

Magical Realism in Indian Literature

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Introduction

Magic realism or magical realism is a genre where magical or unreal elements play a natural part in an otherwise realistic environment. Although it is most commonly used as a literary genre, magic realism also applies to film and the visual arts. An example of magic realism occurs when a character in the story continues to be alive beyond the normal length of life and this is subtly depicted by the character being present throughout many generations. On the surface the story has no clear magical attributes and everything is conveyed in a real setting and breaks the rules of our real world. Magic realism is a term used to describe the everyday reality with supernatural events. The two terms 'magic' and 'realism' have become intertwined that strange, unearthly happenings become almost an accepted, even normal part of daily life. Magic realism considers being a postcolonial phenomenon. Magic realism is to be found only in the post colonial texts. The writers of colonized countries incorporate magic realism in their writings as a mode of resistance to western rationalism. There is no place for logic in magic realism. In countries like India, People believe in myths and ghosts as they believe in history. Magical things do not constitute the Indian culture. There is realism also. Diaspora writers' characters make use of magic realism to escape to a world of fantasy for it provides them pleasure, relief, and an escape from the excruciating pain they experience in an alien land. The term magical realism was introduced by Franz Roh, a German art critic in 1952. When Roh coined the term the mean it to create an art category the strayed from the strict guidelines of realism, but the term did not name an artistic movement until the 1940s in Latin America and the Caribbean. Magic realism or Magical realism is a genre of 20th century English literature. This paper deals Magical Realism in Indian literature and its authors.

Salman Rushdie, one of the Active feminist's of Indian Diaspora explore the exploits and utilizes the Magical realism powerfully with Indian sources of inspiration. He begins his career as a novelist with the publication of novel *Grimus* (1975). Indian Literature has multi-culture and multi-themes, Rushdie explore them in his novels. Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is the only Indian novel listed in Time's Magazine as, one among hundred best novels of English Language. 'Recurrence' is the central theme of the novel. *Midnight's Children* (1981) is an allegory of event of Independence and partition of India, in the midnight of *August 15, 1947*. It is considered as a new-historic novel. It has appealing, sarcastic tone and it attracts the readers. Rushdie use this device to bind the Indian and Multi-cultural interface. He made fantasy imbibed as matrix in the foot note of the novel. Fantasy and unrealistic elements play hide and seek with realism (History). In this novel political upheaval and chaotic developments are placed as fantasy with real human emotions. Indians' strive to attain freedom, over a night colonized people turned post-colonial people. Rushdie shows history (realism) like a magic. He treats Magic realism as an alternative technical tool. Characters holds identity crisis and chaos imbibed in the hidden form. In *Midnight's Children* first magical realism is characterization of Tai, Second 'the Humming Bird' symbolism; it transcends magical

realism, with chronology of present and past. Matter of *Time and Space* found in the novel, after independence vacuum position engulfs Indian people, as an effect of displacement and migration. Political position, Post colonized stage provides the needed space for usual realism. Complete and complicated vision merges with unbelievable happenings through the mixing and juxtaposition.”Realism can break a Writer’s Heart”(Rushdie.*Shame*). Rushdie proved mentioned statement. He uses the character of Tai to condemn and denounces the fruitless practices in the country in his novel. Magic realism is not only in functional level but a criticism of patriarchal and political system. Rushdie is closer to reality corporate the world of post-independence and second generation. He turns as role model to magic-realistic lineage in India. The aspects religion and its traces among the colonized Indian people drew them to the unreal state. He made close contacts with the contemporary Indian society in the characterization. Amidst the writers of the subcontinent Rushdie is an expert in Magical Realism. His works include ‘*The Satanic Verses*’, ‘*The Shaliman The Clown*’, ‘*The Enchantress Of Florence*’, ‘*Shame*’, ‘*The Moor’s Last sigh*’ which are fine examples of Magical Realism. *Midnight’s Children* is a literary fiction which falls into the categories of Magical Realism and post Colonialism. Rushdie artistically incorporates the elements of Magic Realism in *Midnight’s Children*. Not only does he use of Magic Realism – the fantastic, the magical, the strange – but also as useful as technical tool of narration. The whole novel is presented as a narration by the protagonist Saleem Sinai to his lover Padma. His use of magical realism as a narrative technique is natural or unintentional. Rushdie assumes magic realism as an effective tool to solve the problems of post-colonialism. *Midnight Children* is therefore an attempt to recapture India through the technique of magical realism. All these attempts would have been impossible without the inclusion of magic realism.

