

Revisiting the Metanarrative of ‘Two-nation’ Theory: A Postmodern Study of Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*

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ABSTRACT

In 1947 India was violently partitioned into the States of India and Pakistan. The political leaders behind this partition justified their decision based on the two-nation theory which had presented the two major religions namely Hindu and Muslim as two distinct civilizations that could not coexist. By marginalising and ignoring other important aspects of Indian society, and by magnifying only the religious aspect, they successfully created the metanarrative that would strengthen the ‘imagined’ border. Salman Rushdie, a postmodernist at heart, in *Midnight’s Children* artistically brings the minute details of common Indian lives to the fore and thereby compels the readers to reanalyse the validity of the theory. This study, thus, by referring to the postmodern theory propounded by Jean François Lyotard, has tried to examine the legitimacy of two-nation theory in the light of the micronarratives portrayed in the *Midnight’s Children*.

Keywords: Jean François Lyotard, partition, postmodernism, Salman Rushdie, two-nation theory

INTRODUCTION

“At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will wake to life and freedom” – With this speech by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, delivered on the midnight

of 14th August 1947, India gained its long-awaited freedom (Dalal, 2003, p. 5). But this event was not a happy one for all; with independence, India was brutally partitioned into two nations – India and Pakistan. Based on the religious beliefs of the people, Pakistan was created for the Muslim population, and India was created for the Hindus. Some political leaders of undivided India had propounded the “two-nation” theory and asked for a partition. The theory proposes that Hindus and Muslims are radically different from each other,

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they are from different origins, they have different bents of mind and therefore they cannot coexist. In other words, it would not be safe for a minority population of Muslims to live in a nation where the majority of the population is Hindu. Several arguments were produced in support of this theory but in practice the effect of this theory was devastating, as we find in various partition literature, *Midnight's Children* being one of them. It was followed by anarchy, bloodshed, rapes, robbery, and ruthless violence; the reason behind this devastation lies within the very narrative of the theory, which this paper explores.

India has its long tradition of 'unity in the midst of diversity'. People from different ethnicity, language, caste, and religion come together and coexist to make the colourful fabric of the Indian subcontinent. But when such a hypothesis was executed in reality, it created an incredible sensation among the individuals. The people were perplexed regarding the future course of action and many of them didn't know whether their homes lay in Pakistan or India. Salman Rushdie bases the plot of his novel *Midnight's Children* on this chaotic situation in India during the partition. Rushdie himself was very critical of the two-nation theory and did not support the creation of Pakistan (Rushdie, 2008). In this novel, he portrays incidents before and after the independence of India and takes the common people of the society as the characters to show their agonies. Being a historical novel, *Midnight's Children* incorporates several incidents that are historically true and this article will try

to examine how Rushdie (2012) in his novel depicts the impact of the two-nation theory.

The two-nation theory is a fabricated metanarrative that was meant to establish a political partition at the expense of innocent lives. It created such a debate from local to an international level that even today we go back to this concept whenever the two nations confront each other. Possessing the first-hand experience of the aftermath of the partition, Rushdie has portrayed the emotions and incidents as realistically as possible, and thus *Midnight's Children* seems to be the most suitable literary piece which we can read closely, analyse critically and explore to find those mini-narratives which will provide the real truth, not the distorted one. In the subsequent analysis, this study will bring forth the skilfully portrayed micronarratives of common Indian lives. The paper will look at these narratives from a postmodern perspective and observe whether these people or their life experiences legitimise the propositions of the theory.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Salman Rushdie, being a postmodernist (Luburić-Cvijanović & Muždeka, 2016), was aware of the Lyotardian concepts of narratives and knowledge-power relationship, and could never accept the partition. In the novel *Shame*, he mentioned that the creation of Pakistan in 1947 was a failure because it was just "insufficiently imagined" (Rushdie, 2008, p. 16). For his own part, he believes that religion is something that makes one's identity static,

and prevents people from mingling with each other. In order to create the division between self and the other, religion must stereotype the other by creating metanarratives. That's why in his personal life he says

I lost my faith... at school in England... during a Latin lesson... to prove my newfound atheism, I bought myself a rather tasteless ham sandwich, and so partook for the first time of the forbidden flesh of the swine. No thunderbolt arrived to strike me down. I remember feeling that my survival confirmed the correctness of my new position.... [F]rom that day to this, I have thought of myself as a wholly secular person, and have been drawn to the great traditions of secular radicalism – in politics, socialism, and its offspring" (Rushdie, 1991, p. 405).

