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**Metamorphosis of trouble-making girl-child into Jamila singer, a celebrity star:
An image of girl child in the Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's children***

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Abstract The existing paper attempts to examine the Jamila Sinai's role in *Midnight's Children*. Jamila, a girl child in Rushdie's novel basically, from a conservative Islamist family who turns out to be a famous singer. The paper discusses the reformation from her nickname, Brass Monkey to a super-star celebrity Jamila-singer. Her freedom as a girl child is under the barrier of old-fashioned religious setting. On the other hand, the ill-treatment of this girl child takes copious silhouettes, the range varying from male sexism and over-fortification of the girl child by her own parents. The ever-present Indian edifying convictions think about female children reliant on their male caretakers. Interestingly this trouble making girl, Jamila despite deprived of privileges to her choice of career, attains what she desired for. Thus, in this paper place of interest is the representation of Brass Monkey in *Midnight's Children* who as a girl-child accomplishes a striking victory in her singing career not all the way through her female identity but through the arrangements of her religious father.

Key words: Girl-child, childhood, culture, gender bias, etc.

The present paper endeavors to analyze the Salman Rushdie's Brass Monkey, a female-child figure in *Midnight's Children*, with distinctive weight on her renovation from Brass Monkey to a superstar, Jamila singer. The off-putting stereotypes of girl-child are glimpsed in more or less every portion of life in patriarchal society. All and sundry speak about the autonomy of girl-child. However, sarcastically female child is under the cordon of outmoded religious and social way of



life. This mistreatment takes numerous shapes, the scale varying from male sexism and over-fortification of the girl child by parents. The ubiquitous Indian cultural convictions consider female children reliant on their male caretakers. Dr Jyoti Singh in her research article argues that, “to grow up as girl is different compared to growing up as a boy and it reflects the attitude of society towards female child. Indian literature, traditional as well as and modern is canonical, replete with statements and images rejecting a girl child and showing craving for a male child”(Singh-119). Of course girl children are deprived of their privileges to choice of career. Thus, in the same manner the paper highlights the image of Brass Monkey in *Midnight's Children* who as a girl child attains a dramatic success in her singing profession not all the way through her female identity but through the arrangements of her religious father. Though, the narrative of *Midnight's Children* deals with the male protagonist but the essential segment of the novel deals with the transformation of Jamila Sinai to super star singer. The current paper also seeks to probe that how a great deal Jamila's talent of singing is a result of her own creation? And how much it is product of patriarchal society?

Discussion

Prior to setting off a meticulous analysis of Brass Monkey, a girl child in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. It may be beneficial to check up several gliding position of girl child in Indian postcolonial fiction in English. Unquestionably, India is terra firma of the age long traditions where adults are well-regarded but children are overlooked with apathy. Overlooking at the girl-child in the Indian society has pressed many postcolonial novelists to move up the concern for girl children in their artistic works. A case in point is *The God of Small things* where Arundhati Roy unfurls the truth regarding the indifferent treatment of Rahel, girl-child in Indian family. Rahel, a daughter of divorce-mother kept in her family did get the due love which every child need in childhood. The disproportionate conduct of male-child and girl-child in Indian society is at good strength painted by fiction writers. Reshma's comment is, thus, an incredibly insightful that even if traditionally childhood has been considered as delightful phase of protection with care but still this socially gender construction have its impact on childhood, “Girls are encouraged to move around with the



girls of similar social and caste status. Children thus learn to create their own groups based on gender, caste and family to which they belong. In this way culture shapes the child before he or she understands the significance of it” (Reshma-04). This inclusive lack of concentration on the girlhood is endorsed as age-long religious and cultural defined values where girl child is overlooked on the basis of sexual characteristics. Mostly, in Indian society the individuality of girl child is constrained by the cultural set of laws which make her distinctive woman. This gender specific childhood of girl children are all visible in the postcolonial novels where novelists have make girl child as key narrating consciousness.