R.K. Narayan predominant South Indian novelist starts writing in 1930’s. Narayan’s novel *A Tiger for Malgudi* was written at the time of Rushdie’s *Fame*. Narayan the contemporary writer of Rushdie played his part in Magical realism. Magic realist characters in Narayan’s work, are an integration of myth, with contemporary things of parallel reality and critical dimensions. He presents hegemonic, homogenized image on India by promoting middle class principles and perspectives. Highlights parallel rationale world as a counter-realism in the forms of fact of Magic Realism. Magic realism closely associates with the ideas of hybridity and psychology. Magic Realist aspects in Narayan’s novels are highly linked to Hindu Mythology and Mysticism. Post-colonial realism found in its freshness in *The Guide* and *The English Teacher*. The ideas of hybridity and Magical transformation of believes in the typical Indian village (Malgudi) is hinted by Narayan. Sacrifice, ignorance, egoism, genuineness are the ideological implications of his novels. Post colonial touch tinkered and improvisation of personality, growth and change of characterization is marked in his novels. In *The English Teacher* (1945), the evocation of spiritual world placed as a Magic Realistic thing. Important components like imaginative world, fantasy, dream, and myth kept as magical realism. In *The English Teacher* magical criticism is placed as political and social criticism. Narayan with held this sort of criticism. The concept of spirit-talking is unreal thing in the novel, which is more pervasive and obvious. In traditional fable, the magic, myth components come to retain philosophy. But on contrast he presented ‘magical realism’ as a part of reality in the harmonious world. Narayan use the Magical realism to express the typical Indian myths in realistic approach. Modern world viewed with the sense of mythical world, he encounters, provokes spiritual awakesness and inner questions of human fascination. His characterizations are ambivalent.

Arundathi Roy motivates the Gender Studies and Magical Feminism in India. Roy is one of the active women feministic writers. It was *Pankaj Misra*, a critic who traces the tendency of Magic realism in Roy’s novel *The God of Small Things*. She rebels against exoticism. Arundathi Roy states that “Ushering in a new era for Indian Literature in English”. *The God of Small Things* published in the year 1997, the story sets in a rural town of Kerala state. The novel explains social and political life of the region. Magic realist feature is the presence of telepathy communication between the twins, it continues even after their separation. Her characters represent cultural landscape of post colonial society. Contemporary India

encompassed in her novels. *God of Two things* exploits with Strategic exoticism. Novel binds special communication, it seems to be personal not communal. The Metaphorical roles turned the Small God overlook as Big in the novel. The presence of supernatural elements in magical realism novels is in prime level. It contains an implicit criticism of society, particularly the elite. Dream, Mythology, Fairy tale, day to day life creates a kind of kaleidoscopic pattern in fiction. She is fully aware and encompasses the foregrounds of realistic images in her novels.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (1956-) is prolific Indian writer writing in English. She is a familiar voice in the Indian literary diaspora, in her writings often focuses on themes which includes women, immigration, the South Asian experience, history, myth, magic, identity crisis and tradition and modernity. Among Indian diaspora writers, she has skillfully used the element of magic realism in her novels namely, *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), *Sister of My Heart* (1999) and *Queen of Dreams* (2004). She has skillfully used the elements of magical realism in her first novel, *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), is distinct in that it blends prose and poetry, successfully employing magic realistic techniques. In the novel *The Mistress of Spices*, the protagonist, Tilo, is the “mistress of spices”. Born in India, she is shipwrecked on a remote island inhabited by women. In the island, she encounters an ancient woman who imparts instruction about the power of spices. Ordained after a trial by fire, each new mistress is sent to a far-off land. Tilo heads for Oakland, California, disguised as an old woman, and sets up a shop where she sells spices. While she supplies the ingredients for curries and kormas, she also helps her customers to gain a more precious commodity. Divakaruni through her characters beautifully unravels the mythic past to set the stage for the present. She takes her reader on a journey to a magic place between fantasy and reality. She skillfully combines Indian American experience, magic realism and the magic of Indian folk tales, myths and fairy tales in her novel. The dream of the characters in the novel is symbolic. Each dream explicitly exposes some inherent drawback in the American society. The harsh realities of the immigrant life, makes the immigrant to recreate the past through dreams, memories and magical powers.

