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(Dis)junction of Globalization and Belonging in Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*

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Abstract: The paper attempts to explore the issues of globalization, belonging, identity, history, and nation in terms of citizenship, nationhood, ethnicity and gender. It will be further addressed from the point of the view of cosmopolitanism that differs from a traditional vision of world citizenship, and challenges the assertion that 'globalization and belonging' are separate spheres. It aims to show that (dis)junction of identity in the terms of 'globalization and belonging' is a fluid and continuous process of adaptation and reclamation between different cultural communities. In other words, identity is not a fixed signifier determined by national, ethnic or religious boundaries. The crucial concern of this paper is the exploration of the (dis)junction between 'globalization and belonging', yet what will be evident in the subsequent analysis is that the nation-states are relevant, and often significant, factors in that relationship.

Keywords: Globalization, Belonging, Multiculturalism, Ethnicity, Cosmopolitanism, Local, National and Global.

Salman Rushdie's *The Moors' Last Sigh* (1995) and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) question the stable, definite and fixed notion of self in the home and the world. The novels emphasize the possibility of newness, change, and multiplicity in the formation of identity. The formulations of identities shift across time and place, for individuals, group and whole societies. The novels show that the cultural identity of a community or an individual can change, for instance, when one moves from one place to another, marries, or improves one's economic status. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the (dis)junction

of 'globalization and belonging' in Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *The Ground Beneath her Feet*. Both of these novels are concerned with the areas of the local and the global, the national and the international, the particular and the universal, the ancient and the modern, and such other conditions through the logic of globalization. These fictions are explored in the context of 'globalization and belonging' that represent the phenomena of the East and the West encounter, regional and multicultural world-view, Greek myth and contemporary European philosophy along with popular cultures. At certain places, the novel like *The Moor's Last Sigh* provides a severe critique of the incidents that happened in the last decade of the twentieth century. It explores how Rushdie's representation of the two nations, India and Pakistan, evokes Nehru's ideas of the nation in juxtaposition with those of M. A. Jinnah. For instance, *The Moor's Last Sigh* is concerned with nation and diversity, which looks at the history of India through the eyes of Moraes Zogoiby and his family, brings the history of medieval to map contemporary India and its current cultural practices. The interaction between 'globalization and belonging,' particularly trans-nationalism, may even challenge the nation-state. It is in this context that the fiction of Rushdie represents a vision of cosmopolitanism refashioning the "self" in an ever-changing world. In this context, I argue that 'globalization and belonging' in the form of hybridity appear as an empty nostalgia, and Rushdie's embrace of fragmentation is faltering and problematic, and therefore, it is necessary to understand the specificities of Indian history which both coincides with and deviates from the general theories of nation such as that of Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities."

Dealing with the issues of 'globalization and belonging', *The Moor's Last Sigh* contains the story of four generations of a Christian-Jewish family, which has been based on very complicated narratives. It has been concerned with the business of the spice trade in India. Most of the events in the novel are seen to be out of Indian sub-continent and it shows the impact of globalization in terms of trade and business across the limit of a particular territory. "The Moor" is the narrator of the novel and he is the son of the double-dealing spice merchant Abraham Zogoiby. Abraham Zogoiby's ethnic identity is known as a Spanish Jew who is presumably the illegitimate descendant of the Arab Sultan Abu Abdullah of Andalusia (known as Boabdil), and the Catholic matriarch-

cum -artist Aurora da Gama, a descendant of the renowned Portuguese explorer, Vasco da Gama. Like Scheherazade, the Moor protracts his own life by spinning the yarn of the Zogoiby-da Gama saga from within an Alhambra-like citadel in Benengeli, Spain. Here he is held captive by Vasco Miranda, who is a decidedly second-rate artist and Aurora's spurned lover. It is for Vasco Miranda that Moor writes the story of his family's life, from his premature birth and high-speed aging, through his family's business feuds, to his fatal visit to Benengeli to recuperate his mother's painting, also called *The Moor's Last Sigh*, which Vasco has stolen by way of revenge.

