Knowledge Gathered from *Joseph Anton:* Freedom and the Nation Through the Lens of Ideal and Real

By

Barnali Talukder

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of English

We acknowledge and respect the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Xʷsepsəm/Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Knowledge Gathered from *Joseph Anton:* Freedom and the Nation Through the Lens of Ideal and Real

By

Barnali Talukder

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Stephen Ross, Supervisor
Professor, Department of English

Dr. Corinne Bancroft
Assistant Professor, Department of English

Dr. Neilesh Bose, Second Reader
Professor, Department of History

Dr. Athena Madan
Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology

Abstract

Because of Salman Rushdie's experience with a restricted life resulting from the national bans on both his books and freedom of movement after the controversy around *The Satanic Verses, Joseph Anton: A Memoir* demonstrates a vested interest in articulating the author's ideas about freedom and the nation. While Rushdie envisions or conceptualizes freedom and nationhood in an idealized, universal, and flawless way, the reality contradicts, questions, and sometimes invalidates the conceptual ideals. Thus, knowing about Rushdie's ideals about freedom and the nation is potentially different from navigating or knowing about the realities, which shape those ideals. Although Rushdie's idealized freedom and nationhood inform about a universally good world, the reality provides knowledge about the underlying complexities and unresolvable dilemmas, which question the universality of such goodness. The thesis has examined how the gap between the ideal and real unfolds in Rushdie's discussion about freedom and the nation. The thesis places the sense of universal moral goodness entertained by Rushdie's ideals against the complex and conflicting real-world troubles; and argues that knowledge gained from Rushdie's ideal world cannot dictate the real-world undertakings because of the latter's tendency to embrace change and to respond to situational demands, which contributes to the creation of a different kind of knowledge. To reach this end, the thesis mainly analyzes *Joseph Anton* in detail preceded by the brief conceptual outlines of freedom and the nation's essentially problematic nature and the critics' opinions on the memoir's deliberate and strategic narrative to uphold certain truths over others.

Table of Contents

Introduction

In early 2025, Donald Trump threatened to turn Canada into the 51st state of the USA. During his 2024 election campaign, the president pledged to end the war between Ukraine and Russia. On the one hand, the promise to end a devastating war sounds alluring, while on the other, the threat of America to occupy the neighbour, Canada, sounds alarming, and thus unsettles everyone's dream of a better world. Many people feel baffled trying to make sense of such conflicting ideas despite knowing that reality functions in an inconsistent way. The imagination of a war-free world and an ambition of extending empire both coexist in reality and indicate the essential conflict the real-world remains embroiled in. Compared to the problematic nature of reality, the world of abstraction or idealization seems less complex and more enchanting. Take John Lennon's idealization of a united world, for example, or Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's longing for a non-violent nationhood. Visionaries such as them steer our gaze towards a far-away dream to aspire to but often overlook the underlying challenges on the way to reaching it. Thus, dreaming about a perfect world or particularizing the ideals of it cannot always adequately solve the complexities of reality. Such a gap between the ideal and real finds an elaborate and meticulous representation in Salman Rushdie's *Joseph Anton: A Memoir* (2012) too, which is interesting enough to explore as the author provides some flawless and universal philosophies, particularly about freedom and the nation, while chronicling the unresolvable circumstances from the real-world.

No doubt, the ideal sounds exalted and ambitious. Be it Plato's utopia or Jean-Jacques Rousseau's state of nature, the ideal always resembles a balance and stability. Knowing about an ideal is similar to acquiring knowledge about a perfect, synchronous, and perpetual world. Thus,

knowledge fashioned by the ideal reflects an infallibility and universality. Contrarily, reality seems to be tumultuous, blurry, and evolving. The evolutionary nature and epistemological function of the ideal – to make us imagine reality alternatively and understand it deeply – shows how improving reality depends largely on the formulation of realizable ideals (Chiodo & Milano 972). The tension between the ideal and the real is unpreventable but important too to make the latter better. Salman Rushdie's memoir *Joseph Anton* bespeaks this tension in an extensive as well as microscopic way, which eventually provides an opportunity to understand freedom and the nation comprehensively, to contemplate possible ways of making the application of these concepts better in reality, and which the following discussion brings to light.

Born in Bombay in 1947, Salman Rushdie studied at Rugby boarding school and Cambridge in England. As his Indian Muslim family later moved to Pakistan, Rushdie stayed there for a brief span of time. But the author eventually settled back in England and began his writing career. During the mayhem over *The Satanic Verses* in 1989, and the years following this incident, Rushdie spent a considerable amount of time in America too. Rushdie as a writer emerged from an ideologically robust intellectual circle of the 1970s who entertained a "radical student consciousness," endorsed "anti-Vietnam protests," and "libertarian civil rights movement;" and, he believed, "the function of fiction" was "to confront the world, its authorities, its pieties and its settled perceptions…for anti-establishmentarianism, iconoclasm and mulish disrespect" (Teverson 12). Because of holding a "complex cultural position" and an eagerness to give voice to that positionality, Rushdie's fiction investigates a number of twentieth and twenty-first century "contemporary cultural and political affairs, including issues of migrancy, cultural and religious affiliation, the values of political action and the nature of political writing" (Teverson 10). Therefore, Rushdie's roots in different hemispheres and their consequent cross-fertilization make

Rushdie's oeuvre suited to today's global culture (Goonetilleke 148). Rushdie's intention to intervene "in public discourse in order to voice an alternative interpretation of politics or history and to propound a new perspective on pressing issues" inspires many to read Rushdie for an alternative understanding about everything established (Jovanovska 49). Such a politically-energized and visionary artistic consciousness finds an illustration in *Midnight's Children*, which won the Booker Prize in 1981. The novel challenges the established national identity of India and celebrates India's diverse and heteroglot voices (Bennet 192). Thus, imagining India – challenging the established and celebrating the heterogeneity inherent in the land - divulges Rushdie's ideas about making the nation better, reaffirming the author's skeptical and uncompromising attitudes towards the established, and indicating his inclination towards imagining or idealizing in an alternative way. But after the fatwa, Rushdie's stances about diversity and relativity change substantially; for instance, in *Joseph Anton* (2011), Rushdie stays away from bestowing "full subjectivity to those with whom he disagrees," attacks "liberals who believe in coexistence and accommodation among cultures," and aligns with "the American treatment of Muslims after 2001" (See Trousdale's). Resultantly, the liberal establishments such as *The Economist* extol Rushdie for his unwavering commitment to the defence of free speech ("Salman Rushdie and the struggle"). But critics such as Pranav Jani notice how Rushdie's "methodology of understanding freedom of speech" has undergone changes, currently conceiving of freedom of speech as a non-contextual phenomenon and demonstrating a contrast with the author's earlier notion about it as entirely a context-oriented matter (76). Changes in beliefs or stances occur to everyone but in Rushdie's context, this brings to light an inevitable interconnection such change shares with his real-life experiences. Rushdie's unwavering writerly commitment to artistically explore politics, culture, and identity eventually brings out his views about improving in these matters. Side by side, the

real-world repercussions of such explorations result in changes in his beliefs and stances, highlighting the transformative nature of the author's beliefs. Rushdie's views or ideals evidently transform depending on the real-world undercurrents. To understand Rushdie completely and to garner knowledge from his perspectives about diverse socio-political matters, applying this ideal versus real lens is therefore a critical and appropriate one as it captures his ideas along with their underlying realities – thus examining the compatibility, universality, and value of his ideas in the face of real-world complexities. Besides, reality itself too drastically changes. The incident regarding resuming the sale of *The Satanic Verses* in the Indian market 36 years after it was banned – because "the original government order banning the book's import" was lost "in India's labyrinthine bureaucracy"- for example, shows the fragile nature of reality (MacRae). This suggests the essentially inconsistent and unrealiable nature of reality, which poses further challenges to the realization of ideals. Thus, not only Rushdie as an individual is vulnerable to the changes, reality itself undergoes a continual transformation, extending the tension between the ideal and the real to a significant extent.

Based on the memoir's inquiry into the spectrum of identity, Rushdie identifies himself as Indian, British, and American in terms of nationality; as a non-believer in terms of religion; as a Muslim in terms of family's religious orientation; as a Booker Prize winner; as a criticized and controversial writer; and, more than everything else, as an individual juggling a diverse identity.. Rushdie is privileged to pride himself on a wisdom that originates from multiple orientations. Rushdie's lifelong commitment to the cause of free speech adds to that wisdom. Undoubtedly, such a prodigious voice is worth listening when it comes to imagine alternative ways to improve on the existing and established rules of the world; on top of that, the memoir provides glimpses into the reality too to weigh those against the imaginary ideals.

In *Joseph Anton*, Rushdie zooms in on his own life and thoughts, paying particular attention to the troublesome time of *The Satanic Verses* (1988). While unveiling the personal and public experiences undergone by the author, the memoir sketches out the ideal nature of freedom and the nation. Rushdie sounds very idealistic and ambitious while formulating these ideals. In other words, the ideals, in an abstract as well as absolute way, formulate a knowledge proclaiming "the universality" in "human nature," "ethics," and "freedom" (Rushdie 626). However, the memoir is not confined to a mere idealisation of the concepts such as freedom and the nation. Alongside such abstractions, there also emerges a picture of the real world where Rushdie, as a non-religious and creative individual, encounters diverse situations related to the question of freedom. Rushdie also describes in the memoir how certain nations such as India, England, America respond when the question of individual freedom arises, eventually creating an opportunity for glimpsing those nations' socio-political conditions. These real-world experiences contribute to the acquisition of knowledge about the contradictions, complexities, and biases embedded in reality that neither individuals nor nations can resolve in a black and white way.

To sum up, *Joseph Anton* provides the ideals that Rushdie considers important to ensure absolute freedom for individuals and to build a nation safeguarding those ideals. Such ideals are universal and timeless, and they would seemingly bring uniform goodness to everyone; however, the reality described in the memoir challenges the uniformity and permanence of such ideals. Thus, I argue, knowledge cultivated from Rushdie's memoir about the ideal nature of freedom and the nation entertains a sense of universal and perpetual goodness that the realities contradict and sometimes invalidate because of their embeddedness in practical challenges and complexities. The realities create an opportunity for another kind of knowledge that manifests itself as a process of

encountering diverse circumstances as well as assessing the applicability of ideals in the real-life situations.

The review of Salman Rushdie's latest book *Knife* recommends the novel particularly for those who seek cultural courage and want to put an end to their silence on different issues (Cooke). This suggests, Rushdie's bearing on the matters such as culture, art, and freedom is still relevant. Thus, *Joseph Anton: A Memoir* has the potential to capture Rushdie in his entirety as the memoir places the real-life Rushdie against the visionary-writerly one. In addition, a memoir's unique scope to recount the past in the light of the present demonstrates the transformations of an individual and his thoughts, eventually revealing all the inconsistencies and ambiguities in this journey. This thesis argues that believing in Rushdie as an idealistic visionary who dreams of uniting humanity is exhilarating, but rediscovering Rushdie as a real individual, living in a real world, provides an opportunity to weigh the cost and viability of his ideals. Because the author has been lauded, awarded, and appropriated as a champion of free speech, readers often accept Rushdie's words and ideas without argument, which, in turn, makes it imperative to critically look at his real self to better weigh the tangibility of those dreams. In today's world, conceptualizing freedom and the nation indisputably seems to be an impossible task. Yet the attempts to conceptualize freedom and the nation are rampant and endless. Rushdie's memoir while imparting knowledge in these matters reveals a number of crucial questions, which need to be adequately resolved before conceptualizing freedom and the nation pragmatically.

Chapter One

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis has been broadly divided into two sections: the first chapter includes introduction, a brief overview of the memoir and an outline of the concepts of freedom and the nation essential for grounding the study; and the second chapter analyzes *Joseph Anton* to gather Salman Rushdie's ideas about freedom and the nation along with the underlying challenges the real world poses on the way of realizing those. The section on freedom includes different aspects of it such as belief, speech, imagination, society – as articulated in the memoir. Similarly, the part regarding the nation discusses each nation such as India, Britain, America, Pakistan, and Iran separately to describe Rushdie's ideals about those and the realities of those lands.

Although the thesis examines Rushdie's *Joseph Anton* as a chronicle of his ideas about freedom and the nation, these two concepts bear importance in my life too. As a woman coming from a Hindu minority family living in Muslim-majority Bangladesh, the urge for leading a free life within a fair and just national territory has always been central to my political aspirations. I have seen how my belongingness has always been questioned there based on the assumption that Hindus are historically more affiliated with India than Bangladesh, and women are not entitled to enjoy the same freedom as their male counterparts. After migrating to Canada - a liberal democracy - I am now able to enjoy more freedom in different aspects of life although I have also taken up an immigrant identity. Thus, beliefs, values, and identities around me are always different no matter how developed or underdeveloped national territory I reside in. This probably drives me to wonder, despite my longing for a free life, do I, as an individual, wish to be free to the extent, which allows me to offend someone's emotions or beliefs, or makes me so iron-hearted that I do not get affected by any racist or biased comments? I also ponder, can the liberal democratic reality of Canada recognize my nationally and culturally split positionality in its entirety whereas the communally

conservative reality of Bangladesh has only intensified the challenges surrounding rights and choice? These questions underpin my reading of *Joseph Anton* through an ideal-versus-real lens where defining freedom absolutely and imagining the nation as an inherently just structure significantly differ from the realities, resultantly revealing the dilemmas hidden beneath.

