



**DUAL PERSONALITY AND SELF-ERASURE IN AURORA ZOGOIBY OF SALMAN
RUSHDIE'S *THE MOOR'S LAST SIGH***

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ABSTRACT

"It is a recurring feature of his work that women are invoked to prove a point about social injustices and inequities, and then effectively demeaned ... by the writing itself." (17) This is how, Catherine Cundy concludes about the delineation of woman characters in *Midnight's Children*, *The Satanic Verses* and *Shame*, and this forms the base for the dual, split-personalities in *Aurora Zogoiby* of Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* too. This paper aims to identify the dual elements in *Aurora Zogoiby*, and also aims to deconstruct the mystery behind them. It also explores the causes and origins of these dualities with reference to the views of psychoanalysts, Simone de Beauvoir, Ajay Skaria, Nicole Weikgenannt, Chandra Mohanty, Trinh T. Minh-Ha, Aloka Patel, Catherine Cundy, and Justyna Deszcz. It also analyses how oppression of women becomes the root-cause for the existence of dual elements in her. The dualities in her are examined under the light of J. Hillis Miller's "The Critic as Host" to deconstruct the alignment and design of those dualities.

Key Terms: creative courage; creative despair; separate development; a made woman, and self erasure.

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Gender debate has its origin from the period unknown. The consequences of this debate are umpteen in number and interplay of dualities in women is one among them. Women in Salman Rushdie's novels vividly display multiple dual elements inbuilt in them, and this paper deconstructs the mystery behind the split-personality of *Aurora Zogoiby* of Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Just identifying the dual elements in her would be meaningless if the causes and origins of these dual elements are left unexplored. The views expressed by psychoanalysts, Simone de Beauvoir, Ajay Skaria, Nicole Weikgenannt, Chandra Mohanty, Trinh T. Minh-Ha, Aloka Patel, Catherine Cundy, and Justyna Deszcz have been skimmed and scanned to throw

light on these areas in this paper. Similarly, the study of the interplay of the dual elements, identified in *Aurora Zogoiby* of Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*, would not be complete unless the inclinations behind their interplay are deconstructed. Again, a mere documentation of the roles and causes of these interplays would not be meaningful if the causes of the oppression of women, especially of *Aurora Zogoiby* and the possible solutions for overcoming this oppression are excluded from the agenda. Therefore, this paper proceeds to analyze the split personality of *Aurora Zogoiby* after formulating an overview on the roles and causes of dualities in her, and also, the causes of and solutions for the oppression of women, in general as well as in *Aurora*

Zogoiby of this novel, in particular. This paper also analyses how oppression of women becomes the root-cause for the existence of dual elements in Aurora Zogoiby.

"The negative lives from the positive it negates," says Paul Tillich in "The Meaning of Meaninglessness" (946), and this existentialist thought forms the base for understanding the very interplay of counterparts within the women in the post-colonial era as well as in the fictional world of Rushdie. The monstrous streak in the bold and submissive woman characters of Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* can be traced out from the absence of their 'creative courage'- the courage to face things as they are and to express the anxiety of meaninglessness - in their confrontations with despair and oppression. In the absence of 'creative courage', the encountered despair or oppression does not take the shape of 'creative despair' (Tillich 945), giving way only to momentary hope which is no way different from mere despair itself. Rushdie's woman characters in this novel, unlike Kashmira in *Shalimar the Clown*, show enormous courage when situation demands, but they choose the path that takes them away from 'creative courage'. As such, they oscillate between dual elements.

"It is a recurring feature of his work that women are invoked to prove a point about social injustices and inequities, and then effectively demeaned ... by the writing itself." (17) This is how, Catherine Cundy concludes about the delineation of woman characters in *Midnight's Children*, *The Satanic Verses* and *Shame* and this forms the base for their dual, split-personalities in Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* too. The dual roles played by Aurora Zogoiby in this novel can also be aptly equated with Mahmoud's (Bilquis Hyder's father) comments on the emotions and images that attach to the word 'Woman': "Is there no end to the burdens this word is capable of bearing? Was there ever such a broad-backed and also such a dirty word?" (*Shame* 62) Therein lay the roots of the binarism - being innocent/whore, bold/submissive and shameful/shameless - which Aurora Zogoiby embodies like both sides of a coin. Labeling the portrayal of woman characters in *Midnight's Children*, as prejudiced on gender basis and offensive, Patel observes that Parvati, Padma and

