

# Magical Realism Reflected in the Salman Rushdie's Novel *Midnight's Children*

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**ABSTRACT:** Salman Rushdie, one of the most notorious writers of Indian Diaspora, settled in England, shot into fame through his stunning success, *Midnight's Children*. The symbolic novel *The Satanic Verses* infuriated Muslim fundamentalists who issued a fatwa sentencing Rushdie to death. The literary significance of *Midnight's Children* is linked with a style of writing or technique that incorporates magical or supernatural events into realistic narrative without questioning the improbability of the events. *Midnight's Children* won for him Booker of Bookers prize in 1993. In 2008 it was selected as The Best of Bookers. This paper attempts to show how the concept of **magic realism** is applicable to *Midnight's Children* and its impact to the literary work. The attribution of physical attributes to abstract the inner entities is well reflected. Various themes and elements of magic realism like the themes of diversity, dislocation, immigration and disintegration are symbolically used in various incidents in the text.

**Keywords:** magical realism, midnight children, postcolonialism

## I. INTRODUCTION

Magic realism is a fictional movement connected with a style of writing that incorporates paranormal proceedings into realistic narrative without questioning the implausibility of the events. Magic Realism is a mythical movement connected with a style of writing or performance that incorporates magical or paranormal events into realistic narrative without questioning the questionability of the events. Magic realism is related to, but characteristic from, surrealism, due to its focus on the material object and the actual existence of things in the world, as opposed to the more cerebral, psychological and subconscious reality that the surrealists explored [1].

Rushdie uses the sequence of events style in magic realism in *Midnight Children* with fantasy blended in real life. **He uses the narrative technique of magic realism in *Midnight Children* to blur the dissimilarity between fantasy and reality.** He gives an equal acceptance for the ordinary and the extraordinary. He fuses lyrical and, at times, fantastic writing with an examination of the character of human existence and hidden criticism of society, particularly the cream of the crop. Rushdie can be considered as a writer who plays with the description technique of magic realism. He has earned every right to be called one of the greatest magic realists ever [1-2]. *Midnight's Children* is a fictitious reaction to a series of real life conditions that have been ingeniously fictionalized through insinuations, disguised as well as direct, to the country's recent and not so recent past. The novel has an impressive sweep covering about Sixty years in the history of the Indian subcontinent. The time from the Jallianwala Bagh incident to April, 1919 to the birth of the protagonist, Saleem, on 15 August, 1947 is portrayed in Book one; the end of the Indo-Pakistan war in September, 1965, is covered in his second book and book three envelops the period up to the end of the Emergency in March, 1977, and includes the Bangladesh war as well [3]. This paper is an attempt to analyse critically the magical realism in the Salman Rushdie's Novel *Midnight's Children*.

### A. *Historicism in the novel*

The term Historicism was coined by the American critic Stephen Greenblatt, whose book *Renaissance Self Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare* (1980) is considered beginning in this direction. Although, Peter Barry defined it is a method of the 'parallel' reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period [3-4]. Literary 'foreground' and a historical 'background' in literary and non-literary texts are given equal weight and constantly inform or interrogate each other in the present era. Barry is of opinion that "*the practice of giving 'equal weighting' to literary and non-literary material is the first and major difference between the new and old historicism*". The previous approaches made a hierarchical separation between the literary text, which was the object of value, the jewel, as it were, and the historical 'background,' which was merely the setting, and by definition of lesser worth. .... [5].

Midnight's Children portrays the proceedings and knowledge in the lives of three generations of the Sinai family after the fictional level. The day begins in Srinagar and follows their passage through Amritsar, Agra and Bombay to Karachi from where Saleem alone returns concealed in the basket of Parvati, the witch, only to experience the terrors of the tragedy that had been forced in India. The commingling of autobiography and narrative, the striking breach of chronology and the search for identity and the meaning of life is well depicted in the novel for the taste of readers. The frequent forward or backward shift in time that makes it difficult to trace the proper sequence of events in the life of the protagonist are critically seen by various novelists in the novel. In the beginning, after the date of his birth, the narrator somersaults to his thirty-first birthday. He then dives deep into the past only to return to the present, and then to embark upon the future.

### ***B. Postcolonial Environments in Midnight's Children***

The status of a perfect postcolonial text in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is known for its brilliant use of magic realism. The issue of split identity and conflict of immigration is beautifully depicted in his novels. The idea of nation" has always been the central concern in his imaginary and non imaginary writing. **With magical realism, postcolonial writers are able to challenge realistic narrative and present an alternative reality.**

The description framework of *Midnight's Children* consists of tale which Saleem Sinai recounts orally to his wife to-be Padma. This self-referential narrative recalls aboriginal Indian culture with similarity to Arabian Nights as is well recognised from the text of Salam Rushdie's. In this novel, the mixing of the fantastic and ordinary, which is an aspect of magical realism, seems Indian as the characters involved in contemporary political and social turmoil also have the power of mythic heroes. In the initial phase of the novel, there is a fine passage as an example for this mixing of the real and fantastic [1,6].

The window of the room to fall and causes on his enemy's eyes to crack and fallout Mian Abdullah's humming without a pause is a delusion like quality due to the mixing of real life with fantastic elements. Sexuality in the novel has been depicted in different tune to align with magical realism as is seen that Amina is having fears of getting a child with a cauliflower in its head instead of brain. We also come across another strange washerwoman Durga whose breasts are colossal and inexhaustible with a torrent of milk. **The novel remains a continuous and subtle enquiry of the relations between order, reality and fantasy. The narrator Saleem constantly relates his life to that of his country India. His nativity, growth, development and destruction are related to that of India.** The various other characters too seem to stroll through the pages of history, colliding with necessary events in the development of India seemingly by accident. Thus, Saleem's grandfather is on his knees after a mighty sneeze when Brigadier Dyer's fifty machine-gunners open fire in the Amritsar massacre of 1919; it is Saleem's father who buys one of Methworld's villas; Saleem is born at the moment India is; and almost all of the major events of his life, leading finally to the devastation of the *Midnight's Children* and also India at the moment of announcement of Emergency are accidental to developments in the new country. Saleem and India must deal with genealogical perplexity as they move violently to construct their identities [6].

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## **II. CONCLUSION**

The course of Indian writing in English is highly influenced by Salman Rushdie's and he has attained a very important position in the literary field with a high respectable place in the reader's heart. *Midnight's Children* was truly a fate changing novel for Rushdie and a typical example of a postcolonial novel that mixes the elements of magic realism into it. The authors deliberate use of magic realism helps in bringing out the surreal and unreal dimensions of the Indian subcontinent and thereby making it a postcolonial work. Rushdie's use of magic realism makes *Midnight's Children* the more attractive and gives a fantastical element to the book. Fantasy is intentionally used so as to exceed the reality. Magicrealism helped the author to speak the unspeakable.

Various themes and elements of magicrealism like the themes of diversity, dislocation, immigration, disintegration are symbolically used in various incidents in the text. The elements of pity and fear, time and space, sketch, eroticism, reappearance, all give an unrivalled beauty to this novel. The use of poetic language is worth noticing in this regard. Rushdie used magic realism as an effective tool to resolve the problems of postcolonialism. So, by connecting and combining historical events, mythological stories and fictional narratives, Rushdie tries to create and convey a true

picture of Indian postcolonialism and Indians as a monolithic place and people, the novel illustrates India's multiplicity and diversity, in an attempt to overturn the colonial image of India.

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