

## Chapter 1

### Rushdie and *Midnight's Children*

#### Background of the Study

Multiculturalism and cultural clashes are major characteristic features in post colonial India, and this situation is echoed in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. In such condition the cultural clashes are partly the consequences of the British Empire in India. Every culture has its own traditions, habits, religions, languages and many other common features. Crucial condition of peaceful coexistence between various cultures is a mutual respect and willingness to accept the differences. Otherwise, it elicits the cultural clashes. The main focus of the study is to identify and analyze major multicultural clashes in India as reflected in *Midnight's Children*.

The British Empire ruled over India for almost 350 years due to which the Indian culture and literature were tremendously influenced by the English culture and literature which further gave rise to cultural clashes as an impact of British rule both in India and on the life of the main protagonist in the novel. The novel employs different levels of hybridization, each depending on each other to exist and work within the text, through which the novel illustrates India's emerging post coloniality and multicultural clashes.

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is a 1981 magical realism novel revolving around India's independence. The novel is semi-autobiographical, though the main character and Rushdie stand-in has magical powers. *Midnight's Children* was critically acclaimed and won many literary awards, including the Booker Prize and the special Booker of Bookers Prize which commemorated the award's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of the novel is born on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947 feels as if he is dying after thirty years, so he decides to tell the story of his life to his

lover Padma. He begins the story of his grandfather Adam Aziz who lived in Kashmir, India. In his story, Adam is a doctor caring for a woman named Naseem, who becomes Saleem's grandmother. After getting married Adam and Naseem move to Amritsar, where Adam witnesses for Indian independence from British rule. These protests are violently suppressed and end with the protestors being massacred.

After having three daughters and two sons, Adam becomes a follower of an activist named Mian Abdullah. Abdullah is assassinated for his beliefs, and Adam agrees to take in his assistant, Nadir Khan. Naseem labels Nadir as cowardly and protests his staying in their house. Ultimately, Nadir Khan and Adam's daughter Mumtaz fall in love. They marry but even after two years, fail to consummate their marriage. Nadir Khan is found to be hiding at Adam and flees, leaving his wife behind. Mumtaz remarries Ahmed Sinai, a merchant. Mumtaz decides to change her name to Amina and she and her husband move to the large city of Delhi. Amina is soon pregnant, and visits a fortune teller to learn about her future child. The prophecy about her child states that he will never be older or younger than his country. Due to some complications with Ahmed's factory being burned down by terrorists, he decides to move them to Bombay.

In Bombay, Mumtaz and Ahmed buy a house from an Englishman named William Methwold. One of their neighbours is an entertainer named Wee Willie Winkie who lives with his pregnant wife Vanita. Vanita had an affair with Methwold and he is the father of her child. Both Vanita and Mumtaz go into labor and have their children at midnight, though Vanita does not survive child birth. The midwife decides to switch the babies so that the poor baby can live a life of privilege and vice versa. Saleem is not truly the biological child of Mumtaz and Ahmed but of Vanita and Methwold. The midwife becomes Saleem's nanny out of guilt.

Saleem loses a part of his finger and is rushed to the hospital. Obtaining his blood type the doctors revealed that Saleem cannot be Ahmed and Mumtaz's biological son. Saleem's nanny admits she switched the two boys at birth. Ahmed, now an alcoholic, becomes violent at hearing the news, which prompts Amina to take Saleem and his sister to the recently created nation of Pakistan to live with her sister. After Ahmed dies, the family moves back to Bombay. At this time, India is embroiled in a war with China. After India loses to China, the family moves back to Pakistan. There his entire family is killed, save his sister Jamila, during a war between India and Pakistan.

Saleem loses his memory after being hit in the head. He ends up in the army, although he is not quite sure how he ended up there. Saleem witnesses many war crimes and barbarisms, and he escapes into the Bangladesh jungle. There he recovers some of his memory, but does not recover his name until he meets Parvati-the-witch, who is another one of midnight's children. She helps him recall his name. Parvati wants Saleem to marry her, which he refuses to do. She then has an affair with Shiva but they have relationship troubles, and parvati returns to the magician's ghetto, pregnant and unmarried. Saleem agrees to marry her. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, has begun sterilization camps to decrease India's population. Parvati dies after childbirth, and Shiva captures Saleem to take him to a sterilization camp. There all midnights children are sterilized and set free. Saleem heads out to find Adam Parvati's son. He finds him with a snake charmer they knew in the ghetto, and the three travel to Bombay. There, Saleem eats some chutney which reminds him of his nanny.

Rushdie portrays a character who is caught between two cultures. Having European manners, culture and thinking, his doubts keep nibbling at his mind. This

situation clearly illustrates the main problem of many Indians and that is a search of individual for his identity. That searching confronts the protagonist with a dilemma whether to accept newly acquired experiences on one hand or to stay deeply connected with the culture and traditions of his own native country on the other.

This study uses reliable ideas and examples from the famous literary works such as: *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai and *Clash of Civilizations* by Samuel P. Huntington. The study focuses on the literature that portrays multicultural conflicts taking place in post colonial India and clarify the way they reflect in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* which however, includes the features of the above mentioned texts, which is related to the theory under discussion.

This novel has been interpreted by various critics in different ways. The areas of cultural clash and consequences have not been analyzed yet. This is the main problem appeared in course of study. Therefore, this study is an attempt to find out the solutions to the following questions.

- i) How and why did cultural clashes take place in Indian society as described in *Midnight's Children*?
- ii) What were the consequences of the cultural clashes?

