Chapter VII

The Satanic Verses

In Rushdie's novels, the old stable ego of the character as determined by the encircling environment has often been questioned. This is primarily because the migrant as protagonist can never be circumscribed or limited either by the place which might be said to be his original home or by the context in which he lands himself, during the course of his wanderings. In his essay entitled "Old Stable Ego of the Character: The Politics of Identity" in Rushdie's Fiction in Salman Rushdie edited by Mittapalli and Kuortti, Michael Hensen writes how The Satanic Verses offers another point of view when the Indian protagonists Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta migrate to England, go back to India in the end, and in between dream themselves into different times and places (S.V.,168). Actually, most of Rushdie's protagonists are migrants, of their own will and who construct their personal identity in relation to the often entirely different social identity around them. The Satanic Verses very explicitly raises and attempts to answer the question, how far Rushdie's protagonists are able to choose a specific country and culture as their own homes and also question the very possibility of fixing one's roots either in his own birthplace or in an adopted country. Rushdie has brought out this question of identity and home in cross cultural

contexts in his Imaginary Homelands, where he has attempted to show how the idea of home and cultural identity defies all sense of limits and boundaries in space and time. Rushdie very clearly positions the migrants in cross cultural contexts, where he will eternally "create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indian of the mind" (I.H., 10). In The Satanic Verses and Imaginary Homelands Rushdie has emphasised the fragmentary character of the migrant protagonists by quoting the song sung by Gibreel Farishta as he tumbles from the heavens at the inception of former:

> O, my shoes are Japanese
>
> These trousers English, if you please
>
> On my head, red Russian hat —
>
> My heart's Indian for all that (S.V., 5).

This notion of hybridity has been developed in The Satanic Verses. On the one hand we see how the Indian Gibreel Farishta tries to consolidate and confirm within himself his idea of selfhood by refraining from adapting to English society. His fellow countryman Saladin Chamcha on the other hand, is all set to accept foreign identity. Rushdie shows how Gibreel is rewarded by his consistency (S.V., 142) and thereby passes his bad breath on to Saladin (S.V., 133) and who is therefore punished for disowning his origins by made to grow horns and hoofs (S.V., 141). The narrator has the following observations to make on the migrant status of Gibreel and Saladin:

> Should we even say that these are two fundamentally different types of self? Might we not agree that Gibreel [...] — has wished to remain, to a large degree, continuous — that is, joined to and arising from his past; — [...] — so that his is still a self which, for our present purposes, we may describe as true [...] whereas Saladin Chamcha is a creature of selected discontinuities, a willing re-invention; his preferred revolt against history being what makes him, in our chosen idiom, 'false'? [...] — While Gibreel, to follow the logic of our established terminology, is to be considered 'good' by virtue of wishing to remain, for all his vicissitudes, at bottom an untranslated man. — But, and again but: this sounds, does it not, dangerously like an intentionalist fallacy? — Such distinctions, resting as they must on an idea of the self as being ideally homogeneous, non-hybrid, 'pure' — an utterly fantastic notion! — cannot, must not, suffice (S.V., 427).

At this juncture some facts regarding identity have been established by Rushdie. Firstly, he confesses to the idea of personality and identity as acentric, subjected to change and instability. Secondly, identity today can only be understood in terms of the shifting categories of time and space; as against historical and geographical limits and evolving towards a new consideration of culture in trans-national terms in the post-

colonial era. Thirdly, the location of identity, according to both Rushdie and Bhabha is to be found at cross cultural currents and contexts. Hensen and Petry have drawn our attention to the fact that the notion of hybridity may be found at the intersection of theories of the postmodern and the post-colonial. Bhabha, the foremost theoretician of hybridity and Rushdie, its most powerful fictional exponent have been quite successful in blending typical issues regarding migrant-identities and cultural diversity with post-structuralist and postmodernist theory. Rushdie in The Satanic Verses and in subsequent novels has similarly argued for a concept beyond the postmodern and its fragmentation of the personal and the social. The migrant in both has been successfully located in a space of in-betweenness — a powerful "third space" between his own culture and that of an other, thus opening up a space which acknowledges a certain incommensurability between cultures (Bhabha, 1994, 2).

