

**Pakistan, Rushdie and *Shame***  
**(A Reading from the Perspective of New Historicism)**

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**Abstract**

The objective of this research paper is to investigate the fragments of historical reality regarding the military coup in Pakistan. In Salman Rushdie's novel *Shame*, the concept of shame refers to the national shame caused by an attack on democracy. From the standpoint of New Historicism, the work contains several traces and pieces of history relating to the military takeover during Bhutto's government in Pakistan. In Rushdie's *Shame*, physical details and cruel and horrible acts cover numerous historical truths. Suffiya is a representation of the shame she experienced. She first expresses the shame through her normally ashamed expression. Later, the internal guilt manifests as disease. She keeps feeling more and more ashamed. In this study, a fragment of historical truth about the military coup and the ensuing loss of democracy in Pakistan is indirectly examined beneath the literary specifics of Salman Rushdie's novel *Shame*. In order to show how Zia's military coup overthrows democracy, the study claims that Rushdie makes many allusions to historical truth that are concealed under fiction and fantasy. The researcher uses the theory of New Historicism, particularly those interpretative tools advanced by Michel Foucault and Stephen Greenblatt, to interpret the text. As part of a qualitative research project, Salman Rushdie's novel *Shame* was analyzed using the literary device of new historicism. The study came to the conclusion that Rushdie's *Shame* uses fiction and fantasy to depict the traces of historical fragments. By fictionalizing official history, it reveals the historical truth that lies behind historical actuality.

*Keywords:* fictionality, history, new historicism, political turmoil, representation

**Introduction**

This research was conducted to investigate how a fragment of historical truth regarding the military coup and the ensuing loss of democracy in Pakistan appears in an indirect manner beneath the literary specifics of Salman Rushdie's novel, *Shame*. *Shame*, Rushdie's novel, dramatizes Pakistan's political upheaval. Through the story of Shakil, Raza Hyder, and Harappa's family, the novelist recreates significant events in Pakistan's present history in the third person. A small group of people are making history by approaching power as if it were a family feud. The rise and fall of three political families demonstrates that politics is akin to a family feud.

Salman Rushdie is a well-known author, and the majority of his books include historical details, a combination of fact and fiction, meta-narratives, the invocation of myths, etc. Rushdie is well renowned for writing a lot of books. His name is usually linked to disputes brought on by his candid and forthright criticism of different political and religious topics. Similar to this, the problems brought up are primarily related to the political and historical contexts of India and Pakistan. The country's creative strengths are fundamentalism, censorship, religious conflict, racial violence, corruption, and marginal issues.

This story clearly depicts the tug of battle in Pakistan between the military dictator and the democratic leader. Rushdie is not only fascinated with historical themes and subjects, he is also concerned about a new worldwide phenomenon. Rushdie is more than just a literary commentator who has passionately elevated the prohibited voices of traditional Islamic countries. He is an advocate of freedom of the press and freedom of speech. He is an outspoken opponent of censorship. He believes that censorship kills creative potential. It stifles and inhibits the creative ability required to address society's tangible problems.

The work reflects the political unrest in Pakistan through its literary devices, which include references to cultures and politics and concern the politico-cultural lives of Pakistan. Omar Khayyam Shakil, the protagonist of the story, is permitted to go to school. Omar is obliged to never experience humiliation in exchange for being permitted to go to school. He decides to move to attend medical school. His hatred serves as a barometer for his hate and shame. The collapse of democracy, the coup, the emergence of the military dictatorship, and the rise of Islamic extremism all had to be dealt with by Pakistan as a whole. This is how Iskander Harappa's fury worsens when Omar interacts with a wealthy playboy and befriends him. Rani Humayun's husband is Harappa. She perceives Omar as a threat right away. Women are empowered in this condition; they are seeking true freedom, identities, and self-esteem. Only in a democratic environment can women and marginalized groups experience true freedom. However, Omar's helpless and helpless position reveals how the country's politics were both directly and indirectly weak in terms of democracy.

The plot revolves around the characters Omar Khayyam Shakil and Sufiya Zinobia. Readers are introduced to Pakistani politics through the characters of Iskander Harappa (Bhutto), Rani Harappa (Nusrat Bhutto), Raza Hyder (Zia Ul-Haq), Arjumand Harappa (Benazir Bhutto), and others. The novel uses the history of the family in one way while evoking the politics of the nation in another.

