

**Women to Worship/Rule? Wives, Widows, and Witches in Salman Rushdie's  
Midnight's Children**

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**ABSTRACT**

In a patriarchal society, it is observed that men are reluctant to recognize women's quality to achieve success. Women's empowerment provides a sense of inferiority complex to the men. In Hinduism, there are several powerful goddesses who dominate the devils and nurture the noble ones simultaneously. "Durga" is one of the most overpowering goddesses of Hindu pantheon and one of the most popular among devotees. Durga, as a woman is known as the destroyer of the demon and the savior of her husband as well as a helpless god. Woman is also represented as motherland which plays a tolerant and productive entity, allows exploitation, and provides shelter and/or all sorts of facilities to nation. With these parallel images; "powerful" as well as symbol of tolerance, productivity, and healer according to "men constructed myth", this paper unfolds how women are manipulated to adopt hegemonic femininity. Women dream to see themselves in this "mythic role model", and ironically, instead of being clapped as an ideal woman, they are being trapped into this vile politics of a male dominant society. The paper is a research about Indian society's hegemonic maneuvers towards women pictured in Rushdie's Midnight's Children. It is an analytic research, and the method that has been used is fully qualitative and discursive.

*Keywords:* Patriarchy, Hinduism, myth-construct-images, super powerful goddesses.

**Introduction**

Throughout the world, women's involvement in the betterment of the society is praiseworthy. In Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, there are noticeable numbers of female characters who are remarkable and influential at the same time. The portrayals of the female characters in this novel, which are based on the nationalist discourses, image of super powerful goddesses in Hinduism and the representation of women as Mother India, associate to build up a dream image of women in a male oriented society. Gradually this image acts as a weapon of exploitation of the women by men more purposefully.

**Design of the Paper**

This research paper is divided into four parts. First part contains Introduction and Design of the paper. Second part deals with a detailed comparative study of the characters in the novel. Third part goes directly with the textual references from Midnight's Children to comprehend how the discourses are applied to create a dream image of the female characters. How the women are trapped with the allusion of the dream image is exposed in the last part of this paper.

### Research Questions

1. How is the women's contribution evaluated in a patriarchal society?
2. What do the expectations men have towards women in the society?

To get the findings along with the answers of these questions, the paper explores the theory of feminism under the shed of a postcolonial discourse; Hegemony, in the brief analysis. The sub-theme of the paper is Postcolonial Hegemonic Feminism. The methodology, as already been discussed in the abstract, that has been used to write this paper is qualitative; i.e. analytic and discursive.

### A Comparative Study

As the paper deals with the politics of the representation of the female characters in Midnight's Children so it is necessary to understand the significance of those characters in the text, more specifically in the life of the narrator. Throughout the story it is perceived that women are responsible for bringing changes in Saleem's life, the narrator. Saleem also feels the same and admits, "Women have made me; and so also unmade me...Women and Women and Women" (566). Each transformation and problem in Saleem's life leaves him into a puzzle where he cannot decide whether he should take the "too-many women" as "the multiple faces of Bharat Mata" or "as the dynamic aspect of maya, as cosmic energy, which is represented as the female organ". (567)

### Naseem Aziz and Adam Aziz

Naseem Aziz appears at first in the novel as a patient of Adam Aziz. Her father, Ghani, dominates her in such a way that she has not the freedom to express her own opinion and not even the physical pain. He allows Adam to examine Naseem through a perforated sheet. He says, "You will kindly specify which portion of my daughter it is necessary to inspect. I will then issue her with my instructions to place the required segment against that hole which you see there. And so, in this fashion the thing may be achieved." (23) Naseem was out and out a dominated woman before getting married. After being a wife when she finds some dissimilarity in the way of thinking with her husband she tries to protest it with her best. She also ignores the idea of being a modern Indian girl. She has not that much concern about the nationalist activities as well as giving teaching non-secularism to her children. By being Reverend Mother, Naseem Aziz starts to dominate the domestic realm with a strong hand. Gradually Adam becomes silent and on the other hand Naseem appears increasingly outspoken.

### Amina Sinai and Ahmed Sinai

Another significant couple in the text is Amina Sinai and Ahmed Sinai. She was not attractive but sexually precocious as she stole her elder sister's fiancé. She marries again for solace and for children. Before marrying Ahmed Sinai, she was in love with Nadir Khan who was impotent and as a result Amina remained virgin even after two years of their marriage. Then she marries Ahmed Sinai and tries her best to love this person who never respects Amina as a human being. Ahmed always treats her as a female body. Amina possesses the protective quality of the motherland as she saves life of Lifafa Das from a group of tempted Muslims in Delhi. Amina represents the dream of unified India. In the text Amina's portrayal is drawn in such a way where she has all the similarities to Mother India. As Mother India Amina strongly resists intimating the life style of Methold with his furniture in Buckingham Palace in Bombay. There she successfully possesses the emotion for India whereas Ahmed indulges himself in the pleasure of using foreign furniture and behaving like a British. When all the Ahemd's assets are frozen by the state

Amina appears as a savior for the family where Ahmed Sinai remains inactive. In all respects Amina is superior to Ahmed Sinai, even in the way of expressing feelings and emotions to others. Though Ahmed Sinai has been trying to dominate Amina throughout their conjugal life, Amina's image is presented superior to Ahmed as the end of their life Ahmed remains an unsuccessful person in his professional life and Amina reflects the embodiment of motherland by exposing all positive qualities in her character.

