Narrative Techniques in Midnight's Children
After the publication of *Midnight's Children*, Salman Rushdie was hailed as a "glittering novelist-one with startling imaginative and intellectual resources." There are many more reasons for the grand success of his novel. One of them was the unique style and narrative technique. Rushdie has applied many rare and innovative techniques in his novel which are appreciable doubtlessly. He has applied fantasy, magic realism, history and individuals and many others in his works.

In general it is observed that a novelist uses alternative methods of "showing" and "telling" - of showing how the characters speak or act of for themselves and of intrusively telling how they do these things. Rushdie believes that art of fiction does not begin until the novelist thinks of his story as a matter to be shown, to be so exhibited that it will tell itself. Rushie's aims are as varied as his achievement. And so, he has applied varied techniques in Midnight's Children which can be considered a "Non-fiction Novel" of political allegory. It just seems a political allegory only as Rushdie's religious allegory is absorbed quickly into the political because religious one has always been a potent weapon for the rulers of India.

At a glance *Midnight's Children* gives the impression
of a vast ambitious amorphons work in which some of the author's intentions and devices are at cross-purposes. The protagonist narrator strikes one as not only preternaturally clever, but also as impish, omniscient and wholly incredible as a human being. Until one begins to see that saleem Sinai is, in fact intended to be simultaneously Rushdie's alter ego and an allegorical representation of India's Independence and the life of Saleem is really the history of that independence Saleem, like Rushdie, having been born at the precise hour of the end of the British rule.

James Harrison in his book on Rushdie in the Twayne Series, approves of the "Magic Realism" in Midnight's Children, discusses in detail the postcolonial and metafictional features of the novel and moves to the grand conclusion:

"To say that language and meaning crumble, disintegrate, deconstruct themselves only endlessly and phoenix like to reconstruct themselves, is merely to say that they partake of and the human condition."

On the whole, the critical consensus, seems to be that:
(a) Rushdie's mode of narration is magic realism.

(b) He is postcolonial and postmodernist and

(c) His use of English is "innovative" and "decolonizing"

let us consider these a bit more closely.

(a) Magic Realism has been variously defined as an attempt to transcend the limitation of Realism a free mixture of fantasy and reality a mode that holds the mirror "at a slight angle to reality." However, what is interesting to note is that it was Rushdie himself who first claimed for his fiction, the mode of magic realism. Salman Rushdie used magic Realism as an instrument of ambitious political and religious allegory. If any reader feels offended, novelist can always claim that it is a dream-sequence and that at that point the dreamer is drunk. Such an argument fore-closes any meaningful discussion and debate. It this instance appears to be an extreme case, consider these from Midnight's Children who uses such expressions as "urine-drinking Finance Minister", "The Widow", and "labia-lipped man ?" Not the author, but the narrator-the crazy impotent and constantly uprooted Saleem Sinai. In other words, magic realism in Rushdie can also be viewed
as technique of escape-escape from any responsibility - ideological as well as ethical.

(b) As noted earlier Rushdie is considered a per-eminent post colonial writer because according to steve conor "such texts expose the fictionality of history itself."

On theoretical plane, all the views are unimpeachable, for they can be seen in practice also. Like early in the novel *Midnight's Children*, the narrator talks about his grand father getting caught in Jallianwala Bagh Massacre. The narrator describes the crowd, and then says:

"The fifty-one men enter the compound and take position.... As Brigadier Dyer, issues a command to sneeze hits my grand father full in the face. Yaakh-thoo he sneezes and falls forward losing his balance, following his nose and thereby saving his life."

It is quite sure that even an identical historian wouldn't be so objective as to treat the massacre and an old man's nose with equal seriousness. One more incident can be considered in this series. The description of the linguistic re-organisation of India, in 1967. According to the narrator, the boundaries of the
new states were "walls of words". The movement for a Marathi-State and its clashes with the Gujarati agitation—all these are "old dead struggles between the barron angularity of marathi.... and Gujarati's boggy Kathiawari softness."(226) clearly the narrator here is one who has no idea of languages, and the symbiotic relationship between a languages, its speakers and their culture. No wonder then a little later, he records that an innocent rhyme in Gujarati sparked off a riot in which many people were killed.