In *Joseph Anton*, Salman Rushdie often sounds like a philosopher because of his grand ideas about matters such as freedom and the nation. The author also historicizes his life, works, transformations, and the contemporary surrounding world around him. But, throughout the memoir, Rushdie emerges more as a tactful writer who, through navigating the real-world challenges, comes up with impeccable and enchanting ideas. However, the author's unwillingness to acknowledge those challenges in his philosophy and his inclination to uphold only his worldviews as absolute and non-negotiable truths make him a romantic visionary more than a philosopher or historian. In other words, Rushdie's real life seems more illuminating than his philosophical or historical articulations as there show up all the intricacies which mere visions, words, and imagination cannot resolve. Thus, the voice of a visionary struggling with multifarious real complexities remains dominant in the narrative than a logic-bound philosopher or a nonpartisan historian.

About *Joseph Anton: A Memoir*

Joseph Anton: A Memoir by Salman Rushdie was published in 2012. The title combines the first names of two prominent writers: Joseph Conrad and Anton Chekov. Rushdie used to introduce himself as Joseph Anton during the turbulent times ignited by *The Satanic Verses*, mainly to hide his actual identity. The six-hundred-fifty-page-long memoir is written from a third-person point of view, presumably to mark the distinction between the author's true self and the fictionalized Joseph Anton.

The furor kindled by the publication of *The Satanic Verses* during the early period of 1989 cost Rushdie hugely: he had to let go the pleasure of leading a stable and secure life and witness the demise of his literary image for a time being, and he was deprived of many rights. Besides the controversy surrounding the book, Rushdie's personal life has always been shrouded in a mystery because of his multiple relationships, broken marriages, and religious oscillations. It is natural for readers to feel curious about these mysteries and ambiguities. *Joseph Anton* answers most of their questions, opening up a gateway into the author's thoughts about his personal, political, and literary lives.

Similar to the mysteries enveloping his personal life, Rushdie's writerly life seems as if deliberately crafted and directed to present him as a visionary. Charlie Wesley observes that Salman Rushdie fashioned himself in three "overlapping authorial narratives" throughout his literary career. In the 1980s, he was "a migrant intellectual," "entrenched within the canon of postcolonial literature"; after the fatwa, an Enlightenment figure, specifically inspired by the oeuvre of Voltaire; and since his relocation to the USA in 2000, an advocate of "apolitical virtues" of literature (520). Meanwhile, the media have always attempted to portray him as "a cosmopolitan

playboy" because of his "celebrity and wealth" (521). Wesley believes that the purpose of *Joseph Anton* is to highlight Rushdie's "exilic Enlightenment persona" and to challenge the "mediatized image as a playboy" (521). The memoir "emphasizes particular parts of the writer's personality and life story while minimizing others" (521). Wesley's analysis of Rushdie's oeuvre indicates the author's ambition of being an idealistic visionary epitomizing the Enlightenment values. In other words, more than immersing himself in the spontaneous and multidirectional flux of literature, Rushdie's literature has metamorphosed into a voice to promulgate ideals for a better world. The memoir in an unparalleled source of insight into the author's ideas, particularly about free speech, the nature of an ideal nation and other subjects too; on the other hand, being a memoir, *Joseph Anton* cannot help sketching out the real life of Rushdie too, facilitating a glimpse into the author-turned-visionary's real life and surroundings such as the troubles on his way of leading a free life or his explanations for championing absolute free speech.

On the other hand, Rushdie's voice sounds so louder throughout the memoir that others' arguments and appeals find almost no space there, which Kirsten Sandrock's analysis brings to light. Sandrock observes an interesting tension in the narrative of the memoir: although the third-person narrative technique allows the co-existence of multiple voices in the text, the focalizing agent rejects this heteroglossia and asserts its authority in the claims regarding morality and truth (134). Sandrock intends people to read the memoir from this perspective so that the questions of power and justice in the text can be studied more meticulously: from her subjective reading experience, the "overbearing and uncomfortably controlling" focalization in *Joseph Anton* makes it difficult to endorse the totalizing truths and judgements as expressed in the memoir (138-9). Sandrock's observation about the focalizing agent's overwhelming control of morality and truth points to the memoir's conscious investment in promulgating Rushdie's beliefs as the ultimate

truths. But even Rushdie's truths are not timelessly fixed. In this matter, Pankaj Mishra speaks out in a review of the memoir, alluding to the defensive stance Rushdie took, declaring the book as a "work of art" after the accusation of the defamation of the Prophet put by the Islamic audience ("Joseph Anton by"). Mishra continues by mentioning that this particular stand undertaken by Rushdie estranges art from politics, contradicting the author's earlier belief in the unavoidable amalgamation of politics and literature with definite consequences. What critics observe about *Joseph Anton* is indicative of the value-laden nature of it and a tendency to establish the author's truths as universally justified. In other words, the memoir proclaims the author's truths, attempts to consolidate them, and offers views about increased individual freedom and righteous nation. But are those truths immutable or can they stand up the real world too? The memoir unlocks a window to look into that question too.

I have included the critics' observations about Rushdie's literary life in general and memoir in particular to indicate the changing and authoritative nature of Rushdie's writerly beliefs or values. Rushdie's ideas sound timeless and inalterable in writings; but those ideas themselves have changed many times to reach the current state, which undeniably brings to light an essential tension persistent between the ideal and the real.

Conceptual Outline of Freedom and the Nation

Conceptualizing freedom as an all-encompassing term is an impossible task. The concept entails many connotations such as political, religious, social, economic and individual, and often one connotation encroaches on another's boundary creating an unresolvable conflict. In plain words, freedom denotes the ability and opportunity to pursue individual choices. Although many critics doubt whether this can ever be possible to attain absolute freedom in today's fully politicized or institutionalized world, such doubtful polemic could never intimidate debates and research on freedom. In general, freedom refers to freedom of choice and freedom to exercise basic human rights (Saliba 217). The overriding goal of freedom is to emancipate individuals from all kinds of enslavement; but the gap between conceptualizing freedom and practising it is an enormous and complicated one (Saliba 220).

Freedom of choice and Freedom to exercise human rights are normally differently defined – while freedom of choice refers to an individual's active involvement in choosing something from a broad range of options, freedom of the realizion of human rights implies the absence of any constraint while pursuing someone's choice. Freedom of choice does not necessarily ask for any authoritative intervention to avoid any conflict of interest. Freedom of exercising rights essentially looks up to the political, social, or cultural cooperation so that individual rights are protected. In *Joseph Anton*, Salman Rushdie particularly alludes to the rights of belief, art, speech – all of these come under the human rights category. Historically, the American Declaration of Independence of 1776 and the French Declaration of the rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789 officially and politically provided the blueprint for individual freedom. The most remarkable breakthrough in the history of freedom was the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, which protects human rights irrespective of nation, religion, and race. But such universalization of rights cannot

avoid debates as many nations consider the internationalization of rights as attempts to westernize as well as interfere in local affairs (Cerna 740). In other words, the internationalization of human rights in the twentieth century further complicates the existing endeavours to delineate human rights (Hoffmann 25). More precisely, the universalization of human rights delegitimizes every other political regime except liberal democracies (Brown 59). Thus, making local definitions of rights compatible with the international ones turns out to be the first and foremost challenge. In addition, a critical examination of the Declaration demonstrates the discrepancies between different sections. For instance, Article 18 and 19 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights aim at protecting freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion and expression; undoubtedly, ensuring these rights is important for entertaining individual freedom (3). But Article 29 asserts, individuals have some duties towards the respective community and can be subjected to a minimal amount of limitations "for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society" (4). Finding a perfect reconciliation between the rights to freedom of expression, belief, and religion and respecting the rights of fellow individuals is quite challenging. Thus, the conversation about individual rights has never been a straightforward or conclusive one. In the case of the Rushdie Affair, the problem accentuates. Because of boasting a global positionality, Rushdie has an inclination towards universal human rights; at the same time, the memoir unfolds the complexities of reality providing a unique opportunity to examine ideals against real-life troubles. The memoir depicts the struggle of finding a fine balance between safeguarding freedom and performing dutifully and ethically in diverse familial, social, and political spheres.

Similar to the concept of freedom, the concept of nation is equally complex. In *Joseph Anton*, Salman Rushdie identifies many areas which the nations such as India, Britain, America should improve in order to boast an ideal moral standing. It is to keep in mind that this study does not examine Rushdie as an advocate of a borderless and post-national world but as an idealist who urges multiple nations to improve their existing structure to provide better national experience. But can this happen easily?

Broadly the nation forms on the basis of ethnicity or civic requisites. Culture, language, ethnicity, and history – any of these can act as the foundation of the nation, although postmodern thinkers such as Benedict Anderson considers the nation as "an imagined community", the inhabitants of which do not share any natural or immutable tie. Because of the diversities and complexities embedded in the idea, thinkers such as Michel Seymour propose to consider the nation as a conceptually plural matter (417). Beyond the conceptual debate, executing the nation is often dubbed as equally problematic. Edward Said underlines "nationalism" as "a deadly problematic enterprise" because of its dependence on a "common history, religion, and language" and an inclination towards "resistance" (223). Drawing attention to the intersecting relationship between identity politics and nationalism, Craig Calhoun illuminates how the success of an identity or a nationalism often infringes on others' "claims and hopes" (28).

Theories on the nation and nationalism often identify high culture or past glory or language as the cornerstone of national homogenization and political legitimization, which consequently gives birth to many dissenting or subdued communities dwelling within the same national territory. Hence, nationalism inherently is not violent but maintains a close connection with organized violence, which is a historically produced, ideologically infused, and microsolidarity-based phenomenon and expresses through modern-day revolutions, warfare, and terrorism (Malesevic).

Because of the inherent complexities the nation as a concept entertains, the gap between imagining an ideal nation and executing it just proliferates.

Chapter Two

Conceptualization of Freedom: Knowledge about the Ideal and Real

Freedom as a Concept: Rushdie advocates for absolute freedom and intends it to be unbending even in precarious or threatening circumstances. Rushdie fights for the right to "freedom of speech, freedom of the imagination, freedom from fear, and the beautiful, ancient art," including a demand to emancipate art, that means, the freedom to apply literary techniques, for instance, "skepticism, irreverence, doubt, satire, comedy, and unholy glee" (285) to freely criticize all the disparities around the world. Undeniably, the author's intent sounds ambitious, idealistic, and universal. Yet, the question persists: how does the real world respond to such idealistic dreams? By analyzing Rushdie's ideals of freedom as found in the memoir, the following discussion embarks on discovering how the author in real-world situations handles matters related to absolute freedom. This analysis – broadly aiming at digging out the incongruities between the ideal and real – finds out how the idealization of the concept of freedom produces a knowledge or vision about the world that differs from the knowledge procured from the real-world undertakings. This eventually unpacks the real-challenges, which Rushdie's ideals should provide satisfactory answers to before being seriously considered.

Freedom of Belief

Having a choice to be religious or non-religious or atheist falls under the idea of freedom of belief, no doubt. Particularly in today's world, when marginalized people are also coming out of cocoons and seeking recognition, the demand for freedom to pursue individual belief turns out to be a legitimate cry.

Rushdie identifies himself as a non-believer. At his parental home in India, within the walls of Windsor Villa, he experienced an upbringing tolerant of religious disbelief that eventually instilled a "heathenish" sensibility into his mind (26). It seems that, because he grew up with a freedom to disbelieve, Rushdie never hesitates to identify himself as an irreligious person (147). This eventually leads the author to seek recognition for individuals who never identify themselves as religious. Fearlessly, Rushdie asks of religion, "what sort of club is it that makes it compulsory to be a member?" (315) The question unsettles the empire of religion, invalidating all intimidations unleashed on the pretext of it. From a non-believer's perspective, Rushdie sounds righteous enough to question the overwhelming nature of religion, arguing that an irreligious individual should experience the world as much as their religious counterparts do, and that the nation should accommodate people belonging to all faiths and beliefs. For Rushdie, Pakistan exemplifies restrictive and non-liberal nation: "what's up with those Pakistani official forms … that insist you state your religion, and won't accept 'none' for an answer?" (315). Here, Rushdie mainly highlights the urgency of reviewing as well as reforming the existing national infrastructure that is missing appropriate inclusivity. Rushdie's explicit demand for the socio-political recognition of non-believers emerges as an ideal harboured in the idea of freedom of belief, one that the author intends the world to endorse. By attacking the confined or illiberal premise of religion and the discrepancies the nation supports valuing religion over non-religion, Rushdie imparts ideas about

the ideal nature of freedom of belief that should not be contingent upon time and place. Therefore, freedom of belief denotes the absolute liberty to practise individual beliefs without encountering any challenges or impediments.

Rushdie also deliberates on the history and present crisis of Islam in the memoir. Before the transformation of Islam into an influential belief system in Mecca, the Meccan culture championed matriarchal and affectionate values was replaced by Islam—"a revolutionary idea" and "an essentially conservative theology"—with the support of those "marginalized by urbanization – the disaffected poor, the street mob" (43). This historical context of birth, which demonstrates a replacement of the Meccan elite with the poor, slides into a degradation, Rushdie observes; and this compels Islam to gradually assume a phobic, schizophrenic, terrorized character, which he detests (345). Rushdie considers the "respect for Islam" as the cancer of cultural relativism, which demolishes "the rich multicultures of the modern world" (357). The author suggests that Islam should adopt "secularist-humanist principles" to keep pace with the modern world and to emancipate it from the shackles of unfreedom (625). Rushdie discusses Islam here particularly but essentially condemns all violence conducted in the name of religion. This discussion underscores the necessity of reconfiguring religion as a non-violent and secular institution so that the freedom to believe in religion cannot subordinate the freedom to not-believe. In other words, the author intends religion to assume a character congruent with modern, secular, humanist values. Unless religion internalizes secular values, the freedom to practice religion threatens the freedom to be irreligious. Thus, adoption of refined and secular values works as a prerequisite for freedom of belief to function properly.

