Chapter-III

HISTORY AND MAGIC REALISM

MIDNIGHT’S CHILDREN
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Anita Desai, the famous Indian English novelist, says, "*Midnight's Children* will surely be recognized as a great tour de force, a dazzling exhibition of the gifts of a new writer of courage, impressive strength, the power of both imagination and control and sheer stylistic brilliance" (*Where Cultures Clash by Night*, p.13). Thus the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* has heralded a new era in the history of Indian English fiction. It is clearly exhibited the international trend of Post-modernist novel writing. It is a post-modernist text and it has become a milestone not only in Indian English fiction but also in English fiction in the world.

Salman Rushdie, who was born in India, went to Britain to prosecute his studies. His parents migrated to Pakistan. He visited Pakistan. He feels that he is rootless, insecure, alienated. The post-colonial India faces a lot of turmoil in the course of its development. The partition left a permanent scar on the psyche of people. There were Hindu-Muslim communal riots, language riots and wars with China and Pakistan. This backdrop of troubled history of young nation motivated Rushdie to write *Midnight's Children* where he tells his story as well as the history of India as "At the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world... I had been mysteriously hand-cuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country. For the next three decades, there was to be no escape" (*MC*, p.9). Raja Rao says "Of the Third World expatriates, Salman Rushdie alone shares some traits with the post modernists whose influence on his work he has consistently denied. The use of the comic tone despite the dead seriousness of his themes, the employment of black humour and fantasy, the
general mistrust of visible reality, at the best fragmentary reconstruction of reality are some of the characteristics he shares with the post-modernists” (The Impact of Expatriation on Technique: Allegory as a Mode for Creating Reality. Third World Novel of Expatriation: A Study of Émigré Fiction by Indian, African and Caribbean Writers, p. 148).

Midnight’s Children is applauded for its experimental style and it is considered a masterpiece. Its success is due to its ability to tell strange stories in familiar ways. It is hailed as post-modern epic where Salman Rushdie employed several features of magic realism.

The magic realist novels deal with the social, political and cultural aspects of the novelists’ homelands. The features of fairy tales or fantasy are incorporated in such works. The narration defies logic or standard customs and enters into a world where anything can be subverted. Myths or dreams substitute clock time. The process of ageing is abruptly stopped or space and time have no hurdles in that world.

Salman Rushdie uses levitation, flights, telepathy, dreams, memories, magic potions, invisibility and transformation of matter into mind to show the phantasmagoric realities of post-independent India. Hallucination, insanity, extraordinary situations are projected in the novel to reconstruct history.

Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children presents the political history of India from the time of the Jallianwalla Bagh to the end of the Emergency in 1977. The title refers to the children born on the midnight hour of India’s Tryst with Destiny on 15 August 1947. The story is narrated by Saleem Sinai, the protagonist
of the novel. The novel shows Saleem's ordinary and extraordinary life and depicts the diversity of India. The book has thirty chapters in its three parts. In part I, the narrative begins from the time of Jallianwalla Bagh tragedy and ends with the birth of Saleem Sinai. Part II begins with the birth of the hero and concludes with the end of the Indo-Pakistan war on 23 September 1965. In part III, the narrative comes forward to the end of the Emergency in March 1977. The novel covers the Indian sub-continent and its history. The narrative covers the events starting from 1915 to 1978 but it begins on 15 August 1947 and ends on 15 August 1978.

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* was praised as a "Post-colonial metafiction, a novel about third world novels" (Timothy Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation*, p.25). He examined the relationship between the self and the nation. He fictionalizes the events of Indian history. Dreams of the people were shattered when the leaders failed to deliver the goods. The writers expressed disillusionment with the corruption and failure of the nation-state. He presents characters which seem to be fantastic yet are real. He tries to recreate the bygone nationalistic democratic ideals for the underprivileged. The novel is an allegory of India's history as well as a subversion of conventions and authority. It presents the fabulist-historiography of post-independent India in *Midnight's Children* by employing magic realism and follows the great tradition of Sterne, Gogol, Gunter Grass, Marquez, and Joyce.

The publication of *Midnight's Children* marks a radical departure from the earlier novels written by Indians in English. It presents events in India's modern history from the partition to the declaration of Emergency. It also presents the history of three generations of the Sinai family in Srinagar, Amritsar, Agra,
Bombay and Karachi. Saleem Sinai, who works at a pickle factory, recollects his experiences with the fond hope that “one day, perhaps, the world may taste the pickles of history” (MC, p.461).

Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* experiments with the modern techniques in literature. In a sense, it has been considered an innovative writing which digresses from the earlier fiction. He did not follow the traditional conventions of fiction. The novel *Midnight’s Children* may be interpreted as, “an autobiographical bildungsroman” (Dilip Fernandez: “Such Angst Loneliness, Such Rootlessness”, Gentleman, Feb.1984,p.101) and a “picaresque narrative” (Northrop Frye, *Anatomy for Criticism*, Princeton, p.7).

Salman Rushdie does not portray the cynical image of the India as V.S.Naipaul portrayed in his works. The features of magic realism like satire, structural unity, fantasy, prophecy, pattern and rhythm can be found in *Midnight’s Children* but they are interwoven into the pattern of a magic carpet. Siddiq Ali aptly says “The novel’s amorphous and complex form and the blending of history, myth, politics and fable at first instance appears deterrents to its appreciation. But the novel yields several pleasures once the reader understands the underlying purpose of the interplay between fact and fiction, fantasy and realism...the history is the substance of Midnight’s Children is obvious...” (*Midnight’s Children as historiography*, pp.130-131).
Salman Rushdie effectively presents the past and the present of Saleem Sinai in alternating bits of narration. It also presents the events of the twentieth century Indian history. All most all the events are preserved in the novel in order to make the novel in Maria Couto’s words “an extraordinary saga of epic dimensions and resonances” (Midnight’s Children and Parents: The Search for Indo-British Identity, p.63).

The narrator of Midnight’s Children, Saleem Sinai narrates the story starting from Kashmir, Bombay, Karachi and then to Bombay against the background of the history of three nations: India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Commenting on the setting of the novel, Rushdie says “in a modern post –colonial context about India since independence and the subsequent evolution of Pakistan and Bangladesh”. (Coral Ann Howells, The Temptations of Big Bear and Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children, p.192).

Salman Rushdie’s creativity anticipates the thought processes in the reader that he may assume or follow patterns of familiar responses. Saleem Sinai the narrator finding himself “mysteriously handcuffed to history” (MC,p.420) by the coincidence of his birth and India’s arrival at independence put himself at the centre of a vast web of stories which constitutes post-colonial Indian history and which is his own life story. In his search for individual identity and meaning, Saleem weaves together the stories of his family through several generations, of Indian independence Pakistan and its partition, the state of Emergency, Indian myth, both Hindu and Muslim and the thousand and one children born in the first hour of India’s independence.
The novel is an exploration of the relations between reality, order and fantasy. Saleem relates his life to that of India. He is apprehensive about his historical inconsistencies. He is aware how fantastic his narrative is to the skeptical, pragmatic Padma. He rearranges the facts of history so that he develops a new pattern through which he interprets his own history as well as the history of India “I told you the truth”, I say yet again, “Memory’s truth, because 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 versions of events; and no sane human being ever trust some one else’s version more than his own” (MC, p.275).

Saleem Sinai’s birth, at the stroke of midnight which results in the division of Indian sub-continent into India and Pakistan, has identity crisis. Thus he is born with a divided character. Saleem Sinai was a ‘midnight’s child’ and so he has a divided character. As he says “Our names contain our fates; living as we do in a place where names have not acquired the meaninglessness of the West, and are still more than mere sounds, we are also the victims of the our titles” (MC, p.304). His family name ‘Sinai’ has “sin in the moon” and it is a symbol of instability of Saleem rather than the waxing and waning moon.

Salman Rushdie uses some of the Indianisms like “bed-sheet” (MC, p.9) in order to heighten the intensity of the narrative. Commenting on the use of language in the novel by Salaman Rushdie, Michael Harris says “(All) such syntactic efforts to hold things together also imply, by their very presence and nature, the centrifugal force of the diversity that makes them necessary, as do the equally
frequent foreshadowing and recapitulations” (Outsiders & Insiders: Perspective of Third World Culture in British and Post-Colonial Fiction, 1992).

