

Asian Resonance

Midnight's Children: An Allegory of the 1975 National Emergency



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Abstract

It is an attempt to show how Rushdie allegorizes the 1975 National Emergency, India's greatest political crisis since independence, in his prominent work *Midnight's Children*. The main concern of this paper is to understand how Rushdie articulates the historical fact by dissolving historical events, shattering the plot, bringing the myth and memory, and strategically navigating the point of view and manages to revive the basis for treating the narrative as an allegorical mode of representation. Though this novel is a very comprehensive work that deals with the complex events of Indian national history such as JallianwalaBagh massacre, Indian Independence, the partition and its aftermath, this paper inquires how the most precarious condition of the 1975 Emergency period is allegorized by Rushdie.

Keywords: Rushdie, Allegorize, National Emergency, Political Crisis, Historical Fact.

Introduction

Rushdie's novel that consists of *Book One*, *Book Two* and *Book Three*, begins with his detailed introduction to it. He says that his creative construction began in 1977 and ended in mid-1979. When it was published, he recounts his reader's responses as follows, "In the west people tended to read *Midnight's Children* as a fantasy, while in India people thought of it pretty realistic, about almost a history book". (Rushdie "Midnight's" xv). Its popularity was such that it was very well liked almost everywhere. But, he says, "One reader who didn't care for it, however, was Mrs. Indira Gandhi, and in 1984, three years later its publication, –she was Prime Minister again by this time –she brought an action against it, claiming to have been defamed by one single sentence (Rushdie "Midnight's" xv). It is with this kind of novelist's introduction that Rushdie's work comes into being as the subject of interest even after thirty seven years of its publication.

Objective of the study

It is to show how Rushdie interweaves the public story of modern India with the private story of Saleem Sinai to allegorise the major political crisis of India.

Review of Literature

The chosen period of India's past is dealt with by Rushdie in *Midnight's Children*. One of his statements clarifies the main impulse behind this choice. He says, "...it seemed to me that the period between 47 and 77 –the period from independence to the Emergency –had a kind of shape to it: it represented a sort of closed period in the history of the country. That shape becomes part of the architecture of the book" (Dhar 168).

Rushdie, through intermingling of reality and fantasy, makes this novel present a multiplicity of perspectives and viewpoints. Therefore, the historical events referred to are JallianwalaBagh, the change of national socio-political circumstances from 1919 to 1942, the announcement of the partition of India on June 4, 1947, the day of independence, the language marches of 1956 and 1957 massive parades of demonstration for partition of states along linguistic lines, the national elections, the Five Year Plans for national development, the emergence of the Communist Party as the major opposition party for All India Congress Party during the 1957 general election, Ayub Khan's imposition of martial law in Pakistan with the of General Zulfikar, India's engagement with three wars in a quick succession with its neighbours such as Indo-China war and the two wars with Pakistan one in 1965 and the 1971 conflict over Bangladesh Independence, the nationalization of coal mines and the wheat market on 23rd February 1973, India's first nuclear explosion at the desert of Rajasthan on 18th May 1974, the deterioration of the country's economy and the corruption of its

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politicians under Mrs. Indira Gandhi's government, the thirteen-day political tumult of the Janata Party led by Jaya Prakash Narayan and Morarji Desai, the Allahabad High Court's judgment by Judge Jag Mohan Lal Sinha on 12th June 1975 and the emergency period between 1975 and 1977.

What has to be noticed in all these historical events is their historical inaccuracies. The narrator seems to be violating the chronology of these events deliberately. It is because as the narrator he thinks that he has the power to alter history, to distort everything and to rewrite the whole history of his time with an illusion of an artist. Therefore, one can easily find the fact that the narrator cuts up history to suit himself and he is capable of any distortions. Thus, the narration does not take an explanatory mode rather it takes an analytical mode to reconstruct historical events in fiction. He uses all necessary modernist creative techniques to bring links among the bizarre major historical events.