As a result of this 'secular, pluralist and eclectic' attitude, Rushdie could objectively view the lives of the common Indians, their daily struggles, the part that religion played in their societies, and the effects of partition in their lives. Getting rid of the metanarratives that two-nation theory made us believe, Rushdie has tried to delve into the real problems of India, and show how all of these were erased from the main discourses in the name of religion and partition. *Midnight's Children* is a living example of this endeavour which Droogan (2009) mentions, "The questions at the heart of *Midnight's Children* are how, in

the absence of religion or any ultimate principles, can a person know the world, or know themselves?" (p. 202) He further says that Rushdie's rejection of religious restrictions symbolises his alienation from the colonial education which was based upon modernist ideals and also from the Eastern values of tradition, beliefs, and faith. In *Midnight's Children*, he seeks the truth by breaking the shell of religion-based identity and encourages the readers to find the real history of India (Droogan, 2009).

S. Kumanan (2016), in his article, touches upon India's partition and Saleem's symbolic connection with the fate of the new nation, as portrayed by Rushdie. Referring to the *Midnight's Children Conference* and other instances, Kumanan presents the history that Saleem subjectively believes. But as Rao (2008) mentions, "Saleem creates the special type of history of an unbelievable narrator, as he has his own perspective of history. He combines 'fiction' with 'facts' to emphasize the ambiguous nature of history" (p. 11). Thus the study fails to provide any concrete reason behind the partition, the role of the two-nation theory, or the effect that it had upon the common people.

Todd Giles (2010), similarly, brings Rushdie's art of writing and chutnification in the focus of his article. History, written by anyone, is bound to have subjective bias and historians always try to present their observations as much objectively as possible. But Rushdie (2012), on the contrary, instead of taking any objective attitude, redraws history from the subjective

view of Saleem Senai, the protagonist – “[I]n a country where truth is what it is instructed to be, reality quite literally ceases to exist, so that everything becomes possible except what we are told in the case” (p. 453). Giles (2010) thus observes that sometimes things are arranged “in such a way that the reader takes them as truths, as much as, say, he or she takes what appears to be factual dates and occurrences as truth, most of which are in actuality only half-truths, false histories” (p. 183). The author makes the reader aware of the mixing of reality and imagination in writing this historical novel, yet avoids indicating any direction to derive the real historical facts out of it.

O. P. Dwivedi (2009) also looks into the historical aspects of *Midnight's Children*, but his prime focus is on the process of nation-building. He shows how Rushdie has connected the imaginary future of Saleem Senai to the real future of India, with an unthinkable dexterity. He says that when a nation is inappropriately imagined it creates a lot of problems for the people and that every nation, in order to exist, must have its strong historical base. However, this article strangely keeps mum on the question of India's emergence as a nation. The focus shifts in finding the historical elements in Rushdie's novel, but it does not comment on how the historical facts contributed to the process of partition.

After reading different critics one can say that the origin and execution of the two-nation theory consist of an important chapter of Indian history, and it is, in fact, the major cause for the birth of today's

India and Pakistan. *Midnight's Children*, being a partition novel, tries to capture the social, economic, and mental condition of the then common people of India. Several critics have discussed Rushdie's handling of history, narrative style, the art of mixing imagination with reality, and the different aspects of memory and religion as portrayed in his novel; but no significant study has been found which solely focuses on how Rushdie strongly yet artistically refutes the propositions of two-nation theory in his novel. We argue that Rushdie bases his narration on the arguments of Lyotard's postmodernism and has portrayed numerous trivial but important micronarratives of common Indian lives that show the simple lifestyle, cordial relationships, interactions, altercations, the happy moments, and a life free from any boundary and religious hatred. This article thus tries to focus on those micronarratives from *Midnight's Children* and thereby shows how Rushdie dismantles the two-nation theory and compels readers to critically revisit this part of Indian history anew. The following sections of this article will first discuss the methodological approach of this study, and then it will venture into finding and analysing critically the acceptability of the theory with references from the novel.