### **Parvati- Saleem**

In Saleem's life Parvati has a significant contribution helping him to return to his homeland, Bombay, from Bangladesh with the help of her magical gift. She marries Saleem but she bears child of Shiva. Parvati also tries to make Saleem active in sexual intercourse but she fails. She possesses all the qualities of a good wife who tames Shiva and restrains him from continuing lead a reckless sexual life. Before giving birth the child "Parvati-the-witch became a new person" (580). This Parvati, who has the name of Laylah, transform into a complete new person, a caring mother. In this couple, Parvati plays the dominating role. Knowing about the extra-marital relationship of Parvati, Saleem cannot raise any objection due to his incapability of producing child.

### **Parvati-Shiva**

This couple resembles the god Shiva and goddess Parvati. In Hindu mythology Shiva is a ferocious god who is tamed by Parvati in order to have a child for the conservation of the earth. In this novel Shiva is used to lead a reckless life along with philandering with more than ten thousand women. When Parvati tames him by taking proper care, Shiva surrenders himself to Parvati and they continue their sexual life for long four months, which is unusual for Shiva's part. Here also Parvati's dominating personality is observed. Though Shiva is used to lead reckless life, it is Parvati who persuades Shiva to maintain a steady conjugal life avoiding the irrational one.

### **Jamila Singer and Saleem**

Jamila Singer was called by Brass Monkey before her transformation into a singer. Brass Monkey and Saleem have been grown up together as sister and brother though they do not have any blood relation. She was always deprived of love by Saleem's overpowering shadow and as a result she became furious when someone expressed his love for her. Her first victim was Sonny Ibrahim. When he expressed his passion to Brass Monkey, she "marched across to his father and mother" and said "Nussie auntie, I don't know what your Sonny's been getting up to. Only just now I saw him and Cyrus behind a bush, doing such funny rubbing things with their soo-soos". (209) When she grew up and attended Walsingham School for Girls then one day "she and the three beefy swimmers had jumped upon Sonny Ibrahim...ripping every scrap of clothing off his body...left in the street...naked as the day he was born." (255) Jamila maintains this resisting attitude to love and having affair with boys throughout her life. Her refusal leads Saleem to seek shelter to the street girl, Tai Bibi. Jamila causes another corrosion of Saleem's character. She is such a strong character who throughout her life dictates the males around her who try to get her as their beloved one.

### **Padma**

References to Padma are available in this novel. She works as an attendant of Saleem who is also a good listener. Like a caring wife she insists Saleem on taking food on time. She tries her best to give Saleem comfort and pleasure by making love with him.

In spite of knowing every detail of Saleem, Padma is eager to set off a new journey towards the life with Saleem. Padma is the representation of regeneration as she is a completely healthy woman where Saleem represents infertility –impotency. From this point of view Padma is more qualified than Saleem and she, perhaps, also becomes the cause of Saleem's inferiority complex.

### **Durga**

Durga appears at the end of the novel. She is a washerwoman who possesses "preternatural breasts which unleashes a torrent of milk capable of nourishing regiments". (622) She saves Saleem's child's life by feeding him her breast. She is the first person in Saleem's life who foretells his death. According to Durga, "when a man loses interest in new matters, he is opening the door for the Black Angel." (624) In order to restore strength Durga allows Saleem suckle her left breast. Her healing power proves again that Saleem, in all respect of his life, is dependent on women.

From this detailed character analysis, it is evident that Saleem remains totally dependent on the women throughout his life. In this novel, females are in the leading position with all good qualities. Females are progressive in their respective spheres of life. In a patriarchal society, man cannot accept this progressive attitude of women and the development of women gives an impact their psychology. As a consequence, they feel an urge to find out a new technique that is sufficient to invert the total situation in a strategic way.

### **Application of The Discourses**

In a patriarchal society, men do not like to see women as superior to men. Women's empowerment provides a sense of inferiority complex to the men. In an essay, titled 'What Is a Woman', Torial Moi states that when a man behaves in the ways that are socially acceptable for him, he feels more convinced than ever that he is a 'real man'. When most of the people of a society behave according to certain gender norms, this ensures that the norms are appropriate for the society and are maintained with the consent of the people of it. It is defined as 'gender performativity'. In a male oriented society, women are always the subject to domination which is taken as granted. When women are the causes of this change, men are more active to find out new way to keep them under domination. As a consequence, the power of authority creates different discourses, which are favorable to the men. In this novel, nationalist discourses, image of the powerful goddesses, Mother India are used for constructing the dream image of a woman, which appears very alluring to the progressive women.

**The nationalist image of the essential Indian women.** In Midnight's Children Naseem Aziz and Amina Sinai are brought under the nationalist discourse. Naseem is shown as Reverend Mother, monstrous wife by not exercising the discourses upon her and Amina is presented as the representative of the upholder of Indianness in Post Independent India. Naseem gains criticism by violating the discourses where Amina appears as an embodiment of Mother India by nurturing the very idea of non-secularism, exercising those practices by which an image of a traditional ideal wife is constituted and possessing the feelings of nationalism within herself. In an article, titled 'The Nation's Monstrous women: Wives, Widows, and Witches in Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children,' published in the Journal of Commonwealth Literature, the author points out the politics of this image. In this article, it is stated that this type of nationalist image is only concerned with the middle class Indian woman. Nicole, the writer of this essay, elaborates a critic's view, named Partha Chatterjee, in this essay: Partha Chatterjee argues that in the late nineteenth century nationalist discourse made a distinction between an inner, spiritual