Soo che ? Saru che ?

Danda leke maru che ! (191)

(How are you ? i am well - I will take a stick and thrash you to hell)

To be aware of the economic deprivation of the Maharashtrians in Maharashtra - to be aware of all the complicated issues would be to really historicize the language riots of the fifties. But here man like Rushdie, who is supposed to subvert history, these riots take place because Indians aren't rational creatures.

That brings us to a more important aspect of Rushdie's historiography. As is obvious, in Midnight's Children, Rushdie
attempts to chronicle simultaneously the histories of an individual and a nation. Its quite a unique nature of national history that emerges from Midnight Children. The overall picture of post independence India that Rushdie in the novel is one of immature and emotional people start killing one another on any pretext, they are all hypocrites.

"India, the new myth-a collective fiction in which anything was possible, a fable rivalled only by the two other mighty fantasies : money and God." (130)

Finally coming to Rushdie's use of English it is supposed to be "born out of a creative consciousness", and "a subversion of English language."

But what one actually finds in him is a gratuitous mix of English, Hindi and Urdu words, resulting in what he himself calls "Chutnification" is criticised by many authors. They call it a sort of pidgin English, or what used to be called Buttler English. Inspite of this type of criticism, Rushdie has made a significant place for him in the Global English scenario. Because, it was Rushdie himself, not any other Indian writer that gets invited by the New York Times to write about India and Indian literature. Rushdie, in his article, made the
preposterous claim that creative writing in Indian was only in English and not in any regional languages was only expected, reassuring the British and American readers that after all colonization was not such a bad thing to happen to India. It is this aspect of Rushdie. Phenomenon - a sort of literary Darwinism that one finds so alarming wholly incredible as a human being. Until one begins to see that Saleem Sinai is in fact intended to be simultaneously Rushdie's fictional alter ego and an allegorical representation of India's Independence and the life of Saleem is really the history of that Independence Saleem, like Rushdie, having been born at the precise hour of the end of the Raj.

It taxes the author's abilities sorely to sustain Saleem Sinai's credibility as a human being while at the same time capturing within his person all the euphoria, the tensions and the trauma of independence his difficulties are compounded manifold by the fact that Saleem is also the narrator-protagonist of the novel. The best of us would at the prospect of having to sustain so many simultaneous identities. Saleem Sinai and his creator come out of the ordeal bruised but with their honours relatively unblotted.
Saleem Sinai is, above all a highly self-conscious narrator. He is by turns aggressive, coy, strident, subtle, fatalistic, rebellious, finical, bawdy, flippant and grave. The dominant mood of the novel seems to oscillate between the apocalyptic and the expansive. Now Saleem is maddening, keeping his interlocutrix, Padma, on the tenterhooks, being dilatory in revealing his parent-age. And again he is pouring a long narrative out all at once in breathless haste in large paragraphs without any full-stops. Padma, described by Saleem as "the lotus goddess, whose most common appellation amongst village fold is 'The One Who Possessed Dung' is also his artistic conscience. She pulls him up whenever he appears to be straying.

"But here is Padma at my elbow, bullying me back into the world of linear narrative, the universe of what-happened: "At this rate", Padma complains, "you'll be two hundred years old before you manage to tell about your birth." (38)