METHODS

This study is analytical and exploratory in nature. It has used critical discourse analysis to critically examine the discourse that emerged out of the socio-political situation following partition which has been portrayed

by Rushdie in his novel. The paper uses the close reading technique and critically analyses instances and evidence which challenge the validity and legitimacy of the metanarrative, i.e. the two-nation theory. The everyday incidents and the normal activities of the common people of India, as depicted in Rushdie’s novel, are used as an instrument to bring out the incongruousness of the two-nation theory. The data have been collected from the novel itself, while the theoretical perspective adopted to strengthen the arguments is postmodernism propounded by Jean François Lyotard in 1984.

32 years after the partition, French philosopher Lyotard published his groundbreaking work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984). The uniqueness of postmodernism lies in its rejection of following the traditions, hierarchies, and the worship of unknown authority or power. Postmodern theory strongly condemns the use of metanarratives to validate any social, political, or philosophical knowledge. These metanarratives seem to be imperfect and biased in the modern society as they always present a generalised view of any fact; and to generalise they try to marginalise, cover-up and eliminate all odds or exceptions, and thereby present an imperfect, idealised view of the fact, not the real fact. That is why Lyotard (1984) affirms: “I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives” (p. xxiv); and in place of metanarratives what he argues to introduce in the process of legitimisation of narrative knowledge is the micronarratives. He says

that postmodern knowledge “refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable” (p. xxv).

Lyotard’s postulate applies to the politico-historical phenomenon of the “two-nation” theory too. In India, such a metanarrative was created and circulated in a way that the religious diversity of the country was perceived by the people as a threat to their lives. The propagators of the two-nation theory only focused on the religious aspect of human identity and left out the other important aspects. Thus it is necessary to analyse the then socio-political situation of India wholly, without ignoring any of the micronarratives, in order to explore the truth of the two-nation theory.

Leo (1988) rightly says, “one of the biggest transformations marking the disjunction between modernism and postmodernism is the collapse of the ‘master narratives’ or ‘grand stories’” (p. 342). Salman Rushdie, being a critic of the two-nation theory portrays the lives of the common people in India. He deliberately brings the Hindu and Muslim characters together in *Midnight’s Children*, so that through their interactions we get a different glimpse of India and its people. Seemingly trivial and insignificant events and facts of this novel turn out to be important and serve as the micronarratives that prick the bubble of the metanarrative of the two-nation theory. In the following section, we will attempt to investigate some such instances in this novel and thereby try to question the validity of the two-nation theory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Salman Rushdie was born in Bombay on 19th June 1947, the very year when India gained independence from British rule. The similarity of Rushdie's year and place of birth to that of Saleem provokes a group of critics to presume that Saleem in *Midnight's Children* is Rushdie's reflection of himself. Saleem is the central character of the novel and as the novel begins Senai says "...my destinies [are] indissolubly chained to those of my country" (Rushdie, 2012, p. 3). Here the word "my country" is notable because at the time of Saleem's birth partition had already taken place and being a Muslim Saleem, according to the theory, should feel an affinity with Pakistan; but instead of this he calls India "my country".

Before coming to the story of Saleem, the novel takes the readers back to the time of his grandfather Aadam Aziz. Aadam was a Kashmiri and he had a very good friend named Tai who was a boatman. Both of them had great respect for each other. Amazed by the unchanging nature of Tai's age Aadam used to ask "How old are you really, Taiji?" (Rushdie, 2012, p. 14) Religion or religious rituals never had any serious importance in Aadam's life. One day, while praying, Aadam hit his nose to the ground, which caused three drops of blood to come out of his nose, and he was so disturbed with this incident that "he resolved never again to kiss earth for any God or man" (p. 4). There is hardly any reference in the text to Tai's religion. Tai loved to make up stories and often he made fun of the mythological tales. One day he claimed to Aadam that he

had met Christ when he came to Kashmir and explained, "Isa, when he came, beard down to his balls, bald as an egg on his head.... And what an appetite.... Saint or devil, I swear, he could eat a whole kid in one go" (p. 13). Thus he presented a comical gluttonous figure of Christ. Aadam, mesmerised by this description, instead of showing any doubt or offence, ran to his parents to tell them every word that he had listened; but to his disappointment, they had no time to pay any heed to such "gas". These examples show that although people in India were concerned about their religious faiths, it scarcely attained such significance to necessitate violence or partition. Aadam's life in Kashmir symbolises the age-old Indian tradition of tolerance, simplicity, and openness of mind, which undoubtedly goes against the proposed grain of the two-nation theory.

