

**A Postmodern Study of Politics, Language, Magic Realism and Oral tradition in Salman  
Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories***



Saraf Anjum

ID: 15263009

Department of English and Humanities

April 2017

**A Postmodern Study of Politics, Language, Magic Realism and Oral tradition in Salman  
Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories***

A Thesis submitted to

The Department of English and Humanities

BRAC University

By

Saraf Anjum

ID: 15263009

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Masters of Arts in English

April 2017

## **Acknowledgements**

First of all I am thankful to Almighty Allah for granting me this opportunity to finish my thesis. I would also like to thank my supervisor Prof. Syed Manzoorul Islam for his guidance and support. I am indebted to my supervisor for giving me his valuable time and suggestions throughout the duration of thesis. I would also like to thank my other faculty members, Prof. Firdous Azim and Dr. Rifat Mahbub who have discussed theories in classes which helped my thesis.

## **Abstract**

This paper will discuss on two of Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. Firstly a brief introduction about postmodernism is given along with how its ideas clashes with modernism's doctrines. It will also talk on how the notion of politics and history is deconstructed by postmodernism, and also on the role memory plays while writing the historical narratives. Magic realism and oral tradition also plays a role in novels which will also be covered. Rushdie's alterations of the English language and how his style inspired new writers has will also be discussed. The rest of the paper will focus on how Salman Rushdie delegitimizes politics, language and history and his intentions for using magic realism and oral tradition in the two novels.

## Table of Contents

Title	Page no
Introduction	1
Chapter One Salman Rushdie: Hybridity of Language	5
Chapter Two Politics, History and Memory	9
Chapter Three Magic Realism and Oral Tradition	13
Conclusion	17
Works Cited	19

## Introduction

Postmodernism is a cultural turn that happened sometime in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It does not postdate modernism but runs parallel to modernism and questions its excesses. However, the ideas and thoughts that are associated with this movement are completely different to that of modernism. Postmodernism believes in pluralism and it subverts the truth. On the other hand, modernism believes in singularity and absolutism. Modernist literary authors perceived the world as fragmented, troubled and on the edge of disaster which is conveyed through their novels. A postmodern author depicts the world having already undergone countless disasters and is beyond redemption and understanding. The hierarchy that is associated with the English language has been dismantled in the era of post colonialism and post modernism. The language no longer belongs to the British instead it has been transformed into a global language where people of different nationalities have started to speak their own form of English.

The end of World War II marked the beginning of a new movement called postmodernism. In 1960 it spread its wings towards architecture, literature, art, as well as to the visual culture such as television, Hollywood. Thus these areas have witnessed tremendous changes in the areas of genre, language, narrative style, portrayal of the characters and much more.

Ihab Hassan in his essay 'Towards a concept of Postmodernism' gives an idea about what postmodern is. He does not provide a concrete definition since there is none he says. But later in the essay he gives certain characteristics that makes postmodernism different from modernism. In terms of literature, postmodernism does not follow a concrete style. The events of the story are sometimes not narrated chronologically. It is anti narrative and meta-narrative for it includes *petite histoire*, meaning there are other narratives within the same plotline. The endings of such novels are open and does not provide the readers the satisfaction of a happily ever after. The open endings are the gateways to new beginnings and hope. The narrative technique of modern novels is *grand histoire*, where only the main plotline is followed. These novels' endings are closed in order to show a solution is reached.

Modernist authors search for meaning in a chaotic world. They try to find meaning behind the fragmented and troubled world. While postmodern authors often playfully avoid the very possibility of meaning. There are some novels where the readers will not be able to deduce any meaning from the stories. Ihab Hassan also includes other characteristics of these two movements. Modernism believes in totalitarian rule where the political authority has absolute control over everything. It is full of anxiety and is strictly hierarchical; and also makes a clear distinction between high art and low art. Modernism does not like popular culture for it was for the masses. Modern literature did not accept it because it was for the lower class. Postmodernism, on the other hand, blurs the distinction between high and low art. Installation art is very popular and it challenges gallery art. The former is a process where the artist installs the art manually and it cannot be owned. Gallery art is for the elites and owning this art is considered to be highly prestigious. Postmodern creates anarchy in the sense that it rejects and mocks the upper classes as well as the classics and dismantles the social structure. Postmodernism takes on a celebratory tone with no value judgment and it also portrays the society as it is.

