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Salman Rushdie. An Anthology of Critical Essays in New Millennium

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INTRODUCTION

The Novels of Salman Rushdie: A Postcolonial Reading

Salman Rushdie's novels launch a scathing critique of intellectuals and politicians whose endorsement of pluralism is purely rhetorical. Rushdie shows that people who claim to promote unity are actually complicit in creating ethnic strife. Rushdie wants a productive, inclusive cosmopolitanism that can have serious unintended consequences. (Trousdale 91)

Rushdie may epitomize the migrant writer par excellence with all its potential for reinventing the world and the subject of human identity, but the Rushdie affair also places him in a position in which he seems to personify the flip side of globalization—that is, the clash of civilizations, the increasing gap between cultures, and the proliferation of fundamentalism. (Frank 132)

The winner of the Booker Prize (1981), the Booker of Bookers (1993) and the Best of the Bookers (2008) and, of late, the PEN Pinter (2014), the name that has dominated the literary world since establishing himself as a leading exemplum of postcolonial, postmodern and diaspora writings, is the renegade, Sir Ahmed Salman Rushdie. Famous for multifarious writing, he himself is a multifaceted personality, often emerges as an unpredictable figure with an unfathomable depth of creativity and criticism. Being an iconoclast, Rushdie never chooses the trodden road: he rather plunges headstrong into the unexplored territories of literature, not yet attempted. For the Booker, he never ran the race rather he reached the zenith of the success by bagging the same for *Midnight's Children* in 1981. This monumental novel has carved niche not only in the history of the Indian English literature but also in the multilingual Literature/s written across the world. Rushdie played a ground-breaking role in new beginnings—the blending of history with fiction and magic realism. With him begins the era of new writings, new experiments giving him a new identity—the postmodern figure and a progenitor of new generation—the 'midnight's children'. Not only his works but he himself also is a postmodern product—a blend of a god for literary aestheticians and a Satan for religious aestheticians. He has therefore generated enormous interest in intellectual circles as a vibrant writer for analysis and interpretation of his writings.

He is a recipient of the 'Booker' from the judges of literary art, 'hooker' from political commercials and 'Fatwa' from the self-declared custodians of Islam, of Allah. He is a fighter combating with his two selves—the inner and the outer, and also at the same time with the external world for his *The Satanic Verses*. His literary dictatorship entangles him into controversies, and arrows of words penetrating his heart and mind compelling him for introspection. However, Rushdie defends himself at an appearance at 92nd Street Y, expressing his views on copyright while answering a question whether he had considered copyright law barriers (impediments) to free speech:

No but that's because I write for a living, (laughs) and have no other source of income, and I naively believe that stuff that I create belongs to me, and that if you want it you might have to give me some cash. [â€¦] My view is I do this for a living. The thing wouldn't exist if I didn't make it and so it belongs to me and don't steal it. You know. It's my stuff.¹

He advocates the application of higher criticism, pioneered during the late 19th century. In a guest opinion piece printed in *The Washington Post* and "The Times" in mid-August 2005, Rushdie called for a reform in Islam:

What is needed is a move beyond tradition, nothing less than a reform movement to bring the core concepts of Islam into the modern age. A Muslim Reformation to combat not only the jihadist ideologues but also the dusty, stifling seminaries of the traditionalists, throwing open windows to let in much-needed fresh air . . . It is high time, for starters, that Muslims were able to study the revelation of their religion as an event inside history, not supernaturally above it, . . . Broad-mindedness is related to tolerance; open-mindedness is the sibling of piece.²

Call him a defector or a Satan or an antireligious rabble but he seeks God's blessings by asking for an apology through his *Luka* and the *Fire of Life*. The apology is not for having been blasphemous but for having shaken the faith of Muslims before preparing a suitable environment for developing humanist and rational thinking in them that could save them from being blind traditionalist and religious fundamentalists. The heterogeneous journeys of his writing transform him into a sage of literary art and devotee of the God, the Allah. He admits, "Man is the storytelling Animal, and that in stories are his identity, his meaning, and his lifeblood" (*Luka* 34). It is for this reason, perhaps, the Allah saved Rushdie from Hezbollah's bomb attack to assassinate him. Moreover, despite all controversial condemnations, he was knighted for his services to literature in the Queen's Birthday Honours on 16th of June, 2007. He remarked, "I am thrilled and humbled to receive this great honour, and I am very grateful that my work has been recognized in this way."³ Rushdie's emergence with his creative bulk has dazzled and amazed for being unconventional rather than becoming conundrum for both, the contemporary authors and the readers. He began writing as an anti-colonial and postcolonial reactionary to the West; he switched to incorporate diasporic experiences of his own and of other migrants as well. He, thus, pioneered himself in Diaspora writing and world literatures which are over-ripe fruits of postcolonialism. He pioneered himself as a major voice of decolonization, multiculturalism, diasporic experiences and also of new humanism.

His works embody the stamp of concurrent Indian conventions and Indo-Anglian interests which lead him to interface with the worldwide readership, especially to the Western audience. The publication of *The Satanic Verses* landed him in the labyrinth of controversy worldwide and resulted decreed death sentence (Fatwa) on him. It epitomizes the postcolonialists' flimsy and constant battle to balance the demands of conflicting cultures. Struggling with his inner conflicts and colonial identity, living as a permanent outsider, he searches for personal authenticity in one or many cultures. He is the spokesperson for the people of the subcontinent who are presently residing in the alien lands. Staying within the domains of the mainstream ideologues such as Britain and the US, he mimics and comments on all Western ideologies and proves himself to be a representative of the East. Religious and cultural diversity of both India and Britain offers Rushdie a wealth of the experience of unnumbered issues and themes that

consistently refract throughout his oeuvre. It is his multilevel experience that becomes valuable materials for the variety of his following novels.

Every novel of Salman Rushdie deals with the thoughts of national and International theses keeping in mind his primary focus on his India and its subcontinents i.e. Pakistan and Bangladesh. The very opening pages of his novels evoke the themes of migration, exile, diasporic consciousness, nationalism, multiculturalism, dualism etc. His writings have become the focus of a certain kind of struggle for cultural identity in Britain and other Western states.

Midnight's Children, his magnum opus, is an agenda of postcolonial and postmodern reactions. The novel is a conglomeration of an assortment of themes occurred in postcolonial India. It is a fantasized version of the historical reality of India that spans from the Jallianwala Massacre of 1919 to the period of Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi in 1977. Rushdie's new venture of blending history with fiction and fiction with history employing the technique of magic realism and supernatural elements make the novel characteristically more different than what many other authors had already attempted. Midnight's Children is superficially the biography of Saleem Sinai and potentially autobiography of Salman Rushdie but allegorically the history of India. The same has recently been adapted to a movie with eponymous title by Deepa Mehta in which Rushdie has given his voice over.

Employing the narrative techniques of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Günter Grass, Rushdie amalgamates facts with fiction so artistically that sometimes it becomes a Herculean task to differentiate between truth (history) and fiction (literary invention). Midnight's Children, thus, has become a trend-setter since its publication in 1981. As Rajeshwar Mittapalli and Pier Paolo Piciuccio put it:

The imaginative re-working of Indian history in a culturally hybrid environment, the innovative use of literary techniques...together with a supreme command of the English language and a genius for story telling modeled on the hoary Indian narrative traditions and cultural practices, had established Midnight's Children as a trend setter and classic for all times. (Preface)

The novel deals with displacement and rootlessness which are the main factors of identity crisis. Almost all the major characters whether it is Saleem Sinai or Shiva or Padma or Parvati suffer from this psychological disease of alienation and identity crisis. Sinai is a true portrait of Rushdie for he himself is the victim of same ailment. The hero Saleem, like his creator, wanders from place to place, from Bombay to Karachi and from Karachi to Bangladesh finally comes back to Bombay. Rushdie himself returns to India again by the time, not to the geographical India but to the "India of the mind" (Rushdie, 1991). In view of Klaus Boerner, "Midnight's Children is Copernican turning-point in the history of literature and of ideas" (23) that paves the path for other novels of Rushdie. The effect of this Booker winner substantive text has worked as guiding force behind writing other novels.