In this third or liminal space there is often the danger of the migrant accepting and celebrating his very fragmentation of identity as a sort of pure anarchic liberalism or voluntarism. And this might happen in the case of several Rushdie's protagonists. But more so than ever, Bhabha would rather analyse and validate this fragmentation of identity as a recognition of the importance of the alienation of the self in the construction of forms of solidarity (Bhabha 1990, 213). Hensen and Petry show how in recent criticism Rushdie has been lauded as portraying a very positive concept of cultural hybridity (Mittapalli *et al.* 2003, II. 129).

This view is largely in consonance with Bhabha's attempt to place himself in that position of liminality, in that productive space of the construction of culture as difference, in the spirit of alterity or otherness (Bhabha 1990: 209). This idea of "productive difference" may be precisely be located in Rushdie's novels, especially in his The Satanic Verses (Mittapalli *et al.*, 2003, 129).

Such a view of culture has been illustrated in The Satanic Verses when Gibreel's quarrel with hybridity has been negatively shown with respect to his problem of "sulphurous halitosis", which returns with a vengeance on him, and he loses his girl-friend as well as his job before finally committing suicide (S.V., 546). Saladin, on the other, represents a very positive concept of cultural hybridity, when he is finally reconciled with his father and inherits his wealth and even re-unites with his girl-friend Zeeny Vakil (S.V., 547). This makes Hensen and Petry comment that "in the end, it is Saladin rather than Gibreel who comes up with a successful concept of a person's self-positioning as migrant in both a foreign and familiar culture (Mittapalli *et al.*, 2003, II. 133).

With respect to the productive space opened up by the notion of culture as difference, especially in the spirit of alterity or otherness, we here take exception to the gross misreading and misrepresentation of this entire issue by Goonetilleke in his treatise on Salman Rushdie (1998). In his book he is at pains to list three reasons to illustrate the failure of the process of hybridity in The Satanic Verses. He cites as proof Saladin's

return to his ancestral home, his resuming his original name and his resumption of his mother tongue Urdu. This argument does not hold sound because Gibreel also returns to India and yet he fails to "survive". Again, Saladin's reunion with Zeeny Vakil is due to the fact that she favours

> an ethic of historically validated eclecticism, for was not the entire national culture based on the principle of borrowing whatever clothes seemed to fit, Aryan, Mughal, British, take-the-best-and-leave-the-rest? (S.V., 52).

This passage positions Saladin in a positive culture of hybridity. Again, he does not return to his "one and only former self', but rather "feels closer to many old rejected selves, many alternative Saladins" (S.V., 523). In this way personal cultures become hybrid constructs and the migrant, who travels in-between two or more cultures will eventually have to develop a sense of a "third-space", or hybrid identity (Mittapalli *et al.*, 2003, II. 132-33). The very conclusion of The Satanic Verses might be cited as an illustration of the consequence of such hybrid cultures on the subject of personal identity. Thus the narrator states:

> [....] we are here to change things. I concede at once that we shall ourselves be changed; African, Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Cypriot, Chinese, we are other than what we would have been if we had not crossed the oceans; if our mothers and fathers had not crossed the skies

> [...]. We have been made again: but if I say that we shall also be the ones to remake this society, to shape it from bottom to top (S.V., 413-14).

In this sense the third space, or the space in-between always comes up as a point of reference when migrant-protagonists cross countries and cultures. Thus the aeroplane, as noted by Hensen and Petry, becomes a powerful symbol of Bhabha's third space of in-betweenness (Mittapalli and Kuortti, 2003, 136). In The Satanic Verses, for example, Saladin and Gibreel fall out of an exploding aircraft on England and as they fall, changes in terms of personality occur since not only do the passengers fall out of the place but it is also indicative of

> the debris of the soul, broken memories, sloughed-off selves, severed mother-tongues, violated privacies, untranslatable jokes, extinguished futures, lost loves, the forgotten meaning of hollow, booming words, land, belonging, home (S.V., 4).

