

Multiculturalism and cultural clashes in postcolonial India and its reflection in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

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Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. London: Simon and Schuster UK Ltd., 1996.

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ABSTRAKT

Tato práce se zabývá multikulturalismem a kulturními střety v postkoloniální Indii a jejich odrazem v dílech Kiran Desai *Dědictví ztráty* (2006) a Salmana Rushdieho *Děti půlnoci* (1981). Bakalářská práce se nejprve zabývá pojmy jako kolonialismus a multikulturalismus a následně demonstruje postupný vliv a působení Britského impéria v Indii. Hlavní částí práce je snaha zachytit různé podoby multikulturních střetů ve vybraných dílech, konfrontovat je s realitou odehrávající se v Indii po získání nezávislosti a také analyzovat oba romány. Práce zobrazuje následky působení Britského impéria jak na Indii, tak na život hlavních hrdinů ve vybraných knihách.

Klíčová slova: kolonialismus, multikulturalismus, Britské impérium, Východoindická společnost, nezávislost, imigrant, identita, kulturní střety, náboženství, Indie, Pákistán, Desai, Rushdie

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses multiculturalism and cultural clashes in postcolonial India and its reflection in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981). The bachelor thesis firstly deals with concepts of colonialism and multiculturalism and subsequently demonstrates a gradual influence and impact of the British Empire in India. The aim of this thesis is to describe various multicultural clashes in the selected books, confront them with a reality in independent India and analyze them. The thesis depicts consequences of the impact of the British rule both on India and on a life of main protagonists in the selected books.

Keywords: colonialism, multiculturalism, the British Empire, the East India Company, independence, immigrant, identity, cultural clashes, religion, India, Pakistan, Desai, Rushdie

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INTRODUCTION

Since the concept of multiculturalism is an up-to-date topic in today's world, it attracts more and more people's attention. Every single culture has its own traditions, habits, religions, languages and many other common features. Crucial condition of peaceful coexistence between various cultures is a mutual respect and willingness to accept the differences. Otherwise, it elicits the cultural clashes. The purpose of my thesis is to identify the cultural clashes in postcolonial India and demonstrate its reflection in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*.

The British Empire ruled over India for almost 350 years; therefore, the Indian culture and literature was tremendously influenced by the English culture and literature. Salman Rushdie and Kiran Desai, both authors of the Indian origin, wrote their novels in the English language however the main topic of their novels still remains India and the Indian culture.¹

Salman Rushdie published his *Midnight's Children* in 1981 and it won the Booker Prize for Fiction. We can say that this novel belongs to the genre of magic realism. This combination of reality and fiction is a typical feature of his novel.² Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* was published in 2006 and it was also awarded the Man Booker Prize for Fiction.³ The success of these novels was enormous because they describe postcolonial reality after the decline of the British Empire and deal with problems of immigration. Their masterpieces still contribute to current discussions relating to the problems of the East and the West. On top of that, these novels leave an indelible impression on reader's minds all over the world.

In the first part of my bachelor thesis I introduce the concept of colonialism, multiculturalism and development of the British Empire. These two terms are closely related together since the tremendousness of the British Empire was built up on colonialism and multicultural clashes play a key role in the thesis.

¹ M.Q. Khan and Bijay Kumar Das, *Studies in Postcolonial Literature* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2007), 4,
<http://books.google.cz/books?id=g4DlzlVusZsC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs#v=onepage&q&f=false>
(accessed April 16, 2012).

² Khan and Das, *Studies in Postcolonial Literature*, 7.

³ "Kiran Desai," The Man Booker Prizes, <http://www.themanbookerprize.com/prize/authors/2> (accessed April 16, 2012).

An introduction to a history of colonization will show us the purposes of the British colonization of India which reflected in Indian people's behavior, religion, culture, literature, opinions and finally in the loss of their identity. Influenced by European manners, the situation since India gained independence led to people's schizophrenic perception and confusion in their own country. The purpose of the first part is to declare a gradual rise of the British Empire.

Secondly, I deal with importance of multicultural clashes in the chosen pieces of literature. The fact that their novels are written in the English language only declares the influence. The main motive of their books is an intention to capture the postcolonial reality in India and multicultural clashes appearing after the independence. My intention is to confront the reality and consequences of the loss of the British rule with hard life of the main protagonists in selected books.

The thesis is largely focused on the multicultural clashes as they will play a significant role in future. Samuel Huntington, the author of his *Clash of Civilizations*, predicts a possible course of events: "In this new world the most pervasive, important and dangerous conflicts will not be between social classes, rich and poor, or other economically defined groups, but between peoples belonging to different cultural entities. Tribal wars and ethnic conflicts will occur within civilizations."⁴

He further claims that, "Civilizations and culture both refer to the overall way of life of a people, and a civilization is a culture writ large. They both involve the 'values, norms, institutions, and modes of thinking to which successive generations in a given society have attached primary importance."⁵

If a profound thought of this thesis could be formulated into one sentence, Samuel Huntington would express it very precisely: "We know who we are only when we know who we are not and often only when we know whom we are against."⁶

⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Simon and Schuster Uk Ltd., 1996), 28.

⁵ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 41.

1 COLONIALISM, MULTICULTURALISM, DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

1.1 Colonialism

Since the thesis is closely related to the British Empire and multicultural clashes, it is essential for a reader to be familiar with two key terms - colonialism and multiculturalism. The power of the British Empire and its extensiveness was build up on colonialism and multicultural clashes are in some measure its consequence.

The term colonialism is defined as “a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another.”⁷ However, the problem in defining colonialism arises when compared to imperialism. These two terms are often used as synonyms because “like colonialism, imperialism also involves political and economic control over a dependent territory.”⁸ The term imperialism, however, changed its meaning in consequence of historical events. “As Britain began to acquire overseas dependencies, the concept of empire was employed more frequently. Thus, the traditional understanding of imperialism was a system of military domination and sovereignty over territories.”⁹

When looking at justification of colonialism, it was an issue which was in the foreground of many philosophers and thinkers.¹⁰ European rule in the nineteenth century was at its peak but, paradoxically, “in the same period when most political philosophers began to defend the principles of universalism and equality, the same individuals still defended the legitimacy of colonialism and imperialism. One way of reconciling those apparently opposed principles was the argument known as the ‘civilizing mission.’”¹¹ The combination of these factors caused that Europeans and the British Empire came to believe that they have “the obligation to ‘civilize’”¹² the rest of the world.

⁶ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 21.

⁷ Margaret Kohn, “Colonialism,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/colonialism/#PosColThe> (accessed April 16, 2012).

⁸ Kohn, “Colonialism.”

⁹ Kohn, “Colonialism.”

¹⁰ Kohn, “Colonialism.”

¹¹ Kohn, “Colonialism.”

¹² Kohn, “Colonialism.”

1.2 Multiculturalism

From the political point of view, the term multiculturalism can be perceived as the best way of reacting on cultural differences. It works on an assumption that minority groups are not treated on the same level as other citizens. Multiculturalism also serves as an instrument of political and economical interests.¹³

Some critics contend that the multicultural argument for the preservation of cultures is premised on a problematic view of culture and of the individual's relationship to culture. Cultures are not distinct, self-contained wholes; they have long interacted and influenced one another through war, imperialism, trade, and migration. In the latter respect, multiculturalism is closely allied with nationalism.¹⁴

Samuel P. Huntington expresses it clearly in his *Clash of Civilizations*:

In the post-Cold world, the most important distinctions among peoples are not ideological, political, or economic. They are cultural. Peoples and nations are attempting to answer the most basic question humans can face: Who are we? And they are answering that question in the traditional way human beings have answered it, by reference to the things that mean most to them. People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations, and, at the broadest level, civilizations. People use politics not just to advance their interests but also to define their identity.¹⁵

1.3 Development of the British Empire

An increasing influence of the British Empire and gradual transition of India under the rule of the East India Company can be dated from the third Battle of Panipat. After this battle, Mughal and Maratha joint forces suffered a disastrous defeat and it appeared that the Indian subcontinent lost any uniting power and authority. The initial chaos in India was gradually replaced by a new system of power. In the 1770s, the expansive policy of the East India Company started to interfere in the northern and middle India. The East India Company decided to use a tactic, which was typical for the Indian policy at that time: they supported one of the pretenders and in case of victory they required, as an exchange for the help provided, that they will get a certain territorial area to manage. Thanks to that tactic, the British Empire ensured itself progressive penetration and annexation of their territory.¹⁶

The expansion of the British Empire and the influence of the East India Company over

¹³ Song, "Multiculturalism," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/multiculturalism/> (accessed April 16, 2012).

¹⁴ Song, "Multiculturalism."

¹⁵ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 21.

the Indian subcontinent gradually grew up. Apart from the Maratha Empire, there were no other rivals, who would be able to face to the British Empire. After their defeat, the rest of the Maratha nations were forced to sign unequal agreements, accept the presence of the British residents and in the end they became the part of the Indian princely states.¹⁷

The British successively started to annex the individual territories. After the annexation of Punjab the British resident was authorized to ‘manage and control all the matters in the region’. During the annexation of Awadh the British power was legalized and they suddenly took the control over a huge territory. The East India Company became a legal regional institution and was able to face their rivals with a strong economy and army.¹⁸

1.4 The East India Company

The Companies at that time represented a significant institutional innovation and they were successful opponents of the Portugal power, and also had the good chances to compete with local Asian communities. Methodical building of factories and warehouses enabled them to control and balance undesirable price turnover on the both Asian and European markets which might in a short-term view yield profit, but also financial losses.

On the contrary, long-term view enabled to follow much more reliable profits which could have been then reinvested to strengthen and improve infrastructure. It was the infrastructure that appeared to be very valuable and essential and its protection was worth protecting. This need seemed to be especially urgent by the end of the mid 18th century, when the disintegrating Mughal Empire was no longer able to guarantee enough security to protect the European business interests. That caused the transformation of originally unarmed factories into trade associations.¹⁹

1.5 The British East India Company

The England did not want to be sidelined and the traders tried hard to make business contacts with the Orient. Their interest was stimulated by profitable business with spice and other east commodities, which were for the whole 16th century governed by the

¹⁶ Jaroslav Strnad, Jan Filipovský, Jaroslav Holman and Stanislava Vavroušková, *Dějiny Indie* (Praha: Lidové Noviny, 2003), 539.

¹⁷ Strnad, Filipovský, Holman, Vavroušková, *Dějiny Indie*, 541.

¹⁸ Strnad, Filipovský, Holman, Vavroušková, *Dějiny Indie*, 560.

Portugal. Growing demand for spice, religious rebellion against the authority of the Pope connected with The English Reformation and new political situation were the main reasons which brought about the open attack against Portuguese and Spanish monopoly.²⁰

In 1609, the East India Company granted certain privileges which allowed it to declare war or to conclude peace, make relationships with orient monarchs, appoint governors, hire soldiers, build fortresses and the main privilege was to capture and sent back captured ships and merchants who offended against restored monopoly. Growing demand for the luxury articles such silk, coffee and tea contributed to the success and prosperity of the Company.

In the 1680s the board of directors of the English East India Company started to take interest in transforming business organisations into territorial power and it would build up its influence from the resources of controlled area. These tendencies started to develop into power ambitions, in advancing business and political interests via subsidiary alliances and annexations. That became in the mid 18th century the main instrument for building the European colonial Empires on the Subcontinent.²¹

1.6 Dalhousie's Policy

In 1848, Lord Dalhousie was appointed as a Governor General in India. Dalhousie's governing is not only the period of annexations and consolidation of the territory under the British Empire but also the period of prosperity, modernization, technical progress and the period of administrative and social reforms.

Consolidation of the British power connected with interfering into social structures, introducing the innovations, reforms, different system of education, life philosophy and thinking provoked the Indian people and caused troubles. The British met with a resistance. Indian were not satisfied with the British administration, revenues of the taxes, introducing of the new legislation and justice system, replacing their official Persian language by English and other innovations. The British economic policy transformed India into raw material base and the developing English industry caused, that India became the primary market for finished products. Their sphere of influence was growing. In 1813, the Christian churches started their missions and since that Hindu and Muslims considered all the reform

¹⁹ Strnad, Filipovský, Holman, Vavroušková, *Dějiny Indie*, 581.