Durga are presented as iconic Hindu Goddesses of power or shakthi or the revolutionary force and at the same time, ironically, as symbols of celibacy, impotence and destruction: "The woman, then, in the case of Rushdie is trapped between the two extremes of the Devi and the Devil." (Patel 87) These remarks of Patel seem applicable to Aurora Zogoiby too. It is not the descriptive potential of gender difference, says Chandra Mohanty, but the privileged positioning and explanatory potential of gender difference as the origin of oppression that needs to be questioned. Women are taken as a unified 'powerless' group even before the analysis in question which is merely a matter of specifying the context after the fact. This analytic strategy is questioned by Aurora Zogoiby as she rebels and pops out of her oppression / traditionally assigned territories, momentarily and later, recoils back passively into her shell that is conventionally bound for her. Her rebellion shows her dissatisfaction against her oppressors. Her passivity, interconnected with her rebelliousness, shows her incapacity to withstand the oppression for a long duration. She fails to sustain her success in overcoming her oppression due to her lack of steadfast efforts and willingness. Sometimes, she finds her oppression to be too powerful to be encountered and as a result, she recoils back passively. At times, her psychological conditioning to be passive by the oppressors comes as a hindrance for her. As such, she exhibits dual split personalities.

Aurora Zogoiby plays the dual role of being bold when situation demands and submissive when the events recoil back to normalcy. She wants to escape out of her shells of tradition and culture, but her own mental blockages and make-up disable her to do so in exerting her independent identity. She plays the role of a nurturer and a destroyer as Saleem points out:

Women have made me; and also unmade. From Reverend Mother to the Widow, and even beyond, I have been at the mercy of the so-called (erroneously, in my opinion!) gentler sex. It is, perhaps, a matter of connection ... women have done their best; and also, I'm bound to say, their worst. (*MC* 565)

Thus, the interplay of dualism is apparent not only in the roles Aurora Zogoiby plays, but also is evident in her mental and physical make-up, too. In other words, this interplay is internal as well as external. Hillis. J. Miller's theory about opposites stands applicable in this interplay:

The uncanny antithetical relation exists not only between pairs of words in this system, ... but within each word in itself. It reforms itself in each polar opposite when that opposite is separated out, and it subverts or nullifies the apparently the unequivocal relation of polarity which seems the conceptual scheme appropriate for thinking through the system. (443)

Characterization of Aurora Zogoiby in *The Moor's Last Sigh* is a clear subversion of the image of a mother as almost a divine being cherished in the Indian society. She reverses the roles played by the typical traditional Indian Mother as a Bharathiya Nari, one who bears everything, is loving, caring, all sacrificing for the sake of her family. The reversal of the traditional roles by her can be traced out from the origin of the policy of 'separate development' (Minh-Ha 246-247). Apart from the changes due to globalization and the changing roles played by women in the rapidly changing society, there are other factors that need to be considered in this regard. The concept of 'a made woman' and self erasure in the attempt of trying to 'unsay' (Minh-Ha 246-47) can be attributed to the cause of changes in the roles played by Aurora Zogoiby.

Aurora's unpleasant childhood, devoid of love and her tensed relationship with her husband, can be taken as the foundation for her being a cosmopolitan mother with little affection towards her children. Moor himself tells that his 'mother was no Nargis Dutt', 'she was in your-face type not serene' and 'was a city girl, perhaps the city girl as much the incarnation of the smartly boots metropolis as Mother India was village earth made flesh' (MLS 139). She marries a man from a different religion, defying even her uncle, Aires. Her spell on Abraham forces him to walk away from his mother and race and convert himself into a Christian. The desire for 'separate development' shoots up from her discovery of Abraham's extramarital affairs and his underworld

business. She ignores all these things as routine happenings and spends more time in her studio with her paintings. Her unsaid feelings are ventilated through her paintings. She gets entangled with, as pointed out by Uma, with Kekoo Mody (number one), Vasco Miranda (number two) and Mainduck (number three). There are reports in the novel that Moor might be an offspring of Aurora and Jawahar Lal Nehru.

Her downward 'separate development' takes place within the sheltered province of Abraham. She does not move out nor does Abraham. Unlike a typical virtuous Indian woman, she has a retaliating attitude and is quite dominating in the marital relationship. Abraham remains a 'colourless phantom hanging around the edges of tumultuous Aurora's court' (MLS 169). Though Aurora's great passion for her husband had cooled rapidly after Moor's birth, she submissively clings to him and the reason for which she is not unaware of: "Aurora was not unaware that her lavishness required maintenance, so that she was bound to Abie by her own needs. Sometimes she came close to admitting this, even to worrying that the scale of her spending, or the looseness of her tongue, might bring the house down." (MLS 170)

