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**REPRESENTATION OF CHILDREN AND
CHILDHOOD IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S 'MIDNIGHT'S
CHILDREN' AND 'HAROUN AND THE SEA OF
STORIES'**

**BĒRNU UN BĒRNĪBAS ATTĒLOJUMS SALMANA RUŠDI
DARBOS "PUSNAKTS BĒRNI" UN "HĀRŪNS UN STĀSTU
JŪRA"**

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ANOTĀCIJA

Salmans Rušdi ir postmodernisma Indo-britu rakstnieks, kas pēta tādas tēmas kā Indijas uzplaukums un pagrimums pēc neatkarības atgūšanas no Britu impērijas, kā arī valsts nācīgas dzīvi un cīņu. Šo tēmu attēlojums ir sasniegts, izmantojot „*maģisko reālismu*”, kā arī bērnu tēlu radīšana. Kamēr „*maģiskais reālisms*” ļauj Rušdi parādīt Indijas problēmas, bērnu tēli spēlē svarīgu lomu tos atveidošanā lasītājam. Tādēļ šis darbs ir veltīts bērnu tēlu un viņu bērnības analīzei Salmana Rušdi „Pusnakts Bērni” un „Hārūns un stāstu jūra”. Tā rezultātā, bērnu lomas un problēmas kuras viņas atspoguļo ir izpētītas un pēc tam salīdzinātas ar dokumentāliem faktiem, kas attiecas uz mūsdienu Indiju. Līdz ar to šis darbs piedāvā potenciālam lasītājam iespēju iepazīties ar Salmanu Rušdi, viņa rakstīšanas stilu un diviem no viņa literāriem darbiem; kā arī atklāt vēstījumus, attēloti ar bērnu tēlu palīdzību.

Atslēgas vārdi: maģiskais reālisms, Salmans Rušdi, bērnu lomas, Indija

ABSTRACT

Salman Rushdie is a postmodern Indo-British writer who explores such themes as India's flourishing and decline after recovering its independence from the British Empire, as well as the life and struggle of the country's nation. The depiction of such major subjects is achieved with the help of "*magic realism*" and the writer's creation of the children characters. While "*magic realism*" allows Rushdie to demonstrate the issues of India, children characters play an important role in conveying them to the reader. Therefore, the present paper is dedicated to the analysis of the children characters and their childhood in Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children' and 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories'. As a result, the roles of children and the issues they represent are explored and afterwards are compared with the non-fictional facts, which are relevant to contemporary India. Consequently, the present work offers its potential reader a possibility to get acquainted with Salman Rushdie, his writing style and two of his literary works; as well as to discover the messages conveyed by the children characters.

Key words: magic realism, Salman Rushdie, children characters, India

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INTRODUCTION

Even being relatively a young literary genre, “*magic realism*” has already proved itself as ‘the literary language of the emergent postcolonial world’ (Hart, 2005: 1). The new style which contains elements of supernatural, mythical and magic, perfectly interweaves with the realistic story, allowing postcolonial authors to represent their own culture and ‘to indict the follies of both empire and its aftermath’ (ibid.: 7). However, the peculiar genre was not only used to depict the cultures of the colonised territories and their development after gaining freedom from their oppressors, but also to portray contemporary issues of the independent nations.

To tell the story of his country of birth, as well as to depict issues faced by his homeland, Salman Rushdie chose to use exactly “*magic realism*” in his works. However, there is another reason why Rushdie writes his works in the genre of “*magic realism*”. The reason lies behind the writer’s national dualism. Being an Indian by birth and living almost half of his life in England, Rushdie shares with the reader his memories of his home country. Hence, using “*magic realism*” allowed Salman Rushdie ‘to describe calamitous events that exceed the grasp of normal description’ (Kakutani, 1989). And in order to help Salman Rushdie to convey ‘the truth via the road of untruth’, characters in the form of children were created (Rushdie, 2010).

Consequently, the *aim* of the present paper is to analyse the children characters depicted in Salman Rushdie’s works in order to explore symbolic meanings which the characters are endowed with.

As a result, the *hypothesis* of the work is as follows:

- ✓ Characters of children and the theme of childhood perform several important and symbolic functions in Salman Rushdie’s novels; such as representing the potential and the hope embodied in the Indian nation, as well as the thwarting and the diminishing of this potential.

Therefore, in order to reach the aim and prove the hypothesis, two works by Salman Rushdie were chosen in order to analyse the children characters; namely ‘Midnight’s Children’ (1981) and ‘Haroun and the Sea of Stories’ (1990). ‘Midnight’s Children’ is a captivating novel about a boy, Saleem, who by his birth ‘has been mysteriously handcuffed to history’ (1981: 3). Being born at the first hour of India’s independence from the British Raj, Saleem is endowed with a spectacular gift of telepathy and a powerful sense of smell that makes his life not only full of adventures but also full of losses and frustrations. Strangely enough, Saleem’s life and India’s history from the moment of its independence intertwine,

making Saleem an active participant (or so he believes) in India's history. When Saleem loses his talents, India suffers a decline. However, everything can be changed by Saleem's successor, his son Aadam who promises a new dawn for India. 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories', on the other hand, is a children's tale, dedicated to Salman Rushdie's son Zafar. The story is about a boy, Haroun, and his wondrous adventures. One day, Haroun's family is visited by misfortunes – Haroun's mother leaves the family, which makes an impact upon Haroun's mental state and causes his father Rashid Khalifa's loss of his story-telling talent. Rashid Khalifa is very sad as story-telling is the only source of his income; therefore, Haroun sets a goal to help his father to return the story-telling skills. In order to make Haroun's wish come true, the boy has to travel to the magic moon named Kahani. There, the boy meets many new friends and participates in exciting and even dangerous quests. After helping the citizens of Kahani, the boy is awarded by 'a happy ending', which means his mother's returning home and his father's regaining his story-telling talent (Rushdie, 1990: 202).

Even though both works are very different in their structure, genre, and target audience, both texts are united by one feature, which is the presence of children characters. Therefore, in order to research in detail the subject of children and their representation in Salman Rushdie's 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories' and 'Midnight's Children' such *enabling objectives* were formulated for the present paper as:

1. studying the theory on magic realism, postmodernism, symbolism, Salman Rushdie's biography as well as traditions and culture of India;
2. examining Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children' and 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories';
3. applying the theory to the analysis and interpretation of the children characters of both literary works;
4. comparing the ways in which Rushdie represents social and political issues in his novels and the ways in which they are presented in non-fictional sources;
5. drawing relevant conclusions.

Moreover, such theoretical methods of research are applied as:

- **Case study**, which denotes finding the aid sources for the theoretical background, various materials on defining terms and diverse articles, videos and other resources on Indian art, culture and nation's problems.
- **Comparative analysis**, which implies comparison between the lives and family structures of both protagonists, who are Saleem and Haroun. In addition to analysing

the main characters, the comparison between India's culture of the early twentieth century and modern India is made.

Referring to the contents of the work, it consists of six chapters, two sub-chapters, conclusions, thesis and the list of sources. The first chapter introduces the reader to India's role in Rushdie's life and works, including Rushdie's dual identity and its influence upon literary works and their style. The second chapter comprises theory on the genre of "*magic realism*" and its history. Moreover, the chapter explores the reasons why exactly "*magic realism*" was used in Salman Rushdie's works, as well as outlines the genre's elements, supported by the examples from 'Midnight's Children' and 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories'. The third chapter serves as the beginning of analysis of children characters, which starts with examining the titles of 'Midnight's Children' and 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories', where the subject of children is clearly seen. Further on, the paper deals with the cities of residence of both protagonists, Haroun and Saleem. The chapter includes not only the history and description of the cities, but also the living conditions in them. The fifth chapter consists of the analysis of the characters themselves, namely their families and economic backgrounds, as well as the environment they live in. Afterwards, the family and environmental aspects of fiction characters are being compared with the non-fictional information regarding the situation in contemporary India. Finally, the sixth chapter explores the symbolic meaning embodied in certain characters of both literary works.

Lastly, the author of the present paper believes the researched theme to be topical as it is directly connected with understanding any literary work. Owing to the characters as well as to the events that take place around them, one has an opportunity to know more about the world the characters live in: their problems and achievements, their joy and sorrow. However, at times, the reader does not realise that there might be found something more than just a story; that many of the literary heroes, despite their primary role in the text, portray far more than just the surrounding world. For instance, either character can represent traditions, situations and problems which have a full relevance to the real world as well. As a result, the reader does not only familiarise him/herself with the literary work but also gains lessons and messages which are conveyed through its heroes.

1. INDIA IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S LIFE AND WORKS

Before Britain's announcement of withdrawal 'from India by June 1948', various events took place which favoured the end of the Raj as well as the beginning of the new era of Independent India (Szczepanski, n.d.). Bharat¹ had to experience forced participation in the war against Germany in 1939 as well as unrest between Muslims and Hindus, where the seat of aggression between the people was the Indian National Congress² with its members mainly of Hindu religion. Violence, based on religious clashes, in the territory furthered India's division from Pakistan which ended up with the formation of two 'independent nations in August 1947' (Khilnani, 2007). As a result, for some people postcolonial times brought the long-awaited independence, but for others – loss of their homeland.

Salman Rushdie's family has also suffered because they had to leave their homeland. Born in Bombay, Rushdie, being a Muslim, belonged to the religious minority, which made the life in the city very difficult. Therefore, at the age of thirteen, 'he and his family migrated to England and two years later moved to Karachi' (Goonetilleke, 1988: 5). It was in England, a new refuge, where Rushdie began his writing career till he reached his 'artistic and commercial breakthrough' with 'Midnight's Children' (1981) (Frank, 2008: 131). The literary work 'features high in polls listing the best books of the twentieth century and, in 1993, was awarded the first 'Booker of Bookers', the best Booker Prize winner of the last quarter century, and in 2008, the best Booker of the last forty years' (Gopal, 2009: 91). What made the work so successful was not only the young author's talent and his aim to educate, but also the use Rushdie made of his own memories of India. Writing about his own recollections makes Salman Rushdie resemble Saleem, the protagonist of 'Midnight's Children', whose mode of narration is fragmented and subjective.

Being a migrant living in England and writing about his homeland India, Rushdie forged a new identity 'which is 'at once plural and partial'' (Rushdie, 1992: 15). Still, Rushdie's hybrid identity which is half Indian and half British, gives him a vantage point in depicting life in India being a spectator on one hand and a participant on the other. The role of the participant is noticeable by the fact that Rushdie included in his works not only childhood memories of India but also the historically notable moments of the country; whereas the role of the spectator emphasises his belonging to Britain.

Before considering some of the notable works of Salman Rushdie, it is important to note that owing to his identity, Rushdie demonstrates to the reader 'his' India, forming 'his own

¹ Hindi name for India (Online 1).

² A political party, 'dominated the Indian nationalist movement opposing British rule' (Carr, 2011).

version of the nation' (Thiara, 2009: 1). And to achieve it, he introduces the representatives of the nation itself, who are children. For instance, the title of Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children' is a metonymy³ that includes the word 'children' which denotes the beginning of a new life - postcolonial India. However, this life does not only illustrate the country's flourishing years but also its decline. Moreover, through the eyes of the characters who are children Rushdie portrays the country's cultural and religious diversity, as well as a 'depiction of Indian excess and grotesquery' (Kortenaar, 2004: 4). The country's grotesquery is reflected in its depravity, violence, unfulfilled dreams, unhappy families and other social issues which are discussed further in detail.

Ten years after 'Midnight's Children' was first published, admirers of Salman Rushdie's literary works could read 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories' (1990). The new work, written in the genre of a fairy tale, did not only convey a story 'about a boy's confusion about his parents' breakup', but it also told the readers about 'censure and the importance of telling stories' (Frank, 2008: 132). The story takes place in a postmodern Indian society. As opposed to centuries-old Indian culture where family values play a major role, in contemporary India one can encounter family breakups and unfaithfulness. Moreover, just as in 'Midnight's Children', 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories' contains Salman Rushdie's 're-creation' of 'his Indian childhood' as well as his own lifestyle which he led in 1980s (Sen, 1995: 655). The reader can notice Salman Rushdie's persona in Rashid Khalifa, the Shah of Blah, a father and storyteller who loses his ability to create. The same misfortune of losing the talent 'mirrors Rushdie's own troubles in writing after the price on his head was placed' (ibid). The literary hunt for Salman Rushdie was announced after publishing his '*The Satanic Verses*' (1988), when Rushdie was accused of blasphemy against Islam. Therefore, Rushdie was forced to live apart from his family, including his son Zafar to whom 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories' is dedicated. Even if the work was first written only for Zafar, it was appraised by readers all around the world which resulted in Rushdie's receiving the Writer's Guild Award for the Best Children's Book.

