

## THE CONCEPT OF IMMIGRANT IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S STORY CALLED "GOOD ADVICE IS RARER THAN RUBIES"

SALMAN RUSHDIE'NİN "İYİ NASİHAT YAKUTLARDAN BİLE ENDER  
BULUNUR" ADLI ÖYKÜSÜNDE GÖÇMEN KAVRAMI

Ayla OĞUZ\*

**ABSTRACT:** In the European context, it is observed that immigration has changed the socio-economic structures of the countries in Europe including Britain and turned them into postcolonial societies. Indeed, immigration and mobility exist at every stage of the life cycle. In addition, human migration has occurred since the beginning of history, either by force or due to slavery or colonization. In this sense, migrations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were largely related to industrialization and globalization. Britain accepted a significant number of immigrants from its colonies where it lost power since the Second World War. The flow of immigrants from Asia and Africa continued until the 1990s. Immigration has exposed immigrants to an endless sense of otherness and difference. Bringing the hope of living with better living conditions in a foreign country, the immigrant must deal with social, cultural, and psychological humiliation, marginalization, and exclusion. In this context, Salman Rushdie's short story "Good Advice Is Rare Than Rubies" has been examined in order to reveal the perception of immigrants and marginalization imposed on people through Miss Rahena trying to immigrate to England.

**Keywords:** Immigration, immigrant, marginalization, Britain, postcolonial, Rushdie.

**ÖZ:** Avrupa bağlamında bakıldığında Britanya da dahil olmak üzere göçün Avrupa'daki ülkelerin sosyo-ekonomik yapısını değiştirdiği ve onları postkolonyal toplumlara çevirdiği gözlemlenmektedir. Nitekim göç ve hareketlilik yaşam döngüsünün her aşamasında mevcuttur. Ayrıca insan göçü tarihin başlangıcından beri gerek güç yoluyla gerekse köleliğe ya da kolonileşmeye bağlı olarak gerçekleşti. Bu anlamda on dokuzuncu ve yirminci yüzyıllardaki göçler büyük ölçüde endüstrileşme ve küreselleşme bağlamlı idi. Britanya İkinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan itibaren güç kaybına uğradığı sömürgelerinden önemli oranda göçmen kabul etmiştir. Asya ve Afrika'dan göçmen akımı 1990'lara kadar devam etmiştir. Göçmenlik göç eden insanları bitmek bilmeyen bir ötekilik ve farklılık duygusuna maruz bırakmıştır. Yabancı bir ülkede daha iyi yaşam koşulları ile yaşama umudunu beraberinde getiren göçmen sosyal, kültürel ve psikolojik açıdan aşağılanma, ötekileştirilme, dışlanma gibi sorunlarla baş etmek zorunda kalır. Bu bağlamda Salman Rushdie'nin "İyi Nasihat Yakutlardan Bile Ender Bulunur" adlı kısa öyküsü İngiltere'ye göç etmeye çalışan Miss Rahena yoluyla insanlara dayatılan göçmen algısını ve ötekileştirmeyi ortaya koymak amacıyla incelenmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Göç, göçmen, ötekileştirme, Britanya, postkolonyal, Rushdie.

\* Doç. Dr. – Gaziosmanpaşa Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Bölümü İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Ana Bilim Dalı / Tokat – [ayla.oguz@gop.edu.tr](mailto:ayla.oguz@gop.edu.tr) (ORCID ID: 0000-0001-7112-6549)



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## **1. Introduction**

After the Second World War, migration to European countries including England increased in a great amount. In this period the nature of migration to Britain changed and immigrants from the Commonwealth countries started to come to England in a great majority. One of the most important reasons for this situation is the British Nationality Act, adopted in 1948. Due to this, the immigrant population became an important factor in the ethnic appearance of Britain in postcolonial period. It is evident that Britain is among the most important countries affected by migration in Europe in the twentieth century (Giddens, 2006: 500-503).

