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**A STUDY ON MAGIC REALISM IN THE WORKS OF SOUTH ASIAN WRITERS:  
CHITRA BANERJEE, ARUNDHATI ROY AND SALMAN RUSHDIE**

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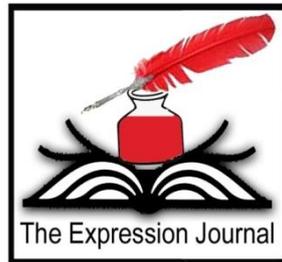
**Abstract**

Magic realism is a literary aesthetic style or genre that incorporates magical aspects into a realistic setting in order to get a better understanding of reality. These magical components are described as common events that are presented in a straightforward manner that enables the 'real' and the 'fantastic' to coexist in the same stream of thinking. In order to fully comprehend the current idea, it would be helpful to look at a few definitions of Magic Realism. Magic realism is described by Mathew Strecher as what happens when a highly detailed, realistic setting is invaded by something too strange to believe. This is a corpus based study follows a descriptive analytical method aiming at investigating Myths and Magical realism in the works of South Asian writers: Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Arundhati Roy and Salman Rushdie.

**Keywords**

Realism, Postmodernism, Aesthetic, Magic Realism,  
South Asian Writers.

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## **A STUDY ON MAGIC REALISM IN THE WORKS OF SOUTH ASIAN WRITERS: CHITRA BANERJEE, ARUNDHATI ROY AND SALMAN RUSHDIE**

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### **Introduction**

Magical realism is often understood to be the literary form that challenges realism's stylistic orthodoxies. In so doing, it is said to capture a post-colonial nation's heterogeneous, political and aesthetic energies. In this reading, the term may be synonymous with postmodernism and postcolonialism, or rather a postmodernist postcolonialism. What is, however, not given as much attention is the fact that realism is at the heart of the term, and that literary realism, at least in the South Asian context, has hardly ever been orthodox or homogeneous. Unlike the form's historical interconnectedness with the rise of bourgeois capitalism in Europe, realism in South Asia had a more complex beginning. As Meenakshi Mukherjee noted, the novel in India was influenced by European values of individualism, rationality, historical consciousness and so on, but those did not turn the colonial novel into a case of derivative realism. Older narrative forms combining the everyday and the extraordinary as in the *puranas*, the epics and the fables have deeply influenced modern literary writing. Further, as India is predominantly an agricultural country, the main cultural products were oral in form – for example, *jatra* (folk theatre) and *kathakata* (oral recital of the *purana* stories) – that frequently exploited the topics and narrative elements of the mythological and the supernatural. Many novelists have deployed mythological temporal frameworks and made heavy uses of allegory, symbol and fable in their works. In these writings, realism is already convoluted and composite in character, much before 'magical realism' as a literary form arises.

Inheres in options, styles, and modes – stylistic characteristics – that are normally regarded as realism aberrations, or rather non-realist or anti-realist in the South Asian setting. In the late-colonial South Asian novel, particularly at the

nexus of anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist movements, and the nationalist search for an 'authentic' literary-political representation that combines secularism, rationality, and logic (aesthetic principles derived from bourgeois capitalism) with customs, rituals, and beliefs (representing the dominant racial group), Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Premchand, Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, and other realist writers of the time were agonisingly aware of India's problematic entrance into historical modernity, where hope for a redemptive future and disillusionment with the present were the contradictory element of the difficulty of predicting the future and hope in the prospect of a better, more accepting postcolonial existence has to be maintained through realism.

## **Magic Realism in Salman Rushdie's Work**

*Midnight's Children*, by Salman Rushdie, is generally considered as one of India's greatest magical realism novels. Magical realism, as Brenda Cooper points out, is often used to criticise Eurocentric empiricist discourses of reality, as well as current totalitarian-capitalist regimes. Since a result, Rushdie's use of magical realism was appropriate, as he was responding to both Indira Gandhi's authoritarian rule and the Eurocentric Enlightenment's view of history and reality.

