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A Brief Comparative Analysis of Kiran Nagarkar and Salman Rushdie

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Abstract:

Comparative analysis is the essential parameter in English literature through which one can assess pros and cons of particular writers. It is evaluated and judged like Touchstone method of Matthew Arnold. Present paper highlights the linguistic differences in the works of Kiran Nagarkar (1942) and Salman Rushdie (1947). The researcher demonstrates different writing style and linguistic approach of these contemporary writers. Kiran Nagarkar, the recipient of Sahitya Academy Award, is one of the well known writers in the canon of Indian English literature. He is an Indian novelist, playwright, film and drama critic and screenwriter both in Marathi and English, and is one of the most significant writers of postcolonial India. He has consistently forged his own quite different path through his works. His novels basically are not just engaging but veritable page turners. Researcher focuses on Nagarkar's fictional oeuvre, his place in current writing in English in India, his enormous variety that exists in his novels and examines the range of values, cultural milieus and fictional techniques that he presents.

On the other hand, Salman Rushdie, a British Indian Novelist and Essayist, leaves an indelible and unmistakable mark on each of his novels. He intellectually combines the magic realism with historical fiction. Rushdie's novels bring out the events of history, myth, legends, fable, comedy, political satire, and magic elements within an imaginative and linguistic frame work. In a general sense, his work is concerned with the many connections, disruptions, and migrations between Eastern and Western civilizations. He again and again uses wonderful, exuberant wordplay and hotch potch plot in his novels. A brief comparative analysis of these two novelists throws an interesting light on their methods and their preoccupations.

Key Words:

Linguistic approach, comparative analysis, aesthetic pleasure, controversial writing, craft and vision, meticulous attention towards fiction etc.

Kiran Nagarkar is one of the India's most widely known writers and has attained the stature of distinguished man of letters with international acclaim and reputation. He has made unbelievable footprints on the world literary scenario. Denis Scheck praises Nagarkar for his valuable contribution in Marathi and English literature. He asserts, "Kiran Nagarkar is a name you definitely have to remember, because this author is one of the genuine great new discoveries of the past few years."

In this article, researcher mainly focuses on Kiran Nagarkar's linguistic experiments. Nagarkar authored six novels, *Seven Sixes Are Forty Three* (1980), *Ravan and Eddie* (1995), *Cuckold* (1997), *God's Little Soldier* (2005), *The Extras* (2012), *Rest in Peace* (2016).

No doubt, his works has a *timeless quality* which tempts the readers to read his novels. Kiran Nagarkar's writing is so powerful and amazing that it holds the interest of the reader. It would not be an exaggeration if we say that Nagarkar has established himself as a story teller in the tradition of Graham Greene. Khushwant Singh comments, "*He is a born story teller with an unerring eye for detail, skilled in the use of words and an artist of the erotica. I'm glad that Kiran writes in English as I admire his novels immensely.*"

His *craft and vision* enhances the reader's enjoyment. His books make the reader think and interact with narrative and author; they also have humour and a sense of the absurd. Nagarkar uses his genius and takes constant efforts to create subversive pleasure in his fictions. His universal approach reflects immensely in his novels. His all novels are modernist in parts and post modernist in others. Nagarkar's novels leave an imprint on the minds of the readers and compel them to think about the post colonial issues and their consequences on human beings.

The specialty of all these novels lies in its *varied themes*. Nagarkar's personality reflects throughout his work by representing various themes such as alienation, class struggle, crime and punishment, eroticism and adultery, greed and hypocrisy, gender violence, identity crisis, quest for identity, kindness and humanity, pain, suffering and humiliation, cultural heritage, nationalism, political freedom, thread of historicity, fanaticism, quest for identity, exploitation in Bollywood etc. His books are different from each other and have a great literary taste. It makes us difficult to believe that they are by the same author. Basically his novels deal with the various thematic, structural, linguistic and historical aspects. His novels are different in theme, nature of characters, style and plot construction.

Nagarkar is socialist by nature. He reveals *social concern for human being*. His perception of human life in past and recent past is expressed through the characters of his novels. He always combines the social, political and communal events of the past and recent past and aims at projecting the meaning of such events in context of present and future. His novels depict human relationship, national boundaries, and structuring his themes around families and their life modern life with sub version of historical events.