The belonging of the narrator Moor is allocated and imposed from outside, where memories are systematically suppressed in the pre-colonial past, and the urge to revisit the past becomes indispensable for the processes of reconciliation and belonging reconstruction. By the time the Moor tells his story to the narrator-in-exile, he is: "alone now, motherless . . . appear[ing] to lose his metaphorical role as a unifier of opposites, a standard bearer of pluralism, ceasing to stand as a symbol – however approximate – of the new nation" (MLS 66). The root of Moor's family is typically mixed Indian heritage. On one side, the depiction of Indian nationalism as an escalating/ethnocentric movement, with a "Hindu preference for the eternal stability of caste" and "natural residents" (299), is emphasized by the Moor's parallel universe of the darker side of Spain's modern history, where "folk had been plunged into deep morning" (387), over Franco's death. The formation of ethnic and cultural identity is entangled in the vast but liminal zone of the nation," which escalates in Bhabha's words "a particular ambivalence that haunts the idea of the nation, the language of those who write of it and the lives of those who live it. It is an ambivalence that emerges from a growing awareness that . . . the cultural temporality of the nation inscribes a much more transitional social reality" (Bhabha, 1990:1).

The Moor's Last Sigh (1995) deals with the patrimonial history of Moraes Zogoiby, who is popularly known as "the Moor". His lineages suggest that he is the last survivor to the descents of a Portuguese explorer Francisco da Gama. Da Gama came to India in quest of spices and later settle over here and became wealthy by transporting to the western countries. His ancestors, Moraes informs how Boabdil, the last Muslim king of Spain is forced to surrender his city to Ferdinand and

Isabella in 1442. The place of Boabdil seizure becomes today becomes a place for tourism, which is known as 'The Last Sigh of the Moor.' When his descendants came to southern India, they adopted their family name, "Zogoiby," which means "The Unfortunate." The other line of the family came from Black Jews who had come to Cochin, India, and constructed a synagogue in 1568. This becomes a famous centre of attraction at the present time. Moraes traces the last four generations of his ancestors that span the first eight decades of the 20th century. He describes his mother, Aurora, as a young girl and her close relatives to make the reader understand her strong and difficult character. All over the novel, Rushdie tried well to explore the doubt, dishonesty, and illusion that indwell this teeming nation: the mixture and conflicting of many cultures, languages, and religions - even though he constantly minimize the latter's significance and positive impact. Historical events interlink with fiction, contributing opportunities for reflection. Both of the classical myth and modern pop culture offer insights into a mysterious region. The main protagonist 'Moraes' faces (dis)junction of the ridiculous boundary of a particular ethnic identity during his trade of spices in different places with different people. His hereditary business of spices in the global context fails when the same friends and business partners of his, raise fingers pointing out his identity and belonging to different clan and caste. In *The Moors' Last Sigh*, Rushdie rewrites the past of the nation by challenging the established, sacred, and dogmatic notions of time and history. This is reflected in Rushdie's description of characters who is a combination of many ethnicities and cultural background, which leaves no scope for him for self-expression.

The novel narrates the story of a spice trader, Moraes Zogoiby who is popularly called 'Moor' who takes care of his ancestral spice trade business with full of enthusiasm at Cochin. Despite under pressure of lots of troubles, he feels capable to carry out the risky task of such spice trade as:

“the menace of emerald smugglers, the mechanisation of business rivals, the growing nervousness of the British colony in Fort Cochin, the cash demands of the staff and of the plantation workers in the spice Mountain, the tales of communists trouble making and Congress wallah politics” (TMLS 9).

The Moor's narrative shows not only what the nation has become but what it has promised at the birth: reflecting such as A. K. Mehrotra argues that "a historical generosity of spirit," a free India was supposed to be "above religion ... above class ... above hatred ... above vengeance ... above tribe ... above language ... above ignorance ... above stupidity" (Mehrotra, 2003: 316). India seems as if it were a model example of that very modern observable fact, an "imagined community" whereby people on a large scale come together to make up that political and cultural body known as the nation.

Rushdie's assumption of the basic fragmentation of the Third World immigrant's life in a First World metropolis captures the other side of 'globalization and belonging' in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. The novel seeks to represent a rooted form of American identity and southern particularities which are rough with problematic instances of racial blindness and ignorance in American history. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* begins with a desire to leave behind the monolith of Old World colonial and postcolonial experience for the pluralist abundance of American life. Rushdie's America reveals the historical, racial, cultural and linguistic outcomes of perpetual movement into and around the nation over the course of the twentieth century.

