

## THE CHARACTER PORTRAYAL AND FRAGMENTATION OF SELF IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF SALMAN RUSHDIE

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### **Abstract:**

Postmodern literature is literature characterized by profound reliance on techniques like fragmentation, absurdity, and dubious narrators. Fragmentation is another important aspect of postmodern literature. Various rudiments, concerning plot, characters, themes, imagery and factual references are fragmented and discrete throughout the entire work. In general, there is a sporadic sequence of events, character development and action which can at first glance look modern; it purports, however, to portray a metaphysically unsubstantiated, chaotic universe. Fragmentation can take place in language, sentence structure or grammar. A sense of alienation of character and world is created by a language medium invented to form a kind of intermittent syntax structure which complements the illustration of the main character's subconscious uncertainties and suspicion in the course of his exploration of a seemingly chaotic world. And hence this is depicted well by the involvement of fragmentation as a theme. Hence this is highlighted well in the novels of Salman Rushdie who is a postcolonial writers and he has adopted the theme of postmodern technique fragmentation to depict the chaotic state of the individuals in the structure of the nation. Fragmentation is the ever discussed theme which focuses basically on the quest for self of an individual, and this particular fragmented state of the individual leads him/her towards the peripheral state. This state leads an individual to the marginal position which treats him as an insider-outsider in the existing community. Here the individual is exiled and he strives hard for the identity and there is an identity crisis but, this causes for the unification of the self. The fragmentation in the structure of the nation creates a unified picture of the nation. There is unity in diversity in this particular position of the nation. With the novel *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie forged a new path for novel-writing. In his epic story the main character became split into two in order to show the many facets of Indian culture.

Also, I found that while the lives of the characters are fragmented, the crucial plots of *Midnight's Children* is also fragmented, going back

and forth and telling stories of numerous people and the nation as a whole. In *Midnight's Children*, Salman Rushdie emphasizes pieces and fragments -- both fragmented characters and objects -- which symbolize a fragmented India. Politically speaking, the tension between the single and the many also marks the nation of India itself.

**Keywords:** dubious, intermittent, purports, rudiments, sporadic.

“And there are so many stories to tell, too many, such an excess of intertwined lives events miracles place rumors, so dense a commingling of the improbable and the mundane! I have been a shallower of lives; and to know me, just the one of me, you 11 have to swallow the lot as well.”

- (*Midnight's Children*. 4)

Postmodern literature is literature characterized by profound reliance on techniques like fragmentation, absurdity, and dubious narrators, and is often defined as a style or trend which emerged in the post–World War II era/post colonial era. Postmodern works are seen as a retort against Enlightenment thinking and Modernist approaches to literature. Fragmentation is another important aspect of postmodern literature. Various rudiments, concerning plot, characters, themes, imagery and factual references are fragmented and discrete throughout the entire work. In general, there is a sporadic sequence of events, character development and action which can at first glance look modern; it purports, however, to portray a metaphysically unsubstantiated, chaotic universe.

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Fragmentation is the ever discussed theme which focuses basically on the quest for self of an individual, and this particular fragmented state of the individual leads him/her towards the peripheral state. This state leads an individual to the marginal position which treats him as an insider-outsider in the existing community. Here the individual is exiled and he strives hard for the identity and there is an identity crisis but, this causes for the unification of the self. The fragmentation in the structure of the nation creates a unified picture of the nation. There is unity in diversity in this particular position of the nation.

Sir Ahmed Salman Rushdie the Indian/British writer was born on 19<sup>th</sup> June, 1947, in Bombay (now Mumbai) Maharashtra to Anis Ahmed Rushdie, who is a Cambridge educated businessman and his mother Negin Rushdie is a school teacher. They belong to a Muslim family of Kashmiri descent. Salman Rushdie's early education took place at the Cathedral and John Cannon School for Boys.

Rushdie was educated in England and eventually took his M.A., in History from King's College, Cambridge. Rushdie's career started as a Copywriter, working for the advertising

agency Ogilvy and Mather, and for the advertising agency Ayer Barker, for whom he wrote the memorable line “That’ll do nicely” which came in American Express. It was while he was at Ogilvy that he wrote “*Midnight’s Children*” before becoming a full-time writer.

