



Research Paper

## Rushdie's World Of Phantasmagoria Of Conscious

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**ABSTRACT:** Rushdie's each and every novel is encompassed with myth, magic, soul, supernatural telepathy, human being taking the shape of animals, thus through fantasy we reach illusive world, where the familiar may seem to be strange and the strange made familiar. Not always familiar, but Rushdie's 'fantastic' and 'magical' forces, also make us to travel, into the world, an unfamiliar world, the world of death, horror, supernatural forces. Mary Pereira sees her dead husband in *Midnight's children*. Cama's life shadowed by his dead twin Gaya in *The Ground Beneath her Feet*, and Sufiya's incarnation into a beast, killing animals and human's and eating their entrails in *Shame*. Not only Sufiya, but her ayah Shahbanoe and even her husband Omar is shown to be transfigured. May it be abnormal growth of Moor in *The Moor's last sigh*, all works of Rushdie have cluster of example and references to fantasy. Rushdie says "illusion, itself is reality" (*Midnight's Children* 1982:60). Thus Rushdie weaves a beautiful world, a dream world, and this is how the **fulcrum of phantasmagoria of the conscious is created.**

**KEYWORDS:** Phantasmagoria, conscious, imagination, metamorphosis, prophecy, hallucination, telepathy.

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Salman Rushdie sharing his view about magic realism, with Uma Chaudhuri, says:

I am not very inclined towards social realism, not that I didn't like realism, but it seems to me that it's a convention that has been tried to impose itself as some kind of objective truth...in order to describe reality you do not have to write realism in only one rule about reality, there are lots of other [*Imaginative Maps: 'a conversation with Salman Rushdie'*, 1990: Vol II, No I].

Thus, a part from penning down, the reality as exactly it is, the ordinary events and characters are mingled with the elements of fantasy and myth, which at on one hand seems to be familiar and at on the other hand, seems to dream like, is another art of expressing reality, which is termed as "**Magic realism**".

Historically the technique of '**magic realism**' with its characteristics mixing of the fantastic and the realist, traces its origin, as a literary style to Latin America and Third world countries, is the weapon of post-modernism. Defining the term '**magic realism**' Brenda K. Marshall writes: "A text that is called magic realism is one which disregards the 'natural' or 'physical laws, which we have to see as normal' (*Teaching the post modern*, 1992: 179). In past mythological works, or religious doctrines like that, from "*Mahabharata*", "*Ramayana*" to *Jataka tales* or *Alice in wonderland* or the "famous lamp" in *Aladdin in Arabian Nights* or recent *Harry Potter* or *The hulk* are all wrapped in magical fantasy and there is social relevance of the age. "**Magic Realism**" which is the modern term given to the fantasy writing encompasses imagination, vision, mental flight, telepathy and also hallucination, supernatural so as to depict the "**Phantasmagoric realities**" of the twentieth century.

The writing of magic realism, is not just a fairy tale, removed away from the 'real' world, rather it constantly threatens the notion of the real world. In 1980, Salman Rushdie published his novel *Midnight's Children*, and with this book, Rushdie became one, of the first few writers and first Indo-English writer, to employ magic realism.

Rushdie's power of imagination, takes us to a pre-mediated and deliberate flight into a world, where unexpected things happen. His phantasmagoria tells us about the consciousness and the individual person. It was by his art of magic realism that he juggles to create new, a new world, which reveals his deep conviction in religion, it is reined by his variety of woman and above all it is a world which is dream like, but seems to be true. **While soaring in the world of phantasmagoria, he uses theology, art, djinns, telepathy,**

**metamorphosis, invisibility ghostly figures and spirits, all done with purpose.** As Rushdie says "I have always thought of fantasy, as only being useful as a way of enriching realism, not as an end in itself." (Dharker, *New Quest*, 1983:351).

Writing about fantasy, Rushdie in his book "*Imaginary Homeland*" says "it is an effective way of dealing with problems of less compatible societies (19). "The shadow world" he adds is a good deal more fascinating than the one most people inhabit" (221). The use of fantasy is also helpful in creating distance from actuality, which would make things less offensive (408-9). He also puts, if we are "given the gift of self consciousness, we can dream versions of ourselves, new selves for old, walking as well as sleeping, our response to the world is essentially imaginative(377). **"Imaginations" are dreams, in consciousness that symbolize our subdivided wish or hope which we earnestly need to get fulfilled.** In *Shalimar the Clown*, Pamposh Kaul comes to her daughter's dream and tells her:-

...About the unshackled future that shone on the horizon, like a promised land she could never enter, the vision of freedom, that had eaten away at her all her life... I am telling you what's already in your heart, what you want to confirm. (54).

