

## **I. Communion of East and West in *East, West***

Salman Rushdie's *East, West* (2002) is an anthology of stories of people and places from around the world. There are trans-border characters that mingle with each other and thereby help to reduce the gap of supremacy of West over the East. The West which generally projects self as the center of civilization finds its presence in the East, and in turn the East is finding a meaning presence in the West. The characters in the anthology are of multi creed and race, religion and belief, language and sect and of cultural nuances. However, the movement of people from the East to the West, and vice-versa has dismantled the cultural nuances.

Culture is a pattern of behavior and thinking that people living in social groups learn, create, and share. It is one of the most important aspects that distinguish one human group from others. It also separates humans from other animals and other species. A group of people's culture includes their beliefs, rules of behavior, language, rituals, art, technology, styles of dress, ways of producing and cooking food, religion, and political and economic systems. However, there is a lot of difference existing in cultural pattern and its practice among the people of various societies and communities around the world.

Cultural difference suggests that cultural authority resides not in a series of fix and determined diverse objects but in the process of how these objects create their existence.

Homi K. Bhabha in *Location of Culture* explains the scenario, as:

This process of coming to be known is what brings into being and discriminates between the various 'statements of culture or on culture and which gives authority to the production of the fields of references by which

we order them. By stressing the process by which we know and can know cultures as totalities, the term cultural difference emphasizes our awareness of the homogenizing effects of cultural symbols and icons and places the emphasis on a questioning attitude towards the authority of cultural synthesis in general. (20)

The difference Bhabha emphasizes here is clearly connected with the radical ambivalence that he argues is implicit in all colonial discourses. He insists that this same ambivalence is implicit in the act of cultural interpretation. The production of meaning in the relations of two systems requires a third space. This space is something like the idea of deferral in post-structuralism that believes in creating a new world of its own by dismantling or rejecting the existing hegemony. The trend of rejecting the old or the existing one is to create a new one, in the place.

Culture, according to *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* is derived from Latin *cultura* which in turn comes from *colere* meaning to cultivate. It generally refers to patterns of human activity and the symbolic structures that give such activities significance and importance. Cultures can be understood as systems of symbols and meanings that even their creator's contest, that lack fixed boundaries, that are constantly in flux, and that interact and compete with one another.

Culture can be defined as all the ways of life including arts, beliefs and institutions passed down from generation to generation. Culture has been called the way of life for an entire society. As such, it includes codes of manners, dress, language, religion, rituals, norms of behavior such as law and morality, and systems of belief as well as the art.

Bhabha further opines that culture is one of tools to understand the mannerism and sense of life and living of people. This idea of culture is universal in manner, which according to Bhabha is:

Cultural anthropologists most commonly use the term 'culture' to refer to the universal human capacity and activities to classify, codify and communicate their experiences materially and symbolically to people of similar nature and belief. Scholars have long viewed this capacity as a defining feature of humans. (97)

This notion some primatologists have identified as aspects of culture such as a learned man's tool for the use and separation of humankind's closest relatives in the animal kingdom.

In Eastern philosophy, culture involves religion as the primary concern. As such, most of the Eastern culture is influenced of religious philosophy. Both, philosophy and religion have been an adherent part of the culture. But, in West religion, culture has less influence over it. It is made up of religious values; however, people are far more detached to religious philosophy, in West in concern to influence of culture. This has dominantly presented in Rushdie's present collection of stories.

*East, West* is a collection of short stories published basically in West based magazines and journals. The compilation takes on the plot of various stories from the Eastern communities, basically from the rural backdrops of India; and then moves on to Western cities and nations. The stories cover the plot from Indian cities to Ontario, Canada and to London, and back to the suburbs of Indian cosmopolitan cities. In the process, *East,*

*West* bridges the socio-economic and cultural gap between the people living in either parts of the globe – East and West.

Culture is composed of signs and symbols that acquire meaning through their difference from other signs and thus a culture may be identified by its difference from other cultures. The difference in culture is also deferred, a duality that is defined in a new space. The space can be compared to this space of deferral and possibility. Thus a culture's difference is never simple and static but ambivalent, changing, and always open to further possible interpretation. In short, this is the space of hybridity itself, the space in which cultural meanings and identities always contain the traces of other meanings and identities. Therefore, Bhabha argues, "Claims to inherent originality or purity of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their Hybridity" (37).

Culture shapes human behavior and helps people guide their action. It surprisingly gives the individuals their identity. Moreover the hunger of culture brings about identity crisis in the lives of individuals as they cannot assimilate to new culture. Regarding this, a prominent critic, Edward Said writes, "culture with its superior position has the power to authorize, to dominate, to legitimate, denote, interdict and validate" (The World 9). Thus, the superiority of a specific culture dominates individuals as they feel inferiority of their own culture. When someone nurtured in one culture is placed in another they face cultural dislocation and alienation and the resultant reactions may be anger, frustration, fear, curiosity, fascination, hatred or confusion. It arises in mass when there are people crossing national borders and moving into alien land for settlement or business. This scenario gives rise to a condition, popular in literary scenario, as Diaspora.

In the 1980s, theories saw colonial discourse as this field of study. The best known colonial discourse theorists are Said and Homi Bhabha, whose analysis posited certain disabling contradictions within colonial relationships, such as hybridity, ambivalence and mimicry, which revealed the inherent vulnerability of colonial discourse.

Characters in *East, West* are grounded in social and ethical happenings of the Eastern part of the globe. However, they move as far as to the far end of all parts of the world. His stories depict characters who are obsessed from a minor 'radio' to 'slipper' and 'spheres' – a religious bead. Rushdie exposes the different ground for ideas and mannerisms depicting the varying social and cultural milieu of the people from the separate parts of the world – East and West that helps in bridging 'cultural differences' that separates people of the globe.

In the nineteenth century, humanists such as English poet and essayist Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) used the word "culture" to refer to an ideal of individual human refinement, of "the best that has been thought and said in the world" (4). This concept of culture is comparable to the German concept of Bildung: ". . . culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world" (4).

Although many earlier civilizations had colonies, and although they perceived their relations with them to be one of that central imperium in relation to a periphery of provincial, marginal and barbarian cultures, a number of crucial factors entered into the construction of the post- renaissance practices of imperialism; Edward Said offers the following distinction for culture and imperialism, "Imperialism means the practice the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory;

colonialism, which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory” (8).

People of East follow different mannerism, norms and values different to that of the West. It is a common phenomenon because of geography, location and political and economic set up of the people of the certain place. The West claims itself to be better in these aspects. Here, West indicates to the developed first world nations, including the United States, the Great Britain and other European nations. The way of behavioral approach followed by the people of the West, is obviously different to that of the people of the East. The Easterners are inclined to the West not only because they are more developed, but also due to the fact that they have advertised their culture and commodity in the Eastern market more than necessary.

And it is a fact that the Eastern people are still struggling for basic availability of infrastructures to make their life easier and healthier. Besides, the level of awareness is not according to the West prescribed model, which makes ground the West to claim themselves as superior to the East and its people.

M. Madhusudan Rao, one of the contemporary critics of Rushdie is of the opinion that Rushdie’s *East, West* gaps the so-called bridge that exists between the East and the West. He opines:

There is nothing like a consistent theme in *East, West*. There are signs, however, of certain key ideas shaping up, of a perspective developing in his writing, which ultimately collect for a larger whole. However, Rushdie revives the Indian tradition of story writings, as in *The Mahabharata*, *The*

*Panchatantra* and thereby claim the coming of Indian form of writings in the Western world. (31)

The rhetoric of the novel covers larger features of South Asian nationalities reviving the ways of storytelling like that of the ancient Hindu epics.