As a non-believer and an advocate for freedom of belief, Rushdie deems it right to be a "skeptical" and "dissident" friend of Islam (271). The author finds no harm in making "an artistic engagement with the phenomenon of revelation … from the point of view of an unbeliever" (74). Rushdie finds it absolutely right to oscillate between belief and non-belief as well as reverence and irreverence regarding the matter of religion, and he thinks religion should develop tolerance towards contrary beliefs (356). Religious tolerance is a precondition for guaranteeing freedom of belief; similarly, freedom of belief entails the right to freely engage with religious materials. The ideal or right kind of freedom of belief ensures a fearless environment in which to confront or contradict religion, and this should again never vary depending on situations, places, or times, according to Rushdie.

All these ideas under the badge of freedom of belief foster non-violence, inclusiveness, and co-existence. The socio-political recognition of non-believers, the right to criticize the failures of a religion, to put faith in well-meaning belief, and the liberty to interpret religion in one's own terms define Rushdie's idea of freedom of belief. The author proposes these ideas not for any particular geography or time; instead, the author universalizes these ideas as realization of what is needed to build an ideal world. Because the author endorses universality opposed to "the fallacies of relativism" (626). In other words, the knowledge of freedom of belief, constructed on the basis of these ideals, demonstrates an absolutism and infallibility that Rushdie thinks is non-negotiable in the quest for a better world.

The above discussion underlines Rushdie's philosophy expressed in his memoir, that he intends the world to embrace the idea of freedom of belief in an absolute and unrestricted way. Yet, Rushdie traverses the real world too – commenting on, conversing with, and reacting to real-

life people and matters. All such interactions culminate in the construction of another knowledge primarily pinpointing the contradictions and ambiguities that a freedom of belief absolutist encounters while negotiating with the real world. The reality described in the memoir presents Rushdie as a non-religious individual commenting on religion and interacting with people from different faiths. Rushdie's navigation of such matters reveals insights into how an individual identifying as a non-believer and an advocate of absolute freedom reacts to the beliefs and ideas held by others. If a freedom of belief advocate cannot maintain consistency between his words and acts, it becomes doubtful to believe that Rushdie's ideals of freedom of belief will operate in a peaceful way.

During the mayhem over the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, a number of demonstrations took place across the world. One of the protestors, Asad, who had been the "West Midlands Convenor," later converted to atheism. In the memoir, Rushdie marks this journey from belief to non-belief as a "progress" (531). Putting non-believers on the progressive side, Rushdie brands all religious people as unenlightened, which entails the risk of marginalizing the good-willed believers too. Again, during the meeting of the Writers in Strasbourg, the author underlines "Religion" as his least favorite word (439). As well, in a letter addressed to Religion, the author discusses how "reason," when annexed to religion, gives up "thinking," and how he belongs to "the other team," which challenges the religious "first principles" with the help of "first principles of other type" to find out "new starting points" (315). Here, Rushdie's skepticism about religion clearly manifests and as a non-religious individual the author denounces the principles of religion. Although from a non-religious perspective, such arguments make sense but this can raise a conflict between the religious and non-religious. Rushdie aspires to an inclusive, reformed, and accommodating collective national structure; but he considers religion not worthy enough to

sustain. In future, would the author even recommend abolishing the discourse of religion? The examples here accentuate the incompatibility between an urge for inclusive society and a celebration of unrestricted individual freedom as unconstrained engagement with religious matters and its manifestation can jeopardize the foundation of an inclusive society. These examples invite two questions: do beliefs tend to be hierarchical and hegemonic in nature? Does the freedom of belief necessarily entail unrestrained expression? Rushdie's words and activities in real-life situations prompt readers to think about whether absolute freedom of belief accompanied with the unrestricted expression of it can ensure peace, inclusivity, and co-existence, or whether this poses the risk of disrupting the social bonding.

Although Rushdie believes in the celebration of individual beliefs and remains skeptical about religion and believers, the author highlights defenses of *The Satanic Verses* by Muslims in the memoir. For instance, an Islamic scholar defended *The Satanic Verses* in an American magazine, explaining that the text represents the long Muslim tradition of doubting art, poetry, and philosophy, a defense that pleases Rushdie (184). Similarly, a Syrian professor of Islamic studies from Exeter University construed *The Satanic Verses* as descending "from within the Islamic tradition" (131). In another instance, Rushdie thanks "one hundred Arab and Muslim writers [who] jointly published a book of essays written in many languages and published in French, *Pour Rushdie*, to defend freedom of speech" (410). Rushdie did no wrong by appreciating all these defenses, but these instances raise a question: does Rushdie's absolute freedom of belief adopt here a defensive turn? In accordance with the author's understanding, individuals should hold onto their individual beliefs, whether they are accepted or not. Rushdie as an author nurtures doubts about the premise of religion. But welcoming Islamic defences for a text alludes to the essential social symbiosis we all are in. Above everything else we are social human beings who expect and

need support from others around. In other words, it seems as if beliefs must garner support from other beliefs to survive and thrive. As Rushdie no longer dismisses the Islamic defence of the text and instead appreciates support from a religious realm, the reality sounds here like underscoring social interdependence that an unrestrained freedom of expression can potentially disrupt. In other words, the real-world social interdependence can jeopardize if the freedom of expression follows an absolute and unrestricted route.

In the memoir, Rushdie mentions that he fights for the right to make "an artistic engagement with the phenomenon of revelation" (74). In *The Satanic Verses*, the author employs many words and expressions such as "scums and bums" for the persecutors to address the fictional Prophet and his companions. Whores in the imaginary brothel take on the names of the Prophet's wives to arouse their clients, and they "fuck too many times." In the memoir, Rushdie explicates these as fictional requisites, not to intentionally offend anyone (114-5). Besides such explanatory defences, Rushdie had apologized two times for offending the Islamic sentiment that the author marked as wrong decisions later (285). But clearly, Rushdie took such initiatives to minimize the severity of the chaos surrounding the publication of his controversial book. In other words, Rushdie here compromised on the absolutism of his belief to try to extinguish a burning controversy. The reality Rushdie faced and his reaction leads us to contemplate the lightness of principles in the face of real-life crisis.

Ideally, nothing sounds more alluring than imagining a collective life championing both peaceful coexistence and individualism. Yet, the reality in which Rushdie lives offers different knowledge about the world, where ideals struggle to remain consistent, absolute, and unapologetic. While the idea of freedom of belief aspires to a free, fair, and just environment to celebrate

individual beliefs, the real world demands constant readjustments as well as reappraisals of individual beliefs and thoughts. Thus, the ideal knowledge about freedom of belief as universally constant contradicts the knowledge cultivated from Rushdie's real-life confrontations of those, which is more evolving and accommodating in nature.

Freedom of Imagination

Rushdie got an invitation to attend the 48th Congress of International PEN in New York in January 1986. The author reminisces about this event in the memoir remarkably. Rushdie marks 1986 as a time when writers were considered to be "the unacknowledged legislators of the world" and literature as "the proper counterweight to power" holding "a lofty, transnational, transcultural force," able to "open the universe a little more" (78). Rushdie appraises the power of literature that reins in the unbridled exercise of power and emancipates the world from prejudice. The creators leverage this untold privilege so that, "when a book leaves its author's desk, it changes" as it gains "in a sense, free will" in that it can be differently read, interpreted, and remade (90). Both the creation and reception of books entertain a sense of freedom, which transcends the boundary of rules, laws, and obligations. In terms of Rushdie's understanding, literature provides writers with a means of freely and responsibly thinking for the betterment of the world. The importance of freedom of imagination emerges here: the freedom to imagine precedes the freedom to interpret.

Therefore, Rushdie considers the assaults on his writings as attacks on freedom of imagination that significantly impede the flux of artistic engagements. In other words, "literature" in such contexts mourns as if "vilified, shot, kicked, knifed, killed, blamed" (428). What "good men" decipher as "peace" turns out to be an "intellectual suicide" to the author (341). The author dismisses religious patrons such as "priests and mullahs" who decide from their seats "the limits of what it is possible to think" (530). In addition, it sounds diminishing to the author when his writing translates as "a coded version of his life" (443). These references culminate in formulating the ideals of freedom of imagination: literature stays out of the grasp of assault or censorship, and does not instrumentally aim at peacebuilding.

Rushdie thinks that he "had the right to write as he chose" and that "it would at the very least be treated as serious work" (117). The idea of freedom of imagination implies the right to freely write and the privilege to be received seriously. Rushdie believes "human nature" should be considered as "the great constant, in any culture, in any place, in any time" (626). Exploiting the "heterogenous" self of human beings, "readers and writers" should equally invest themselves in discovering "common ground" (627):

> Literature tries to open the universe, to increase, even if only slightly, the sum total of what it was possible for human beings to perceive, understand, and so, finally, to be. Great literature went to the edges of the known and pushed against the boundaries of language, form, and possibility, to make the world feel larger, wider, than before. Yet this was an age in which men and women were being pushed toward ever-narrower definitions of themselves, encouraged to call themselves just one thing, Serb or Croat or Israeli or Palestinian or Hindu or Muslim or Christian or Baha'i or Jew, and the narrower their identities became, the greater was the likelihood of conflict between them. Literature's view of human nature encouraged understanding, sympathy, and identification with people not like oneself (628).

Articulating the functions of literature, Rushdie emphasizes the need to liberate literature in order to construct a better and unified world. Liberating literature denotes a freedom of imagination, not demarcated or intimidated by religion, politics, or any compromises. Rushdie's idea of freedom of imagination is not a time or place dependent phenomenon. To imagine or construct a better world, there is a dire need to liberate literature and to let the writers tell the untold and even the untellable.

Rushdie's ideals of freedom of imagination can be discerned as the freedom to freely think and write, to keep literature free from the grasp of any pressure group such as religious authorities, to let literature correct the world unleashing a different sort of power, and the freedom to interpret. In terms of Rushdie's understanding, freedom to imagine as well as to interpret is important to envision and construct a better world. On the other hand, Rushdie illustrates his literary journey as a real-life prominent literary figure in the memoir. This description provides a glance into how

literature navigates the real world, whether literature can stand alone, and what literature brings in to the world. Exploration of these matters results in acknowledging the real-world repercussions of unrestrained literary engagement.

Rushdie considers literature as a counterweight to power. Thus, writers are expected to speak against all abuses and exploitations brought about by politics or religion. Yet, to mitigate the turmoil over the publication of *The Satanic Verses* and to strengthen his demand for freedom of speech, Rushdie went on a world tour to convince "the world's leaders to defend his right" (344). Rushdie even contemplated having "a little intimate dinner" with Khamenei and Rafsanjani "to put an end to all the hatred and scorn" in the memoir (419). The idea of freedom of imagination cannot sustain itself in the real world. Instead, it seems to be embroiled in an unending maze – power validating as well as safeguarding the right to speak against power. This undermines the power of literature and calls into question its survival, since it seeks support from political powerhouse to survive.

Regarding the reception of a literary work, Rushdie conceptually believes in multifarious interpretations of it. Yet, the readers' interpretation of *The Satanic Verses* as an offensive text "perplexed" the author (74). On top of that, the author defends "the fictive nature of his project" to save the text from the controversy what the opponents describe as "transparent attempts at concealment" (75). Although the readers are ideally supposed to freely interpret a literary work, Rushdie's remarks and explanations in response to a controversial interpretation of *The Satanic Verses* emphasize the complexities involved. Therefore, it seems, freedom of interpretation might require further explanation to avoid unexpected consequences in real-life contexts.

The long quote given above expresses the Rushdie's ideal that literature can shape an individual mind in the best possible way. Freedom of imagination thus acts responsibly to bring positive changes to individuals and the world, aiming at enlightening individuals. Rushdie indicates as well that an author is supposed to be the embodiment of "understanding" and "sympathy" (628). Yet, in the memoir sometimes Rushdie sounds uncompassionate, deviating from the ideal of "sympathetic understanding." For instance, Rushdie feels disheartened as Arundhati Roy reacted "cool" when Rushdie had felicitated her on the success of her first book. Probably such upsetting encounter with Roy persuaded Rushdie to bring to light how a protection officer got disappointment with Roy's "long, gloomy reading" of a part of her book (511). Rushdie's portrayal of Roy - not very societal and eloquent - does not present her in a very positive or admirable light. Rushdie himself does not incorporate any negative adjective in the memoir to comment on Roy's demeanor, but it becomes adequately clear that the conversation between Roy and Rushdie was not a successful one. Rushdie could have excluded such a brief and insignificant conversation with Roy, but the fact that he included it emphasizes that the real-world writer is a mere human being who cannot always behave sympathetically towards fellow writers.

Rushdie's ideal formulation of the idea of freedom of imagination is intent on transforming the world for the better. Being free from all abuses and censorship, writers imagine a world where human values exist as constant, not vulnerable to perspectival relativity. Again, Rushdie's freedom of imagination ideally entails the right to free interpretation. But reality confers a different knowledge about how the idea of freedom of imagination functions. In real life, the author had to seek political backup to restore the acceptance of a controversial book, find a way to recirculate his own interpretation of the book, and exploited the platform of literature to comment on fellow authors compromising on "understanding" and "sympathy." Consequently, the nature of ideal

knowledge about freedom of imagination again collides with that of the real knowledge of this kind – the former tends to be free, unbiased, and universal in nature while the reality of freedom of imagination informs us about a world where this has to behave strategically for different purposes.

