

'THE FREE RADIO' BY S.RUSHDIE

TEACHING MATERIAL

By A.Rahaman

INTRODUCTION:

- 1.SALMAN RUSHDIE IS A BRITISH-INDIAN NOVELIST.**
- 2.BORN ON 9TH JUNE 1947 IN BOMBAY,INDIA.**
- 3. CITIZENSHIP- UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES**
- 4. IMPRTANT WORKS- MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN(1981), SHAME(1983) THE SATANIC VERSES(1988). THESE ARE ALL FICTIONS. HE WON BOOKER PRIZE IN 1981 FOR HIS MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN.**

OTHER WORKS-

EAST, WEST(1994), THE MOOR'S LAST SIGH, THE GROUND BENEATH HER FEET.

ABOUT THE STORY:

- 1.FIRST APPEARED IN RUSHDIE'S SHORT-STORY COLLECTION'EAST WEST'.**
- 2.THE COLLECTION WAS FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1994.**
- 3. THE STORY TALKS ABOUT THE SELF-DECEPTION AND DELUSION OF THE POOR CLASS.**
- 4.THE STORY CAPTURES THE 1975 EMERGENCY PERIOD IN INDIA WHEN THE GOVERNMENT INTRODUCED FORCED STERILIZATION PROGRAMME TO CONTROL POULATION IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST.**
- 5. THEME OF OPPRESSION- THE STATE OF EMERGENCY WAS A DARK PERIOD IN INDIAN POLITICAL HISTORY. DURING THE EMERGENCY THE GOVT. INTRODUCED VASECTOMYOR NASBANDI AND IT WAS TARGETED AT POOR PEOPLE LIKE**

RAMANI WHO COULD NOT UNDERSTAND THE DEPTH OF IT AND INSTEAD WELCOMED IT.

5.THE FREE RADIO TELLS THE STORY OF A YOUNG RICKSHAW DRIVER RAMANI WHO UNDERGOES GOVERNMENT 'S FORCED STERILIZATION PROGRAMME.

6.THE STOREY ALSO REFLECTS THE GENDER BIAS OF 21ST CENTURY RURAL INDIA.

CHARACTERS:

1.RAMANI- A RICKSHAW PULLER. HE IS THE PROTAGONIST.HE FELL IN LOVE WITH THE THIEF'S WIDOW AND LATER MARRIES HER.

2. THE THIEF'S WIDOW- A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, TEN YEARS OLDER THAN RAMANI. THE NARRATOR, COLOURED BY SEXISM OF HIS TIME, INTRODUCES THE WIDOW AS A DESTRUCTIVE FORCE. SHE IS CONDEMNED SIMPLY BCOZ OF HER STATUS AS A SELF-SUFFICIENT WOMAN. THIS SHOWS THE HANDICAPPED MENTALITY OF THE SOCIETY. ALSO SHE HAS NOT BEEN NAMED. THIS FURTHER SHOWS HER IDENTITY CRISIS. THE WIDOW IS ONLY DEFINED BY HER DISREPUTABLE DEAD HUSBAND

3.THE NARRATOR- AN OLD RETIRED TEACHER. THE NARRATOR IS UNRELIABLE. HE NARRATES MOST OF THE INCIDENTS BASED ON GOSSIP. A POSTMODERN TRAIT.

THE NARRATOR SAFEGUARDS THE CONVENTIONAL MORALITY BY FROWNING ON THE FACT THAT RAMANI AND THE WIDOW ARE SEEN IN PUBLIC.

PLOT OVERVIEW

THE NARRATOR TELLS THE STORY OF RAMANI WHO IS YOUNG, GOOD-LOOKING. HE RIDES A RICKSHAW THAT HE

INHERITED FROM HIS FATHER. HE IS SEDUCED BY A THIEF'S WIDOW. THE NARRATOR DISAPPROVES OF HIS RELATIONSHIP. THE NARRATOR HAS A VESTED INTEREST IN SNATCHING RAMANI OUT OF THE WIDOW'S CLUTCHES, BCOZ HE USED TO KNOW RAMANI'S PARENTS.

THE NARRATOR DESCRIBES THE WIDOW AS ATTRACTIVE AND VICIOUS. SHE IS TEN YEARS OLDER THAN RAMANI AND HAS FIVE CHILDREN FROM HER PREVIOUS MARRIAGE. WE COME TO KNOW ABOUT HER FROM THE NARRATOR'S POINT OF VIEW. SHE IS POOR AS THE THIEF DID NOT LEAVE HER ANY MONEY.

THE NARRATOR TELLS THE STORY OF HOW RAMANI AND THE THIEF'S WIDOW GOT MARRIED. THE NARRATOR INSINUATES THAT THE THIEF'S WIDOW IS A PROSTITUTE.

