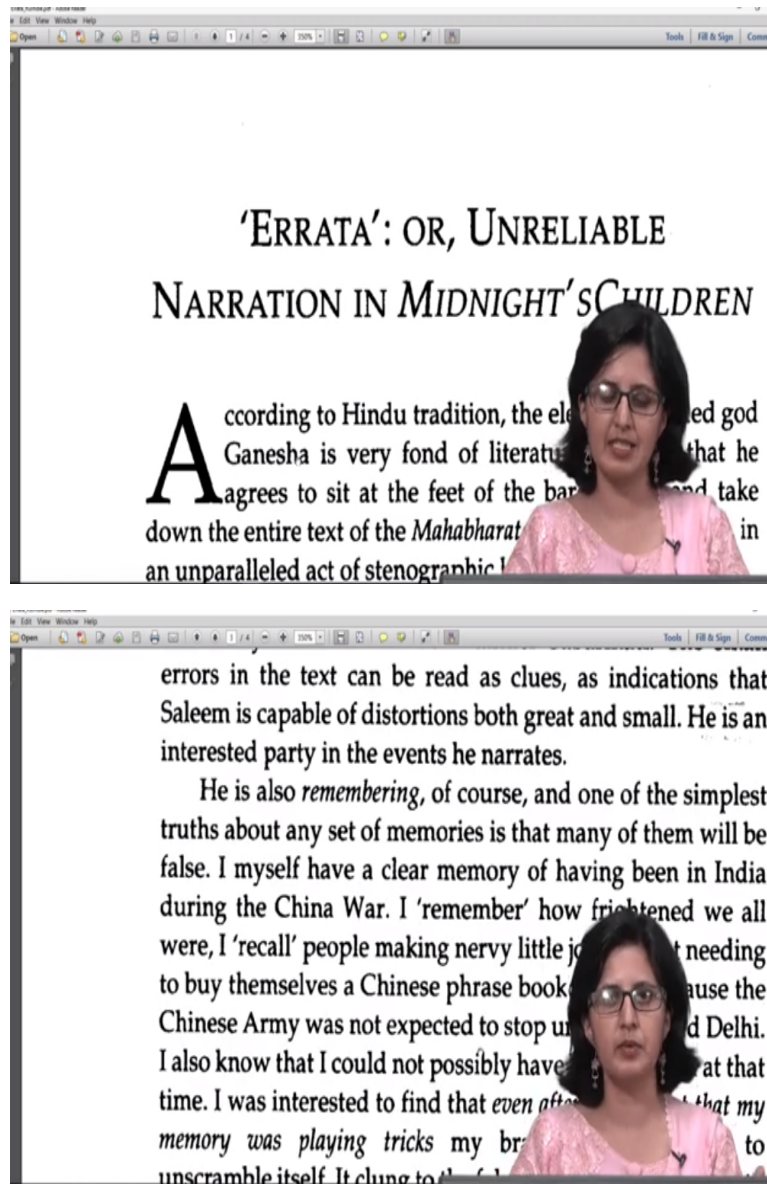


Introduction to World Literature
Professor Dr. Merin Simi Raj
Department of Humanities and Social Science
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From Errata to MC

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**'ERRATA': OR, UNRELIABLE
NARRATION IN *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN***

According to Hindu tradition, the elephant-headed god Ganesha is very fond of literature that he agrees to sit at the feet of the bard and take down the entire text of the *Mahabharata* in an unparalleled act of stenographic!

errors in the text can be read as clues, as indications that Saleem is capable of distortions both great and small. He is an interested party in the events he narrates.

He is also *remembering*, of course, and one of the simplest truths about any set of memories is that many of them will be false. I myself have a clear memory of having been in India during the China War. I 'remember' how frightened we all were, I 'recall' people making nervy little jobs not needing to buy themselves a Chinese phrase book because the Chinese Army was not expected to stop under the Delhi. I also know that I could not possibly have been there at that time. I was interested to find that *even after* that my memory was playing tricks my brain to unscramble itself. It clung to the false

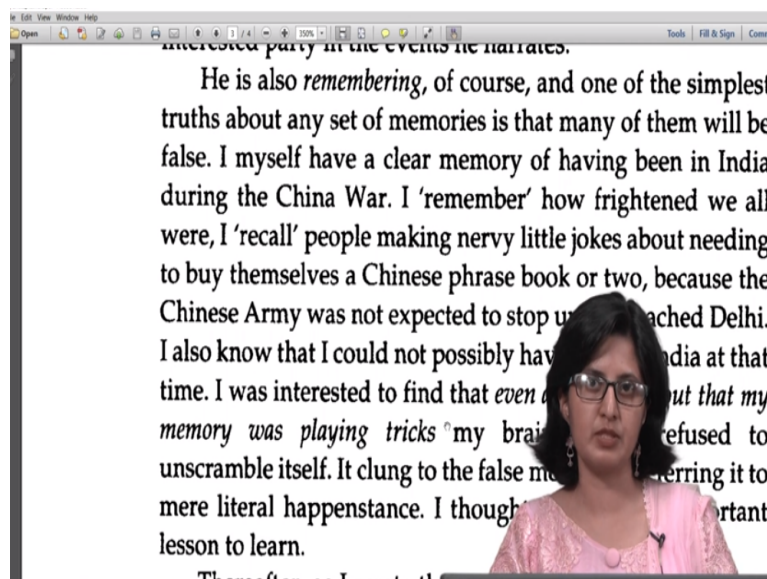
Hello and welcome back to a discussion of the essay errata or unreliable narration in *Midnight's Children*. While discussing this essay, I had indicated that it is always handy to use this essay on errata as an entry point to discuss *Midnight's Children*. So while I am taking you through this essay, I also want to keep in mind that this is more like a preface to *Midnight's Children*, though it was written ten years after the publication and the huge success that *Midnight's Children* had.

received and this was written like more less like a clue like a road map given by order himself to on how to read how to deal with the mistakes which have been deliberately certain of midnight children.