The novel depicts another feature of magic realism which refers to incest. There is a reference to incest when Saleem Sinai says “she listened to him explaining that there was no sin...they were not truly brother and sister, the blood in his veins was not the blood in her” (MC, p.325). This seems to be heretical. His incestuous passion for his sister Jamila generates sexual trauma and which leads to his nagging guilt-complex which makes him impotent.

Saleem Sinai’s physical appearance also is symbolically portrayed in the novel. His “large moon-face was too large: too perfectly round” (MC, p.124). His lack of strength in his character portrayed in “some thing lacking in the region of the chin” (MC, p.124). The lack of homogeneity is seen in his “dark stains spread down my western hairline, a dark patch coloured my eastern ear”. (MC, p.124) His “temple like stunted horns” (MC, p.124) indicates the proverbial cuckold and “rampant cucumber of the nose” (MC, p.124) which continues to grow shows his lack of harmony in face.

Some of the incidents in the life of Saleem Sinai have been presented fantastically by Salman Rushdie. Saleem Sinai goes through a number of personal mutilations. His father’s blow makes him permanently deaf in his left ear. After the accident with Evie’s bicycle, he is able to hear the voices of the other ‘midnight’s children’. His geography teacher pulls his hair so hard and thus leaves “a monkish tonsure, a circle where hair would never grow again” (MC, p.232) He loses the “top third of his middle finger” (MC, p235.) when he quarrels with his friends in
the school. His injury in a bomb explosion during the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965 results in the loss of memory so that he cannot even remember his name. Then he is reduced to the level of a “man-dog”, a member of CUTIA. He lost all the sensations except sense of smell “anaesthetized against feelings as well as memories” (MC, p.353). He is also shown as “Buddha” (old one) “because there hung around him an air of great antiquity” (MC, p.349). The pun on ‘Buddha’ is ironical. A snake bite in the Sunderbans restores Saleem’s memory. He is also shown as impotent. He loses telepathic powers during the Emergency.

Saleem Sinai undergoes many tribulations as he was born with an identity crisis. He is the illegitimate son of Vanita and William Methwold. He is exchanged by the midwife Mary Pereira for another legitimate son of Ahmaed and Amina Sinai. By doing so, she imagines that she does “her own private revolutionary act” (MC, p.117). Thus Saleem grows up as the son of a Muslim couple. He is destined to have more than two mothers and many fathers. He says “I have had more mothers than most mothers have children” (MC, p.243); “all my life, consciously or unconsciously, I have sought out fathers” (MC, p.426) and “giving birth to parents has been one of my stranger talents” (MC, p.243). His real mother is Vanita and putative one Amina. Mary Pereira, the midwife, is also a kind of mother to him. He also finds another mother in his childless aunt Pia “I was promoted to occupy the sacred place of the son she never had” (MC, p.243). Saleem Sinai’s ‘fathers’ outnumber his ‘mothers’. His fathers are Methwold, Vanita’s husband the entertainer, and Ahmaed Sinai. Amina dreams a strange dream when Saleem is born a “dream of such overwhelming reality that it stayed with her throughout her waking hours. In it, Nadir Khan (her first husband) came to her bed and impregnated her” (MC, p.127). Such was the mischievous
perversity of the dream that it confused Amina about the parentage of her child, and provided me, the child of midnight, with a fourth father to set beside Winkie and Methwold and Ahmed Sinai.

Schaapstekaer, the German ‘snake doctor’ cures him with cobra poison. His uncle General Zulfikar calls him sonny or my son. Picture Singh, the snake-charmer rescues Saleem from Bangladesh and thus becomes “the last in the line of men who have been willing to become my fathers”. (MC, p.378). Saleem’s personal identity takes a larger dimension as he was born on the midnight of 15 August, 1947 as he is “mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destines indissolubly chained to those of my country” (MC, p.420). Saleem says “Jawaharlal Nehru wrote: “Dear Baby Saleem, My belated congratulations on the happy accident of your moment of birth! You are the newest bearer of that ancient face of India which is also eternally young. We shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own” (MC, p.122).

Saleem is conscious of his large identity right from the beginning of childhood as he was “linked to history both literally and metaphorically…” (MC, p. 238). This enables him to prey into the thought processes of others and connects with other ‘midnight’s children’. But this ability leads him to ordeals and unhappiness. He is responsible for the murder of the adulterer, Homi Catrack by Commander Sabarmati and it leads to the suicide of his uncle Hanif. He is aware of the truth as “Saleem Sinai, perennial victim, persists in seeing himself as protagonist” (MC, p.237). As a ‘midnight’s child’ he has not only undergone vasectomy but also “sperectomy: the draining-out of hope” (MC, p.437). This
reminds the readers of the forceful family planning operations performed during the emergency period in India.

Saleem’s identity-crisis has roots in his ancestors. The motif of fragmentation is vital in the life of his grandfather Dr.Aadam Aziz. Dr.Aziz who treats his future wife Naseem through a perforated sheet and thereby he “came to have a picture of Naseem in his mind, a badly-fitting collage of her severally-inspected parts. This phantasm of partitioned woman began to haunt him, and not only in his dreams” (MC, p.25).

The motif of fragmentation can be seen in the life of Aadam Aziz’s daughter and Saleem’s mother Amina. She married Nadir Khan and divorces him as he is impotent. Ever after her marriage to Ahmed Sinai, she could not forget Nadir Khan and so decides to “train herself to love her new husband” and hence “she divided him, mentally, into every single one of his component parts, physical as well as behavioural, compartmentalizing him into lips and verbal ticks and prejudices and likes... in short, she fell under the spell of the perforated sheet of her own parents, because she resolved to fall in love with her husband bit by bit” (MC, p.68).

The ‘perforated sheet’ which is a symbol of fragmentation appears again in the career of Amina’s daughter Jamila, the singer. Jamila’s parents are hesitant to allow her to perform on the stage. But their family friend Major Latif creates “her famous, all concealing, white silk chadar, the curtain or veil, heavily embroidered in gold brocade-work and religious calligraphy, behind which she sat demurely whenever she performed in public...when Jamila sang with her lips pressed against
the brocaded aperture, Pakistan fell in love with a fifteen year old-girl whom it only ever glimpsed through a gold-and-white perforated sheet" (*MC*, p.313).

Another feature of magic realism is the element of fragmentation which is seen in the life of Aadam, son of Saleem. He too has two fathers. His personal appearance has an endemic element of discordance “On either side of his head flapped audient protuberances like sails, ears so colossally huge that ... when his head popped out they had thought, for one bad moment, that it was the head of a tiny elephant” (*MC*, p.419). He seems to be dumb for long time. He also suffers from tuberculosis and then recovers and utters the mysterious ‘Abracadrba’. Like Saleem Sinai, Ahmad too is “mysteriously handcuffed to history, his destinies indissolubly chained to those of his country” (*MC*, p.420). He is born exactly at the moment when the Emergency is declared on 25 June 1975. He had big ears as he has ‘heard the shootings in Bihar and the screams of lathicharged dock-workers in Bombay’ (*MC*, p.420) and refuses to speak as he is ‘a child who heard too much, and as a result never spoke, rendered dumb by a surfeit of sound’ (*MC*, p.420). Ahmed’s reaction is symbolic when he is given a powerful medicine to make him cry “…the child’s cheeks began to bulge, as though his mouth were full of food; the long-suppressed sounds of his babyhood flooded up behind his lips, and he jammed his mouth shut in fury. It became clear that the infant was close to choking as he tried to swallow back the torrential vomit of pent up sound which the green powder had stirred up; and this was when he realized that they were in the presence of one of the earth’s most implacable wills” (*MC*, p.423). It also demonstrates how the public opinion is suppressed during the Emergency. The other symbols are—the child is always “unsmiling, grave’ and prefers “to keep his eyes firmly closed”. He is cured completely from his disease when the Emergency
came to an end. Thus the novel shows the continuous plight of individual identity in the hostile modern world.