Commenting further on the anthology, Rao feels that time is an important factor in the anthology of Rushdie. He writes, “The narratives in the collection move from victimizing history to painful anonymity and disintegration, and finally silence” (23). Rao is justified in saying so because Rushdie presents all the major events related to the rise of conflict from communal to global agenda dominant from pre independence to post independence era.

*East, West* traces a model nation where different cultures and people are treated equally. He establishes an idea of multicultural nation by depicting East, West in the canvas of harmony. Rushdie, developing his idea about nation, views that a nation is not a concrete entity within certain geographical boundaries; rather it is an imaginary construction. Same is the case of identity. It is not stable rather keep on changing due to the shifting locality. The collection of stories *East, West* manages to capture the pain and angst of Diasporas people are cured by treating them equally.

Rushdie’s writings have been challenged by the radical forces of Islamists and in the process. However, Rushdie continues writing to build a new world order. He disagrees with any such reclusive theories of which the very title speaks of the quality life and ethics. In fact, it is obvious from his writings, that he took the decree as a humor as no place in the world is safe. According to M. Madhusudhan Rao, Rushdie exposes the fear of living in world without hiding place. Commenting on modern insecurity, Rushdie writes:

We live in a world without hiding places, the missiles have made sure of that. However much we may wish to return to the womb, we cannot be unborn. So we are left with a fairly straightforward choice. Either we agree to delude ourselves, to lose ourselves in the fantasy of the great fish, for which a second metaphor is that of Pan gloss's garden; or we can do what all human beings do instinctively when they realize that the womb has been lost forever-that is, we can make the very devil of a racket where Orwell wished quietism, let there be Rowdyism. (99)

Therefore, it is not surprising to find politics almost always drawn into literature. This is important to note that in "In Good Faith", another story from the collection, Rushdie speaks of the novelist's right to write as he pleases: "A book is a version of the world. If you do not like it, ignore it; or offer your own version" (412).

The storyline of the novel moves to and fro, from the Eastern part of the world to Europe, and to the U.S., from the communal to global issue. At the same time the novel paints a picture of turmoil present in the world. In fact, the reality is no part of the world today is free from disturbances of one or other nature.

There is a connection between the antics of "East" and "West" of *East, West* that Rushdie exhibits as regards his relationship with Islam, politics, and the West. He seems largely liberal on presenting his ideas in section "East," "West" and "East, West" in the respective section of the text. Commenting on his universality of treating texts above religion and community Eric Spanberg in *Science Christian Monitor* writes:

Besides being a phenomenally gifted writer of fiction and criticism, Rushdie is also a political novelist, an early veteran of the current clash between Islam



and the West and Eastern ethics to that of the Western ethics. His special relation with multiplicity of ideas of the East and West of its residence in the Western metropolis, has made him a public figure that is constantly sought after by the media to comment on the political development or the so-called terrorist crises. (14)

On a more artistic plane too, he is asked to comment on the elusive connections between the art of the novel and the art of the orator, demagogue, and the rhetoric of the Western power houses. As such, all these factors give rise to a Diasporic situation which helps in reducing the gap between the societies of East and West and of varying cultures.

In literary understanding, Diaspora is scattering of people, language and their ideas, largely due to migration. Dispersion of people, their language and culture will ultimately give rise to the hybrid culture, a concept that Rushdie presents in *East, West*. Through these tools, Rushdie depicts the coming of the West to the East and vice-versa and in turn it is helping to bridge the cultural gaps existing among people in Eastern and Western part of the world.

The position of the migrant writer and the discourse of those who write conscious of spatial, temporal and linguist alienation from their native land have come to occupy an important place in literary and cultural studies. One of the principal exponents of this discourse is Rushdie himself, a product of the postcolonial and Diasporic condition. He comes from a dualistic background, born in India and later moved to Pakistan, and finally to London. This Diaspora is visible in his writings. His literary and critical endeavors are recurring meditation on the plight of those who like himself, have had to deal with the change and continuity, strangers and familiarity,

characteristics of our increasingly complex, multicultural world. Multiplicity of thematic pattern and skilful presentation of different cultures without prejudices clearly depicts his commitment to multicultural ethos which is the backbone of his writing.

In historical actualization, Diaspora referred to the Jewish communities outside Israel. Traditionally, Jews outside Israel considered themselves in exile (Hebrew galut), but many Jews no longer hold this view. Interpreting this historical approach, Simon Blackburn in *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* writes:

The Jewish Diaspora began with the exile of Judeans to Babylonia by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC. The majority of Judeans remained in Babylonia even after the refounding of Jerusalem. Under Hellenistic rulers, large numbers of Jews settled in Alexandria. During the Greco-Roman period, Jews settled throughout Asia Minor and southern Europe. Many Jewish prisoners of war were brought to Rome after the destruction of Jerusalem in ad 70. (105)

However, this migration did not stop there, and from Italy, Jews migrated to France and Germany, and from there to England, Scandinavia, and Eastern Europe, becoming known as Ashkenazim. Under the sway of Islam, Jews from North Africa moved Westwards into the Iberian Peninsula. Expelled by Christian rulers in the fifteenth century, these Jews, known as Sephardim, resettled in the Netherlands, the Balkans, Turkey, Palestine, and the Americas. In the 19th and 20th centuries, large numbers of central and East European Jews went to North America and, after World War II, Jews of all groups immigrated to Israel.

However, in modern time, the term has acquired a more sinister and brutal meaning. According to Blackburn in modern days, Diaspora signifies to “a collective trauma, a banishment, where one dreamed of home but lived in exile” (105).

R. Radhakrishnan’s book *Diasporic Mediation* defines Diaspora as the space of hyphen that tries to coordinate with the identity which is related to the place of origin with that of present home. He writes:

The Diasporic location is the space of the hyphen that tires to coordinate within an evolving relationship, the identity politics of one’s place of origin with that of one’s present home. The term is not used either as a mark of privilege or as a universally representative human condition. . . . As a matter of fact Diaspora strongly contests such a comfortable universalization of Diasporic perspectives. (Introduction xiii)

Diasporic subjectivity is thus necessarily double: acknowledging the imperatives of an earlier ‘elsewhere’ in an active and critical relationship with the cultural politics of one’s present home, all within the figurality of a reciprocal displacement. ‘Home’ then becomes a mode of interpretive in-betweenness, as a form of accountability to more than one location.

The Diasporic people can never be the first class people in the alien world. The hyphen between them (African-American) always create we and other. Thus, the migrated people feel themselves as alienated in the search of identity. Similarly, Leela Gandhi’s book *Post-colonial Readings: A Critical Introduction* defines Diaspora as trauma of displacement either it is of Jewish or Africans, or any other. She writes “Diaspora’ evokes

the specific traumas of human displacement-whether of the Jews or Africans Scattered in the service of slavery and indentures” (131).

In consideration to all the above discussions, the present researcher is willing to undertake the issue that *East, West* bridges the gap between East and West parts of the world. For the same, this research is divided into three chapters: first, “Communion of East and West in *East, West*.” The second chapter will be “*East, West* as a Cultural Bridge.” Then third chapter, “Conclusion: Fall of Cultural Hegemony” will conclude the present research.

## II: *East, West* as a Cultural Bridge

Rushdie's *East, West* is an anthology of stories covering three different parts of the world, the "East," "West" and "East, West." It covers incidents and people of different societies and culture from different parts of the world who have migrated from their homeland to alien in search of job, entertainment and in the process have adapted to new cultures and ethics.