Abraham-Aurora relationship is closely related to the parable of the scorpion and the frog in which the scorpion, having hitched a ride across a stretch of water in return for a promise not to attack his mount, breaks his vow and administers a potent and fatal sting. The result is that both the frog and the scorpion, in other words, Abraham and Aurora, begin to drown with the murderer's apologies to the victim: "I couldn't help it ...It's in my nature." (MLS 170) Though she humiliates her husband, that he suffers without protest, she is well aware of her submissiveness and its cause, too:

Men in our part of the world! ... All are either peacocks or shabbies. But, even a peacock like my *mor* is as nothing compared to us ladies, who live – o in a blaze of glory. Look out for the shabbies, I say! They – tho are our jailers. They are the ones holding the cash-books and the keys to the gilded cage." (MLS 169-70)

Any prominent feature / characteristic, like 'Parasite', always calls up its apparent 'opposite'. It has no meaning without its counterpart. There is no parasite without its host (Miller 441-42), and so is there any element without fissured or fused counterpart in it. As both word and counterword subdivide and reveal themselves each to be fissured already within themselves (Miller 441), so are the other elements and their counterparts which is exemplified in the portrayal of Aurora: Her love and passion for Abraham result in a retaliating and dominating attitude towards him, the cause being his extramarital affairs and his underworld business. Her emboldened entanglement with other men, a sign of hatred and a subdivision of love, structures her counterpart behaviour of submissively clinging to her husband for her lavish maintenance and other reasons.

Her rapid swinging moods in her 'Olympian, immortal unconcern' (MLS 171), her confidence of her genius, her beauty as merciless as her tongue and as violent as her work, her hawk-swoops, and rococo riffs and her great set-piece ghazals of cursings, coated with her cheery stone-hard smile anaesthetizes her victims, ripping out their innards, and this is how Moor documents his experience with her: "(Ask me how it felt! I was her only son. The closer to the bull you work, the likelier you are to be gored.)" (MLS 171) She strides around her victims as 'an inebriated prophetess' (MLS 171) with her ego tiding high, as Moor records, Abraham is tougher than any frog, who in spite of her stinging habit does not drown. He never ceases to love her as fiercely as on the day of their first meeting: "...everything he did, he did for her. The greater, the more public her betrayals, the more overarching, and secret, grew his love." (MLS 170) This is more so because her abuses directed towards him in public are blotted with 'a diamond smile' that suggested she was only teasing and that her constant belittlements were concealers of adorations, too enormous to express: "... it was an ironising smile that sought to put her behaviour into quotes." (MLS 170) But this act of abusing, smiling and teasing was never completely convincing as she is often seen drinking and cursing everybody. All she does and she speaks is no fault of hers, but that has been transferred to her as an inherited property from

her mother, Belle: "*You will see, Aurora had said. From now on I am in her place.*" (MLS 171) In spite of all this, she is recorded as 'irresistible' probably because of her weakness of allowing her grief and pain so often come out as anger and later, permitting herself 'the luxury of letting rip' (MLS 177). She feels a huge rush of apologetic affection for the people she hurt in a way proving that all her 'good feelings could only swell up in her in the aftermath of a ruinous flood of bile'(MLS 177). This soft side of hers makes her irresistible - "... And we spent our lives living up, down and sideways to her predictions ... did I mention that she was irresistible?" (MLS 172) It is this quality of Aurora that makes Moor forgive her for all her follies and shortcomings. This quality of hers keeps the Aurora-Abraham bond alive. Even though they no longer sleep in the same bed, they look forward for each other's good opinion the most: "... my mother needed Abraham's approval as much as he longed for her." (MLS 172) This mutual understanding touches Moor and makes him forgive them both wholeheartedly for their follies. She remains, as Moor records, the 'light' of their lives, the 'excitement' of everybody's imaginations, and the 'beloved' of everyone's dreams: "We loved her even as she destroyed us. She called out of us a love that felt too big for our bodies, as if she had made the feeling and then given it to us to feel – as if it were a work." (MLS 172)

Aurora's passive nature can be felt when she puts on artistic clothes that looked unnatural upon her, to win Abraham's good opinion, but later, she asserts her secret identity, the voice of which came from Vasco Miranda. Initially, Aurora is dragged towards naturalism because the spirit of the age demanded it and her husband has a special preference towards it. Instead of meekly surrendering to the wishes of her husband, she analyses her inner voice, its likes and dislikes. Vasco reminds her of her instinctive dislike of the purely mimetic which had tried to turn her back towards the epic-fabulist manner, an expression of her true nature. As a result of this analysis, she decides to pay attention, once again, to her dreams and the dream-like wonder of the waking world. Finally, she takes Vasco's tips and makes Moor the centerpiece of her art. These bold changes in her feelings towards Abraham, the

