



SALEEM'S QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN THE MAGICAL TIME WORLD OF SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN*

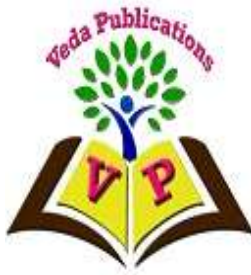
Ruchi Dubey^{1*}, Dr. S. K. Tiwari²

^{1*}(Research Scholar, Atal Bihari Vajpayee University, Bilaspur C.G.)

²(Assist. Prof, HOD, D.P. Vipra College, Bilaspur C.G.)

Email ID: ruchisharma8814@gmail.com

ABSTRACT



Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* has erased the line between historical events and historical fiction. It has chronicled the history of Indian subcontinent in an impressively irreverent voice. Throughout the story the main protagonist, Saleem revolves around the magical time world created by Salman Rushdie in his novel *Midnight's Children*. This research paper explores how the protagonist Saleem Sinai seeks his identity and goes parallel to the magical time created by Rushdie in *Midnight's Children*. The treatment of time in this novel can be done by placing the elements of time as Tense, Generations, Years, Events and space of origin. Saleem comes across the numerous time moments as India's Independence coinciding with Saleem's birth and partition followed by a countdown leading to Saleem's Amnesia. The constant previewing of events to come is the most effective way of treatment of time in this novel. *Midnight's Children* has covered everything, everyone and every time period in it since the birth of the nation from the partition, religious divisions, linguistic fights and slums to the emergency and from eccentric aunts and cousins to soldiers and snake charmers. This research paper shows how Saleem seeks his identity while living in the magical time world. Magic Realism in the form of Magical time world connected with Indian History has helped Saleem to search his identity and to break the monotony of his life. This epic book presents the truer picture of the land and its people whereas in this research paper the fictional character Saleem is shown true in the time world of Rushdie.

Keywords: *Time, Midnight's Children, History, Identity, Magic Realism, Time world.*



MAGICAL TIME WORLD

Magical time world refers to Indian history, which Rushdie has placed in this novel. Magic Realism is the commonest genre which Rushdie uses in his novel. In *Midnight's Children*, the reality part is the history of India and the magical part is the story. Especially the magical part begins after the birth of 1001 Midnight's Children who were born on the Midnight stroke between 12 AM to 1AM on India's Independence dated 15 August 1947. The characters of the novel go parallel to this magical time world. The characters are so much mingled to the time world that it seems they are the real part of Indian history. The magical time world of Rushdie means the 'magic realism' which the author has used to explore the significant events in the subcontinent history including the war between India and Pakistan, and the independence of Bangladesh and the emergency under Indira Gandhi.

METAFICTIONAL AREA

When we relate this novel to the concept of time metafictional area develops in it. Saleem besides being a fictional character is a creator of fiction, he is thus in position of power and hence in control of time. As long as he is re-creating his fictional life story he masters time and can therefore ignore linearity or chronology and uses time instead as a flexible background to his narrative. We can say that Saleem invents his narrative thus he can also invent any time structure he wants to. The story goes according to Saleem along with the time and he seeks his identity in that time world.

Time can be divided into four generation in this story:

(A). First Generation: - First generation deals with Saleem's grandfather Dr. Aadam Aziz and his grandmother Naseem.

Saleem's story begins in Kashmir 32 years before his birth in 1915. Saleem's grandfather Dr. Aadam Aziz while treating a woman named Naseem, via perforated sheet for three years falls in love with her and saw his future wife's face for the first time, when world war one ends, in 1918. Aadam Aziz marries Naseem and moves to Agra. They had three daughters named Alia, Mumtaz and Emerald and two sons named Mustafa and Hanif.

(B). Second Generation: - Second generation deals with Saleem's father Ahmed Sinai and his mother Amina.

Mumtaz was married to Ahmed Sinai and her name was changed to Amina, and she moved to Delhi with her husband. Amina got pregnant and meanwhile Ahmed's factory was burned, so they shifted to William Methwold's estate in Bombay. William Methwold was entertained by a poor Wee Willie Winky and his wife Vanita, who was pregnant.

(C). Third Generation: - Third generation is about protagonist of the story Saleem himself. About his magical powers and event which occurs with him, along with the other *Midnight's Children*.

At exactly Midnight Amina and Vanita delivered their sons and Marry Pereira exchanged both the children, so that the rich became poor and the poor became rich. She did this to please her lover Joseph D'Costa. Saleem is the biological son of



William Methwold and Vanita who was with Amina and Ahmed, and Shiva was left with Wee Willie Winky.

Saleem's search for origin with his magical power

Saleem quest for identity was triggered by the shocking discovery when Marry Periera confesses that Saleem is not Ahmad and Amina's biological son. Saleem's father sends him to live with his aunt and uncle out of a sense of shame and confusion. The revelation about Saleem's true parentage represents a major shifting point in Saleem's identity one of which he can never return.