Salman Rushdie is the author of eleven novels, one collection of short stories, four works of non-fiction and is the -editor of the Vintage Book of Indian Writing. He has received many awards for his writing including the European Union’s Aristoleon Prize for Literature. He is a fellow of *the Royal Society of Literature* and *Commandeur des Aets et des Lettres* of France. Salman Rushdie married four times and divorced too. In 2007 he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for his services to Literature.

The defeat about for truth is evidenced through the narrator's obvious fallibility and through the lack of control that the narrator has over what stories will finally emerge. Rushdie's post-modern fragmented fantasy world is not an excess of belongings; it allows readers to visualize the alternate states of reality present in the text—and the world surrounding them. Through fantasy, Rushdie is able to reject normative views of how history has progressed, and is progressing. Joan Scott discusses the retelling of history as fantasy and utilizes what she refers to as "Fantasy Echo" to support Foucault's vision authorship. She says, "Fantasy is the means by which real relations of identity between past and present are discovered and/or forged. Fantasy is more or less synonymous with imagination and it is taken to be subject or rational, intentional control; one's direct imagination purposively to achieve a coherent aim, that of writing oneself or one's group into history, writing the history of individuals or groups" (Scott.287).

Scott believes that fantasy is not a subjection of the other but rather that it "enables individuals and groups to give themselves histories". Scott and Aijaz offer differing opinions on the nature of storytelling and the author as being the eventual subject. Rushdie's fragmented narration is the only way he can present an unswerving picture. It encapsulates the complex identity issues (of the nation in particular and the self in general) that are dealt with in his texts. His postmodern techniques allow him to question the precincts of an historical past and its effect on the present realities. Kathryn Hume defends Rushdie's postmodern perceptions of Truth in her article "Taking a Stand While Lacking a Center: Rushdie's Postmodern Politics" she asserts that "Rushdie is fascinated and appalled by tyrants and tyranny, and has been from the start of his career. As a postmodern writer, however, he finds effective action against tyrants difficult to conceive" (Hume. Pp.209-210).

She goes on to say that "Postmodern humanity is decentered: how can it take a firm stand against tyranny if decentering removes any solid basis for belief in ethics and political position?" So while Rushdie urges his readers to question reality, he must simultaneously acknowledge that he has no solid ground to stand on. Furthermore he must deal with the issue of the tyrant as one which may exist within himself as "re-shaper" and teller of stories.

With the novel *Midnight’s Children*, Rushdie forged a new path for novel-writing. In his epic story the main character became split into two in order to show the many facets of Indian culture. Instead of gaining an understanding of just one way of life, the reader became privy to all the stories being lived in such places as the Methwold estates, the surreal *Sundarbans (the beautiful gardens)*, and the Magician’s Ghetto. The story of one, single individual was lost in the cacophony of voices that each had their own tale to tell in Rushdie’s novel. This new form of writing, which favored the many over the individual, took departure as a step in the procession of writing that began with what was appropriated from the British to the definition of an Indian identity within a new Indian form.

He claims that this postmodern realm of "non belonging" reinforces the power of the ruling classes because there is no recognition of identity among the subjected. Samir Dayal builds on this idea to create a complex argument that suggests the further disempowerment of women through the "blurring" of identity through fragmentation. Rushdie's fragmented story allows room for manifold histories to exist in one space, and suggests that the myths of a culture can become "a phantom with one arm lifted in a gesture of farewell". While Salman Rushdie mourns the missed opportunities since the time of India's Independence, he also celebrates variety and values difference in his magical narrative, writing about processes of awareness and emancipation, rebirth, passion, hope, and love, articulated through his fictional characters who are struggling with their own fate.

