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Politics of Irony in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*

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By

Jitendra Bahadur Singh

Roll No.: 00006074

T. U. Regd. No.: 6-2-464-115-2011

Central Department of English

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Tribhuvan University
Central Department of English

Letter of Recommendation

This thesis entitled “Politics of Irony in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*” carried out by Mr. Jitendra Bahadur Singh has been completed under my supervision. I hereby recommend this thesis for upcoming viva voce.

Shankar Subedi

Supervisor

Central Department of English

Date: _____

Tribhuvan University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Science
Central Department of English

Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Politics of Irony in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Jitendra Bahadur Singh, has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

Members of the Research Committee

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Head

Central Department of English

Date: _____

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Jitendra Bahadur Sing

Politics of Irony in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*

Abstract

This research critically examines Rushdie's politics of irony in the novel The Satanic Verses. The politics of deploying irony in the novel assists Rushdie to challenge the colonial discourses which define England as prosperous and civilized world. Rushdie's Saladin Chamcha, along with his fellow protagonist Gibreel Farishta, becomes the representative victim of the white brutality ultimately making them return to their own homeland with empty hands despite their initial optimism to the English world and its glory. Through the political use of irony, Rushdie unearths the darker reality of the West especially postcolonial Britain where new imperial power seems dominating and subjugating outsiders so that it can sustain its spirit of imperialism. Besides, this research further investigates how Rushdie's politics of irony as trans-ideological and discursive strategy, problematizes the Islamic fundamentals and deconstructs the hierarchy, absolutism, truth, created by historically developed discourses which prevail the domain of both politics and religion. Moreover, Rushdie attempts to revisit and rewrite the history of Islam which bounds the Muslims within senseless and inhuman beliefs and practices. The researcher takes the help of theoretical insights of irony mainly proposed by Linda Hutcheon, Wayne C. Booth and Claire Colebrook in order to interpret the ideas.

Key Words: Irony, magic realism, subversion, trans-ideology, Islamic fundamentalism.

This present research critically examines the politics of irony in Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses*, and the researcher claims that Rushdie's politics of irony functions as a weapon not only to dismantle the historically constructed discourses of Western civilization, but also to challenge the rigidity and absolutism of Islamic fundamentalism. Rushdie uses irony in order to interrogate the ultimate truth of white colonial discourses which acclaim Britain as the world of civilization, prosperity and development which does

not hold any truth at all as it is established by power politics. From the eyes of his twin protagonists, Rushdie projects England as more civilized and prosperous to settle in; they consider London as "Proper" but his subsequent running of topsy-turvy model of plot reveals his intent of showing postcolonial Britain as uncivilized and improper as well.

Rushdie ironically comments on the postcolonial Britain where the colonial legacy has not come to an end but it is further taking the form of new imperialism. Although it is said that colonialism has ended due to decolonizing process, colonial legacy is still persisting even in the age of postcolonialism. The colonial discourses which present the West as civilized are still manipulating the psychology of the people. But such elitist discourses are developed to empower their imperial rule and superiority to dominate the minorities in reality. That is why Rushdie uses irony to criticize and challenge the discourses of white supremacy and falsify them by presenting the inherent exercise of new imperialism in postcolonial Britain.

The use of irony in Rushdie's novel also facilitates him to critique Islamic fundamentalism which limits the Muslim communities within certain rules and regulations in such a way that the Muslims do not accept change and progress in life. The fundamentals in the Islam religion, for Rushdie, are barriers to change and progress or development. According to Rushdie, the religion Islam is more politicized. The truths in the history of Islam may not be absolute as they are developed by the fabrication of people in power. Particularly Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam is supposed to have received a message from the god through Archangel Gabriel and he revealed the God's message to the people as God's true words. Later on, Muhammed inscribed these revelations in a book and developed as the *Quran*, the holy book of Islam. But Rushdie modifies this mainstream history of Islam and comes up with an alternative history in which the Prophet Muhammed is portrayed as cynical and politically corrupted human figure. Rushdie seems to claim that Muhammed received the

message even from Satan and he later excluded those verses from the *Quran* which is not highlighted by the mainstream history of Islam. The subject of harsh criticism, for Rushdie, is the inscriptions of the *Qur'an* which are developed as the radical or rigid fundamentals which promote hierarchy, domination, injustice and violence in society. So, Rushdie interrogates and challenges those predominant perceptions which may not hold any truth as they are constructed by the people in power.

The story of the novel *The Satanic Verses* basically revolves around the life of two major characters Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta. Both of the characters are from Indian Muslim background who migrate to England with big hope of career building and the development of their personal well-being. They consider England as "proper" and "civilized" which can fulfill their happiness and comfort. Despite their popularity in Bollywood film industry as Gibreel is a film star and Saladin is a renowned voice actor known as the "man of thousand voices", both of them are presented having high ambition to settle in England and accomplish English identity. Mostly the obsession for England can be seen in the case of Saladin Chamcha who is sent to Britain for his study since his early childhood; he grew up there. So, he is fond of settling there in England and living English lifestyle. For this he quarrels with his father and even criticizes his home and culture of origin that is Indian. But the story begins with Saladin and Gibreel's travel to England by plane which is hijacked and detonated by four Sikh hijackers. The detonating plane directly falls in the English Channel in which Saladin and Gibreel are the only survivors. As soon as they fall, they are presented as transformed into angelic and demonic figure. The former is transformed into demon whereas the latter as an angel. Gibreel, despite his angelic form loses his faith and thus undergoes suffering with dreams. His loss of faith leads him to the series of dreams in which he encounters with the seventh century history of Islam and its prophet Muhammad that Rushdie calls 'Mahound' in the novel. His dreams torment him day and night. On the other

hand, Saladin tackles with his devilish self as he encounters with the British police and their abuse. After their hard struggle in postcolonial British metropolis, both Saladin and Gibreel return to Bombay with empty hands where Saladin reconciles his old self, family and culture while Gibreel kills himself.

