

THE THEORY OF COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *MIDNIGHT CHILDREN* AND ARUNDATHI ROY'S *A GOD OF SMALL THINGS*

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Abstract:

This paper focuses on the comparative study using Post Colonial interpretation. The study compares Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Arundhati Roy's *A God of Small Things*. The study aims to throw some light on the post colonial features in these works.

Keywords:

Imperialism, post colonial, culture, natives, independence

Postcolonial literature is a literature by colonized people. It exists on all continents except Antarctica. Postcolonial literature often addresses the problems and consequences of the decolonization of a country, especially questions relating to the political and cultural independence of formerly subjugated people, and themes such as racialism and colonialism. A postcolonial critic Edward Said refers to it as cultural imperialism. A range of literary theory has evolved around the subject.

In many works of literature, specifically those coming out of Africa, the middle east, and the Indian subcontinent, we meet characters who are struggling for their identities in the wake of colonization, or the establishment of colonies. For example the British had a colonial presence in India from 1700s until India gained its Independence in 1947. The characters in Indian novels, must deal with economic, political and emotional effects that the British brought and left behind. This is true for literature that comes out of any colonized nation. In many cases, the literature stemming from these events is both emotional and political.

Arundhati Roy, whose full name is Suzanna Arundhati Roy, was born in November 24, 1961. She is an Indian author, actress, and political activist who was best known for the award-winning novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997) and for her involvement in environmental and human right causes. Roy's father was a Bengali tea planter, and her mother was a Christian of Syrian descent who challenged India's inheritance laws by successfully sued for the right of Christian women to receive an equal share of their father's estates. Though trained as an architect, Roy had little interest in design; she dreamed instead of a writing career. After a series of odd jobs, including artist and aerobics instructor, she wrote and costarred in the film, *In Which Annie Gives It to Those Ones* (1989) and later penned scripts for the film *Electric Moon* (1992) and several television dramas.

In 1995 she wrote two newspaper articles claiming that Shekhar Kapur's film *Bandit Queen* exploited Phoolan Devi, one of India's most wanted criminals in the early 1980s and a heroine of the oppressed. The columns caused uproar, including a court case, and Roy retreated from the public and returned to the novel she had begun to write. In 1997 Roy published her debut novel, *The God of Small Things* to wide acclaim. The semiautobiographical work departed from the conventional plots and light prose that had been typical among best-sellers. Composed in a lyrical language about South Asian themes and characters in a narrative that wandered through time, Roy's novel became the biggest-selling book by a non expatriate Indian author and won the 1998 Man Booker Prize for Fiction.

Roy's literary output largely consisted of politically oriented nonfiction, much of it aimed at addressing the problems faced by her homeland in the age of global capitalism. Among her publications were *Power Politics* (2001), *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2002), *War Talk* (2003), *Public Power in the Age of Empire* (2004), *Field Notes on Democracy: Listening to Grasshoppers* (2009), *Broken Republic: Three Essays* (2011), and *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* (2014). In 2017 Roy published *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, her first novel in 20 years. The work blends personal stories with topical issues as it uses a large cast of characters, including a transgender woman and a resistance fighter in Kashmir, to explore contemporary India.

Roy was active in various environmental and human rights causes, often putting her at odds with Indian legal authorities and the country's middle-class establishment. She drew criticism for her vocal support of Maoist-supported Naxalite insurgency groups, views she summarized in the volume *Walking with the Comrades* (2011). While Roy was leading efforts to prevent the construction of dams in Narmada, supporters of the project accused her of attacking them at a protest in 2001. Though the charges were dropped, she was convicted of contempt of

court the next year after her petition for dismissal of the charges offended Supreme Court judges with its vituperative tone. She was fined and sentenced to a day of imprisonment. The incident was chronicled in the documentary *DAM/AGE* (2002). Roy narrowly escaped sedition charges in 2010 after making remarks in support of Kashmiri independence. In December 2015 she was issued a contempt of court notice after she had published an article earlier that year defending a professor who had been arrested for alleged Maoist links. In recognition of her outspoken advocacy of human rights, Roy was awarded the Lannan Cultural Freedom Award in 2002, the Sydney Peace Prize in 2004, and the Sahitya Academy Award from the Indian Academy of Letters in 2006.

Sir Ahmed Salman Rushdie was born June 19, 1947 in Bombay, India. He was the only son of a wealthy Indian businessman and a school teacher, Rushdie was educated at a Bombay private school before attending The Rugby School, a boarding school in Warwickshire, England. He went on to attend King's College at the University of Cambridge, where he studied history. After earning his M.A. from Cambridge, Rushdie briefly lived with his family in Pakistan, where his parents had moved in 1964. There, he found work as a television writer but soon returned to England, where for much of the 1970s he worked as a copywriter for an advertising agency. While Rushdie would later become a target of Muslim extremists, the religion was very much a part of his upbringing. His grandfather, a kind man and family doctor, was a devout Muslim, who said his prayers five times a day and went to Hajj to Mecca.

