

## MULTICULTURALISM IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN*

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Multiculturalism is a widely used term in the literary criticism of post colonial literature. The true implication of the terms have always been subjected to 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 first part of the article aims at locating the meaning and experience inherent in the very terms called multiculturalism. The term consists of two words; 'multi' and 'culture' and to arrive at the true implication of the terms we need a detailed discussion on what is meant by culture and consequently by multiculturalism.

The word, culture owes its birth to the Latin word, *cultura* which comes from *colere*, which means 'to cultivate'. There are a number of definitions of culture with multiple implications and ideas. Different literary, sociological and anthropological studies define culture in different ways. The study of culture includes behaviors, attitudes, the ways of life, traditions, arts ideals and a number of factors that determine man's attitude towards life and society. On one hand it includes the day to day behavior of an individual and on the other hand it also involves the religious faiths and beliefs, the rituals and traditions, the use of language, codes of conduct etc. it also involves art, architecture, education, social and personal etiquettes and manners. Overall it can be said that the term culture makes the landmark for various points of enlightenment of the vast process called civilization that begins at some unknown point in the past and will go up to some unknown point of the future. It is the essence of human existence realized in form of the collective behavior of man in different units of habitation such as society, nation, continent etc. It is a process which is marked by various defining aspects of human existence such as philosophy of life, mores, ideals practiced collectively in a society or nation. Time plays an important role in determining the cultural identity of a society or nation. The growth of various integrates aspects of human life grow simultaneously and shape and reshape its cultural identity. It can thus be

easily said that culture is the most respectable aspect of the identity of any nation of society. The views of V.K. Gokak invite our attention. He elaborating the idea of the culture say;

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. (Gokak03)

Gokak's views aptly justify the complexity of the very idea behind the concept of culture and, at the same there is obvious denial to the fact that no single association suffices in rendering a complete and holistic idea of culture. He further elaborates the concept and says;

This brings us to the consideration of an adequate formula for defining the cultured man. Culture implies an integrated personality and neither time nor eternity can be left out. The cultured man reconciles the universal with the particular; and the claims of time with the claims of eternity. (Gokak05)

Eliot also elaborates the nature of manifestation of culture in terms of paradox. He includes a number of patterns of seemingly paradoxical behavior in expounding upon the very idea of culture. He lays stress on the role of unconscious in shaping and reshaping cultural attributes and say;

Culture can never be wholly conscious-there is always more to than we are conscious of it; and it cannot be planned because it is also the unconscious background of all out planning including the unconscious assumptions upon which we conduct the whole of our lives. (Eliot94)

The views of Gokak and Eliot ratify the fact that culture is a complex idea inclusive of a number of paradoxes that constitute the whole spectrum of human existence at a given point of time locatable at a definite point of space.

At present, the term culture is used widely in many ways like corporate culture, popular culture etc. These subdivisions of the term, convey the nature and behavior of man in a limited frame. It may be of some work place, or a group of specific behavior. Popular culture generally refers of the behavior and attitude of the common persons especially the young lot. Corporate Culture refers to the nature of interaction and work culture in a corporate set up. There are divisions and subdivisions even on the religious or ethnic grounds. The prominence of Hindu culture, Islamic culture and Christian culture is common in the cultural study of India. These various subdivisions of culture give birth to the concept of multiculturalism. The origin of the concept can be traced back to the possibility peaceful and equitable coexistence of many diverse groups having unique cultural and ethnic identity. The idea of multiculturalism has acquired tremendous significance in the Post colonial India. which is unequivocally the result of the rapid unification of various aspects of human society. The commingling of ethnic groups took place in the country as a result of economic development in the country. The migration taking place due to the expansion of public sectors and the proliferation of private sectors is another important factor responsible for the growth of multiculturalism in Indian society. The political processes took new shapes and form that further encourages the process of coming together of various sections of the society. The rise of secularism is the most important of all factors that led to the minimization of cultural distinctions amongst various sections of the society. Many political parties adopted secularism as the main agenda in the electoral manifestoes. Media also contributed significantly to the rise of secularism. Gokak's views capture the attention again. He commenting on the birth of the new culture rightly says;

