



INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

(Peer-reviewed, Refereed, Indexed & Open Access Journal)

DOI : 03.2021-11278686

ISSN : 2582-8568

IMPACT FACTOR : 6.865 (SJIF 2023)

THE AGONIES AND ECSTASIES OF DIASPORA IN RUSHDIE'S FICTION

Dr. Priyanka Singla

Associate Professor of English,
Government College for Women, Hisar (Haryana, India)

E-mail: priyanka.ind81@gmail.com

DOI No. **03.2021-11278686**

DOI Link :: <https://doi-ds.org/doilink/04.2023-35496694/IRJHIS2304017>

ABSTRACT:

Salman Rushdie is one of the most prominent and significant diasporic writers of the 20th century. Born in India in 1947, Rushdie migrated to England in 1961, where he spent most of his career as a writer. His works have been hailed for their inventive and imaginative style, their blending of cultures and nationalities, and their exploration of issues of belonging, identity, and language. In this paper, it will be stressed that Rushdie's importance as a diasporic writer stems from his ability to shed light on the complexities and dilemmas of the diasporic experience, his use of language to create hybrid identities and his contribution to postcolonial literature. Salman Rushdie's importance as a diasporic writer stems from his ability to explore the complexities and dilemmas of the diasporic experience, his use of language to create hybrid identities, and his contribution to postcolonial literature. His works have been critical in shaping our understanding of diasporic cultures and identities, and his writing continues to be a vital and influential voice in the field of contemporary literature.

KEYWORDS: *Diaspora, Hybridity, Identity Crisis, Multilingualism, Postcolonial Literature.*

Introduction:

First and foremost, Rushdie's importance as a diasporic writer lies in his ability to probe and examine the complexities of the diasporic experience. Through his novels, he explores themes of identity, home, and cultural hybridity that arise out of the experience of displacement and migration. As a diasporic writer himself, Rushdie draws upon his own experiences of leaving his homeland, becoming alienated from his family and culture, and being forced to navigate and adapt to a new cultural landscape. Rushdie's works also depict the impact of colonialism, post colonialism, and globalization on the diaspora, and how these forces shape and influence diasporic identities. Secondly, Rushdie's use of language as a tool for creating hybrid identities is another reason for his significance as a diasporic writer. Rushdie's prose is notable for its multilingualism, its use of colloquialisms, and its fusion of British English and Indian dialects. This technique of blending multiple languages and cultures creates a unique voice that reflects the experience of

diasporic individuals who often feel caught between two or more cultures. The hybrid identities that Rushdie's characters embody in his works serve as a reflection of the diversity of contemporary diasporic communities, whose members find themselves situated at the intersections of multiple cultures. Finally, Rushdie's contribution to postcolonial literature makes him an essential diasporic writer. His novels help to deconstruct and destabilize the dominant narratives of Eurocentric literature and challenge established notions of history, identity, and culture. His works also give voice to the marginalized and silenced communities whose stories have been ignored or dismissed by the dominant cultural narratives. Rushdie's novels call attention to the complexity and diversity of diasporic communities and make significant contributions to the writers and scholars working in the field of postcolonial literature.

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is a novel that explores the theme of diaspora through the story of its protagonist, Saleem Sinai. The novel portrays the impact of colonialism and migration on individuals and communities, and the challenges of defining one's cultural, religious, and national identity. The novel navigates the complexities and contradictions of the diasporic experience, emphasising the importance of remembering and preserving one's history and heritage. Through Saleem Sinai's story, the novel explores the legacy of British colonialism in India and the forced migration of Muslims and Hindus during the partition of India in 1947. Saleem is a product of this historical context, having been born at the stroke of midnight on the day of India's independence. As a result, he is endowed with supernatural powers and is symbolic of the birth of a new nation. However, the novel also highlights the disillusionment and broken promises that followed the euphoria of independence.