Thus, the next novel Shame was found to be a shorter version of its predecessor Midnight's Children dealing with the history of Pakistan- an "insufficiently imagined country, with a blend of diasporic discourse than of fiction. Overtly it is a novel about political turmoil of Pakistan presenting the themes, issues and conflicts of the then conditions but covertly it deals with major and minor political and social issues. The novel marks the condition of Pakistani women in

the light of postcolonial theory. The condition of diasporic women is worse; they are doubly marginalized, and are the victims of patriarchal dominance.

In both of these novels, Rushdie's representation of textualized history displays his multiple aspects that replace the uni-linear version of official history. Rushdie's history is the version of his memory rather than the officially written one. He never describes the past but remakes the past to suit his present purpose using memory as his tool. *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* are to some extent, the history of India and Pakistan respectively. But his novels move beyond the bounds of history for the purpose of finding universal significance of historical forces that are operating at a particular phase of time. He manipulates the truth to fictionalize it and thus, make the real unreal and vice versa.

The third novel of Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh* is more a postmodern than a postcolonial one. The protagonist and narrator Moor inherits the blend of races and creeds of India. His mother Aurora has the blood of Portuguese invaders as well as Catholicism in her veins whereas his father is one of the last Jews of Cochin and a descendant of Boabdil, the last Moorish ruler of Spain. The entire family mimics the chaotic diversity of South India. Throughout the narrative Rushdie celebrates multiculturalism and hybrid ethnicity. This novel presents a family that splits on the views of nationalism and anti-nationalism and the division of the family symbolizes the divisions in the country in the name of pro-Empire and freedom loving people.

The Moor's Last Sigh is also an attack on the parochial Hinduism led by Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. The people of Shiv Sena have led India towards its unwanted destination, towards a religious country instead of a secularist one. India is known for its unity in diversity-- its multi-ethnicity, its multi-religions and its multi-culturalism. But the fundamentalist Hindus and Muslims have led it astray. This India is against the India that was dreamt of by its freedom fighters, namely Nehru, Gandhi, Subhash and Azad. Though the novel delineates the post-colonial history of India, its metaphoric and linguistic divisions yet it attacks India for becoming a pseudo-secularist nation.

The publication of *The Satanic Verses*, in which Rushdie treats Quran as a literary text, open for individual perceptions dared to attempt higher criticism but its aftermath created turmoil in his mind. However, Hindu Fundamentalists banned *The Moor's Last Sigh* also in some parts of India due to its attack on Shiv Sena's supremacy, Late Bal Thackeray. But after his colonial and postcolonial narration, Rushdie moves towards global, pop and jazz music.

His next novel *The Ground beneath Her Feet*, fictionalizes the fact of Ayatollah Khomeini's decreed Fatwa on him. Rushdie begins the novel with the death of the female protagonist Vina Apsara on the fourteenth of February 1989, the very date of Fatwa. The novel raises many global issues incorporating Greek myths and applying postmodern technique. *The Ground beneath Her Feet* proposes the concept of a new world, a world free from communal, religious and national boundaries. In *The Ground beneath Her Feet* all the pains of Diasporas such as alienation, trauma and longing for homeland have faded out for representative migrants Ormus and Rai's love. Teenage Vina Apsara, of this novel are valueless because music is beyond restraint. Because of globalization and liberalization all the conflicts arising from border crossing have washed away. Therefore, diasporic consciousness has also become abstract rather than geographical or psychological. Hybridity and multiculturalism fused in the characters point out Rushdie's view

towards a future in which the world, demolishing all boundaries, will be united to face any threat. However, Rushdie's personality differs from his theory. He himself is unable to step across the frontiers and it seems that he is still lingering within his parochial world from which he is destined not to come out.

The collision between the reactions of Islamic countries against him and his instinct for critiquing the religious fundamentalism produced a writhing fury within him. The novel *Fury* is a concrete and material form of his own abstract fury. It is "his first 3-D, full volume American novel, finger snapping, wildly mind-boggling, often slyly funny, red-blooded and red toothed" (Miami Herald). Malik Solanka, the hero of the novel, is a new version of Buddha who leaves his home for New York without informing anyone. Rushdie once again appears in the disguise of Solanka. Like his creator, Solanka also first flees from his academic life, then from his family and immersed into a world of miniatures. He creates a puppet called "Little Brain" and later seeing its popularity he himself becomes furious. The novel accurately deals with the darkest side of human nature.

The novel *Shalimar the Clown* is his return to the Indian sub-continent that he left in *The Ground beneath Her Feet* and *Fury*. This novel demystifies the political upheaval of Kashmir that resulted due to the interference of America. The novelist delineates the story of post-colonial Kashmir and explains the reasons why the paradise became hell, how the Hindu-Muslim unity came under suspicion, why and how the citizens of paradise started becoming terrorists and what role India and Pakistan played in creating the chaos and commotion. Through the story of *Shalimar and Boonyi*, Rushdie displays the Hindu-Muslim harmony that existed before independence. The central theme of the novel is the making of a terrorist as terror becomes a global phenomenon and a cause of concern worldwide. The effort to look into the mind and get under the skin of a terrorist becomes an artistic challenge that the novelist has dealt competently in *Shalimar the Clown*.

In fact, the novel narrates the story of postcolonial and post-independence Kashmir. Since Rushdie is a political novelist, *Shalimar the Clown* is a blending of realism and magic realism. Like *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Rushdie again imagines a composite culture where race, religion and identity do not matter as in the idea of Kashmir. The novelist shows in how gradually the composite culture is destroyed by both military and militancy. Before 1947, there was no point of dispute between Hindu and Muslim. They used to celebrate each other's festivals. But the independence of India and Pakistan transformed this paradise into a battle field where ignorant armies and citizens are being killed by their own citizens.

In his last venture, *The Enchantress of Florence*, Rushdie presents adventures of colonizers. The novel is set in medieval India, at the time of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, the Great, at the time when colonizers began to arrive and establish their trade which is customary with Salman Rushdie who never adheres to a single theme in his fictions. So is the case with *The Enchantress of Florence*. Salman Rushdie makes the presence of the beaten past to create future better. The novel is set in the sixteenth century India. It delineates the colonial situations and conditions in which Magor dell Amore is the representative of white colonialists, who lands on the shore of India and makes his way to Sikri to the court of Akbar and succeeds in befooling the wisest king. The female protagonist of the fiction *Qara Koz* seems to represent the counter discourse to the colonialism. The colonial enterprise was a product of western androcentric imperialist desire. *Qara Koz*, on the

other hand is a woman of Asian blood who manages to bring the whole of Florence, the epitome of western civilization of that period under her influence. She represents the subversion of the colonial enterprise. The novel has a helical structure and intertwines two stories going in diverse directions that present a beautiful picture of how Mogor comes to India and becomes closer to Emperor than his nine jewels. In the same way Qara Koz goes, from central Asia to Europe and becomes the heartthrob of Europeans. But in the end Mogor is exposed as liar and has to leave India. Mogor is a symbolic representation of the British colonizers and Koz is symbolic of Indian beauty and innocence.

Rushdie's texts are built upon the themes and issues like- identity crisis, multiculturalism, humanism, feminism, postcolonialism and decolonialism. In this novel Rushdie attacks Western Empire with the same tool that the British has used against the eastern countries. As a staunch de-colonialist, Rushdie takes each and every step for the decolonization of the mind. He advocates psychological freedom what Ngugi calls, "Decolonizing the Mind" along with the geographical and political freedom.

Joseph Anton: A Memoir (2012), the latest production is an autobiography, written in third person narrative, of this "Britney Spears of literature", (13) says Meenakshi Bharat. Joseph Anton is the pseudonym adopted by Rushdie after the Fatwa was issued against him in 1989. Joseph is Joseph Conrad and Anton is Anton Chekhov of real life. The plight of Rushdie post- Fatwa and his persistent attempt at making writing successful have been portrayed very excellently in this work.