As the migrant lands himself in a foreign culture, the dialectics between his self and the other becomes operative (Bhabha, 1994, II. 35). In this way, the migrant as both Saladin and Gibreel find themselves in an irreconcilable contradiction and a difference that can never be solved. At the same time, it is true that in Saladin, the self cannot exist without its Other and it is precisely at this crisis that the self can provide for its own transcendence as well as its own deconstruction. Saladin situates himself

in a unique position and within his incompatibility, he can formulate his own "newness". Thus the fall of Saladin and Gibreel parallels in a certain sense the fall of Adam from God's grace as well as the fall of Lucifer from heaven. For Gibreel it becomes really his fall, whereas for Saladin it becomes a fall towards a new "newness" and a unique hybridity of self.

In this context, it is necessary that we try to understand the role and function of the migrant, in all his multidimensionality in The Satanic Verses. The migrant-protagonist has been assigned several roles in the novel. On one level he has been portrayed as the migrant as metropolitan. On another level he is presented as an exile and an alienated figure in a foreign cultural milieu. Then again, he enacts the role of a social reformer. On a very different level he represents the paradigmatic imagination of the migrant. On another plane the migrant has been shown to transgress the demarcations of history and society. The migrant also makes his appearance as a fanatic and as an exponent of Islamic culture in alien lands. If we analyse the text very closely we shall also see that the most important notion is the double subject of migrancy in the figures of Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha. According to Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak in "Reading the Satanic Verses", published in an important collection of essays The Postmodern Arts edited by Nigel Wheale (1995), the double subject of migrancy has been reflected on the issues of "male bonding and unbonding" (Wheale, 1995, 228). In the text, the contradictory persona of Gibreel and Saladin enact variously the male

narrative patterns, subsuming and underprivileging the voice of the woman (Whele, 1995, 228). Finally, the theme of migrancy has been illustrated not only in terms of religiosity but also in the terms of art. In all this, we detect Rushdie's shifting stance and his desire for appearing in the text in multiple fictive roles. Thus at many points in the novel Rushdie weaves in and out of narratives, broaching time and again the relationship of margin and centre, of individual and the state or religious apparatus which enact the repressive voice of tyranny and so on (Wheale, 1995, 229). In this way the serious issues of identity and plurality become highlighted in the migrant discourse of Gibreel and Saladin.

The novel opens with the two main characters, Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, falling on earth since the plane they have been flying in has just been blown up by the terrorists who have hijacked it. We are then informed about their backgrounds, their occupations, their love affairs and about the events which led to their boarding of the plane. The story of the hijacking is then narrated, leading up to the moment of explosion with the novel began. It is important to note that falling is a major motif occurring throughout the novel. Initially, the fall of Gibreel and Saladin has parallels in Defoe's location of Satan's abode in the air in his Book I, Chapter VI of The Political History of the Devil as well Ancient as Modern (1726). Similar to Defoe's novel, the demonic falls from the air in this novel but more significantly it is to be noted that the Devil becomes a wanderer, an image of rootless migrant and which is

central to this novel. The migrant as wanderer also has parallels in Joyce's Ulysses and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, especially in the myth of Daedalus, who tried to escape his island prison with his son Icarus, using wings made of feathers fastened with wax. Another parallel may be located in Ovid's Metamorphoses (1st century B.C.) which was primarily taken up with the many changes undergone by the migrant in foreign cultural milieu. The fundamentals of change involves the question of whether the individual undergoes change in kind or change in form. And this very idea has been developed in the course of the novel, which uses the idea of physical metamorphosis to focus on the changes taking place both physically and psychologically in the migrant. This brings us to the question whether at all there is an essential and abiding centre in our lives or whether there is some sort of a defining thread which runs through all our numerous changes to which we are all subject whenever we cross nations and enter the heterotrophic space inhabited by polycultures.