The factors which foment social differences in India are now being opposed. Each religious has been assured proper protection while no religion can afford to be aggressive. Each language can grow to its full stature on the lines determined by its own genius. But no single language can strangle or overwhelm another. The liquidation of the zamindari and of the feudal order of princes and the shift of emphasis with regard to government servant, on their word as servants of the public as distinguished from their position as bureaucrats are sure to take us a long way on the road to equality and liberty. The real challenge to our democracy today is casteism and communalism. But with the rapid spread of education, this too may be discarded shibboleth. (Gokak13)

Gokak justly summarizes the cultural developments that took place in India especially during the second half of the century. The comingling of religious faiths and beliefs, the death of the monster of caste based and language based distinctions and the crumbling of feudal order are some of the factors that gave birth to a new culture out of the old existing cultural order. Multiculturalism, in Indian context, may be interpreted chiefly in term of amalgamation of many cultures where none dominates the other. It can also be summed up as recognition to the diversity by means of codification that contributes to the equality of all cultures within one culture, one point of space. The post Independence India witnessed tremendous changes in the country along socio- political and economical dimensions. The participation of the minorities in the political processes suddenly acquired great impetus. The expansion of education and the rise of corporate set ups further minimized the cultural distinction between the majority and the minorities. The sharing of rituals and participation in the festivals of the people belonging to alien cultures became a common finding in the country. The interpenetration of the cultures led to the homogenization of various cultures and consequently the birth of a new culture that was the result of this commingling of faiths and beliefs and the sharing of the festivities.

A study of Rushdie's mind and art makes us realize that he is essentially a pluralist and think in terms of the identity with plural implications of being an Indian. His views on politics ratify his pluralism which gave birth to the multiculturalism in his novels specially *Midnight's Children*. His admiration of Nehru is a known phenomenon. A close scrutiny of the causes responsible for his fondness for Nehru confirms his adherence to pluralist philosophy of society and politics. Analyzing Nehru/ Gandhi dynasty, he says that Nehruvian era to be the 'noblest part of it. Indira Gandhi to him is a 'figure of decline', while Sanjay Gandhi is 'further debasement of currency.' (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 383) Nehru thus is an embodiment of Rushdie's political ideals. The views of Orest Martyshin capture our attention. He elaborating on Nehru's success as a chief architect of Indian political structure, points out that Nehru 'didn't succumb to the sentiment of the mob of that of some of his colleagues in the government, who demanded revenge and massacre of the Muslims.' Martyshin further observes that Nehru, on the other hand 'tried to convince the Muslims that they were not foreigners in India,' and he was never tired of repeating that while he was the Prime Minister, India would never become a Hindu state.' Nehru, according to Martyshin, always came out with the idea of 'egalitarian society.' (Martyshin176) It is noticeable that this idea of egalitarian society draws a close parallel with Salman Rudhdie's political ideal which he located in Nehru and his political philosophy. The comparison becomes more clear after a close examination with Rushdie's views on Nehru. He says;

It was therefore of great value and importance that the Congress party under Nehru based its electoral appeal firmly on safeguarding the rights of minorities. It forged a unique electoral coalition between India's Muslims, Harijans and Brahmin Hindus- the only large nation wide groupings- and for a long time seemed invincible as a result. (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 385)

Religion to Rushdie has always been parasitical to politics. He talks about the towering images of the spiritual personalities of Jesus Christ and Ayatollah Khomeini and proves the point. In his famous essay- 'In God We Trust,' he discusses, at length his peculiar relationship between politics and religion. He alludes to the findings of the great historian Hyam Maccoby and says that crucifixion was at the time of Christ, a penalty reserved exclusively for the persons found guilty of political-not theological subversion.' He further says that Christ died as a political revolutionary and but was largely depoliticized and wrapped in mysteries by Paul.' (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 381) He also takes the example of and claims that the power of the towering figure of Khomeini was not purely the product of his 'holiness' or 'feat.' He takes Khomeini to be an embodiment of the idea of Iranian nation and says that 'Shah of Iran Raza Palahavi 'never dared to move as ruthlessly against the mosque, against the clergy as he did against his secular enemies. He further says that the polarization of hostilities and atrocities, in turn, resulted into the 'gravitation' of the 'opposition' to the theologians resulting into a 'power vacuum'. He concludes that 'Khomeini stepped into it with massive authority.' (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 383)

