

THE IMPACT OF ZOROASTRIANISM ON SALMAN RUSHDIE'S CREATIVE VISION AND IDENTITY: A STUDY OF MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN

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DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i6.2024.3410](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i6.2024.3410)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates Salman Rushdie's strong connection to his Zoroastrian ancestors and demonstrates how he reframes essential ideas in his literature. The method, which focuses on literature like *Midnight's Children*, emphasizes Zoroastrian-influenced themes such as dualism, magic, and hybridity. By focusing on specific situations and characters, the analysis exposes subtle degrees of relevance and creative vision, as well as new insights into Rushdie's cultural and religious background. Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children*. Zoroaster, the prophet, founded the ancient Persian religion known as Zoroastrianism, which emphasized the concepts of good versus evil, free will, and the ultimate triumph of good. Zoroastrianism plays an important role in the plot since it influences the characters' attitudes, behaviors, and overall thematic development. The main character, Saleem Sinai, was born on the day India attained independence, and his connection to Zoroastrianism represents the contradictory cultures and identities that exist in post-colonial India. The article looks into the connections between Zoroastrianism and broader subjects like history, identity, and the seeking of meaning in an ever-changing world. Rushdie's use of Zoroastrianism emphasizes the story's richness and depth. Rushdie incorporates Zoroastrianism into his literature to demonstrate India's vast cultural diversity while also adding depth and complexity to the plot. Rushdie's Zoroastrian upbringing heavily influences his presentation of characters and investigation of topics in *Midnight's Children*. The novel becomes a canvas on which Zoroastrian philosophy paints delicate strokes, enhancing the narrative tapestry. Rushdie combines Zoroastrian concepts such as dualism, free choice, and cyclical time into the tale *Midnight's Children*. And the story explains how Zoroastrianism influenced Salman Rushdie's artistic vision and personality. *Midnight's Children* explores the complexities of Indian culture and history through its various levels of symbolism and thematic relevance, while also providing a deep exploration of universal human themes and ideas. Zoroastrianism promises redemption through good deeds and spiritual regeneration. Saleem's voyage, which aligns with Zoroastrian ideals of ethical obligation and divine fairness, can also be interpreted as an attempt at individual and societal healing. Exploring these other dimensions deepens the relationship between Zoroastrianism and *Midnight's Children*, offering readers a complex exploration of ethical, intellectual, and Spiritual themes are intertwined throughout India's rich history and culture.

Keywords: Hybridity, Zoroastrianism Voyage, Heritage, Symbolism, Identity, Ethical

1. INTRODUCTION

Rushdie's: Salman Rushdie is from a Muslim household in India. Salman Rushdie, a well-known author of thirteen books, including the Booker Prize-winning *Midnight's Children*, has received various prizes. In appreciation of his creative talents, he has received multiple prestigious awards, including the James Tait Black Prize, the Writers' Guild Award for Excellence, and the Whitbread Prize. In addition to his creative successes, Rushdie has presided over the PEN

Worldwide Voices International Creative Festival and served as president of the PEN American Center, both of which promote free speech. He was knighted in 2007 and is still a well-known figure in the literary world, with one of his novels translated into over forty languages.

India's Zoroastrian Legacy: India has a Zoroastrian community, the Parsis, who migrated centuries ago. Rushdie, growing up in Bombay (now Mumbai), was exposed to Zoroastrian elements in Indian culture and society. Zoroastrianism emphasizes good versus evil, a duality also present in *Midnight's Children*. Zoroastrianism, one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions, traces its origins to ancient Persia and the teachings of the prophet Zoroaster around 600 BC. Central to this faith is a dualistic worldview, where forces of good and evil, light and darkness, engage in perpetual conflict. Zoroastrian Influences in *Midnight's Children* Salman Rushdie's magnum work, *Midnight's Children*, intricately entwines Zoroastrian elements into its narrative, enriching the storyline with layers of symbolism and philosophical depth.