The motif of fragmentation plays a vital role in the novel. Prof. R.S.Patahk observes “The motif of fragmentation is present throughout the novel. But in no case it is prominent as it is in the case of Saleem. He is fully aware of his problems and plights, misfortunes and discordances, so typical of a rootless person” (Salman Rushdie’s Treatment of Alienation”, Indian Fiction in English: Problems & Promises, p. 33).

Saleem introspects himself as the broken bits and fragments of his former self ---- “I am tearing myself apart, can’t even agree with myself talking and arguing like a wild fellow, cracking up, memory going, yes. memory plunging into chasms and being swallowed by the dark. only fragments remaining, none of it makes sense any more”(MC,p.343). Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children tries to present the despair of Saleem Sinai. He is a broken self who lives on the edges in fragments. Rushdie says “Instead of being an insignificant dot in this multitude, Saleem Sinai actually contains the multitude. It is an aspect of him, rather than he an aspect of it. The sadness of the book is in the discovery that this is not so when your picture of yourself, your self-image breaks, you die. And that is what happens to Saleem” (Kumkum Sangari: Interview with Salman Rushdie).

But Saleem Sinai does not have real self image. He is present on the metafictional canvas of historiography. Thus the theme of fragmentation is seen throughout the novel.
Salman Rushdie employs the device of fragmentation in *Midnight's Children*. John J White says “fragmentation describes the situation where a single prefiguration is refracted across a number of modern figures. The distinguishing characteristic of this process is the repeated use of a single motif in various contexts, the comparison of more than one character with a single figure from mythology” (*Mythology in the Modern Novel*, p.194).

The novel presents “the children” as a symbol of humanity. They go through all kinds of repression wherein their illusions are shattered and alienate them from others and finally lead to their end.

Fantasy in *Midnight's Children* operates at three levels-verbal, episodic and structural. The verbal fantasy makes the reader to involve in the magic web of words and he is also distanced from his environment so that he can judge events with detachment. Fantasy, one of the literary devices, has occupied a prominent place in the 20th century literature. Novelists employ it as a device in voicing the ‘other’. Dostoevsky says that fantasy is a medium to express a sense of estrangement, of alienation from ‘natural’.

The characters in the novel – Dr. Aadam Aziz, boatman Tai, Ghani the landowner and his daughter Nasee; Nadir Khan, Amina and Ahmad Sinai; Saleem Siani, Shiva, Parvati and Padma—are treated ironically. The novel has many examples of verbal fantasy. Boatman Tai is portrayed as “a watery Caliban” (*MC*, p.15). Naseem Aziz “could even dream her daughter’s dream, just to know what they were getting up to” (*MC*, p.44). Dr. Aziz’s house at Agra, overcome with “the smell of silence” reduced to a “bog of muteness”. The description of Dr. Aziz’s
nose “My grandfather’s nose: nostrils flaring, curvaceous as dancers. Between them swells the nose’s triumphal arch, first up and out, then down and under, sweeping into his upper lip with a superb and at present red-tipped flick. An easy nose to hit a tussock with...There are dynasties waiting inside it, “—and here Tai lapsed into coarseness—“like snot” (MC, pp.13-14).

The sporadic fantasy in the novel is seen as each event or episode is described separately in the life of Saleem starting from the migration of his grandfather from Srinagar to Agra. The children had telepathy and every child has some marvelous power. Saleem can smell events. Shiva can knock off heads and Parvati is a witch who is expert in magic spells. “The Perforated Sheet”, “Hit-the-Spittoon”, “Commander Sabarmathi’s Baton”, Movements performed by pepper pots”, “Sam and the Tiger” are all symbolic episodes presented in the novel. The fantasy element in these episodes is made subordinate to the general structure of the novel.

The protagonist of Midnight’s Children can be compared to the characters created by Milan Kundera and Gunter Grass. In attempting to present the facts of history, Salman Rushdie fictionalizes the events in the novel which are almost fantastic. With a sense of irony, he writes the other version of the official history “What I was actually doing was a novel of memory and about memory, so that my India was just that: ‘my’ India, a version of all the hundreds of millions of possible versions” (Salman Rushdie, The Indian Writer in England, p.76). The novel Midnight’s Children “is a deconstructive and creative re-working of history which supplements historical facts in order to give a more comprehensive account of historical process and of the continuum between lived experience and recorded
Rushdie in his novel *Midnight’s Children* presents the political leaders of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and their military leaders as fantastic figures. This is seen as “He (the imaginary Indian Major Shiva) grew a luxuriant moustache to which...drunk his own urine, had skin which rustled like rice-paper...” (*MC*, p.408). William Walsh says that the “huge purpose” of Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* is “the personification and realization of Indian life” (*India and he Novel, The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*, p.257). Rushdie attempts to recollect the history of India by mingling fact and fantasy. He says “And one such suspicious generalization may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back we must also do so in the knowledge—which gives rise to profound uncertainties—means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, India’s of the mind” (*Reclaiming a City and a History*, Express Magazine, p.5).

Salman Rushdie projects Saleem Sinai as an embodiment of a supreme moment of history as Malcolm Bradbury aptly comments in this context “Post-modernist fiction on the other hand, is primarily concerned with two things—the portrayal of the late-capitalist Western society which, spinning the whirl of technology wrought change and in the absence of the stable base of society and character, appears as a historical, temporal fantasy to the writer’s now necessarily
subjective eye, rendering fantasy the most common idiom of narrative expression, and in keeping with this view of reality, the demonstration of the fictive nature of the text itself" (*The Novel Today*, p.15).

In *Midnight's Children*, Salman Rushdie employs post-modernist techniques of magic realism in order to show the multi-dimensional Indian reality. The main motif in the narrative is the Saleem-Padma relationship. She is the narrator's counter self, the 'other' in the minds “intrinsic dualism and duplicity”. By comparing Saleem and Padma to the creator Brahma and to Laxmi, Rushdie uses the Hindu myth of cosmic creation to explain the process of creation. 'Maya' becomes a metaphor in the illusory nature created by Salman Rushdie.

Rushdie presented the history of India by combining the features of marvelous and the supernatural in order to resolve the immigrant's dilemma. He says “I grew up on Warden Road, Bombay; now it's Bhulabhai Desai Road. Of course, the new decolonized names tell of a confident, assertive spirit in the independent state: but the loss of past attachments remains a loss. What to do? Shrug. And pickle the past in books” (*Imaginary Homelands*, p.277). Thus he creates “the unmistakable whiff of chutney” (*MC*, p.37). Many lives, events, miracles, places, rumours leak into each other in a dense “commingling of the improbable and the mundane” (*MC*, p.9). Rushdie, as an emigrant writer, in his attempt to recapture the past “create(s) fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind” (*Imaginary Homelands*, p.10).
Rushdie criticizes Saleem as not an authentic narrator and his novel is “far from being an authoritative guide to the history of post-independence India” (Imaginary Homelands, pp.22-23). He presents one of the many possible versions as he wants to write a Proustian novel, “to unlock the gates of lost time so that the past reappeared...unaffected by the distortions of memory” (Imaginary Homelands, p.10) as he was writing a novel “of memory and about memory” (Imaginary Homelands, p.10). Rushdie declares that he was influenced by Gunter Grass’s The Tin Drum. He captured Bombay, Delhi and Aligarh like Grass’s Danzig, Kundera’s Prague, Joyce’s Dublin and Marquez’s Macondo. He was also influenced by The Film Sense by Sergei Eisensein, the Crow poems of Ted Hughes, Borges’s Fictions, and Sterne’s Tristram Shandy. One can find several similarities in the characters and the presentation of history in Midnight’s Children, The Tin Drum and One Hundred Years of Solitude. Salman Rushdie employs magic realism on the lines of his precursors to portray the Indian history for a period of sixty years with several events of the sub-continent. He says that “Magic Realism is a development out of surrealism” as it shows “a genuinely ‘Third World’ consciousness. It deals with what Naipaul has called ‘half-made’ societies, in which the impossibly old struggles against the appallingly new, in which public corruptions and private anguishes are somehow more garnish and extreme” (Imaginary Homelands, p.301).