**"Imagination"** of Saleem in *Midnight's Children* could materialize things into reality, his dreams turned to be real that he had dreamt off. Saleem confess "I fell asleep... I dreamed the murder of my classmate Jimmy Kapadia... in the dark of the night, I awake from the dream of Jimmy Kapadia's death...at school, the next day, I was told of Jimmy Kapadia's tragic death...it is possible to kill a human being by dreaming his death?(249). **This is Rushdie's phantasmagoric world, where dream and reality merge, where the future is imagined, and that's why, Camas's** (*The Ground Beneath her feet.*) well known album "The earthquake" came to be true, as if he could see the future. His album imagined future, his "eschatological world view, the Quake is coming, the Big one that will swallow us all. Dance to the music, for tomorrow, suckers, we die" (393). Rushdie states that "Natural disasters are proofs of god's displeasure, because the world is our fault" (457). So, human sacrifices are the result of divine's rage. Rushdie here wants to express, that our minds, our conscious mind, our imagination, gets expression by the medium of writing, or dream and turned out to be real. **Here he has blurred the distinction between expression, imagination, dream and reality.** It is like dreams invade the day, while walking humdrums beat in our dreams" (390). In *MC* he shows Dr.Scheepsteker, who ran a snake poison research institute "had the capacity of the dreaming every night about being bitten by snake, and thus remained immune to their bites. (737)

Talking about imagination, can it be reality that sometime we imagine of getting **"metamorphosis"** into animals serpents, dinosaurs, come to be true? Rushdie writes:

the laws of the universe may be changing, such transformations may incredibly, horrifying- become normal... we may be losing our grip on our humanity by when we finally let go, what's to stop us from turning into dinosaur...tigers, jackals, hyenas, wolves?(*Ground*, 2000:391)

**The "metamorphosis" is Rushdie's another weapon to transmit fantasy. It foretells our urge to change. It expresses our wish to remold or remake the world, the people, and also ourselves.** In *Fury*, the dolls made by professor Solanka, metamorphosis to become alive living individual. He goes to such extent that even, a doll's face resembled to a living women. Rushdie puts "it was a trick of mind to see human life made small, reduced to doll size, (15)" solanka, awake, full conscious, sees his dolls metamorphosised into living "sleeps-deprived, wild of thought, he headed for his bedroom. Behind him through the thick humid air, he could hear his dolls, alive now jabbering behind the closed doors"; telling each other, their "back story", the tale as how she or he come to be" (50). Rushdie here tells us that we all have stories of life, and after our death, such life tales will keep us immortal. **Throughout his various novels, the characters, change name or their personalities** Parvati to Jamila Singer, Mumtaz to Amina in *MC* and more specifically Saleem's turning into she-dog, who is being used by Pakistan army, to sniff out the enemy, suggest a truth, a reality, too dark to be directly revealed.

Saleem even sees his mother metamorphosing "into a lizard on the wall" (*MC*, 1982:4). **Seeing an individual metamorphosis is actually a distorted or submissive mentality, of an individual.** Metamorphosis or transfiguring is often also seen in our old fables, and myths.

Rushdie giving us an insight about the need to "metamorphosize" writes:

Metamorphosis, this is what I need to explain...is what supplants our need for the divine. This is what we can perform, our human magic. I am talking now about the ordinary, quotidian changes that are the stuff of modern life... Chameleon natures which have become so common during our migrant country... when we are faced will the immense. At such a hinge moment we can occasionally mutate into another final form of a form beyond metamorphosis. A new fixed form... (*Ground*, 2000:461)

Rushdie's world is really a mystery, where we metamorphosize to another fixed form. When the real existence becomes questionable, "a mystery" is developed. Rushdie's world thus is also the **"world of mystery"**. He uses mystery because according to him "mysteries" drive us all. We only glimpse, their veiled

face, but their power pushes us onwards, towards darkness or into the light" (*Fury* 2001:43). Thus Saleem in *MC* says:

A mythical land, a country which would never exist except by the efforts of a phenomenal collective will- except in a dream ...the new myth- a collective fiction anything is possible, a fable rivaled only by the two other fantasies: money and God (112).