As a result, being highly appreciated by readers of any age, Salman Rushdie's works embrace the postcolonial spirit of postindependent India which is conveyed by his own childhood memories. Having spent his early years in India, Rushdie builds his own image of his homeland, with its beauty brightly contrasted with ugliness, presented by the future of the nation - children. Consequently, both 'Midnight's Children' and 'Haroun and the Sea of

³ a figure of speech consisting of the use of the name of one thing for that of another of which it is an attribute or with which it is associated (Merriam-Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2011)

Stories refer to postcolonial works that mirror Rushdie's view on India where the children play a significant role in describing Salman Rushdie's place of birth.

2. MAGIC REALISM AS THE GENRE OF SALMAN RUSHDIE'S WORKS

In his interview Salman Rushdie mentioned that: 'People tend to focus on the 'magic' more than the 'realism'. But, like all fiction, fantasy arrives at truth via the road of untruth' (Rushdie, 2010). The given statement sets the door ajar to the world of magic realism where the reader is guided along its paths hand-in-hand with Salman Rushdie's works. The paths that create an imitable way of approaching the truth with the help of 'fantastic or mythical elements' within the realistic fiction (Carr, 2011). But before one should become a frequent guest of the world of magic, he or she should first become familiar with the concept of "*magic realism*" itself, together with its history and its relevance to Salman Rushdie's works, namely "Midnight's Children" and "Haroun and the Sea of Stories".

First of all, it is worth mentioning that in the course of time, the term of "*magic realism*" has experienced many changes and undergone various transformations that eventually caused the coinage of other terms. Consequently, even though the terms might sound similar, in fact, their definitions are very diverse. That is why, if the reader wishes to know more about the style which characterises Salman Rushdie's works, he or she should first learn to distinguish "*magic realism*" from other genres, namely 'magical realism' and 'marvellous realism'. According to Bowers, 'the terms originated from the German *Magischer Realismus* which travelled and was translated into the Dutch *magisch-realisme*, the English "*magic realism*" and eventually the Spanish *realismo mágico* and '*lo real maravilloso*' that were translated as 'marvellous realism' and 'marvellous reality' (2004: 2). There is a considerable difference between the three terms; for instance the German *Magischer Realismus* concerns the painting of 'the Weimar Republic that tried to capture the mystery of life behind the surface reality', *lo real maravilloso* means an expression of 'realist and magical views of life in the context of the differing cultures of Latin America' and, lastly, *realismo mágico* or "*magic realism*" was introduced in the 1950s in relation to Latin American fiction, but 'has since been adopted as the main term used to refer to all narrative fiction that includes magical happenings in a realist matter-of-fact narrative' (ibid). Two of the notable representatives of the narrative fiction created in the genre of "*magic realism*" are Gabriel García Márquez from Latin America and Günter Grass from Germany, who are among the writers that 'influenced Salman Rushdie's writing style' as well (Cundy, 1996: 5).

Having mentioned the origins of "*magic realism*", it is important to outline the most prominent elements which will provide the reader with full comprehension of the term. In

order to make it more understandable, each element will be supported with the example from Salman Rushdie's "Midnight's Children" and "Haroun and the Sea of Stories".

Proceeding with the first characteristic feature:

- ❖ Magic realism is a kind of literary genre in 'which fabulous and fantastical events are included in a narrative' (Chilvers, 2004).

Professor Stephen Hart, a specialist in Latin American literature, film and culture, states that 'magic can mean anything [...] including religious beliefs, superstitions, myths, legends, folklore' (2005: 14). Referring to Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children', one may notice the allusions to the Sanskrit epics of the Mahabharata and Ramayana. For instance, all the male representatives of Saleem's family are associated with the elephant-headed god Ganesh, 'son of Shiva and Parvati in Hindu mythology' (Cundy, 1996: 39). It all starts with Doctor Aadam Aziz, Saleem's grandfather, whose life was saved many times owing to his nose. Wherever there was danger waiting at the corner, doctor Aziz's nose began itching. In the city of Amritsar, for instance, he was saved from being killed because of tickling in his nose that brought him to sneezing and made him lose balance and fall, right before the firing was started. Saleem's nose, on the other hand, was like a 'map of India' from which there always 'flowed a shining cascade of goo' (Rushdie, 1981: 88,168). However, the nose helped Saleem acquire the talent of telepathy. Telepathy gave Saleem an opportunity not only to hear people's thoughts, but also to communicate with other midnight's children. Aadam, Saleem's adopted child, was also born to be special and instead of a long nose, he had another feature of Ganesh - big ears. Therefore, the baby's head looked as 'the head of a tiny elephant' at the moment when he was born (ibid.: 304). What is more, just as in Hindu mythology, Shiva from 'Midnight's Children', not only is endowed with destructive power, but also becomes a biological father of Parvati-the-witch's baby – Aadam.

Furthermore, both works contain allusions to the '*Arabian Nights*' or '*One Thousand and One Nights*'. The reason of the appearance of the allusions in both texts might be the fact that Salman Rushdie himself grew up with the '*Arabian Nights*' stories and believes the 'highly fantastical, fabulated story-telling' to be one of the means of conveying the truth (Rose, 2008). By the same token, the number of children born in the first hour of Indian Independence, which was one thousand and one altogether, is an allusion to the number of the tales in the '*Arabian Nights*'. Whereas in 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories' the houseboat where the boy and his father Rashid stayed while visiting Mr Buttoo, an arrogant politician who invited Rashid to help in winning local elections with his marvellous talent to tell stories, was called *Arabian Nights Plus One*. Additionally to the name, the houseboat contained various

decorations adopted from the already mentioned collection of stories. ‘Each of its windows had been cut out in the shape of a fabulous bird, fish or beast: the Roc of Sindbad the Sailor, the Whale That Swallowed Men, a Fire-Breathing Dragon, and so on’ (Rushdie, 1990: 51).

- ❖ Apart from Indian folklore and the stories of the Middle East, the text contains the variety of magical occurrences which include miracles, ghosts, extraordinary talents, disappearances and strange atmospheres.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that “conjuring ‘magic’ is brought about by tricks that give the illusion that something extraordinary has happened, whereas in *magic realism* it is assumed that something extraordinary *really* has happened’ (Bowers, 2004: 19). For instance, Parvati-the-witch’s ability to make people disappear completely after entering ‘a large wicker basket with a lid’ (Rushdie, 1981: 274). In the modern society everybody will say that it is crystal clear that all the magicians have their own tricks which make the performance seem to be of real magic; however, the sorcery of Parvati made Saleem disappear for real, so he managed to flee from Bangladesh back to India.

However, probably, the main occurrence which is closely associated with the world of fantasy is the birth of midnight’s children itself. The Independence of India which happened on the 15th of August, 1947 was a notable and special moment in the history of India – a sort of a miracle that freed the country from the British colonisers. Therefore, in order to emphasise the significance of the moment, the author enriched it with the birth of one thousand and one children with extraordinary powers. Some abilities may be encountered even in the daily world, for example Saleem’s telepathy, Parvati’s healing power or ‘children with two heads’ (ibid.: 142). However, the real magic or curse occurs with children born in the last seconds towards the midnight; these are a girl with the beauty that blinded everyone who looked at her, ‘a boy who had the ability of stepping into mirrors and re-emerging through any reflective surface in the land’, a boy who could reduce or increase his size whenever he wished to, a child who by immersing her/himself in water could change her/his sex and so on (ibid.: 143).

- ❖ Moreover, it should be pointed out that ‘magic occurs without using devices typical to the fantasy genre unless the devices (i.e. ghosts, angels) are employed in a context that makes them ordinary’ (Sellman, 2004).

That is why the appearance of Joseph D’Costa in Mary Pereira’s consciousness seems to be quite natural. Mary Pereira has made a grave mistake by swapping Saleem and Shiva directly after their birth. The reason of her reckless action was D’Costa’s advice, which was based on a delirious idea that swapping the children of the opposite social strata will serve as

a beginning to diminishing of inequality between the social classes. As a result, Joseph D'Costa was executed by the government, the fractures between the poor and the rich never lessened and Mary Pereira began being haunted by D'Costa's ghost as a remorse for what has been done and what cannot be changed any more.

The work 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories', on the contrary, being dedicated to Rushdie's son, is almost fully based on magic. The reason is obvious – it is "*children's fiction*"; even though it touches upon various so-called adult issues of the modern world. Reading the work, one may come across genies with 'a huge purple turban [...] and baggy silk pajamas' as well as whiskers of sky blue colour; the journey on a mechanised hoopoe bird to the Ocean of the Streams of Story and later to the land called Kahani; the 'Disconnecter' that plays a role of the supplier of stories; shadow warriors, whose eyes 'instead of whites had blacks; and the irises were grey as twilight, and the pupils were white milk' (Rushdie, 1990: 56, 125).

- ❖ Another quality which Rushdie exploits in his writing style and which refers to "*magic realism*" is 'a range of literary and cultural resources from allegory, satire, and surrealism to Hindi cinema, [...], science fiction, detective novels, American 'westerns', political slogans, and advertising jingles' (Gopal, 2009: 92).

For example, in 'Midnight's Children' Saleem, introduces the reader with 'Bombay talkies' in the person of his uncle Hanif. Hanif 'had not only succeeded in becoming the youngest man ever to be given a film to direct in the history of the Indian cinema; he had also wooed and married one of the brightest stars of that celluloid heaven, the divine Pia' (Rushdie, 1981: 102). However, after some years uncle Hanif suffered a decline and eventually committed a suicide. Apart from the allusion to Bombay film industry, there is also a parody on American westerns that depicts desire of Bollywood for Hollywood's world-wide popularity and recognition. The Indian western or 'eastern western' contained an overweighed character with only one hand galloping on his brave horse in order to save cows from being slaughtered by a local factory. Apart from the 'cowboy', the film varied with songs, dances and 'a beautiful nautch girl who would have looked more graceful if they hadn't made her dance in a ten-gallon cowboy hat' (ibid.: 30).

Additionally to 'Bombay talkies' and parody on westerns, one can notice various slogans and jingles located in 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories'. For instance: 'Keep Teeth Kleen And Keep Teeth Brite, Keep Teeth Kolynos Super White!', from the billboard of the toothpaste advertisement in 'Midnight's Children' or 'WHO'S THE ONE FOR YOU? – NOT JUST ONE, BUT TOO!', the slogan of the unpopular politician's local election (Rushdie,

1981: 174; Rushdie, 1995: 205). Creative and humorous jingles for careless drivers in 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories' are also worth mentioning:

'IF FROM SPEED YOU GET YOUR THRILL
TAKE PRECAUTION-MAKE YOUR WILL' (Rushdie, 1995: 35)

or

'LOOK OUT! SLOW DOWN! DON'T BE FUNNY!
LIFE IS PRECIOUS! CARS COST MONEY!' (ibid.: 31)

The jingles, on one hand are funny and catchy, but on the other hand, enclose bitter truth about reckless driving and make the reader, either the one with a car or without it, think over it.

- ❖ Furthermore, 'magic realism can show the cultural and national identity of post-colonial societies' (Cundy, 1996: 97).

The central stage, which is introduced in 'Midnight's Children', is the freedom of India after the British colonisation; the starting point of all the changes that happened with India as well as Saleem. The reader might not witness the British Raj in the text, nonetheless it is represented by William Methwold, an Englishman who is obliged to expatriate and who leaves his own estates with belongings for Saleem's family to live in. The estates, however, may be the symbol of all the edifices and social institutions that were built during the Raj and which can still be seen nowadays. Methwold's abandoned possessions might also relate to customs left after the colonial times. The end of British colonisation meant a rebirth for India, its nation and its identity.

Having mentioned features that deal mainly with the first part of the term – '*magic*', it is also significant to pay attention to its second aspect which is '*realism*'. Realism, in the case of both works captures issues of humanity, either renunciation of religion or its criticism, depiction of India's history and nation, society problems, such as poverty, alcoholism, culture clashes, children's abuse, family breakups and so on. Therefore, as it has already been stated, magic helps to convey the reality and the problems of the contemporary world to the reader.