In his web page on Noted on Salman Rushdie: The Satanic Verses (1997), Paul Brians comments on Rushdie's artistic impulse behind the creation of the novel:

> Rushdie says that novels do not lay down rules, but ask questions. In fact he claims that by asking questions, good fiction can help to create a changed world. Novels like The Satanic Verses don't settle debates: they articulate the

> terms of debate and ask hard questions of the opposing sides, thereby helping to usher "newness" into the world. One of the unifying themes of The Satanic Verses is newness, or change. It attacks rigid, self-righteous orthodoxies and celebrates doubt, questioning, disruption, innovation.... But Rushdie is focussing on a particular set of issues relating to rigidity and change: those identified relating with what is sometimes called "identity politics". People who find themselves excluded or suppressed by dominant groups try various means to find an effective voice and tools for action to create power and authority for themselves. It is these struggles that are the basic underlying matter of Rushdie's novel. The question that is asked throughout this novel is "what kind of idea are you?" In other words, on what ideas, experiences, and relationships do you base your definition of yourself...your identity? (Brians, 1).

And yet the kind of ideas, experiences, relationships, on which one bases his definition of himself lacks any such secure foundation in The Satanic Verses. This is primarily because the novel, as Spivak takes extreme pains to illustrate, in spite of all its plurality, has been woven around an aggressive central theme: "the post-colonial divided between two identities: migrant and national" (Wheale, 223). It is true that

migrants who find themselves identified as "foreigners" or "aliens" often find unwelcome hostile identities imposed upon them. Here Rushdie uses the technique of "demonisation" by turning Saladin, the immigrant who is most determined to identify with the English, literally into a demon. The other immigrants who assume horns later in the novel express the same satirical view of English bigotry. In this context it is worthwhile to remember for a later analysis that the migrant has been bifurcated into two entities within the parameters of the novel. On the one hand, he is shown as subjected to change, striding across nations and races, in other words, his trans-nationality. On the other hand, we should bear in mind that the migrant is not only the exotic, and the marginalised but a usurper, who steadily moves towards the centre of an alien culture.

In this context we note the transition in the status of the migrant, from the migrant as exile to his position as a social reformer. He also moves from his position as an outsider, the migrant who transgresses social or historical limitations to the status of the migrant as paradigm. The valorisation of the migrant in terms of discourse and narrative pattern may be witnessed within the course of The Satanic Verses. In this sense the migrant travels from his nation to other nations and his journey may be understood in transnational terms. He enjoys a hybrid status, comprising within him the discourse of several nations. In this context he becomes a paradigm. But in a very different sense he also shares a nostalgic concern for his deserted country, and being rootless he yearns

for his originary roots, but to which he cannot return and only hope for in his dreams. On the other hand, the migrant is involved in a vibrant manner with new national discourses and his hybrid existence becomes a resulting concern for the inhabitants of a foreign nation because, according to Rushdie, he steps across nations in order to change things.

> We are here to change things.... African, Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Cypriot, Chinese, we are other than what we would have been if we had not crossed the oceans.... We have been made again: but I say we shall also be the ones to remake this society, to shape it from the bottom to the top (S.V., 414).

And again, Saladin Encounters a young black woman in England "who gave his (conservative British) attire an amused once-over.... She was wearing a lenticular badge.... At some angles it read, Uhuru for the Simba; at others, Freedom for the Lion. 'It's on account of the meaning of his chosen name', she explained redundantly. 'In African', Which language?...She shrugged.... It was African: born, by the sound of her in Lewisham, or Deptford, or New Cross, that was all she needed to know.... As if all causes were the same, all histories interchangeable" (S.V.: 413-415).

Gradually we come to accept the idea that migrant or writers from the Third World may not just seem to be exiles, uprooted and stranded in

alien, often hostile countries or cultures far from home and working in a language that may not have been their own. Rather they may seem to embody a hybrid culture, which looks both forwards and backwards and hence they are in a position to work on some essential elements of culture in a foreign land and subject them to change. Thus cultural fusion leading to acculturation, and finally to cultural dissemination and transformation on the part of the migrant forms his artistic credo, leading to his counter-movement from the periphery towards the centre. In this sense exile is a weak image, and Rushdie rejects it. It may be borne in mind that immigrants were called exiles, whether they had actually been driven from their homeland or...as was much more in common — they had sought increased opportunity by voluntarily moving abroad. Thus the challenge of "marginalised" voices is to find the centre, or shift it to themselves, appropriate the identity of an alien culture and make it their own.