Freedom of Life:

During the years of furor over *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie strove for an ordinary life more than anything else, lamenting, "In this free country [England]…I am not a free man" (307). In the middle of "a series of crises and emergency solutions," the author desperately sought the luxury of "normality" (364). From 1989, Rushdie's search for ordinariness or normalcy in life defines the idea of freedom of life as the author expects the nation to safeguard an individual's right to freely live and speak even when the entire world turns against them. From Rushdie's point of view, the right to lead a normal life in any situation, transforms into an ideal of freedom of life.

While lecturing to a graduating class at the Bard College commencement ceremony in 1996, Rushdie said,

> First, if, as you go through life, people should someday accuse you of what one might call Aggravated Gravy Abuse – and they will, they will – and if in fact you are innocent of abusing gravy, do not take the rap. Second: Those who would reject you because you are wearing the wrong shoes are not worth being accepted by. And third: Kneel before no man. Stand up for your rights. (47).

The quote abstracts notable bitter experiences that Rushdie encountered at different times of life. Certain principles about the freedom of life emerge here that Rushdie aspires to hold onto: for instance, standing against false accusations, adhering to self-judgement, and being unbending in the matter of principles. At another point in the memoir, Rushdie postulates several rules of life: "not to accept the descriptions of reality made by security people, politicians or priests. To insist, instead, on the validity of … own judgements and instincts. To move toward a rebirth, or at least

a renewal" (416). Rushdie here determines a number of principles to guide the journey of his life. As a free individual, the author is entitled to follow these self-formulated principles. This applies in the case of every other individual too. Therefore, it seems, Rushdie's concept of freedom of life urges ensuring an environment where individuals pursue their self-constructed principles fearlessly.

Who does not want freedom of life? For Rushdie, to particularize the ideals was necessary as the author witnessed how even everyday rights were snatched away from him due to the crisis over the publication of a controversial book. Therefore, Rushdie emphasizes the normalcy and moral uprightness of life. Having the opportunity to lead an aspired life necessarily is a universal demand. Through detailing the ideals of this demand, Rushdie constructs a knowledge base that is abstract and ideal in nature. Because *Joseph Anton* sketches out the author's ideal and real life extensively and meticulously, it uncovers a tension between what Rushdie says about freedom of life and how the author leads his own life in reality.

Rushdie deliberately made the decision to study in England at a young age (27). At one point during his school days the author wanted to return to India, but his father "persuaded" him to stay back in England (35). Despite Anis Rushdie's unwillingness, the author studied history at the graduate level (35). In the summer of 1981, Rushdie set out on his journey as a full-time, professional writer, endangering his financial security and the stability of his life (58). In the memoir, Rushdie recounts "a guilt ache" that he deliberately created by disconnecting from a loyal and generous publishing friend for the sake of money (100-2). In his personal life, despite being in a relationship with Elizabeth and an expecting father for the second time, Rushdie indulged in a transient affair in Paris with Caroline Lang (504). In another instance, Rushdie could make sense

of all the "fears and doubts" behind his wife Elizabeth's reluctance to move to America but "his own needs" to do that sounded more important to the author than the "love" for his wife (561). Piecing together all these instances reveals a reality where a different version of freedom of life peeps through. Rushdie's unbendingness regarding the choice of study and profession deserves appreciation as it reflects the author's unshakable determination. However, prioritizing self-interest over everything else does not always end pleasantly; for instance, placing monetary gains over the value of friendship or cheating on a spouse calls into question the moral goodness of an individual's character. In fact, this resonates more with a sense of irresponsibility or a lack of empathy. Thus, the conceptual beauty of freedom of life—championing self-interest and unbendingness—dims as these can clash against matters such as responsibility and amity.

In *Joseph Anton*, often Rushdie changes stances regarding the presence of security officials at his home. State protection was necessary after the turmoil over *The Satanic Verses* to save the author from any possible attacks. At one time, an indication that security officers would be withdrawn from the author's house seemed as "a breathtaking betrayal of trust" to him (325). At other times, the author wished to live a life without official protection (370). In this case, Rushdie seems baffled and unsure about the right choices. Such confusions arise in real life no doubt; but intending the world to pulsate with the changing impulses of individual desires might bring in more troubles. If Rushdie understands freedom of life as a concept that permits an individual to changes stances frequently and intends the world to keep pace with it, it becomes difficult to make it happen in real life situations in an uncomplicated way.

Rushdie apologized two times – one immediately after the eruption of a furor over the publication of *The Satanic Verses* and another during the negotiations with Islamic representatives

to pacify the mayhem led by Essawy, a London based dentist. The first time, Rushdie drafted "a straightforward apology" despite being unwilling to surrender to others' decisions; the apology got "rejected, then half-accepted… [t]hen rejected again" (145). Later, the author signed a peace-document to pacify the raging protesters; Rushdie described the entire apology phase as being "lost inside a whirlwind, dizzy, blinded by what he had done, and had no idea where the tornado was taking him" (275). This attempt failed too before long. Rushdie explains these occurrences by claiming that he was "imprisoned by the need to be loved" and he had to "rectify" this coming out of the disillusion (284-5). "He would also have to un-say what he had said, to un-make his Great Mistake" (304). It is worthwhile to remember that the author once expressed a willingness to join "a little intimate dinner" with Khamenei and Rafsanjani during which he could "put an end to all the hatred and scorn" by utilizing his humour (419). It is fathomable that human beings can change their moral stances. Yet in Rushdie's context, does it not sound more like overthrowing one's beliefs for temporary gains? Rushdie in this instance values worldly stability more than moral adherence; in other words, the author seems more interested in the calculation of gains and losses rather than epitomizing moral rigidity, suggesting that moral stances in reality often depend on the situation to decide the right course of action.

In the memoir, Rushdie reflects on his role in family life, too:

> the pain he caused to the mothers of his children, the two women who loved him better than anyone else, haunted him…This was his own doing and his own responsibility. Whatever wounds his life had inflicted on him, the wounds he inflicted on Clarissa and Elizabeth were worse. He had loved them both but his love had not been strong enough. (568)

Regarding his apology gestures, Rushdie reflects that, "all his life he had known that there was a small enclosed space at the center of his being that nobody else could enter…now the bright light of the *fatwa* had blazed through the curtains of that little habitation and his secret self stood naked in the glare. *Weak man*" (294). Rushdie thinks about his role in familial relationships and the peace-attempts. This reveals a few honest and unconcealed truths about his contributions to family life. These blatant truths no doubt inspire readers to look at the honest and admirable aspects of Rushdie's personality. However, the same introspection also unveils the author's relentless pursuit of happiness that only prioritizes his own choices. Therefore, the concept of freedom of life no more remains naïve, easily attainable, or commendable in the real world as it might interfere with duties, responsibilities, and obligations.

Rushdie conceptualizes freedom of life in a way that guarantees a respectful and contented life. The concept aspires to an idealized, highly-esteemed life that in the real-world context does not seem to be easily attainable. Thus, knowledge about the free life determines certain ideals or principles as fixed and unnegotiable. Yet it appears that in the course of Rushdie's life, adhering to individual values, shifting from one ethical standpoint to another, or thinking about selfish gains above everything else could not be fulfilled without making remarkable compromises. This might even turn disgraceful for an individual in reality. Therefore, the knowledge about the ideals of freedom of life stands in contrast with the knowledge cultivated from reality, as an attempt to implement the idealistic principles in reality brings out the tensions persistent in the idealization.

Free Society

Rushdie's free society does not confine "ideas or beliefs" within walls and is never intimidated by challenges; he compares a free society with "the bazaar of conflicting views" (210). The nation, family, and religion advance distinct stories for surviving in the long run. An artist refuses to accept those grand narratives unconditionally; they argue over it, satirize when necessary, and recommend the reformations required for changing times (360). A free society inspires "to re-tell and re-make" the existing story; in other words, a society liberates itself by encouraging a free flow of arguments (360). On the contrary, a closed society shuts down all debates imposing "political or ideological power" (360). Thus, an ideal free society ensures the fearless circulation of ideas and arguments.

Societies across the world pride themselves on cultural relativism, which Rushdie finds to be the root of "the death of ethical thought," of "the right of tyrannical priests to tyrannize," of the "despotic parents to mutilate their daughters," and of the "bigoted individuals to hate homosexuals and Jews" (187). Using the pretext of culture, societies legitimize "bigotry," "prejudice," and "violence", undermining the quintessential values of humankind (187). To sum up Rushdie's understanding, epitomizing universal human values counts as an ideal of free society.

In Rushdie's conception, a free society welcomes arguments and counter-arguments, refraining from the exercise of power as a repressive tool, and never instrumentalizing cultural relativism as an excuse for violence. Ideally, a free society becomes the embodiment of principles, justice, and transformations. No doubt, such an idealized concept of society deserves appreciation. Yet, a society needs people to form and function. People tend to differ; times appear when some differences need to be counted and some others to be invalidated for broader benefit.

Rushdie defines “cultural relativism” in terms of violence and exploitation. It is possible for “cultural relativism” to turn unscrupulous at times, but mostly the idea celebrates diversity in beliefs worldwide. Although the author admits the diverse nature of arguments, conflictingly, the author invalidates cultural relativism.

After the Iranian death threat over the publication of a controversial book *The Satanic Verses*, a survey of British people’s opinions about the controversial book by Rushdie showed that, “a large majority” thought the author “should apologize” for his “offensive book,” and Rushdie realized that “this would not be an easy argument to win” (115). As this instance denotes, an argument never stands alone–they vie with other arguments to prove their superiority or value. Even a free circulation of arguments is not exempt from the desire to win over or suppress the rest. Again, arguments are sure to face demographic as well as political challenges, making it more difficult to single out whose argument carries more worth. Therefore, the beauty of countless co-existing arguments erodes when one argument intends to dominate over others. Also, the challenge to separate an argument from gibberish persists as unreflective or inconsequential arguments can have unmanageable consequences.

Rushdie articulates arguments about religion through different media such as books, lectures, and newspaper writings. The author raises his voice in support of an unimpeded life of arguments. Yet, when a fraction of the audience translated the author’s arguments as placed in *The Satanic Verses* as indecent or disrespectful, this spiraled into real trouble. As mentioned above, the author defended the controversial book by emphasizing its “artistic engagement with the phenomenon of revelation” while the use of words such as “scums and bums,” “whores,” and “fuck,” the author believes, were not intended to be disrespectful to Islam (74, 114-5). But this

explanation failed to save the author from repercussions. Because these reactions to his book scared or unnerved him, Rushdie even attempted to calm the whole situation through attempted peace-deals. Here the author unknowingly uncovered the real-life challenges that arguments inevitably encounter. Although Rushdie intends the world to liberate arguments and to circulate them freely, he forgets to consider the emotional aspect of arguments. Societies cannot altogether overlook the emotionality ingrained in arguments. Arguments do not always sound impersonal or objective; rather some arguments can sound intolerably insensitive or indecent to some audiences, which might result in chaos, as happened in the case of *The Satanic Verses*. The ideal free society that promotes and ensures the distribution of arguments is not an easy thing to implement. In the real world, arguments might transcend the boundary of reason and acceptance, and create unavoidable turmoil. Thus, Rushdie's ideals about a free society impart a kind of knowledge, which is universal and inalterable in nature. But the real-life situations problematize those ideals by showing how the ideals of free society are not so easy to make real, which in turn provides another kind of knowledge, worth paying attention to.

Freedom of Speech

Free speech, the author believes, should be as unbridled as possible. He writes that it is "better to allow even the most reprehensible speech than to sweep it under the carpet, better to publicly contest and perhaps deride what" is "loathsome than to give it the glamour of taboo, and that, for the most part, people could be trusted to tell the good from the bad" (356). Rushdie understands freedom of speech as entirely unbounded, so that even the most unspeakable things get a voice.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights defines free speech as: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression" and "[t]his right includes freedom to hold opinions without interferences and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" (196). Referencing this definition, Rushdie mainly points to the absence of any subordinate clauses, such as "unless you upset someone, especially someone who is willing to resort to violence" or "unless religious leaders decree otherwise and order assassination" (196). The author criticizes the contemporary world's denunciatory approach to individual opinions. To further emphasize the nature of freedom of speech, Rushdie borrows a line from John F. Kennedy saying, "[f]reedom is indivisible" (196). Thus, unconditionality and indivisibility together construct an ideal of freedom of speech. Firmly and dearly, the author holds the ideal close to his heart and aspires to "artistic freedom" (196). By delineating the nuances of freedom of speech, Rushdie not only reinforces its universality but also distributes knowledge about its nature and manifestations.

Rushdie's ideals of free speech are absolute and uncompromising in nature. The author deems it right for individuals to fearlessly vocalize their thoughts and beliefs, criticisms and admirations, worries and dilemmas. Such an ambitious and absolute freedom of speech can even

turn inconsiderate and unbearable at times. Therefore, different life circumstances such as those undergone by the author provide us with a glimpse into the author's reactions when such a situation arises. This ultimately facilitates the cultivation of knowledge in a real-life context.

In *Joseph Anton*, Rushdie describes both joyous and gloomy phases of his life. After the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, the author experienced life as mostly embroiled in secrecy, disappointment, and uncertainty. The author admits in the memoir that "[t]wo years of attacks by Muslim and non-Muslim adversaries" "affected" him more than anything (263). Criticisms shot his heart as "black arrows" (264). As human beings, we cannot help facing criticisms as unnerving or disheartening. The same happened with Rushdie too. Despite being a distinguished proponent of freedom of speech, the author could not help feeling the harshness of negative criticisms.

