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**Political Allegory in:
Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children**

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

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Dedication

In The Name of Allah, the Most Merciful and Compassionate

I dedicate this modest work to all my family:

My parents for their endless support and encouragement

My husband for his extraordinary patience and understanding

My dear children, my brothers and sisters

Acknowledgements

Alhamdulillah,

Praise is to Allah the Almighty who has given strength to complete this work

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ABSTRACT

Midnight's Children is a loose allegory for events in India both before and after the independence and partition of the Indian nation which took place at midnight on 14th August 1947. The novel is considered as an example of post-colonial literature. The aim of the study is to analyze how political allegory operates as an extended metaphor in which symbolic actions, characters, settings and images serve to reflect complicated issues that cannot be expressed explicitly. This research is conducted by using qualitative research and descriptive method to interpret and analyze the data. The main data are the facts and information about post-colonial issues through selected events and characterizations in the *Midnight's Children*. The findings of the study prove that political allegory as an apparatus helps in re-evaluating and re-examining the history to find a solution and to create a harmonious and well-balanced society.

Keywords: *Midnight's Children*, Allegory, Political, History, Post-colonial literature.

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General Introduction

1 Background of the Study

Midnight's Children is one of Salman Rushdie's successful novel. It is read as a national allegory giving imaginative form to India and its history. It is the central text in Indian literature written in English and the voice of the Indian subcontinent. The novel represents India's transition from British colonialism to independence and the partition of India. The post-colonial, political and social conditions are well depicted by the writer. The novel tells the story of the protagonist, Saleem Sinai who was born at midnight on the 15th August, 1947.

The novel presents a commentary on the effects of the India-Pakistan partition that took place after India's independence. A terrible situation was created and affected the social and familial life of millions of people. The novel can be seen as an attempt to re-evaluate and re-examine the history to find a solution for the creation of a harmonious and well-balanced society. Rushdie's novel explores the notion of the nation having a stable identity through the use of political allegory.

Midnight's Children is an allegory that chronicles the history of India through the lives of children born with the country's first hour of independence on August 15, 1947.

The book won for him the Booker of Bookers prize in 1993. In 2008, it was selected as the Best of Bookers. *Midnight's Children* is also the only Indian novel on the Times' list of the hundred best English language novels since its founding in 1923.

The novel begins with the birth of the main character Saleem Sinai on the day of India's independence. The children who were born in this day are called midnight's children. The midnight's children possess supernatural abilities. Saleem's gift is the ability to hear the voices of his fellow midnight's children. Throughout the novel, Saleem attempts to recount the circumstances of his life from birth to the present. The novel demonstrates the impossibility of identifying a true 'authentic' Indian identity or history. Instead, it shows that if postcolonial people can create their own history and identity, it becomes possible to ignore.

Saleem's arrival in the world at midnight of August 15, 1947, is the exact time of the declaration of India's independence. At a simple level, the novel is the story of Saleem Sinai and at a subtle level, this is the story of his country where Saleem is important as an individual, a representative of Independence and a literary mechanism.

2 Statement of the Problem

Salman Rushdie highlights a different perspective on the problems created by the colonial power. The depiction of the characters and the different incidents in the novel influences readers' and critics' perspectives and interpretations. Besides, through the use of allegory, many issues will be conveyed smoothly. Allegory is used to present the symbol of nation but, it can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning (moral or political one).

3 Research Questions and Research Hypotheses

This study will present the following research questions:

- How does Salman Rushdie portray political allegory in *Midnight's Children*?
- How is postcolonial literature reflected in the Indian novel and how is political allegory used to reveal the situation in India before and after the independence?

Hence, the main research hypotheses are:

- If we use allegory to convey hidden messages, it will be easier to describe complicated issues and talk about controversial ideas that might be dangerous to talk about explicitly
- In other words, the use of political allegory and novel will help in describing and revealing complicated and controversial political issues.

4 Aims of the Study

Based on the background of the study and the research question above, the purposes of the study are as follows:

- 1- To analyze the impact of the post-colonial era on Indian literature in general and on the Indian novel in particular.

2- To analyze the use of allegory to reveal the situation of India in the Postcolonial era and after the partition from Pakistan.

5 Research Methodology

Qualitative research is used to describe and show how the novel blends old and new India, through the characters and how *Midnight's Children* shows India's issues. This study is conducted in two phases. At the first, we compile, classify, and verify the data that show the Eastern paradigm towards Western culture in the novel and the portrait of purification in India. In the first phase, a concise definition of post-colonial literature and its impacts on Indian novels and how those impacts are useful in this context. Then, we gather information about the most successful Indian novels and we find that *Midnight's Children* is the best example to analyze how political allegory is useful to convey complicated messages that cannot be explained explicitly. The second step is applying an interpretative and descriptive method to expose the intended meanings and messages that appeared in *Midnight's Children* through allegory.

6 Significance of the Study

The study provides a detailed analysis of political allegory in *Midnight's Children*. The novel constitutes a turning point in the history of the Indian English novel, it presents a continuous conflict between personal and national domain. In this context, the study helps to understand how allegory in general and political allegory in specific operates as a tool in which symbolic actions, characters, settings and images serve to reflect some other cloaked confrontations.

7 Structure of the Study

The current research is divided into two chapters. The first chapter is devoted to review the different features of post-colonial literature; main themes, strategies and techniques. Besides it is concerned with revealing the considerable impacts of post-colonial literature on Indian novel and especially on *Midnight's Children*.

The second chapter deals with the analysis of the use of political allegory in *Midnight's*

Children, it provides a presentation of the author Salman Rushdie and a summary of the novel. Then, it focuses on the function of political allegory in conveying hidden messages and describing complicated issues in India.

