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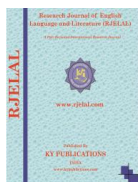
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RUSHDIE'S STYLE OF FICTION- MAGIC REALISM WEAVES THREADS OF FANTASY & MYTH, PAINTS A REALISTIC VIEW WITH HISTORICAL & POLITICAL ELEMENTS

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Abstract

Salman Rushdie's style of fiction is magic realism which is a distinguishable genre. Magic realism portrays fantastical events in an otherwise realistic tone. Through the use of magic realism style, Rushdie's novels presents use of history, myth, fantasy, politics, and reality in a flower form as one flower has different petals. In a similar way, his novels provide the fragrance of a flower with the combination of all these petals. In his novel, Grimus fantasy echoes with actual conditions and Rushdie employs different mythologies as Norse, Hindu, and Persian along with Islamic allusions. In his award winning second novel Midnight's Children there is a perfect fusion of fantasy, reality, political history of India and mythological battle between the innovative and devastate forces in the world. Shame, The Satanic Verses and The Moor's Last Sigh written in narrative style of magic realism in which myth, fantasy are uniquely blended with historical events, real life and politics. In his novels, Rushdie's narrative style – magic realism weaves the threads of fantasy and myth, paints a realistic view with historical and political incidents.

Keywords: Magic, realism, novel, style, use, fiction

Introduction

Salman Rushdie uses the narrative style of magic realism in which myth and fantasy are blended into real life. Magic realism style of Rushdie employs hybridity being a primary feature, it unites the opposites as urban and rural, western and indigenous. Another significant characteristic is metafiction, it explores the impact that fiction has on reality, reality on fiction and the reader's role stands in between supernatural elements is another important feature of magic realism. C.N. Ramachandran in 'Critical Response to Rushdie' discusses the use of magic realism in his novels :

" Rushdie mode of narration is magic realism....."

Magic realism has been variously defined as an attempt to transcend the limitation of realism, a free mixture of fantasy and reality, a mode that holds the mirror ' at slight angle to reality'. It is viewed as a denying 'the hegemony of bourgeois realism..... as a micro – macro synthesis. However, what is interesting to note is that it was Rushdie himself .who first claimed for his fiction the mode of Magic realism; and immediately critics hurriedly endorsed the claim." (p – 29)

Grimus : Salman Rushdie's first novel Grimus centers on 12th century Sufi- poem ' The Conference of Birds' as well as upon Sufi, Hindu, Christian and Norse mythologies.

Grimus is a historical novel. The central character Flapping Eagle who is given the gift of immortality sets out search for his sister Bird-Dog and to find out life's meanings. Flapping Eagle meets other immortals and his sister in Calf Island. Here he finds people blessed with immortality yet bored with sameness of life. Flapping Eagle is tired with the mundane reality of immortality hence wants to get rid of Grimus effect. The history of migration is also Rushdie's chief concern in the treatment of history. It is just exactly the case of Flapping Eagle and his companions who have been expelled from their national land and experienced the life of migration in Calf Island. They travel from one place to another hunting shelters for new free lives and new possible histories. Elfrida, a female character says:

"There are million possible Earths with a million possible histories, all of which actually exists simultaneously." (p – 55)

Rushdie's narrative style magic realism blur the lines between fantasy and reality. Fantasy echoes with the actual conditions in the novel. Grimus aims at providing an alternate form of reality and to construct a conceivable way of seeking reality from diverse dimensions.

Midnight's Children: Salman Rushdie's second novel 'Midnight's Children' narrated by Saleem Sinai covers the Indian sub – continent and it's history. In this novel personal history merges the political history which is set against a mythic backdrop gathered from India and Middle Eastern sources. Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* was praised by Timothy Brennan as :

Post – colonial metafiction, a novel about third world novels."

Midnight's Children written in magic realism style has been acclaimed as a landmark in the history of Indian literature written in English. Rushdie draws up compressed images of Indian social, cultural and political reality wonderfully mixed with fantasy. This novel hailed as a post – modern epic where Rushdie employed several features of magic realism. Dr. Indira Devi has quoted the words of C. Kanaganayakam in her book 'Salman Rushdie and Magic Realism' as under :

"Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* marks the long awaited birth of the great Indo – Anglican novel. His magic realism foregrounding of style, syncopated dialogue, constant shifts of chronological sequence, self – conscious narrative mode and the fusion of realism and fantasy point to an awareness post – modern and meta – fictional trends in fiction and a desire to break away from the realism and assumptions governing the growth of the average Indo – Anglican novel."

