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Midnight children: A path breaking novel

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Abstract

Rushdie's writings take English literature to a new height. He is the master to influence the writers of his generation to follow him how to craft fiction fictionalizing history and vice versa. He is the first writer to combine the narrative techniques of the East and West expanding a vast canvas from the small point of an event. How a novel is composed combining all sorts of materials like history, magic, realism, fantasy, biography, autobiography and many other forms of literature is to learn from his fiction. He slips from center to periphery encircling and expanding his ideas to a greater extent which is very unique and uncommon. *Midnight Children* is a simple plot combining galaxy of literary genres getting garlanded in a single thread of theme.

Keywords: Globalization, historization, culture, intertextually, history, modernism, post-colonialism, postmodernism

Introduction

Globalization and its impacts abundantly found in the writings of Salman Rushdie, opined by the critics like M. Wellhead, Chhota Lal Khatri and Bern Hamm, have been attempted to prove in this paper. For the first time Rushdie takes an attempt to combine the western and eastern narrative techniques. It is experimentation in literature. Eliot's *Waste Land* was the classic to herald the modernism poetry which is still followed by all the poets. In fiction Rushdie brings about a novel technique of narration encompassing a multi-literary form of fantasy, facts, fable, biography, tragedy, comedy, humor, history, politics and irony in the same time. It is Rushdie who lifts the characters and incidents from different countries in his fiction and renders it a global status. Readers wander from one country to another in their novels watching the events, sights, incidents and situations in the word- pictures. He portrays the situation and incident in such a way as if the entire incidents occur before the readers.

His classic novel *Midnight's Children* brings laurels for Rushdie bagging Booker's Booker for its innovation in theme, and narration. The plot covers a period of three generations. The plot first sets in Kashmir, then shifts to Delhi, Allahabad then from India to Pakistan and Bangladesh. For the first time a fiction covers three countries and the protagonist displaced from one country to another. His problems are the problems of India; the two were born on the same midnight of a historic movement. The country is reflected through a character i.e., Salim Sinai. Rushdie set the trends to set the plots in more than one country so that it could cover a wider canvas. His visits to Pakistan, Bangladesh and his halt in England render concrete shape to this novel. After Rushdie a lot of Indian Diasporas fiction writers follow him setting their novels in more than one county. Amitav Ghosh, one of the intellectual fiction writers, sets the plots of his fiction in different countries. His *Fault Line* is set in the countries where *Midnight Children* is set.

The narrator Salim Sinai narrates the story to his wife Padma, who is not a silent listener rather she goes on to intervene meantime. Sinai's interpretations about his family, friends and relatives and the situation they go through have been humorously narrated. His grandfather 's effort, parents' personal relationship and the family's fate have been narrated in a humorous way.

Rushdie's writings owe their origin from his personal bitter and better experiences of migration from one place to another within and outside India. It leads him to compose *The Imaginary Homeland* in which he reveals his pangs deprived of a nation and homeland. The attachment for homeland and experiences getting separated from provides stuff for his fiction.

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Midnight Children has been globally celebrated for its eloquent and evocative explorations of questions of identity, history, colonial legacy in India, and national imaginings, critically scrutinizing the British legacies in India. Graham Huggan argues that, "Midnight Children is a radically revisionist novel, a work of historiographic metafiction that shows the inescapable ideological characters of historical facts... that is not prevented the novel being read - as a surrogate guide book, or as a meddle or incomplete historical narratives that engage with India's (post)imperial historical past."(25)

Imperial status in India is transferred to the ruling class which exercises their authority over people even violating the constitution. Such ghetto mentality is found in South Asia while Salim Sinai wandering from one country to another. Rushdie's writings about Pakistan and its postcolonial political scenario is very humorous. He satirizes the Pakistan politics and politicians allegorically in *Shame*. The same thing he does in *Midnight Children*. India political leaders are criticized. The very identity of politics is to hoodwink to common mass which the writer tries to map.

Midnight Children portrays the places, people and political parties in course of narrating his plot. Characters derived from various platforms and countries are well-knitted as if alive. The different socio-political and financial problems they face are also very real which the world faces. India and Pakistan and the peoples of these two counties are portrayed symbolically. The war mongering Pakistan generals controlling the political system from background have also come to the front in Rushdie's popular fiction *Shame*.

How Muslim a Muslim family is embroiled into different problems by the problems of the land where they live have been portrayed in *Midnight Children*. Salim searches for a homeland which he does not get. In *Grimus* the Flapping Eagle discovers himself and his alienation in Calf Island. Both the characters travel throughout their lives to a homeland of their own but fail to find. The attachment for place strengthens them to run for land but the repulsion starts when they are clashed with realism. The tussle between the imaginary and real homeland is one of the themes of the fiction.

Three generations of a family in India and its movement from one place to another for different reasons is the plot of the fiction. It is connected to Pakistan, Bangladesh. The story begins in Kashmir, then moves to Agra, Delhi, Bombay and again ends in Delhi with the marriage of Salim Sinai with Padma who he narrates the history of his family. Salim Sinai is thirty when the plot sets, and it goes back to thirty two years earlier before his birth in 1915. He was born in the midnight of 1947 at the exact point of time India got its independent. Starting from 1915 to 1987 the plot relates to the major historical events of the country. Both the pictures of pre-independence and post-independence have been portrayed emphasizing how the political events and incidents affect life and living. Salim Sinai's grandfather, Adam Aziz, doctor, is in love with Kashmir girl Naseem who he treats. Naseem continuous treatment from fever by Dr. Aziz is the beginning of the great family which is very symbolic of the vast family. Adam Aziz and Naseem produced a family of three daughters and two sons.

The family is linked to Pakistan in marriage. The politics of Pakistan and the ruling of Bhutto have been narrated in the novel. Rushdie has a very bitter experience on Pakistan

when he visited the land and found it in the verge of failure in democracy. Pakistan poses itself as the only savior of the Islam. The leaders want to rule in name of the religion because of the people. Bangladesh is also like Pakistan which is portrayed like the former. The *Midnight Children* is fiction that deals with the current political and social affairs of undivided India.

Rushdie shot into fame for his *Midnight Children*. It brought him international recognition. The new style of narrating history, politics, current social events and geo-politics are the new flavor in fiction which was not a practice before. Rushdie has influenced a lot of fiction writers on a global level. Arundhati Roy and Aravind Adiga are deeply influenced by Rushdie. He is a novelist to influence many generations for his unique and innovative style of writing.

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