CHAPTER ONE

An Overview of Post-colonial Literature

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Introduction

After the end of the Second World War, the British Empire collapsed. In 1947 India was the first country from the Asian continent which gained its independence and established its republic. However, the first years of the independence were not the easiest ones and many Indians decided, in a view of a better life, to move to the former capital of the empire – to London Great Britain, which was until this post-colonialism immigration wave from the cultural point of view homogenous, had to face new impulses. The immigrating writers, most of them coming from the South Asian diaspora, were first seen as foreigners. In their works, they have, however, shown high artistic qualities. Thus, throughout the changing of cultural and social climates, immigrating writers have been equalized with the British ones. Moreover, the unknown or resented writers suddenly became internationally recognized and reputable. By this development, the immigrating authors gave birth to the so-called post-colonial literature.

However, “the decentralization” of British fiction took place. Also, new topics in fiction arose as the inhabitants of the East come to the different world of the West. Very soon, they realized that they are not able to fully assimilate to the entirely different culture. Therefore, the post-colonial discourse is filled with feelings of alienation, rootlessness, disbelonging and with themes of the quest for identity, hybridity, East and West relationship, nationalism and of course migrancy.

In this chapter, we give a brief explanation of post-colonial literature. We demonstrate the characteristic features of post-colonialism. The aim of this chapter and its motivation derives from the desire to offer a brief explanation of the works of post-colonial literature.

1. 1. Post-colonial Literature

Without question, the practice of colonialism had a huge impact on globalization phenomena. The lives of more than three-quarters of the people living in the world are shaped by the experience of colonialism, which shows the importance of colonialism in political, economic, cultural, and social spheres in a globalized world.

The term 'Post-colonialism' widely refers to the representation of race, ethnicity, culture and human identity in the modern era, mainly after many colonised countries got their independence. It is connected with imperialism from the moment of colonisation until the 21st century. The word imperialism derives from the Latin imperium, which has numerous meanings including power, authority, command, dominion, realm, and empire. It describes many interactions between the 'coloniser' and the 'colonised'. Majority of the world was under the control of European countries, especially the British Empire which consisted of more than a quarter of all the territory on the surface of the earth. It is the literature and the art produced in countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Senegal and Australia after their independence, that is called Postcolonial literature.

1. 1. 1. Spread of Post-colonialism

There is a single largest defining factor in outlining world politics in the second half of the 20th century, Britain's loss of empire at the outset of World War II. After that Britain lost most of its formal colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, the Pacific, South-East Asia and the far East including the Persian Gulf. In the 17th century, Britain had gained control over many parts of North America, Canada and Caribbean Islands along with slaves from Africa and market development in India. Nevertheless, Britain viewed its imperialistic expansion as a moral responsibility and exerting greater control over the countries like India and Africa. A famous British writer Rudyard Kipling referred to this responsibility as 'the white man's burden' of civilising the people who were incapable of self-governing. Many colonised countries such as India, Pakistan, Ireland, Kenya, Nigeria and so on started writing a type of literature reflecting and representing their own experiences while and after colonization.

Frantz Fanon laid the essential theoretical foundation for future colonial theories in his famous book, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). He argues that a new world can come into being only with a violent revolution by African farmers. In another instant, he used his personal experiences in his book *Black Skin, White Mask* (1952) to show the relationship between the

colonised and the coloniser in terms of psychology in observing emotional damage to both the colonised and the coloniser.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) critiques Western representation of the East as irrational, anti-western, primitive and dishonest. According to Said, Orientalism is an ideology born of the colonisers' desire to know their subjects and to control them in a better manner.

1. 1. 2. Post-colonial Authors

Some of the most prominent authors of Post-colonial literatures are Chinua Achebe, J M Coetzee, Franz Fanon, Michael Ondaatje, Salman Rushdie, Li-Young Li, Derek Walcott Jamaica Kincaid and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, etc. The four names appear again and again as thinkers who have shaped postcolonial theory: Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Though all these writers had different lands, nationalities and social backgrounds, they could all create their own distinction in producing wonderful works of literature of which many would certainly come under the label of 'Post-colonial literature.

Post-colonial literature has many common motifs and themes like 'cultural dominance' and 'Racism', 'quest for identity', 'racial discrimination', 'inequality', 'hybridity' along with some peculiar presentation styles. Most of post-colonial writers reflected and demonstrated many thematic concepts which are quite connected with both 'coloniser' and 'colonised'.

1. 1. 3. Language of Post-colonial Literature

In the post-colonial context, language played a crucial role in the control and subjugation of colonised people. Colonisers often imposed their language upon their subjects to control them. Therefore, most post-colonial writers address the issues in many ways by mixing the local language with the imposed language, the result is a hybrid one that underscores the broken nature of the colonised mind.

1. 1. 4. Post-colonialism and its Reflections

There are various reflections of Post-colonial literature in terms of theories and conceptions. Post-colonial theorists examine both the colonial texts and literature written after colonialism. Some of the notable theorists who popularized colonialism such as, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha and others. These theorists connected postcolonial literature with many fields like history, politics, philosophy and literary traditions and their significance in present-day society. Most of the times, these post-colonial theorists are from post-colonial countries for instance Edward Said from Palestine, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak from India and Fanon from a French colony, Martinique. The colonial countries started writing and depicting the experiences of colonization and many changes brought by independence upon individuals and their respective nations.

Some filmmakers also attempted to depict colonial and postcolonial predicaments in their films Satyajit Ray, Deepa Mehta, Mira Nair, Shyam Benegal are few among the filmmakers who contributed to Post-colonialism.