So I do find that is easier to enter midnight children easier to access some of the aspects midnight children if the first take a look at this easy errata and the talk about specially when we are talking about the aspect of memory aspects of remembering which are in an haven part of many discussion in the context of midnight children, so having come through the first half of the essay I take you to best accept which I also think is the most significant part of this essay I read out to your best section he is also remembering of course and one of the simplest truths about any set of memory is that many of them would be false.

I myself have a clear memory having of having been in India during the China was I remember how frighten, we all were I recall people making nervy little joke about needing to buy themselves a Chinese phrase book by themselves because the Chinese army was not expected to stop until it reached Delhi.

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I also know that I could not possibly have been in India at that time, I was interested to find that even after I found out that my memory was playing tricks with my brain simply if refused to unscramble itself, It clung to the false memory preferring it to the more literal happenstance I thought that was an important lesson to learn and this important lesson that Rushdie learn in the

process of narrating this story also remain does an important clue us to unveil the mystery that is *Midnight Children* we all know that *Midnight Children* has been seen in that this political allegory as a story of the nation or text which retold the story of the nation in multiple ways and I love the possibility of opening up the story for many others to deal with many others to access to many other renovate.

Whichever way they wanted and this is something that many other always have acknowledge many others have a lot of soot after seeing the enormous success when children receiving also being inspired by the narrative that I loved a multiple possibilities, so it is a takes which is take to postcolonial and postmodern at the same time the narrative that need I allowed the debunking of the idea of truth and at the same time they allow the multiple truth to emerge they allow plurality to access they allow hybridity to function in data to bases so coming back to this access the Rushdie talking about the idea of remembering.

And how had this memory being in India during the India China war but in reality he was not in India he already left for UK for his studies but this aspect of him remembering something that he had not witnessed remembering an incident in which was not part of his left experience it is extremely important this is word Saleem sign as at toward in *Midnight Children's* if you get a look of it and when you read from *Midnight Children* and when you try and understand and many incidence which have been narrated what's try to extremely important is that it is all be strong word.

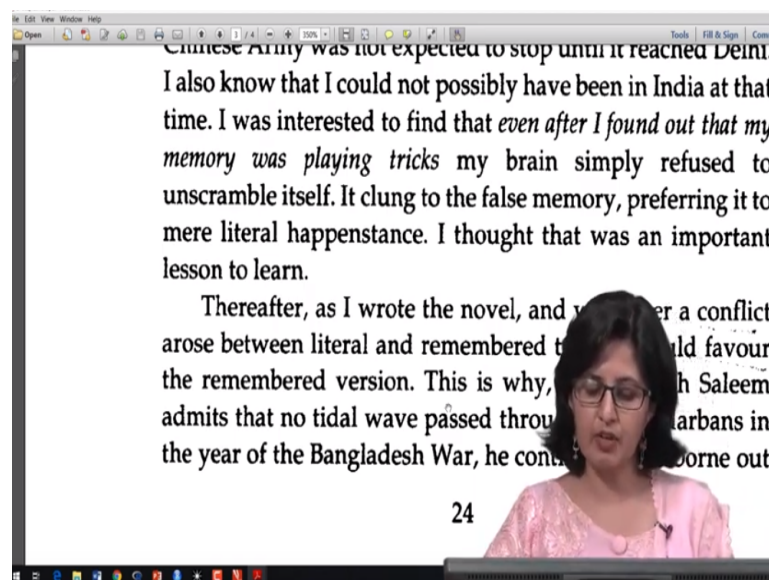
Saleem Sinai as remembers and he does not claim any authenticity he does not claim any truth value to it he does not make the bit deal even when he forget it would be wrong to say that Saleem Sinai as lie but his memory is perhaps playing trick with him and Rushdie it is at some level trying to tell us that it is no big deal that this is something that he learnt himself that we tent to do that and by extension *Midnight Children's* is also trying to tell us that the memory that perhaps we have been relying at all this while the memory on which the foundation of this nation has been build may be that is also a false memory that is also a set of event which we called not entirely in right sequence not entirely in the right way,

And this is extremely important regardless of the kind politics that natural in participates or does not participates in it is important to stay back that what does is this significant postcolonial

postmodern intervention which also comes in at a is at a much needed time in India's history need failed from a cross interference to rewrite the national historiography to look at the nation to look at the histories which were part of the nation which were different point of view all together to fore ground remain to fore ground minorities to fore ground many gods till element.

Such as cast or adversity which where or where reach which were part of this whole and midnight children made possible to talk about the personal talk about the personal without having to worry whether it is a plenty enough or whether it can be a part of public memory or not and it is also negates this some and it is also negate some shell that public memory collective memory and what comes a cross to us a national memory is infallible and also playing with the possibility that may be there are tricks play by memory at different points of time an going on.