darkening violence within her and her self-destructive gifts bewilder Abraham and those surround her. Yet, Abraham continues to be her 'uncomplaining protector' (MLS 182). He is always the first one to inspect her work and Aurora's saga of 'separate development' continues under Abraham's uncomplaining protection, but, Aurora boldly steps out at times from his protective zone to sort out issues. The danger of violence and fire-attack, the results of wrath ignited by her *The Kissing of Abbas Ali Baig* painting, is averted by her in a single telephonic conversation within half an hour, without Abraham's aid and without leaving *Elephanta*, her abode, though Moor records this victory of hers as defeat: " 'Wait on,' my mother told him. 'This little frog-face, I know how to fixify. Give me thirty ticks.' ... 'How much?' she asked. And Mainduck named his price." (MLS 233)

Aurora's dual nature of being bold and submissive allows her to play the dual roles of being a nurturer and a destroyer. The void she creates in Vasco, Abraham and Moor confirms this. After her death, Vasco and Abraham become recluses: "... they both sought to bury the pain of her loss beneath new activity, new enterprises, no matter how ill-conceived." (MLS 328) Therefore, the interplay of dualism in Aurora's persona is not only seen on both sides of the boundary line that separates these binary opposites, but also between inside and outside this boundary line. Aurora herself becomes the boundary itself, the screen which is at once a permeable membrane connecting inside and outside, confusing them with one another, allowing the outside in, making the inside out, dividing them but also forming an ambiguous transition between one and the other. (Miller 441) It becomes difficult to locate and assess her thoughts, actions and relationships with others as good or evil, villainous or heroic, desirable or undesirable, conventional or traditional, intentional or unintentional, destructive or constructive, masculine or feminine, etc.

The harsh and tougher side of Aurora is seen on surface in action when she commits the cold-blooded murder of her grandma, Epifania, by 'inaction' (MLS 64). When she reads Abraham's written document to surrender their first born male child to Flory (her mother-in-law) to be reared as 'a male Jew

of Cochin' (MLS 112), with a sense of justice as the maid of Belmont denied Shylock his bloody pound, Aurora commands Abraham to move out of her bedroom declaring with determination that there would be no children while Flory remained alive. Her unsaid grief and anger get expressed in her paintings and drawings:

... in the following months, however, her work- drawings, paintings, terrible little skewered dolls moulded in red clay – grew full of witches, fire, apocalypse. Later, she would destroy most of this 'Red' material, with the consequence that the surviving pieces have gained greatly in value ... (MLS 115)

When Abraham mewls piteously at her locked door and later, he tries to win her heart back with old love songs sung by a hired ballad-singer (and mouthed idiotically by himself), Aurora's terrorizing and romantic attack leaves him permanently with a limp. Her attack, throwing flowers first, the water from the flower-vase, next, and finally, the vase itself symbolizes her character and role. The flowers thrown represent her romantic peppery loving nature; the water reveals her role as a nurturer; and the vase, a heavy piece of stoneware reflects her role as a destroyer. This incident makes them both move in diverging paths where Abraham's misery and obeisance and Aurora's humiliations remain constant:

Misery was etched in every line of his face, misery dragged down the corners of his mouth and damaged his good looks. Aurora continued, contrastingly, to blossom. Genius was being born in her, filling the empty spaces in her bed, her heart, her womb. She needed no-one but herself. (MLS 116)

Though, Suchitra Awasthi dubs Aurora as 'not a typical virtuous Indian woman' (112), an indifferent mother, a subversion of a traditional Indian woman with 'the elements of ruthlessness, hatred and indifference' (111) and as a 'contrast to an all bearing Mother India' depicted by Mehboob Khan in his blockbuster *Mother India*, at times the counterpart features of an indifferent mother and woman emerge to the surface in different shades and forms. Her forecast of the future of her offspring is tinged with sympathy, love, grief and helplessness: "Poor kids are

such a bungle, seems like they are doomed to tumble.” (MLS 172) Her painting, *The Death of Chimene*, whose central figure is a female corpse tied to a wooden broom, after disinheritting Moor, is again a snapshot of a broken mother’s heart, all cluttered and frazzled out. The substitution of Moor’s metaphorical roles as ‘a unifier of opposites’ and ‘a standard bearer of pluralism’, a symbol of the new nation by his ‘semi-allegorical figure of decay’ (MLS 303) in Aurora’s paintings constituting the ‘*Moor in Exile*’ sequence, is a reflection of her inconsolable helplessness, dejected and broken self, mourning the loss her son, and her grief and pain taking the shape of anger:

Aurora had apparently decided that the ideas of impurity, cultural admixture and mélange which had been, for most of her creative life, the closest things she had found to a notion of the Good, were in fact capable of distortion, and contained a potential for darkness as well as for light. This ‘black Moor’ was a new imagining of the idea of the hybrid – a Baudelairean flower, it would not be too farfetched to suggest, of evil ... (MLS 303)

Her grief and pain that shoot up as anger, have their origin in her deep unexpressed love for her son and thus, creating a linear chain of unexpressed love, grief and pain, anger and hatred leading to the disinheritance of her son.