In another context, Rushdie threw a family party, inviting Harold Pinter and a few close friends. There, Pinter bitterly criticized the other guests, and Rushdie believes that he "abused" their hospitality and "ruined" their evening (543). Although regarding several points of discussion, such as "Cuba…East Timor," Rushdie held Pinter's opinion as "much more right than wrong," he found that Pinter's "tirades" "are just plain tiresome" (543). This instance, in a limited way, illustrates the consequences of unrestrained freedom of speech, which here jeopardize the premise of friendship, empathy, and warmth.

Throughout the turmoil, Rushdie had to face many unpleasant criticisms and even defamations. The author hardly puts down any comments in the memoir about his personal feelings in these matters, but it appears that he struggled hard to deal with these. The memoir describes many instances where the author helplessly endured others' piercing criticisms. Ron Evans, one of the protection officers, lied about his personality (174); the British tabloid press circulated a

"carefully constructed," "arrogant," and "unpleasant" image of him (175); and Norman Tebbit (one of Margaret Thatcher's closest political allies) dissected the author's life and principles. The "celebrated historian Tory Peer," the novelist John le Carre, and the British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd all stood against Rushdian ideals (260), and Rushdie's second wife Marianne spelt out her resentment toward him in a newspaper interview (292). Although Rushdie does not explicitly describe his feelings about all these defamatory comments, the author utilizes the memoir as a platform to respond to as well as invalidate the criticisms. However, there remains no way to deny the painful effects the criticisms left on the author; from Rushdie's point of view, these criticisms in one way or the other misrepresent his beliefs or aim to curtail his freedom, and he has to admit that unrestricted freedom of speech may allow lies, defamations, and unpleasantness to spread, which might have painful effects on individuals.

In summary, Rushdie's ideals for free speech retain a universal and absolute sense, creating knowledge about a world where nothing undergoes screening. But reality presents the underlying challenges of constructing such a world. Rushdie's real-life experiences show the bitterness such a world remains vulnerable to. Although knowing about the author's ideal is an exhilarating experience because it envisions an unfiltered and unprocessed world, knowledge about the reality leads us to think over the feasibility of such a dream.

Conceptualization of The Nation: Knowledge about the Ideal and Real

The interactions with several nations (India, Britain, the USA, Pakistan, Iran) by the author lead to a discovery of what Rushdie conceives of as an ideal nation accompanied with the description of the realities within them. In *Joseph Anton*, Rushdie describes his experiences with multiple nations. These experiences eventually unveil different kinds of crises prevalent there that highlight the measures necessary for building up an ideal nation. Despite paying close attention to the nations' reactions to the question of freedom, other socio-cultural and political matters are illustrated in the memoir. Unlike the idea of freedom – the ideals of which the author particularly and meticulously describes – the ideal concept of nation emerges through the reality that Rushdie lays out in the memoir. Reality functions here in two ways – to carve out the author's idea about an ideal nation and to impart knowledge about real-life challenges and complexities. Below, I discuss individual nations described in the memoir that indicate the ideals Rushdie finds important to build up an ideal nation. However, regarding Pakistan and Iran, Rushdie mostly criticizes the intimidating and claustrophobic environments these two nations inherit and take pride in. This indicates that the author considers the ideological infrastructure of these nations as an abomination, suggesting his unwillingness to reconcile with any such nation. In other words, the author deems these nations as unworthy of today's world. Thus, the author's understanding about an ideal nation is universal, recommending that nations adopt uniform values in matters such as freedom and individual rights, whereas the reality of those nations demonstrates the difficulties, shortcomings, and impediments in the way of assuming a universal and ideal character. The tension here between the ideal and real reveals substantial knowledge about the transparent beauty of ideals and the blurry conflicts enmeshed in realities.

India: Ideal and Real Knowledge

In *Joseph Anton*, Rushdie idealizes the concept of nation implicitly: he depicts the reality of several nations to suggest the triumphs and failures the nations experience on their way to being ideal ones. In the case of India, the author illustrates the socio-political and cultural atmosphere of it both before and after the turmoil around *The Satanic Verses*. As the birthplace of the author, India occupies a large portion of the memoir. I will elaborate on the depiction of the real India in the memoir that leads us to discover certain ideals that Rushdie finds important for an ideal nation.

Rushdie, during his early life in Windsor Villa, never felt any compulsion to observe religious rites; "the heathen grew up heathenish and, in Windsor Villa at least, that was fine" (26). The bounded sphere of the author's home remained unaffected by the external frenzy over religion or belief. Presumably, such experience with a freedom of belief during childhood led the author to perceive India as a liberal nation. Therefore, when *The Satanic Verses* was banned in India, the incident astounded him:

> In 1988 it was possible to believe in India as a free country in which artistic expression was respected and defended…Book banning was something that happened all too frequently across the border in Pakistan. It wasn't the Indian way. Jawaharlal Nehru had written in 1929, "it is a dangerous power in the hands of a government; the right to determine what shall be read and what shall not…In India, the power is likely to be misused." The Young Nehru was writing, at that time, against the censorship of books by India's British overlords, It was sad to think that his words could be used, almost sixty years later, as a critique of India itself. (117)

Although Rushdie identifies political transformation as the main culprit behind such a regressive act, the whole undertaking unveils a real India where the possibility of future instability matters more than the need to guarantee individual freedom. Regarding this, the author comments again, "the presumption of intellectual freedom and respect had been ever-present except during the

dictatorial years of 'emergency rule' imposed by Indira Gandhi between 1974 and 1977" (117). Rushdie here laments the absence of freedom in the Indian intellectual realm during that timeframe, the freedom which has historically always been a glorious part of the it. The author disdains India's transformation into a repressive, intimidating, and—above all—illiberal nation. Through Rushdie's discussion here, two faces of the nation emerge: one represents the pragmatic and political India while the other represents Rushdie's imagined version of it. The real India emerges here as instrumentalizing censorship, which the author detests. On the other hand, Rushdie's ideal India urges an unrestrained intellectual as well as artistic liberty. In other words, the reality of India cannot ignore the impending chaos that unrestrained freedom of expression costs; contrarily, the ideal India, Rushdie believes, should adhere to principles no matter the result. Rushdie's ideal India, or the concept of ideal nation, is supposed to ensure a free and unrestricted atmosphere for creative individuals. Although Rushdie considers the unconstrained freedom of expression as the ultimate good that an ideal nation integrates in the nation-building project, because of Indian reality's rootedness in diversity, it becomes difficult to answer whether an unconstrained creative freedom will bring more goodness or not. In reality, the nation preferred extinguishing a potential furor by banning a questionable book before even experimenting with unrestricted artistic freedom. Again, the author makes a compelling case to pursue the question once again whether unrestricted creative freedom involves behaving respectfully towards others' sacred beliefs or not.

To illustrate the restricted environment of India and to reinforce the importance of liberating individual choices, Rushdie asserts again: "'authenticity' did not belong to the majority alone, as the Hindu majoritarian politics of India was beginning to insist. Every Indian person, every Indian story, was as authentic as every other" (295). The author here overtly criticizes India's

tendency towards political marginalization of anything or anyone different. The real India's involvement in collective identity politics—crumbling the ground under the recognition of individualism— saddens Rushdie; the author believes that an ideal India should acknowledge as well as celebrate differences rather than consolidating religion as the primary mark of identity. No doubt, today's national authorities should work towards recognizing individualism, but can Indian collective nationalism, which was primarily formed on the basis of religious identity, accommodate an individual "authenticity" (a disrespectful atheist) that clashes with an "authenticity" (believers in particular faith) of a collective kind?

South Asia as a whole embodies a "deep-rooted Muslim culture" to Rushdie (39). India, as a South Asian nation, certainly displays a similar religious-cultural inclination. The author considers Indian people as "warmer-blooded creatures" who spread more warmth and compassion compared to the cold-blooded Western people, but Rushdie despises India's meaningless wars with neighboring nations, for instance, "the pointless India-Pakistan conflict of September 1965" (35). Despite being aware of the geo-cultural differences between different parts of the world, the author is critical of the geopolitical conflicts arising out of such differences. Rushdie observes the real India getting engaged in the communal, geographical tensions that an ideal India should distance itself from. This undoubtedly reiterates the dream of transforming the world into a non-violent and unconflicted place. Yet, the real India brings to notice the survival mechanisms necessary to sustain the nation, as a political institution can hardly avoid all geo-political conflicts. No doubt, it is commendable to stay away from war and violence, but here, Rushdie reflects on a conflicting situation: the author intends the nation to sustain itself as a political institution but condemns the strategies, such as war and violence, which are sometimes unavoidable for securing a nation from potential external threats. Although the author's ideal India remains oblivious to the

threat of wars and religious communalism, the real India cannot always bypass them. In other words, the non-violence that Rushdie's ideal nation epitomizes might risk the safety and security of the real national territory.

Rushdie's time studying in England eventually cast the author into "a confusion" and "a bewilderment" leaving "a harmful effect on his personality" (47). Rushdie identifies himself as "a migrant" who shares no bond anymore with the "place, community, culture" of his birthplace, India (53). Despite being entirely estranged from the Indian soil, the author prides himself on his identity as "a Bombay boy" (54). As well, the author firmly believes that the self is essentially grounded in "its origin and its journey" (54). Yet, because he migrated to a far-off land, a breach develops between the author and India. The breach further expands when Rushdie's parents move to Karachi in Pakistan because of an increasing sense of alienation as Muslims, although Rushdie fails to make sense of their sudden religious sensibility after leading a non-religious life (53-4). Both Rushdie and his parents migrate to other countries for a better life and for peace, respectively. Migration takes place across the world; India is not exempt from this reality. But Indian reality—because of undergoing an increasing amount of religious and social turmoil—witnesses large-scale migrations to different corners of the world. This fact draws attention to multiple challenges the nation faces to ensuring a perfect living environment for every individual.

In *Joseph Anton*, the author mentions his book *Midnight's Children*'s exploration of such problematic Indian realities mainly by journeying through several remarkable life events, such as the author's birth just before India's freedom from British colonialism, subsequent incidents from his life related to India, and his education in history (55-6). The author recounts his search for a corresponding language to match India's "hot… overcrowded… vulgar… loud" reality (56).

Rushdie notes that India received the book earnestly as if to bridge the expanding gap between the author and the nation (57). Indian realities and experiences inspired his later writings too, besides this particular book: even the violent attack on an Air India Flight in 1985 by the Sikh terrorists hoping to establish an Independent Sikh state—Khalistan—secured a space within his writing landscape (73). Later, the author embarked on a journey to film a documentary during the fortieth anniversary of India's independence as requested by Britain's *Channel Four* producer (80). During the journey to rediscover the "idea of India" "through the eyes of forty-year old Indians," the author encountered "a famous oral storyteller" in Kerala whose narrative often violated the traditional forward-moving way of storytelling and interestingly included a lot of digressive interventions (80-1). A Muslim woman in "a Bombay sidewalk shack" and "a communist lady in Kerala" unpacked the miseries of womanhood, marriage, agedness, and poverty (81); a Bombay mayor and member of the Shiv Sena committed to consolidating Hindu nationalism (82); at the great mosque of Old Delhi—the Juma Masjid—an "old Imam Bukhari" conversed with Rushdie only because of the author's Muslim origin, but devoted most of his time to the management of "an enormous number of crumpled currency notes in his lap" (82). In Kashmir, "a group of travelling players" performing "clown stories" —based on Kashmiri history and legend—showed a double-faced character who commended "the Indian Army" on camera, but despised "the authoritarian" presence of them off the record (83); and a Sikh woman in Delhi sought "justice" for her husband and children who had been murdered in the turmoil around the assassination of Indira Gandhi (83). Rushdie recollects how the screening of such controversial stories faced challenges as the Indian Government preferred intimidating the victims rather than the terrorists (84). In a nutshell, the journey imbues the author with "ideas, arguments, images, sounds, smells, faces, stories, sensuality, intensity, and love" (84). The discovery of a new India fails to delight Rushdie; instead,

it enormously saddens him, sketching out the grim reality that certain individuals have to endure. The author's reminiscence about India highlights a number of discriminatory practices that the nation seems unconcerned about. India accommodates people belonging to diverse economic backgrounds, religions, and cultures. For the sake of maintaining a presumed unity, India seems to be reconciling with people descending from different socio-economic backgrounds but fails to ensure justice and fairness for every individual. This reality eventually showcases the shortcomings the nation as an idea has to carry as the nation has to overlook many discrepancies as well as resort to violence at times for sustaining in the long run. On the other hand, the depiction of this reality ultimately demonstrates the ideals Rushdie points to, for instance, minimizing economic disparity, standing by the victims, and practicing fair and just inclusivity while imagining social unity. In other words, justice, fairness, and recognition are the pillars of Rushdie's ideal nation and of universal human goodness. Contrarily, to manage the "hot…overcrowded…vulgar…loud" reality of India, authorities seem to use measures such as intimidation, marginalization, and silencing. The reality of the nation demonstrates how justice, fairness, and recognition are sometimes denied to avoid broader discontent and anguish. Because of the incompatible diversities within India, the nation often subjugates or marginalizes particular groups of people such as the poor, which helps restore an apparent stability within the national realm.