The above quoted discussion on the religious and political views of Rushdie makes it clear that he takes religion to be of secondary importance in comparison to the politics. And his views on various stalwarts of Indian political process makes it clear that he is essentially a pluralist without any bias towards religion. Rushdie's lifestyle has also been supportive of the same idea of pluralism. The religious fanaticism played no part in his life. He recollects;

Although I come from a Muslim family background, I was never brought up as a believer, and was raised in the atmosphere of what is broadly known as secular humanism. (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 430)

He also recollects that 'both' his 'parents were believers but neither was insistent of doctrinaire. Remembering Eid he says;

Two or three times a year, at the big Eid festival, I would wake up to find new to find new clothes at the foot of my bed, dress and go with my father to the great prayer maidan outside the Friday Mosque in Bombay, and rise and fall with the multitude mumbling my way through the uncomprehended Arabic much as Catholic children do –or used to do- with Latin. The rest of the year religion took the back seat. I had a Christian ayah (Nanny) for whom, at Christmas, we would put up a tree and sing carols about baby Jesus without feeling in the least ill-at-ease. My friends were Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis and none of this struck me as being particularly important. (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 377-378)

The narrator of the novel Saleem Sinai recreates the same milieu of multicultural implications in the *Midnight's Children* when he recollects;

There were people among whom I spent my childhood; Mr Homy Catrack, film maker and race horse owner, with his idiot daughter Toxy who had to

be locked up with her nurse, Bi Appah, the most fearsome woman I ever knew; also the Ibrahims in Sana Souci, old man Ibrahim. Ibrahim with his goatee and sisal, his sons Ismail and Ishaq, and Ismail's tiny flustered hapless wife Nussie, whom we always called Nussia- the – duck on account of her wedding gait, and in whose womb my friend Sony was growing, even now, getting closer and closer to his misadventure with a pair of gynecological forceps. (Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*, 111-112)

It becomes clear from a brief reference to the biographical facts of Rushdie that he was born and brought in the milieu where he inhaled the air of plural faiths and beliefs and practiced a plural philosophy; the philosophy that denies every kind of fanaticism and pays stress of natural equality of all faiths without being skewed towards any faith.

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* published in 1981 is a landmark in the history of Indian English novel. The novel, rightly taken to the novel of memory, is a pronounced revelation of Rushdie's political idealism realized in terms of relationship between history and individual. He candidly asserts that 'everything in both the books (*Midnight's Children* and *Shame*) has had much to do with the politics and the relationship between individual and history.' (Rushdie, *Gentleman*, 57) The with all vastness of the narrative spread along the time and space aptly represents the political process responsible for the destiny of a common man. The narrator Saleem Sinai, rightly confesses that he has been 'mysteriously handcuffed to history' and his 'destinies have been 'indissolubly chained to those of his country.' (Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*, 05), and it is this interdependence of history and human fate that the protagonist exclaims; Why, alone of all the five hundred million, should I have to bear the burden of history? (Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*, 457), it is interesting to note that the narrative is spread along a wide span of the time and space covering almost whole of the twentieth century with action being reshuffled at various points of space from Kashmir, Agra, Bangladesh, Pakistan and West Bengal and Southern part of India. A large part of the narrative is centered on Bombay and Delhi also. The realization of the action of novel along such a vast span of time and space makes it obligatory for the narrative to include the elements of multiculturalism. The action which is a perpetual escape, begins with Kashmir with seemingly uniform culture dominated by Muslim ethics. But in the backdrop of Muslim background, the narrator fuses the elements of multiculturalism. The landscape with primitive beauty of Kashmir is delineated with the 'temple of Sankara Acharya, a little black blister on a khaki hill' that 'dominated the streets and lakes of Srinagar.' (Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*, 05) The boatman Tai, who 'has seen the mountains being born,' is another very important character that foretells the advent of multicultural elements in the narrative. 'I saw that Isa,' he claims, 'that Christ when he came to Kashmir, and predicts the prominence of multicultural elements in the narrative that acquire shape and form in the coming phases of the narrative. The death of Tai 'who was infuriated by India and Pakistan's struggle over the valley,' is strongly supportive of the multiculturalism which at this phase of the narrative can be taken to be biculturalism. Tai 'walked to Chhamb with the express purpose of standing between the opposing forces and giving them a piece of his mind.' (Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*, 36)