In The Satanic Verses Rushdie reverses the one-sided dialogue of the centre to the margins, and challenges the English/European/White sense of identity. He rejects its claims for radical superiority. London has been transformed into an exotic country where people follow strange customs (wiping themselves with paper only and eating bony fish). People of traditional Anglo-Saxon stock are almost entirely absent from the London of The Satanic Verses. Instead the city swarms with immigrants: Indians, Bengalis, Pakistanis, Jamaicans, German and Jews, etc. He

reminds the English that they too were colonised by the Romans and the Normans. The only exception is Pamela, who has a traditional English heritage but who is shown to be striving to escape from it. She mistakes Saladin for an exotic "alien" who can link her to India, when the main reason behind his attraction to her is that she represents escape from the Indianness he is trying to flee. The other female character, Rosa Diamond, is an Englishwoman yearning to become Latin American or to be conquered by invading Normans. The bigots who beat Chamcha in the police van are all — as he notes — no more English in their heritage than himself, but his colour and identity as a post-colonial immigrant allows them to treat him as a complete alien.

Rushdie in The Satanic Verses has actually turned the tables on Anglo-Americans. He has portrayed minor Anglo-Saxon characters as venal (Hal Valance), or bigoted (the punks who spit on the food in the Shaandar Café), or tyrannical (Margaret Thatcher), or stupid (Eugene Dumsday). European travel writers have for generations dwelt on the failings of benighted natives of far-off lands, making them objects of their contempt and ridicule. It is now Rushdie's turn to reduce the European and colonial masters to a set of cartoons and to provide the background for the thoughts, feelings and actions of the colonised. However, we have to bear in mind that Rushdie's caricature of the Europeans and the English does not lead to the privileging of the migrant-artist. He cannot be morally superior to the Westerners. Both the European and the Eastern are morally

flawed. Rushdie is interested in turning the tables of colonised discourse; the dialogue of the coloniser and his Others have been turned inside out. Rather the immigrant exerts his racial characteristics over his erstwhile superiors and tries to impose himself on the European Other. At the same time, the migrant as hybrid bypasses such polar distinction because he contains within himself the voices of opposite and conflicting cultures, which claim him as their own. The migrant is therefore in a much superior position than the Europeans or the English. In all this, however, Rushdie is perfectly aware that by doing so he is disorienting his "mainstream" English and American readers, giving them a taste of what it feels like to be like players in a drama, which undermines their racial superiority. Further, he is not asking how immigrants can become "English"; he is instead asking how immigrants can create an identity for themselves in England which is richer, modern and more arresting than the traditional stereotypes associated with the old centre of empire.

The reader accepts the idea that the marginalised race always attempt to create a sense of identity by emphasising their shared history. Sometimes such communities are inclined to refer to a historical period of suffering, just like Afro-Americans, who are likely to draw on their heritage of slavery. Such an attitude can lead to both positive and negative consequences. In a certain sense, such an approach relies for its efficacy on the hope that members of the group will accept the responsibility for their ancestors' deeds. Even when majorities acknowledge the injustices

of the past, guilt is not an emotion that can often motivate action to atone for such injustice. The Hindu miners in the Titlipur story who hark back to their suffering under the rule of Muslim emperors exemplify the common practice of historical grievances utilised by one group to justify crimes against another. Again, such an instance may be found in the action of Sikh terrorists who blow up the plane at the inception of the novel. In the novel the white races decorate their homes with references to nineteenth-century wars in South Africa, posing as harassed English South African settlers surrounded by hostile Zulus. Rushdie also wants us to remember that Union Carbide's neglect cost the lives and health of thousands of Indians in the Bhopal disaster, but he does not claim that the very identity and fate of India will be determined only by a chain of misfortunes. In this context Paul Brians' comments on The Satanic Verses in web page hosted by him may be regarded as significant.