In this phantasmagoric world, full of mystery, which is a mythical land where anything can happen. The inhabitants of this mythical land can "**posses' power**", which is not seen in normal human. The most representative example is the power possessed by the 1001 midnight children in *MC*. "The nature of these children, every one of whom was, through some freak of biology...or preternatural power of the moment...endowed with features, talents, or facilities which can be described as miraculous. (*MC* 195)

The thousand and one children born in the midnight of country's independence were blessed with "**magical and miraculous**" power. They are children who had power of transmutation, flight, prophecy and wizardry..." (*MC* 200). It was already cited in previous paragraph, that "**metamorphosis**" was **temporary change of form, but 'mutation' was a permanent change of a form**. The midnight's children were actually "Mutants". Describing the "Midnight's Children" or the "**Mutants**" Rushdie express as Saleem:

...Kerala...boy...had the ability of stepping into mirrors...Goanese girl with gift of multiplying fish...power of transformation...from the nilgiri hills...vindhya boy...could increase or reduce size...from Kashmir...could alter sex as she (or he) pleased...we were a bunch of kids...Parvati-the witch...the genuine gift of conjuration and sorcery...to Shiva the hour had given the gift of war...and to me, the greatest talent of all- the ability to look into the heart and minds of men. (*MC*, 200).

"**Miracles and strangeness**" in growth yet another tool used by Rushdie to create Phantasmagoria which can be seen in the growth of "Moor" in *TMLS*. Moraes, express his abnormal growth when he says:

"By the age of seven- and - a- half I had entered adolescence, developing face- fuzz, an Adam's apple, a deep bass voice and fully fledged male sexual organ...at ten, I was a child trapped in the six- foot-six body of a twenty- year- old giant...(152). I grew in all directions...I was a sky scrapper freed of all restraints, a one-man population explosion...a shirt- ripping, button- popping Hulk. (188)

Saleem, too in *MC* is shown to grow at an enormous speed. He does not only grow fast, but he also changes his shapes and size. He has a nose, like the trunk of the elephant. He was further disfigured by his geography teacher Zagallo. At the age of nine, he could be revived back to life by injecting snake poison. Later he is made impotent, and also gets struck on head, by a spittoon, during a bomb blast, which leads to memory loss, but he develops an enhanced power of smell.

**The fantastic transmogrified figures elucidates the problem of identity, parenthood, and nationality, it describe the turmoil that goes inside a man.** As Saleem says "I, alone in the universe, had no idea, what I should, or how I should behave (*MC* 153). On the other hand, Moraes (in *TMLS*) thinks, that "for my many and many sins, for my fault, for my most generous fault" (143) of disparately and breaking mother's heart, he had been a man "living double-quick". He was addressed as "Mr. Gulliver Travel and we are your Lilliput" (189).

Just opposite the rapid growth of Moor and Saleem, Sufiya (in *Shame*) showed "**diminished growth**". Her body grew, but she was mentally retarded. Here Rushdie says "Sufiya grows up, her mind more slowly than her body, and owing to this slowness she remains "somehow clean in midst of a dirty world" (120). Rushdie expresses that fast growth results in the facing of the adversity of the world before time, while diminished growth keeps us away from the dirty world and thus we do not become a part of it.

Travelling alone with Rushdie's in his phantasmagoric world we land in the world of "**Magic**". Yes, the magical and fantastic world has a special place in Rushdie's novel. In *MC*. Uncle Haniff is successful as a filmmaker, when he adopts fantastic and unrealistic mode of storytelling in his film, and his effort to make realistic film, leads to his demolition. In *TMLS*, Rushdie points out that "Realistic movies were never popular" and then "Aurora preferred the service of films for children... where fantasy rip, in which fish talked, carpets flew and boys dreamed of previous incarnations. (173)". Rushdie's world is also the world of magician; "Magic" means change brought by confusing tricks. Such is this world where we can see people flying in baskets", magician performing surprising feats.

A son... who will never be older than his motherland...there will be two heads-but you can see one... there will be knees and nose...newspaper praises him, two mother raises him! Bicyclists' love him...crowds will shove

him! Sisters will weep, cobra will creep...washing will hide him- voices will guide him! Friends mutilate him- blood will betray him...spittoons will brain him- doctors will drain him- jungle will claim him... he will be old before he is old! And he will die...before he is dead (88).