Dualistic Themes: At the heart of Zoroastrianism lies the idea of dualism—the perpetual conflict between good and evil, light and dark. *Midnight's Children* illustrates this dualistic perspective through the ethical dilemmas encountered by its characters, particularly Saleem. His extraordinary powers represent the ongoing struggle between conflicting forces, offering a complex examination of Zoroastrian dualism.

The concepts of Free Will and Destiny: Zoroastrianism emphasizes the significance of free will, a key theme highlighted throughout the novel. Saleem and the other characters face challenges in making choices that shape their destinies. The exploration of free will acts as a philosophical base, mirroring Zoroastrian principles about personal responsibility and the capacity to chart one's own path. Saleem Sinai's diverse ancestry, which becomes apparent at the exact moment of India's independence, represents the experiences of the Zoroastrian diaspora.

Rushdie's Zoroastrian heritage shapes his perspective. Rushdie's Zoroastrian background notably impacts his portrayal of characters and the examination of themes in *Midnight's Children*. The principles of Zoroastrianism turn the novel into a canvas, where subtle touches enrich the overarching narrative.

Narrative Elements Zoroastrianism highlights the ongoing conflict between good (Ahura Mazda) and evil (Angra Mainyu). The Parsi community has distinct creation myths and tales. Investigate whether any aspects of Indian mythology or folklore in the novel align with Parsi narratives, especially those that explore the battle between good and evil or miraculous events. In "*Midnight's Children*," Salman Rushdie skillfully reflects the timeless struggle between good and evil, weaving Zoroastrian concepts of dualism into his tale. This dualistic perspective enriches the characters' struggles and identities, influencing both their internal dilemmas and external conflicts. A central theme of the novel is the psychological duality experienced by characters like Saleem Sinai, who grapples with the conflicting facets of his identity as both Indian and British. This internal fight highlights the universality of such struggles by replicating Zoroastrianism's cosmic conflict between good (Ahura Mazda) and evil (Angra Mainyu). Rushdie used characters like Shiva to highlight the story's duality nature.

Despite having qualities associated with Zoroastrian dualism, Shiva is named after the Hindu god of destruction and is a potent symbol of the ongoing fight between opposing forces. His persona exemplifies the complexities of life and the continual conflict between conflicting fates and ideas. Rushdie investigates profound philosophical questions about the nature of good and evil. These intricate portrayals of dualism address evil, identity, and the human predicament. He adds layers of symbolism and allegory to his novel by drawing inspiration from Zoroastrianism, encouraging readers to consider the universal issues of moral ambiguity and duality. Salman Rushdie intricately weaves aspects of Zoroastrian mysticism into his storytelling, imbuing it with an aura of enchantment and awe. The abundant rituals and mystical practices found within Zoroastrianism provide a rich backdrop for Rushdie's examination of magical realism. Drawing inspiration from Zoroastrian lore and mystical traditions, Rushdie intersperses his narrative with supernatural elements that blur the lines between the ordinary and the extraordinary. The characters in the story exhibit supernatural powers or experience magical events that echo Zoroastrian views on spirituality and otherworldly dimensions. With these fantastical components, Rushdie not only enthralls readers with mesmerizing tales but also delves into profound themes of faith, fate, and the unseen forces that influence human existence. The author adeptly investigates the theme of cultural hybridity, paralleling it with the syncretic essence of Zoroastrianism. Emerging from Persia and leaving its mark on various cultures through the ages, Zoroastrianism represents a blend of different religious and cultural aspects. In a similar vein, Rushdie's narrative embodies this hybridity as characters navigate diverse cultural identities molded by historical, social, and personal factors.