domain of the nation and an outer, material domain. In material sphere, the West was superior but in the spiritual sphere, the East far surpassed the West. The outer/inner domain correspondence to the division of the home and the world-*ghar* and *bahir*. Whereas the world was the domain of the men who had to imitate the scientific and technological advance of the West and its rational and modern method of statecraft, the home was the truly Indian domain where woman preserved the self-identity of national culture. Chatterjee sees Indian nationalism's creativity as displayed in this inner domain which was characterized by its difference from western models. One such creative construct was the model of the new woman who was modern but in an Indian rather than a western *memsahib-aping* way. This remoulding of middle-class women was a contradictory, ambivalent and heterogeneous project as women had simultaneously to be defined against lower-class and lower-caste women, westernized women and uneducated middle-class women while preserving the essence of tradition, virtue and Indianness. (3-4) In this nationalist discourse 'purdah' plays a vital role. It was slowly redefined as the new women had to have access to education and knowledge of the outside world. Women will be safer in venturing the outer world as long as she will display the signs of her feminine quality in dress, religion and demeanour. Women easily welcome this idea as they get the chance to explore the outer world. They are given such an idea by which they can feel that they are sharing the equal status as men as they are also sharing the same nationalist aspiration of Indian men.

When men themselves cannot feel about the nation as much as women have after displaying discourses in front of them, naturally men feel frustrated. For example, Nicole Weickgenant points out this problem in his essay. In *Midnight's Children* Adam Aziz advises his wife "Forget about being a good Kashmiri girl. Start thinking about being a modern Indian woman" (39) just after realizing that he "does not feel Indian". In this way middle class Indian women are forced or in some cases are inspired to come out from purdah. They are, in this way, inspired to "represent the modern feminine face of Indian nation" (Weickgenant, 5) which is "constructed and propagated by nationalist discourse." (5) Along with this discourse they are given to the right of education and the authority of the inner world that is the domain of household. Attaching women to the idea of ruling the realm of inner world, men like to see them as responsible wife and mother who are always there to work for the good of the nation by educating their children well and managing a clean, hygienic and efficient household. Mahatma Gandhi supports this overwhelming idea of a modern woman, who is concerned about nationalism and nationalist movement. Nicole, in this essay points out: Gandhi idealized Indian women's capacity for self-sacrifice, which he urged the nation's men to emulate. While feminist historians are critical of the space Gandhi opened up for women because it affirmed the essentialist nationalist image of woman and her predominantly domestic role, it is nevertheless acknowledged that he enabled women's unprecedented involvement in the nationalist movement. (6)

This image of the essentialist Indian woman occupies women's psychology. Then they like to imagine themselves as essential part of the nation by trying hard and soul to fulfill the nationalist discourses imposed by men. If any woman tries to violate this discourse, society likes to present her as monstrous wife like Naseem Aziz in the novel. In *Midnight's Children* Naseem "inverts the nationalist ideal of a good wife as her main victim is her husband Adam Aziz. She is described as vampire-like, sucking out the life of her hapless husband, as her strength of will seemed to increase as Aziz was ground down by age." (Weickgenant, 9) If Naseem were obedient enough to reflect the image of a good wife, she would be presented like Amina Sinai as the embodiment of motherland. Where Naseem Aziz is imposed the monstrous image, Amina Sinai achieves the image that

resembles with Mother India. She is the only character who is portrayed as persistently trying to follow the nationalist script for the middle-class women and in doing so provides a contrast to the other less scrupulous women, who are far more resilient than she is. When she is pregnant, she saves Lifafa Das's life and announces, "Listen well. I am with child. I am a mother who will have a child, and I am giving this man my shelter. Come on now, if you want to kill, kill a mother also and show the world what men you are!" (Rushdie 100) Here giving protection and shelter to a helpless person, Amina reflects the quality of motherland. Her image, as a good and devoted wife, is also elevated by her struggle to love her husband part by part. In order to come out from this psychological problem regarding to love Ahmed Sinai, Amina "divided him, mentally, into every single one of his component parts...to fall in love with her husband bit by bit." (87) By mentioning this struggle of Amina she is presented as the traditional typical good Indian wife who always tries to be devoted and dedicated herself to her husband. She receives more respect when she displays her sense of nationalism by refusing to use any foreign equipment in Methold estate and thinking "if we're sitting in the middle of all this English garbage...this is still India" (133) This type of image naturally allures women to develop themselves according to the discourses. So portraying the nationalist image of the essentialist Indian woman is nothing but a politics of men to distract women from self-development as a proper human being. It evokes the feminine qualities even among the progressive women in the society.

**Super-powerful goddesses.** In order to construct the appliance of domination more effective, men seek help from Hindu mythology that is evident in this novel. In Hinduism there are several powerful goddesses who dominate the devils and nurture the good ones simultaneously. In this text, Durga and Parvati resemble with the super powerful goddesses in Hindu mythology. In an essay by Jennifer Takhar, titled 'Super-powerful Shaktis: Durga and Parvati', it is asserted, Hindu goddesses are traditionally conceived to be strong figures, even indomitable ones. By comparing his female characters to these goddesses, Rushdie attributes them with a force of character. He perceives India as a matriarchy, an ideological presumption whereby maternal power, energy and love is the means to social cohesion.

