CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

The objective of my research project is to examine the theme of solitude with reference to the major novels of Gabriel García Márquez and Salman Rushdie in order to highlight the contemporary socio-political realities of decolonized Colombia, India and Pakistan as depicted in the fantastic mode of narration. The research is conducted with the following hypothesis: ‘Márquez and Rushdie represent commonplace socio-political realities of their time as magical realities with the help of the techniques of oral and written narratives’.

The socio-political reality of the so-called decolonized nation force its writers, people and administrators to take resort to solitude. The word ‘Solitude’ is a polysemic word; it will be explained in the beginning of the second chapter. It is mentioned here just to suggest the relationship between ‘solitude’ and every day socio-political realities. It is to be noted that since ordinary realities are represented in the form of imaginative and magical style they seem to be fantastic realities. A close reading of the fantastic as found in the major novels of Márquez and Rushdie is necessary to grasp the nature of ordinary realities. This close reading will be done with the critical tools of ‘analysis’ and ‘comparison’, if necessary.
To be more specific our plan is to study One Hundred Years of Solitude with Midnight’s Children and The Autumn of the Patriarch with Shame. The study is made with twofold purposes. First, it is to interpret the theme of solitude in its different contexts; the context may be linguistic and non-linguistic. The linguistic context included the used of pronoun and objectives in the most appropriate ways. The non-linguistic context is explained later in this section. Second it is to be traced and illustrate how the day-to-day experiences are transformed into supra-rational, irrational and magical experiences.

Both Márquez and Rushdie are considered magic realists. The concept of magic realism shall be interpreted later in this chapter. Here it is enough to say that the novelists who adopt magic realism as style to represent socio-political and economic realities of their time are called magic realists. Most of the magic realists belong to the decolonized nations. Márquez, for example, belongs to Colombia, which won its Independence from Spain in 1810. Technically, Colombia has been one of Latin America’s oldest democracies, yet it has never been a democratic nation due to its frequent political upheavals and uncertainties. The major upheaval has been the civil war, the war of a Thousand Days of Colombia, which began in 1899 and ended in late 1902. The war claimed the lives of over 1,00,000 people, primarily peasants and their sons. Márquez’s grandfather also fought in this war.
Obviously, Colombia suffered from lawlessness and instability caused by the civil war.

Colombia is known for its banana industry. Unfortunately its banana industry had been monopolized by the United Fruit Company, an American outfit. The UFC had tremendous political clout in spite of the fact that it was a corrupt and ammonal Company that abused its Colombian workers. In October of 1928, over 32,000 native workers went on strike demanding, among other things, toilets and payment in cash rather than company scrip. One night a huge crowd of workers gathered to hold a demonstration. In order to quell the incident the conservative Government sent in the troops, which fired on the unarmed workers, killing hundreds. Over the next few months, more people simply vanished. Finally the whole incident was officially denied and struck from the history books.

The banana massacre was followed by the period of the violence that Márquez himself witnessed. Colombia had two main political parties: The party the Liberal and the party of Conservative. The leader of the Liberal party, Eliecer Gaitan inspired peasants and other workers to take active part in the democracy in order to bring about a radical change in their lives. His efforts has been frustrated by the members of his own party. By 1946, he caused a split in the Liberal party. The
split helped the conservative party to return to power. The conservative administrators started terrorizing Liberal voters, killing thousands of them by the end of 1946. In 1947 the liberal Leader Gaitan gained power; he also started taking retaliatory action against the Conservative voters. No wonder that tensions rose and on April 9, 1948, Gaitan was assassinated in Bogota. His assassination led to lethal riots for three days, which caused the deaths of 2500 people.

Colombia has been declared as a democratic nation. When we go through the history of Colombia, we confront two intriguing questions. The first question is can Colombia be called a nation? We know that a nation has a unity in terms of language and culture. Colombia never achieved any type of unity, it had always been divided. Colombia’s claim to be a nation is, therefore, an illusion. The second question is: Has Colombia ever been a democratic country? No, it was never. Neither the Liberal nor the Conservative government worked for the welfare of the people. Colombia’s claim to be a democratic nation was just a myth.

