

Representation of Fantasy in Salman Rushdie's *Luka and the Fire of Life*

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Abstract

Rushdie employs many rare and innovative techniques like fantasy, magical realism, time and space in terms of narrative and language. In general, it is observed that a novelist uses alternative characters to speak or act for themselves and by intrusively telling how they do these things. The novelist believes that the art of fiction does not begin until the novelist thinks of his story as a matter to be shown, to be so exhibited that it will tell itself. In *Luka and the Fire of Life* Rushdie adopts a number of supernatural elements. Magic is no longer quixotic madness. Realism functions as an objective, universal representation of natural and social realities. It functions ideologically, but less hegemonic ally of its program and is not centralizing but eccentric. It creates space for interaction of diversity. Magical realism could be seen as a significant international, contemporary literary mode. It is an important presence in the contemporary literary mode. Unlike mythical realism favoured by the west, it draws upon cultural modes and non-literary forms in their western novel form.

Key words: Arthashastra, Fantasy, Ogre, Magical realism, Supernatural elements

Introduction-

Salman Rushdie is hailed as a captivating novelist with startling imaginative and intellectual resources. There are many more reasons for the grand success of his novels. One of them is the unique style of his narrative technique. Rushdie employs many rare and innovative techniques like fantasy, magical realism, time and space in terms of narrative and language. In general, it is observed that a novelist uses alternative characters to speak or act for themselves and by intrusively telling how they do these things. The novelist believes that the art of fiction does not begin until the novelist thinks of his story as a matter to be shown, to be so exhibited that it will tell itself.

Critic Kathryn Hume's discussion of fantasy as a functional form reveals the power of fantasy in her book *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature*:

Successful fantasy persuades us to consider the situation as it was possible. Or it persuades us to wish that the violation of consensus reality could take place. Or it suggests to us that a rich experience awaits us if we recognize the metaphoric ways in which the substitution or contradiction is true on a non literal level. (167)

The scope of Rushdie's allusions, images and vocabulary is overwhelming in its enormity. Jago Morrison, in the article "Imagining Nations: Salman Rushdie's Counter-Histories," is convinced that this allusion like that of the writer like Joyce is deliberate. "Excess and readily overload are attributes of Rushdie's aesthetic" (138). He feels that an informed reader and the ability to trace intertexts is a prerequisite to read

Rushdie. He interlaces with surplus of information. In the novel *Luka and the Fire of Life*, a thousand years ago, there was a curse by the Chinese that all dogs turned into pooches and pye-dogs. The dog kingdom became quick and bogs, they lost their sang power and can only bark. They lost their power and walk on four legs. " A thousand years old, it's true, But we were unmade by a Chinese curse, were turned into pooches and pye-dogs and a curs... (31). The word Arthashastra, is an ancient Indian treatise on statecraft. In the novel, it is mentioned to understand the Indian tradition and also there is a trust that all rules which are instructed in the book is followed by the people. Another character Bulbul Dev, the Ogre, in reality an Ogre is a legendary monster usually depicted as a large, hideous, manlike being that eats ordinary human beings.

Next episode is that the Respectorate of I, a city ruled by rats insisting on cultural relativism, which means the idea that a person's beliefs, values and practices should be understood based on that person's own culture, rather than be judged against the criteria of another. When Dog and Bear disable, Aag appears beside Nuthog, a shape-changer in the form of a dragon. It is a large creature that appears in the folklore of many cultures around the world. There is a strong belief about dragons, which vary according to region.

In the novel, Rushdie points out that, " The ancient gods of the North, the gods of Greece and Rome, the South American gods, and the gods of Sumeria and Egypt long ago" (127). The fact is that, in the magic world, myths are played as computer games. Romans are the lowest and

Egyptians are the highest. Almost the gods of Roman are borrowed from Greek myth. Rushdie has noted Coyote the next god, a figure of Native American legend, who distracts the gods to help Luka to steal the fire. "Luka squinted up into the sky. There she was, the Insultana, the Fairy Queen of the Otters, monarch of the skies, riding on King Solomon's Carpet"(82). The fairy queen or queen of the Fairies is a figure in Irish and British folklore, is believed to rule the fairies. Based on Shakespeare's influence in English speaking cultures, She is often named as Titania or Mab.