The novel's portrayal of characters like Saleem Sinai, who grapples with his Indian and British heritage, mirrors Rushdie's own experiences of cultural complexity. Through these characters, Rushdie talks about the interplay of cultures, highlighting how diverse influences unite to shape individual and collective identities. Just as Zoroastrianism embraces various cultural elements to create a unique identity, *Midnight Children* celebrates the richness and complexity of cultural hybridity, offering deep insights into the human knowledge. Salman Rushdie stands as a towering figure in contemporary literature, known for his bold narrative styles, intricate storytelling, and exploration of complex themes. Originating from a background profoundly influenced by Zoroastrianism, an ancient monotheistic faith, Rushdie's work significantly showcases his cultural and religious roots. As we explore Rushdie's complex connection to his Zoroastrian legacy, we will traverse the thematic realms of hybridity, magic, and dualism that permeate his narratives. These themes are not only pivotal elements of his storytelling but also mirror the rich variety of beliefs, customs, and cultural subtleties that shape his perspective. Rushdie's examination of these themes adds layers of intricacy to his works, encouraging readers to reflect on the relationship between cultural identity, artistic expression, and the magical realism that characterizes his literary creations. Zoroastrianism profoundly influences the beliefs, morals, and behaviors of the characters in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* throughout the entire novel. Zoroastrianism acts as a cultural and theological backdrop that shapes the identities and interactions of the characters, adding greater nuance and depth to the story. Zoroastrianism provides a distinctive lens through which to view the protagonists' cultural landscape, enriching both plot and character development. In the narrative, Zoroastrianism assists in orienting both the characters and the readers within Rushdie's intricately crafted world, much like a compass indicates true north. It enhances the overall reading experience by serving as a key to unveil hidden meanings and layers within the text. Zoroastrianism forms the structural foundation for the novel's thematic richness, akin to how a base supports a building. The importance of Zoroastrianism in *Midnight's Children* can be encapsulated as vital threads intricately woven throughout the narrative to link disparate elements and impart depth to the story.

Overview of Zoroastrianism: Zoroastrianism, one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions, traces its origins to ancient Persia and the teachings of the prophet Zoroaster around 600 BC. Central to this faith is a dualistic worldview, where forces of good and evil, light and darkness, engage in everlasting conflict. Salman Rushdie's ties to Zoroastrianism stem from his early life experiences. Having a Zoroastrian father, he grew up in a setting rich with the cultural and religious traditions of this ancient religion. The dualistic principles found in Zoroastrianism, along with the perpetual conflict between opposing forces and the emphasis on personal accountability, have significantly influenced Rushdie's perspective and are reflected in his literary creations. As we delve into Rushdie's involvement with Zoroastrianism, it becomes clear that the teachings of this religion act as a thematic undercurrent, shaping the narrative fabric of his novels. Academic discussions surrounding Salman Rushdie's connection to his Zoroastrian roots have garnered both interest and limitations. A number of works have investigated the notable impact of Zoroastrianism on Rushdie's literature, highlighting themes such as duality, personal responsibility, and the ongoing struggle between good and evil. Nevertheless, the literature review also uncovers shortcomings in existing scholarship. There has been insufficient focus on a comparative analysis of how Rushdie addresses Zoroastrian themes alongside other religious or philosophical influences within his writings. Additionally, a detailed examination of the influence of Zoroastrianism on particular characters, scenes, and narrative structures remains largely unaddressed.

This study aims to fill these voids by offering a nuanced analysis that surpasses current literature. By closely analyzing specific scenes and characters in Rushdie's novels, the research aspires to provide a deeper understanding of how his Zoroastrian background intricately informs the thematic aspects of his literary works. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* resonates with the ancient Zoroastrian concept of virtue in opposition to evil, not through explicit mentions, but through a subtle interplay of duality embedded within the narrative and character portrayals. The novel's division is marked by the moment of midnight on August 15, 1947, which signified both the inception of India and the violent split. This duality sets the stage for the emergence of the midnight children, each possessing a unique talent that mirrors the interplay of good and evil. The narrative embodies this inner struggle. Saleem Sinai's unreliable narration disrupts the storyline, offering glimpses into the lives of other children with diverse abilities and characteristics. Shiva, with his unyielding ambition, consistently contests Saleem's perspective, highlighting the fundamental duality of human existence. The magical abilities blur the boundaries between good and evil. Saleem's healing powers can both harm and mend, while Shiva's telepathy can encourage or incite rebellion. The connection among the children illustrates this notion: their destinies are intertwined, and their gifts symbolize the intricate nature of humanity. This duality also applies to the characters themselves. Aadam Aziz embodies idealism and morality, contrasting sharply with Emilie Jinnah's pragmatic and deceptive nature. Their conflicting viewpoints reflect the ongoing struggle between ideals and