However, it has been the dream of the people of Colombia to be a democratic nation in true sense of the term. Márquez represents his people’s dream in the form of fantasy in his novels. He also discovers the truth of the banana massacre that the government denied and struck from the history books. In One Hundred Years of Solitude we find elaborate narration of
banana massacre. So Márquez’s fantasy is indeed an actual reality. Perhaps it is the higher reality in the sense that it indicates the aspiration of the people of Colombia.

Rushdie, on the other hand, belongs to India, which won its Independence on 15th August 1947. The Preamble of the Constitution of free India says that India is a ‘Secular’ and ‘Socialist’ nation. The pertinent question even today is asked: Is India a secular nation? The answer is: No, not even today. We know that even on the very eve of Independence, India suffered from a number of communal riots, which shocked the very fabric of secularism. It is a known truth that India has always been divided in the name of caste and creed class and gender. The declaration of Emergency by Mrs. Indira Gandhi had been undemocratic and oppressive; it curtailed the freedom of people. Similarly, India is not a socialist country in the true sense of the term. After Independence the gap between the rich and the poor has widened. Thus the image of a secular and socialist India is a myth; it does not exist in reality. It is just a dream that Rushdie narrates in the mode of the fantastic in Midnight’s Children.

Furthermore, Rushdie migrated to England and lost all physical contacts with India. He admits that he cannot belong to India physically. Living in England he can just recreate the image of India in his memory. For him India does not exist,
India that he describes is the creation of his imagination and memory.

*Writing my book in North London what I was actually doing was a novel of memory and about memory, so that my India was just that a version and no more than one version. I tried to make it as imaginatively true as I could.*

II

Gene Bell Villado\(^2\) recounts the early life, hungry years and later life of Márquez and establishes their relationship with Márquez's novels and short stories. Gerald Mártiln explains the meaning of magic realism and analyses the works of Márquez in relation to the boom of the 1960s. His comment on Márquez is worth noting: ‘García Márquez reminds us that those who read stories read the story of their lives, and the consciousness of author, character and reader slide into overlap again’.

*García Márquez and Latin America* is a book edited by Alok Bhalla. This book consists of articles about Latin America and Latin American authors presented in a seminar. In the opening of his paper Alok Bhalla makes a very perceptive observation:
'I must re-imagine the myth of Latin America as a place where the relationship between men, society and nature was complex and fabulous. I am convinced that such knowledge alone will, like Ariadne's thread, help us to find again a way out of Latin America's present nightmare in which torture chambers are endlessly repeated into a world of sanity and sanctity. Before beginning to consider the Latin America of García Márquez or any of its other novelists, poets or artists, it is wise to recall that in Latin America it was once or still possible to affirm elemental acts of daily and common decencies amongst men.  

Márquez uses oral narrative technique of his country; He also consciously employees the narrative technique used by the European novelists. So far Rushdie is concerned, he does not follow the tradition of Indian English novels; he seems to be influenced by Kafka and Márquez. In an interview Rushdie says:

The idea that there is a school of Indian British fiction is a sort of mistake. Writers like Mulk Raj Anand and R K Narayan have many more affinities to Indian writers in the Indian languages than they do to a writer like me who just happens to be writing in English.
Rushdie in fact denies the very existence of Indo-English fiction. Uma Parmeswaran, however does not accept Rushdie’s viewpoint. She says; ‘Rushdie may not believe there exists an Indo-English Stream of literature or that he is a part of it, but literary historians would have to disagree’.

Contrary to Uma Parmeswarn’s assertion, Reviewers compare Rushdie with García Márquez and Gunter Grass for the epic sweep and political thrust of his imagination. Catherine Cundy also accepts that Rushdie has been influenced by Western novelists. She says ‘More contemporary influences are European and Latin American magical realists such as Calvinao, Borges and Gabriel García Márquez’.