Various cultural clashes took place in Post-colonial India. Immigration of Adam Aziz, the grandfather of Saleem Sinai from Germany to India. Amritsar massacre, formation of Muslim League and conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims, involuntary clash between Indian and British culture prior to Indian independence and Saleem's presence in Pakistan etc. are the epitomes of multicultural clashes depicted in *Midnight's Children*. Such multicultural clashes took place because of the British colonialism and economic imperialism. The British colonialism not only brought Englishmen in India but also various cultures and their economic

activities which resulted into multiculturalism in the Indian society. Multicultural clashes brought various effects in Post-colonial India. The Indian nationals faced identity crisis, religious riots took place between the Hindus and the Muslims which resulted into the partition of the British India. People faced internal conflicts within themselves because of the admixture of multiple cultures.

### **Review of Literature**

*Midnight's Children* is a 1981 novel by Salman Rushdie that deals with India's transition from British Colonialism to independence and the partition of British India. The main motive of the novel seems to capture the post colonial reality in India and multicultural clashes appearing after the independence. Various scholars and critics have interpreted the novel from different perspectives and on various components such as magic realism, hybridity and post coloniality.

Samuel Huntington, the author of *Clash of Civilization*, predicts a possible course of events: "In this new world the most pervasive, important and dangerous conflicts will not be between social classes, rich or poor, or other economically defined groups, but between people belonging to different cultural entities, tribal wars and ethnic conflicts" (34) will occur within civilization. Huntington argues that in the modern world, the most penetrating and serious clashes will appear due to cultural differences among the people rather than due to the socio-economic causes.

M.H. Abrahams states, "the novel employs the formal technique of magic realism, a hybrid of realism and the supernatural, through myth and historical events, and Rushdie simultaneously represents ordinary events alongside fantastic elements" (203). Abrahams claims that Rushdie represents the customary events with implausible elements at the same time.

In *Origin and Originality in Rushdie's Fiction*, Martin Hennard Dutheil points

to the central idea of *Midnight's Children* as "the power of fiction to capture and invent a new reality" (10). In the afore-cited passage, Saleem the protagonist of the novel, reminds the reader that individual perception as created by memory is an illusion that ultimately comprises a truth of an individual. Dutheil argues about the main theme of the novel as the ability of fabrication to take control and discover a new real world.

Michal Reder notes, "Rushdie portrays history as unreliable when one searches for a single unified historical truth. By perpetrating a bold falsification of the 'truth', Rushdie creates limits for the working of memory as a creator of alternate realities that replace a unity of historical truth" (225-49). Reder talks about the novelist's style of depicting history as sporadic when one looks for a uniform historic fidelity as a single entity.

In *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Hutcheon expounds upon the *impossibility of narrative reality*: "If the speaking subject is constituted in and by language, s/he cannot be totally autonomous and in control of her or his own subjectivity, for discourse is constrained by the rules of language and open to multiple connotations of anonymous cultural codes" (168). He continues several pages later, voicing her analysis of Rushdie and other authors of postmodern fiction: "They make their readers question their own interpretations" (180). The impossibility of reliable narration encourages Rushdie to play with the conventional techniques of narrative, providing a narcissistic narrative with elements of oral narrative and ultimately stimulates the function of memory.

In *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie articulates utility of the necessarily unreliable narration as mimicking memory: "History is always ambiguous. Facts are hard to establish, and capable of being given many meanings" (25). Rushdie notes that

people read and internalize the world and its events in different ways from one another, based on individual perception.

Multiculturalism also serves as an instrument of political and economical interests. Some critics contend that the multicultural argument for the preservation of culture is premised on a problematic view of culture and of the individual's relationship to culture. Cultures are not distinct, self contained wholes; they have long interacted and influenced one another through war, imperialism, trade and migration. In the latter respect multiculturalism is closely allied with nationalism.

The previous studies alone recently, have thrown much light on the various aspects of Rushdie and his novel. There are much rooms for interpretations to be done from different perspectives. Thus, the present study is focused on cultural clashes in post colonial India and an outcome through the interaction between multiculturalism and colonialism.

### **Outline of the Study**

This study is divided into three chapters; each chapter is further divided into its sub-chapters.

The first chapter is related to the background of the study which has been further sub-divided into three sections. The first section presents various arguments reflecting cultural clashes in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. The thesis statement has been incorporated as the major argument. Related literature review regarding the novel and novelist has also been embedded in the second section of this chapter. Moreover, the outline of the study has been included under the introductory chapter.

The second chapter deals with the factors that gave rise to the cultural clashes in *Midnight's Children* with the introduction of multiculturalism, colonialism, post-colonialism, development of British Empire in India and historical and political issues

in *Midnight's Children*. Authentic websites, thesis, journals and library resources have been used as per the need for the proper analysis of the chapter. This chapter has been further sub-divided into five sections. A brief introduction to the contextual description of multiculturalism by different critics has been included in the first section. The second section deals with the concept of colonialism. a brief discussion of post-colonialism has been presented as the third chapter. Moreover, the expansion of British Empire and influence of the East India company over the Indian Sub-continent and its reflection *Midnight's Children* has been incorporated in the fourth section of this chapter respectively.

Additionally, a brief introduction to the historical and political issues in *Midnight's Children* is also incorporated in the last section of this chapter. The third or the final chapter is a conclusive note that assumes multicultural clashes and consequences in *Midnight's Children*.



## Chapter 2

### Factors causing Cultural Clashes in *Midnight's Children*

*Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdi is a model work carrying out some of the possible causes of cultural clashes. The following sections in this chapter try to explicate the causes behind the cultural clashes. Firstly, an attempt is made to define what culture and cultural clashes are.

Culture is social behaviour and norms found in human societies. Culture is considered a central concept in anthropology, encompassing the range of phenomena that are transmitted through social learning in human societies. Cultural universals are found in all human societies; these include expressive forms like art, music, dance, ritual, religion, and technologies like tool usage, cooking, shelter and clothing. The concept of material culture covers the physical expressions of culture, such as technology, architecture and art, where as the immaterial aspects of culture such as principles of social organizations, mythology, philosophy, literature, and science comprise the intangible cultural heritage of a society.