Music in post-colonial countries also exhibiting cultural identity and values as aboriginal pop music, the best example of this kind of music such as Ravi Shankar's unification of classical Indian music with Western sounds. The Negritude movement also based on the concept of shared cultural affinity among black Africans. Most prominently Negritude literature included the poetry of Leopard Senghor and Aime Cesaire especially in *Return to My Native Land*.

1. 1. 5. Post-colonial Novel

Theorists argue that literature offers one of the most vital courses in which the post-colonial period's observations are communicated and the everyday substance experienced by colonised groups have been powerfully recorded, thus significantly relevant. Post-colonial novelists, particularly scholars in previous British colonies, the centre of the present study, have attracted readers and the attention of literature prize coordinators.

As a consequence of this movement, it was unavoidable that the post-colonial novel moved from the previous conventions of style and subject to methods for communicating issues concerning individuals, social orders, and peoples of the time, as Bill Ashcroft and et al describe;

“What each of these literatures has in common beyond their special and distinctive regional characteristics is that they emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power ,and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre It is this which makes them distinctively post-colonial” (1989, p02).

Post-colonial novels drew attention with inquiries and issues, for example, diasporas, multiculturalism, and identity issues. Post-colonial novelists grade to different methodologies, keeping in mind the end goal to recuperate the impacts that colonialism left on the colonised people. They write in a counterpoint to the structures, styles, and topics of English literature, "in contrast as opposed to the irresolute type of imitation; a distinction, besides, which empowers them.

In addition, the post-colonial novelists depict the reluctant cultural and national identities of groups trying to develop their nations in the wake of liberation.

At a psychological level, numerous novels investigate the pressure of keeping harmony of the previous colonizer and immigrant lives, with the clash between their new governing framework and ways of life. The subject of exile and communicating the contention of immigrant involvement in places of their colonizers is one of the impressive countenances of the postcolonial novel, which incorporates into an extensive variety of their composition. The migrant experience, recorded so disjunctively by post-colonial novelists, turns into a piece of the material of British literary custom; however, this history has not accordingly been transformed into “safe” or “settled” for the present as they “come across a new world, a new customs to which you have to adjust while struggling to maintain your recognizable forms of identity” (Young,2003, p12) The postcolonial novel has demonstrated an immeasurable contribution to the

literary coliseum of the world, particularly to English literature.

Post-colonial studies and literature are essentially incorporated into any syllabi of literature in English. Perhaps, as Bonnici remarks, “the most exceptional thing is that the contemporary literature in English is significantly relying upon the literature drawing nearer from post-colonial writers living in Britain or the United States, however, were brought up in previous colonies” (Bonnici 2004, p 1)

1. 2. Post-colonial Literature and its Textual Strategies

Post-colonialism is concerned with writing by those people who were once colonised by Britain. The term ‘post-colonial’ is used to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day and not only the years after the decline of the British Empire because the previous period has its effect on the contemporary literature as well.

Post-colonial literature’s development may be divided into several stages corresponding also to the rise of national or regional consciousness. The first post-colonial texts are usually written by the representatives of the imperial power, for example by settlers, travelers and soldiers. However, pure post-colonialism is linked to the second stage, in which the main ‘producers’ of the texts were the natives though they were still “under imperial license”. The independent literatures also called modern postcolonial works of literature waited for their development until the decolonization era.

1. 2. 1. The Main Features and Techniques

One of the main features of post-colonial writing is the use of language. After the imperial control over the language and marginalization of ‘impurities’, a new way of using English emerged distinguishing between the standard British English inherited from the empire and the English which the language has become in post-colonial countries. In addition, post-colonial writers refused the categories of the imperial culture and its correct use of language, and adopted English as a tool utilized in various ways to express widely differing cultural experiences.

In the postcolonial narrative, there is significant use of metaphor and metonym. Metaphor in the western tradition, had the privilege of revealing the unexpected truth and texts, especially Rushdie's, are full of metonymic use of adjectives and the use of plurals. Some of the post-colonial texts also employ neologisms to convey the sense of cultural distinctiveness. Post-colonial writers leave some words untranslated in the text which is a device not only acts to signify the difference between cultures but also to illustrate the importance of discourse in interpreting cultural concepts.

It is also important to mention the concern with place and displacement among the major features of post-colonial literature, it is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place. All the experiences of dislocation, migration from one country to another, enslavement or the oppression of the indigenous personality may result in doubts about the valid sense of self and the dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of postcolonial societies whether these have been created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two.

However, the most important feature that distinguishes postcolonial literature from traditional western literature is the use of traditional national forms based primarily on oral narrative and religious epic. Moreover, the techniques of repetition, the circling back from the present to the past, technique of building tale within a tale, and persistently delaying climaxes are typical in post-colonial literature (and is often seen in Rushdie's novels) and make it different from most of the texts of contemporary western literature.

1. 2. 2. The Main Themes

National identity or Nationalism, in general, has always emphasized the territorial imperative and the mistreatment of minorities. The nationalism of the emergent states is perceived as a struggle for a new social organization. The question of identity and national belonging became more complicated in the postcolonial era.

Post-colonial fiction becomes a prolific place for the exploration of the hybridized

cultural forms in multicultural Britain. However, the migrants' stories are not a celebration of independence and national freedom Britain in the 1980's failed to embrace the inevitable post-colonial future, which Salman Rushdie commented on as a crisis of the whole culture, of the society's entire sense of itself. The migrants were not received in Britain which led to an ethnic diversity in Britain situated between multiculturalism and flat assimilation. In his works, Rushdie defines the space of the hybridized culture of the postcolonial migrant, of crucial significance to all inhabitants of the new emerging culture. The space of postcolonial writing is transitional and multiculturalism is seen as an active, conflictual process.

