



## CULTURE & NATIONHOOD IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *EAST, WEST & MY CHILDREN*



**Karabasappa C Nandihally,**  
Assistant Professor, Dept. of English,  
Govt. First Grade College, Davanagere.

### ABSTRACT

This paper involves the examination of two works by Salman Rushdie: a short story collection, *East, West* and a novel, *Midnight's Children*. Looking at these texts through a postcolonial lens, I analyse Rushdie's writing in terms of its relationship to the academic debates of the period and the historical context that grounds the works. Throughout the paper, I analyse Rushdie's portrayal of the relationship between culture, nationhood, and identity, while also focusing on different aspects of the works. In the first section I examine the relationship between postcolonialism and magical realism in *East, West*, and argue that Rushdie uses a unique hybrid of magical realism, satire, and intertextuality to complicate the portrayal of culture in his stories as he brings into question the use of the East/West binary that dominated scholarly discourse at the time of the publication of these text. In the section second chapter I discuss the relationship between *Midnight's Children* and *East, West*, examining the portrayal of post-independence India and Rushdie's critiques of the Indian government at the time.

While in the section first chapter, stylistic decisions serve as the primary focus of my analysis, in second part, the relationship between technology and national identity becomes the driving question. Using textual and historical evidence, I demonstrate the extent to which these two texts serve as a statement on the nature of cultural and national identity in the postcolonial era, providing no certain answers but instead raising more questions and illuminating the complexities of global interactions. *East, West* is a collection of

narratives about identity formation in cross-cultural circumstances. The originality of these stories may be detected by noting many features of Rushdie's novels that are not to be observed here. Rushdie's own statement that "literature is, of all the arts, the one best suited to challenging absolutes of all kinds" could take as the motto of *East, West*, because this is exactly what the stories, individually and collectively, set out to do. Rushdie 1991:424 The wonderful characters he portrays in these short-stories strike us through their ability to mix popular culture with philosophical remarks and informal expressions with subtle psychological awareness. Structurally, the collection is divided into three sections: "East," "West," and "East, West" which consists of nine stories, three in each section. The "East" section contains "Good Advice is Rarer than Rubies," "The Free Radio" and "The Prophet's Hair" while the second section called "West" is made of "Yorick," "At the Auction of the Ruby Slippers" and "Christopher Columbus and Queen Isabella of Spain Consummate their Relationship." The third part entitled "East, West" includes "The Harmony of the Spheres", "Chekov and Zulu" and "The Courter." The purpose of these demarcations is not to suggest a facile fusion between the two worlds. Rather, Rushdie sets out to offer images of both worlds that connect them rhetorically while suggesting their difference

### KEY WORDS

Postcolonialism, Magical, Realism culture & nationhood, Sheherazadean hotch-potch fantasies "Ex colonial, Imagined Communities, identity and simultaneity,