The emblematic figures in his work of fiction are therefore possible voices, which portray the countless diverse colonial, postcolonial, and nowadays globalized voices. Although his characters are fictional, they are, to a certain extent, authentic and overcome Western attributions and descriptions. Besides, the author's magical realistic writing style expresses a genuinely *Third World* consciousness, which provides a liberating response to the codes of imperial history and its heritage of fragmentation and discontinuity, when he points out: "Europe repeats itself, in India, as farce (*Midnight's Children*. 235).

Born at the dawn of Indian independence and destined, upon his death, to break into as many pieces as there are citizens of India, Saleem Sinai manages to represent the entirety of India within his individual self. The notion that a single person could possibly embody a teeming, diverse, multitudinous nation like India encapsulates one of the novel's fundamental concerns: the tension between the single and the many. The influential relationship between Saleem's individual life and the collective life of the nation suggests that public and private will always manipulate one another, but it remains unclear whether they can be completely equated with one another. Throughout the novel, Saleem struggles to contain all of India within himself—to cram his delicate story with the themes and stories of his country—only to disintegrate and collapse at the end of his attempt.

Politically speaking, the tension between the single and the many also marks the nation of India itself. One of the fastest growing nations in the world, India has always been an exceptionally diverse. Its constitution recognizes twenty-two official languages, and the population practices religions as varied as Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, and Buddhism, among many others. Indian culture is similarly hybrid, having been influenced by countless other cultures over the millennia of its development. At the same time, however, maintaining India's rambling diversity in a peaceful fashion has often proved difficult: India's division into the Islamic nation of Pakistan and the secular, but mostly Hindu nation of India—a process known as Partition—remains the most striking example of the desire to contain and reduce India's plurality. In *Midnight's Children*, the child Saleem watches as protestors attempt to do divide the city of Bombay along linguistic lines, another attempt to classify and cordon off multiplicity.

Saleem, a character who contains a whole host of experiences and sensitivities, stands in stark disparity to the protestors who demand their own language-based region, the strict monotheism of Pakistan, and Indira Gandhi's repression of contradictory dissension. His powers of telepathy allow him to surpass the barriers of language, while he himself—with his English blood, poor background, wealthy upbringing, and eclectic religious influences—reflects India's diversity and range. The 'Midnight Children's Conference' that he convenes is, in its initial phase, a model for pluralism and a testimony to the potential power inherent within coexisting

diversity, which is a natural and definitive element of Indian culture. In *Midnight's Children*, the desire for singularity or purity—whether of religion or culture—breeds not only intolerance but also violence and authoritarianism.

Saleem claims that, much like his narrative, he is physically falling apart. His body is riddled with cracks, and, as a result, the past is spilling out of him. His story, extend out over sixty-three years, is a fragmented narrative, oscillating back and forth between past and present and frequently broken up further by Saleem's interjections. In addition to the narrative and physical fragmentation, India itself is fragmented. Torn apart by Partition, it is divided into two separate countries, with the east and west sections of Pakistan on either side of India. This division is taken even further when East and West Pakistan are reclassified as two separate countries, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Within India, language marchers disconcert for further partitions based upon linguistic lines. New nationalities are fashioned, and with them come new forms of cultural identity that reflect the constant divisions.

The perforated sheet through which Aadam Aziz falls in love with his future wife performs several different symbolic functions throughout the novel. Unable to see his future wife as a whole, Aadam falls in love with her in pieces. As a result, their love never has a cohesive unit that holds them together. Their love is fragmented, just as their daughter Amina's attempts to fall in love with her husband are also fragmented. Obsessed by the memory of her previous husband, Amina embarks on a campaign to fall in love with her new husband in sections, just as her father once fell in love with her mother. Despite her best attempts, Amina and Ahmed's love also lacks the completion and unity necessary for indubitable love to thrive. The hole of the perforated sheet represents a portal for vision but also a void that goes unfilled. The perforated sheet makes one final manifestation with Jamila Singer: in an attempt to preserve her purity, she shrouds herself completely, except for a single hole for her lips. The perforated sheet, in addition to preserving her purity, also reduces to her to nothing more than a voice. The sheet becomes a veil that separates her from the rest of the world and reflects her inability to accept affection.