Book Three of Midnight's Children is packed with the political conflicts that have been the part and parcel of Pakistan. The narrator gives an account of the astonishing results of the 1971 general elections in India where Indira Gandhi's New Congress Party won 350 out of 515 seats in the Lok Sabha. He also mentions the greatest ever refugees' flow into India during the East and West Pakistan political conflicts. It is during the celebration of Bangladesh's independence, many Indian artists from magicians' ghetto, Delhi, exhibited their many talents as entertainment. The narrator remembers that "Parvati-the-witch saw me and gave me back my name" (529). Till then he had forgotten the fact that he is Saleem from India. Parvati took him back to India in her basket of invisibility. Saleem says, "Without passport or permit. I returned, cloaked in invisibility, to the land of my birth; believe, don't believe, but even a sceptic will have to provide another explanation for my presence here" (532). It is interesting to know that his arrival in India coincides with Mrs. Indira Gandhi's reign passing into absolute power with an absolute majority. He says that "... On December 16th 1971, I tumbled out of a basket into an India in which Mrs. Gandhi's New Congress Party held a more than-two-third majority in the national assembly" (538).

Saleem, while narrating his family history from his grandfather Dr. Aadam Aziz to his son Aadam Sinai, corresponds it with the history of India from pre-independence movement to post-independent India. The narrative allows the reader to experience the freedom struggle and the misuse of power by the bureaucrats and the politicians in free India. It is Dr. Aziz who, with true patriotic spirit, represents the nationalists of the freedom struggle who only dreamt of a free India. Ahmed Sinai represents hundreds of thousands of selfish beneficiaries of freedom and Saleem as a common man represents the masses who are disillusioned and alienated by an unhappy turn of socio-political events in post-independent India. Furthermore, Saleem and Shiva, the twin prominent figures of the novel, are the symbols of India and Pakistan that were freed from the British rule.

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The significance of this choice is that the socio-political and historical space it covers is enclosed by two momentous events. If the first one marks the end of the British Raj and the beginning of free India, the second puts an end to the short but the most controversial period of the emergency declared by Mrs. Gandhi. It is during this period the hard won freedom was severely threatened. Thus, the narrator, while giving an account of these two events, attempts to totalize the past. But, this complete and coherent account is provided with some continuous and missing links. It is because as Rushdie asserts in one of his essays that "Human beings do not perceive things whole; we are not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable only of fractured perceptions" (Ghosh 340).

Thus, the novel begins with the metaphor of the perforated sheet to indicate the narrator's incapability to write a total and complete account of his family, and by extension, his country. By this, Rushdie seems to admit to the readers that his perception and understanding of things could be no more than fragmentary as it is quite impossible for any writer to give a full and total account of anything. It is because the novelist recreates the past by expounding the idea of history reclaimed through memory. It is with this insight that Rushdie allows Saleem to state before Padma, his loyal and loving friend, who also serves as his patient but often skeptical audience, very clearly that his link with the past is through memory. At once, his reliance on memory as a source of truth about the past is stated in its completeness, when he says:

I told you truth,' I say it again, 'Memory's truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events; and no sane human being ever trusts someone else's version more than his own. (292)

His words make it clear that memory plays a very significant role in the psyche of the individual in the post-independent period with reference to the idea of reconstruction or re-presenting an unpleasant past. So, this novel is Saleem's version of re-presentation of the India's past based on his memory's truth.

Methodology

The textual analysis with the framework of realism is carried out to show the realities of the 1975 emergency period. The significant aspect of Rushdie's style in presenting history is that he constantly emphasizes the need for mingling reality and fantasy in fiction. It is interesting to know what Rushdie said in this regard. He said, "I genuinely believed that my overt use of fabulation would make it clear to any reader that I was not attempting to falsify history, but to allow a fiction to take off from history" (Ray 22).