The rootlessness, in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, is viewed as anti-social because it disorderly disorients from home, family, clan, race, and nation. In *Shame*, the narrator asks whether "history [is] to be considered the property of the participant solely?" (Shame 28). The narrator, Rai in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is a cosmopolitan migrant who narrates the historical identities of India from a temporal and geographical distance and his description of Bombay reveals difficulties of representation and responsibility from outside India. Rai's changing narration and perception of Bombay show transformation taking place within Bombay, that is, de-Islamization. The Muslims think that they are not having the privilege that their counterparts are having in Bombay, which is regarded as a city of diversity, tolerance, and cosmopolitanism. In addition, the narrator himself feels marginalized in the narrative of the city and nation as it revolves around Vina and Ormus's love. Above all, there is not a direct relationship between the narrator and the nation; unlike Salim Sinai, the narrator of *Midnight's Children*, who is "handcuffed to history," Rai, the narrator of *The Ground Beneath Her*

Feet is “not attached to history or Bombay” (GBHF 78). He is “Other” to the city and nation, and his relation to Bombay is only through his parents. So, it is his belated arrival which does not include construction of postcolonial identity. The creation of Maharashtra in 1960 shows Marathi-centric narrative. The representation of Bombay as multi-ethnic and cosmopolitan city appears distant from contemporary reality as the narrator himself feels alienated from the city. But Rai thinks that people will not understand his narrative of identities as he is away for a long time, and he claims to give an account of his sensibility: “People will say I’ve been away too long, I don’t understand the situation. . . . But I’ll tell you how it feels, after all these years. It feels like an ending” (248). Rai’s distancing from and participation in Bombay is as postcolonial migrant’s identities, therefore in Bhabha’s terms, “condition of in-betweenness”, a space that acts out diversely alternative of resistance against the view of identity essentialism that contains both the nationalistic and ethnocentric colonial discourse. In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Rushdie shows how the migrants face different types of identical problems in travelling which are much higher in the migrated country. Vina can fly to India because of her US Passport, but within America, she faces problems like prejudices and threats to her travel. Her mother and step-father have to go to secure a place in the school-bus. They explain Vina and her sister that their “darkness was not Negro darkness, they were Indians from India and didn’t need to be discriminated against, they could ride on the bus along with the regular kids” (105). Undoubtedly, the concepts of globalization fail to adjust the identity and belonging of particular migrants.

The novel, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, was written after Rushdie emigrated to America and settled down in New York. Unsurprisingly, it does not just deal with his impressions of America, but most importantly, focuses also very much on the condition of the outcast, the immigrant and in particular on the question whether it is possible to lead a life not just without roots, but also without any firm attachments or ties. The characters in the novel seem to be torn between the need to be free and experience the changing nature of the world on the one hand, and the need for roots and close relationships that should give them certainties on the other. In order to comprehend a person’s need for relationships, Rushdie explores in this novel the role of love and the

extent to which it could contribute to making a person whole. This theme is connected with the role of art in its various forms.

As for Rai, his familiarity is identified with Rushdie's figure, a spiritual relative of Saladin, the displaced hero of *The Satanic Verses*, and Moor, the conflicted narrator of *The Moor's Last Sigh*. A photographer by vocation, Rai is a professional observer who finds his scepticism sorely tested by his encounters with Ormus and who finds his own detachment dissolving in his love for Vina. At times, Rai demonstrates Rushdie's magpie love of language (his fondness for "whatever sounded bright and shiny"). But all too often his meditations on the story of Ormus and Vina devolve into ponderous pontifications, the babbling of someone in love with the sound of his own voice. He blathers on about Ormus having double vision, suggesting that the world he and the other characters inhabit is a kind of mirror world of our own. He wonders "if each of us has alternative existences in the other continuum" (TGBHF 389).