The two-nation theory argues "...a Muslim of one country has far more sympathies with a Muslim living in another country than with a non-Muslim living in the same country" (Quaid-e-Azam & MRT, 1992, p. 176). Now, this was not only a metanarrative but a false statement if seen from the perspective of the citizen-nation relationship. This argument was criticised vehemently by the then social activists from all the spheres of society; Rushdie, in line with them, has thus produced a cluster of instances in his novel, which makes this argument unconvincing and questionable.

In his Kashmir days when Dr. Aziz was a bachelor, Ilse Begum, one of his German friends, had come to visit him and mysteriously drowned in the lakes of

Kashmir while taking a ride with Tai. Now, if Jinnah's observation was true, Dr. Aziz would have taken legal action against Tai, the non-Muslim, on suspicion of killing Ilse Begum who was a Muslim, but he did not accuse Tai, and instead, put his trust in him.

Aadam got married to Saleem's grandmother Naseem and settled down with her. While leaving Kashmir, they could see the temple of Shankara Acharya and Takht-e-Suleiman standing one atop another on a mountain and representing religious cooperation in pre-partition India (Rushdie, 2012). Naseem was a bit conservative but Dr. Aziz did not possess any hatred for other religions. The greatest example of religious harmony is evidenced when the curtains at the hotel room caught fire and Aadam shouted frantically for help, "...about thirty five Sikhs, Hindus and untouchables [thronged] in the smoke-filled room" for rescue (p. 39).

These pictures present before us the kind of relationship that existed among different religions in India before the partition. Rushdie has been very explicit in pointing out the different faiths of the rescuers who rushed in. While two-nation theory only talks about the Hindu-Muslim binary, Rushdie's incorporation of other religious communities like Sikhs and untouchables in his novel adds another layer of micronarratives that help us to understand the nature of Indian society and infer the attitude of people before partition.

While living in Agra, the narrator describes a few instances of religious stereotyping (Rushdie, 2012); Dr. Aziz or

his family by contrast had never indulged in such practices, neither had they faced such attacks. Dr. Aziz was a man of reason and rationality. When Dr. Aziz found that the *maulvi* (a teacher of Islamic law) appointed for the children's religious teachings, was teaching his children to hate others' religion, he fired him straightaway (Rushdie, 2012). A worshipper of optimism, he always loathed the Muslim League's intention to divide the country based on religion. He believed that the leaders were not actually thinking for the common Muslim population, but they had some other vested interest. His conviction was confirmed when he found people like the Hummingbird, Nadir Khan, and Rani of Cooch Naheen around him, who were also against the League's questionable activities, and ironically Muslims speaking against the so-called Muslim organisation. Rani expressed her disdain for the League by crying:

That bunch of toadies! Landowners with vested interests to protect!
What do they have to do with Muslims? They go like toads to the British and form governments for them, now that the Congress refuses to do it.... Otherwise, why would they want to partition India?
(Rushdie, 2012, p. 55).

These vested interests who constructed the metanarrative of Hindu-Muslim disharmony were further exposed by Joseph D'Costa when he explained to Mary, "The independence is for the rich only; the poor are being made to kill each other like flies.

In Punjab, in Bengal..." (Rushdie, 2012, p. 139) Thus Rushdie, by presenting these micronarratives of pre-independence India, not only challenges the validity of the theory but also exposes the reality behind this.

