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“QUEST FOR INDIVIDUALITY IN SALMAN RUSHDIE’S MIDNIGHT’S CHILDREN” – A STUDY”

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Abstract:

Saleem, the "swallower of life," the text's all-pervasive postcolonial narrator, cautions us that "Midnight's children can be used to signify many things." In the aforementioned statement, the term "midnight's children" relates to both the offspring of midnight that Salim is referring to and the author's deliberate concern with the text itself. In this novel, Rushdie creates a heady concoction of history and narrative technique to bring to the table a plethora of issues concerning the postcolonial identity of Indians born after partition. He does this by drawing on the postmodern tradition of "disjunction, simultaneity, irrationalism, anti-illusionism, and self-reflexivity." The author builds an India in the text that resonates by undermining the conservative understanding of post-British India and simultaneously making fun of the idealistic fantasies of perfect freedom.

Keywords: Individuality, Insufficiency, Genuineness, Postcolonial, Postmodern, Civilization.

INTRODUCTION:

At the young age of nine, Saleem, who was born with the nocturnal ability to peer into other people's minds and thoughts, inadvertently discovers the very political nature of his trait and is obviously perplexed by the same. After highlighting the dichotomies of marginality that existed in the fledgling Indian nation, Saleem encounters servants who "sold their identities on little pieces of pink paper," women who are "faced with the guilt’s of the world," and men who are "faced with the insufficiency of categorical identities and the dismissal of practice on the "local, practical identities of ordinary people."

Saleem's quest for himself begins at the beginning of the text itself, intertwined with the birth of the country and his own. His birth had unavoidably started the identity crisis he would experience as someone whose "destinies are indissolubly tied" to those of the country. The reader is forced to agree with Saleem when he claims that of all the midnight children, his gift is the greatest and he establishes himself as their chief spokesperson. Saleem repeatedly states that "Reality is a question of perception," and thus the reader has no right to dispute his or her genuineness. He is not concerned with any other narrative histories of the country that could be available elsewhere. Because Saleem wants to understand his tragic personal fate, he declares himself to be the nation's destiny-bearer. In the author's attempt to recreate India, where "history is given meaning via the repeating of individual experience," Midnight's Children almost reads like an autobiography. Saleem, who is a postcolonial, postmodern self-searching for

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meaning in his own life and in the lives of others, plays-fully pickles and preserves the stories of the nation's beginning and continuation as he would like to. Saleem isn't just "obsessed with beginnings," but also with how the stories will end. Ironically, Saleem not only emphasises the need to concentrate on "solid hard facts," he also questions his own legitimacy and authority as he asks, "But whose facts?"

Saleem, who should have led the life of Shiva and vice versa but was instead elevated to a life of wealth due to Mary Pereira's "crime," also makes fun of the alleged "hierarchical division between high and low civilizations" and blurs the lin1es of traditional wisdom. Despite the fact that he claims to be able to produce a "display of erudition" and possibly retain a "purity of dialects," Saleem insists on being the "othered one." He accepts the fact that he did not inherit his identity at birth, but rather one that was acquired via circumstance. His name becomes the main indicator of his identity in the newly constituted country. We are also victims of our titles. Living where we do in a place where names have not taken on the meaninglessness of the West, he fervently argues, "They are more than just sounds."

Saleem's body is riddled with fissures, and when he pours from them, it appears as though he is simultaneously alluding to the porous past of the subcontinent, the reality of porous boundaries in spite of the presence of military forces, and the porous identities. He informs us about his decomposition right away: I merely mean that I've started to split like an old jug; that my wretched body, peculiar and ugly, battered by too much history, subjected to drainage from above and drainage from below, maimed by doors, and brained by spittoons, has begun to split open. In other words, I am slowly but surely falling apart, while there are hints that this process may be speeding up.

