

# Projection of Post Colonialism and Post Modernism in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

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## Abstract

*Post Colonialism, Post Modernism, Magical Realism, Mythology, Deconstruction and Deformation are some of the theories that are been frequently reflected in our Indian Literature. Salman Rushdie has brilliantly implied these intellectual theories in his novel Midnight's Children through his own tactics and ideas, which won him the Booker Prize Award in 1981. The implication of such theories in it was made possible with its dealing of the India's past and binding Indian culture of past to the contemporary multicultural interface. The rare combination of all these combination of theories makes this novel a great post modernistic work. This Paper deals directly with the India's partition from almost an Indian perspective. These qualities of this novel make it a literature of privilege and protest. It remains as an epitome, imposing Indian values, and economic pressure, cultural and religious predicaments that prevailed during and after the colonialism.*

**Keywords:** Post Colonialism, Post Modernism, Hybridity, Fragmentation, Magical Realism, Intertextuality, Mythology, Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*

## Introduction

Salman Rushdie's novel that has won its Booker prize award in 1981 and also which was glorified as the best Booker-winning novel from the first twenty-five years of the competition, earning the title "Booker of Bookers". This was possible because of the two brilliant aspects of the Book that it serves to be one of the best post-colonials and postmodern work in Literature. Salman Rushdie has brilliantly implied these two intellectual theories in his novel through his own tactics and ideas.

## Post Colonialism and Post Modernism

Post Colonialism and Post Modernism are some of the theories that are been frequently reflected in our Indian Literature for its historical fact of being colonized by an alien nation for over two hundred years. *Midnight's Children* is such a work that carries a heavy theme of destruction verses creation and paints it with its magical realistic style, subjective narration, and intricate symbolism. The implication of such theories in it was made possible with its dealing of the India's past and binding Indian culture of past to the contemporary multicultural interface. Corruption, infidelity, and sufferings as a by-product of colonialism is been knitted with its plot. It reveals a complicated world of historic realism being knitted with mythical magic which gives its quality of being a fictional work that has a historic backdrop. This rare combination makes it a great post modernistic work. It deals directly with the India's partition from almost an Indian perspective. These qualities of this novel make it a literature of privilege and protest. It remains as an epitome, imposing Indian values, economic pressure, cultural and religious predicaments that prevailed during and after the colonialism.

A deep colonial experience- a feel of being marginalized and treated as a refugee in our own native and the sympathies of suffering right-thinking people is claimed in the novel.

This novel draws a picture of the time since around 1915 and explains India's situation after it gained its Independence from the British colonizers; it implies Gandhi's Quit India movement, the violent partition of India, the impact of the war with Pakistan in 1971 for the emergence of Bangladesh as an Independent nation, and also the wry predicament of Indira Gandhi's State of Emergency from 1975 to 1977 and few other events with whole fully through the Indian eye.

This Book is applauded for its post modernistic approach. This work can also be considered as the one that implies deconstructive theory. It has its backdrop as the recent past of India during its phase of been colonized by the Britishers and the aftermath of it, that is the multi-faceted state of India after the independence. The political upheaval and constant threat of violence that marked the first three decades of independence forms the backdrop for the novel. The violence that accompanied independence was a prelude to the multiple wars, coups, and governmental abuses that plagued the area in the years that followed. In the thirty years following independence, India and Pakistan fought three separate wars: two over Kashmir, and one over the creation of an independent Bangladesh. The wars produced millions of refugees, claimed thousands of lives, and led to a nearly permanent state of tension between the two countries. The Post colonialist works mostly, apparently of the emphasizing nature on the realities of social construction and tends to subject it to a change. In this novel Saleem calls for all the mid night's children to make a revolution.

Post Modernism usually tend to attack the use of sharp binary classification like male versus female, white versus black, colonizers versus victims or higher class versus lower class and being written in a generalized form, considering all as readers and hardly creating impact in them in a usual form. It is a way of dealing one's ideas with different elements; showing their insight though several different windows.

Salman Rushdie also explores the disintegration of identity in the face of modernity, a theme deeply rooted in postcolonial discourse. The novel portrays the complex relationship between modernity and identity through the protagonist Saleem Sinai and other characters, reflecting the fragmentation and reshaping of individual and national identities in postcolonial India. As he deals with the complexities of cultural hybridity, linguistic diversity, and instability in politics, the legacy of colonialism hinders his mental state. His problems with mental health are made worse by the tension between tradition and modernity and the difficulty of making sense of the past and present. In an era of swift globalization and cross-cultural interchange, Saleem's identity problem perfectly reflects the wider postmodern challenge among individuals split between two or more worlds.

In "Midnight's Children," Salman Rushdie uses historical fragmentation as a storytelling device to reflect the fractious and nuanced character of postcolonial India. The book is organized around a number of disconnected scenes, which represent the rifts and discontinuities present in India's historical development. Rushdie mostly achieves this fragmentation through the life of Saleem Sinai, whose chaotic circumstances are mirrored in Indian history. Saleem's story is not linear; it jumps around in time and frequently incorporates mythological allusions and supernatural themes. The fragmented history of India, which is marked by colonialism, partition, and civil unrest, is reflected in this nonlinear pattern.