Salman Rushdie's magical realism book *Midnight's Children* (1981) was made into a film by Deepa Mehta, based on a script by the author himself, after more than thirty years. Unlike in Daldry's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* and Percival's *The Book Thief*, magical realism is present in both speech (after all, it is a dialogic processing of a literary work) and visuals in this film. Despite the fact that film narratives are supposed to be non-diegetic (most screenwriters consider explicit, diegetic narratives, such as narratorial voice-overs, to be clumsy screenwriting), we are told about Saleem Sinai's life and his and the other 999 children's magical connection to India's post-independence history (rather than shown).

The children, who were born at precisely 12 a.m. on August 15, 1947, are gifted with telepathic and other supernatural abilities. Saleem, who also serves as the first-person narrator, begins his narrative with a fairytale format similar to Princess Moanna's (Ofelia's) story in Pan's *Labyrinth*'s opening sequence: "I was born in the city of Bombay, once upon a time." On the stroke of midnight, at the very moment of India's freedom, I sprang out into the world. My name was Saleem Sinai, and I was strangely bound to history. My fate is inextricably linked to that of my nation. At the time, I couldn't even clean my own nose." Saleem's grandmother, Naseem Ghani is also said to have listened in on her daughters' dreams, Amina (or Mumtaz, Saleem's mother), Alia, and Emerald. It's worth emphasising that in a magical realism setting, such narrative components are not to be regarded as tropes, but as factual truth; they don't form poetic language or serve to enrich reality; they are reality. When Saleem's father, Ahmed Sinai, had his assets blocked, Saleem's voice-over continues, "From that point, my father entered a profound isolation." And a peculiar odour began to emanate from under his study door. Jamila [his daughter] said it smelled like old food, but I believe it smelled like failure."

Magical realism visuals are typically muted and, in many cases, compliment the magical realist narrative rather than startling the viewers' sense of reality. For example, Aadam Sinai, a little boy (son of Shiva and Parvati, two of the midnight children), hides in his mother's basket of invisibility from the troops sent by his father to demolish the slum. "I believed in her [Parvati's] magic," his grandpa tells Saleem Sinai. I'd always known it wasn't a ruse." There is no such thing as magical realism. In the last shot, we hear the narrator (Rushdie's voice) repeating the fairytale formula: "Once upon a time, a child and a country were born at midnight." Both of us were expected to achieve great things. The reality has been less spectacular than the fantasy. We have, nevertheless, survived and progressed. And, despite everything, our lives have been acts of love." Despite a small smell of Hollywood make-feel-good sentimentality, the film remains a significant and complicated example of magical realism trauma story, with all of its postcolonial traumatic content.

## **Magic Realism in Chitra Banerjee's Work**

Magic realism as manipulated in Chitra Banerjee turns out to be a reasonable artistic mode to convey the strains that exist between divergent societies and distinctive view of reality. It is huge the manner by which the magic realist account works by between weaving the otherworldly with common every day events. It additionally reflects in the language of portrayal the encounter of two societies and two restricting impression of reality. The novel *Mistress of Spices* concludes with a blend of culture on the protagonist's terms. Ruth Noriega Sanchez in his *Challenging Realities: Magic Realism in Contemporary American Women's Fiction* additionally opines that magical realism can fill the holes by recovering the pieces of voices and images of the overlooked and subsumed chronicles of the other from the perspective of the colonized. All these make magic realism an extremely solid post-colonial account gadget in fiction.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, achieved artist, short story writer, novelist, teacher, is sectioned among the main ten twentieth century women writers who have a solid a dependable balance in the contemporary scholarly scene. She is known for her solid suppositions on issues like male-female separation, minimization, disengagement, monetary uniqueness, female infanticide, mysticism and furthermore age strife which is depicted delicately through her women characters particularly who have moved to remote lands.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni utilizes the character of Tilo to intermix legend, dream and reality. The increased understanding of a mortal (Tilo) accomplishing the status of a God through the capacity to mend and resolve the issues identifying with achiness to go home, thwarted expectation, culture stun gives the magical quality. The capacity to predict the sufferings and to can possibly change the torments into satisfaction makes a sentiment of amazement however with a pinch of embellishment.

