Chapter V

Rushdie’s Postmodern Narrative Strategy

Rushdie’s greatest contribution to the Indian novel in English is perhaps related to the linguistic and stylistic innovations he has introduced. There seems to be a critical consensus that in his use of language and narrative technique Rushdie resembles Garcia Marquez and Gunter Grass. According to Madhusudhana Rao, “As for Gunter Grass, for Rushdie also the aesthetic medium is an aspect of ‘exploration’ of the narrative world itself” (167). In Rushdie, conventions associated with the traditional forms of fiction, in terms of time, place, characterization and narration are violated. The narrative fluctuates uncertainly between the first and third persons. Fictional realism is subverted through the mixing of fact and fantasy. Genres and themes are mixed in a free and fantastic manner and a carnivalesque atmosphere is created with the mingling of the high and low art forms. William Walsh has identified certain recurring features in Rushdie’s art of narration:

He is doing three things at once. First he is telling the story in a straightforward, rather old-fashioned way. Secondly, he is breaking into this narrative line with discussions on his problems and obligations as author in unfolding the narrative. Thirdly, he treats the novel as a species of
autobiography, taking every opportunity to link it with phases of his own life. (122)

This comment is applicable to all the major novels of Rushdie. His major novels are at once autobiographical and self-reflexive obliterating the dividing line between fact and fiction.

Rushdie's fiction stresses the role of the narrator and often the narrators are ordinary human beings overawed by the enormity of their task. The narrators in *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* reveal themselves as detached, disinterested and intelligent. They are unprejudiced and their views on politics are neither Indian nor Pakistani. They react to events from a purely human point of view. They transcend nationality, race, creed and even cultural upbringing and provide as truthful a view of political events as possible. Saleem, the protagonist narrator from the periphery is presented as a sad victim of historical events. He is an ordinary human being with normal human virtues and vices who realizes that he embodies the history of the nation. His physical disintegration is the outward expression of the social and political disintegration in India.

Rushdie's narrators are “auto-diegetic narrators, in Genette’s terms” because “they narrate their own story” (Kenan 96). Flapping Eagle, Saleem Sinai and Moraes are in a way discussing their own selves. Saleem Sinai is rewriting modern Indian history which is also his own story. It is a political act. The story that he is narrating must
seem interesting to the reader. As a result Rushdie uses different
stylistic devices to win the attention of the readers. Nancy E. Batty
and Uma Parameswaran are of the view that “one of the ways by
which Saleem accomplishes this in his narrative is to link events of
his own life with those of his country’s history” (qtd in Batty 52).

If Saleem Sinai represents India, Moraes the narrator in The
Moor’s Last Sigh is a composite image. When Abraham reveals to
Moraes his plan to finance the secret manufacture of large-scale
nuclear weapons for certain oil rich countries, Moraes disagrees as he
identifies himself as a Jew. Moraes considers himself as one of
Jahovah’s people whereas Abraham is not one because of his evil
nature. Moraes is appropriately connected to Luther since he nails the
truth of his family on a door for the people to read. Moraes is
reminiscent of Christ and he awaits death at the same age as Christ
and will experience resurrection. Moraes has shades of Barbarosa in
his cave who will waken to lead the conquering armies. Moraes’ death
is presented as a sleep to be followed by a resurrection or awakening
to a brighter day.

In Midnight’s Children the similarities between the narrator and
his country start with the very physical resemblance. Saleem’s face
resembles the map of India. Klaus Borner remarks: “India’s history
between 1947 and 1975 is literally written on Saleem Sinai’s body. He
carries like a canvas the colossal painting of India’s history between
dream and nightmare” (19). By fusing the individual and national lives, Rushdie makes the narration of history a gossip, one of his ways of subverting historical narration. In *Midnight’s Children* and *Shame*, Rushdie makes references to all the major historical and political events in India and Pakistan. Events like the Jallian Walla., language riots, declaration of Independence, partition, Chinese aggression, Indo-Pak war, Bangladesh war and the Emergency are connected with the events and incidents in Saleem’s personal life. Ashutosh Banerjee remarks:

> From the beginning Rushdie maintains a continuous effort at synchronising national and domestic life, so that the odyssey of the Azizes and the Sinais also becomes the odyssey of the nation from the year 1915 up to about the year 1977; this convergence of the national and the domestic is underscored repeatedly in the course of the novel. (198)

These personal anecdotes are spicy enough to catch the reader’s attention. At the same time Rushdie’s narrators are not partial or biased in their views.

Moraes also symbolizes India, among other things. He ages at double speed. His rapid growth is a metaphor for post independent India with its increase in population and many-sided developments. When he says “I expanded without time for proper planning . . .” (MLS
he stands for Bombay and the multiplicity of India. Shekhar maintains:

It is the Moor’s family saga of trans-continental voyages and maternal curses, of the epidemic of love and betrayals, of rites of passions and dance of death coincidental with the ironies of modern India – the vestiges of Nehruvian socialism, religious fundamentalism, pseudo-nationalism, and a veritable collage of discordant moods. (188)

Rushdie has justified his mixing of the public and private lives in his novels: “objectivity becomes a great dream, like perfection, an unattainable goal for which one must struggle in spite of the impossibility of success” (IHL 100-101). As a result Rushdie’s narration of history is highly subjective. The combining of the historical and personal is the most interesting technique used in Midnight’s Children. As Pushpinder Syal has remarked,

We have the narration of important historical events and of an intense and inseparable connection between these and individuals living in a particular time and age, while a simultaneous critique of these connection is carried on in the dialogue between the narrator (Saleem) and his listener (Padma) and through these means with the reader. While the narrative consciousness mirrors the diffused fragmented consciousness of the postmodern, at the same time it
mirrors a composite consciousness that is very real in the post independence context of India and its earlier traditions.

(131)

Mixing private life with public events, a characteristic feature of Rushdie’s style fantastically deployed in *Midnight’s Children*, reappears in *The Moor’s Last Sigh* as when he connects Aurora Zogoiby with historical figures like Vallabhai Patel, Moulana Azad, Pandit Nehru, Edwina Mount Batten, Indira Gandhi and others.

Rushdie has written his novels from the migrant’s perspective. Most often Rushdie’s narrators are migrants. The migrant writer tries to present reality in all its totality, as he has no personal objectives to defend the system. According to Sudha Pai, *Midnight’s Children* “can be read most fruitfully as an interpretation of Indian history and Indian reality, through the expatriate mode of thought”(40). Rushdie himself has stated that to see things plainly one has to cross the frontier (*IHL* 125). As a result writers like Salman Rushdie are considered to be the representative voice of the marginalized.

Margaretta Petersson reveals just the opposite view when she justifies Timothy Brennan’s statement that Rushdie is a “Third world Cosmopolitan”. In her opinion, Rushdie belongs to ‘a tradition of third world cosmopolitan’ that is, writers who have their origin in some country in the Third World, but now a days are living in the
West and paradoxically are understood by the West as authentic voices from the Third World" (Unending 47).

Being a migrant writer, Rushdie chooses themes that have a postcolonial importance and offer a "confrontation with a European centre" (Petersson, Unending 46). In Midnight's Children Rushdie breaks European conventions by annihilating in the family chronicle the whole family expect the main character, not allowing the hero be born until after more than 100 pages and telling the story of a family to which he infact does not belong. As in Midnights Children, in Shame also the perspective of the margin is given authority. The migrant condition of the narrator enables Rushdie to do away with fictional and narratological conventions and employ contradictory, paradoxical narrative strategies. Instead of realism, fantasy and dream structure dominate his novels. Fidelity to men and events even in historical material is dispensed with to create a world of fantastic characters. In Shame time and again the self conscious narrator reminds us that this is not a realistic novel:

If this were a realistic novel about Pakistan, I would not be writing about Bilquis and the wind; I would be talking about my youngest sister. Who is twenty-two, and studying engineering in Karachi . . . . I think what I'm confessing is that, however I choose to write about over-there, I am forced to reflect that world in fragments of broken mirrors . . . I
must reconcile my self to the inevitability of missing bits.