Midnight’s Children has features of the magical and the real, the mimetic and the marvelous. The narrator in the novel, Saleem Sinai emphasizes that what he says is real and at the same makes to think unreal. The fairy tale narration is seen in the first sentence of the novel “I was born in the city of Bombay...once upon a time” (MC, p.9) and then makes it real when he says that he was born “in
Doctor Narlikar’s Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947...On the stroke of midnight” (MC, p.9). Here, Salman Rushdie seems to be presenting the true history of India by mentioning the historical events. At the same time, he also uses phrases like “I am flying across the city...I am winging towards the Old Fort”. (MC, p.103) “inside the basket of invisibility, I Saleem Sinai...vanished...Disappeared. Dematerialized. Like a djinn”, (MC, pp.380-381) “I am the bomb in Bombay watch me explode” (MC, p.463) shows it to be as a fantasy. Saleem says that he has been “mysteriously handcuffed to history” and his destiny “indissolubly chained to that of my country”. The Prime Minister of India wrote a letter, “We shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own” (MC, p.122).

Salman Rushdie juxtaposes the realistic events with the inexplicable events and the dream with the mundane events and thus creates fantastic events. Saleem says “I have become...the apex of an isosceles triangle, supported equally by twin deities, the wild god of memory and the lotus goddess of the present” (MC,p.150). The narrator though tries to state things as they really are; he could not “as nearly as possible in spite of this flimsy curtain of ambiguities, what actually happened” (MC,p.87). He does not intend to “obfuscate...further (MC,p.37)” and argues like a wild fellow. He does not agree with himself as his “memory plunging into chasms and being swallowed by the dark, only fragments remain; none of it makes sense any more” (MC, pp.421-422). He is in dilemma whether it was a nightmare or a dream or “Facts as remembered. To the best of one’s ability” (MC, p.422). And then he wants to preserve these words “although distortions are inevitable in both methods” (MC, p.459). Saleem declares “One day, perhaps, the world may taste the pickles of history. They may be too strong for some palates...I
hope nevertheless that it will be possible to say of them that they possess the authentic taste of truth" (*MC*, p.461).

Saleem’s narration combines the truthful presentation of events with some ambiguities as he has fallible memory “if you are a little uncertain of my reliability, well, a little uncertainty is no bad thing” (*MC*, p.212). He is also doubtful of his parentage i.e. whether he is born to Amina and Ahmed or Vanita and Wee Wille Winkie. Mary Pereira swapped Saleem for Shiva and so he “becomes the chosen child of midnight, whose parents were not his parents, whose son would not be his own” (*MC*, p.117). There is a lot of ambiguity in the depiction of events by the narrator.

Saleem Siani presents a fragmentary vision from the “broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost” (*Imaginay Homeland*, p.11) As he looks at India through fragmented mirrors, Saleem says “consumed multitudes are jostling and shoving inside me” (*MC*, p.9) He goes on narrating the events related to three generations of Sinai family by combing it with the history of India to Padma. She is portrayed as the “Mother of Time” (*MC*, p.195) She, now and then, questions him about his parentage. Rushdie presents Saleem Sinai as having the power of supernatural vision. He can enter into other’s dreams and present anywhere.

Salman Rushdie presents Saleem as an eccentric narrator-protagonist. The 1001 children born on August 15, 1947 have supernatural powers. They are fragmented mirror-images of Saleem. He has the ability to become invisible and enter into other’s dreams. A pair of twin sisters in Orissa has the ability to make
others fall in love suicidal with them. A Bengali boy declares that he is the reincarnation of Rabindranath Tagore. Sundari, a Delhi beggar girl, Parvati-the Witch, a Kerala boy have ability of stepping into mirrors and emerging through any reflective surface.

Salman Rushdie employs ‘invisibility’ or ‘vanishing’ in Midnight’s Children. Nadir Khan vanishes from the underworld. Adam Aziz and Mary Pereira disappear from the underworld. Adam Aziz and Mary Pereira disappear. Saleem says “I was in the basket, disappeared, but Laylah or Parvati went without the assistance of spells’ (MC, p.381). Characters in the novel seem to split into doubles and multiples. Shiva is the alter ego of Saleem as is Parvati of Jamila.

The split is seen in the fragmented narration as past and future time is made into a permanent present time. The fragmented vision is a legacy bestowed on Saleem. ‘The Perforated Sheet’ becomes his ‘talisman’ and ‘open sesame’. Aziz inspected a girl through a perforated sheet. Saleem declares that he was “condemned by a perforated sheet to a life of fragments”. He also says that “I have become its master” (MC, p.121). This motif is seen throughout the novel. Amina loves her husband in parts or segments. She saw a hole in the centre of her father’s body. Saleem feels a hole at the centre of himself. Jamila is also seen through a hole by the audience. Saleem’s grandmother looks down at him through a hole in “a perforated cloud” (MC, p.461). Saleem travels India through the peepholes of a private ‘Dilli-dekho’ machine. Saleem sees his life “its meaning, its structures- in fragments” (MC, p.170). Thus the hole becomes a supernatural symbol.
Siva and Saleem possess unusual knees and noses with extraordinary powers. The symbol of pointing finger is often used in the narration. The title “The fisherman’s pointing finger” has “old fisherman... pointed out to sea as he told his fishy tales” (MC, p.15). Saleem’s grandmother loves the boatman Tai due to his “endless verbiage” (MC, p.15). Saleem Sinai follows that pointing finger “eyes straining at horizon, beyond which lay what my future, perhaps; my special doom, of which I was aware from the beginning” (MC, p.122).

Salman Rushdie says that “reality” is built on “prejudices misconceptions and ignorance as well as on our perceptiveness and knowledge” (Imaginaty Homelands p.25). He elaborates this as the narrator of Midnight’s Children says “at first in the back row, and gradually moving up, row by row, until your nose is almost pressed against the screen. Gradually, the stars faces dissolve into dancing grain; the illusion dissolves or rather, it becomes clear that the illusion itself is reality” (MC, pp.165-166). Salman Rushdie says that no one can comprehend the entire truth as “we are not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable only of fractured perceptions” (Imaginaty Homelands,p.12) He says that one can enter reality from several angles as “Reality can have metaphorical content; that does not make it less real. 1001 children were born; there were 1001 possibilities which had never been present in one place at one time before; and there were 1001 dead ends. Midnight’s Children can be made to represent many things, according to your point of view” (MC, p.200). Hence, reality can be multifaceted.

The narrator wishes “to end up meaning –yes, meaning something” and then acknowledges “above all things, I fear absurdity” (MC, p.9). His narrative becomes a dream and sometimes a nightmare. The dream forest of Sunderbans
delta is an "absurd fantasy" and his dream of Midnight's Children Club and his ability to enter into Other's dreams lead to absurd situations.

Saleem, Rushdie's alter ego, says "I was born in the city of Bombay...once upon a time" (MC, p.9). The first sentence echoes the social realism of the 19th century Bildungsroman and the second sentence echoes the conventional English formula for fairy tales to show that fantasy is ready to happen. He tries to find an identity in the strife-torn world. His search for the whole leads him beyond either realism or fantasy alone "Sometimes legends make reality, and become more useful than the facts". Fantastic happenings are mentioned as if they were real events. The interaction of natural and supernatural is characteristic of the magic realist interpretation of object and spirit. Saleem contrast the scientific temper of Adam Aziz with the mystical beliefs of Naseem. Adam is a modern doctor whereas Naseem seems to have "eavesdropped on her daughter's dreams just to know what they were up to" (MC, p.234).

Salman Rushdie depicts levitation in the novel in order to present events. Magic realism is seen when Saleem Sinai narrates his mother's visit to a fortune-teller. His mother witnesses the levitation of Shri Ramram Seth. Here, Saleem Sinai stresses the symbolic function of the magic by referring to a traditional Indian myth "here is one monkey, scurrying along the ramparts. I shall call him Hanuman, after the monkey god who helped Prince Rama defeat the original Ravana. Hanuman of the flying chariots" (MC, p.85). Then, his mother is made aware that Shri Ramram Seth is sitting on a protrusion built into the wall. But she accepts his prophecy of her son's birth.
Salman Rushdie uses Saleem’s incestuous desire for Jamila to suggest status of a mythic hero. A disturbing combination of secrecy, sexuality and punishment makes his magical ability to hear the voices of all the other midnight’s children. Saleem Sinai realizes that his incestuous craving for his sister Jamila makes him impotent.