When the members of a society tolerate and respect other cultures, there is cultural harmony. There is a comfortable coexistence of various cultures. If people from different cultures cannot tolerate other cultural values, then there is antagonism between these cultures. This is an example of cultural clash. Such clashes happen to appear when a group of people from one culture hate people from other cultures.

In Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Saleem, the protagonist of the novel, from the beginning of *Midnight's Children* asserts that he is breaking apart, struggling throughout the novel to prevent his imminent end, but ultimately realizes and accepts his new condition. Moreover, fragmentation can be seen as an allegory of India's disintegration. Saleem, born to a Hindu mother and Christian father, later on

nourished by Muslim parents, the protagonist is enclosed by the three major ethnic and religious groups; Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. The novel depicts various cultural clashes and their consequences through the use of various elements. They are discussed as follows:

### **Multiculturalism**

Multiculturalism is a widely used term in the literary criticism of post colonial literature. The true implication of the terms has always been subject of debate which makes it difficult for any critic to arrive at an undisputed meaning and implication of the term so widely used in the modern literary criticism.

The term multiculturalism consists of two words 'multi' and 'culture'. The word 'culture' owes its birth to the Latin word, cultura which comes from colere, which means to 'cultivate.' Different literary sociological and anthropological studies define culture in different ways. V.K. Gogak elaborates the idea of culture as: "Culture, therefore, consists in man's harmonious and balanced cultivation of all the faculties in man; intellect and emotion, intuition and sense, perception, flesh as well as spirit" (Gogak 03). Gogak's views aptly justify the complexity of the very idea behind the concept of culture and, at the same time there is obvious denial to the fact that no single association suffices in rendering a complete and holistic idea of culture.

The definition of multiculturalism depends a great deal upon the context in which it is discussed. The concept of multiculturalism is constantly varying as more people make their voices heard to a recurrently increasing readers. Multiculturalism implies the diverse perspectives people develop and maintain through varieties of experience and background stemming from racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation and class differences in our society.

The term multiculturalism, however, has not been used only to describe a

culturally diverse society, but also to refer to a kind of policy that aims at protecting cultural diversity. It is sometimes used to describe a condition of society, more precisely. It is also used to describe a society where a variety of different cultures co exist. Many countries in the world are culturally diverse. India is just one example. China is another country that can also be considered culturally diverse. In contemporary China there are 56 officially recognized ethnic groups, and 55 of these groups are ethnic minorities who make up approximately 8.41 percent of China's overall population. The other ethnic group is that of Han Chinese, which holds majority status (quoted in Han 36, He 42).

There are varieties of ways whereby societies can be diverse, for example, culture can come in many forms (03). Perhaps the chief ways in which a country can be culturally diverse is by having different religious groups, different linguistic groups, groups that define themselves by their territorial identity and variant racial groups.

Multiculturalism is the acceptance or promotion of various ethnic cultures. It is diversity valid to the demographic make-up of a specific place, often at the organization level, e.g. schools, business, neighborhood, cities or nations. In this context, multiculturalists advocate extending equitable status to distinct ethnic and religious groups without promoting any specific ethnic, religious, and cultural community values as central phenomena.

Furthermore, multiculturalism means that one cultural identity does not dominate other cultural identities, that people are free to participate in their faith community without denying or hiding their cultural identities. It means nurturing a religious community where people of all races, ethnicities, and cultures see their cultural identities reflected and affirmed in every aspect of congregational life

worship, fellowship, leadership, religious education and so on.

From the political point of view, the term multiculturalism can be perceived at the best way of reacting on cultural differences. It works on an assumption that minority groups are not treated on the same level as other citizens. Multiculturalism also serves as an instrument of political and economical interests. In the same context, Sarah Song claims:

Some critics contend that the multicultural argument for the preservation of cultures is premised on a problematic view of culture and of the individuals' not distinct, self-contained wholes; they have long interacted and influenced one another through war, imperialism, trade and migration. In the latter respect multi-culturalism is closely allied with nationalism. (14)

Song argues about the concept of culture saying that culture is not clearly defined and is difficult to understand and that multiculturalism is closely connected to patriotism.

Multiculturalism is a body of thought in political philosophy about the proper way to respond to cultural and religious diversity. Multiculturalism has been used as an umbrella term to characterize the moral and political claims of wide range of disadvantaged groups, including African Americans, women, gays, lesbians, and disabled. Most theories of multiculturalism tend to focus their arguments on immigrants who are ethnic and religious minorities, minority nations and indigenous people.

Multiculturalism is important for understanding a changing reality at national and international levels. Multiculturalism used in such a normative sense, refers to an ideology that attaches positive value to cultural diversity, calls for equal recognition of different cultural groups and calls upon the state to support such groups in various

ways. "We are all multiculturalist now", Nathen Glazer declared with characteristic bluntness and authority in 1997. Multiculturalism of course has had press in recent years, but the charges against multiculturalism as set out in public debate are either misguided or exaggerated when set against evidence garnered by social scientists and from government inquiries.

To sum up, multiculturalism is the acceptance of a number of cultures within a multiethnic society. Those who favour a policy of multiculturalism assert that it promotes respect for individual differences, fosters diversity and promotes beneficial cultural evolution. The fruits of multiculturalism and immigration are seen in everyday life. From ethnic enclaves in urban areas to ethnic foods in grocery store, people experience the fusion of different cultures.

### **Colonialism**

The term colonialism is defined as "a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another". It is about the dominance of a strong nation over another weaker one. Colonialism happens when a strong nation sees that its material interest and affluence require that it expands outside its borders. It is the acquisition of the colonialist by brute force, of extra markets, extra resources of raw materials and manpower from the colonies.

*Collins English Dictionary* defines colonialism as "the policy and practice of a power in extending control over weaker people or areas."