The narrative structure of the novel is not linear as it moves back and forth to India, Pakistan and Britain as well as Middle East. Even time setting of the novel is infinite because sometimes it describes the postcolonial phenomena and at the same time it explains the seventh century history of Islam. So, the novel presents its events and subject matter in an infinite setting to challenge the one dimensional realistic vision of the world. The metafictional and self-reflexive structure further complicates the textual indeterminacy of the novel. Rushdie uses unreliable narrator who narrates Saladin and Gibreel's life not in proper order. The narrator brings turn and twists in the story in order to force readers to reconsider their experience and perspective of the story. The story of the novel ends with the situation beyond the characters' expectation. Saladin finds him a goat-like human having cloven hoofs whereas Gibreel as an angel. Their ultimate but empty-handed return to Bombay speaks a lot about human intent and its opposite outcomes in human life. Yet, Saladin is presented to have reconciled his family and old self despite his unimaginable struggle and plight for Englishness. But Gibreel commits suicide in front of Saladin. His death is beyond not only his expectation but also the readers. Thus, Rushdie's implementation of unreliable narrator further characterizes his nature of postmodern writings.

Salman Rushdie is a postmodern or postcolonial British Indian writer. He is often considered as a political writer who prominently critiques the dominant politics of contemporary India, Pakistan, Britain as well as the Middle East. As Andrew Teverson asserts, "For Rushdie, politics is central to his art, but his art is also central to his politics" (13). It means Rushdie insists on the political functions of art. As Rushdie himself said,

"works of art, even works of entertainment, do not come into being in a social and political vacuum; and that the way they operate in a society cannot be separated from politics, from history" (92). He focuses more on the interrelation between work of art, history and politics. As a postcolonial writer, Rushdie often questions the legacy of colonialism in his writings. Not only this, he also challenges the predominant values and truth through his writing. Irony, satire, magic realism, dark humor or serio-comic representation, surrealism, allegory, intertextuality, fallible narrative techniques are the major specific features of Rushdie's writing which are often deployed to "break down our conventional, habit-dulled certainties about what the world is and has to be" (13). So, Rushdie is a writer who gives value to the political function of art which provokes to reinterpret and redefine the world people live in.

As the novel *The Satanic Verses* is published in 1988, it explicates the history of postcolonial Britain where colonialism is not ended but it is taking a form of New Empire. In the name of immigration policy, postcolonial British government allured the large mass of immigrants from the Common Wealth nations by advertising extraordinarily, full of hope and optimism. But again the contemporary political leaders of Britain are afraid of outnumbering population of immigrants. For this reason, the British government and police force do not take any responsibility of the outsiders but rather they abuse and misinterpret them. The outsiders are counted as animals.

In the same way, as soon as the novel was published, the book infuriated the large mass of Muslim communities because of its so-called abusive and insulting contents of Islamic religiosity. The copies of the book were burnt and the book was subsequently banned in the Muslim countries including India. Many publishers were killed and the publication houses were bombed. The author of the book was issued fatwa by the Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989.

This controversy of the book *The Satanic Verses*, thus, has drawn the attention of the numerous world-wide readers, critics, intellectuals and other literary scholars. Various readers, interpreters, critics and scholars throughout the globe have analyzed the novel in a number of ways. Most of the critics have put forward their commentaries on the book on the basis of religious issues that the text contains. Some of the critics have also interpreted the novel from the perspective of postcolonial diasporic immigrants in England. Regarding this issue, Stephen Morton in his essay "Postcolonial Secularism and Literary Form in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*" remarks:

One of the central ways in which postcolonial modernity is thematized in *The Satanic Verse* is through the idea of migration. Just as Rushdie's novel *Shame* uses the experience of the *hijrat*, or an exalted form of migration that has its roots in the flight of the prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina, to register the experience of migrant characters who were forced to move from India to Pakistan after partition, so *The Satanic Verses* rewrites passage from the life of the prophet Muhammad to register the experience of migration from India to Britain in the late twentieth century. (49-50)

These lines here merely parallel the postcolonial migration from India to Britain to the historical flight of the prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina in the history of Islam in the seventh century. The migration of the Prophet Muhammad from ancient Mecca to Madina is an allusion to the postcolonial migration from India to Britain represented by Saladin and Gibreel in the novel.

Similarly, another Muslim scholar M. M. Ahsan believes that the story is the product of an Orientalist conspiracy designated to "cast doubt on the teachings of Islam by challenging the authenticity of the *Qur'an*" (14). In Ahsan's view, the novel is written from

the Orientalist point of view to defame the teachings of Islam. He means to say that the writer is guided by the Oriental discourses which misinterpret the non-West.

Andrew Teverson in his book *Salman Rushdie: Contemporary World Writers* acclaims, "Rushdie commits an act of betrayal against Islam in *The Satanic Verses*, which may also be read as a symbolic form of assassination" (158). Teverson insists on the idea that Rushdie symbolically murders his own religion. Speaking against one's own religion, whether it is right or wrong is nothing other than treachery or deception that Rushdie is tagged with. Teverson seems to blame Rushdie as the murderer of his own religion Islam which is not true judgment of Rushdie's writing.

In "Twenty Years of Controversy", Akeel Bilgrami remarks: "In making a 'bad old thing' the target of a postmodern cultural critical stance, *The Satanic Verses* repudiated the historicist restriction of appropriate stances for appropriate targets; it repudiated the restriction as itself another Orientalist withholding of the creative possibilities of Islam for its own self-understanding and self-criticism" (54). In this view, the novel is analyzed in partially a correct way as it reflects on the novel's attempt to refuse the pointless restriction in Islam for self-understanding and self-criticizing. But again Bilgrami labels the novel as the possession of Orientalist view point to criticize Islam.