Durga is one of the most overpowering goddesses of the Hindu pantheon and also one of the most popular among devotees. She is known as the destroyer of the demon and the savoir of her husband as well as the helpless gods. In this role she is depicted as a great warrior queen with five pair of arms, each wielding a weapon. She rides upon a ferocious lion and defeats all the evil forces. This image gets priority to draw the image of Durga, the washerwoman. Jennifer mentions:

In Midnight's Children a character named Durga dominates and crushes the burly Sikh, Picture Singh, with her "preternatural breasts (which) unleash(ed) a torrent of milk" and according to grapevine tattle, she is said to possess two wombs. Saleem acquaints us with this dhoban/washerwoman without really wanting to get too close to her: "It was with the greatest reluctance that I agreed to make her acquaintance; it is with the greatest reluctance that I admit her into these pages". We have not forgotten that Durga means "the unapproachable." Saleem fears her because she symbolizes the hope that he has completely lost because of the consequences of the state of Emergency. Durga incarnates the future, "of new things": "her name, even before I met her, had the smell of new things; she represented novelty". She is blessed with superabundant fertility and is even capable of foretelling the imminent death of Saleem, "I mention Durga...because it was she who...first foretold my death.

Though a fearsome image of Durga is perceived here but her compassionate approach is focused as she heals Adam Sinai who is stricken with a particularly virulent case of

tuberculosis. Her healing power is evident when she helps Saleem to restore his strength by letting him “suckle her left breast while (my) his son pulled on the right.” By analyzing this event it is observed that the goddess Durga’s healing power is represented by this washerwoman’s healing quality and it gets more importance than the destructive fearsome image of Durga.

On the other hand, there is another female character, named Parvati. Her mythology is extricably linked to that of her spouse. She is known as Shiva’s wife who achieves her husband through great heroic effort. She is the only one who evokes Shiva into producing their children, as it is necessary for the conservation of the world. In the text, Parvati possesses noticeable similarity with this powerful goddess. Similarly restoring order Parvati acts especially as a stabilizing force in the novel. She possesses the quality of saviour as she helps Saleem return to Delhi by using her magic basket, making him invisible. Here a positive image of Parvati is drawn by attributing the positive, protective and nurturing qualities of the goddess *Parvati*.

Both of these female characters are the representatives of the powerful goddesses in Hindu mythology. Surprisingly, these super powerful goddesses are always mentioned as the symbols of tolerance, protection and healer. If patriarchal society focuses on their (the goddesses) powerful and destructive images, it becomes favorable for the women and they receive lesson from it to develop them properly. This practice may decline eventual supremacy of the males. To sustain their supremacy men strategically focuses on the adoring persona of these goddesses so that women are persuaded to acquire those qualities and cannot rebel against the everlasting dominance of men.

### **Dream Image of a Woman**

If women are represented as motherland, it becomes easier for the men to dominate them as the very image of the motherland serves the idea of tolerance, production, allowing exploitation and providing shelter as well as all sorts of facilities for the people of the nation. Similarly depicting woman as motherland serves the scope to exploit them according to the wish of the men. They can easily take woman as virgin territory like a nation. In *Midnight’s Children*, most of the female characters are portrayed as the representation of motherhood. Motherhood, which could be a privileged site for women and also a potential challenge to patriarchal systems, is used as an equipment to resist the progress of women.

By imposing these ideas and displaying these discourses men start to construct a dream image of women where they appear as mere female bodies in order to provide pleasure for men. Throughout *Midnight’s Children* this politics of the representation of female body is observed.

**Woman as a mere female body.** Each and every female character in this novel is focused from a queer perspective. Most of the cases they just become as the spectacles of female bodies. As a result, their personality is overshadowed by their physical traits, which in other way raises sensuality into readers’ minds. Adam Aziz first meets Naseem Ghani as a doctor. He examines different parts of Naseem according to the wish of her father through a perforated sheet. At first, he examines her stomach as she feels pain there. Gradually he examines her right knee, right chest which is “perfectly formed and lyrically lovely”, thigh that attracts Adam’s attention to a “superbly impossible buttock.” Each and every part of Naseem’s body appears to Adam as some parts of a female body. Here Adam treats Naseem not more than a female being. Observing through a perforated sheet and focusing on the particular parts, woman’s appraisal as a human being is ignored and it presents woman just a source of enjoyment.

Adam Aziz and Naseem Aziz argue in their conjugal life for the first time on the performance during making love. Second night of their marriage Adam asks his wife to move a little during accomplishing sex. In reply to this suggestion of Adam, Naseem shrieks in horror and says, “My God, what have I married? I know you Europe –returned men. You find terrible women and then you try to make us girls be like them! Listen, Doctor Sahib, husband or no husband, I am not any . . . bad word woman.” (38) As result Adam gets furious and burns out her purdah-veils that exposes Naseem in front of “about thirty-five Sikhs, Hindus and untouchables throng.” (39) Here Naseem becomes as a spectacle of female body.

Amina Sinai receives humiliation from her husband for not enjoying sex. Though Amina possesses many other good qualities as a human being, an Indian, an obedient daughter and a devoted wife, Ahmed Sinai treats her as the object of obtaining sensual pleasure only. That is why Ahmed insists her to have a sexual intercourse, when Amina is carrying a baby no bigger than a frog in her womb, which is unapproved by the physicians. As Ahmed has never treated Amina a respectable wife or human being, he ticks her off and orders her to enjoy the sex for the next time.