Shame : Rushdie's novel 'Shame' published in 1983. It is written in magic realism style constructed of interwoven stories which treat the social life and the individual in fictional version of Pakistan named 'Q'. Two Pakistan's are created in the novel one fictional and one real existing side by side as narrator says:

"There are two countries, real and fictional, occupying the same space or almost the same space. My story, my fictional country exists like myself, at a slight angle to reality." (p – 29)

Rushdie himself admits that his country is real and fictional, which is and it is not Pakistan. Therefore, magical realism is used to tell truth through fantasy and treats social problems in *Shame*.

Sufiya Zinobia, however is the ideal symptom of magical realism depicted purposely for the novel. Throughout the incidents of the novel, she discusses her connection with the white panther, and the beast that she has become,

"this was the danger of Sufiya Zinobia: that she comes to pass not in away wilderness of basilisks and fiends, but in the heart of the respectable world..... the more powerful the Beast became, the greater grew the effort to deny it's very being." (p – 210)

In his novel, Rushdie begins his myth by describing the mythic hero, Omar Khayyam Omar is a supreme avatar of shamelessness. So, novel *Shame* written in magic realism style a mixture of different threads of fantasy, myth, reality, history and political elements.

The Satanic Verses : Rushdie in his fourth and most controversial work, 'The Satanic Verses' published in 1988 used magical realism and contemporary events and people to create his characters. It is an allegory in which Rushdie used dream concept throughout the novel. The title of the novel, 'The Satanic Verses' denotes a mythological reference. In the opening scene of the novel, Gibreel's opening lines are:

"To be born again....."

First you have to die." (p – 1)

Rushdie in his novel employs the elements of fantasy to describe the attitude of the west towards the people of the East. The Satanic Verses also deals with the political mechanism of immigration from East to West – specifically from India to England. The politics of racism is an integral part of the immigrant's experience. Moreover novel is enriched with social references also.

The Moor's Last Sigh : In his novel, The Moor's Last Sigh, facts combined with fantastical elements found throughout the novel. The most magical incident happened when Aurora (Moraes mother) gives birth to Moraes in just four and a half months of conception. Charyulu Mohana G. & Rao Venkateshwar D. In their article 'Re – Presentation of History in Salman Rushdie's Fifth Novel "The Moor's Last Sigh" described use of magic realism style in his novel as :

"The title of the novel The Moor's Last Sigh is taken from the story of Boabdil, the last Moorish King of Granada. This novel depicts the major two harbor cities in India . Rushdie narrates the major themes in the highly populated city Bombay, capital of Maharashtra state as well as Cochin of Kerala. Through this novel Rushdie recollects the wounds of Bombay blasting, destruction of Babri Masjid. The novel begins in Spain and moves to India. Indian history is depicted as he had witnessed in his childhood days. The novel goes through the first person narration and ending with the third person narration."

Rushdie also touches the dark sides of dirty politics in the novel as refers to heavy destruction in Bombay caused by bomb – blasts at many places of India. The novel portrays Hindu – Muslim riots in Ayodhya and Bombay leading to the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992 as the narrator puts it :

"The mosque at Ayodhya was destroyed." (p – 363)

Alongwith the historical, political, realistic events in the novel various Biblical, other religious and mythological stories are mixed in the larger framework of the narrative.

Conclusion

So, Rushdie in his above studied novels weaves the threads of fantasy and myth, paints a realistic view with historical and political elements. He employs the narrative style of magic realism in which myth and fantasy are blended into real life. His first novel, Grimus is a historical novel in which fantasy echoes with actual conditions. Midnight's Children is a post modern epic where Rushdie employs several features of magic realism. Shame, The Satanic Verses and The Moor's Last Sigh written in magic realism style exhibits the historical, political, realistic events alongwith mythological stories . Baijayanti Swain remarks about Rushdie's narrative style magic realism and it has been interpreted as an attempt to outstrip the constraints of realism.

"The author's purpose to adopt magic realism as a narrative mode lies behind his aim to display dictatorial politics, religious fundamentalism, cruelty of history and society, not with civilized people, but with savages.....he is conscious of his professional responsibility which he fulfills through his sensibility (magic realism)." (p – 290)

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