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Mrs. Gandhi: An Assault on the Liberal Democratic Nature

Mrs. Gandhi used her mighty political power to assault the liberal democratic nature of the nation. Mrs. Gandhi's undisputed and absolute rule is an important turn in the history of post-independence era. It is known as good as for (being) the worst. The rule was such that it prepared an ordinary government employee to act according to her will. Saleem says that even his uncle, "Mustapha, though veering wildly between his resentment of not having been promoted, has a blind lapdog devotion to every one of the Prime Minister's acts. Commenting on the Prime Minister's power, Saleem says with reference to his uncle that, "If Indira Gandhi had asked him to commit suicide, Mustapha Aziz would have ascribed it to anti-Muslim bigotry but also defended the statesmanship of the request, and naturally, performed the task without daring (or even wishing) demure" (546).

His uncle, like many Indians, believed in Mrs. Gandhi's power to reform India. When Saleem says that, "My historic mission is to rescue the nation from her" (550). He deeply sighed and said that "Our country is in safe hands. Already Indiraji is making radical reforms –land reforms, tax structures, education, birth control –you can leave it to her and her sarkar" (551). However, while his uncle attempts to win Saleem over Indiraji he remains skeptical about her powers. He says that, "the more he praised his Indira, the more deeply I detested her" (551). The reign of Smt. Gandhi and her administration made millions of Indians believe that she is an indispensable leader for them. But, some exceptional people like Saleem could sense the '*Second Coming*' like W. B. Yeats. True to his sense, he witnesses the failure of the centre to hold the things together. As a result, the 'falcon cannot here the falconer' and 'things fall apart' leading to socio-political chaos. This uncontrolled socio-political unrest made the heads of the government to think of some undemocratic means of control.

According to Saleem, Smt. Indira's government proves to be an extraordinary government for many reasons. While commenting on Sanjay Gandhi, he predicts that "at that extraordinary government (and also certain unelected sons of prime ministers) had acquired the power of replicating themselves ... a few years later, there would be gangs of Sanjayas all over India! No wonder that incredible dynasty wanted to impose birth control on the rest of us..." (551).

Further, he says that, "it was 23rd February 1973; coal-mines and wheat market were being nationalized, the price of the oil had begun to spiral up, would quadruple in a year" (554). As Saleem settles in the ghetto, he witnesses a banner with a cow-suckling calf symbol of the Indira Congress that read ABOLISH POVERTY. It is during his stay with Picture Singh, the snake charmer, Saleem gets to know about the corruption prevalent in Indiraji's government. He says that, "it was Picture Singh who revealed to me that the country's corrupt, 'black' economy had grown as large as the office, 'white' variety, which he did by showing me a newspaper

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photograph of Mrs. Gandhi" (558). Picture Singh gives to Saleem another account of corruption of railway minister who has been an appointed minister for bribery. There are practices of corruption during the elections in the form of poll fixing. While ridiculing the elections, Picture Singh says that, "God damn this election business, captain' whenever they come something bad happens; and our countrymen behave like a clowns" (558).

These details give a necessary glimpse of the political administration of Mrs. Indiraji's government before the declaration of the emergency rule. Through these realistic accounts, it seems that Rushdie makes a critique of the downfall of Indian bureaucracy after independence. Instead of going upwards, the Indian polity is on the decline, as the novel reveals it. But, it is also necessary to be aware of the fact as Ralph. J. Crane rightly interprets that:

The events Saleem describes could not have happened quite as he describes them because, as we know, Saleem is a fictional character, and could not have been present as he suggests. While the narrative undoubtedly aspires to the condition of truth or reality, it is ultimately, a fictional truth and not an historical truth. (Ralpa 176)

Reconstruction: The Past in Relation to the Present

Therefore, one has to see the fact that Rushdie's fusion of history and fiction is not to seek an historical truth but a fictional truth with which he attempts to reconstruct the past in relation to the present. As he continues to do so, he allows his narrator Saleem to talk about his marriage with Parvathi. He says, "I married Parvathi-the witch on February 23rd, 1977" (563). But, the arrival of his old rival Shiva, now a major in Indian army, explodes his life. While commenting on his arrival he says that "it was the 18th, perhaps at the very moment at which the deserts of Rajasthan were being shaken by India's first nuclear explosion? Was Shiva's explosion into my life truly synchronous with India's arrival, without prior warning, at the nuclear age?" (568).