The doctrines of modernism were set aside by three extraordinary thinkers. Modernism believed in hierarchy and that power dominates all. However Karl Marx with his theory on social structure dismantled that thought. Marx says that the proletariat, being exploited for generations, revolutionizes against the bourgeoisie class. Therefore the entire class structure collapses, taking with it the political power and authority. Darwin's theory of evolution proved that man is not the Supreme Being which was another shock to modern ideas about man. Darwin's theory says that human beings evolved from different variables which belonged to animal and plants. In 1920 came the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud who presented his theory on how the unconscious mind shapes the way humans think and behave. These great theorists completely altered the views and perceptions of the modern world.

The First and Second World Wars were fought for power as well as occupying territories. The leaders of 1914 and 1939 believed that all the problems and disputes will be solved through violence. In truth they wanted to gain new territories to expand their power and control over other nations. Modern politics give the illusion of serving the people; it paves the way of expressing people's rights. However, in reality modern politics is all about the domination and

suppression of ordinary people. It is exclusionary and it only favors people with power. Hierarchy and origin are two important beliefs that modernism follows. Modernism strongly emphasizes that origin is important. It says that every individual is deeply rooted to their identity and it is that identity that shapes a person's beliefs and thoughts. Hierarchy is rather common in modernism. It says that the authority with more power shall rule the nation. Although politics, suppression and domination cannot be fully eradicated, postmodernism presents its own view concerning the matter.

Postmodernism satirizes politics. It criticizes politics by saying that it does not matter who holds the most power, for the opposition is just as fake as the one who is currently in power. Therefore postmodern politics dismantles the power structure. Since the cultural movement believes in multiplicity, it provides the world, the society and the people with different versions of truth.

*Midnight's Children* attempts to chart the lives of three generations of the Sinai family. The life of Saleem Sinai the protagonist and narrator is a metaphor for his country. The children of the book's title are all born in the course of midnight of India's independence. The novel is intensely political, interweaving the course of Indian democracy in the wake of its numerous challenges and drawing attention to the Emergency of the seventies. The novel questions received versions of history, revel in politics, and draws heavily from aspects of Indian popular culture and memory. It is a novel where Salman Rushdie presents the audience with multiple truths. The novel's protagonist Saleem Sinai has his life intertwined with that of the nation's history. By doing so Rushdie has created Saleem's version of history regarding the Indian nation. Rushdie used the power of fiction to provide alternative versions of the past and thus questioning the official history.

Postmodern unity is marked by a commitment of local experiences. Folk stories and folklore and art which modernism deduces as low art, became important figures of creativity. In folk imagination realism has many experiences. Magic realism is one of them. The term was first coined by Alejo Carpentier in 1940 and from then magic realism has become a genre for many

novels such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, Tony Morrison's *The Beloved* and several more. Magic realism constructs and alternate reality. Postmodernism knows that the reality cannot be changed so it creates another reality where fantastical elements are celebrated. Oral literature is another genre where a storyteller plays a significant part. The storyteller takes the listener into a world of imagination. Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is heavily incorporated with these two genres. It takes the readers to an alternate world of Water Genies, talking Hoopoe birds, the land of Gup and Chup and the silent world of Khattan Shud. The book follows the journey of a young boy, Haroun, who travels through worlds in the hopes of restoring Rashid's ability to tell stories. The real world of Haroun and Rashid is that of a sad city, which manufactures sadness and a city which has forgotten its own name.

## Chapter One

### Salman Rushdie: Hybridity of Language

The Indian empire had its first encounter with the British in the 1600s. The British merchants had the privilege to perform trade with the West Indies through the East India Trading Company. The national language of the subcontinent was Persian and English was only used by the company for trading and business purposes. In 1757 the Nawab of Bengal Siraj-ud-Doula fought against the Company and was defeated, which led the British government to be directly involved with the Indian empire and this marked the beginning of two hundred years of British colonial rule in India.

The Charter Act of 1813 stated that the East India Trading Company will be held responsible for the education of the people. Therefore many schools and colleges were opened which laid the foundation of the English system of education in India. As a result the English language was no longer contained within the walls of the Company. It gradually paved its way into the voices of the Indian nation. The British gradually but effectively spread their Metropolitan culture, their traditions and social norms. English was considered as a language of power and authority and it was the belief of the sub continent that mimicking the colonizer's language will upgrade one's status. Thomas Macaulay's essay 'Minute on Indian Education' states that the English should be the only language used for Western education.