Saleem the protagonist of the story was born precisely at midnight August 15th 1947, therefore exactly as old as the independent republic of India. He later discovered that he had telepathic powers, and all children born in India between 12:00 AM and 1:00 AM on that date are imbued with special powers. Saleem uses his telepathic powers, to assemble conference to discover the meaning of their gifts. In particular those children born closest to the stroke of Midnight had more powerful gifts than the others. (a). Shiva with powerful "Knees". (b). Parvati had Magical powers so called as "Parvati Witch". These two children with notable gifts played major roles in Saleem's life.

The search for origin was especially important for Saleem Sinai because of the nature of this particular gift of communication he had, but the midnight children's conference falls apart as the children began to go their separate ways as they were affected by the religious, culture and class based prejudices of their parents.

Saleem suffered from Amnesia when he was hit by silver spittoon in an air attack during Indo-Pakistan war and he enters a quasi mythological exile in the jungal of Sunderban, where he re-endowed his memory. He marries Parvati, when she was pregnant from Shiva. Here again, Saleem's would be child's identity was questioned as Shiva was the biological father of Saleem's would be child.

Meanwhile Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, began a sterilization campaign. Shortly after the birth of Parvati's son "Aadam Sinai", the government destroyed the Magician's Ghetto. Parvati died, while Shiva captured Saleem and brought him to a forced sterilization camp, where all the Midnight's children were sterilized and their powers were destroyed.

(D). Fourth Generation: - Fourth generation is about Saleem's non biological son Aadam Sinai.

Saleem along with his Son Aadam, and Picture Singh moved to Bombay, where he eat some chutney which was exactly like the once his Ayah Marry used to make. Saleem met Padma and Marry in Chutney factory and he marries Padma, his steadfast lover and listener. On Saleem's 31st birthday which falls on 31st anniversary of India's independence, Saleem prophesies that he will die on that day, disintegrating into millions of specks of dust.

As Saleem recalled his childhood near the end of his life, he became aware of the symbolic and tragic roll he played in history. Saleem's bodily decay goes parallel with the progress of his written novel. The faster, and the more he writes, the more rapid



he decays. Clearly, when he completed his writing, he too vanishes out of the story.

Treatment of Time, Historical Events, Space of Origin and Saleem Sinai's Life

(i) On 1947 in Bombay, 1001 Midnight's Children were born, when Marry Periera disclosed the truth of switching babies. Saleem Amina and Brass Monkey moved to Pakistan. Saleem stayed in Pakistan for four years with his uncle, Major Zulfikar and Aunty Emerald. They came to Bombay (India) when Saleem's father Ahmed had a heart failure.

(ii) From 20 Oct. 1962 to 21 Nov. 1962 for thirty three days, India and China war occurred at that time Saleem went for a medical operation, he loosed his telepathic powers of communication but gained the sense of smell in Pakistan.

(iii) From 26 March 1971 to 16 Dec. 1971 for eight months, India and Pakistan war occurred. During this time, Saleem was hit by a Silver Spittoon and loosed his memory. Saleem helped in the Independence movement of Bangladesh. In jungle of Sundarban, Saleem regained his memory.

(iv) On 1975 in India, Indira Gandhi put Emergency. During this time Saleem met his Midnight friends, he married Parvati and Saleem's non biological son Aadam Sinai was born. All the powers of the midnight's children were destroyed during the Emergency. Parvati was killed during the sterilization process of Emergency. Saleem came Bombay with his son Aadam and got married to Padma.

Tense

Past, Present and Future become one single entity and space in which Saleem travels freely, ignoring temporal boundaries. Any clear borders disappear so that the narrative exists in state and space of fluidity and flux. In *Midnight's Children*, the time does not obey the loss of cause and effect, but creates its own universe of endless swoops, spiral, digression and reiteration.

One might compare the novel's time frame to Benedict Anderson's motion of "Homogenous empty time" in which he claims, such autobiographical narratives are mostly set. He argues that, why so many autobiographies begin with the circumstances of parents and grandparents, for which the auto biographer can have only circumstantial, textual evidence. The recurring motif of ending and beginnings fits into this idea of homogenous time. The endings are never terminal in *Midnight's Children*.

CONCLUSION

This article explores that the protagonist Saleem lives along the Indian history. He assumes that his own life has a bearing on wider history, events or the magical time world of Rushdie. Saleem's personal identity is inextricably entwined with that of India. Saleem's disappointment shows the reflection of the newly forming country's own problems. Saleem wistfully describes the timeless Kolynos kid, trapped forever in the bill board but free from the ravages of time and age. Saleem longs for his lost childhood in the same way as India longs back at its ancient past.



This research paper concludes with how time, generations, space and events chronologically go parallel to Saleem's life. Saleem is linked to history by different notes of connection, through many fold relationships, Saleem faces multiple identities press upon him, a mirror of fragmentation and multiplicity of Indian Society and the confusion of social, religious, religion and parochial identities under which India suffered.

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