(SH 68-69)

Like the narrator, his fictional country also exists at a slight angle to reality.

Rushdie's narrators are usually unreliable. The unreliability of the narrator is also due to his migrant position. The self-conscious narrators in Rushdie's novels oscillate between past and present, the historical and the personal because they have no stable identity. Flapping Eagle in *Grimus*, Saleem in *Midnight's Children*, the third person narrator in *Shame* and Moraes in *The Moor's Last Sigh* are all migrants in search for their identity. Multiplicity of the narrator's personal experience has resulted in the mixing of genres and the celebration of hybridity in their narration. The narrator's migrant position makes the narration of historical events problematic. Dates, events and persons are misrepresented by the narrator as these are factors of identity which the migrant cannot lay claim to.

The migrant's perspective disrupts linear narrative and in *Midnight's Children* Rushdie uses a peep show technique as one of his characters Lifafa Das. The shots are in a seemingly irrational sequence but the cumulative, effect as with the peep show, is that one has seen all of life. Like the Peepshow of Lifafa Das, the perforated sheet which gives Saleem the partial perception of reality, is another central symbol in *Midnight's Children*. It "conveys Saleem's and
Rushdie’s message that nothing can be seen, experienced, or communicated in its entirety, or shown either” (Parameswaran, 44). The narrator’s removal from the exact time of the occurrence, his inability to be a participant of the history narrated, has resulted in an unreliable narration.

Shomith Rimmon – Kenan in *Narrative Fiction : Contemporary Poetics* has defined the unreliable narrator as “one whose rendering of the story and/or commentary on it the reader has reasons to suspect . . . The main source of unreliability are the narrator's limited knowledge, his personal involvement and his problematic value-scheme” (100). In *Midnight’s Children* Saleem is unreliable as a historian because he has distorted events for him to remain at the centre. The narrator in *Shame* is also undependable as he has learned the country in slices. Rushdie too has admitted the unreliability of his narration: “It is by now obvious, I hope, that Saleem Sinai is an unreliable narrator, and that *Midnight’s Children* is far from being an authoritative guide to the history of post independence India” (*IHL* 22-23). At the same time such tongue-in-cheek confessions are Rushdie’s ways of leaving escape routes open and being non-committal about his fictional re-creations of historical events and personalities.

Though Rushdie tries to convince the reader that his migrant position and alienation from his native land have caused inaccuracies in his narration, actually it is Rushdie’s way of showing his
irreverence to metanarratives like history, myths, politics and religion.
A postmodern playfulness and the mixing of high and low is achieved
by Rushdie through subverting the historical, political and mythical
realities with the help of the unreliable narrators. The unreliable
narration inspires the reader to see things in a playful and hilarious
perspective and thereby reach a mental condition to celebrate even
fragmentation and mistakes. The unreliable and incoherent narration
is a characteristic feature of orality, which according to Rushdie's is
the basis of the Indian tradition.

Even though Rushdie shares many of the stylistic qualities of
Marquez, Grass, Lawrence Sterne and G.V.Desani, he is not a
postmodern magical realist or fantasist alone. He was interested in
the oral tradition of India and this tradition has shaped his aesthetic
sensibility. Rushdie admits his indebtedness to the Indian oral
tradition, when he says that the oral narrative technique in *Midnight's
Children* is "a form which is 1000's of years old, and yet which has all
the methods of the postmodernist novel . . . you become a post-
modernist writer by being a very traditional one" (Reder 59).

Self-reflexivity is a narrative technique that Rushdie shares with
many postmodern novelists. For the new novelists the creative process
is more important than the created work: "The new novelists consider
themselves first and foremost to be creative artists whose main
obligation is to produce a well-crafted work of art that stands up in its
own right as an autonomous reality" (Higgins 92). As a result self-reflexivity or the intrusion of the author and the description of the process of creating the text have become distinctive postmodern characteristics. In Rushdie, “the novelistic practice, methods and strategies are laid bare, so that the reader may have an understanding of how fiction is ‘manufactured’ ” (Jai Dev 32). In Midnight's Children, Saleem Sinai invites the reader to his composition room above a pickle factory in Bombay, where he writes his novels. As in the preparation of pickles he has added spices to his pickled history, which makes it unreliable as a record of the past.

Saleem who supervises the production of Mary's legendary recipes admits that he has added to it his special blends: “Memories, dreams, ideas, so that once they enter mass-production all who consume them will know what pepperpots achieved in Pakistan, or how it felt to be in the Sundarbans . . . believe don't believe but it's true” (MC 460). He frankly admits that he had made alterations: “To pickle is to give immortality, after all: fish, vegetables, fruit hang embalmed in spice-and-vinegar; a certain alteration, a slight intensification of taste, is a small matter, surely? The art is to change the flavour in degree, but not in kind” (MC 461). The self-conscious narrator admits the short comings of his narration. But he is helpless. “Yes, I should revise and revise, improve and improve; but there is neither the time nor the energy” (MC 460-461). Thus the narrator shares the problematics of the narration of history with the reader.
For the narrator the act of story telling is imperative for the creation of his self and identity. His very life depends on it as in the case of Schehera Zade in *The Thousand and One Nights*. He also shares with the reader his fears about being rejected as an artist. As a result of this sharing of the problematics of narration, the narrator is no more a high priest of art, but only a conjurer. Once again the myth of the artist as a divinely inspired being is questioned and his status is relegated to that of a skilful magician.

This self-reflexivity attributes the quality of an oral tale to Rushdie's narration. Rushdie himself has admitted this in an interview with Timothy Brennan: "No one would find the author's anecdotal breaks in the narrative unusual if they were hearing the story recited. What seems like a calculated literary device, he claims, is only the written simulation of the very common practice among story tellers to interrupt themselves" (qtd in Brennan 214). The element of self-reflexivity demands the presence of a narratee. A narratee is defined by Kenan as "the agent addressed by the narrator" (104). In *Midnight's Children* Padma is an "intradiegetic narratee" (104) because she takes part in the story she is listening to. Again she is an overt narratee who makes her presence felt and contributes to the narration through her presence.

The presence of the narratee in modern self-reflexive novels is justified by James Higgins:
A consequence of the demise of the traditional, omniscient narrator is that the new narrative invites, and requires, the active participation of the reader, who, in the absence of authorial guidance, must disentangle the complexities of the text for him/herself to arrive at his/her own understanding of the world described. (94)

And the reader becomes "an accomplice who will collaborate with the author in the search for a deeper understanding of a complex and confusing world" (Higgins 95). This is true of most of Rushdie's novels. The presence of the narratee gives the narration the semblance of a tale told orally, in which the storyteller often interrupts himself and breaks the narrative to give his views and ideas. He often makes digressions and then gets back to the story.

In *Midnight's Children* Padma serves as the narratee. She keeps the actual reader of the novel alert and critical. Saleem needs Padma's support; his memory tends to fail without her. The episode in which Saleem explains the purpose of his story to Padma, and Padma interrogates him, is a discourse in itself. It is in fact a discussion on the art of narration and the roles of the narrator and the listener. The narrator – listener – Saleem Padma – relationship could be interpreted in multiple ways. Saleem is presenting Padma as an ignorant naïve listener, while he presents himself as the educated knowledgeable teller. Padma is a convenient device that the narrator uses to prop up
the narrative as well as to subvert it. Padma’s viewpoint is criticized by Saleem. But Saleem as narrator is also subverted, made to appear as trapped within his own fabrications perpetuating his own illusion. This subversive act is necessary because in the post-modernist context, the narrator is always suspicious of his attempt to put himself at the centre.