The Aztec, the deities from Mexico, is the god of the dead. He has a scary voice and he has received human sacrifices, the throat of the human being has cut and the blood has flown into the god. Luka is begged to stop praying to the Aztec god. Because while flying the god never help to get a life. Next Luka is flying over a phantasmagoric landscape there he hears the voice of Ozymandias, king of kings, in reality the king is arrogant and he has called himself as king. Next the sphinx a man with the hyena's body may destroy the house or temple. While moving they see the lion with a woman's head. Its duty is to stop the stranger and insist them to talk to her.

Rushdie's narrative is a retort to the process of the corridors of power. In order to show the reality, he engages with the knowledge and experience of the worlds. Magical realism is the literary form that encourages readers to suspend conventional definitions of reality and to enter a world where a boundary less imagination weaves its story. As Goonetilleke states, "Rushdie transforms biography into art"(67). Magical realism moves back and forth, between the dissimilar worlds of the real and the imaginary.

In *Luka and the Fire of Life* Rushdie adopts a number of supernatural elements. Magic is no longer quixotic madness. Realism functions as an objective, universal representation of natural and social realities. It functions ideologically, but less hegemonic ally of its program and is not centralizing but eccentric. It creates space for interaction of diversity. Magical realism could be seen as a significant international, contemporary literary mode. It is an important presence in the contemporary world. Unlike mythical realism favoured by the west, it draws upon cultural modes and non-literary forms in their western novel form. The novel is skillfully crafted, the bearer of a powerful and timeless message, and truly accessible to readers of all ages. The novel is an

accomplishment reminiscent of the act of a skilled juggler who keeps all balls suspended in the air as if by magic. So, it is not surprising that Rushdie's latest tale begins with a circus. When Captain Aag's Great Rings of Fire come to the city of Kahani, Rashid Khalifa refuses to take his family, citing the horrible mistreatment of the animals by the Grandmaster. After witnessing with his own eyes "a cage in which a mournful dog and a doleful bear stared wretchedly all about," (3) Rashid's youngest son, Luka, curses the circus master. Shortly thereafter, it is reported on television that the animals have revolted, and later that night, the circus goes up in flames. The next day, a singing dog named Bear and a dancing bear named Dog turn up at Luka's doorstep.

The scene makes the book enchanting and immensely funny while providing a glimpse of the astonishing depth of Rushdie's storytelling. Through the tale of a young boy who has travelled through the World of Magic to steal the Fire of Life that will save his father—a famous storyteller who has fallen into a deep sleep and cannot be awakened, Rushdie delves deep into matters to which every person can relate that is love, life, and death. Rashid Khalifa may not live to see his youngest son grow up and Luka may confront the fact of his father's mortality - as well as his own.

While travelling up the river, the group stops at the Respectorate of I, an oppressive city run by easily insulted rats who demand eternal respect. On getting ready to leave after lunch, Luka unexpectedly insults the Respectorate's national song. But before the rats can do anything the Otters of Ott attack, led by the Insultana of Ott, "a green-eyed girl wearing a green and gold cloak, her fiery red hair streaming in the wind, nor more than sixteen or seventeen years old" (78). Luka correctly guesses her name as Soraya, and helps her defeat the rats with an itching powder.

Later, Soraya joins them on their quest. Her flying carpet helps them pass through the Mists of Time and the Great Stagnation. Soraya sends the carpet extremely high above the Inescapable Whirlpool and El Tiempo for them to escape, "perhaps forty miles below them already" (106). The elephant birds help through the Trillion and One Forking Paths, where the true River of Time splits into thousands upon thousands of fake. Afterwards, they are temporarily detained by the Great Rings of Fire, the treacherous defense of the Fire. However, Dog and Bear reveal them to be both a fake, illusive and the handiwork of Captain Aag.