Furthermore, migration to Britain is not restricted to the twentieth century, but it can be observed in the early stages of history. The first migrations began to flow from the coastal areas of the British islands to central cities, whereas the others in the later periods were the result of the migrants' mobility from the colonial lands under the dominion of United Kingdom. At the beginning of the eighteenth-century people from different countries focused on the industrial developments, international job opportunities and social and economic changes and tried to find new life spaces due to the fact that they were in need of new life conditions (Sinha & Ataulloh, 1987: 1-2). As a result of all these changes, people from underdeveloped countries and colonial countries migrated from their own places to the countries in Europe. Of course, Britain having a lot of colonies was one of them and became one of the examples of multicultural societies due to postcolonialism. Naturally, all these changes have become the subject matter of the literature. In this sense, Salman Rushdie as a British author reflects the characteristics of the postcoloniality and the devastating portrait of being immigrant in his story called "Good Advice Is Rarer Than Rubies".

## **2. Concept of Immigrant in Britain**

By the end of the Second World War, British and European societies gradually reduced their presence in the colonies. From the 1950s and 1960s, postcolonial migration scenes began to emerge with the colonies dissolving and the sovereign countries opening their doors to immigrants. Afterwards, it is striking that both Britain and Europe began to transform as postcolonial societies. Additionally, Africans and Indians came to England for the first time in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in small numbers, and the first appearance of small black populations coincides with this century. In this century, racial and class characteristics associated with such terms like class, status, and power determined the relations between the white and black population. Hostile attitudes towards Asian, Irish, and Jewish-based immigrants who came to Britain until the twentieth century continued, and these people were marginalized. Also, derogatory terms have been used as a means of identification for immigrants in the UK. After the Second World War, not only the immigrants from Ireland, Italy, and Poland but also the immigrants from Jamaica, the Caribbean, and Barbados Island started to

come to Britain. However, in the 1950s, immigrants from India and Pakistan outnumbered others. The factor that triggered these migrations was labour migration. This feature has become permanent rather than a temporary situation due to the increasing growth of the modern global economy (Fenton, 1999: 223-225).

The European identity's claim to sovereignty during and after the discovery of the world arises from the fact that it sees itself as the subject of modern knowledge. This sense of self alienates those who are not like it. Immigrants from countries that were dissolved after colonialism were also included in the world map, which became more and more postcolonial with the others. The immigrant is in conflict with the present and the things she/he has left behind in terms of cultural values. Therefore, it can be said that immigration appears as a motif that enriches modern culture. Changes became commonplace with the presence of immigrants who escaped from the third world and met the culture, language, and lifestyle of the first world (Chambers, 1995: 9-10).

Culturally, ethnic immigrant communities are deeply injured, and their British-born children seek to reconcile their ethnic identity with feelings of 'being in Britain' and 'being British'. It is true that immigrant life has a traumatic quality. Disconnections from familiar life and culture extend to language and thought problems, self-consciousness crises and ultimately personality change and identity crisis in this process of disharmony. The social definition of the immigrant is caught between the approval and rejection patterns. The foreigner is always in comparison with the local one. The immigrant both experiences an intense dissolution and dispersion and is also tested with various negatives while trying to re-arrange her/his life. The tendency to add new dimensions to her/his personality and the repeated breaks between the old and the new in the search process, the ties that cannot be established in a healthy way with the new one, and the anxiety, depression, fear and related psychosomatic reactions during the identity crisis created by this tension are among the negativities that permeate immigrant life (Teber, 1993:14).

There are many factors that will keep ethnic identities alive and nurture racial attitudes in an unequal class society. Britain represents a dominant culture as a centre of postcolonialism. More, it is an established nation-state containing Celtic cultural minorities, and an advanced economy that includes urban minorities, extensions of the former colonies. Thus, the concepts of superiority and subordination remain effective in British society, where ethnic or racial hierarchies prevail. The expression of ambiguity in the immigrant psyche leads him/her to be described as a "stranger", sometimes a positive image of cosmopolitanism as an in-between mixture, sometimes embracing the associations of abnormality and pollution that push the boundaries of the nation state's welfare. In this context, identity

problems are presented in relation to place, time and place (Fenton, 1999: 89).