Globalization and colonization understanding have created a group of people with more than one identity. They live between two cultures but they don't fit perfectly into either of them. As a result, they suffer from a loss of cultural and personal identity. When callous to find out who they really are, some intellectual people turn to literature as the last refuge of their souls. *Midnight's Children*, a distinguished novel written by the British Indian novelist Salman Rushdie employs magical realism to assemble such a character. Besides depicting colonial history and tyranny, this novel shows that colonization experience stays in people's hearts for several generations and causes their lives to fall apart and become fragmented.

The protagonist of *Midnight's Children* is called Saleem Sinai, a child who's born "at the precise instant of India's independence" (*Midnight's Children*.3). He is a child who doesn't have much alliance about his biological parents. He finds out accidentally that the family he has lived with for the past is not his real family, and that his biological mother died when giving birth to him. Saleem is mandatory to accept the reality that he will never have a chance to meet his real parents and form a simple, normal relationship with his real family members like other people do. As a result of not knowing who he really is, Saleem feels that his life is broken into pieces. At the beginning of the novel, Saleem tells the readers that his time is running out and that he is "crumbling" (*Midnight's Children*.3).

In the chapter titled *Tick, tock*, Saleem says that "my inheritance includes this gift, the gift of inventing new parents for myself whenever necessary. The power of giving birth to fathers and mothers: which Ahmed wanted and never had (*Midnight's Children*. Pp.144-145)."

From the quotations above, readers can see that his real identity has exceeded the proportions of reality and because he feels broken inside, he could only look for some comfort in creating literature. The relationship between parents and children are one of the most fundamental relationships in the universe. However, the real identity of Saleem is a secret to him from the moment he was born. In addition, because of his special birth, he possesses supernatural powers and his fate is linked with the fate of his country. All these things make him wonder about his identity and “identityless” somewhat becomes the synonym to his identity.

The loss of identity is also exemplified by Saleem’s grandfather, Aadam Aziz. When he came back from Germany after finishing his medical studies, he starts to see things differently and when he tries to enumerate verses from the Quran, he starts to question his beliefs. Having experienced a European culture and gained some new perspectives, he could not pretend like nothing has ever happened. Therefore, he “was knocked forever into that middle place, unable to worship a God in whose existence he could not wholly disbelieve” (*Midnight’s Children*.7). As a consequence of which, “a permanent alteration: a hole” was formed inside him (*Midnight’s Children*.7). If he had not gone to Europe to pursue a degree, his esteemed beliefs and values would still be intact and invulnerable. However, studying abroad for five years changed him and his former life starts to be torn into pieces. Also, some objects in Saleem’s grandfather’s life are also fragmented. One example of these could be the perforated sheet, through which he examines Naseem Ghani’s body.

Also, I found that while the lives of the characters are fragmented, the crucial plots of *Midnight’s Children* is also fragmented, going back and forth and telling stories of numerous people and the nation as a whole. Stories are not told in a sequential order and the author seems reluctant to reveal all his secrets at once. The technique of fragmentation is significant because it enables the readers to get a sense of what it is like to have multiple identities. There is not a specific noun those people can use to describe their identities and they feel that their lives and memories are broken and can’t be assembled back in concert.

The fragmentation is important, not only because it characterizes Saleem’s thoughts and embodies the lack of identity of the Indian culture, but it also creates a stream of consciousness feel to it. The book begins with Saleem immediately delving into his treasure trove of stories and secrets, because he feels he is about to die and does not have much time left to tell them. Naturally, this leaves him in a frenzied state where he does not necessarily think of events in a linear and orderly fashion. Rather the events are offered in the order in which Saleem thinks of them. While he tries to present them in a linear fashion, we as readers can see which events Saleem prioritizes simply by noting which events he brings up at a time which they break the linear timeline. A whole paper could be written which events Saleem brings up out of order, or randomly, and how perhaps they show what values, events, and memories Saleem’s subconscious deem the most important or the most memorable. So while the reader pays attention to the events in an attempt to piece together a linear chain of events that our minds prefer, perhaps it is equally important to focus on the order in which they are discussed by Saleem.