It is obvious that the action of the novel in the first part of the narrative is set in the backdrop of the natural beauty of Kashmir and the Dr. Adam Aziz is the first protagonist of the novel who renders shape and form to the action of the novel. The first major event of the novel is the gradual fragmentation by making hole in the perforated sheet that is used as veil to cover the

Muslim girl. The making of hole for diagnosing the ailments of the Naseem, the daughter of the landlord. The perforated sheet is delineated with a number of metaphorical implications. On one hand, it symbolically represents the fragmented vision of the author and on the other hand, it serves the purpose of parody which in one of the most important aspect of the technique of narration of Salman Rushdie in all his novels. The symbol of perforated sheet aptly represents the purdah system of Muslims to parody;

So gradually Doctor Aziz came to have a picture of Naseem in his mind, a badly fitting collage of her severally inspected parts. This phantom of partitioned woman began to haunt him and not only in his dreams.  
(Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*, 23)

It is further noticeable that the gradual perforation of the sheet eventually leads to the reconciliation of the landlord. 'The story of the perforated sheet got out too,' the narrator tells Padma, and the 'lady wrestlers were evidently less discrete than they looked.' It is noticeable that the dissolution of the myth is further ratified when the narrator says that 'women giggled behind their palms...' (Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*, 30) The symbol of perforated sheet invites another interpretation from the point of view of multiculturalism. The introduction of the perforated sheet structures the milieu of unicultural milieu in the introductory part of the novel and through the element of parody, Rushdie makes clear that a single culture structuring the background for the novel like this ceases to suffice and the reconciliation of the landlord confirms the invasion of multicultural elements in the narrative. The image of the perforated sheet is recreated with Jamila Singer. The image however serves the same purpose but with obvious change in the nature and function of parody;

But when Jamila singer, concealed within a gold burqa arrived at the palace, Mutassim, the handsome-who owing to his foreign travels had never heard the rumors of his disfigurement-became obsessed with the idea of seeing her face; he fell hand-over heel with the glimpses of her demure eyes he saw through her perforated sheet. (Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*, 383)

The symbol of the perforated sheet is recreated but with the piercing figurative implication as the symbol now is set in the fanatic society of Pakistan. The vulgarization touches the peak when Saleem and Jamila realize that 'they were not truly brother and sister' and the 'blood in his veins was not the blood in hers.' (Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*, 387)

The elements of multiculturalism acquire more space in the narrative with the Ahmad Sinai's escape to the Bombay; the city that makes the cultural metaphor of Indian. The escape of the protagonists from Kashmir to Agra and then to Bombay, gradually intensify the scope and possibility of multiculturalism in the novel. Ahmad Sinai ignores Alia's relationship with Nadir Khan and marries her. 'Time for a fresh start,' Ahmed tells Alia, 'throw Mumtaz and Nadir Khan out of the window.' (Rushdie. *Midnight's Children* 70) The 'fresh start' indicated by the protagonist father refers to the making of the new world which can aptly be defined in terms of synthesis of many cultures. The birth of the protagonist itself is a pronounced testimony of multiculturalism. He is son of Wee Willie Winkie and his wife Vanita whose actual father is Mr. Methwold. He is exchanged with the child of Ahmed and Amina Sinai by the midwife Marry Pereira to please her communist lover Joseph. Thus the birth of the protagonist itself marks the beginning of the multicultural identity of the protagonist. The identity crisis of the protagonist which he shares with the author is delineated in natural correlation with the idea of

