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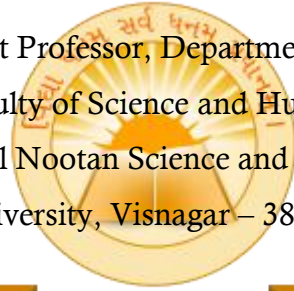
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**Reflection of Magical Realism in the Salman Rushdie's  
Postcolonial Novel *Midnight's Children***

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## Abstract

**“Reality is a question of perspective; the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems – but as you approach present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible”**

**- Salman Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children***

Salman Rushdie (19 June 1947) got the Australian State Prize for European Literature in 1993, *Midnight’s Children* has been greatly praised in the world. This novel is based on the midnight of 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947 and the children born on that midnight. The **Satanic Verses** raised a storm of controversy among the orthodox Muslims. Muslims countries issued ‘fatwa’ against him and he ran to foreign country for his life.

The present paper will enlighten on Post-colonialism, Post-colonialism in literature, Post-Colonial Theory, Magical Realism in Rushdie’s Post-colonial Novel ‘*Midnight’s Children*’ and finally Depiction of Post-colonialism in ‘*Midnight’s Children*’.

**Keywords: Magical Realism, Post-Colonialism**



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## Introduction

Magic realism is a fictional movement connected with a style of writing that incorporates paranormal proceedings into realistic narrative without questioning the implausibility of the events. Magic Realism is a mythical movement connected with a style of writing or performance that incorporates magical or paranormal events into realistic narrative without questioning the questionability of the events. Magic realism is related to, but characteristic from, surrealism, due to its focus on the material object and the actual existence of things in the world, as opposed to the more cerebral, psychological and subconscious reality that the surrealists explored (Wani & Mehta 186). Rushdie uses the sequence of events style in magic realism in *midnight children* with fantasy blended in real life. He uses the narrative technique of magic realism in *midnight children* to blur the dissimilarity between fantasy and reality. He gives an equal acceptance for the ordinary and the extraordinary. He fuses lyrical and, at times, fantastic writing with an examination of the character of human existence



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and hidden criticism of society, particularly the cream of the crop. Rushdie can be considered as a writer who plays with the description technique of magic realism.

### Post-Colonialism

One of those modern topics of intellectual debate that are prefixed with **Post-**, post-colonialism is an inclusive term embracing a wide range and variety of concerns. The term **post-colonial** is used to cover all the **'cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present-day'**. It does not refer to the situation obtaining in a newly independent country that has wrested its freedom from the colonizer, but to the time **'it started conceiving and constructing its various sets of discursive practices to resist colonization, its ways, its ideologies and legacies'**. Thus although India obtained freedom on August 15, 1947 and the Indian post-colonialism may be said to have begun with works of writers and thinkers of the nineteenth century. Identifying this condition as **Post-colonialism** one scholar points out,

“Its formation is not rooted so much in intellectual debate as in the process of history, human psychology and the positioning within power relationships. The relationship of this post-coloniality with literature is born out of and reflects upon political conditions (Rajimwala 508)”

### Post-colonialist Literature

According to Rajimwala (2012), Post-colonialist literature is much more actively produced in the English speaking nations, though similar processes could be seen in the cultures of other language-speaking countries albeit in a weak form. Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Nadine Gordimer, J. M. Coetzec, Derek Walcott, V. S. Naipaul, Margaret Atwood, Michael Ondaatje, Les Murray, Salman Rushdie, Janet Frame are some front line writers who highlight growing urban global culture, produced by international politics, communications and an economy going world-wide (511).

In India writers of the 80s and after that have shown enhanced awareness of their engagement with history and particular historical contexts. One notes this Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh, Nayantara Sehgal, Attia Hosain (though she wrote in 1960s), Rama Mehta, Manju Kapoor and Several others. Besides, the earlier works of such writers as Premchand, Phanishwarnath Renu, Mukul Kesawan, Krishna Sobti, Qurratulain Hyder, Bhisham Sahni, Kamleshwar, Rahi Masoom



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Raza, etc. are subjected to re-assessment in the light of post-colonial theories (Rajimwala 511).

### Post-colonial Theory

Post-colonial studies deals with the effect of colonialism on cultures and societies. It is concerned with both how European nations conquered and controlled 3<sup>rd</sup> World cultures and how these groups have since responded to and resisted those encroachments. The work of writers such as Albert Memmi, Aime Cesaire, and particularly Frantz Fanon, in the 1950s provided a foundation for much of the post-colonial theory that proliferated in the following decades.

Edward Said build on these arguments and applied Marxist scholarship on dialects and hegemony to the study of the cultural documents of European empires in his foundational book, **Orientalism** (1978). In this and later works Said drew on literary, philosophic and social science texts to show how the West created an intellectual apparatus that fetishized the otherness of colonized peoples and he argued that these institutionalized cultural conceptions directly facilitated territorial conquest. Said defined 'Orientalism' as a 'distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philological texts' and he set out to study the 'dynamic exchange between individual authors and the large political concerns shaped by the three great empires – British, French, American – in whose intellectual and imaginative territory the writing was produced.'