Though many critics have made sweeping generalization about the influence of Márquez on Rushdie’s Novels, no critics have so far explored the relationship between Márquez and Rushdie in detail. Taking the cues from critics like Catherine Cundy and M Madhusudhan Rao, we have chosen to analyze and compare, wherever necessary, the major novels of Márquez and Rushdie.

III

The title of my research project is Discourse of Magic Realism. Today the word ‘Discourse’ and ‘Magic Realism’ are used with different shades of meaning. So they need to be
explained for the sake of clarity. Twenty years ago, 'Discourse' had its traditional meaning, it meant the 'ordered exposition' in writing or speech of a particular subject. Recently the term discourse is used in Linguistics to indicate the meeting ground for diverse inquiries into the nature and use of language. Austin, for example, says that language is not simply a matter of making true or false statements about the world but also a kind of action or expression of an intention in relation to a person.

In this context, discourse is an utterance. To understand the meaning of an utterance it is necessary to know what it refers to and what function it performs. In other words we have to decide whether, it is promising, commanding or questioning. This view of discourse is related to the speech act theory. Discourse thus is an utterance or an act of communication. Addresser, addressee, code, context and phatic are the main components of discourse. We decode discourse keeping these components in our mind.

In literacy criticism the term 'discourse' is used to indicate a cultural activity. In brief, discourse is a social practice in language. The language is used mainly for twofold purpose. First, it communicates ideas, and logical relations between these ideas. In this sense language is understood as the content of discourse. Second, it establishes social identities of the writer and the reader.
Discourse indeed is produced and interpreted by active subjects in broader societal contexts. The phrase active subject refers to the responsive readers who interpret a given discourse in its explicit or implicit contexts. Marq M Talbot explains this point effectively:

In the act of reading, readers are also active in the sense that they are actively interpreting. In doing so they are constructed as social subjects. I am using the term subject in the double sense of one-who-does something and on-to-whom-something is done. A reader just like any language user is an active agent and simultaneously unknowingly constituted in an act of using language.9

The novel of Márquez or of Rushdie is a discourse in the sense that its language contracts a reality, which seems to be magical reality. These novels have to be interpreted in terms of geography and political happenings taking place in Colombia, India and Pakistan after their Independence. To understand the imaginary town of Macondo we have to be familiar with the village of Aracataca where Márquez was born. Similarly, to interpret the remote town of 'Q' we have to keep in mind the life in the modern city of Karachi and the story of the partition of India.
Discourse thus communicates social and political reality. However, the novels of Márquez and Rushdie communicate magical reality. For many critics 'Magical Reality' is the communication of 'dreams' and not actual reality. But this view is only partially true. Magic realism is in fact, the representation 'the wonder' and the strange things that common people experience in their mundane life. Márquez affirms this truth:

*I believe in the magic of real life. I think that Carpentier's concept of magical realism refers to the wonder of the Latin American reality or more specifically, the reality of the Caribbean countries ... Our education, however, was on the lines of Descartes, and with this knowledge we stepped into life. But such education was insufficient because the moment we come across something out of the ordinary we simply shrug it off by saying that this cannot be. And that is why I think that the only thing a writer claiming be a member of the 'mafia' of magical realism can do is to simply believe in reality without attempting to explain it. Let the critics, scientists, or whosoever find explanations...*¹⁰

Rushdie also says that Márquez's 'magic realism' is not anti realism. It is the development of surrealism that expresses the Third World consciousness. It deals with half made society in
which the impossibly old struggles against the appallingly new. To quote Rushdie:

*It would be a mistake to think of Márquez’s literary universe as an invented, self-referential closed system. He is not writing about Middle earth, but about the one we all inhabit. Macondo exists. That is its magic.*

Yes, Macondo is not a world of miracles and mirages; it is a real world in the sense that it represents the surprise of the villagers of Macondo when they see the new inventions of Science. For example, a heavy gypsy brings a magnet and tells the people of the village named Macondo that it is the eighth wonder of the learned alchemists of Macedonia. The eighth wonder is described thus:

*He went from house to house dragging two metal ingots and everybody was amazed to see pots, pans and braziers tumble down from their places and beams creak from the desperation of nails and screws trying to emerge, and even objects that had been lost for a long time appeared from where they had been searched for most and went dragging along in turbulent confusion behind Melquiadies’s magical irons.*
Rushdie relates magic realism to surrealism. Here, it is necessary to explain realism, naturalism and surrealism so that we may clarify the concept of magic realism. Nineteenth century realism gives importance to the accuracy of representation. Objectivity, lucidity, search for an immediate verifiable truth, matter-of-fact style etc. are the chief characteristics realism as found in the nineteenth century novels. Also, realism has been related to the milieu of middle class bourgeois.