Padma serves both as the reader and the narrator’s artistic conscience. She pulls him up whenever he goes away. Saleem says: “But here is Padma at my elbow, bullying me back into the world of linear narrative, the universe of what-happened-next” (MC 38). When she slackens, she taunts him saying, “you’ll be two hundred years old before you manage to tell about your birth” (MC 38). Occasionally her attention diverts and she dozes off; at other times she criticizes the narration. She says: “To me it’s a crazy way of telling your life story” (MC 38). Saleem is aware of this. He says: “Padma has started getting irritated whenever my narration becomes self-conscious, whenever, like an incompetent puppeteer, I reveal the hands holding the strings” (MC 65). According to Catherine Cundy,

Padma is a vital spur and judge of Saleem’s autobiography . . . On the one hand, she can be seen as the exemplification of Roland Barthe’s arguments on the role of the reader subsequent to the “death” of the author – “that some one who holds together in a single field all the traces by which
the written text is constituted” apparently affirming the text's status as postmodern production. On the other, she provides a link back to the culture which Rushdie insists informs his work most strongly. (Salman 30)

Thus Padma too becomes an instrument to fuse the traditional and postmodern elements in Rushdie’s narration. According to Uma Parameswaran, Padma could be treated as a necessary element of traditional narratives employed by Rushdie in his postmodern historiography.

It has been variously suggested that Padma is to be seen as a *vidushika* who in a Sanskrit play is a buffoon or jester who accompanies the hero; or as *Rangeli* in the *Rangela-Rangeli* team in folk theatre. According to Uma Parameswaran “Padma is like the chorus in a Greek drama-always on the stage, but never initiating action-essentially a non-participant but occasionally giving a thrust to the play’s progression” (10).

In *The Moor's Last Sigh* Aoi-Ue a Japanese restorer of paintings becomes the narratee to Moraes the narrator. Though J.M. Coetzee thinks that Rushdie breaks the “elementary rules of fiction, like not introducing new characters in the last pages” (13), it should be remembered that this is a postmodern novel which doesn’t end anywhere any number of stories could be added to it. Rushdie claims
that his narrative technique is essentially based on the Indian oral tradition. In an interview with Grass, Rushdie has stated:

In India the thing that I've taken most from, I think, apart from the fairytale tradition that we were talking about, is oral narration. Because it is a country of still largely illiterate people the power and the vitality still remain in the oral story telling tradition. And what's interesting about these stories is that they command huge audiences, the best storytellers with literally hundreds of thousands of people. They'll come to sit in a field while a man tells stories . . . And so everything he does is done to hold the audience. This suggested to me that what we were being told was that this very gymnastic, convoluted, complicated form was, in fact, the very reason why people were listening. (Reder 76)

Catherine Cundy analyses Padma's role in this background when she says that if Saleem is the story teller, Padma "becomes a vocal and individualized member of the multitude which sits at the feet of the story teller, hanging on his every word" (Salman 30). On the other hand the desultory style of narration, leaping from one matter to another, constant shifts of perspective, frequent eruptions into the narrative of marginally related incidents, symbols and anecdotes, the frequent drift of the narrative into dream and fantasy, symbolise the fragmentary existence of Saleem, who tells the story in the way in
which Indian people tell stories which is very round about full of
digressions, jokes, asides, exaggerations, and fantastical episodes.
Rushdie’s use of memory as an effective tool for the reclamation of the
past is also a part of the oral tradition. Rushdie admits: “Memory has
its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates,
minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own
reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events” (MC
211).

Nancy E Batty makes a comparison between The Arabian Nights
and Midnight’s Children, which stresses the oral narrative tradition
employed in Midnight’s Children. According to her, the “once upon a
time” indicates the fairy tale beginnings. This impression is firmly laid
by the subsequent sentences when Saleem says: “I count on having
even a thousand nights and a night” (MC 9). Midnight’s Children
begins and ends with explicit reference to the Arabian Nights.
Scheherazade spins tales to save her own life and the lives of many
other women like her. She keeps king Sahryar in suspense and
promises that her next tale will be even more intriguing than the
previous one. It is “this contract between fictional narrator and
fictional narratees that provides the most apparent link between A
Thousand and One Nights and Midnight’s Children” (Batty 51). Like
Scheherazade keeping Sahryar in suspense, Saleem Sinai keeps his
listener Padma as well as the readers of the novel in suspense.
In *Shame* also Rushdie uses orality as a literary technique, which makes the authorial intrusions in the narrative appear normal. He claims that what seems like a calculated literary device is only the written simulation of the very common practice among story tellers to interrupt themselves. According to Malini Shukla,

> He reduces the divergent and incongruous elements of the story into a comprehensive pattern by his personal interruptions. This shift in view point – from external to internal, helps the reader to expand his perceptions and understand the implications of the writer better, as he reaches closer to the scene. (69)

Rushdie calls *Shame* a modern fairy tale, which suggests that *Shame* also presents an angled view of history. The once upon a time - setting is a recurring motif in the novel. Rushdie narrates the story of the Raza-Isky families: “Once upon a time there were two families; their destinies inseparable even by death” (*SH* 173). The heroine Sufiya is also introduced in the fairy tale manner: “And once upon a time there was a retarded daughter” (*SH* 135) followed by “There was once a young woman, Sufiya Zinobia, also known as ‘Shame’ ”(*SH* 197); “There was once a wife, whose husband injected her with knock-out drugs twice daily” (*SH* 242) and “There was once a Beast” (*SH* 243). Using the fairy tale terminology Rushdie traces the evolution of
the wrong miracle, which is also a subversion of the fairy tales, which speak of happy miracles.

_The Moor's Last Sigh_ also begins like a story: "Mine is the story of the fall from grace of a high-born cross-breed" (MLS 5). If disintegration poses a threat to Saleem, it is Vasco Miranda who is threatening the Moor. So the Moor has to become Scheherazade and spin yarns for his life. Vasco Miranda blames Moraes for the wrong doings of Aurora and Abraham and makes him a prisoner. He shows Moraes the palimpsest through which Aurora reveals that her murderer is not Fielding but Abraham. Moraes has to recount the saga of the Zogoiby's to Vasco and as long as his tale holds Vasco's interest, he would be permitted to live. He says: "Every day, after that, he brought me pencil and paper. He had made a Scheherazade of me. As long as my tale held his interest he would let me live" (MLS 421). The relationship between the Moor and Ao-lue is similar to the Saleem-Padma relationship.

The adoption of the fairy tale conventions demands the incorporation of the fantastic element into the very structure of the novels. As Madhusudhana Rao puts it, "Fantasy is the main gateway to Rushdie's fiction" (33). Rushdie uses fantasy to make the implausible plausible. Fabulation serves as the effective medium for the writer to cross the conventional frontiers of narration. As Vijaylakshmi remarks, "The nonsensical framework gives him a
freedom from the 'straight jacket of logic', so that he can stretch the world that has lost its unifying principle, its meaning and its purpose to its ultimate in nonsense" (154).

The use of the fable gives him a tool for off-centering reality. Rushdie uses fabulation as a device not to falsify history but to allow fiction to take off from history and reality (IHLL 56). He elaborates on this in an interview: “A way of stripping away the veil of custom through which we normally look at the world which makes us think that it's some how normal. But actually the world is a very abnormal place” (qtd in Lakshmi 154). Rushdie’s use of fantasy has prompted many critics to call him a magical realist.

Magic realism has been variously defined as an attempt to transcend the limitations of Realism, a free mixture of fantasy and reality. Carol Birch traces the development of magic realism and maintains that Alejo Carpentier, the Cuban writer was the first to use the term magic realism in relation to fiction: “Carpentier fused realism with Afro-Caribbean folk traditions to convey a history of oppression and slavery, a world in which reason appears to have broken down” (78). Alejo views magic realism as “‘exclusive to the Americas’, arising from the singular history of the New World, the only sane response in the face of overwhelming insanity being to spin off into the dream-sense of wild imaginings and make of it something profound and
uplifting" (qtd in Birch 78). Like Alejo Rushdie also views the use of magic realism as an escape from the harsh realities.

In *Midnight's Children* fiction and reality are so intricately mixed up that the narrator becomes helpless in recording the events realistically. Andrzej Gasiorek sees fantasy as an absolute necessity in *Midnight's Children*:

> *Midnight's Children* offers a fictional account of a specific country in a determinate historical period, one that coruscated with competing hopes, dreams, ambitions, intrigues, and myths. To tell this story in flat, realist prose would be to deny the diversity, dynamism and political confusion of that country at that time. (167)

Rushdie's narrative mode seeks the help of fantasy to reveal the strange and unstable political reality of the times.