²⁰ Strnad, Filipovský, Holman, Vavroušková, *Dějiny Indie*, 607.

²¹ Strnad, Filipovský, Holman, Vavroušková, *Dějiny Indie*, 659.

activities as an attempt to convert them to Christianity.²² These efforts of the British to rule over Indians are closely related with their perception of them. Thinking of the British, based on their Anglo-Saxon white origins, “developed a set of stereotypes towards black that portrayed them as both savage and bestial figures who needed to be controlled at all costs and as passive and helpless beings in need of missionary care and protection.”²³

1.7 Immigrant

To understand behaviour of characters in the following multicultural conflicts, one has to look at the position of immigrants and situation after the fall of the British Empire. The massive wave of immigrants coming to the UK and USA has to be examined from the historical context. In 1947, India gained its independence and almost 350 years of colonial rule of the British Empire ended up. Although the influence of the fallen British rule in India was still enormous it was not only the “colonial tie”²⁴ which caused the inflow of immigrants.²⁵

Firstly, a shift of people from their country of origin was connected with “the post-war labour shortage in Britain and the Commonwealth membership of the successor states of British India. This made the citizens of these countries simultaneously citizens of the United Kingdom.”²⁶ Secondly, the British Empire went through dramatic social changes and decline in power. It was strongly affected by the fact that its position “changed from being the largest and grandest of European nineteenth-century capitalist imperialism, controlling a quarter of the world’s population, into a largely symbolic and ceremonial ‘Commonwealth of Nations’.”²⁷ These historical events resulted in the perception of immigrants in the British society since “this decline in imperial power . . . was not

²² Strnad, Filipovský, Holman, Vavroušková, “*Dějiny Indie*“, 754.

²³ Paul B. Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 12, <http://books.google.cz/books?id=G144AAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs#v=onepage&q&f=false> (accessed April 16, 2012).

²⁴ Judith Margaret Brown and Rosemary Foot, *Migration, the Asian Experience* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), 49, http://books.google.cz/books?id=oOWWOs_qHbgC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed April 16, 2012).

²⁵ Brown and Foot, *Migration, the Asian Experience*, 48.

²⁶ Brown and Foot, *Migration, the Asian Experience*, 49.

²⁷ Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics*, 1.

accompanied by an equal and concomitant decline in racial ideas and ideologies for the advent of black immigration to Britain in the 1940s and 1950s. . . .”²⁸

The loss of empire came as a profound psychological shock to a society that had grown used to having colonial possessions, despite its ignorance of their nature and extent. The sense of imperial mission and ‘trusteeship’ and governance over ‘backward races’ extended, however, only to the colonial sphere and became difficult to reapply back within the imperial metropolis itself once a series of black communities, with links back to former colonial possessions, had begun to emerge in its midst. A break thus began to occur in British thought and attitudes towards race in the course of the 1960s with the final withdrawal from empire and the establishment of a new state-organized system of management of domestic race relations, combined with strict immigration control.²⁹

²⁸ Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics*, 1.

²⁹ Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics*, 11.

2 MULTICULTURAL CLASHES IN MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN

2.1 Aadam Aziz and his return from Abroad

The first multicultural conflict discusses a problem of immigration. At the beginning of the story, Salman Rushdie describes Aadam Aziz, Saleem's grandfather. He spent five years in Germany, where he was studying to be a doctor. "Now, returning, he saw through travelled eyes."³⁰ Aadam Aziz is back at home but he doesn't feel comfortable at his birthplace. He suddenly realizes that "the years in Germany had returned him to a hostile environment."³¹

Influenced by his German friends; there were Heidelberg and Ingrid, scorning him for his Mecca-turned parroting, Oskar and Ilse Lubin the anarchists, mocking his prayer with their antiideologies, Heidelberg, who learned that India – like radium – had been 'discovered' by the Europeans; even Oskar was filled with admiration for Vasco da Gama, and this was what finally separated Aadam Aziz from his friends.³²

It is apparent that Rushdie's intention is to point out the internal conflict of individual. Based on his attitudes, opinions and experiences gained abroad, Aadam makes a decision influencing him for the rest of his life. While trying to pray, he hits his nose. That convinces him to not worship a God, in whose existence he is not able to believe. These years spent away from home, belief of his friends who considered him to be "somehow the invention of their European ancestors"³³ and many other aspects makes him unable to worship.

Rushdie portrays a character that is 'caught' between the two cultures. Having experienced different life, different European manners, culture and thinking, his doubts keep nibbling at his mind. This situation clearly illustrates the main problem of many Indians and that is a searching of individual for his identity. That searching confronts Aadam with a dilemma whether to accept newly acquired experiences on the one hand or whether to stay deeply connected with the traditions of his country on the other hand. Therefore the searching for his identity can be seen as a consequence of historical development since their sense of identity went through a long-lasting historical progress

³⁰ Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (New York: Knopf, 1981), 5.

³¹ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 6.

³² Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 6.

³³ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 6.

and “Indians had begun to develop a sense of ‘Indianness’.”³⁴ Indianness can be understood as sharing “common heritage or legacy.”³⁵ One can notice that Rushdie is trying to describe the crucial internal problem which Aadam and an Indian immigrant in general has to resolve. That problem indicates that “not every Indian immigrant will subscribe to what is considered Indian ‘values’ or Indian ‘philosophy,’ but in the very act of rejecting certain options, they are aware that they are either discarding centuries-old traditions or upholding them.”³⁶

It is far more important for immigrant to strengthen the sense of identity while living abroad. “In an alien environment, ‘Indianness’ is not only inherited but also created in conscious opposition to what is non-Indian.”³⁷ In Germany, Aadam becomes an object of derision for his origin and rituals. He realizes that he is tightly connected with history. “For some emigrants, the process of identifying one’s Indianness and reinventing it may be too subtle or complex or even inexplicable. Indeed they resent having to explain it or identify it at all. They may not be able to explain why they value or enjoy what they do, but they do know that they can share it with other Indians from any other part of the world.”³⁸

Whereas in the first conflict Aadam Aziz faces the identity crisis alone, the following situation demonstrates the reaction of an old boatman called Tai. They used to be friends but now, not seeing each other for 5 years, Aadam notices an antipathy to him and obvious change in his behaviour. He says: “We haven’t got enough bags at home that you must bring back that thing made of a pig’s skin that makes one unclean just by looking at it? And inside, God knows what all.”³⁹ Tai looks at his bag with *Heidelberg* sign on it and Aadam suddenly realizes what makes the old man so angry. “To the ferryman, the bag represents Abroad; it is the alien thing, the invader, progress.”⁴⁰ Aadam is later on branded as an alien, person who is not trustful. People start to ignore him.

³⁴ Padma Rangaswamy, *Namasté America: Indian Immigrants in an American Metropolis* (Pa.: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2000), 38, <http://www.google.cz/books?id=-UKINliuSkC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs#v=onepage&q&f=false> (accessed April 16, 2012).

³⁵ Rangaswamy, *Namasté America*, 39.

³⁶ Rangaswamy, *Namasté America*, 39.

³⁷ Rangaswamy, *Namasté America*, 39.

³⁸ Rangaswamy, *Namasté America*, 39.

³⁹ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 18.

⁴⁰ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 19.

One can see the effort of Salman Rushdie to describe the attitude of society to Aadam's return. He is regarded as somebody, who just came back from Abroad, from a different culture and this fact is unacceptable for them.

2.2 The Amritsar Massacre

The multicultural conflict taking place in Amritsar captures an important historical event in Indian history. This incident foreshadowed decreasing and slowly, but inevitably coming to an end, influence of the British Raj.⁴¹ "1919 was a turning point in the history of India and Amritsar was the pivot."⁴² Rushdie's character Aadam is situated in the novel as a witness and direct participant of Amritsar massacre. He soaks up the atmosphere of Hartal – the day of "mourning, of stillness, of silence."⁴³ It was a form of public protest when public services and schools were not open since . . . "Gandhi has decreed that the whole of India shall, on that day, come to a halt. To mourn, in peace, the continuing presence of the British."⁴⁴

Knowing Rushdie's style of writing, magic realism, one can notice that Aadam is meant to be a witness of significant historical turnout and thereby placed into a centre of the massacre. Rushdie depicts it metaphorically when describing Aadam's wound received in Amritsar. "The clasp of his bag is digging into his chest, inflicting upon it a bruise so sever and mysterious that it will not fade until after his death."⁴⁵ One can have a feeling that the author wants to say that this event remains indelibly imprinted in Indian's minds. Aadam's contemplation and his internal thoughts before the massacre indicates that he realizes that the British rule is over but bequeath it legacy in India.

Doctor Aziz notices a soldierly young man in the street, and thinks – the Indians have fought for the British; so many of them have seen the world by now, and been tainted by Abroad. They will not easily go back to the old world. The British are wrong to try and turn back the clock. 'It was a mistake to pass the Rowlatt Act.'⁴⁶

The main point of this conflict is to highlight an increasing dissatisfaction with British dominion. India's aspiration to rule its own country gained its strength. That "simultaneously increased the impatience of nationalists and frightened conservatives in

⁴¹ Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (London: Abacus, 1994, 1998), 415.

⁴² James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, 417.

⁴³ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 37.

⁴⁴ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 37.

⁴⁵ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 41.

India and Britain.”⁴⁷ To meet the requirements of Indians, the British condescended “to set India along the road to ‘responsible government’ within the empire.”⁴⁸ Indians were not satisfied and the conflicts between the Raj and Congress were gradually raised when reforms called “Rowlatt Acts” were introduced.⁴⁹ Along with Gandhi’s politics of non-violence, although not suitably realized by Gandhi’s followers, demonstrations turned into riots. “It is April 7th, 1919, and in Amritsar the Mahatma’s grand design is being distorted. The shops have shut; the railway station is closed; but now rioting mobs are breaking them up.”⁵⁰ These struggles ultimately resulted in massacre in Amritsar. During the peaceful demonstration in Amritsar, Indian troops led by Brigadier-General Dyer started to fire into the demonstrators. As a result, 379 Indians were killed and hundreds of them were wounded.⁵¹

2.3 Aadam Aziz and Optimism

The following multicultural conflict describes the events connected with the Muslim league. Basically, the main causes of the conflict were struggles between Muslims and Hindus. The Muslim league was created as an opposition to the Indian National Congress. Despite Congress being an organization standing up for the interests of India as a whole, Muslims felt both lack of proper education and representation in government.⁵² “Muslim leaders saw that their community had fallen behind the Hindus.”⁵³ That strengthened up their feeling of being minority and need of taking certain measures. The leader of the Muslim league, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, managed to unify various Islamic organizations in majority Muslim’s provinces “under the umbrella of the Muslim League.”⁵⁴

⁴⁶ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 37.

⁴⁷ James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, 415.

⁴⁸ James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, 415.

⁴⁹ James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, 416.

⁵⁰ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 39.

⁵¹ James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, 417.

⁵² The library of Congress, “India: Origins of the Congress and the Muslim League,” The library of Congress, Country Studies, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field%28DOCID+in0025%29> (accessed April 16, 2012).

⁵³ The library of Congress, “India: Origins of the Congress and the Muslim League,”

⁵⁴ The library of Congress, “India: Political Impasse and Independence,” The library of Congress, Country Studies, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field%28DOCID+in0027%29> (accessed April 16, 2012).

Whereas the idea of separate state, emerged in 1930's, did not meet with a large response, the voices calling for creation of Pakistan became topical in early 1940s.⁵⁵ "The Muslim League insisted on its separateness from the Hindu-dominated Congress, as the voice of a 'nation within a nation.'"⁵⁶ These struggles finally resulted in "partition of the British Indian Empire into the nations of India and Pakistan. Partition seemed preferable to civil war."⁵⁷

The events taking place in this multicultural conflict places Aadam in the notable position of somebody who represents the interests of another group that is not mentioned above. In 1942, Aadam "contracted a highly dangerous form of optimism. He was by no means alone, because, despite strenuous efforts by the authorities to stamp it out, this virulent disease had been breaking out all over India that year, and drastic steps were to be taken before it was brought under control."⁵⁸

One could say that Rushdie's expression 'optimism' can be metaphorically understood as a belief of those Indian Muslims who were against partition. "Like Aadam, like Rani of Cooch Naheen, like Mian Abdullah loathed the Muslim League."⁵⁹ They did not agree with Muslim League and "its demand for a partitioned India."⁶⁰

The character of Mian Abdullah, known as "Hummingbird", is described as ". . . the founder, chairman, unifier and moving spirit of the Free Islam Convocation."⁶¹ Rushdie portrays him as somebody who appeared ". . . to become the hope of India's hundred million Muslims."⁶² The Free Islam Convocation is established as an opposition to the dogmatic and selfish interests of the League. Aadam tells his friend Rani of Cooch Naheen, that in the beginning he was Kashmiri and "not a much of a Muslim."⁶³ However, having the bruise on his chest as a symbol of Amritsar massacre, that ". . . turned him into an Indian"⁶⁴. He still feels not much of a Muslim but completely agrees with Abdullah. However, Abdullah is assassinated and that is the end of the optimism.