While the immigrant was reified as a needed workforce, she/he remained outside of social information networks and political institutions. An immigrant is someone who always feels the weight of being seen as a foreigner in the depths of his soul. The contradictory logic of encircling with others and the sense of isolation are very evident in the immigrant. The unrest of the individual in modern societies is added to this position. Due to this problem, a neurotic appearance emerges at the end. The alienation of the immigrant, whose roots are always elsewhere, tries to find a place for herself/himself by being kneaded in terms of integration, assimilation, and transformation. In this sense, the stranger is always more prominent than others and is in a state of transformation. When the immigrant, who is a foreigner, cannot reconcile her spiritual and cultural world with the values of the new society, she/he experiences deep spiritual traumas, and this situation is reflected in her/his personality. The immigrant who resists change is already the other. On the other hand, the immigrant, who is ready to integrate with the values of the host society, still cannot escape from her/his label (Teber, 1993:28-29). The problems experienced by the immigrant are closely related to self-awareness. The formation of a person's self-consciousness includes the healthy relationship that she/he establishes with the non-self. A person's self is made up of his/her own feelings and thoughts and their reflection on his/her spiritual actions. The individual who is conscious of a healthy self is lively and active because of her/his cultural harmony and integrity in spiritual and physical terms. However, individuals with a strong self-consciousness can resolve their conflicts by overcoming the defeats, sudden or expected negativities in life in a healthy way without experiencing major depressions (Teber, 1993: 40).

The phenomenon of immigration has a characteristic of shaking the basic sense of security that individuals have due to the negativity connotations it contains. These basic feelings of security develop in the context of the continuity, consistency, and loving sameness of the individual's relationship with others. The factor that triggers the emergence of an identity crisis in a foreign society is not only the deterioration of the immigrant's identity integrity and consistency, but also her recognition value in the eyes of others. In this sense, the immigrant may express herself/himself in the field of activity of her/his own minority or ethnic group, to which she/he wishes to belong, and may want to adapt to the dominant culture. But it does not mean that it can be a complete member of the original culture. With its partial culture, it is always doomed to stay both close and distant to that culture. This is the genesis of a new hybrid, cultural hybridity. All movements of the immigrant are under the observation of the host society, and the immigrant who is aware of being followed is aware that she/he is not free (Teber, 1993: 43-44).

Immigration is very related with people, place, and time (King, Connell, White, 1995:48). The link of immigration with both modernism and postmodernism raises common themes such as fragmentation, displacement, and alienation. Alienation has almost become a cliché in modernist writing. The formation of a sense of belonging in historical, spatial, temporal, and individual terms during the immigration process is the crisis focus of the life that is constantly damaged. Changes created by the living conditions of immigrants bring about personality changes in this case, and the self acquires new images. More, the soul and body integrity of the person is damaged in the process (Teber, 1993: 65). The immigrant needs trust, love and excitement due to his alienation. So, he constantly tries to cope with a feeling of exclusion.

One of the most important stages of the immigrant's encounter with change is the encounter with a new language. Changing the language of the immigrant means changing the tradition and culture that carries his soul. The settlement of the third world in the first world has changed the metropolitan life. Although the immigrants prefer a living space close to those like them, the local and the other have started to mingle with each other and the necessity of such a life has emerged. As the immigrant crosses borders, she/he is ready to realize that there are other voices, other worlds, beyond borders. It is evident that immigrant is a kind of foreigner and being a foreigner always means being exposed to the expectations of others (Chambers, 1995: 12). While the immigrant lives elsewhere, she/he breathes an air in which different identities are sometimes recognized, sometimes exchanged, often mixed, but traces of which are not lost. The immigrant trying to cope with the feeling of strangeness is somewhere on the sidelines. She/he has shifted from the centre to the edge since the moment she/he left her/his homeland. The new stories, experiences, languages and identities that enter the life of the immigrant reshape the immigrant's new identity (Chambers, 1993: 30-32).