As soon as Bear and Dog disable the illusion, Aag shows up along with Nuthog, a magical changer in the form of a dragon. While Aag gloats Nobodaddy and tells Luka as, "His original name was Menetius, and he was once the Titan of Rage" (123). Right as Aag orders Nuthog to destroy Luka and company, Soraya arrives, having freed Nuthog's three sisters, who are imprisoned in ice by Aalim. With her sisters now freed, Nuthog betrays Aag and incinerates him. With the changers now with them, the group passes through the land of the ex-gods. After meeting with Coyote, one of the original fire thieves, the fire alarm goes off, alerting the gods that someone is going to try and steal the fire.

Instead of running, Luka and the group head towards the danger. After making it past the guards, by using the one time transformation of Nuthog's sister's one into Slippy, the Horse King, they wait for Coyote to begin the diversion. Coyote begins the diversion while Luka goes behind the Mountain of Knowledge, "with the Lake of Wisdom lapping at its shores, its water clear, pure, and transparent in the pale, silvery light of the Dawn of Days," (160) to find the Abyss of Time. Luka then enters the left-handed version of the Magic World, where he is soon captured. And, when the gods arrive and Luka delivers a speech to them, the world begins to fall apart. The gods, inspired by Luka's speech, allow him to take the fire. Soraya arrives, and the group begins the journey back towards the entrance.

With the world now ending and Nobodaddy nowhere to be found, the group is flying as fast as they can towards the dying Rashid. They are now joined by Prometheus, the original fire thief and the brother of Aag. After bare escape of El Tiempo, "the Carpet being sixty-one miles above the Earth's surface," (193) they enter the Mists of Time when Prometheus dissipates them. They are then captured in the cloud fortress of Baddal-Garh, which is now under the control of the Aalim and Nobodaddy who have betrayed Luka in order to complete his task of killing Rashid Khalifa. Prometheus grows to his full height and hurls Nobodaddy into outer space. Aalim finally shows them, whereas they begin speaking, causing everyone, but Luka, Dog, Bear, and Prometheus to collapse in pain. Luka curses Aalim, and then the god's revolt of destroying the fortress. Luka and the group speed towards the entrance, the gods defending them from the deadly rain cats, Aalim's final card. Luka makes it home

and gives the fire to Rashid and "the color returned to his face; after which a glow of health spread across his cheeks, almost as if he were blushing with embarrassment" (212). A deformed Nobodaddy arrives, whereas Bear sacrifices his immortality to destroy the phantom once and for all. Then, Khalifa who is enjoying a wonderful, happy, dinner, with Soraya now has to "put up with the stories of the Magical World from her husband and both her sons" (217). Soraya then puts the Fire of Life away somewhere, where hopefully it will return to the World of Magic.

In the novel, young Luka, a child, turns back time for his parents by virtue of his survival. The real power of imagination is best explored in the different engaging stories of Luka and Haroun brothers, unique but inseparable tales about father-son love and so on. *Luka and the Fire of Life* is a classic novel without any stodginess, combining the traditional elements of quest such as including fire-breathing dragons-with relatable contemporary references such as the video-game elements of Luka's magical world, where lives can be stored up and one's progress can be saved. Readers will enjoy the vivid imagery, fantastic characters, and clever wordplay, the sweeping action, nail-biting suspense and light hearted humour.

References to countless other tales and myths create a window to a world of literature, while details such as Luka's left-handedness and the diversity of The World of Magic create a platform to discuss timely issues and current events, especially surroundings, the topics of difference, tolerance, and respect. In addition to the central themes of love, life and death, Rushdie touches on a stunning range of secondary themes including the nature of time, ethics, authoritarianism and freedom, truth and illusion, which might be explored profitably by older students. Demolishing any boundaries between children's literature and adult literature, the story is an immensely enjoyable one that is truly growing and evolves along with its reader. *Luka and the fire of Life* is an explosive, magical exploration of filial love, courage, and the power of one's will. The novel says, "Eliminate the impossible, and what remains, however improbable, is the truth" (35). Luka reflects, and it is true that in Luka, the most interesting place that Rushdie writes about is neither reality nor the stunning lands of magic, but the place where the two meet-where imagination and reality collide and thought combines with

something more powerful than one's own nature to become the action is that what shapes the world.

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