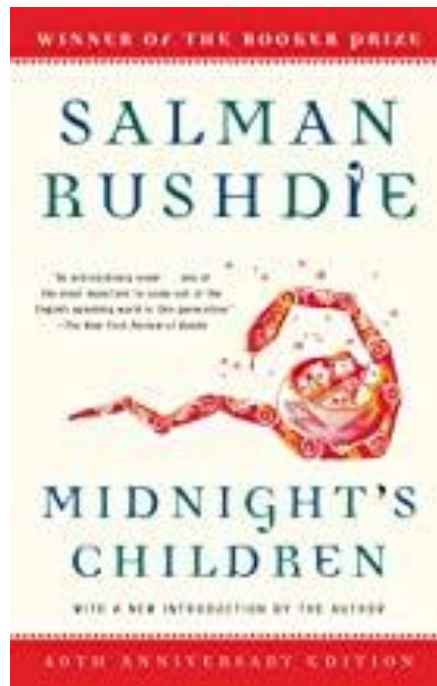


Trauma of Dislocation and Relocation in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

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Abstract

The very term 'Dislocation' means the movement of a person or a group of people from one place to another, whether forced or volunteered. Here our protagonist undergoes a coerced displacement. Not only him but also his grandfather and father has been displaced involuntarily. It is apparent that displacement (dislocation) is the inheritance of his family.

How *dislocation* and *relocation* have affected the psyche of the protagonist has been dealt here. It all starts precisely at the stroke of mid-night when the clock joined hands to welcome the squirming baby Salim on August 15, 1947. Everyone cherished him, the newspaper praised him and the prime minister himself wrote him welcoming his birth, with the new nation born Salim and got embroiled in fetters with the nation and was imbued with telepathic powers and a highly sensitive nose that senses danger. Salim narrates and scribbles his story under the watch of Padma his loyal fiancé and his patient listener. Salman Rushdie deftly provided us with plenty of cultural references and historical contexts making this one of the predominant works of post-colonial literature.

Keywords: *Salman Rushdie, Midnight's Children*, Alienation, Exile, Dislocation, Relocation, Post Colonialism.

Expatriation, Exile and Alienation are such difficult phases faced by someone who got displaced and our protagonist is no exception, Aadam Aziz, a doctor graduated from Germany, happened to treat the ailments of the daughter of a landlord named Ghani. Aadam Aziz's curiosity increased as everything he could see was a perforated sheet of seven inches. The backdrop is set in Kashmir and the lush environment is explained with such spectacular choice of words. He saw the face of Nazeem exactly at the date when the *First world War* was announced. As days gone by, they both fell in love with each other and got married eventually with the consent of her father and they had left Kashmir to Agra, having frustrated with the irksome behavior of an old boat man named Tai. This is where the story starts moving as Aadam Aziz got displaced coercedly and the displacement passes on to generations.

"I've decided to give Tai his victory" by Aadam Aziz, MC, Page no. 30

The couple was welcomed by the corpses of the rioters, the resultant of the outbreak of a riot because of the distortion of a grand design of Mahatma Gandhi on August 6, 1919. The erupted riot took over a week to settle down and Aadam Aziz was heavily wounded and was treated by Mercurochrome. They got accustomed to the city, and they bore five children, Hanif, Mustafa, Mumtaz, Alia, and Emerald. With the main plot, Salman has provided the readers with myriad of political happenings and the conflicts between India and Pakistan.

Mumtaz, the second of five was married to Nadir Khan a young man and the personal assistant of Mian Abdulla was safely given accommodation in the underground of their house. A year later, her father found out that the couple has not yet consummated their marriage and was known of the impotence of Nadir Khan and sends him away. Mumtaz now was married to Ahmed Sinai, a merchant and changed her name to Amina and they left for The Methwold Estate, Delhi.

It is apparent that *Dislocation* plays a titular role in their lives. Now that Ahmed and Amina is leading a peaceful life where Amina's thoughts still hankers for her ex-husband Nadir Khan, she somehow manages to forget him. Pregnant, she went to a fortune teller where, he prophesied that the child will never be older or younger than his country and stated that he foresees two heads, knees, and a nose, prophesying(hinting) Salim and Shiva which Salman unravels on the course of the novel.

"She was beset by the phantoms of Ramramseth, and the old prophecyOf a child with a cauliflower instead of brain; she was plagued by the dreams of a monster child, began to drive her wild all over." MC, pg.no. 455

A sudden shift in the story takes place in the novel with the arrival of our protagonist at the Narlikar's nursing home, August 15, 1947, precisely at the stroke of midnight when the clock joined hands to welcome the wriggling baby Salim to the world. Not only Salim, along with him thousand and one children were born.

"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: it was on August 15, 1947. And the time? The time matters too. Well then: at night, it's important to be more ... on the stroke of midnight as a matter-of-fact Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greetings as I came."

