

**Exploration of Magic Realism in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*: A Study**

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**Abstract**

Salman Rushdie is one of the major voices of 20th Century Indian Diasporic Writings. He got Booker of the Bookers prize in 1993 for *Midnight's Children*. The political events of modern India have been reflected very minutely in this novel. It has been narrated by a young man born at the stroke of midnight when India got freedom. The novel has been regarded as autobiographical as the protagonist Saleem has close resemblance with Salman Rushdie. The fantasy has been presented as a reality. The elements of magic realism have been used in this novel very graphically.

**Key Words:** Magic Realism, Fantasy, Reality, Myth, Post modernism.

Salman Rushdie is one of the major voices of 20th Century Indian Diasporic writings. He got Booker of the Bookers prize in 1993 for *Midnight's Children*. The novel has been translated in twelve languages. It covers a period of seventy years from the time of Indian's independence to the declaration of Emergency. The political events of modern India have been reflected very minutely in this novel. It has been narrated by a young man born at the stroke of midnight when India got freedom. The novel has been regarded as autobiographical as the protagonist Saleem has close resemblance with Salman Rushdie. The novel attacks on the rules of the three countries, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The manifold identity of India has been focused.

*-----One of the most important novels to come out of the English speaking world in this generation. India has found her Gunter Grass. So it should so certainly involve itself with aspects of the most crucial critical/theoretical debates of its day. (Wilson 138)*

The novel has first person narrative. The characters have been introduced before they perform their roles. A sharp suspense has been created. The fantasy has been presents as a reality. The blending of the magical and real elements is vivid in the beginning of the novel. The elements of magical realism have been explored with keen interest here.

The narrative of the novel reflects both the story of the narrator's life and the mirror of the life of India. Saleem presents a distinction between two modes that is realism and magic. "Saleem significantly eschews a purely linear chronological mode of narration in favour of one which veers between past, present and future, presenting not only the arrival of events and characters which will later be revealed, but also his own annihilation." (Ong 28)

The magical talk of Tai, the boat man presents the narrative of the novel very brilliantly. Rushdie wants to present Tai as a representative of old and pre colonial India. Tai declares that he is very old and 'has

watched the mountains being born' and 'seen emperors die'. (MC 13)

*"Tai is getting nearer. He, who revealed the power of the nose, and he who is bringing my grandfather the message which will catapult him into his future, is stroking his shikara through the early morning lake."* (MC 13)

Rushdie expresses the elements of magic realism in this novel very graphically. The very first sentence of the narrator of this novel shows the technique used by Rushdie.

*I was born in the city of Bombay... once upon a time. No, that Won't do, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th 1947. And the Time? The time matters, too. Well them: at night. No, it's important to be more...on the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact.* (MC 9)

The very first sentence describes the realistic way of narration but the second expresses the narrative as a fairy tale, a fantasy. It represents the social realism of 19th century. The novel introduces the birth of Saleem but soon it moves thirty two years to 1915 with the story of Saleem's grandfather Aadam Aziz's marriage. The element of magic realism is found in this novel as the two opposite worlds of fantasy and reality. Rushdie claims:

*The fantastic is easily discerned in Midnight's Children. Through it, the realistic makes its voice heard. The thousand and one children point not only towards the fantasy of the*

*similarly numbered, Arabian Nights, but also Rushdie's calculations of the Indian birth rate. He estimated that 'a thousand and one children an hour is roughly accurate* (Rushdie 23)

Obviously, in a magic realist novel, "a battle between two oppositional systems takes place, each working towards the creation of a fictional world from the other." (Stephen 11)

Time plays an important role in this novel. There is a backward and forward movement of time in this novel. Time for Saleem is significant.

*Time, in any experience, has been as variable and inconstant... no people whose word for 'yesterday' is the same as their word for 'tomorrow' can be said to have a firm grip on the time.* (MC 106)

Rushdie presents the elements magic realism by the mixing the really and fantasy, twisting time, and by including myth and folklore. He uses this technique to solve the problems of postcolonial life.

Hybridity plays a significant role in this novel. The life of Saleem becomes microcosm of post independent India. The novel is considered as an allegory of the history of India. Saleem has magical power and vision. His physical construction and deformed shape shows the political map of India.

*Rushdie's novel explodes the notion of a nation having a stable identity and a single history, and then invites a skeptical, provisional faith in the nation that it has exploded.* (Mukherjee 461)

Magic realism expresses the reality with the help of various magic metaphors. "Amina is a

drift in a sea that consists of 'waves of excitement' and 'hollow of fear'" (MC 112). The use of metaphor is expressed in the statement of Saleem: "Suppose yourself in a large cinema" (MC 164), "I become a sort of radio" (164), or "I seem to be stuck with this radio metaphor" (MC 221). Metaphor has been used very frequently in this novel.

The narrative changes between first person and the third person, natural becomes unnatural or supernatural. The novel is full of hidden clues and old utterance which always seems pointing towards some conclusion. This novel can be described in one way as a fantasy. The narrator is presented here as a magician. 'The parallel drawn between Saleem's growing up and the development of the newly independent India would normally be best understood as metaphor. (Jackson 40)

The novel is completely political: "The political figures that appear Indira Gandhi, her son Sanjay, Morarji Desai, etc. are monsters straight out of a night mare." (Jackson 40)

Myth is relevant in this novel: "Midnight's Children achieves a successful fusion of east and west in term of both form and content. (Cundy 26)

The chief characters Parvati and Shiva in the novel represent to the Hindu gods. The goddess Parvati obtained her husband through great perseverance and provoked him into creating their child, being essential for the conservation of the world. Rushdie's Parvati action is similar to the goddess Parvati:

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*Parvati ... oiled his moustache, caressed his knees and after all that produced a dinner of biryani so exquisite that (Shiva) Devoted his undivided attentions to her for four whole months. (MC 411)*

In this novel the son of Parvati Aadam Sinai is born with big ears: "ears so colossally huge (that) people believed) ... that is the head of tiny elephant ... he was the true son of Shiva and Parvati: he was elephant - headed Ganesh". (MC 419) We are reminded here the Hindu mythology. Furthermore the rival between Saleem and Shiva expresses the relationship between the Hindu deities, Brahma and Shiva. The novel unfolds an aesthetic competition between Saleem and Shiva. Brahma dreams the world, was Shiva allows it to exist by declining to use his power towards its annihilation. The myth of Ganesh, Characters of Ravana: goddess Laxmi, Lord Narayana also find vivid expression in the novel. The novel exhibits the element of magical and supernatural elements also. Magic and references to ancient myth control and balance the narrative.

#### Conclusion

*Midnight's Children* express the technique of magical realism to solve the problem of post colonial life. The novel explores the life of Saleem and events of Indian history. Saleem's birth, growth, development, and destruction are India's. The novel is full of individuals who are gifted with magical power. There is vivid description of blending the magical and the real elements.

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