And in spite of his tentativeness and his impotence, "I am unmanned", (39) Saleem is confident about his virtuosity as story-teller. "I know now that she is, despite all her protestations, hooked. No doubt about it: my story has her by
the throat." Although Padma exhorts him to get on quickly with the story, "fighting down the proper pride of the successful story-teller, I attempt to educate her. 'Things-even people have a way of leaking into each other', I explain, 'like flavours when you cook. Ilse Lubin's suicide, for example, leaked into old Aadam and sat there in a puddle until he saw God. Likewise, I intone earnestly, 'the past has dripped into me.... so we can't ignore it..." (38) But Padma continues to expostulate: "To me it's a crazy way of telling your life story if you can't even get to where your father met your mother." (38) Elsewhere Padma criticized Saleem's trick of revealing the tools of his trade", .... Padma has started getting whenever my narration becomes self-conscious, whenever, like an incompetent puppeteer, I reveal the hands holding the strings...." (72) But Padma as symbol has other dimension. She is Saleem's nurse and cook; she is also his fellowpurveyor of "pickle" (Rushdie's symbol of history). Together they make history. But being impotent, Saleem Independent India, cannot impregnate her.

A breathless passage without any full-stops, but with capitals to show where these should have been is Rushdie's method of indicating haste and confusion in his narratorprotagonist; "But imagine the confusion in my head !
Where, behind the hideous face, above the tongue tasting of soap, hard by the perforated eardrum, lurked a not-very-tidy mind, as full of bric-a-brac as nine-year-old pockets. Imagine yourself inside me somehow, looking out through my eyes, hearing the noise, the voices, and now the obligation of not letting people know, the hardest part was acting surprised, such as when my mother said: Hey Saleem guess what we're going for a picnic to the Aarey Milk Colony and I had to go Ooo, exciting!, when I had known all along because I had her unspoken inner voice.... "and so on for two pages. (202-3) Long before this, however, Padma has been made to concede, "At last... you've learned how to tell things really fast." (126)

Rushdie is obliged to invest his narrator-protagonist with superhuman vision and extraordinary powers of thought-reading in order to make his omniscient accounts of a dozen different lives as well as the life of the nation credible as coming from a single witness. Saleem is intensely conscious about the impact of his narrative on listeners: "... these events, which have tumbled from my lips any old how, garbled by haste and emotion, are for others to judge." (28) But he can rationalize the multiplicity of strands that he weaves into his narrative of which he is the centre: "If I seem a little bizzare,
remember the wild profusion of my inheritance.... perhaps, if one wishes to remain an individual in the midst of the teeming multitudes, one must make oneself grotesque." (126) Saleem gives earnest of his prodigious powers from his cradle: he has unblinking eyes that can receive an incredibly large number of impressions; in his ninth year "after a curious accident in a washing-chets, I became a sort of radio." He is able to hear unspoken words, to choose individual voices and to turn the volume up or down. Rushdie dexterously waves India's language problem into this prodigious capability of Saleem Sinai: "The voices babbled in everything from Malayalam to Naga dialects, from the purity of Lucknow Urdu to the southern slurrings of Tamil." (200)

From the beginning Rushdie maintains a continuous effort at synchronising national and domestic life, so that the odyssey of the nation from the year 1915 upto about the year 1977; this convergence of the national and the domestic is underscored repeatedly in the course of the rivel: "On the day the World War ended, Naseem developed the longed-for headache. Such historical coincidences have littered, and perhaps befouled, my family's existence in the world." (25) And again on a more personal level, "... thanks to the occult tyran-
ties of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously handcuffer to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country." (3) Many years later Saleem is to father that imperilled child who cannot speak—the sick Emergency with its claustrophobic lack of the freedom of speech. The convergence is often artificially imposed upon the narrative: "One last fact: after the death of my grandfather, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru fell ill and never recovered his health. This fatal sickness finally killed him on May 27th, 1964." This connection seems rather gratuitous.

Half way through the novel Saleem indulges in a playfully learned explication of the sense in which his life might be said to mirror the nation's: "... Your life, which will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own", the Prime Minister wrote, obliging me scientifically to face the question: In what sense? How, is what terms, may the career of a single individual be said to impinge on the fate of a nation? I must answer in adverbs and hyphens: I was linked to history both literally and metaphorically, both actively and passively, in what our admirably modern scientists might term "modes of connection" composed of "dualistically-combined configurations" of the two pairs of opposed adverbs given above. This is why hyphens
are necessary; active-literally, passively-metaphorically, actively-metaphorically and passively-literally, I was entwined with my world.