The wealth and bona fide learning of Ayurveda comes convenient to Divakaruni's save. She uses her know-how on flavours and their remedial advantages. She offers an understanding into the fortune of the India's old routine with regards to utilizing herbs, flavours and fixings which give alleviation from

regular chilly or avert detestable and even determination complex issues in light of relationships, employments and different securities. Divakaruni through Tilo exemplifies such a measurement of, to the point that female mind which features that women have a natural power and potential to recuperate, to fix, to support and to ensure. As indicated by *A Handbook of Literary Terms* by M. H. Abrams.

The most recent expansion to the rundown is the Indian Diasporic writer Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Divakaruni's style and procedure sets her notably better than the rest. Her story aptitude gives the readers a chance to get into the psyche of the character and experience the feelings. It was Divakaruni's style that surprised the scholarly world as she made her introduction as a novelist in 1997 with the distribution of *The Mistress of Spices* in spite of the fact that she had begun composing sonnets and short stories previously her entrance into the class of novel composition and furthermore had a devoted readership.

The utilization of magic realism can be viewed as one of the best components for her achievement in this class of novel written work. Her novel got rave audits as she incredibly made a universe of riddle and reality and transported the readers into the place that is known for mysticism and magic; which is extremely synonymous with India.

Magic realism, which presently is ordinarily comprehended as an artistic classification however had its underlying foundations in painting additionally connected to film and visual expressions, is an offshoot of Post Modernism. As the name means, Magic realism is the intermixing of magic and reality with the utilization and help of people stories, tall tales, tales, folklores, legends, sagas which could have a place with one's culture or that which is acquired from around the globe.

A basic case of the utilization of magic realism is the nearness of one character carrying on with his/her life on the other side of an ordinary life expectancy and is one who lives all through numerous ages and imperatively assumes a vital part in the advancement of the story. In such a circumstance magic realism is utilized through such a character. Another illustration could be the utilization of a genuine occasion or scene as a background and punctuated with components of magic and dream as utilized by Salman Rushdie in his mega effective novel, *Midnight's Children* which earned him Booker of Bookers. Rushdie mixes history with folklore with a vital political development India's Independence and a few scenes of his own lives to devise the magical world which is inventive yet apparently genuine and genuine, which can be clarified as really the quintessence of magic realism.

She lives with the snakes and it is through them she is comes to know about the "Island of the Spices" in the Indian Ocean. She yearns to achieve the prohibited island. The snakes encourage her to live with them and turn into their "SarpKanya" snake Woman yet as foreordained she goes to the island and turns into the "Mistress of Spices".

The principal sentence the novel starts with, hits the note with the readers. She lives with the snakes and it is through them she comes to know about the "Island of the Spices" (in the Indian Ocean). She yearns to achieve the taboo island.

The snakes ask her to live with them and turn into their *SarpKanya* (wind Woman) yet as foreordained she goes to the island and turns into the *Mistress of Spices*.

Chitra Banerjee's myths and use of culture go back to a traditional use of these in archaic examples and old works, but the issue of magical realism is a recently emerging modern subject explored to its greatest extent by Chitra Banerjee. Her books include many mythological allusions, demonstrating that she is well-versed in mythology. Several pivotal moments in her books contribute to the class's status as a magical realism.

The depiction, like a cheat, returns to the over a long period of time. The writer employs a variety of techniques, including stream of cognizant systems, dreams, and flashback processes, among others.