‘*The Portraits of Ayxa*’, a series of self-portraits by Aurora, is nothing but the exhalation of the anguished, magisterial, appallingly and unguarded self, engulfed in wild erotic despair, whose very immediate origin can be traced back from her son’s betrayal and the actual origin from her love for Moor: The paintings in the series of ‘*The Portraits of Ayxa*’ a phantom figure –Ayxa / Aurora – is often seen haunting Moor in garbage, which lays explicit her unsung and hidden love for Moor. The Ayxa / Aurora is hovered by faint translucent images of a woman and a man, whose faces are left blank, indicating her inability to cope up with her loss and defeat. (MLS 304) Here, submissive seclusion in her studio in painting the paintings of her grief and pain stands in direct contrast to her roles played in murdering Epifania by her deliberate ‘inaction’, averting all alone

the violence and disgrace her painting *The Kissing of Abbas Ali Baig* was expected to bring with just a phone call to Fielding, her public humiliations directed towards Abraham, her direct physical attack on Abraham with a vase causing permanent limp in him and her freaking out freely, at times to ‘eat some other khansama’s dish’ (MLS 177). Showering back of ‘humanity’ (MLS 315) on Moor in her last work, *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, is her showering of forgiveness and blessings on Moor, designating her quality for which she remains ‘irresistible’, and Moor records it thus after her death: “I never knew a stronger woman, nor one with a clearer sense of who and what she was, but she had been wounded ...” (MLS 315) This adorable quality is not to be found even in the role of the traditional Indian mother depicted by Mehboob Khan in his blockbuster *Mother India*. Bad Birju is not only cast out from his mother’s love but also shot dead by his mother in the movie, which gets her the image of an aggressive treacherous annihilating mother who haunts the fantasy life of Indian males. In contrast, Aurora submissively secludes herself and ventilates her revenge, anger, frustrations, wild erotic despair, defeat, etc. through the refreshing windows of her paintings and pieces of art, which are reevaluated and praised after her death. Absence of abstract harlequin and junkyard collage in her last work, *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, indicates her complete exhaustion of her wild erotic despair and anger. The portrayal of her son, lost in limbo like a wandering shade and soul in Hell and herself behind him, no longer in a separate panel, looking frightened and stretching out her hand reveal her absolute forgiveness and her longing to unite with her son. The reappearance of the tormented Sultan Boabdil, not as a berated figure, standing reunited with her and her son unveils all the counterpart qualities of an indifferent and ruthless mother, wife and human being. Thus, Aurora, as labeled by Suchitra Awasthi, is not a typical traditional Indian Mother or a *Bharathiya Nari*, one who bears everything, is loving, caring, all sacrificing for the sake of her family. The tags of being too daring, hateful, indifferent, uncaring, dominating, etc. do fit her personality at times, but not always. The presence of the counterparts of these tags cannot be denied on any grounds. Her paintings right from the days she

suckled baby Moor to her last painting called *The Moor's Last Sigh* depict the binary roles she plays in real life, the role of a nurturer and a destroyer by alternating her bold, daring and submissive nature:

It showed the truth about Aurora, her capacity for profound and selfless passion as well as her habit of self-aggrandisement; it revealed the magnificence, the grandeur of her falling-out with the world, and her determination to transcend and redeem its imperfections through art. Tragedy disguised as fantasy and rendered in the most beautiful, most heightened colour and light she could create: it was a mythomaniac gem. She called it *A Light to Lighten the Darkness*. (MLS 220)

Aurora's sense of justice in exhibiting love and hatred and punishing her beloved victims, dazzling beauty, diamond-smile, ability to handle moments of crisis all alone, artistic genius for which she is given state funeral, quality of recoiling back for patch-ups, art of handling men and women in self-defense and above all her ability to forgive, expressed indirectly in her last painting, make her dazzle like a bright star even after her death:

My mother Aurora Zogoiby was too bright a star; look at her too hard and you'd be blinded. Even now, in the memory, she dazzles, must be circled about and about. We may perceive her indirectly, in her effects on others- her bending of other people's light, her gravitational pull which denied us all hope of escape, the decaying orbits of those too weak to withstand her, who fell towards her sun and its consuming fires. (MLS 136)