> The most important aspect of the Indian cultural heritage for him (Rushdie) is its rich, creative variety. Its history is more than a mere list of the crimes committed against it by others; and he is prepared to add the crimes committed by Indians against each other to its portrait as well.
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> Another approach to identity politics is to hark back to a positive historical heritage instead of to a time of suffering. Thus the black Caribbean immigrants in the novel seek to emphasise an African heritage which is

> actually very distant from their lived experience. Chamcha mentally mocks them by singing the "African National Anthem". The black leader originally named "Sylvester Roberts" has chosen the absurd name "Uhuru Simba" in an attempt to "Africanise" his identity. It seems clear that Rushdie shares at least some of Chamcha's reservations about Afrocentrism in the scene of the defense rally for the arrested Dr. Simba. Choosing Chamcha as his point of view allows him to critique the limits of such ideas even as he acknowledges the justness of their cause (Brians, 3).

In the novel Rushdie emphasises that Indians are both victims and criminals, both creators and destroyers. He is not adumbrating a sort of bland homogenised theory of original sin according to which all people are equally guilty and none specifically to blame. He is in favour of wrongs be righted and criminals identified and punished. In fact, he rejects both martyrdom and triumphant nationalism as inadequate foundations for a satisfactory self-identity. This may be seen in the very inception of the novel when George Miranda and Bhupen Gandhi match Zeeny's proud references to Indian accomplishments and her list of crimes against Indians with their own instances of cruelty perpetrated by Indians. The question of self-identity looms large in Bhupen's enquiries about the modern Indian. Apart from the question of race, identity may also be defined by religion. In the novel, Rushdie underlines that orthodox

religion implies intolerance, representativenss and rigidity. Dumsday represents the rigid Christian right and the Imam, fanatical Muslim extremism. It is true that Rushdie shares the Imam's hatred of the erstwhile Shah of Iran and SAVAK but the alternative is even more hideous. Rushdie imagines a great maw of a hand destroying the people it claims to be saved. Critics have noted one of the devastating ironies of the Rushdie affair. It is that the Khomeni evidently died without ever realising that the novel he had denounced contained a devastating image of him.

In essence Rushdie is against any form of absolute in ethics, religion, identity, nationalism and ideology. This is why he flaunts his hybrid culture and identity. Herein also lies the reason behind Rushdie's challenge to the credibility and the benefits of orthodox Islam. Gibreel's dreams challenge the Quran's claims to infallibility by accusing Islam of the repression of women, and calling into question the probity and honesty of the Prophet himself.

Rushdie is actually attempting to undermine the authority of religion and society, who give birth to endorse slavery, censorship and fanatic religious convictions. Just as in The Satanic Verses he challenges Muslim fanaticism, he critiques Hindu intolerance in The Moor's Last Sigh. The Satanic Verses attempts to break down absolutes, and shows how high ideals can lead people to commit terrible crimes and exposes the traditional and easy distinctions between good and evil. Rushdie also

attempts to destroy the distinction between centre and periphery in postcolonial discourse by making the migrant usurp the totalitarian assumptions of foreign culture in an alien land. Thus demons can behave like angels and vice versa. And that high ideals can lead people to commit terrible crimes. There can, therefore, be no simple answers to the query, "What kind of an idea are we?" In an essay now included in his collection of articles in Imaginary Homelands entitled "In God We Trust", Rushdie vividly portrays his initiation into "Secular radicalism" while he was studying in England:

> God, Satan, Paradise and Hell all vanished one day in my fifteenth year, when I quite abruptly lost my faith. I recall it vividly. I was at school in England by then. The moment of awakening happened, in fact, during a Latin lesson, and afterwards, to prove my new-found atheism, I bought myself a rather tasteless ham sandwich, and so partook for the first time of the forbidden flesh of the swine. No thunderbolt arrived to strike me down. I remember feeling that my survival confirmed the correctness of my new position. I did slightly regret the loss of Paradise, though. The Islamic heaven, at least as I had come to conceive it, had seemed very appealing to my adolescent self. I expected to be provided, for my personal pleasure, with four beautiful female spirits, or houris, untouched by man

> or djinn. The joys of the perfumed garden; it seemed a shame to have to give them up (I.H., 377).

