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HISTORICAL REALITY AND POLITICAL HISTORY IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN: A CRITICAL STUDY

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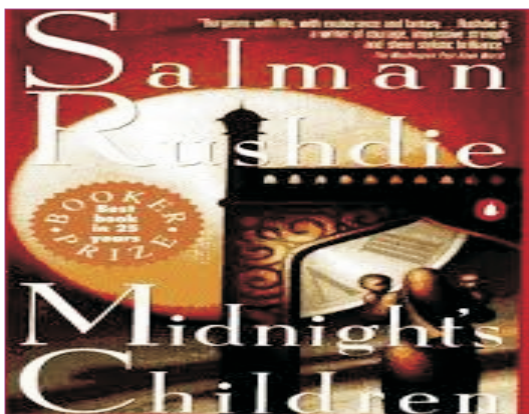
ABSTRACT:-

Rushdie, with a sleight of his hand, has conjured up a new trend by mixing free-flight fairy-tale with savage political indictment. He has transformed his novel *Midnight's children* into a political history, giving it a comic strain. The narrator, Saleem, who suffers from amnesia and emotional numbness as a consequence of the death of his parents is, enrolled in a unit she- dog unit in place of a tracker-dog. Through the bare facts given about the political events in the novel, we get a clear indication of the depth of human degradation. This is symbolic of the bestiality of the 1971 war itself as it too had a dimension of cruelty and horror. When the war is over and the narrator finds himself in India, he finds the doings of unscrupulous politicians just as inimical to humanity as the war had been. Saleem enters this work in a moment of political reality at the precise insure of India's arrival at independence. I tumbled into the world. Right from the beginning Saleem is conscious of his historical 'centrality' and his being mysteriously handcuffed to history, his destiny being indissolubly chained to that of his country. Born at midnight on August 15, 1947, the moment of India's independence, Saleem's story has a representative significance, for his birth and upbringing are meant to parallel that of India.

KEYWORDS: Partition, Subsequent, Representative, Destiny, Abandon, Progress.

INTRODUCTION :

The novel, however, encompasses over one hundred years of Indian history, since Saleem feels that his begetting is as much a part of his story as is his birth. The novel covers different periods of Indian history. Such as the era of British rule, the struggle for independence, horrors of partition, the progress of the two nations of India and Pakistan, Indo-Pakistani wars the creation of Bangladesh, and Indian politics in the 1970s. Saleem's dilemma plays out against the backdrop of the first years of independence, the partition of India and Pakistan, the ascendancy of 'The widow' Indira Gandhi and eventually the imposition of martial law. If we ponder over the chosen periods, the first marked the end of the long period of colonial rule and the beginning of free India, the



second put an end to the short but controversial period of Mrs. Gandhi's emergency rule, during which the hard-won freedom was severely threatened. Rushdie understands the importance of these two events and the connection he perceives between them determines the shape of this period for him. Thus, the time order that defines the historical novel of the narrative is cyclical and regenerative in Rushdie.

Rushdie is also intent on showing how the ideals of seculars, egalitarian India expressed in the movement for independence are shattered by subsequent political developments and how the dream becomes a nightmare by the 1970s. *Midnight's children*, in other words, are a satire.

On Indian politics and political corruption, despotism, war-mongering, and zealotry Rushdie sees everywhere in contemporary India. It is also a novel of India's growing up from its special, gifted infancy to its very ordinary, drained adulthood. Another important and noteworthy event is the declaration of justice Jaggmohanjudgment by Allahabad High Court setting aside the election of Mrs. Gandhi under the provision of misuse of peoples representative Act. This led to the declaration of emergency by Mrs. Gandhi and the eventual birth of the Janata party under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan. The birth pangs of the Janata Party are metaphorically put, currently connecting it with those of Parvati, the witch, at the time of birth of Andum Sinai. Saleem's son is born at midnight of the day when Indian Gandhi clamped down emergency rule on India. Parvati's thirteen-day labour coincides with the thirteen days of political tumult when Indira refused to resign after the verdict of the Allahabad High Court. On the contrary she proclaimed emergency.