Sometimes Realism is equated with Naturalism. This is misleading. In literature Naturalism represents the narrowing down of Realism. The Naturalist novels are guided by the principle of scientific determinism. Naturalists extract from Darwinism the notion of man-as-animal; they see man’s life as essentially a bloody struggle. Naturalist novels deal with working class.

Surrealism, as defined by Breton, is a certain point of the mind at which life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low, ceased to be perceived as contradiction. And Surreality, is a sort of absolute reality, which includes and transcends both dream and reality. Surrealist writers and poets draw the images of paradox and dream in order to change our perception of the world as well as the world itself. Surrealism, aims at changing the world. Like surrealism, magic realism
also offers us a new perspective on the world; this is common between the two. In the words of David K Danow:

Magical reality manages to present a view of life that exudes a sense of energy and vitality in a world that promises not only joy, but a fair share of misery as well. In effect, the reader is rewarded with a perspective on the world that still includes much that has elsewhere been lost. Where possible is instantly transformed into probable as we are transported from the domain of the real to the magically real by the similarly uncharted stratagems of the artistic imagination.13

Both surrealism and magic realism deal with the marvelous. Yet there is a subtle difference between the two. Surrealism pursues the marvelous in terms of psychology; whereas magic realism discovers the marvelous in ordinary reality. In magic realism the marvelous is always commonplace.

In short, in magic realism we find the transformation of the common and the everyday realities into awesome and the unreal. Magic realist does not aim to create imaginary beings or the world. He confronts reality and tries to discover what is mysterious in things, in life in human acts. Magic realism is indeed an art of surprises.
A literary discourse is analyzed in relation to its context and intertexts. Context may be linguistic or non-linguistic. The non-linguistic context includes socio-political and economic conditions, which help us, interpret a discourse and discover the new world, the world that is different from the old one. The word intertext means the influence of the other texts in the formation of a discourse. In this section some biographical details from the lives of Márquez and Rushdie are given to understand the non-linguistic context and intertexts of their novels.

García Márquez, who was born in March 6, 1922 in Aracataca, a village in Northern Colombia. He left Aracataca when he was just eighteen years old and returned to it at the age of 20-22. On his return he had the most stupefying experiences. 'I discovered' says Márquez, that everything in the village; the people and the objects were the same as before, only much later and smaller. The doors were much lower than I had imagined. The table was the same but smaller... The world around me had seemingly shrunk.'

Márquez was haunted by the experiences of his childhood at Aracataca. He wanted to narrate these strange experiences but he did not know how to do so. It was Faulkner who showed Márquez the ways of expressing the experiences of childhood.
'I learnt from Faulkner' says Marques because he was talking of a world, which has so much in common with what I wanted to describe. So it should only be fair to recognize Faulkner's influence on me.'

From Faulkner Marquez learnt how to reformulate his childhood into a mythical past, inventing a town and a country to house his people. In Faulkner's mythical Yoknapatawpha, Marquez found the seeds of Macondo, a village described in One Hundred Years of Solitude. Moreover, Faulkner taught him that a writer should write about what was close to him.