ONE DAY THE THIEF'S WIDOW WITH HER CHILDREN CATCHES RAMANI'S RICKLAW FOR A RIDE. AFTER THAT THEY BECAME INTIMATE AND WERE SEEN EVERYWHERE IN PUBLIC. THE NARRATOR TRIES TO PERSUADE RAMANI TO STAY AWAY FROM THE WIDOW BUT IN VAIN.

RAMANI ALSO CAME INTO CONTACT WITH SOME FRIENDS WITH WHOM HE WOULD DRINK LIQUOR IN THE BACK OF IRANI'S CANTEEN. THIS TIME ALSO THE NARRATOR TRIED TO DISSUADE HIM FROM EVIL COMPANY BUT IN VAIN. THE NARRATOR DOES NOT LIKE RAMANI'S FRIENDS. THEY WERE THE ARMBANDS OF NEW YOUTH MOVEMENT. AT THAT TIME THE STATE OF EMERGENCY WAS CONTINUING. THOUGH RAMANI WORE NO ARMBAND, HE WAS ALWAYS WITH THEM BECAUSE THEY IMPRESSED HIM. THEY ALWAYS FLATTERED RAMANI BY TELLING HIM THAT HE IS SUCH A HANDSOME MAN WHO CAN BE COMPARED TO ACTORS LIKE SASHI KAPOOR AND AMITABH AND HE SHOULD GO TO BOMBAY AND INVEST HIS CAREER IN THE FILM INDUSTRY. THEY FLATTERED HIM WITH DREAMS BCOZ THEY KNEW THEY COULD TAKE MONEY FROM HIM AT CARDS AND BUY DRINKS AT HIS EXPENSE. THE WIDOW COULD HAVE

STOPPED HIM BUT SHE ALSO ONCE FLATTERED HIM SAYING THAT HE LOOKED LIKE LORD KRISHNA . SHE DID SO SO THAT EVERYONE COULD KNOW THAT THEY WERE LOVERS. FROM THAT DAY THE NARRATOR WAS SURE ABOUT RAMANI'S IMPENDING DISASTER.

THERE ARE MORE INTERESTING THINGS HAPPENING IN TOWN. THE LOCAL HEALTH OFFICER HAS PARKED A WHITE CARAVAN IN THE STREET. THE VEHICLE GUARDED BY THE ARMBAND YOUTHS IS USED FOR STERILISING MEN. AT THIS RAMANI STARTS DREAMING ABOUT RECEIVING A TRANSISTOR RADIO AS A GIFT FROM THE CENTRAL GOVT. IN LIEU OF BEING STERILISED.

SOON AFTER, RAMANI AND THE WIDOW GOT MARRIED. THE NARRATOR WANTS TO KNOW IF RAMANI HAS BEEN TO THE CARAVAN. RAMANI IMPLIES THAT HE HAD BEEN BCOZ HE IS IN LOVE WITH THE WIDOW. RAMANI ALSO ADDS THAT HIS FREE RADIO IS SURE TO ARRIVE SHORTLY AS A THANK YOU GIFT FROM THE GOVT.

AFTER THAT , THE WIDOW IS SEEN RARELY IN THE TOWN. RAMANI, ON THE OTHER HAND, STARTS WORKING MORE. EVERYTIME HE RIDES THROUGH TOWN, HE PUTS HIS HAND UPTO HIS EAR AND MIMICS RADIO BROADCASTS. THE COMMUNITY IS ALMOST BEFOOLED INTO THINKING THAT RAMANI HAS THE REAL THING.

RAMANI CONTINUES TO CARRY AN INVISIBLE RADIO. THE NARRATOR SAYS THAT RAMANI HAD POURED INTO THE IDEA OF THE RADIO ALL HIS WORRIES. THE NARRATOR REGRETS THAT IF THE DREAM WERE TO DIE, HE WOULD BE FORCED TO FACE THE FULL GRAVITY OF HIS CRIME AGAINST HIS OWN BODY

THE WHITE CARAVAN IS BACK IN TOWN ONCE AGAIN. RAMANI WAITS A FEW DAYS HOPING THAT THE GOVT. OFFICIALS WILL BRING HIM THE RADIO. ON THE THIRD DAY

HE RIDES TO THE CARAVAN WITH THE WIDOW AND SEES HIS DREAM OF HAVING THE RADIO GETTING SHATTERED. RAMANI, VISIBLY BEATEN, IS MARCHED OUT OF THE CARAVAN BY HIS ARMBAND FRIENDS.

ONE DAY RAMANI SELLS HIS RICKSGHAW AND TELLS THE NARRATOR THAT HE AND HIS FAMILY ARE LEAVING FOR BOMBAY TO FULFIL HIS DREAM OF BECOMING A FILMSTAR.

AFTER A FEW MONTHS THE NARRATOR RECIVES LETTERS FROM RAMANI FILLED WITH STORIES ABOUT RAMANI'S NEW FOUND LIFE- HIS EXCELKLENT LIFE OF A RICH FILM STAR.