⁵⁵ The library of Congress, "India: Political Impasse and Independence,"

⁵⁶ The library of Congress, "India: Origins of the Congress and the Muslim League,"

⁵⁷ The library of Congress, "India: Political Impasse and Independence,"

⁵⁸ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 45.

⁵⁹ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 55.

⁶⁰ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 56.

⁶¹ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 47.

⁶² Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 47.

⁶³ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 47.

⁶⁴ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 47.

One can notice the author's main idea. "Not all Muslims looked up to Jinnah. Many criticized him, some because they found him too Westernized, others because he was too straight and uncompromising."⁶⁵ They did not agree with partition, however, as Rushdie's metaphor implies it, their voices were never heard.

2.4 Involuntary Clash with the British culture

This multicultural conflict takes place around the time of early independence of India and it points out the clash between Indian people and British culture. Aadam's daughter Amina and her husband Ahmed are deciding whether to move from Delhi to Bombay. One can see that Rushdie's aim is to capture the atmosphere before Partition. The British were leaving and selling their properties. Ahmed gets messages from his old friend living in Bombay. "The British are leaving in droves, Sinai bhai. Property is dirt cheap! Sell up; come here; buy; live the rest of your life in luxury!"⁶⁶ On June 4th they decide to move to Bombay. "On the same day Earl Mountbatten of Burma held a press conference at which he announced the Partition of India, and hung his countdown calendar on the wall: seventy days to go to the transfer of power."⁶⁷

After their arrival to Bombay, they make a bargain with leaving Englishman, William Methwold. However, he sells the house having two strange conditions. First, they must buy the house with all the stuff in it and retain everything as it is. Second, the actual transfer of property will not be realized until midnight on August 15th. Rushdie's major point permeating through this conflict is to demonstrate contempt and superiority of Methwold. "Lock, stock and barrel,' Methwold said, Those are my terms. A whim, Mr Sinai . . . you'll permit a departing colonial his little game? We don't have much left to do, we British, except to play our games."⁶⁸ Methwold, trying to outline his requirements, tells Ahmed Sinai: "You'll take a cocktail in the garden? Six o'clock every evening. Cocktail hour. Never varied in twenty years."⁶⁹ Methwold expresses his doubts about forthcoming events and says to Ahmed: "Hundreds of years of decent government, then suddenly, up and off. You'll admit we weren't all bad: built your roads. Schools, railway trains,

⁶⁵ Akbar S. Ahmed, "Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity," *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/a/ahmed-jinnah.html?_r=2 (accessed April 16, 2012).

⁶⁶ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 108.

⁶⁷ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 120.

⁶⁸ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 126.

parliamentary system, all worthwhile things. Taj Mahal was falling down until an Englishman bothered to see to it. And now, suddenly, independence. Seventy days to get out. I'm dead against it myself, but what's to be done?"⁷⁰ Ahmed, imitating the Oxford pronunciation in his presence, asks Methwold what are the reasons of his insisting on delay. He explains to Ahmed, that by following a similar pattern, he wants to transfer the power at the same time as the British government. His idea is to choose the right person and realize his own transfer of property.

One might say that Methwold's requirements and insisting on delay are Rushdie's means of expression of the fact, that this behaviour of individual called Methwold can be metaphorically transferred from him to the way of rule applied by the British in India. Rushdie intentionally places character of Amina in opposition to Ahmed as an alternative solution of situation. Amina is angry and dissatisfied with those conditions. She is not allowed to get rid of one single piece of stuff in the house. She becomes more suspicious of Methwold and asks her husband if they really "must live like those Britishers?"⁷¹ She stands for the option not to buy the house and hold on to dignity. Ahmed, however, persuades her to be patient and tolerate it for two months. He rejects her complaints because he considers Mr Methwold to be a fair, honest man of high society.

After one month, all the residents of the Villas are bothered about the Methwold's requirements. All of them are forced to do things which they don't like but on the other hand, there are some advantages. "Ahmed Sinai finds a cocktail cabinet in Buckingham Villa (which was Methwold's own house before it was ours; he is discovering the delights of fine Scotch whisky and cries, So what? Mr Methwold is a little eccentric, that's all – can we not humour him? With our ancient civilization, can we not be as civilized as he?"⁷² However, there are twenty more days to the transfer but no one noticed what is happening:

[T]he Estate, Methwold's Estate, is changing them. Every evening at six they are out in their gardens, celebrating the cocktail hour, and when William Methwold comes to call they slip effortlessly into their imitation Oxford drawls; and they are learning, about ceiling fans and gas cookers and the correct diet for budgerigars, and Methwold, supervising their transformation, is mumbling under his breath. Listen carefully: what's he saying? Yes, that's it. 'Sabkuch ticktock hai,' mumbles William Methwold. All is well.⁷³

⁶⁹ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 126.

⁷⁰ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 126.

⁷¹ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 127.

⁷² Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 130.

⁷³ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 131.

The clash with the British culture is as apparent as the result of the conflict. Methwold's requirements were fulfilled since he achieved ascendance over them. "By and large, the British have handled the end of Empire well, bowing to the inevitable, running down the flag and packing their bags with relatively little fuss."⁷⁴ To understand Methwold's behaviour it is worth to look back in history and get straight to the core of British thinking as these were real reasons to colonialism. As Jeremy Paxman explains, "But what gave the British Empire its belief in itself was the delusion that it was driven by a moral purpose, that there was a God-ordained duty to go out and colonize those places unfortunate enough not to have been born under the flag. The assumption of superiority became an article of faith."⁷⁵

Another sign demonstrating majesty and dominance of the British are Methwold's houses.

Methwold's Estate: four identical houses built in a style befitting their original residents (conqueror's houses! Roman mansions; three-storey homes of gods standing on a two-storey Olympus. . . .") Methwold had named them after the famous European palaces: Versailles Villa, Buckingham Villa, Escorial Villa and Sans Souci. Breach Candy Swimming Club situated nearby where "pink people could swim in a pool the shape of British India without fear of rubbing up against a black skin."⁷⁶

Paxman further claims:

The Empire was created by initiative, greed, courage, mass production, powerful armed forces, political scheming and self-confidence. A technologically advanced country with few natural resources needed a big trading area. And the technology made the subjugation of 'primitive' peoples inevitable. The Empire gave the English the chance to feel blessed. And the greater its success, the more blessed they felt. It is just that the history of imperialism is the alliance of self-interest and technology.⁷⁷

2.5 The Independence

One can see that Rushdie fully exploited his characters to express the thorniest issues of Indian history. From this point, Rushdie introduces new narrator in his novel, Saleem Sinai, who is born on August 15th 1947; "at precise instant of India's arrival at independence."⁷⁸ That mysterious date and hour he was born, had the impact on his entire life as he considers himself to be indelibly connected with the history of his country. Since Rushdie's

⁷⁴ Jeremy Paxman, *The English: A Portrait of a People* (London: Penguin Books, 1998, 1999), 64.

⁷⁵ Paxman, *The English*, 65.

⁷⁶ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 125.

⁷⁷ Paxman, *The English*, 64.

Midnight's Children is considered to be his autobiographical novel, one can realize that Saleem's profound thoughts, opinions and concerns are in fact Rushdie's. Along with his country, being under the British rule for such a long time, he is trying to find himself, to discover new way of living. The moment of the independent India and Saleem's birth is approaching. On 14 August, Saleem is being born and M. A. Jinnah announces the independence and birth of a new Muslim state – Pakistan. The independent India is formed on 15 August 1947.⁷⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru gives a famous speech, 'Tryst with destiny':

Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation long suppressed finds utterance.⁸⁰

2.6 Hindu-Muslim conflicts

The dispute between Muslims and Hindus was result of series of long-standing struggles persisting from the time before independence. "From 1940 on, reconciliation between Congress and the Muslim League became increasingly difficult, if not impossible."⁸¹ By creating the land of Pakistan, "the spiritually pure and clean"⁸² Muslim state, the main problems to resolve after the Partition were territorial and religious disagreements. "Was Pakistan to be a secular state serving as a homeland for Muslims of the subcontinent, or was it to be an Islamic state governed by the sharia, in which non-Muslims would be second-class citizens?"⁸³ These questions emerged and "[a]bove all other concerns were the violence and the refugee problem."⁸⁴ "The approach of independence day precipitated the mass migration of millions of Indians, Hindus moving from provinces designated to Pakistan, and Muslims leaving Indian territory."⁸⁵

⁷⁸ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 3.

⁷⁹ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 149.

⁸⁰ Denis Judd, *Empire: The British Imperial Experience, from 1765 to the Present* (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1996), 323.

⁸¹ The library of Congress, "Pakistan: Toward partition," The library of Congress, Country Studies, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field%28DOCID+pk0023%29> (accessed April 16, 2012).

⁸² The library of Congress, "Pakistan: The Two Nations Theory," The library of Congress, Country Studies, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field%28DOCID+pk0022%29> (accessed April 16, 2012).

⁸³ The library of Congress, "Pakistan: Problems at Independence," The library of Congress, Country Studies, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field%28DOCID+pk0024%29> (accessed April 16, 2012).

⁸⁴ The library of Congress, "Pakistan: Problems at Independence,"

⁸⁵ The library of Congress, "Pakistan: Problems at Independence,"

The conflict between Muslims and Hindus described in the novel appears shortly after the formation of the new states. Saleem's father Ahmed runs a business but his company is shut down and his assets are gone. He regards it as an attack against Muslims and the intention to expel them to Pakistan. One can see that Rushdie emphasises the fact that the antipathies between Muslims and Hindus clearly came to light after Partition. Their lives are directly threatened when Mahatma Gandhi is shot. They are afraid an assassinator is Muslim which would get them into trouble. Finally they find out the assassinator was not a Muslim but Hindu. Although they stay in Bombay, the tension between these two groups remains. "The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on January 30, 1948, in New Delhi, by a Hindu extremist opposed to Gandhi's openness to Muslims ended the tenuous celebration of independence and deepened the hatred and mutual suspicion in Hindu-Muslim relations."⁸⁶ Saleem, despite of his Muslim origin, feels to be Bombayite for the rest of his life. That is a clear connection to Rushdie since he spent his childhood in Bombay. One can say that involuntary resettlement was a problem of many people who were afraid to stay because of their religion. Historically speaking, "Jinnah's plea to regard religion as a personal matter, not a state matter, was ignored. Muslims were fleeing India; Hindus and Sikhs were fleeing Pakistan."⁸⁷

2.7 Saleem and Midnight's Children Conference

This multicultural conflict captures the atmosphere in independent India. Its efforts to gain freedom were fulfilled but "[t]he euphoria of independence was short-lived as partition brought disastrous consequences for India in the wake of communal conflict."⁸⁸ India was confronted both with "the stupendous task of national integration and economic development."⁸⁹

Rushdie portrays Saleem as he celebrates his tenth birthday and recapitulates the progress and development of India after ten years. Although all the inhabitants in the Methwold's Villas pretend to be happy, they are in fact agonised: "Ten years, my God!

⁸⁶ The library of Congress, "India: National Integration," The library of Congress, Country Studies, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field%28DOCID+in0028%29> (accessed April 16, 2012).