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dissection is taken even further when East and West Pakistan are reclassified as two separate countries, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Within India, language marchers agitate for further partitions based upon linguistic lines. New nationalities are created, and with them come new forms of cultural identity that reflect the constant divisions.

Saleem, a character who contains a multitude of experiences and sensitivities, stands in stark contrast to the protestors who demand their own language-based region, the strict monotheism of Pakistan, and Indira Gandhi's repression of contradictory dissension. His powers of telepathy allow him to transcend the barriers of language, while he himself—with his English blood, poor background, wealthy upbringing, and eclectic religious influences—reflects India's diversity and range. The Midnight Children's Conference that he convenes is, in its initial phase, a model for pluralism and a testimony to the potential power inherent within coexisting diversity, which is a natural and definitive element of Indian culture. In *Midnight's Children*, the desire for singularity or purity—whether of religion or culture—breeds not only intolerance but also violence and repression.

In *Midnight's Children*, Salman Rushdie emphasizes pieces and fragments -- both fragmented characters and objects -- which symbolize a fragmented India. The perforated sheet serves as the first major form of fragmentation the reader encounters. Through this sheet, Aadam is introduced to and falls in love with Naseem. Rushdie writes,

My grandfather had fallen in love, and had come to think of the perforated sheet as something sacred and magical, because through it had seen which filled up the hole inside which had been created when he had been hit on the nose by a tussock and insulted by the boatman Tai. [*Midnight's Children*. 23]

The multiple levels of fragmentation here, when teased out further, begin to reveal larger forms of fragmentation. The previous passage hints at the multiple forms of a disjointed India. First, we have the love that grows between Saleem's parents as a result of this perforated sheet. Aadam is only allowed to see Naseem in pieces. Only after months of taking care of her is her entire body revealed to him. This experience, in turn, results in a fragmented love between the two. Fragmented love is then, in turn, passed down in the family. Aadam and Naseem's daughter, Mumtaz "began to train herself to love [Ahmed]. To do this she divided him, mentally, into every single one of his component parts, physically, as well as behaviorally, compartmentalizing him into lips and verbal tics and prejudices" (*Midnight's Children*.73). Rushdie emphasizes the fragments within the family. The family that Saleem is born into is not one built of true love but a love forced and pieced together.

Only by careful introspection can Saleem acknowledge that he too is fragmented. He explains that

"the ghostly essence of the perforated sheet, which doomed my mother to learn to love a man in segments, and which condemned me to see my own life -- its meaning, its structures -- in fragments also; so that by the time I understood it, it was far too late" (*Midnight's Children*. 119).

By being born at the stroke of midnight on the day of India's independence, Saleem's life is broken into two parts: that of the old India and that of the new. He will forever be doomed to live life split down the middle, a life with a supporting "structure" that is unstable.

Rushdie also mentions the "hole inside" Aadam, "which had been created when he had been hit on the nose by a tussock" (*Midnight's Children*. 23). This hole represents the religious void within Aadam. After hitting his nose while praying, "he resolved never again to kiss earth

for any god or man" (*Midnight's Children* .4). Aadam may very well be a symbol of the religious segmentation, which leads to hostility, in India.

This religious resentment appears in the treatment of Lifafa Das, the peepshow peddler. Lifafa's encounter with the little girl who wants to go "firih" reveals, to the already slightly hysterical town, that he is a Hindu. Das has been forced to hide his religion from the community. His unmasking makes apparent the religious intolerance created by fragmentation. When she is told to wait her turn, the little girl cries out, "You've got a nerve coming into the *muhalla*! I know you: my father knows you: everyone knows you're a Hindu" (*Midnight's Children*.82). Because of his religion, Lifafa (the envelope in Hindi) is then called a "Mother raper" and "violation of [their] daughters." This incident demonstrates that India was already fragmented into *muhallas*, even before its greater fragmentation into two countries -- India and Pakistan.