Mimicry of Language is one of the tools of decolonization. The west, through Macaulay's Minute, started teaching English to acculturate the Asian mind to British patterns while Rushdie and his generation started conditioning the same language to suit Asians and to respond to the Empire. For this, he mixes the words of Hindi, Urdu and other regional languages in English and englishizes them without any reference or notes. He, in his first major novel *Midnight's Children*, exhibits the complexities and quandaries that the project of Indianising the resources of English language entails. In each of his novels, he amalgamates words from several origins and tries to make them perfect. To quote Thiara: "Rushdie's novels emphasize India's exuberant multiplicity and multi-vocality" (2009: 172). Thus, he becomes the leader of postcolonial authors who have taken the oath to "provincialize" English, and is determined to subvert the master's tool in order to make it their own.

Apart from fictionalizing the truth of India Rushdie has a number of critical writings in the form of articles and papers and two critical treatises namely *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (1991) and *Step Across This Line: Collected Non-Fiction 1992-2002*; two collections of story books *Harun and the Sea of Stories* and *Luka and the Fire of Life* and an autobiography, *Joseph Anton: A Memoir*. Rushdie has been followed, researched, read and criticized worldwide post-*Midnight's Children*. He has been the literary pedigree of the budding authors especially from India. "He is very virtuoso and full of ideas", says Cyrus Mistry in Jaipur Literature Festival in 2014. Thus, a critical "virtuoso" is imperative in the new millennium!

Critical Essays in the Volume

Salman Rushdie, one of the pioneering voices of the "new Diaspora", progenitor of series o

controversies, what we call 'Rushdie affair' in postmodern literary politics, has been superseding and has intrepid influence in literary sphere. He has written history in fiction and fiction in history by presenting the 'national allegory' of the nation right from 1947 till date. His literary journey from *Grimus* (1975) to *Joseph Anton* (2012) has been conspicuous rewarding via *Midnight's Children* (1981). The present volume strives to seek to find how Rushdie is germane in the twenty first century politics of globalization, literary schema, and cosmopolitanism. The book has been divided into two broad heads the first section intrinsically deals with the most popular book of Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* while the second section contains Rushdie's latter fictions which have been researched and presented in the light of intertextuality, hybridity, diaspora and, of late, autobiography.

The younger and the unheard voices, budding scholars from India and abroad, candidly put forth their views on Rushdie's various works in the present volume in the following ways: Suhaina Bi, in her paper, 'Presentation of a Wounded Civilization: A Cosmopolitan Perspective of *Midnight's Children*', critically analyses cosmopolitanism with that of diaspora and postcolonialism. She presents 'Cosmopolitanism as an ethos that is deduced from Enlightenment theories and values. It advocates a mode of humane thinking about the relationship between human beings without taking into consideration the geographical boundaries and a moral concern for different communities' and further holds the view that 'in his real life, Rushdie is struggling for his liberal ideals and freedom of expression and through his novels; he has raised his voice not only for a cosmopolitan but also for the whole humanity. Rushdie retells the tragedy of the minority, which usually occurs at the time of socio-political chaos in most of the nations'.

The essay entitled 'The Dichotomous Nature of Decolonisation of India in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*' by Sutanuka Ghosh Roy aims to look at history in a new way. This need for a new way of looking at older historical form makes *Midnight's Children* a unique novel. The paper further explores 'how Rushdie discovers an alternative to the typical historical tradition of historical truth as merely recorded facts. He fuses memory and the process of recalling memories. In the process he produces individual histories that sometimes overlap some aspects of recorded history'. The paper is concluded with an observation that 'his (Rushdie's) novels differ from the other Raj novels written by various authors, in so far as his vision of an Indian internationalism and multiculturalism embraces the politics of pluralism, whereas the Raj novels are more particular in the exploration of a British India. Rushdie has shown us the dichotomous nature of India's decolonisation, even in the use of language he has dislocated the English and let others into it'.

Ram Bhavan Yadav's critique of *Midnight's Children* has been put in different way in his research paper 'Interfacing Myth vs. History: A Postcolonial Study of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*'. Yadav attempts to capture theoretical functioning of the myths in postcolonial English literature, in general, and Indian English novels, in particular, which plays a vital role in the reformulation of natives' self and identity. In this context, his attempt is to read and examine Rushdie's said novel that blends myths with history by using postcolonial theoretical approaches. Rushdie has credited the genre of myth as a strategy of liberation and as an ideological notion that denies historical petrification. 'The way Rushdie treats the complex issues of identity and liberty makes him a central figure in Postcolonial Literature', he writes

Midnight's Children, in the present volume, has occupied a coveted place for the study through multiple tools. But none other than T. Sasikanth Reddy's article entitled "Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children: A Kaleidoscopic View" surveys that Rushdie's novels are complex, multi-layered with episodic causality, bearing strong influence of post-modernist novels as well as principles of the Indian art forms. His exalted diction, elevated word usage and felicitous word phrases leave strong impinge on the readers. The novel Midnight's Children does not have a continuous forward narration rather it is complex and interrelated, based on structure repetitions and episodic casualties, which is in fact one of the strong points of the novel, as it is the perfect hitching of the content to the form. The paper ends with the conclusion that "Rushdie presents history through the metaphor of chutnification, which gives way to his narrative. In other words, Saleem is actually preserving the facts of history as chutnification, a method of perpetuation of each of the thirty one chapters in the novel which stand for "a pickled jar".

The first section, Midnight's Children: Fiction, History and the Nation, ends with Asis De's paper entitled "In Time of Narrating the Nation: Rushdie's Transcendence of National History in Midnight's Children". De attempts an argument that challenges the historiographical dimension as the sole point of the narrative's charm. Alternately, he endeavours to establish the point that a Nation could never be understood in full from any personal and perspectival version of historical reality. De clearly opines that "a writer is usually affected by the historical milieu in which s/he lives and the periods of an earlier time with which s/he associates his/her identity."

The second section entitled "Diasporic Identity, Intertextuality, Treatment of History and Autobiography" is inaugurated with Vikrant Sehgal's article "Diasporic Identity in Salman Rushdie's Shalimar the Clown" outlines some of the main theories behind the post-colonial discourse, and he argues, from a diasporic perspective specifically thematic element in Rushdie's Shalimar the Clown. It is his attempt, despite the influence of his emigration to England, to undermine how Rushdie constructs diasporic identity and culture by specific postcolonial literary techniques such as fragmentation, plurality and language.

Indah Lestari's paper entitled "Indianness and Satire of History in Salman Rushdie's The Moor's Last Sigh" observes that Rushdie's novel focuses on the themes of Indian history and the search for identity. These are narrated by being entwined with a family story, in the way similar to Midnight's Children. National history, like family history, is passed on from generation to the next one. It is told from subjective point of view, and thus is subject to alteration. Through her palimpsest painting, Aurora suggests this alteration. National history is also built by foreign interference. Thus, Indian identity is complex in racial aspect. Moreover, India is also plural in terms of language, religion, and political orientation. The paper further aims to analyze the complexity of India as a nation-state from the aspect of its history as depicted in the novel and how Rushdie satirizes Indian history intertwining the protagonist's personal life and historical events.

Ajit Kumar's critical venture on "Journey towards the New World in the Selected Novels of Salman Rushdie" presents the array of diasporic authors and compares with the theme, technique, matter and manner with that of Rushdie's novels and also the content and context of the postcolonial world that is adroitly presented by the author. Kumar concludes that "in the history of Indian Literature of English, Salman Rushdie's efforts are well visible to the readers

Right from his first novel *Grimus* to *Midnight's Children*, *Shame* and *The Enchantress of Florence*, he seems to be an explorer of the of the human psychology being in the modern world where people long for identity and peace but they all seem wandering for it. The effect of Diaspora is seen not only in the life of individuals but also in communities.

Hetal K. Kachhia in her article "Globalization and Cosmopolitanism: Major Themes in the Works of Salman Rushdie" studies the major novels of Rushdie. She beautifully relocates the "globalization" and "cosmopolitanism" in the novels of Rushdie. She writes that "[I]f we look at the terms "globalization" and "cosmopolitanism" as the intermingling of different cultures and its different aspects and phenomena into one another, we can say that the works of Salman Rushdie compose a global and intermingled fictional world by including the element of "intertextuality", from his own works to the different allusions from others' works, which makes the recurrences of characters and places possible from one text to another".