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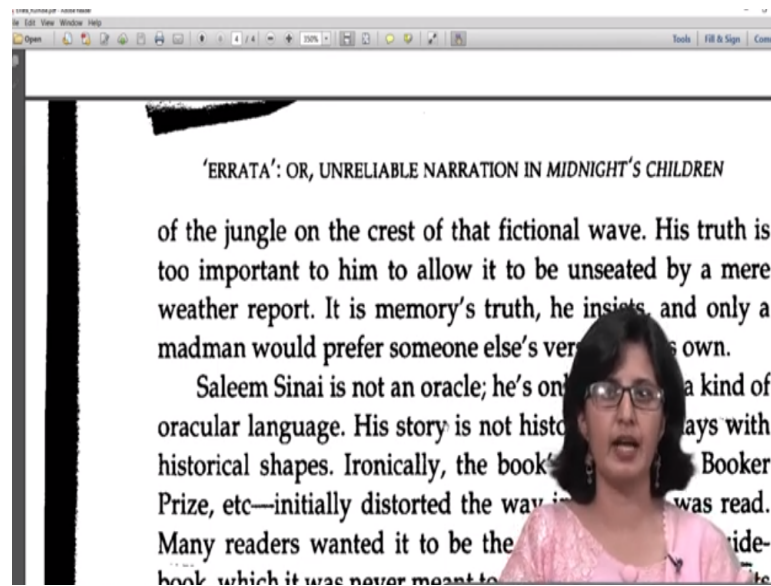
He also make it very controversial as a shell which also as the crux midnight children thereafter as I wrote a novel whenever a conflict arose between literal and remembered the truth I would favor the remembered version there I find the term version extremely important I wish to pay attention to that word even as you reading midnights children this a version and what midnight children make it possible is to tell us that there are many-many version there are different versions or history there are different ways in which the same instant can be remember and this is something that we can in significant works in the tried to narrate the nations.

And re-narrate the nations shadow lines being the one of them there he also talks about how there is a closer different between the incident that the narrator remember which instantly get witness as well and this is end stock contrast with way the newspaper get reported to it so there is a way in which a different version was being fade to the pubic different version had made it into the pages of history and that stands in contrast with the personal version which incidentally to be happens to be more authentic as well here midnight children thus not any claim of under city but it is repeatedly telling us this is just a version.

And the moment we bring into treat all history is an all other narratives and all other traditional solid forms of historiography as different versions it this bring to get easy up and for the same reason he has deliberately made the identity of the narrator Saleem Sinai the identity of the protagonist it is if has very ambivalent it is difficult to set a wait him here or there and if you take the time period but then which the novel happens it begins the time when it is difficult to say whether it is India or Pakistan it is begin in a seem less way and continue to begin seem less way and except for the event to for birth that happens.

Saleem Sinai birth it of course as an exaggerated the even in the story as you could see as the novel if you would see except for that there is a continue which the story which midnight children try to bed and that is the version that it is also presenting to us as an alternative not that truth as in alternative as in other version which also requires as much legitimacy as the official documented once have and continuing this is why even though Saleem admit that no tidal wave passed through sundarbans in the year of the Bangladesh war, he continues to be borne out of the jungle on the crest of the fictional wave.

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His truth is too important to him to allow it to be unseated by mere weather report, it is a memory truth he insists and only a madman would prefer someone else version to his own, I find of interesting that or Rushdie chooses to use the figure of them madman here I also wanted to briefly recall Saadat Hasan Manto's short story Toba Tek Singh where madness is used as a metaphor to talk about the event of partition the unspeakable gets spoken through the metaphor of madness and here.

When he is talking about the memory is truth and when Rushdie is searching about midnight children and high extension this the entire narrative that he is produce at some level Rushdie is here trying to search that the truth that midnight children has his memories truth and only a madman prefer somebody else truth to his own version and here he is also referring to his entire idea of national historic if you have absent referring to that as a kind of madness as well the urged to situate histories hierarchically they urged to say that one is better than the other and the urge to say that only one version.

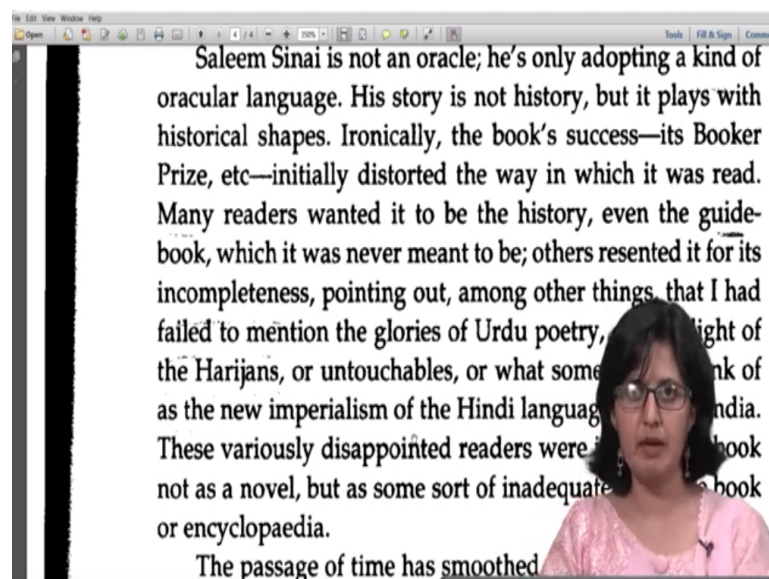
Which needs to be almost worship in order to make sense of nation to make nor to make sense of history and today there is an all the world need to get engaged that this different strange gaged to get this pluralities and it would not be wrong to say that midnight children as various level as we treat text as of document which dally is in post-colonialism and post-modernism it makes it possible multiple ways or may not entirely like the narrative which midnight children produces.