There are two examples from 'Midnight's Children' and 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories' that portray the aspect of realism under discussion. The first one, regarding 'Midnight's Children' is Rushdie's depiction of Indira Gandhi as 'the Black Widow'. The facts that Indira was a widow and had a peculiar look certainly belong to historical reality. Saleem mentions, 'the Prime Minister of India was, in 1975, fifteen years a widow' which is true as Feroze Ghandi, the husband of Indira 'died in 1960 of a heart attack' (Rushdie, 1981: 306; Online 2). Also, during a fit of fever, Saleem tells Padma about his nightmare where 'the widow's hair has a centre-parting it is green on the left and on the right black' (Rushdie, 1981: 150). Actually, in every photo of Gandhi, it can be seen that the Indian Prime Minister did

have a central parting, one of which was still black and another – of grey hair. However, the name ‘Black Widow’ can also be treated as a fantastical notion as it is connected with the Hindu superstitions, namely perceiving a widow as ‘bad luck’ (Cundy, 1996: 38). Thus, in order to prevent from the ‘bad luck’, sati or ‘the practice through which widows are voluntarily or forcibly burned alive on their husband's funeral pyre’ was taking place (Patel, 2000). In ‘Midnight’s Children’, an ancient superstition is also intertwined with author’s personal opinion about Indira Gandhi and her method of ruling, including ‘Gandhi's autocratic “emergency” regime, initiated after she was found guilty of electoral malpractice in 1975’ (Rushdie, 2004). “Emergency” regime, according to historical facts, proved Indira Gandhi ‘guilty of many civil and human rights abuses, including forced sterilizations and vasectomies’ (ibid). The Ocean of Stories and the Wellspring in ‘Haroun and the Sea of Stories’, on the other hand, is not only the cradle where all the stories are born and where the new ones are created, but it also is ‘a metaphor for art and the imagination’ (Goonetilleke, 1998: 116). The metaphor conveys the abilities of people to create and produce new ideas which are significant in every person’s life. Thus, an individual of any age might find in the text something that refers to his/her interests and consciousness. Children will firstly see magic and fantasy, whereas adults will notice a hidden meaning, a moral that lies beneath the marvellous and the imaginary.

- ❖ The last feature of “*magic realism*” to be mentioned at present is the ‘extensive usage of symbols and imagery’ (Gove, 2006).

In ‘Haroun and the Sea of Stories’, for instance, Mudra-the-shadow-warrior depicts a constituent part of Indian culture, which is a traditional dance - where the essence is hidden primarily in hand and body gestures. The term ‘Mudra’ itself denotes ‘type of symbolic hand gesture’ (Online 1). It is ‘an essential part of Classical Indian Dance, and is used to express the vast array of human emotion and experience’ (Herring, 2010). While ‘Abhinaya’ or the language that Mudra spoke in Rushdie’s work, originally signifies ‘to carry the spectator towards the meaning’ which means not only acting, miming or facial expressions. ‘The term applies to all the related aspects of conveying the poetic content of drama to the spectators’ (Chapekar, n.d.).

Consequently, it can be pointed out that each of the theoretical positions, namely the main character features of ‘*magic realism*’, its history and its examples found in Salman Rushdie’s works ‘Midnight’s Children’ and ‘Haroun and the Sea of Stories’, makes an important contribution to the reader’s understanding of the literary genre. Therefore, the reader will not only feel him/herself much more confident in the sphere of “*magic realism*”,

but also will attain a new viewpoint of the events taking place in Salman Rushdie's works. In other words, the reader, apart from observing various magic occurrences, will also be able to connect them with the reality of our contemporary world.

3. APPEARANCE OF CHILDREN IN THE TITLES OF WORKS

While scanning through the bookshelves either in the library or the bookshop, all of a sudden our attention is drawn by a skilfully decorated, exquisite book. However, not only the successful appearance of the book arrests one's attention but its original title as well.

Therefore, the first aspect to be analysed in the present work is the titles of 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories' and 'Midnight's Children'. According to the subject of the present research, children play an essential role in portraying life in India in its various aspects, such as living conditions, environment, people and issues that emerge on their life path. The studied theme of children and childhood is reflected in the titles of both works of Salman Rushdie analysed in this paper. In order to observe the relevance of children to the title and, consequently to the contents of the book, each of the two chosen works by Salman Rushdie is to be analysed separately.

The first work to be examined is 'Midnight's Children'. The title represents the main theme of the novel which is related to children, namely, the ones who were born in the first hour of India's Independence. However, even though the title is in the plural, the work itself can be named a Bildungsroman. A Bildungsroman or coming-of-age story is 'a novel in which an adolescent protagonist comes to adulthood by a process of experience and disillusionment' which help the protagonist to 'mature and strengthen' (Wheeler, n.d.). The protagonist is a child, Saleem, who, is born right at midnight of August 15, 1947, the first independence day of India. From this moment on, Saleem's whole life unfolds before the reader's eyes. The reader is introduced to Saleem and his talent, his family, friends, first love, school, the loss of beloved ones, his service in the army, adventures, birth of a son and finally, his death.

Importantly, 'Midnight's Children' also acts as a metaphor⁴ for the new era of India. According to the Dictionary of Symbols, a child denotes future; that is the future of a nation (Cirlot, 1971: 45). In the first hour of India's Independence one thousand and one births took place, where the number one thousand and one bears not only a direct relation to the '*Arabian Nights*' but also has its numerological significance - '[...] thousand in Arabic denotes

⁴ a figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest a resemblance (Merriam-Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2011)

“countless”, hence 1001 means infinite’ (Bettelheim, 2005: 86). Therefore, the meaningful number of children born on the day of India’s freedom from the British Raj denotes hope and success for the future nation. However, the reader becomes alerted when Saleem states that four hundred and twenty children died, which points at a starting point for India’s regression. Still, the climax occurs later, when almost all of the midnight’s children were caught, chained and eventually, deprived of reproductive organs. In other words, the midnight’s children could not give birth to their offspring anymore, so that the extraordinary talents could not be passed on to any other human being. Metaphorically speaking, as the midnight’s children were deprived of their inheritors, the nation of India was deprived of its future. Nevertheless, the novel finishes on a positive note – an emergence of hope for India symbolised by Aadam, Saleem’s stepson.

The title of ‘Haroun and the Sea of Stories’, by its turn, suggests that the work itself will deal mainly with Haroun and his magic adventures, which first are supposed to be a trip ‘to Gup City to see the Walrus’ in order to get Haroun father’s talent of storytelling back (Rushdie, 1995: 59). However, nothing goes well and instead of a pleasant journey to Kahani, Haroun arrives at the Gup City right at the peak of panic and chaos in it. The reasons of the civil unrest are two grave occurrences, which are the contamination of the Ocean of the Streams of Story by the warriors of the Land of Chup and the kidnapping of the Princess Batcheat by Chupwalas. Hence, in order to have his own wish fulfilled, which is to ask for his father’s talent back, Haroun should first help the Guppees to save the Ocean and the Princess. Therefore, the magical trip of Haroun turns into unforgettable adventures, where Haroun makes lots of new friends, sees unimaginable happenings, manages to save the Ocean of the Streams of Stories and succeeds in gaining a victory over the evil and, above all, gets rewarded with ‘a happy ending’ (ibid.: 202). The ‘happy ending’ includes the restoring of the storytelling skills of Haroun’s father as well as Haroun’s mother’s return home to the family.

Furthermore, the title ‘Haroun and the Sea of Stories’ reminds of Lewis Carol’s novel *‘Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland’* or, shortly, *‘Alice in Wonderland’*. Both titles involve children, the main protagonists of the works, who find themselves in a fantasy world, depicted in the given names of the novels. The impact of Lewis Carol’s *‘Alice in Wonderland’* can be noticed not only in the title but also in the contents of ‘Haroun and the Sea of Stories’. Apart from the facts that the titles include the protagonists and the magic places where they go and experience various adventures, there are other similar characteristic features between the two works. For instance, when Haroun finds himself on a Hoopoe together with Water Genie, they look for ‘patches of the Ocean that shine with extra brightness’ or Wishwater (ibid.: 69). If Haroun tastes the Wishwater, concentrating on the thing desired, the wish will fulfil. The

same scheme is traced in *'Alice in Wonderland'* where she needs to drink the potion from a little bottle to change in size in order to go through the door. Next, finding himself in the castle of King Chattergy where Haroun was invited as the King's guest, he saw many Pages of the Royal Guard, wearing rectangular tunics. Again, the pages and their appearance allude to card-servants of the Queen of Hearts. Lastly, when Alice wakes up on the meadow, she realises that everything she saw and experienced was merely a dream, just as Haroun opens his eyes lying in his bed in *Arabian Nights Plus One*, Snooty Buttoo's floating house. Both protagonists notice that the time never changed, although it seemed as if they had spent quite some time in their lands of wonders.

It should also be mentioned that the name of the protagonist which also appears in the title - Haroun, as well as Rashid, the name of Haroun's father, allude to another world-famous work, which is the *'Arabian Nights'*. Salman Rushdie explains that 'Haroun and Rashid are both named after the legendary Caliph of Baghdad, Haroun al-Rashid, who features in many Arabian Nights tales' (ibid.: 218). Haroun al-Rashid, aside from his appearance in *'One Thousand and One Nights'*, is a historical personality whose 'reign is often referred to as the Golden Age, a period of significant cultural and literary activity during which the arts, Arabic grammar, literature, and music flourished under his patronage' (Ruthven, 2004: 36). The reason of Salman Rushdie's choice of giving the characters of his children's book the names of Haroun al-Rashid is evident. The Caliph of Baghdad was fond of arts and enlightenment, while in 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories' one of the main themes refers to the talent to create, imagine and to inspire.

Therefore, the analysis of both titles of the works emphasises the idea that the children in both cases set the theme of the work. 'Midnight's Children' tells the reader about the children born in the first hour of India's independence; their destiny and relevance to the country's history. Whereas 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories' depicts the boy's trip to a magic land in order to help his father and reunite the family. Moreover, both 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories' and 'Midnight's Children' contain allusions to such world-famous works as the *'Arabian Nights'* and Lewis Carol's *'Alice in Wonderland'*.

4. CITIES OF RESIDENCE OF THE PROTAGONISTS

After the detailed study of the titles of 'Midnight's Children' and 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories', the research shall proceed with the analysis of the contents of both works. Therefore, the first aspect to be analysed is the hometowns or places of residence of both protagonists, which are Mumbai, Kahani and Karachi.

The reader, as if with the help of a magic wand, is able to find him/herself in various cities where Haroun and Saleem lived, observing a full panorama of the places through the children's eyes. Haroun, for instance, accepted Kahani, his birthplace, as '[...] a sad old city', which stood by 'a mournful sea' (ibid.: 15). Moreover, 'in the north of the sad city stood mighty factories [...]' with 'black smoke' pouring out of their chimneys (ibid). There was also 'an old zone of ruined buildings that looked like broken hearts' and 'almost everybody' who lived in the city was 'poor' (ibid.: 15, 208). In addition, the quality of roads in the city of Kahani was rather bad, as during the rain 'many of the streets were flooded' (ibid.: 207). In short, Haroun's hometown was a large, old industrial city washed by the sea. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Haroun was not happy to live in Kahani, as the citizens were always mournful, poor and many of them lived in an old zone which most likely means the slum area. Even the black colour of the factory smoke expresses 'menace, or discontent; threatening; sullen; foreboding' which might relate to both – the dull life in the city as well as to Rashid's sudden loss of his storytelling talent (Online 3). Also, it should be noted that Kahani, with its geographical location, industrialisation and slums, bears a great resemblance to Mumbai/Bombay.

Saleem, on the other hand, was born 'in the city of Bombay' (Rushdie, 1981: 2). His biological parents, William Methwold and Vanita, were an Englishman and a wife of a street-singer; however, being swapped for another child in the hospital by his nanny, Saleem was raised in a prosperous family. In the seventh chapter of 'Midnight's Children', already a grown-up Saleem tells a story of the origin of Mumbai. Mumbai, tells Saleem to the readers, acquired its name after the goddess of Mumbadevi, who was also called Mumbabai or Mumbai. 'But then, the Portuguese named the place Bom Bahia for its harbour' (ibid.: 65). After the Portuguese, came the British who colonised the territory of India, including Mumbai. The new colonisers, eventually, turned the place into a city called Bombay. 'It was

very different then', comments Saleem, 'there were no night-clubs or pickle factories or Oberoi-Sheraton Hotels or movie studios; but the city grew at breakneck speed' (ibid).