⁸⁷ The library of Congress, "Pakistan: Problems at Independence,"

⁸⁸ The library of Congress, "India: National Integration,"

⁸⁹ The library of Congress, "India: National Integration,"

Where have they gone? What have we done?”⁹⁰ In spite of the industrial prosperity, “illiteracy survived unscathed; the population continued to mushroom.”⁹¹ One can see that Rushdie’s intention focuses on the fact that gaining the independence did not necessarily mean achieving progress and prosperity. Rushdie also suggests a solution in metaphorical description of Saleem. Saleem has the ability to read people’s thoughts and sets up the Midnight Children’s Conference consisting of the children gifted with various supernatural abilities. He wants the Conference to be a “sort of loose federation of equals, all points of view given free expression.”⁹² However, he gets into conflicts with them. Saleem encourages them to find the reason of their being here. Nevertheless, their ideas are different than Saleem expected.

[A]mong the philosophies and aims suggested were collectivism – ‘We should all get together and live somewhere, no? What would we need from anyone else?’ – and individualism – ‘You say we; but we together are unimportant; what matters is that each of us has a gift to use for his or her own good’ . . . , capitalism – ‘Just think what businesses we could do! How rich, Allah, we could be!’ . . . and religion – ‘Let us declare ourselves to the world, so that all may glory in God’ – courage – ‘We should invade Pakistan!’⁹³

Saleem is disappointed. He looks for a sense of being but it seems that the others don’t. As ten years old children they are confused, it is obvious that these things are far too complicated to be resolved by them. One can see that Rushdie’s description of children’s thoughts is a parallel to India. India after ten years found itself in uncertain position and diversity of ways, that India might have followed, was very rich. The same parallel is also between Saleem and his country. One can notice “the unavoidable connection between the infant state’s attempts at rushing towards full-sized adulthood and my own early, explosive efforts at growth.”⁹⁴

By using the magic realism, another allegory describing the reality is a symbolic disintegration of Midnight’s Children Conference which “fall[s] apart on the day the Chinese armies came down over the Himalayas to humiliate the Indian fauj.”⁹⁵ However, multicultural and religious conflicts were significant factors of decline too.

⁹⁰ Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*, 285.

⁹¹ Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*, 285.

⁹² Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*, 305.

⁹³ Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*, 316.

⁹⁴ Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*, 331.

⁹⁵ Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*, 352.

Children, however magical, are not immune to their parents; and as the prejudices and world-views of adults began to take over their minds, I found children from Maharashtra loathing Gujaratis, and fair-skinned northerners reviling Dravidian 'blackies'; there were religious rivalries; and class entered our councils. The rich children turned up their noses at being in such lowly company; Brahmins began to feel uneasy at permitting even their thoughts to touch the thoughts of untouchables; while, among the low-born, the pressures of poverty and Communism were becoming evident.⁹⁶

Saleem tries to convince them. "Do not let this happen! Do not permit the endless duality of masses-and-classes, capital-and-labour, them-and-us to come between us! We . . . must be a third principle. . . ."⁹⁷ Shiva, his main rival, represents the opposite side of Saleem. He says: "No, little rich boy; there is no third principle; there is only money-and-poverty, and have-and-lack, and right-and-left; there is only me-against-the-world! . . . For things, the country is run. Not for people. For things, America and Russia send aid; but five hundred million stay hungry. . . ."⁹⁸ Saleem argues with Shiva and says that people are not things and if they stick together, in good and bad, that might be the third principle. However Shiva goes on: "Little rich boy, that's all just wind. All that importance-of-the-individual. All that possibility-of-humanity. Today what people are is just another kind of thing."⁹⁹ Saleem evolves the thought if it isn't strange that such young children "discuss the role of the individual in society? And the rivalry of capital and labour? . . . And the conflicts in socio-cultural heritages? . . . Was collectivity opposed to singularity? Was God killed by children?"¹⁰⁰ He draws a conclusion that "children are the vessels into which adults pour their poison, and it was the poison of grown-ups which did for us. . . . If there is a third principle, its name is childhood. But it dies; or rather, it is murdered."¹⁰¹

One can see that Rushdie's last sentence clearly highlights the whole point of this conflict. The children are future of every single country. Being brought up in post-colonial era, differently that their parents they have an opportunity to do things better. But as long as they are influenced by their parents, by their deeply rooted historical prejudices and fusty opinions, their country will never move forward.

⁹⁶ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 353.

⁹⁷ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 354.

⁹⁸ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 354.

⁹⁹ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 355.

¹⁰⁰ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 355.

¹⁰¹ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 355.

2.8 Saleem in Pakistan

The aim of this multicultural conflict is to depict the situation in Pakistan in 1958. This year foreshadowed important changes in the country. “On October 7, 1958, President Mirza, with the support of the army, suspended the 1956 constitution, imposed martial law, and canceled the elections scheduled for January 1959.”¹⁰² In the same year, Saleem and his family moved to Pakistan. This is clear analogy between Saleem and Rushdie. Rushdie also spent some time in Pakistan; however, he never took a liking to this country as he was connected with India.

Historically, Pakistan was at that time under the control of Ayub Khan and relationships with its neighbours were unstable. Pakistan carried on in maintaining its cooperation with the United States but the relations with China and India worsened. India severed friendly relationship with China after its occupation of Tibet.¹⁰³ “An entente between Pakistan and China evolved in inverse ratio to Sino-Indian hostility, which climaxed in a border war in 1962.”¹⁰⁴ Nehru was shocked as the war revealed the truth about Indian army which was poorly prepared to protect its northern borders. “At the conclusion of the conflict, the Chinese forces were partially withdrawn and an unofficial demilitarized zone was established, but India's prestige and self-esteem had suffered.”¹⁰⁵

Rushdie places Saleem in a position of direct witness of historical events. After their arrival, they are accommodated in General Zulfikar’s house. General Zulfikar’s intention is to place mines all over the Indo-Pak border. He says: “Let’s give those Hindus something to worry! We’ll blow their invaders into so many pieces, there’ll be no damn thing left to reincarnate.”¹⁰⁶ The antipathy against Indian is obvious. Saleem listens to General Ayub Khan as he says: “Martial Law is now imposed.”¹⁰⁷ Saleem finds out that “Midnight has many children; the offspring of Independence were not all human. Violence, corruption, poverty, generals, chaos, greed . . . I had to go into exile to learn the children of midnight

¹⁰² The library of Congress, “Pakistan: Collapse of the Parliamentary System,” The library of Congress, Country Studies, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field%28DOCID+pk0027%29> (accessed April 16, 2012).

¹⁰³ The library of Congress, “Pakistan: Ayub Khan’s Foreign policy and the 1965 War with India,” The library of Congress, Country Studies, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field%28DOCID+pk0031%29> (accessed April 16, 2012).

¹⁰⁴ The library of Congress, “Pakistan: Ayub Khan’s Foreign policy and the 1965 War with India,”

¹⁰⁵ The library of Congress, “India: Nehru’s legacy,” The library of Congress, Country Studies, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field%28DOCID+in0028%29> (accessed April 16, 2012).

¹⁰⁶ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 397.

were more varied than I – even I – had dreamed.”¹⁰⁸ One can have a feeling that Rushdie by comparing the situation between India and Pakistan wants to say that Pakistan clearly demonstrated the fact that there existed much worse ways of governing a country.

Saleem spent in Pakistan four years and during that time the relationships between India and Pakistan got worse. Saleem witnesses the conflicts on the Sino-India border, the aid of the United States in Pakistan, “the untouchable problem”¹⁰⁹ but he doesn’t make anything to moderate these problems. After four years in Pakistan, they return back to India. Saleem is happy to be back but his enthusiasm doesn’t last for long. On September 9th 1962, “Defence Minister Krishna Menon took the momentous decision to use force if necessary against the Chinese army on the Himalayan frontier. ‘The Chinese must be ejected from the Thag La ridge No weakness will be shown.’”¹¹⁰ The Indian army is defeated by the Chinese at Thag La ridge; however people started to suffer from . . . “the optimism disease, students burned Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai effigy . . . , mobs attacked Chinese shoemakers, curio dealers and restaurateurs.”¹¹¹ The Indian nation was excited and ready to go off to war. On November 20th, the Indian army attacked the Chinese forces. Yet, the Indian army was defeated and public’s resolve ended up. Finally the Chinese army stopped advancing forward after they took control of “Himalayan heights.”¹¹² Saleem, influenced by circumstances, has doubts about attainability of the third principle. In January 1963, Saleem and moves again from India to Pakistan to start a new life in “the Land of the Pure.”¹¹³

2.9 Saleem returns back to Pakistan

The last multicultural situation describes permanently continuing conflicts between India and Pakistan. Nehru died in 1964 and the situation in India after his death was difficult. His contribution was huge as he “possessed a rare combination of intellect, breadth of vision, and personal charisma that attracted support throughout India.”¹¹⁴ In 1965, Indo-Pakistani war over Kashmir broke out. The struggles started “along undemarcated territory at the

¹⁰⁷ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 402.

¹⁰⁸ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 405.

¹⁰⁹ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 407.

¹¹⁰ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 409.

¹¹¹ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 416.

¹¹² Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 420.

¹¹³ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 424.

Rann of Kutch.”¹¹⁵ The conflict got worse as soon as “India reported increased activity by infiltrators from Pakistan into Indian-held Kashmir. Pakistan hoped to support an uprising by Kashmiris against India.”¹¹⁶ However, Kashmiris did not revolt and without military support of the United States and Britain the war ended.¹¹⁷

Rushdie depicts Saleem as he lives with his family in Pakistan. In 1964 his grandmother Naseem Aziz arrives in Pakistan. Aadam Aziz died and it seems that his death allowed her to move to the Land of Pure. Aadam always scored for the formation of Pakistan and blamed the Muslim League for killing Mian Abdullah. It is worth noting that multicultural conflicts appear even between married couples since Rushdie intentionally describes his characters as different personalities to each other.

After the arrival of his grandmother, Saleem starts to have dreams about Kashmir. These dreams were “a reminder of my family’s separateness from both India and Pakistan.”¹¹⁸ His dream soon becomes current for the rest of Pakistanis. One can see that Rushdie points out that looking for individual’s identity became current for Kashmiris as they are an issue of dispute between two competing countries.

The area of the “Rann of Kutch”¹¹⁹ was the leading cause of the conflict. “Ever since Partition, the Rann had been ‘disputed territory’; although in practise, neither side had much heart for the dispute.”¹²⁰ The Pakistani army built up a line of fortresses in that area and some of them were occupied by the Indian troops. The fights on the border last for eighty-two days until July 1st. After “‘false peace’”¹²¹, lasting for thirty-two days, the conflicts carry on.

[O]n August 8th did Pakistani troops in civilian clothing cross the ceasefire line Kashmir and infiltrate the Indian sector. . . . In Delhi, Prime Minister Shastri announced ‘massive infiltration to subvert the state’; but here is Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan’s Foreign Minister, with his riposte: ‘We categorically deny any involvement in the rising against tyranny by the indigenous people of Kashmir’.¹²²

¹¹⁴ The library of Congress, “India: Nehru’s legacy,” The library of Congress, Country Studies,

¹¹⁵ The library of Congress, “Pakistan: Ayub Khan’s Foreign policy and the 1965 War with India,”

¹¹⁶ The library of Congress, “Pakistan: Ayub Khan’s Foreign policy and the 1965 War with India,”

¹¹⁷ The library of Congress, “Pakistan: Ayub Khan’s Foreign policy and the 1965 War with India,”

¹¹⁸ Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*, 457.

¹¹⁹ Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*, 465.

¹²⁰ Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*, 465.

¹²¹ Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*, 469.

¹²² Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*, 470.

The last sentence clearly declares that Rushdie highlights the superficiality of the whole conflict. The main reasons for the break out of war were power motivated ambitions of both countries. Rushdie, represented by Saleem, is thinking about the motives for repeated attack. Was it “the continuing anger which had been stirred up by the Rann of Kutch; the desire to settle, once-and-for-all, the old issue of who-should-possess-the-Perfect-Valley? . . . Or one which didn’t get into the papers: the pressures of internal political troubles in Pakistan – Ayub’s government was tottering, and a war works wonders at such times.”¹²³ Saleem suggests a possible reason of his own. “I remained impure, and the war was to separate me from my sins. Jihad . . . Holy war!”¹²⁴ The conflict gains its strength. Prime Minister Shastri says: “We promise that force will be met with force, and aggression against us will never be allowed to succeed!”¹²⁵ In the meantime, megaphones in Pakistan announces: “The Indian aggressors will be utterly overthrown! We are a race of warriors! One Pathan; one Punjabi Muslim is worth ten of those babus-in-arms!”¹²⁶ Saleem points out danger of Holy war. It promises that anyone who dies in battle enters a “camphor garden.”¹²⁷ “Martyrs . . . , heroes, bound for the perfumed garden! Where the men would be given four beautiful houris, untouched by man or djinn; and the women, four equally virile males! What a thing this holy war is, in which with one supreme sacrifice men may atone for all the evils!”¹²⁸ On September 23rd the war between India and Pakistan is finally stopped. However, Saleem’s family is killed by bomb attack during war.