### According to John Lye, Post-colonial theory mainly focuses on

- “The way in which literature by the colonizing culture distorts the experience and realities, and inscribes the inferiority, of the colonized people.”
- “On literature by colonized peoples, which attempts to articulate their identity and reclaim their past in the face of that past’s inevitable otherness.”

The key terms in Post-colonial Theory are **Alterity** which refers to ‘The state of being other or different’ and **Hybridity** referring to the integration of cultural signs and practices from the colonizing and the colonized cultures.



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### **Magical Realism in 'Midnight's Children'**

**Midnight's Children** catapulted Salman Rushdie to literary notability. This work won the 1981 Booker Prize and, in 1993 and 2008, was awarded the Best of the Bookers as the best novel to have received the prize during its first 25 and 40 years. *Midnight's Children* follows the life of a child, born at the stroke of midnight as India gained its independence, who is endowed with the special power and a connection to other children born at the dawn of a new and tumultuous age in the history of the Indian sub-continent and the birth of the modern nation of India. The character of Saleem Sinai has been compared to Rushdie. However, the author has refuted the idea of having written any of his characters as autobiographical, stating, **"People assume that because certain things in the character are drawn from your own experience, it just becomes you. In that sense, I've never felt that I've written an autobiographical character (Jayaraman 84)."**

*Midnight's Children*, roughly based on the early life of its author, Salman Rushdie, is considered a masterful blend of fiction, politics, and magic. Critics credit it with making the worldwide literary audience aware of the changes that India underwent throughout the twentieth century. With his masterful control of the English language and his ability to render even the minutest events in full, vivid details, Rushdie takes readers on an imaginative trip that makes them see his native country in a way that they never did before.

After *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie wrote *Shame* (1983), in which he depicts the political turmoil in Pakistan, basing his characters on Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq. *Shame* won France's Prix du meilleur Livre Etranger (Best Foreign Book) and was close runner-up for the Booker Prize. Both these works of postcolonial literature are characterized by a style of magic realism and the immigrant outlook that Rushdie is very conscious of as a member of the Indian Diaspora.

### **Depiction of Post-colonialism in *Midnight's Children***

The status of a perfect postcolonial text in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is known for its brilliant use of magic realism. The issue of split identity and conflict of immigration is beautifully depicted in his novels. The idea of nation has always been the central concern in his imaginary and non imaginary writing. With magical realism, postcolonial writers are able to challenge realistic narrative and present an alternative reality. The description framework of *Midnight's Children* consists of tale which Saleem





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Sinai recounts orally to his wife to be Padma. This self-referential narrative recalls aboriginal Indian culture with similarity to Arabian Nights as is well recognised from the text of Salman Rushdie's. In this novel, the mixing of the fantastic and ordinary, which is an aspect of magical realism, seems Indian as the characters involved in contemporary political and social turmoil also has the power of mythic heroes. In the initial phase of the novel, there is a fine passage as an example for this mixing of the real and fantastic. The window of the room to fall and causes on his enemy's eyes to crack and fallout Mian Abdullah's humming without a pause is a delusion like quality due to the mixing of real life with fantastic elements. Sexuality in the novel has been depicted in different tune to align with magical realism as is seen that Amina is having fears of getting a child with a cauliflower in its head instead of brain. We also come across another strange washerwoman Durga whose breasts are colossal and inexhaustible with a torrent of milk. The novel remains a continuous and subtle enquiry of the relations between order, reality and fantasy. The narrator Saleem constantly relates his life to that of his country India. His nativity, growth, development and destruction are related to that of India. The various other characters too seem to stroll through the pages of history, colliding with necessary events in the development of India seemingly by accident. Thus, Saleem's grandfather is on his knees after a mighty sneeze when Brigadier Dyer's fifty machine-gunners open fire in the Amritsar massacre of 1919; it is Saleem's father who buys one of Methworld's villas; Saleem is born at the moment India is; and almost all of the major events of his life, leading finally to the devastation of the midnight's children and also India at the moment of announcement of Emergency are accidental to developments in the new country. Saleem and India must deal with genealogical perplexity as they move violently to construct their identities (Wani & Mehta 187).

### **Conclusion**

Salman Rushdie has attained a vital position in the literary field and grand respect in the heart of readers. *Midnight's Children* was indeed a fate changing post-colonial novel by him which mixes the elements of magical realism into it. Magic realism actually helped Rushdie to speak the unspeakable. Rushdie used elements of magical realism such as immigration, diversity, dislocation and disintegration along with elements of pity and fear, time and space, eroticism, reappearance and all given an unrivalled beauty to this novel. Hence, the author attempts to create and convey a true picture of Indian post-colonialism and India as a monolithic place and people.



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