The novel emphasises the theme of diaspora through Saleem's loss of identity and sense of belonging. Saleem is a symbol of the diasporic experience of Indians who were displaced and forced to leave their land, community and culture during the partition of India. This experience of dislocation and displacement results in Saleem's search for a new identity and a sense of belonging. Saleem's search for belonging is not only an individual struggle but also a collective one, as he represents the search for a postcolonial identity. Furthermore, the novel highlights the importance of memory and cultural heritage in the diasporic experience. Through Saleem, the novel portrays the significance of cultural heritage in shaping one's identity and sense of belonging. The novel celebrates the rich history and diversity of India and emphasises the importance of remembering the past and honouring cultural traditions. The novel portrays Saleem's return to his ancestral home as a symbolic homecoming, a journey towards rediscovery and reclamation of his identity and heritage. Moreover, *Midnight's Children* illustrates the complexities of the diasporic experience, with its emphasis on the diversity of cultures and identities within the diaspora. The novel challenges the notion of a homogeneous diaspora and emphasizes the multiple and diverse identities that exist

within it. The novel's portrayal of the diversity of Indian culture - its religions, languages, and traditions - highlights the importance of cultural hybridity and the false dichotomy between East and West.

Moor's Last Sigh is a novel that navigates the concept of diaspora through the lives of its multi-generational and complex set of characters. The novel portrays the many facets of diaspora, highlighting its impact on individual lives, families, and cultural identity. It is an exploration of the fragmented and irreconcilable experiences of migrants, their struggles for self-acceptance, and the search for a sense of belonging. The protagonist, Moraes Zogoiby, is the embodiment of the diasporic experience, having been born to a Portuguese-Jewish father and an Indian Catholic mother. Moraes navigates the complexities of his hybrid identity, which is further compounded by his experiences of displacement, rootlessness and a family history stained by the fallout of the Partition of India. Moraes, like many migrants, has to negotiate different cultures, languages, identities, histories, and memories which creates a sense of fragmentation and dislocation. Furthermore, *Moor's Last Sigh* also explores the theme of diaspora through its exploration of family and inheritance. The novel explores the maternal legacy of the Zogoiby family, which has been passed down from generation to generation. This legacy is portrayed as an inheritance of cultural, ideological, and religious diversity, which shapes the cultural identity of Moraes and his mother Aurora. The novel's portrayal of the family's complexity highlights the idea of the diaspora experience as a multi-generational phenomenon that shapes the lives of its members and creates an interconnected and diverse family tree.

Moreover, Rushdie critiques the idea of cultural purity and homogeneity that is often used to limit the scope of diversity within a community. The novel challenges the notion of cultural purity by exposing the hybridity that exists within cultures. The Zogoiby family, for instance, is depicted as a family that embodies the elements of Indian, Portuguese, Jewish, and Catholic cultures. Thus, the novel suggests that cultural identity is not a limiting factor but a source of strength, diversity, and creativity. Additionally, the theme of diaspora also allows Rushdie to explore the impact of migration on cities and the concept of home. The novel's setting is in Mumbai, a city that is portrayed as a melting pot of cultures and religions. Rushdie illustrates how the city's cosmopolitanism creates a sense of cultural pluralism and diversity. Rushdie also shows how migration transforms a city and how migrants add to its cultural and intellectual vitality. The novel highlights the importance of a sense of belonging and home, even for those who cannot trace their roots precisely. *Moor's Last Sigh* is a novel that explores the theme of diaspora through the lives of its characters. The novel critiques the idea of cultural purity, challenges binaries and illustrates the importance of cultural hybridity. Rushdie represents the diasporic experience that is characterized by complexity, hybridity, dislocation, and fragmentation. Through its exploration of family, inheritance, and the idea of home,

the text exposes the interconnected and diverse nature of the diaspora experience.

Rushdie is known for his innovative use of language in his works, especially multilingualism. In his works, he explores the complexity of different cultures and their languages by weaving different languages into his narrative. In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie uses multilingualism to depict the diverse cultural identities that exist in India. The protagonist, Saleem Sinai, a product of multicultural heritage, narrates the story in multiple Indian languages, including Hindi, Urdu, and English, reflecting the multilingual nature of India. Rushdie's use of language captures the complex interplay of identity and language in the Indian culture. By mixing several languages, Rushdie creates a multivocal narrative that makes it possible for characters to express themselves in the way they feel most comfortable, capturing their beliefs, values, and ways of life. By portraying multilingualism in his works, Rushdie strives to emphasize that language and identity are interconnected. He explores the symbolic meaning of different languages and how they shape personal and collective identities, as well as ways in which language is used to create borders and exclusions. In this sense, multilingualism is a tool for Rushdie to challenge stereotypes, demonstrate the complex entanglement of identity and language and present his work from a global perspective.