After the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, India responded regressively. India was the first country in the world to ban *The Satanic Verses* and denied Rushdie a travel visa, too (84). Madhu Jain from *India Today* published an excerpt from *The Satanic Verses* accompanied with an interview of Rushdie, even before the publication of the book (112). The author believes that the article ignited a furor; concomitantly, the comment from "the Indian Parliamentarian and Islamic

conservative Syed Shahabuddin" fueled the controversy (112). The journalist Khushwant Singh in *The Illustrated Weekly of India* also called for a ban "as a measure to prevent trouble" (113). A few Indian newspapers published in support of the author's book, while a fraction of the Indian press marked the initiative as "a Philistine decision" and "thought control" (118). The entire hullaballoo surrounding *The Satanic Verses* bewildered Rushdie, prompting the author to reappraising India's stance on freedom. The reality of India adopts a policy of safeguarding internal stability and undertaking precautionary steps against any possible turmoil. Rushdie, on the contrary, robustly speaks against such weakness: the author's ideal imagination of India advocates an uncompromising adherence to principles, endorsing freedom of expression steadfastly. To Rushdie, such adherence to a moral stance can only make the world better. But in reality, the Rushdie affair has never been uniformly supported. The reality here sheds light on the presence of a significant section of the nation that stands against Rushdie's ideas, revealing a real conflict, as a nation cannot unhear voices raised by a significant opposition.

The Indian Government restricted Rushdie's mobility across Indian territories. The author felt unwelcome even at the Indian Cultural Center in London because his mere presence might jeopardize "the center's secular credentials" (355). At one point in the memoir, returning to India seemed like a dream to the author, despite his obligation to handle a few real-life troubles; for instance, his grandfather's summer cottage at Salon in the Shimla Hills had been illegally seized by the state government of Himachal Pradesh (432). Indian reality here seems very unforgiving and restrictive towards the author. Cutting him off from the right to carry on with his everyday life as an Indian citizen is similar to penalizing the author for a grave misconduct. All these initiatives by India reflect the intimidating and collective nature of the society where the concern about collective stability matters more than ensuring individual rights. Undoubtedly, this India stands

starkly opposite to Rushdie's ideal imagination of it, which holds that individual rights are never suppressed for the sake of protecting a collective self. An ideal nation is supposed to recognize individual rights, but the reality here acts in a pragmatic way and resultantly finds it more practical to shut out a writer rather than to agitate a large fraction of the society. This suggests the nation's innate tendency to respond to a collective interest first, rather than entertaining an individual's freedom.

In addition, the BBC project to film *Midnight's Children* in India was turned down by the Indian Government, and Rushdie was denied participation in the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Indian independence, held at the Indian consulate in Manhattan (515-6). Another book by Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, also faced challenges initially to enter the Indian market because of a few contested elements, such as the naming of a pet dog after the first Prime Minister of the country (482-82). Rushdie sounds critical of the Indian Government's authoritarian intervention in every domain. The author's imagination of India does not match the reality that the nation, knowingly or unknowingly, exhibits. The reality of India considers certain matters as sensitive and intangible, such as the glorification of the first prime minister; however, Rushdie's ideal India finds no problem in deconstruction or anti-establishment sentiment. In other words, Rushdie's ideal nation does not fear to confront deviances, but the reality of it reckons certain past glories or facts as unnegotiable. The reality also here sounds critical of any individual who does not indisputably align with the national standards.

Rushdie comments sporadically on diverse socio-cultural aspects of India too. For instance, the "Nalini Mehta" incident, where a developmentally delayed Indian girl flew to England hoping for a romantic union with Rushdie, persuaded him to speak about how issues related to "mental

illness" are stigmatized in India (223). Similarly, the Tamil Tiger's insurgence after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi indicates the cracks in national integrity (297). The demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya saddened Rushdie as a signal of the rise of religious extremism in India (354). The author nurtures an empathy towards those "good-natured," "tolerant" Muslims in India to whom the religious assault of this kind might inflict pain (356). Because of being "the country of his birth and deepest inspiration," any regressive actions undertaken by India hurt him "the deepest" (355). No doubt such social, religious, and communal rifts in Indian reality dishearten the author. Indian reality sheds light on the socio-psychological aspects that the nation should pay attention to. The real India reveals the imbalances persistent in the national imagination where the marginalization of the weak becomes normal and violence often turns out to be the language of resistance. Rushdie's ideal India, however, is devoid of such incongruities; the author believes that ensuring an individual's right to lead a free life dismantles the problems related to communal, religious, and social conflicts, leading to ultimate goodness. But the national reality, it seems, in order to define the standards of a normal and acceptable collective life, prioritizes certain interest groups over others.

Despite all such tensions and turmoil, Rushdie flew to India at last after the Hindu nationalist BJP had approved of his visa (570). This time, the author not only discovered a polluted, technologically-transforming Indian society but also experienced several triumphant moments when many Indian people re-embraced him with love and respect (603). The author, it seems, intends to mark the moment as a time that shows the people's love for him as opposed to the authorities' intimidation. Rushdie emphasizes here the essential diversity of the Indian land and the people's compliance with such diversity. In the end, India seems to be celebrating Rushdie's presence despite the nation's overall failure to respond the way Rushdie imagines or idealizes.

Through the depiction of India, Rushdie's perception of an ideal nation finds words. Recognizing individualism—individual choices, rights, and freedom—turns out to be the first and foremost objective the nation should work towards. Again, an ideal nation ensures a free, fair, and just environment where individuals do not face discrimination because of their differences. Similarly, an ideal nation integrates liberty and denounces censorship in the practice of art and culture. These ideals define Rushdie's concept of ideal nation. The reality of India in the description is intolerant, intimidating, and unjust, but these eventually bring to light the fissures in the ideal of nation. India, as a vast and diverse nation, imagines unity that often demands prioritization, that is, placing one interest over another, eventually compromising on Rushdie's parameters of an ideal nation. Knowledge attained from the imagination of an ideal India suggests a universality and resolution; in other words, for Rushdie, the ideal nation indicates a permanent and ubiquitous goodness. On the other hand, the real India seems to be entrapped in many crises and challenges, and to sustain itself as a nation, it has to question the goodness of Rushdie's ideals in different ways as well as resort to alternative and unfair methods for maintaining national integrity. This indicates that we get to know about the world by confronting diverse situations and by discovering multiple alternative ways to manage an impending threat.

England: Ideal and Real Knowledge

In *Joseph Anton*, Rushdie incorporates a number of observations, questions, and doubts about England's reality. Rushdie's imaginary ideals for bettering the nation derive from the nuanced description of the reality of England.

Salman Rushdie went to England to study in 1961 (21). In *Joseph Anton*, the author contemplates the reason behind migrating to England at such a young age, despite the reluctance of his parents and the comfort of a familiar environment in India. One possible reason emerges as the picture of "an imaginary England" ingrained in his mind through the readings of many English authors (28). The author had discovered an England through books as a land of kings, mystery, and diversity that presumably later persuaded him to "venture forth into" its enthralling charm (29). At Cambridge, the author for the first time inhaled the air of his cherished vision of England, whereas at Rugby school, the author experienced a very different, biased and unfair England (36). These few remarks pave the way for understanding Rushdie's preoccupation with an imaginary England that gradually comes into tension with the real one.

During his school and university years, Rushdie experienced an England that in many ways stood starkly contrary to his imagined version. At Rugby school, "racism was something he quickly understood" (29). The author found the English people's ignorance about India quite unusual; the author recounts how often the British ran out of words during the conversations over India, identifying the nation as "far out," or as the land of "the maharishi," and "Ravi Shankar" (38). At Cambridge, the author was held responsible for "a gravy damage," out of racial discrimination: some anonymous Cambridge fellows spread a "bucketful of gravy and onions all over the walls and furniture" just to remind the author of his origin from a land fed on gravy. The

author could not wear “brown shoes” in there because of an arbitrary custom, and he had to kneel and beg for the degree from the Vice Chancellor (46). All these experiences baffled Rushdie, forcing him to discover an everyday England yielding to prejudice, racism, and ignorance. As the author considers the real England’s noticeable lack of enlightenment and compassion unacceptable, these incidents eventually lead us to know about an England that is entangled in multiple social and cultural biases. Despite Rushdie’s disdain for such practices in England, the reality of the nation sheds light on the presence of a substantial number of people who harbour doubts about universal humanity. In other words, the real human world abounds with biases and unfairness, which a society works to minimize but cannot wipe out overnight. Based on Rushdie’s description, the real England still needs betterment in different arenas to make real progress. This reality of England eventually demonstrates the dimensions of Rushdie’s imaginary or ideal England: overcoming cultural as well as racial biases, and embodying universal human values. Thus, building an ideal nation is to know the truth that aims at dismantling all the biases, but the reality highlights the challenges to making this happen.

In the memoir, Rushdie alludes to his long-time involvement in anti-racist works such as being a part of the Camden Committee for Community Relations (CCCR) (65). During this involvement, Rushdie discovered “the immigrant London of deprivation and prejudice,” which “he had previously known little about” (65). Little by little, the reality of England unfolds before him. Real England strives to deracialize the land, and parts of the country still struggle to get over discrimination. The reality here shows how England encounters difficulties on the way to ensuring national unity, mainly caused by the presence of people from diverse backgrounds. On the other hand, Rushdie imagines an ideal England championing human values, where an underrepresentation of people from other races is not even thought about. While Rushdie’s ideal

nation from this perspective is devoid of all racial and cultural biases, the real nation displays the difficulties on the way towards betterment and the long way left to tread to reach that level of perfection. Thus, idealizing the nation as a fair and just entity differs significantly here from the knowledge cultivated from reality: building an ideal nation is a long and up-hill battle.

Such fragmented impressions about a real England mount up and accumulate into an avalanche of disappointments mainly during the furor over *The Satanic Verses*. For instance, a British newspaper article's indication about a Tory MP's abomination of Rushdie prompted the author to ponder: do they represent the nation and are they "so unconcerned about" the matter of liberty? (378) While the real England never uniformly as well as unquestionably accepts Rushdie's arguments on freedom, the imaginary ideal England, the author believes, should endorse free-thinking above everything in order to remain morally laudable. England's reality sounds skeptical about individuals transgressing the boundary of decency while the ideal England - in other words, an ideal nation - Rushdie believes, should remain steadfastly committed to freedom of expression. The reality demonstrates the essential doubts that lurk underneath.

At the Dorchester Hotel during an award ceremony, Rushdie reflected on his life in England during the years of invisibility: "In this free country … I am not a free man" (307). England's failure to stand for the cause of freedom compels the author to live an imprisoned life. When the British edition of *The Satanic Verses* was published in 1988, for a brief time the literary world there celebrated the moment "in the language of books" (114). But the situation completely altered as the book "became an insult" and the author turned into "the Insulter" (115). "Polls taken after the "Rushdie Affair" showed that a large majority of the British public suggested the author should apologize for his "offensive" book" (115). In the cities with the largest Muslim populations,

such as Bradford, Yorkshire, simultaneous demonstrations against *The Satanic Verses* took place (125). The agitation manifested shockingly in the burning of a copy of the novel, and Rushdie reports being disheartened to learn that the Bradford MPs sympathized with "the Muslim side" of the story (128-30). The foreign secretary and the chief rabbi of Britain spoke against Rushdie because of the book being "unloved" and the author behaving unsympathetically to the religious sentiments (152). The author was labelled as "a troublemaker" as the police officers serving "the Thatcher administration" had to risk their lives for someone who had criticized the government previously (156). Peter Temple-Morris, one of the members from the anti-Rushdie Tory group, said during a lecture on Iran at the School of Oriental and African Studies that, "Mr. Rushdie was to blame for the whole affair and should now keep silent" (444). All these reactions and comments by commoners, religious leaders, and politicians unveil a real England whose perceptions enormously contradict Rushdie's idea of freedom. A significant portion of the real England seems unconvinced about the idea of unconstrained or absolute freedom of expression. This indicates the presence of a remarkable number of people who conceive of freedom differently. It is impossible to disregard the opinions given by such a large faction of a society. On the other hand, Rushdie repeatedly advocates a kind of freedom of expression that stands beyond debates and compromises. The author intends the government and people of England to stand by the right cause: that is, to defend absolute freedom as an unnegotiable right of individuals. Therefore, the gulf between the ideologically diverse demographic and Rushdie's ideal or uniform England in the matter of freedom of expression is vibrantly illustrated. An ideal nation places moral principle above people's choices, but the reality intervenes in acknowledging the truth: as a nation comprises the people living within it, turning a deaf ear to a significant portion of them is almost impossible.

Similar to the British people and government, a notable section of media covered "the Rushdie affair" with doubt and criticisms. The British tabloid press tried in every possible way to sketch out an "ungrateful" image of the author who had benefited from various state services; Rushdie defines this tabloid strategy as a "carefully constructed" phenomenon (175). The author recollects how "sections of the British tabloid press" wrote "untrue stories" about how Elizabeth, "Rushdie's new love," "upped the security budget by hundreds of thousands of pounds"; the more the government showed less concern over the Rushdie Affair, the more the press highlighted "the cost of the protection" (298). The derogatory comments on Rushdie's overall demeanor continued in the British news media for a long time. For instance, an article in the *Evening Standard* described him "conceited" and "mad"; London's BBC radio station ran a poll asking the British people to reconsider whether they "should support Rushdie anymore"; *The Telegraph* interviewed the author's previous wife Marianne only to discover her "doleful, foolish, cowardly, vain, farcical, and morally ambiguous" view of him (395). The entire media hysteria saddened Rushdie, making him realize that "[o]utside Britain he was seen as likable, funny, brave, talented, and worthy of respect," but Britons failed to see these qualities in him (419). The author criticizes a few promotional activities by *The Guardian* that, instead of blaming the culprits, accused Rushdie of creating the furor (226). The reality in England here seems doubtful regarding Rushdie's loud cries for absolute freedom. Media in all of these instances never accepted Rushdie's ideals. All the spite and bite affected the author's personhood in a damaging and bitter way. Thus, Rushdie's imaginary ideal England or ideal nation where individuals are not dissected for their opinions suffers a massive blow and the real England resurfaces as being intolerant of individuals trudging through controversy.