Saleem, a survivor of the midnight of August 15, 1947, not only experiences identity crises in his thoughts, but his body is also wilted, frayed, and brittle, mirroring the flimsy feeling of identity he must contend with as a child of the post-independence generation. In the postcolonial situation, Saleem's body is akin to that of the country, which has "cracked" and "leaked" repeatedly. The novel weaves historical events like the Indo-Pak War in 1965, the language marches of the 1950s, the communal riots of the 1940s, and the emergency rule of 1975 to show how the postcolonial Indian country has experienced similar existential and identity crises to Saleem's worn-out body. Saleem then represents the country as a whole: What or who am I? My response is that I am the culmination of all that has come before me and everything that has been done to me. I am everything and everyone whose existence in the world has been impacted by mine. Anything that occurs after I've left but would not have occurred if I hadn't come is what I am.

The impotence of Saleem and the Indian nation, as well as the effects of this hereditary impotence on personal and societal identities, is one of Midnight's main concerns. In fact, it borders on obsessive. The author/narrator is burdened by the pessimism left by

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partition history and appears to be adamantly convinced that India as a country will fail in the long run. Rushdie seems to be almost in agreement with the colonial masters who left the land in the hope that it would fail as a nation as he creates the a "mass fantasy," a "new myth—a collective fabrication," a country "which had never existed" and "would never exist except through the efforts of a phenomenal collective will—except in a dream we all decided to dream." Or is it specifically done in order to deal with the question of a postcolonial identity that has been hybridised in the undeniable circumstances of the country's history, as the author responds? In his article "Imaginary Homelands," he addresses a common issue, so: He is in fact discouraged by Saleem's tale. However, the narrative is structured to reflect, as closely as my talents would allow, the Indian culture of constant self-regeneration. Saleem is aware that the identities he has created for himself are fragile, but he also recognises that a storied existence is the only thing that will rejuvenate his "crumbling, overworked body."

Rushdie, who is well-versed in both western and eastern cultural traditions, emphasises that "In actuality, identity is speech, and we are what is spoken about us." And this has significant ramifications for India's national literature and identity." Rushdie is not a demeaning artist who one should study in order to find solutions to the modern Indian condition in a metafictional novel, either. What results from this is writing or a manner of representation that downplays the monumentality of history and openly ridicules its alleged capacity to serve as a model for imitation. As an Indian reader of the text, it is also intriguing to discover that the text is inaccessible to a western readership in some places due to the author's liberal usage of Indian language vocabulary.

The use of a language that the all-knowing west cannot decipher is a deliberate choice made by the text's creator and narrator. It is actually done to give the text the legitimacy Saleem claims at the outset—to give it an Indian identity. Therefore, Saleem's quest for identity goes beyond the nation or even the fictional characters; instead, it ironically examines the textual self or self’s in order to make them "in a sense, a reflection of our own." Reading Rushdie after September 11, 2001, by Sawhney and Sawhney, points out that"...because here was a narrator both firangi and desi (foreign and native)-a desi hidden in a firangi or vice versa."

Conceived at the infamous midnight of the country's independence and division. Saleem is paradoxically imprisoned in the life of another, representing both life and death. Despite being told repeatedly that "he could be just what you desire," he is not what he could have been. Saleem is born with the loss of identity rather than having to deal with it. Saleem continuously seeks to get insight into his sense of identity in a way that is both self-reflective and unnerving through the stories he pretends to know and tells an audience that is as erratic and changeable as "our Padma." As a result of being "uprooted, hounded, perplexed, and condemned to witness the evaporation of the truths that he has worked out for himself one after another," In an effervescent universe, Saleem must maintain the continuity of his fluid self. In spite of the accompanying

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sufferings, Saleem's self-aware, self-reflexive tale highlights a single search for identity in a multipolar world. The text also illustrates the multitude of selves one must contend with in postcolonial India.