One of the critics, Talal Asad speaks about the novel that "the problem about Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* is not the novel's criticism of Islam per se, but that the force of [Rushdie's] criticism depends on the face that he is situated in a western liberal tradition and is perceived to be addressing an audience that shares it" (295). This review highlights on the writer's subjectivity and positionality that he is situated in the Western liberal tradition, and his attitudes towards East reflected in his writings create a problem.

Similarly, one of the postmodern critics, Jago Morrison affirms, "*The Satanic Verses* addresses the experience of postcolonial migration, dividing its focus between a number of

characters, and weaving variously between India, England and the Middle East. Most controversially, it explores the crisis of faith experienced by a rich Indian movie star who falls to earth in the West" (14). Morrison further asserts, "His portrayal of postcolonial Englishness in *The Satanic Verses* is as scathing as anything you are likely to read in contemporary fiction. But Rushdie is a writer whose work is informed certainly by a left-liberal European politics. It is from this position that he has both celebrated and critiqued the histories of India, Pakistan and the Middle East" (140). In Morrison's view, Rushdie both critiques and celebrates the history of India, Pakistan and Middle East taking the benefit of his middle-class British literary status through the representation of postcolonial migrant experience.

Giving insistence on the hybrid and fragmented human identity, another critic M. Keith Booker states:

Finally, in *The Satanic Verses*, all identities are radically unstable, with most of the characters being shown to bear artificially created identities that they themselves have largely made up. This artificiality of identity is particularly in the case of Chamcha, who has made up his name, changed his voice, even changed his face in order to fit in better in Britain. As a result, his identity is hopelessly multiple . . . But of course in Rushdie there is no true self, and this dual opposition is fated to break down. (982)

Booker here focuses more on the fluctuating nature of identity. It is human nature that one tries his best to hide his/her original identity to be easily assimilated in others' culture and society. A person like Saladin in the context of the novel adopts artificial identity by changing name, voice and even face to adjust new cultural phenomena. As a result, the single identity gets split and there are multiple identities of a single being due to change in time and place.

Focusing on Rushdie's major character Saladin as an adulator of Englishness, Neil ten Kortener's remarks:

In Saladin Chamcha, whose family name means *toady and flatterer*, and who makes a career of speaking like a perfect Englishman, Rushdie repeats the trope, familiar from postcolonial literature of the 1960s and 70s of the colonial mimic as a debilitating figure. When he metamorphoses into a devil, Saladin is not being self-consciously subversive like London's radical black youth; he is losing control of his English manner of walking and talking. (6)

According to Kortener's view, Saladin by his name is the admirer or even one can call him a devotee of English culture, heritage and civilization despite his non-English identity. Besides, he also insists on the difficulty that an individual suffers while assimilating different culture. Saladin slowly and gradually loses his confidence to adopt Englishness due to his devilish transformation despite his eager to mimic English culture and lifestyle.

All these aforementioned literary critics' take on *The Satanic Verses* is that the novel is all about the predicament of Third World citizens immigrant in the postcolonial Britain or the author's deliberate insult of Islam. Yet most of the critics analyze the novel on the basis of Rushdie's Western liberal perspective which both critiques and celebrates the history of India, Pakistan and the Middle East at the same time.

However, this research tries to examine Rushdie's politics of irony to challenge the Western colonial discourse which rather promotes new imperialism within postcolonial Britain by presenting it as the world of civilization. In other words, through the use of irony, Rushdie critiques postcolonial British who are giving continuity to colonial legacy which is giving birth to New Empire within postcolonial Britain. Rushdie's politics of irony uncovers the hidden reality of the West which is corrupt and murderous but veiled with a thin cover of civilization. Rushdie seems to reveal the Western, particularly postcolonial British metropolis

wearing the mask of humanity, civilization, development and prosperity in its outer representation but its inner reality is full of corruption, inhumanity, hedonism, immorality and violence. Rushdie intentionally uses this irony in order to dismantle the hierarchy and supremacy of the so-called civilized West that is England. As it challenges hierarchy, absolutism and prejudices, the function of Rushdie's irony is discursive.

Besides, Rushdie's irony interrogates and challenges the teachings of Islamic fundamentalism which do not let the Muslims be free and accept the change even in this age of modernity. Rushdie, for this, revisits the history of Islam in which the preoccupied authenticity of the prophet Muhammed is rewritten from the alternative point of view. This is to say that once constructed reality does not hold the ultimate truth rather it is manipulated or fabricated by the people in power. So, the close and critical observation of Rushdie's politics of irony to interrogate and subvert both historically developed colonial discourses and the absolutism in Islamic fundamentalism is the prime objective of the researcher to conduct this research.

Rushdie's irony serves as a discursive strategy, which problematizes the mainstream history of Islam and also critiques postcolonial Britain of New Empire at the same time. The mainstream history of Islam, as Rushdie infers, promotes Islamic fundamentalism which limits people within certain boundaries keeping them oppressed and backward. In the same way, postcolonial Britain has further strengthened the legacy of colonialism as a form of new empire which subjugates the outsiders or minorities within postcolonial British metropolis. Yet England is said to be prosperous and civilized. Thus, Rushdie devises ironic twin protagonists Saladin and Gibreel in the novel in order to critique postcolonial British metropolis and Islamic fundamentalism respectively. Saladin and Gibreel are ironic in a sense that they are defined as Satan and Angel in a respective way but they are not so in reality. Rushdie deliberately offers demonic and angelic attributes to his leading characters in order

to criticize and interrogate the status of postcolonial Britain and grand narrative of Islam. He uses Saladin to critique postcolonial Britain while Gibreel is used to problematize Islamic fundamentalism.

Rushdie represents Saladin and Gibreel as completely unaware about the inner reality of postcolonial Britain where new imperialism is gradually getting sprout out of the withering stem of colonial discourses. To comment on this, the author ironically makes his characters glorify England as the world of civilization, prosperity and development. Though Rushdie is well aware about the inner reality of postcolonial Britain where new imperialism is in its rise, he projects his characters as ignorant and unaware of it. So, it is irony in a sense that the author literally says one thing to infer something else. He deploys his twin protagonists not only as characters but also as an idea to criticize historically recorded truths of both the West and the Islamic fundamentalism. Rushdie's depiction of Saladin and Gibreel is to challenge the Western hegemony and the authenticity of Islam respectively. Rushdie deals with these ideas by deploying the politics of irony.