Her roles as a nurturer and as a destroyer and her image as a refuge and escape are equally cherished and appreciated by her near and dear ones:

If she trampled over us, it was because we lay down willingly beneath her spurred – and – booted feet; if she excoriated us at night, it was on account of our delight at the sweet lashings of her tongue. It was when I finally realized this that I forgave my father; for we were all her slaves, and she made our

servitude feel like Paradise. Which is, they say, what goddesses can do. (MLS 172)

These dual roles of hers and their inter-relations form a triangle, not a polar opposition. There is always a third to whom the two are related, something before them or between them, which they divide, consume, or exchange, across which they meet (Miller 444) to create a nurturing destroyer or a destroying nurturer and to provide an escaping refuge or a refuge in escape. Aurora as a nurturing destroyer or a destroying nurturer neither sheds the qualities of a nurturer nor a destroyer. Similarly, she in the process of providing an escaping refuge or a refuge in escape sheds neither of these roles, with an ambiguous division / consummation / exchange of characteristics of these polar opposite roles when they confront each other. As such, it becomes impossible to categorize Aurora as a nurturer or a destroyer and as the one providing refuge or escape. All her perfections and imperfections - her capacity to love and hate, forgive and punish, smile, tease and humiliate, etc. – fuse, defuse and sometimes propagate parallelly to overlap randomly later, making it difficult to categorize the characteristics of Aurora.

The way Aurora takes the place of her mother, Belle, after her death, leaves her family and the staff of the household in Cabral Island open-mouthed in wonder as if they had seen her mother's living ghost. The bold and the aggressive side of Aurora make entry only when there is a kind of injustice in the air. This is evident in her confession of her deed in a high ascending shriek – "... it-was'nt-them-it-was-Me." (MLS 58) - when the staff of the household is tortured by Aires to solve the riddle of lost ivory-tusks and Ganeshas. She comes running to confess her deed and her guilt fills her with shame and makes her incapable of meeting the eyes of the assembled staff. But, she faces the assembled members of her family, including the impassive Epifania with her head held high and an assertive voice:

'Don't call me baby,' she answered, defying even him. 'It is what my mother always wanted to do. You will see: from now I am in her place. And Aires – uncle, you should lock up that crazy dog, by the way, I've got a pet-name for him that he really deserves: call

him *Jaw-jaw*, that all-bark-no-bite mutt.’
(MLS 58)

She welcomes her punishment and banishment, once she establishes herself as a reincarnation of her dead mother’s ghost, as the true moment to make public her inner-self. She becomes a doting figure among the domestic servants after saving them from Aires’s interrogation, who smuggle all the delicious items out the kitchen for her along with her favourite instruments – charcoal, brushes, paints, etc. She decides to endure her sentence of room arrest for a week by herself. Even her ex-jailbird father who could not fight to keep his daughter out of the lock-up, hangs his head and obeys her command of keeping away from her premises during punishment. But, she recoils back with love to her father, possessing the same force and intensity which she shows in her anger and hatred towards him while enduring the punishment. Her dual nature is explicit in confronting her family members boldly and later, accepting the punishment of room arrest without making any protest. She invites her father, Camoens, at the end of the period of house arrest, to view her art on the walls and ceilings of her room. Even the seeping black lines drawn by her reflect her inner rebellious nature: each and every figure drawn in sweeping black lines transformed themselves constantly; the lines drawn were muscular and free, teeming and violent; the earth was red; the sky was in purple and vermilion; there were huge blocks of colour that filled the figures; forty different shades of green could be seen; and the figures drawn were human as well as animal, real and imaginary.

Her painting parodying the scene of Last Supper in which the family servants carouse wildly at the dining table while their raggedy ancestors stare down from the portraits on the wall and the da Gamas serving as waiters, being treated badly, reflects her soft and rebellious nature, softness directed towards the oppressed and the rebellion against the oppressors. Similar is her painting of Taj Mahal in which she unflinchingly shows its mutilated masons. Each and every line she draws echoes endlessly that the metamorphic line of humanity was the truth. On the whole, her paintings record the rage of the women, the tormented weakness and compromise in the faces of the children and the

passive uncomplaining faces of the dead. All the inputs of world’s anger, pain, disappointment and little of its delight, at a tender age, are downloaded into her painting canvasses which give room for a silent conversation between her and her father: “...when you have learned joy, he wanted to say, then only then your gift will be complete, but she knew so much already that it scared the words away and he did not dare to speak.” (MLS 60)