Saleem tells stories which teem and multiply. He includes myths, history and popular culture in his hybrid narration. By the use of fantasy existing norms and conventions of fiction are broken and historical events and characters are subverted. The excessive use of fantasy is a characteristic feature of the Indian literary tradition. Both The Ramayana and The Mahabharatha have exploited the full potential of fantasy. Indian imagination finds its paramount expression in these works. Besides the epics, the *Panchathantra* and *Arabian Nights* too have helped in shaping Rushdie's literary
sensibility. Hence Rushdie’s abundant use of magic realism, whatever the affinities to the Western writers like Gunter Grass or Marquez is fundamentally Indian. According to Goonetilleke, “In Sanskrit poetics, there is a category of prose called Akhyayikas, which combines fact and fiction, and a category of fiction called Sakalakatha, which is a cycle of stories, which may have influenced Rushdie” (18). This Indian tradition forms the basis of Rushdie’s magic realism.

According to M L Pandit “Fantasy in Midnight’s Children operates at three levels – verbal, episodic and structural” (46). The description of characters like Tai, as the Watery Caliban, the remark that Doctor Aziz’s nose comparable only to the trunk of the elephant headed Ganesh established his right to be a patriarch, Naseem Aziz presented as having the ability even to dream her daughters’ dreams, just to know what they were getting up to during a quarrel between husband and wife and Adam Aziz at Agra pictured as overcome with the smell of silence illustrate the use of verbal fantasy.

Midnight’s Children abounds in episodic fantasy also. The episodes that describe the telepathic powers of the midnight children, their personal gifts, skill in magic and the like provide fantastic experiences. The “perforated sheet” which becomes a structural device in suggesting the restricted vision of reality is an example of fantasy at the structural level. The perforated sheet, which appears at different situations in the novel, gives a structural unity created by
fantasy. *Shame* also makes ample use of the fantastic. R.S. Pathak remarks how “The use of fantasy in *Shame* helps the novelist in creating a distance from actuality which would make things less offensive” (“Thinking Makes” 234). In his political novels Rushdie employs fantasy with a specific purpose. Though Rushdie is presenting a realistic portrait of Pakistan in *Shame* he wants the readers to consider it as fantasy so that he may not be held responsible for the harassment of political dignitaries and religious heads. As a result the narrator admits: “There are two countries, real and fictional, occupying the same space, or almost the same space. My story, my fictional country exists, like myself, at a slight angle to reality” (*SH* 29).

Myth is an auxilliary to fantasy in *Midnight’s Children*. The simultaneous use of mythical and historical references sways the reader between fact and fiction. References like “They say in Kurukshetra an old Sikh woman woke up in her hut and saw the old-time war of the Kurus and Pandavas” (*MC* 245), “She saw the chariots of Arjun and Karna, and there were truly wheel-marks in the mud!” (*MC* 245), “at Gwalior they have seen the ghost of the Rani of Jhansi; rakshasas have been seen many-headed like Ravana” (*MC* 245), “the tomb of Lord Jesus is found in Kashmir. On the tombstones are carved two pierced feet and a local fisherwoman has sworn she saw them bleeding” (*MC* 245) allude to the inextricable link between fact
and fiction. Rushdie also criticizes the undue importance given to religious myths in India. By recapturing the myths,

the new-born, secular state was being given an awesome reminder of its fabulous antiquity, in which democracy and votes for women were irrelevant . . . so that people were seized by atavistic longings, and forgetting the new myth of freedom reverted to their old ways, their old regionalist loyalties and prejudices, and the body politic began to crack. (MC 245)

Rushdie sarcastically points out that in times of critical situation it is safe for rulers to divert the people's attention towards religion, religious superstitions, myths and legends so that they won't be thinking of the real serious political issues. Diverting the attention of the people from the main issues towards fictional and imaginary things like myths and stories appears to be a policy followed by the democratic rulers of India.

The atrocities of the Indo-Pak war and the Bangladesh war are narrated in the chapter “Sundarbans”, where the narrator experiences a dream-like condition. The picture of the widow having green and black hair is also a product of his dream. Saleem and his friends were used by the Pakistan government for the Bangladesh war. The Sundri trees and the Nipa fruit belong to the fantasy world. In the dark night a translucent peasant with a bullet hole in the middle appeared before
them, a liquid leaked out of the hole. It fell on Ayooba's right arm and from the next day onwards he couldn't lift his right arm. Saleem and friends were tormented by the cries of people whom they had tormented centuries ago. They were unable to escape from the cries. Each night the forest sent them new punishments: "the accusing eyes of the wives of men they had tracked down and seized, the screaming and monkey-gibbering of children left fatherless by their work" (MC 363). They covered their cars with mud and thus became deaf. Ordinary language is not enough to present the gruesome results of the battle. So Rushdie resorts to fantasy for its depiction.

The description of the ceramic tiles at the synagogue at Mattanchery in *The Moor's Last Sigh* is a product of Rushdie's fantasy. It appears that when Rushdie found it difficult to portray the life of the Jewish community who occupied the land in the remote past, he overcame the situation by using fantasy:

No two are identical, the tiles from Canton, 12"x12" approx., imported by Ezekiel Rabhi in the year 1100 CE covered the floors, walls and ceiling of the little synagogue. Legends had begun to stick to them. Some said that if you explored for long enough you'd find your own story in one of the blue and white squares, because the pictures on the tiles could change, were changing, generation by generation, to tell the story of the Cochin Jews. Still others were convinced that
the tiles were prophecies, the keys to whose meanings had been lost with the passing years. (MLS 75-76)

Abraham as a boy crawled around the synagogue and his father reappeared in the ceramic tiles. Abraham’s mother hid inside the trunk a silver dagger and a tattered crown: “It was four and a half centuries old, the last crown to fall from the head of the last prince of al-Andalus; nothing less than the crown of Granada” (MLS 79).

Magic realism has enabled Rushdie to build an alternative reality in which fantastic characters and situations are presented. As his novels use history as the subject matter, by employing magic realism he could present another version of reality and this has enabled him to reveal the suppressed history. Rushdie’s use of magic realism has been variously interpreted. Although some critics say that Rushdie uses magic realism to escape from responsibility, a close reading of Rushdie’s novels proves that it is not an escape from responsibility but a means of thorough involvement with the contemporary cultural and political situation. Facts too harsh to be swallowed will have to be coated in magic realism to make them palatable.

Postmodernist fiction has also sought to destroy the generic purity of the novel, to accommodate the multiplicity of contemporary experience. According to Mohanty, “The emphasis on discontinuity, the celebration of difference and heterogeneity, and the assertion of plurality as opposed to reductive unities—these ideas have animated
almost an entire generation of literary and cultural critics” (120). As a result postmodern fiction becomes “a chutney” as in the case with Salman Rushdie who has incorporated in his fiction history, magic, peepshows, cinema, fairy tales, allegory, newspaper cuttings and fables. Heteroglossia both thematically and stylistically became the most dominant feature of Rushdie’s fiction.