Irony in its general understanding has been defined as the discrepancy between appearance and reality. In other words, irony refers to the gap between what sth/sb appears and what it really is. Originally, the word irony is derived from Greek term 'eiron' or 'eironeia' which refers to 'ignorance', but later it was defined as expressed statement or language revealing distinct meaning or message. The word 'eironeia' for irony in Greek was used for the first time in Plato's *Republic* to indicate the ample use of irony in Socrates' dialogues. As Claire Colebrook, in her *A New Critical Idiom*, investigates the changing notion of irony from past to present, she remarks:

The word 'eironeia' was first used to refer to artful double meaning in the Socratic dialogues of Plato, where the word is used both as pejorative— in the sense of lying— and affirmatively, to refer to Socrates' capacity to conceal what he really means. It

was this practice of concealment that opened the Western political/philosophical tradition, for it is through the art of playing with meaning that the interlocutors of a dialogue are compelled to question the fundamental concepts of our language. (1)

This passage highlights that the prime use of verbal irony has its origin in Socratic technique of *eironeia* in his dialogue. Socrates used irony as both positive and negative assertions but actually to infer what he means through lying. And this trend of using irony by Socrates in his dialogues, as Colebrook suggests, paved the way of Western political and philosophical tradition of uncovering the essence of language.

According to Linda Hutcheon, a postmodern critic of irony, irony depends upon interpretation and understanding. The "cutting edge of irony" is political and social. It happens in the space between the said and the unsaid, and the interpreter should evaluate this gap with reference to its social, political and cultural context to uncover ironist's intended meaning. So, irony for Hutcheon brings author, text and reader or interpreter together for the construction of author's intentional meaning which is not overtly said in the text. The traditional definition of irony is not adequate to analyze either visual or verbal text at present time. The concept of irony has been theorized in various ways. Irony in this postmodern or postcolonial era tends to function as discursive tool. The traditional definition of irony has been changed

Similarly, Wayne C. Booth's notion of stable irony also serves as interpretive tool which undermines clarities. He means to say that irony is contradiction between "what the words say" and "what the author actually mean". So, irony for Booth is language or statement where its obvious or literal meaning should be avoided to catch the meaning of author's intension. Paul de Man's notion of irony also does not limit irony as a mere trope or a device which is in principle interpreted in accordance with the speaker's intention or the truth-claim, but the very disruption language poses to understanding. Kevin Newmark also analyzes that

irony "always has a way of slipping away from whatever means of observation, verification, and oversight one tries to apply it" (7). Likewise, D. C. Muecke views that irony of the ironist is intentionally ironical; the irony of an ironic situation or event is unintentional and results from the development of events.

Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* is amply loaded with both situational irony and verbal irony. In Colebrook's words, "The irony within a literary text are signaled either by plot or by disjunctions of character and context" (45). Situational irony and verbal irony in the novel are inextricably adjoined in order to project the contradiction of human life and understanding. Situational irony, which is also known as the irony of events occurs when incongruity appears between expectation of something to happen, and what actually happens instead. Colebrook remarks, "Dramatic, cosmic and tragic irony are ways of thinking about the relation between human intent and contrary outcomes. This sense of irony is related to verbal irony in that both share a notion of a meaning or intent beyond what we manifestly say or intend" (15). It hints the fact that irony happens when there is contradiction or gap between explicitly said thing and implicit meaning; saying one thing and referring or intending to another is irony.

As Colebrook refers irony whether it is dramatic, cosmic or tragic, is associated with verbal irony having common meaning of said and intension. The consequence of situational irony can be tragic or comic. But it is often unexpected. In the same way, verbal irony refers to a contradiction between what speaker says and what he/she actually means. To put it succinctly; verbal irony occurs when a speaker says one thing but means something else. In verbal irony, underlying or intended meaning contrasts with the words spoken literally. So, the discrepancy between what one says and what one actually means is simply an irony. Rushdie uses cosmic irony or situational irony which is also known as dramatic irony or

irony of fate, comic irony, and verbal irony to show the conflicting ideas, shifting nature of reality or facts and questionable truth.

However, Rushdie's irony in the novel, as a whole, has political function as defined by the postmodern discursive community of irony. His politics of irony works on the level of discourse which needs interpretation and evaluation with reference to socio-political and cultural context. The irony that Rushdie deploys in the novel is discursive strategy or tool and its cutting edge serves the writer as a socio-political edge which deconstructs the western colonial discourse and reinforces the readers to know its inner reality. In this regard, Linda Hutcheon, Wayne C. Booth and Clare Colebrook's theory of irony is used main analytical tool for the research as they more focus on the discursive or radical use of irony where the said and unsaid are relational rather than complete opposition. The politics of Rushdie's irony, as Linda Hutcheon suggests, functions as a discursive tool or strategy which needs interpretation and evaluation with reference to socio-political and cultural context. This discursive irony thus helps the author challenge and dismantle the hierarchy, existing values, ideology of purity, authenticity and absolutism of religious text Qur'an and colonial discourses in a parallel way.

Rushdie's projection of postcolonial Britain is ironical. He seems to dismantle the presupposition that Britain is the world of civilization full of secular values, prosperity and development. Thinking so, Rushdie's characters Gibreel and Saladin also want to settle there when they do not see any future in their homeland India. Both of the characters, either one way or another, are the devotees of England; they think that England is only the paradise which can fulfill their all pleasures and happiness in the world. To exemplify this, when Saladin's mother suggests him not to stay in England, he refuses saying: "It is inconceivable, Ammi, what you say, England is a great civilization, what are you talking, bunk" (39).