Rushdie's use of intertextuality and reality distortion allows him to engage in a form of historical revisionism. By reinterpreting historical events and figures, he critiques dominant narratives and offers alternative perspectives on India's past. This revisionist approach challenges the authoritative accounts of history, emphasizing the fluidity and multiplicity of historical truths. The intertextual references in "Midnight's Children" reflect the cultural hybridity inherent in postcolonial societies. Rushdie explores the intersections of different cultures, languages, and traditions, highlighting the complexity of identity formation. The distortion of reality underscores the fragmented nature of postcolonial identities, shaped by a fusion of diverse influences.

## **Magical Realism**

Salman Rushdie has used several elements to prove his work to be one of the best postmodern works. The ideal element or technique used in it is “Magical Realism”, which is the characteristic of blending fantasy with realism. Here he has knitted India’s concrete pre and post-Independence history and has mixed it with the abstract magical muse or imagination. The imaginary extra ordinary powers like the telepathy and his smell feeling and motives beyond the limits; all the children born within the first hour of that night possessing some unusual and extra ordinary powers. This gives the novel the other name like, “Historic Fiction”. Therefore, presenting his work with the combination of history and imagination after India has been released from the stern clutch of the English makes this an important aspect to claim the title as a Post Modernistic work. Rushdie narrates the story as it comprises a time period of 1915 to 1977 and all the events in the story uses the events in Indian history as its vehicle. For instance, the story’s main character Saleem Sinai was born at the stroke of Indian Independence. Along with him, many other who born within the first hour of that mid night was endowed with some mystic powers which varies according to how close to mid night they were born. Secondly, Adam Aziz, Saleem’s grandfather, saw his wife’s face rightly at the day of the ending of first world war and he being on his knees after a vigorous sneeze when Brigadier Dyer’s machine-gunners fired shots in the 1919 Amritsar Massacre; that Reverend Mother breaks her silence on the same day the United States drops the atomic bomb on Japan not only repeats the continued theme of personal history intersecting with political history, but it also illustrates the significance of individual events in the history of a family; the characters in the story weaved into turmoil at the time of Indira Gandhi’s implementation of State of emergency; On June 4, as Earl Mountbatten announces the partition of India into two separate nations, Ahmed and Amina board a train for Bombay.

## **The Irony in the Novel**

After undergoing immense struggle, Amina and Vanita deliver their infants. But the middle mother, Mary switches the name tab of the two babies thinking that she is doing an act of social justice by giving a life of richness to the poor and the life of poor to the rich. This ironically says that India saw the birth of Independence but the people still struggled under their perplexed predicament of being torn with the multi-culture, multi-identity and so on. Another incident in the novel is that Amina marries Ahmed Sinai and even delivers a child. But still she was not able to forget her previous life with her first husband Nadir Khan. This ironically brings out the pathos of Indians who were in a dilemma that whether to continue their former culture or to start with the recently introduced western or modern culture. This irony shows one of the strategy of post colonial usage in his work.

## **Knitting his Life with the Contemporary Predicaments**

Another aspect is that Salman Rushdie has threaded his life’s events with the contemporary society. Salman Rushdie was born on June 19, 1947, to an affluent family in Bombay, India. Rushdie’s birth coincided with a particularly important moment in Indian history: after nearly one hundred years of colonial rule, the British occupation of the South Asian subcontinent was coming to an end. Almost exactly three months after Rushdie’s birth, Pakistan and India achieved their long-awaited independence when, at the stroke of midnight on August 14 and 15, respectively, power was transferred from Great Britain to the sovereign governments of each country. This proves one of the aspects in the usage of post modernistic ideology in his work.

## **Magical Realism - A Post Modern Device**

Magical Realism is the foremost factor that enables the privilege of being called as a Post Modernistic work. It is a service that binds the Indian culture of the past to the contemporary multicultural interface.

### **Mythology - A Post Modern Device**

The aspect of knitting the Indian mythology with such a intricate fiction serves as an important aspect for the post modernism in literature. Salman Rushdie portrayed Shiva, Saleem's archrival. Shiva is born at exactly the same moment as Saleem. While Saleem is raised in a loving, wealthy household, Shiva is raised in abject poverty by a single father. He is blessed with a pair of preternaturally strong knees and an amazing prowess in war. Shiva is named after the Hindu god of destruction, who is also the god associated with procreation.

Born at the stroke of midnight and named after the Hindu god of destruction, Shiva is Saleem's rival and counterpart. And also the woman, with whom he got his son Adam, is in the name 'Parvathi'. In Hindu mythology, Shiva and Parvathi is a divine couple. Their son in this story is named as 'Adam'. Adam is the first human on the earth and is regarded as the son of God himself.

Then, the allusion in the chapters to Ravana, a many-headed demon from the Indian epic the Ramayana, emphasizes the frightening specter of mob mentality. These mythological references also serve as one of the post modernistic tools of Salman Rushdie.

### **Deformation - A Post Modern Device**

Deformation is one of the techniques of Post Modernism. Salman Rushdie has rightly used this technique in his novel. There are many historical events like the partition of India and Pakistan, partition of Bangladesh, Quit India Movement, Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the war between India and China, the State of Emergency of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and many more. Not any of the chapters of this novel need the external reference to these events in order to understand the context of it. He has explained the context of these events as the story is casually revealed.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, Salman Rushdie's novel has rightly interpreted the theories of Post colonialism and Post modernism and thereby making the novel as a greatly celebrated one and also to have set a stone cold example in the midst of other similar works and as a legacy to the to-be-born literature.

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