During the 20th century the modern city (and in the postcolonial literature primarily London) undergone rapid development and became in some sense a metaphor for success and better living, therefore, everybody who wanted to mean something, hoped to become somebody or at least felt the urge to be around when things were happening, moved, though with various feelings and consequences, to the capita.

1. 3. Indian English Novel

The British rulers thought that by converting the top classes of the Indian society into English knowing people, they would convert the mass intellectually. They hoped that the new civilization will support them but in fact, a new class of intellectuals was being formed which was considerably more conscious of their rights and duty to their nation. Later on, English became popular and people used it frequently for speeches, articles and pamphlets discussing current problems. Even veteran nationalists and freedom fighters used the language for their expression. Even in the meeting of the Indian National Congress, resolutions were passed all in English and every resolution had some good leaders to back it. The time came when Indians could express their literary urge in English.

The early novelists were experimenting to provide recognition to Indo-Anglian fiction. They wrote social-historical and detective novels but historical romances were much popular. The period between 1920-1950 was dominated by novels with political-social themes. During

1950-1970, the next generation of novelists like Raja Rao, RK Narayan, Mulkraj Anand, Kamla Markendeya, Nayantara Sehgal, Anita Desai Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgaonkar Ruth Prawar Jhabwala, Arun Joshi, Khushwant Singh and a host of others were trying their art of fiction writing with unlimited and unrestricted themes. The recent generation of Indian English novelists such as Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukharjee, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Chandra, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De, Kiran Desai, Chitra Banerjee- Divakaruni, Amit Choudhary and others are expressing their creative urge in the form of fiction and earning worldwide reputation. If we presume the big three like Raja Rao, RK Narayan and Mulkraj Anand as the 'First Generation' of the Indo English novelists. The 'Second Generation' may be said to consist of great writers like Khushwant Singh, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgaonkar, Kamla Markendeya, Nayantara Sehgal, Anita Desai Ruth Prawar Jhabwala, Arun Joshi, G V Desani, K Abbas, B Rajan and others The 'Third Generation' (1970 onwards) of the novelists such as Chaman Nahal, V S Naipaul, Shashi Deshpande, Arun Joshi, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Vikram Seth Salman Rushdie and many others have earned global fame for their quality writing.

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is the best example of Indian novels, it marked the beginning of a new era for Indian English novels both in India and abroad and went on to win 'the Booker of Bookers', the best novel to have won the Booker Prize for Fiction in the award's 25 years of history. *Midnight's Children* is being regarded as a foundational text of post-colonialism. The reason for this immeasurable popularity of Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is to be found in its unique style. There appeared an Indian writer who told the story, the way it should be told and who did not write about village life and social ills Rushdie 'chutnified' both the Indian history and language with his acute sense of humor and invented new metaphors of nationhood.

Midnight's Children covers different issues in India, issues of politics, history, nation, religion. It deals with incidents of pre and post Independence era. Salman reveals all the

incidents and conflicts in India using an intelligent and skillful political allegory. This political allegory is expressed through the allegory of the main character, the protagonist Saleem Sinai. The life of protagonist Saleem Sinai is closely linked and associated with the historical and political events in his nation India. We find an interlink between the nation and the life of the protagonist. In this novel, Rushdie reveals and uncovers the tension and struggles of the pre and post-colonial era in India using an intelligent political allegory.

Conclusion

The strategy of colonial power has had an effective influence on colonised people losing their sense of identification and becoming mimics of those countries and while remaining with a sense of homelessness.

As a representative of post-colonial literature, Salman Rushdie gained his reputation for his allegorical novel *Midnight's Children*. The novel is set in the context of actual events as with historical fiction. It is commonly read as a political allegory giving imaginative form to India, its history and its political circumstances.

CHAPTER TWO

Political Allegory in *Midnight's Children*

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Introduction

Midnight's Children is a post-colonial novel in which the novelist gives an account of the historical events that happened during the British Raj and Independence in India. He adds beauty to these events by using the tool of political allegory, which makes it a beautiful piece of literature instead of a boring historical document. Salman Rushdie wrote a dark and complex history of his nation. In this chapter, we attempt to highlight different post-colonial elements found in the novel along with its narrative style and political allegory.

2. 1. Salman Rushdie as a Post -colonial Writer

Salman Rushdie was born in Bombay, India on June 19th, 1947, the year of independence from British rule His mother's name was Negin Rushdie and his father was a Muslim businessman, Anis Ahmed Rushdie In 1954, he attended an English mission school in Bombay In 1961, at the age of fourteen, he went to study at Rugby school in England Three years later, he started attending Kings College, Cambridge, where he studied History and acted in the Footlights Revue Rushdie has fair skin for an Indian man, which is, according to himself, significant in terms of how his identity is perceived by other people In India, there is still a great advantage in having light skin and this in combination with his British education and English with no accent, marked him out as simultaneously other but recognizably the same. In 1968-1969, he continued to act in the Oval House, Kennington, in London When Rushdie met Clarissa Luard in 1969, he gave up acting and started to work as an advertising copywriter After a year, he stopped working to write an unpublished novel, *The of The Pir Book*, after which, he continued to work part-time again, something that allowed him to go on writing. In 1975 the novel *Grimus* was published and Rushdie started writing *Midnight's Children* and the year after he married Clarissa Luard. In 1981 Rushdie left his job, before the publication of *Midnight's Children*, a novel which rewarded him with several literary awards, among others, the Booker Prize, Britain's most prestigious award for fiction, and twenty-five years later, the Booker of Bookers.