And that precisely is the point that it is okay not to like it one may not agree with that truth which are being reproduce there one may not will comfortable with the memory that is being trigger over then but that precisely again is the point that Rushdie and midnight children are trying to make that is okay to be not fine with the versions which are around that the important thing is to makes face for those different versions so that there is enough roll for plurality and for high purity as it is the cake.

I also intent to pay attention in to this segment where Rushdie is talking about his readers and how the historical details playing significant rolls in shaping a certain kind of reader in inviting a certain kind of readers to engaged with the midnight children and a his a Saleem Sinai story is not a history but place with a historical shapes he is talking about the form if you look at the way in which midnight children is narrated from beginning to end cover to cover it is informed very-very clearly and very-very directly by various historical events.

Which took place in the context of India and Pakistan there is a seem less ness which is broughten to it and there is also way in which the stories that is tie together and the historical shapes which are being introduce deliberately they also functioned as a frame as a framework against with Saleem's story and his version can we verified and he then moved so onto in interesting point where he says that many readers wanted it to be the history even the guide book which it was never meant to be other resented it for it is incompleteness.

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Pointing out among other things that I had failed to mention the glories of Urdu poetry or the plight of the Harijans or unfortunately , or what some people think of as the new imperialism of the Hindi Language in south India these this variously disappointed readers were judging the book not as a novel, but as some of inadequate reference or encyclopedia, I find the self differentiability extremely interesting the metanous which Rushdie brings it very-very deliberately he talks about his personal memory into hearing whether story that he is narrating he attributes the errors to Saleem Sinai.

He talks about Saleem Sinai as someone real who is making mistakes in the novel which he is writing but at the time he also brings in this interesting twist very deliberately referring to midnight children only as a novel and there were also telling us suggesting or rather that this is just a novel and it is okay if you do not take seriously perhaps and he is also here trying to mock those reader who are actually trying to find truth in it and he is trying to look at the way in his he juxtaposed two thing in his book success.

And the way in which it is read he is drawing to the retention to the enormous success that the book receive and also teasing the readers over here by saying at the errors and the way in which the readers glow to the over the fact that they could find errors in such a successful text in such a humongously written historical text but also had directly and indirectly contribute to the success and if you look at the number of works which talk about midnight children about this success that this work God about that many-many aspect within midnight children.

You will also begin to see how an entire industry was generated following the success of midnight children and he is also join a retention to the many things that he did not speak about of course there is a politics in English stands for an Rushdie can be seen as one of the attached pair of that politic as well that is the entire discussion of another context but at the same time I drawing a retention into the things that midnight children is not talk about the high region or the untouchable or the glorious past or and the Hindi agitations he is also trying to tell us that this version.

That he is producing is not a holistic one they could be that he missed out that could be many tholeiitic that many areas that he gotten entirely wrong but that is okay because this is only a version and he also leave and encourage and that can always produce another version you come

up with your own version which has that aspect of memory that you remember it is that aspect of your personal intervention that you remember the best these are the collective memory or the political memory that has been fade into the making of the nation.

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Before we conclude a discussion on errata this essay that a Rushdie had written I also wanted to see how it is possible to end up a tie children through errata and how is that an aspect of memory are extremely important in our understanding of the novel.

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Midnight children is of course it has been seen as a novel which narrates a story of modern India and it begins from 1930's onward as you could see it in this text and the protagonist the central character is Saleem Sinai he is born at the stroke of midnight and the allusion of midnight is very Nehruvian and see over here and there is also this is constant up play with the way in which nation story had been set off the midnight onward and this is an illusion that it is very-very hard to miss as you would see and this as you can see in the title and as well as in many images that invoke throughout the novel.

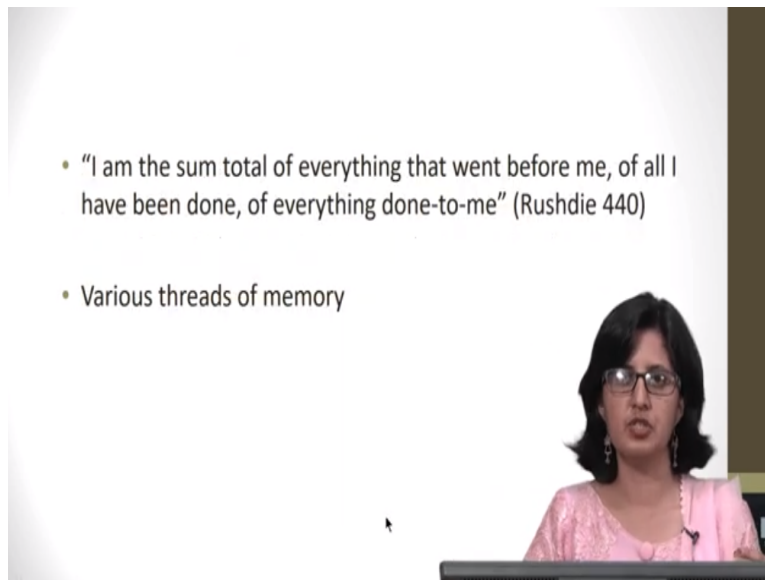
We will see that this Nehruvian moment of which celebrates the birth of a nation continues to be extremely important and which is why Saleem Sinai is also pleased in that midnight over so that you know the dramatic effect also gets as situated there is a clue that we get right off the out to protect to give a sense to kind of story the kind of memories that are part of this work handcuff to history destinies indissolubly chained to those of his country this is what the novel tells us about Saleem Sinai his handcuff to history so it is very-very important to us to get the tone of this novel right at the outset that this about history it is about the history of the nation there is a personal element.