Kiran Nagarkar, *as a creative and innovative writer*, constantly tries out skillfully new techniques and fictional experiments in his novels. His novels reveal the quality of creative writing. His writing creates an everlasting impact on the readers and his fictional experiments are remarkable. He is the classic writer who always discovers new facets and insights every time in his novels. He simply enhances the reader's enjoyment through his novels.

Kiran Nagarkar's *narrative technique* is highly innovative. He employs a distinctive yet unobtrusive narrative voice. His novels are flawless and are free from exaggeration and from magic realism like Rushdie. He makes use of entirely different content, themes and techniques in all his works. He hardly ever opts for the flash and mad roller coasting pyrotechnics of an irrepressible blend of English and Hindi/Urdu phraseology.

Kiran Nagarkar's novels are remarkable indeed. He conveys social, spiritual and ethical message to his readers, whether Indian or foreign. The novel *Seven Sixes Are Forty Three* (1980) is the story of a highly sensitive young man's life, his interactions with others, his several

varied romantic encounters, his coming to grips with himself as an individual. The novel raises many issues- issues relating to love, honour, identity problems of Indian youth, pain, suffering and death, rationality and its limits. This work is characterized by the use of disjointed narrative and a plethora of characters. The novel indicates the cultural plurality of the city of the Bombay. It follows no plot construction, no picaresqueness and no narrative line is dictated by cause and effect. It leaps backwards and forwards in time. It zooms to a close up and pans over large vistas. The events are loosely connected around the central figure of the protagonist. There is tautness to the events which seemed to be linked through logic internal to his world. There is juxtaposition of the farcical and the tragic of the sensitive and the more robust. It is nicely presented in the form of black humour.

In his second novel *Ravan and Eddie* (1995), Nagarkar has reflected a tragic undertone and analytical comments on life characteristics. Nagarkar projects the complexity of modern man living in a mixed society with mixed identity and multi cultural milieu. He reveals the intricacies of dual identity of the character in modern times. It then follows them through the twists & turns of their growing up, the pleasure, the pain, the horror, the angst, the guilt, responsibility, sin and sex, crime and punishment, power, expiation, domination, betrayal, and self-discovery etc.

His third novel, *Cuckold* (1997), represents the fine honing of a rich sensibility and presents an engaging story operating on many levels. It is a mosaic of different personalities, of different value systems and patterns of life. In *Cuckold*, there is no alienation and a very deep involvement is set up with the main character, the Maharaja Kumar, heir apparent of Mewar, who questions the codes, conventions and underlying assumptions of the feudal world of which he is a part, a world in which political and personal conduct are dictated by values of courage, valour and courtesy; and death is preferable to dishonour.

Nagarkar's *God's Little Soldier*, 2006 is a tale of a liberal Muslim boy's tryst with religious orthodoxy. It explores fundamental, psychological and political issues and the dangers of religious extremism of all varieties. It underscores the incoherent ambiguities of good and evil, and the tragic conflicts. It is the story of a young extremist Zia Khan, the central character, who barrels through a series of epiphanies that take him from fundamentalist Islam to extreme versions of Christianity and Hinduism. In the end, Nagarkar reveals how an extremist can change his ideology and religion, but he always remains an extremist.

Kiran Nagarkar's fifth novel *The Extras*, 2012, a sequel to *Ravan and Eddie*, takes place in the late 1970s/80s Bombay in contemporary Bollywood. It is the engrossing tale of an epic struggle against obscurity and towards self-realization and traces the adult lives of Ravan and Eddie as extras in Bollywood. Both are grown up in Bombay, the city of movie and have craze for glamour. They both dream of super-stardom. They both are from impoverished backgrounds and join the acting class and want to get a break in Bollywood. After a few months, both adjust their ambitions and try to get jobs as extras.

His recent trilogy *Rest in Peace* (2016) is a love letter to a city that no longer exists. In this novel, chance makes fools of Ravan and Eddie yet again, but they remain characters who defy gravity. They both come together in a way that is at once thrilling and

inevitable. "Falling...falling...falling..." runs as a refrain through the book; like the chorus in a Greek play, it reminds us of the inevitability of a certain, tragic doom and the futility of attempting to run away from one's past.