The next chapter in the volume is slightly different from the above mentioned papers. Hetal M Doshi in her paper titled "Theological Aspects and Diasporic Sensibilities in Rushdie's *Satanic Verses: An Analysis*" offers Rushdie's attempt to fearlessly question some of the religious tenets which he finds devoid of logic. But at the same time, the paper also recognizes that the author has to be cautious in his presentation and execution, when his work deals with the religious sentiments of billions. Freedom of speech does not provide the license to be blasphemous. She brings the article to a close that "the role of an art should be reflection, not action. It is the duty of an artist, more so of a writer to renew the perceptions about history, society and religion; not to shatter them". History has always surprised us with its various meanings. Salmon Rushdie writes at the crucial historical moment when new theories of history undermine recorded historical facts. Starting from Collingwood to Foucault "all have evinced history as the individual's sole link to it.

Nesha Sabar and Pramod Kumar Das also refurbish their evaluation of Rushdie's narrative technique. But they chose a different novel, *Shame*, to deal with. In the paper titled "Salman Rushdie's *Shame: A Study of Narrative Strategies*", they focus on the various narrative strategies used in the text. In doing so, they zero in on a range of strategies such as mimicry, history, fairytale, magical-realism, metafiction and intertextuality employed by Rushdie to knit the narrative and these devices, in turn, help us to understand the text in better and improved way. They conclude their observation that "Rushdie's narrative style can be viewed as a tongue-in-cheek use and "abuse" of numerous literary narrative conventions and theoretical perspectives that include exaggerated reflections of colonial mimicry, unreliable narrator's fairytale motifs and intertextuality".

The anthology does not end with Ramesh Tibile's "Salman Rushdie: A Self-Proclaimed Controversialist". Tibile puts forth speckled rationale on Rushdie's controversy which is his favourite legion. He observes that "the political significance of Rushdie's writing does not change from text to text not because his subject matter changes but also because his political location changes. In his work, Rushdie proposes only one rather tentative answer to the question of how a decentred being can work meaningfully, and that is by writing history of the particular country".

Temporality and history in the works of Salman Rushdie are unfinalizable and plural. Rushdie's vindication of the "imaginative variety of truth" and allegoric representations of nations, events and people challenge the established notions about writing history into fiction. In his novels, borderlines between the public and private spheres of experience; memory and imagination and reality and fantasy are deliberately blurred. Many metaphors suggestive of the nature of time history and historiography are deployed in Rushdie's novels and he uses the techniques of anachronism and flashback while turning history into fantabulous fictional narratives. Rushdie justifies the artistic freedom an author may exercise while transforming the raw material of history into fictional narratives. In her critical essay entitled "Chutneys, Pickles, Palimpsests and Collages: Lived and Imagined Temporalities in the Works of Salman Rushdie", Bini B. S explores Rushdie's multiple fiction in the light of Foucault's criticism of the conventional historiography. She further holds the view that "History in Rushdie's works takes the form of a polyphonic narrative which is dappled with hues of hilarity, violence, shame, pain and caustic satire". She concludes her paper with a notion that "It is not necessary to tell apart lived experiences and a life lived in imagination. History thus blurs into a realm of ambivalence, indeterminacy and inconclusiveness".

The next paper is complementary to Bini's paper. The objective of the paper entitled "Nation and Non-narration: Multiplicity, Hybridity and Heterogeneity in Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*" by Manjeet Kumar Kashyap is how to understand the fiction of Salman Rushdie. In his view, the fiction of Rushdie is marked by modern historiography of India. Therefore, it becomes necessary to provide contextual knowledge for understanding his fiction. Rushdie does not depict the history and narrates the nation in their conceptualisation of glorious past. Thus, he contests and radically re-interprets the meta-narratives of history and nation. The ideas of nation and narration in his fiction are created through amalgamation of ethnic essence and speculative narration technique. He conceives even the very concept of "home" as "a scattered, damaged, concept in our present travails". Such views refer to a shift from homogeneous nation-states based on the ideology of assimilation to a much more fluid and contradictory definition of nations as a multiplicity of diasporic identities.

Vali Rahaman's well-researched critical essay "Metautobiographicity: Some Observations on Salman Rushdie's *Enchantress of Florence*" observes the hypothesis that everything - concerning with / referring to writer, reader, the presence of the writer, the absence of the author and implicit, explicit images of author's intensions - is required at the time of reading a text. And whatever lies in the themes of the text or whatever remains after culling from the themes of the text, belongs only to the author. Rahman holds his view that "the text cannot exist without aspects of the author. The text without aspects of its author is a glitch".

Thus, the anthology offers varied perspectives on Rushdie's writings. The volume includes the researchers not only from India but also from abroad who are not well-known as critics but have more potential for becoming meticulous critics. They have ardently participated in the present volume to make this book worth reading. The multiplicity of subject matter, plurality of cultural edifice, subjectivity of identity discourse and "nostalgic diversity" and of course multiculturalism make Rushdie's vast corpus of literature discursive and digressive. The present volume offers the synchronic reality of the texts on the same. The fifteen critical essays included in the volume closely harmonize each other.

Notes:

1. Radio show Medierna broadcast on Sveriges Radio P1 on 31 January 2009.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salman_Rushdie. Accessed on December 13, 2014.
2. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/05/AR2005080501483.html> (Para 5). Accessed on December 14, 2014.
3. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knighthood_of_Salman_Rushdie. Accessed on December 15, 2014.
4. <http://www.salman-rushdie.com/blog/fury/>. Accessed on December 15, 2014.

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Section-A *Midnight's Children*: Fiction, History and the Nation

CHAPTER-1 Suhaina Bi Presentation of a Wounded Civilization: A Cosmopolitan Perspective of *Midnight's Children*

Salman Rushdie has helped the Indian Writing in English to gain a reputation in World Literature in addition to win the prestigious prize of Booker of the Bookers for himself in 2008. He is the foremost writer who presented the Sub-continental Diaspora with all its geographical and psychological pros and cons both in real and virtual sense. Most of the characters of his novels suffer from the disease of alienation and rootlessness because of their frequent and forced displacements. This is perhaps the reflection of his own personality for he had to leave his home, not once but several times; sometimes at will and at other occasions by force. Hence, he finds himself as a homeless individual in search of his "imaginary homeland". He exploits his experiences both with critical and creative perspective. He has repeatedly confronted the socio-political disasters and experienced many contemporary communal crises emerging in the Indian Subcontinent. And it is these primary experiences of Rushdie which provide him with unique theme which he skillfully exploits to their utmost level in his fiction. Such experiences enable him to present moral values beyond geographical and sociological borders and make him an advocate of universal humanity. His novels present themselves through the eyes of a cosmopolitan or a rootless individual; because it is the cosmopolitan individual who can best analyze the civilization which gets continuously wounded in the name of patriotism and nationalism or because of the loyalty concerned only to a specific community, doubtlessly happening on the cost of one's own conscience in this age of multiculturalism and globalization.

Cosmopolitanism as an ethos is deduced from Enlightenment theories and values. It advocates a mode of humane thinking about the relationship between human beings without taking into consideration the geographical boundaries and a moral concern for different communities. It supports the idea of "weltbürgerlich" (Qtd. in Niesen 1) or the concept of "the world citizenship". Cosmopolitanism is "globalist understandings of universal citizenship" (Niesen 2) and an intellectual and aesthetic stance towards divergent cultural experiences and it requires an ability to see oneself from the perspective of others that is often developed through psychological disposition and is a structure of feelings evaluated through the geographical changes of an individual. According to the anthropologist Ulf Hannerz, cosmopolitanism is a "willingness to become involved with the Others, and the concern with achieving competence in cultures which are initially alien" (239-40). Cosmopolitanism is developed among ordinary individuals because of the changes of their practices of everyday life that leads traversing emotional ties with strangers beyond geographical and sociological borders. Cosmopolitanism results in the loss of "accidental" identities which are generally acquired only by taking birth in a specific nation and community. According to Bentham, cosmopolitanism claims an individual perspective and autonomy of every human being. He says that cosmopolitanism refers to the moral universalism i.e. "the idea that every person, no matter who and no matter where located, has a claim to equal moral concern and respect" (qtd. in Niesen 5). Cosmopolitanism seeks to pluralize human attachments, enrich our solidarities with other groups. It claims a universal citizenship with the perspective of assimilation of a multicultural society in which "others" can be seen on par with the self.