Macaulay in the argument against Orientalists boldly presented his opinion on spreading Western learning through the medium of English because according to him, Macaulay has not found a single Orientalist who could deny that 'a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia' ( Macaulay, 241). In his minute, Macaulay rejected the claims of Arabic and Sanskrit being the medium for teaching Western knowledge in educational institutes. He gives pointers as to why English should be favored. It is the key to modern knowledge and is therefore more useful than Arabic or Sanskrit. It stands the greatest even among the language of the west in India, English is the language sponsored by the ruling class. It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the east. The

natives are eager to learn English and are not keen to learn Sanskrit or Arabic. What the colonizers wanted was to create class of people who would blindly follow the masters. It would seem that Macaulay strongly believed so. In the minute he mentioned that it was not possible to teach the masses of India, however it was possible to educate “a class of persons Indian in blood and color and English in taste, opinions in morals and in intellect” (Macaulay, 249), who would in turn teach English to the masses, and Macaulay said that “To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population” ( Macaulay, 249).

The nation of Africa faced similar situations like that of the Indian nation. The people of Africa were made to believe that learning the colonizer’s language would provide them with power and authority and also they could have a sense of domination and control over their fellow citizens. Chinua Achebe has said in his essay “English and the African Writer”, that English is a “world language that history has forced down our throats” (Achebe, 346).

“One of the main factors of imperial oppression is control over language. The imperial education system installs a ‘standard’ version of the metropolitan language as the norm, and marginalizes all ‘variants’ as impurities” as said by Helen Tiffin in the theoretical book *The Empire Writes Back*. During the colonial rule, English was considered as the language of hierarchy and a medium used for control and domination. However this idea is dismantled in the age of post colonialism and postmodernism. As mentioned earlier postmodernism rejects hierarchy and disassembles sources of power and suppression. Similarly with the English language, postmodernism has created a linguistic insurrection by destabilizing syntax, challenging the purity of the language, introducing plurality and the voices of the subalterns and also using the native’s lens to understand a nation.

India and Africa after gaining independence from the colonizers started to suit their own native style. Authors of these nations uses hybrid English as a medium to write fiction. They also include native words and phrases in their novels which according to the British are impurities. But these words and phrases make the story more thriving and the colonial gaze is subverted

from the novels. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is one such novel where he includes the cultural background and traditions of the Igbo tribe. The novel includes many phrases of the Igbo tribe for Achebe mentions in his essay that "I have been given this language and I intend to use it" (Achebe, 348). Achebe has Africanized the English language. Similar to Achebe, Salman Rushdie has also brought significant changes to the English language.

Rushdie played with the linguistics and syntactical structure of the English language and in the process did what some linguistics describe as chutnification. 'Chutney' is an Indian dish, which is a side dish and tangy, adding flavor to the main course of any meal. "Chutney" is a noun form and is understood as such in English. By adding "-fication", Rushdie changes an Indian word into an English one to stand for transformation. Therefore "Chutnification" in the novel means transformation of English having an additional connotation of making the language used in the novel tangy and more flavorsome and exciting. *Midnight's Children* is where Rushdie sprinkles English with Hindi and Urdu words and this sprinkling provides the novel with an oriental flavor. Rushdie does this for two reasons; firstly to make the readers understand the various geographical locations that spins around India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and secondly to subvert the language associated with colonial powers.

Rushdie's style of writing acts as an inspiration to the new generation of Indian writers. Rushdie's *Midnight Children* was the one to bring in content and form which was fresh and new. It brought in a wave of new content of modern writing but still infused with rich Indian history and its cultures. He includes certain words and cultural background of the sub continent in the language. Rushdie does this in order to suit the novel's setting. He Indianizes the English language in order to emphasize the post modernity of his novels and also to deconstruct the concrete ideas about the benefits of mimicking.