The 2006 *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* uses the term colonialism to describe the process of European settlements and political control over the rest of the world, including America, Australia and parts of Africa and Asia." It discusses the distinction between colonialism and imperialism and states that "given the difficulty of consistently distinguishing between two terms, this entry uses colonialism as a

broad concept that refers to the project of European political domination from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries that ended with the national liberation movements of the 1960s.

Oppression is a basic ingredient of colonialism. There is no denying it that oppression dehumanizes both the oppressor and the oppressed. There are so many views on the effects of colonialism. These views depend on the political and ideological position of those who disseminate them. In spite of ugly face of colonialism, it did a lot of good to the colonized. It brought to the colonized a new vision of life, mainly western and advanced. It fostered a strong sense of national unity. Moreover, it brought industrialization and modern economy to the colonies and above all, it advanced cultural life where it occurred.

Colonialism can refer to a transnational process of domination, the policies by which it is carried out, and the ideologies that underwrite it. Modern colonialism has taken various forms since the Iberian, British, and French (and later German, Belgian, and Italian) incursions into Asia, Africa, and the Americas—whether for armed trade, armed missionizing, or armed settlement—began to escalate from the late fifteenth century onward.

The continued expansion of capitalism has always depended on colonialism—that is, on externalizing its costs and reaching ever farther afield for inputs. This means that a political entity with an interest in generating profit has to project its power outside its territorial jurisdiction in order to do so—and that's imperialism. This may occur through economic or military means, hard power or soft, or some combination thereof. Furthermore, colonial projects and imperial projections require some form of racism as a legitimizing base. The stability of all colonial systems has ultimately depended on maintaining, at great effort, a strict line, supposedly

existential but in truth ideological, of which one side must be portrayed as irredeemably alien, primitive, inferior, evil, scary, and/or less human. That was the only way to create justification for enslavement or genocide, whether to a public whose participation was required or another power. Some forms of this have included Christian missionary efforts, Orientalism, racialist pseudoscience, and the liberal civilizing mission, aka the white man's burden. This is why anticolonial resistance movements in the Global South have so often been interconnected with antiracist mobilizations in the Global North; they were both linked manifestations of the same phenomenon, same logic, and same historical processes.

Two of these processes—two related techniques of colonization—are of particular relevance to contemporary repertoires of civil disobedience and their relationship to space. The first is military occupation, in which an imperial power moves its army into a place to demand its submission by brute force. The second is a subset of the colonial enterprise known as settler colonialism—in which an imperial power engages in what amounts to ethnic cleansing or a massive population transfer, by moving its own people permanently into a region, rather than just defending bases or enclaves. Occupation in these contexts means the illegitimate claiming of space: invasion, conquest, sanctioned vigilantism against prior residents. That, of course is the dirty open secret on which the United States was founded: there is no unoccupied land here.

This is why decolonization may actually be a more accurate term for what protest movements that utilize occupation as a tactic intend to do when they establish a sustained presence in a space claimed by government, military, or corporate entities, such as (to name just a few examples) the American Indian Movement did at Alcatraz, the Bureau of Indian Affairs headquarters, and elsewhere since the 1970s;

students did at universities throughout California and New York in 2008–9; and Argentinean workers did in their factories in 2001. The first example is certainly a more direct opposition to explicit colonization and conquest in the textbook sense. Nevertheless, all such actions are essentially moves toward reversing the process of dispossession; dismantling relationships of inequity and the legal/governmental structures that protect them; halting the suck of wealth extraction from the bottom to the top of the pyramid; restoration of the commons; and refusal to sacrifice the priorities of collective social well-being to the profits of an elite few. When externalized and mapped onto racialized divisions between an elite and a population to which it is seen as external, these grievances are all aspects of the colonization process.

When looking at justification of colonialism, I was an issue which was in the foreground of many philosophers and thinkers. European rule in the nineteenth century was at its peak but, paradoxically, "in the same period when most political philosophers began to defend the principles of universalism and equality, the same individuals still defended the legitimacy of colonialism and imperialism. One way of reconciling those apparently opposed principles was the argument known as the 'civilizing mission'. The combination of these factors caused that Europeans and the British Empire came to believe that they have the obligation to civilize the rest of the world.

Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of *Midnight's Children*, describes the colonization of Bombay, and demonstrates how power shifted from the early settlers to the later colonizers. The Portuguese and British illustrated their power by shifting the city's association with the "benign residing influence of the goddess Mumbadevi, whose name- Mumbadevi, Mumbabai, Mumbaimay well have become the city's"



(Rushdie 101). Instead, "the Portuguese named the place Bom Bhai for its harbor, and not for the goddess of the pomfret Folk. The renaming and naming of place remains a significant aspect of colonial rule, as the colonizers attempt to assert their control over their colonized lands. Renaming the city, from Mumbai to the Portuguese "Bom Bhai" and later to the British "Bombay", shows the power shifts within the city and nation. Although the city was later renamed to Mumbai in 1996 the city renamed "Bombay" until that date.

The shift from a British India to an independent India remains connected to the Indian independence movements occurring within Bombay. The narrator describes the final change in power to the Indians from the British as a change occurring in the "dominion" of Bombay, "in August 1947, the British having ended the dominion of fishing-nets, coconuts, rice and Mumbadevi, were about to depart themselves, no dominion is ever lasting (Rushdie 103). The novel describes this change, India as a colonized land to an independent nation, as a change occurring within Bombay. Bombay remains central in the movement to create an independent India, and Saleem, the novel's narrator, demonstrates Bombay's importance in this struggle through various historical references.

### **Postcolonialism**

The term "Postcolonialism" refers broadly to the ways in which race, ethnicity, culture and human identity, itself are represented in the modern era, after many colonized countries gained their independence. However, some critics use the term to refer to all culture and cultural products influenced by imperialism from the moment of colonization until the twenty-first century. It is the historical period or state of affairs representing the aftermath of Western colonialism, the term can also be used to describe the concurrent project to reclaim and rethink the history and agency of

people subordinated under various forms of imperialism. The term should not be confused with the claim that the world we live in now is actually devoid of colonialism.