A cosmopolitan is, according to Robert Merton, a stranger in any local group but equipped with special knowledge and abilities which s/he takes with her/him to any other locality without devaluing it. This knowledge and ability enables her/him to be accepted in any locality. S/he has a social status that is acquired in another society. Though there is lack of the knowledge of

acquaintance which makes her/him rootless, but s/he possesses an ability to make her/himself at home in every new locality while moving throughout the world (qtd. in Hannerz 5). Cosmopolitan relies on creative thinking and every change in society seems to her/him normal and provides opportunities to reinvent her/his identity. S/he easily learns the new ways of an alien society. Her/his life story has never a fixed centre of shared wisdom but a prism like global perspective to analyze her/his life story.

The approach of Cosmopolitanism is very often applied and presented in Indian writing in English for the negotiation of English language has provided the authors of Indian literature a large cosmopolitan English speaking audience—whether Indian or non-Indian. Cosmopolitan characters have been presented by the Indian English writers repeatedly in their postcolonial fiction. Sahgal's *A Time to Be Happy* (1958) and *The Day in Shadow* (1971), Kamala Markandaya's *The Coffer Dams* (1969), Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), and Bhabani Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966) may be presented as some of the examples of such works. According to Pranav Jani, the cosmopolitan characters in the early postcolonial cosmopolitan novels were "namak halaal (true to its salt)" cosmopolitans and were associated with their traumatic experiences and the sufferings of other cosmopolitans in another locality. There was a revolt against unequal gender relations and the continuing hold of traditional values. Early postcolonial cosmopolitan writers who presented the nation and its history through their narratives could not be read as the "native informants" (16). But the novelists of the 1980s and 1990s, such as Amitav Ghosh in *The Shadow Lines* (1988), Shashi Tharoor in *The Great Indian Novel* (1988), Vikram Chandra (in *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995), Rushdie in *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), and Rohinton Mistry in *A Fine Balance* (1995) are regarded as "native informants" and they attempted to speak for the hierarchical problems of socio-political subversion and oppression of all Indians. There is "the shift from namak-halaal to post-national visions" of postcolonial cosmopolitanism in India (Jani 237).

Rushdie is the most distinguished postcolonial cosmopolitan writer. In almost all of his novels he presents a cosmopolitan individual as the narrator of the story, e.g. in *Grimus* (1975) the narrator Flapping Eagle is alienated and marginalized in his own tribe because of his auspicious birth, in *Midnight's Children* there is a search for imaginary homeland by its narrator Saleem Sinai and *The Ground Beneath her Feet* (1999) is preoccupied with the issues of globalization. Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is the most distinguished novel in this range because of its presentation of radical and overt cosmopolitanism. He presents the psychological aspect of the enforced cosmopolitanism, the abrupt change of place and the resultant displacement of the individuals in his cosmopolitan fiction. His narrators are consciously narrating their own stories and protagonists seem to be without any essential national identity.

The present paper attempts to present the cosmopolitan experiences of the repeatedly displaced narrator Saleem Sinai of *Midnight's Children* (MC) and his direct as well as indirect confrontation with the socio-cultural crisis and political conflicts of his age. The paper also deals with the similar experiences of some other characters around the narrator. The narrator Saleem Sinai is the illegitimate son of Vanita and William Methwold and is brought up by a Muslim family. Born at the midnight of 15 Aug, 1947, when the nation (India) also gets a new lease of life from the shackles of the foreign rule, his birth is celebrated because he is born with the nation and he is

greeted by the first Prime Minister of the nation Pt. J. L. Nehru and also by the Time itself: "Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came" (MC 3). He is the most celebrated child of the 1001 "midnight's children" because he belonged to an elite family of a minority community. His birth was publicly announced by his mother. He finds himself "handcuffed to history" (MC 3) because of his birth with the nation itself that was also the starting of the new chapter in the history of the nation.

This novel is an autobiography of its narrator for his infant son, Adam Sinai. Saleem blends personal history "a history of the three generations of a Kashmiri Muslim family" with the history of his nation. He is self-consciously narrating the story in which he, sometimes, addresses directly to his readers as he says: "I should speak plainly, without the clock of a question mark" (MC 206). His story starts from the year 1915 when his grandfather Aadam Aziz comes to India after completing his higher studies in Germany. At that time, Kashmir was an independent state. Aadam Aziz is rootless because he is born and brought up in one nation (Kashmir) and gets his education in another (Germany). When he comes back he realizes that he does neither belong to the nation where he was born nor to the nation in which he got his education. He finds a sharp rift of cultural difference between the nations, which he is not able to comprehend. When he moves to Amritsar with his newly married wife, Naseem Ghani, Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919 takes place in front of his own eyes and he witnesses the spill of the blood flowing on the ground like the red medicine, mercurochrome. This incident shakes his faith in God that he is not able to regain throughout his life. He could not stay there and moved to Agra with his family.

The above incident makes him staunch secular and an anti-colonialist. He has three daughters and two sons. Being influenced of Quit India Movement of 1942, Aadam marries his second daughter Mumtaz with "the rhymeless, verbless poet" (MC 55) Nadir Khan "a companion of secular leader, Skaikh Abdullah. Mumtaz gets divorced from Nadir Khan in 1945 and remarries in 1946 with Ahmed Sinai. It is her second husband who names her as Amina Sinai. Ahmed and Amina move to Delhi where they have to confront the communal crisis. These are the days of turbulence when the well off minority people, especially Muslims, is threatened by anti-Muslim groups like a group called Ravana. Ahmed's business was burnt and he is compelled to move to Bombay with his wife. He gets a home in Buckingham Villa. The owner of the Villa William Methwold restricts the new residents from bringing any kind of change in the Villa until the political power of the nation is formally transferred into the hands of the indigenous political leadership.

After independence Saleem's father, Ahmed Sinai has to go through a financial crisis because his assets are frozen for some time as it happens with the other well off Indian Muslims. This is a very tough time for Indian Muslims who are seen as the advocates of Pakistan in spite of their decision of not migrating to Pakistan. They are considered as if they are the disloyal citizens of India. In some cases, it was thought that "the Indian Muslims were hostages to be held in security for the treatment of Hindus in Pakistan" (Hasan 52). When Mahatama Gandhi was assassinated on 30th of January, 1948, it was doubtful whether a Muslim was the assassin or a Hindu. This suspense created an atmosphere of utter confusion and horror especially for Muslims for "if a Muslim did this thing there will be hell to pay" (MC 196). Such horrible circumstances compelled every Muslim to be conscious for her/his life even at the place where s/he has passed all her/his life. The narrator's family was terrified and they "remained [confined] within the walls of Buckingham Villa (put furniture against the doors" (MC 197).

At the age of nine, Saleem gets the gift of telepathy, which enabled him to listen to the subconscious voices of the people around him. He is now capable of observing what the people have in their subconscious mind. Through the introduction of the gift of telepathy, Rushdie enabled Saleem Sinai to present the cosmopolitan's traumatic experiences which remain neglected for a long time. With the help of this gift Saleem is able to record and later on narrate the simultaneous events in a heteroglossial manner. Various voices intermingle with each other at a single time and became a sort of "All India Radio", which could observe heterogeneous experiences of the other cosmopolitan individuals in heterogeneous societies and give voice to such experience.