Marquez grew up in the house of his maternal grandfather and grandmother. His grandfather, Colonel Nicolas Ricardo Marquez was a Liberal Veteran of the war of a thousand days. The Colonel protested against the banana massacre. In fact, the Colonel had lived a very intriguing life. When he was younger he shot and killed a man in duel. It was said that he had fathered over sixteen children! Besides, he was an excellent storyteller. The Colonel taught the young Gabriel lessons from the dictionary took him to the circus and was the first one who introduced his grandson to ice – a miracle to be found in the UFC Company store. The opening sentence of One Hundred Years of Solitude refers to his discovery of ice: 'Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel
Aureliano Buendia was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover Ice.¹⁶

The grandmother of Márquez also influenced the young Márquez. She was filled with superstitions and folk beliefs. Also, she had a unique way of telling stories. No matter how fantastic her statements, she always delivered them as if they were the implacable truth. Márquez was deeply influenced by his grandmother’s manner of telling stories. He says:

*She used to tell me the most atrocious things without turning a hair; as if it was something she’d just seen. I realized that it was her impassive manner and her wealth of images that made her stories so credible. I wrote One Hundred Years of Solitude using my grandmother’s method.*¹⁷

His grandmother had a wonderful method of telling stories. She told supernatural and fantastic things with complete naturalness. She did not change her expression at all when telling her stories and everyone was surprised. Márquez wrote his stories in the manner of his grandmother.

Márquez was sent to college. Like many authors he had no interest in his studies. There he associated himself with literate socialists starving artist and budding journalists. One day, however, his life changed. He was given a copy of
Kafka's *Metamorphosis* translated by Jorge Luis Borges. The book had a profound effect on Márquez. It made him aware that literature did not have to follow a straight narrative. Also, Márquez learnt how to narrate the fantastic with naturalness. Kafka inspired Márquez to write his stories and novels.

By 1950, Márquez had already decided not to study law, he devoted much of his time to read European Classics and modernist novelists like Hemingway, Joyce, Woolf and others. He particularly found inspiration in the Oedipus Rex by Sophocles. From Sophocles he learnt two things: (1) the idea of a plot revolving around society and (2) the idea of the abuses of power.

Hemingway advised Márquez not to write soon after he found an interesting subject, nor should he take long time to write about the subject that haunted him. Virginia Woolf taught Márquez how to treat time in a novel. 'Virginia Woolf has a very original and exceptionally sharp sense of the world, says Márquez and all that there is in it. But primarily it is her sense of time that helped me a lot in my writing'.

In January 1965, he and his family were driving to the Acapulco for a vacation. Suddenly he was inspired to write a book; he, in fact, found his tone and voice. He turned the car
immediately around and headed home. He put his wife in charge of the family and retired to his room to write.

One Hundred Years of Solitude is the outcome of this inspiration, and illumination. It is also the result of his struggle and sacrifice. We are told that Márquez confined himself to a room which is described as the cave of Mafia'. He was in debt; he had to pawn household implements to meet his daily requirements. Finally he published his famous novel, One Hundred Years of Solitude in June 1967. It is recorded that within a week all 8000 copies were gone. It was translated into over two-dozen languages and it won four international prizes.

In 1971, Márquez decided to write about a dictator. To get the first hand information about a cruel dictator, he moved his family to Barcelona, Spain. There he laboured on his next work about a composite dictator, a dictator with Stalin's smooth hands and the solipsistic will of an archetypal Latin American tyrant. The outcome of his labour was the publication of The Autumn of the Patriarch in 1975.

The Autumn of the Patriarch is written in a unique style. It has labyrinthine sentences that disappoint many critics. Now it is considered the novel of shifting realities. As such it is accepted as a minor masterpiece of prose.
After the publication of *The Autumn of the Patriarch* Márquez decided that he would write no more fiction until the American, supported Pinochle stepped down form his dictatorship of Chile. Through his writing and donations, he supported Leftist causes in Colombia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Argentina and Angola.

In 1981, Márquez returned to Colombia where he found himself in trouble. The conservative government of Colombia accused him of financing the M-19, a liberal group of guerrilla. Fleeing Colombia, he asked for and received asylum in Mexico, where he lived to this day.