actions. The *Midnight's Children* Conference represents this dichotomy. Children with varying powers gather, using their abilities for either benevolent or selfish purposes. This spectrum of motivations reinforces the Zoroastrian belief that both good and evil reside within us all. Through this delicate interplay of opposing elements, Rushdie compels the reader to confront the complexities of human nature. The line separating good and evil becomes indistinct, mirroring Zoroastrian beliefs and prompting us to reckon with the duality that shapes both history and our individual lives.

2. OBJECTIVES

Salman Rushdie's connection to Zoroastrianism originates from his formative years. With a Zoroastrian father, he was raised in an environment enriched with the cultural and religious practices of this ancient faith. The dualistic concepts inherent in Zoroastrianism, along with the continuous struggle between opposing forces and the focus on individual responsibility, have profoundly impacted Rushdie's outlook and are evident in his literary works. As we explore Rushdie's engagement with Zoroastrianism, it becomes evident that the teachings of this faith serve as a thematic foundation, influencing the narrative structure of his novels. Academic inquiries into Salman Rushdie's relationship with his Zoroastrian heritage have sparked both interest and limitations. Several studies have examined the considerable influence of Zoroastrianism on Rushdie's writings, emphasizing motifs like duality, personal accountability, and the relentless battle between good and evil. However, the literature review also reveals gaps in the current scholarship. There has been a lack of emphasis on a comparative analysis of how Rushdie weaves Zoroastrian themes alongside other religious or philosophical influences in his work. Furthermore, a thorough exploration of how Zoroastrianism impacts specific characters, scenes, and narrative forms remains largely unexplored. This research seeks to address these gaps by providing a detailed examination that goes beyond existing literature. By closely scrutinizing specific scenes and characters in Rushdie's novels, this study aims to deepen the understanding of how his Zoroastrian heritage intricately shapes the thematic dimensions of his literary creations. Salman Rushdie's **Midnight's Children** resonates with the ancient Zoroastrian idea of virtue contrasting with evil, not through overt references, but via a nuanced interaction of duality embedded in the narrative and character portrayals. The novel's division hinges on the moment of midnight on August 15, 1947, marking both the birth of India and a violent division. This duality lays the groundwork for the rise of the midnight children, each endowed with distinct talents that reflect the interplay of good and evil. The narrative encapsulates this internal conflict. Saleem Sinai's unreliable narration disrupts the storyline, providing insights into the lives of other children with varied abilities and traits. Shiva, driven by relentless ambition, persistently challenges Saleem's viewpoint, emphasizing the fundamental duality within human existence. The magical gifts blur the lines between good and evil. Saleem's healing powers can both harm and heal, while Shiva's telepathy might inspire or incite insurrection. The connections among the children exemplify this idea: their fates are intertwined, and their abilities symbolize the intricate essence of humanity. This duality also pertains to the characters themselves. Aadam Aziz represents idealism and morality, contrasting starkly with Emilie Jinnah's practical and deceitful nature. Their opposing perspectives illustrate the continual struggle between ideals and actions. The *Midnight's Children* Conference exemplifies this dichotomy. Children with diverse abilities convene, employing their gifts for either altruistic or selfish ends. This range of motivations reinforces the Zoroastrian belief that both good and evil coexist within us all. Through this delicate interplay of conflicting elements, Rushdie urges the reader to confront the complexities of human nature.