The Sunderbans chapter shows Saleem’s journey in the jungle during the 1971 war over the secession of Bangladesh. Saleem and his three friends enter the “dream forest” (MC, p.363). Here the natural and the supernatural intermingle harmoniously. When the soldiers enter the Sundarbans, they are “swallowed” (MC, p.360) by the jungle and then enter another world as “The jungle closed behind them like a tomb, and after hours of increasingly weary but also frenzied rowing through incomprehensibly labyrinthine salt-water channels overtowered by the cathedral-arching trees, Ayooba Shaheed Farooq were hopelessly lost...it seems as if the possibility of ever leaving the place receded before them like the lantern of a ghost” (MC, p.360).

The chapter “In the Sunderbans” combines political and psychological themes. Here the events in the “real world” acquire “a quality of absurd fantasy”. Human emotions are reflected in the nature as “Ayooba Baloch cried without stopping for three entire hours or days or weeks, until the rain began and made his tears unnecessary: and Shaheed Dar heard himself saying “Now look what you started, man with your crying...” (MC,p.361). Saleem Sinai and his friends are punished by the forest for their crimes. It sends ghosts. It also makes them realize their past misdeeds. When Saleem is “rejoined to the past”, his “words flowed so
freely that they seemed to be an aspect of the monsoon”, (MC, p.362) and he acts a
telling cure as he confesses all –his first telling of his story.

The realization between dreaming and desire links the political and
psychological parts of the allegory as jungle presents a conglomeration of gods and
thereby connecting Saleem Sinai’s memories to a complex cultural past. Saleem’s
Pakistan’s friends call him “Buddha”. It sends them “soft women of their most
contented dreams” till they realize that “by giving them their heart’s desire it was
fooling them into using up their dreams”. At the end, Saleem builds his own myth
though he is cracking up “drained above-and-below” (MC p.442) by using his
narrative power to construct a personal and national identity.

Though magical element of magic realism tries to project or revive native
traditions the magic is original. Post colonial magic realists invent new narratives
of a national imaginary. The traditional myths are used by magic realists as sources
but they are changed into new narratives. Salman Rushdie employs several
traditions without using any one of them as a foundation of legitimacy. His novel
acquires the authenticity of realism. Theo L.D’haen’s aptly concludes that “Magic,
which in the colonial novel often functions as the sign of the otherness of non-
Western society and civilization, with Rushdie becomes daily reality and hence
magic relaism in the sense of (Alejo) Carpentier’s lo real rabiloso:indigenous
magic” (“Magic Realism and Post-Modernism: Decentering Privileged
Centres”, p.198).

Saleem tries to resolve his agonizing problems of identity by withdrawing
himself into the realm of fantasy – “After news of my grandfather’s death and the
arrival of Reverend Mother in Pakistan, I began to dream repeatedly of Kashmir: although I had never walked in Shalimar Bagh, I did so at night; I floated in Shikaras and climbed Sankara Acharya’s hill as my grandfather had; I saw lotus roots and mountains like angry jaws. This, too, may seem an aspect of the detachment which came to afflict us all...a reminder of my family’s separateness from both India and Pakistan” (MC, p.275). The novel symbolizes Saleem’s gradual amputation and loss of freedom, sanity and individuality. He tries to find identity for himself in the strife torn modern world. Rushdie explores the identity of nation and person. He and the new born India are symbolic counterparts. Both are born on August 15th, 1947 with one thousand other children. These midnight’s children have miraculous powers. He also possesses magical powers like telepathy and ability to smell emotions and intentions. Rushdie presents fantasy which is bizarre and complex. Magic is seen when the metaphors turn into events. The ‘crack’ in the body politic of the country corresponds to all the ‘cracks’ in Saleem.

Commenting on Saleem Sinai’s realization of the isolated facts of history as well as a fragment of the society, George Lukas says “only in this context which seeds the isolated facts of social life as aspects of the historical process and integrates them in a totality, can knowledge of the facts hope to become knowledge of reality” (History and Class Consciousness, p.87). Salman Rushdie declares in Midnight’s Children: “Reality is a question of perspective; the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems-----but as you approach the present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible...tiny details assume grotesque proportions (first) :(then) the illusion dissolves—or rather, it becomes clear that the illusion itself is reality” (MC, p.265).
Salman Rushdie presents the character of Saleem Sinai who gives scope for multiple interpretations. He is defiant, modest, strident, subtle, fatalistic, recalcitrant, fastidious, bawdy, flippant and solemn. He leads an aimless life. Ashutosh Banerjee says “Now Saleem is maddening, keeping his interlocutrix Padma, on the tenterhooks, being dilatory in revealing his parentage. And again he is pouring a long narrative out all at once at one go in breathless haste in large paragraphs without any full-stops” (Narrative Technique in Midnight’s Children, pp.24-25). Saleem Sinai’s life is perforated sheets.

Saleem Sinai’s inner life has a function of the historical forces affecting his state. The narrative becomes a historiographic metafiction as he parodies the Indian history. Midnight’s Children belongs to the “look-back-in anger” or “protest” type of fiction presented by an expatriate who is haunted by “an upsurge to book back even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt…” (Dilip Fernandez, Such Angst, Such Loneliness, Such Rootlessness, p.34). Kathleen Flanagan declares that “Saleem Siani sees himself as a part of society, not a detached mind-reader at its centre. The self of Saleem Sinai undergoes a metamorphosis from being a character whose consciousness as a child and young man determines his while existence, to being a character whose social existence determines his vision of the world” (“The Fragmented Self in Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children”, p.36).

Saleem Sinai tries to tell India’s as well as his story in order to make whole his fragmentary private existence. William Walsh says Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children is “the personification and realization of Indian life” (“India and The Novel”, The New Pelican Guide to English Literature, p.45). Prof. O.P.Mathur
says—“Saleem Sinai who is the embodiment of a supreme moment of history, a crystallization of an evolving mood, a distillation of a vision nostalgic, critical and philosophical, is a camera eye, as the novelist remarks, some of its fragments missing. But in spite of it, or perhaps because of it, he is able to project what may be called a sort of prismatic vision of reality, partial, fissured and fragmented, but highly absorbing and deeply meaningful” (A Metaphor of Reality: A Study of the Protagonist of Midnight's Children, Image of India in the Indian novel in English 1960-1985, p. 123). Salman Rushdie superimposed the magic sphere of fantasy on the history of facts. Fantasy is realized through the portrayal of Saleem Sinai and his imaginary Midnight Children’s Club where Siva, Sony, Parvathy, Cyrus and Kapadia are members. In spite of “magical children” living in their world of fantasy, they possess their own identity. The historical narrative is presented in a world of myth and fantasy “…from Kashmir, there was a blue eyed child whose original sex I was never certain; since by immersing herself in water he (or she) could alter it as she (or he) pleased. Some of us called this child Narada, others, Markandaya, depending on which old fairy story of sexual change we had heard” (MC, p. 254).

Saleem Sinai enters into a world of timelessness where fantasy purges the evils of history “…as I look up there is a feeling at the back of my head and after that there is only a tiny but infinite moment of utter clarity while I tumble forwards to prostrate myself before my parent’s funeral pyre, a minuscule but endless instant of knowing, before I am stripped of past present memory time shame love, a fleeting but also timeless explosion in which I bow my head…” (MC, p. 343).
Saleem goes to Bangladesh and his sudden comeback to India is portrayed through myth—"Did not the Caliph Haroun-al-Rasheed (in an earlier set of fabulous tales) also wander, unseen, invisible, anonymous, cloaked through the streets of Baghdad? What Haroun achieved in Baghdad streets, Parvathi-the-Witch made possible for me, as we flew through the airlances of the sub-continent..." (MC, p. 218).