Talking about the post colonial literature, it is the literature of countries that were colonized, mainly by European countries. It often addresses the problems and consequences of the decolonization of a country, especially questions relating to the political and cultural independence of formerly subjugated people, and themes such as racialism and colonialism. A range of literary theory has evolved around the subject. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* remains central text in postcolonial literature. The novel's importance and significance as a postcolonial text arises from the novel's ability to intertwine three major themes: the creation and telling of history, the creation and telling of a nation's and an individual's identity, and the creation and telling of stories. Within these three connected themes, the novel explores the problems of post coloniality, depicted in the novel as the difficulties in assigning ones point of personal or national origin, the problems in determining one's personal and national history, and the impossibility of finding and achieving personal and national authentic identity.

The novel openly explores Indian post coloniality, while discussing the problems associated with the post coloniality. By understanding the novel, with its complete embodiment of hybridity, it becomes possible to understand the difficulties and problems associated with post coloniality, along with understanding post coloniality itself.

The novel's inherently connected levels of hybridity work together to form a new picture of India, as the nation becomes a postcolonial land. The novel effectively and clearly depicts the problems of post coloniality and through the use of hybridity,

the novel seeks to show if these problems remain may be solved, and if possible, seeks to solve them.

In many works of literature, specifically those coming out of Africa, the Middle East, and the Indian subcontinent, we meet characters who are struggling with their identities in the wake of colonization, or the establishment of colonies in another nation. For example, the British had a colonial presence in India from the 1700s until India gained its independence in 1947. As you can imagine, the people of India, as well as the characters in Indian novels, must deal with the economic, political and emotional effects that the British brought and left behind. This is true for literature that comes out of any colonized nation. In many cases, the literature stemming from these events is both emotional and political.

The postcolonial theorists enter these texts through a specific critical lens, or a specific way of reading a text. Postcolonial critics reinterpret and examine the values of literary texts, by focusing on the contexts in which they were produced, and reveal the colonial ideologies that are concealed within. In postcolonial literature, the nation-building project seeks to erase the colonial past by rejecting and resisting the Western constructions of the other as primitive, savage, etc. postcolonialism includes a vast array of writers and subjects. In fact, the very different geographical, historical, social, religious and economic concerns of the different ex-colonies dictate a wide variety in the nature and subject of most postcolonial writing. In the postcolonial period, however, language and the ability to speak, write and publish has become an enabling tool for postcolonial authors.

Postcolonialism is a very broad theory. At its most basic, postcolonialism deals with the effects of colonialism on societies and states. It concerns itself with the relation that is incited due to colonialism, which is the taking over and expansion of

colonies by people from another colony. In essence, postcolonialism deals with the ways, race, identity, culture and ethnicity are represented after an area has been colonized. It pays particular attention to the response of the oppressed, which can be both radical and subtle. It also deals with the conflicts of identity and cultural belonging.

To sum up, postcolonialism consists of a set of theories in philosophy and various approaches to literary analysis that are concerned with literature written in English in countries that were or still are colonies of other countries. For the most part, post colonial studies exclude literature that represents either British or American view points and concentrates on writings from colonized or formerly colonized cultures. Rooted in colonial power and prejudice, postcolonialism develops from a four-thousand-year history of strained cultural relations between colonies in Africa and Asia and the Western World.

To sum up, colonialism is a form of domination- the control by individuals or groups over territory and/or behavior of other individuals or groups. Widespread accord also exists that colonialism refers to group domination and not to social relations or processes among sets of individuals at the family or sub clan level. In other words, colonialism is that form of inter group domination in which settlers in significant number migrate permanently to the colony from the colonizing power.

### **The British Rule in India**

The conquest of India took nearly a hundred years. In 1757, the British Army fought and won the Battle of Plassey, and the British East India Company was established, an event which is widely seen as the beginning of the British rule over India. During World War I, there was a great sense of loyalty and generosity from India towards the British, and a will to provide both soldiers and resources. As a

result, there was some tendency from the British government to move towards a certain degree of self-government, but in 1919, the Rowalt Act was passed, which provided the British Viceroy's government with extraordinary powers to quell sedition by silencing the press, detaining political activists without trial, and arresting any individual suspected of treason without a warrant. This resulted in a national work stoppage to mark the widespread discontent. In Amritsar, Punjab, some 10,000 people had assembled to celebrate Baisakhi, a Sikh festival at Jallianwala Bagh on April 13, 1919. The British soldiers fired 1,650 rounds into the crowds of unarmed and unsuspecting people, killing 379 and wounding 1,137 people. Even though the first people in charge of India were cruel, malicious and greedy, things began to change after the appointment of Lord Cornwallis as governor - general of British India, as Read and Fisher state, "Cornwallis was the first of the new line of aristocrats who would be sent out one after another until 1947 to rule India on behalf of the British government, men who already have fortunes in England and so would have no need to make more in India" (24). The authors further explain that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the British understood Indians' customs and treated them with respect, but as more British arrived in India, the Anglo-Indian relationship deteriorated rapidly (45-46). The authors argue about the rule of British people over India one by one. They also claim that people who already live a comfortable life in their own native country need not to come to India to gain more prestige. Due to the arrival of more British people in India, the relationship between the British and Indians worsened.

Read and Fisher describe the attitude of the Marquess of Dalhousie, who was appointed governor - general in 1848 as:

"[...] he was determined to turn India into an Asian Britain, [...]"

Together with the new educational system, Dalhousie's three great

engines Railways, uniform Postage, and the Electra Telegraph - were to revolutionize communications throughout India, playing a vital part in its unification and making a national independence movement possible in little more than 30 years." (47)

The authors explain Dalhousie's governing as not only the period of annexations and consolidations of the territory under the British Empire but also the period of prosperity, modernization, technical progress and the period of administrative and social reforms.