Because of its prominent usage as a leitmotif in current books, the concept of magical realism has recently emerged as a sub-type, whereas themes of myth and culture are often used from outdated situations. The author has given it a structure that differs from that of another dimension. It explains how they are linked to one another and adds a twist to her books. Divakaruni has mostly used dreams as a means of extending the mystical aspects in her books. The miraculous events that occur in the characters' dreams come true in real life. In her books, inanimate objects such as remarkable snakes, spices, and conch may communicate with the characters and converse with them as if they were human. They are treated as though they had life and intelligence by the writer. The characters do not hesitate or ask questions, but rather recognise, converse, and respond to them. She has combined magic and reality in this manner.

Chitra Banerjee is a Bengali actress. Divakaruni resurrects the long-forgotten Indian myth, conviction, convention, culture, and even dreams, all of which are essential for presence, and which are, in reality, simply a mix of everything in magical realism. Nonetheless, as the book continues, the dream aspect becomes less dominant and the rational part becomes more apparent. Divakaruni rethinks the story and modifies old Indian stories. Her investigation involved Bengali folk stories, Indian mythology, eastern mysticism, and the migrant experience. The protagonist, socially and socially positioning herself as an outsider Indian, neither acculturates nor acclimatizes, but merely adjusts or modifies her life to fit her surroundings, without altering or changing herself.

Her books' mythological structure contributes to the creation of a feminine world. The mythical world is mostly feminine in nature, rather than masculine. In her books, she attempts to create new myths or demystify old ones. The new myth, in her opinion, represents the feminine reality in which women protect other women without asking males to help. She used myth not just as a means of reuniting with India, but also as a means of rethinking the loss of Indian women. In magical realism, demystification is a major theme. Divakaruni makes use of misconceptions and preconceptions about Indian women, which she examines after her migration and sets out to confront and dismantle. The myth of widowhood, for example, is one of the myths that Divakaruni examines. A culture dominated by men mourn women whose spouses have died: The dowager,

whether young or old, transforms into an agamic, undervalued creature who foretells bad omens.

India is a country with a rich culture and a strong belief in superstitions. All things considered, preserving the culture is the priority. The novels of Chitra Banerjee are evidence of this. Her books show the possibility of developing a bicultural identity. Divakaruni's approach to ethnic individuality is unexpected from the viewpoint of the South Asian Diaspora, which emphasises the importance of integrating Indian heritage with American experience. ChitraDivakaruni maintains ties to her Indian heritage. She would ask her mother to give her a large number of Bengali books on dream interpretation conventions. It helped her remember how people in her society viewed things. She tells a growing group of individuals about her experiences. The author packs her books with rituals, customs, and works on connecting to nutrition, clothing, and the dialect of her local area as social branches.

By integrating all aspects of the creative force, particularly as conveyed in magic, myth, and religion, magical realism has the potential to enhance our understanding of what is "real." In magical realism, the author confronts the actual world and tries to unravel it, to discover the odd in things, in life, in human behaviour. As a writer, she creates a sense of realism via the use of magic, and her work concentrates on women.

### **Magic Realism in Arundhati Roy's Work**

Arundhati Roy has accepted in an interview that she cannot separate the fact and fiction after completing the novel. Her creative imagination fused on the fact and emotions in the novel connected the events like a spider's web. The story of the novel explored through the eyes of the twins, Estha and Rahel. Along with this children's perspective, the writer, Arundhati Roy also adopted the technique of magical realism. Due to these reasons, she has enjoyed enormous freedom in misplacing things and creating the characters, real and unreal.

*The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy uses magical realism throughout the novel as a way to portray details and descriptions in seemingly childish ways. This works well considering that through the majority of the novel Rahel and Estha are in their younger years. This is especially apparent at the funeral when Rahel describes Sophie Mol as "Only Rahel noticed Sophie Mol's secret cartwheel in her coffin." (8) She is also described as basically buried alive as well soon after "Inside the earth Sophie Mol screamed, and shredded satin with her teeth." (9) It also goes well with their close connection, which is almost telepathic, relationship. After the sexual assault against Estha he begins to speak to Baron Von Clapp – Trapp who tells him "It's out of the question. I cannot love them. I cannot be their Baba. Oh no." (102) This shame and discomfort seems to transfer to Rahel seamlessly when she is approached by The Orange drink Lemon drink Man "something about that portable piano smile, something about the steady gaze in which he held her, made her shrink from him." (107). This connection is finalized when later Rahel outwardly says she knows he did something to Estha. The twins and the world itself is warped only slightly enough that things seem normal in a cinematic way.

