

THE MIDNIGHT CHILDREN: A JOURNEY FROM THE NOVEL TO THE FILM

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Abstract

A 'film adaptation' is the process of producing a new work based on an existing literary work or source material. In the film industry, this procedure has grown in popularity. Literature and film are two different but equally surprising forms of art. Both of these media have the ability to take readers or viewers to a different world, despite their differences and similarities. Many literary masterpieces have been adapted for the big screen. Cinema is thought to be a powerful medium that can depict societal events. Movies that are based on Indian novels have attempted to analyze the books and their film adaptations. This paper carefully examines the worldwide appeal and film adaptations of Deepa Mehta's *The Midnight Children*. The 2012 movie *The Midnight Children*, which is based on Salman Rushdie's Booker Prize-winning novel, examines the main themes of migration, memories, and fragmentation in addition to the effects of colonialism in India and neocolonialism and the relationship between history and personal experiences. The significance of this work, in Rushdie's opinion, must also be viewed within the framework of a larger global movement that could be referred to as global modernism. The aim of this paper is to present a thorough analysis of the process of adapting *The Midnight's Children* for the big screen, as well as to assess the adaptation's achievements and shortcomings. It will also shed light on the work's cultural significance and the way it is portrayed in the film medium.

Keywords: adaptations, accessibility identity, Immigration, modernisation,

Introduction

Since independence, Indian English literature, especially novels, has grown to be a significant component of the world literary canon. They have gained international recognition for their vivid portrayal of the multifaceted, multicultural, and multilingual facets of Indian society, and they are widely read, with a well-known theme. The lengthy period of independence, the mentalities of those who survived British rule, the need for identity, and the stunning pre-colonial India were all uniquely combined in Indian novels. Several Indian English novelists have established themselves as some of the greatest writers in the world, including Jhumpa Lahiri, Salman Rushdie, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Arundhati Roy, and Aravind Adiga. In addition, they have received numerous prestigious literary awards in India and abroad.

People from many states, who practice a wide range of customs and rituals, and who, most importantly, speak nearly twenty-two different languages and innumerable dialects make up India's rich and varied culture. The introduction of English to India has been advantageous to its citizens. According to Lord Macaulay, it was initially introduced in India with the express purpose of advancing educational reform and creating a group of working-class men who would be English in taste but Indian in blood and color. However, over time, English proved to be helpful and gave many Indian writers from all over the country a common platform to share their ideas, opinions, and thoughts with the world. Many Indian novelists took the initiative to write about societal issues such as dowry systems, child marriage, casteism, sati-pratha, widespread superstitions, and illiteracy. Raja Ram Mohan Roy had pioneered such writings. He made an effort to educate Indians about their culture and society and to persuade them to refrain from such harsh behaviors. This led to a number of important literary developments that popularized Indian themes and concepts globally. Following colonization, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, and Mulk Raj Anand emerged as the three main authors of Indian English novels. They had a profound impact on the global perception of Indian literature.

Some outstanding novels are becoming more and more well-known worldwide as a result of their "film adaptations." The term "film adaptation" describes the process of producing an original work based on a current literary work or other source material. This approach has become more and more common in the film industry since a lot of well-known movies are reinterpretations of previously published works of literature. The study of film adaptation provides important insights into the cultural significance of films as well as their creative process. The popular and contentious topic of book-to-film adaptations has sparked debate and interest among scholars, filmmakers, and viewers. Novel adaptations can benefit from film in a number of ways, including bringing narratives to life visually, reaching a larger audience that might not have read the book, increasing engagement through visual elements, generating interest in the original book, offering a fresh viewpoint on the story, and occasionally using illustrations to clarify intricate plot points. Classic novel adaptations have the power to rekindle interest in the original work by telling timeless tales to new generations of viewers. Through the use of visual cues to convey motivations and emotions, actors' performances in film adaptations can offer a deeper understanding of characters. Occasionally, a movie will simplify intricate storylines or novel ideas to make them simpler for audiences to comprehend.