In the first section 'East', there are three stories. They are all about Indian people, culture and village anecdotes. The first story in the collection, *Good Advice is Rarer than Rubies* presents many oriental stereotypes. Miss Rehana, whose eyes were "large and black and bright" (5) meets the crook, Muhammad Ali, outside the British consulate. "Muhammad Ali who specialized in advising the most vulnerable-looking the weekly supplicants, found his feet leading him towards the strange, big eyed independent girl" (6). Then Ali asked her. "Please, you allow me to give some advice? Small cost only" (6). As an answer to the Ali's question she replied, 'Good Advice is rarer than Rubies', I cannot pay I'm an orphan, not one of your wealthy ladies" (6). In a conversation peppered with proverbs and clichés, Ali tells her what she must do to obtain the coveted visa.

There are people like Muhammad Ali, who in *Good Advice is Rarer than Rubies* make their living by confusing and manipulating the meek people in an attempt to justify that the Western people are low and cheat. Similarly, Rehana, an innocent girl who has come to the British Consulate for a Visa Interview to Bradford, England are misguided by their own countryman. It is not the Britons who mislead Rehana, but one of her fellow countrymen, Ali, who, manipulates her as, "The sahibs thought that all the women who came on Tuesdays, claiming to be dependents of bus drivers in Luton or chartered

accountants in Manchester, were crooks and liars and cheats” (9). However, the fact is, there is nothing like the sorts being asked in the interview.

Ali, in fact is a broker, who makes his living by making fool of innocents like Rehana. Moreover, there are other people, who willingly would like to contribute for Ali’s favor, as they are easily lured into the net spread by Ali. He makes them believe as:

They will ask you how many rooms are in your family home, and what colors are the walls, and what days do you empty rubbish. They will ask your man’s mother’s third cousin’s aunt’s step-daughter’s middle name. And all these things they have already asked your Mustafa Dai in his Bradford. And if you make one mistake, you are finished. (9)

Furthermore, he also is engaged in fake passport, as he suggests to Rehana that the journey to England would be easily done in the passport available to her by him. He offers her:

His voice fell low-as-low.

‘Miss Rehana, it is a British passport. Completely genuine and pukka goods. I have good friend who will put your name and photo, and then, hey-presto, England there you come!’ (11)

So, there are two sets of people, who defy the Western obsession by their shrewdness, to earn their living. And, there are Rehana, who defy the Western obsession falling in trap to such cheap like Muhammad Ali.

Rehana, was nine when she was engaged with a thirty-year-old man and what she had of him was just a photo. She had no memories of him and little she knew about him beside the photo was his voice, which, now she may not recognize. Besides, the charming beauty she also possessed the gut to defy the English attraction to Bradford, and her

wannabe husband. Unlike most others, she is more than happy that her visa has been cancelled. As Ali, notices that he had never seen such a lady who was extremely happy on being rejected the visa. Her happiness knows no boundary as she says to Ali:

‘Now I will go back to Lahore and my job. I work in a great house, as ayah to three good boys. They would have been sad to see me leave. [. . .] Her last smile, which he watched from the compound until the bus concealed it in a dust-cloud, was the happiest thing he had ever seen in his long, hot, hard, unloving life. (15-16)

So, the mentality of the people of colonized nations is dwindled in the mask of duality. They are often lead by common notion of greed and selfishness, represented by Ali. On the other hand, there are characters like Rehana, who are hard bent to break away from the charm of the Western sorcery.

As a writer hailing from a colonized country, he seems to affirm that to be on the side of the human and life, against exploitation of the week, and violence. The encounter between the dramatically opposite East and the West in the context of human relationships and cultural values constantly engages his attention and gets reflected in his novels. Rushdie himself being the product of both the oriental and the occidental cultures is not far-fetching to see in most of his novels, his own experience being filtered. An attempt has been made, in this chapter, to analyze the multicultural issue and cultural encounter in his collection of stories, *East West*.

Rushdie’s *East, West* has articulated an important question in regards of the life of migrant and Diaspora. Diaspora has become a common form of experience, of migration or exile, generating fissured identities and hybridity alongside problems of dislocation and

dispossession and a large problem of a lost center. Rushdie explores the universal mystery of being born and puzzled of which one is. Beside these, quest for identity, divide selves, double identity and conflict between good and evil and the most recurring themes of his writing. Multiplicity of thematic patterns and poly-angular perspectives in his writing clearly brings forth the multicultural ethos that forms the basis of his writing. Rushdie, an Indian settled in England is familiar with the East-West confrontation and its outcome as the hegemonic impact. He is aware of the Western mentality of observing the Eastern people and their culture. However, it also has to do with the Eastern way of life and downward way of thinking of the Eastern people. *East, West* is a literary magic in which Rushdie brings forth the multicultural ethos.

Muhammad Ali tells her the difficulties of getting the coveted visa and the bad nature of the people of Embassy. “She was a sparrow, he told her, and they were men with hooded eyes, like hawks” (9). Thus, he advises her not to go England:

I am a poor fellow, and I have offered this prize because you are so beautiful. Do not spite on my generosity. Take the thing. Or else don't take, go home, forget England, only do not go into that building lose your dignity. But she was on her feet, turning away from him, walking towards the gates, where the woman had begun to cluster and the Lala was swearing at them. His experience, he says, has shown him the true character of Indians. It is the urge of our people, he yelled. We are poor, we are ignorant, and we completely refuse to learn. (12)

All the stereotypes that Rushdie carefully builds up are demolished when Miss Rehana chose to fail the test and remain in India. “Now I will go back to Lahore and my hub. I work



in a great house, as ayah to three good boys. They would have been sad to see me leave” (15).

In “The Free Radio” another story in the collection is about a Rickshaw-wallah, Ramani after several unfortunate attempts of being a movie star. The narrator takes Ramani, as a cheerful man wrapped in un-fateful incidents, as:

That boy could have had a good life. God had blessed him with God’s own looks, and his father had gone to the grave for him, but did not he leave the boy a brand new first-class rickshaw with plastic covered seats and all? So: looks he had his own trade he had, there would have been a good wife in time, and he should just have taken out some years to save some rupees. (19)

Ramani has good looks and strong body with is own trade of Rickshaw, is attracted by the thief’s widow. “But after that Raman, and the thief’s widow were seen everywhere shamelessly, in public places, and I was glad his mother was dead because if she had lived to see this her face would have fallen off from shame” (21).

Sometimes in those days Ramani came into the street in the evening to meet some friends. They all wear the armbands of the new youth movement. Ramani wore no armband but he went with them because they impressed him, the fool. These armband youth were always flattering Ramani. “Such a handsome chap, they told him, compared to you Shashi Kapoor and Amitabh Bachchan are like lepers only, you should go to Bombay and be put in the motion pictures” (22).

Ramini never know why the armbands groups are flattering him? They flattered him with the dreams because they knew they could take money from him at cards and he would buy them drinks. “So now Ramani’s head become filled with these movie dreams” (22).

Some days after he was on the way to Bombay and came to say farewell to his teacher, “Goodbye, teacher sahib, I am off to Bombay, where I will become a bigger film star than a Shashi Kapoor or Amitabh Bachchan even” (30). The feelings of filmy stars are other means to associate with cultural bridge. Ramini wrote his first letter to his teacher. The letter was full of his new career, as mentioned:

How he had been discovered at once, a big studio had given him a test, now they were grooming him for stardom, he spent his days at the Sun ‘n’ Sand hotel at Juhu beach in the company of top lady artistes, he was buying a big house at Pali hill, built in the split-level mode and incorporating the latest security equipment to protect him from the movie fans. (931)

Those were the wonderful letters, brimming with confidence. The Rickshaw-walla Ramani now become great artist with a lot of fans and big house with latest security equipment. The story presents unbelievable reversal of fortune.

