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Celebration of Culture and Myth in
Salman Rushdie's Novel *Midnight's Children*

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ABSTRACT

Salman Rushdie is one among the most prominent Indian contemporary writers. He is an illustrious winner of both the Booker Prize and James Tait Black Memorial Prize. The theme of this novel vividly portrays the British's colonisation over India. The novel starts with the events from the midnight of Independence as the children born in that particular night are having some special powers. The Protagonist of this novel, Saleem Sinai is born on August 15th 1947, when India got its independence from the British. Saleem Sinai's birth, life struggles and his death are analysed in this study. Salman Rushdie has chronologically entwined characters from the India's culture with the characters of western culture. Here, we see the importance Salman Rushdie gives to the Culture and Myth as he portrays the colonisation of people in India and its transition.

KEY WORDS

Magical realism, historical fiction, satire, post colonialism, independence, culture.

INTRODUCTION

Salman Rushdie is one among the most prominent novelists of the Contemporary India. He had published several novels of international repute. They include *Midnight's Children*, *Shame*, *Satanic Verses*, *The Moors Last Sigh*, *Ground Beneath Her Feet*, *Fury* etc. Salman Rushdie is also a winner of many prestigious prizes and awards. The most notable works among them is the Booker of Bookers his second novel *Midnight's Children* (1981) which is our topic.

This novel *Midnight's Children* contains the story of three generations of the family of Saleem Sinai, protagonist of the novel. He narrates the story to Padma who is his present lover. Saleem Sinai and Padma work in the pickle factory of Mrs Braganza who was Saleem's former nurse under the name Mary Pierera. Saleem Sinai works in the factory at the day time and narrates the story at the night time. His grandfather Aadam Aziz and his grandmother Nazeem Aziz belong to the first generation, their children and their counterparts to the second generation. Next is our protagonist Saleem Sinai who belongs to the third generation. This novel is not narrated in the chronological order of the generations. This is a novel, that talks about a man who is born on the midnight of 14-15 August in 1947. The biography of a man is from its inception, therefore, entwined with that of the nation. The conscious narrator, Saleem Sinai, provides an alternative view of India's modern history from his point of view. The protagonist was born in the Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947. The time of his birth is important because it is mysteriously handcuffed to the history. Thus Saleem's birth is the fateful moment in Indian history, because his life story moves in the same timeframe as that of the newly independent nation. In Saleem's version of history he draws upon the Indian mythology and the supernatural events, endows the midnight's children with their magical power, and gives a fairy tale opening "Once upon a time".. Salman Rushdie challenges the Western conventions of unity, continuity, and objectivity in writing history. The dichotomy between the history and the fiction gets blurred. In this novel Indian scene inspired by Post-Modern tendencies the trend of what is called metafiction is seen.

ANALYSIS

'Midnight's Children' is the second novel of Rushdie. It is an epic that spans the six decades

and almost three generations of India's pre- and postcolonial twentieth-century history. It is an epic in the sense that it tries to describe India and its stories which are too innumerable. "the narrator gives the hint that stories are developing out of other stories. This novel symbolises author's own childhood. This novel tells about his affection for the city of Bombay in those times. It is a novel about the various cities of Indian subcontinent. It is recognised for its remarkable, flexible and innovative use of English language. This novel has the chronologically entwined characters from the India's cultural history with the characters from Western culture. The Indian culture, religion and storytelling, Western drama and cinema are presented with postcolonial Indian history, in order to examine both the effect of the indigenous and non-indigenous cultures on the Indian mind and in the bright future of Indian independence.

The mythical past and the democratic norms mingle with each other for lending a touch of great tension in the novel. The metaphorical vein makes to explicit the moral and ethical stand proffered by the novelist. Salman Rushdie uses the myth of Brahma in connection with the *Midnight's Children* in Saleem Sinai's mind. This is a clue to the improbable world which is created by the narrator who had turned into protagonist. Saleem Sinai's statement has an exegetic quality. Rushdie aims to place beginning and middle in the end. It acquires the characteristic of 'open endedness'.

This novel sets the ontological priority of becoming the realm of apparent. Rushdie used the epic in mythic form. Rushdie quotes ironically a "strategy of liberation." This also becomes a "comic" one. The tragedy masks are too painful to be otherwise expressed. It is a mythical and surreal one, its realism "would break a writer's heart." This would also be "an exercise in complete and contained mimesis" because of its emphasis on wholeness. This would be ultimately worthless as it is an allegory of the history of modern India.

The novel moves around the magical lives of 1,001 children who are born within the country's first hour of independence from Great Britain on 15th August 1947. The history becomes clear in the names of the three important midnight's Children- Saleem Sinai, Shiva and Parvati. Saleem Sinai's name itself has a variety of interpretations, one of them being the association with Mount Sinai and Moses.. Saleem's sister is called the Brass Monkey which brings in the idea of Hanuman.. For a long time Saleem's sister is loyal to Saleem. There is an inversion because the brother and sister tread different paths. The brass Monkey sings for the benefit of the Pakistan army while Saleem returns to India

CONCLUSION

Salman Rushdie concludes this novel with an experiment about the broader implications of Mythical History with different perceptions. The views of the aesthetic and the mythological pleasure, a theoretical research framework, creative interpretative, expounding controversies and a value-judgment, the research has been devised. This novel is moved into the terms of artistic, thematic and critical categories to bring out the precise implications of the Rushdiean concepts of Mythical History. The ends are new beginnings. The beginnings are seen in ends. It is because each end is the beginning of a new story. So the narrative must be circular, never-ending. Thus Salman Rushdie highlights the Indian culture and the Western culture. His major preference is Indian culture so he explains how the protagonist stands for the culture, Saleem even though he is not an Indian born to Indian parents, he respects the Indian culture and stands for it.

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