Sensing Padma’s unscientific bewilderment, I revert to the inexactitudes of common speech: By the combination of "active" and "literal" I mean, of course, all actions of mine which directly-literally-affected, or altered the course of, seminal historical events, for instance the manner in which I provided the language-marchers with their battle-cry. The union of "passive" and "metaphorical" encompasses all socio-political trends and events which, merely by existing, affected me metaphorically for example, by reading between the lines of the episode entitled "The fisherman’s Pointing finger", you will perceive the unavoidable connection between the infant state’s attempts at rushing towards full-sized adulthood and my own early explosive efforts at growth... Next, "passive" and "liberal" when hyphenated cover all moments at which national events had a direct bearing upon the lives of myself and my family - under this heading you shall file the freezing of my father’s assets, and also the explosion at Walkeswar Reservoir, which unleashed the great cat invasion. And finally there is the "mode" of the "actively-metaphorical", which groups together those occasions
on which things done by or to me were mirrored in the public affairs, and my private existence was shown to be symbolically at one with history. The mutilation of my middle finger was a case in point, because when I was detached from my finger-tip and blood (neither Alpha nor Omega) rushed out in fountains, a similar thing happened in history, and all sorts of every which thing began pouring out all over us; But because history operates on a grander scale than any individual, it took a great deal longer to stick it back together and up the mess. (285-286)

The clear rational analysis of the interaction between the personal and the national can be detected under the facade of a whimsical exhibition of grammatical learning. As opposed to these deliberately demonstrated parallelisms between national and personal life, there are, throughout the novel passages of straightforward journalistic account of national events. Thus in Book Two the chapter entitled "Love in Bombay" contains a description of the Bombay Language riots of 1957 beginning "It is a matter of record that the States Reorganization Committee had submitted its report to Mr. Nehru as long ago as October 1955; a year later, its recommendations had been implemented. India had been divided anew into fourteen states and six centrally-administered 'terriitories'. But the boundaries of these states
were not formed by rivers, or mountains, or any natural features of the terrain; the were, instead, walls of words...." (225)

The same journalistic vein characterizes the following passage from a later part of the novel:

And (without any assistance from me) relations between India and Pakistan grew worse; entirely without my help India conquered Goa - "the Portuguese pimple on the face of Mother India"; I sat on the sidelines and played no part in the acquisition of large-scale U.S. aid for Pakistan, nor was I to blame for Sino-Indian border-skirmishes in the Aksai Chin region of Ladakh; the Indian census of 1961 revealed a literacy level of 23.7 percent, but I was not entered in its records. The untouchable problem remained acute; I did nothing to alleviate it; and in the elections of 1962, the All India Congress won 361 out of 494 seats in the Lok Sabha, and over 61 percent of all State Assembly seats. Not even in this could my unseen
Such passages relate the novel to the modern phenomenon of the Non-fiction Novel. The Non-fiction Novel is a novel based on contemporary political events, the genre having originated in some American novelists' feeling that in the sixties real events in that country had acquired a quality of fantasy. John Hollowell has discussed this form of the novel in *Fact and Fiction* (University of North Carolina Press, 1977) with special reference to *Truman Capote's In Cold Blood, Norman Mailer's The Armies of the Night* and *Tom Wolfe's The Electric Kook-Aid Acid Test*. Rushdie's narrative technique has a great deal in common with the technique of these works. Hollowell quotes Philop Roth who wrote:

"The American writer in the middle of the 20th century has his hands full in trying to understand, then describe, and then make credible much of the American reality. It stupefies, if sickens, it infuriates, and finally it is even a kind of embarrassment to one's"
own meager imagination. The actuality is continually outdoing our talents: and the culture tosses up figures almost daily that are the envy of any novelist."5

The dominant mood of Midnight's Children is comparable to this. The political leaders of these countries of the subcontinent as well as their military leaders have acquired the quality of figures of fantasy in Rushdie's hands.