“The Prophets Hair” is another story to the collection East where a prophets hair in a silver phial bring about the stunning reversals of fortune to two unsuspecting Indian families. In this grown up fairy, tragedies become blessing where blessing are hexes in disguise. The hair which “sits to his day in a closely guarded vault by the shores of loveliest of lakes in the heart of the valley which was once closer than any place on the earth to paradise” (57), provokes tragedies as it’s possession forces those who retain it to comfort hidden truths. The attempt to escape from these tragedies led to further trauma. Human’s encounter with the thief, for instance, is a reliving of her childhood nightmare:

She saw acing a gray-haired giant down whose left cheek ran the most sinister of scars, cicatrices in the shape of the letter sin in the Nastaliq script.

She was gripped by the insupportably nostalgic notion that the bogeyman of her childhood nursery had risen up to comfort her, because her ayah had always forestalled any incipient acts of disobedience by threatening Human and Atta: you don't watch out and I'll send that on the steal you away-that Sheik sin, the Thief of Thieves. (40)

This 'thief of the thieves' turns out to be an old man who, "with a parent's absolute love, had made sure that (his four sons) were all provided with a lifelong source of high income by crippling them at birth, so that, as they dragged themselves around the city, they earned excellent money in the begging business" (53). When, by the miracle of having been in the same house as the hair for a few minutes, the discovered they could walk, the son were "very properly furious" (57) because they had lost their manner of making a living.

Rushdie as a postcolonial writer deals with the change and continuity strangeness and familiarity, characteristic of our increasingly complex multicultural world. Most of his literature, his creative writing and criticism outline the pivotal themes of trans-cultural situation. That's why his second section 'West' in the Collection East, West, deals with the story of Western people and culture. Rushdie, focusing upon the localization creates a novel East, West where the rudimentary ideas about nation and identity are blurred. Nation and identity are supposed to be defined within strict national and cultural borders. But East, West by Rushdie focuses upon the identity, which keeps on shifting due to the changing locality. To be clearer, Rushdie envisions a nation where national and cultural boundaries are blurred. By merging 'East' and West in a single collection of stories, Rushdie is focusing upon multiculturalism.

“Yorick” is the first story of the West section, where the story of Hamlet is said in the style of *Tristan Shandy*. This story is a retelling of Hamlet from the lips of the disgruntled court jester.

Hamlet plots-that king Claudius must be accused of his brothers’ murder, and Yorick’s execution must be shown to be the camouflage, the arras behind which the truth was hid-so Murder’s specter is invoked a second time, and Hamlet, in his mother loving passion, sees it walk the battlements of Elsinore.  
(82)

Rushdie’ treatment of this story is based on a fantasy. It makes us clear that the well known events of Western literature and history are beyond revision for fantasy. The positional strategy that defines the relationship between East and West are subvert in this text.

Rushdie’s purpose is clear and his irony explicit, as he presents for instance:

Yorick’s saga, of course: that same ancient account which fell, near enough two hundred and thirty-five years ago, into the hands of a certain-no, a mot uncertain-*Tristram*, who (although yseult) was neither triste nor ram, the farthest, most heady shady of a follow . . . Truly, a voluminous history which! It’s my present intent not merely to abbreviate, but in addition, to explicate annotate, hyphenate, palatinate and permanganate- for it’s a narrative that richly regards the scholar who is competent to apply such sensitive technologies. (64)

Thus, Rushdie depicts the Eastern notion, or the Diasporic notion of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. In doing so, he is exposing the Western notion that is no more superior to that of the East which is inferior.

Similarly, another story under the West section is *At the Auction of the Ruby Slippers*, which contains a diatribe on the relationship of fantasy to reality and the blurred boundary that totalitarian state, fiction is feared because if further thought by furnishing alternatives to accepted assumptions and creeds, rendering ways to escape imposed reality. Fictions are dangerous the alarmed consumerist narrator warns, because “we may simply float way from our desires and see them a new from a distance, so that they seem weightless and trivial” (102). He further reflects that:

This permeation of the real world by the fictional is a symptom of the moral decay of our post-millennial culture. Heroes step down of cinema screen and marry members of the audience. Will there be no end to it? Should there be more rigorous controls? Is the state employing insufficient violence? We debate such question often. There can be little doubt that a large majority of us opposes the free, unrestricted migration of imaginary beings into an already damaged reality, which resources diminish by the day. After all few of us would choose to travel in the opposite direction (though there are persuasive reports of an increase in such migrations of an increase in such migrations lately). (94-95)

The narrator of this story is conscious omnipresence of fiction in his life. Needs the ruby slippers, themselves a fictional creation, to bring back the woman be loved? This dream, he sees is a reality that may have been inexorably turned into fantasy. “I am aware that, after all these years of separation and non-communication, the gale I adore is not entirely a real person. The real gale has become confused with my re-imagining of her, with my private elaboration of our continuing life together now be beyond our grasp, ineffable” (96). The

overlapping of the two worlds results in the inability to separate them: there is equivalence between the reality of woman be loved and the necessary fiction he has had to create to keep her alive for him.

This story offers the dispiriting spectacle of the world where the only firmly held values seems to be those of the market place on the one hand and religious fundamentalism on the other, as all bidders compete for a piece of Hollywood memorabilia. The fundamentalists have openly started that they are interested to buy the magic foot wear only in order to burn it, and this is not, in the view of the liberal auctioneers, a reprehensible program as narrated, “Next week there is another auction. Family tress, coats of arms royal lineage will be up for sale and into any of these one may insert any name one chooses. One’s own or one’s beloved’s Canine and Feline pedigrees will be on offer too: Alsatian Burmese saluki, Siamese, Cairn terrier” (103).

Further provisioning of the positional strategy is evident is the third story, in which he presents the travails of the Italian Columbus in the Spanish court, an account that positions the Westerner as one of those foreigners who among other things. “Forget their place. Given time, they begin to think of themselves as our equals” (108). Rushdie further adds:

Foreigners can be dogged. And can also, on account of language difficulties, fail to take a hint. They again, let us not forget, it is considered derring to keep a few foreigners around. They lend the place a certain cosmopolitan tone. They are often poor and consequently willing to perform divers necessary but dirty jobs. They are moreover, a warning against complacency,

their existence in our midst reminding us that there are quarters in which  
 (hard to accept) we ourselves would be considered foreigners, too. (108)

The final section presents the new order Rushdie envisages, in which the East and the West are fused, presenting us with the intricacies of a world that explicitly eliminates the possibility of their separation. This fusion of the East and West suggests a corollary in literature. The traditionally opposed East and West are not so different after all, Rushdie seems to argue. This seeming contradiction must be accepted, Rushdie claims, because it is a faithful reflection of life and history. If history created complexities, let us not try to simplify them. Rushdie's experiment with the fusion of opposites, unveils the fantasy behind the real, and demonstrates that the West is in fact only part of the East, thus, there is no cultural dimensions.

He attempts to combine the facts of history; biography and autobiography challenge the frontiers of fantasy. Rushdie's narrative ideology gives rise to a particular use of genre, in which each genre defuses the other, and the mythic/romance mode defuses itself. Rushdie's use of myth and fiction liberates him from Western hegemonic strategies of containment, at the same time, by using the comic/surreal mode to defuse myth; he is able to avoid historical petrification. Through the stories collected in this section, Rushdie attempts to establish human relationship with other individuals and through them with community and humanity; a multicultural perspective that widens and enlarges the frontiers of thought, an important literary characteristic.