When Saleem Sinai is ten years old, his ayah, Mary Pareira discloses the secret that he is not the son of his present parents but of Hindu parents. After the discovery of his birth he never finds himself at home while he is at his own home and amidst of his own people. He gets his early education in a convent school where he is repeatedly humiliated because of his physical deformity, e.g. the scars on his face, a big nose and a bald patch on his scalp. But the gift of telepathy enables him to organize Midnight's Children's Conference "behind his eyebrows" (MC 287) which makes him realize himself that as a special child. In 1958, he and his family leave India to go to Karachi (Pakistan), where they reside for four years. In these years he and his family are treated as inferiors in comparison to the indigenous people of the city. They are regarded merely as the poor relatives of General Zulfikar Ali or else as "Muhajir"¹. In Pakistan, he loses his contact with the other midnight's children. But Saleem is after all capable of making himself to be identified as a special boy and better than Saleem is after all capable of making himself to be identified as a special boy and better than Zulfikar's own son, Zafar. This movement from India to Pakistan provides him with a creative opportunity to be able to adjust among the stranger and in a new locality. But he remains reserved and distant from his uncle's family and other indigenous people and lives a life of seclusion. General Zulfikar trusts him and keeps him as a companion in some of his secret missions.

Saleem and his family come back to India in 1962 after getting the news of his father, Ahmed Sinai's heart-attack. His family reunites and becomes happy once again. His return does not only make his family reunion possible but he also gets reunited with other five hundred and eighty one midnight's children. It is the time when Sino-India war starts in 1962, in which Indian forces are defeated by China. Saleem witnesses through the gift of telepathy that due to the Sino-India war, Chinese-Indians have to suffer a lot. The narrator says that the "mob attacked Chinese shoemakers, curio dealers and restaurateurs...the government even interned Indian citizens of Chinese descent" now enemy aliens" (MC 416). Thousands of Chinese-Indians from Kolkata, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jamshedpur, Mumbai and Northeast are arrested and sent to the prison camps at Deoli in Rajasthan where they are kept for five years in terrible conditions and extreme surveillance. These people are accused of being spies and most of them are forcibly deported to China. Only some of them are allowed to return to their respective homes. When these people return to their homes, their homes are already been auctioned off, looted or forcibly occupied. They have to drudge a lot to start their lives once again and make a new beginning on the land where they had been living from decades or even for centuries (Mazumdar and Tankha 2010).

Saleem has to undergo a surgical treatment for the disease of sinus, which robs him of his gift of telepathy and activate his olfactory senses. With his hypersensitive nose, he becomes

“capable of smelling sadness and joy, of sniffing out intelligence and stupidity” (MC 430). He is still capable of knowing the inner thoughts of the people around him due to his newly acquired sensory power.

Saleem and his family shift permanently to Pakistan at the end of the year 1962, where he “began to learn the secret aromas of the world, the heady but quick-fading perfume of new love” (MC 427). His father starts a new business and his family begins a new life. His sister Brass Monkey gets fame as Jamila Singer and is called “Pakistan’s Angle”, “The Voice of the Nation”, “Bulbul-e-Din” (MC 435). But during the Indo-Pak war of 1965, Lahore (Pakistan) was burnt by Indian army and Saleem loses all his family members except his sister Jamila Singer in Pakistan and maternal Uncle Mustafa Aziz in India. In this war, Saleem also loses his memory. But his olfactory senses still enable him to be a proud young man. Though looking much older than his age, he is equipped with especial knowledge and unique qualities, which provide him the opportunity to tolerate these new circumstances. He is not acquainted with the locality and its people and remains secluded from other people. Saleem joins Pakistan Army as a man dog in Cutia unit 22 and is sent to Bangladesh. The war of Bangladesh provides him with another opportunity to experience the alienation of a people who are treated as aliens in their own country. He witnesses there the massacre of common people. Once again, the blood flows like mercurochrome in the lawns. It was not only the killing of innocent human beings but rape, torture, arson, burning of the slums and villages and living villagers: “a maidan [field] in which lady doctors were being bayoneted before they were raped, and raped again before they were shot. Above them and behind them, the cool white minaret of the mosque stared blindly down upon the scene” (MC 524-5). All this is done by the Muslims with the Muslims of other states. After Indo-Pak war of 1965 and the triumph of India in Bangladesh in 1971, Indian Muslims confront discriminations in different socio-political spheres. Saleem’s uncle Mustafa Aziz is a senior Civil Servant and number two in his Department but he was required of “being a chamcha [henchman]” and “clearly the victim of anti-Muslim prejudice, in a contradictory but absolute loyalty to the government of the day” (MC 546). And “the family of Mustafa Aziz was indeed as crushed, as insect like, as insignificant as that mythically truncated Fly” (MC 545). On 16th of December, 1971 Saleem comes back to India with the help of one of his companion of midnight’s children, Parvati, the witch through “the basket of invisibility” (MC 482). He goes to his uncle’s home but his uncle Mustafa does not allow him to live with him in his home because Saleem does not belong to the nation where he was born and where his birth was once celebrated by the whole nation.

On 25 June, 1975 Indira Gandhi imposes Emergency on India which results in the “suspension-of-civil rights, and censorship of the press, and armoured-units-on-special-alert, and arrest-of-subversive-elements” (MC 585). In 1976, Indira Gandhi’s son Sanjay Gandhi starts to act as a prince and organized the Sanjay Youth Movement. Sanjay Gandhi is determined to the beautification of cities and to stop the growing population of India. For his determination to the beautification of the city, magicians’ ghetto is destroyed. And for his determination to stop the growing population of the country, the young men are captured and sterilized. Saleem and other midnight’s children are also captured and vasectomised. The Emergency is ended on 18th Jan 1977.

Though Saleem is born in India and passed initial eleven years of his life in India, he leaves India in

1958, and lives for twelve or thirteen years in Pakistan where he loses all his family as well his memory, and later on spends few months of his life in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). He returns to India in 1971. Saleem witnesses the prominent historical events of these three countries: India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. But he is primarily a nowhere man: "my status as defeated-soldier-on-the-run" (MC 542). He does not belong to any country though he is always capable to be adjusted in any community and could confront any circumstances. Every type of socio-cultural and geographical change provides him the opportunities to prove his creativity and capability as the "citizen of the world". He and his family are always displaced by force, whether social or political, but never by their will: "In my family, we always go when we're pushed. The boatman Tai drove my grandfather from Kashmir; Mercurochrome chased him out of Amritsar; the collapse of her life under the carpets led directly to my mother's departure from Agra; and many headed monsters sent my father to Bombay" (MC 118-9). Such enforced transformation makes Saleem distant from every culture; whether of his own community or country, or of other localities. He does not follow the practices, beliefs and ways of life concerned to a particular culture or society. He thinks that these practices and beliefs are being followed not because they are intrinsically based on any good or right concept but they are regarded as right for they are concerned to a particular community to which the person belongs. And such practices make a man conservative on the level of humanity. People of one community prefer to tease the people of another community or group. Saleem and his family have to confront the similar circumstances. Ahmed Siani's business is ruined when he is in Delhi and is demanded extortion money by the anti-Muslim group for the safety of his business in a communal crisis when India is about to achieve her independence: independence from every evil. Though he is a stranger in the magicians' ghetto, he is welcomed there and finds himself attached to all the other strangers and identifies himself with them. Saleem is greeted as "Saleem Kismati, Lucky Saleem" (MC 541) in the magicians' ghetto because after his arrival in the ghetto, the magicians found more opportunities to getting money and new ideas for their magical tricks which make their talent more attractive: "Other artistes began to his new peaks of achievement - jugglers managed to keep one thousand and one ball in the air at a time, and a fakir's as-yet-untrained protégée strayed on to a bed of hot coals, only to stroll across it unconcerned, as though she had acquired her mentor's gift by osmosis" (MC 540-1). Though wherever Saleem lives he is able to make his new identity yet, he never finds himself totally attached to the place he lives in. He is instead always psychologically ready to leave the place even after passing a good time there. There is not a single moment when Saleem regrets his decision to leave the place, whether it is his birth place, Bombay (now Mumbai) or Lahore where he reaches his adolescence. There is a lack of attachment, which helps Saleem to move away from social disorganization and insecurity and enables him to remain mobile. He is never limited to a particular geographical region and remains emancipated from every limitation concerned to the geographical boundaries. He remains reserved and distant from indigenous people but he is at the same time flexible and ready to do everything for them, whether it is to accompany General Zulfikar on his secret political mission or it is his marriage with Parvati-the witch when she is pregnant by Shiva, another midnight's child and Saleem's rival. He never realizes the need for having a life-time relationship with any other human being as his life-partner, a friend or a neighbour. Saleem has never been acquainted with the locals but he is always appreciated by them because of his deep knowledge of human beings, which has been gained by him due to his gift of telepathy and olfactory senses. He is always surrounded by different cultures e.g. he was born from Vanita (a Hindu) and William Methwold (a Christian),