Postmodern literature uses low art forms like thriller, detective story and fantasy along with myths, epic, fables and fairy tales. It imitates and makes fun of past traditions and uses innovative and subversive narrative strategies: “From modernism to postmodernism is from The Castle to the carnival, from agonized silence to inconsequential babble” (Mepham 142). Bakhtin calls them carnivalized novels, which provide a new outlook on the world. Writers like Salman Rushdie aim at wedding this mood of festivity to a mood of the absurd. Rushdie has justified the adoption of the plural narrative form in his novels:

What I was trying to do in Midnight’s Children was to make a plural form, since it seemed to me that I was writing about a world that was about as manifold as its possible for a world to be. If you were to reflect that plurality, you would have to use as many different kinds of forms as were available to you – fable, political novel, surrealism, kitchen sink,
everything-and try to find an architecture which would allow all those different kinds of writing to co-exist. (Reder 45)

Hybridity manifests in two different ways in Rushdie's novels. In the same novel Rushdie incorporates different themes and situations, which represent the hybrid culture of India with its celebrations, religious beliefs and rituals. In the same text Rushdie includes different genres and literary devices without making the reader conscious of the predominance of any one of these devices. This mixing of genres which in fact suggests and celebrates hybridity, begins with *Grimus*. The multiple themes in the novel include the family story of Flapping Eagle, his quest for identity, the political system in *K*, the problems faced by the migrant in the adopted country and the fragmentation of the self. The heterogeneous genres in the novel include the absurd, science fiction, cowboy films, allegory and the quest literature. Though in *Midnight's Children* Saleem is telling the story of Indian independence, he has also included in it his personal story. Magic, peepshow, cinema, fairy tales, gossips, newspaper cuttings, irony, parody, satire, intertextuality, subversion, fantasy and a number of topical, mythical, and historical devices and references also go into the world of *Midnight's Children*.

Meenakshi Mukherjee praises *Midnight's Children* "as the quintessential fictional embodiment of the postmodern celebration of decentering and hybridity" (9). The book is celebrated as a
continuation of Indian oral traditions combined with superb handling of the western novel genre. According to Venkata Reddy, “The ingredients of the ‘European’ novel – realism, satire, structural unity, fantasy, prophecy, pattern and rhythm can all be traced in *Midnight’s Children*, but they are colourfully overgrown or, as it were interwoven into the pattern of a magic carpet by the pungent spices of the Indian cuisine” (161-162).

The protagonist of *Midnight’s Children* also defines India in terms of its hybridity. It is “a country which would never exist except by the efforts of a phenomenal collective will-except in a dream we all agreed to dream; it was a mass fantasy shared in varying degrees by Bengali and Punjabi, Madrasi and Jat . . .” (*MC* 112). Celebration of hybridity in *Midnight’s Children* is embodied in the portrayal of Bombay, which forms the locale of the major events. The history depicted is the history of the teeming multitude. India is the land of the huge nebulous collectiveness, Gujaratis, Kashmiris, Dravidians, Sikhs and Bombay Christians with Portuguese names form the teeming multitude. Bombay symbolizes the diversity of India. The Aryans, the Mughals and the British invaders have left their traces behind in Bombay and the nation gradually absorbed this multiplicity which forms the varied heritage of India.

The description of the locale is both a traditional and modern device. The hybrid culture of Bombay is focussed in *The Moors Last
Sigh when the Moor describes Bombay: “In Bombay all Indias met and merged . . . Bombay was central; all rivers flowed into its human sea” (MLS 350). The selection of Bombay as the locale of *Midnights Children* and *The Moor’s Last Sigh* is important in two ways. Bombay is where Rushdie spent his early childhood and so the narrator is familiar with all aspects of Bombay. More than that Bombay stands for India. The Indian culture, its customs and celebrations manifest in the hybridity of this metropolis. No other city could probably encompass the rich variety of India. But the Bombay of *The Moor’s Last Sigh* is rather different from that of *Midnight’s Children*. Through the description of the same locale at two different periods of history Rushdie presents the deterioration that has come to this metropolis. The destruction of Bombay symbolizes the disappearance of secularism, because Bombay stands for diversity. Acceptance of diversity is considered to be the driving motif of secularism in post-independent India. The Bombay blasts and the rise of Hindu fundamentalism are presented as threats to Indian secularism.

*The Satanic Verses* also celebrates hybridity. The reference to ideas and images borrowed from the Bombay film industry, the idioms of Hobsons Jobson, a colonial English curriculum, the *Katha Sarith Sagar*, the nativist jokes of *Oopervalal – Neechevala*, the narratives of the epic recast as the battle for the Mahavilayat, the populist narratives of Phoolan Devi, the female dacoit, the Ayodhya issue, the
reference to the Indian Penal Code Section 420, as well as the Indian Civic code create a world of hybrid discourse in *The Satanic Verses*.

Like the peepshow of Lifafa Das, Aurora's painting in *The Moor's Last Sigh* is another tool used by Rushdie to represent the diversity of India. Catherine Cundy says: "*The Moor's Last Sigh* continues to privilege hybridity as both cultural model and textual strategy" (*Salman 113*). Aurora's art symbolizes hybridity. According to the Moor, Aurora's paintings are attempts "to create a romantic myth of the plural hybrid nation... using Arab Spain to re-imagine India" (*MLS 227*). The protagonist, the Moor, a blend of Catholic Jewish, Arabic, Spanish and contemporary Indian influence is symbolic of Indian hybridity. As Clement Ball puts it, "It is in Aurora's paintings that Rushdie's pluralist values find their most elaborate and original expression" ("Acid" 41). This hybridity is depicted on the political and religious levels through the presentation of characters like Raman Fielding who try to destroy the plurality of India by imposing the monopoly of Hindu culture. They prefer to practise a theory of exclusiveness, which is opposed to the Indian tradition of all-inclusiveness. Through the celebration of hybridity, Rushdie discards the idea of exclusiveness, which threatens the very survival of India's multiplicity.

The carnival element and the use of Menippean satire form integrated parts of Rushdie's narrative strategy. Along with the
celebration of hybridity at the thematic level, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* presents a generic carnival of, allegory, autobiography, epic, *bildungsroman*, picaresque, magic realism, fantasy and satire as genres and sub genres. Aurora's painting, the most important symbol in the novel which uses Arab, Spanish, Iberian, Christian and Hindu influences to reimagine India is predominantly carnivalesque.

The Menippean satire is based on the theory of the carnival and it is a satire of the utopian genre which developed during a period of time which might have some points in common with our own, during Hellenism, when national bonds and moral standards were dissolving, according to Bakhtin, and an intense struggle between different religious and philosophic directions was being waged. The genre has its name after its first practitioner, the philosopher Menippos. (Petersson, *Unending* 51)

Rushdie in *Midnight's Children* captures the utopian spirit of freedom, optimism and newness of the transitional period in Indian history. The celebratory crowd, the colourful festivals and above all the celebration of Bombay and the magicians are considered to be the qualities of Menippean satire, characterized by the presence of the element of the carnival.

Aurora's paintings were full of grotesque figures fusing human and animal parts, with breasts for buttocks or whole bodies made
from urban rubbish. She blended geographical and social realities. She blends the Bombay landscape with the Arabian sea were “strange composite creatures slithered to and fro across the frontier of the elements” (MLS 226). Thus in her paintings she achieves the blurring of “the dividing line between two worlds” (MLS 226). Aurora in her annual performance at Chowpathy Beach dances her carnival dance against the fundamentalist element in Hindu culture. Her tendency to include everything is revealed where the narrator says “she sucked in the city's hot stenches, lapped up its burning sauces, she gobbled its dishes up whole” (MLS 128). Moraes reveals his love for multiplicity when he defines his idea of love:

I wanted to cling to the image of love as the blending of spirits, as mélange, as the triumph of the impure, mongrel, conjoining best of us over what there is in us of the solitary, the isolated, the austere, the dogmatic, the pure; of love as democracy, as the victory of the no-man-is-an-island, two's-company. Many over the clean, mean, apartheid Ones. (MLS 289)

The city of Bombay with its rich diversity reflects the energies of the Carnival.

Rushdie employs parody and pastiche to ridicule and burlesque history and reality and these stylistic devices are “characterized by a refusal to respect traditional hierarchies” (Bertens 132). Linda
Hutcheon has justified the predominance of parody in modern literature. According to her parody is "one of the ways in which modern artists have managed to come to terms with the weight of the past" (*Parody* 29). She cites Salman Rushdie, Italo Calvino and Timothy Findley as writers who have made parody an important mode of modern self-reflexivity (*Parody* 34). Though parody ridicules men and works, it is not a destructive art destroying the original text. "A new form develops out of the old, without really destroying it; only the function is altered" (*Parody* 35-36). *Grimus* is a parody of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. In *Midnight's Children* Indian history is presented as a parody of Saleem Sinai's personal life. Almost all political and historical events in Indian history are parodied. Intertextuality is also employed as a tool for parody. The political and personal life of the great heroes of Indian history are parodied in Saleem's life. *Shame* is considered to be a parody of the Koran. The personal and public life of Pakistan's military generals like Bhutto and Zia are parodied in the portrayal of Iskander and Raza. *The Moor's Last Sigh* offers a parodied version of the Indian political scenario after the attainment of independence.