Along with the criticisms and adverse reactions in the media, the British government turned out to be a huge source of disappointment to the author because of the protection arrangement for him. The government assigned “two protection officers, two drivers, and two cars” to safeguard the author (139). The Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police in the United Kingdom was in charge of his security. Rushdie indicates that the regular duty of this branch is to protect individuals such as the prime minister, the defence secretary, and the foreign secretary, but because the nature of crime had diversified, the author made it to the list (96). Rushdie discovers that the state discriminated against him in this matter. The protection arrangement “wasn’t right” in the sense that “every other ‘principal’” was allowed to carry on with their normal life as “the undercover work” ensured their safety, but Rushdie’s protection mechanism was to hide the principal instead since it cost less (171). Rushdie’s dissatisfaction with the security arrangement lays bare the discriminatory practices prevalent in England’s institutional structures. Based on Rushdie’s description, individuals do not receive the same attention, protection, and care from the state. Undoubtedly, such practices dismantle the ideals of equity and fairness. Needless to say, the real England has to decisively allocate resources and assign services because no nation in the world possesses an overwhelming amount of resources to spend heedlessly. However, Rushdie’s ideal England stands against such discrimination and injustice. The knowledge about an ideal nation where individuals get equal treatment faces a challenge from the real-world’s pragmatic considerations to decide on the best possible way to distribute state services on the basis of an evaluation of the recipients’ contributions to the national cause.

Václav Havel, the Czech Prime Minister, intended to talk to Rushdie in person during the turmoil, but the British Government deliberately intervened. Havel believes and Rushdie agrees that a meeting of this kind would expose the British prime minister’s negligence in the Rushdie

affair (234). Again, Margaret Thatcher was unwilling to meet with the author, and the British Government found it adequate just to "keep him alive … keep him in the box" (243). Rushdie laments that on the day of the publication of *Haroun and the Sea Stories*, the British Government "renewed partial democratic relations" with Iran (262). Later, the author's request for attending a friends' funeral was denied by the head of Scotland Yard, Helen Hammington, as "he was making too many demands on the Branch" without serving the nation significantly, unlike every other principal under state protection (323). Immediately after this statement, a decision came to withdraw the police protection that, Rushdie believes, was primarily made to minimize costs, and which seemed as "a breathtaking betrayal of trust" to the author (325). However, the decision was changed, confirming that "the protection would continue until the threat level dropped" (334). In Rushdie's opinion, "the British were prepared to abandon him to his fate" (329). Here, a real England is revealed where the nation sounds suspicious of a controversial author and treats the him differently. Instead of measuring all individuals by the same yardstick, the nation weighs their contributions to the national cause and determines the amount of benefits they deserve. At the same time, when it comes to the matter of international relations, the real England considers the collective and greater good more important than cutting all ties because an individual's collision with a particular nation. The real England here sounds practical and calculating, whereas the author's ideal England should adhere to the principles of freedom even at the expense of socio-economic losses.

The description of Rushdie's experience of real England eventually uncovers the ideal England that the author imagines. The ideal England, the author believes, should foster the cultivation of liberty, fairness, and human values. Unfortunately, as the author discovers, the real England grapples with significant troubles and often compromises on these ideals. Rushdie's ideal

England imagines the nation as a place guaranteeing freedom of life and recognizing individual differences. Thus, knowledge about an ideal nation gets constructed that fixates on certain ideals as universal and timeless, whereas reality points out the challenges from different spheres that create enormous doubts and ambiguities. As well, this reaffirms how knowledge about the real world constantly changes according to the demands of the time.

America: Ideal and Real Knowledge

America as a nation in *Joseph Anton* mostly remains empathetic towards the Rushdie Affair. Often the author praises the liberating nature of the nation, which the author cherished throughout. Yet, there exist gaps, which the author sounds critical of.

Rushdie refers to a set of early impressions about America before his close encounter with the nation. For instance, the first reference to the United States in *Joseph Anton* comes when Rushdie talks about the religious belief held by his father, Anis Ahmed Rushdie. Anis Rushdie was not a believer. In order to indicate the courage required to be irreligious during his father's era, Rushdie notes how the idea of "godless man" sounds shocking even in the twenty first century USA (23). During his employment in an advertising agency in the mid-1970s, Rushdie noticed racist discrimination flaunted by an American airline, which refused "to feature black stewardesses in their ads" (51). The author also travelled to a few cities in the USA because of an assignment to write tourism ads for the US Travel Service (52). During his travels, the massive buildings in the city of New York shouted to the author, "*We are here forever*" (53). These early observations about America signal the innermost complexities of the land: vast and gargantuan but constrained by beliefs and biases. Here the author mainly alludes to a real America, which boasts both the pinnacle of civilizational progress and the traces of unresolved discrimination.

Later, Rushdie found the American experience quite commendable in many contexts. For instance, upon the publication of *Midnight's Children* in 1981, the author experienced a welcoming as well as inspiring reception as the book was admired for its literary excellence in newspapers such as *The Washington Post* and the *Chicago Tribune* (62). "The critical success of *Midnight's Children* in the United States" bestowed on the author a moment of celebration and delightful

surprise (63). In January 1986, Rushdie attended the 48th Congress of International PEN in New York. The author discovered the "gravity" of the event more important than the "levity" of it as the participation of legendary writers across the globe facilitated conversations over multiple issues regarding literature and politics, entertaining diversity as well as unity (75-8). Amidst the criticism of the book as well as its author in Britain, most of the American press welcomed *The Satanic Verses* with "gratifyingly positive notices" (148). In addition, to reiterate the importance of *The Satanic Verses* for the cause of freedom, the Association of American Publishers, the American Booksellers' Association, and the American Library Association paid for a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times* proclaiming that,

> [f]ree people write books. Free people publish books. Free people sell books. Free people buy books. Free people read books. In the spirit of America's commitment to free expression we inform the public that this book will be available to readers at bookshops and libraries throughout the country. (150)

On top of that, the PEN American Center organized an event to read from the novel (150). On the thousandth day of the author's invisibility, the center "held a rally and delivered a protest letter to the United Nations (309). On another visit to America, Rushdie felt like he was rediscovering himself as a writer as American senators stood behind him holding copies of the paperback edition of the book (331). Rushdie believes that the unconditional support from the USA compelled Britain to take care of the author's protection and defense without halting it for a moment (334). The author also believes that America's support helped him enormously in gaining back his "personhood" and realizing the "dignity in being a combatant [rather] than a victim" (340). Rushdie admits that, during those days of hiding and invisibility, America offered him "near-freedom" for a certain timespan (361). Meetings with luminaries such as Thomas Pynchon,

strolling in the park, stopping by a restaurant, or playing on a beach—the opportunity to carry on with such everyday things—opened up "the best possibility of finding some freedom in the short term" (364). All these instances explicitly demonstrate the liberating nature of American soil. Here the real and the ideal America amalgamate. Rushdie tastes the imaginary ideals in reality on this land. Thus, the real America that overall ensures a protected and liberated environment for individuals eventually incarnates absolute freedom and universal human values. Yet, America's compliance with Rushdie's ideals is not consistent, indicating that the nation endorses the author's line of thought until it collides with the national interest.

When the hullabaloo continued around the death threat from Iran, Rushdie intended to travel to America for a few weeks or months, but the American Ambassador in Britain respectfully prohibited the author from the visit as it might interfere with the anticipated release of American hostages in Lebanon (237). Rushdie surrendered to the American appeal, but for a long time after this incident, the American reluctance to welcome him persisted (286). The author's visit to deliver a speech at Columbia University was heavily guarded, and immediately after the speech, Rushdie experienced the flip side of the nation, which very "unceremoniously" drove him out of the land (314). During an attempt to organize a consortium of publishers, booksellers, industry organizations, and prominent individuals to support the right to the paperback publication of his book, Rushdie faced challenges in the USA as "the great figures of U.S publishing" abstained from joining as this might translate as a criticism of the fellow people and press in the publishing business (320). These particular instances bring up the picture of a real America: diplomatic, vigilant, unsympathetic, and pragmatic. Consequently, we get to know a real America that is ready to compromise on the matter of freedom for greater stability. Obviously, Rushdie's ideal America

contradicts this version of the nation, since the author aspires to nations assuming a character not vulnerable to compromises and negotiations.

In a meeting with the Bill Clinton, Rushdie earned his assurance that America unequivocally endorsed freedom of speech and intended for the world to embrace "first Amendment-style rights" (404). Yet, after a short while the presidential stand began staggering, as the President tried to mitigate the significance of the meeting with Rushdie describing as short-spanned, "no insult…intended," "just…to defend free speech" (406). Rushdie found Clinton's hesitancy unacceptable and his words not resembling those of "the leader of the Free World taking a stand against terrorism" (406). *The New York Times* aligned with Rushdie's reactions in this particular context, as an editorial published right after the president's wavering statement unhesitatingly warned the president, "Hold the waffles, Please" (406). Here, Rushdie brings out a staggering inconsistency in the moral character of America. The real America here does not seem unconditionally bold, rigid, and uncompromising. Instead, practical considerations keep the nation from holding onto a moral stand. Undoubtedly, such behaviour shocks Rushdie, who values the nation's idealistic rigidity more than its realistic considerations.

Despite being mostly appreciative of America's free and unconstrained social and cultural milieu, Rushdie sometimes sounds critical of the deviations in the nation's commitment to the matter of freedom. As a nation, America epitomizes many of the ideals that Rushdie deems necessary for constructing an ideal nation. Yet, the author's conceptualization of the ideal nation never falters in the advocacy of free speech. Put differently, knowledge about an ideal nation is not subject to change or evolution but disseminates ideas about the nation's unflinching adherence to a moral stance, resolute commitment to individual as well as universal freedoms. But the reality sometimes deviates from these ideals when sidelining an individual is easier than risking the

national interest. From the course of Rushdie's experience of America, an essential knowledge emerges suggesting how the nation strives to find balance in order to restore stability and sustainability.

Pakistan: Ideal and Real Knowledge

In *Joseph Anton*, Rushdie mostly condemns Pakistan's repressive and intolerant nature. Pakistan, according to Rushdie's description, appears to be a claustrophobic nation where religious extremism as well as violence rules over everything else. This knowledge about the grim reality there highlights certain stances by the Pakistan government that an ideal nation never adopts while constructing its national imagination. Rushdie's description positions Pakistan against the liberal atmosphere of ideal Western democracies, where religion can never undermine the modern and rational mind. While writing on the crises and tensions in India, England, and America, Rushdie indicates certain points that should be taken care of to transform them into ideal nations. But his description of Pakistan abounds with disdain for the nation's failures to adopt a liberal and free atmosphere.

In *Joseph Anton*, the reality of Pakistan appears extremely repressive. The nation seems entangled in fanaticism and unruliness:

> Pakistan was that place where the crooked few ruled the impotent many, where bent civilian politicians and unscrupulous generals allied with one another, supplanted one another, and executed one another, echoing the Rome of the Caesars, where mad tyrants bedded their sisters and made their horses into senators and fiddled while their city burned. But, for the ordinary Roman—and so also for the ordinary Pakistani—the murderous, psychotic mayhem inside the palace changed nothing. The palace was still the palace. The ruling class continued to rule. (60)

Rushdie defines Pakistan as a nation representing "a historical blunder" and as "a country insufficiently imagined"; the nation fools itself into believing in the power of religion to unite a geographically as well as historically divided people (60). Due to its fundamentalist and troubled history, penning a single sentence about Pakistan in his fictions seems not right to Rushdie (71). Although the novel *Shame* is set in Pakistan, Rushdie avoids any glorifications or words "with

love" about Pakistan in the novel; instead, he utilizes literary techniques such as black comedy to illustrate the fanatic political atmosphere of it (60-1). Unsurprisingly, Pakistan banned the book, though many people, including diplomats, there paged through it surreptitiously (61). The author reflects on the book banning culture of Pakistan, which in no way sounds unusual there (117). In accordance with the author's description, the reality of Pakistan mirrors a fundamentalist, regressive, and intolerant nationhood. Rushdie abhors such backwardness and religious-extremism. The author considers all such eccentricities of Pakistan as major hindrances on the way to adopting universal human values. Rushdie's understanding of an ideal nation, where beliefs never encounter persecution, stands opposite to such fundamentalism. Yet, the reality of Pakistan confirms the fact that a large number of conservatives or fundamentalists dwell in the world who counterattack the rational and liberal bloc, suggesting the challenges to achieving a universal humanity. Rushdie never welcomes such national realities since they threaten the efficacy of universal human values.

During a visit to Pakistan because of his father's illness, Rushdie witnesses the frenzy of the nation more closely. For instance, the best medical facility in Karachi, the Aga Khan Hospital, provides free service to all Ismailis while all the non-Ismailis have to spend a lot to afford the same treatment (86-7). This particular example draws attention to the massive collapse of humanity in Pakistan, since the nation fails to ensure that its medical sector remains pledged to safeguard human lives rather than upholding political and religious values. It reveals the foundational fallacies the nation stands on and how far the nation stands from the enlightenment.

A Pakistani film titled *International Gorilla* was released in 1990 that intended to denigrate Rushdie in the worst possible way, but the British Board of Film Classification initially refused to

allow it to be broadcast because of the "libelous" elements in it (256). However, as a free speech absolutist, Rushdie decided to advocate for the public release of the film and eventually succeeded. The target audience ultimately rejected the "dreadful film" due to the indigestible trash it brought to screen (256). Here, the demoralization and decay persistent in the realm of Pakistan's art and culture come to light, along with the overwhelming religious fanaticism the nation remains in the grip of. As a creative individual, Rushdie finds this disrespectful towards the integrity and impact of art and culture. This example illustrates Rushdie's idealization of a free and fair cultural milieu necessary for flourishing artistic excellence, which the nation is responsible for ensuring. But the reality shows the eventual subordination of art and culture to the national authority, which results in its stagnation.