Brown in the section 'Hybridity of Language' states how Rushdie has whisked himself away from the conventional rules of English. This is seen through Saleem when towards the end of this narration he starts to lose grip on his story and starts narrating without punctuation. What makes Rushdie's language truly postmodern is that he embraces the low culture by incorporating voices from the streets which includes colloquial speech and jargons. Brown concludes the

section by saying Rushdie intermixes Indianizes Bombay English with Oxford English. By doing so Rushdie 'delegitimizes the hegemonic structure of original English' (Brown, 59) and thus transforming English into a global language. Rushdie's English is both postcolonial and postmodern. It gives us glimpses into his conscious craftsmanship, which aims at decentering and hybridity.

## Chapter Two

### Politics, History and Memory

Politics and history have always been inter-related. The common driving force between them is power. Power has the ability to charter the course of history and politics in its favor. Modernism believes in hierarchy and that the elite dominate everything. Similarly history is the work narrated by the elites. Traditionally history was considered as an objective and unbiased mass of knowledge, but in the postmodern era the very existence of history is threatened by the questioning of the authenticity of historical sources and documents.

Postmodernism fictionalizes history. In the past fiction and history were clearly distinguishable. History was about being realistic and objective while fiction was imaginative and subjective. However the age of postmodernism has blurred the line between them. Rushdie has done exactly this in *Midnight's Children*. He mixed fiction with history. One of the examples is the 1956 language march. Saleem was trying to impress Evie Burns with his nonexistent cycling skills, which eventually leads him to crash head on into the march. The people in the march then asks Saleem to say something in Gujarati. Saleem does so and that becomes the slogan for the march. Therefore Saleem becomes directly involved in the 1956 language march by the Marathas.

The novel interprets history which is different than the original. It focuses on the history of an individual rather than the elitist version. During the Amritsar massacre, Aadam Sinai was saved by a timely sneeze which makes him fall into the ground seconds before Brigadier Dyer commanded his men to open fire. The colonizers version of the same story includes the number of bullets being fired and out of that number how many have found its target. Linda Hutcheon mentions that postmodern fiction does not aspire to tell the truth rather it focuses on whose truth gets told. This is exactly what Rushdie is trying to prove through the novel. He subverts history by linking Saleem's story with that of the nation's. In the novel Saleem went to spy on his mother Amina as she secretly meets with Nadir Khan who is a communist. According to Saleem is it due to his mother's campaign that led the Communist Party to win maximum number of seats in the election.

In typical postmodern fashion, events from history are installed only to be subverted. Saleem is unable to escape his association with historical events even when he goes to Pakistan along with his mother and sister. Incidentally, he learns that the presence of the Pakistani frontier deprives him of his telepathic communication to the children of midnight. While in Pakistan, Saleem finds favor with his uncle General Zulfikar. His uncle prefers Saleem over his own son. Consequently, Saleem is allowed to witness the surreptitious meetings leading to the military coup by Ayub Khan. He claims "not only did I overthrow a government — I also consigned a president to exile" (*Midnight's Children*, 291).

Memory and history are also intertwined. It is heavily dependent on each other. Postmodern fiction tends to show how the established history is faulty due to memory being fragmented. Memory is an ambiguous entity yet it occupies a major portion when narrating history. The idea of memory is noteworthy for its fragility, its capability to be maneuvered to suit political, social or religious needs. Power constructed memories are collective for they hope to manipulate the masses to suit their desires and even go as far as alter or obliterate parts of the historical narrative. The theme of memory manipulation is seen in many contemporary novels. One example of this is George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, where Napoleon and Squealer alters the memories of the other animals of the Seven Commandments to suit their own selfish desires. They do so in order to stay in power and to indulge in all the extra benefits that are associated.

It is memory that both authenticates and invalidates the official history. In *Midnight's Children* Saleem's inconsistent memory of storytelling unravels the hidden strategies of history writing that reconstructs the past; because of this the hunt for the real truth remains unsolved. Inconsistent memory produces distorted historical narratives. Memory alters, selects, eliminates and exaggerates but in the end creates its own reality which points out that the established history is unreliable since it is written from the records of an individual's memory. Memory is related to identity. When Saleem loses his memory due to severe injury to the head, he also loses his identity.