Aurora’s nature that is soft but assertive, that is bold and submissive, that has the capacity of loving and hating with the same intensity, which swings between parting away and recoiling with the same speed for patch-up and that consists of punishing, abusing, cursing, hurting, and finally, reconciling, forgiving and reuniting, too, conquers everyone. These peculiar qualities are seen in the depiction of Mother India, in her room walls and ceilings: Her vision of Mother India is seen with her garishness and her inexhaustible motion; she is portrayed as capable of both loving and betraying, nurturing and destroying; her conjoining and eternal quarrel with her children, whom she loves, is shown stretched long beyond the grave; her stretch over the mountains looks like exclamations of the souls; the rivers over which she stretches is full of mercy and disease; some of the lands are infertile and drought ridden and some are shown with oceans, water-wells, coco-palms and rice fields; and her birds exhibit brutality as well as sweetness. Aurora’s Mother India, on the whole, is the one who could be monstrous, a worm rising from the sea, turn murderous, dance with cross-eyed and Kali-tongued while thousand died. The absence of any God, Christ, angel, saint or other divinity in the landscape of her drawing shows her aggressive rebellious hues of her personality. The presence of Mother India with her mother, Belle’s face in the very centre of the ceiling at the point where all the horns of all lines drawn converged, depicts the softer side of hers – longing for her dead mother’s love and her capacity to shower motherly love on others, in other words, her capacity to love and to be loved:

Queen Isabella was the only mother goddess here and she was dead: at the heart of this first immense outpouring of Aurora’s art was the simple tragedy of her loss, the

unassuaged pain of becoming a motherless child. The room was her act of mourning. (MLS 61)

Aurora allows Uncle Aires and Carmen to stay in Cabral Island forgetting their past harsh behaviours. After Carmen's death, Uncle Aires is given shelter at *Elephanta* and later, is buried next to Carmen in Cabral Island by Aurora. She takes pity on him and sets aside all the old family resentments. She provides him the most lavish guest room, softest mattress and quilt and the best view of the sea. Aurora's feelings during the funeral service – "But her heart wasn't in it. The quarrels of the past were long forgotten." (MLS 203) – offer a loud cry against Suchitra Awasthi's stamp on Aurora of being the complete subversion of the typical traditional Indian woman. This act of Aurora, her capacity to forgive and embrace the present, inherited from her mother, Belle, is a replay of earlier act of forgiving Abraham, after Flory's death. The play of counterparts in Aurora's characterization and their inter-relations in question form a chain, 'that strange sort of chain without beginning or end in which no commanding element (origin, goal, or underlying principle) may be identified, but in which there is always something earlier or something later to which any part of the chain on which one focuses refers and which keeps the chain open, undecidable'. (Miller 444) Aurora's characterization, instead of having blocks of air-tight compartments with fixed and stagnant elements, forms a chain: She is bold and aggressive in her confession; she is humble, yet inwardly strong in embracing her punishment; she is assertive and bold in facing and sometimes, in defying her family members, but, a doting figure among her domestic servants; the lines in her paintings reflect her inner strength which is muscular, free, teeming and violent (a pack of overlapping elements); she is soft towards the oppressed and rebellious towards the oppressors; she longs to be loved and is also capable of loving; she defies the presence of God, but longs for motherly love; she is not a complete subversion of the typical traditional Indian woman, yet not a complete typical traditional Indian woman; and she is the one who can accept punishments humbly, denounce punishments by forgiving and pronounce punishments by her sense of justice and rage. This

chain of counterparts does not stop here. It is ever ready to accept many more such counterparts, and therefore, remains undecided and unconcluded. This is more so, because Aurora's contribution to the chain continues even after her death till the end of the novel. Nothing in the chain suggests her predominant nature and nothing in the chain suggests the voids in her personality, making it impossible to pass any solid assessment.

Aurora's bold and rebellious nature supplements rigidity, masculinity and novelty to her feminine existence. Her submissive and ever forgiving nature supplements a touch of softness, flexibility and traditionalism to her urbanized existence in Bombay. Her role, as a nurturer, supplements positive connotations, whereas her part, as a destroyer, supplements negative connotations to her personality. Her capacity to provide refuge supplements magnificence and grandeur, whereas her potential to provide escape supplements a heroic stroke to her personality. Her aptitude to love, help and forgive, and her capacity to abuse, rebel and punish defer each other constantly in her, making her a prolific domain of uncanny antithetical elements. The interplay of dualities in Aurora typically exemplifies the creative construction of the 'new woman' – undoubtedly resourceful, resilient and at times ruthless, monstrous, men-harming and unpredictably witch-like demonstrating 'gratuitous violence', attacking 'for some reason' (Weikgenannt 78) and making her aggression look rational, reciprocal and manageable.