Along with national history, gossips, customs, and beliefs are also parodied in *Midnight's Children*. The perforated sheet is a parody of the traditional wedding ceremony. In both Hindu and Muslim wedding, there is a custom by which the bride and groom stand with a screen of cloth or silk between them, which is then pulled away for
the “first look”. The perforated sheet becomes a subversion and parody of this custom. The Nanavati case of seduction and murder is parodied in the story of the narrator’s Buckingham Villa incident where Homi Catrack, the seducer of Lila Sabarmati is shot dead by the injured husband commander Sabarmati. Cyrus Dubah, Saleem’s classmate who is made into a religious cult leader Lord Khusroo and Bhagvan by his widowed mother is a parody and an amalgam of the stories of actual persons such as Hatha Yogi Lakshman Rao, Bhagwan Rajneesh, and Mahesh Yogi. Rushdie has reduced the 1958 coup which made General Ayub Khan the first dictator of Pakistan into a travesty of military campaign by grotesquely describing its inner fictional story into an after – dinner exercise made out of movements performed by pepper pots.

*Shame* could be read as a parody of the *Koran*. The holy book becomes a fairy tale. Timothy Brennan hints at the comparison that exists between *Shame* and *Koran*. *Koran* is the divine text revealed to Muhammad “who himself assumed ‘the position of a theocratic ruler’ using the text ‘for making public his command’ ” (Brennan 215). Rushdie equates authoritarian politics with the unalterability of the religious text. Rushdie believed that authoritarianism was part of Islam. The shameful political condition pictured in *Shame* is the result of authoritarianism, which is the product of the revealed text. *Shame* is like the holy book, it tells the story of political dogmatism of the country. Instead of Muhammed we have Isky and Raza as the political
rulers who rule the country by seeking the help of the religious text to justify their authoritarianism. The revealed nature of the sacred text is ridiculed in *Shame* when the author assembles his story from newspaper clippings and anecdotes. Timothy Brennan says: "It is an intentional provocation, an overturning of the Islamic concept of Cijdaz "which describes the uniqueness of the Koran . . . which is inimitable" . . . If a Quaranic parody is going to be effective satire, it must display what Islamic Orthodoxy denies" (Brennan 216). The entire book could be read as a parody of the *Koran* because it narrates the story of the denial of individual freedom in a country ruled by Islamic orthodoxy. The Koranic parody of the text becomes more obvious in Bariamma's narration, which imitates the style of the holy book. Her stories "were the glue that held the clan together, binding the generations in webs of whispered secrets. Her story altered, at first, in the retellings, but finally it settled down, and after that nobody, neither teller nor listener would tolerate any deviation from the hallowed, sacred text" (*SH* 76).

The political scenario of Pakistan becomes a parody when Pakistan's internal life is portrayed in the discrete parameters of a family squabble between Raza Hyder and Iskander who represent Zia and Bhutto. The names of characters are also parodied in *Shame*. Iskander Harappa for example reminds one of the old Harappan civilization situated in Central Pakistan. Its most important site was Mohenjo-Daro and its other name was 'Mount of the Dead' and this
site is located just outside Larkans, the Bhutto family home. Thus Mohenjo and Harappa are subtle references to Bhutto's reign of terror. Iskander is a variant of Alexander, the Macedonian conqueror. Bhutto is again compared to Iskander Mirza, a timeserver of the Punjabi bureaucracy. Raza is an alternate form for Raj, the British governmental authority that ruled India from 1858 to 1947. Raza Hyder continues the Empire's practice of evolving the profoundest spiritual principles of religion and tradition to justify a strategy of tyranny and theft. He represents no improvement over his British predecessors. He also reminds the legendary hero Hyder Ali of Mysore. Omar Khayyam Shakil brings to mind the Persian poet Omar Khayyam who exists only in translations. The Literary parody includes the parody of the Revenge Tragedy, carried out in the killings by Isky, Haroun, Omar and Sufiya.

Among the different literary genres used in *Midnight's Children* the comic epic form is the most prominent. In an interview with Michael Kaufman, Rushdie has remarked: "It seemed to me that if you had to choose a form for that part of the world, the form you would choose would be the Comic Epic" (qtd in Afzal Khan, "Myth Debunked" 52). *Midnight's Children* is an epic, which narrates six decades of Indian history. It tries to contain an India whose stories are too numerous to be contained even in an epic. So he debunks the epic form and makes it a comic epic. The epic hero Saleem is a ridiculous comic character, known under various nicknames Sniffer,
Buddha and Snot Face. Like epic characters he is endowed with magical powers but, he receives it while hiding in a washing chest which ridicules his magical powers. Other characters like Adam Aziz, the midnight's children, and the authoritarian generals in Pakistan are all drawn in the comic epic style.

Subversion in Rushdie's novels could be treated as the outcome of the contemporary social situation. Subversion begins from the very structure of *Midnight's Children*. The novel is a new *Arabian Nights*, which initiates and subverts the convoluted story line of the Persian text. The subversion is in the man's narration of the story and woman listening. Both *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* subvert the conventions of the fairy tale. The events narrated in *Midnight's Children* are nightmarish and they end with the description of the darkest period in Indian history, the period of Emergency and the draining of hope from the midnight's children. In *Shame* the fairy tale assumes the characteristics of a horror story: "the tale of the panther was travelling to the capital. Black head, pale hairless body, awkward gait" (*SH* 253) and "Murders of animals and men, villages raided in the dark, dead children, slaughtered flocks, blood-curdling howls: it was the time-honoured man-eater scare, but with a new and terrifying twist" (*SH* 253). This is what happens to fairy tales in the postmodern condition.
The Nishapur story is a subversion of the traditional place of refuge in fairy tales. When Hyder and Omar reached Nishapur, thinking that the old mansion would protect them, the three mothers receive Hyder saying that God had brought him there. They make Hyder carry the corpse of his wife and finally kill him in the dumbwaiter. The fairy tale inversion becomes complete when Omar admits that he is not a prince capable of saving the princess but only a peripheral man whose job is to be a corner man in other people’s wrestling matches. The sleeping beauty fable also is subverted in Sufiya who comes to Omar, her husband who is waiting like a groom for the bride in the bridal chamber: “She was there, on all fours, naked, coated in mud and blood and shit, with twigs sticking to her back and beetles in her hair” (SH 286).

Rushdie uses the subversive strategy in Midnight’s Children, Shame and The Moor’s Last Sigh to present the political and social life in India and Pakistan. He subverts even myths to make them express the contemporary reality. The Ganesh myth, Shakthi myth, the Siva myth and the Lakshmi Narayan myth are subverted in Midnight’s Children. Womanhood and motherhood are subverted in Midnight’s Children, Grimus, Shame and The Moor’s Last Sigh. In Rushdie’s political novels subversion becomes a powerful and clear technique because “subversion is the destruction of the violence that is inherent in exploitation and which runs through society, indistinctly, massively and terribly: subversion is countervailing power” (Negri 59).
The extensive use of myths is another feature of Rushdie's narration. Rushdie employs myths both as a thematic base and as a structural device for his novels. The mythical elements are varied and are taken from all kinds of sources including Hindu, Greek, pre-Islamic, Islamic Sufi, Christian and Persian mythologies. By making an elaborate use of myths in his fiction, Rushdie has not only broadened the dimension of his works from the immediate to the everlasting, but also added a deeper significance to the characters and events contained in them. Myths are presented in both the true and subverted forms. Through the subversion of myths, Rushdie tries to present the contemporary political and cultural situations which are in sharp contrast with those presented in the myths and this subversion helps the novelist in portraying the hushed up political situation in India and Pakistan.