Shiva who arrived in the ghetto by motorcycle took Parvati away in Saleem's absence. Saleem says that:

When Shiva grasped Parvathi by the wrist, I was with Picture Singh at an emergency conference of the city's many red cells, discussing the ins and outs of the national railway strike; when Parvathi, without demurring, took her place on the pillion of a hero's Honda, I was busily denouncing the government's arrests of union leaders. (574)

It is interesting to note the way Rushdie weaves Saleem's personal story with that of his nation. As the nation loses democratic control over its people it witnesses a lot of political chaos across the states. The arrival of Shiva, as a symbol of

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destruction, hints to the readers that something bad is bound to happen in Saleem's life and in the life of his country. The gathering of thick dark clouds in the private life of Saleem, Parvati and Shiva goes parallel with national politics. Saleem says that:

In Bihar, where corruption, inflation, hunger, illiteracy, landlessness ruled the roost, Jaya-Prakash Narayan led a coalition of students and workers against the governing Indira Congress; in Gujarat, there were riots, railway trains were burned, and Morarji Desai went on fast –unto death to bring down the corrupt government of the Congress (under Chimanbhai Patel) in that drought-ridden state ... it goes without saying that he succeeded without being obliged to die; in short, while anger seethed in Shiva's mind, the country was getting angry, too; and what was being born while something grew in Parvati's belly? You know the answer: in late 1974, J. P. Narayan and Morarji Desai formed the opposition party known as the JanataMorcha: the people's front. While Major Shiva reeled from whore to whore, the Indira Congress was reeling too. (575)

The most striking comment that Saleem makes at the end of this paragraph has to be viewed from socio-political perspectives. Major Shiva's ego is hurt by the humiliations caused by his illicit relations with aristocratic women. He, who was once known for his great victory, is now a fallen man. This condition of a war hero is drawn similar to the condition of Indira Congress. Smt. Indira Gandhi emerged an undisputed leader of the nation after the 1971 general election. Her popularity as the Prime Minister of the nation had gone to such an extent that Indira became India and India became Indira. But, by 1974, she lost her popularity as she was found guilty of election malpractices by the Allahabad High Court. She suffered from the humiliations and her government started to reel like Shiva, who reels from whore to whore.

Saleem, with Picture Singh, continues to tell the people about the gross inequalities of wealth distribution in the society, police harassment, hunger, disease and illiteracy. Picture Singh uses his cobras to show what Saleem says. He also plays the role of a politician to show how to make false promises. A youth watching it shouted out, "Ohe, Pictureji, you should be in the government, man, not even Indiramatha makes promises as nice as yours" (577). It is through this irony, the readers are sensitized to Smt. Indira's rule which was once known for false promises. This government was also popular for quelling any anti-government democratic activists in an undemocratic way by misusing its absolute political power. The riot police used tear gas, *laatis*, and marshal law to disperse the protesting mobs. The

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scenes would remind the scene of Jallianwalbagh, but at least there were no bullets on these occasions.

Parvati returns to the magicians' colony after Shiva leaves her. She bears her illegitimate child without any guilt. But, she was saved from public ridicule by Saleem. The interesting point is that as he says, "While mysterious assassins killed government officials, and narrowly failed to get rid of Mrs. Gandhi's personally-chosen Chief Justice. A. N. Ray, the magicians ghetto concentrated on another mystery: the ballooning basket of Parvati-the witch (582).

The growing political unrest of the nation with the Indira Congress was very threatening. It grew in all kinds of bizarre directions. It was very painful for Smt. Indiraji as labour pain to Parvati-the witch. It was on the 12th of June 1975 another bitter pill to swallow came in the form of Allahabad High Court Judgment that found Mrs. Gandhi guilty of election malpractices during the 1971 election campaign. Saleem says that it is on this same day at two p. m. Parvati starts experiencing the labour pain that lasted for thirteen days.

