



SRI RAMAKRISHNA ENGINEERING COLLEGE

Autonomous Institution, ISO 9001:2008 Certified.
Approved by AICTE and Affiliated to Anna University, Chennai
(All Eligible Courses Accredited by NBA)
Vattamalaipalayam, NGGO Colony Post



COIMBATORE-641022, Tamilnadu, India
www.srec.ac.in

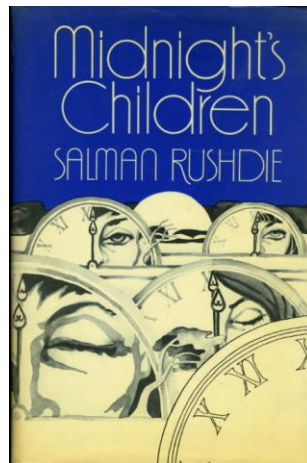
11th International Congress on English Grammar (ICEG 2014)
In association with Systemic Functional Linguistics

Grammar and Grammar Teaching: Changing Perspectives

Editor
Dr. Vathana Fenn

Discourse Analysis of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

M. S. Vinutha



A Quest for Identity

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:1 March 2014

Dr. Vathana Fenn (Ed.) *Grammar and Grammar Teaching: Changing Perspectives*

M. S. Vinutha

Discourse Analysis of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* has been described as fantasy, history, autobiography, a political novel, a novel with a theme of quest for identity, etc. It has been viewed through various literary angles, rather than the angle of language. This novel has catapulted Rushdie to well-deserved fame in 1981 for his play with language. The writer has been widely acclaimed for his experimental style and a remarkable cerebral fertility.

Freedom at Midnight

In this novel, Saleem Sinai, the protagonist is born at midnight on August 15th 1947 – the very instant that India attained her independence. Saleem's generation is represented by 1001 children born in the first hour of India's independence. Each one has some special preternatural ability and the power to telepathically communicate with each other through Saleem who has the power to read others' thoughts. Saleem hopes that these children can work together and use their powers for the betterment of their country. But, they never do anything. Instead, their powers are destroyed by their own people.

Saleem's Autobiography

In this novel Saleem writes his autobiography, reading it aloud to Padma who takes care of him and links it with the contemporary history of his country. Throughout the novel Saleem's inner life is a function of the historical forces affecting his state. In this manner Salman Rushdie links historical facts with fictional elements by intellectually systematizing the records and survivals of the history of India.

A Post-modern Novel – Fact and Fiction Blurred

This novel is considered a postmodern novel. In any postmodern novel, there is a blurring of two genres and in this novel fact and fiction are blurred. It also contains many postmodern elements such as irony, parody, self-reflexive narration, etc., which are nothing but the language aspects throughout the novel. So, as the language aspect is of utmost importance in any postmodern novel, discourse analysis which concentrates on variation in the use of language throws light on the novel as a postmodern novel, and in the process leads to the heart of the novel.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:1 March 2014

Dr. Vathana Fenn (Ed.) *Grammar and Grammar Teaching: Changing Perspectives*

M. S. Vinutha

Discourse Analysis of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

Lexical Analysis - *Cousinji*

The first stage of analysis is of lexical items, which is done in terms of neologism, words with unusual affixation, unusual words and words in different languages. Neologisms like ‘cousinji’, ‘chutnification’, ‘crorepatis’, etc., are abundantly used. The vocabulary given to each character suits them perfectly. Unusual words like ‘writery’, ‘looker-after’, ‘writing-shiting’ are used to retain the flavor of the vernacular. There is an authentic delineation of Indian life and attitudes through the use of many Indian words taken from Urdu and Hindi (Kachcha, Yara, Bhai, Badmaash, Fauj, Sadar, Shaitan, etc.).

New Words from Indian Usage

We can also see that in the phrases like ‘Gib the car poliss, Begum?’, ‘Let us in Maharaj!’, the words like ‘Gib’, ‘poliss’ break open the realistic mode of presenting the divisions of race and class highlighting India’s oppressed and downtrodden through their repeated encounters with the elite. Rushdie’s use of Indian names like ‘Jawan’. ‘Babu’. ‘Buswallah’, ‘Fakir’ can also be found a number of times. Rushdie has created new words by adding ‘ed’ to the words (browned, stethoscoped, etc.,) and adding suffix ‘y’ to the words (cobwebby, spidery, down to earthy, etc.,). Onomatopoeic words like ‘poof’, ‘ekkkhh-thoo’ etc., can also be seen in the novel in various places. Rushdie’s purpose of using such unusual words is to give the novel an Indian flavor. He has used various words from various Indian languages like Hindi, Urdu and Sanskrit to evoke Indianism in the novel. Through this style of writing, he has also highlighted the cross-cultural interactions in the novel.

Structural Elements – *Irony, etc.*

The next stage of analysis is the analysis of structural elements. Here the narrative elements like events, parody, irony, self-reflexive narration and switching from first person to third person are focused upon. The analysis of different kinds of events (events in which historical and fictional characters meet, instances in which historical and fictional events coincide, events in which historical events and fictional characters meet) lead to the conclusion that Indian politics and Saleem’s story are inter-woven with great skill. We can understand

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:1 March 2014

Dr. Vathana Fenn (Ed.) *Grammar and Grammar Teaching: Changing Perspectives*

M. S. Vinutha

Discourse Analysis of Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*

clearly through many of the events the central irony of the novel that Independence has damaged the Indian spirit by proving that Indians can act as abominably as the British did. Thus Rushdie, by mixing up historical characters and fictional characters is able to blur the borders between fiction and history. This way he not only attempts to make sense of the past, but also critiques it from the point of the present. This co-mingling of history and fiction elevates private experience to public consciousness.

Parody

There are several examples of parody in the novel. Sometimes the imitation is done so badly that it seems to be an intentional mockery of what it should be. The writer has successfully made use of irony also along with parody, to incorporate the textualized past into the text of the present so that the past is not destroyed but revisited. He has also forcefully indicated the burgeoning of distorted politics in India through the above mentioned structural elements.

Other Strategies

Self-reflexive narration which can be seen throughout the novel incorporates into its narration, reference to the process of composing the fictional story itself. This kind of narration is a work of fictional art. The last structural element ‘switching from first person to third person’ proves that the novel moves from the element of realism to the element of anti-realism. This substantiates what critics have pointed out to as magic realism in the novel.

=====
M. S. Vinutha
Assistant Professor of English
Government Law College
(Affiliated to Karnataka State Law University)
Hassan
Karnataka
India
vinutha.14@hotmail.com