



# Constrained Relationship Among Salman Rushdie's Characters In 'The Moor's Last Sigh'

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## ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the theme of constrained relationship among the characters in Salman Rushdie's fiction 'The Moor's Last Sigh'. The Moor's Last Sigh is a novel published in 1995. It's a complex and layered story that explores themes of identity, culture and family history. In the novel constrained relationship is a recurring theme, particularly in the context of family dynamics and cultural expectations. The novel blends magical realism, historical fiction and satire. A constrained relationship in literature refers to a relationship between characters that is limited, restricted or complicated by various factors such as unresolved conflicts, unrequited love, or suppressed emotions. In the social context it can arise on social expectations, class differences or cultural norms. Constrained relationship can be made on physical distance, separation and limitations. Trauma, mental health and personality conflicts can also create constrained relationship.

The works of Erving Goffman, R.D. Laing and Thomas Szasz applied alternative vista which examined the social causes for madness that made profound impact on the mental condition of an individual. Laing opines that social sickness and familial structures make a good contribution in the mental sickness and disability of person distancing and detaching him away from normal individuals so as to produce him or her mentally disabled and unable to maintain a socially approved relationship with others. Depression instigates negative emotions which affects the interpersonal correlation and relations with one's environment also it results negative consequences.

## INTRODUCTION

Salman Rushdie, a most renowned novelist of the Indian origin settled in the United States. Rushdie has written numerous novels and short stories that have acclaimed him a great fame and also they are commercially successful. Salman Rushdie's writing style is a unique blend of magical realism, postmodernism, and satire, often exploring complex themes such as identity, colonialism, and cultural hybridity. His narratives frequently combines elements of fantasy, mythology, and folklore with realistic depictions of life, creating a rich and layered storytelling experience. Rushdie employs magical realism to blur the lines between reality and fantasy, adding depth and complexity to his narratives. His writing is characterized by vivid, poetic descriptions that transport readers to different times and places. Rushdie's novels often feature non-linear plots and multiple points of view, keeping readers engaged and invested in the story. He frequently uses humor, satire, and irony to critique societal norms and challenge established power structures. Rushdie's novel often experiment with non-traditional narrative structures, incorporating techniques like flashbacks, dreams, and stream – of – consciousness narration.

The novel follows the life of Moraes Zogoiby, also known as "Moor" a mixed-heritage individual who narrates his family's history and struggles with identity. The story spans over six hundred year, covering four generations of a Bombay family and blends historical events, magical realism and fantasy. The novel deals with multiple themes like identity and cultural heritage, family and inheritance, art and creativity, history and politics. This paper discusses and analyses the family and relationship which is the broad area in which how its members have developed a constrained relationship among themselves.

While discussing the family relationship, there are numerous characters who have developed constrained relationship among themselves. Moraes Zogoiby, the book's narrator, discusses his family's four generations and ancestors throughout the book, starting with his great-grandfather and great-grandmother and continuing with his own moms, Aurora De Gama and his father Abraham Zogoiby. The protagonist of the book, Moraes, goes by the nickname "Moor" throughout. The novel portrays the life of Abraham Zogoiby and his ancestry related to the Jewish and the Goan-Christian ancestry, who is a billionaire, lived in Bombay and his most famous wife who is a dancer and artist Aurora Da Gama Zogoiby.

The nuptial relationship of Francisco da Gama with his wife Epifania is constrained over the issue of distribution of the property. The decision made by Franciso to divide the assets into two equal parts in favor of his sons Aires and Camoens irritates Epifania the "most severe and least forgiving of mothers" (Salman Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh*. p - 32). She considers that both the sons were useless as Aires uncannily to the expectation of his mother Epifania, drowns himself in carousing while Camoens spends his life by becoming the member of Nehru's Party Congress. Epifania conspires with the association of her daughters-in-law Belle and Carmen to capture and bring the property under her control. Abraham Zogoiby, father of the hero is also a villainy character like the Bombay under world Don as he trades girls, explosives and drugs and the fearsome sound and fury of the contemporary Bombay has been illustrated by Rushdie.

Sundar L Gilman of Emory University, Atlanta, USA in his article on the title 'Madness as Disability' (Sander L Gilman, p- 441-442) states that mental illness is a disability which affects the stability and functioning of the mind and activities of a person due to the negative impacts made by external factors and induces psychic pain, also called worries of the mind which is completely discrete from Physical pain. The mental illness is the source of some disorder in the body and thoughts of the mind. (Locke, 1690, Book 2, ch. 20: 113).

The old woman Epifania is brought out through the repeated saying of some hateful phrases in the midst of her rosary which is overheard by Aurora when she approaches her recalling the dream that she had about murdering her "May your house be forever partitioned, may its foundations turn to dust, may your children rise up against you, and may your fall be hard." C. David clay brook, of Ouachita Baptist University published a paper on Psychosomatic disorders defines that it affects the mental function of a person and Cleveland Clinic assures that it a psychological condition which leads to physical symptoms and does not have any medical explanation. Camoen da Gama, father of Aurora and maternal grandfather of the narrator is another grotesquely pictured person of the novel who is interpreted as "goateed stick of a man," Camoens becomes almost mad and delivers uncanny reactions and behavior after his wife's departure, he also reflects marks of scratch on his body as he had dreams about his wife Bellie also who takes incarnation of ghost and haunts the house.

Epifania da Gama showed her strange approach not only towards he daughter -in-law Isabella allies belly, Aurora's mother but also her approach towards her husband Francisco was also awkward which led him to intolerant and he was stifled to premature emotional death like murder. Epifania emits her villainy nature towards Bellie on various occasions throughout her life due to her maternal jealousy as she considered Bellie not eligible to get married and enter into the da Gama family and treated her lower than Carmen because Carmen was her relative. Further, Epifania hides the truth that her son Aires is incapable of having heterosexual relationship; she kills Bellie's heart and combines herself with Carmen to strengthen her rivalry, enmity and animosity and introduces new vocabulary in her dialogue like 'Killofy' and 'stickofies'.