In 1975 Rushdie published his first book, *Grimus*, a fantasy and science fiction novel that received tepid reviews. Undeterred by the response, Rushdie kept writing and his second work, *Midnight's Children*, proved life altering. Published in 1981, the book, which tells the story of India's complicated history through a pickle-factory worker named Saleem Sinai, was a critical and commercial success. The honors included the Booker Prize and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize (for fiction). In 1993 and 2008 it was awarded the "Best of the Bookers," a distinction that made it the best novel to have won a Booker Prize for Fiction in the award's 25 and later 40-year history. Rushdie's follow-up, 1983's *Shame* won the French literary prize, Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger, and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, further cementing Rushdie's place among literature's upper echelon.

In 1988 Rushdie published *The Satanic Verses*, a novel drenched in magical realism and whose main story was inspired in part by the life of Muhammad. Critics adored it. The book won the Whitbread Award for novel of the year and was a finalist for the Booker Prize. But it also drew immediate condemnation from the Islamic world for what was perceived to be its irreverent

account of Muhammad. In many countries with large Muslim populations, the novel was banned and on February 14, 1989, Ayatollah Khomeini, the spiritual leader of Iran, issued a fatwa requiring the author's execution. A bounty was offered for Rushdie's death and for a number of years the writer was forced to live under police protection. To try and dial back the outrage, Rushdie issued a public apology and voiced his support for Islam. The heat around *The Satanic Verses* eventually cooled and in 1998, Iran declared it would not support the fatwa. In 2012 Rushdie published *Joseph Anton: A Memoir*, an autobiographical account of what life was like for him during the decade-long fatwa.

Even at the height of controversy surrounding his famous novel, Rushdie continued to write. In all he's written eleven novels, as well as a pair of children's books and published several collections of essays and works of non-fiction. Rushdie's 12th novel, *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* was published in September 2015. Overall, his books have been translated into more than 40 languages. Rushdie's litany of honors and awards are considerable, including honorary doctorates and fellowships at six European and six American universities. In 2007 Queen Elizabeth II knighted him. In 2014 Rushdie was awarded the PEN/Pinter Prize. Established in memory of the late Nobel-Laureate playwright Harold Pinter, the annual award honors a British writer for their body of work. Rushdie has also maintained a fiery tongue and pen. He's been a fierce defender of freedom of expression and was a frequent critic of the US led war in Iraq. In 2008 he publicly regretted his embrace of Islam in the wake of the criticism of *The Satanic Verses*.

The things that are common in both novels is the birth of the children. Both the children were born in historical times. *Midnight's Children* starts with Saleem and Shiva, they were born into Democracy at the stroke of midnight. India got independence on August 15, 1947. Then, *The God of small things*, a war broke-out in China on October 1962. The mother, Ammu was eight months pregnant of the twins. Shortly after, in November, while war was still going on, the monozygotic twins Rafel and Estha were born. These children were born in a time of change. The second distinctiveness in these novels was the separation from their parents that the children experienced. In *Midnight's Children*, the boys, Saleem and Shiva were switched at birth by Mary Pereira. She separated them due to her rebellious love to spike her Ex-Husband, Joseph Castro due to him leaving her for another woman. Due to being switched at birth with Saleem, Shiva is robbed of his wealthy birthright and raised meekly. In *The God of Small things*, the twins got separated because of Sophie Mol's death. Ammu thought it was best that Estha go to visit his father.

The novels were set in post-colonial India and so they are heavily influenced by the western world, only one family admits to be anglophiles. In *Midnight Children*, there is Aadam, who went to study abroad in Germany and comes back with the knowledge and tools to practice medicine. His new practice and customs do not set well with more traditional characters such as Reverend Mother and Tai; however, it allows him to set up a successful practice and have a comfortable living. In contrast, we have Chako who went to study outside of India as well, but went to England. His knowledge and studies are neither more for bragging purposes because he is unable to maintain his mother's business nor any other successful enterprise in his life.

The characters in both the novels show that their preconceptions and encounter with the Westerners play a big role in how they view Westerners and Indians who have adapted to or grown up with the Western lifestyle. Due to Roy's family being a group of Anglophiles and liking the British, they see Sophie Mol being half-Indian as positive. Padma, Saleem's partner in Rushdie's novel, on the other hand, is less familiar with the British and therefore has problems accepting that Saleem is half-English. This difference between how the two families view the half-breeds, Sophie Mol and Saleem, can also be connected to the long history of colonialism, where Roy's family has been trained to like the British, whilst Padma was born after India's independence and was not trained to like the former colonists. Similarly, Chacko is being more accepted for his adaptation to English ways by his family than Aadam is by his family. However, Chacko is not accepted by the English, where he feels that he belongs, which makes both Chacko and Aadam feel rootless in their home culture. It is through these preconceptions and different encounters that characters view and believe that there is a difference in behavior between the Indian and Western women, and that Westerners have a need to have higher status than the Indians. This paper shows that Indians have different views depending on their knowledge, lack of knowledge, interest or lack of faith in the West. Thus, the similarity between these novels is established through the post-colonialism. The effect of the colonized people on the natives is brought out through these novels. Thus post colonialism has brought in a great impact on the natives which is bought out through the comparison between the novels *Midnight's Children* and *A God of Small Things*.

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