The position of the author as the subject is the crux of Rushdie's necessity for exploration. Rushdie recurrently uses the narrator's voice to defend his message. His defense is so convincing that it seems that Rushdie's narrator could be speaking directly to the critics who question his methods of creation. He acknowledges the "off-centering" as necessity, because of the inevitability of the "missing bits". So he chooses to tell many stories, and question each of them. The Narrator highlights this exploration telling a story about a country that is not "Pakistan, or not quite".

The narrator explains that,

"There are two countries, real and fictional, occupying the same space. My story, my fictional country exists, like myself, at a slight angle to reality. I have found this off-centering to be necessary; but its value is, of course, open to debate. My view is that I am not writing only about Pakistan.

(*Shame*. 22).

Throughout *Shame* readers will be introduced to multiple stories, all of which are necessary to the whole. But their swap states of subsistence are persistently questioned. The story of Bilquis was reshaped by other characters who insisted upon a falsely created narrative, but the creation of stories affects the narrator also. Hume points to an extremely effective moment in *Shame* when the narrator explains, "Well, well, I mustn't forget I'm only telling a fairy-story. My dictator will be toppled by goblinish, faerie means. "Makes it pretty easy for you," is the obvious criticism; and I agree, I agree. But add, even if it does sound a little peevish: 'You try and get rid of a dictator some time'" (Hume. 210).

Rushdie's narrator is shielding his storytelling manner as well as the author, who has been assigned the role of "subject". It is not known who assigned these roles, but it is coming up to be uncovered, somewhere beneath the palimpsest tale. Dictatorship and oppression are central to the biased struggles illustrated within the "fairy story," but the numerous levels of participation amid the narrator of the text and the teller of the story forces readers to question how many dictators are present.

Even so the narrator tells readers the story—as he should. For the reason that the fragmented stories which serve as metaphors, *Shame* could be considered the profane forerunner of the notorious novel, but it is much less contentious on the surface. Although Rushdie uses postmodern techniques to create an exceptionally contemptuous milieu, it is less unpleasant than a rewriting of the *Qur'an*. But both novels are perplexing the power history has in forming our present realities. In due course, one could hope that as the myth of the undeviating of history over at hand reality floats away there is room for incredible else to become visible, and it



becomes manifest throughout the text that the story which should be told is the story of the women.

On the whole, I think the idea of disintegration is very essential because it better characterizes colonial and post-colonial understanding and also, it makes the reader conscientious for weaving the whole thing together. In the process of doing so, the readers will get a sagacity of the psychological consequences of colonization and disembark at a better observant of the novel and the history of India.

Politically communicating, the anxiety involving the distinct and the many also marks the nation of India itself. One of the furthestmost budding nations in the world, India has always been an unusually assorted. Its constitution recognizes twenty-two certified languages, and the population practices religions as different as Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, and Buddhism, among several others. Indian culture is correspondingly hybrid, having been influenced by innumerable other cultures over the millennia of its growth. At the same time, conversely, maintaining India's extensive multiplicity in a serene method has often proved complicated: India's division into the Islamic nation of Pakistan and the secular, but by and large Hindu nation of India a process known as Partition remains the most striking example of the desire to contain and reduce India's plurality. In *Midnight's Children*, the child Saleem watches as protestors endeavor to do segregate the city of Bombay along linguistic lines, another endeavor to classify and hurdle off assortment.

#### CONCLUSION:

For this cause in the ultimate remarks I would like to give a brief note of the a number of aspects dealt in, in the works of Salman Rushdie concerning the fragmented state of the different characters in his novels as well as the fragmented state of the nation being represented in the novels with unreal names. In his novels *Grimus*, *Midnight's Children*, *Shame*, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, *Shalimar the Clown*, *Fury*, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, *Ground Beneath Her Feet*, *Luka And the Fire of Life*, so on and so forth he depicts the exiled and alienated state of the different characters which are obsessed towards the subsidiary/peripheral position and as a final point they are located in the fragmented and the bewilderment position. Hence, this at last leads an individual towards achieving the decisive position. That is, he encounters the pessoptimistic conditions existing in the nation. Rushdie is viewing the nation from a positive outlook. He intends and negotiates for a 'social change' which undeniably helps us a lot to attain the ultimate truth of the realistic world.

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