Many a time, some historians manufacture truth to destroy reality. But, fiction attempts to reconstruct reality that is destroyed in historical accounts. Thus, Saleem's account of the thirteenth day public crisis ends with two deliveries. While Parvati-Layalh who suffers an intense labour pain, gives birth to a boy child at the precise instant of the birth of new India, Smt. Indira Gandhi also suffered a similar kind of pain caused by public and political dissent. The way Saleem narrates his intense personal crises which are in direct link with the public or national crises reflect his anxieties and worries about his personal as well as his nation's future. When he describes the chaotic situation he says, "it was only in my ears that the ticking could be heard . . . a countdown to God knows what, until I became possessed by fear, and told Picture Singh, ' I don't know what's going to come out of her, but it isn't going to be good' " (583).

This hypothesis of Saleem based on his careful observations of the socio-political phenomena comes true after thirteen days. On day one, he finds that the Prime Minister refuses to resign though she is barred from public office for six years by the High Court. On the second day, he notices that Mrs. Gandhi is in the grip of pains like his wife Parvathi, as her electoral candidates in Gujarat are routed by JanataMorcha. The pain is so intense that it makes her as stiff as steel. On the ninth day, as Saleem observes that there is an absolute silence. He says that "a soundlessness of such an immense power that it shut out the roars of the JanataMorcha demonstration outside RastrapathiBhavan" (583). On the twelfth day while he sits cross legged being dismembered by his wife Parvati's agony, he hears that "Supreme Court was informing Mrs. Gandhi she need not resign until her appeal, but must neither vote in the Lok Sabha nor draw a salary" (584). Saleem is told that Parvati's condition gets worse at this phase. Her contortionists inform him that "she would surely die if the baby did not come now" (584). On the thirteenth day, Saleem is bit relieved because

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Parvati's contortionists screamed that "Yes, yes, she has begun to push, come on Parvathi, push, push, push" (584). It is on this day he notices that J. P. Narayan and Morarji Desai are also provoking Smt. Indira Gandhi while urging the police and army to disobey the illegal orders of the disqualified Prime Minister. They, like the contortionists, are forcing Mrs. Gandhi to push. While Saleem's baby was coming out of his wife's womb at midnight, the Prime Minister was also giving birth to a child of her own at the same time.

The birth of Saleem's child coincides with the birth of emergency. Saleem says that, at midnight as his child's head comes out, "The central Reserve Police arrested the heads of JanataMorcha, including the impossibly ancient and almost mythological figures of Morarji Desai and J. P. Narayan" (585). He further says that:

Parvathi gave a final pitiable yelp and out he popped, while all over India policemen were arresting people, all opposition leaders except the members of the pro-Moscow Communists, and also schoolteachers, lawyers, poets, news-paper men, trade unionists, in fact anyone who had ever made the mistake of sneezing during madam's speeches. (585)

Saleem anticipates that something was ending and something was being born. He listens to the word emergency that is brought into force exactly at the same midnight as the birth of new India takes place. The suspension of civil rights and the censorship of the press, calling the armored units on special alerts, and the arrest of subversive elements have come to effect even before the actual announcement of this emergency rule that marks the beginning of continuous midnight for two long years.

It is at this point of time that Saleem tells about the crucial day in which his son Adam Sinai is born. It is crucial because his son arrived at a night-shadowed slum on June 25th 1975 that coincides with the declaration of the emergency by Smt. Indira Gandhi. Saleem, while referring to the time and the socio-political condition in which his son is born says, "at the precise instant of India's arrival at Emergency, he emerged. There were gasps; and, across the country, silences and fears" (586). It appears that the emergency has been the cause of too much about everything that literally made the nation gasp, silent and afraid. Saleem wonders how Mrs. Gandhi, who once was addressed by the popular phrase: *India is Indira and Indira is India*, mysteriously attempted to handcuff the nation by distorting the constitutional provisions invested in her position by exercising her power undemocratically.