One important theme that appears consistently in Rushdie's literature is that of identity. Through his writing, Rushdie explores the complexities and nuances of identity, highlighting the ways in which it is shaped by cultural heritage, political forces, and personal experiences. In Rushdie's novels, characters struggle with their individual identities, often playing multiple roles or wearing masks to navigate the expectations of the cultures they inhabit. In *Midnight's Children*, for instance, the protagonist, Saleem Sinai, struggles with his identity throughout the novel. He is born at the exact moment of India's Independence and is hence associated with something larger than himself, namely the post-colonial Indian identity. Saleem's life story is intimately connected to India's own story of decolonization and the tumultuous events that followed. Saleem ultimately questions his identity and his place in the world, as he feels that he is a product of both his country and his family. Another example of this theme in Rushdie's writing is in *The Satanic Verses*. In this work, the characters struggle to reconcile their cultural heritage with their individual desires and aspirations. The novel's main characters, Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta, struggle with their roots as immigrants from India living in England. They must navigate the complexities of a multicultural society and individual desires and needs that they have.

Additionally, Rushdie explores the idea of hybrid or in-between identities, those that are not confined to a single cultural or national identity. His novel, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, for example, features a protagonist who is both Indian and Jewish, struggling to reconcile her two cultural identities. The novel portrays the challenges of blending multiple identities, particularly in a post-colonial world. Finally, Rushdie's works frequently interrogate the idea of identity as defined by

others or society. His novel, *Shame*, deals with the concept of everyday identity, the sense of self that is imposed on individuals by their social and cultural institutions. The novel's protagonist, Omar Khayyam Shakil, is haunted by the sense that he is not living up to the social and political expectations of his community, and consequently finds himself in conflict with other people. Rushdie's works explore the theme of identity in many ways, reflecting the complexity of this concept in our modern world. His characters struggle with their individual identities, cultural heritage, and political context, creating a layered portrait of the modern identity. Through his literature, Rushdie demonstrates the importance of accepting different identities and understanding them. His novels highlight the universality of the struggles of identity, uncovering the deep-seated conflicts that often accompany living in an interconnected world.

Indian Writing in English has evolved over the years, and its contribution to the world of literature cannot be ignored. One of the most important figures in IWE is Salman Rushdie, who has made significant contributions to the genre through his unique approach to writing. Rushdie's importance lies in his status as a diasporic writer, and his ability to depict Indian life in a global context. As a diasporic writer, Rushdie stands out in his representation of Indian life and its complexities in a global context. Rushdie has been able to address the diasporic experience and its impact on the individual's cultural identity through his works. In his novels, Rushdie portrays the struggles of being an Indo-British writer and how it affects his writing. Rushdie's works address cultural diversity, language, migration, and the complexities of belonging to multiple cultures. Rushdie's contribution to Indian Writing in English is invaluable, and his relevance cannot be ignored in today's modern context.

Rushdie's work provides a voice to those who belong to multiple cultures, and his focus on cultural identity has become increasingly important in today's multicultural society. Rushdie's writings provide a way to approach and understand contemporary global issues that stem from the complexities of identity and belonging. In addition, Rushdie's works are not just limited to the Indian diaspora but have a broader appeal to people from diverse cultures, making them a unique contribution to global literature. Rushdie's writing is characterized by his use of language, magical realism, and elements of postmodernism. Rushdie creates a unique blend of Indian tradition, folklore, and history with modernity, resulting in a distinctive style. His works challenge the conventional style of writing and storytelling, leading to a new form of literature that incorporates elements of fantasy and symbolism. In conclusion, Salman Rushdie's contribution to Indian Writing in English as a diasporic writer is significant. His unique approach to writing, his focus on cultural identity and the diasporic experience, and his literary style have made him an essential figure in modern literature. Rushdie's works continue to resonate with readers globally, making him a true ambassador of Indian literature to the world.

WORKS CITED:

1. Rushdie, Salman. *Grimus*. London: Vintage Books, 1996.
2. ---. *Midnight's Children*. London: Vintage Books, 2006.
3. ---. *Shame*. London: Vintage Books, 1995.
4. ---. *The Enchantress of Florence*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2008.
5. ---. *Imaginary Homelands*. London: Granta, 1991.
6. Herwitz, Daniel & Ashutosh Varshney. *Midnight's Diaspora: Encounters with Salman Rushdie*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2009.
7. Salgado, Minoli. "The Policies of Palimpsest in *The Moor's Last Sigh*". *The Cambridge Companion to Salman Rushdie*. Ed. Abdulrazak Gurnah. Cambridge University, Press, 2007.