"East, West," the last story of the anthology is a powerful depiction of falling of the cultural ethos through different characters like Khan, Merry, Mixed-up, etc. "The Harmony of the Spheres" explores Eliot Crane's struggle to be a writer. He is befriended by Khan, a

skeptical Indian in 1960s Cambridge who was “suffering from the disharmony of my personal spheres . . . and beyond it a number of difficult question about home and identity” (139).

As an immigrant he suffers from existential as well as cultural problems. Thus, he feels alienated and dominated in the alien world. By depicting the cross cultural scenario, he is further supporting the idea of multiculturalism, which is the bitter reality of the world. The line from the text supports these points:

But in Eliot’s enormous generously shared mental storehouse of the varieties of ‘forbidden knowledge’ I thought I’d found another way of making a bridge between here and there, between my two otherness, my double unbalancing. In that world of magic and power there seemed to exist the kind of fusion of world views, European Amerindian Oriental Levantine, in which I desperately wanted to believe. (141)

Rushdie ruptures the traditional notion of nation and identity, and brings forth the notion of nation and identity, which are multicultural. Rushdie presents the identity of Khan by crossing the borders of nationality. Thus, identity is not constant things. It keeps on shifting, due to the changing locality.

The last story of the collection “The Courter,” is a semi autobiographical fiction. It definitively demolishes the East/West boundaries. Here, because of an Asians inability to pronounce English properly, an apartment building porter becomes a ‘courtier’ and the Indian immigrants at Waverly House resident fluctuate between identities and cultural loyalties:



English was hard for certainly-Mary, and this was a part of what drew damaged old mixed-up towards her. The letter p was a particular problem, often turning into f or c, when she proceeded through the lobby with wheeled wicker shopping basket, she would say, going shocking, and when, on her return he offered to help lift the basket up the front ghosts, she would answer, 'yes, fleas'. As the elevator lifted her away she called through grille: oe, Courter; thank you Courter. (176)

The character Mary, in the last section 'The Courter', is an Indian who has migrated to England. She has a difficult life over there. She has a language and cultural problems. She cannot cope up with the British. Thus, she feels alienated, dominated in the new world.

She got her sari struck in the jaws of the machine, and as the escalator pulled at the garment it began to unwind. She was forced to spin round and round like a top, and scream at the top of her voice. O BAAP BA2PU-RE; BAAP-RE-BAAP-! It was mixed up who saved her by pushing the emergency stop bottom before the sari was completely unwound and she was exposed in her petticoat for the entire world to see. (156)

This accident happened when she could not read 'unzip a banana.' Time and again, she becomes the victim of alien world. The Indian way of life, language and cultures are completely different from that of British. So the immigrants like Mary suffer. Then she decides 'I need to go home' (208). Suddenly she decides to go home because she is being attracted by heart disease. The narrator thinks, the heart trouble might be the result of homesickness. "So it was England that was breaking her heart, trouble may be the result of homesickness: breaking it by not being Bombay and Mixed up? I wondered was the courtier

killing her, too, because he was no longer himself” (209). Mary’s heart trouble was the consequence of not being in India England was breaking her heart.

Mary’s dream about England and life style suddenly tramples like a fragile glass. Then she asserts “god knows for what all we came over to this country . . . But I can no longer stay” (209). Then she returned to India, the land of her root. “As it happened she was right about the homesickness. After her return to Bombay she never had a day’s heart trouble again: and as the letter from her niece Stella confirmed, at ninety-one she was still going strong” (210). Rushdie’s depictions of England as well as India via character Mary certainly pave the way to multicultural ethos.

Similarly, in yet another story “The Courter,” the story of Chandni is of similar kind. She is also the victim of double identity. She is whirled between East and West and many of her dreams are related to attaining the Western desires. When she wanted to learn traditional Indian dance, on one hand, at the other hand she also has panache for stunning looks she bestows through her Western outfit, as:

Chandni was eighteen month older than me, and so sexy it made you sick.

She was training to be an Indian classical dancer, ‘Odissi’ as well as Natyam, but in the meantime she dressed in tight black jeans and clinging black polo-nick jumper and took me, now and then, to hangout of Bunjie’s, where she knew most of the fold music crowd that frequented the place and where she answered to the name of moonlight, which is what Chandni means. (188)

Chandni, the cousin of the narrator is an Indian girl of eighteen, living in England. Through this character Rushdie brings forth his multicultural ethos. Being an Indian, she is interested to Indian classical dance ‘Odissi’ and ‘Natyam’ but because of her upbringing. She dressed

in tight black jeans and bank polo neck jumper and hangout at bunjie. By depicting the Indian culture and British society in one canvas, Rushdie is focusing upon multiculturalism.

The question of choice between East and West is the ground for a battle that will wage within the immigrants. Mary suffers from an unidentified illness, until the narrator realizes that it was England that was breaking her heart. And Chandni suffers from her hybrid identity. They cannot choose between past and present. The question of choice is an irrevocable one but the narrator faced with the choice rebels. To choose seems tantamount to losing something, because until he chooses, he may remain in the comfortable limbo of oblivion “But I, too, have ropes around my neck. I have them to this day, pulling me this way and that, East and West, the nooses are tightening, commanding, choose, choose [. . .] I refuse to choose” (211).

Rushdie’s stories are made significant by his ability to build pluralistic worlds. Thus, in his fiction the mediated reality is stretched to the frontiers of fantasy, in order to present the cultural destiny of the immigrant. The creation of palimpsests, of cultural and generic constructs that constantly cancel each other out to reveal new versions of the same, permits entrance into an alternative universe where the boundaries between East and West, disintegrate. Rushdie uses the intervention of fiction to make the implausible plausible.

As such, the desire for East to meet the West does not remain mere an illusion. It becomes fable, becomes a medium for the writers to cross the conventional frontiers. The question he poses seems to be whether or not the accepted difference between East and West East as such. His stories imply that the classical boundaries between the entities have been eradicated, shown to be mere invention. It is as though to remind us that hybridity is the primary characteristic of all postcolonial and immigrant text. Rushdie presents us a world of

amalgamation, in which the old ways of reading and seeing do not apply, in which plurality of vision provides the means for comprehension. This sense of plurality designs a world of East communing to the West, and vice-versa.

The theme of conflicts and reconciliation of cultures have often been a repeated issue in the indo-English novel. Rushdie too has treated this complex issue in his writings through the vivid character portrayal against the backdrop of specific socio-cultural milieu. In the “East, West” chapter of the novel, the protagonists are alienated from society, from families, from parents and from their country. They are unable to communicate and to identify themselves with the people around. Unable to relate themselves with the milieu they drift into their own sequestered world where they spin their dreams, which never materialized. It is their sense of alienation and a haunting past that motivates them in their quest for identity, for a meaningful present. And Rushdie analyzes the complex negotiation between cultures via various characters. By depicting various cultures values norms and spirit, Rushdie brings forth the multicultural ethos.

In the collection of stories *East, West*, the first section is about Indian culture then, second section is about Western people and culture and the East is the merging point of East and West, India and Britain. By merging Indian and British stories and cultures, he is creating a multicultural nation, which is inclusively democratic and respects individual dignity. Structurally also the novel which is divided into three sections “East” “West” and “East, West”, is supporting the idea of varying culture.