The novel was, however, not uncontroversial and Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India brought libel charges that forced Rushdie to revise the book and issue an apology. Between 1990 and 2005 Rushdie published the books *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990), *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), *The Wizard of Oz* (1992), *East, West* (1994), *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing* (1997), *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), *Fury* (2001), *Step Across This Line: Collected Non-fiction 1992-2002* (2002) and most recently *Shalimar The Clown* (2005). Salman Rushdie is an Honorary Professor in the Humanities at The Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and has also received eight honorary doctorates.

Rushdie's upbringing in a Muslim middle-class family is an important factor in understanding his later literary output. The Rushdie family spoke Urdu, a Muslim language, but Salman was encouraged at home to use English as the language of everyday discourse. He, thus, became fluent in two languages and this is the foundation of the resourcefulness and playfulness of the language in Rushdie's novels. In his youth, Rushdie lost his faith in the religion of Islam, something which has influenced his writing and life as a whole.

Rushdie also uses Hindu mythology in his writing, due to the polyglot nature of Indian society, where Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity and other religions mix. The fact that Salman Rushdie is bilingual and has been living in different countries has made him a person who fits in everywhere but does not belong anywhere. He states that he has both lost and gained something in translation. Two parts of the Hindu culture have influenced Rushdie's work; the Hindu mythical archetypes and the Indian Film industry which spread these myths through the 'Bombay Talkie'.

2. 2. Summary of *Midnight's Children*

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is a 1981 magical realism novel revolving around India's independence. The novel is semi-autobiographical, though the main character and Rushdie stand-in has magical powers. *Midnight's Children* was critically acclaimed and won many literary awards, including the Booker Prize and the special Booker of Bookers Prize, which commemorated the award's 25th anniversary. The protagonist, Saleem Sinai, is born on August 15th, 1947, at the exact moment India gains its independence from Britain. Mumtaz marries Ahmed Sinai, Saleem's parents. Mumtaz decides to change her name to Amina and she and her husband move to the large city of Delhi. Amina is soon pregnant and visits a fortune teller to learn about her future child.

The prophecy about her child states that he will never be older or younger than his country. Due to some complications with Ahmed's factory being burned down by terrorists, he decides to move them to Bombay. In Bombay, Mumtaz and Ahmed buy a house from an Englishman named William Methwold. One of their neighbors is an entertainer named Wee Willie Winkie who lives with his pregnant wife, Vanita. Unbeknownst to Willie, Vanita had an affair with Methwold and he is the father of her child. Both Vanita and Mumtaz go into labour and have their children at midnight, though Vanita does not survive childbirth.

The midwife who has recently had an affair with a socialist decides to switch the babies so that the poor baby can live a life of privilege and vice versa. Saleem is not truly the biological child of Mumtaz and Ahmed, but Vanita and Methwold. After Ahmed dies, the family moves back to Bombay, at this time, India is embroiled in a war with China.

Saleem's large nose has been giving him trouble all his life, so he gets an operation to fix it. After the operation, he is no longer telepathic but has an enhanced sense of smell and he can sense people's emotions. After India loses to China, the family moves back to Pakistan.

There, his entire family is killed, save his sister, Jamila, during a war between India and

Pakistan, Saleem loses his memory after being hit in the head.

He ends up in the army, although he is not quite sure how he ended up there, Saleem witnesses many war crimes and barbarisms, and he escapes into the Bangladesh jungle. There, Saleem recovers some of his memory but does not recover his name until he meets Parvati the witch. She helps him recall his name. Saleem agrees to marry her.

Indira Gandhi, who is the prime minister of India, has begun sterilization camps to decrease India's population. She also destroys the magicians' ghetto. Parvati dies after childbirth, and Shiva captures Saleem to take him to a sterilization camp. There, all of *Midnight's Children* are sterilized, to protect the prime minister from their powers but Gandhi does not win her first election.

All of *the Midnight's Children* are set free, and Saleem heads out to find Adam, Parvati's son. He finds him with a snake charmer they knew in the ghetto and the three travel to Bombay. There, Saleem eats some chutney which reminds him of his nanny. He tracks down the chutney factory his former nanny owns, and there he meets the Padma. He decides to marry her but is certain that on his thirty-first birthday, the anniversary of India's independence, he will die and explode into dust.

2. 3. The Narrative Style

The novel starts with a prologue where the protagonist, Saleem Sinai says:

I was born in the city of Bombay once upon a time. No, that won't do, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more precise. On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world. There

were gasps And, outside the window, fireworks, and crowds A Few seconds later, my father broke his big toe; but his accident was a mere trifle when set beside what had befallen me in that benighted moment, because thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country (9).

The first sentences show how the story is going to be told. The narrator discusses with himself and shifts between a fairytale way of telling, that is “once upon a time”, and a telling based on facts. He discusses with himself how he is going to tell the story, just as he does in the middle section of the book, where he discusses different titles for a chapter, and in the last part, where he tries different endings.

The story is told in a form that resembles the old Indian way of oral story-telling and is often interrupted by Saleem making predictions and prophecies, as well as telling about dreams or memories. He sometimes describes his physical disintegration and how he can see the cracks on himself and he is also afraid that nobody will believe him. The story goes back and forth in time, circling the events Rushdie was, among others, influenced by the story of the Arabian Nights, where Scheherazade has to tell stories in order not to get executed, Saleem hints that he also has to tell the story well enough ,in order not to fall to pieces.

Rushdie is trying to set up a tension in the text by creating a paradoxical conflict between the form and the content of the story .Saleem’s life makes him miserable, but the narrative is told in a way that echoes the Indian “talent for non-stop self-regeneration.

The novel has been considered to have many different themes; it has been viewed as a psychological novel, a historical novel, a political novel, and also as having impotence as the main theme. What determines how the novel is interpreted is how it is read.