Surprisingly, the predictions turned to be true. Saleem's birth was also prophesized by a "Sadhu" who enters Buckingham Villa, just before his birth. He foretells "I have come to await the coming one. The Mubarak- he who is blessed. It will happen very soon. (MC, 113).

**All these prophecies, fortunes, intuition are a means to relate the present to the future, and this is the world of phantasmagoria, where the distinction of present and future has been blurred.**

"Magic" also means the power of apparently influencing events by using mysterious or supernatural forces. In Rushdie's work, we get appropriate example of "**hallucination, ghost, djinns, supernatural forces, soul**". Rushdie uses vivid pictures to create an environment of fantasy. Like the shifting of scenes in a melodrama, how aptly he describes the atmosphere of a fantasy world:

Then- we should have known something bad would happen...corpses of dead promfet which floated without the ghost of an explanation ...other omen...comets were seen exploding...flowers had been seen bleeding real blood; (MC 136).

The fantastic world is also highlighted in *Fury*, in the worlds of dolls, that is world of inanimate, miniature women. "The world of inanimate miniature is just about all you can handle. The world you can make, unmake and manipulate filled with women, who don't answer back..." (30). It pictures man's hidden wish, to dominate, to command and the world of in animate which exactly acts according to our wish and follow our orders without any tantrums.

**By this journey, into fantasy world Rushdie, at first illustrates the need of such a journey is to escape from too much reality and find refuge in the arms of fantasy world, in search of peace.** The world though sizzles, with transparent figure of peasant's ghost, the unnatural growth of mangrove trees, the three inch size of transparent leech, sets the atmosphere of turmoil, problems, sufferings, pain in the world, but then the 'monkey with mother's face', the comfort given by four beautiful hours states that there is also hope, a temporary relief in this world.

Rushdie's novels are webbed with innumerable description of fantasy, illustrated with supernatural atmosphere.

The willful fight to the phantasmagoric world, takes us to the world of people, who are different from other. They have the power to reign the imagination of others and study, what juggling is going on in one's mind. This is "**Telepathy**" which enhances the fantasy atmosphere of Rushdie's 'phantasmagoric world'. Rushdie writes; "telepathy, the inner monologues of all the...teeming millions, of masses, and classes alike; jostled for space within my head. (168).

At first, Saleem's telepathy was restricted to 'listening', then he was able to 'tune' first of family member, then of passing strangers, Saleem (in *MC*) had the power of entering into the thought of others, and smell out the fishy. Saleem puts, "inside me, the voices rebounded against the walls of my skull (163).

Rushdie shows that by the power of telepathy, one can travel in the regimes of other mind, and get connected, just like the radio waves gets connected and leads us to the transmission, and hence we can study other minds... **Thus Saleem's degenerate body patronizes his disability, whereas his telepathy patronizes his ability.**

Rushdie, commenting further of telepathy, says that such **telepathy, was seen in old love stories, where "before telecommunication, true love was enough"...to make possible a kind of spiritual contact between lovers**" (SC 2005:257). She could feel his grief, wants, love and he could feel the murmur of her love. The same telepathic communication of true lovers is seen in the story of Boonyi and Shalimar "They could see each other with their closed eyes, touch each other without making physical contact...a channel of communication in functioning" (SC, 258).

Thus **Rushdie, express that this telepathy at one end shows one's ability**, as every individual may have numerous disabilities, but he is sure to have one ability, and telepathy was Saleem's ability.

**Secondly, telepathy helps us to read minds and contact people.** This telepathy mode of communication is automatically present in true lovers. **Thirdly, the mode of telepathy helps in individual to reign in two worlds simultaneously** his or her own world and the world in which they make communication. Thus Rushdie writes “Boonyi was at once there in the hut and somewhere else as well. She could hear what he was saying but she was also listening elsewhere. (262).

Rushdie points out those lovers, saints, prophets, who have the power of telepathy; they live simultaneously in two worlds. **“Living simultaneously in two worlds”** is one this aspect that we see in Rushdie’s fantasy world.

When the caravan of Rushdie lands, from his world of conscious flight to phantasmagoria world, into the world of reality, he writes:

Reality is a question of perspective... suppose yourself in a large cinema, sitting in the back row, and gradually moving up, row by row, until your nose is almost pressed against the screen. Gradually the stairs faces dissolves into dancing grains; tiny details arouse grotesque proportion; the illusions dissolves- or rather it becomes clear that **the illusion itself is reality.** (MC, 168).

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