Salman Rushdie was a direct observer of the suffering caused by the division of India, having been born just months before it occurred. The political and social environments in India and Pakistan after their independence had a significant impact on his writings. *The Midnight's Children*, the book that made him famous worldwide, is a fictionalized history of India following its separation and independence from Britain. After this work was published, he became one of the most well-known authors of Indian English literature in England. This is one of the best examples of magical realism. Saleem Sinai, the book's main character, was born on the day India gained its independence. He was given special abilities and the ability to communicate with each other telepathically, along with the 1001 other children born on that momentous day. Rushdie used subtle humor to satirize India's social and political conditions while fabricating a false image of the country. Rushdie's writing was greatly influenced by history. He says: "Literature revalues history by shifting the point of view, by demystifying, by seeing what was always there to be seen, what we would have seen if the conjurers of power had not been trying so hard to distract our attention."

Salman Rushdie's book *Midnight's Children* was viewed by people worldwide after it was published and produced for Netflix. Following its 1981 publication, it was awarded both the Booker Prize and the "James Tait Black Memorial Prize." In 1993 and 2008, it was also recognized with two "Best of the Booker" awards. The book is regarded as a classic of magical realism, postmodern, and postcolonial literature. In 2018, it was announced that Netflix would make *Midnight's Children* a global original series. Netflix subscribers in more than 190 countries were supposed to be able to watch the series. The book was hailed by critics as a literary masterpiece, and Rushdie was somewhat compared to the greatest modern authors in the world. The book enthralled readers all over the world and sold over a million copies in the UK alone. This postcolonial novel examines India's journey from British colonial rule to independence. It also examines issues of history, identity loss, change, and identity. As Salman Rushdie notes: "I wanted to write a kind of magic realist history of India" (Rushdie, 2021).

Saleem Sinai has telepathic skills that allow him to communicate with other children who were born simultaneously. Rushdie examines how colonialism's effects and the development of modern India are reflected in Saleem's history. The book has won numerous accolades for its creative storytelling style, which blends magic realism, political satire, and historical fiction to create a unique depiction of India's past and present. *Midnight's Children* has been praised for its ability to challenge accepted historical interpretations and offer a powerful critique of the political and cultural forces that have shaped modern-day India. According to Rushdie:

"The idea of a child being born at the exact moment of a nation's birth, and then the child growing up to reflect the nation's journey, is a powerful one" (Rushdie, 2021).

Salman Rushdie explores the topic of identity disintegration in the context of modern life, which is grounded in postcolonial theory. The protagonist of the book, Saleem Sinai, and other characters illustrate the intricate relationship between modernism and belonging, reflecting the loss and reorganization of both national and personal identities in India following independence. As he negotiates the difficulties of linguistic diversity, ethnic hybridization, and political instability, the legacy of colonialism consumes much of his thoughts. The conflict between tradition and modernity, as well as the challenge of reconciling the past and present, exacerbate his mental health issues. As he fights against persecution and cultural displacement, Saleem's experiences demonstrate how colonialism negatively impacts mental health. His mental health problems highlight the deeper psychological effects of colonialism and the formation of postcolonial identities by illuminating the intimate connections between traumatic events on a personal and social level.

Filmmakers found it extremely challenging to adapt *Midnight's Children* for the big screen due to the novel's complex topic storytelling style. Critics and viewers gave the Deepa Mehta-directed movie adaptation varying reviews when it was released in 2012. Despite effectively capturing the story's political and cultural issues, critics have pointed out that the adaptation lacks the original work's narrative coherence and character development. The film's imaginative depth and historical scope are indisputable, despite its somewhat disjointed plot. Fans, however, have praised the film for its flawless execution of Rushdie's vision and its extravagant visuals. According to Peter Bradshaw, a film critic,

"Mehta's film has real sweep and grandeur, even if it does serve to reinforce the themes of the novel and create a unique vision for the screen. Despite the mixed reviews, the adaptation of *Midnight's Children* has been widely

recognized for its visual impact and its success in bringing Rushdie's novel to a wider audience."