### **3. Story Analysis: Being A Marginal, Being an Immigrant**

Salman Rushdie's story "Good Advice is Rarer than Rubies" refers to a postcolonial society in terms of space. The story is based on the young and beautiful Miss Rehana's wish to go to England. Mustafa Dar, an immigrant in England, is Miss Rehana's fiancé who is probably twenty-five years older than her. When this marriage was planned, her fiancé was over thirty and she was only nine years old. By promising to take her to England, Mustafa Dar leaves Miss Rahena's family and returns from Lahore to Bradford, where he lives in England. Miss Rahena's father approved this marriage, thinking that Mustafa would take good care of his daughter. According to Yavuz, women have little importance as individuals in eastern societies. (Yavuz, 2017:106) Miss Rahena does not object to her father's decision as an object of the patriarchal social structure. The patriarchal structure makes its presence felt as the cornerstone of social structure in eastern countries such

as Pakistan. In this sense, social structures existed with concepts such as caste, class, ethnicity, and gender. They all refer to patriarchy, indeed. As a matter of fact, the word patriarchy means being under the rule of the man or the father (Oğuz, 2009: 13). However, when Miss Rahena's mother and father dies, Miss Rahena decides to go to her fiancé. Now, she is a young girl and very charming. The only way to move to England is to obtain a permit from the consulate to enter the country.

The consulate is full of people, most of whom are women trying to enter the UK. It is noteworthy that Miss Rahena comes alone in front of the consulate building, where everyone comes with a male relative. This situation immediately attracts the attention of the driver, Mohammed Ali, who tries to fool women who come to the consulate from different cities of the country with the hope of going to England. He deceives them and takes their money by promising them for help. When Mohammed Ali notices Miss Rahena once again, it is lunch time and the consular staff have not returned from the lunch break yet. Mohammed Ali salutes Miss Rahena, who buys something to eat at the buffet and offers Miss Rahena help. Miss Rahena is extremely cautious. She does not seem very enthusiastic, saying that she is an orphan, does not have much money, and that he should go to rich women who have male relatives with them. She does not even offer him the food she ate. This situation seems to indicate that Miss Rahena does not like the old Mohammed Ali very much. But Mohammed Ali tries to persuade her with his linguistics. When he tells her that she should let him give advice that he is experienced, Miss Rahena responds by saying "good advice is rare even than rubies"(Rushdie, 2011: 16).

Mohammed Ali is a person who deceives naive women who want to have a transaction at the consulate, under the pretext of helping them for money. He usually prefers those who come from far away so that he does not get into trouble with the women deceived by him. In the story, it is understood from the speeches of Mohammed Ali that the British government had a lot of difficulty in receiving immigrants. It mentions that immigrant candidates who want to enter the country are asked highly personal questions: "He explained that they would ask her questions, personal questions, questions such as a lady's own brother would be too shy to ask. They would ask if she was virgin, and, if not, what her fiancé's love-making habits were, and what secret nicknames they had invented for another" (Rushdie, 2011: 19). For Mohammad Ali, it is very difficult for a woman to answer these questions. He goes on giving examples to persuade Miss Rahena as such: "They will ask you how many rooms are in your family home, what colour are the walls, and what days do you empty the rubbish. They will ask your man's mother's third cousin's aunt's stepdaughter's middle name. And all these things they have already asked your Mustafa Dar in his Bradford. And if you make one mistake, you are finished" (Rushdie, 2011:19). These are the questions that go beyond the limits of education.