The first major mentioning of Mumbai in connection with Saleem's life was exactly 'the Bombay edition of the Times of India' which 'announced that it would award a prize to any Bombay mother who could arrange to give birth to a child at the precise instant of the birth of the new nation' (ibid.: 70). The announced prize was ultimately won by Amina Sinai who gave birth to her firstborn Saleem; a boy whom midnight endowed with the special skill, a gift of telepathy.

Being a firstborn and a male, Saleem felt constant pressure exerted upon him by his family members. Therefore, in order to escape the pressure, Saleem made his own magic land, detaching himself from the real world. 'Hatim Tai and Batman, Superman and Sinbad' were his imaginary friends. Even when going shopping or playing in the garden, the boy fantasised himself being a fairy-tale character or experiencing adventures together with the fictional heroes. Hence, being able to detach from the real world of problems and issues to think about, as well as being a member of a well-off family, Saleem did not see or participate in the real world. The area the boy lived in was the one where only prosperous families resided. The only thing he saw from his bedroom window was 'the map-shaped pool beside the sea' and the European girls who plunged in it (Rushdie, 1981: 110). Another connection with the surrounding environment was Saleem's trip to school and his studies. The trip included a short journey to the school by bus which had some distant reflections of the real life hustling and bustling around Saleem. The bus had 'rattling seats' and cracked window-panes, which did not feel or look like the family's 'black 1946 Rover' at all (ibid.: 80). However, the appearance of High School which was 'washed and brushed every morning', returned Saleem to a familiar life of the wealthy people (ibid).

The first occurrence, thanks to which Saleem found himself in an environment different from his daily one, took place when Evie Burns, a tom-boy from America with hair of 'scarecrow straw', skin 'peppered with freckles' and with braces on her teeth, pushed Saleem from a hillock (ibid.: 131). Saleem dashed on his bike right into the language marchers who 'demanded the partition of the state of Bombay along linguistic boundaries' (ibid.: 121). However, Saleem admits that even if he and his friends witnessed historically notable manifestations, to them 'the endless ant-trail of language in Warden Road seemed as magnetically fascinating as a light-bulb to a moth' (ibid.: 137). Moreover, he heard the following words full of sarcasm from the members of the manifestation: 'Look look, a little laad-sahib comes down to join us from the big rich hill!', which again proves that Saleem had never experienced any needs and even, most probably, still did not know anything about

poverty and sorrow (ibid.: 138). Even when Ahmed Sinai was facing hard times with his business that led to the Sinai family's plunging into debts, everybody tried to look happy and carefree with Saleem being around.

Another attempt to "familiarise" himself with the real world outside his window was the day when Saleem decided to spy on his mother and her date Nadir Khan in the Pioneer Café. However, Saleem hides in the boot of his mother's car, which again provides him a covering from the action happening outside. Although he felt safe in the boot of the car, Saleem had to come out of it so that his spying mission would be crowned with success. Hence, when Saleem stole up to the café, he saw 'dirty glass in the window' and 'dirty glasses on the tables', noting to himself that the café was far from 'the Gaylords and Kwalitys of the city's more glamorous parts' (ibid.: 156). He also heard 'music blaring out from a cheap radio by the cash-till' and saw 'a long narrow greeny room lit by flickering neon, a forbidding world in which broken-toothed men sat at reccine-covered tables with crumpled cards and expressionless eyes' (ibid). The café, in the mentioned passage, acts as a representation of real Mumbai which is completely unfamiliar to Saleem; the café impresses him with its simplicity and poverty as well as with its people of washed-out looks. 'Grimy decrepitude' of the environment was a true discovery for Saleem to which, being raised in luxury, he was not used to (ibid).

Not long after his visit to Pioneer Café, new challenges are to be confronted by Saleem. First, all of Saleem's friends and their families had to depart from the Methwold Estate, leaving the boy alone. Saleem suffered a loss, which was caused not only by his friends' departure but also by a suicide of his uncle Hanif, who was very dear to Saleem. Furthermore, the death of uncle Hanif was accompanied by a severe drought, from which all Saleem's family suffered for a prolonged period of time. Finally, everything changed in one moment when Saleem's mother was forced to pack the bags and, together with her children, migrate to Karachi from an alcohol addicted husband who was not aware of his own actions. Therefore, in spite of Saleem's aversion to the city, Karachi became his second home, where the process of Saleem's acquaintance with real life continued. Due to Ahmed Sinai's bankruptcy, Amina could not afford overindulging herself with too much expenditures; therefore, she was obliged to ask her sister Emerald to purchase tickets for Pakistan. 'We reached Rawalpindi by hot, dusty train' complained Saleem, who, most probably, had never travelled in 'ordinary first-class' before (Rushdie, 1981: 207). However, that is the only thing which drew Saleem's attention; as soon, he was again surrounded by a habitual environment in aunt's Emerald's house. The large, exquisite house in a military zone, Emerald's and General Zulfikar's residence, was now Saleem's temporary home. Although Saleem's life in the new house was

similar to that which he had in Buckingham Villa, still the General's family indicated that the Sinais, being just the poor relatives from India, did not belong there. Saleem's life changed within a blink of an eye; from a rich boy of a prosperous family he turned into a poor relative who, together with his mother and sister, became completely dependent. Nevertheless, owing to General Zulfikar's presence, Saleem also learned a lesson which is: avoiding practicing violence and mocking at other's faults, because just as the proverb says, what goes around comes around. Some years later, Saleem got to know that General Zulfikar paid for his abusive behaviour with his own life.

Soon, after spending some time in Karachi, together with aunt Emerald's family, Saleem went back to his hometown at last. The reason of the Sinai family's rapid returning to Mumbai was unpleasant news - Ahmed's heart stroke. The stroke, even though it might sound odd, helped Saleem's family to become reunited; and after Ahmed's recovering, all migrated back to Pakistan. Saleem admitted himself that he 'never forgave Karachi for not being Bombay', calling the largest city of Pakistan 'ugly' (Rushdie, 1981: 224). The geography of the place completely differed from his hometown; the city was 'set between the desert and bleakly saline creeks whose shores were littered with stunted mangroves' (ibid). Such a peculiar description of Karachi bears its symbolic meaning, where Pakistan for Saleem stands for singularity and lack of potential, whereas India represents cultural diversity and broad variety of possibilities.

While living in Karachi, Saleem understood the poverty and ugliness of the real world. Riding his motor-scooter, Saleem saw many things which were happening around him and which he had not noticed before, including 'the fatalistic hopelessness of the slum dwellers and the smug defensiveness of the rich' as well as prostitution, represented by Tai Bibi (Rushdie, 1981: 224). The fact that Saleem began exploring the world and discovering reality was likely caused by Saleem's previous years of experience. Being sixteen years old, Saleem had undergone not only a period when he led a carefree life, receiving everything that he wished for, but also the time when he and his family survived only with the help of Emerald who provided them with a shelter. As a result, Saleem now knew the price of happiness as well as acquired a brand new view on the world surrounding him.

As a result, the environment of the cities, namely Kahani, Mumbai and Karachi, embodies the views that, first, children in 'Midnight's Children' and 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories' represent the daily life both protagonists live in. Second, Haroun and Saleem do not only depict the appearance of the places where they live, but also comment upon various contemporary issues, for instance violence, bad living conditions, poverty, prostitution, slums and so on. Third, the perception of the city life by both protagonists considerably differs one

from another. The reasons of the differences in their perceptions are found in the economic states of both families. Haroun belongs to a family of quite an average income; therefore, he knows conditions that everything comes with labour. Moreover, living near the 'old zone' he understands what poverty and struggle for life means. Saleem, on the contrary, was born into an upper middle-class family; till the age of fifteen he did not realise that there might be another world behind the life he was leading. From the birth itself, Saleem was surrounded by his ayah and mother who cared for him more than anyone else and gave everything his heart desired. Consequently, being brought up protected from the outer world, it was quite difficult for the boy to get adapted to the changes of his lifestyle, namely his stay at aunt Emerald's and leaving his habitual environment of Mumbai for Karachi.

5. ROLES OF CHILDREN IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S 'MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN' AND 'HAROUN AND THE SEA OF STORIES'

Even though children and childhood most often are associated with innocence, chastity and openness, it has not always been like that. Starting from the Middle Ages children were treated as grown-ups: they 'were dressed like miniature adults and were expected to behave much the same way' (Le Poulet Gauche, 2004). In rural areas, by the time children were about seven or eight, they were expected to help the family earn a living. Whereas in the upper class, 'girls married as young as 12 and boys as young as 14', which means that even the rich offspring could not have a desirable childhood (Lambert, n.d.). Parents paid significant attention towards children's education; hence youngsters from one oppressing environment were transferred to another much alike. The new location was a grammar school where 'discipline was savage' (ibid.). Furthermore, violence and abuse directed towards their children was not thought to be disheartening; in fact, it was encouraged. The reason in promoting violence towards children in the Middle Ages was that children 'were believed to be born naturally "evil", and thus, had to be reformed' (Capelli, n.d.). The so-called reforming included beating the 'evil' out of poor children. Consequently, until the late 20th century teachers were allowed to physically and verbally abuse youngsters (Lambert, n.d.). However, at the beginning of the twentieth century, 'people began to see childhood as a special time and to recognise that children needed education and protection' (Channel 4 Learning, n.d.).

The two completely different ways of treating children is also presented in Salman Rushdie's works 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories' and 'Midnight's Children'. In both literary works the reader can observe either maltreatment, where violence and self-interest play major roles in children's upbringing, or love, ensured by caring parents to their offspring. As a result, both modes of children treatment can be compared to their homeland India, where poverty and scant quality of living is confronted with a life of luxury and sufficiency; where colourfulness opposes greyness and struggle of everyday life. The subject of such a bright contrast of India is also disclosed in Salman Rushdie's attitude towards his own birthplace: 'On the one hand he gives special praise to its cheerful, cosmopolitan character, on the other hand, he feels strongly repulsed by its misery, its lack of culture and its religious intolerance'

(Priskil, 2000: 40). The dramatic contrast of life led by the people of India bewilders; thus, serving as a reason for investigating the area more thoroughly. As a result, characters of children encountered in Salman Rushdie's works are to be analysed in order to depict the life conditions of the whole nation of India. Subsequently, the area of study will include such aspects of children and childhood as family, history, politics, culture and living conditions of India.

5.1. Family

The concept of a family in both literary works by Salman Rushdie is a leitmotif⁵. In 'Midnight's Children' before having acquainted with Saleem Sinai, the reader travels through time, namely two generations back before Saleem's birth. The story starts from his grandfather's, Aadam Aziz's renunciation of Islam and success in his medical career during which he married a young patient Naseem 'who was always known by the curious title of Reverend Mother' (Rushdie, 1981: 26). In the course of his marriage, Aadam Aziz and Naseem had three daughters. One of the girls was called Mumtaz who later married Ahmed Sinai, a 'prosperous reccine-and-leathercloth merchant' (ibid.: 27). Soon Mumtaz (renamed by her husband as Amina) and Ahmed were blessed by a child - a boy Saleem. However, no one from the couple suspected of a grave mistake made by Saleem's nanny/ayah Mary Pereira. Working as a nurse in the hospital, Mary Pereira swapped the offspring of a poor family with Amina and Ahmed's child. As a result, Amina raised somebody else's baby assuming it was her own child Saleem. In a year's time, after Saleem's birth, his sister, the future famous Pakistani singer, Jamila or the Brass Monkey was born. Both had memorable childhood among friends and family members. Among the most significant memories left from Saleem and Jamila's childhood were their school years, a dangerous fever which was about to take Saleem's life, family issues and relations, first love, war, and finally, loss and separation from family members. Apart from Saleem's relatives there are also other families of the boy's friends with their own stories, victories and losses, which are also discussed in the present paper.