The theory of two nations had been discussed by the Hindu Maha Sabha, under the presidency of V. D. Savarkar, who accepted that Hindus and Muslims were radically different. In this context, B. R. Ambedkar (1945) mentioned, "Mr. Savarkar...insists that, although there are two nations in India, India shall not be divided into two parts" (p. 69). It was sixteen years later that Jinnah demanded the partition based on this theory and during the 1940s political activists voiced the demand for partition. On 23rd March 1940, Jinnah in his Lahore speech proposed that Muslims and Hindus were from two different religious philosophies. They had no intermarriage and their ideas and perspectives of life and society were also very conflicting. "Their outlook on life and of life was different and despite thousand years of history, the relations between the Hindus and Muslims could not attain the level of cordiality" (Wolpert, 2005 p. 48). But this was merely a sweeping statement. Saleem, the protagonist, for example, mentioned the name of Padma several times. She takes care of him in his 'last days'. Though Padma belongs to the Hindu faith, the cordiality and care between them invariably draw our attention. Padma is a critic of Saleem, but she also loves him – "Padma: strong, jolly, a consolation for my last days" (Rushdie, 2012, p. 24). Padma is

the one who listens to Saleem's story. They truly love each other and at the end of the novel we get to know that despite Saleem's sterility, they have decided to marry. This depiction nullifies what Jinnah had said about Hindu-Muslim marriage and cordial relationships. Rushdie has intentionally paired the character of Padma with Saleem to highlight that cordiality outside one's own community was very common in India and intermarriage scarcely posed any problem to anyone's life or identity.

In Bombay, where Saleem and his family lived, the people had created a colourful social fabric with different faiths, cultures, and socio-economic backgrounds (Rushdie, 2012). It was Dr. Narlikar, a Hindu friend of Ahmed Senai, who helped in the birth of Saleem at a critical time (Rushdie, 2012). Saleem also had a number of Hindu and Muslim friends among whom Parvati is notable. Parvati had saved his life more than once and provided him with the necessary shelter when he needed it most. She wanted to marry Saleem but his infertility dissuaded her. She subsequently had a physical relationship with Shiva (a Hindu) but he deserted her once she fell pregnant (Rushdie, 2012). Saleem, out of concern and genuine love, decided to marry her and become the father of her child (Rushdie, 2012). These instances point out that religion cannot be the only parameter to define one's life and identity. It is quite natural for two people belonging to different religions to be good friends or spouses, and if any discord is to happen it can even happen between individuals from the same

religion. Thus, what Jinnah had posited on Hindu-Muslim relationships is misleading. These examples bring forth a fundamental question – did religion really play such a crucial role in common Indian lives that it necessitated the country to be partitioned so brutally? If not, then why did the partition happen? We are thus compelled to revisit history, analyse it anew and evaluate the historical and political facts. The truth seems elusive and we are left undecided.

Two-nation theory argued that the Muslims could not achieve justice and fairness in such independent India, where their adversaries, the Hindus would have a majority. The Muslims in India "...had to... take full control of their destinies. They were not simply a religion, but a distinct cultural and national community" (Vershney, 2009, p. 7). But all these were again a totalising view – in terms of Lyotard, metanarratives which were meant for satisfying some political interests. The fact is that the partition was not meant for the sake of the common Muslim population, but it was for the political leaders and rich class of the society who were eager to profit out of a chaotic situation. Akbar (2008) says, "Muslim elites in British India, particularly landlords and capitalists, manipulated the incipient ideology of the Muslim League, and fuelled it with incendiary sentiment in order to create a state where they could protect their vested interests" (para. 4). Chengappa (2008) analyses this further and opines that while a group of orthodox Muslims doubted religion as the basis of nationhood, "the Western-educated Muslim

elites stated that their common religion of Islam was adequate to form a nation" (p. 2156). In order to create a separate state for Muslims, the most important step was to form the All India Muslim League in 1906. Chengappa (2008) adds, "The Muslim elites who feared Hindu domination in a democratic system based on majority rule established the League" (p. 2160). That is why Rushdie makes his readers aware of the metanarrative of two-nation theory again and again through the words of his protagonists like Rani of Cooch Naheen and Joseph.

To talk about justice, it was never denied entirely, but there was an undercurrent of anti-Muslim propaganda among the Hindu population also, which turned the situation in favour of the Muslim League and resulted in its popularity and success. The movie *Gai-Wallah*, for example, was produced to tickle up religious hatred and it caused hullabaloo among the people of Delhi – "The film was made for Hindu audiences; in Delhi it had caused riots" (Rushdie, 2012, p. 61). Confirmed of the news of Pakistan's origin, a new band of hooligans, named after the notorious Hindu villain Ravana, appeared; they targeted Muslim merchants and demanded money from them; they set fire to the estate and property of those who did not fulfill their demands. Terrified by their activities, Ahmed Senai left Delhi and settled in Bombay where again his property was seized because of his religious identity – "freeze a Muslim's assets, they say, and you make him run to Pakistan, leaving all his wealth behind him" (Rushdie, 2012, p. 185).