Which comes in but the framework remains very historical and it is also political in nature and we also find that the personal begins to have significance the persons defined against the vain which the historical or the political gets presented and it is also give voice to millions of individual experience, there are non-linear memory narratives which are woven throughout the text and some of them make sense they perfectly fit in but some of them are also about Saleem's very-very personal private memories which have significance only when we try to see the connection between personal and the political and let us taught girl were put it midnight children is an exercise in the act of archivization the gathering of impression.

An exteriorizing of memories from the private to the public realm and this is something that midnight children does best of I would say the way in which the memories are taken from the private to the public realm and this is extremely important even when we look at the kind of scholarship that we can now access in terms of historiography study term of some Walter historiography in terms of the rewriting which is being called in the context of national historiography we find the personal of Saleem Sinai what midnight children successfully transports the private into the public realm and also say that it is not just the public official version

which count but even the private personal version counts as much when he is talking about the nation when there is no in which the private can be entirely divorce from the political history or from the social history of a nation.

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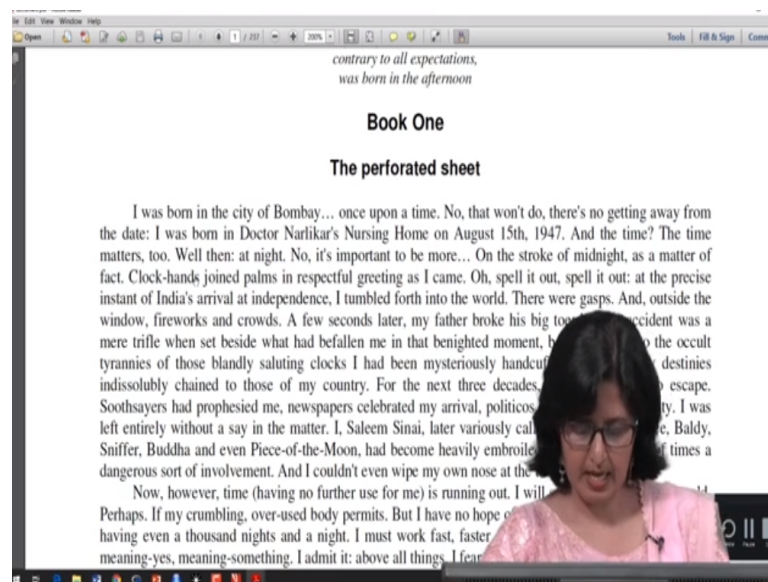


And there are certain segment from the novel that I wants to draw to draw a retention Saleem Sinai says I am the sum total of everything that went before me, of all I have been done, of everything done-to-me, so this a way in which he is combining various threat of memory he is recalling and bringing together on those episode that he was part of, now I wanted to link this with that segment in errata where Rushdie says he imagined he always thought he always remember being the part of Indo China war being in India during the time of the war but in reality he was not.

So this is how Saleem Sinai also function so would rather say that perhaps Saleem Sinai is bringing together those event which he would like to set together he would like to make sit together rand that is perhaps the beauty of this narration as well it really not matter where is did the Saleem Sinai had actually lived in experience those events which he is now remembering what is important is that he wants to bring them together he wants these various threats of memory to be connected with the threats of the private the personal an then he wants to put it there out there in the framework of the national in the framework of the historical in the framework of the public the legitimate historical disposed of the public.

So when he says I am the total everything that went before me of all have been done of everything done to me it is very-very important because if you pay attention here and throughout and the threat that the story follows the story begins much before Saleem Sinai was even born and look at the vain which look at the confidence in his narration when he is talking about his great grandfather when he is talking about the moment of his birth as of he is there as an outsider witnessing everything.

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I wanted to take the look at the opening segments in midnight children book one which is titled the perforated sheet, I was born in the city of Bombay once upon a time, no that would not do these no getting from the date I was born in Doctor Narlikars Nursing Home, on August 15th 1947, and the time, the time matters too well then at night No it is important to be more on the stroke of midnight as matter of fact, clock hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came, oh spell it out, spell it out as the precise instant of India arrival at independence.

I tumbled forth into the world, there were gasps and outside the window fireworks and crowds a few seconds later my father broke his big toe but this accidents was a mere trifle when set beside what had befallen me in that benighted moment because thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously handcuff to history my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country, for the next three decades there was to be no scape soothsayers

had prophesied me, newspapers celebrate my arrival politicians ratified my authenticity I was left entirely without a say in the matter.