The hopes of people of August, 15, 1947 were shattered as the "real" children of midnight "Midnight has many children—the offspring of Independence were not all human, violence, corruption, poverty, generals, chaos, greed, and pepper pots...I had to go into exile to learn that the children of midnight were more varied than I—Even—I—had dreamed". Saleem’s disintegration is symbolic failure of Midnight’s Children "Or dreams, because last night the ghost of Reverend Mother appeared to me, staring down through a hole in a perforated cloud, waiting for my death so that she could weep a monsoon for forty days...and I, floating outside my body, looked down on the foreshortened image of myself, and saw a grey-haired dwarf once, in a mirror, looked relieved" (MC, p.234).

Saleem Sinai’s identity shifts alternately from the realms of timeless fantasy and time-bound history—"...I had entered into the illusion of the artist, and thought of the multitudinous realities of the land as the raw unshaped material of my gift: 'I can find out any damned thing! I triumphed, 'There isn't a thing I cannot know'. Saleem Sinai shrinks into anonymity and tries to recollects after his return to India—"Who What am I? My answer: I am the sum total of every thing that went before me, of all I have been seen done. Of everything done to-me I am everyone everything whose being-in-the world affected by mine" (MC,p.383).
Tai, the story-teller symbolizes the fusion of time events as he says—“I have watched the mountains being born; I have seen Emperors die...I saw that Isa, that Christ, when he came to Kashmir. Smile, smile it is your history I am keeping in my head” (MC, p. 16) Rushdie’s attitude to the art of the novel—“And there are so many stories to tell, too many, such an excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumors, so dense a commingling of the improbable and the mundane! I have been a swallower of lives; and to know me, just the one of me, you’ll have to swallow the lot as well” (MC, p. 233).

The nightmare of the Widow’s hand crushed the children and its symbolism is seen in “No colours except green and black the walls are green the sky is black (there is no roof) the stars are green the Widow is green but her hair is black as black. The Widow sits on a high high chair...the sky is black there are no stars the Widow laughs” (MC, p. 207).

Rushdie employs a myth in portraying Dr. Schaapsteker who “had the capacity of dreaming every night about being bitten by snakes and thus remained immune to their bite” (MC, p. 137).

Myth and reality blur as the narrative is presented through fantasy. Rushdie says, “It seemed to me that the period between 1947 and 1977 the period from Independence to emergency had a kind of shape to it. It represented a sort of close period in the history of the country. That shape became part of the architecture of the work” (C. Pattanayak, Interview with Salman Rushdie). Salman Rushdie presents Aadam Aziz in a comic epic tradition—“Forward he bent, and the earth, prayer-mat covered, curved up toward him. And now it was the tussock’s time...it
smote him upon the point of the nose”. Aziz’s loss of faith is portrayed in mythic and surreal terms—“Three drops fell. There were rubies and diamonds. And my grandfather, lurching upright, made a resolve… (He was) knocked forever into that middle place unable to worship a God in whose existence he could not wholly disbelieve. Permanent alteration: a hole” (MC, p. 10).

*Midnight’s Children* has many mythical motifs and allusions. He uses mythical motifs from Hindu, Greek, Pre-Islamic, Islamic, Sufi, Christian and Persian mythologies. He titled chapters as “Many-headed Monsters” and “Revelations”. The first one reminds us the horrible things committed by Ravana. Hanuman plays a pivotal role in burning down the godown of Ahmed Sinai. The second one refers to “The Revelations of St. John, the Divine”, the last book of the New Testament. Some characters in the novel have mythical names like Padma, Shiva and Parvati and they have allegorical and symbolical overtones. Shiva plays both destructive and procreative roles. Padma is an attendant to Saleem. Parvati adds a mythical dimension to the novel. She becomes Parvati-Laylah after marrying Saleem which shows religious harmony.

The use of several myths in *Midnight’s Children* produces complex patterns by the use of condensation and fragmentation. John J White says condensation “refers to a pattern where a number of separate prefigurations all relate to the modern event or a single character” (*Mythology in the Modern Novel*, p.194). Shiva and Shakti appear in the pattern of condensation. The Prime Minister Indira Gandhi is presented as Shakti as her role during emergency is equalent to the most violent aspect of Kali “towering statue of a black dancing goddess…fecund and awful, with the remnants of gold paint on her teeth”. There
are references to religious allusions like Olympus and Mount Kailasa, Jesus Christ and Krishna.

The myth of Ganesh also finds place in the novel. Padma’s running away from Saleem forces him to interpret the myth in a wrong way “When Valmiki (sic), the author of Ramayana, dictated his masterpiece to elephant-headed Ganesh, did the god walk-out on him half-way?” (MC, p. 149). Saleem, Aziz, Emerald, Alia, Hanif, Mustapha and the Brass monkey all possess a nose like that of Ganesh. Saleem, who is “…mammoth-trunked, Ganesh-nosed…perhaps, the Elephant…” watches India with his “nasal ethics” (MC, p.233).

The myth of Ravana was used in a fragmented manner. The omniscient evil can be referred to the myth of Ravana. Mustapha Kemal, S.P.Bhatt and Ahmed Sinai say that public is “the many-headed many-mouthed rapacious monster”. Saleem is brought up in such a demonic atmosphere that he feels that “many-headed monsters swell inside me-masked Ravanas, eight-year old girls with lips and one continuous eyebrow, mobs crying rapist…” Salman Rushdie employs these myths in the form of metaphors. Saleem Sinai has “…Ganesh nose”. His son is portrayed as “born with ears which flapped so high and wide that they must have heard the shootings in Bihar and the screams of lathi-charged dock-workers in Bombay…” (MC, p. 344).

Salman Rushdie also uses myths from Ramayana in order to convey his ideas into tangible images. The relationship between Commander Sabarmati and Homi Catrack is described though the metaphorical presentation of the love of “Rama and Sita”. It is presented as a combination of myth and cheap tricks of
Bombay cinema: "In the Sabarmati Case, the noble sentiments of the Ramayana combine with the cheap melodrama of the Bombay talkies..." The legal case of Commander Sabarmati raises questions in the Rashtrapati Bhawan where his advocate has appealed for pardon. Mythical past and democracy vie with each other "...is India to give her approval to the career...is India to give her approval to the rule of law, or to the ancient principle of the overriding primacy of heroes? If Rama himself were alive, would we send him to prison for slaying the abductor of Sita?"(MC, p. 264).

Shiva in this novel is a metaphor of Lord Shiva. The character is based on "Shiva, the god of destruction, who is also most potent of deities, Shiva, greatest of dancers, who rides on a bull, who, no force can resist..." (MC, p. 221). He also symbolizes procreative function "Shiva the destroyer of Midnight's Children, had also fulfilled the other role lurking in his name, the function of Shiava-linga, Shiva-the-procreator, so that at this very moment in the boudoirs and hovels of the nation, a new generation of children, begotten by Midnight's darkest child, was being raised towards future". Shiva-the character is "a notorious seducer, a ladies' man, a cuckold of the rich, in short, a stud (MC, p.408). Roshanara remarks that the Shiva is "just our pet ape, Major Sahib, very useful but basically a clown". Lord Shiva is distorted in "the clownish Shiva of grotesque proportions" and who is shown as "the terrifying image of a short, rat-faced youth with filed-down teeth and two of the biggest knees the world has ever seen" (MC,p.408).

Another important myth of Brahma from the Mahabharata is also used. There is a metaphorical description of midnight's children assembling and forming a conference in the mind of Saleem. Saleem questions "Do Hindus not accept --
Padma—that the world is a kind of dream; that Brahma dreamed, is dreaming the universe; that we only see dimly through that dream web, which is Maya... If I say that certain things took place which you, lost in Brahma’s dream, find hard to believe, then which of us is right?” (MC, p.234). He also employed the Shakti-myth as a simile. The myth of Kali-yuga is metaphorically presented in order to justify the all pervading evil in post-Independence India. Thus Rushdie employs myths in metamorphic form and then integrates them into the structure of myth and fantasy and thereby exhibits his encyclopedic knowledge.

Salman Rushdie’s use of the historical parallels becomes a stylistic device. It enables him to justify his own strange inventions. The improbable is made real or fact by combing the personal and the historical when Saleem traces the events surrounding the death of Aadam Aziz with the sickness and death of Nehru in 1964.