Aurora, in spite of her artistic genius and beauty finds it difficult to survive without any male support. She marries Abraham, the manager of her ancestral property, to take care of her, her property and provide shelter, though she harbours love for him at the bottom her heart. It is under his uncomplaining protection, she continues to pour her rebelliousness and anger over her limited existence into her paintings, even after she comes to know about Abraham's extra-marital affairs and his underground illegal business dealings. Her anger over this and her inability to step out from Abraham's protective zone become the cause of the interplay of dualities in her personalities. At times, her independent spirit peeps out for a while, but, she passively recoils back to her

studio and expresses her suppressed feelings in her paintings. The cause of her murder at the hands of her husband could be assumed to be his jealousy over her popularity or her unbridled independent spirit that peeps out of her then and there. Therefore, Aurora's attempts to resist the patriarchal oppression become the cause of her dual nature.

Each of the dual aspects in Aurora Zogoiby namely, boldness-submissiveness, good-evil, love-hatred, the monstrous and the angelic, motherliness-unmotherliness, etc., like a membrane divides inside from outside. This division, passing through 'a hymeneal bond' and 'an osmotic mixing' (Miller 443), results in formation of a 'new woman' (Weikgenannt 67), who is a source of life and death, a devilish angel, an angelic devil, a motherly mother, an unmotherly mother, a joyful sorrow, a sorrowful joy, a pleasurable suffering, a suffering pleasure, a destroying nurturer, a nurturing destroyer, an epitome of refuge, shelter and escape, destroying one's identity, a tuner / toner of destiny being also the controller / capturer of one's destiny, a Snake in the form of a Ladder, a Ladder in the form of a Snake, lovingly constructive, lovingly destructive, lovingly revengeful, revengefully lovable, shamelessly shameful, shamefully shameless, powerlessly powerful, powerfully powerless, lovingly humiliating, humiliating lovingly, lovable but violent, harmlessly harmful, harmfully harmless, and so on. Aurora Zogoiby, thus, clearly exemplifies Paul Tillich's statement – "The negative lives from the positive it negates." (Tillich 946) She is invoked to raise voice against social injustices and inequities, and then effectively demeaned later. She becomes the word 'Woman' that carries endless burdens and broad-backed dirt with it. She constitutes the destiny, as inferred by the psychoanalysts, allotted to her through the conflicts between her masculine and feminine tendencies, resulting in her virility when she asserts her independence. She is undoubtedly resourceful, resilient and at times ruthless, monstrous, 'men-harming' and unpredictably witch-like demonstrating 'gratuitous violence', attacking 'for some reason' and making her aggression look rational, reciprocal and manageable, as mentioned by Ajay Skaria in "Women, Witchcraft and Gratuitous Violence in Colonial Western India". (Weikgenannt

78) She constitutes the powerless group because of the meaning her activities acquire through concrete social interactions. She constitutes the 'made woman' group, at times, trying to un-make herself to have 'separate development' (Minh-Ha 246-47) and then, re-make herself, to once again, fit into her traditional moulds. She is sexually over-determined, driven frenzy and to nullity on the other hand, with her erotic needs. She is dispersed among the males, having no past, no history, and no religion of her own. As Beauvoir views, she is not born, but rather forced to become a woman. She is trapped between the two extremes of the Devi and the Devil. The concept of 'a made woman' crowns her, and her self-erasure in her attempts of trying to 'unsay' (Minh-Ha 246-47) can be attributed to the cause of changes in her roles. She is dehumanized, removed with force from her position, relocated, re-educated, redefined, and humiliated by having to face the necessity to force herself to falsify her reality and voice by trying to 'unsay' it. She is forced to dwell in a position of you 'will be said' (Minh-Ha 246-47) when she tries to say something.

As a result of interplay of dualities, Aurora Zogoiby in *The Moor's Last Sigh* emerges as a new category – 'new woman'. The configuration of this 'new woman' becomes a potpourri of binary opposites, preparing a stage for duets and a combat ring for duels of these binary opposites. This play of dualities in the hands of Rushdie receives a scintillating effect as they are not confined to their respective spheres when they are in operation, instead each one of the binary opposite pairs, set in action, serves a purpose, and therefore, they create triangles, not mere polar oppositions. A third sphere is created in the emergence of a different woman in the hands of Rushdie which is related to both the elements in the pair, taking positions sometimes before them or between them as they divide, consume and exchange across when they meet. Therefore, it would be appropriate to conclude about Aurora Zogoiby of *The Moor's Last Sigh* with Weigel's statement that there is a strong sense of subordination with regard to even the strongest woman. (11)

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