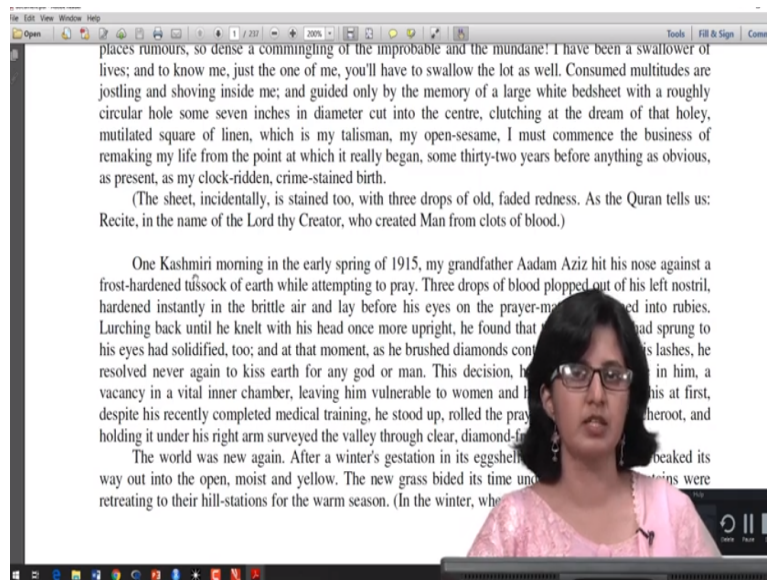
I Saleem Sinai later variously called Snot nose stain face Baldy sniffer, Buddha and even piece of the moon had become heavily embroiled in fate at the best of time a dangerous sort of involvement and I could not even wipe my own nose at the time, look at the way the novel sets its tone here a very private incident the birth of a child is being supposed to be the birth of a nation and the details which have been mentioned over here that the date about the time about the many other details those are the details.

Which have been documents and you can see and how Saleem Sinai makes use of those facts those documented facts which are out there and he makes a personalized version of it he had not witnessed but we not find any reason to be suspicious about the authenticity or veracity of these things because there are always lies on the documents and this is something that the novel continues to play with there are certain documented facts there are certain documented truths and regardless of whether one had witnessed or not.

There is a way in which those facts and those documents that taken as the truth not allowing any other version here if you are familiar with this novel you would know that there is a complication involved this of course Saleem Sinai was born at the midnight hour on August 15 1947, and all these details about the nursing home and other things are all truths they are all documented but there is something which is not documented that this identity was switched at birth which is a funny accident that happened something that a nurse had done deliberately.

So we will not go into details of that but what is important here is that the documents do not really mean anything the proof does not mean anything it is more about how the personal is being pushed into the parry-ferry to privilege us certain documented authentic version which in some ways more respectable and also more palatable for public and assumption that this is what happens in this description of Saleem Sinai but itself.

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And a coming down there is a right in the beginning he talks about the early spring of 1915 that is where the story begin in certain way, one Kashmiri morning in the early spring of 1915 my grandfather Aadam Aziz hit his nose against a frost hardened tussock of earth while attempting to pray three drops of blood plopped out of this left nostril hardened instantly in the brittle air and lay before his eye on the prayer-mat transform in the rubies lurching back until he knelt with his head once more upright.

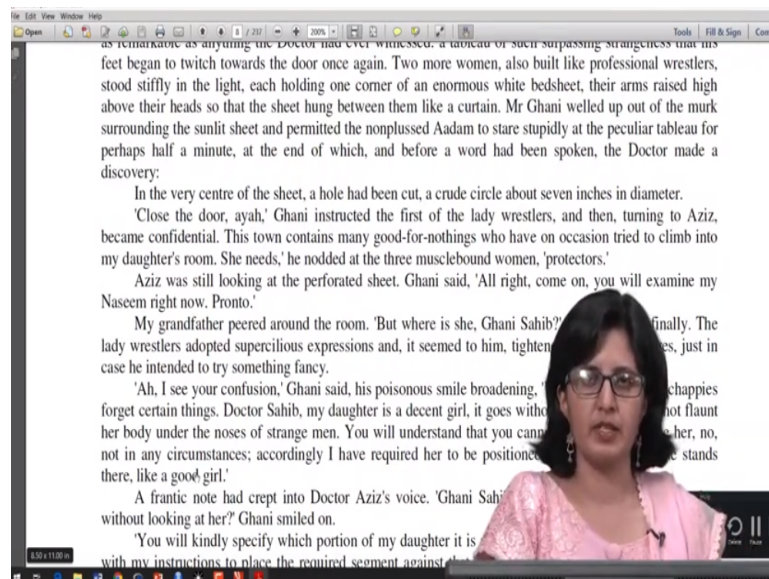
He found that the tears which has trunk to his eyes had solidified, too and at the moment as he brushed diamonds contemptuous from his lashes he resolved never again to kiss earth for any god or man this decision however made whole in him a vacancy in a vital inner chamber, living him vulnerable to women and history unaware of this at first despite his recently completed medical training he stood up, rolled the prayer-mate into the thick herald and holding it under his right arm surveyed the valley through clear diamond free eyes.

This novel is again setting the tone for many other things which were remain unspoken throughout the novel he is here present a Muslim family which is also murder he is trying to bring together two narratives which were also being force to going to different directions during the time of partition and even in the contemporary various point the identity of the Muslim and the many representation of modernity here he is trying to bring together the idea of minority and the figuration of modernity into this single family and that continues to be extremely important

in the telling of the story where there is a way in which the story makes possible to tell the story from the perspective of a minority.