The portrayal of Jamila Sinai in *Midnight's Children* is akin to that of millions of girls who is tutored by her religious family to be vigilant towards the society. Ironically, she as girl-child is viewed by her parents merely on the requisites of her outlook and responsibility in the direction of her family and Islamic society. It is in the book of the *Midnight's Children* Jamila Sinai comes into view as an instrument to amalgamate her brother protagonist in the novel. In relation to the protagonist-Saleem she is spellbound in twofold binary of good-bad and angel-demon game. Saleem as male child in the novel enjoys more fictional self-sufficiency than that of her sister Jamila Sinai who became central attention in book two of the novel. Besides, Jamila Sinai there is another important female child figure in the novel namely Evelyn Lilith Burns who is American by birth, a bicycle-riding gale child. Saleem along with his friend Sonny Ibrahim instigates to extend a romantic push on this American girl, Evelyn. But unluckily Evelyn likes his friend Sonny. And instead Sonny likes Saleem's sister, Jamila. A complex chain of love; yet, no love at all. It is indeed true in a sense that, girl children draw their attention simply when they are all set for romantic advances then they come into direct contact with the male cult. Both Jamila and American girl refuse the romantic advances of boys. Jamila and her friends thrashed Sonny and Saleem aims to get a hold on Sonny to Evelyn for himself, but Evelyn falls for Sonny. Saleem attempts to make an impression on her by learning riding a bike, but that did not make any impact on her mind. Child-Saleem expresses his feelings about the love for this girl, “before I climb into my first pair of long pants, I fell in love with Evie: but love was a curious, chain- reactive thing that year” (MC-185).



Though, *Midnight's Children* primarily deals with the male-protagonist but it gives significant glimpses of girl-child. A case in point is Jamila who is treated as an incapable of decision making when it comes her career advancement in singing. The privileged conduct of male-child and minor handling of girl-child is rampant in narrative which creates a dividing line between male and female child. Evidently, in the novel when Jamila come into view before public she is enclosed with white silk *chadar*, an emblematic representation of purity. The novel states, "the chadar of Jamila singer was held up by two tireless, muscular figures, also veiled from head to foot- the official story was that they were her female attendants, but their sex was impossible to determine through their burqas"(MC 245). This clearly shows how sexism and bigotry is customary in the novel with regard to the treatment of girl child. Even the counterparts of girl-children in the novel are indifferent to them. Take the instance of child-Saleem and Sonny Ibrahim who insist on girls with romantic advances without considering the autonomy of girl-child and their identity. Both Jamila and Evie reject these boys on grounds of their inner wish but on the contrary boys do not show any respect for their freewill. Both Amina and Parvati agree that neither Saleem nor Sonny value the freewill of Jamila and Evie who don't crave to be in relationship with these boys. But on the contrary, these boys stubbornly hunt on these girls apart from what girls yearn for. The sexiest remarks of narrator are an open confession of stubbornness he says, "once, I shyly gave her a necklace of flowers (queen-of-the-night for my Lily-of-the-eve), bought with my pocket money from a hawker- woman at scandal point" (MC-183). But Evelyn refuses to take it she simply denies by saying that "I don't wear flowers". (MC-183) Thus, for insisting foolishly to girl unfolds the fact that children are divided on the basis gender consciousness. The complex chain of love triangle in the narrative where Saleem is chasing behind Evie and Sonny is chasing behind Saleem's sister. As Sonny says, "Saleem's sister, you are pretty solid type! Or, listen you want to be my girl?"(MC-185) Instead Evie is inclined towards Sonny. Thus this cross inclination creates a dividing line among them. This is actually a result of familial upbringing wherein they are taught this stereotype behavior. As Reshma argues in her research article that:

Childhood in India is gender specific male children and female children are brought up in different ways according to familial practices and cultural demands. Indian girl realizes at



very young age that she is different from her younger brother or elder brother who is evidently given preference compared to her. (Reshma-4)

In Indian society this division between a male child and female child relationship crop up due to the predetermined standpoint of stereotype old age tradition by which they seek to comprehend themselves as well as others. In *Midnight's Children* Saleem's sister beats up Sonny just for the fault that he was pursuing her in love. He was ruthlessly beaten by Jamila along with her friends as mentioned, "she and the three beefy swimmers had jumped upon Sonny Ibrahim, street-sleepers and beggars and bicycling clerks were watching with open amusement, they were ripping every scrap of clothing off his body"(MC-186). But Saleem was watching and could not help Sonny he says to Saleem, "Damn it man, are you going just stand and watch?"(MC-187) It was indeed hard for child-Saleem to decide on whether to take side of her stereotype sister or to take side of his best friend. Ultimately scene of incident ends with the beating of Sonny "tata-ba-ta lover boy"(MC-187) Later Sonny asked Saleem about his sister's brutal conduct; he asks, "*Why she does it*" and in reply Saleem says, "She does things that is all" (MC-187). This harsh female behavior is result of social factors perhaps Jamila is from the Muslim background that she is taught to be critical towards boys. This is a process that goes on with childhood and even beyond. Thus the division in childhood on the basis of gender is social construction where parents direct teaching is responsible for creating barriers between girl child and male child in the social setting who do look at each other beyond the perspective of gender. This barrier is injecting on the inner psyche of children which make them gender conscious in childhood and result is isolated childhood experiences. The novel records the conversation between Sonny and Saleem where they express more openly the threat posed the female behavior:

'Listen Sonny; I pleaded, 'you are my friend, right?