In comparison with Saleem's family Haroun's was not large; the boy was 'the only child of the storyteller Rashid Khalifa' (Rushdie, 1990: 15). Haroun's family consisted only of a father, a child and a mother. The child was happy as all the attention went to him only, till one moment when Haroun's world cracked into pieces with his mother's sudden elopement with the neighbour. Broken-hearted Rashid and devastated Haroun had to cling together in

⁵ a dominant recurring theme (Merriam-Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2011)

order to support each other; therefore, they both went on Rashid's business trip to another city in order to help an arrogant and dishonest young politician. And from that moment on, Haroun's adventures start, including a magical journey to the Moon Kahani with a special task - to help his father to regain the storytelling talent.

Now, it is worth pointing out that both family stories occur in the twentieth century. To be more precise, the action in 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories' takes place in the nineties; whereas the story of Saleem in 'Midnight's Children' begins from 1915 and prolongs all through 1978, the year when Saleem dies. Therefore, a comparably large time interval between Saleem and Haroun's families forms the first difference between two of them. Another distinctive feature can be traced in families' hierarchy. For instance, patriarchal ideology ruled in Saleem's family (excluding the relationship between Naseem and Aadam Aziz) while Haroun's, on the contrary, was a family where husband and wife had equal rights. The third difference can be noticed in economic conditions of both families. Haroun's family consisted only of three people who lived in a usual apartment without any extravagances. Saleem, on the other hand, lived in a Buckingham Villa, together with his own ayah, pets, servants and other family relatives. Moreover, Haroun's father worked as a storyteller, whereas Saleem's father was a prosperous businessman.

Furthermore, belonging to upper-class strata, Saleem's family was very conservative. Traditional principles and views according to which Saleem's family lived can be traced in relation to a birth of a child. 'In a patriarchal society like India, there exists the unfounded belief that only man is the bread-earner of the family, consequently, the male child gets the best of the limited facilities and resources within the family' (Singh, 2003: 152). However, 'birth celebrations for baby daughters are more muted than for sons and are sometimes absent altogether' (Indian Children, 1995). The absence of birth celebrations can be explained with the fact that the girl in India has to take care of the younger siblings at home 'and since she is to be married off soon, investing in her education is considered wasteful and hence a liability (Singh, 2003: 152). In addition to being male, Saleem was also a firstborn, automatically gaining 'exceedingly high parental expectations', which had also unconditionally made him a favourite in the family (Grose, 2005). For a time, Saleem was the only child who received undivided attention from his parents and even grandparents. That is why the Brass Monkey put the shoes on fire hoping to draw her parents' attention which, eventually, brought all her attempts to failure.

Even though Saleem's family was well-off and both Saleem and Jamila were surrounded by loving mother and a nanny, the reader becomes a witness to the fact that even in prosperous families things might get rather difficult. In Saleem's case misfortune befell his

father and the head of the family, Ahmed Sinai with his ‘constantly-worsening drinking habits’ (Rushdie, 1981: 147). His addiction to alcohol led to regular outbursts of violence that consisted not only of frequent reproaches but also physical damages caused to Saleem. One of such outbursts of violence provoked Ahmed into giving a blow to Saleem’s head after the boy’s statement that he could hear voices and talk to “Archangels”. The blow was so heavy that Saleem ‘fell sideways across the startled room [...] and shattered green tabletop of opaque glass’ (ibid.: 119). Saleem, as a result, was cut all over by the pieces of glass from the tabletop. Moreover, after the fierce and damaging blow Saleem’s hearing had worsened.

Feeling themselves in danger as well, all the family members silently watched Ahmed torturing his nine-year-old son. Even when Amina heard Ahmed Sinai’s order not to feed her child that evening, she had silently accepted instructions. Therefore, the idea expressed in Saleem’s bitter experience embodies the fact that in the middle of the twentieth century patriarchy was the main ideology practised in families. Moreover, obeying the man in the family, even though a violent, cheating alcohol-addicted person was a rule; where even mother’s borderless love for her son had to retreat.

Meanwhile, in Rashid Khalifa’s family, Haroun was the only child, so he did not have to divide attention with anyone else. Haroun’s family was more modern – they did not live with any other relatives, nor was there any trace of patriarchal ideology. Not like in Saleem’s family, where Ahmed Sinai maintained a distant and authoritative role, Rashid Khalifa treated his son and wife with warmth and care. However, despite being a good husband, Rashid Khalifa was often criticised by his wife Soraya for the kind of work he did, namely storytelling. Her husband’s peculiar profession did not make his wife happy, thus, after various quarrels, which had been happening before Haroun’s eyes, she ran away with the neighbour. As a result, in ‘Haroun and the Sea of Stories’, instead of an aggressive father, the reader finds a thoughtless, complaining and discontented mother who does not reckon with the child’s needs and feelings and just runs away with the neighbour.

Haroun was not only devastated with his mother’s action, he was also experiencing self-blame. Tina Moules, an expert in the field of Health and Social Care, states that ‘the reaction can be likened to those following bereavement, with an initial expression of denial and guilt’ (1998: 17). Therefore, Haroun’s only wish was to help his father to get back his talent of storytelling and to make his family united and happy again. The boy was very sad as he saw Rashid suffering: his father was not laughing anymore as he used to, he was always depressed and even cried sometimes. Moules adds that ‘reactions of children to the break-up will be influenced by the way in which the custodial parent deals with the situation’ (ibid.). Consequently, both Haroun and Rashid were depressed and did not know what to do until

Haroun was given a chance to fly to the Moon Kahani and meet Walrus who could 'provide a happy ending' for his family story (Rushdie, 1990: 202).

Consequently, the aspect of a family is one of the main themes in 'Midnight's Children' and 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories'. Nevertheless the families in both literary works differ in various ways. The differences depend not only on the time and strata to which the family belongs to, but also on hierarchy and age-old traditions preserved from generation to generation. Nevertheless, no matter how diverse the families are, they might encounter with common issues, such as alcoholism, tyranny and unfaithfulness.

5.2. Nation's Struggle in India

The next subject represented by children in Rushdie's works 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories' and 'Midnight's Children' is depiction of India's issues. This majestic country, with its impressive culture, splendid art, colourful festivities, a big number of deities, is also known for its drawbacks that make life of its citizens sometimes unbearable. Poverty, malnutrition, corruption, bad education and medical services, contaminated environment, violence and crime towards children – all these and many more are the reasons of the **high death rate** among the inhabitants. Seeing suffering children cannot be passed unnoticed; the report of the UK programme 'Save the Children' says, 'Nearly a decade of high economic growth has not translated into improved healthcare and nutrition for the majority of children' (Varma, 2009). Moreover, 'being born into poverty reduces a child's chances for a brighter future' (ibid.) Therefore, if the government cannot improve the conditions of people's life, then, at least the problems of the centuries-old nation can be voiced and heard by other communities. Hence, the media and literature are the means by which India's unhappiness will reach other people's hearts, so that the country where 'sadness is actually manufactured, packaged and sent all over the world' would become a better place to live in. The same task is achieved by Salman Rushdie who conveys the truth to the reader with the help of "*magic realism*" as well as children characters who are directly connected with the issues of their homeland India.

One of the major issues which causes the high death rate among the 'future of the nation' is **poverty**. 'Poverty is the state for a majority of the world's people and nations' (Gupta, 2008: 60). What is more, India is the 'home to the world's largest proportion of the poor, even if percentage of people living below the poverty line reduced from 36 per cent in 1993-94 to 22 per cent in 2004-05' (ibid.: 10). Thus, even in 1950, the time when the action in 'Midnight's Children' is taking place, there were millions of people who suffered from the grave and global issue of poverty. Furthermore, the big cities are developing with high speed, but so does the number of slum-dwellers. Slums are the areas that do not have any

infrastructure and are seriously contaminated. The direct meaning of the slum is ‘a densely populated usually urban area marked by crowding, dirty run-down housing, poverty, and social disorganization’ (Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2011). It means that the inhabitants do not have any clean water or sanitary environment, which causes various diseases and allergies.

The problem of poverty and living in slums is also depicted in Rushdie’s works. For instance Parvati-the-witch, the mother of Aadam, Saleem’s stepson, was also born and lived in the slum region in Old Delhi. What is more, she was an outcast belonging to the group of magicians, illusionists and other circus representatives. The huts in the slum were ‘built out of old packing cases and pieces of corrugated tin and shreds of jute sacking’ (Rushdie, 1981: 144). In addition to the shabby construction of the slums, its dwellers frequently experienced ‘police harassment’ and rat invasions (ibid.). Shiva, the biological son of Amina and Ahmed, was also a child of poverty. He was born into a poor family of a street singer Wee Willie Winkie and Vanita, who died right after giving birth to Shiva. After Winkie’s death, Shiva was left all alone amidst the streets, becoming the child of slums just as Parvati was.

However, the most notable example of horror caused by poverty can be observed in a scene in which Amina went to one of Mumbai’s slums in order to consult a fortune-teller about her still unborn child. Amina, a person who is used to living in better conditions, is truly shocked to see the shadows of people they used to be: the disabled, transsexuals, untouchables, and surely children – all with black teeth, and girls ‘baring their nipples’, which most probably points to **children’s prostitution** (Rushdie, 1981: 57).

Poverty results in other grave problems, such as **malnutrition** and **poor health**. Four hundred and twenty children out of one thousand and one that were born in the first hour of India’s independence did not survive due to ‘malnutrition, disease and the misfortunes of everyday life’ (ibid.: 142). Hence, the fact that almost a half of the midnight’s children failed to survive points at **children’s high death rate**, which is also present in developing countries of the contemporary world. In 2009 the organisation ‘Save the Children’ announced that ‘two million children below the age of five die every year in India’ which makes ‘India’s child death rate highest in the world’ (Varma, 2009). What is more, ‘the poor health and nutrition status of pregnant women is a major contributory factor to infant mortality’ (Bhakhry, 2006: 49). However, albeit normal course of pregnancy, the baby or the mother herself are at risk during the labour, especially if the family is not well-off or resides in a rural area. As a result, the high death rate of population is not only promoted by malnutrition but also by ‘the **poor delivery system**, which includes inadequate supplies, poor equipment, poor services, and malpractices’ (ibid.). For instance, the biological mother of Saleem, Vanita, died in her labour

due to a haemorrhage while doctors ‘fussed over Ahmed Sinai’s broken toe’ (Rushdie, 1981: 84). The death of a woman was caused by the **carelessness of the medical staff**, which instead of watching a recently confined woman, were busy with a case of less importance. The reason of such excessive attention to Ahmed Sinai was his social and material status. In comparison to him, the respected businessman, Vanita was a humble and a poor resident of slums.

Another example of doctors’ malpractice can be traced in the birth of Sonny, Saleem’s childhood friend, where due to the doctor’s incompetence the child’s head was damaged by a too hard pressure made by forceps. Eventually, the child ‘arrived with little dents beside each of his temples’ that remained forever (ibid.: 85). Even if Sonny’s parents were of the same economic background as Saleem’s family, they were not protected against the carelessness of the doctor. Unfortunately, the same delivery issues depicted in ‘Midnight’s Children’ are encountered in contemporary India as well, where ‘300 women die every day due to childbirth and pregnancy related causes’ (Swayam, n.d.).

Yet, cases of child maltreatment take place not only in the area of medicine, but also in the sector of **education**. Education, together with health and nutrition, is another area of concern. According to the National Human Rights Commission, ‘the First Five-Year Plan (1951-56), exactly the time when Saleem started attending school, took a comprehensive review of resources and needs of children along with women [...]’ (Bhakhry, 2006: 21). Therefore, a new act was adopted which meant ‘free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 years’ (ibid.: 22). Even though children now could study for free, the way the knowledge was provided sometimes violated all the social norms. ‘Midnight’s Children’ reflects poor education of modern India with the help of Mr Zagallo’s geography lesson, during which harassment of children was a frequent phenomenon. In the course of the lessons pupils were often abused by the teacher with such damaging words as ‘filth from the jungle’, ‘sons of baboons’, ‘ugly ape’, ‘animal’ and so on (Rushdie, 1981: 168). The teacher also tended to resort to force, namely twisting a child’s ear or, even worse, pulling out Saleem’s hair.

