

## **A Pragmatic Portrayal of Indian Culture, Politics, History and Magical Realism in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children* – A Critical Study**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Salman Rushdie's most renowned second novel **Midnight Children** (1981) succeeds the prominent Booker McConnell Prize for fiction in 1981. He has shown his accessory towards Indianans and high level of theoretical uniformity through his novels. Rushdie's novel always carries a strong attachment towards Indian social, cultural, political supernatural phenomena. **Midnight Children** is an autobiographical; post colonial and political novel of Salman Rushdie which in relation to India, the nation of his childhood. The novel explores Indian culture, politics, history, fantasy, imagination, stream-consciousness, myths, magical realism and author's dream about Bombay city. The novel also investigates the hallucinating delight of the citizens which conveys the proper termination of the British rule and the birth of Indian independent nation at accurate hour of the midnight in 1947. Through the character of Saleem Sinai, major events of pre-independence era have been presented by Rushdie. Saleem is constantly thinking of reason because of his supernatural powers. Saleem is a representation of newly independent India, full of pledge and high hope. This research paper aims to explore the multifaceted themes of the novel **Midnight Children** written by Salman Rushdie.

### **KEYWORDS:**

Magical Realism, India, Fantasy, Dream, Culture, Myth, Supernatural, History, Politics, Culture, Midnight

## INTRODUCTION:

Indian Literature is a mixture of written and by word of mouth recitation forms. The novels written by Indian authors are overflowing with social, philosophical and aesthetic framework. Almost all the novels in Indian writing in English consist of historical background. The purpose of Indian novel is to amuse and restructuring the society. Indian novels play a vital role in the society that is to teach and improve the new society with new ideals. Majority of Indian novelists imitate Sir Walter Scott for his historical and romantic theme. For example The Indian novel **Kanthapura** (1938) is the mixture of both myth and historical background of India, explores the colonizer's opinion about India. The novel also explores the Britishers brutal atrocities that how they exploited the nation:

There, on the blue waters, they say, our carted cardamoms  
and coffee get into the ships the Red-men bring, and, so they  
say, they go across the seven oceans into the countries where  
Our rulers live. Cart after cart groans through the roads of **Kanthapura**....(1)

The rouse of autonomy in 1947, ensuing generations, have appropriated and indigenized English culture and the English language in the most fertile and creative way. The presence of Salman Rushdie (1947- ) has been commended as the brand of the development in Indian Writing in English and familiar in writing Indian familiarity, use of Indian languages with more and more Indianans. Rushdie's trialing with language is one of his amazing accomplishments. As M. L. Raina says "No Indian novelist has had the gaiety and joyousness of Rushdie" His writings are sparkler apparent that he doesn't give place to political quietism and follows spirited action. He has come forward in modern years, as a persuasive, multifaceted and influential writer because of his astonishing choice and profundity, his multi-dimensional wordiness and his classic concerns.

Salman Rushdie's **Midnight Children** is a fictional creative which reveals the fictional techniques such as historical, political, metaphysical and psychological. The novel presents magical realism and takes an integrated approach within a given and conventional view of India, as a secular nation with civilization and culture of multiculturalism and acceptance towards other religions. The novel earns the international recognition and won the prestigious Booker McConnell prize for fiction in 1981 and is flagged as a literary work of genius. The novel also gains an ocean of assessment, analyses, articles, discussion, celebrations and red carpet welcome

and commendation both in India and all over the world. The novel ranked Salman Rushdie with Charles Dickens, Jane Eyre, and many other prestigious writers and gained popularity in the history of Indian Writing in English. Rushdie's aspire of writing **Midnight Children** is to found an interrelationship among private lives and public events, to investigate development of the protagonist.

Rushdie's **Shame**, **Midnight Children** and **Haroun** also hold mythological pattern and allusion. It is being noted that Rushdie has made quite a lot of visits to Pakistan, a comprehensive one of five months in 1974 before started writing the novel **Midnight Children**. Though his parents are Pakistanis, he made himself as a regular visitor to Pakistan. **Salman Rushdie** acted as a customary Arabic Story teller. The Satire of the story is great sharper. Rushdie has made amazing achievement on Indian Language.

"No Indian novelist has had the courage to handle English language with the gaiety and joyousness of Rushdie" (Rushdie 6)

Rushdie's aim of writing **Midnight Children** is to create an inter-relational ship between confidential lives and community events. In all his novels he beautifully describes how history influences individual deed and how individual deed influences history of a nation. Rushdie accepts that his novels have been filled with history. As R. S. Pathak Says, "It seems to me that everything his books have to do with politics and the relationship of the individuals and history". (28)

The novel has seemed to readers like the zenith of Indian writing in English and its tradition. **Midnight Children** is about Indian autonomy, separation and its effects. It also deals about the past 70 year life of Indian people. But unfortunately the Indian partition brings out the tragic development of Indian people. The novel also witnesses how the tragic events of partition events become the important factor in Indian history. Rushdie is the only writer in English from the post colonial world to write without personal expertise of colonialism.