One reason for the number of ways of reading the novel is that it is allegorical and therefore has

different levels of interpretation. The allegory is most evident in the description of the main character Saleem is a changeling, which underlines his and India's multicultural heritage. Religions, races, and social classes are mingled in his identity.

An important structural principle in the novel is that the development of India and the development of Saleem seem to be connected. Some events occur at the same time in India and to Saleem and his family, the birth of the child and the nation at the same instance is one example.

As a narrator, Saleem is not very reliable. He deceives both Padma and the reader several times during the narrative. It turns out that the person who was celebrated by newspapers and politicians was not Saleem, his father is not his father.

The narrator's unreliability can serve the purpose of creating the feeling that everything must be questioned. So, Saleem would be both reliable and unreliable, just as facts about history are hard to establish. The unreliable narration can be a parallel for how we all try to read and interpret the world every day.

2. 4. Significance of History and Political Allegory in the Novel

Midnight's Children tells the dramatic and extraordinary story about postcolonial India. The novel depicts the historic events which shaped the life of India that we know today through the portrayal of the personal history of the Sinai family. *Midnight's Children* is a critique of Indian mentality, diversity, politics, and history, but at the same time a study on human relations.

In this part, we will try to explore how political allegory is a vital device in presenting historical and political events concerning personal affairs. We will focus the attention on the far-reaching consequences of these events on the path of the country and the individual lives of its citizens. We will attempt to answer the challenging question: How is an allegory used to reveal complicated issues in India and how is it used to convey important messages concerning India?

Midnight's Children is one of the most victorious novels written by Salman Rushdie. It

was published in 1981. This piece of art won many awards and received immense critical acclaim. It won the Best of the Booker prize, earning the reputation of being the best novel that has been given the prestigious Booker award. Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of *Midnight's Children* narrates the intriguing story about postcolonial India. This story does not seem to cease to amaze people for it is a universal study of plurality and diversity. Readers can be related to the characters, either because they discover their personality traits in them, or because they find parts of their country's history in the depiction of conflicts and wars, or simply because they link the actual stories of the people who were going through these tragedies with the newspapers headlines they read about.

Saleem Sinai is aware that his story will not be suitable to everyone's taste, but he still insists that he is telling the most truthful version he knows and that he is doing it out of love for his country. "Midnight's Children" is indeed a fascinating account of one of the most captivating countries in the world, but simultaneously, it is a tale about a family, their emotions and their struggles in the face of a tragedy that befell their country. Salman Rushdie also teaches us a lesson in the hope that we will come to learn to appreciate diversity and not repeat the same mistakes India has made.

2. 4. 1. Historical Allegory

After the Partition of India, many Muslims immigrated to Pakistan, but the Rushdie family decided to stay in Bombay. When Salman was 13, he attended a school in London and at a very early age, he encountered racism: "Of course, I knew that racism is not confined to British I come from a society where racism is commonplace, between one Indian community and another. But you have to combat racism wherever you find it". Therefore, already at an early age, his thoughts were directed at different types of racism. After studying history at Cambridge University, Rushdie moved to Karachi, Pakistan, where his family immigrated in the meantime. Even though, he found a job at the television, with his European-educated mind, he had

difficulties accepting censorship that prevailed in all the aspects of Pakistani life regarding religion, as a result, he moved back to London.

The binaries that were presented in his personal life when it comes to his origin and his sense of belonging were the inspiration for the central plot of *Midnight's Children*. Perhaps, for this reason, he is the best man for the job – the job of describing the true gist of Indian colonial history and all the consequences stemming from it.

It is quite obvious that *Midnight's Children* is in its greater part, an autobiography. Rushdie admitted that the character of Saleem was based on Rushdie himself and the purpose of writing this novel was also to highlight all the aspect of freedom.

After the secession of the British rule over India, Britain passed the sovereign power to the two newly formed countries –Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. The Partition of India did not only bring the creation of the new countries, but also brutal conflicts which resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, the most complex divorce action in history.

Its consequences were also the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war over Kashmir and the 1971 conflict over Bangladeshi independence.

The novel is politically centralised around the figure of Indira Gandhi. She was the daughter of the former Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, she was politically popular because of various reforms she employed as well as for the Indian victory in the conflict with Pakistan that resulted in the creation of independent Bangladesh. She declared the State of Emergency in the country between 1975 and 1977 when she was found guilty of election fraud. With the State of Emergency, she limited many civil rights and liberties, censored the media, and started the sterilization process. Midnight's children have no power, no hope, and no future. Rushdie addresses Indira Gandhi as a “widow” in the novel, not only because she was the widow of Feroze Gandhi, but also because a widow is a figure of ill-omen in Indian culture.

India has always been characterized by the diversity of the people living in it. The partition was nothing else but an attempt to divide the country along religious lines and make

Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. What the people aiming to do this failed to realize is that you cannot ask people to move to another country based solely on religion. What has to be taken into account is a sense of belonging, many people felt attached to India, to the country India used to be, and despite that, they were forced to leave their homeland.

2. 4. 2. Allegory of the character Saleem

The story of Saleem Sinai is the story of post-colonial India. He is the representative of the post-colonial nation because the exact moment of his birth was 15 August 1947. This moment completely coincides with India's gain of its independence from Britain. His birth ties him closely to the country's fate and future. Accordingly, his life is a reflection of the country's ups and downs, good times and bad times "More than a mirror of India, Saleem is the multitude of India.