Consolidation of the British power connected with interfering into social structures introducing the innovations, reforms, different system of education life philosophy and thinking provoked the Indian people and caused troubles. The British economic policy transformed India into raw material base and the developing English industry caused, that India became the primary market for finished products. Their sphere of influence was growing. In 1813, the Christian churches started their missions and since that Hindu and Muslims considered all the reform activities as an attempt to convert them to Christianity [qtd. in Strnad 754].

It has been said that the British Empire was picked up in a "fit of absence of mind." Nowhere was this more true than in the case of India which gradually came under British rule, not by the efforts of British government, but by those of British East India Company, founded in 1599 by a group of merchants in search of nothing more than "quiet trade". However, circumstances would thwart these peaceful intentions, and over the next 250 years the British would find themselves more and more in the role of conquerors and governors than traders. Not only would the British have a profound effect on India's history, but the "crown jewel of the British Empire would also affect Western Civilization." This is reflected in such English words a

bungalow, verandah, punch, and pajamas, and such customs as smoking cigars, playing polo and taking showers, as well as more profound influences in the realms of religion and philosophy.

An increasing influence of the British Empire and gradual transition of India under the rule of the East India Company can be dated from the third Battle of Panipat. After this battle, Mughal and Maratha joint forces suffered a disastrous defeat and it appeared that the Indian sub-continent lost any uniting power and authority. The initial chaos in India was gradually replaced by a new system of power. In the 1770s, the expensive policy of the East India Company started to interfere in the northern and middle India. The East India Company decided to use a tactic, which was typical for the Indian policy at that time. They supported one of the pretenders and in case of victory. They required as an exchange for the help provided that they will get a certain territorial area to manage. Thanks to the tactic, the British Empire ensured itself progressive penetration and annexation of their territory (qtd. in Strnad 539).

The expansion of the British Empire and the influence of the East India Company over the Indian Subcontinent gradually grew up. Apart from the Maratha Empire, there were no other rivals, who would be able to face to the British Empire. After their defeat, the rest of the Maratha nations were forced to sign unequal agreements, accept the presence of the British residents and in the end they became the part of the Indian princely states.

The British successively started to annex the individual territories. After the annexation of Punjab, the British resident was authorized to manage and control all the matters in the region. During the annexation of Awadh, the British power was legalized and they suddenly took the control over a huge territory. The East India

Company became a legal regional institution and was able to face their rivals with a strong economy and army.

According to Filipovsky, England did not want to be sidelined and the traders tried hard to make business contacts with the Orient. Their interest was stimulated by profitable business with spice and other east commodities, which were for the whole 16<sup>th</sup> Century governed by the Portugal. Growing demand for spice, religious rebellion against the authority of the pope connected with the English reformation and new political situation were the main reasons which brought about the open attack against Portuguese and Spanish monopoly (607).

In 1609, the East India Company granted certain privileges which allowed it to declare war or to conclude peace, make relationships with orient monarchs, appoint governors, hire soldiers, build for tresses and the main privilege was to capture and send back captured ships and merchants who offended against restored monopoly. Growing demand for the luxury articles such as silk, coffee and tea contributed to the success and prosperity of the company.

In the 1680s, the board of directors of the English East India Company started to take interest in transforming business organizations into territorial power and it would build up its influence from the resources of controlled are. With reference to the same context, Filipovsky states that, these tendencies started to develop into power ambition, in advancing business and political interests via subsidiary alliances and annexations. That became in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century the main instrument for building the European colonial Empires on the subcontinent.

In 1947, India gained its independence and almost 350 years of colonial rule of the British Empire ended up. In the same context Margaret Brown and Rosemary Foot claim that, "although the influence of the fallen British rule in India was still



enormous, it was not only the "colonial tie" which caused the inflow of immigrants" (Brown and Foot 49). The authors argue about the impact of the British rule in India and the causes of immigration even after India gained its independence from the British rule.

Brown and Foot further provide several reasons for the inflow of the immigrants. According to them, a shift of people from their country of origin was connected with "the post war labour shortage in Britain and the commonwealth membership of the successor states of British India. This made the citizens of these countries simultaneously citizens of the United Kingdom" (49). The British Empire went through dramatic social changes and decline in power. It was strongly affected by the fact that its position changed from being the largest and grandest of European nineteenth-century capitalist imperialism, controlling a quarter of the world's population, into a largely symbolic and ceremonial Commonwealth of Nations.

These historical events resulted in the perception of immigrants in the British society since this decline in imperial power was not accompanied by an equal and concomitant decline in racial ideas and ideologies for the advent of black immigration to Britain in the 1940s and 1950s (qtd. in Rich 1-11).

To sum up, the history of the British rule refers to the period of British rule on the Indian sub continent between 1858 and 1947. The system of governance was instituted in 1858 when the rule of the East India Company was transferred to the Crown in the person of Queen Victoria (who in 1876 was proclaimed Empress of India). The British presence like Robert Clive, of the British East India Company, combined military prowess with a ruthless ambition, and became fabulously wealthy. With wealth came power and traders took control of huge swaths of India.

### **Historical and Political Issues in *Midnight's Children***

*Midnight's Children* is a complex novel narrating the story of Saleem Sinai, an Indian, who is born at the stroke of midnight on August 15<sup>th</sup> 1947, at the precise time of Indians' independence. The time of Saleem's birth connects him closely with his country, making him "mysteriously hand cuffed to history" (Rushdie 03) with his "destinies indissolubly chained to those of his country" (Rushdie 03). The novel starts with the story of Saleem's grandfather, Adam Aziz, who is a westernized intellectual and recently returned from Germany, where he has been educated as a doctor. Since Adam would not have been able to study in Germany if not for the British Empire, he is a product of the British Empire as well as a witness to its falling part.