The vast sprawling narrative of a nation's history over a period of some sixty-two years—indeed, it is proper to call in the history of three nations over various lengths of time—has been given a certain integrity by means of special devices. The centrifugal movement of international relations has been partially undercut by the centripetal devices of strictly chronological progression, repetitive imagery and fortuitous parallelisms. There are also frequent summaries of previous events to refresh the reader's memory. The stained and perforated bridal sheet of Naseem Aziz, itself symbolizing the Purdah, the hole in the vital inner chamber of Dr. Aziz created by his renegotion of Islamic faith, the image of the rubies and diamonds (literally, the items of trade in the Aziz family business and figuratively, applied,
among other things, to the blood on Dr. Aziz's nose when he injures himself praying), saffron and green (of the tricolour and "Amina Sinai in a room with saffron walls and green woodwork", 132) Prime Minister Jawaharlal's letter to Saleem, Saleem's umbilical cord preserved in brine ("and when, years later, our family entered its exile in the Land of the Pure, When I was struggling towards purity, umbilical cords would briefly have their day." 144) the spittoon and the washing chest are only a few among innumerable objects which Rushdie uses repeatedly and obsessively sometimes literally as objects, at others, as symbols obsessively sometimes literally as objects, at others, as symbols binding together people and situations otherwise widely apart in time and space. The following passage, sparked off by the Brass-Monkey's (Saleem's name for his sister) fight with Evie Burns will demonstrate Rushdie's method:

Bolood, then, was spilled in the circus-ring. Another rejected title for these pages—you may as well know—was "Thicker Than Water". In those days of water shortages, something thicker than water ran down the face of Evie Burns; The loyalties of blood motivated the Brass Monkey; and in the streets of the city,
rioters spilled each other's blood. There were bloody murders, and perhaps it is not appropriate to end this sanguinary catalogue by mentioning, one again, the rushes of blood to my mother's cheeks. Twelve million votes were coloured red that year, and red is the colour of blood. More blood will flow soon: the types of blood, A and O, Alpha and Omega—and another, a third possibility—must be kept in mind. Also other factors: Zygosity, and Kell antibodies, and that most mysterious of sanguinary attributes, know as rhesus, which is also a type of monkey.

Everythings has a shape, if you for it. There is no escape from form. (270-71)

This demented voilence of emphasis and this gratuitous accumulation of parallelisms are very much the staple of Rushdie's technique of imposing integrity on desperate material. Sometimes he anticipates certain events through a kind of foreshortening achieve by tantalising bunching of past, present and future events through riddle-like references— the element in com-
mon being just such a fortuitous image or object. Here is an example: "In the brandy-bottle of the boatmat Tai I see, foretold, my own father's possession of djinns and there will be another bald foreigner... and Tai's gas prophesies another kind, which was the consolation of my grandmother's old age, and taught her stories too... and pie-dogs aren't far away... Enough. I'm frightening myself." (12)

This bunching of episodes is partly playful, often halfdemented. It is also calculated to maintain the suspense, to arouse curiosity and to give the impression that the story is all of one piece. Another playful aspect of Rushdie's technique is his deliberate presentation of scenes in terms of the film:

"Close-up of my grandfather's right hand: nails, knuckles, fingers all somehow bigger than you'd expect. Clumps of red hair on the outside edges. Thumb and forefinger pressed together, separated only by a thickness of paper. In short: my grandfather was holding a pamphlet. It had been inserted into his hand (we cut to a long-shot-nobody form Bombay should be without a basic film vocabulary) as he entered the hotel..." (31)
The interaction between fiction and the film would seem to deserve a volume to itself. But it may not be long before some talented director, taking the clue from Rushdie, discovers the filmic possibilities of Midnight's Children and sets about filming it. Thus it can be concluded that Rushdie's mode of narration is unique and excellently outstanding.