¹²³ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 470.

¹²⁴ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 471.

¹²⁵ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 471.

¹²⁶ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 471.

¹²⁷ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 471.

¹²⁸ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 472.

3 MULTICULTURAL CLASHES IN THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS

3.1 Conflict in Cho Oyu

The first multicultural conflict in Desai's novel takes place in 1986, in Kalimpong, high in the northeastern Himalayas. The main characters living here are the judge, the cook and Sai. Desai introduces her characters as they live their difficult lives in the background of continuing fights. At the beginning of the story, it is rumoured that the insurrection in the hills changed into resistance movement stockpiling men and guns. "It was the Indian-Nepalese this time, fed up with being treated like the minority in a place where they were the majority. They wanted their own country, or at least their own state, in which to manage their own affairs. Here, where India blurred into Bhutan and Sikkim, . . . it had been always a messy map"¹²⁹

The peaceful atmosphere is suddenly disrupted by young boys who came to get judge's rifles. They are guerrilla soldiers and one of them bears a gun. The one with a gun starts to speak to the judge. He says: "No Nepali?"¹³⁰ The judge doesn't understand him so he continues in Hindi and asks them if they have guns. The judge says that he doesn't have any and orders them to leave but they want to kill them one by one until they get what they want. Sai is scared and decides to bring the guns. However seizing their guns, the boys still doesn't seem to leave and moreover, they steal their food, rice, sugar, matches and plenty of other stuff. Before the leaving they humiliate and insult them. "Say, 'Jai Gorkha,' they said to the judge. 'Gorkhaland for Gorkhas.'¹³¹ Judge responds: "Jai Gorkha."¹³² Their insults continue. "Say, 'I am a fool.'¹³³ Judge has to repeat it again "I am fool."¹³⁴ The soldiers, laughing and carrying off two bags, finally leaves. Sai and the cook avert their look away from the judge because they know that humiliation of a proud man can be a reason to kill.

One can see that Desai describes the humiliation and helplessness of their characters against aggressors' behaviour. They are involuntarily involved in the struggles over "the

¹²⁹ Kiran Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss* (New York: Atlantic Monthly press, 2006), 9.

¹³⁰ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 5.

¹³¹ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 7.

¹³² Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 7.

¹³³ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 7.

¹³⁴ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 7.

drawing of borders.”¹³⁵ The clash appears between the two cultures of Hindus and Nepalese and it clearly declares the fact that that violence and injustice are skilfully disguised under false pretences of freedom and public interests.

3.2 Biju’s hard life in America

Since Desai’s novel does not contain such a big amount of story lines as Rushdie’s novel, this whole multicultural conflict is a description of Biju’s life, divided into separate situations. Biju is an Indian immigrant living in America. He left India with a dream of having better life in America.

From the historical point of view, Indians immigrated to the United States from various reasons. Many of them left to study universities; many were dissatisfied with political situation in India or looking for better job opportunities as there were much higher incomes in the United States. Another significant factor of their leavings was to financially support there families from abroad. As Rangaswamy claims, “Of course, the personal circumstances of migration differ from individual to individual, and for Indians, it was not just a matter of personal choice, but involved the entire family.”¹³⁶

3.2.1 Biju and his leaving

At the beginning of the story, Desai introduces Biju and his father as they are trying to find a way how to send him abroad. One can notice that the first conflict is not multicultural as such, however, it is essential to understand the atmosphere in the society. Desai describes individual’s difficulties of getting abroad.

The cook’s first try comes when a cruise agent appears in Kalimpong. He recruits volunteers for waiters, toilet cleaners on the boats, basically labourers for the worst jobs. The local newspaper announced in an advertisement that they “[w]ill procure legal employment in the USA!!!!”¹³⁷ This announcement elicits enormous response and hundreds of people want to get this job. Biju goes for an interview with fake passport and made up stories nevertheless he is successful. However he is forced to pay big amount of money and after all he is fooled. For the second time, he applies for a tourist visa and this time he is really successful and he gets it. One of the applicants, also asking for a visa, says

¹³⁵ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 9.

¹³⁶ Rangaswamy, *Namasté America*,

¹³⁷ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 179.

Biju: ““You are the luckiest boy in the whole world. . . .””¹³⁸ One can see from this situation that no matter what sort of job it is, no matter what money they have to pay, no matter if they are cheated, their expectations of better life in the United States are so big that they are willing to do anything. In expectation of better life, the achievement of visa is though regarded as the most joyful news promising them departure from India. However, Biju is an example of the fact that living in America does not have to fulfil their hopes they have been dreaming of.

3.2.2 The reality in the USA

After Biju’s arrival in the USA, he spends the first few weeks by selling sausages. His employer is, however, directed to check the green cards of his employees. Biju doesn’t have any and so the employer is obliged to fire them. He responds them ““Just disappear quietly is my advice. . . .””¹³⁹ This problem with the green card haunts him through the whole time of his stay. He desperately desires to obtain it which would enable him to come back. One can think that Desai’s intention is to show immigrant’s worries. Biju lives alone in alien country, separated from his family and he cannot visit them because he wouldn’t have another chance to return to the USA. That arouses the feeling of confusion and homesickness. All along, the immigrant has difficult dilemma whether to withstand terrible conditions he lives in and financially support his family or whether to go back to India.

3.2.3 The conflict with the Pakistani

Biju often changes jobs and this time he finds a job at Le Colonial which promises “the authentic colonial experience.”¹⁴⁰ “On top, rich colonial, and down below, poor native. Colombian, Tunisian, Ecuadorian, Gambian.”¹⁴¹ Biju finds out that the whole world can be found “in the basement kitchens of New York.”¹⁴²

The conflict appears when he meets one Pakistani at work. Despite no reasonable argument, Biju is not able to talk to him. He writes a letter to his father who is strongly startled by the fact that someone in America is willing to hire the Pakistani. He gives him

¹³⁸ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 187.

¹³⁹ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 16.

¹⁴⁰ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 21.

¹⁴¹ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 21.

¹⁴² Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 22.

advice: “Beware. Beware. Keep away. Distrust.”¹⁴³ Biju hates the Pakistani. The reason is simple: “. . . [O]ld war, best war. Where else did the words flow with that came from centuries of practice? How else would the spirit of your father, your grandfather, rise from the dead?”¹⁴⁴ Biju insults him with a swearword learned from his childhood. He says: “Pigs, pigs, sons of pigs . . .”¹⁴⁵ After their fight, which might endanger the balance between perfect “first-world on top”¹⁴⁶ and “third-world”¹⁴⁷ in the kitchen, both of them are fired. The reasons of this mutual conflict are religion and traditions.

In this situation, one can see that Desai points out the hatred between Indian and Muslim. These two do not even bother to get to know each other. Instead, they rather adopt prejudices and attitudes of their fathers. This proves that characters are able neither critically think on their own nor make their own opinion. Another point worth mentioning is Desai’s description of the restaurant. Looking at Le Colonial from customer’s point of view, one would say that the truth should not come to the surface. Their only concern is to order delicate food and one does not know what would happened if they knew the background. The bitter reality is, however, exposed from the immigrant’s point of view. He can see the differences between wealth and poverty and feels injustice.

3.2.4 Another job and Biju’s inability to adapt

After his dismissal he works in Italian restaurant called Pinocchio. The owner’s wife says about him that he stinks. “She had hoped for men from the poorer parts of Europe—Bulgarians perhaps, or Czechoslovakians. At least they might have something in common with them like religion and skin color, grandfathers who ate cures sausages and looked like them, too, but they weren’t coming in numbers great enough or they weren’t coming desperate enough, she wasn’t sure. . . .”¹⁴⁸ The owner buys him soap and other hygienic stuff but after some time Biju is fired again. This situation repeats several times. He lives in terrible conditions and cannot find a job. He is a part of “a shifting population of men

¹⁴³ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 22.

¹⁴⁴ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 23.

¹⁴⁵ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 23.

¹⁴⁶ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 23.

¹⁴⁷ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 23.

¹⁴⁸ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 48.

camping out near the fuse box, behind the boiler, in the cubby holes, and in odd-shaped corners that once were pantries, maids' rooms, laundry rooms, and storage rooms. . . ."¹⁴⁹

This situation describes Biju's inability to adapt to changing conditions. For Biju, it is a problem both to find the job and sustain it. From the expectation of owner's wife, one can have a feeling that they are prejudiced against Biju; however, the owner makes an effort to help him. It is difficult to say from this situation to what extent it is Biju's mistake that he does not succeed. This situation asks a question. The position of being immigrant is hard to evaluate for those who never were in such a conflict as Biju, never were brought up in such poverty and never were taught to hate people, to distrust them. On the other hand, Biju, in spite of he is very young, is able to make his own choices, to think critically on his own and to be his own master so looking at him as being poor boy predestined by destiny, is irrelevant.

3.2.5 Biju and his friend Saeed

It is worth describing Biju's conflict when he meets Saeed Saeed. Biju wants to be his friend, he is amazed by him, but first of all, he has to run through the certain doubts he has in his mind.

Saeed was kind and he was not Paki. Therefore he was OK?
 The cow was not an Indian cow; therefore it was not holy?
 Therefore he liked Muslims and hated only Pakis?
 Therefore he liked Saeed, but hated the general lot of Muslims?
 Therefore he liked Muslims and Pakis and India should see it was all wrong and hand over Kashmir?¹⁵⁰

These questions lay heavy on him as "[h]e remembered what they said about black people at home. 'Be careful of the *hubshi*. Ha, ha, in their own country they live like monkeys in the trees. They come to India and become men.'¹⁵¹ People in India regarded themselves as civilized and therefore had no respect for blacks. Thus, other thoughts appeared then.

Therefore he hated all black people but liked Saeed?
 Therefore there was nothing wrong with black people and Saeed?
 Or Mexicans, Chinese, Japanese, or anyone else . . . ???¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 51.

¹⁵⁰ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 76.

¹⁵¹ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 76.

¹⁵² Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 76.

“This habit of hate had accompanied Biju, and he found that he possessed an awe of white people, who arguably had done India great harm, and a lack of generosity regarding almost everyone else, who had never done a single harmful thing to India.”¹⁵³ One can have a feeling that Desai highlights the internal thoughts the immigrant might keep in his mind when meeting somebody new. These are consequences of his upbringing. It is essential to mention one important thing common not only to all Desai’s characters but common for majority of people. They do not live the present day. Their minds are full of invented thoughts and they keep living in either past or future. The character is then caught up in his own reality, unable to change anything.

3.2.6 Biju and his decision

In this multicultural conflict, Biju works in the restaurant called Brittany. He washes the dishes with one Achootan man in the kitchen and listens to his swearing. ““These white people! . . . Shit! But at least this country is better than England. At least they have some hypocrisy here. They believe they are good people and you get some relief. There they shout at you openly on the street, ‘Go back to where you came from.’”¹⁵⁴ He tells Biju that he learned a phrase by which responded to their insults. He said: ““Your father came to *my* country and took *my* bread and now I have come to *your* country to get *my* bread back.””¹⁵⁵ This man spent eight years in Canterbury and therefore he can compare the atmosphere towards immigrant in these two countries.

One can have a feeling that Desai wants to point out the difference between America and England from the immigrants’ point of view. It is apparent from his speech that immigrant suffer from racial prejudices in both countries, however, America seems to be more liberal than England. Glenn C. Loury explains it as follows:

. . . Britain has a hereditary aristocracy at home and a colonial legacy abroad. In addition, it has been a population-exporter far longer than a population-importer. In contrast, the USA has been a nation of immigrants for most of its history. Moreover, American ideology holds that social class origins are less important than talent and ambition.