It has been common to be known that postcolonial literature is enthusiastically attached to the act of decolonizing the mind. Almost all postcolonial writers including Rushdie have engaged themselves how to get rid of the use of the language of the English for their own mother-tongues to find the sense of true identity. Rushdie's early life is seen as the only son of proficient, middle-class Muslim family in Bombay and local languages of his current belonging must be used as a crucial factor which is the result of subsequent literary output in his well-acclaimed fiction, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, in which he introduced vernacular language and local dialects into his fiction for spacing out his own identity and belonging. He constructs the local dialects apparently as ambiguous terms; deliberately he does it to reject the Standard English syntax and applying structures resultant from other languages; of including many different creolized version of English into his texts such as:

He munched on mango. "When man *converts*," he mused, "it is like a *powver* cut. Load shedding. He is shedding, you see?, a load of Human Destiny in a basically *cowwardly* way. *Phundamentally* an unserious *phashion*. In doing so, he detached himself from the history of his race, isn't it? Like pulling out a plug,

okay? ... Life is a cycle. In this poor life of ours, we must pay *phor* the sins of our past existence, and also if appropriate reap rewards of *previous* good *behaviour*. The *conwert* is like a guest in a hotel who will not pay his bill. *Therephore conwersely* he cannot expect *benephits* if there is billing error on his phaviour. (GBHF 70, emphasis added)

It is embodied extensive view that literature from the once-colonized countries was primarily concerned with challenging the language of colonial power, unlearning its world-view, and producing new modes of representation. Its authors looked at the fortunes of the English language in countries with a history of colonialism, noting how writers were expressing their own sense of identity by refashioning English in order to enable it to accommodate their experiences. "English was being displaced by "different linguistic communities in the post-colonial world" (Ashcroft, 1999: 8). In nature often more narrow than evocative, they enunciated the belief that the "crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing define itself by seizing the language of the centre and replacing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place" (Ashcroft, 1999: 38).

The claim of Ashcroft *et al* in constructing new 'englishes' (the lack of a capital 'E' is deliberate) by a number of approaches introducing words without any translations into their texts. *The Empire Writes Back* stated that writings of postcolonialism was always noted down of "the abrogation (i.e. discontinuing) of the received English which speaks from the Centre, and the act of appropriation (i.e. seizure) which brings it under the influence of a vernacular tongue, the complex of speech habits which characterize the local language" (Ashcroft, 1999: 39).

To conclude, the selected fictions of Rushdie represent the simplistic construction of globalization, belongings, nations, cultures, and identities based on tradition, geographical origin, and cultural location. Thus, it challenges the very categories on which the national identities are forged. Rushdie's narrative de-narrates the nation by not making the distinction between fantasy and realism. The nation between globalization and belonging is neither romanticized nor sentimentalized, but it is nevertheless acknowledged as a palimpsest construct in the imagination. In this way, the narrative of the novel embodies the trends

of non-narration, that is, it does not follow a linear, realistic and progressive structure of the narrative. The breaks in narrative open multiplicity and heterogeneity leading innumerable interpretations of the novel. In consequence, what Saleem Sinai calls “the chutnification of history” in *Midnight’s Children* has now become Aurora’s “junkyard collage” in *The Moor’s Last Sigh* (315). It also asserts Stuart Hall’s sense of the postcolonial relation with the past as “always-already ‘after the break’”. The novel evinces Hall’s awareness of that relationship as “always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth” (226). Rushdie’s own art is the best example of the cultural hybridity he celebrates.

For Rushdie, ‘globalization and belongings’, especially Indian, is palimpsest in nature. In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, he suggests that it is a fusion of real inequality and mental turmoil that combine to make travel for the migrant a frightening experience. The novel suggests the psychological dislocation and the impact of travel on identity along with the injustices wrought on the others. Movement and vague identities are enshrined in Ormus’s belief that “I don’t have to choose . . . I don’t have to be this guy or that guy . . . I’ll be all of them” (TGBHF 303). The novel creates new hybrid identity which is characterized by a feeling of independence and a sense of possibility which means “if you are Ormus Cama, if you are Vina Aspara, whose songs could cross all frontiers, even the frontiers of people’s hearts, then perhaps you believed all ground could be skipped over, all frontiers would crumble before the sorcery of the tune” (TGBHF 55). Rushdie constructs several speculative worlds to show that realistic worlds are just as socially constructed, and the truths exist outside and beyond of those constructions.

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