



## Salman Rushdie : The Novelist Par Excellence

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Salman Rushdie: The Novelist Par Excellence Abstract Salman Rushdie is a great novelist in Indian Writing in English. He is the recipient of a number of national and international awards and prizes including the Booker Prize which he got for his fiction *Midnight's Children* published in 1981. This book presents India's development from independence and partition 1947 through the secession of Bangladesh to the state of emergency under Indra Gandhi.

### Abstract

Salman Rushdie is a great novelist in Indian Writing in English. He is the recipient of a number of national and international awards and prizes including the Booker Prize which he got for his fiction *Midnight's Children* published in 1981. This book presents India's development from independence and partition 1947 through the secession of Bangladesh to the state of emergency under Indra Gandhi. His other famous book, *Shame* published in 1983 is a dark and subtle work stirring the history of Pakistan in the light of the modern concept of feminism. Rushdie is famous for the extraordinary art of uniting both realism and fantasy together. The book, *Stannic Verses* in 1988 was very controversial and religiously and politically contentious. It earned him international notoriety amongst Muslims for its unfavorable depiction of the prophet Mohammed. In theme, Rushdie has taken history as a subject and fictionalized it. Rushdie believes that his fictional art uses the subversive mode to reach to the roots and identity. He chooses to recreate in a way through history in which the modern individual struggle to find a meaningful place.

### Keywords

History, Narrative Technique, Subjugation of women, Cultural heritage.

*Midnight's Children* is an autobiographical novel. It is different from all other major autobiographical novels. It is a nation's history which the novelist cannot distort or change. In this novel the family, the individual are made to appear like the thermostat of the whole nation. In other words, Rushdie has tried to beautify the bone of history. The novelist has very beautifully portrayed the life of Saleem in the light of the famous

postures of Buddha sitting under the bigbunyan tree or the Boddhi tree, the tree of knowledge. He says:

*So, apologizing for the melodrama I must doggedly insist that I, he had begun again; that after the years of yearning for importance he (or I) had been cleansed of the whole business; that after my vengeful abandonment by Jamila Singer, who wormed me into the Army to get me out her signet, I (or he) accepted the fate which was my repayment for love, and sat uncomplaining under a china tree; that, emptied of history, the Buddha learned the arts of submission, and did only what war required of him.<sup>1</sup>*

The novels of Rushdie present the imaginary truth which relates not to the particular country like India but to the most of the third world. Rushdie strongly believes in the fact that events and history must always be subject to questioning as well as deconstruction for the remaking of history. In *Midnight's Children*, the novelist is not a dispassionate or disinterested historian rather he shapes his materials the way he likes and sometimes distorts history to suit his purpose. He says :

*History is always ambiguous. Facts are hard to establish, and capable of being given many meaning. Reality is built on our prejudices, misconception and ignorance as well as on our perceptiveness and knowledge.<sup>2</sup>*

Rushdie has an uncommon jest for making a disastrous messing-up a misfortune topmost in recent history. His treatment of history cannot remain isolated from cartoonist caricature. He depicts the folly of his family to migrant from India to Pakistan. Alongside of Saleem's personal history we have the collective experience of a people and a history of a Nation. This book contains a number of historical events of pre-independent India like the Jallianwalla Bagh tragedy. Quiet India movement, cabined Mission The Muslim League. It also shows very artistically and historically since important movement historically since important movement of both political and social after the Independence e.g. Five years Plan, Partition of India and Pakistan, Chinese Aggression, The Theft of Secret Relic from the Hazrat Bal Mosque, Pakistani war Libration of Bangladesh and Emergency. Prof Jaya Srivastav rightly observes:

*Born at the moment of Indian independence from British rule and 'fathered', you understand by history, Saleem is bestowed with a magical presence and telepathy that causes him to anthropomorphize the destinies of India. He becomes a media technology, a disembodied intelligence that channels and broadcasts collective social imagining. He inherits, as does the newly minted nation, the raw unshaped multitudes realities of the land and shares with it a longing for form and meaning.<sup>3</sup>*

The other prominent novel of Salman Rushdie is *Shame* published in 1983. This novel presents a very realistic picture of the plights and persecution, the sufferings and agonies of Muslim women born and brought up in a conservative atmosphere. The book also delineates some neurotic women characters who are bound to live a cornered life or a subaltern life in a close door. Through the use of some beautiful images and symbols, the novelist has shown the miserable conditions of the suffering women:

*...In Shame, the women are confined in prison like mansions in the name of purdah, while their husbands indulge in libidinal orgies and political stunts, ...The result is the sterility of mind and imagination.<sup>4</sup>*

It is interesting to note that in a patriarchal society particularly in India, Women have to bear the brunt of male domination right from the cradle to the grave. In Hindu religion, women are brought up under the strict control of her parents and after marriage, her husband determines her wishes for the rest of her life. In other words all the aspirations and wishes of the women are choked by her father, brother and also by her mother. Perhaps this is why the new concept 'feminism' came into existence in

order to give equal political, social and cultural status of woman. On this issue, B.P.Sinha rightly observes:

*In Hindu scriptures and myths, woman is depicted either as a goddess or a sub human creature never as a complete human being, where on one hand she has been described as an object of reverence or worship, on the other she is treated like an object of sexual gratification and considered to be man's property in every age. The recurrent symbol of seed and earth further degrades her position.*<sup>5</sup>

The major characters of novel, *Shame* are victims of the repressive patriarchal society. The woman characters Suphia, Bilquies, Rani, Arjumand, Naveed are conditioned and molded according to the dictates of the patriarchy. In this critical junctures of suffering and agonies some woman succumb to the pressures of operation while some other woman struggle hard to rebel against the wishes and aspirations of the male characters. They burst like volcanic eruptions and express their voice for the liberty and freedom. The patriarchal domination is so powerful that they act like a weight on the unnatural silence of women. Devasree Chakravarti and G.A. Ghanshyam rightly observes:

*These female characters starting from the three Shakil sisters to that of Sufiya, bear the burden of shame and honour throughout their life. Made to live a life of confinement, their imprisonment behind closed doors is not only physical but also psychological as well. Unable to voice their feelings, their fears and concerns, they find out some kind of an outlet eventually to give vent to their pert up emotions and feelings. Their silence is broken through their actions, through the infinite ways that a woman can express herself even through her silence.*<sup>6</sup>

## Conclusion

Thus, this brief critical analysis very well shows Salman Rushdie, as a great novelist of craft and fiction, feeling and form. His novels are centered to the historical theme with a difference. His quest for identity, his idea for holiness and his attempt to translate colonial anxieties of India and Pakistan into literary mode are very noteworthy. His *Midnight's Children* presents the wandering of a split self in quest of holiness and identity. But his presentation of historical facts are not simply the documentation of facts and figures but they are highly literary. The writer often takes the help of metaphors, symbols, magic realism, fantasy and mystification.

## References

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