Amitav Ghosh (1956) is an Indian writer. His notable works are *The Shadow lines* (1988), *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016). He used magic realism in his respective novels with dexterity. Ghosh follows the magic realism technique employed by such Latin American writers as Gabriel Garcia Marquez in his narrative technique. The novels of Ghosh has enriched the English literature and their novels are unique example of a postcolonial novels are unique of a postcolonial novels that combines elements of magical realism.

Kiran Desai is an Indian author. She is the daughter of a distinguished novelist Anita Desai, who represents the voice of younger generation of Indian English writers that explores the technique of magic realism in her debut novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. Desai writing in her works with the touch of magic realism. She described magic realism as an exaggerated reality. In *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, the mundane background and characters are transformed into something unique having their own identity through her rich imaginative coloring and perceptive humor. The instances like a normal guava inflating itself and exploring like a bomb, onions growing large beneath the feet, creepers bursting from the floorboards, fish swimming beneath the doors, clearly tell us how largely the element of magic realism is used.

Girish Karnad (1938-2019) was one of the India's most prominent intellectuals. He was a writer, a playwright, an actor, a screen writer and a director. He received numerous awards during his life time. He has chosen the technique of magic realism which itself subverts the hierarchy of magic and realism, emotion and rationality. Karnad has deployed the technique in his plays like *Hayavadana* (1975) and *Nagamandala* (1990). In his play *Hayavadana* he has used Indian myth, folk tradition and supernatural elements, and blended them with the plot of the play. Karnad has social scenario, to put a question on the social structure and to emphasize the need to bring about social change. The main plot of the play

Hayavadana is an adaptation from Thomas Mann's *The Transposed Heads* (1995) which has its source in the ancient Sanskrit Brihatkathasaritsagara, a collection of stories written by Somdeva in the eleventh century. Uncanny elements are blended with both the main-plot and the sub-plot of *Hayavadana* in such a way that they became constituent parts of the play. Karnad presents Goddess Kali as a character in the play whose intervention changes the fates of Padmini, Kapila, Devadutta and *Hayavadana* as well. This is the power of magic realism. We never allowed putting our disbelief on the incidents like the transposition of the heads of Kapila and Devadutta by Padmini and their coming life back to life, the transformation of *Hayavadana* into a complete horse from a man with horse's head. Karnad has also used various forms of folk theatre in his play *Hayavadana* which further puts the play into genre of magic realism. In this play Karnad has chosen selected myths and folktales relevant to his dramatic purpose and applied them to make a critique on the unreasonable human aspiration of the search for completeness. The sub-plot talks about the character of *Hayavadana* who succeeds in his search for completeness at the end of the play by becoming a complete horse. So, sub-plot very artistically parodies the main-plot. Thus, *Hayavadana* most effectively subverts the accepted notion of the superiority of head over the body. In order to do this Karnad has chosen the technique of magic realism which itself subverts the hierarchy of magic and realism, emotion and rationality.

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