The narrator, after twenty years of his life in England, is unable to identify himself as a British though he has citizenship. Consequently he learns to withdraw, to keep things to himself, to be aloof that exacerbates his loneliness which ultimately makes his quest for

identity and attempt to give meaning to the meaningless. The narrator's culture and alien birth made him lose confidence and hope in England, as:

I became a British citizen that year I was one of the lazy ones, I guess, because in spite of that chess game I had Dodo on my side. And the passport did in many ways set me free. It allowed me to come and go to choices that were not at once my father would have wished. But I, too, have ropes around my neck, have them to this day, pulling me this way and that, East and West, the nooses tightening, commending, choose, choose. (211)

Immigrants are always treated as soother and inferior, how long they spend their ties in alien world. Though the narrator got British citizenship, he cannot be sure of his right and respect. Thus, he become confused either to chose his past or present, where he lives.

The literary meaning of the term 'Diaspora' is scattering of language, culture and people, who were formerly concentrated in same place. It has its origin in Greek term *dispeirein* which means disperse or scatter. Diasporas are always haunted by their past is their efforts to trace their history-a hidden motive to establish identity and to overcome Diasporic feeling. Mary, a close relative of narrator is haunted by the image of homeland time and again. Consequently she is being attacked by sickness, as:

Mary's heart trouble turned out to be mystery, unpredictable, it came and went. She was subject to all sorts of tests during the next six months, but each time the doctors ended up by shocking their heads; they could not find anything wrong with her physically. She was right as rain, except that there were these periods when her heart kicked and bucked in her chest like wild horse in '*The Misfits*', the ones whose roping and typing made Marilyn

Monroe so mad. At the beginning of the summer, marry made an announcement. I know what is wrong with me, she told my parents, out of the blue. I need to go home. (208)

Diasporic people are compelled to think themselves inferior in this way or that. Neither they can understand new culture and language nor assimilate with the situation. They can't be happy with present or forget their past. They are in the border of two cultures, unable to choose. In this situation, they feel alienated and went to create the home of their mind, which is free from prejudices. Mary's heart treble is also a symbolic manifestation of their desire to be in home. Here, illness is not physical but psychological. She was ill because she is not in India. Britain was breaking her heart.

Similarly, language is generally known as the symbol of identity and culture. But, when we cross the frontiers, we have to cope up with new language and culture. Obviously, the phenomenon of assimilating with different language and culture is difficult and may lead to bitter situation. Here, in this collection, the narrator's father becomes the victim of linguistic varieties.

I did nothing he said, standing there in the hall with the pharmacy bag in the other hand and a face as pink as Mecir's rubber gloves. I just went in with your list. The girl seemed very helpful. I asked for baby compound, Johnson's powder, teething Jelly, and she brought them out. Then I asked did she have any nipples, and she slapped my face. [. . .]. Here they call them teats. (183)

Because of the linguistic differences, the narrator's father was slapped by a seventeen years girl. This slap made him discomfort able in front of his children along with physical pain.

He has never thought of being slapped while asking for nipples in pharmacy. This all happens due to cultural and linguistic differences. As a son, the narrator take this incident as legendary in the following manner, “I remember this story with delight because it was the only time I was saw my father so discomforted, and the incident become legendary and girl in the pharmacy was inc\stalled as an object of our great veneration” (185).

Leela Gandhi in *Postcolonial Theory* defines Diaspora as trauma of displacement either it is of Jewish of Africans. She writes “Diaspora evokes the specific traumas of human displacement-whether of the Jews or an Africans Scattered in the service of slavery and indentures” (131).

The word ‘Diaspora’ suggests, therefore, a linkage asserted in the context of exile from a homeland, and a unity maintained in the varying circumstances confronting a scattered population. Such a concept refers by extension to other dispersed peoples, such as those exile Americans who resettled across much of Europe and Asia from the eleventh century and throughout the period of Ottoman Empire. While we cannot think of Diaspora without regard to Jewish history, we must beware of making this history normative for our understanding of the concept.

In a similar way, dislocation in a different sense is also a feature of all Diasporic writing. Many postcolonial texts acknowledge the psychological and personal dislocation of a migrant. This cultural denigration is against dislocating process that many modern decolonizing struggles are instituted. Mary symbolizes the pain and anxiety faced by the Diasporas, certainly, moves through the path of dislocation, she hangs like pendulum between East and West:

So it was England that was breaking her heart, breaking it by not being Indian. London was killing her, by not being in Bombay. And Mixed-up? I wondered, was the counter killing her, too, because he was no longer himself? Or was it that her heart, roped by two different loves, was being pulled by both East and West, whinnying and rearing, like those movie horses being yanked this way by Clark Gable and that way by Montgomery Cliff, and knew that to live-she would have to choose? (209)

Mary is divided within herself on her bid to achieve assimilation or acculturation, which is the only option left to her in order to survive among cultural schizophrenia. It is a state of mental illness that causes the sufferer to act irrationally leading her to estrangement from social relationship. This state leads to a divided identity-divided by culture, history and circumstances. As cultures cut across and intersect natural frontier, individual like Mary feels dislocated.

Similarly, Diasporic situation articulates hybrid identity. This hybrid situation fosters a sense of ambivalence, scattered amongst the people of both, East and West. In today's global scenario, it is a growing phenomenon. The narrator's cousin Chandani in *East, West* is only one example, where she encounters the charm of East and West, but finally finds solace in the Eastern soil, in the flavor of her own feelings and people. "Chandni was eighteen months older than me and so sexy it made you sick. She was training to be an Indian classical dancer, Odissi as well as Natyam, but in the meantime she dressed in tight black Jeans and a clinging black Polo neck Jumper" (187). These lines depict the hybridness of the character Chandni. She cannot forget her culture completely nor adopt in the



Western society. She is interested in Indian classical dance but at the same time wore clinging black neck jumper as the imitation of British people.

The story “The Prophet’s Hair” is base on the disappearance of the Prophet Muhammad’s hair from the Hazrat Bal Mosque at Srinagar in 1963, and Rushdie playfully develops his own fictional story out of this incident. His deconstruction of Eastern absolutes deals in this story mainly with the blind veneration of the Prophet Muhammad. The wealthy moneylender Hashim is “not a godly man but sets great store by living honorably in the world” and asks - despite the injunctions of the Qur’an - interest rates of seventy per cent” (43). His family is living a quite secular life, though with a Muslim background, as Huma the daughter doesn’t wear purdah, visits the cinema or the family doesn’t pray five times a day at first.

For many this *purdah* system might be ridiculous and similarly when we could not pronounce and speak correct language of the alien land and people. However, this is the cultural notion that is being built in the present world. This is a very common problem for every Diasporic people who are a victim to it. This has often created a sort of problem among people of different linguistic and social background. Today, one of the biggest problems of contemporary world is to associate these various groups of people within the common thread of universalism. At moment, everyone is compelled to remember their own past where they were free and had not gone through such irritating circumstances. Rushdie’s *East, West* clearly shows such an incident the immigrant has gone through:

It was not just certainly Mary and my parents who had trouble with the English language and the mannerism. My school fellows filtered when in my Bombay way I said brought up for upbringing (as in where was your brought

up?) and thrice fro three times and quarter plate for side plate and macaroni for pasta in general. (185)

The narrator, who is an Indian migrated to England, faces the language problem, too. He can't speak correctly and become the subject of laughter. Though these lines seem hilarious at first reading, is full of angst of Diaspora people.

Mary's dream about England and its life style suddenly tramples like a fragile glass. Then she says: "God knows for what all we came over to this country. But I can no longer stay" (21). After some days, she returned India. "After her return to Bombay, she never had a day's of heart trouble again" (210). Thus it is the magic of the Eastern flavor that lessens the pain of Mary, who once left East for a better dream to the East. However, it could not be materialized. Chandni's decision to come back to India and her being relived from the heart disease is the fall of Western passion.