Emergency: The Secret Macabre Untold

Saleem, further, thinks that "If the mother of the nation had had a coiffure of uniform pigment, the emergency she spawned might easily have lacked a darker side" (588). Saleem's thoughts about Mrs. Gandhi's acts clearly prove that he is a critical insider who tells what matters to him. He, while commenting

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on her hair colour with reference to the emergency, says that "She had a white hair on one side and black on the other; the Emergency, too had a white part – public, visible, documented, a matter for historians – and a black part which, being secret macabre untold, must be a matter for us" (588). This interesting remark makes everyone comprehend what matters to a critical insider who is quite different from that of others who documented the *white part* of the emergency period. But, its *black part* that consisted of untold human agony is explored by the fictionists. The emergency, as Saleem describes, has been the cause for "Endless night, days weeks months without the sun, or rather (because it's important to be precise) beneath a sun as cold as a stream-rinsed plate, a sun washing us in lunatic midnight light" (590). These critical interpretations of the emergency become a fine read which spread a light on how this marshal law has hit the nation like an epidemic that paralyzed the nation making its people suffer from many forced disabilities for two years.

Saleem had the power to smell strange things that occur. This helped him to critically interpret the time when the constitution was altered to give the Prime Minister an absolute power. He says that "I smelled the ghosts of ancient empires in the air . . . in that city which was littered with phantoms of Slave kings and Mughals of Aurangzeb the merciless and the last, pink conquerors; I inhaled once again the sharp aroma of despotism. It smelled like burning oily rags" (592).

It is not just Saleem who sensed the future dangers but even the nasally incompetents could have worked out that something smelled rotten in the capital. Though, most of the people felt that they were coming under the treacherous power they could not have taken to their heels. There were practical objections for it. As Saleem says "Where would I have gone? And, burdened by wife and son, how fast could I have moved?" (593). This seems to be the condition of many popular, common and marginalized people who had no alternatives except suffering under the implacable, traitorous despotism.

Saleem, being one among those midnight's children of Independence, rushed wildly and fast into his future. He grew up with vertiginous speed wearing an ingratiating smile from the start. He has determined to absorb the universe with his open eyes. But, when he finds himself in a miserable situation at the ghetto of the magicians during the emergency period, he feels that the hard earned freedom enriched with color full dreams has been shattered into pieces. He notices that during the early months of the emergency the entire ghetto remained in the clutches of a gloomy silence. Even persons like Picture Singh who is known for his extempore remarks starts to say, "This is a time for silence, Captain" (595).

It is during this silence Saleem thinks of the story he is narrating and says, "This is not what I had planned; but perhaps the story you finish is never the one you begin" (596). This is what happens to a person who attempts to speak about the facts with illusions based on his memory. It is because, he says,

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"Most of what matters in our life takes place in our absence; I must be guided by the memory of a once-glimpsed file tell-tale initials; and by the other, remaining shards of the past, lingering in my ransacked memory-vaults like broken bottles on a beach . . ." (596).

Saleem later comes to know Smt. Gandhi's determination to combat the deep and widespread conspiracy which has been growing across the country. Smt. Gandhi being obsessed with stars, learnt from astrologers the secret potential of any children born at that long-ago midnight hour. Therefore, Saleem thinks that "the truest, deepest motive behind the declaration of a State of Emergency was smashing, the pulverizing, and irreversible discombobulation of the children of midnight" (597).

As Saleem contemplates about the endless gloom caused by the murky light of the emergency, he notices the vans and bulldozers rumbling along the main road arriving at the ghetto of the magicians. He says, "A loudspeaker began to blare: 'Civic beautification program . . . authorized operation of Sanjay Youth Central Committee . . . prepare instantly for evacuation to a new site . . . this slum is a public eyesore, can no longer be tolerated . . . all persons will follow orders without dissent'" (599).