The boundary delineating good and evil becomes blurred, reflecting Zoroastrian tenets and compelling us to grapple with the duality that influences both history and our personal lives. The novel aims to place Rushdie's work within a broader literary context, showcasing the unique features that distinguish his approach to Zoroastrian themes. Also the fresh Insights and challenges tells about the new perspectives and insights gained from the analysis. By researching into specific scenes, characters, and thematic elements, the study has uncovered layers of meaning and distinct artistic vision. Saleem Sinai's path in *Midnight's Children* serves as a compelling framework for examining themes that resonate globally. The ongoing relocation of his family reflects the experiences of numerous migrants, emphasizing the difficulties of abandoning one's homeland and discovering a place in a different setting. As Saleem grapples with his mixed Indian and possibly British heritage, the narrative explores the intricacies of cultural identity, particularly for individuals with varied backgrounds. Throughout his journey, Saleem's desire for acceptance remains a prevalent theme, symbolizing a universal human longing for a home. By investigating these themes through Saleem's journey, Rushdie illuminates the displacement and cultural intricacies encountered by many in post-colonial contexts, reminding us that the quest for identity and belonging is a common human endeavor. Salman Rushdie's artistic perspective and identity in *Midnight's Children* are examined in relation to Zoroastrianism, revealing significant insights into dualism, magic, and hybridity.

The narrative is rich with dualistic themes, evident in the internal struggles of the characters and reflecting the cosmic battle between good and evil represented in Zoroastrianism. By artfully blending Zoroastrian mysticism with magical realism, Rushdie blurs the lines between the extraordinary and the mundane. The spiritual and metaphysical concepts of Zoroastrianism resonate throughout this synthesis of magical elements. As the characters navigate various cultural identities shaped by different influences, the novel's exploration of cultural hybridity reflects the integrative nature of Zoroastrianism. Analyzing *Midnight's Children* uncovers how Zoroastrianism shaped Rushdie's themes and narrative structure, offering insights into the challenges of identity, morality, and cultural amalgamation. The novel further illustrates how the author's writing is influenced by his mindset and multicultural background. Saleem Sinai's journey in *Midnight's Children* serves as a compelling framework for examining themes that resonate globally. The ongoing relocation of his family reflects the experiences of numerous migrants, emphasizing the difficulties of abandoning one's homeland and discovering a place in a different setting. As Saleem grapples with his mixed Indian and possibly British heritage, the narrative explores the intricacies of cultural identity, particularly for individuals with varied backgrounds. Throughout his journey, Saleem's desire for acceptance remains a prevalent theme, symbolizing a universal human longing for a home. By investigating these themes through Saleem's journey, Rushdie illuminates the displacement and cultural intricacies encountered by many in post-colonial contexts, reminding us that the quest for identity and belonging is a common human endeavor.

3. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Salman Rushdie's masterful blending of Zoroastrian themes in works like *Midnight's Children* showcases his deep connections to his cultural and religious roots. Rushdie reinterprets fundamental ideas through motifs of dualism, magic, and hybridity, offering readers a distinctive perspective on identity and the human experience. By closely analyzing specific events and characters, Rushdie uncovers layers of significance that highlight the richness and complexity of his narrative. This exploration underscores Rushdie's extraordinary narrative style and his impact on contemporary literature in illuminating the cultural wealth of India. Saleem Sinai's journey as a migrant in *Midnight's Children* reflects the historical diaspora of the Zoroastrian community, which faced persecution and relocated to various regions globally. Just as Zoroastrians escaped religious oppression, Saleem and his fellow midnight's children leave India during times of political upheaval and communal strife. Both Saleem and the Zoroastrians confront issues of identity in unfamiliar territories, echoing themes of displacement and the yearning for a homeland. Saleem's wistful desire for his homeland and his struggles to adapt to new cultures resonate with the experiences of Zoroastrians who migrated in earlier generations. His journey encompasses cultural adaptation and assimilation, paralleling the Zoroastrian experience of merging into new societies while maintaining their cultural identity. Through Saleem's story, Salman Rushdie delves into wider themes of migration, cultural identity, and the sense of belonging, illuminating the shared human experience of dislocation and the complexities of cultural pluralism in post-colonial environments. The novel's portrayal of history as cyclical aligns with Zoroastrian concepts of eternal cosmic cycles. However, *Midnight's Children* also proposes that transcending the constraints of time and destiny is achievable, hinting at a deeper spiritual dimension to human life. Zoroastrianism underlines the importance of community responsibility and unity. Characters within the narrative grapple with their sense of identity and belonging within the vibrant tapestry of Indian culture, reflecting Zoroastrian ideals of social justice and harmony among individuals.