Kiran Nagarkar, a genuine experimentalist, proves fidelity to his characters. He combines in his writing a tremendous instinct for storytelling with a rare openness of imagination. He is willing to go where it takes him, express it in whatever form and through whichever language. His novels are nationally representative and far away from compositional language.

Nagarkar uses wit and satire in his polemical novels. He represents the things in ebullient and energetic manner. He keeps his main focus on the characters. The end of Nagarkar's novels seems to be the fate of his characters and the fate of the mankind. In short, meticulous attention to detail, immaculate writing, crackling pace and large dollops of humour are the trademark qualities of his writing.

Nagarkar is well known for using memorable characters in his novels. His characters are memorable. They effectively build relationship with one another. He deals with such a range of characters and from such variety of social strata. He seems to write from the inside whether it is about the genteel and suffocating middleclass, the very poor or prince and kings. He shows fierce sympathy for the poor and the have-nots like. He is, at times, a feisty polemicist, but always a pithy and racy one.

Nagarkar uses the technique of digressions to retain the interest of his readers as well as to get some comic relief. He brings in digressions on a variety of topics, on the Indian obsession with white skin, the loss of human dignity suffered by people in chawls, ruminations on language and these are all introduced in the texture and body of the narrative itself.

One major aspect that separates Nagarkar from Rushdie and many of the bright Indian novelists in English is sex. Use of sex in his works plays a crucial role. Nagarkar deals with it comfortably, harking back to an ancient Indian tradition. He expresses all the erotic elements in superb manner. Sex is indeed an integral and important element of Indian English literature. Following this tradition, Nagarkar is utterly self conscious while dealing with sexual and erotic matters. In this way, he succeeds in painting the fraction of turbulent and engrossing portrait of the life. Nagarkar's images of sexuality are integrated casually into his writings. His overt sexualizations suggest that he has not been exceedingly influenced by Western culture, particularly in his desire to depict characters that express dimensions of both male and female sexualities. Nagarkar writes: "If he had been horrified at the thought of masquerading as a transvestite, why was he not incensed that his step had become light and his torso lissome? Or were the reasons for this quite simple and banal? That at heart he was a woman or perhaps all human beings are really bisexual? ... What is the most complete and sufficient idea that mankind has had? God. And yet if you assign sex to God, then he or she too becomes finite and incomplete." (Nagarkar, Kiran. 'Cuckold,' p. 496)

Indian-born British author and postcolonial writer **Ahmed Salman Rushdie** is a well known leading novelist among the writers of Indian English Literature. He was born to wealthy Muslim parents, just two months before the Partition of British India. His famous

novels are- *Grimus* (1975), *Midnight Children* (1981), *Shame* (1983), *The Satanic Verses* (1988), *Luka and the Fire of Life* (2010). Rushdie's novels bring out the events of history, myth, legends, fable, comedy, political satire, and magic elements within an imaginative and linguistic frame work.

Rushdie is famous for his unique narrative style. In every novel, he found new inflections of his voice in his narrators and characters, which "chutnified" English, "translated" their languages into their idioms, aestheticized and palimpsested their world, "disoriented" it, turned it into a "hypertext", or seduced the readers with their stories.

His language is absolutely different from Kiran Nagarkar. He remarks his sorcery with language in *Satanic Verses*, "*The real language problem: how to bend it shape it, how to let it be our freedom, how to repossess its poisoned wells, how to master the river of words of time of blood: about all that you haven't got a clue. How hard that struggle, how inevitable the defeat*". (Dana Badulescu, *Rushdie's Sorcery with Language*). The language in *The Satanic Verses* is as "metamorphic" as identities, dreams and visions. "Metamorphic" is a word that contains in a nutshell Rushdie's idea of shifting settings, characters, worlds, and the writer uses the word in later novels too. According to Rushdie, "Exceptionality in the novel, so difficult to attain, is a matter of handling language: the geniuses of the novel are those whose voices are fully and undisguisably their own, who [...] sign every word they write (Rushdie 1992: 425–426).