The thunderous voice of the loudspeaker makes the ghetto of the magicians shiver. The works of the evacuation began even before the announcement comes to an end. The people of the ghetto are shocked to see their shacks bulldozed in the name of civic beautification. There are cries and screams all across the ghetto with ruins. Most of the children, women and old people lose their life during this merciless action. There is utter chaos everywhere. As Saleem stands watching the brutal attack on helpless and innocent mankind of the independent India, he notices that the magicians and old beggars are dragged towards the vans for sterilization. Some of the slum dwellers start to throw stones at the invaders to save their women and children. But their dissent too is bulldozed. The invaders finally unleash more formidable assault upon the slum by setting the troops against magicians, women and children. There is no way for the slum dwellers to protest except surrendering their will to the mighty marshal law imposed on them during the emergency.

Saleem shares his experience of being caught by Major Shiva who is acting upon the explicit instructions of Mrs. Gandhi. He says, "he came to the colony to seize me; while the Widow's son arranged for his civic-beautification and vasectomy programmes to carry out a diversionary manoeuvre" (603). It is through Saleem, Shiva succeeds in arresting all midnight's children and makes them as political prisoners along with the thousands of other innocents. Millions of people literally lose their hard earned freedom. Yet the Widow said, "It is only a small percentage of the population of India" (606). Saleem continues to suffer in jail as a political prisoner until March 1977. He says, "Late in March 1977, I was unexpectedly released from the palace of

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the howling widows, and stood blinking like an owl in the sunlight, not knowing what way" (616). Later, the Prime Minister had, to the astonishment of all, called a general election by bringing an end to the martial law and allowing the people to have the fresh breath of freedom to live without fear with their heads held high.

Rushdie's allegorical interpretation of the socio-political history of the nation in *Midnight's Children* takes the readers beyond their imagination. The narrator is shown crumbling towards the end of the novel to show symbolically the disintegration of the nation. As many critics view it, this appears to be Rushdie's pessimism. But Rushdie denies them by considering them as negative outlooks. He argues that disintegration is the beginning of integration. He strongly defends it by saying that:

I am often accused of pessimism, but I don't think the end of the book suggests a negative view. Saleem's personal destiny does lead to despair, but Saleem does not represent the whole of India but only one particular historical process, a certain kind of hope that is lost and which exhausts itself with the death of Saleem. (Chauhan 21)

Rushdie's ingenious way of blending the story of an individual with the socio-political history of the nation makes this novel very well known for his highly intensive creative power. The fusion of history, fact, fantasy, myth, and metaphor makes it as a fiction of fine art. As a seeker of the fictional truth, he never attempts to redeem or annihilate the historical past. Therefore, he crosses the historical boundaries to re-interpret, revise and reconstruct it to understand the present. O. M. P. Juneja rightly observes, "By using the binocular lens of allegory, Rushdie refocuses our concept of history as post-colonial and post-modernist discourse" (Juneja 106). Thus, Rushdie, while placing the history at the centre of the novel, attempts to dismantle history with the help of the unique post-modernist techniques of magic realism, parody and allegory to bring out the human agony which is eclipsed in the historical discourses.

Conclusion

Midnight's children, as a discursive fiction, appears to be highly conscious of the official historical versions of a manipulative power that tailors history to its political certitudes. Rushdie explains it by stating that "writers and politicians are natural rivals. Both groups try to make the world in their own images; they fight for the same territory. And the novel is one way of denying the official, politicians' version of truth" (Dhar 174). Therefore, to understand the realities of history, he fuses moral and philosophical issues as well as different modes of perception of the world. He denies the fact that one can write and think objectively about history and demonstrates that reality can only be grasped through literature rich with allegories and myths.

It can be concluded with the note that Rushdie's views of the historical events helped many researchers to see the realities of the past which find

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artistic expressions in the novel form. His attempts to fictionalize the experiences of the emergency provide a larger perceptive of the nation that is about to disintegrate to integrate again. It is with this open end Rushdie seems to alert the optimists of the future to review the past with critical insights.

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