War had always been an integral part of both politics and religion. The motto of war revolves around valor, courage and heroism. For example Brigadier Dyer in *Midnight's Children* was welcomed as a war hero by the colonizers for his valiant deed during the Amritsar massacre. In reality Dyer can be considered as a murderer who killed innocent civilians and he should not be labeled as a war hero. Modernism greatly leans towards the taglines that are associated with war. It believes wars should be fought to impose supremacy in the name of peace and tranquility. The events of World War II and the Holocaust left a disturbing and traumatic impression into the hearts of the nation. Naturally, talking about a war is equally distressing. Postmodern fiction tackles the events of war through allegorical novels and dismantles the labels related to war. Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is where he mocks the very idea of war. The final battle between the Gupees and Chupwalas is Rushdie's remarks on war fought for politics, religious or personal reasons. In this case the Gupees are fighting in order to rescue Princess Batcheat from the Chupwalas. Since the Chupwalas are forbidden to speak, they are unable to explain their situation and thus the war comes off as foolish. Rushdie's description of the war makes the two armies look literally foolish. The Chup City is located into the heart of darkness. The air was so cold that the Chupwalas put on nose warmers to prevent their nose from freezing over. The Gupees did the same and to Rashid the war looked like 'a war between buffoons' (Rushdie, 179). Their outlook made both armies appear like clowns as they fought. The idiocy comes to light when it is learned that the Chupwalas fight only because they are afraid not to do so. This war, therefore, has nothing to do with bravery, courage or honor.

*Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is an allegory. At first read it comes off as a children's novel, however Rushdie has hid meanings within the lines of the story making the novel an allegory. In the novel allegory exists on both political and personal level. However these two levels of allegory intermingle with one another. At the time of writing the book, Rushdie was dealing with the *fatwa* issued against him. The connections to personal allegory are evident in the story; Soraya leaving Rashid is similar to the way Rushdie was abandoned by those he loved. The idea of Haroun saving his father and restoring Rashid's gift of storytelling is allegorical to Zafar who helps Rushdie rediscover his art of writing.

Rashid's gift of storytelling is rejected by Sengupta, Soraya and Khattum- Shud. These are all politically allegorical against the authorities who seek to silence artistic free speech. Due to the *fatwa* in effect Rushdie went into hiding and led an extremely difficult life. During that time his right for expression was taken away and thus the writer became frustrated. Rushdie's denial of freely expressing his ideas can be compared to the Chupwalas. Khattum- Shud represents the censorship imposed on Rushdie. He forbids his people to speak and barricades them from expressing their ideas. Khattum- Shud's reason for censorship is that he wants to control the Chupwalas. He tells Haroun that the world is meant for controlling and domination. The way the Cultmaster will enforce his dominance is by suppressing the people's voices. He is in command of the Chupwalas by polluting the Ocean of Stories and constraining their language. Khattum- Shud's method is familiar in the political world where power, authority and fear silences the people.

## Chapter Three

### Magic Realism and Oral Tradition

Magic Realism is a technique popular among Latin American writers in which supernatural elements are treated as mundane. The technique has its roots in traditional storytelling. The term was first introduced by Franz Roh, a German art critic. Even though magic realism existed only in art before, however it was not until World War II and the Holocaust when it became a global phenomenon. In 1930s the technique made its way to be a literary genre and the works of Latin American novelists and short story writers fell under the new term 'magical realism'.

Latin America witnessed the 'boom' period in literature in 1950s and 1960s. This 'boom' was brought by writers such as Alejo Carpentier and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. The genre of magical realism was not limited only to the narratives of South America. It spread its wings to various texts and cultures from Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa and several others. Writers such as Salman Rushdie, Tony Morrison and Emily Bronte are among magic realist writers who employed magical realism in their writings. They did so in order to tackle the horrors of the holocaust.

Magic realist novels rescued the people from the trauma of the holocaust. Many writers incorporated the genre of magic realism in their novels to counteract the political violence of the contemporary world. The novels have a celebratory tone where the line between possibility and impossibility collapses. The era of modernism was full of anxiety, however magic realism contains no anxiety and it gives off a sense of wish fulfillment to the people. Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* contains many fantastical elements, one of which is Rashid's reply to Haroun's question about the origins of his father's stories. Rashid gave his answer casually that his stories flow from an "invisible Tap, installed by Water Genies" (Rushdie, 17). Rashid's intonation was relaxing as if invisible taps and water genies are a daily occurrence. Another instance was when both Haroun and Rashid were resting at Bhutto's guesthouse and Haroun suddenly saw a light emitting from under his bathroom door. As he cautiously opened the door, he found a small creature who later introduces himself as Iff, the Water Genie. Haroun found this

meeting completely ordinary, for instead of expressing shock, he normally begins to converse with I