In other word, compared to Britain, class mattered little in America, and, over time, ethnic divisions would not matter either. Whether or not ethnic divisions matter, one reason that American employers may be less likely to react to ethnic difference than their British counterparts is that the

¹⁵³ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 77.

¹⁵⁴ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 134.

¹⁵⁵ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 135.

US legal system condemns discrimination more effectively than the British. A UK law prohibiting job discrimination dates only from 1976, some twelve years after the US Civil Rights Act¹⁵⁶

Another problem presents the fact that Biju deals with his religious beliefs. The Brittany restaurant offers menu consisting of steak and that poses a problem to him. “Holy cow. Unholy cow. Biju knew the reasoning he should keep by his side.”¹⁵⁷ The visitors of the restaurant were not only Americans but also Indian businessmen eating steaks. He held them in scorn and they knew that but they didn’t care about it. Biju thought that “[o]ne should not give up one’s religion, the principles of one’s parents and their parents before them. No, no matter what. You had to live according to something. You had to find your dignity.”¹⁵⁸

In this multicultural conflict, Biju decides to hold on to his Hindu religion and this time it is him who quit his job. He decides to look for a job in which they don’t cook with beef.

3.2.7 Biju in the Gandhi Café

He finally finds a job in the Gandhi Café but it seems that the conflicts appear everywhere. He is now confronted with hypocrisy as Desai clearly demonstrates it when describing Biju’s employer.

Toward his staff Harish-Harry was avuncular, jocular, but he could suddenly become angry and disciplinary. But when an American patron walked through the door, his manner changed instantly and drastically into another thing and a panic seemed to overcome him. “Hallo Hallo,” he said to a pink satin child smearing food all over the chair legs, “Ya givin your mom too much trouble, ha ha? But one day ya make her feel proud, right? Gointa be a beeg man, reech man, vhat you say? Ya vanna nic cheekan karry?”¹⁵⁹

One can see that Desai points out the two-facedness of Harish-Harry. He pretends to be someone else and want to leave good impression on the American people. However, his antipathy against the American is hidden inside him; he knows that he means nothing to them. The following extract reveals his real feelings as he says:

¹⁵⁶ Glenn C. Loury, Tariq Modood, and Steven Michael Teles, *Ethnicity, Social Mobility and Public Policy: Comparing the Us and Uk* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2005), 365, <http://books.google.cz/books?id=usCZdije1zMC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs#v=onepage&q&f=false> (accessed April 16, 2012).

¹⁵⁷ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 135.

¹⁵⁸ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 136.

¹⁵⁹ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 147.

“And they think we admire them!” He began to laugh. “Every time one enters my shop I smile” — he showed his skeleton grin—“Hi, how ya doin,’ but all I want is to break their necks. I can’t, but maybe my son will, and that is my great hope. One day Jayant-Jay will smile and get his hands about their sons’ necks and he will choke them dead.”¹⁶⁰

3.2.8 Homesickness

One day Biju talks to newsagent who tells him that there is a problem with Nepalis in his country. “They should kick the bastards back to Nepal . . . Bangladeshis to Bangladesh, Afghans to Afghanistan, all Muslims to Pakistan, Tibetans, Bhutanese, why are they sitting in our country?”¹⁶¹ Biju says that they are also sitting in America but he explains him that “[t]his country is different . . .” “Without us what would they do?”¹⁶² After the phone call with his father Biju finds out that the situation in Kalimpong is serious. He ruminates about his life and relationship with his father. “Year by year, his life wasn’t amounting to anything at all; in a space that should have included family, friends, he was the only one displacing the air.”¹⁶³ When he spoke to his father, his homesickness intensified and he could feel the emptiness between them caused by their separation. One would say that Desai wants to express the internal feelings of the immigrant.

Shouldn’t he return to a life where he might slice his own importance, to where he might relinquish this overrated control over his own destiny and perhaps be subtracted from its determination altogether? And if he continued on here? What would happen? Would he, like Harish-Harry, manufacture a fake version of himself and using what he had created as clues, understand himself backward? Life was not about life for him anymore, and death—would even that mean to him? It would have nothing to do with death.¹⁶⁴

His dilemma escalates and Biju finally buys a ticket and goes home. He knows that if he stayed in the America, he might never see his family again. “It happened all the time; ten years passed, fifteen, the telegram arrived, or the phone call, the parent was gone and the child was too late.”¹⁶⁵

This conflict points out the internal dilemma of the character. He must choose whether to live as immigrant or live with his family. One can see that Desai’s main point of this

¹⁶⁰ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 149.

¹⁶¹ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 228.

¹⁶² Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 228.

¹⁶³ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 268.

¹⁶⁴ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 268.

¹⁶⁵ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 233.

situation is to show the fundamental conflict the character must resolve. As a matter of fact, this is not only Biju's question but the key question of the entire issue of immigration.

As Rangaswamy claims:

Their links to the homeland of India, or some other part of the world from which they come to the United States, continue to be important as they create new identities without discarding the old.

The commonly used collective term for all overseas Indians is "diaspora," and in many ways, the term is indeed a fitting one, describing as it does the scattering of seeds from a central source. It also suggests a condition of exile, as if Indians who live abroad are condemned to a permanent state of homelessness and can never return to the land of origin. What the term "diaspora" fails to capture, however, is the continuing connection to the homeland that Indians are wont to maintain, no matter where they live.¹⁶⁶

3.3 The Cook

3.3.1 Relationship between the cook and Sai

The relationship between Sai and the cook is another multicultural conflict. Sai spends plenty of time with the cook but both of them are aware of the fact that their social status is different. After the incident in Cho Oyu, the cook's hut is ransacked by the police. Sai witnesses thoughtless attitude of police towards the cook. "Here they felt comfortable unleashing their scorn, and they overturned his narrow bed, left his few belongings in a heap."¹⁶⁷ She realizes how big the gap between them is.

Sai felt embarrassed. She was rarely in the cook's hut, and when she did come searching for him and enter, he was ill at ease and so was she, something about their closeness being exposed in the end as fake, their friendship composed of shallow things conducted in a broken language, for she was an English-speaker and he was a Hindi-speaker.¹⁶⁸

The cook is a poor man without any dignity. He even agrees with the approach of the police. "Well, they have to search everything. Naturally. How are they to know that I am innocent? Most of the time it is the servant that steals."¹⁶⁹

The point of this conflict is to highlight the social differences in India. One would say that Desai's aim is to describe the reality in relationships among people. All of them play certain roles in the society in order to cover the hypocrisy and the truth that only by superiority over the others they are able to identify themselves. It seems to be a human weakness to shape oneself at the expense of somebody else.

¹⁶⁶ Rangaswamy, *Namasté America*, 7.

¹⁶⁷ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 13.

¹⁶⁸ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 19.

3.3.2 Cook and his perspective on life

This multicultural conflict captures the cook's perspective on life. Desai describes him as a poor, uneducated man who lives with the judge in his cottage in Cho Oyu. His only reason for living is a hope to see his son Biju again. However, he lives in distorted reality. Biju posts him letters in which he assures his father that he is satisfied but he doesn't tell the truth. He changes his job all the time but his father thinks that he lives a wonderful life. The cook is very proud of his son who works in New York and he tells it to everyone he comes across. "My son works in New York He is the manager of a restaurant business. New York. Very big city The cars and buildings are nothing like here. In that country, there is enough food for everybody. One day soon my son will take me."¹⁷⁰

This conflict shows both the illusion created in Indian's mind and their behaviour consequent upon this. All these lies help them to forget on their own miserable existence. The cook can imagine that Biju has a sofa, TV and bank account and these are the symbols of happy life for him. He hopes that once, Biju earns enough money to take care of him. The letters pushes the cook forward to see a better future and therefore he pays enough attention while replying to his letters. He tells it to Mrs. Sen whose child is also in America: "Best country in the world. All these people who went to England are now feeling sorry. . . ." ¹⁷¹ He feels somehow connected to people who have children abroad. That makes him happy that they have something in common.

Desai's character of the cook represents the lowest class in society. One might say that Desai's main point is to show complete poverty people live in. Their only hope is dream of better future which is, however, rather insecure. It is again the giant gap between West and East which enables some to live in extreme affluence and some in extreme poverty. However, it is necessary to mention what Rangaswamy claims in his book. Despite his argument being related rather to immigrant situation, it can also be used for the cook's attitude.

If rejection and discrimination are indisputable fact the overseas or immigrant Indian experience, as recounted in the histories of Indians in East Africa, Fiji, or England, the active role Indians themselves played in shaping their own destinies must also be considered. What did they do to change their status, if anything? If not, why not? Only by looking at immigrants as capable of

¹⁶⁹ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 18.

¹⁷⁰ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 84.

¹⁷¹ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 85.

making choices and being responsive to change can one begin to understand them as active players in their own history.¹⁷²

3.4 The judge's experience in England and its consequences

3.4.1 Life in England

This multicultural conflict, describing the judge's experience from abroad, counts among the most important in Desai's novel. It is the judge from whom the other characters' lives uphold. Desai describes the judge as somebody who is strongly affected by his experiences. He leaves his home for the first time at the age of twenty. In 1939, he departs from Piphit and reaches Liverpool at first and then he leaves for Cambridge. However he leaves his hometown with the strange feelings. He knows that he knows nothing about the world outside. When Jemubhai arrives in Liverpool, he notices that a porter carrying passenger's bags is white. He doesn't understand that "a white person . . . pick[s] up a brown person's bags!"¹⁷³ One can say that Desai wants to point out the Jemubhai's innocence. As an offspring of colonial legacy, it seems that he believes that white people are superior to brown.

The life in England surprises him. "It took him by surprise because he'd expected only grandness, hadn't realized that here, too, people could be poor and live unaesthetic lives."¹⁷⁴ He isn't much impressed by the new atmosphere, but he doesn't make a good expression either. Nobody wants to rent him a room. He must visit twenty-two homes before he finds the accommodation. One can see that this is the first clash with the British culture. He experiences the first feelings of being immigrant and that inescapably forms his personality. The racial tension he feels gradually leads to Jemubhai's retreat within himself. He studies twelve hours a day and talks to nobody. He starts to feel uncomfortably. His "mind had begun to warp; he grew stranger to himself than he was to those around him, found his own skin odd-colored, his own accent peculiar."¹⁷⁵ After he passed the examinations into Indian Civil Service (ICS) he . . .

. . . took revenge on his early confusions, his embarrassments gloved in something called 'keeping up standards,' his accent behind a mask of quiet. He found he began to be mistaken for something

¹⁷² Rangaswamy, *Namasté America*, 40.

¹⁷³ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 38.

¹⁷⁴ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 38.

¹⁷⁵ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 40.

he wasn't—a man of dignity. This accidental poise became more important than any other thing. He envied the English. He loathed Indians. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he would become, he would be despised by absolutely everyone, English and Indians, both.¹⁷⁶

This experience ruins him for the rest of his life. These years spent in England made him angry and arrogant man who pretends to be English gentleman but in fact he is Indian who never found his identity. However, the judge's experience must be understood as an experience of one individual. He contributed to his own failure in large measure with his behaviour. He tries to deny his identity, his origin and it finally reflects in lifelong schism of identity.

3.4.2 Life in India

The judge's hypocrisy can be seen in the situation when Sai opens the door at the moment the cook sieves the flour. Both of them are sprinkled with the flour and they start to laugh. “‘*Angrez ke tarah. Like the English*’”¹⁷⁷ Sai tells to her grandfather “‘Look . . ., just like English people.’”¹⁷⁸ However the judge reacts tumultuously. He says to her: “‘Stupid fool.’”¹⁷⁹

The consequences of his bad experience gained in England have the degrading influence on all the people around him. His pretended pseudo behaviour to be a man of a very high standard causes him only troubles. He recalls the humiliations and difficulties experienced there. When Jemubhai came to England, he studied very hard to become a member of ICS. He was questioned by the group of twelve examiners during his final examination. “[T]he first question was put to him by a professor of London University— Could he tell them how a steam train worked?”¹⁸⁰ Another question: “‘Could he describe then, the burial customs of the ancient Chinese?’”¹⁸¹ Jemu was confused since the question was not relevant to the recommended subjects and he didn't know the answer. “‘Lastly, who was his favorite writer?’”¹⁸² After his reply that it is Walter Scott they ask him if he can recite his favorite poem. Jemubhai finished his poem and “[w]hen he looked up, he saw

¹⁷⁶ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 119.