During the first hour of independence, 1001 children were born, all of them with astounding magical powers. Midnight's children were alive by the time Saleem discovered their special gifts. His gift was the gift of telepathy, he was able to enter other people's minds and get to know their most intimate thoughts, emotions, and desires. Saleem's gift of telepathy allows him not only to immerse himself into the minds of other midnight's children but also into India itself, he is connected to the country through his gift .He can hear all of India, through all of its diversity, including different religions. Midnight's children are the most exquisite reflection of India itself, they represent the main characteristics of the Indian country –diversity, and plurality. They are all different, they all come from different backgrounds, religions, but they are connected by the precious gifts that they own, gifts that are not always a blessing.

The children are the embodiment of the country, of the nation, of its present and its future owing to his special power. Saleem organizes a Midnight's Children Conference, so, they all meet in his mind for one hour every day Shiva, who was born at the same time as Saleem, has the power of war. He suggests to Saleem that they should be the leaders of the group, which Saleem rejects, wishing for the group to have a greater purpose.

Saleem and Shiva, both being born at midnight, represent contrasting personalities; Shiva is named after the God of destruction, while Saleem represents Brahma, the God of creation. Shiva's personality stems from his upbringing, he was born into great poverty, he was expected by his father to be a beggar, so a lot of his frustration and anger can be justified. They together manifest the core differences striking India – rich and poor, Hindu and Muslim.

Before his death, Saleem claimed that his body would dissolve into 630 million pieces, which was approximately the population of India, at the time the book was written and published.

In this way, Saleem also represents not only the Indian country but also every citizen of India, in all of their differences and diversities. Having told his story, his purpose is fulfilled, therefore, he does indeed fall apart into as many pieces of dust as there are people in India.

India has always been a country that includes many different religions and cultural influences. However, managing all these distinctions proved to be very challenging, as even India itself ended up in many conflicts and wars over them. Hence, it is only logical that Saleem, the paragon of India's complexities and contrasts, having no solution for India's unity, has to disappear and evanesce. The book gives the analysis of Indian history and the evidence we receive – Saleem and his feelings, emotions, memories, the stories he heard about, and the stories he found out about using his gift – are all subjective. We do not receive any hard specific evidence in the book, which makes the story more personal and closer to the readers.

2. 4. 3. Saleem's Physical Disintegration

Saleem is writing the story as a defense against the cracks and disintegration of his body. His aim with the story is to create meaning in his life by telling his story. At the time he is thirty-one years old and working in a pickle factory, where he is preserving his history in pickle jars. Saleem desires what he calls meaning and by writing himself, he tries to acquire the significance that his adult life has taken away from him.

Saleem is losing his hair, one joint of his finger, he loses his sinuses and is castrated, and as a result, he disintegrates into 630 million fragments, which is the same number as the number of inhabitants of India. When the novel ends in 1978, Saleem repeatedly says that to understand him you have to swallow a world and he tries to understand his own fragmented identity. Since Saleem is a result of many different nations, languages, religions, and political parties, his sense of self is thus often conflicted and contradictory.

When there is a dance at school, there is a quarrel about the classroom door, and when it closes, one-third of Saleem's middle finger is cut off "I look at my hand out of pure curiosity. My finger has become a fountain: red liquid spurts out to the rhythm of my heartbeat" (235) Saleem is driven to the hospital where his mother meets him. The doctor asks about Saleem's blood type, but Amina does not know, and she tells him "I am an A; but my husband, O" (235) They are both rhesus positive. The result from the blood-test: Saleem is neither A, nor O and rhesus negative. This leads to Ahmed Sinai's suspicions that Saleem is not his son. Saleem thinks about this as:

"opposition of inside and outside! Because a human being, inside himself, is anything but a whole, anything but homogeneous; all kinds of every witching are jumbled up inside him, and he is one person one minute and another next. The body, on the other hand, is homogeneous as anything Indivisible, a one-piece suit, a sacred temple, if you will. It is important to preserve this wholeness. But the loss of my finger (which was conceivably foretold by the pointing digit of Raleigh's fisherman), not to mention the removal of certain hairs from my head, has undone all that. Thus we enter into a state of affairs which is nothing short of revolutionary; and its effect on history is bound to be pretty damn startling Uncork the body, and God

knows what you permit to come tumbling out. Suddenly you are forever other than you were; and the world becomes such that parents can cease to be parents, and love can turn to hate And these, mark you, are only the effects on private life. The consequences for the sphere of public action, as will be shown, are – were – will be no less profound” (236-7)

When Saleem can leave the hospital, it is not his parents who get him, but Mary Pereira and his uncle Hanif. He is informed that he is going to stay with Hanif and his wife Pia. Although Saleem loves his uncle and his wife, he thinks of it as his first exile and concludes that he has been loaned out and that his parents would send for him when they want him back. He thinks that he is in exile Saleem’s feeling of not being worthy of his parent’s love and protection, makes him decide to be the perfect nephew during his stay with Hanif and Pia, to reward them for taking him in.

In the novel *Midnight’s Children*, Saleem explains that it is like when you go to the cinema. If you watch the film from the back of the room, you have full view over what happens on the screen, but as you move closer to the screen, your perspective changes and you can only see a part of the picture, until you are so close that the only thing you can see is small dots which do not make much sense .It is like when you look at something at close range, you only see a small part, a segment or fragment, and the further you move from the object, the more you see.The same can be true about history; if you are too close to the incident in time, it is difficult to see the whole picture at once.

2. 4. 4. Saleem’s Purification

Soon after they arrive in Pakistan, Ahmed Sinai resolves to build a new house for them to live in. Saleem misses Bombay, but as his parents think that they should become true citizens of Pakistan. Saleem had lived in India, where the number of deities almost equals the number of

people, he is condemned to be a misfit. Even though he studies history, he does not feel as a part of Pakistan, where his fellow students demand a stricter, more Islamic society with more rules. Saleem is convinced that the purpose of the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965. was to annihilate his whole family, in other words the annihilation of the history of India and Pakistan.