Saleem's Padma is presented as a masculine female figure though she has the quality of being a caring and sensitive human being. Here Padma's representation is out and out erotic as Saleem describes in spite of a great effort of “plump Padma” he cannot “hit her spittoon.” (45) Whenever Saleem talks about Padma, her biological traits get priority to anything else. Saleem describes, “How I admire the leg-muscles of my solicitous Padma...Calf-muscles show no sign of strain; thigh-muscles, rippling through sari-folds, display their commendable stamina...my admiration extends also to her arms, which, when they enfold me nightly in futile embraces, there is no escape.” (375). In this way Saleem never treats her more than a female body.

Particular parts of female body are also receiving extra importance in the narration of the text. From Saleem's recollection it is known that he perceives the uncovered part of his mother in his childhood. Even in the realm of imagination of Ahmed Sinai this idea gets priority. Saleem remains the witness of this erotic imagination. As he is accustomed with such eroticism from his childhood, he develops this sense with the growth of his age. When he reveals the secret meeting of his mother with Nadir Khan he describes it with the essence of eroticism though there is nothing like sensual in their encounter. Saleem gives a cinematic vision along with the sensuality of that meeting. This tendency becomes more unethical when he starts to look at his aunt Pia from a sensual point of view and focuses on particular parts of her body. He sees his aunt from a queer perspective. During his stay with Aunt Pia and Uncle Hanif, Pia expresses her frustration as an unsuccessful actress that does not touch Saleem at all rather he is eager to perceive her as a sensual female body. Most significantly, Padma is presented in such a way where she appears to the readers as a masculine female body. His erotic attraction to female body makes him bound to approach near to the street girl, Tai Bibi, latrine girl and at the end to Padma, his attendant. Not only the whole female body but to some extents, particular parts of a female body are received extra attention of the readers in this text. For instance, Saleem describes a person's physical traits as “Someone with ...a mouth as fleshy as a woman's labia”. (551) Durga's “preternatural breasts” and “two wombs”, Padma's “hairy forearms” and different parts of Naseem Aziz's body are focused in such a way that exposes those human beings nothing but the spectacles under the male gaze. Sundari and Parvati two midnight children are also displayed publicly where their physical beauties are used to earn money. In a book preview, named *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmortality and Transnational Feminist Practiced*, the author states that in contemporary India, poverty drives women to present a different kind of spectacle. It is stated here, “Wee Willie Winkin's wife Vanita, the street singer is a common sight in the big cities of India, her rags barely covering the body that



in other circumstances is so mystified.” When women are deprived of their dignity as human beings and are treated as mere female bodies, it becomes easier to exploit them. Though, the dream image of a woman which is associated with the image of goddesses, motherland and active nationalist woman seems to be desirable for woman but it’s actually leaves woman to such a state where they are treated as mere female bodies.

By attributing different attractive images on the women a complete dream image of woman is constructed in Midnight’s Children. This very image denies the progressive qualities of a woman and allures the women to accept it as a role model. With the association of this desirable dream image it is exposed how easily a woman can be drawn under oppression and domination in a patriarchal society. Ironically with the dream of being worshipped for being an ideal woman, they are trapped into this vile politics of a male oriented society and are ruled.

To this end, it rights off the bat that needs to consider the part of Indian women in the postcolonial society, recognizing that their part is adapted by decolonisation discourses. Along these lines, since patriotism and religion are the columns that contradict Western imperialism, the characterisation of Indian women must watch a few decades that are subsumed to such thoughts as: the enlivenment of religion, the returning to of the past and of convention, the reliability towards indigenous dialects and gems of workmanship and writing, the battle against outside frameworks of significant worth and figures of speech and so on. To be reasonable, a spectator of the wonder under investigation ought to concede that, in spite of the fact that patriotism presents women as the primary bearers of custom, financial advancement enables them to make a change in their condition, as they are allowed to get to the instructive framework, to work etc. In any case, womanhood is characterized inside the setting of gender discourses that develop the idea as per Indian culture's belief systems, that characterize gentility in concurrence with the autochthonous past and custom as a type of threat to the maligning British talk that took women's status/corruption as a list of the low, undeveloped sort of society and subsequently advocated the requirement for colonisation and for control. In this regard, R. Rajan and Y. Stop see as generalizations of the third world women such properties as hush, the shroud, nonattendance, and pessimism (Schwarz and Ray 2005: 55). As the example of the Hindu convention, women are the guardians of the family respect and the procreators, and this is in truth simply one more way of controlling their lives. In these conditions, the conceptualization of womanhood is to be identified with the epic-religious convention which imagines women inside the social structure of the family as per the picture of the perfect spouse after the models of Sita and Savitri, from one viewpoint, and to national belief system that associates the picture of the perfect mother with that of Mother India which is an immaculate locus unprofaned by colonisation, then again. This honesty is then given to women who are put in association with the family and who should protect the immaculateness of their home and all that is done keeping in mind the end goal to exclude British imperialism. These records, regarding womanhood, convey to the fore, the need to analyze an extremely squeezing issue in India: widowhood. If the contribution of women is limited to their marriage, the passing of the husbands decides the loss of the mate's status, and along with these lines of women's helplessness. Likewise, since any Indian woman's place is with her significant other, the given dowager must perform sati, a training that is said even in Mahabharata. Alternate "open doors" of widowhood are to submit totally to a parsimonious life and to family needs, or, if so permitted by her kinfolk, to wed the dead man's sibling. Notwithstanding the spouse and dowager positions, there are different parts appointed to women, for example, parenthood, and in this regard, the connection between this hypostasis and the idea of country is very much outlined by the thought of Mother India (with references to both well-known portrayals and to

