Hindu Religion And Women Essay, Research Paper

?Hindu goddesses are traditionally conceived to be strong figures,even indomitable ones. By comparing his female characters to these goddesses, Rushdie attributes them with a force of character.He perceives India as a matriarchy, where maternal power, energy, and love is the means to social cohesion.? (Jennifer Takhar) Durga, the washerwoman who had nursed Saleem?s son in his sickness, is an important figure in Saleem?s life. As we understand from the description of her (pg:445), she is a powerful woman who is an opposite image of the docile Indian woman. She may be representing the power that is repressed in these women. Saleem fears her as she symbolizes the hope that he has lost. ? Her name, even before I met her, had the smell of new things; she represented novelty, beginnings, the advent of new stories, events, complexities, and I was no longer interested in anything new.? (pg:445) She is again the one who foretold Saleem’s death. So, these kind of women as witches inspired fear in Saleem. Like Durga, Parvati-the-witch, who is Shiva?s wife, is another important figure. She causes in creating their child which is necessary for the continuation. Mother was seen as a nation. There is parallelism between continuity of nation through having children. Women have roles in productivity; that is why they are important. Parvati acts as somebody restoring order. She helps Saleem return to Delhi by using her magic basket, making him invisible. Parvati reminded Saleem of things he had tried to put out of his mind. (pg:389) So, we can say that she influenced Saleem as other women, as being representator of a nation. When we come to other women in Saleem?s life, for example Mary Pereira. She is the one who gives birth to Saleem; she creates him in both biological sense and metaphorical sense. She changes the babies and at the same time fates. Out of guilt, she attaches her whole destiny to Saleem?s life by becoming his caretaker.She also influences the class positions of the babies. (Saleem and Shiva) The pickling process which is a process of preservation, linked to preservation and continuity of traditions metaphorically, is significant. This food process is under control of females and it is an important source of authority and identity for the women. It is the preservation of the past. The women?s way is practical, oral; it is a way of transmitting tradition we can say. Pickling process is only a symbol of this transmission. So, Mary P., like the other women in Saleem?s life has great effect on Saleem. Reverend Mother, on the other hand, who is the bride behind perforated sheet turns out to be the head of the family. She is also very powerful. She becomes the head after the marriage. She preserves identity of the nation. She is like the other women; asserts her authority in cooking. Her food, for example, revives Ahmed Sinai after freeze. ? She uses food as battleground where she wages her battles against her husband.? (W. Glasgow Philips ?92) We see the monitoring of food, so simple and practical but can influence men. It is this simplicity of mothers, their affection influnces Saleem. To Saleem women, like India, is nothing without its past. ? no escape from past acquaintance. What you were is forever who you are. (pg:368) And thi?s connection to past is through these women. They are the ones who create nation and preserve it like the pickles. Amina, Saleem?s mother, changes and influences his life also. He sees her naked in the bathroom and witnesses her unfaithfullness on the phone. All this causes him to have some kind of explosion in his head and that explosion causes him to hear voices in his head. It is the birth of ?Midnight?s Children?. He sees mother, motherland, the nation-India-,earth is not pure as he identifies women with the nation. Identification is between the country and the body of the woman, especially mother. He sees the body of woman as the country and he should protect country as well as honor of mother. But seeing her motheris not pure, the discovery of impurity in mother will bring crisis in his head- the multiplicity of nation-. ? The body is homogeneous as anything. Indivisible, a one-piece suit, a sacred temple, if you will. It is important to preserve this wholeness.? (pg:237) Padma,whom Saleem exchanges opinions about how to tell a story is another significant figure. While he writes, his illiterate listener, Padma, sits beside him showing her emotional responses to his stories, questioning their credibility. When Padma shows interest on her face, Saleem speeds on telling his story. She keeps questioning ?what is next??. She encourages him to write which is the only gift Sallem has for continuity, preservation. Padma is important as a caretaker; providing warmth, food, human kindness to Saleem. She is India for him, connected to all country as a mother. She has earthly characteristic. She emerges as an earthly, stable, real, practical woman that ties her to the motherland. That is why, according to me, she is the most important character in this novel. But although she is a preserver for Saleem, she unwillingly poisons him by feeding him with things she thinks he?ll be ni love with her. It is a poison which is also a cure; both nourishing, reviving, perserving and also poisonous,destructive. She is like India creating him. ? And ceratinly Padma is leaking into me. As history pours out of my fissured body, my lotus is quietly dripping in, with her down-to-earthery, and her paradoxical superstition, her contradictory love of the fabulous?? (pg:38) In short, women had important role in Saleem?s life. They are the mothers, the creators of men. If they were not on earth, no continuity would take place; there would be no world. Saleem is afraid of them also because although they create him as nation creates men; they also prepare the fall of men. They both give significance and at the same time destroys. They can take away the identity as in Saleem. Saleem is the nation also as he creates; he writes. He tries to create meaning and form. And women help Saleem create himself, his identity like the nation does to all human beings. But it can also unmake people. The women try to hold on to past and keep it safe as ? past is a country from which we have all migrated; that its loss is part of our humanity.? (Imaginary Homelands; Essays and Criticism 1981-1991. London: Granta Books, 1991) And this statement teaches the migrants that reality is an artifact and it doesn?t exist until it is made and it can be made well or badly, and it can also be unmade, like women did to Saleem. When we come to the question of why ? White Castle? didn?t give place for women might be because the childhood theme ook great importance in the book. For example, the grandfather?s looking for his childhood at home?That is why it gives much space for the child king. There is the continuous looking for the simple, untouched ?ide? before recognizing sexuality, leaving the mother, to have potency. There is again the fear to lose the pureness, wholeness of the childhood. And because of it there are the speeches in this novel that tells about the childhood naughtiness. It is like the fear of the child. And if we relate this to the ?women? ,as we said women are the creators and they are connected to past, there is no escape from it and when it involves naughtiness and things like a child fears. So, as the Hodja did, there is both an escape from it and at the same time looking for the past innocence. That is why there is no sexuality with women in the book. As they are feared, they can unmake men. The dangerous influence of women is not given permission in the book; only limited and innocent ones are implicitly told. Consequently, women and sexuality are barred and not given much importance as in ?Midnight?s Children? happened the contrast. According to me, it is because it is known how influential women are and can be dangerous in creating. And when you want something wholly new and create your own identity, as the characters in ? White Castle? wanted, it is not a good idea to include women and sexuality. The women can bring ? fall? of men while creating them.