'Yeah, but you did not even help...'

'No, so you have to do your own dirty...'

'Hey, Sonny, man, think only. These girls need careful handling, man. Look how the



Monkey (Jamila) flies off the handle! You've got the experience, yaar, you have been through it. You will know how to go gently this time. What to do I know, man? May be she doesn't like me even. You want me to have my clothes torn off, too? That would make you feel better? (MC-178)

This conversation between Saleem and Sonny unfold the fact that these boys foolishly pursue their counterparts without considering their will. They don't seem to look at these girls beyond the gender perspective rather they view them romantic-toys whom they want to play with. As Mccoby and Jacklin observes, "Children continue to learn gender roles throughout childhood, and pre-adolescence and adolescence are important stages in learning masculine and female behaviors" (Maccoby-89). This reveals the fact that biological peculiarities between sexes determines the manner of living for boy or a girl, which is evident in from the conduct of children, Saleem, Sonny, Jamila and Evie. Both male and female children have different understanding of each other.

Midnight's Children presents a developing image of girl-child Brass Monkey. It is on her fourteenth birthday party that she was known as Jamila singer. The emerging talented girl from the Muslim stereotype family was caught in the clutches of communal troubles like gender intolerance in the garb of religious and cultural restrictions. Same is case with Jamila who along with her brother Saleem arrived in Karachi on Feb-9th, where Jamila "had been launched on the career"(MC-237) She believed that if she had left Bombay however being here in Karachi proves to be a shining fame for my entire career of singing. Dilemma begins when major Latif asked Saleem to host a musical show of his sister Jamila in fact, major Latif had actually heard about Jamila's melodies voice. Saleem could not eject major Latif on spot. Saleem's belief was that his parents have recognized that their daughter's singing gift is extraordinary to remain to themselves. This stereotype approach of their parents is the result of age long silent gender discrimination where girl child is treated in utmost care and protection. The inclusive lack of consideration on the singing talent of Jamila singer is attributed to the narrow mindset of her parents who do not seem to see her desire for singing beyond the prism of religion. The novel states:

Their daughter's gift was too extraordinary to keep to themselves; the sublime magic of her



angel's voice had begun to teach them the inevitable imperatives of talent. But Ahmad and Amina had one concern.' Our daughter; Ahmad said- he was always the more old-fashioned of the two beneath the surface- is from a good family; but you want to put her on a stage in front of God knows how many strange men?(MC-278)

Under the congenial protection of this girl child her parents later changed their mindset only when major Latif assured them for complete safety of their daughter he told them that, "your daughter would be given much respect as mine"(MC-280). The way Jamila became a shining star. Jamila cooperatively succeeds in attaining transformation by performing with outfit outside her parental restrictions. The mounting attractiveness of Jamila singer in Pakistan had arrived at position that she could no longer keep away from an open public concert.

In Indian social order the girl children are made-up to comprise a life of safeguard however this often proved risky for girl children in the hands of those, who are supposed to look after them With Jamila's increasing fame in her singing profession, her brother, a caretaker of her begins to feel romantic sensation towards her. Paradoxically, it is in the land-of-pure called Pakistan that Saleem discovered himself in the impurity of sister-love. He says, "From the earliest days of Pakistani adolescence, I begin to learn to the secret aromas of the world, the heady but quick-fading perfume of new love, and also the deeper, longer lasting pregnancy of hate" (MC-272) Saleem yet asks a prostitute to try smell like Jamila but swiftly dashes away when he become conscious that the scent which stimulate him sexually is his sister's. Yet the girl child's gloomy image behind his own brother ends with shame. As Madelaine puts it:

Woman can either use their sexuality to confer male identity, or to destroy it. Such is the case with Jamila singer, who banishes her brother to the other reaches of the Pakistan army as a punishment for his forbidden feelings towards her. As a result, Saleem completely loses his memory and became emotionless figure of Buddha. (Madelaine-05)

The position of girl-child in India is an embodiment of oblique intermingling of comic disagreements. Looking profoundly into the postcolonial social reality Arundhati Roy carried out



the psychological suffering faced by the girl-child-Rahel due to collective limitations and authoritarian ethical set of laws. Thus, while highlighting the function and standing of girl children in the novel Rushdie sensibly put into words their psychological dilemma, and other than anything else the declining rank of the “second sex” for which the Jamila as a girl child was restricted to appear in public show. Ultimately, a trouble-making girl child Jamila becomes a star celebrity and celebrated performer which indeed shift from the customary immingling.

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