Saladin also says to his parents, "...we are just jungle people". Not only this, when there is a cricket match between India and England, Saladin favors England's victory. For instance:

When the England cricket team played India at the Brabourne Stadium, he prayed for an England victory, for the game's creators to defeat the local upstarts, for the proper order of things to be maintained. (But the games were invariably drawn, owing to the featherbed somnolence of the Brabourne stadium wicket; the great issue, creator versus imitator, colonizer against colonized, had perforce to remain unresolved.) (37)

This aforementioned passage clarifies the fact that Rushdie's character Saladin is ironical as he belongs to Indian origin but yet glorifies England. Rushdie simply seems to argue that despite having Indian nationality, his characters are ideologically manipulated by the white colonial discourses. He portrays Saladin's high preference to the colonial Britain going against his own national pride. At this point also, Saladin does not have the sense of nationality who instead prays for England's victory. So, Rushdie's intension of irony in Saladin is to break the hierarchy between colonizer and colonized or creator and imitator.

But here Rushdie's intention is to satirize the Westerners' view that the West is always superior to the East. It is because Saladin in the aforementioned passage is presented advocating colonizer's victory over colonized that is to challenge the politically constructed truth. As Hutcheon asserts, "The often 'cutting' edge of irony is always a social and political edge. Irony depends upon interpretation; it 'happens' in the tricky unpredictable space between expression and understanding" (i). Rushdie intends to say that England no longer remains victorious and that is not proper order too though it is said "for the proper order of things to be maintained". History and truth, as Rushdie hints here, gets changed according to the change of time and place. Discursive truths and ideologies, for Rushdie, keep changing. His irony, as a discursive tool or strategy, helps him to subvert the established values,

challenge the authority and dismantle the hierarchy between colonizers and colonized or creator and imitator.

The literal meaning of Rushdie's Saladin and Gibreel's interpretation of England as "proper" and "civilized" is rejected by the reality it possesses. On the surface, they claim England as more civilized. For instance, "Hey Spoono," Gibreel yelled eliciting a second inverted wince, "Proper London, bhai! Here we come!" (3). Here Rushdie's intension is to reveal the falsity of colonial discourse that England as civilized. Irony, as Hutcheon states, "involves a conscious rejection of the literal meaning and the substitution of an 'ironic' (often opposite) meaning" (59). As Rushdie is well aware about postcolonial Britain, he deliberately portrays his characters valorizing England. This is irony in which the literal expression of the characters contests with the real intension of the author. As Wayne C. Booth says, irony creates a gap between "what the words say" and "what the author actually mean". The most repeated phrase "Proper London" throughout the story, as Booth suggests "undermines clarity" because the reader may get confused whether England is really proper or not.

Similarly, Rushdie's difference between said and unsaid is apparent in his characters' language. The statement, "We Londoners can be proud of our hospitality" that Saladin tells to his English wife Pamela shows Rushdie's unsaid meaning that Londoners are rather cruel and brutal. Saladin is deceived by his own wife later when she is in affairs with Jumpy Joshi, Saladin's own friend. But Rushdie's fallible narrative technique brings turns and twists in the story which clarifies his intension of critiquing England through irony. The irony of event in the life of Rushdie's Saladin and Gibreel makes it clear that the writer is critical about postcolonial Britain which is striped on the ground of colonial discourses. Thus, Rushdie's postcolonial narrative as, Sara Suleri asserts, "does indeed replicate the anxieties of empire represented by colonial discourse itself" (112).

The incongruity between expectation and reality in the life of Saladin and Gibreel helps to explicate the imperial nature of postcolonial Britain. Rushdie here uses cosmic irony which shows the tension between expectation and the order of fate beyond the expectation or predictions. Both of the characters are the representative of postcolonial migrants from independent India who seek asylum to Britain for better future and career building. As Rushdie himself in his *Imaginary Homelands*, affirms:

They were invited to Britain so that they came. The MacMillan government embarked on a large-scale advertising campaign to attract them. They were extraordinary advertisements, full of hope and optimism, which made Britain out to be a land of plenty, a golden opportunity not to be missed. And they worked. People traveled here in good faith believing themselves wanted. This is how the New Empire was imported. (133)

This paragraph reminds us how the postcolonial British government allured the immigrants by extraordinarily advertising with full of hope and opportunity. And this was the reason the migration to England from common wealth nation was a big influx during 1950s and 60s. With the same context, Rushdie's Saladin and Gibreel are defined as migrants from India to England with big hope. As the narrator narrates:

Salahuddin Chamchawala had understood by his thirteen year that he was destined for that cool Vilayet full of the crisp promises of pound sterling at which the magic billfold had hinted, and he grew increasingly impatient of that Bombay of dust, vulgarity, policeman in shorts, transvestites, movie fanzines, pavement sleepers and the rumoured singing whores of Grant Road who had begun as devotees of the Yellamma cult in Karnatak . . . He was fed up of textile factories and local trains and all the confusion and superabundance of the place, and longed for that dream-Vilayet of poise and moderation that had come to obsess by night and day. (37)

This is how the generation of postcolonial India, in the context of the novel, was attracted by the British government's strategy not to give them proper working environment and justifiable treatment but to strengthen national economy. Saladin is "destined for that cool Vilayet full of the crisp promises of pound sterling" (37). The narrator, for instance, further says, "— Of materials things, he had given his love to this city, London, preferring it to the city of his birth or to any other" (398). This is what Rushdie actually satirizes Saladin's subjugated and disadvantaged identity in postcolonial British metropolis which ultimately forces him to return to Bombay getting nothing. This is what Colebrook calls "an irony of situation, or an irony of existence; it is as though human life and its understanding of the world is undercut by some other meaning of design beyond our power" (13). It is said, "By the time of his graduation he had acquired a British passport, because he had arrived in the country just before the laws tightened up, so he was about to inform Changez in a brief note that he intended to settle down in London and look for work as an actor" (47). Despite having "British passport" and "right to abode", he is excluded from the British society. So, here Rushdie uses cosmic irony which, as Colebrook claims, "covers twists of fate in everyday life" (13).