A postmodern reinterpretation of history, Rushdie's *Shame* transcends mere literary innovation. The nature of identity formation is the basis of his research. The events that are represented in various facets of Islamic culture can be freely used into a novel. Furthermore, rather than having literary overtones, it has more political and theological ones. Muslim protests both domestically and internationally frequently ended in rioting and fatalities. It is difficult to accept the idea that the myth of nationhood serves as the foundation for identity development. Whether through fable or by the subject, who is seeking identity, fairy tale characters reflect the stages of identity formation.

The novel concentrates on the technique of fusing history and fiction in that, for Rushdie, history is no longer a collection of unchanging facts but rather the interpretation of events and

the cogent presentation of the history of the country. In Rushdie's *Shame*, Raza Hyder and Iskander Harappa are fictional characters who are used to explore the religious, political, and cultural lives of Pakistan. The book is set in Pakistan and illustrates the country's political and cultural unrest throughout its history.

### Objectives of the Study

Examining how Rushdie portrayed Pakistan's political past in his fictional work, *Shame*, is the main goal of the research. It also aims to demonstrate how the fictionality of history and the historicity of fiction were handled in the book.

### Readings on *Shame* and the Research Gap

Numerous critics have seen the fiction from various angles. A political truth about the bitter competition between Bhutto and Zia Ul-Haq is revealed by the fight between Raza Hyder and Iskander Harappa. *Shame* implicitly reproduces the political-historical facts surrounding the political upheaval in Pakistan, while commentators have given it diverse interpretations.

Brian (2010) interpreted the novel *Shame* as an east-west divide. The western perception of Zia-Ul-military Haq's reign is of the utmost importance. He liberally redefines Islamic faith and teaching. Some theocratic monarchs in the Arab world issued directives to him. He views Islam through a secular lens. Nevertheless, narrow-minded representatives of Islam do not embrace his stance. They are unable to comprehend liberal philosophy. When evaluating Islamic faith and philosophy from a secular standpoint, his analysis and observation appear to be rather westernized. That is why some cling on to disrespect.

It was analyzed in terms of literary devices by Kluwick (2012). He freely makes use of tales, symbols, magical realism, and other ethereal elements in his historical and political themes. The Pakistani people's yearning to soar high in the skies of democracy, freedom, and secularized ideas in areas like politics, business, and enterprise is expressed through the symbolic act of flight. One of the difficult problems that the novelist approaches from several aspects is migration. The fact that the subject of migration is not approached in a vacuum is crucial. Instead, it is discussed in relation to a number of other symbolic acts, such as flying. According to Culik (2003), the book *Shame* is about:

In his works, the sexual impulse is disconcerting. Shameful lovemaking can sometimes assume the form of escapism, which hides unpleasant realities. Power politics is too shameful to disregard the grace of public dignity. (42)

The portrayal of Raza as a man tormented by thirst for extremism and oppression is heavily criticized. Women are submissive, whilst males are warriors searching for the purpose of life. The majesty of man's brilliance is contrasted with women's pettiness. In this aspect, it is not as disconcerting as people normally seem to imagine. In addition to this perplexing subject, there is another confusing theme that is directly related to the political theme of betrayal.

Sander (1999) judges novels based on his power, politics to create new terminology and neologisms. He asserts his ideas and expresses the following points of view:

To describe this new kind of political problem which verges on *shame*? The shifting politico-cultural horizon has bred *Shame*. Many unconscious and conscious forces operate beneath the surface of identity formation. In this regard's *Shame* plays a paramount part. (27)

He is dissatisfied with the dominant discourse languages. He is determined to keep his radical sense of good manners. The underlying reasons both political, historical and ideological have to be uncovered and analyzed properly before diving into the complicated web of liberal identity.