¹⁷⁷ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 105.

¹⁷⁸ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 105.

¹⁷⁹ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 105.

¹⁸⁰ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 111.

¹⁸¹ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 112.

¹⁸² Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 112.

they were all chuckling.”¹⁸³ In the end, the judge managed to become a member of ICS. However, he paid a high price for that. One day he meets Bose, his only friend from England, and during their conversation he gets carried away by anger and reveals his real feelings. “‘Bastards! What bastards they were! *Bloody white people*. They are responsible for all the crimes of the century!’”¹⁸⁴

Sai and Gyan in the background of political struggles

The conflict arising between Sai and Gyan appears to be another multicultural conflict. Their background and style each of them is brought up in will be the essential problem causing them many troubles. Their love affair carries on until the upcoming political dissatisfaction. That is indicated by the series of strikes and processions. “The country, Sai noted, was coming apart at the seams: police unearthing militants in Assam, Nagaland, and Mizoram; Punjab on fire with Indira Gandhi dead and gone in October of last year; and those Sikhs with their Kanga, Kachha, etc., still wishing to add a sixth *K*, Khalistan, their own country in which to live with the other five *Ks*.”¹⁸⁵ However, they are so much interested in their love that they do not take any notice of changing events. Posters and slogans foreshadow discontent. “‘We are stateless,’ they read. ‘It is better to die than live as slaves,’ ‘We are constitutionally tortured. Return our land from Bengal.’”¹⁸⁶ Nobody really paid enough attention to these posters. “But the one day fifty boys, members of the youth wing of the GNLF, gathered to swear an oath at Mahakaldara to fight to death for the formation of a homeland, Gorkhaland. Then they marched down the streets of Darjeeling, took a turn around the market and the mall. ‘Gorkhaland for Gorkhas. We are the liberation army.’ Quite suddenly, everyone was using the word *insurgency*.”¹⁸⁷

Gyan later on joins the insurgents. He identifies with their ideas. “They meant what they were saying; they felt a lack of justice.”¹⁸⁸ Gyan listens to a speaker of GNLF as he says:

“In 1947, brothers and sister, the British left granting India her freedom, granting the Muslims Pakistan, granting special provisions for the scheduled castes and tribes, leaving everything taken care of, brothers and sisters——

¹⁸³ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 113.

¹⁸⁴ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 206.

¹⁸⁵ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 108.

¹⁸⁶ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 126.

¹⁸⁷ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 126.

¹⁸⁸ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 157.

“Except us. EXCEPT US. The Nepalis of India. At that time, in April of 1947, the Communist Party of India demanded a Gorkhasthan, but the request was ignored. . . . We fought on behalf of the British for two hundred years. Have we been given compensation?? Are we given respect?? No! They spit on us. . . . In our own country, the country we fight for, we are treated like slaves. . . . We must unite under the banner of the GNLF, Gorkha National Liberation Front. We will build hospitals and schools. We will provide jobs for our sons.¹⁸⁹

This multicultural conflict illustratively describes the political situation in Desai’s novel. The Nepalis call for their own state and they start revolution. However, their promises are nothing but the empty words. Their only interest is power struggle; not building the schools. The revolution gradually results in the series of strikes and roadblocks. Finally, people in Kalimpong are terrorized by GNLF, they live without supplies of water, gas, kerosene and electricity. Desai also describes how these riots influenced behaviour of people against each other. “If you were a Nepali reluctant to join in, it was bad. If you weren’t Nepali it was worse. If you were Bengali, people who had known you your whole life wouldn’t acknowledge you in the street.”¹⁹⁰ The situation gets worse and worse. “Whatever point the GNLF might have had, it was severely out of hand; even one man’s anger, in those days, seemed enough to set the hillside alight.”¹⁹¹

The relationship between Sai and Gyan comes to an end. That is a consequence of the fact that Gyan is confronted with a different lifestyle of Sai and the judge. He starts to feel that they behave in condescending manner to him. Gyan is angry and he wants to be financially independent of “that fussy pair, Sai and her grandfather with the fake English accent and the face powdered pink and white over dark brown.”¹⁹² Gyan lays the blame for his miserable life on them. After several arguments between them, Sai asks him: “What kind of man are you? Is this any way to behave? He responds: “I’m confused . . . I am only human and sometimes I’m weak. Sorry.”¹⁹³ This answer makes Sai absolutely angry. “At whose expense are you weak and human! You’ll never get anywhere in life, my friend . . . if this is what you think makes an excuse. A murderer could say the same and you think he would be let off the hook to hop in the spring?”¹⁹⁴ One would say that Desai points out thinking of Gyan. He refuses to confess to himself that the only person responsible for his

¹⁸⁹ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 158.

¹⁹⁰ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 279.

¹⁹¹ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 281.

¹⁹² Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 122.

¹⁹³ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 249.

¹⁹⁴ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 249.

life is him. Therefore he looks for reasons to justify his behaviour. The whole situation finally ends when Gyan betrays Sai and tells the revolutionists about the rifles in the judge's house. That results in conflict in Cho Oyu.

Discussion between Loli and Nona

This multicultural conflict describes discussion between two sisters - Lola and Nona. They live together in a cottage called Mon Ami and discuss the current political situation. Thereby Desai's characters discover current multicultural conflicts. Lola holds an opinion that "[t]hose Neps will be after all outsiders now, but especially us Bongs."¹⁹⁵ She continues: "This state-making . . . biggest mistake that fool Nehru made. Under his rules any group of idiots can stand up demanding new state and get it, too."¹⁹⁶ However Nona's opinion seems to be different. "But you have to take it from their point of view, said Nona. First the Neps were thrown out of Assam and then Meghalaya, then there's the king of Bhutan growling against."¹⁹⁷ She thinks Nepalis are afraid of being under pressure. Majority of them lived there for many generations. "Why shouldn't Nepali be taught in schools?"¹⁹⁸

Because on that basis they can start statehood demands. Separatist movement here, separatist movement there, terrorists, guerillas, insurgents, rebels, agitators, instigators, and they all learn from one another, of course—the Neps have been encouraged by the Sikhs and their Khalistan, by ULFA, NEFA, PLA; Jharkhand, Bodoland, Gorkhaland; Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Kashmir, Punjab, Assam. . . ."¹⁹⁹

In this situation, Desai describes many various cultural groups who live close to each other and each of them has certain both territorial and cultural requirements. One would say that it seems to be the problem because these demands are enforced through violence and hatred. Their conversation goes on when a friend of theirs, Mrs. Sen, appears. In her opinion the problem is Pakistan. She seems to be interested in this issue since "her thoughts and opinions ready-made, polished over the years, rolled out wherever they might be stuffed into a conversation. 'First heart attack to our country, no, that has never been

¹⁹⁵ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 127.

¹⁹⁶ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 128.

¹⁹⁷ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 128.

¹⁹⁸ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 128.

¹⁹⁹ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 128.

healed—”²⁰⁰ Lola replies: ““It’s an issue of a porous border is what. You can’t tell one from the other, Indian Nepali from Nepali Nepali. And then, *baba*, the way these Neps multiply.”²⁰¹ Mrs. Sen: “Like Muslims.”²⁰² Lola: “Not the Muslims *here*.”²⁰³ Mrs. Sen: “No self-control, those people. Disgusting.”²⁰⁴ Noni: “Everyone is multiplying. Everywhere. You cannot blame one group over another.”²⁰⁵ Mrs. Sen:

More Muslims in India than in Pakistan. They prefer to multiply over here. You know, that Jinnah, he ate bacon and eggs for breakfast every morning and drank whiskey every evening. What sort of Muslim nation they have? And five times a day bums up to God. Mind you [w]ith that Koran, who can be surprised? They have no option but to be two-faced.²⁰⁶

“The reasoning, they all knew from having heard before, formed a central pillar of Hindu belief and it went like this: so strict was the Koran that its teachings were beyond human capability. Therefore Muslims were forced to pretend one thing, do another; they drank, smoked, ate pork, visited prostitutes, and then denied it. Unlike Hindus, who needn’t deny.”²⁰⁷ One can notice very important feature of religion from their conversation about Muslims and that is this two-facedness they describe. There are many rituals performed in the name of God - which would not be that bad, if there weren’t killing, hatred, envy etc. committed in the name of the same God.

3.5 The judge and his wife

The aim of this multicultural conflict is to show a position of women in India. Their role changed rapidly during history but it still remains the important issue in the society. Except from Vedic Age, when their status was equal to the man, they were treated subordinately to him and their rights were restricted.²⁰⁸ “Despite all said and done Indian women are still far

²⁰⁰ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 129.

²⁰¹ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 129.

²⁰² Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 129.

²⁰³ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 129.

²⁰⁴ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 129.

²⁰⁵ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 129.

²⁰⁶ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 130.

²⁰⁷ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 130.

²⁰⁸ C. Chakrapani and S. Vijaya Kumar, *Changing Status and Role of Women in Indian Society* (New Delhi: MD Publications, 1994), page 16, http://books.google.cz/books?id=UuYHDRCdKQkC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed April 16, 2012).

behind when compared to women in the West. This is mainly due to the age-old traditional norms and restrictions that are imposed on them.”²⁰⁹

Jemubhai Patel, the Judge, is married to his wife Nimi at the age of 20. She is only 14 at that time. His family decides to marry him because their dream is to send him abroad, nevertheless the lack of money does not enable them to pay for the ticket. As soon as a message that “Jemu would be the first boy of their community to go to an English university”²¹⁰ gets around, they receive a marriage proposal. After their wedding party, the whole family is interested in how the wedding night goes on. When nothing happens within the three days family starts to be worried. Jemu is provided with the instructions how to behave. “Force her . . . [i]nsist. Don’t let her behave badly. Chase her and pin her down.”²¹¹ Nimi is told: “Other families would not be so patient.”²¹² From the very beginning, Jemubhai understands her timidity as well as he understands his. Both of them were children being brought together because of their parents. However course of events completely changes after his arrival from abroad. After five years, he meets Nimi but he completely forgot that he had wife. The first clash with her appears when she keeps his powder puff. He is shouting: “Someone has been through my belongings.”²¹³ Nobody understands why it is such a problem for him but they do not know that he started to behave in English manner and holds them in scorn. He finally finds out that it was Nimi who took it. He is filled with anger and starts chasing her. She tries to escape but her family locked the door. “All the stories of brides trying to escape—now and then even an account of a husband sidling out. Shameshameshameshame to the family.”²¹⁴ In the end, the judge brutally rapes her and for the rest of their living he treats her worse than his dog. “He would teach her the same lessons of loneliness and shame he had learned himself.”²¹⁵ He pressures her to learn English but she refuses. He takes food away from her then. “One day he found footprints on the toilet seat—*she was squatting on it, she was squatting on it!* — he could barely contain his outrage, took her head and pushed it into the toilet bowl. . . .”²¹⁶

²⁰⁹ Chakrapani and Kumar, *Changing Status and Role of Women in Indian Society*, 2.

²¹⁰ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 89.

²¹¹ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 92.

²¹² Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 92.

²¹³ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 167.

²¹⁴ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 169.

²¹⁵ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 170.

²¹⁶ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 173.

The final struggle between them appears when she threatens his career by her presence at Nehru's welcoming.

Then, when this wasn't enough to assuage his rage, he hammered down with his fists, raising his arms to bring them down on her again and again, rhythmically, until his own hands were exhausted and his shoulders next day were strained sore as if from chopping wood. He even limped a bit, his leg hurting from kicking her. "Stupid bitch, dirty bitch!" The more he swore, the harder he found he could hit.²¹⁷

Finally, he sends her back to her family and she knows that family will be ashamed of her. Her uncle tells her: "You are your husband's responsibility. Go back. Your father gave a dowry when you married—you got your share and it is not for daughters to come claiming anything thereafter. If you have made your husband angry, go ask for forgiveness."²¹⁸

One can notice that Desai's aim is to point out the position of women in India. This conflict illustratively demonstrates several problems. First of them is that Jemubhai and Nimi get married very young and without their free will. The position of Nimi is even worse. "In traditional Indian society the women as daughters are kept under the restricted supervision and authority of their parents right from their infancy to adulthood."²¹⁹ Another problem is that her position changes when she is married to the judge. Now, her role is to behave as his wife. One can see the way the family and her husband treats her. Their first wedding night is under constant supervision and little matters that Nimi resists. "There is no woman who has not suffered at one time or another the harassment, humiliation, exploitation and violence that shadows her sex."²²⁰

This conflict shows Desai's intention to describe the cruel reality of women in India. Her duty is to behave in accordance with the deeply rooted traditions. These senseless traditions, though, degraded the position of women on its lowest level. "Traditionally, the expectations of every member of the family are to be fulfilled by her, and further with her behaviour and activities she has to earn the appreciation and approval of not only of her husband but also of other members of the family."²²¹

²¹⁷ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 305.