4. CONCLUSION

Salman Rushdie's writing is greatly influenced by his close connection to his Zoroastrian heritage, which is most noticeable in pieces like *Midnight's Children*. This study has highlighted the ways in which Rushdie reinterprets basic concepts through themes of dualism, magic, and hybridity that are influenced by Zoroastrianism. The research uncovers profound layers of interpretation and creative vision by focusing on specific situations and characters, offering new perspectives on how Rushdie navigates his spiritual and cultural heritage. The comparative approach of this study, which utilizes scholarly sources, enhances our understanding of Rushdie's distinctive literary contribution. The development of characters such as Saleem Sinai, whose connection to religion embodies the clashing cultures and identities of post-colonial India, is significantly influenced by Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrianism serves as a potent symbol in Rushdie's work, emphasizing the cultural diversity of India and adding depth and richness to the narrative. Through this exploration, Rushdie not only sheds light on the historical and cultural context of India but also delves into essential questions

regarding identity, purpose, and the human experience in an ever-evolving world. In conclusion, this study underscores the significant influence of Zoroastrianism on Rushdie's creative approach and the complexity and insightfulness of his literary works. It not only provides new perspectives on Salman Rushdie's connection to his Zoroastrian roots but also emphasizes the importance of continued academic inquiry into the nuances of cultural and religious influences in modern literature.

Rushdie's Zoroastrian lineage serves as a compelling undercurrent in *Midnight's Children*. The tension between good and evil manifests itself within the characters' internal conflicts and motivations, while the themes of free will and the quest for belonging resonate with Zoroastrian tenets. The influence of Zoroastrianism enriches the magical realism aspect, enhancing the depth and intricacy of the story. By integrating these components into the narrative, Rushdie moves beyond a mere post-colonial tale. *Midnight's Children* transforms into a vibrant tapestry filled with universal human experiences, illustrating the significant effect an author's background can exert on their creative vision and storytelling. This paper centers its attention on Zoroastrianism and aims to explore Zoroastrianism within the context of history, identity, and the search for meaning reveals a profound connection between this ancient faith and the complexities of human experience. By analyzing the characters and themes in Rushdie's **Midnight's Children**, one gains a deeper insight into how individuals cope with transformation, develop their identities, and seek purpose in a constantly evolving world. The enduring influence of Zoroastrianism, highlighting free will and the conflict between good and evil, serves as a poignant reminder that humanity's quest for meaning crosses both time and cultural boundaries. Zoroastrian beliefs assert that individuals have the autonomy to make both positive and negative choices, which is vividly reflected in Salman Rushdie's artistic vision and identity within **Midnight's Children**. This novel acts as a political allegory that integrates themes of religion. Rushdie skillfully intertwines the ideas of cyclical time, free will, and duality from Zoroastrianism into the narrative of **Midnight's Children**. Through its symbolism and thematic depth, Zoroastrianism enriches the exploration of post-colonial India's heritage, identity, and the human experience. **Midnight's Children** not only offers an in-depth commentary on universal human issues and beliefs but also illustrates the intricacies of Indian history and identity through its layers of symbolism and thematic significance. Zoroastrianism offers liberation through spiritual renewal and virtuous actions. In a similar fashion to Zoroastrian concepts of moral duty and divine retribution, Saleem's journey can be interpreted as an endeavor for the rehabilitation of both the individual and the community. By probing into these additional aspects, the connection between Zoroastrianism and **Midnight's Children** is further enriched, providing readers with a nuanced exploration of ethical, intellectual, and spiritual dilemmas interwoven within the rich tapestry of Indian history and culture.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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