brought up in a Muslim family, got his education in a mission school and his friends are Hindu and Christian and he has to move to a Muslim country Pakistan with his family. And finally, he lives with the atheist magicians: "They were a people who denied the supernatural, they were artistes, and like all performers had an implicit faith in luck, good-luck-and-bad-luck" (MC 540). Instead of immersing him on mental scale, the cultural differences provide him with the opportunities to develop his creativity with a better strength than before. These cultural differences seem superfluous to Saleem. He lifts himself above to the sphere of worldwide chaos of cultural diversities and competing groups. He belongs to the borderless society of strangers and legitimizes strangeness, which seemed to him as a religion. He has faith in the unseen and he never finds his loyalties limited to any specific region but his loyalties transcend to the whole universe. Hence, he is emotionally moved with the same intensity when he comes to know the horrible experiences of Chinese Indians as he was moved with the horrible experiences of Indian Muslims.

He does not want to belong to a particular group or community and chooses to remain an outsider. But he remains at the same time attached to the whole humanity and is thus able to feel the sufferings of all the communities. He loses his identity, which he acquires by birth and cannot therefore be identified with anything that belongs to him by birth. Wherever he goes, he invents a unique identity for himself. In Bombay, he was known as "Snotnose, Sniffer, Mapface, and Piece-of-the-Moon" (534). When he joins Pakistan Army as a man dog in Cutia unit 22, he is called Buddha because he had "learned the art of submission, and did only what was required of him" (488). He is treated as inferior because he does not follow the ways of life of the young people of his age. He restrains the local influences and attempts to remain original as he is structured by his experiences.

He is acquainted with the subtle and emotional aspect of transition. He learns new ways of thinking very easily because he can listen to the subconscious voices of the people, and can smell the intention of the people around him. Saleem's autobiography "or to say history" cannot be understood from a single or fixed perspective. His personality has the prism-like characteristics. Saleem is not a rootless traveller. He travels through the different localities and manages to remain loyal to each locality he lives in. His primary motive is the happiness of the mankind. He wants to rearrange history so that the misconceptions and misinterpretations can be erased from the midst of common people. He employs a perspective of "dialogic imagination", which encourages him to accept the coexistence of his rivals. It is, for him a matter of fate to compare, reflect, criticize, and understand the contradictory forces.

In this novel, Rushdie presents the journey of a nation from a secular state to the state where communal card is used to get more and more political power, which in turn affects the life of every human being; whether it is of the simpleton or of powerful elite, of indigenous or a cosmopolitan. In his real life, Rushdie is struggling for his liberal ideals and freedom of expression and through his novels; he has raised his voice not only for a cosmopolitan but also for the whole humanity. Rushdie retells the tragedy of the minority, which usually occurs at the time of socio-political chaos in most of the nations. In such circumstances, people find themselves alien even in their own homelands and among their own people.

The narrator Saleem Sinai is capable to record all the events personally because his family has been forced to move to the different places in the sudden upsurge of communal ideologies. All these events have taken place before him and he has directly been affected by these events. The

other source of his information is the experience of five hundred and eighty other midnightâ€™s children, who are expelled and who act as â€˜a gang which was spread all over the length and breadth of the country and whose headquarter were behind my eyebrows;â€™^{3/4} â€˜Midnightâ€™s Childrenâ€™s Conferenceâ€™ (MC 287). The novel *Midnightâ€™s Children* is tracing the betrayal of optimism that the common man have had after independence in the name of secularism and equal civil rights to all: â€œThe disease of optimism, in those days, once again attained epidemic proportionsâ€ (MC 416). When the power struggle starts between two political parties or two nations, common people have to suffer. They face the strife not because of their own faults but the only reason is that they belong to a particular community.

Rushdie is successful in voicing the suppressed truth as Neil Ten Kortenaar says: â€œit sounds like a continent finding its voiceâ€ (MC 22). He is successful in presenting a cosmopolitan perspective in the novel *Midnightâ€™s Children*. It contains Beckâ€™s â€œdialogic imaginationâ€ which means â€œthe clash of cultures and rationalities within oneâ€™s own lifeâ€ (MC 12). Such clashes make â€œthe cosmopolitan perspective is an alternative imagination, an imagination of alternative ways of life and rationalities, which include the otherness of the otherâ€ (MC 18).

Note:

1: I used the word â€œMuhajirâ€ not from the text but as a metaphor to show the helpless condition of Indian Muslim immigrants in Pakistan. Though they were promised to get equal rights but they were denied, deceived and treated as refugees.

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CHAPTER-2 Sutanuka Ghosh Roy The Dichotomous Nature of Decolonisation of India in Salman Rushdieâ€™s

Midnight's Children

What is history? Who writes it? Where does it start? Are these divine inspirations behind annals? When finally death comes how one should react to it? Is it possible to leave a trace of one's existence? Can a nation's history be represented by a single character? What is the exact nature of a nation? Ultimately what is the nature of history itself? History, after all, is not something to be read only. It is not possible for a person to be solely a history-reader. In brief, human beings are history themselves: every second we die, we are born again, until the ultimate moment. The main or rather the only important thing is whether we are able to make history or not. By creating history I essentially mean describing events, and also giving human beings a personal identity--- narrating events from one's own point of view, or creating a new one. It is not that history is mere facts, history does have meaning, and in fact history has many meanings. In postmodern literature there are diverse opinions about history. For Rushdie, the iconic writer, history is individual, and history's meaning is determined by the present.

Salman Rushdie's novel, *Midnight's Children* published in 1981, is a modern epic, depicting India's decolonisation with the waning influence of British rule. In 1993 *Midnight's Children* was adjudged the "Booker of Bookers", the best novel to have won the Booker prize in its first twenty five years. The novel is divided into three books. The book begins with the story of the Sinai family and the readers are led with the events particularly up to India's Independence and partition. "Born at the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947, at the precise moment of India's independence, the infant Saleem Sinai is celebrated in the press and welcomed by Prime Minister Nehru himself: "Dear Baby Saleem, My belated congratulations on the happy accident of your moment of birth! You are the newest bearer of that ancient face of India which is also eternally young. We shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of your own" (Rushdie, 1981:167).

But this coincidence of birth has consequences, Saleem is not prepared for; his telepathic powers connects him with 1,000 other "midnight's children" all born in the initial hour of India's independence" are imbued with special powers. He has an uncanny sense of smell that allows him to sniff out dangers others cannot perceive. Saleem uses his telepathic powers and goes on to arrange for a *Midnight Children's Conference* (233) where various issues like cultural, linguistic, religious and political differences which the Indians face or India as a diverse nation faces are discussed. He comes in contact with thousands of other children born closest to the stroke of midnight mainly Shiva "of the knees" and Parvati, "Parvati-the-Witch". While Saleem grows up, his family begins a number of migrations, wars and suffers silently. Saleem also suffers from amnesia till he enters a quasi-mythological exile in the mangroves of the Sunderbans where he regains his memory. He reconnects with his childhood friends. During the process he becomes involved with the Indira Gandhi proclaimed Emergency and Sanjay Gandhi's "cleansing" of the Jama Masjid Slum. As a consequence he becomes a political prisoner. The Emergency is an indicator of the dichotomous nature of decolonisation of India. Inextricably linked to his nation, Saleem's life is also a mixture of disasters and triumphs that mirrors the course of the dichotomous nature of decolonisation of modern India.