Rushdie presents Saladin transformed into devil in order to critique the diabolic nature of postcolonial Britain. Rushdie's projection of irony in the fate of his characters presents commentary on the postcolonial British government which is unable to take responsibility of immigrants. The British government's irresponsibility towards the immigrants comes to the forth when Rushdie depicts Saladin as the victim under the oppression of British police force and immigrant officers. As the narrator recounts:

The three immigrant officers were in particularly high spirits, and it was one these ... who had 'debugged' Saladin with a merry cry of, 'Opening time, Packy let's see what you'r made of!' Red and white stripes were dragged off the protesting Chamcha, who

was reclining on the floor of the van with two stout policemen holding each arm and a fifth constable's boot placed firmly on his chest...

His thighs had grown uncommonly wide and powerful, as well as hairy. Below the knee the hairiness came to a halt, and his legs narrowed into tough, bony, almost fleshless calves, terminating in a pair of shiny, cloven hooves, such as one might find on any billy-goat. (157)

This is where Rushdie seems to play a witty game of irony. He deploys magic realism, a literary device or narrative strategy which combines supernatural elements with realistic incidents or elements of fantasy in dream to criticize harsh reality of human life. Saladin is transformed into a satanic goat-man by his fall as soon as he encounters with the abuse of British police. The extremity of this abuse, combined with the unavoidable physical manifestations of his "macabre demoniasis" as Teverson states, "combine to provide the greatest challenge that Chamcha's dream of English civility has yet faced" (145). But his devil synonym is not to call him actually devil but to rename British civilians as demonic and violent who manipulate outsiders both psychologically and physically. Ironic situation of the characters and unimaginable circumstances they face shows the writer's bitter commentary upon postcolonial government.

Rushdie's intension of presenting this unimaginable incident in the life of Saladin is to critique the British government. Instead of giving protection, the British police force offers him threats and extremely brutalizes despite being a legal British passport holder. By this, Rushdie intends to say "the law courts and the police are not doing their jobs that the activities of racist hooligans are on the increase" (135). The British police force as Rushdie clarifies "represents the colonizing army, those regiments of occupations and control" for the outsiders of former colonies specially Asians and Africans. British society, as Rushdie affirms, "has never been cleansed of the filth of imperialism. It's still there, breeding lice and

vermin, waiting for unscrupulous people to exploit it for their own ends" (131). Imperialism is still there in postcolonial Britain. The non-whites are excluded from the Western mainstream culture.

Rushdie brings the issue of inclusion and exclusion at the heart of the novel. His characters are presented to have been excluded from the Western mainstream culture. Hutcheon also states, irony "unavoidably involves touchy issues such as inclusion and exclusion, intervention and evasion" (2). The English immigrant officers and police consider Saladin an illegal immigrant and abuse him. Saladin, who previously thinks of inheriting the English identity and status has now become the symbol of protest against British racism. For instance, "'The symbol of the Goatman, his fist raised in might...Chamcha,' Mishal said excitedly, 'you are a hero. I mean, people can really identify with you. It's an image white society has rejected for so long that we can really take it, you know, occupy it, inhabit it, reclaim it and make it our own. It's time you considered action'" (287). Saladin is the mere image or symbol of protesting white domination over the minorities.

There is another character named Uhru Simba in the Chapter "A City Visible but Unseen" of the novel who becomes the victim of white racist gaze. As he is involved in racial demonstration, he loses his life because the white supremacy does not give him any space. Despite the legislation of Race Relation Act in 1965 which "outlawed the discrimination of the grounds of colour, race, or ethnic or national origin in public places in Great Britain", British police force is rather institutionalizes racism. As the narrator recounts, "Police community relations officers pointed to the 'growing devil-cult among young blacks and Asians' as a 'deplorable tendency', using this 'Satanist revival to fight back against the allegations of Ms. Pamela Chamcha...'" (286). It is irony that when the immigrant community tends to protest against British exploitation by demonstrating Saladin's goat-man figure, the British police instead prepare their impending violence to suppress it. This way, Saladin's

metamorphosed image of goat-man is the symbol of white men's animalistic brutality and violent treatment over outsiders. And it is also contradictory to his previous expectation.

The misinterpretation, suppression and domination over the non-whites in Postcolonial Britain are further proliferating to sustain the colonial legacy. The minority immigrants are described not as human but as animals. For instance, Rushdie's Saladin views, "They describe us," the other whispered solemnly. That's all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct" (168). This is what Edward Said phrases as "oriental gaze". According to him, oriental discourses have manipulated not only the Westerners but also non-Westerners to see the non-West (East) as uncivilized. Said in his *Orientalism* overtly remarks: "The idea of representation is a theatrical one: the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined. On this stage will appear figures whose role is to represent the largest whole from which they emanate" (63). Saladin's direct and explicit negative criticism of his own cultural heritage is the projection of Western colonial discourses by which most of the people in postcolonial age are still tied with.

Rushdie's another politics of irony rests on his attempt of revisiting the history of Islam and bringing about transformation in it. The very question "What kind of idea are you?" that the narrator often asks in the novel is Rushdie's general interrogation to Islam today. He primarily doubts whether the revelation that the Prophet Muhammad received are divine or demonic. Muslims believe that whatever is inscribed in the *Qur'an* are the true words of God, Allah. The archangel Gabriel delivered the message to the prophet and he later revealed those verses to the people confirming as the real words of the God. This is what Muslims believe.