scholarly ones). Nevertheless, as J. McLeod claims, citing C.L. Innes, "patriotism is much of the time a gendered talk; it traffics in portrayals of men and women which serve to strengthen patriarchal disparities between them. Patriot portrayals have been in risk of sustaining dis-enabling portrayals of women" (1998: 114). With regards to the situating women in patriot talks, McLeod alludes to the hypothesis of Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, who recognize five generalizations of womanliness: 1. "Natural reproducers of individuals from ethnic collectivities" so as to having a place with certain ethnic gatherings, the state constrains women to acknowledge that their commitment is to have children to develop the quantities of the country. 2. "Reproducers of the limits of ethnic/national gatherings" Women will undoubtedly ensure that they do not put the character of the gathering in peril by taking part in unaccepted generation collusions. 3. "Participating midway in the ideological propagation of the collectivity and transmitters of its culture" women are intended to teach the youngsters and to draw in them in the conventions of the national culture. 4. "Signifiers of ethnic/national contrasts - as a concentration and image in ideological talks utilized as a part of the development, multiplication and change of ethnic classes" Women are utilized as notable portrayals (e.g. country - mother) and this is a method by which they can add to hostile to pioneer patriotism. 5. "Participants in national, financial, political and military battles" (2000: 116). Ladies are supporters of the endeavors in the circles of economy, legislative issues, and patriotism. Normally, every one of these generalizations have endured a few changes along the decades, and this development of womanhood outside sex limits is all around outlined in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. Breaking down Rushdie's female characters through the focal points of governmental issues and religion includes working with the terms *homo politicus* and *homo religiosus* and watching the sign of their attributes on account of the Indian/Muslim populace inside the postcolonial time. Robert Dahl characterizes *homo politicus* as "the national effectively occupied with legislative procedures", while *homo civicus* is spoken to by "most by far of potential voters who once in a while sought after their interests by participating in governmental issues". The previous is the chosen delegate, intrigue aggregate supporter and political activist who really "taken an interest in the social procedure of government". On the off chance that *homo politicus* utilizes his techniques/assets to meet political closures, *homo civicus* utilizes his methodologies/assets to meet individual finishes" (in B. Cruikshank 1999: 30). Concerning the thought of *homo religiosus*, it ought to be said that the term assigns the devoted individual who is roused consistently by religious deliberateness. Inside the geological territory that has the characters of *Midnight's Children*, Muslim generalizations involve a front line position, their definition by K. Brill's in *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures* demonstrating valuable for the present investigation: Stereotypes either delineate Muslim women as fascinating, abused and completely oppressed by men in Islam, or as guarding the ethics of Islam and the status and rights concurred to women (2005: 755). In reality, Brill goes considerably more remote than that, and states that Muslim Indian women "experience the ill effects of different generalizations of backwardness; their status is credited to the pervasiveness of the purdah, polygamy, separation and substantial family measure. [...] The generalizations and the genuine circumstances of ladies are guided by the common power relations, yet regularly legitimized for the sake of religion" (755). The creator does not leave aside oppression women should likewise be looked for in the way that "patriarchal standards and hegemonic belief systems utilize a specific translation of religion and culture" (756). Once the essential hypothetical refinements between *homo politicus* and *homo religiosus* are depicted, one may investigate the unequivocal cases of Rushdie's female characters in the novel under investigation. As specified over, the natural bond amongst womanhood and

country characterizes the female political part in postcolonial talk, and this paper begins from U. Parameswaran's premises that Rushdie makes utilization of various story gadgets to interface the principle character's close to home history with the historical backdrop of India: Three of the primary auxiliary gadgets are: (a) he utilizes birth pictures and allegories to check defining moments in history and symbolize their long haul importance; (b) he joins political and recorded occasions, beginning with the Jallianwala Bagh slaughter of 1919, with one or other of Saleem's friend network and family, and (c) he utilizes Padma as a character who is practical at both account and typical levels (1983: 38).