Salman Rushdie’s ‘Midnight’s Children’ showed the state of such important aspects in people’s life as education, medicine and healthcare, which are of poor quality. However, comparing the conditions in which characters live in ‘Midnight’s Children’ with the situation in modern India, many similarities can be noticed. For instance, the organisation Mèdecins Sans Frontières reports that ‘the poorest and most remote parts of the country often have inadequate medical facilities, poor healthcare infrastructure, low-quality health standards, and a lack of medical staff’ (Mèdicins Sans Frontières, 2011). Moreover, the common medication

used daily by people of India might arouse ‘severe side-effects’; not even mentioning frequent cases of such terminal diseases as TB and HIV/AIDS (ibid). In the educational system in India, ‘the shortage of qualified teachers in rural and slum schools is one of the most challenging problems faced by overburdened education systems’ (Mona Foundation, 2010). Consequently, the situation depicted in ‘Midnight’s Children’ in the 1960’s reflects the situation of modern India as well. Such spheres of the country’s life as education and healthcare are of poor level. Children rights must be protected no matter whether the country is a developed or developing one; the future of nation should be given an access to better healthcare and decent education.

As India is a developing country, its economy is not very strong. Considerable amounts of money are directed to the improvement of healthcare and education; however, only a part of it reaches people who need the allocated resources. The reason is India’s eternal problem of **corruption**. According to a survey conducted by the journal *‘India Today’*, contemporary India with its Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is ‘the most corrupt country’; whereas 37 per cent of the people surveyed, consider less than 10 per cent of the government employees to be honest (ITGD Bureau, 2011). Moreover, 32 per cent of the participants in the survey stated that they had no other way but to bribe college and school staff so that their children could continue their studies. It should also be mentioned that the total number of respondents was 831 from different cities; such as ‘New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Pune and Ahmedabad’ (ibid). As a result, having a nation’s economy corrupted, the areas of India’s healthcare and education do not function the way they should. Therefore, the future of India – children, do not receive proper medical services or education.

One of the representatives of the economic and political situation in modern India is Snooty Buttoo from ‘Haroun and the Sea of Stories’. ‘The slick gent [...] with a movie-star smile whose insincerity made Haroun feel ill’ (Rushdie, 1990: 41). Snooty Buttoo is a haughty, boasting, tactless and arrogant person who believes himself to be a member of a high stratum and does not tolerate any criticism or any other opinion which differs from his. ‘Do you know to whom you speak? Do I look the bus-driver type?’ – Snooty expresses his indignation towards Haroun’s statement that the young politician had a similar name to his bus-driver friend’s, Mr Butt (ibid.: 43). Furthermore, the young politician was not popular among the citizens at all; therefore, always had soldiers around to protect him. However, as opposed to the real world, the good triumphs over the evil; the arrogant Snooty Buttoo’s elections were an ignominious failure, his dishonest promises were ignored and the politician himself was ‘pelted [...] with rubbish’ (ibid.: 207).

Another drawback of the Indian nation is **racism**. 'It has long been known that India has its own brand of racism, manifested in a number of ways', namely prejudice on the grounds of caste and colour (Bhaskaran, 2009). Due to its diversity, India's people are subdivided into races: those who are from the northern states are of 'fair complexions', the ones living in the south are 'usually dark-skinned', whereas 'the light-coloured people with Mongoloid features' come from the northeast (ibid.). The ones with the fair skin have more chances to find a good job as well as to form a family without being discriminated against. The dark-skinned, on the contrary, have to resign themselves to low-paid jobs and difficulties in forming families. In Hinduism, additionally to the person's skin colour, his/her caste affects the way a person will be treated in the society. Although 'the Indian Constitution provides equal rights for all and caste discrimination is a punishable offense', caste racism is widespread in contemporary India (Saxena, 2009). Notwithstanding the fact that most of Rushdie's characters are Muslims, the direct connection with the caste biases is clearly exemplified in the scene of 'Midnight's Children' where Amina visited the slum area of Mumbai in order to consult a fortune-teller. Among the slum dwellers she saw transsexuals, prostitutes and untouchables who belong to the lower caste in India. The lower caste consists of 'people who work in ignominious, polluting and unclean occupations' (Aharon, n.d.). Furthermore, 'Midnight's Children' introduces an example of racism on the grounds of person's skin-colour. Amina Sinai was born dark-skinned and her 'dark skin stood between her and the affections of her mother' (Rushdie, 1981: 35). Naseem Aziz, due to racism biases, instead of 'unquestioning tenderness [...] gentleness, care and fragility' of her nine-year-old daughter Mumtaz, saw only the girl's skin of 'a South Indian Fisherwoman' (ibid.: 38). Family should be the place where a person is surrounded with love and support; however, Mumtaz was discriminated against even being with people she cared for and loved most of all. The only person who loved Mumtaz unconditionally was her father, Aadam Aziz.

Another mode of discrimination is **sexism**. Sexism is defined as 'prejudice or discrimination based on sex; especially: discrimination against women' (Merriam-Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2011). Additionally to the skin colour and social position, gender is one more reason people are discriminated against. First, due to the patriarchal ideology practiced in the family, male children are desired more than female ones, which leads to female oppression. Secondly, inequalities between males and females are traced in 'their access to education, health care, physical and financial resources and opportunities in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres' (Swayam, n.d.). The Indian organisation SWAYAM which fights with violence against women and women's inequality states that women's salary is only 75 per cent of men's wage rates. What is more, the percentage of

‘women in the workforce is only 13.9 per cent in the urban sector and 29.9 per cent in the rural sector’, which denotes that a significant part of women have basically never worked in a public sphere, performing the function of housewives instead. There are other shocking facts offered by SWAYAM, such as nearly ‘245 million Indian women lack the basic capability to read and write’ and ‘one in every two women faces domestic violence in any of its forms - physical, sexual, psychological and/or economic’ (ibid.). The issue of women’s discrimination is disclosed in the character of Blabbermouth, a tomboy in ‘Haroun and the Sea of Stories’. Blabbermouth worked as a page in the palace of the King of Gup where all the workforce consisted of men. That is why the girl feels upset and humiliated after Haroun’s knocking off her cap and revealing her secret of being a girl. ‘Now you’ve spoilt everything’, cries out Blabbermouth, ‘You want to get me the sack or what? – asks she (Rushdie, 1990: 107). Then the girl adds: ‘You think it’s easy for a girl to get a job like this? Don’t you know girls have to fool people every day of their lives if they want to get anywhere?’ (ibid.) Blabbermouth discloses women’s inequality in the working sphere. She confides in Haroun by telling him how difficult it is for a woman to free herself from the daily discrimination; to prove the whole world that she is also able to achieve success and become someone else but a housewife. Moreover, Blabbermouth points at the importance of men in Indian society: ‘you probably had your whole life handed to you on a plate, [...] but some of us have to fight (ibid.). The statement is full of bitterness, as if Blabbermouth speaks for all the women around the world who suffer from unfair gender biases. Hence, ‘Haroun and the Sea of Stories’, even if being written for children, specifically for Salman Rushdie’s son Zafar, raises serious issues faced by India’s people in their daily lives.

Next severe issue of the developing countries is **child labour** which is presented by Blabbermouth, a young girl who works as a page in the castle of King Chattergy in ‘Haroun and the Sea of Stories’. India encloses the highest number of working children; more precisely, ‘between 60 and 115 millions’, which makes it a major problem of the whole nation (Bhargava, 2003: 337). The ILO Bureau of statistics declares that child labour is practiced as the income source for the poor families (ibid.: 340). On one hand, perhaps, parents who can hardly feed the family, just do not have another choice but to ask their children for help. But on the other hand, the exploited children do not have a chance to receive ‘education crucial to their development’ (ibid.: 337). There are also some avaricious parents who, in their desire to grow rich, intentionally force their children to work or go begging. Amina Sinai’s visit to the slums reveals the baseness of parents when she sees ‘cripples everywhere, mutilated by loving parents to ensure them of a lifelong income from begging’ (Rushdie, 1981: 57).

However, not only parents make a disabled person out of a healthy and lively child; there is also a 'beggar mafia' who earns large amounts of money owing to homeless children (Malone, 2009). To be more precise, 'beggar mafia' is defined as violent and amoral criminals who 'hack the limbs off children, as well as steal new-born babies from hospitals' (ibid.). Thus, it may be said that Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children' introduces the reader such a crucial issue as child labour. For the crippled children, who are seen every day begging on the street and hoping for the sympathy of the passers-by, the future remains bleak mostly because of the corruption which holds its sway over the Indian government. If the money, which is constantly being stolen, were directed towards helping homeless and slum children as well as to organising operations against the mafia, India would become a better place to live in.

The last issue which is explored in Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children' is **alcoholism**. Right after Saleem Sinai's birth, his father becomes an alcoholic. At the beginning of his 'life-long struggle with djin-bottles', Ahmed Sinai experienced sudden mood changes which passed into disrespect towards his own subordinates and aggression towards his family members. For instance, he ordered the dependent ones who worked for him for many years to visit doctors in order to get so-called prescriptions for bottles of djins; he also insulted and accused Musa, the oldest and the most respected servant of the Sinai family, as well as Mary Pereira of burglary without any evidence. The more dependent on alcohol Ahmed Sinai became, the more damage he did to his family. Ahmed's mind deterioration caused the lack of coordination in his daily life as well as created false illusions about his ancestry. As a result, Ahmed began seeing 'Mughal blood running in his veins' (Rushdie, 1981: 112). Also mood's changes happened quite frequently – jolliness rapidly transformed into aggression towards his wife and children. As a result, despite his unfaithfulness to Amina, Ahmed Sinai started abusing his own son – first verbally, and then physically as well.

Being only eight years old, Saleem often had to experience his father's abuse. For instance, one night Ahmed Sinai dashed into his son's bedroom, tore off Saleem's bed sheet and roared 'What are you up to? Pig! [...] Filthy! God punishes boys who do that!' (ibid.) The father accused his own eight-year-old son of self-satisfaction, which serves as a proof that Ahmed Sinai's behaviour was beyond all the morals. Soon after Saleem's father's night visit to his bedroom, another situation took place which proved Ahmed Sinai to be a violent tyrant. The head of the Sinai family hit his son on the head after the child shared his new discovery with all the family members – the ability to hear 'Archangels'. Ahmed Sinai gave such a powerful blow on the boy's head that Saleem literally flew back, landing on a glass tabletop. The boy 'plunged into a green, glass-cloudy world filled with cutting edges' which 'lacerated'

his hands (ibid.: 119). Moreover, after his father's blow Saleem would suffer from hearing problems all of his life. Therefore, Ahmed Sinai's aggression towards his family members in other words can be defined as **domestic violence**. Domestic violence signifies 'the emotional, physical, psychological or sexual abuse perpetrated against a person [...]. Abuse may include threats, harm, injury, harassment, control, terrorism or damage to living beings or property' (McCue, 2008: 2). Therefore, Saleem Sinai is a victim of domestic violence which is provoked by Ahmed Sinai's addiction to alcohol. Subsequently, in fears for her children's safety, Amina Sinai is forced to leave her husband and move to Pakistan together with her younger sister's family.

To summarise, it should be mentioned that Rushdie deals with grave issues because of which millions of people in India suffer every single day. Even though the action of both of Rushdie's works takes place in different periods of the country's history, the issues depicted in 'Midnight's Children' and 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories' mirror contemporary India. Additionally, all of the mentioned aspects have a direct relation to children and the world which surrounds them. Malnutrition, poor healthcare, bad medical services and eventually children's high death rate reveal the environment to which the children of underprivileged families belong. The problems in the sphere of education, the addiction to alcohol and practice of domestic violence are the issues that Saleem discusses in his narrative. Moreover, owing to Blabbermouth and Amina, skin-colour prejudices and gender discrimination are also explored in both literary works by Salman Rushdie. However, everybody knows that the issues represented in 'Midnight's Children' and 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories' are just some of the long-term, insoluble problems due to which neither children nor adults can have a peaceful and carefree life.

6. MANIFESTATION OF SYMBOLISM IN CHARACTERS AND THEIR INTERESTS

The essence of any outstanding work of literature is conveyed not only by the literal sense of words, but also by their figurative meanings. Therefore, the presence of symbols in the text not only adds significant meaningfulness to the literary work but also serves as a link between the reader and the writer himself.

In literature, the term symbol, which derives from Greek, 'is often a figure of speech in which a person, object or situation represent something in addition to its literary meaning' (Chevalier, 1996: 9). A symbol may appear in various ways to suggest a number of different things. Most commonly, 'a symbol will present itself in the form of: a word, a figure of speech, an event, the total action or a character' (Willis, n.d.). Regarding Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children' and 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories', primarily the characters of children belonging to both works are to be analysed in order to determine their symbolic meaning. For the purpose of a thorough symbolic analysis only some of the children-characters of both works were chosen, namely Saleem, Haroun, Blubbermouth, Shiva and Cyrus Dubash, Saleem's childhood friend.