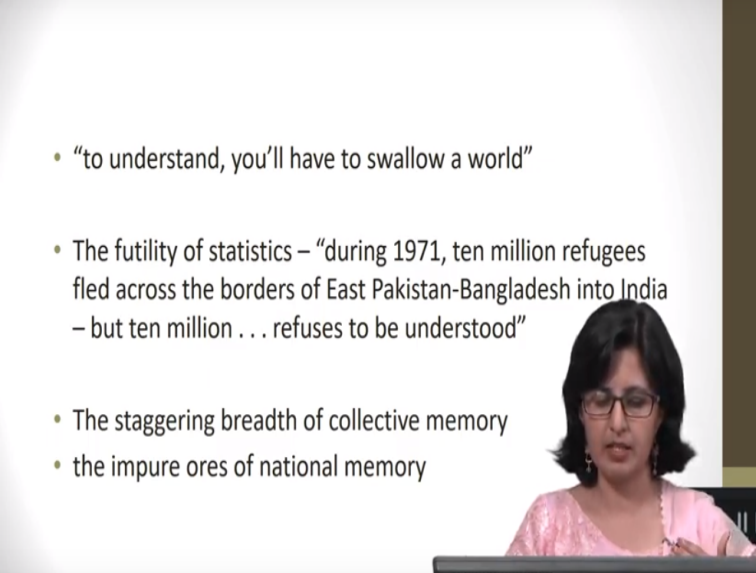
And the time make it modern enough and at the same time situated within the rhetoric of modernity which was in spindly was bedrock also the foundation on which the nation are has been build and giving this details the private details how is grandfather lost his faith and how he become a rational a person how he entered this twist the history in various significant ways those are all clues that the text gives us rise that the write to outset to read this version of a national history that to read this version of the nation story that is being produce for us

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The first section also end with a very interpret personal story about how his great grandfather had mate his great grandmother and therefore none of many details are pertaining to that one may perhaps wonder what is has got to do with a way with a nation story is being the nation story is being written but as you progress forward as you move forward with the story would also know that there is an intimate connection between the private and the public there is an intimate way in which the way one seize one sell in forms which one seize the world seize the politic sense seize the history and vise-versa the way looks at history also informed the person decision which are being taken to something that we were find continue very throughout the reading of the story

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- “to understand, you’ll have to swallow a world”
- The futility of statistics – “during 1971, ten million refugees fled across the borders of East Pakistan-Bangladesh into India – but ten million . . . refuses to be understood”
- The staggering breadth of collective memory
- the impure ores of national memory

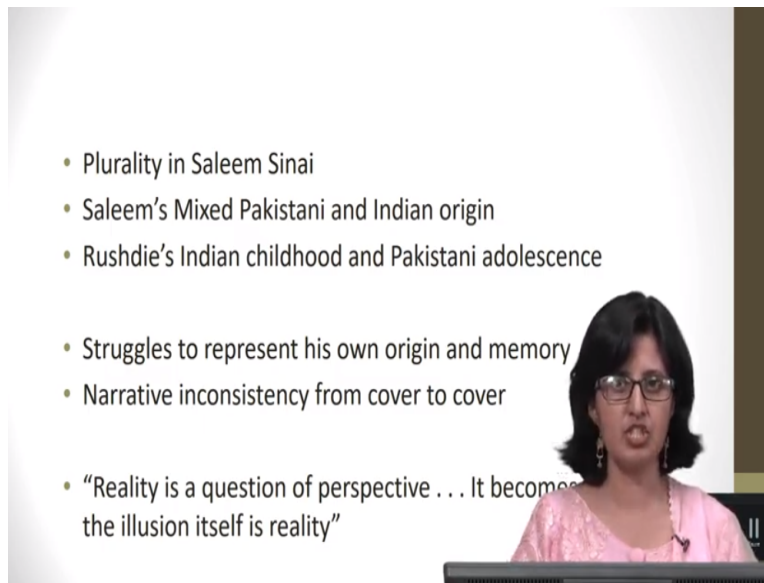
And coming back to look at how Saleem Sinai does this perfectly he says in order to understand the world that he is presenting before us and to understand the story before he presenting us to understand you have to swallow a world and that is a humongous task and he is also join a futility of statistic and there is one section where he talks about the riot of 197, during 1971 ten million refugees fled across the borders of east Pakistan-Bangladesh into Indian-but ten million refuses to be understood he is drawing a retention of the impossibility to be understand history with just few figures with just a few narratives and with just a some statistics through here and there.

And he is questioning the validity of documents his questioning the validity of official reports all of this being done in this iconic work midnight children by paying with the idea of memory by playing with the idea of remembering what want us to remember and here we are also being a made aware of this staggering collect of memory how it encompass almost everything how would also form identity and this again I would urge it thing about the in which Saleem Sinai identity of itself brought within many personal as well as public context how his identity how his vintage in his context to an multiple way due to a trivial incident that happened and that triviality goes on to form in which the way his get construct.

And here when we talk about the staggering breadth of collective memory also being a later think about the impure ores of national memory from which all of this things are getting

constructed and reconstructed so at some level midnight children is also asking us to get rid of the national memory as being the only significant so one may not be able to purify this old purify the material in waste the one desires to but it is always possible to draw story it is always possible to draw a version from other unexploded territories and sources as well.