Through Rushdie's colourful stories, it becomes clear that he even goes far beyond this bridge notion. The author does not only try to link or reconcile the two parts but he as a migrant between the two worlds plays ironically with the traditional images of Orient and Occident: By applying a huge variety of genre, styles, structures and techniques he finally deconstructs the traditional notions of the two entities. In doing so, Rushdie undermines the reader's conventional assumptions about the East and West and makes clear that in recent times reality cannot be pressed into or described by such simple schemes any longer.

Thus, it is not only Mary's case but through it Rushdie in *East, West* depicts the fall of world order, hegemonized by the West. It is the mark of the coming of a new era, where people, communities and nations are free of such absurdities created in the name of supremacy and thereby, power. It is again the beginning of the East coming to the forefront

of international politics. All thanks go to the trend of Diaspora and the intermingling of culture thereby in creating a hybrid world scenario.

However, as the short stories in *East, West* fulfil all more or less this deconstructive design on the one side and represent on the other side the richness and diversity of human life in the different parts of the world they naturally do not offer easy interpretations. Nevertheless, this term paper tries to examine how Rushdie criticizes and deconstructs the traditional notions and absolutes of the East and West and how he takes apart these artificial entities. The idea of cultural bridge that Salman Rushdie deconstructs the typical images and questions the inviolable both of the Orient and Occident and thus describes the world as a complex, interrelated system will be the paper's central question.

One morning, however, Hashim finds a famous relic of Prophet Muhammad's hair and keeps it. This possession of the vial changes his behaviour thoroughly. He begins to force a deeply religious life upon his family and becomes himself a religious fanatic. Nevertheless, this change in life doesn't lead to a moral improvement of Hashim's conduct as he starts beating his wife and daughter and keeps being reckless to his debtors. The children's ordering of Sheikh, the king of thieves, to steal the relic however leads to a vicious circle that tragically wipes out the whole family and also kills the thief. Only the four sons of Sheikh, who "with a parent's absolutist love, he made sure they were all provided with a lifelong source of high income by crippling them at birth so that they earned excellent money in the begging business" are wondrously healed but thus tragically reduced of their earning powers by 75 per cent (57).

Considering this collection, it firstly reminds the recipient of the miraculous events that use to happen in religious tales. Among deeply religious Muslims the power of the

Prophet Muhammad is usually considered to be endless and inscrutable, yet in Rushdie's story it leads to death and ruin. This sad ending seems thus to completely offend Muslim beliefs, as the veneration of Muhammad is at the very centre of Islam: "pious Sunnis had gone to great lengths to model their lives on that of the prophet, every detail of his life . . . became the ideal for a whole civilization" ("The Prophet's Hair" 34). He further points out that an assault on Muhammad's "reputation, like Rushdie does, is perceived as an assault on the Muslim personality" (34).

However, that's exactly what at first view seems to happen in "The Prophet's Hair": the recipient suddenly experiences that a blind orientation on Muhammad's life and rules can lead - as in the case of Hashim the moneylender - to death and misery.

The myth of cultural and religious image of the Orient and Islam that is growing across the globe, one has perhaps to consider the story's autobiographical background. Rushdie was born into a Muslim family in Bombay in 1947 and grew up in Karachi. He was later sent to Rugby, England in 1961. His relationship with Islam was again heavily coined after the publication of his famous novel *Satanic Verses*, when this book was burned officially in the Islamic world and caused Ayatollah Khomeini and other mullahs to sentence a *fatwah* (death sentence) on Rushdie in 1989 with a promise of martyrdom for the assassin. The hiding of Rushdie from the religious fanatics that followed these reactions and the experience of religious fanaticism and absolutism may have left its traces and thus, also have entered Rushdie's short story "The Prophet's Hair." It is not only Rushdie who is the victim of this new cultural episode of global culture, but his characters, are also been victimized by it.

This geographically separated anthology of Rushdie comprises of three stories each for the segments East, West and East and West. There are a couple of other amusing stories. From the segment East, “The Free Radio,” of a hapless rickshaw driver who falls into the hands of an unscrupulous widow who makes him dream impossible dreams. Also from East, *The Prophet’s Hair*, the story of a liberal man turning into a conservative monster as soon as he comes upon a hair of the Prophet Mohammed. And from East and West, *Chekov and Zulu*, of an ideological difference between two friends who go by the names Chekov and Zulu.

This anthology is almost unpalatable is the whole of West. The three stories that comprise it highlight not so much as the West’s (supposed) moral bankruptcy as it does Rushdie’s reluctance to go beyond that trope. A rickshaw driver dreams of being a Bombay movie star; Indian diplomats, who as childhood friends hatched Star Trek fantasies, most boldly go into a hidden universe of conspiracy and violence; and Hamlet’s jester is caught up in murderous intrigues. In Rushdie’s hybrid world, an Indian guru can be a redheaded Welshman, while Christopher Columbus is an immigrant, dreaming of Western glory. Rushdie allows himself, like his characters, to be pulled now in one direction, then in another. Yet he remains a writer who insists on our cultural complexity; who, rising beyond ideology, refuses to choose between East and West and embraces the world.

Every person has a birthplace, a starting point that offers a sense of identity for an individual. Through this start, this receding to the roots mentality, one examines their present in terms of their constructed past. Rushdie touches upon this concept of past to present comparison within his vignette “The Courter,” in *East, West*. Throughout “The Courter,” there is an everlasting push and pull of “worlds in transition,” between the Indian

character Mary and her family, as they attempt to adapt culturally to England (13). However, since Mary is older and has never traveled, her Indian roots remain the starting point to which everything is compared. Mary's roots *alone* are unable to explain the surrounding structures that exist outside the "invisible" domain of the "India of [her] mind" (Rushdie, 10). To remedy this situation, Rushdie incorporates the idea of "the courter," who aids Mary in transitioning to England. Through the jealous eyes of Mary's grandson, the narrator, Rushdie metaphorically depicts both the allure, and alienation present within a state, or 'relationship' of cross-cultural integration.

By maintaining a relationship with the courter, Mary displays her desire to possess a sense of companionship within her new, but foreign home (185). When transitioning into a land with infinite cultural differences, it is easy to feel misplaced, and especially misunderstood. By befriending the courter, Mary not only connects herself to a physical relation, but also to a means of cross cultural communication. Through her relations to the courter Mary feels understood, and gains understanding of the English "crumpets," and "Bedrock" singing culture (188).

However, without the discovery of the courter, this bridge between worlds would not have existed for Mary. Mary's lack of prior understanding of English culture is displayed ironically when she first meets the courter. Since Mary had no prior relations to England, nor the English language, she mistakenly announces the porter, as her "courter" (177). Upon hearing "this name," he declares that "[a]courter," is something that he "will we try to be" for Mary. In light of his efforts, Mary starts to branch out her understanding to encompass not just her past, and herself in society, but the world presently around her.

Through the transformation of chess into a private language, between the courter and Mary, Mary finds a sense of “adventure,” in adapting to new surroundings (195). In chess there are two sides, each aiming to trap the other in an unfair and outnumber the other’s position. Rushdie uses the chess game within “The Courter,” as a metaphor to depict the constant battle of balance that a character of two sides, or two cultures, must maintain. Fittingly, the courter who has emigrated many years ago from India to England is a master of the game, and decides to teach Mary the game as well. Through his teaching, she finds the game, the process of adapting to different angles and perceptions, as exciting as a new “country,” that she has never seen (195). By teaching Mary the game of chess, the courter describes to her how his societal stance of “straddling two cultures like stools,” presents him with an infinite amount of strategies to maneuver himself without feeling trapped by either side. Through the introduction to this concept, Mary for once feels limitless, and not limited, by her bicultural status, or “plural identity” (11).