*Shame* has been enhanced by fairy tale patterns, folklore evidence design, enchantment, realism, and various models, claims McGiveron (2003). McGiveron received a lot of criticism for his realistic approach to writing about Pakistan, and he notes the following about this part of the book:

He uses an indirect, parabolic, and folktale-based approach to portray Pakistan's war-torn country in order to avoid receiving this kind of harsh criticism. Harappa initially expresses sadness about the coup. He regrets having such poor vision. He regrets not being able to preserve democracy. He stands for the tragic events that have destroyed Pakistan's cherished nation connections and bright future. (25)

According to McGiveron, the history of Pakistan, which has been torn apart by coups, is a history of treachery, dishonesty, poverty, and countless other manifestations of human callousness. In the text, such skewed circumstances and irrelevant reality coexist.

Despite the fact that each of these reviewers approaches this book from a different angle, none of them has focused on its historical and political ramifications. The events alluded to in *Shame* include a military coup, Pakistan's democracy being raped, a communal strife, a historical loss, and a religious program. There are numerous political and ideological undertones buried behind the overabundance of linguistic elements. The poem as a whole is overflowing with several linguistic options due to implicit historical allusions and popular unease with a dictator suffocating democracy.

### **New Historicism: A Tool for Literary Criticism**

A New Historicist analyzes literature in a more complete historical framework. The New Historicism movement recognizes that the historical context in which an author lived at the time it was written influences the work. A literary theory that believes Michel Foucault's philosophy had an impact on Stephen Greenbelt's literary criticism. The history of the author and the critic are both taken into consideration when studying literature in this way. It is critical to comprehend modern historicism, which recognizes how an author's era and circumstances influenced their writing. Furthermore, the circumstances, perspectives, and prejudices of critics at the time influence their evaluations of literary works.

In accordance with the New Historicist school of thinking, literature should be examined and analyzed in light of both the author's and the critic's recent pasts. It is literary theory based on Stephen Greenblatt's literary criticism. The new historicism recognizes that a writer's times and environment have an effect on their literary creation. The critic's environment, convictions, and biases also have an impact on how he responds to that work.

The New Historicist analyzes how the work reflects and influences the writer's time in a larger historical context. Political and cultural history can be revealed through the study of work. As one studies the past, one learns more about the text. In this sense, critics admit that their analysis of literature is influenced by their culture, environment, and beliefs. Literary criticism of the period held that literature was influenced and mirrored by its own historical setting, and that the cultural historical background reveals more about the literary work. Current Literary Criticism emphasizes that New Historicism is ephemeral and influenced by time and situation.

The main theoretical instrument used by the researcher is the idea of new historicism. In the history of literary theory, there has been an ongoing discussion of the differences between history and fiction. Textualism and contextualism have engaged in a number of theoretical conflicts throughout literary theory's history. In addition, compelling in the manner of a "pendulum, with fleeting wins to one side or the other, reflecting the oscillation between the verbal-literary champions of textualism and socio-historical champions of contextualism" (Greenblatt 76). Along with the idea of power itself, the New Historicists are interested in how literature serves political purposes. These critics put their attention on exposing the historically unique model of truth and authority that is mirrored in a particular work. In other words, history is not just a simple record of facts and events, but a nuanced account of human reality and the development of a person's inherent nature.

Literature also enlightens us on different factual facets of prevailing beliefs at the moment they first appear. Ideas also relate to social structure, prejudices, and things that are taboo in society. These focus on ideological or cultural structures, which are formations of any period, and are more socio-historical than factoids. They highlight issues that sociologists and anthropologists both find intriguing. New Historicists claim that ideology shows up in literature and discourse as a result. Members of a society are interested in how culture and interpretive frameworks relate to their lived experiences.

### **Rushdie's *Shame*: Fictionalization of History**

In Salman Rushdie's novel *Shame*, fable is used to project a subjective fraction of historical fact. This work hides historical facts and findings beneath the mask of narrative details. The novel does not directly address historical truth. On the contrary, it takes the form of a Hyder and Harappa narrative. In *Shame*, the fable of Hyder and Harappa reflects a battle between Pakistan's military ruler Haq and democratically elected Prime Minister Bhutto. The objective depiction of political reality, in the fable mode, projects the history of the nation. The emergence of Haq and the coup that followed resulted in national shame.