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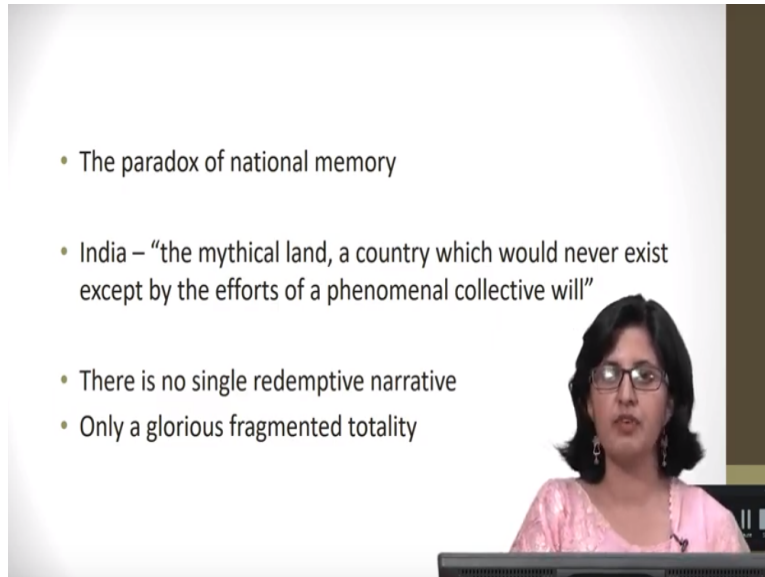
- Plurality in Saleem Sinai
- Saleem's Mixed Pakistani and Indian origin
- Rushdie's Indian childhood and Pakistani adolescence
- Struggles to represent his own origin and memory
- Narrative inconsistency from cover to cover
- "Reality is a question of perspective . . . It becomes the illusion itself is reality"

The plurality in Saleem Sinai is something that makes this narration makes this telling very much possible Saleem Sinai is a mixed Pakistani and Indian origin or this could we are extension of Rushdie's own Indian Childhood and Pakistani adolescence and how all of this is brought together into this narrative how this is we together into this narrative even not a make a point but mostly to break away the consensus which is always already there we find Saleem Sinai and why extension Rushdie coming a cross and so who is struggling to represent his own origin and memory we will find this narrative inconsistency from cover to cover it not only makes a midnight children and an unreliable text but it also makes sit a text which opens a multiple possibilities it is not about whether the information given his reliable or not.

It is more about what constitutes the various factors which go into making a text reliable or unreliable and as it is also said by the name is Sinai in the name one of the context reality is a question of perspective it becomes clear the illusion itself is reality so there is a learning here and there is also breaking down a categories which happens here being true that version between illusion and reality between public has to react private memory, so we find all of these merging

together in this tail and that perhaps is the greatest achievement of midnight children and as a little text.

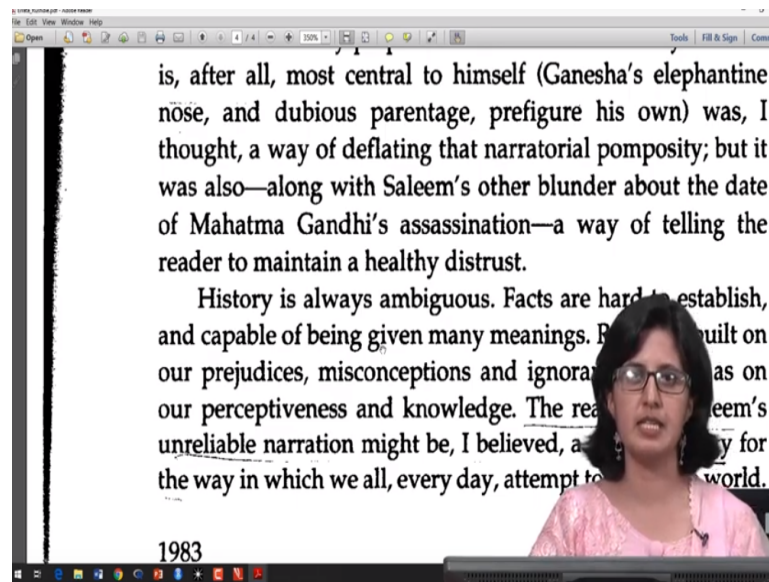
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And finally when we talk about memory and the act of memory in midnight children it would perhaps act to leave you with this thought that this is about this is a text which talks about the paradox of national memory of course it is about the Saleem Sinai's private life it gives us many details about whether his childhood his adolescence his sexuality his love life it tells us about many things that him a man but more than that what the novel does the end of the day is to present but the paradoxical version of the national memory.

And it also draws the retention to against an aspect from the text India been shown as a mythical land a country which would never exist except by the effort of a phenomenal collective will this is a strong statement to make subversion and real it say in time it is also drawing a retention to the fact that there is no single redemptive narrative but there is only a glorious fragmented totality which the novel and raises in dismantle at the same time.

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So as a ramp up the session I would leave you the final segment from the essay errata history is always ambiguous facts are hard to established and capable of being given many meaning reality build on our prejudices misconceptions and ignorant as well as on our perceptiveness and knowledge the reading of Saleem's unreliable narration might be I believed and useful analogy for the way in which we all every day attempting to read the world.

If not anything what midnight children has opened up as different strategies and different techniques and different possibilities for reading the world that we in have it on a daily basis wither in historical sense or in a personal sense or in a or it a very one day private level thank you for listing to this I hope discussion was useful for you and it also has well an encouragement for you to go and access the text midnight children self, thank you for retention and I look forward to see in the next session.