After witnessing the chess-inspired romance between Mary and the courter first hand, the narrator “wishes [he] had someone too,” to help him gain an identity (197). One day the narrator decides to join Mary and the courter for a game of chess. Thinking that he could beat either, he challenges both to a game. However not expecting the mastered skill of the courter, nor the knowledge he had provided Mary, the narrator loses and is ultimately “humiliated,” and “defeated” (196).

In light of this dreadful feeling of inferiority and loneliness, the narrator seeks to establish romance with someone. At first, the narrator attempts to date a Polish girl, named Rozalia. Rozalia dates him a couple times, but leaves him with no more than a couple of sandwiches bought, and momentary gropes. After that doesn’t work out, the narrator

fantasizes about dating Chandi, an Indian classical dancer. Through these choices it becomes clear that Rushdie is depicting the narrator's desperation to find a single cultural identity. He seeks a connection to his nostalgic Eastern roots within Chandi, and a desire to possess the ever so tempting but distant Western culture within Rozalia. Neither women offer more than a piece of something, an intangible idea, insufficient to fulfill his heart and identity's needs.

Through these attempts of devoting self to one culture, the characters narrator display his/her internally divided nature, and sense of alienation in society. After witnessing the courter's stabbing, Mary has her first encounter with a feeling of alienation. Once the courter, the master link to her bicultural world was stabbed, Mary no longer felt fit enough to straddle two cultures any longer. What made her bicultural tie strong, was the belief in the courter's lesson, and ability to control two sides, the East, and the West. However after the Western youth attacked the courter, the courter no longer appeared to be in control of the cultural game any longer. Witnessing this move, Mary loses faith in her ability to exist in the West any longer. The courter was just one man within the whole of society, and this painful distinction reminded her of the fact that she was also only one 'piece', on a vast board of land. After this realization of inferiority, Mary becomes sick with emotional exile, claiming that, "England was breaking her heart" (209). In order to get better she must, go home; the West must meet the East to console and get peace of mind.

Although Mary's voluntary moves back to India ceases her "heart trouble," her move intensify the feeling of alienation that's already present within her grandson (210). When riding home, Mary looks "straight ahead," and doesn't bother to display any sense of emotional pain. By displaying such a lack of emotion attachment to leaving her home in England, the home that the narrator was a member of, the narrator feels disregarded.



Although the narrator “had known and loved her, his whole life,” this fact did not seem to matter; his grandmother was still returning to her home and leaving him. Without his grandmother, and her relationship to the courter, the narrator no longer had any relation to judge his own bicultural stance. Losing his grandmother did not just lose him a relation, but the only relations that he witnessed between his Eastern and Western world. Continuing the theme of alienation within the narrator, Rushdie also has Rozalia and Chandi, his singular links to the Eastern and Western culture, abandon him as well. Rozalia becomes engaged to a “real man,” and Chandi decides to return to India. Knowing no true sense of companionship to any culture the young narrator experiences an “intense sense of loss” of identity (12).

Although, it is not until Chandi is mature that she discovers the ever constant pull that a cross cultural individual must feel his entire life. Upon leaving and returning to his old flat in England, he describes the urges of the East, and the West, as nooses tightening, commanding, begging him to choose, choose. The narrator knew that neither Rozalia whom *he* always “pursued,” nor Chandi, “a teenage dream,” ever actualized themselves as being more than just passing desires to him. What he desired most was what Mary and the courter possessed, a true sense of cultural understanding, by existing in their sense of misunderstandings. By coming to realize this fact, the narrator no longer displays a sense of loss, but a sense of understanding to his own state, his unique culture.

Salman opines that we are not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable only of fractured perceptions partial beings, in all senses of that phrase. Although the narrator, and Mary within “The Courter,” felt as if they were “partial,” beings, they were being nothing more than true individuals. No one ever knows the true sense of their own

life, and in consequence no one will ever know a true sense of identity. Therefore although adapting to another culture presents the characters with an issue to whether or not they belong, Rushdie informs the reader that belonging is not the point. The point is, is to recognize that one's place is rooted only by one's own view. Since the narrator felt no affinity to either East or West, he never became rooted in either. Since Mary felt only comfort within the confines of India, she returned and felt at home instantly. Our place in society is dictated by our own choice, by discovering what location pulls and compels us-- and living by the pulls as best as one can.

In other words the author ironically criticizes absolutist notions and weak sides of the Eastern and Western systems. And by this critique and deconstruction of traditional images he makes clear that within the global village these two parts of the world are closely interrelated and cannot be considered as opposing entities. Thus, Rushdie goes beyond the common debates about whether there is a divide of the world into East and West or make a bridge to lessen the differences.

So, there are stories of people from the East and West. They are mingled in common thread of spreading of culture and values that have engulfed the present world. This is also possible because of the rapid growth of technology and people are increasingly moving from one place to another. This has created a scenario of cultural hybridity and a scenario of Diaspora. Today, Diaspora is a reality, and it is cultural that has bridged the gap between the East and West.

### III. Fall of Cultural Hegemony

Rushdie's anthology of stories *East, West* exposes the notion of cultural hegemony imposed on the third world and the once colonized nations and its territories. The fact that the present society is fast falling accumulating dynamism of race, ethnicity, culture and tradition for a free and liberal global social order depicts the presence of varying culture around the world. The declining status of Western hegemony in literature and other trends of social and economic factors are due to the worldwide rise in the rate of migration and mixing of the people from different clans and culture.

Rushdie's collection comes at a very crucial phase of international politics when, migrants, especially, from the Indian sub-continent nations are fast making their presence felt in the global scenario. These people are not only migrating physically, but are also taking their culture and traditions which are increasingly making their impact to the Western based people and society. Rushdie, who belongs to a hybrid bringing up – born in Bombay, India reared in Lahore, Pakistan mingles this feature in his writings. As seen in *The Harmony of the Sphere*, Rushdie depicts life in the West, as, despite all the material possession there is a need of someone, who can understand each other. In absence of someone to feel and share the inner most feelings life becomes lone and avoided.

In today's world every person has his/her way of living and thinking in conception of society is seen as complex and sum total of comportsing discourses that are produced frequently in the course of time. The ideas which are drawn out of these compelling discourses are negotiated. To understand nation as a transcendental or ideal one is the culture of European modernity. Modernity always creates 'we' and others. But *East, West* ruptures the idea of transcendental nation. Here, Rushdie tries to impart the idea against

'totalized' national cultures which create binary opposition and envisages multicultural utopia where no binaries remain.

To assess the cultural hybridity of the present world the falling aspect of cultural ties are to be taken in consideration, which Rushdie does in the present collection. Every sections of the anthology contains happening based on lamentation and woes of the general people, from the East to the West and the vice-versa. The first section, set in his native India, consists of simple village anecdotes and stories about Indian people and society very minutely and realistically. On the contrary, the West section set in England presents a retelling of hamlet in the style of *Tristram Shandy*, a futuristic auction of Dorothy's Ruby Slippers, and such which are again the counter to resist the Western authoritarianism. The last section mingles the East with the West, to predict the coming of a new world order.

Thus, through *East, West*, Rushdie hints to the approaching of a new generation of culture and custom, which will be sans the traditional concept of hegemony.

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