

Magical Realism, Narrative, and Symbolism: Representing National Identity in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

¹C. Vigneshwaran, ²Dr. G. Sivabalan

¹Full-Time Research Scholar, MKU23FFOL10867, PG & Research Dept of English, Sourashtra College, Madurai.

²Head & Associate Professor, PG & Research Dept of English, Sourashtra College, Madurai.

Abstract: This paper inspects the use of magical realism, narration exploration, and illustrative demonstration in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. The novel combines history, myth, fantasy, and reality to present the appearance of modernistic India and the particularities of national identity. Rushdie involves a parallel between disparate experiences and the nation's historical enhancement by terminating the protagonist and narrator, Saleem Sinai, who was born at the moment of Indian independence. The study identifies how magical realist elements, especially the prodigious powers of the *Midnight's Children*, exceed established realism to reveal expanded historical, cultural, and psychological truths. It also deconstructs Rushdie's inconsistent narrative structure, unsystematic chronology, and the use of wanderings and explorations that reflect the reputation of oral storytelling mythology. Constant arguments such as the perforated sheet, the silver spittoon, and blood imagery situations are symbolical tendencies that support rhetoric within the novel's intricate narrative framework. The paper examines the cooperation between Saleem and Padma, which determines intellectual espousal and narrative genuineness. *Midnight's Children* provides a thoughtful voyaging of memory, history, identity, and nationhood through the distinguishing lens of magical realism.

Keywords: Magical Realism, National Identity, Postcolonial Literature, *Midnight's Children*, Narrative Technique, Symbolism, Memory and History, Cultural Hybridity

Introduction:

Magic realism is a literary genre or style most frequently identified with Latin American literature that weaves strange or mythological aspects into otherwise realistic narrative, according to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary—Magic Realism. It blurs the line between fact and fiction as a plot device. The embrace of both the commonplace and extraordinary in equal measure defines magical realism. It incorporates beautiful and oftentimes surreal poetry, a study of the nature of human existence, and an underlying critique of society, particularly the elite. The phrase's current usage was first described by Alejo Carpentier in the foreword of his 1925 book, *El reino de este mundo*. The expression was first used by Franz Roh, a German art critic.

Magical Realism and the Cultural Representation of India:

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* has been compared in scope and style to Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, Gunter Grass's *The Tin Drum*, and James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Rushdie's work, like theirs, chronicles the life of a single person while providing a thorough examination of an entire civilization. This is made feasible, in part, by the incorporation of a number of non-Western classics into the novel form, including the Sanskrit epics, *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata*, and—most consciously—*The 1001 Nights*. Saleem Sinai reflects on his life and the history of his twin, the newly constituted nation of India, as the narrative takes the form of a fictional autobiography. Saleem Sinai was born at midnight on August 15, 1947, the precise time of Indian independence. He fabricates a tale that combines elements from other cultures in order to achieve this. Saleem looks for or learns about the connections between the personal and the national, the individual and the societal, throughout the course of the story in order to give meaning to his life and, somewhat more problematically, to the history of India from



the period between World War I and the Indian Emergency 1975–1977, when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi suspended the Constitution and democracy all but collapsed in the country. From the start of the story, Saleem feels handcuffed to history rather than free because of the difficult relationship he has with his national twin.

Saleem Sinai, the main character and narrator of *Midnight's Children*, has multiple personalities. His multiple identities and the recurrent claim that his life story could be symbolically linked to India are probably the causes of the novel's most spectacular attempt at unification. He is first and foremost the biological son of William Methwold and Vanita, the assumed son of Wee Willie Winkie and Vanita, and the unintentionally adopted son of Ahmed and Amina. The outcome of combining Hindu, Muslim, and English cultural influences is India. In addition, Ire is Shiva in the strictest definition of the word. Afterward, he gains additional father figures in the form of Nadir Khan, the father he might have been; Dr. Schaapsteker, who brings him back to life; General Zulfikar, who forgoes raising his own son in favor of Saleem; and Picture Singh, who adopts a reincarnated Saleem after being obliterated to invisibility by Parvati. Saleem claimed that his inheritance allowed him to create new parents for himself at any time.

The story of *Midnight's Children* is a metaphor for the national psyche. Saleem Sinai, the novel's protagonist and narrator, is how Rushdie explores these subjects. *Midnight's Children* can be made to stand for a number of different things, depending on your viewpoint. They may be seen as either the actual hope of freedom, which is now taking shape, or as the final holdout of everything antiquated and backward in our myth-ridden nation, which we have finally overcome. They have been relieved of their suffering, but they must not turn into some bizarre fabrication of a disturbed mind.