When Haroun, Rashid along with Bhutto were crossing the Dull Lake, strange episodes began to initiate. The Dull Lake or the Moody Land alters its environment on the basis of an individual's mental state. For instance Rashid Khalifa was disheartened and depressed so the Lake was shrouded by the 'Mist of Misery' (Rushdie, 48), while Bhutto, on the other hand, was enraged causing the Lake's water to boil. Both Bhutto and Haroun were equally furious causing the Dull Lake to have rougher waters, violent winds with flashes of lightning and thunder. The fact that a lake can change its surroundings while depending on a person's mood is truly absurd yet viewed as normal. The castle of Prince Bolo is another marvelous example of magic realism. The Prince's subjects were all pages and their uniform was rectangular in shape. Each of these texts had separate texts and volume numbers written on them.

*Midnight's Children* also had the privilege to have magic realism as one of its genre. The protagonist, Saleem Sinai begins his narration by confessing that he was born at the stroke of midnight on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947, the precise instant of India's arrival at independence. Rushdie's aim was not to retell the fixed notions of history instead he compiles personal histories of others which are tangled with the thread of the official history. By doing so the aura of constructed history gets replaced by the aura of everydayness. Saleem narrates the incidents of his life with the national history as the backdrop. Therefore through Saleem, Rushdie is mixing the aura of ordinariness with the elitist aura of Indian history. Rushdie uses magic realism to make people forget about the events of sterilization, the war against the Chinese, the Partition and the Emergency.

The magic realist elements that Rushdie used are brilliantly spread throughout both the novels. The readers become baffled at every turn of the page and just when the audience thinks that there are no more surprises, at that moment Rushdie drops a bombshell on the readers with new characters with their unique personality; like Butt the hoopoe, a mechanical bird who converses "without moving its beak" (Rushdie, 68), the Plentimaw fishes, Goopy and Bagha, who also has the ability to talk, Saleem and his telepathic powers, Parvati and her witchcrafts and many more.

Magic realism has its roots in oral tradition. Oral literature is a completely different literary text with its own style and narrative technique. Like the name suggests the knowledge, culture, art, and ideas are transmitted orally from one generation to the next. Oral literature is sometimes known as folklore and differs greatly from the written texts.

Oral tradition leans heavily upon the participation of the audience. A storyteller must have an active and lively group of listeners. Rashid, the Shah of Blah, is a storyteller whose tales are listened with great interest from listeners all over the world. "And with all his rehearsals and performances, Rashid was so often on stage.....he sped around the city and country telling stories." (Rushdie, 16) -----This shows how popular Rashid's stories were. He had all kinds of audience from "toothless old-timers (16) to politicians. The audiences in written texts are distanced since they are reading something which has already been recorded.

Oral literature or folklores contains the feature of Intertextuality. In *Haroun and the Sea of the Stories*, Rushdie has borrowed ideas, stories and names from other folklores. The names of Haroun and Rashid come from the splitting of the name of the caliph of Baghdad, Haroun- al Rashid. The water Genie Iff reminds the readers of *The Arabian Nights* which is abounded with all kinds of Genies.

Memory is a vital part of storytelling *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* with the loss of memory and identity. "There was once, in a country of Alifbay, a sad city, the saddest of cities, a city so sad that it had forgotten its own name" (Rushdie, 15). However at the end, memory is restored in the city when the policeman says, "we remembered the city's name.....Kahani.....it means Story" (Rushdie, 208-209).

The reason behind the restoration of memory is Haroun's journey to recover Rashid's storytelling ability when Haroun defeated Khattum-Shud and saved the Ocean of the Stories, the forgotten happiness of the people of Kahani in the real world is restored.

"Haroun often thought of his fighter as a juggler, because his stories were really lots of different tales juggled together and Rashid kept them going in a sort of dizzy whirl, and never

made a mistake” (pg.16) -----Rashid’s improvises the stories in correlation to the audience’s background. It is an important quality of a storyteller to know his/her audience beforehand.