However, Rushdie's fictional account of Muhammad called 'Mahound' in the novel challenges this predominant belief of Muslims who assume the Prophet a true messenger of God and there is only one God in the universe that is Allah. Rushdie intends to rewrite this

history of Muhammad not directly but through Gibreel's dream vision that he has after the loss of his faith. In Gibreel's dream vision, the prophet called Mahound is presented wrestling Gibreel himself who is both human and angel at the same time. As the narrator describes: "Gibreel and the prophet are wrestling, both naked rolling over and over, in the cave of the fine white sand that rises around them like a veil" (122). This is where the author depicts the prophet conflicting with archangel not in reality but in Gibreel's dream. Immediately, Mahound believes that "it was the devil", "it was Shaitan". The narrator further explains, "the Devil came to him in the guise of the archangel, so that the verses he memorized, the ones he recited in the poetry tent, were not the real thing but its diabolic opposite, not godly, but satanic: He returns to the city as quickly as he can, to expunge the foul verses" (123).

Here Rushdie highlights his revisionary interpretation of the prophet who unlikely in the mainstream history of Islam, is supposed to have received the verses from devil and later he superseded those verses from the *Qur'an*. This way, Rushdie doubts the early revelations which are making fundamentals strong and often rigid too. Rushdie's point here is to remind us especially those Muslim fundamentalists, as Amir Hussain asserts, "Critical studies of the *Qur'an* are encouraged by God and the Prophets. Neither God nor his Prophets want people to follow the religion blindly" (22). The examination of revelation as an event inside history and his treatment of miraculous events in the novel is Rushdie's attempt to make sense of historical events through a non-secular point of view. This is what Rushdie ironically awakes the majority of Muslims who blindly follow unnecessary and pointless fundamentals of Islam without considering their unworthy and uncertain consequences. It also encourages a more open, subjective approach to Islam which recognizes the coexistence of the secular and religious in the modern postcolonial world.

The fictionalization of annual pilgrimage to Mecca in the novel is an attempt to rethink about Islam. Rushdie's female character Ayesha's pilgrimage across the Arabian Sea is a test of the pilgrims' faith. Ayesha calls herself a Messenger like earlier Prophet and thus inspires the villagers of Titlipur to travel to Mecca. She claims that the cancer victim Mishal Akhtar, the wife of Mirza Saeed will be cured only when she is taken to Mecca. The compulsion of annual pilgrimage to Mecca on foot is one of the fifth pillars of Islam. Muslims believe that one who does not go to Mecca once in lifetime won't get any place in heaven. In the same context, Rushdie's Ayesha convinces the villagers to go to Mecca assuring that the Arabian Sea will part to allow the pilgrims to go to Mecca. For instance, "And it is the purpose of these good people to walk to the Arabian Sea, believing as they do that the water will part for them" (475). She then leads them and the entire village heeds her command to undertake a pilgrimage on foot to Mecca. Even the skeptic husband of Mishal prepares to go. But the things turn just opposite from what Ayesha had foretold. The pilgrims die drowning into the sea as it does not part. The narrator says, "Human beings in danger of drowning struggle against the water. It is against human nature simply to walk forwards meekly until the sea swallows you up. But Ayesha, Mishal Akhtar and the villagers of Titlipur subsided below sea-level; and were never seen again" (503). For Rushdie, this is the consequence of blind faith that a mankind destroys oneself in the name of senseless religious beliefs.

By showing the tragic ending of this pilgrimage, in which many of the pilgrims die in the attempt to cross the Arabian Sea, Rushdie seems to discredit the religious faith of Islam. This tragic ending, as Stephen Morton, states, "is less significant than the rational debate that the pilgrimage provokes" (57). It is Rushdie's direct interrogation to the faith of Islam as he fictionalizes the religious narrative of the twentieth century, a magical realist story of great faith in which many Muslim pilgrims lost their lives while crossing the Arabian Sea to

Mecca. The projection of a female character Ayesha's telling lie to the people of Titlipur is Rushdie's intentional critique of the unworthy faith of Islam. For instance, "Mrs. Qureishi said, "Go away, son. No room for unbelievers here. The angel had told Ayesha that when Mishal completes the pilgrimage to Mecca her cancer will have disappeared" (238). To make it clear, Rushdie's representation of the Ayesha pilgrimage in the novel offers a counterpoint to the dogmatic interpretations of the Qur'anic scriptures advocated by Mahound/Gibreel and the anti-historical Imam in the novel.

Moreover, Rushdie partly uses comic irony by creating a character named Salman, the Persian who is a double of the writer himself in order to mock or satire the greatness of the Prophet Muhammad (Mahound in the novel). Salman is Mahound's scribe for a long time while leaving away from Jahilia. But later Salman suspects the relationship between the angel Gibreel and Mahound. As the narrator recounts, "he just laid down the law and the angle would confirm it afterwards; so I began to get a bad smell in my nose, and I thought this must be the ordour of those fabled and legendary unclean creatures, what's their name, prawns" (365). Salman here doubts whether the verses are divine or satanic; the verses, as Salman believes may be falsely transmitted to Mahound. This is why Salman decides to test Mahound by changing the text slightly. Salman says, "If Mahound recited a verse in which God was described as all hearing, all-knowing_, I would write, all-knowing, all wise_. Here's the point: Mahound did not notice the alterations. So there I was, actually writing the Book, or rewriting, anyway polluting the word of God with my own profane language" (367) He further recounts, "So I went on with my devilment changing verses" (368). Mahound does not notice the alterations and rewriting of the book and thus Salman doubts and loses his faith.

However, Salman is sure that his loss of faith shall bring threat to his life. Salman recounts, "And now Mahound is coming in triumph; so I shall lose my life after all. And his power has grown too great for me to unmake him now." Baal asked: "Why are you sure he

will kill you?" Salman the Persian answered: it is his Word against mine" (368). This is Rushdie's parody to mock the Prophet of Islam who is considered "too great". By creating Salman as double of the writer himself, Rushdie indicates his own alternative vision of the scriptures of Islam and its fictional or literary projection ironically leads Rushdie to escape from Muslim threat greatly Ayatollah Khomeini's declaration of fatwa. It is because the words in the *Qur'an*, either they are absolute or not, are more powerful than what Rushdie writes in the novel.