Rushdie concentrates more on narrating the nation's history in the novel, blurring the line between history and fiction. In some ways, history is no longer comprised of set and objective facts; rather, it is the interpretation of events. The shame of three women, who brazenly contend

that each of them has the right to claim for the baby the bizarre versions of how Omar Khayyam Shakil, one of the principal characters, was born. Three sisters keep themselves confined within the house, departed from the world. Each section of the fable of Harappa and Hyder acts as the memory of historical event and episode. The sheer setting of this tale conjures an inferred sense of the geography of Pakistan. The novel is set in the mythical city of Q. It is located between Pakistan and India, and is similar to Pakistan. Most crucially, the battle between Raza Hyder and Iskander Harappa is reminiscent of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Zia Ul-aggressive Haq's squabble, with comparisons to a country and family war.

In the real world, the antagonistic relationship between Bhutto and Zia Ul-Haq results in the collapse of democracy, a military coup, and the development of Islamic fundamentalism. It incorporates both realistic and fanciful imagination components. It hints the historical reality. The term "responsibility" refers to the act of determining whether or not a person is responsible for his or her own actions. Truth, which enters the text in this manner, is subjectively transformed and textually altered. New historicism became influential through the works of new historicists, who first utilized it to evaluate Renaissance works.

In addition to the violent political struggle between Hyder and Harappa, the concept of *Shame* emerges. Three pregnant sisters claiming the same infant as their son is heinous, humiliating, and disgraceful. This concept of *Shame* alludes to political disgrace. Pakistan achieved democracy at a high cost. Pakistan gained power after the end of colonialism. However, religious orthodoxy, military general ambition, and a lack of structured expertise in practicing democracy resulted in a disgraceful scenario. This awful condition is the rape of democracy, the ascent of absolute authority, creation of military domination, formation of theocratic state and outbreak of fanaticism. The following extract demonstrates how increasing thirst for power on the part of Hyder gives rise:

[...] everything was smaller than it is today; even Raza Hyder was only a major. However, he was like the city itself, going places, growing fast, but in a stupid way, so that the bigger they both got, the uglier they became. I must tell you what things were like in those early days after the partition: the city's old inhabitants, who had become accustomed to living in a land older than time and were therefore being slowly eroded by the implacably revenant tides of the past, had been given a bad shock by independence. (81)

Hyder's desire for dominance emerges in a professional manner. He doesn't expressly show how passionate he is about power. He takes a calculated method to overthrowing democracy. The will, consent, and agreement of the people are nothing in comparison to his insatiable appetite for the supremacy of military might. His desire has no limits. A comparison between Zia Ul-military Haq's takeover and Hyder's coup can be drawn.

This new perspective on history affects how we view literature and literary criticism. While new historicism contends that history can only be known in the same way that literature is—through subjective interpretation—traditional literary historicism maintains that the proper goal of literary criticism is to attempt to reconstruct the past objectively. This is because our understanding of the past is always shaped by our present consciousness. Louis Montrose's

thoughts demonstrate how historically tied we are. We can only reconstruct history using our mind as a lens.

The future of Pakistan would be ruined by Hyder's political arrogance. The umbilical cord is wrapped around the infant's neck rather than mentioning explicitly that Hyder's child suffered poor luck in the story. An understated reminder of Hyder's military takeover's attempts to crush democracy and civil dominance is provided by the horrible image of a child and its fate of being choked by the umbilical chord. It also illustrates how Pakistan's fate and future have been distorted. Only the flimsy, groundless optimism remains as an alternative for Hyder and Bilquis. They are hoping that God will bring her a second kid to replace the one. "Having persuaded themselves that a second pregnancy would be an act of replacement for which God (for Raza, as we know, had consented to send them a free substitute for the destroyed good," they calculated (83). The attitude of self-gratification, facile optimism, and empty hope shared by Raza and Bilquis is shared by all Pakistanis.