Through its creative use of distinctive effects, such as constructing a magical world in which the children of *Midnight* may communicate telepathically, the movie has received praise for its capacity to evoke the mystical elements of the book. Furthermore, it is well known for its relevance and significance because it explores political and cultural subjects like the effects of colonialism and the development of modern India. The film examines political and cultural factors that have shaped India's past and present in a discerning and thought-provoking manner. The film has made significant progress in the discussion of postcolonial writing and the influence of political and cultural factors on national identity because of its capacity to bring these crucial issues to the public's attention.

Two different perspectives on the novel's themes and narrative style can be found in Salman Rushdie's "*Midnight's Children*" and Deepa Mehta's film adaptation of the same name. Although both pieces examine the effects of colonialism and the creation of contemporary India, they diverge greatly in how they handle character growth, story organization, and aesthetics. The way the protagonist, Saleem Sinai, is portrayed in the novel and the movie is one of the main differences. Saleem is a multifaceted and complex character in the book, and the examination of issues like nationalism and identity is heavily reliant on his relationships and experiences. It is a book about the birth of a country as well as the birth of a person. Some have argued that this change in character development takes away from the original text's depth and complexity. The use of visual style and effects is another significant distinction between the novel and the movie. The film primarily uses visual effects to communicate its themes and story, whereas the novel is distinguished by its imaginative and intricately detailed prose. Although the film's visual spectacle successfully conveys Rushdie's vision, critics have pointed out that its narrative coherence and structure are lacking.

Salman Rushdie's novel "*Midnight's Children*" and its Deepa Mehta-directed film adaptation have quite different narrative structures. With its unusual narrative style, which combines historical fiction, political satire, and magic realism, the book offers a distinctive and engrossing look at India's past and present. In order to examine themes of identity, nationalism, and the junctions of history and personal narrative, the main character, Saleem Sinai, weaves together historical events with his own life story.

The movie adaptation, on the other hand, takes a simpler and more linear approach to the storyline. The film frequently forgoes the intricacy of the original text in favor of a more approachable and aesthetically pleasing narrative, even though it still captures the novel's political and cultural themes. Although the film's plot is not entirely cohesive, its imaginative depth and historical scope are undeniable. One significant change in the movie adaptation is the elimination of this subplot, which both streamlines the story and lessens the original text's depth and complexity. The most noticeable alteration is the lack of several subplots that are crucial to the book but are omitted from the movie version.

The absence of Padma is one of the main distinctions between Deepa Mehta's film adaptation and Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children*. Padma, a prominent character in Saleem's life in the book, pushes the plot along and begs Saleem to stay on course. She also regularly raises doubts about the veracity of Saleem's testimony. She represents the political and cultural forces that influence India and acts as a romantic interest. Nevertheless, Padma is absent from the movie adaptation, and some have criticized this as a major loss to the story and character growth.

Conclusion

In recent years, the Indian Anglo novel has experienced a resurgence in popularity as new writers have begun experimenting with various themes and techniques. These novels provide a new and perceptive perspective on modern Indian daily life while also capturing the nation's shifting social, political, and cultural landscape. Indian English novels are important because they offer a critical analysis of current Indian issues as well as a distinctive and priceless insight into Indian society and culture. Novels written in Indian English today stand out for their creative themes, approaches, and themes. These books provide a new and perceptive look at modern Indian life and culture through magic realism, political and social commentary, or comedy and satire. A film adaptation such as *The Midnight Children* can use actors, music, sound, and visual storytelling to make a story come to life. Despite criticism of the films' overuse of spectacular effects and simplistic plot, one could argue that the adaptation successfully conveys the political and cultural issues raised in the book while offering a distinctive cinematic vision. Indian films are becoming more and more successful in reaching and being recognized globally as a result of the numerous new subjects, the national accolades they receive, and the film adaptations.

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