Through the use of irony Rushdie mocks and satirizes the mainstream values and discourse of Islam in order to unearth the repressed voices. Rushdie comes up with what Hutcheon calls "transideological politics of irony" (10), which as a discursive strategy, subverts socially and culturally constructed dominant ideologies, norms, practices and values. As Hutcheon retells, "Many-voiced play of said and unsaid can be used to ironize the single-voicing of authoritative discourse— no matter what the politics of that discourse" (194). It means the multiplicity of said and unsaid language challenges the authoritative discourse of single voice. In Islamic fundamentalism, males have power to control and misuse females. The injustice done to women in the name of religion is against humanity and morality. So, Rushdie seems to give voice to the voiceless. He raises question against the Prophet Abraham's (called Ibrahim in the novel) injustice to his wife and son who are left in the desert of Jahilia. The narrator recounts:

In ancient time the patriarch Ibrahim came into this valley with Hagar and Ismail, their son. Here in this waterless wilderness, he abandoned her. She asked him, can this be God's will? He replied it is. And left, the bastard. From the beginning, men used God to justify the unjustifiable...Hagar wasn't a witch. She was trusting...after Ibrahim left her, she fed the baby at her breast until her milk ran out. Then she climbed two hills, first Safa then Marwah, running from one to another in her

desperation, trying to sight a tent, a camel, a human being. She saw nothing. That was when he came to her, Gabriel, and showed her the waters of Zamzam. So, Hagar survived; but why now do the pilgrims congregate? To celebrate her survival? No no. They are celebrating the honour done the valley by the visit of, you've guessed, Ibrahim. In that loving consort's name, they gather, worship and, above all, spend.

(95)

Rushdie interrogates the historically treated injustice to women by a great man, Abraham whom the *Quran* and the Muslims describe and worship as a 'man of truth and righteousness'. He critiques Ibrahim's decision to leave his wife and son in the lifeless desert as quite unjust and inhuman act. Nobody will call whatever Ibrahim does as good. Yet, people gather in the valley to celebrate not Hagar's survival but Ibrahim's visit to the valley. This way, men used God to justify unjustifiable from the very beginning. Hagar is always forgotten; her voice is not heard. Thus, Rushdie challenges historically constructed prejudices and injustice to the women and tries to give them voice.

Rushdie deploys the politic of irony in order to dismantle the hierarchy. The existing hierarchy between Angel and Satan, male and female, prophet and disciple has come to be challenged in Rushdie's irony. As Hutcheon states, "The subversive function of irony is often connected to the view that it is a self-critical, self-knowing, self-reflexive mode that has the potential to offer a challenge to the hierarchy of the very site of discourse, a hierarchy based on social relations of dominance" (28). According to Hutcheon's view, irony is a self-critical, self-knowing and self-reflexive mode that subverts the dominant discourse of hierarchy.

In the same way, Rushdie's politics of irony subverts hierarchy as he represents Mahound as weak in front of his scribe Salman who tests his authenticity of reciting true words of God. Mahound is suspected to dictate to the archangel, first. Then the scribe Salman is dictating to the Prophet Mahound himself by letting him know the changed verses but he

does not know. The chain of command has been broken. Not only this, Rushdie also devises a female character Ayesha who appears as the religious leader in Titlipur where she leads all the villagers for pilgrimage to Mecca. It seems to be Rushdie's great challenge to Islam where women's role and identity is always undermined. Thus, the irony that Rushdie uses in the novel is what Hutcheon calls "a challenge or an ability to undermine and overturn" hierarchy that has "politically transformative power" (13).

Moreover, Rushdie juxtaposes the idea of sacred and profane through simultaneous projection of a brothel and harem. In Gibreel's dream, the whores are synonymous to Mahound's wives; one of them is Ayesha, the most loving wife of the Prophet. The juxtaposition of brothel and Mahound's harem offers the sense of difference between sacred and profane. But Rushdie seems to argue that harem and brothel are of no difference. Only difference is that only the husband has authority to go to Harem whereas brothel is open for even strangers. Hutcheon also asserts, "Sometimes the juxtaposition that structures irony's happening is between an utterance and uttering" (151). This is why the whores of the brothel as Rushdie says, "take the names of the wives of the Prophet Mahound in order to arouse their customers" and both harem and brothel are "places where women are sequestered, in the harem to keep them from all men except their husband and close family members, in the brothel for the use of strange males" (401). The writer here blurs the boundary between sacred and profane. Rushdie critiques the fundamental of Islam where the system of harem is against women's freedom letting them not to see the world outside in their own.

In conclusion, the cutting edge of irony, which is both social and political, assists Rushdie to challenge both the Western white discourse and absolutism of Islamic fundamentalism along with dismantling the hierarchy and giving voice to the voiceless in the novel. Through the use of irony, Rushdie reveals inner reality of postcolonial Britain where violation, domination, stereotyping, discrimination prevail giving rise to new imperialism.

Rushdie intentionally uses irony in order to prove that colonialism is not ended but rather it is taking a new form of new empire in postcolonial Britain. By creating fictional characters, their ironical situation and different circumstances, Rushdie deconstructs the Western discourse and criticizes those white elites who still present Britain full of civilization. Not only this, Rushdie's irony interrogates the absolutism, purity and singularity of Islam by rewriting its history. He intends to challenge the Islamic fundamentalism which is constructed out of a particular historical figure in a particular historical time that may not hold ultimate truth due to fabrication by power politics.

Thus, irony in Rushdie's novel functions as a discursive strategy which subverts the predominant values and system. Rushdie's irony in the novel has 'political edge' which cuts the edge of Western discourse and the discourse in Islamic fundamentalism. His said and unsaid come together to question authority and domination. Irony has social and political function to dismantle the concept of singularity, purity and absolutism. Through the use of irony, Rushdie intends to say that reality is always shifting or fluctuating. Besides, Rushdie's irony helps to grant voice to those voiceless or marginalized ones.

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