Magical Realism comes under the category of imaginative genre. This genre is filled with fantasy, magical, unbelievable, unrealistic and unscientific elements. The author of the genre adapted the different world that we can only imagine. We should have a third eye for understanding the magical realistic concepts. The third eye should be used to recognize and value the writings of the so called magical realistic writers. The appearance of phantom, angels, witches, spiritual rituals, hell, paradise, ecstasy, nightmare, flights, thought transference,

invisibility, alteration of substance into mind to depict the phantasmagoric realities, aliens, preceding birth, birth after demise, cemetery celebrations, good and bad angels, under world concepts and unoriginal experiences like speaking and practiced with God and Satan, all can be believed in Magical Realism. Almost all the post modernist writers have used the concept of magical realism. In the words of Madan M. Sarma: “In **Midnight children** Rushdie, in fact, presents intensified images of reality as he sees it in the Indian sub-continent in the decades preceding and following India’s independence. The disparate materials pertaining to those times of political upheaval, popular upsurge, growing, optimism, and chaotic developments that often bordered on the fantastic could not have been woven together by any other method but that of fantasy” (54)

Magical Realism converts the general, and every day events into illusory and outrageous one. These Magical fundamentals are borrowed from the Hindu, Christian and Muslim and Greek literary sources. Rushdie uses the fantasy as a descriptive strategy. Rushdie’s novels puzzle the elements of both magical and reality. The novel begins with the fairy story telling: “I was born in the city of Bombay....Once upon a time” and then scrupulously bring in data, time and place to validate his record, that he was born “in Doctor narlikar’s Nursing Home on August 15<sup>th</sup> 1947... on the stroke of mid-night” (Rushdie 9). The novel abounds the sentences like “ I am flying across the city... I am winging towards the Old Ford” (Rushdie 103). “Inside the basket of invisibility, I Saleem Sinai...Vanished.....Disappeared. Dematerialized. Like a djinn” (Rushdie 381), “I am the bomb in Bombay, watch me explode” (Rushdie 463), which are all establish the magical and imaginative elements of the novel. Imperceptible or disappearing appears to be a distinguishing characteristic that persist all through the novel. Nadir Kahan vanishes from the underworld leaving behind a note; Adam Aziz disappears and so does Mary Pereira. Saleem says, “I in a basket, disappeared but Laylah or Parvati went without the assistance of spells” (Rushdie 381). Saleem has the influence of genii. Among the children born at midnight some had the “Powers of transmutation, flight, prophecy and wizardry....”( Rushdie 200). Through the character of Saleem, Rushdie brings out the real face of Bombay that is the rebellion and the aggression which accompanies. Indian Politics, brutality, prejudice and aggression of the Indian people are the key factors of Book I in **Midnight Children**. He doesn’t fail to satire the nation reform board which split India which divides the India on the basis of language spoken by Indian People. The establishment of Jallianwala Bagh tragedy and the battle amid India and Pakistan in

Book II shows his concern toward nation and its history. Saleem's family was assaulted during the war that makes him to recognize his identity. Threat of the communist party to Congress, decline of Congress after Nehru's death, India's Emergency period all these violence has been shown by Rushdie through the character of Dr. Adam Aziz and Saleem Sinai. Beneath the administration of Mrs. Gandhi how India's democratic system has been spoiled is exposed in Book III which shows the images of destruction, waste and exhaustion as V. B. Salunke writes: "The sense that one has at the end of the book is that of fatigue, tiresomeness, and disgust and destruction. The story of the hopes and despairs caused by the miraculous power in the **Midnight Children** is a brilliant experimentation in the philosophy of power. Bertrand Russell for the first time could understand the corrupting influences of political power. He understood the necessity of taming the power. Salman Rushdie pleads the same principle by presenting it in a dynamic manner".(11)

Saleem is recognized as a Buddha by his peaceful appearance. He is bitten by a snake and it returns his reminiscence. He meets Parvati one of the midnight's children and married him. She becomes envious after come to know about Saleem's supernatural powers. So she destroys all the midnight children except Saleem.

"its distinguishing feature from literary realism is that, it fuses the two opposing aspects of the oxymoron (the magical and the realist) together to form one new perspective.....magic(al) realism is often considered to be a disruptive narrative mode" (Bowers, Maggie Ann ) (Magic(al)Realism 3)