Saleem Sinai claims that he is the centre of all things and that he better represents the country than Indira Gandhi, whose sloganized centrality is refuted by Prime Minister Nehru's letter to him. This is explained by the fact that he was born during a pivotal period in history. There are many similarities between Saleem and India. A clock-ridden, crime-stained birth is taking place right now. His Indian ancestry restricts his possibilities. Geographical factors are also significant. Saleem Sinai is a small version of India. The lameness of his map face is a reflection of India's vastness, and his entire face is a portrayal of the map of India. The horrifying birthmarks on the face appear to be the result of the Holocaust that was India's split, which resulted in Pakistan's establishment. He represents the Himalayas and Kashmir with his Byzantine domes and sky-blue eyes, respectively. The black stain and dark patch on his face stand for Pakistan's two wings. His prominent nose is a representation of India's vanity and self-exaltation.

Narrative Form, Technique, and Storytelling:

The unravelling of the story from the narrator Saleem's birth and life to the history of India and the subcontinent accounts for the delight of the text in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. The text of *Midnight's Children* is a linguistic mosaic and tapestry made up of several writings. The subject has access to happiness because two languages coexist and function side by side: the text of pleasure is an accepted Basel. This is especially important in novels because speech is constantly mixed in.

The first scene introduces the perforated sheet paradigm. Dr Aziz can only see the patient's body through it. Rushdie's narrative style can be compared to this inherent sexiness because it only exposes a portion of the body while concealing the rest. The delight of the striptease is comparable to a number of voyeuristic figures in Rushdie's writings, such as in *Shame*. Saleem lurks in the washer or the trunk of the car, watching the other characters, notably his mother. The writing has a sensual quality, as it is said in the text's delight that to depict is to unfurl, disclose, and exhibit. Reading restores the text's etymological and original depth. It is a perforated sheet, so we can see through the holes in it. A small bit of the sheet is always removed when a page is turned, exposing what was previously hidden—the remaining body and the story. The narrator exploits this uncertainty by using



the polysomic phrase sheet. The possibilities of the signifier and, within it, of the letter itself, are based on the structuring around the time of writing. It frequently happens in autobiographical literature.

The narrator's birthdate and the time of writing are consistent in Tristram Shandy. The work, which is a fictional autobiography, actually centres on the statement and story that I'm about to tell. The moment of speaking is repeatedly referenced in *Midnight's Children*. Saleem talks a lot about the angled light, the pickle plant, and his writing area. The momentum of the narration appears to be continually pointed toward the magnet of the present, much like at the beginning of the chapter All India Radio, where the viewer moves toward the movie screen. Imagine yourself in a big movie theatre, initially seated in the back row and progressively sliding up and down until almost your nose is mashed against the screen. Since Saleem is aware of his imminent death, the narrative's anchoring in the text's eternal present allows him to contest both death's oncoming arrival and its eventual conclusion. They are the essential components of the narrative. Tristram Shandy goes off on a lot of tangents. In order to avoid having a beginning and an end in his history, which would indicate his death, the narrator tries to delete the moment of his birth. Even though Ash Saleem announced his birth from the beginning in a pretty typical manner, he makes an effort to postpone his death, which will be fatal as a result of the revelation of his birth. The proleptic signs of death are collected in his disfigured body. Padma is enraged by his choice to wait until the conclusion of Book One to tell the story, and she becomes very upset. Because they fill the void left by bursting fissures, which would be catastrophic, the various interpolated stories are criticised. When it comes to stating the truth in order to survive, Saleem is pretty Beckettian.

The dialogue between Saleem and Padma, who stands in for the audience, is what drives *Midnight's Children's* storyline. Saleem employs asides on occasion to query the reader. Since the tale is written and spoken in front of an audience, rhetoric is important. Three major concepts can be drawn from Cicero's approach. The narration is carried out under their supervision. 'Movere', which in Latin means 'to move', is the first rule of elocution. The orator must captivate the audience by appealing to their emotions and using pathos.

The narrator begs for the audience's and reader's requisite good will in order for the story to continue. His early life was filled with sad and moving experiences. The series of injuries—from the hair yanked out to the eardrum punctured by a powerful blow from his father, from the sliced finger to the sinus surgery that results in the loss of telepathy—elicits the two emotions of sympathy and horror. The most heartbreaking mutilation may be the one he never stops trying to hide and that keeps coming up in the story: the sterilization he had.