²¹⁸ Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 306.

²¹⁹ Chakrapani and Kumar, *Changing Status and Role of Women in Indian Society*, 18.

²²⁰ Chakrapani and Kumar, *Changing Status and Role of Women in Indian Society*, 34.

²²¹ Chakrapani and Kumar, *Changing Status and Role of Women in Indian Society*, 20.

One can see the judge's cruelty from this conflict. He is fully aware of the fact that when sending her back home she will be disowned by her family. "No woman can expect support from her parents if her husband ill-treats her."²²²

²²² Chakrapani and Kumar, *Changing Status and Role of Women in Indian Society*, 34.

4 INDIAN-ENGLISH WRITERS AND LITERATURE

Writers of the Indian origin writing in English can be divided into two groups. Writers of the first group write in English but they live in their country of origin. “In the second category, we have expatriate, immigrant, diasporic and what is more important, a group of writers who divide their time between their homeland and U.K. or U.S.A.”²²³ Both Salman Rushdie and Kiran Desai fall into the second category. “This is because they write with a sense of history and contemporaneity.”²²⁴ A writer of this category therefore expresses his multi-cultural feelings in his writings. “It becomes clear that a writer can write or does write about his own country while living in another country either as an expatriate or an immigrant.”²²⁵ Technological progress caused that “the world has become ‘a global village.’”²²⁶ Writers of the former colonies know that the English language is a way how to stay connected with the reader even if they move back to their country of origin. They also look for unusual techniques defining their novels.²²⁷ “Rushdie introduced the technique of ‘magic realism’ which became very popular in the world. Feminist writers have given a new direction to fiction in English by asserting feminine identity and demanding sexual freedom in the patriarchal society.”²²⁸ Both Rushdie and Desai are winners of the Booker Prize, “one of the most prestigious literary awards given every year to the best novel written in English.”²²⁹

The influence of the English language as means of communication can be observed at the beginning of 19th century “with the growth of the Empire and the expansion of civil administration.”²³⁰ The Indian students gradually started to learn the Western values and thinking. The amount of people who were able to speak English fluently increased.²³¹ “The wealth of English literature dazzled the minds of new intellectuals.”²³² The efforts of the

²²³ Khan and Das, *Studies in Postcolonial Literature*, 9.

²²⁴ Khan and Das, *Studies in Postcolonial Literature*, 4.

²²⁵ Khan and Das, *Studies in Postcolonial Literature*, 5.

²²⁶ Khan and Das, *Studies in Postcolonial Literature*, 5.

²²⁷ Khan and Das, *Studies in Postcolonial Literature*, 6.

²²⁸ Khan and Das, *Studies in Postcolonial Literature*, 8.

²²⁹ Khan and Das, *Studies in Postcolonial Literature*, 9.

²³⁰ B.R. Agrawal and M.P. Sinha, *Major Trends in the Post-Independence Indian English Fiction* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2003), 1,

http://books.google.cz/books?id=WmKYoVsTxroC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed April 16, 2012).

²³¹ Agrawal and Sinha, *Major Trends in the Post-Independence Indian English Fiction*, 1.

²³² Agrawal and Sinha, *Major Trends in the Post-Independence Indian English Fiction*, 1.

first writers were both to present “Indian religion and philosophy and its rich spiritual heritage to the West”²³³ and introduce new literary elements into Indian languages. “All the Western forms of literature like the novel, biography tragedy, comedy, the essay and the lyric with their sub-divisions were the mould into which the spirit of awakened India poured itself.”²³⁴

Eckstein in his book clarifies the attitudes of Britain to such a variety of English language.

Britain’s relationship to the diversity of English literatures across the globe must be described as ambivalent, as British colonialism is the very source of that diversity. On the one hand, it reflects the coloniser’s world-wide dissemination of English language and culture that accompanied political and economic processes initially and was at the core of missionary activities in the 19th century. On the other hand, the literary diversity shows how creatively writers around the globe have used, and continue to use, the medium of the English language as well as its cultural heritage.²³⁵

²³³ Agrawal and Sinha, *Major Trends in the Post-Independence Indian English Fiction*, 1.

²³⁴ Agrawal and Sinha, *Major Trends in the Post-Independence Indian English Fiction*, 2.

²³⁵ Lars Eckstein, *English Literatures Across the Globe: A Companion* (Paderborn: Fink, 2007), 33, http://books.google.cz/books?id=fm9ypshd1XgC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed April 16, 2012).

5 ANALYSIS

Since these issues are both thorny and crucial for Desai and Rushdie, it is difficult to know their real attitudes and opinions they hold on each of these problems. Therefore, the analysis is carried out on the basis of the conflicts described as above. The following comparison is divided into several topics, each of them describing attitudes of the authors.

5.1 Immigrant's experience

Both authors use their characters to express their own feelings of being either expatriate or generation influenced by the British legacy or both. Each of the characters spends certain period of time abroad and returns back home with that 'burden'. Their life is then being described with that burden, as they are still recalling their memories back. It is essential to underline the fact, that the characters are influenced by this experience for good. The characters of Aadam, the judge or Biju shows their transformation when they clash with other culture. Deep inside they hate that they had to go through this experience. However, if they didn't, they would be longing to taste the life abroad. That is their burden – love and hate at once. That is a split of their identity. In case of Salman Rushdie, his Aadam comes from Germany and tries to put his newly gained experiences into practice; however both his family and society strictly refuse it. On the contrary, Desai's judge returns back as a two-faced person, full of broken thoughts. Their characters also suffer from racial prejudices they experienced abroad. Rushdie's and Desai's characters therefore represent the people who carry the postcolonial legacy deeply in them. It is not, though, only immigrant's experience but also the relationship between East and West they mention.

5.2 Religion and Region

Another broadly discussed issue in several multicultural conflicts is a religion. The authors purposely describe the confrontation with different religious groups to point out the real reasons in the background. Via their characters, Rushdie and Desai underline the fact that instead of trying to cooperate with each other, people deals with aspects like whose God is better, who my children should hate, who I have to fight with etc. Such religious rigidness holds back a development of the country and moreover it creates tension among people which finally results in violence and killing. This is also closely connected with regional fights. A plot of the books is narrated in the background of struggles between

various cultures and ethnic groups. In both cases, the groups demand their own state otherwise they resort to violence.

5.3 Behaviour in English manner

Another common feature in both novels is an effort of the characters to behave in English manner. However, the characters of Ahmed and Judge clearly demonstrate the consequences of such behaviour. They remain trapped in their minds and as time goes by they find out that they completely lose their sense of identity. The only way how to exist is to pretend that they are somebody else. But they cannot escape from themselves.

5.4 Women

The role of women is the first aspect the authors describe differently. Kiran Desai is naturally much more interested in this issue. One cannot say that Rushdie doesn't analyse this topic at all, but Kiran as a woman exactly understands woman's feelings when being humiliated, battered and badly treated. One can see that she delivers a message to the world to not tolerate such men's behaviour anymore.

5.5 American dream

The characters in Desai's novel dream of American dream, however they clash with reality. Biju has first-hand experience when living in America. His father's notion of the world is, though, completely misrepresented. He thinks that life in America is easy, that everybody has a flat and TV. By and large, Indians know now that TV does not guarantee a happy life.

5.6 Independence

Rushdie's novel is closely connected with historical events. He deals with the independence and postcolonial development of his country much more than Desai. The reason is that Rushdie was born only two months before India gained independence and therefore his personal life corresponds to India.

5.7 Characters lack a confidence

The characters in Desai's book suffer from lack of confidence. They are absolutely resigned with destiny and do not try hard enough to change their miserable situation. The characters do not critically think on their own and tend to join masses who think instead of them.

CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of my bachelor thesis was to analyse the multicultural conflicts taking place in postcolonial India and clarify the way they reflect in Rushdie's and Desai's book. I intended to examine it from postcolonial immigrant's view however as Kay Deaux claims "I arrive at no single description of the immigration experience. Different individuals, as members of different groups, arrive in different cultural and historical contexts, and the ways in which their experience plays out depends on the mixture of elements."²³⁶ But legacy left by both authors is much deeper. The thesis reveals many component issues from which the multicultural clashes seem to stem from. These aspects are deeply connected with religion, territorial struggles, the British rule, independence and many other and the cultural clashes are in fact consequences of all these problems.

The position of immigrant in both Rushdie's and Desai's interpretation is practically the same. Indian immigrant is trying to hold on to tradition of his country, its culture, customs, language as this helps him to retain his sense of identity. However, the question closely related to multiculturalism arises when looking at their confusion from newly gained experience. Is it even possible for people to adapt to traditions of a certain country where they are located? The answer is that it is very hard if people want to preserve their cultural traditions. Otherwise they would merge with the country they live in and lost any sign of individuality.

This seems to be a problem because as both authors describe it, there are aspects Eastern culture have different from Western. To create multicultural society, it is essential that these two cultures learn from each other. In my opinion, undisputable issues like religious toleration, human rights in general, equality between men and women, rights of women not to be treated like a thing, free choice of partner and free development of their relationship, mutual support of children to respect different culture, not killing in the name of God and many other should be learned from the Western culture. On the other hand, the Western culture fell into a complete consumerism, does not ascribe to spiritual values or even any values, destroys the planet and its only objective is money. This needs to be learnt

²³⁶ Kay Deaux, *To Be an Immigrant: Psychological Design and Social Fabric* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006), 3.
http://books.google.cz/books?id=zENCdynbpKIC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed April 16, 2012).

from the East. The only way to create a multicultural society is mutual respect and tolerance to other culture and religion, provided that all the dishonest practices restricting the individual will be extirpated.

I was bitterly and not surprisingly disappointed when I found out that the most of the problems in India was caused by religion. Almost every single conflict is based on either struggle over the area or because of religion. One can make his own opinion why Rushdie's life is endangered. He told the truth about religion and societies caring only for their own welfare not about people. Rotten system of religious groups and fundamental psychos asserting their 'truths' through violence can be no longer tolerated. That is why Rushdie's and Desai's books are timeless and at most alarming. Their upbringing, insight, maturity, experienced postcolonial changes, only these events enabled them to get to know different, Western culture and get rid of dogmatism of their religions. Their aim is to encourage people to think their own way and show them the inflexibility of religion. Their clash between the Eastern and the Western culture is an example for everyone, not only for writer or famous person, but for every individual since it slowly but surely ruins the ingrained habits of both cultures.

Salman Rushdie describes it as the third principle, our spirit. Only by looking for a sense of being people take a look on a situation from a critical point of view. He emphasizes that it should no longer be a question of any ideology or religion but an effort of each individual to try to find a place on Earth. The major task will be to find a golden mean between the West and the East that nobody lived anymore in ostentatious, luxury and useless affluence whereas the others live in undignified poverty. Desai's character cook shows how big the gap between the East and the West can be.

As for the postcolonial era and its influence, in my opinion it should be accepted as a part of the Indian history. As we can see from the multicultural conflicts, many bad things happened, millions of people were killed and nobody can deny that the British rule left both India and Indians in uncertain position. But the British also brought a progress and development, and last but not least, they helped to open people's consciousness of the world.

Since many books related to this topic examine mostly historical truths, the truths of ordinary people remain hidden to the others. The individual situations from which both stories of the books are consisted of describe the lives of ordinary people. The thesis describes multicultural conflicts that characters of two books have to deal with in the

background of historical events. My conclusion is the same message Rushdie and Desai are trying to deliver. The world will never be the place of peace unless we change ourselves. The motto of my thesis is: “Instead of praying to God, get rid of your belief and start to *think* on your own. Nothing but the religious wars brought about this world we have. So wake up.”

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