multiculturalism. There is a continuous fragmentation of the identity of the protagonist and this fragmentation is realized in the backdrop of multicultural locale of the action. The most conspicuous revelation of the crisis of identity is takes place through the multicultural elements pervading the narrative. It has been discussed earlier that Saleem is an illegitimate son of a Hindu mother and a Christian father and he is brought to the parental care of a Muslim couple. Thus in the time of birth only Saleem has two fathers and two mothers and these four different parent figures belong to three major ethnic groups of India. Marry Pareira is another mother figure associated with the protagonist. Thus the parenthood of the protagonist is itself designed in the chiaroscuro of multiculturalism. Further, as the narrative advances, we come across a number of parent figures in the life of the protagonist. Saleem himself confesses that ‘giving birth to parents has been one of’ his ‘stranger talents.’ He also reveals that ‘he had more mothers than most mothers have children.’ (Rushdie. *Midnight’s Children*, 291) He also admits that ‘all his life,’ he ‘consciously or unconsciously’ has ‘sought our fathers.’ (Rushdie. *Midnight’s Children*508) It is thus clear that the delineation of the character of Saleem Sinai itself owes its metaphorical magnificence to the elements of multiculturalism. Saleem’s nuptial conjugation with Parvati the witch is another very prominent use of multiculturalism in the novel. Parvati, as the name suggests, is a Hindu woman and Saleem is a Muslim man.

I married Parvati-the witch on February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1975, the second anniversary of my outcast’s return to magician’s ghetto. (Rushdie. *Midnight’s Children*483)

Saleem, the protagonist/ narrator in his last soliloquy forcefully proclaims the pervasion of multiculturalism for as many and one thousand and one generations;

Yes, they will trample me underfoot, the numbers marching one two three four hundred million five hundred six reducing me to specks of voiceless dust, just as all in good time, they will trample my son who is not my son, and his son who will not be his and his son who will not be his, until a thousand and first generation, until a thousand and one midnight’s have bestowed their terrible gifts and thousand and one children have died, because it is the curse and privilege of midnight’s children to be both, masters and victims of their times, to forsake privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of multitudes and to be unable to live or die in peace. (Rushdie. *Midnight’s Children*, 552)

The excerpt quoted above is a fine blend of Rushdie’s vision of India which is defined and determined in terms of multiculturalism. It is also important to note that there are indications of the coercion and repression but the author foresees the perpetuity of multicultural elements in socio- political set up of India for as many as one thousand and one generations.

The secondary characters in the novel provide a great scope and opportunity of the inclusion of multi cultural elements in the narrative. The views of A.R.Humphreys on the nature of the Augustan literary characters hold great relevance. He commenting on the essential nature of the Augustan characters points out that ‘their power comes from the fact that they are not subtly understood individuals but representative of a kind with a kind of collective force.’ (Smith, 13-14) The characters form a pattern of parallels and contrast and people the world of the novel. In the first and second part of the novel, there is slow and gradual advancement from uni-cultural background to multiculturalism. The secondary characters are delineated with the inherent metaphorical significance. The contrast of Mian Abdullah and Nadir Khan is a brilliant

example of delineation of the characters in parallels and contrast. Mian Abdullah represents the progressive Muslim mind set whereas Nadir Khan shows the narrow Muslim mind set prone towards Zinnah. The characters like Lifafa Das, Alia, Emerald, S.P. Butt, and Zohra people the world of the novel. They make a microcosmic representation of new India definable in terms of multiculturalism. The secondary characters acquire new shades and complexion in the second and third parts of the novel. They are delineated with rich metaphorical shades of metropolitan culture. The characters like Mr. Methold, Wee Willie Winke, Vanita demonstrate completed independence from the pre existing parameters of a uni-cultural world. They also bring the fragrance of Christian culture contribute to the multiplicity of the culture. The family of the film magnet, Homy Catrack introduces Persian culture in the narrative. Commander Sabarmati is another important character from the point of view of multiculturalism. He is delineated with the obvious distinction with the world of civilians, thus introduces a new culture. *Midnight's Children* is thus an novel which is thickly forested with the characters belonging to every domain of India's cultural domain.

Rushdie delineates a number of midnight's children, born at the first hour of India's independence from the Crown. They are delineated with supernatural fantasy. There was a 'beggar girl' called Sundari whose 'beauty' was so 'intense' that it blinded 'her mother and the neighboring woman who had been assisting at her delivery.' (Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*, 236) A boy from Kerala had the ability of stepping into the mirrors and re emerging through any reflective surface in the land.' There is a Goanese girl who enjoys the 'gift of multiplying fishes.' A boy from Vidhyas 'had been the cause of wild panic and rumors of the return of the giants.' A midnight's child from Kashmir is born with the uncertainty of his 'original sex' and 'by merging in the water,' he could 'alter' his 'sex.' (Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*, 2237) It is remarkable that Rushdie doesn't associate any ethnic group in delineating these midnight's children and makes use of supernatural fantasy to dissolve the regional distinctions and creates a multicultural milieu.