In the *God of Small Things* Roy utilizes magic realism, she uses fantastical imagery and a childlike innocence to showcase the compartmentalization the children use to understand the society they live in and the sometimes horrific events they go through. This is why throughout the novel, we see the innocence of the children is prominent. We see this in the way that Rahel deals with death, punishment, and the inequality of the caste system. When looking at Rahel and the way she deals with Sophie Mol's death, it reveals that she was not able to understand death and pictured her cousin being buried alive even though it is very clear she was not. She created this visual of her cousin scratching at her coffin to avoid the reality of death. It is also interesting to see how Rahel deals with punishment and disapproval from her mother; she is obsessed with the notion of her mother "loving her less". She understands love as something that can be lost and never returned, which shows her inability to comprehend the complex notion of what love really is. Rahel states, "shall I miss dinner as my punishment?" She was keen to exchange punishments. No dinner, in exchange for Ammu loving her the same as before." (109). To avoid dealing with the complex notion of love, she sees it as something pliable that can be lost or gained. We also see this in Rahel with the way she saw Velutha even though he is a Paravan; unlike society, she was able to look past his place in the caste system. Roy writes, "Pappachi would not allow Paravans into the house. Nobody would. They were not allowed to touch anything that Touchables touched" (71). She does not see the inequality of the society, she only sees Velutha as a person. These examples show Rahel's inability to understand her reality and the measures she uses to create an understanding for herself.

The novel *The God of Small Things* incorporate elements of magic realism by utilizing a critique of politics in India. The novel uses magic realism to take a critical look at the takeover of Communism in India during the time period this is set in. The way the novel criticizes these politics is by giving subtle examples of magic realism throughout the story, "The drivers who'd been stretching their legs got back into their vehicles and slammed doors. The beggars and vendors disappeared. Within minutes there was no one on the road" (Roy 62). The takeover of Communism in India makes its people very opinionated about the subject. Communism seems to either draw the attentions of certain people, or repel them away. It is such a controversial government system, that it challenges the way Indians think about their beliefs of the old system. India is known for being a very traditionalist country, which comes with many old superstitions about how to treat different social classes. For example, in the novel there is a group of social outcasts called the Untouchables, who are the lowest class in the eyes of everyone else. The draw of Communism attracts these groups of people in a supernatural kind of way because of its promise of equality for all of the social classes in India. It is incredibly likely that the lower classes in India are the primary demographic for Communist thinking, due to its promise for change. In the novel, when the Communist party marches in the streets, Rahel notices one of the members who looks like her friend Velutha. Velutha is a man who grew up into a family of Untouchables, even though he has enough skill and drive to be more than just an

outcast in his society. This may be why he, and others like him, are protesting against India's old superstitions. Thus, the pull and repel of Communism appears to be like magic in India's society.

## Conclusion

The heterogeneous character of realism, where fictionalised elements, local cultural forms and oral storytelling techniques have remained embedded within narration, and the political and historical crises of the 1940s and the 1970s have offered fertile grounds for magical realist writing in South Asia. Its use has been deeply varied in character and treatment. Rushdie's magical realist style is different from Banerjee's grotesque mode, which is again different from Roy's mythical mode, while all of them are aesthetic responses to the events of the Indian society. In south Asia, magical realism receives tremendous energy and dynamism because of ongoing political crisis and the large agricultural base of the population, where capitalist modernity's injunctions and rural cultural forms appear coeval and interactive. As authoritarianism and social violence continue to rise in South Asia and India, magical realism receives more robust, innovative and diverse forms of articulation.

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