Rushdie's critique of established traditions and deeply rooted orthodoxy in The Satanic Verses is to be understood along with his scathing criticism of heterogeneous multiculturalism in ultra modern societies as in America in his later novel, Fury. In fact, one of Rushdie's main contention in the book is to enunciate a sort of existential morality. As individuals, we become responsible for the choices we make and the destinies we forge for ourselves. Therefore, absolutes simply do not exist. We can never shift the responsibility for our actions to God or history. Whether we are immigrants or not, we have to define for ourselves our identity. Thus at the very end of the novel Saladin returns to India, finally to reconcile himself with his father. But he can never simply return to his roots. He realizes that his father has changed. Actually Saladin could never have loved his father earlier. He only loved his father on his deathbed, when he had become the enfeebled, benign shadow of his former self. His inheritance does not lie in the home he grew up in. Zeeny, who elsewhere warmly urges his Indian roots on him, has little use of sentimental attachment to Peristan. She says that it should make way for the new. Finally Saladin seems to agree and he is prepared to cast aside the false claims of religion as well as that of his personal history. In the end he opts for newness, for if the old refused to die, how can the new be born in this world.

In his essay entitled "In Good Faith" Rushdie defends The Satanic Verses by emphasising that in spite of the controversy and storm raised by its publication, the novel has a philosophy and is largely the result of his determined effort to create a literary language and literary forms in which the experience of formerly colonised, still-disadvantaged people might find full expression:

> If The Satanic Verses is anything, it is a migrant's eye view of the world. It is written from the very experience of uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis (slow or rapid, painful or pleasurable) that is the migrant condition, and from which, I believe, can be derived a metaphor for all humanity.
>
> Standing at the centre of the novel is a group of characters most of whom are British Muslims, or not particularly religious persons of Muslim background, struggling with just the sort of great problems that have arisen to surround the book, problems of hybridization and ghettoisation, of reconciling the old and the new. Those who oppose the novel most vociferously today are of the opinion that intermingling with a different culture will inevitably weaken and ruin their own. I am of the opposite opinion. The Satanic Verses celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and

> unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelisation and fears the absolutism of the Pure. Mélange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace it. The Satanic Verses is for change-by-fusion, change-by-conjoining. It is a love song to our mongrel selves (I.H., 394).

Rushdie's new religion is changed-by-fusion. Rushdie's new love is changed-by-conjoining. His new politics is reconciling the old with the new. His new identity comprises a mongrel self. In the course of human history apostles of purity have brought havoc on those human beings, who can be called heterogeneous in terms of culture. Rushdie terms himself "a bastard child of history" (I.H., 394), because according to him, we are never products of pure races. We are black and brown and white, always leaking into one another like the flavours emanating during the process of cooking. Human beings usually attempt to understand themselves and shape their futures by arguing and challenging and questioning and saying what should not be said; not by submission either to gods or to men. It would be insult to claim that The Satanic Verses contains "nothing but filth and insults and abuse" that has occasioned such killings, bannings and burnings throughout the world. "That book simply does not exist" (I.H., 395). Rather, it is a profound "work of radical dissent and

questioning and reimagining" (I.H., 395). Rushdie is inclined to dissent from the orthodox religiosity which never encourages man to be independent in mind and spirit. Bereft of sovereignty, man can never question his origins and probe into the roots of his own culture. Rushdie considers the relative value of the sacred and the profane within the parameters of the novel. He finds that we can become whole only through a consciousness of our own hybridity or impurity.

Indeed, Rushdie's brand of hybridity comprises an intellectual cum physical journey from a world, full of imposed or orthodoxies of all types and nationalities, to an ethos where we find the existence and expression of freedom in terms of race, culture and religion, as well as politics. As a post-colonial, Rushdie does not remain confined within its orbits. He transcends the narrow demarcations of postcoloniality by moving away from the struggle between Western freedom and Eastern rigidity and orthodoxy and which may be rightly observed in other writers of the Indian subcontinent who may be located within such an ambience. It is indeed difficult to locate Rushdie in the novel. He is both Western as well as Eastern. Like James Joyce, Rushdie thinks that the artist can only live and breathe in a world, where there is racial, sexual and political freedom. As a migrant-artist, Rushdie challenges

> What is freedom of expression? Without the freedom to offend, it ceases to exist. Without the freedom to challenge, even to satirise all orthodoxies, including