Salman Rushdie’s use of magical realism and also Saleem’s own unreliable memory infuses or emphasizes the narration with comedy and fantasy. In it fiction the line between reality and fantasy, between tragedy and comedy become blurred. Valentine Cunningham declares “What makes Midnight’s Children so important, and moreover (for literary importance isn’t always matched by a fetching readability), what makes it so vertiginously exciting a reading experience, is the way it takes in not just the while apple cart of India and the problem of being a novel about India but also, and this with the unflagging zest of a Tristram Shandy, the business of being a novel at all” (“Nosing Out the Indian Reality”, p.38).
The character Padma, a mythic lotus goddess is presented as a listener to Saleem. Her presence in the novel enhances the mythic form of the story. She now and then interrupts Saleem but he says "But here is Padma at my elbow, bullying me back into the world of linear narrative" (MC, p.345). But Saleem refuses to follow a linear narrative. A linear narrative is ‘official’ whereas the non-linear narrative hints ‘heteroglossia’. It is a feature of ‘unofficial’ discourse. Rushdie terms his narrative method as not linear and comments, “It’s not linear. An oral narrative does not go from the beginning to the middle to the end of the story. It goes in great swoops, it goes in spirals or in loops, it every so often reiterates something that happened earlier to remind you, and then takes you off again, sometimes summarizes itself, it frequently digresses off into something that the storyteller appears just to have though of, then it comes back to the main thrust of the narrative. Sometimes it steps sideways and tells you about another, related story which is like the story he has been telling you and then it goes back to the main story...So it’s a very bizarre and pyrotechnical shape” (‘Midnight’s Children and Shame’ Kupapipi, p.7).

Salman Rushdie uses grotesque as it is a dimension of the ‘carnivaleque’. Saleem realises his telepathic ability in the form of “mucus rising higher than mucus was ever intended to rise” (MC, p.162). Another allegorical metaphor can be seen in the novel when the transformation of the body as well as national crisis run parallel. The disintegration of the potential of India’s Midnight’s Children and also the destruction of the nation “The gradual disintegration of the Midnight’s Children’s Conference--------which finally fell apart on the day the Chinese armies came down over the Himalays to humiliate the Indianfauj-was already well under way”. The grotesque dimension emphasizes its materiality, from Shiva’s
deformed knees and his irresistible fecundity, to the Widow’s centre parting and her black-and-white hair.

Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* has several sources. There are many references to *The Thousand and One Nights* in the figure of listener. Another source is Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* whose narration is also obsessed with the disintegration of his body and his approaching death. Another novel that is “lying behind” Rushdie’s is Gunter Grass’s *The Tin Drum*. The narrator of the *Tin Drum*, Oskar, is physically deformed and has magic power. His voice can break glass and he can revisit moments in history when he plays his Tin drum. Both feel that they are responsible for the history—Oskar for the history of Germany. Both are threatened by a Widow and a Witch.

Even the food items prepared reflect their emotional status. The food prepared by Reverend Mother is described as “curries and meatballs of intransigence”. Mary Pereira makes pickles that “had partially counteractive effect—since she had stirred into them the guilt of her heart”. Amina stirred her “disappointments into hot lime chutney which never failed to bring tears to the eyes”. Saleem felt Aunt Alia’s vengefulness in her food “while we lived in her Guru Mandir mansion, she fed us the birianis of dissension and the nargisi koftas of discord” (*MC*, p.330).

Another feature of the novel is its method of allowing fantasy to become ‘real’. Musa, the old servant, robbed Ahmed Sinai but swore his innocence and “called down upon himself the curse of leprosy if he should prove a liar” (*MC*, p.280).
After some years Musa becomes leprosy patient. Mary Pereira sees a man "whose body lacked fingers and toes and was littered with boils and holes" (MC, p.280). She imagines him to the ghost of her lover Joe D’Costa. She swapped the babies Saleem and Shiva to impress Joe D’Costa but now fears that his ghost has come to expose her. Then she confesses her baby-switch to the family.

The narrative in the novel abruptly proceeds towards fantasy. In particular, some characters or events in the novel are prone to metamorphoses. Magic Realism reflects a specific behaviour to reality and history.

There is a direct as well as indirect references to real events. Some characters dramatize the elements at work. For instance Uncle Hanif embodies the choice of the uncompromisingly committed and absolutely "realistic" artist as “Hanif Aziz, the only realistic writer working in the Bombay film industry, was writing the story of a pickle-factory created, run and worked in entirely by women. There were long scenes describing the formation of a trade union; there were detailed descriptions of the pickling process” (MC, p.234). This realism is in contrast with the regular Bombay melodrama or fantasy which the Hindi movies portray.

Reality replaces fantasy in most of the events in Saleem’s life. The baby grows phenomenally but it is cured by Dr. Schapstekaer’s eccentric medicine. Saleem, when hiding in the washing-chest sees his mother naked body and then began to hear mysterious voices. He could know the secret thoughts of others. He acquires such a power wherein he sees his father mentally undressing his secretaries or his mother who is a model for faithfulness dreams of her former
husband. He can “hear” the answers for all the difficult problems given by his teacher. After a bicycle collision, he begins to hear the voices of the “Children of Midnight” Then he acquires a tremendous sense of smell through the intervention of Tai Bibi, an ancient prostitute. This makes him to aware of his incestuous desire for his mother as well as his sister, “the Brass Monkey”. He has transformed into “the buddha”, an amnesic animal like human. The Pakistani army utilizes his services for tracking down the enemies. He becomes immune to pain and suffering.

Then the narrative moves to Sunderbans, a nightmarish jungle in Bengal. Here, both man and animal become transparent. The narrator explains this extraordinary phenomenon “In their alarm they understood that it was the last and worst of the jungle’s tricks, that by giving them their heart’s desire it was fooling them into using up their dreams, so that as their dream-life sapped out of them they became as hollow and translucent as glass” (MC, p.367). The horror of being transparent and the loss of substance follow the fulfillment of the men’s desires in the arms of the houris in the temple of Kali.

There is another instance where fantasy becomes magic when Parvati the Witch saves Saleem from the troops of India in Bengal and flies back with him to Delhi after making Saleem invisible in her magician’s basket. She undertakes such a big risk as she does not know how to make invisible Saleem into visible Saleem.

The novel has characters who can foresee the future. There is magic in this aspect. The best example for this is the visit of Saleem’s mother Amina to Ram Ram Seth, a soothsayer, in order to know the future of child in her womb. Ram Ram Seth prophesies “A son, Sahiba, who will never be older than his mother-
There will be two heads—but you shall see only one—there will be knees and a nose, a nose and knees... Newspaper praises him, two mothers raise him! Bicyclists love him—but, crowds will shove him! Sisters will weep, cobra will creep... washing will hide him—voices will guide him! Friends mutilate him—blood will betray him... spittoons will brain him—doctors will drain him—jungle will fry him... He will have sons without having sons! He will be old before he is old! And he will die... before he is dead" (MC, p.87).

These prophesies become true later. These events are interrelated between the narrator Sand Padma. Amina is fascinated and puzzled by revelations of the soothsayer.

There are references to Sin, the Arabina moon-go who is capable of acting-at-a-distance and shifting the tides of the world. Saleem’s mother Amina calls him my little piece of the moon. Saleem thinks that his magic powers enable him to control everything. Rushdie’s effort at unveiling any secrecy finds symbolism in Saleem’s ability to read others’ thoughts. Saleem “never blinks” after his birth. But Amina makes a lot of effort to shut his eyelids. Words produce extreme disorders as a girl from Calcutta has a sharp tongue that it can inflict physical injuries on people. Magic affects all most all characters in the novel. For example Tai Bibi, the ancient three hundred and ninety-five-year-old prostitute can give off any smell she thinks of. The powers of acrobats, clowns or conjurers are credible at the beginning but they become incredible. There is a fire-eater who spits flames out of his anus.