Carmen, like Isabella lives an emotionally disturbed and imbalanced life. Being left alone uncared and not satisfied by her husband in terms of sexual gratification and children, she fails to care Aurora who has become almost an orphan after the demise of her mother Belle. It affects her mentally and she remains passive and a dumb victim to the homosexuality of her husband. When Aires returns from prison after his six years of imprisonment along with Camoen, the emotionally disturbed and imbalanced Carmen turns violent and threatens her husband to death, if he continued promiscuity. Carmen revenges her husband through having an immoral affair with Prince Henry, Aires' old lover. She has been sketched as an emotionally barren and empty woman as she fails to express her motherly love and compassion towards the motherless Aurora.

Queen Isabella, called Bellie, Aurora's mother is uncanny in her approach towards her husband Camoen and his welfare. She never shows any concern regarding his health condition but relishes his absence smoking like a volcano, the words that got delivered from her mouth were awkward and she never intended to control her language good even in the presence of children, she also drank too much to her unconsciousness and sprawled on the mat at the Malabar Bar like a whore. (The Moor's Last Sigh, p-44). She suffered tuberculosis and met with unsoothing death. Flory, Abraham Zogoiby's mother nourishes her hatred against her son and daughter in law Aurora. She feels that her son has been usurped and separated from her since Aurora's wedding and she calls Aurora as "my Abie's Roman whore" which describes a woman who is her son's wife. Flory's grotesque nature is revealed when Abraham requests her to help him by giving the Emerald which his father had kept secretly in the synagogue to regain and meet the loss in business, she orders Abraham to handover his only son Isaac whom she has planned to make a subservient in her husband's as he is not alive.

Vasco Miranda, a poor artist whom Aurora treats as her 'pet', has dark and the frightening side because he is an alcoholic, drug addict and bisexual orgy. "There was a Hell in Vasco, born of whatever devil-deal he had done to shed his past and be born again through us, and at times he seemed capable of bursting into flames" (Salman Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh. p - 165). Moraes Zogoiby comments about Uma in the following words "the woman who transformed, exalted and ruined my life." (Salman Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, p - 237). Uma plays the role of revealer of secrets of the Moor's sisters, his mother and Vasco Miranda in order to take revenge and satisfy herself. Mynah makes an understanding about Uma as a very rough and callous woman. Uma resents to the Moor at the idea that has to pose nude to his mother while painting and convinces him to express his refusal to do so and subsequently he resists posing nude for his mother to portray his figure which irritates and he gives him up suing him as his model. Vasco Miranda's strange and cruel face is portrayed as Aurora starts a quarrel with him because he has become a commercial hack and has heaped wealth by stealing and selling her picture abroad and has attained fame while she is known only in the domestic level. To the shock of the Moor, Uma delivers hidden secrets about the members of his family that Myrna is a lesbian, the sexual needs of his father Abraham is fulfilled through the three prostitutes imported to the city, the three secret lovers of his mother namely Keeko Mody, Vasco Miranda, and Raman Fielding.

Uma's villainy face is displayed when the Moor learns about the death of Jimmy Cash in an automobile accident which the newspapers report that it was intrigued by Uma but on the inspection by Moor, she remains unaffected and answers that she never loved the unskilled dead man. Uma expresses her love for Moor and he is filled with joy and prospect of new life with her and both make blissful love. Moor goes to collect his belongings and leave the house permanently; Aurora uses the opportunity to retaliate Moraes by responding gloomy and cold as he betrayed her by choosing and falling on Uma's side. He returns to Uma's apartment with the intention of staying with her forever and requests her not to attempt to convince his parents. All of a sudden, Uma takes the decision to commit suicide by swallowing

cyanide tablets which alarms Moraes and he attempts to dispossess the tablets but no sooner than he tried she had consumed it and fell dead on the ground.

The reason behind the strange and grotesque reaction of Uma is the mental illness that she suffered from her childhood. Uma in one sense resembles Sufiya Zenobia in *Shame*, Sufiya's mental stability was affected through the reactions of people especially her parents and sisters and incidents that happened around her likely to insult and test her dignity. The impact created within the person's psychology stimulates to react uncannily and grotesquely. The Moor has a turned phase as he is imprisoned over the death of Uma, his lover. He has descended to mean level which is shattering his spirit and mental grit and destined to face a new environment with the routine of cockroaches, rats, adjacent bowls of gruel given to him to satisfy his appetite and excrement, verbal abuse, and resignation. The abandonment of his mother and lover, the tragic family history, his mother's secret, lascivious and debaucheries nature, the portrayal of his life on the canvass. He looks in a state of great amalgamation of horror, melancholy and as if living in a maze and fails to assure if it was reality or dream. After being arrested by the police, the policemen found the suicide tablet and forced him to consume it which proves to be not cyanide but it was the pill to stimulate hallucination.

Abraham Zogoiby is enraged over the immoral conduct of his wife Aurora with many men and also her debaucherous behavior, he plots and murders her. Aurora ill-treats her son, the Moor by forcing him to pose nude for her portrays which are revealed by Uma. Uma discloses the secrets and the debaucherous life of Aurora to her lover which stands as a reason for her enmity and also her attempt to become popular in the field of art. The relationship between Epifania and Francisco, Isabella and Camoens, Aurora and Flory, Abraham's mother have constrained relationship as her son married a woman who belongs to another religion. Thus all the characters of the novel have a relationship which reflects a friction.

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