Without a doubt, Rushdie utilizes birth pictures and similitudes identified with womanhood second to none for political purposes. For example, the introduction of the recently autonomous India is concurrent with that of the one thousand and one youngsters, including Saleem and his adversary, Shiva. The work of Saleem's mom started when Pakistan appeared. Aadam, Saleem and Parvati's child, with Shiva as the natural father, is conceived in the meantime as Indira Gandhi's own particular kid, the Emergency: ... push, gone ahead Parvati, push, and keeping in mind that Parvati pushed in the ghetto, J. P. Narayan and Morarji Desai were additionally urging Indira Gandhi, while triplets shouted push drive the pioneers of the Janata Morcha asked the police and Army to resist the illicit requests of the excluded Prime Minister, so one might say they were compelling Mrs Gandhi to push, and as the night obscured towards the midnight hour, since nothing ever occurs at some other time, triplets started to shriek it's coming, and somewhere else the Prime Minister was bringing forth her very own offspring... [...] when the three flexibility specialists had washed the infant and wrapped it in an old sari and conveyed it out for its dad to see, at the very same minute, the word Emergency was being heard interestingly, and suspension-of-social liberties, and restriction of-the-press, and reinforced units-on-extraordinary alarm, and capture of-subversive-components (419). Salman Rushdie profits himself the chance to exhibit both the subject of birth (as the novel alludes to the presence of India and Pakistan, and to the issues particular to 'new life'), and that of risky parentage (as the scholarly work parallels the perplexity particular to postcolonial India, as well as the hybridity particular to such a large number of sets of conceivable 'relatives'). The very arrangement of Pakistan out of a dangerous "parentage" speaks to a decent case in this regard, as its history is shaped after re-composing Indian history. In what concerns the topic of birth, it ought to be said that it is inescapable all through the novel. The peruse witnesses a great number of births: that of Saleem, that of the 1001 youngsters, of Aadam, of the legend's relatives, and these occasions are what might as well be called a ripeness custom which is intended to be the counterpoint of the dowagers' sanitization program. In addition, the punctured sheet that permits Dr. Sinai to get to various parts of Naseem's body is not just an image of the in part uncovered account, additionally a representation for the punctured hymen that prompts the way of origination. Thusly, numerous ladies are some way or another associated with a punctured sheet: Naseem is seen through a punctured sheet, as is Jamila Singer when she performs in the Land of the Pure, also Saleem's grandma who sits behind a punctured cloud to sit tight for his demise. Moreover, Saleem is conceived in Bombay and after that renewed in the Sunderbans, a place which is loaded with sensuality, where he is caught by the charms of the houris in the sanctuary of Kali. Since his personality is lost, he is re-considered when the snakes, symbolizing spermatozoa, nibble the powerless heel, a mention to the myth of Achilles. He is conceived through the wicker container of Parvati the Witch, a lady who likewise gives his name back. She exemplifies the option, the dichotomic match of yet another witch – the Widow. In spite of the fact that Parvati weds Saleem, she brings forth Shiva's child, the genuine relative of the underlying couple who met through the punctured sheet. Parvati is

slaughtered in the ghetto, and her child endures simply like his "dad" Saleem as an impression of the macrocosmic illness, however he is likewise breathed into life back by a lady – Durga. The ghetto's decimation, Parvati's murder, the kids' capture with a specific end goal to play out the 'depleting of expectation' speak to a study of the harsh sanitization program, comprehended as a genocide of the general population, delivered by political pioneers. In any case, the direct opposition between female *homo politicus* and *homo religiosus* is evident while looking at Naseem and the Rani of Cooch Naheen. The previous is a *homo religiosus* who plays out every one of her activities because of doctrinarism and who is oblivious of administrative issues, while the last is obviously a *homo politicus* in her own right. Naseem knows nothing about the general population or the political circles of life: 'I don't comprehend this hartal when no one is dead,' Naseem is crying delicately. 'Why will the prepare not run? To what extent are we stuck for?' Doctor Aziz sees a soldierly young fellow in the road, and thinks-the Indians have battled for the British; so, a significant number of them have seen the world at this point, and been spoiled by Abroad. They won't effectively backpedal to the old world. The British aren't right to attempt and get back to former days. 'It was a mix-up to pass the Rowlatt Act,' he mumbles. 'What rowlatt?' moans Naseem. 'This is jabber where I'm worried!' 'Against political fomentation,' Aziz clarifies, and comes back to his Tai once stated: 'Kashmiris are distinctive. Quitters, for example. Put a weapon in a Kashmiri's hand and it should go off without anyone else - he'll never set out to pull the trigger. We dislike Indians, continually making fights.' Aziz, with Tai in his mind, does not feel Indian. Kashmir, given the circumstances, is not entirely a piece of the Empire, but rather a free regal state (32). There is doubtlessly the lady who is a long way from understanding the peaceful Gandhian method for requesting freedom, and that she has no clue concerning the Rowlatt Act and its results in India. Her comments are against her significant other's contemplations, which are penetrated with political and ethnic concerns. Her position is recommended by the way that she for the most part makes inquiries, while the man defines articulations. Also, once time has ignored their family, she concedes no political civil arguments in her home and in this regard; she is introduced in absolute opposite with Rani of Cooch Naheen: "Among the things to which she denied passage were all political issues. At the point when Doctor Aziz wished to discuss such things, he went to his companion the Rani, and Reverend Mother sulked; however not hard, in light of the fact that she knew his visits spoke to a triumph for her" (40). Naseem is extremely decided with regards to such issues, in spite of the fact that the possibility of her better half's meeting another lady to examine governmental issues is not exceptionally soothing (as the meaning of the word sulk implies). Her actual inclination is towards religion and as an outcome she demands a conventional training for her youngsters who should be great Muslims and take in the lessons of the Quran: She made just a single instructive stipulation: religious direction. Not at all like Aziz, who was racked by vagueness, she had stayed passionate. 'You have your Hummingbird,' she let him know, 'however I, whatsitsname, have the Call of God. A superior commotion, whatsitsname, then that man's murmur.' It was one of her uncommon political remarks ... (42). The crash between Islamic fundamentalism and the feelings concerning a brought together country described by agreement, hybridity and secularism decides the spouse to move towards the denial of narrow mindedness. Considering the circumstances, the spouse cannot battle her religious convictions and lean towards segregation to absence of fundamental Islamic information: And Aziz, 'Do you know what that man was instructing your youngsters? 'What's more, Reverend Mother flinging question against question, 'What will you not do to bring catastrophe, whatsitsname, on our heads?'- But now Aziz, 'You think it was Nastaliq script? Eh?'- to which his significant other, warming up: 'Would you eat pig? Whatsitsname? Would you spit on the Quran?'