However, justice was not denied to him. He fought at the court and finally recovered all his wealth.

Yet India was divided, and the supporters of partition interpreted the terrible massacre and violence perpetrated by the Hindus and Muslims upon each other during the partition to justify their claims that Hindus and Muslims were indeed so different that they could never live together peacefully in a nation. But this interpretation is incomplete and faulty as Vershney (2009) states that in order to understand the cause of the violence we must look at the consequences first. He says, “The violence only proved that once Partition was accepted, unspeakable havoc was unleashed on the masses, even though they had little to do with its creation. Post-Partition violence cannot demonstrate that Partition was a voluntary choice of the Muslim masses on an ideational, or ideological, basis” (Vershney, 2009, p. 10). Eaton (2014) calls this whole incident a ‘partition drama’ by mentioning that the religious differences between Hindus and Muslims were politicised and transformed into metanarratives, and were presented as if they were independent and disconnected civilizations since time immemorial. Once they were successful in establishing this argument, it was an easy task to validate the partition as a requirement to end the civilizational conflicts (Eaton, 2014). And finally, the hatred that Muslim League wanted to impose upon the Muslims started to show its colour. Common men were polarised. There is an instance of a mob of Muslims chasing a poor, Hindu Peep-

shower. On the other hand, there were people like Amina who in spite of her pregnancy came forward to save the man (Rushdie, 2012).

The true essence of independence, mixed with the sadistic pleasure of partition, riots, and stains of blood created an awful atmosphere on midnight of 14th August. Stricken by this situation Saleem recapitulates:

This year... there was an extra festival on the calendar, a new myth to celebrate, because a nation which had never previously existed was about to win its freedom.... India, the new myth – a collective fiction in which anything was possible, a fable rivalled only by the two other mighty fantasies: money and God (Rushdie, 2012, p. 150).

When a group of people, happy with their newly born nation celebrated the day with sweets and crackers, another group of people was witnessing their worst nightmares in the frontiers – “I shall not describe the mass blood-letting in progress on the frontiers of the divided Punjab (where the partitioned nations are washing themselves in one another’s blood...)” (Rushdie, 2012, p. 150). Not only in India but also in Pakistan the situation was the same – “while trains burn in Punjab, with the green flames of blistering paint and the glaring saffron of fired fuel... the city of Lahore, too, is burning” (p. 155). If this was the condition of the common people, then

who were the beneficiaries and how were they benefitted? The answer becomes clear when we see Major Zulfikar at that time was amassing assets, by buying refugee properties at unbelievably low prices, which would even make the Nizam of Hyderabad jealous (Rushdie, 2012). Now we understand why Joseph had insisted that the independence was for the rich and the poor had nothing to do with the partition (Rushdie, 2012).

Two-nation theory and partition had watered the seed of hatred into a full-grown tree and this only caused misery to the people belonging to religious minorities in both nations. Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated in 1948 and nobody was sure who had killed him, but the Muslims in India surely knew that if a Muslim was involved in it, the entire Muslim community would be effaced from India (Rushdie, 2012). On the other side of the border, Major Zulfikar, with his peers, was also preparing to chase the Hindus back to India and secure Pakistan only for the Muslims (Rushdie, 2012). Finally, the politicians and supporters of the two-nation theory were successful in connecting their thoughts to the lives of the common people and thereby created such distrust and a gap that could not be bridged completely even seventy-three years after the partition.