The novel is a loose allegory for events in India both before and primarily after the independence and partition of India. The narrative is told in the first person by Saleem Sinai, who by his birth on the exact instance of India's independence claims to have become handcuffed to history. The protagonist of the story is Saleem himself who was born with telepathic powers, as well as an enormous and constantly dripping nose with an extremely sensitive sense of smell. An important structural principle in the novel is that the development of India and the development of Saleem seem to be connected. Some events occur at the same time in India and to Saleem and his family. The birth of the child and the nation at the exactly same instance is one example.

India that Rushdie describes in his novel is a country which has a complex culture and where multiplicity, pluralism and hybridity are central ideas. The novel hints at the innumerable possibilities of the country and India is at once tremendously plentiful, heterogeneous and many things at once. The novel suggests that the writer will only last for a time and generation of writers must reinterpret India to the Indians.

The protagonist in the novel is a product of many cultures, religions and traditions. The tradition of India is also a mixed tradition and there is no such thing as a pure Indian culture, a true Indian religion or a true Indian tradition. The novel shows that India cannot be understood as one whole, but a country that multifaceted must be divided into many different fragments in order to be understood.

The novel is described into three books. The book begins with the story of Sinai family particularly with events leading up to India's independence and partition. The story is told retrospectively by grown up Saleem, who writes his incredible life story before his death comparing himself to Scheherazade, in order to warn his nation and prevent his people from forgetting their history since, as he claims, the Indian are a nation of forgetters. There are moments of terror, but they go away" (Rushdie 43). At this point the novel might be considered as autobiographical and Saleem's warning might be taken as Rushdie's own advice to his Indian nation. Yet being written in English, the novel might be taken as a warning for all nations against forgetting their own pasts and against tyrannical despots.

Saleem Sinai, the narrator of *Midnight's Children*, opens the novel by explaining that he was born on midnight August 15, 1947 at the exact moment India gained its independence from British rule. Now nearly his thirty-first birthday, he believes that his body is beginning to crack and fall apart, fearing that his death is imminent, he grows anxious to tell his life story. Padma, his loyal and loving companion, serves as his patient, often skeptical audience.

The novel is Saleem's memoir, written during his thirteenth year. The shattered, important, prematurely aged resident manager of a Bombay pickling factory, he writes with his plump, illiterate mistress Padma, as his only audience. Born precisely at midnight, he is dubbed "The Child of Midnight" by an exuberant

press. His fortunes and those of one thousand other midnight children are mystically linked with the fate of India during the following thirty years. His complex family history also mirrors the troubled history of the area.

Born at the stroke of midnight on the day of India's independence, the life of Saleem is permanently handcuffed to the history of his nation. Narrated by a thirty year old Saleem to his partner and colleague Padma the novel charts the story of his life throughout the tumultuous history of India's journey to independence and partition and beyond. Starting with his grandfather's return to Kashmir region of India, in 1915, Saleem counts down the history of his family and his nation, migrating across time and across India, until the story converges on the moment of his Birth in Dr. Narlikars' Nursing Home in Bombay on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947.

The cultural, linguistic, religious and political differences faced by India are shared by 1,001 children of the midnight hour, most notably Saleem whose every action seems to alter the course of Indian history and development. As a young child he encounters the language riots, sparking their future war, cry with a childish song he sings to marchers. Shortly afterwards his family leaves Bombay and migrates to Karachi, Pakistan. When war breaks out between India and Pakistan, Indian Bombs kill Saleem's entire family except his sister, Jamila, and during the air raids, Saleem hits his head on the family's ever present silver spittoon, erasing his memory entirely.

Saleem later encounters the Indira Gandhi-proclaimed state of Emergency and her son Sanjay's "cleansing" of the slums as government focus attack the ghetto and Parvati, the witch, is killed. Along with all other remaining children of Midnight, Saleem is held as a political prisoner, during the emergency and is sterilized to prevent reproduction. This is narrated during passages which contain scathing criticisms by the emergency regime.

Returning to Bombay, Saleem smells Chutney and is reminded of his childhood. Tracing the factory where it is made, he finds it is run by Mary Pereira, his old nanny, finally setting here he begins his own pickling process, chronicling the tumultuous history of a life entwined with the birth of a nation.

The novel has many minor characters all of whom come into contact with Saleem and all of whom influence him to some extent. The purely fictional part of the novel is manifested through the use of magic realism, making use of magic features, supernatural skills, fantasy and unusual things.

In his novel, Rushdie writes that "The reality is a question of perspective" (229) and therefore in the novel, he creates his own history of India. Yet, on the other hand, the reader might get occasionally confused since the novelist, admitting that everybody's reality is different, sometime tries to support the historical facts depicted in the novel, claiming that "reality can have metaphoric content; that does not make it less real" (278).

To sum up, the novel deals with the historical and political issues. The major historical events are narrated as if they happened due to Saleem's actions, often misfortunate and done unintentionally. Since, Saleem is born on Independence Day, the historical events that took place before his birth are depicted as if they happened due to his relatives, mostly because of his grandfather.

### Chapter 3

#### **Multicultural Clashes and Consequences in *Midnight's Children***

*Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie was published in 1981 and it won the Booker Prize for fiction. The success of the novel was enormous because it describes post colonial reality after the decline of the British Empire and deals with the problems of immigration and multicultural clashes. On top of that, the novel leaves an indelible impression on readers minds all over the world.

The novel discusses various multicultural conflicts. The first multicultural conflict discusses a problem of immigration. At the beginning of the story, the novelist describes Adam Aziz, Saleem's grandfather who has spent five years in Germany, where he was studying to be a doctor. He is back at home but does not feel comfortable at his birthplace. He suddenly realizes that the years in Germany have returned him to a hostile environment. It is apparent that Rushdie's intention is to point out the internal conflict of an individual. The novelist portrays a character that is caught between the two cultures having experienced different life, different European manners, culture and thinking.