Rushdie uses superb language in his novels. His language is the bounteous sprinkling of English with Hindi and Urdu words throughout *Midnight's Children*, and this colorful sprinkling provides a certain amount of oriental flavor to the novel. Rushdie makes use of a number of Hindi, Urdu and Hindustani words, phrases and expressions in *Midnight's Children*. Such words, phrases and expressions form a long list, including 'ekdum' (at once), 'angrez' (Englishman), 'phut-aphut' (in no time), 'nasbandi' (sterilization), 'dhoban' (washerwoman), 'feringee' (the same as 'angrez'), 'baba' (grandfather), 'garam masala' (hot spices), 'rakshasas' (demons), 'fauz' (army), 'badmaas' (badmen), 'jailkhana' (prison), 'baap-re-baap' (o, my father).

His English is absolutely postcolonial and postmodern in nature. It gives us glimpses into his conscious craftsmanship, which aims at decentring and hybridity. He employs some Latin and Arabic words at the lexical level. Some of the outstanding examples of this are: 'mucuna pruritis', 'feronia elephanticus', 'sunt lacrimae rerum' (all Latin), 'kam ma kam', 'fi qadin azzaman', 'tilk al-gharaniq al', and 'ula wa inna shafa ata-hunna la-turtaja' (all Arabic). Sometimes Rushdie combines words and phrases to make compounds, a style later imitated by Arundhati Roy in her *The God of Small Things* (1997). Such compounds are galore in *Midnight's Children*, such as 'overandover', 'updownup', 'downdowndown', 'suchandsuch', 'noseholes', 'birthanddeath', 'whatdoyoumeanhowcanyousaythat', 'blackasnight', 'nearlynine', 'nearlynineyearold', 'almostseven', and 'godknowswhat'. Rushdie may be a trendsetter of 'mongrel English', but his writing smacks of *a touch of artificiality and appropriation*. Tabish Khair suggests that Rushdie uses a highly 'stylized version of the English grapholect.' And as Ben Jonson said of Shakespeare, Rushdie is 'not a safe model' for the future writers of English because of his 'chutnification' of English.

Rushdie uses *slangs* in his novel *The Midnights Children*. for example, 'funtoosh', 'goo', 'gora', 'zenana', 'hubsee', 'other pencil', 'cucumber', 'soo soos', and 'spittoon'.

Occasionally, Rushdie resorts to *deliberate misspellings of words*. Examples are: 'unquestionabel', 'straaange', 'existance', 'ees', etc. He also uses some incorrect words, from the grammatical viewpoint, such as 'mens', 'lifeliness', and 'informations'. At times Rushdie makes *use of the filmic language*, as in the following: "I permit myself to insert a Bombay-talkie-style close-up – a calendar ruffled by a breeze, its pages flying off in rapid succession to denote the passing of the years; I superimpose turbulent long-shots of street riots, medium slots of burning buses." (414)

Salman Rushdie's linguistic fineness depends on his *use of phrase logical units, and this includes idioms*. Not only does Salman Rushdie make frequent use of them, but he also deploys them with an eye to bringing to light and life their many-faceted nature and putting them to specific functional uses. The abundance of idioms in his novels as well as the writer's exploitation of their semantic, functional and stylistic potential justifies the choice of Salman Rushdie's prose for a stylistic examination. By so doing it demonstrates that the writer's use of idioms is not a functionless ornamentation but a complex network of Idioms in Salman Rushdie's Novels relationships between the idiomatic component of the English language and its situation in the literary context. (Idioms in Salman Rushdie's Novels, Grzegorz Szpila)

Rushdie's first novel *Grimus* (1975) is a part-science fiction tale. The story loosely follows Flapping Eagle, a young Indian who receives the gift of immortality after drinking a magic fluid. *Midnight's Children* (1981) follows the life of a child, born at the stroke of midnight as India gained its independence, who is endowed with special powers and a connection to other children born at the dawn of a new and tumultuous age in the history of the Indian sub-continent and the birth of the modern nation of India. The novel, thus, progresses from idealism to disillusionment, from dynamic growth to castration and impotence, premature aging, and death; from a deep sense of connectedness with the pulse of India to alienation, betrayal, and insignificance.

In his third novel *Shame* (1983), he depicts the political turmoil in Pakistan, basing his characters on Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and General Muhammed Zia-ul-Haq.

His fourth novel, *The Satanic Verses* (1988) refers to a group of Quranic verses that allow intercessory prayers to be made to three Pagan Meccan goddesses: Allat, Uzza, and Manat. The part of the story that deals with the "satanic verses" was based on accounts from the historians al-Waqidi and al-Tabari. The notion of a man's life flashing before his eyes as he falls to certain death below has been used.