Effectiveness is the subject of the second tenet. Saleem is concerned with the satisfaction of his readers and listeners. He makes a point of emphasising how he tries to re-engage Padma Bibi's attention by presenting a fairy tale. Rushdie thinks a story needs to be powerful. He contrasted his storytelling technique with that of Indian storytellers in an interview. He has probably taken oral narration, rather than the fairytale tradition we were discussing, from India. Because the majority of the population like Padma is still illiterate, the oral storytelling tradition in this country is still strong and alive. I also got the impression that the storyteller faced the problem of keeping an audience far more than the novelist. The smallest faux pas results in the audience losing interest, which they will express by departing. What takes place is Padma decides to depart for three chapters since she is tired of Saleem's ramblings (chapters eleven to thirteen). Dots and the conjunction of coordination are frequently employed to truncate sentences and control delivery. Nominalisations and stylistic figures create a juxtaposition effect that has contrapuntal value since it generates instability and confusion. Without altering the meaning, Asyndeton and Anacoluthon disturb the syntax or break up logical chains. Similar to the initial recapitulation, the anaphora of the word "there" gives the narration an impatient speed that replicates the incessant jumbling of references happening in the narrator's mind.

To please is the third rhetorical tenet. This tactic is used in parodies and cross-textual references. A certain joy of the book, for example, depends on your ability to decode some of the Shakespearean references. Something



smelled foul in the capital of New Delhi, as it is bizarrely compared to the kingdom of Denmark in Hamlet. In Book One, there are numerous funny tales and nasty puns. Examples of purple patches that are essential to the reader's enjoyment are the description of Doctor Aziz before the massacre in the chapter Mercurochrome or the realization that William Methwold's hair is actually a wig. The writer tinkers with what is left unsaid in order to increase the surprise of the reveal. The reading or listening experience is much improved when faults are fixed. The most blatant example of the reflected joy of storytelling is when a phrase is cut off at the end of a page, forcing the reader to flip the page before it is fully read, which sends Padma into a rage and makes her wear the robe of modesty until their eyes meet. When the narrator says, "Padma, it's true that the Midnight's Children shook even Padma's faith in his narrative," he won her over, and now that there's no mention of outings, it's clear that he's trying to persuade the reader or addressee. With his appeal, he hopes to persuade the audience to accept the speech's proposals and demands as true.

The Representation of Time, Memory, and Recurring Motifs in the novel:

The representational process is made up of the two time and space series. It's a notion that Kant came up with first. The two opposing patterns of before and after, which are defined by a space articulated as the trajectory of succeeding places along the oriented and irreversible line of historicity, and high and low, where time is cancelled out at the temporal zero point that is the singular instant, are at the core of representation. Since the two concepts are inseparable from one another, any attempt to categorize them would be a tautology.

It is essential to start focusing on the space of the narrative, utilising the concepts of linearity and non-linearity, because the story does not follow the traditional chronology. Similar to Tristram Shandy, there are several tangents. It explains every difference of opinion between Saleem and Padma, who are only interested in what occurs next and the connections between the consequences of their actions. Saleem's own admission that he puts the cart before the bullock explains the significance of starting, middle, and finishing conceptions as well as their continuing uncertainty. The title of Chapter Sixteen, Alpha and Omega, serves to remind the reader of this fact. The narrator also regularly mentions the time of speech and is compelled to mention what will happen or what has already happened. He either handles it himself in the first chapter and the rest of the book, or he seeks mediation from someone like a soothsayer. It has the same effect as a magic spell or incantation that predicts Saleem's cycle of fate. Amina is motionless, and the soothsayer's actions accentuate the obsessive nature of everything that is spinning faster and more erratically around her.

Because time folds, unfolds, and moves libido, it is a complicated concept. It serves as the narration's primary dramatic spark. The narrator moves forward out of a genuine sense of desperation to write before his final collapse. He has a lot of stories to share, but near the end of the book, he sounds rushed and says things like, "But it's time to get things going" (Midnight's Children-484) and "to cut a long story short," (Midnight's Children-489) which is similar to Fielding's Joseph Andrews. "But I have no hope of saving my life, nor can count on even a thousand nights and a night, he continues, comparing his situation to Princess Scheherazade's in" (Midnight's Children-16) *The Arabian Nights*, who must tell a tale every night to survive. He got to work faster than Scheherazade.

Time is constantly shifting: it stretches in Book One from Tai the boatman's beginning in 1915, or possibly at the dawn of humanity, to its conclusion in 1947, and then it significantly settles between Chapters 9 and 20, during which an interval of eighteen years passes, until the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965. The first temporal sequence starts on a morning in Kashmir in 1915, or the time the grandfather hit his nose against the ground. The World Was Fresh Again is the title of the second series, which makes use of the pluperfect. It expresses a result because it is about the transition of nature after winter before the first temporalities. In the third temporality, which occurs before the other two, my grandfather's secret will be made known. Since Aziz spent time in Germany before going back to India, the temporality in this situation demonstrates anteriority. There are, however, two exceptions: one recalls the incident of the nose damage that happened in the past, and the other predicts his end. When the morning



and valley are in their fourth series, it happens immediately after the tragic episode where Aziz hurts himself while praying. It closes the time circle by connecting to the first temporality.