Some of the fantastical characters in the novel have literary references. There is a Kerala boy, who goes through mirrors, inspired by Lewis Carroll. The
Vindhya boy who like Alice can grow taller or smaller almost at will. The girl from Goa who multiplies fish has famous Biblical ancestors. The girl from Madras can fly has made Icarus’s dream come true. One can find several bizarre characters in Midnight’s Children. Rushdie proves his talent as a story-teller in the oral genre. There is a reference to The Arabian Nights by the narrator. The narrative leads the reader into the world of magic.

The children of Midnight lose their magical powers due to internal strife. By employing magic realism, Rushdie makes people to reflect on the mechanisms of intolerance and violence that took place in the history of India. His protagonist believes that he can do anything with his magic power but he realizes in the face of stark realities.

Thus Rushdie by combining magic and reality creates a meaningful sphere.

Post-colonial writers employ magic realism as a device that represents the empirical reality of the past and present that transcend the flux of events. K.V.S. Murthy says that “Midnight’s Children belongs to the look-back-in-anger or protest type written by exile or expatriation haunted by an upsurge to look back even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of the salt... (to) create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, ideas of the mind” (Secular Fantasy in Slaman Rushdie’s Fiction, p.175).

Midnight’s Children is considered to be a political allegory. It presents the socio-political realities of India. The action in the novel runs parallel to what happens in the history. When Gandhi is killed, Salman Rushdie downplays the plurality of the situation with different reaction of Amina and Ahmed Siani

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Salman Rushdie’s portrayal of the reality of political sphere in India is ironical. One illustration of this is as the Congress party’s success depends on the literacy of India so they keep it low or at minimum. The declaration of war in 1971 led man to depths of degradation. Pakistani troops use Saleem as a man-dog. After the war Saleem returns to India to find corrupt politicians. With the declaration of emergency by Indira Gandhi, people suffer a lot. Shiva, the embodiment of evil triumphs over the midnight’s children. It symbolizes how human spirit can be suppressed by the ruthless politicians of India and Pakistan.

There are many references to Indian cultural history in *Midnight’s Children*. Rushdie’s cultural references in the novel raises questions about India’s colonial past where several rulers played a vital role “though the author (Rushdie) unflaggingly champions Indian pluralism as a creative, ethical, and cultural value, he also relentlessly illustrates the price of such a stance, for India’s openness leads to domination and dismemberment that finally destroy the country” (Jean M.Kane, *The Migrant Intellectual and the Body of History: Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children*, p.104).

Magic realist writers present heightened language in their novels. Rushdie has followed the literary style of the French master Rabelais. But his use of language is unique and it can be termed ‘Rushdiesque’. Rushdie says “we can’t simply use the language in the way the British did: it needs remaking for our own purpose. Those of us who use English do so in spite our ambiguity towards it, or perhaps because of that, perhaps because we find in that linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggles taking place in the real world, struggles between the cultures within ourselves and the influences at upon our societies. To conquer
English may be complete the process of making ourselves free” (Imaginary Homelands, p.19). He establishes an ethnocentric base for the English language by presenting a magical and humourous Indian blend of English. The total effect of Rushdie’s linguistic techniques seems to mould a vibrant prose whose positive tone makes language a bridge between cultures, enabling a new process of enculturation to take place in the West.

Salman Rushdie uses irony to portray post-independent India. He combines the birth of Parvati the Witch’s bastard child with the cruelties perpetrated during the Emergency. “Dark clouds were gathering in political skies as well: in Bihar, where corruption, inflation, hunger, illiteracy, landlessness ruled the roost, Jaya Prakash Narayanan led a coalition of students and workers against the governing Indira Congress. In Gujarat, there were riots and what was being born while something grew in Parvati belly” (MC, p.343).

C.Kanaganayakam says that Rushdie shows talent in use of language and multicultural devices in the novel as “Rushdie’s manipulation of language seems less concerned with verisimilitude and more involved with defamiliarising the text, fusing the comic with the solemn, converting potential tragedy to comedy and generally drawing attention to itself. We observe his idiosyncratic use of dashes, erratic punctuation, combination of words like “whatisitsname” and “taldarkandhandsome”, and the gratuitous introduction of Urdu terms which distance the experience and control the response of the reader. There is, for instance, the betrayal of Nadir by Emerald. This episode has all the potential to be molded into an expression of the erosion of family loyalties. But the whole effect is subverted by the note left by the fleeting Nadir, which merely states “Talaaq!
Talaaq! Talaaq!” The use of exclamation marks, the recourse to Urdu, and the highly melodramatic gesture of leaving a note to emphasize the humour rather than the pathos of the moment” (Myth and Fabulosity in Midnight’s Children, p.74).

Midnight’s Children is an expatriate writer’s conscious expression of the true version of historical reality. It portrays a hybrid version of history as history can be understood in fragments as “Midnight’s Children depicts the subaltern as the porous embodiment of a violent, hybrid history and a fluid, endlessly proliferate narrative energy. Aziz introduces the corporate, somatic basis of Indian identity. His suggestive anatomy anticipates the novel’s central conceit, the fusion of an individual body with the sub-continent and a personal biography with its political history” (Jean M.Kane, The Migrant Intellectual and the Body of History: Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children, p.104).

The post-colonial novels like J.M.Coetcee’s Foe (1986), Amitav Ghosh’s The Circle of Reason (1986), and Ben Okri’s The Famished Road (1991) also present the national history as an allegory through the metaphor of the body politic. The word “Abracadabra” spoken by Saleem’s son Aadam is an example for hybridity. Both ancient Greek and Oriental concepts were mingled in that word and it shows the amalgamation of East-West cultures. The events of Indian history which are portrayed in the novel are fantastic by themselves. Here “Rushdie has used the hallucinatory devices of Magic Realism to try to capture, metaphorically, the sweep and chaos of contemporary reality, its resemblance to a dream or nightmare… The character’s bizarre adventures, the novel’s numerous dream sequences, the convulsions of its plot, the melodramatic effusions of Mr.Rushdie’s prose-all are meant, in some heightened way, to give the reader a sense of just how
fantastic recent has become” (Michiko Kakutani, *Critic’s Notebook: Rushdie’s Magic Realism*, The NYTimes.Com).

Magic Realism is similar to myth in its symbolic representation of desire and it is also similar to realism. It combines fantastic elements with ordinary empirical experience. Time and space follow the laws of desire than science. Characters come back from death, the logic of cause and effect is reversed. Memory is hereditary and prophecy becomes reality. It contains the specific historical setting of realism but defies its underlying empiricism.

The novel is also in terms of primitivism. Liam Connell objects to anthropological definitions of magic realism that “confl ate the non-Western with the pre modern. In this view, Magic Realism depends upon a dynamic confrontation of one epistemological system with its irreconcilable other, in a manner which denies that contradiction (*Discarding Magic Realism: Modernism, Anthropology and Critical Practice*, p.107). Magic Realism and modernism when combined present the mystique of the East. He says, “How are we to distinguish, Rushdie from Eliot’s use of traditional Indian culture without descending into essentialized categories of true, genuine, or authentic cultural expression? It is my firm contention that it is precisely this sort of essentialism which characterizes the use of the term Magic Realism” (*Discarding Magic Realism: Modernism, Anthropology and Critical Practice*, pp.97-98).

Then, a writer needs realism and symbolism. The symbolic form of magical realism is used to show physical suffering and death. Symbolism also emphasizes or aggravates the effect of violence and it tries to give meaning for a nation.
Jameson declares that magic realism achieves the “unparalleled violence” that “functions to make some discontinuous or surcharged reading of the respective historical moment unavoidable” (On Magic Realism in Film, pp.310-11). The symbolism shows everlasting beliefs and desire whereas the realism presents the historical past and present.

Thus Salman Rushdie employs almost all the features of magic realism in Midnight’s Children in his attempt to depict the history of India since independence. He declared that he was influenced very much by the writings of Gabriel Garcia Marquez. His attempt to weave facts into fiction in this novel received critical acclaim. The very popularity of this novel is the testimony of his success as a novelist of magic realism. Despite its unfilmable nature of the novel, Deepa Mehta secretly completed the shooting of the film. The movie Midnight’s Children is slated to be released next year under the name Winds of Change (http://www.themarysue.com/deepa-mehta-midnights-children)