

## **The Political Background of Rushdie's 'The Free Radio'**

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The short story *The Free Radio* insinuates on the mass sterilization mission undertaken by Sanjay Gandhi in 1976. The mission aimed to forcefully sterilize men as a means to control the population. During this time Emergency was imposed upon the nation by the then Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi. No one could question the power and authority of Sanjay Gandhi. This drive of mass sterilization was effected massively in the rural areas. Men got scared and were afraid to come out of their homes and avoided government officials. At first the government had lured the people in doing this by promising them a radio upon the successful completion of this task. However the promises soon dried up and they were left with a nought.

In this story, Ramani felt lured by the reward of a 'free radio', and had been hopeful of getting this at some point of time in his life. However, he soon realises that he was cheated by the government officials. Though he didn't admit it to the narrator at the end, it was understood that he was left unfulfilled.

In the story there are insinuations of this mass sterilization program. The van which was parked in the market area, with mysterious looking men hovering around it suggests that this campaign was already in the way. The story is a critique of the political ambience of fear and anxiety that reigned in those times. It is an anecdote of hope, betrayal and how a generation of people wasted their lives in the futile waiting of getting a radio from the government for their forced sterilization.