Midnight's Children is centered around India's partition in 1947, which followed its newly granted independence, narrated by a psychologically developed individual with an unusually

grown nose, Saleem Sinai, "Baby Saleem's nose: it was monstrous; and it ran" (Rushdie 1981:169). Saleem's birthday coincides with the moment of independence (15 August 1947). Exactly after thirty years, fearing his imminent death and the subsequent urgency of leaving a legacy of his very own existence in this world, he is compelled to tell his story to Padma his would-be wife. We are taken back during World War I to the time when his grandparents Adam Aziz and Naseem Ghani met and married, and then, slowly we begin to see Saleem closer and closer until we are back at the time of the narration.

Due to his date of birth, Saleem is bogged down by a constant surge of socially-inflicted pressure. He then discovers he has telepathic abilities and can read people's minds, he also discovers that this ability is also spread amongst other children of his generation: Telepathy, then: the inner monologues of all the so-called teeming millions, of masses and classes alike, jostled for space within my head (Rushdie, 1981:232).

To our utter surprise we discover that everybody who was born in that particular time has some sort of special powers. These are "midnight's children":

every one of whom was, through some freak of biology, or perhaps owing to some preternatural power of the moment, or just conceivably by sheer coincidence (although synchronicity on such a scale would stagger even C.G. Jung), endowed with features, talents or faculties which can only be described as miraculous. (Rushdie, 1981:271)

A boy from Kerala has the ability to step through mirrors and reemerge through any reflective surface, including the polished metal bodies of automobiles. A blue-eyed child from Kashmir

can alter his or her sex by stepping into water. Still another, Parvati, is a true witch, with powers of conjuration and sorcery. To Shiva, Saleem's changeling brother, "the hour had given the gifts of war (of Rama, who could draw the undrawable bow; of Arjuna and Bhima; the ancient prowess of Kurus and Pandavas united, unstoppably, in him!)" (Rushdie 1981:277).

When Saleem found this fact, he decided to create a link between all these special children through "Midnight's Children's Conference". However, we are to remember that this is not the only story thread in this book: we also see a parallel development of the plot, namely Saleem's own family's difficulties and peregrinations to survive plagues, wars and his own mental issues (amnesia, cured in the Sunderban jungle). Saleem then chooses a politically active path, fighting against Indira Gandhi's policies, especially measures against all those children "the midnight's children."

Dark clouds were gathering in political skies as well: in Bihar, where corruption inflation, hunger illiteracy landlessness ruled the roost, Jaya-Prakash Narayan led a coalition of students and workers against the governing Indira Congress: in Gujrat, there were riots, railway trains were burned, and Morarji Desai went on a fast-unto-death to bring down the corrupt government of the Congress (under Chimambhai Patel) in that drought-ridden state! (Rushdie, 1981:575)

Subsequently, to Gandhi's political fall, the prisoners are set free. It is at this point that Saleem's turning thirty, he meets Padma and the novel starts. Exactly a year later, on his birthday, he marries Padma and predicts his death on the same day. In the end of his life, Saleem decides to turn his eyes to history. He writes his own history as well as India's, he writes a

Chronicle dedicated to his son.

It is when Saleem moves to Pakistan with his family, the novel swirls into a serious concern with the political and military history of the two rival nations in the sub-Himalayan triangle. Under the surface of comedy, the tone darkens, it becomes Swiftian. There are passages of mordantly ironic satire juxtaposed against scenes of phantasmagoric horror. We are literally shocked by the story of the wife of Saleem's uncle Mustapha Aziz, who has been passed over forty-seven times for the headship of his department, is driven insane, By a life in which she has been required to begin ~ being a chamcha's (to forty- seven separate and successive wives of number-ones whom she had previously alienated by her manner of colossal condescension when they had been wives of number-threes. If Indira Gandhi had asked him to commit suicide, Mustapha Aziz would have ascribed it to anti-Muslim bigotry but also defended the statesmanship of the request, and naturally, performed the task without daring (or even wishing) to demur. (Rushdie, 1981:546)

Rushdie's story is an integral part of Indian Heritage (the readers feel as if not its personification itself), mingled with sunlight and darkness. Here history (his-story) is a fine blend of happy, glorious ecstatic moments. There is a sense of pride in being part of this wonderful mosaic.

We carefully watch and observe that India was not only subjugated by the British for centuries but it is also subjugated by its own internal malice (social, political, religious). Rushdie intentionally brings in the pickle metaphor. In the novel Indian history is compared with pickles. For pickles bring both pleasure, and a sore taste in the mouth. He writes in pickles too:

What I hope to immortalize in pickles as well as words: that condition of the spirit in which the consequences of acceptance could not be denied, in which an overdose of reality gave birth to a miasmatic longing for flight into the safety of dreams. But the jungle, like all refuges, was entirely other" was both less and more- than he had expected. ~I am glad, my Padma says, ~I am happy you ran away. But I insist: not I. He. He, the Buddha. Who, until the snake, would remain not-Saleem; who, in spite of running from, was still separated from his past; although he clutched in his limpet fist, a certain silver spittoon? (Rushdie, 1981:503)

We the readers have to remember that the taste of pickles is not exactly sweet, at the same time it is not bad either, rather it has a complementary taste (like salt) which gives sense to the particular food we are eating. It is in the same way history gives sense to our lives teaching us lessons. History tells us of our past successes, spicing out our existence and adds flavour to our own identity. That is why Saleem chooses to write history and not fighting death.

Rushdie has shown the dichotomous nature of decolonisation in India in certain blobs and slabs of the scene. Here he writes of, [P]articularly at times when the state takes reality into its own hands, and sets about distorting it, altering the past to fit its present needs, then the making of the alternative realities of art, including the novel of memory becomes politicized. Writers and politicians are natural rivals. Both groups try to make the world in their own images; they fight for the same territory. And the novel is one way of denying the official, politicians's version of truth (Jain 218).

An analysis shows that Midnight's Children has depicted the ~State truth~ about the war

in Bangladesh. We have an epic in our hands. The obvious comparisons are to Gunter Grass in *The Tin Drum* and to Gabriel Garcia Marquez in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Rushdie takes a dig at both nations. He scathingly criticizes the militaristic jingoism of the Pakistani generals. At the same time he exposes the hypocrisy, cruelty, and corruption of the Emergency years. Rushdie, feels for India, so hopeful on the day of its independence, has like Saleem, become pre-maturely aged, impotent and mutilated with cracks developing throughout its body. Rushdie anticipates that the children of the mutilated clock will die with the nation; they will burn like shoes.

Meanwhile Shiva the destroyer, now a war hero, bestrides the land. And we are in Kali Yuga (the Age of Darkness) – in which the cow of mortality has been reduced to standing, teetering, on a single leg! – Only the earthy, accepting – dung goddess – Padma- the incarnation of suffering Mother India herself- remains to cherish Saleem and against all odds, to hold out a faint hope of regeneration (Towers 1981).

Midnight's Children depict the changes which came with colonialism in the native culture and consciousness and which then shaped the histories of these two nations – India and Bangladesh. Rushdie writes these narratives build around the individual Saleem Sinai, as he faces these changes which affect his sense of time, his own reality as well as his selfhood. The crucial problem taken up in the novel is whether the common masses and India as a whole nation can face the surging tide over the forces of cultural and political imperialism of the British. The characters in this novel are the different aspects of the social and historical consciousness of the Indian people, delved out in figures drawn from the myths of their collective psyche as well as from their recent political history. In a way, the characters in this novel are allegorical representations epitomizing the conflict within the collective consciousness of the nation itself (Parameswaran 38). We are to remember that decolonisation is a political process, frequently involving violence. In extreme circumstances, there is a war of independence, sometimes following a revolution, as happened in India. More often, it has been noticed that there is a dynamic cycle where negotiations fail, minor disturbances ensue resulting in suppression by the police and military forces, escalating into more violent revolts that lead to further negotiations until independence is granted. The British had to finally leave India. In rare cases, the actions of the native population are characterized by nonviolence, with the Indian independence movement led by Mohandas Karam Chand Gandhi being one of the most notable examples, in the entire world, and the violence comes as active suppression from the occupying forces or as political opposition from forces representing minority local communities who feel threatened by the prospect of independence.

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