Shiva is the Hindu character who offers a direct contrast to the protagonist Saleem Sinai. He represents destructive and coercive force that aims at restoring the dominance of the Hindu culture. The fear of the protagonist on his first confrontation with Shiva aptly shows the premonition of fear. Saleem recollects;

When I first introduced myself to Shiva, I saw in his mind the terrifying image of a short rat-faced youth with filled down teeth and two of the biggest knees the world has ever seen. (Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*, 262)

He endures a long suspension and returns to the narrative as a grown up, ruthless young man, Major Shva the war hero. The myth of Shiva draws natural parallel with the character of Shiva in the novel. Shiva in the narrative is also a destructive force. The metaphorical implications of the character of Shiva draw a sharp contrast with the protagonist. Saleem's submissiveness and cowardice draws a sharp contrast with the Shiva's aggressiveness and ruthlessness. Shiva soon becomes a complex metaphor; on one hand he represents the nuclear power which embodies the possibilities of the holocaust, and, on the other hand, he rises to represent the growing fanaticism of the majority and consequently a threat to the very idea of multiculturalism. The two metaphorical implications are fused in the narrator's query to himself. He asks himself;



Was Shiva's arrival into my life truly synchronous with India's arrival, without prior warning, at the nuclear age? (Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*, 486)

Rushdie's juxtaposes Saleem's sexual impotence with the ruthless and aggressive sexuality of Shiva. He is responsible for 'strewing bastards across the map of India' but he 'suffered from the curious fault of losing interest in anyone who became pregnant.' (Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*, 488) He takes away the wife of Saleem and impregnates her. Adam Sinai is the son Saleem Sinai and Parvati the witch is owes his birth to the sexual vigor of Shiva the metaphor of atrocities and destruction. Shiva's identification with Lord Shiva, the figure of Hindu mythology, makes him a strong metaphor of the growing Hindu sectarianism responsible for grave deteriorations in the status of the minorities in India. Saleem, thus represents the humiliation of minorities as against the metaphorical suggestion of ruthlessness of the Hindu majority in India. Shiva's character thus becomes a threat to growing multiculturalism which goes against Rushdie's much nurtured ideals of a pluralistic society. Rushdie's views on post *Midnight's Children* India capture out attention. He says'

I remember that when *Midnight's Children* was first published in 1981, the most common Indian criticism of it was that it was too pessimistic about the future. It is a sad truth that nobody finds that novel ending pessimistic anymore because what has happened in India since 1981 is so much darker than I had imagined. If anything, the book's last pages with their suggestions of a new, more pragmatic generation rising up to take over from the midnight children, now seem absurdly, romantically, optimistic. (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 33)

It is clear that the advent of Shiva is a threat to the ideals of multiculturalism in the Indian socio- political set up and what begins at the close of the *Midnight's Children*, according to Rushdie is the most unfortunate part of the socio- political history of India since the publication of the novel. He in an interview in *The Times of India* candidly admits that the idea of India that came into being in 1947 could be defined as 'secularist, democratic and socialist,' but that India now is 'being transformed into something else under the pressure of anti secular, anti democratic and free market forces. (Rushdie, *The Times of India* September 10 1995:09) Rushdie's views expressed in his obituary to Mrs. Indira Gandhi makes his ideals clear when he says'

For a nation of seven hundred millions to make any kind of sense, it must base itself firmly on the concept of multiplicity, of plurality and tolerance of devolution and decentralization. Wherever possible. There can be no one way- religious cultural or linguistic- of being an Indian; let differences reign. (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 44)

The views of Rushdie expressed above make it clear that the idea of multiculturalism enshrines his ideal of India. The advancement of the narrative from the first to the last page is an illustration of various phases of the growth and development of multiculturalism of the Indian society. Rushdie, in his most celebrated novel- *Midnight's Children* locates the glory of India in terms of multiculturalism and the gravest threat to the India idea according to him is nothing but the threat to the ideals of multiculturalism that are of defining significance in the thematic network of the novel.

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