And, voice rising, the specialist ripostes, 'Or would it say it was a few verses of "The Cow"? You imagine that?' ...Paying no consideration, Reverend Mother lands at her peak: 'Would you wed your little girls to Germans!?' And delays, battling for breath, giving my granddad a chance to uncover, 'He was showing them to abhor, spouse. He instructs them to abhor Hindus and Buddhists and Jains and Sikhs and who realizes what different veggie lovers. Will you have disdainful youngsters, lady?' 'Will you have pagan ones?' Reverend Mother imagines the armies of the Archangel Gabriel sliding during the evening to convey her barbarian brood to hellfire. She has distinctive pictures of hellfire. It is as hot as Rajputana in June and everybody is made to learn seven outside dialects... 'I promise, whatsitsname,' my grandma stated, 'I swear no sustenance will originate from my kitchen to your lips! Actually no, not one chapati, until the point when you bring the maulvi sahib back and kiss his, whatsitsname, feet!' (42-3) The idea of resilience towards any of the religions grasped by the general population of India, i.e. Hinduism, Budhhism, Sikh or Jainism, is restricted by Naseem, who makes utilization of socially particular terms like Quran, maulvi, and illegal practices like eating pork, subordinated to the field of Islam. The encounter of governmental issues and religion is underlined both with reference to spouse wife relationship and with reference to husband's companion wife relationship: Like Aadam Aziz, similar to the Rani of Cooch Naheen, Nadir Khan hated the Muslim League ('That pack of attendants!' the Rani cried in her gleaming voice, swooping around the octaves like a skier. 'Landowners with personal stakes to ensure! What do they need to do with Muslims? They go like amphibians to the British and shape governments for them, now that the Congress declines to do it!' It was the time of the 'Quit India' determination. 'What's more, furthermore,' the Rani said with absolution, 'they are frantic. Generally, why might they need to parcel India?')(46). The Rani is not just a patriot who argues for a free India, additionally a firm supporter of secularism. She demonstrates her explanatory ability when she distinguishes the genuine motivations behind Partition that is the worries of the rich. In any case, her inquiry demonstrates that she is a visionary as she raises the best enthusiasm of the nation most importantly unremarkable issues and considers that one must be crazy to act against this goal. This *homo politicus* turns into a reflection of her political objectives and of her optimism, a casualty of the diverse worldview of thought: And behind them, looking kindly on, the Rani of Cooch Naheen, who was going white in blotches, a sickness which spilled into history and ejected on a huge scale not long after Independence ... 'I am the casualty,' the Rani whispers, through shot lips that never move, 'the hapless casualty of my culturally diverse concerns. My skin is the outward articulation of the internationalism of my spirit.'(45) The Rani's thoughts are joined by concordant activities and she fiscally bolsters the privilege political convictions she is persuaded her nation may profit by: In the throes of the confidence pestilence, the Hummingbird's supporter, the Rani of Cooch Naheen, never specified the mists coming soon. She never called attention to that Agra was a Muslim League fortification, saying just, 'Aadam my kid, if the Hummingbird needs to hold Convocation here, I'm not going to propose he goes to Allahabad.' She was bearing the whole cost of the occasion without dissension or impedance; not, let it be stated, without making foes in the town. (47) Naturally, such activities can't go unnoticed in a patriarchal kind of society and the storyteller builds up an absolute opposite between the Rani's quiet and humility in monetary issues and her opponents' state of mind. The predominant political reason is vindictively confused and her adversaries fall back on (what else?) the constraint of such respectable undertakings to lady's desire, to dull practices and so forth: The Rani did not live like other Indian rulers. Rather than teeter-chases, she supplied grants. Rather than inn outrages, she had governmental issues. Thus, the bits of gossip started. 'These researchers of hers, man, everybody knows they need to perform additional curricular

obligations. They go to her room oblivious, and she never gives them a chance to see her smudged confront, yet entrances them into bed with her voice of a singing witch!' Aadam Aziz had never trusted in witches. He makes the most of her splendid friend network who were as much at home in Persian as they were in German. In any case, Naseem Aziz, who half-trusted the stories about the Rani, never went with him to the princess' home. 'On the off chance that God implied individuals to talk many tongues,' she contended, 'why did he put just a single in our heads?'(47). musings.

The absolute opposition between the discernment of the Rani and Naseem's religious convictions is authoritative, for the last concedes as realities the announcements of the gossipers and affirms that her better half's companion conflicts with God's expectation for individuals. Actually, the Rani is not seen just contrary to regular town society and to Naseem, additionally to another political figure, a female pioneer – Indira Gandhi - who plays out her part as a *homo politicus* by executing her changes, her disinfection program, by suspending social liberties et cetera.

### Conclusion

To finish up, it might be brought up that, from one viewpoint, Rushdie relates the picture of the country with that of womanhood and, then again, at the level of the scholarly content, this relationship is transposed by making utilization of the particular part subsumed to gentility, i.e. that of conceiving an offspring, which is extrapolated and converted into the field of legislative issues, of state arrangement to be exact. From the stance of governmental issues versus religion, women are imagined in antithetic sets. In this way, the cases of *homo politicus* are differentiated to those of *homo religiosus*. Also, *homo politicus* is liable to another sub-characterization: there is the Gandhian, tranquil, patriot sort of politically given women and the unforgiving imperious, tyrannical, and brutal female characters required in governmental issues.

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