The birth of Saleem Sinai is an exclusive occurrence in this novel. Rushdie was instinctive to put in writing this work of fiction, Saleem Sinai, who born at the midnight in the accurate hour of India's autonomy. Rushdie was born on June 19, 1947 into wealthy Muslim relative and on the same day the British Colonizers has bid Farwell to India. Saleem has supernatural ability by which he can go into the brains of others and recognize the private clandestine of citizens. The one thousand and one Midnight's children are predictable to create India an enormous country by their supernatural powers. Jawaharlal Nehru writes a communication to Saleem Sinai that his destiny would be observed, as it was linked with the destiny of India. He is hounded by his "tangible historically-verifiable past" (Rushdie 515). He says that "we cannot think our way out of our past" would be symptomatic of a kind of collective failure of imagination". (Rushdie 136-137). An unbiased individual would be able to repeal the

whole range of occasion and will not be fixed to his history alone “I am balanced one more” confides Saleem, “the base of isosceles triangle is secure. I hover at the apex, above present and past.” (Rushdie 515). **Midnight Children** novel brings out the mythological narrative strategy with Indian political and historical scenario. Rushdie uses the chapter heading “Many Headed Monsters”, which reveals the evil deeds of Ravana in **Ramayana**. The chapter “Revelations” explores the “The Revelations of St. John, the Divine” the final book of the New Testament”.

Saleem’s life parallels a major fate of India. **Midnight Children** may be considered autobiographical novel because there are so many co-incidental activities happened in the life of Saleem and Rushdie. Saleem is a symbolic figure of India lives all his life in subcontinent, whereas Rushdie’s father sends him to learn at Rugby in England at the age of fourteen. He went to Cambridge to learn History. He undergoes pain whatever happens to India. Here, Saleem’s Indianness is being compared with Rushdie’s Britishness. Hence, Rushdie has used India’s Independence and the Midnight birth of Indian children is one of the major themes of the novel. All these children believe that they all have particular supremacy, as their destiny is connected with the destiny of new India, and they can manipulate the fate of the country completely, but the past forces do not permit this, and the independence and self-respect of the individual spirit, which they stand for, is almost condensed and conquered. Saleem possesses a large nose, which helps him to sniff history. He acquires this gift, after an accident in the washing-chest. He recalls his family history who all possessing long nose, starting from grandfather, Adam Aziz.

Saleem’s nose (you can’t have forgotten) could smell stranger things than horse-dung. The perfumes of emotions and ideas, the adoul of how-things were; all those were and are nosed out by me with ease. When the constitution was altered to give the Prime-Minister well-nigh-absolute power, I smelled the ghosts of ancient empires in the air (Rushdie 8)

Rushdie explains the idea of character and depicts Saleem Sinai as an outrageously strange auto biographical narrator-protagonist who behaves accordingly in an overexcited trend, metamorphosing from one to another in an enduring condition of change and unsteadiness character. The novel depicts the three generations of Saleem’s family.

The presentation of cities like Bombay, Srinagar, Karachi, Delhi, and Dacca shows the author’s energetic career in literature. He presents the chronological and environmental sketch of Bombay throughout his novels. Rushdie believes that the moment of independence that India got electric power with the supernatural supremacy to be granted on the new born babies is born during

that amazing moment. One thousand and one babies are born during that astonishing hour. These One thousand and one children are anticipated to lead India to wealth and magnificence. Rushdie was instinctive to put in writing this work of fiction. It is noted that Saleem Sinai, the supreme patron, has the unbelievable authority of entering into the brain of others and perceptive of secrete thoughts and emotions. The Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti and its demonstration in Bombay are ended memorable by additional information with novel. The integration of different private stories comes to look like the intertextuality of the book itself. **Midnight Children** is a classic that extents the recent six decades and six generations of India's pre and post colonial of history. The novel is like a container which contains the innumerable myth and stories of India.

A main peculiarity that must be made in examining the description in **Midnight Children** is how the narrator Saleem works on two levels of allegory. The nature of Saleem can be interpreted as the substantial personification of India. Saleem's ability to infiltrate the minds of all the midnight children complicates the allegory. All the 1001 midnight children can be read as an allegory for the nation: "Midnight's children can be made to represent many things.....; but what they must not become is the bizarre creation of rambling diseased mind" Rushdie (230). Saleem turn out to be the speaker whose occupation is to light up the relationships amid the events, proceedings, and information of the departing British all the way through India.

## CONCLUSION:

Expanding on the fictional custom of the West, Rushdie wrote the parable historiography of post-independent India in **Midnight's Children** through beautiful techniques and he follow the huge custom of Sterne, Dickens and James Joyce. The myth in the novel though is not the main represent factors, and by no means is it a legendary novel. The myth appears in the form of episode title, imaginary characters, chequered patterns and energetic descriptions in the fabulous framework. It is a book about India that must be skilled, pragmatic and acted in response to in its entire varied steadiness extended beyond mythology, civilization, marvelous fantasies and cruel certainty. **Midnight's Children** is a attempt of Rushdie to write the brilliant historiography of post-independent India. Rushdie's revelation of fairy tale and of the other genre has been appreciated by critics. Saleem's prediction about the prospect of India and its Children of Midnight support the skepticism that Rushdie approve all through the novel. The explanations of India in a gloomy tone give details the novel's structure in a advance glancing approach. The end of Saleem's story is no hesitation miserable evocative of the beat of the human strength. Rushdie

presents the final pages of the novel as an emergence of a newer, harder and more realistic generation.

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