The myth of Ravana has been used in a subverted manner. It is associated with a number of characters and events and thus suggests all pervasive evil. It is used for multiple purposes. It represents both the public and the atmosphere in free India and the resultant degeneration. Muslim businessmen like Mustapha Kemal, SP Butt and Ahmed Sinai consider the public as "the many-headed many-mouthed rapacious monster" (MC 71) who may bring down the price level in times of plenty, compelling the Muslim businessmen to starve. In the Sabarmati case, the noble sentiments of the Ramayana is demythified by combining them with the melodrama of the Bombay
talkie. Rushdie sees in the Sabarmati case a parody of the Ramayana story. Commander Sabarmati just like Rama killing Ravana, killed his wife’s abductor. Rushdie broods over the verdict in the Sabarmati case and expresses his doubts. Saleem asks: “If Rama himself were alive, would we send him to prison for slaying the abductor of Sita?” (MC 264) and leaves it for the reader to find an answer.

Ganesh is a recurring symbol in Rushdie’s novels. In Midnight’s Children Ganesh is presented as the God of wisdom. Ganesh is the scribe who writes down the Mahabharatha as well as the scribe who takes down accounts. But In The Moor’s Last Sigh Ganesh appears as a symbol of brutality and corruption. Aurora dances her defiance and contempt for religious fervour and fundamentalism, which Ganesh Chathurthi represents. By his postmodern interpretation of myths Rushdie criticizes the degradation of values in contemporary societies:

history, in my version, entered a new phase on August 15th, 1947 – but in another version, that inescapable date is no more than one fleeting instant in the Age of Darkness, Kali-Yuga, in which the cow of morality has been reduced to standing, teeteringly, on a single leg! Kali-Yuga – the losing throw in our national dice-game; the worst of everything. (MC 194)

The Buddha story is also distorted. In ancient India Gautama sat under the tree at Gaya in Sabarmati and he taught others to abstain
themselves from worldly sorrows and achieve inner peace; “centuries later, Saleem the Buddha sat under a different tree, unable to remember his grief, numb as ice, wiped clean as a slate” \textit{(MC 350)}. Shiva has the Shiva-like abilities of creation and destruction. He is also representative of the raw energy of injustice which is not derived from the mythic but is part of the semiosis of the novel, created from the social dynamics of a newly independent nation encompassing the blood, love, hate and vengefulness inherent in such situations.

The debunking of myths is continued in \textit{Shame} also. Rushdie begins his story by describing his mythic hero Omar Khayyam as a peripheral man, born out of three sisters' shameless gesture of defiance against the “shameful” existence they had been forced to lead. The rest of the novel is only a development of Omar Khayyam's story. Various characters behave shamelessly towards others, thus engendering a shamefulfulness in them which finally ends up in the creation of Sufiya, the personification of shameless violence.

Rushdie's effective subversive strategy may be observed in the portrayal of female characters. Aurora in \textit{The Moor's Last Sigh} is the antithesis of the popular image of the Indian woman and mother. She is never redemptive and refuses to be a passive victim. She is a sharply retaliating, vindictive woman in her reactions. When Aurora realizes that her husband had agreed to give up their first born to his mother Flory, she vows not to indulge in conjugal love as long as her
mother in law is alive (MLS 114-115). The Indian bride is celebrated for her steadfast love, devotion and fidelity to her husband. But Aurora’s love for Abraham evaporates when she learns that Abraham has started fooling around with girls during her absences. She pays him back in his own coin by launching a series of extramarital relations. Through the subversion of womanhood Rushdie offers a new perspective to feminist thinking.

Satire also becomes an effective narrative tool in Rushdie for presenting the political scenario of India and Pakistan. Satire is the predominating tone in Midnight’s Children. The horrors of compulsory sterilization are presented satirically: “Ectomy (from, I suppose, the Greek): a cutting out. To which medical science adds a number of prefixes: appendectomy tonsillectomy mastectomy tubectomy vasectomy testectomy hysterectomy . . . . Sperectomy: the draining-out of hope” (MC 437). In Shame too satire is the dominant tone. As Fletcher observes: “It is obvious that Pakistani politics is being ridiculed via the portrayal of Isky and Raza and that many of the standard techniques of satire are employed” (121). Indian nationalism is looked at satirically in The Moor’s Last Sigh. John Clement Ball says: “In The Moor’s Last Sigh (1995), Salman Rushdie explores the tensions between inclusive and exclusive forms of Indian nationalism through the dynamic interplay of inclusive and exclusive forms of satire” (“Acid” 36). The rise of religious fundamentalism is like “corrosive acid of the spirit, that adversarial intensity which poured
into the nation’s blood stream” (MLS 351). It violates “the old, founding myth of the nation . . . ” (MLS 351). Satirically Rushdie remarks: “the Ram cult reduces polytheistic Hinduism to a religion in which “only one chap matters” (MLS 338).

There are layers of irony in \textit{Shame}. There is the use of the situational and verbal irony. The description of the 40th day celebration of the death of old Shakil, father of the three sisters is ironically pictured. The details regarding Raza Hyder’s family are also given ironically. Ironically God does not find a place for himself in Pakistan, which is supposed to be the land of the pure. Omar is named after a poet with an expectation of courting the muse but ironically no quatrains issue forth from his pen. Pakistan indicates a holy place but in the novel it turns out to be a centre of brutality and grotesqueness. Sufiya Zinoba is a beauty as well as a beast. As the novelist remarks, to understand her is to admit savagery as a constituent element in the national make-up.

Like Federman and Pyncheon Rushdie also introduces, comic and humourous situations in his political novels. By introducing the element of comedy in the treatment of serious political issues Rushdie seems to focuss on the absurdity inherent in all metanarratives. There is a clear juxtaposition of Ganesh Puja in Bombay with the outbreak of the plague at Surat. According to the narrator, “Indian rats, as we know, carry gods as well as plagues” (MLS 123). Commander
Sabarmati after murdering his wife and Homi Catrack, came to the traffic police man to hand over the revolver, but was left controlling the traffic as the frightened policeman had run away.

Rushdie's method of introducing the comic while narrating the tragic and horrifying is characteristic of modern fiction. Grenier argues how modern fiction "makes no attempt to minimize the terror of the (contemporary) universe; it uses comedy to encourage sympathy as well as to expose evil; it suggests futurity; it celebrates comic distortions as an indication that anything is possible" (qtd in Thakur, "Zig-Zag Trajectory" 60). Joseph Swann says: "In Midnight's Children the terrible and the pleasant, the serious and the absurd are related with the same all-pervading, all knowing-smile. Western concepts of good and evil, of the tragic and the comic, of purpose and history, slither and lose hold in this narrative" (253).

Experiments in language are a major stylistic feature that makes Rushdie's novels enjoyable. He has in fact created what can be called a "Rushdian" English which tries to incorporate the multiplicity of the Indian languages. According to Anita Desai

It was Salman Rushdie again, in Midnight's Children, who finally brought the spoken language off the streets onto the printed page, with such energy and electricity that the Indian reader was finally won over and the Indian writer saw the two tongues as one And so we find we are back in the
days of oral story telling, when the language employed had to be accessible, demotic, of and for the people. (212)

His language is characterized by Indian expressions, coinages and often a literature, which gives it richness and variety. In his novels the language range from the Bombay street language to Oxford drawl. Rushdie has tried to create a new English suitable for presenting the complexity and diversity of Indian life. Rushdie's language is suffused with felicitous expressions, funny coinages, native usages and erotic expressions. Memorable expressions and catch phrases abound in the novels. *Midnight's Children* has expressions like Saleem Sinai's description of himself "Child of an unknown union, I have had more mothers than most mothers have children; giving birth to parents has been one of my stranger talents—a form of reverse fertility beyond the control of contraception, and even of the Widow herself" (*MC* 243), "the partitioned nations are washing themselves in one another's blood" (*MC* 112), "the children of midnight were also the children of the time: fathered, you understand, by history. It can happen. Especially in a country which is itself a sort of dream" (*MC* 118).