This situation clearly illustrates the main problem of many Indians and that is a searching of individual for his identity. That searching confronts Aadam with a dilemma whether to accept newly acquired experiences on the one hand or whether to stay deeply connected with the traditions of his country on the other. Therefore, the searching for his identity can be seen as a consequence of historical development since their sense of identity went through a long-lasting historical progress and Indians had begun to develop a sense of Indianness.

The multicultural conflict taking place in Amritsar captures an important historic event in Indian history. This incident foreshadow the British imperialism

decreasing and slowly, but inevitably coming to an end. "1991 was a turning point of the influence of the British rule in the history of India and Amritsar was the Pivot" (James 415-17). Rushdie's character Aadam is situated in the novel as a witness and direct participant of Amritsar massacre. He soaks up the atmosphere of Hartal the day of mourning of stillness of silence. It was a form of public protest when public services and schools were not open since 'Gandhi has declared that the whole of India shall, on that day, come to a halt. To mourn, in peace, the continuing presence of the British" (Rushdie 37). Knowing Rushdie's style of writing, magic meant to be a witness of significant historical turn out and thereby placed into a centre of the massacre. Rushdie depicts it metaphorically when describing Aadam's wound received in Amritsar. Aadam's contemplation and his internal thoughts before the massacre indicates that he realizes that the British rule is over but bequeaths its legacy in India. The main point of this conflict is to highlight an increasing dissatisfaction with British dominion.

The event connected with the Muslim League is another multicultural conflict described in the novel. Basically, the main causes of the conflict were struggles between Muslims and Hindus. The Muslim League was created as an opposition to the Indian National Congress. Despite Congress being an organization standing up for the interests of India as a whole, Muslims felt both lack of proper education and representation in government. The dispute between Hindus and Muslims has a series of long standing struggles persisting from the time before independence. The approach of Independence Day precipitated the mass migration of millions of Indians, Hindus moving from provinces designated to Pakistan, and Muslims leaving Indian territory. The conflict between Muslims and Hindus described in the novel appears shortly after the formation of the new states. Saleem's father Ahmed runs a business

but his company is shut down and his assets are gone. He regards it as an attack against Muslims and the intention to expect them to Pakistan. One can see that Rushdie emphasizes the fact that the antipathies between Muslims and Hindus clearly came to surface after partition. Their lives are directly threatened when Mahatma Gandhi shot dead. They feared that an assassinator was a Muslim which would get them into trouble. Finally, they find out the assassinator was not a Muslim but a Hindu. Although they stay in Bombay, the tension between these two groups remain. Saleem, despite of his Muslim origin, feels to be a Bombay to for the rest of his life. One can say that involuntary resettlement was problem of man. People were afraid to stay in their country because of their religion. Historically speaking, Jinnah's plea to regard religion as a personal matter not a state matter was ignored. Muslims were fleeing India, Hindus and Sikhs were fleeing Pakistan.

The involuntary clash with the British culture is another important multicultural conflict which takes place around the time of early independence of India and it points out the clash between Indian people and British culture. One can see that the author's aim is to capture the atmosphere before partition. The British were leaving and selling their properties. Rushdie's major point permeating through this conflict is to demonstrate contempt and superiority of the Englishmen who were leaving India.

Saleem and *Midnight's Children* conference captures the atmosphere in independent India. Its efforts to gain freedom were fulfilled but the euphoria of independence was short lived as partition brought disastrous consequences for India in the wake of communal conflict. India was confronted both with the stupendous task of national integration and economic development.

Rushdie portrays Saleem as he celebrates his tenth birthday and recapitulates



the progress and development of India after ten years. Rushdie also suggests a solution in metaphorical description of Saleem. Saleem has the ability to read people's thoughts and sets up the midnight children's conference consisting of the children gifted with various supernatural abilities. Rushdie's description of childrens' thoughts is parallel to India. India after ten years found itself in uncertain position and diversity of ways that India might have followed. The same parallel is also found between Saleem and his country.

The most important multicultural clash noted in the novel is Saleem's presence in Pakistan which depicts the situation in Pakistan in 1958. Historically, Pakistan was at that time under the control of Ajud Khan and relationships with its neighbors were unstable. Pakistan carried on in maintaining its cooperation with the United States but the relations with China and India worsened. India severed friendly relationship with China after its occupation of Tibet. An entente between Pakistan and China evolved in inverse ratio to Sino - Indian hostility, which climaxed in a border war in 1962. The novelist places Saleem in a position of direct witness of historical events. Saleem spends four years in Pakistan and during that time, the relationships between India and Pakistan got worse. He witnesses the conflict on the Sino-India border, the aid of the United States to Pakistan, the untouchable problem in India but he doesn't make anything to moderate these problems.

Rushdie depicts Saleem, the protagonist of the novel in a different way as he lives with this family in Pakistan. In 1964, his grandmother Naseem Aziz arrives in Pakistan. Adam Aziz died and it seems that his death allowed her to move to the Land of Pure. Aadam always scored for the formation of Pakistan and blamed the Muslim League for killing Mian Abdullah. It is worth nothing that multicultural conflicts appear even between married couples since Rushdie intentionally describes his

characters as different personalities to each other.

To sum up, Rushdie highlights the superficiality of the whole conflict. The main reasons for the break out of war were power motivated ambitions of both countries. Rushdie, represented by Saleem, is thinking about the motives for repeated attack. Therefore, *The Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie portrays the multicultural clashes in post colonial India.

The multicultural clashes described in *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie have various effects in different aspects. Firstly, we can see internal conflict among each character of the novel caused by the influence of multiple cultures. Adam Aziz is the epitome of it. Integrated India was partitioned into various states i.e. Pakistan and Bangladesh which can be taken as another important effect of multiculturalism. Various other events such as war between India and Pakistan, religious riots, self fragmentation of the people in India etc are the results of multicultural clashes manifested in the novel.

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