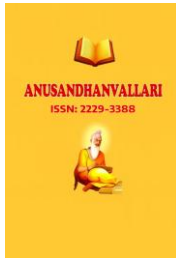
Saleem, the infant, became ill, as if unable to handle all the visitors. Then, after blushing and getting scarlet, he closed his eyes. After examining me, my grandfather declared, "I'm afraid there is no question; the poor lad has typhoid." (Midnight's Children-167) While Mary was in shock, while the umbilical cord hung in a pickle jar, while Mary's chutneys filled our dreams with finger-pointing, while Amina awaited the outcome of Ismail's appeal against the state authorities, while the brass monkey [Salem's sibling] grew in her womb, and while Reverend.

In order to show order within chaos, the narrative scents are introduced last. As much as the teeming variety of narratives and situations, the anarchy that threatens the book figuratively may be observed in the cracks. It is in line with Rushdie's interpretation of the book as it is presented in *Grimus*, which maintains that a novel must have tattered edges and unfinished business. The English language is distorted by being fragmented, abbreviated, and punctuated, and the grammar imitates this distortion. It is still true that Saleem is figuratively focused on shape and significance, like the subcontinent. One cannot avoid correspondences because they are our culture's obsession. When we make connections between things that at first glance seem unconnected, we are happy. Maybe it's only the sense of our ingrained idea that significance only sporadically manifests and that shapes are concealed inside reality, but there seems to be a sort of collective craving for form.

Recurrence cannot be avoided since it is necessary for us to understand how revelation and the story work. Here, both the Rushdie and Wagnerian leitmotifs can be discussed. First of all, it's been claimed that writing a novel is analogous to writing music; occasionally, it wants a more sophisticated audience that would understand the value of rhythm. It's crucial to maintain a steady tempo and introduce minor chords that eventually increase, swell, and seize the melody. Consequently, those who like music may think about the creation of a specific fugue. The numerous documents' initial introductions precede their eventual distribution and disclosure. Rushdie insisted on the significance of the leitmotiv, which creates a formal field of meaning and an arbitrary network of connections. It is necessary for representation to occur. There are a lot of leitmotifs, or what Eliot called objective correlatives. They are all linked to significant moments in the book. Aziz and Naseem's connection is sparked by the perforated sheet, which unwittingly starts a genealogy, no matter how disjointed it may be. It also serves as the catalyst for the novel's narrative. It is frequently used to describe the romance between Ahmed and Amina, as well as Saleem's ghost costume and Jamila's concert performance. The silver spittoon is the object that weighs the most. It is initially given to Ahmed and Amina as a wedding present. It will stay with the narrator and eventually become the only thing left after the destruction of his home and the passing of his parents. These two things contain magic. To identify the perforated sheet, use a talisman and an open sesame. It starts the narrative's metonymic movement and puts the narration physically in motion. The silver spittoon also serves a healing function. At the conclusion of Book Two. The whirling object strikes Saleem in the head, causing him to lose all memory and fall into a coma, freeing him from the shackles of the past. As he stands up unsteadily after the blast, he notices something twisting and turning, somersaulting down, silver as moonlight, a beautifully crafted silver spittoon inlaid with lapis lazuli, and the past falling towards him like a vulture drop.

Conclusion:

This forgetfulness is highlighted by the text's ellipsis of the impacts instant. Other important themes include blood and its deceiving twin, Mercurochrome—Naseem mistakes it for blood in Chapter Two. This fluid carries a lot of symbolic meaning; in addition to being the blood from battles and wounds, it also represents soiling and losing one's virginity because it stains the perfumed sheet. The ferryman Tai's performance of the pointing finger is an allegory for the wall art that hangs in young Salem's bedroom. In this picture, little Raleigh may be seen reading chapter nine's subtitle, Fisherman's Pointing Finger. Off-camera, it denotes the frame's edge and alludes to reality or perhaps transgression. Red also shows up quite a little. Eleven stands out because it brings to mind the narrator's



finger amputation. The narrator is a sharp reader of signs who sees the world as a book. Repetition is the cornerstone of *Midnight's Children's* musicality. The entire time, there are repeated echoes. In the chapter "How Saleem Achieved Purity," for instance, the minaret of the mosque is described as a long pointing finger, and when Doctor Narlikar outlines his project of tetrapod's, he draws the construction site as a pointing finger. This theme and variation structure exemplifies the linguistic symbol's full potency. The text's beauty also stems from repetition; the countless recaps and leitmotifs act as incantations and litanies to jog our memories of the time when writing was oral. Actually, the majority of ancient poems were chants and instructions.

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