As a result, New Historicism is concerned with the historicity of text and the textuality of history, which are more socio-historical and conceived not as a set of fixed, objective facts but as the literature with which it interacts; texts are inscriptions of history and representation, which must be interpreted of the texts of the past. That is to say, people of society with ideological products apply their cultural constructs and experience. Literature should be analyzed in a broader historical context, according to new historicist ideas, because it investigates the work's impact on the writer's time. Despite this, Omar weds her secretly. He is not allowed to engage in sexual activity with her. Sufiya Zinobia is aware that husbands are for providing women children despite her cognitive shortcomings. Omar conceives her ayah Shahbanou in this location. Once more, the beast seizes control. Sufiya Zinobia is made to engage in sexual activity with the four young men. Their heads have been severed. The following passage demonstrates the point:

Raza Hyder, who was placed in charge of the army by Prime Minister Iskander Harappa, has overthrown him, instituted Islamic law and allowed Isky to be tried, brutally imprisoned and executed. Raza is himself overthrown by a military coup and flees with Bilquis and Omar, to supposed safety in fortress-like Nishapur, disguised shamefully in women's burqas. (113)

The three sisters in the dumb waiter kill Hyder with a lot of gore. They had made it specifically for use as their meager form of contact with the outside world. The Beast has seized control of Zinobia. The visitors suffer from the crazed ravings of malaria. In the fairy tale, the two men's families are equally significant. The fairy tale element is utilized to conceal the gravity of historical truth, though. The traces of historical reality are hidden beneath magic and the supernatural. After marrying the modest Bilquis, Raza Hyder briefly moves her in with his grandmother in Karachi. She and the other female family members must sleep in a spacious room. Their husbands pay their wives visits.

The exiled Rani, Iskander Harappa's wife, is forced to live on her husband's rural estate. Her spouse plays sports with Pinkie Aurangzeb, his mistress. Here, the idea of *Shame* is at play. Rani spends her time stitching a variety of shawls that were created magically. All of the embarrassing incidents in the family's history are depicted on these shawls. Their daughter Arjuman finds happiness in her father's line of work.

Sufiya Zinobia is the embodiment of shame at its worst. She is the stupid offspring of Bilquis and Raza Hyder. Hyder rejects the physical proof of his daughter's sex because he is so desperate to have a son. Hyder's hatred hints to and implies several things. It is a sign of his hatred for the pricey freedom-oriented system that Pakistan's citizens brought about. Sufiya Zinobia, who has been completely rejected, develops flushes that are "incandescent enough to burn the lips of an old woman who kisses her, requiring "twice daily applications of lip salve for a week" (89).

In practice, New Historicism is "a profoundly narcissistic method" (Montrose 46). In effect, a new historicism is forming, seeking actual historical truths while imposing its own criteria. To judge literary works in context, there is no easy yes or no answer; more studying the history reveals more about the literary text than it reveals about the past. According to Liu, "New Historicism is unable to comprehend the past on its own terms because it lacks a proper knowledge of rhetoric, or more broadly, language as a historically situated event" (8). As a result, the diverse voices absorbed into modern historicist writing are drowned out by a more forceful vocabulary that fails to recognize their differences.

With their celebration, the Shakil sisters start and finish the pattern of humiliation. Their motive for murder is retaliation for Raza Hyder's murder of their second son, Babar. The novel's final heinous act is Sufiya Zinobia's murder of her spouse. Sufiya's shame engulfs everyone she meets. She is born "the wrong miracle and seemed to go bad from there" (69). She is shame personified; she is also Pakistan personified. The country is also regarded as "a miracle gone awry" (86).

In the end, despite the fact that they are fictions, *Shame* is always strongly linked to Pakistan's history and politics. It reveals political upheaval, power struggles, the influence of Islamic culture, bureaucracy, social divisions, gender roles, military rule, tribal customs, city life, and other issues. He uses a variety of approaches, treats the truth lightly, and gives it his own unique interpretation. The novel's characters and events are made up, yet they are often based on real individuals and events. The entire story of *Shame* is a metaphor for rewriting history, politics, and other crucial fights. As a result, Rushdie attempts to expose Pakistan's tainted history of power.

### Conclusion

In a nutshell, *Shame* is associated with people who are marginalized. It shows the traces and fragments of history by means of fiction and fantasy. By fictionalizing historical account, the narrative presents historical truth that has been unearthed. The primary motivation for this study project has been to paint a clear image of historical truth hidden behind the narrative account and details of the novel *Shame*. In the book *Shame*, historical events are fictionalized. An allusion to Pakistan's terrible post-independence conflict between Bhutto and Zia can be seen in the struggle between Hyder and Harappa, which leads to instability and disorder. The three girls' expressions of guilt as they lay on their backs foretell political shame.

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