It leads him to an interpretation of India's pre-1947 past, which he intermittently invokes the novel to put post-1947 also in purview. The novel includes all the significant details connected with it from the time the Allahabad High Court found Mrs. Gandhi guilty to the point the emergency was actually declared by her. By banning dissent of any and every kind, it brought the democratic process to a grinding halt and led to the arrest of a large number of people with trenchant irony. We are told that the arrested people include 'anyone who had ever made the mistake of sneezing during the madam's speeches' metaphorically, if the birth of Saleem's emergency. His sickness symbolizes the sickness of the entire nation. Through the narrator, the author expresses his anxiety to finish his account before he crumbles under its weight and this clarifies that for both of them history has meaning and value. He is writing history because his future is going to crumble and paradoxically, he wants to remember the past before he forgets it.

Though it is loosely based on actual events, Rushdie is clear that is a story of memory that necessarily distorts and re-chronologies according to its whims. Rushdie in *Midnight's Children* when talking of the Sindhi neighbor's daughter coming out in the street to enjoy the peepshow describes her looks and then he interrogates his memory for her name. He replies that he does not know her name. This is evidence in itself to show how he uses memory to recall real names, and had his novels been works of pure fiction; the name of the girl could have been easily coined. In fact in *Imaginary Homelands*, he is explicitly clear that some of the details are blatantly wrong, and he deliberates them to be so. If the performed sheet is a symbolic anticipation of the fragmented history of India, Dr. Aziz's 'sectioned' patient Naseem keeps pace with the developments of the First World War.

In this Rushdie departs from both the extremist postmodern and post-structural positions and writes from a moderate position which denies both. The true import of emergency is suggested through the popularization of the new slogan of 'India is Indira and Indira is India' this new dictatorial slogan shamelessly legitimized the seemingly constitutional process style, and is censured by Rushdie who equates it with the most despicable despots with no regard for the country and its people. He also links these developments with the children who were born along with the new nation. In practice Saleem's solecisms go further than the normally acceptable, for example, he admits to chronological inaccuracy in dating the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi but refuses to consider correcting his mistake. There are a few inaccuracies that are erroneous but not as oversight or mis-representation. As he, through Saleem, admits, then it occurs to me that I have made another error that the election of 1957 took place before/ and not after, my tenth birthday whereas Saleem has his mother compacting in the summer of 1957. Rushdie has no reluctance in confessing that the novel does contain a few mistakes there are mine as well as Saleem's. But he is not writing any factual history he is drawing upon history through the process of filtration. Saleem and through Saleem, the author therefore, is no dispassionate disinterested chronicler. Rushdie further refers to the China war with many recollections at variance with literal facts, with memory playing tricks with the brain. He clings to false memory in preference to where internal happenstance. He favors remembered truth against the literal truth.

Rushdie, in an interview to David Brooks, says, that he has always used a kind of historical method, in the completely unmethodical way which is the luxury of fiction. I do think this connection of history and story important to remember. The Italian word *storia* means both things, the Urdu word *pis* means a tale and it means story. Thus this novel can be read *inter alia* as the unfolding of the twentieth century Indian, the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy, Quit India movement, cabinet mission, freedom movement, Muslim League and its role,

riots and bloodshed subsequent to the independence, five years plans, reorganization of Indian states and language riots, Chinese aggression, the theft of the sacred relic from the Hazratbal mosque, Pakistan war, Liberation of Bangladesh the emergency the military coup in Pakistan in 1958 and various other historically important events. There are also typically Indian divisions and dissents, chaos and disillusion, communal tensions and religious fanaticism midnights childrens prefigures shame in depicting the realities of political life and the abuses of dictatorial power. Rushdie with the depiction of Indian Gandhi as Black widow locates her as historical reality and monstrous fantasy.