However, the most important micronarrative that completely demolishes the claims of this metanarrative took place in 1971 when a group of Pakistani Muslims tried to take over another group of Pakistani Muslims over the language conflicts and

unleashed ruthless torture upon them. East Pakistan was predominated by Bengali-speaking people while most of the people in West Pakistan spoke Urdu. When the Government decided to declare Urdu as the national language, East Pakistanis were offended and became furious. They started protesting and demanded a separate nation based on their language. However, the government was adamant and decided to take military action to suppress the protest (O'Brien, 1988). Dacca was invaded by the Pakistani army; approximately ten million refugees were forced into 'Hindu' India, making it "the biggest migration in the history of human race" (Rushdie, 2012, p. 498). Saleem was rescued from Dacca by Parvati, and he took shelter at his uncle Mustapha's home (Rushdie, 2012). Now, if religion occupied the only important place in people's lives then why was Pakistan again partitioned? The two-nation theory does not have an answer to this question as it really had missed many important aspects of human identity in order to enforce its hypothesis. All these instances are very much perplexing for the supporters of the two-nation theory, and by this, our doubt against its propositions are also strengthened.

According to critics like David Gilmartin (2015), the problem lies in the very concept of nationalism that the colonial rule had brought with it. It aims at creating borders and partitions by magnifying the differences and dissimilarities. Maulana Azad, one of the influential leaders of the Indian National Congress, criticised Jinnah's idea by saying

that to be a Muslim one did not need to oppose the entire Indian heritage. One could practice Islam by being a proud Indian as well. In his words:

Eleven hundred years of common history have enriched India with our common achievement. Our language, our poetry, our literature, our culture, our art, our dress, our manners and customs, the innumerable happenings of our daily life, everything bears the stamp of our joint endeavour. There is indeed no aspect of our life, which has escaped this stamp (Jay, 1991, p. 241).

Dwivedi (2009), on the other hand, in line with Benedict Anderson's (2006) definition of the nation, mentions that 'imagination' is the most important requirement for the formation of a nation. Since imagination and reality are two different things, it is often seen that a nation that is not properly imagined faces disastrous conflicts and wars. What forms a nation is always debatable. We have witnessed migrants from different parts of the world coming together to form a nation; on the other hand, there is the example of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (erstwhile USSR) which fragmented into as many as fifteen countries in 1991. According to Anderson's (2006) definition, a nation is marked by its boundary, but now there are numerous examples where we see migrant citizens successfully following the customs

and rituals of their country of origin. This thus brings us to question as to whether India and Pakistan were properly imagined.

The flaw in the propositions of the two-nation theory becomes clear when Pakistan, imagined as an Islamic nation fell apart into two in 1971 because of the linguistic conflicts (O'Brien, 1988). The incongruousness of Jinnah's theory became apparent when he demanded that the Muslim people of the regions which he declared to be Muslim dominated, would only have the rights to decide whether they wanted to stay in India; and ironically, with a few exceptions, those regions were constituted by nearly 50% of Hindu population (Hasan, 2004). And finally in 1971 when the Bengali-speaking Muslim people sought recognition for their language, the Government of Pakistan took military action against them. In the novel, we see that Saleem was sent to Dacca as a representative of the Pakistani army (Rushdie, 2012). There he witnessed the cruelty of the army men. They burned the town which was already rippled with bullets; and as they passed by, they slaughtered and raped people. Pakistan was again divided and the nation of Bangladesh emerged. The point is that imagining nations on the basis of religion only, was not a justified decision imposed on the common people by the national leaders. It caused a lot of bloodshed and the loss of innocent lives.

CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, we can see that the relationship between Hindus and Muslims

was not actually as bitter as portrayed by the politicians. India was partitioned. And what came out of it? We got two ever fighting enemy nations, never to come to peace. Saleem lost his entire family except for his own and his sister's life in such a war between the two nations. Religion – which was the basis of the two-nation theory also failed to imagine a whole nation and two decades later Pakistan was again partitioned. If we consider Saleem as a representative of India's fortune in *Midnight's Children*, then we must consider his family members, friends, kith, and kin to be the representative of all the common people of India. From this perspective, all the examples mentioned previously may serve as the micronarratives that dismiss the validity of the metanarrative of two-nation theory. The political leaders had some different intentions in mind, and to materialise those interests they introduced the theory of "two-nation" in which they brought differences, discriminations, and disharmony where there was none. However, *Midnight's Children*, as a novel depicting the social scenario at the time of partition, completely debunks the relevance and positivity of the theory, and we, the readers, by reading this novel also get a comprehensive critique of the theory and become disillusioned by it.

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