As magical and wonderful storytelling is there are downsides as well. A storyteller’s ultimate failure is when he/she cannot tell stories anymore. Rashid faced this crisis when he was asked to tell stories in a political rally, where instead of stories the sounds “Ark, Ark, Ark” (pg.26) came out. Rashid loses the gift of storytelling and turns from his usually happy, imaginative, story-filled self into a sad and self-pitying man who can only say "ark" when telling stories. When the aura of oral literature gets lost in the metropolitan culture of a society, along with it the traditions, the customs and knowledge gets lost too.

## Conclusion

This research paper has dealt with two of Salman Rushdie's novels and offered an understanding on how he dealt with politics, magical realism oral tradition and language in a postmodern era.

Salman Rushdie in both *Midnight's Children* and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* plays with language. The chapter 'Hybridity of Language' shows how the English language has been changed after the British left the Indian subcontinent. It shows the transitional alteration of the English language in postmodern and postcolonial times. Rushdie has Indianized the English language by adding words from Hindi and Urdu. Chutnification is what many theories call Rushdie's contribution to the English language. By adding flavor to the language Rushdie has created a version of English that differs greatly from the colonizers. Along with Rushdie, Achebe's thoughts on English as a global language have also been discussed briefly.

As mentioned earlier postmodern satirizes politics. It means that the power relations and the constructed history that are associated with it are questioned. The second chapter 'Politics, history and memory' expresses how the official history does not reveal the truth at all. The chapter draws on the relation between politics and history. For this section the novel *Midnight's Children* has contributed greatly. Rushdie has intertwined the history of the Indian nation with that of Saleem, one of the many children who were born during midnight and thus gaining supernatural powers. Rushdie, by connecting the historical narrations of Saleem and the country showed that history can be fictionalized and throughout the novel the author focused on the historical narratives of an individual rather than the elitist version, making the novel postmodern. The relation between memory and history has also been portrayed in the novel. Memory creates its own reality through alteration, exaggeration, obliterating events that have already taken place. Therefore an individual's memory of any historical event is not distinct instead it is fragmented and thus the society's constructed histories are questioned in the era of postmodernism.

The last chapter 'Magic Realism and Oral Tradition' firstly briefly talks about the origin of magical realism and later in the 1960s became a popular genre for many Latin American, Asian and African novels. The section then sheds light as to why the genre of magic realism was used by so many writers. It was because since magic realism incorporates fantasy into everyday

life, it was a method to rescue the people from the trauma of the Holocaust. In *Midnight's Children* the genre of magical realism is used in order to defile the aura of constructed history with the aura of everydayness. By giving priority to the histories of other characters Rushdie makes the official history lose the air of importance. The section moves on the next novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* where Rushdie has included numerous elements of magic realism. Postmodernism shapes the genre of magic realism as a gateway to an alternate reality. Magic realism is not similar to escapism; instead it shows a reality which is favorable for the characters. In the novel Haroun travels to the alternative world of Kahani to gain back Rashid's gift of storytelling and also to wish for his mother's return. The journey of Haroun can also be interpreted as wish fulfillment. The section also talks about the characteristics of oral tradition and how it relies heavily on audience participation and how the Rushdie has included other folklores and ideas from other cultures in the novel.

Postmodernism aims to deconstruct the society by problematizing the notion of history, politics, language and memory. It also provides a certain level of hope to those who are traumatized by wars and violence. This hopefulness is mainly expressed by authors in their novels through techniques such as reverse narration, magic realism and several more.

## Bibliography

Rushdie, Salman. *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. London: Granta Books, 1990. Print

Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight's Children*. London: Vintage, 1981. Print.

Achebe, Chinua. "English and the African Writer." *Transition*, no. 75/76, 1997, pp. 342–349.,

Macaulay, Thomas Babington. (1972) *Selected Writings* (ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 238-250.

Hassan, Ihab. "Towards a Concept of Postmodernism". *The Postmodern Turn*, 1987, pp. 273-283.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. Introduction. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literature*. Routledge, 1989. 1-12. Print.

Rocha, Prema. *Salman Rushdie: A Critical Study of his novels*. MA thesis. Goa University, 2008. Web. March 20, 2017.

Brown, Jessica. *East/West: Salman Rushdie and Hybridity*. MA thesis. Olivet Nazarene University, 2011. Web. March 18, 2017.