His fifth novel *Luka and the Fire of Life* (2010) centers on Luka, Haroun's younger brother, who must save his father from certain doom. For Rashid Khalifa, the legendary storyteller of Kahani, has fallen into deep sleep from which no one can wake him. To keep his father from slipping away entirely, Luka must travel to the Magic World and steal the ever-burning Fire of Life.

He uses *flamboyant imagination* in his novels. Salman Rushdie's novels often associate with several categories of literary fiction, including magic realism. *Magic Realism* is

the blend of religion, fantasy, and mythology into a more grounded reality. It is based on rational view of reality and the other on the acceptance of the supernatural as prosaic reality. It aims to seize the paradox of the union of opposites; for instance, it challenges binary oppositions like life and death and the pre-colonial past versus the post-industrial present.”

Rushdie does *a work of magic with languages* in order to find his own voice to tell his unrooted and hybrid stories. In fact, *hybridity and unrootedness* are essential aspects of his writing. This study traces his experiments with languages from all the novels.

Rushdie writes about the term *alienation* as he has ambiguity or hesitation in his own life. He simultaneously writes about the physical alienation of the insider and outsider society of the country. It is reflected in his characters as Saleem says: “Consumed multitudes are jostling and shoving inside me” (300).

In Rushdie’s books many *characters face the problems of identity*. As many other post colonial writers, Rushdie expresses in his novels the problems of finding identity. This is done through his characters who frequently face either loss of identity or a confusion of identity. They do not know or forget who they are, exchange their personality with someone else or transform into something different.

Rushdie’s *characters represent the diversity of India both in its singularity and plurality* besides the postcolonial hybridization. (D. Shanthi, *Hope and Despair in Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children*, Asia Pacific Journal of Research, October 2013, Vol.2, Issue 10) *Indianisation and hybridisation* are traits in their works which constitute an integral part of their linguistic experiments.

His *characters are not memorable*. One is not expected to build relationship with them. They are occasions, opportunities and showpieces for displaying Rushdie’s playful mastery over language.

Rushdie’s *novels are always strongly connected to the history of India and Pakistan* although they are fictions. However he uses different methods than western historical novel authors. He treats the facts loosely, interprets them in his own way. The characters and events in his books are fictional but they are very often a transparent allegory of the real events and persons. Rushdie also uses *other features of oral literature*, such as creating memorable characters, dividing books in cycles, anticipations, parallels and repetition, use of frame stories and embedded stories. He is sometimes highly antagonistic and he always establishes the relationship with the reader by addressing him, pretending the narrator is telling the story to someone and explaining his motives for telling the story the way he is telling it. The use of oral narrative techniques also provides them with a way to rebel against the literature of the occupiers which was forced upon them as an aesthetic norm. Rushdie’s novels give *a mature vision of life*, with many currents and upheavals disturbing the peace but with a tone of confidence and control.

The researcher has thoroughly discussed linguistic writing difference of these two contemporary writers. He throws light especially on different parameters such as end of their novels, their characters, their comfort in writing about sex in novels, their belief in language, craft and vision, thematic concern, social purpose, creativity, narrative technique etc.

The end of Nagarkar's novels seems to be the fate of his characters and the fate of the mankind whereas the end of the Rushdie's novels is his stunning virtuosity. Rushdie's characters are not memorable like Kiran Nagarkar. Rushdie seems acutely uncomfortable with the subject sex in his novels; Nagarkar's use of sex is remarkable. Salman Rushdie, however, does not seem to deploy language for the pleasure of enchantment. Nagarkar believes in pure aesthetics of language. Rushdie does not believe in the pure aesthetics of language, as he says in an interview, adding that for him the use of form has meaning (Chauhan 2001: 49). Although not every reader will enjoy his novels in their entirety, it would be impossible for anyone to deny his extraordinary use of language. An assessment of Salman Rushdie's novels, an appreciation of his artistic inventions, and an attraction to his linguistic flair provoke a very personal reaction in each and every reader of his prosaic creations. As a consequence, Salman Rushdie has been chosen for this analysis due to his "certain verbal dexterity that defines [him] as a great writer" (Reder 2000: 199).

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