

Preface

This study aims to locate Salman Rushdie's works in cross cultural contexts by examining his interactions with various national cultures, ranging from Grimus to Fury with the exception of Haroun and the Sea of Stories to which it refers occasionally. It also considers his literary essays published under the title Imaginary Homelands and refers to his recent essays, entitled Step Across This Line. It is indeed a critical challenge to attempt a dissertation on the subject due to the voluminous critical commentary on the author's work. However, it has been felt necessary to delineate Salman Rushdie's works in a multicultural perspective because more than any Indian author writing in English, he occupies a hybrid status with reference to British as well as American literature. He has also written about Pakistan in Shame, and about Indian politics and culture in Midnight's Children. In The Satanic Verses he has recorded the plight of displaced Asians in Britain and in The Moor's Last Sigh has given expression to the composite heritage of India by highlighting the hybrid culture and glory of the Moors. He has also designated the multicultural aspects of American culture, its mixture of Polish, Italian, Greek, Jewish, Spanish, French, Latin as well as its ethnic "Red" Indian culture in his The Ground Beneath Her Feet and his last novel, Fury. To move around in this kaleidoscopic scene of poly-culture is almost to feel the centripetal and centrifugal forces of cultural syncretism, which sometimes explode in a blitzkrieg of disparate cultures with a tenuous attempt at unity and at other times we find a suitable point of reference, where all cultural perspective may dialectically interact with each other to produce a multi-layered referentiality of meaning and existence.

This study begins by examining the existing critical commentary on Rushdie through the past three decades and shows the lacunae in critical studies, thereby explaining the necessity of the present dissertation. In this way the first chapter indicates and describes the context of critical opinion, against which studies on Rushdie's hybrid culture like that of the present, ought to be placed. Thus it shows how this dissertation explores the theme of identity with reference to the artist's personality, which in Rushdie may be termed as both acentric and ahistorical because it transcends the geographical boundary of space as well as the historical limitations of space.

The second chapter is entitled "The Theoretical basis of Cultural Pluralism in Rushdie: The Post-Colonial Scenario", where attempt has been made to locate the migrant artist in the complex project of revisiting, remembering and interrogating the colonial past. The site of cultural collaboration has been explained in terms of both collision as well as collusion between the coloniser and the colonised. It is argued that the overall strategy of dismantling the colonial project entails a theory of the "hybridisation" of discourse and power. Such strategies implicate the reformation of identity in strategies of subversion that redirect the gaze of the discriminated back upon the source of colonial power. In this sense, Rushdie may be said to enact the role of the colonial hybrid, who articulates in himself an ambivalent space, where authority itself is questioned and negated, thereby modifying the conditions of dominance into grounds of intervention. In this manner, Rushdie is seen to subvert the novel of empire into the novel against the empire itself.

In this chapter the theoretical basis of Rushdie's hybrid status has been explained in terms of a double perspective, wherein the author as migrant has been designated as being both insider and outsider in the worlds he inhabits. The migrant as exile has been theoretically explained as being situated in an in-

between position, hovering between nations, cultures and ideologies. Therefore any appreciation of Rushdie is bound to start from such a critical premise which interrogates concepts like nationhood, identity and the postcolonial condition.

The third chapter illustrates the theoretical basis of Rushdie's cultural plurality by analysing his literary and cultural essays collected under the title, Imaginary Homelands. In these essays written during the years 1981-1991, Rushdie has attempted to explain and illustrate the proliferation of cultures across national boundaries through the use of English as a world language. As a migrant, Rushdie defends his position at the confluence of cultures by illustrating his sense of loss as well his sense of having gained something. Being culturally displaced, all migrant authors possess a partial or fragmentary approach to experience. And yet, Rushdie finds their liminal status highly compelling and challenging because it stamps their works with themes of quest, a quest not for real homelands but for countries of imagination, where geographical boundaries and historical limitations have been lost. Again, the migrant himself incarnates the clash of cultures in his use of English, which he modifies and adopts for his own purposes, creating in the process a very different language from that of the British. In this chapter, Rushdie's inclination to magical realism has been explained by referring to his own ideological standpoint and which aligns him with other exponents of the genre like Gunter Grass and Marquez.

The fourth chapter analyses Grimus, Rushdie's first novel from a multicultural perspective, illustrating his art of mythical transposition whereby he places his protagonists in foreign cultures to bring about their heterogeneity. In Grimus this is done through his use of the metaphors of alchemy, anagrams and imaginary characters like that of the Gorf and the Flapping Eagle.

The fifth chapter deals with Midnight's Children. It explains the hybrid status of the novel and shows how Rushdie uses the circumstances surrounding

the individual's spatial dislocation in the post-independence era to interrogate postcolonial identity and history. This chapter explains how Rushdie's novel is not merely a commentary on cultural plurality and the textuality of history but also embodies his supreme attempt to portray the fantastic and the real in a hybridisation of the English language. In effect, Midnight's Children becomes one of the best examples of magic realism.

The sixth chapter deals with Shame. Rushdie's fiction shows the cross-cultural contexts in the characters, who themselves illustrate the operations of freedom, absolute and mythic, by belonging everywhere and nowhere. The reality of Pakistan is shown to be fragmentary at best. In this country which is both real and imaginary, Shame is seen to symbolise an emotion which is found in all kinds of nations, societies, histories.

The seventh chapter again elaborates how Rushdie's protagonists are able to choose a certain adopted country and its culture as a substitute for their own homes and questions and the possibility of locating one's roots in a foreign country especially with reference to Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha in The Satanic Verses. The migrant as well as the postcolonial has been situated between cultural collectives or what has been termed as a "Third Space" wherein he accepts and celebrates his fragmentation of identity as pure liberation from all sorts of constraints. This chapter positions Saladin in such a state of positive hybridity. The disparate cultural roles of the migrant in Saladin have been thoroughly examined in this context.

Chapter eight shows how The Moors Last Sigh contains Rushdie's hybrid and philosophic vision of his birthplace, the Indian subcontinent. This varied cultural panorama has been incarnated in the story of the last member of the Moors, called Moraes Zogoiby. Here, the complexities of the colonial encounter become evident in Rushdie's analysis of the trans-historical situation

in that of Mooristhan and Hindusthan, where the hybridity of the colonial subject is questioned.

Chapter nine illustrates the cultural plurality of Vina Apsara and Ormus Cama in The Ground Beneath Her Feet. This chapter shows how Rushdie's novel positions the migrant in cultural cross currents, highlighting his rootlessness and exile and despair. In the stories of the mutant and the migrant of Vina and Ormus we find Rushdie's illustration of varied cross cultural encounters, which show such characters in constant metamorphosis and change and where there can be no stable reality and identity.

In chapter ten, the play of migrant metaphors within the arena of cross cultural contexts becomes focused in the story and lifetimes of Malik Solanka, with reference to Rushdie's novel Fury. Both the positive and negative aspects of the American attempts towards repackaging identity and the coalescing of the fiction of migrant metaphors within one dominant trope of Solanka's exploits have been analysed in Fury. Like Solanka, his heroines have also been shown to embody the power of fury as creative energy, which can transform cultures in multicultural America.

The conclusion once again emphasises how Rushdie has come to locate himself at the centre of several cultural cross currents and has thereby fashioned his own particular brand of hybrid identity and ontology in the postcolonial context. His delineation of both the positive and negative aspects of his hybrid culture in a hybrid language is unique in postcolonial literature because of his frankness and acceptance of changing values in a rapid transitional world.