The use of language and imagery is what distinguishes Rushdie from the European postmodernists. The frequent use of Indian words and Indian images make Rushdie's writing unique. Inserting befitting vernacular words and phrases into English sentences like "The Nawab
had invited all of these to his daughter’s hennaing ceremony” (MC 321), “your fatherji is sending himself to the devil” (SH 12), “innocently wide-eyed Chalaak Sahib” (SH 19), gives his language an Indian tinge.

The role of the erotic is another feature in Rushdie’s style. This could be taken as the subversion of the existing belief about the purpose of literature as inculcating finer instincts. But a reading of Rushdie’s Shame demands the violent accommodation of the obscene. Shame begins with a note of obscenity where the Shakil sisters fantasize on male sexuality. The novel abounds in expressions like sister fucker, mother fucker, buffalo fucker, etc. The birth, parentage and early life of Omar are clothed in erotic language.

Funny expressions are numerous in Rushdie’s novels. “Aadam Aziz lifted his daughter (with his own arms), passing her up after the dowry into the care of this man who had re-named and so re-invented her, thus becoming in a sense her father as well as her new husband . . . ” (MC 66); “her furniture was made lumpy by the harsh stuffing of bitterness; old-maid repressions were sewn into curtain-seams” (MC 330). Citizens of Fundamentalist Muslim States were asked to forget all they know. The metaphor is made literal when Saleem suffers amnesia. Naveed Hyder says of marriage: “Marriage is power . . . It is freedom. You stop being someone’s daughter and become someone’s mother instead, ek dum, fut-a-fut, pronto” (SH 155). About the
Portuguese discovery of India Rushdie playfully asks: “how could we be discovered when we were not covered before?” (MLS 4). Moraes “was raised neither as Catholic nor as Jew . . . a Jewholic – anonymous, a cathjew nut” (MLS 104). Moraes’ ayah is named Jaya He, the refrain of the national anthem. She introduces him to the diversity of India, as suggested in the anthem itself. Aurora “scrubbed her body until the skin was raw and not a trace of love’s peppery perfume remained” (MLS 115); “he misses his Mrs, and you are glum about your Mum” (MLS 10); “Epifania swallowed the news of his death without a tremor. She ate his death as she had eaten his life; and grew” (MLS 24). Epifania is called “the brand-new widow” (MLS 26); “Sara, a large-bodied girl waiting like an undiscovered sub-continent for Abraham’s vessel to sail into her harbour” (MLS 81).

The constant use of cinematic technique is another novelty in Rushdie’s narration. Catherine Cundy observes: “In both Midnight’s Children and The Satanic Verses the communication networks of advertising and cinema compete with the written word for man’s attention and allegiance” (Salman 102). In Midnight’s Children the cinema screen becomes a symbol for the changing perspective. In an interview Rushdie observes: “The whole experience of montage, technique, split screens, dissolves, and so on, has become a film language which translates quite easily into fiction and gives you an extra vocabulary that traditionally has not been part of the vocabulary of literature. And I think I used that quite a bit” (qtd in Ali Siddiq
References to films and film actors are very common in Rushdie’s narrative. Walter Ong’s the shift from alphabetic culture to electronic culture as the characteristic feature of the postmodern society becomes obvious when Rushdie describes the New York city in *Fury*. The city survives mostly in a media created illusory world. The analogy with computer games is clear and pertinent computer games re-enact the psyche of the opulent. Computer games imitate and parody war games even as the games of war imitate and parody computer games. The distinction between the real and imagined blurs in the world where reality is another electronically constructed artifact.

Intertextuality is another postmodern narrative strategy used by Rushdie. According to Edmund J Smyth, “Intertextuality is another feature of postmodern aesthetics which seems to illustrate the erosion of originality as a literary value” (14). In their structure, themes, techniques and characterization, Rushdie’s fiction incites references to literary works of the past and present. Linda Hutcheon remarks:

Though Saleem Sinai narrates in English, in ‘Anglepoised-lit writing,’ his intertexts for both writing history and writing fiction are doubled: they are, on the one hand, from Indian legends, films, and literature and, on the other, from the west – *The Tin Drum, Tristram Shandy, One Hundred Years of Solitude, and so on.* (Politics 62)
Robert Alter compares *Midnight's Children* with Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*: "In both books a quirky, jumpy, highly digressive, extravagantly self-conscious narrator tries to reconstruct an account of his origins and life-history" (112). The name Adam Aziz invokes biblical references. Adam Aziz was the first man in the family (Pun on Adam). There are parodies of literature also: "No: I'm no monster. Nor have I been guilty of trickery. I provided clues . . ." (*MC* 118) echoes the *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. "No: I am not prince Hamlet nor was meant to be", "Telepathy set me apart; tele-communications dragged me down" (*MC* 294) parody the line "Highbury bore me Richmond and Kew undid me" from *The Wasteland*. Rushdie himself admits to a seminal relationship between *Midnight's Children* and *The Tin Drum*. He says: "I'm sure that Grass is somewhere behind the book. I hadn't read it for many years at the time I wrote *Midnight's Children*, but *The Tin Drum* is one of my favourite novels" (qtd in Goonetilleke 17). Patricia Merivale points out the similarities between Garcia Marquez's Oscar and Saleem. "Saleem and Oscar share grotesque physical deformities: by the end of the book they are both impotent and suffering the excruciating pains of physical dissolution" (117). The dumb waiter in *Shame* echoes Harold Pinter's play. The references to a hanged man remind us of Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. The woman in the veil alludes both to the Bible and to Hawthorne's story about the veiled minister. Judgment Day is an allusion to the Dooms Day.
Rani Harappa’s autobiographical shawl, described by Salman Rushdie as “the portrait of the artist as an old crone” (SH 194) parodies Joyce’s title “A Portrait Of the Artist as a Young Man” or Dylan Thomas’s parody of it “A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog”. According to Malini Shukla, “Rushdie uses the stream of consciousness technique in a very important passage in the novel” (71), which extends to four pages. The passage contains the thoughts of Rani Harappa and like scattered pieces of mirror tells the truth about Iskander Harappa an autocrat and megalomaniac. Rani is reliving her past in the present. The passage provides insight into the character of Isky based on the Rani’s painful realizations.

Catherine Cundy points out: “The Moor’s Last Sigh is the first instance of Rushdie consistently employing his own work as an intertext” (Salman 115). Shiva, Saleem’s alter ego, Padma, Parvati’s son Aadam, Lord Khusro, and commander Sabarmati from Midnight’s Children reappear, in The Moor’s Last Sigh. The Bombay of Midnight’s Children forms the background of The Moor’s Last Sigh also. Zeeny Vakil from The Satanic Verses also appear in The Moor’s Last Sigh. Fury begins with inter textual reference to Othello. In fact Fury attempts a re-reading of Othello by which the Othello-Desdemona relationship is subverted. Solanka’s wife Eleanor got her doctorate for the study based on Othello. She did not rely upon the motiveless malignity of Iago but rather the Moor’s lack of emotional intelligence. To her Othello did not love Desdemona. Desdemona is Othello’s
trophy wife, his most valuable and status-giving possession, the physical proof of his rising to the white man's world.

Palimpsest art is a recurring motif in Rushdie, which is also a narrative technique used by him to show the relevance of the past in shaping the present. Rushdie's novels can be seen as palimpsests as they depict layers of life on a single person and incident. Saleem Sinai at once represents himself, India and the collective multitude. Similarly each incident offers a variety of interpretations. According to Celia M. Wallhead "the layered approach is therefore applied to the recovery of the past and of personal history, also to the creation of new art, eternally responding agonistically to that which has gone before" (81). This may be Rushdie's idea of suggesting that the new trends in literature have mostly originated from the rich cultural roots of the past.

Rushdie has incorporated in his novels traditional narrative strategies like parody, irony, satire and modern devices like subversion, demythification, intertextuality and pastiche. His novels reveal a fine fusion of the traditional narrative modes and highly postmodern tendencies. His historical imagination fuses the different strands of fact and fiction into a postmodern literary output that remains traditional and modern at the same time.