The varied political histories of national and international level crisscross at many turns and are blended together beautifully Rushdie chooses symbol, for example, he uses the symbol of weapon to explain personal history and links it with political history so that there is no compartmentalization. He gives us the meaning of the name zulfikar which is meant to be a weapon and by mentioning weapon Rushdie makes the readers travel into world's history. Here parallel to the narrows abiographicalhistorythe weapon for example the bomb is dropped at Japan on the very same day when Emerald uses her own secret weapon. If the name Zulfikar is the two-pronged sword carried by Ali, the nephew of the prophet Muhammad, it is also the weapon such as the world had never seen before, just as the weapon which was dropped on yellow people.

Before the partition the extremists of R.S.S party dabbed the symbol of the Swastika on every wall. In the western world, it is its usage as a symbol of Nazism that is most familiar. They are informed that this is the ancient Hindu Symbol of progression and success, sanskrit word for prosperity and not the representation of evil. The great partition itself has been given a commit treatment when he writes that in Bombay there is a rotting bus abandoned just for the mere reason that its driver suddenly decides to leave for Pakistan. We are also informed about the Portuguese invasion and the subsequent naming of the city of Mumbai. This city under the presiding influence of the goddess Mumbadevi, whose name Mumbadevi, Mumbabai Mumbai may well have become the city's name but the Portuguese named the place Bom Bahia for its harbour. We are given a short history of the city Bombay, that the Portuguese were the first invaders before 1633 when an east Indian company officer named methwold came and set the history of India in motion, with charles It's betrothal to Catherine of the Portuguese house of Braganzar, the city came as dowry to the of British hands in 1660.

Through methwold's whimsical terms while selling his estate we got to know that British were fond of dominating Indians, however illogical it might be. This peculiar habit reflects the persistence of the colonial intermixed with the postcolonial. The conditions on which the departing Englishman williammethwold sells his 'Estate' in Bombay by partitioning it among four ethnically varied Indian families are that they might have the house cheap but must retain everything as it is all his furniture and fittings and carry on just as he did. The small numbers of British apparently were able to control an almost immeasurably larger Indian population through their hegemonic power which is to say that there were particular elements in the system of colonial and imperial power of the British in India that made it work. Some characters are used to expose the evils of colonization. Methwoldis one such grotesque caricature whom Rushdie has used to express his views about the history of colonial exploitation in the subcontinent. Even with the transfer of power and the change of rulers, Indians were never free from psychological attachment to the west are very much like methwold's conditions, Lord Mountbatten signed over the British claim to India.

That the British considered themselves to be superior and better than the Indians is clear from the difference in the treatment they gave to latter. The incident of Mr.PushpaRoy, India's first swimmer of the English Channel, when not allowed using whites-only Breach candy pool just because this swimmer was wearing Indian flat colour clothes which clearly meant that he did not belong to the better sort who were definitely Europeans. Thus one more thing becomes clear that acceptance of transfer of the power from British rule to Independence was gradual.

Rushdie propagates secularism whenever he gets a chance. In St.Thomas cathedral when MaryPereira is in discussion with the young priest about the colour of God, he suggests that it is the 'blue' like Hindu love-God Krishna. He further explains that it will be a sort of bridge between the faiths; gently does it, you follow: and besides blue is a neutral sort of colour, avoids the usual colour problems, gets you away from black and white: yes, on the whole I am sure it is the one to choose.

The society, too, bears effects of the political conditions prevalent at that time which always pre-occupied minds of natives. We notice that in the course of narration when Mary is discussing the climatic conditions of Bombay, Joseph remarks that the wind he is shifting at in Bombay does not come from the west but from the north. He is pointing at the ongoing riots in Punjab and Bengal and comments that 'this independence is for the rich only; the poor are being made to kill each other like flies'.

Rushdie accounts events, politics and even the mood of the nation, including that of Pakistan. He characterizes the short-lived Indian mood at the time of the Chinese invasion as the 'disease of optimism' though it was labeled variously by others as an era of industrial peace, of emotional integration, and as one which strengthened people's faith in their government.

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