The book, Midnight's Children, is about origins. The novel addresses three interconnected themes: the search for origin, the ridicule of the idea of authenticity, and the impending crises of the emerging Third World nations. It centres on Saleem's search for his genealogy and his inaccurate recounting of family and national histories. The novel's plot develops along two axes: the personal/national yearning for the Origin and the mocking of the dedication to authenticity. It does this by weaving imagination and distortion into the family anecdotes and historical events of India. Therefore, the novel's fundamental framework is the ethics of authenticity. Since the Enlightenment, the concept of authenticity has frequently been associated with the metaphor of origin, helping Third World countries to develop significant discursive practises. Midnight's Children makes an effort to demonstrate how a Third World country appropriates and expropriates the ethics of authenticity by copying and parodying the concept of authenticity. The Third World nation must deal with a self-alienation in the construction of national subjectivity—the undeniable gulf between its mimetic reality and its local distinctiveness—while using the idea of authenticity to stress difference and the metaphor of origin to strive for autonomy. Therefore, Saleem's palimpsest narration alludes to this phenomenal rupture as well as the diversity and overlap of post-colonial culture and history. By portraying the national past with critical memories, his unreliable narration develops a Foucauldian genealogical history that undermines the "genuine history."

The Third World nation's conflict between embracing modernity's heritage and a desire for autonomy, as well as its impending crisis brought on by the expropriation of authenticity's ethical principles, are explored in Midnight's Children using Origin as a metaphor. Midnight's Children cultivates an "interstitial space" for the underappreciated heterogeneity of culture and history by severing the continuity of the official version of national history with ruptured contradiction. This results in a polyphonic world where various histories compete with one another. Midnight's Children also anticipates the Indian-Pakistani English diaspora in addition to this theme.

One of the most important and prevalent themes in contemporary Indian English literature is that of migration and the resulting loss of identity. The concept of migration is crucial in this day of rapid globalisation and fast-paced existence, and it also needs to be accepted by the general public. The issue of migration is examined and discussed by two groups of authors. According to one group of authors, migration is the basis of struggle; the search for one's origins, the search for one's identity, the hunt for a better life, the search for a better way of life, etc. And according to the other group of authors, migration opens up a large world in which a person is free to travel anywhere he pleases and make accommodations wherever in this enormous cosmos. Salman

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Rushdie, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, and other contemporary Indian novelists have fearlessly and extensively examined the advantages and disadvantages of migration. Some of them have discussed the advantages of migration, while others have discussed its drawbacks. Only a select few authors, like Salman Rushdie, have an emotional and mental connection to the issue of migration. One of the most significant themes in Salman Rushdie's books is migration.

In the novel Midnight's Children, the partition of India, its independence, and the massive migration of people in search of their true homelands from Pakistan to India and from India to Pakistan are all discussed. The protagonist, Saleem, goes through a lot of suffering as a result of the issue of belonging. It is Rushdie's view of a time frame of around 70 years in contemporary Indian history that includes the events leading up to partition and afterwards.

The Indian liberation fight was more than just a political conflict; for practically all sensitive Indians, it was an event that shaped their way of life. The book joins the likes of Train to Pakistan by Khushwant Singh, The Dark Dancer by B. Rajan, Distant Drum by Manohar Malgonkar, Sunlight on Broken Column by Attiah Hussain, Freedom at Midnight by Collins and Lapiere, and Azadi by Chaman Nahal in the canon of partition literature. But Rushdie succeeds in his book because he approaches the issues of the independence struggle, migration, and the pitiful state of migrants with great sensitivity and compassion. For instance, Saleem, the main character of Midnight's Children, is highly aware of the issue of migration. He ties historical centrality and migration together. He is so overwhelmed by the historical forces working against him that he starts to exhibit signs of disintegration. His nose and work have a clear connection, and his family, history, and tradition have all had a profound impact on his life. He can never get rid of national history, though. He correctly admits that: It is safe to say that my retaliatory entry into history during my time was no small matter.

He began influencing the events, people, and world around him even as a young child. He clearly sees the impact of the partition, the bloodshed, and the pitiful and sympathetic situation of the migrants from both sides. He claims: Already, just by being here, I'm changing the course of history, and Baby Saleem is affecting the lives of those around him.

Saleem feels that he is to blame for the establishment of important national events. He accepts accountability for important historical occurrences. He believes that he is the primary motivator behind the debate over division and the accounts of what happened following it.