6.1. Saleem

The first character to be analysed is Saleem, the protagonist as well as the narrator of 'Midnight's Children'. Saleem was born at the moment when India became independent from the British Empire. He is endowed with a spectacular gift of telepathy. In addition to being able to read others' minds, he organises regular meetings in his mind with other similarly gifted children born at the same time as he. Together, all the midnight's children 'represent an enormous promise for a democratic and successful nation' with Saleem functioning as the nation's 'centre', India itself (Bowers, 2004: 26). But before Saleem's discovery of his telepathy skills within himself, we should go back to the very beginning of his life; namely to the year 1947.

In the year 1947, when Saleem was still in his mother's womb, Amina, his stepmother, went to a fortune-teller, who revealed a mysterious secret - 'a son, Sahiba, who will never be older than his motherland – neither older nor younger' (Rushdie, 1981: 61). The prediction, at once, seemed to be very strange and obscure; nevertheless, it serves as a direct proof that Saleem functions as a mirror of India. Saleem's similarities with his homeland are to be continued with his statement that right after his birth, he was 'mysteriously handcuffed to history' and his 'destinies indissolubly chained to those of' his country (ibid.: 3). First, Saleem's self-confidence seems to be overrated; however, every personal event of his and his family's life is metaphorically or literally linked to political and historical events taking place in India. For instance, Saleem's origin represents Indian and Britain's relations before the proclamation of India's independence. Saleem's biological parents were Vanita, the wife of Wee Wellie Winkie, the street-singer and William Methwold, an Englishman, who eventually migrated back to Birtian. However, in the hospital, Saleem was swapped and found himself in the family of prosperous Indians. Hence, one can trace the interconnection between Saleem's parents and the history of India.

'Saleem's birth is invested with great promise. Newspapers celebrate his arrival. Nehru himself ratifies his position in a personal letter' which was also addressed to every other child born in the hour (Goonetilleke, 1998: 27). Consequently, Saleem, just as the other one thousand and one children, found far and wide in India, is identified as hope and prosperity for the future of his homeland. Even before acquiring his magic talent, Saleem was already born with peculiar and extraordinary characteristic features that eventually made his similarity to India even more distinct. The exceptional features were Saleem's sky-blue eyes and 'the rampant cucumber of the nose' which together with his face is later compared to the map of India by Saleem's schoolteacher (Rushdie, 1981: 88). The sky-blue colour of Saleem's eyes, 'the walls of Saleem's room, his crib and his pram' have also their symbolic meanings (Goonetilleke, 1998: 27). Blue is associated 'with freedom, strength and new beginnings. Blue skies are emblematic of optimism and better opportunities. Blue is the colour of loyalty and faith [...] power, [...] protection' (Online 4). The blueness of Saleem's eyes, as a result, foresees the new-born's future as a new beginning full of optimism, freedom and prosperity; just as the predicted future for India after gaining its freedom.

First, due to acting as the embodiment of his parents' hopes, Saleem was constantly under pressure. Therefore, the boy preferred to hide away and to ignore the pressure by shutting himself in a shell of a fantasy world. However, after the memorable day when Saleem became blessed with the talents of telepathy and a powerful sense of smell, he felt much more self-confident and important. Now, having such an essential treasure to hide from

his family, Saleem acted as a secret agent, having his own mission to fulfil – the mission which he did not know yet, but which promised to add significance to his life. However, after gaining his extraordinary gifts, Saleem wastes them for meaningless purposes, such as classroom cheating and spying. As a result, the talents acquired are wasted, just as hopes and dreams of India. The country faces numerous infamous events, such as the partition from Pakistan, language riots, wars against China and Pakistan, Emergency and other issues that only worsened India's situation. The frictions happening within India were also reflected upon Saleem, whose 'pulverized' body suffered from cracks and drainage (Rushdie, 1981: 335). Saleem's body mirrors India that lost its previous flourishing, just as soil which is deprived of rain. Moreover, all the midnight's children failed to utilise their gifts in order to make their own and other people's lives better.

Nevertheless, the story does not end. After being tortured and bereaved of reproduction organs during the Emergency period, Saleem found his last asylum in a chutney factory of his ayah, Mary Pereira. In the factory Saleem conveys his life story to Padma, simultaneously writing it down for Aadam to read after his father's death. He also succeeds in making his own unique chutneys; 'twenty-six pickle-jars stand gravely on a shelf; twenty-six special blends, each with its identifying label, neatly inscribed with familiar phrases: 'Movements Performed by Pepperpots', for instance, or 'Alpha and Omega', or 'Commander Sabarmati's Baton'' (ibid.: 279). All the jars are filled with their own secret ingredients – events and memorable moments and 'all sorts of juicy tit-bits' that are left in Saleem's heart, having the same label as the chapter titles of Salman Rushdie's novel (ibid.: 329). However, the last chutney-jar is left empty, reserved for the future. Saleem, serving as a reflection of India, not willing his homeland to face his destiny, leaves the last chutney-jar unfilled. The empty jar signifies that there might be a completely different story for India. The empty jar signifies a chance for the country to rise up above all the misfortunes and to move towards a bright future. The hope for the future is not only represented by an empty chutney-jar, but also by Saleem's handing over his and India's story to his adopted son Aadam, who acts as a representative of a new generation of midnight's children and consequently, India's nation.

Therefore, owing to his birth as well as his position among the midnight's children, Saleem plays a role of a direct representative of India and its nation. Just as his own homeland, he has gone through many ups and downs. Dying, he encourages India to live by presenting her his stepson, a boy who will also be handcuffed to history but who will definitely succeed in making his birthplace flourish. The novel ends but the story of Saleem's son Aadam will continue and so will the history of India.

6.2. Snakes and Ladders

When Saleem ‘was old enough to play board games’, he fell in love with Snakes and Ladders (Rushdie, 1981: 101). Originally, though, the game was called Moksha-Patamu which ‘was used to teach children about the religion in that the good squares allow a player to ascend higher in the league of life whereas evil will reduce a player back through reincarnation to lower tiers of life’ (Masters, n.d.). The game, later, was renamed by the English colonisers into ‘Snakes and Ladders’ where the vices and virtues of the Hindu game ‘were renamed according to Victorian ideals’ (ibid). The competition between life and death, however, takes place in Saleem’s life itself and, consequently, in India’s being. Therefore, the game has its own symbolic meaning, which denotes Saleem’s ups and downs; his victories and losses.

Nonetheless, snakes are not only associated with evil but are connected with life, too. ‘Snakes can lead to triumph, just as ladders can be descended’, says Saleem and he speaks the truth (Rushdie, 1981: 107). Saleem was saved from typhoid in the first year of his life owing to the snake venom given to him by the neighbour. The neighbour, an experienced man in snakes told Saleem’s despaired family ‘this is kill or cure’ (ibid). The venom turned out to be cure indeed, which lowered the high temperature and boosted his immune system to fight with the disease. The serpent, functioning as a ladder, is also described in the story of Saleem’s uncle Hanif’s life. Instead of migrating to Pakistan after its partition from India, which was a better and safer choice for Muslims, uncle Hanif had stayed in India. He understood that his decision to stay in the homeland was a right one, as later he achieved grand success in Bollywood film industry. However, the snake kept watch over uncle Hanif’s luck and “attacked” him in the form of loss of his work which eventually brought Hanif to suicide. Therefore, ups and downs of everyday life can appear all of a sudden, changing a person’s life completely and beyond recognition.

6.3. Shiva and Saleem

Apart from Saleem, Shiva, Saleem’s alter ego and later, his arch rival, also embodies a symbolic meaning within himself. Both boys are very alike; even before they were born, pregnant Amina was predicted by a slum fortune-teller that “there will be two heads - but you shall see only one - there will be knees and a nose, a nose and knees” (Rushdie, 1981: 62). The poor woman was so shocked after the prediction that she could not sleep at night. But Amina did not actually know that the fortune telling did not mean any disease or mutation of her future baby; it warned of a following incident that would take place right after the baby would be born. The fateful day came when Mary Pereira swapped the two babies born at the

same time while no one was there to see. Therefore, a baby of a prosperous family found his new home in the slums of Mumbai; whereas the baby of the poor parents was blessed with a blue crib in the big house of a businessman, Ahmed Sinai. One baby was named Saleem and the other – Shiva; two characters, who from their birth were destined to serve as opposites to each other.

Nine years later, when Saleem was endowed with the gift of telepathy, he met Shiva during the Midnight's Children Conferences held on the thought level. The MCC was the beginning of conflicts between the two boys, which led to the collapse of the midnight's children. The roles the two characters play 'place them in positions similar to those of the Hindu deities, Shiva the Destroyer and Vishnu the Preserver, with Saleem in the position of Vishnu' (Mitra, 2006: 47). Shiva gives priority to violence, whereas 'Saleem accords more importance to the idealistic world of dreams, to Humanity and to Art' (ibid). The slum fortune-teller's expression 'knees and a nose, a nose and knees' found its explanation. Shiva had powerful knees that killed without much effort; whereas Saleem, owing to his large nose, had a strong sense of smell. Together with a dangerous force in his knees and violence in his mind, Shiva had also a desire for power, thus he was particularly glad to help Indira Gandhi to find and put under arrest all the midnight's children. Literally sending the midnight's children to death, Shiva again proved himself to be a cold-hearted, power-seeking person - a complete opposite to Saleem.

Saleem did not feel happy at all when the destiny made the two arch rivals meet. But even though both heroes were so different, they would always remain bound to each other. The reason of such a close connection between the two characters, who are also enemies, is Aadam. Aadam is Shiva's biological son, who, as a result, was adopted by Saleem and would eventually become the representative of the new generation of midnight's children. Therefore, the two characters represent not only the Hindu mythology but the eternal fight between the good and the evil, life and death, yin and yang, who cannot exist without each other and who will always be as long as life will remain in our world.

6.4. Haroun

Haroun, the protagonist in 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories', as opposed to the other characters of both works, plays various roles in the text. The first one is the way children react to family break-ups and the way they handle the situation. As a result, the child 'may become socially withdrawn and inattentive' (Moules, 1998: 16). That is what can be observed in Haroun's personality. Rashid, after his wife Soraya eloped with their mutual neighbour, which happened precisely at eleven o'clock, 'picked up a hammer and smashed the clock to bits'

(Rushdie, 1990: 21). Rashid's peculiar action resulted in Haroun's inability to concentrate on anything for more than eleven minutes. However, in fact, Haroun's lack of concentration does not have any relevance to Rashid's breaking the clocks, but to the child's mental state; a reaction towards a sudden change, in which Haroun was deprived of his mother's care. The emotional impact was so strong, that it caused a psychological disorder in Haroun's ordinary behaviour. As a result, he became 'socially withdrawn and inattentive' (Moules, 1998: 16).

It is also worth mentioning that characters encountered by the reader during Haroun's adventures are similar to those who made any influence upon Haroun's psychological state. The whole journey to the Moon Kahani is made not because of Haroun's excitement to visit the magic land (as probably every child would want to), but due to Haroun's sense of guilt and wish to help Rashid recover his story-telling talent. Furthermore, in a character's description, the reader can notice resemblance to the people who, either due to their positive emotions or bad experiences, had remained in Haroun's memory. For instance, Mr Butt, a mail coach driver, impressed Haroun with his friendliness, helpfulness and a fast and frightful speed with which he drove the coach. The reckless and cheerful driver, as a result, turned into Butt the Hoopoe, the mechanic bird with the same habits and character of the coach driver. Snooty Buttoo's arrogance and silliness, on the contrary, is reflected in Prince Bolo's attitude towards others and his infantile actions. And lastly, 'the Cultmaster of Bezaban' or Khatam-Shud, in Haroun's magical journey assumes the shape of Mr Sengupta, the neighbour with whom Haroun's mother ran off (Rushdie, 1990: 153). Mr Sengupta is the root of all evil for Haroun; just as the Cultmaster of Bezaban for the Moon Kahani. Consequently, there are obvious parallels between Haroun's impressions and experiences which he faced living in 'the sad city' and the imaginary world he visited in order to save Rashid.