> religious orthodoxies, it ceases to exist. Language and the imagination cannot be imprisoned, or art will die, and with it, a little of what makes us human. The Satanic Verses is, in part, a secular man's reckoning with the religious spirit (....) The Satanic Verses is the story of two painfully divided selves. In the case of one, Saladin Chamcha, the division is secular and societal: he is torn, to put it plainly, between Bombay and London, between East and West. For the other, Gibreel Farishta, the division is spiritual, a rift in the soul. He has lost his faith and is strung out between his immense need to believe and his new inability to do so. The novel is 'about' their quest for wholeness (I.H., 396-7).

An important aspect of Rushdie's art of mongrelisation is, therefore, the bringing together of the sacred and the profane. The "brothel sequence" in The Satanic Verses remains a living testimony to this art, when Rushdie describes how the whores of a brothel take the names of the wives of the Prophet Muhammad in order to arouse their customers. Of course, the "real" wives are dearly described as "living chastely" in their harem. Thus, Rushdie has successfully crystallised the opposition between the sacred and the profane by counterpointing the harem and the brothel. Harem and brothel are opposite worlds, and the presence in the harem of the Prophet, the receiver of a sacred text, is

contrasted with the presence in the brothel of the poet Baal, who might be taken as the creator of corrupt and profane texts. In this context, it is important to note that Mahound is actually a medieval European demonisation of the Prophet Muhammad. This may be cited as an instance of de-contextualisation, which has created a complete reversal of meaning. This was the supreme example of the migrant's idea of reclaiming language from that of the host country, which often indulged in vituperation, insults and abusage. The demonisation of the migrant by the host culture has been turned upside down in the sense that the former retaliates by demonising the host country, largely through cultural and linguistic aggression.

The Satanic Verses has been composed as a retaliatory answer to the host country's demonising of the migrant as the other. And after all, Rushdie indicates that the process of hybridisation, which becomes the novel's most crucial dynamic, actually means that its ideas derive from many sources other than Islamic ones. Thus,

> When Saladin Chamcha finds himself transformed into a goatish, horned and hoofy demon, in a bizarre sanatorium full of other monstrous beings, he's told that they are all, like him, aliens and migrants, demonized by the host cultures' attitude to them. 'They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct.' If migrant groups are called devils by others,

> that does not really make them demonic. And if devils are not necessarily devilish, angels may not necessarily be angelic.... From this premise, the novel's exploration of morality as internal and shifting (rather than external, divinely sanctioned, absolute) may be said to emerge.
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> The very title, The Satanic Verses, is an aspect of this attempt at reclamation. You call us devils? it seems to ask. Very well, then, here is the devil's version of the world, of "your" world, the version written from the experience of those who have been demonised by virtue of their otherness. Just as the Asian kids in the novel wear toy devil-horns proudly, as an assertion of pride in identity, so the novel proudly wears its demonic title. The purpose is not to suggest that the Quran is written by the devil, it is to attempt the sort of act of affirmation that, in the United States, transformed the word block from the standard term of racial abuse into a 'beautiful' expression of cultural pride (I.H., 402-3).

This then, is the essence of hybridity or plurality, which might be said to be the origin of The Satanic Verses. Just as Jekyll is meaningless without Hyde, or that God cannot be defined without the Devil, so the colonizer/the British racists cannot exist without the other/the migrant within England itself, since it is a consequence of colonial expansion. In

the novel the Otherness of colonial discourse has been turned inside out. Not only the Britishers' attitude to other races has been questioned in England, but also that religious fanaticism has been used to probe the tall and fictive claims of religion. Fantasy, dreams and the bizarre have been used in the novel to question the reality of history. Rushdie has attempted to understand the human event of revelation by employing fiction. Just as we cannot believe in the racial superiority of the whites, so we cannot also accept the supernatural world at its face value. To question is to land ourselves in doubt, uncertainties and errors. And this can only be done by the migrant artist who finds himself in a mélange of culture, politics and religion. Because he has been de-contextualised and removed from his parent country, he is truly a secular artist, belonging to no particular nation and imbibing in him a mosaic of cultures.