2. 5. Allegory and Metaphorical Representation

Midnight's Children is known as an allegorical novel but we have to mention the presence of metaphor in it. For example, the secular is a significant and unstable trope in Salman Rushdie's fiction. Rushdie's use of metaphor may seem to preserve the distinction between the secular life of the postcolonial nation and the non-secular world. It is precisely through metaphor that Rushdie interrogates the democratic claims of Nehruvian secularism, beginning with a discussion of Rushdie's figuration of Saleem Sinai's body as a synecdoche for the Indian body politic in *Midnight's Children*.

By representing Saleem Sinai's body as a metaphor for the body politic in his second novel *Midnight's Children*, Salman Rushdie transforms Saleem's body into a site of violent antagonism. *Midnight's Children* as a novel is concerned with the terror of post-colonial modernity because it provides a critical framework through which to read Rushdie's use of hyperbole.

Hyperbole is used in the rhetoric of terrorism to sensationalize and exaggerate the significance of acts of political violence, to increase television ratings or newspaper sales or to garner public support for politicians, to introduce authoritarian security measures and launch counterterrorism offensives. In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie uses hyperbole to register how the excessive forces of history and the power of the emergent secular post-colonial state terrorize Saleem's body. For Saleem's hyperbolic role, as a messianic figure who represents the secular nation, is unsustainable and ultimately leads to his physical destruction.

Conclusion

The India that Salman Rushdie is describing in the novel *Midnight's Children* is a country that has a complex culture and where multiplicity, pluralism and hybridity are central ideas. The novel hints at the innumerable possibilities of the country and India is at once tremendously plentiful, heterogeneous, and many things. The novel suggests that the writer will only last for a time and generations of writers must reinterpret India to Indians. The writer both reinterprets and suffers, not as a private person, but as someone that must identify with the plentiful masses of the country.

The protagonist in the novel is a product of many different cultures, religions, and traditions. The tradition of India is also mixed and there is no such thing as a pure Indian culture, a true Indian religion, or a true Indian tradition. The novel shows that India cannot be understood as one whole, but a country that multifaceted must be divided into many different fragments to be understood.

Saleem is writing the history of his life and the novel contains several mistakes, which he notices and points out, but he usually refuses to correct them. Saleem persists that things happened the way they happened and that the person who believes someone else's history over his own is a fool indeed. This leads to the conclusion that the novel should not be read like a history book, but as a novel about Saleem's version of his history. The story is told in an allegorical way and it is constantly throwing up new stories within the story; this illustrates the Indian talent for continuous self-regeneration,

General Conclusion

To sum up, we can say that Rushdie's masterpiece, *Midnight's Children* is a novel about the Indian independence partition and its aftermath. It contains the novelist's interpretation of a period of about seventy years in India's modern history. In writing this novel, Rushdie aimed to relate private lives to public events and to explore the limits of individuality in a country of various cultures and populations. The novel has an intellectual and intercultural richness and deals with incidents of the pre and post-Independence era of the sub-continent.

The current study has proved the role of political allegory in describing complicated issues and stating some controversial ideas that might be dangerous to talk about them explicitly. It is divided into two chapters, the first chapter is devoted to describe post-colonial literature and its considerable impacts on the Indian novel and especially on *Midnight's Children* whereas the second chapter analyses the function of political allegory and how it is used as a tool to convey different issues smoothly. It is a qualitative type of research taking a descriptive and analytical method.

Midnight's Children is an allegory that chronicles the history of modern India through the lives of 1,001 children born with the country's first hour of independence from Great Britain. The novel deals with India's transition from British colonialism to independence and the partition of British India. *Midnight's Children* recounts the transitional phase of British colonialism to Independent India. It narrates the story of India through the suffering of Saleem, whose story is inextricably attached to India and the countries in the vicinity. For this reason, Saleem has some special powers, like all the children born on that particular hour of that glorious and auspicious day.

One should not have any doubt on the talent and skill of Rushdie as a novelist but the courage and intrepidity which Rushdie has mustered in coming out with fact and truth have never been done before by many authors in the history of Indian English Literature in general

and Indian English fiction in particular. This has been the key and secret weapon of Rushdie's success as a novelist.

Indeed, political allegory in *Midnight's Children* is a mirror that serves in reflecting complicated and controversial issues that cannot be expressed explicitly and this study proves that political allegory is the suitable apparatus to re-evaluate and re-examine the history.

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ملخص

أطفال منتصف الليل عبارة عن قصة رمزية فضفاضة للأحداث في الهند قبل وبعد استقلال وتقسيم الأمة الهندية الذي حدث في منتصف ليل 14 أغسطس 1947، وتعتبر الرواية مثلاً على أدب ما بعد الاستعمار. الهدف من الدراسة هو تحليل كيفية عمل الرمزية السياسية كاستعارة موسعة، حيث تعمل فيها الأفعال والشخصيات والإعدادات والصور الرمزية دوراً كبيراً في عكس القضايا المعقدة التي لا يمكن التعبير عنها صراحة. تم إجراء هذا البحث باستخدام البحث النوعي والمنهج الوصفي لتفسير وتحليل البيانات. البيانات الرئيسية هي الحقائق والمعلومات حول قضايا ما بعد الاستعمار من خلال الأحداث والتوصيفات المختارة في أطفال منتصف الليل. تثبت نتائج الدراسة أن الرمزية السياسية كأداة تساعد في إعادة تقييم التاريخ وإعادة فحصه لإيجاد حل وخلق مجتمع متناغم ومتوازن.

الكلمات الرئيسية: أطفال منتصف الليل، رمزية، سياسية، تاريخ، أدب ما بعد الاستعمار.