Furthermore, the character of Haroun is endowed with such features as intelligence, wisdom, bravery, curiosity, determination, which are marks of a strong personality. Moreover, when the Water Genie asked Haroun to choose from various animals the one which would serve as his own transport, Haroun chose the Hoopoe. The Hoopoe, as the Water Genie explained, 'in the old stories [...] is the bird that leads all other birds through many dangerous places to their ultimate goal' (ibid.: 64). Hence, Haroun's choice of the Hoopoe endows him with a trait of a leader; the one who would soon help to save the Moon Kahani from the evil. Thus, it can be said that Haroun represents various and completely different roles; such as child vulnerability, strong personality and the image of a successful leader as well.

6.5. Blabbermouth

Blabbermouth is a girl-page met by Haroun in the fantasy land of Kahani. Being a teenage-girl, she is a tom-boy, ready to quarrel any time and face all the dangerous situations on her own, but does not feel much at ease with boys as believes them to be arrogant and pompous. The first encounter of Blabbermouth and Haroun takes place when she is told to lead Haroun to his room for some rest in the King's palace. While leading Haroun and, eventually losing her way, Blabbermouth succeeded in talking non-stop all the way. 'Aren't we having a nice chat?' asks she rhetorically to the exhausted boy. The secret of a strangely talkative boy is revealed when Haroun accidentally tears off Blabbermouth's hat and finds out that she is actually a girl.

Even though Blabbermouth sometimes seems arrogant and talkative, she actually acts as a carrier of truth; the truth which sometimes is too blunt and painful but which makes the ones who hear it open their eyes to face the reality. Moreover, during Haroun's stay on the Moon, Blabbermouth plays the role of his own guide, familiarising the boy with what was happening in Kahani. For instance, she tells Haroun about the strange appearance of the Pages as well as their order in the court and leads Haroun around the territory of the palace. And, lastly, Blabbermouth represents the wisdom of the magic world of Kahani. She makes reasonable remarks about many things worth pondering over, as they carry a moral within themselves. For example, 'You shouldn't judge a book by its cover', snapped Blabbermouth (ibid.: 114). The well-known catchphrase was addressed not only to the confusion among the Pages while the march formation during the parade was taking place, but also to the ones who judge people by how they look and what they have instead of how they behave and who they really are inside.

Here are some other phrases and sayings which Blabbermouth tells either to Haroun or other characters. All of them convey the bold truth; even though they are sometimes difficult to agree with:

- 'That's the *trouble* with you *sad* city types: you think a place has to be *miserable* and *dull* as *ditchwater* before you believe it's real' (ibid.: 114). Blabbermouth's expression makes us realise that she is actually right. Most of the people believe that '[...] in our life it is not all songs and dances' as Haroun puts it, emphasising that our life consists more of difficulties and distress and in order to achieve happiness (ibid.: 209). Therefore, one should work hard for it. As a result, when something exciting and pleasant happens all of a sudden, we are quite surprised and do not believe our eyes; as if it is not happening with us.
- 'What a *poser*, I *swear*. [...] Talking so *big* and *rude* because he thinks it'll stop us from noticing that he's *scared* out of his *pants*,' addresses Blabbermouth to Prince

Bolo, an arrogant and impatient prince who believes that everything can be solved by abuses and screams (ibid.: 129). Showing his bravery in words instead of actions, the Prince protects himself by operating with ambiguous words and abuses when feeling in danger. Even though Prince Bolo tries to look majestic and sound intelligent, Blabbermouth makes it obvious that his attempts cannot conceal what he really is.

- ‘Don’t *trust* him – it’s a *trick*...’ points out Blabbermouth when the Chupwala ambassador offers to entertain Prince Bolo when the whole cavalry of the Guppees arrive at the territory of the Land of Chup. However, the silly Prince did not wish to hear Blabbermouth’s advice, neglecting which, he could pay with his own life. When the ambassador began juggling, ‘one extra object was added to the flying cavalcade, a little, heavy, rectangular box out of which protruded a short, burning fuse’, which proved to be a bomb (ibid.: 182). Although, Prince Bolo ignored the page’s warning, Blabbermouth still managed to save him by plucking the bomb out of the array of juggled objects and throwing it ‘away down the hillside, where it exploded in an enormous ball of glowing black flames’ (ibid.: 182-3).
- ‘Tricking you isn’t exactly *difficult*, excuse me. [...] *Jugglers* can do it, so why not *girls*?’ (ibid.: 183) What Blabbermouth is trying to emphasise, is the female discrimination in modern India. Juggling, the work which does not give any possibilities in making a decent career nor allows earning enough money for living, is compared with the female position in Indian society. People are used to perceive a woman as an illiterate person, who sees nothing around her but the house which she looks after. Even though the world changes, and many women quit being housewives and go to work, the society’s traditional opinion stays the same.
- ‘I suppose *you* only do what you’re *told*. [...] I suppose *you* always eat up all the *food* on your *plate*, even the *cauliflower*’ (ibid.: 108). The present quotation of Blabbermouth expresses the same issue of female discrimination. Traditionally, males are treated better than females as they embody the hopes of the whole family which are to be fulfilled in their sons’ future life. From girls, on the other hand, no one expects anything but to be chosen as a humble and decent wife for a man. What is more, family should suffer economically and have to prepare a dowry so that the future husband would be content with his choice.

Thus, all the examples show that even though Blabbermouth is a tom-boy who, eventually, makes good friends with Haroun and even kisses him before his departure back to the reality, she also says blunt truth about India’s culture and society. Moreover,

Blabbermouth's wise remarks are not left unnoticed either by Haroun or by the reader who admire the girl, her wit and the moral which she conveys by her blunt and sometimes even arrogant comments.

6.6. Cyrus Dubash

Cyrus Dubash or Cyrus-the-great was one of the best childhood friends of Saleem's, who was also Saleem's classmate and 'a class genius' (Rushdie, 1981: 124). He is a regular child who just as his father wants to connect his future with 'the nuclear research establishment' (ibid.: 111). However, an important fact which distinguishes Cyrus among his friends is that he was brought up in a particularly religious family. Therefore, when misfortune entered the Dubash family, namely the death of Cyrus's father, 'the religious fanaticism of his mother' was unleashed (ibid.: 193). Cyrus's mother turned out to be a 'religious fanatic', who began shaping 'Lord Khusro Khusrovand' out of her own child (ibid.: 195). Due to being 'simply the most malleable of boys who would not have dreamed of crossing his mother', Cyrus did not object to his mother's absurd ideas (ibid.). Therefore, Saleem's best friend and the most intelligent boy in his class, Cyrus became 'Lord Khusro, the most successful holy child in history' (ibid.). As a result, the fact of Cyrus Dubash's widowed mother 'conjuring her own son into the tale of the Parsi Messiah, Lord Khusro Khusrovan' illustrates 'the danger of fanaticism that stalks all practitioners of all religions at all times' (Mitra, 2006: 47).

Consequently, the present chapter is dedicated to the analysis of some of both works' characters who stand out for their distinctly expressed symbolic meanings. Saleem represents his own homeland, with its happy moments and sorrows; Shiva denotes the inseparable part of the world which is evil and which participates in an everlasting fight against the good; Blabbermouth, the carrier of truth and reason, teaches Haroun wisdom and also saves the obstinate and arrogant Prince Bolo from death; and lastly, Cyrus Dubash, who portrays how religious fanaticism might destroy personalities both of the participants and the instigators. It should be added that there are other various symbols and issues depicted in 'Midnight's Children' and 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories'; however, only those symbols that are referred to the studied subject of children and childhood are taken into account.

CONCLUSIONS

Salman Rushdie's works, 'Midnight's Children' and 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories', are exceptional not only due to the genre, but also by Rushdie's own childhood memories implied in them. Therefore, the first two chapters of the present paper are dedicated to Salman Rushdie, his writing style and biographical events that made impact on his works. As a result, it has been stated that the usage of "*magic realism*" is directly related to Salman Rushdie's hybrid identity, which is Indian and British at the same time.

Such an identity allowed Salman Rushdie to write about his homeland India from the point of view of the observer, who is simultaneously an outsider and an insider. Thus, with the help of "*magic realism*", Rushdie created his own India, drawing upon his childhood memories, his family history as well as the history of his country, adding to the realistic components a drop of magic. The genre of '*magic realism*' allows Rushdie not only to write about the effects of the British Raj upon India, but also to re-create his homeland's identity. Moreover, with the help of the genre, Salman Rushdie can expose India's problems and convey various messages for his readers to think about. Exactly the burning issues of his homeland, as well as its morals are represented by children and childhood in Rushdie's 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories' and 'Midnight's Children'. Thus, **the goal** of the present paper was to study thoroughly the characters of children and their roles in Salman Rushdie's works, as well as to explore their symbolic meanings.

The subject of children is already indicated in the titles of 'Midnight's Children' and 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories', which at once sets the theme explored further in the works. In addition to the title, both protagonists and other minor characters not only mirror the state of living in "Rushdie's" India and demonstrate its major problems and drawbacks, but also convey a symbolic meaning within themselves. For example, Saleem is associated with India, and all the rises and falls of the country are depicted in Saleem's life. Shiva, Saleem's alter ego, on the contrary, portrays all the evil of the world. Moreover, living conditions, social issues, messages and symbolic meanings conveyed by the children, relate to contemporary life as well.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that even though, a wide variety of sources was available, little information about the figurative meaning of the children could be found. Thus,

the practical research is mainly based on the close reading and textual analysis of the works and the comparison of the representatives of a variety of issues in Rushdie's novels in relation to children with the non-fictional articles on the contemporary problems of India.

As a result, the reader of the present paper would be able to know more not only about the genre of "*magic realism*", but about its usage in Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children' and 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories', too. Furthermore, the present paper can be referred to the lectures on Postmodern Literature; namely on Salman Rushdie, "*magic realism*" or symbolism. In addition, the paper can be utilised by amateur readers for a better understanding of both literary works.

THESES

1. With his plural identity, which is Indo-British, Salman Rushdie, being both a native and an alien at the same time, builds his own image of his homeland India, which is based on his childhood memories and the historically notable moments of the country.
2. “*Magic realism*” is a perfect genre for Salman Rushdie’s literary works; where the writer operates simultaneously with magic occurrences and real facts.
3. In both works by Salman Rushdie there are various allusions to the ‘*Arabian Nights*’, Indian mythology, ‘*Alice in Wonderland*’, Hindi and American cinema, which makes the works even more interesting and captivating.
4. The protagonists of ‘Midnight’s Children’ and ‘Haroun and the Sea of Stories’ introduce the reader to the environment they live in, which is represented by the cities of their residence. The cities are Mumbai and Karachi, where Saleem lived and Kahani as the birthplace of Haroun.
5. The title ‘Midnight’s Children’ serves as a metaphor for the new generation born in the first hour of India’s independence from the British Raj, the main representative of which is Saleem Sinai. The title ‘Haroun and the Sea of Stories’ introduces the protagonist Haroun as well as sets the subject of the story which is Haroun’s trip to the Moon Kahani.
6. The concept of a family in both literary works by Salman Rushdie is a leitmotif. The story of ‘Haroun and the Sea of Stories’ begins with the conflict in Haroun’s family, which is the reason of Haroun’s journey to the fantasy land of the Moon Kahani. The very first chapters of the novel ‘Midnight’s Children’ are also dedicated to the family relations of various generations, including Saleem’s family as well.
7. Haroun and Saleem, the protagonists of both works by Salman Rushdie, have completely different personalities and world views, which is explained by the ways

both boys were brought up and by their families' economic states. As a result, the world perceiving of Haroun, whose economic background is worse than Saleem's, is more realistic. Whereas, Saleem till the age of fifteen possesses a blurred understanding of the reality surrounding him.

8. The reader of 'Midnight's Children' by Salman Rushdie has a chance to familiarise him/herself with some of the centuries-old traditions of India, presented by Saleem's family, their relations, opinions and ideology.
9. All the characters of children reflect not only the life conditions of the world they live in, but also various social problems typical of India. For instance, children's prostitution, malnutrition, violence, poverty, child labour, racism and so on. Moreover, all the social issues depicted in both works reflect the same situation in contemporary India.
10. Certain children characters in both works carry a symbolic meaning; for instance Saleem represents India after gaining independence from the British colonisation; Cyrus Dubash is a victim of religious fanaticism; Haroun symbolises a child's vulnerability and so on.

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