Rushdie also provides other examples of religious extremism in Pakistan. In this nation, murdering a blasphemous person does not count as a crime; instead, it is a matter of rejoicing and pride (344). On the other hand, religion in Pakistan often becomes an instrument used for other purposes; for instance, *The Satanic Verses* served the purpose of destabilizing Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's administration as she heralded an ideology of secularism (134). The nasty religious-political game of Pakistan drives Rushdie to ponder the tight hold of fanaticism and fraud on the nation and to measure the magnitude of its failure as a nation.

The reality of Pakistan in Rushdie's description represents a decadent country devoid of modern human values and principles, where religion morally guides national politics and social functioning. This reality presents a counter-logic that stands in sharp contrast with the modern rational mind or the ideal Western democracies. Through his depiction of Pakistan, Rushdie reveals certain ideals that he deems unnegotiable for the conceptualization of an ideal nation: an

ideal nation, does not adopt religion as a source of moral guidance which values human lives more than blind obedience to the words in a sacred text. In other words, an ideal nation never yields to religious fanaticism or fundamentalism. Rushdie's concept of the ideal nation functions as a source of knowledge that positions the nation as a universal institution and a guarantor of self and the security of human life. The reality of Pakistan, on the other hand, discloses the fundamental differences persistent in the imagination of a nation since parts of the world might consider religion as the cornerstone of national unity. Moreover, for those nations, religion is an instrument to score gains in international politics, too. Thus, through the memoir's depiction of Pakistan, it emerges that the author does not support the existence of any nation that murders people in the name of religion, or values words in a sacred text more than living, breathing humans. The knowledge about such a reality, it seems, is not worthy of being highlighted and shared with the world, the author surely suggests; such knowledge rather strengthens the importance of Rushdie's ideal concept of nation, which emphasizes universal human values.

Iran: Ideal and Real Knowledge

Iran owns extensive and significant space in *Joseph Anton*. The nation issued a fatwa condemning Rushdie and the controversial work *The Satanic Verses*. In a sense, Iran's extreme stand inevitably prompted other nations to respond to this controversial matter. The reality of Iran as it appears in the text is of a repressive, violent, and intolerant environment. Despite this reality being dark, it informs about the existence of a world guided by a religious logic or sentimentality, which the author definitely denounces. Similar to Pakistan, Iran also cannot garner any approval from Rushdie; instead, the author implicitly makes the point that Iran should not be counted as a nation because of its barbaric nature.

In *Joseph Anton*, Rushdie draws attention to the fact that fifty Iranian intellectuals defended the author's stand against Iranian authoritarianism, which the fatwa only strengthened over time (348). *Shame* was awarded a prize in Iran (61). The novel was translated into "Farsi without his knowledge, in a state-sanctioned pirated edition," which the author criticizes (61). Later, when *The Satanic Verses* was published in September 1988, no one even in Iran could anticipate the ensuing fatwa (61). While Rushdie considers the acceptance of *Shame* in Iran as a triumph since it implicates the celebration of literary merit by the common people, the denunciation of *The Satanic Verses* pushes the author to see the incident as an authoritarian imposition on the common people, which the author defines as "the top down, not the bottom up" undertaking (61). Rushdie here reveals the conflict embedded in Iranian reality as the state authority devotes itself to the legacy of a religious ideology that does not represent the people's common interests, demonstrating the chasm extant between the oligarchs and the commoners. Thus, Rushdie's understanding of Iranian reality indicates the undemocratic and despotic environment that the nation creates for everyone,

which fails to establish adequate connections between the government and the people. Undoubtedly, the author does not approve of such an exploitative environment that destroys the creative potential of an individual. Rushdie despises such an authoritative and chaotic national atmosphere, which he deems unhealthy for the growth of any individual, let alone of creative people.

The most powerful clerics in Iran, Khamenei and Rafsanjani, openly announced that "a black arrow of retribution is flying towards the heart of that blasphemous bastard" (147). Another Iranian ayatollah, Hassan Sanei, offered a one-million-dollar bounty for the apostate's head (147). Iran's chief justice, Ayatollah Yazdi, summoned every Muslim with adequate "resource" to consider the execution of the Rushdie threat as their duty (228). The Minister of Islamic culture and guidance as well as the great liberal hope of Iran, Mohammad Khatami, also "declared that the *fatwa* was irreversible" (272). Even after peace-making attempts with the British and Muslim intelligentsia, "Iran remained intransigent" and brought no respite from the fatwa ordeal (277). The 15 Khordad Foundation, the quasi-nongovernmental organization headed by Ayatollah Hassan Sanei, increased the bounty amount by two million dollars with the announcement that any friend, relative, or neighbour of the author would be paid the money upon the successful execution of the task (291). Sanei for the third time increased the bounty, which now included even all the expenses needed to carry out the execution (353): "Ayatollah Jannati said in Tehran that the *fatwa* 'sticks in the throats of the enemies of Islam but it cannot be revoked until the man dies" (439). In 1992, a policy was undertaken to conduct a "critical dialogue" between the EU and Iran to bring improvement to the matters such as "human rights, support for terrorism and the *fatwa*," but it failed due to Iran's lack of interest in such conversations (446). Things seemingly did not change much when a new, arguably moderate government led by Khatami came to power, since Rushdie

received the same message: “Salman Rushdie will die soon” (514). Later, when people from the Tony Blair’s new Labour Government in England demanded the withdrawal of the fatwa, Iran asserted in response, “it will last for ten thousand years” (537). After a false promise to withdraw the fatwa for a brief period of time, the demand for Rushdie’s decapacitation gained renewed fervor in Iran (552). All these instances suggest the extremism and ferocity of Iranian reality, which in no way can come to terms with modern, universal human values. Iran does not confine itself to a mere book-banning culture; instead, it goes to significant lengths to punish an individual threatening the integrity of their religion. Thus, Iranian reality unforgivingly wishes to punish Rushdie for a blasphemous deed that the author does not consider a crime at the first place. Rushdie here implicates the deterioration of Iranian reality, which relies on religious logic as the guiding force of its life and society and subsequently distances itself from modern and secular rationality. An ideal nation is supposed to be the emblem of modern and secular beliefs. Iran’s reality shatters this ideal.

Despite Rushdie’s repeated attempts to negotiate with Iran through multiple intermediaries, Iran insisted on the implementation of the fatwa, considering *The Satanic Verses* as an unforgivable blasphemy (245). The exiled ex-president of Iran, Shapur Bakhtiar, an opponent of the ayatollah’s regime, was murdered in France in the name of “ritual killing” (304). However, Rushdie is also aware of the fact that nations act “in their own self-interest”; Iran would not withdraw the fatwa unless the nation foresaw something of self-interest (333). In the course of multiple attempts of negotiations with Iran, the Iranian authority took a wobbling stand, as sometimes the fatwa appeared to mean nothing while at other times Iran seemed determined to carry it out (450). All these nuances in Iranian reality suggest the transformation of religion into a political tool, a reality that Rushdie condemns as it uses religion for other purposes and punishes

people for violating religious maxims. This indicates the extent of degeneration that Iran as a nation has undergone.

Similar to Pakistan, Iran demonstrates extreme religious conservatism. The nation's reality stands in complete opposition to ideal Western and liberal values. Real Iran weaponizes religion as an effective means to oppose secular and liberal values. Rushdie is scornful of such horrendous ideology, emboldened by a nation's social, cultural, and political infrastructure. Rushdie's ideal nation disqualifies religion as the nucleus of national unity; instead, the author idealizes the nation as an institution that ensures an unimpeded flux of ideas and beliefs. Such universal and idealized knowledge about the nation, Rushdie believes, should be integrated everywhere to transform the political world into a human one. Contrarily, Iranian reality produces knowledge about a world where religious strictures are valued even more than human lives.

Conclusion

While defending the value of literature in a pragmatic world, Tim Gillespie emphasizes that literature's wide scope is "to explore human experience in all its dimensions and possibilities" (20). The ideals incorporated into *Joseph Anton* are shaped by Rushdie's experiences, acting as a source to know about the author's innermost realizations and his vision of how to make the world better. We can put our faith in Rushdie's vision or not, but those ideals are going to last forever, functioning as an essential knowledge base suggesting improvements in different aspect of the human world. Knowledge about mere ideals seems incomplete, but this thesis has attempted to complete it with the inclusion of a discussion on reality. No doubt, knowing about an author's ideals, how they envision a better world, can enlightens us, but the route to integrate those ideals into reality is winding and unpredictable, in need of continual and endless adjustments. This is the reason why examining reality becomes important, since it unlocks another treasure house of knowledge to give a deeper look at all the undercurrents for making a better world. Moreover, knowing about reality does not end all ideal visions; instead, this knowledge contributes to envisioning a better world in a more pragmatic way. No doubt, today's age defines itself as a time boasting about pragmatic values and benefits. During such a time, Rushdie's ideals may sound outmoded, as the author's concept of a better world articulates an ambitious and exalted dream but leaves out a reflection on the unavoidable complexities of the real world on the way to materialize the dream. When it comes to matters such as freedom and the nation, it becomes more difficult to reach a single conclusion. Absolute freedom which sounds bold and beautiful at first glance becomes problematic during the search for a balance between individual freedom and social responsibility; similarly, the dream of an ideal nation – epitomizing universal human rights and ethics – fades when different tensions regarding identity, stability, and perspectives arise. Thus,

knowing about these two aspects informs about the world differently, persuading us to continue thinking about making those better and more righteous.

References

Bennett, Robert. "National Allegory or Carnivalesque Heteroglossia? 'Midnight's Children's' Narration of Indian National Identity." *Bucknell Review*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2000, pp. 177-194, https://ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/national-allegory-carnivalesque-heteroglossia/docview/1289912009/se-2

Brown, Chris. "Universal Human Rights: A Critique." *The International Journal of Human Rights*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1997, pp. 41–65, https://doi.org/10.1080/13642989708406666.

Cerna, Christina M. "Universality of Human Rights and Cultural Diversity: Implementation of Human Rights in Different Socio-Cultural Contexts." *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1994, pp. 740–52, https://doi.org/10.2307/762567.

Chiodo, Simona, and Politecnico di Milano. "What an Ideal Is." *Philosophia (Ramat Gan)*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2015, pp. 961–74, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11406-015-9649-8.

Cooke, Rachel. "Knife by Salman Rushdie – a life interrupted." *The Guardian*, 21 April, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2024/apr/21/knife-by-salman-rushdie-review-a-life-interrupted-attempted-murder

Calhoun, Craig. "Nationalism and the Contradictions of Modernity." *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, vol. 42, 1997, pp. 1–30, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41035527.

Gillespie, Tim. "Why Literature Matters." *The English Journal*, December 1994.

Goonetilleke, D. C. R. A. "Conclusion." *Salman Rushdie*. Macmillan Education UK, 1998, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-26745-3.

Hoffmann, Stefan-Ludwig. "Introduction: Genealogies of Human Rights." *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. 1-26.

Jani, Pranav. "Democracy, Fundamentalism, and Empire: Rushdie and the Politics of Free Speech." South Asian Review, vol. 35, 2017, pp. 75-93, https://doi.org/10.1080/02759527.2014.11932955.

Jovanovska, Trajanka Kortova. "Rushdie's Postcolonial Authorship." *Salman Rushdie and Postcolonial Authorship : The Ethics of Intellectual Practice*, Ethics International Press Limited, 2023. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/lib/uvic/detail.action?docID=31075650.

MacRae, Penelope. "Rushdie's Satanic Verses returns to Indian bookshops after 36 years." *The Guardian*, 26 December, 2024.

Malesevic, Sinisa. "Is Nationalism Intrinsically Violent?" *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2013, pp. 12–37, https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2013.761894.

Mishra, Pankaj. "Joseph Anton by Salman Rushdie – Review." *The Guardian*, 18 September 2012.

Rushdie, Salman. *Joseph Anton: A Memoir*. Random House Trade Paperback Edition, 2012.

"Salman Rushdie and the struggle for free speech." *The Economist*, Aug 18th 2022.

Said, Edward. "Resistance and Opposition." *Culture and Imperialism*, Knopf, 1993.

Saliba, Anthony. "The Concept of Freedom." *Hyphen*, vol. 6 (5), 1991, pp. 217-220, https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar//handle/123456789/25153

Sandrock, Kirsten, et al. "The Poetics of Justice in Salman Rushdie's Joseph Anton: A Memoir: Narrative Construction and Reader Response." *Postcolonial Justice*, vol. 191, 2017, pp. 125–40, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004335196_009.

Seymour, Michel. "On Redefining the Nation." *The Monist*, vol. 82, no. 3, 1999, pp. 411–45, https://doi.org/10.5840/monist199982316.

Teverson, Andrew. "Contexts and Intertexts." *Salman Rushdie*, Manchester University Press, 2007. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/lib/uvic/detail.action?docID=1069523.

"The Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

Trousdale, Rachel. "Salman Rushdie and Islamophobia." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2017, pp. 439–54, https://doi.org/10.1177/0021989417695859.

Wesley Charlie. "Salman Rushdie's Authorial Self-fashioning in Joseph Anton." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, Vol. 52(3), 2017, pp. 519-533, DOI:/10.1177/0021989416683543