For this reason, he not only mentions an acquaintance who will take care of all the work for 500 rupees, but also tells that he can sell a fake passport without a picture to Miss Rahena for money, that is, he can provide this her. These are the tactics that Mohammed Ali used to persuade ignorant women. However, fraudsters like Mohammed Ali devalued the Pakistanis in the eyes of the British. The important point here is hidden in the reason Miss Rahena opposed this. Miss Rahena states that if she accepts the document, she will commit a crime and if she goes there illegally, the owners will justify the negative words about them. In this case, it is evident that Miss Rahena is already aware of the prejudices of the British about themselves and the labels they put on them. However, Mohammed Ali calls this not a crime, but a facilitation. At this point, Easterners like Mohammed Ali cause labels such as deceitful, fraudulent, hypocritical, opportunistic, untrustworthy to be used for themselves. Thus, Rushdie conveys the Pakistani perception of the westerner through Miss Rahena's consciousness. Another noteworthy point is the way of her introducing herself in the story. Miss Rahena introduces herself as "the fiancé Mustafa Dar of Bradford, London" (Rushdie, 2011: 17). It is a fact that Miss Rahena does not know the difference between London and England.

In this point, Mohammed Ali immediately corrects her mistake emphasizing Bradford, England instead of London. Miss Rahena's sense of belonging about Mustafa drives her away from her Pakistani identity. In this sense, it is evident that one identifies himself or herself with the group to which he / she belongs. Additionally, one also identifies himself or herself with the values of that group. As an immigrant, Mustafa is the symbol of a cultural identity which is not pure, anymore. In this sense, it is considered that Mustafa represents a culturally hybrid identity with his label as 'Mustafa Dar of Bradford, England'. The juxtaposition of Bradford and Mustafa directly refers to a postcolonial situation and it is a reflection of multiculturalism symbolically. At this point, the immigrants show themselves as in-between identities that try to find a place. However, Miss Rahena has a meeting at the consulate without interfering with Mohammed Ali. Unfortunately, her application is turned down because she could not answer any of the questions correctly. Another reason lies in the fact that her English is not enough for a good communication. This reveals that British government receives those who can speak their language quite well in immigration admission.

#### **4. Conclusion**

It is evident that migration is a supply and demand issue between the receiving country and the sending country. As a matter of fact, Ravenstein links migration directly to the push and pull process. Immigrants coming from the Commonwealth countries to the United Kingdom have been attracted to England's rich industry and economy. However, the immigrants will be foreigners of the country to which they will pass because the labels

loaded on them have marginalized the immigrants. In this sense, Miss Rahena's desire to immigrate to England in Rushdie's story is an indication of her desire to live in better conditions. Although Miss Rahena wants to go to her fiancé who lives in England, she knows very little about him. When she last saw him, she was nine years old. Even his voice on the phone sounds foreign to Rahena now. She explains this as such: "Mustafa Dar went to England and said he would send for me. That was many years ago. I have his photo, but he is like a stranger to me. Even his voice, I do not recognize it on the phone" (Rushdie, 2011: 23). In the story it is understood that people of Pakistan who want to immigrate to England know that westerners have negative views about them. Mohammed Ali says that an immigrant is a person who is not trusted by English people. Although Muhammad Ali is not a reliable person, he learns such a kind of prejudice as a result of his experiences with British people. However, Miss Rahena behaves as honest as she can to avoid being labelled like that.

As a result, the immigrant is at the center of the dilemma of the self and the other, and she/he is in a secondary position in the country of immigration even at the application stage as in the case of Miss Rahena. Furthermore, it is clear that the social definition of the immigrant is caught between the approval and rejection patterns as it is understood from Mohammed Ali's words used to define immigrants in England. It is claimed that European identity including British identity sees itself as the subject of modern knowledge. This sense of self alienates the people outside Europe. Immigrants from countries that were dissolved after colonialism have been the main subjects of the related problems with immigration for a long time. So, it is considered that the foreigner will be always in comparison with the local one and will be subject to discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization from the first step to the last in the immigration process as in the story of Rushdie. Thus, it can be deduced that immigrants become injured persons because of being marginalized and can have psychological, social, and cultural problems due to their negative and humiliating experiences in the country they immigrated.

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