In 1982 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. While receiving this prestigious prize, Márquez made a short speech about the harsh realities of Latin America. He said:

*There have been five wars and seventeen military coups. There emerged a diabolic dictator who is carrying out, in God's name, the first Latin American ethnocide of our time. In the meanwhile twenty million Latin American Children died before the age of one. Those missing because of repression number nearly one hundred and twenty thousand... Numerous women arrested while pregnant have given birth in Argentine prisons, yet no body knows the whereabouts of their children.*

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Márquez claims that he has depicted this outsized reality in the rhetorical expressions of imagination. He says that though Latin America claims to be a democratic country, in reality it is not. Moreover, it boasts of working for equality and social justice, but inequality and social injustice have increased there. Márquez narrates these apparent contradictions of Latin American Society.

V

Rushdie was born in Bombay in June 1947. He was the only son of the Muslim businessman, Anis Ahmed Rushdie and his wife Negin. From 1954 he was encouraged by his parents to use English at home as the language of everyday discourse, though his parents spoke Urdu. Also, he was admitted to an English mission school in Bombay.

In 1961 Rushdie was sent to study at Rugby School in England. Since 1961 he has been living in England in exile. Due to his self-chosen exile he loses many things. At the same time he gains things like objectivity and transnational identity.

In 1964, Rushdie's parents moved to Karachi. However, Rushdie decides to live in London, and work with a multimedia theatre group and an advertising company. In 1965-68 he attends Kings College where he reads History.
Rushdie has made several visits to India and Pakistan. His visit to Bombay inspires him to write *Midnight’s Children*. Rushdie records his impression:

"A few years ago, I revisited Bombay, which is my lost city... Shortly after arriving, acting on an impulse, I opened the telephone directory and looked for my father’s name. And amazingly there it was; his name our old address, the unchanged telephone number, as if we had never gone away to the unmentionable country across the border. It was an eerie discovery... It was probably not too unromantic to say that that was when my novel *Midnight’s Children* was really born, when I realized how much I wanted to restore the past to myself..."  

Though Rushdie was born and brought up in a Muslim family, he was never forced to be a believer. He was, in fact, brought up in the atmosphere of secular humanism. He has, therefore, no faith in the orthodox religion of Islam. The loss of his faith in Islam has been the source of much of the religious debate in his novels and public life. However, Rushdie’s approach to religion is complex, he in fact has his own version of Islam. ‘What I know of Islam’, says Rushdie ‘is that tolerance, comparison and lover are at its very heart.’
Rushdie submits that before writing *Midnight's Children* he tried to recall Bombay, Delhi, Aligarh and Kashmir. *Midnight's Children* published in 1981 is the outcome of memory. Here the question arises: Why does Rushdie describe the past? For Rushdie, it is a political question. So its answer is also political. To describe the past, says Rushdie, is the first step towards changing it.

Rushdie fiction has been influence by Gogol, Kafka, Joyce, Brecht, Márquez, Suf and Urdu Premy. The *Mahabharata* and *Ramayan*, *Katha-Sarit Sagar* and *The Arabian Nights*, are the other intertexts of his work. Besides, the Bombay talkies and filmic vocabulary also have influenced Rushdie's techniques. Indeed, the transference of film terminology to *Midnight's Children* is the distinctive feature of the novel.

In 1968 Rushdie visited Karachi and had the first hand information about the censorship in the military regime of General Zia. A small magazine commissioned him to write a piece about his impressions on returning home. Rushdie wrote and submitted it, yet it was not published. A couple of weeks later he was told by the magazine's editor that the press Council had banned it completely. Strangely, military rulers of Pakistan, says Rushdie allows Afghan entrepreneurs to run the heroine business, but band a book, which contains truths.
The ban imposed by the government suppresses truth. Rushdie published *Shame* in 1983 to disclose the suppressed truths. *Shame* is a novel about the contemporary reality of Pakistan written in the form of a fairy tale. Timothy Brennen in *Salman Rushdie and the Third World* sees Quran itself as an important intertext of *Shame*.

Emergency declared in India by Mrs. Gandhi and dictatorship in Pakistan made people and writers live in Solitude. The theme of solitude will be discussed in the next chapter with reference to Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*. 
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17. ‘An Interview with Márquez’ P. 30.

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