Saleem holds the view that migration and division are the primary causes of the several conflicts waged between India and Pakistan. Due to the divide, there was migration, which created tension, doubt, and mistrust. People on both sides of the split of India and Pakistan moved according to their whims since it created a mental boundary as well as

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a physical one. They moved away from their true homelands in pursuit of happiness and harmony, but they were unable to achieve so. People still fight among themselves because they do not act and believe in the proper ways: Let me clarify that the intent behind the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965 was nothing more or less than the eradication of my benighted family from the face of the planet. It simply takes a careful, objective examination of the bombing patterns from that conflict to comprehend the recent history of our day.

Rushdie is looking for his primary roots, just like his unsettling protagonist. Due to the fact that Salman Rushdie and Saleem were both born in the same year, their stories are similar. In his book, Shame, he clearly states his own facts: As for me, I enjoy all my dreams about migrant workers. I create imaginary countries and attempt to impose them on the real world. I also struggle with the issue of history. What to keep, what to throw away, what to grab onto for that memory that won't let go, and how to handle change. And to get back to the main idea, I should note that I haven't been able to fully shake it.

Similar to Saleem's misunderstanding following the birth of Ganesh, Omar Khayam's emergency child's return to the motherland's consciousness is understated and done in the spirit of a fresh search for roots. Saleem's breakdown is protracted and widespread because he represents the typical male who has acute migration-related problems as a result of "unwanted" partition. Saleem's current situation causes people on both sides to feel rootless: My grandfather Aadam and his wife Naseem are all here, and their throng is pushing, shoving, and crushing me, widening the cracks until pieces of my body are falling off. I am alone in the vastness of the marching one, two, and three, being buffeted right and left as the rip-tear crunch reaches its climax.

Saleem's life nevertheless comes to a still point despite never knowing his father. His three mothers have a natural tendency to open up to him about his father and his secrets. In time, his last admission that he is a peripheral man suggests that there is still some uncertainty about who he is. It is very inevitable that he will fade into eternal anonymity.

"Omar Khayam said," I am a peripheral man. Other people have played the major roles in my life story. I stood in the wings and observed, unsure of how to react. I admit that I engage in social etiquette, only perform my work, and serve as the corner man in other people's wrestling matches. I admit that I hate to sleep."

In Midnight's Children, Saleem attributes his emotional and spiritual breakdown to the division. He suffers from the division on several levels, including migration as well as emotional and spiritual bankruptcy. His wounds were made worse by the emergency during the Indira Gandhi administration. He is a casualty of migration and division. He represents those "midnight's children" whose fate has been constrained by the issue of identification and belonging:

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The curse of Midnight's children causes them to be both the masters and victims of their time; to forsake privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of multitudes; and to be unable to live or die in peace. They will trample me underfoot as the numbers march one, two, three, four hundred million, five hundred sixty, reducing me to specks of voiceless dust.

In order to find peace, harmony, and emotional support after the partition in the wee hours of August 14, 1947, many Muslims moved from India to Pakistan and many Hindus moved from Pakistan to India. But that didn't take place. Their existence became chaotic and anarchic as a result of their unwelcome migration. Not even their own faith accepted them. Their situation now is very different. They are handled similarly to individuals who have emigrated. Even their own kin don't appreciate them. Salman Rushdie provides a philosophical analysis of the issues facing migrants from both sides in Midnight's Children: Finally, the cloud, which rises and spreads and hangs over the nothingness of the scene, until I can no longer see what is no longer there, in the form of a giant, grey, headless man, a figure of dreams, a phantom with one arm raised in a gesture of farewell. The explosion follows, a shockwave that destroys the house. It is followed by the fireballs of her burning.

Salman Rushdie is very concerned about the issues surrounding migration and partition, and he occasionally resorts to violence to denounce corruption and bloodshed brought on by migration and partition. The birth of Saleem Sinai at midnight is a singular event in Midnight's Children. According to the author, this movement for independence is endowed with magical abilities that can be given to newborns. He spends his formative years in Bombay and is assured that the government will follow Saleem's advancement as a representative of a free India. Later, Saleem regrets being under government surveillance.

Salman Rushdie uses Saleem Sinai as his spokesperson because Saleem can help Salman Rushdie uncover hidden truths about the Indian subcontinent.

Midnight Children is a record of the search for identity, longing for roots, and other characteristics of diaspora that are ubiquitous.

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