- MC, page no, 3, Ch. no,1, The Perforated Sheet.

Unlike his grandfather and father he got "displaced" at the moment of his birth itself by Mary Periera who was influenced by the thoughts of her radical Socialist lover Joseph D Costa, switched the babies thereby giving the privileges of richness to a poor baby and vice versa, which Salim later on finds out.

Things go fine until Salim finds out that his mother is frequenting her visits to a cafeteria to see her ex-husband Nadir Khan, and Ahmed finding out that his wife is not interested in him anymore and starts consuming alcohol and became a dipsomaniac. Having been advised by Amina's mother (the reverend mother) she leaves her drunkard husband for the children's good and leaves for Pakistan to live with Salim's Uncle Commander Zulfakir, marking Salim's second **displacement**. Salim finds it elusive to attain his Uncle's affection and to get along with him and makes use of every opportunity to attain his uncle's affection. Moreover, he was not well received by his aunt and was constantly taunted by his enuretic cousin Zafar.

As his entire childhood was spent in India, he finds it incommensurable to cope with the people and culture of Pakistan. here Salman gives us multifarious cultural and religious references. *It is obvious that these have created a huge impact in the psyche of Salim.* As a response to the message that Ahmed Sinai's health is deteriorating by Mary's sister, Amina flees and takes her husband with her to Pakistan and starts a towel factory to earn their living in Karachi. Still, Salim is emotionally attached to Bombay, he finds himself unable to feel at home in the overwhelmingly Muslim Pakistan.

The Indo-Pakistan war erupted, and Salim lost his parents, house and has forgotten everything when a silver spittoon, which is a legacy left behind by his mother, fell on his head erasing his memories. Salim names the chapter 'How I attained purity'. He finds himself in Bangladesh. Somehow, he managed to escape there and reached Delhi, thus *relocated*. He got married to Parvathi – the-witch, who was imbued with the *art of Sorcery*, and was shattered to find out that she has an illicit relationship with *Shiva of knees*, the nemesis of

Salim. Frustrated with the infidelity of Parvathi, he leaves her. He accompanied Picture Singh, the snake charmer, to Mumbai and settles there, *relocated*.

In the course of the novel, we get to know that Salim was swapped as a baby by Mary Pereira and the actual parents of Salim are Vanita, a poor lady and William Methwold a landlord, with whom Vanita had an affair with. Later on Mary with the impinging guilt admits herself to nurse Salim. Talking of displacement we cannot forego Shiva, who is the biological son of Ahmed Sinai and Amina Sinai, Shiva has gone through the traumas of being poor and we can find him mocking Salim by calling him “The Rich Kid”. Not only Salim but Shiva too has an indelible effect on the consequences of the displacement. The cold feud between Salim and Shiva alludes the ancient feud between the destructive powers (Lord Shiva) in the world.

The number 1001 alludes the story of Scheherazade, of the Arabian Nights, as Scheherazade narrates 1001 stories to the King. Salim recites and writes his story to Padma, nicknamed The Dung Lotus, who patiently listens to Salim in his death bed, nursing him. Salman is confessional in a way that he shows how Salim as a boy got physically attracted to his Aunt Pia Mumani, his physical description of Amina, and the way he was attracted and haunted by the face of his sister Jamila, writing down things considered taboo by the society.

Midnight's Children takes us through a neck breaking roller coaster passing through all the things we face such as infidelity, incest, lust, greed, envy, and love.

Midnight's Children is a sheer amalgam of Cultural, Political, and Religious references. No wonder Salim said, “*To understand me you have to swallow the whole world*”. The implication of the Indo-Pakistan war and other contemporary issues merged with the life of Salim made this a titular work on the Post-colonial literature. This book consists of thirty chapters, all of them are metaphoric presentations. This shows the artistic quality of Salman Rushdie. The novel ends with Salim looking at the child which is not actually his but Shiva's. The themes, Truth and storytelling, British colonialism and Post-Colonialism, Sex and Gender, Identity and Nationality, Fragments and Portioning, Bildungsroman have been deftly handled by Salman Rushdie. He has succeeded in bringing forth a vital and engrossing work that stands the test of time. *Midnight's Children* unfolds a new vista every time we read the novel with the artistic writing techniques and his piquant choice of words.

“Yes, they will trample me underfoot, the numbers one, two, three, four hundred million five hundred six, reducing me to speak of voiceless dust, just as all in good time they will trample my son who is not my son, and his son who will not be his, until a thousand and one midnights have bestowed their terrible gifts and a thousand and one children have died, because it is the privilege and the curse of midnight's children to be both masters and victims of their times, to forsake privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of multitudes and to be unable to live or die in peace”. MC, Chapter no, 30. Pg. no. 647.

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