

Truth of Human Experience in Selected Works of Salman Rushdie A Study of his Autobiographical Novels *Midnight's Children* and *Joseph Anton-A Memoir*

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Abstract

Human experience is at the centre of man's growth on this Earth. However, being part of Mother Nature, creative and destructive are intrinsic and core capacities of human self, whereby supremacy of the former has always been asserted. Enormous and extensive range of fiction fused with reality is an undeniable fact for Salman Rushdie whose writings always wrestle with the question of being rational and irrational, science and religion, truth and faith through the experiences of change and transformation, of dislocation and belongingness. As for Rushdie's Fiction this entire world is inhabited with human and superhuman beings, social and anti social beings, rational and irrational, believers and disbelievers, liberal and fanatic continuing in their struggle for supremacy. So, in the wake of this cultural, racial and religious relativism Rushdie talks of Supremacy and dominance of human nature which is to be asserted to bridge the cracks of any sort that have started appearing on the surface of the Mother Earth.

KEYWORDS: Intrinsic, Transformation, Dislocation and Relativism

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Fiction, no doubt the improvisation of human mind passing through the scramble of human experiences, states the truth in a wrapped way. In case of Salman Rushdie both magic and realism work together to produce the final outcome of human experience and thereby, ensure the growth of man and literature engaged in gradual development of human society as a whole. To Rushdie, Fiction acts like a way of arriving at the truth by the road of untrue. Novel and any historical writing are the forms of universal human practice of storytelling. When we know that history itself is a narrative of the events happened and life spent on this earth, this leads us to think of the true purpose of all kinds of narrations. However, fiction means something which is not factual but much of imaginary which may or may not be fused with reality but it does tell us the truth that we recognize as human being. Rushdie writes that "stories were not trueBut by being untrue they could make him feel and know truths that the truth could not tell him'. And that all stories 'belonged to him, just as they belonged to his father, Anis, and to everyone else". (Joseph Anton 19) The present paper aims at exploring and bringing forth some of the social, political, historical and above all human truths scattered and embedded in different pages of Rushdie's Fiction.

To start with the truth of individuality or identity Rushdie does seem to have of the view that self is not something monolithic or homogeneous thing but heterogeneous. Saleem Sinai defines himself as “swallower of lives; and to know me, just one of me, you’ll have to swallow the lot as well. Consumed multitudes are jostling and shoving inside me”. (Midnight’s Children 9) Commenting on the meaning or end of the self again it is absurdity that seems to prevail. There are many stories to tell, too many, such an excess of intertwined lives, events, miracles places, rumours, and their density is very much commingling of the improbable and the mundane. A glimpse at Rushdie’s personal course of living journey reveals that he was born in Bombay, went to England, passed sometime in Pakistan and has spent a lot of time in England and incognito and presently or may be finally, settling himself up in America clearly reflects his own up rootedness and this migration from east to west and west to east though for a while and again from east to west represents disruptions and dislocation of the third world into the first world and the joining up of the culturally and ethically disjointed parts of the world giving birth to a new identity of the world as a whole which is to be understood objectively through the unison of senses and universality of human nature rather than through the perforation of one sense or the other. So the Epiphany of his life is to be realized only when his entire life is to be viewed in wholeness and not in parts. Saleem Sinai one of his characters with whom he shares his birth year and also the birth of 1001 children born at the stroke of midnight with magical powers, says that, “I no longer want to be anything except who I am. Who what am I? My answer: I am the sum total of everything that went before me, of all I have been seen done, of everything done-to-me. I am everyone everything whose being –in-the –world effected was affected by mine. I am anything that happens after I have gone which would not have happened if I had not come. Nor am I particularly exceptional in this matter; each ‘I, everyone of the now-six-hundred- million-plus of us, contains a similar multitude. I repeat for last time: to understand me, you’ll have to swallow a world”. (M C 383) So, to Rushdie Self belongs to more than one place, multiple rather than singular, responding to more than one way of being, more than averagely mixed up and the objective of the fiction is to bring this truth to the fore. The characters in his fiction unveil certain human and historical truths which even the books of histories do conceal.

Rushdie chose to believe in human nature and in the universality of its rights, ethics and freedom. He always stands against the fallacies of relativism say it is of cultural, religious and racial. For him the art of the novel is to bring out the consistency of human nature in any culture, in any place and in any time. Given the modern day terrorism and threat of war looming large it is destiny not the character of self which is determining factor of one’s fate on this earth. In the wake of all this it is sovereign human nature which is needed to be insisted on and must be called for as savior, perhaps more than ever, of human existence amid the horror on earth. Trusting the potential of human nature, Rushdie writes, in the concluding pages of his memoir, “it was clear that the human nature was heterogeneous not homogeneous, not one thing but many, multiple, fractured and contradictory. The person you were for your parents was not the person you were for your children, your working self was other than yourself as a lover, depending on the time of the day and your mood you might think of yourself as a tall or skinny and unwell or a sports fan or conservative or fearful or hot. All writers and readers knew that the

human beings had broad identities, not narrow ones; it was the breadth of human nature that allowed readers to find common ground and points of identification with Madame Bovary, Leopold Bloom, Colonel Areliano Buendia, Rasolnikov etc. Readers and writers could take the knowledge of broad based identity out into the world beyond the pages of books, and use that knowledge to find common ground with fellow human beings. You could support different football teams but vote for the same way. You could vote for different parties but agree about the best way to bring up your children. You could disagree about child rearing but share a fear of the dark. You could be afraid of different things but love for the same music. You could detest each other's musical taste but worship the same God. You could differ strongly on the question of religion but support the same football team." (Joseph Anton 627-28)

The power of fiction comes from a variety of sources, including its popular forms, and often its many vivid emotional, intellectual, moral, and aesthetic layers of appeal, and so on. Nothing could be more relevant in this context than to quote the frame story of *Arabian Nights. One Thousand and One Nights* is a collection of Middle Eastern and South Asian Stories and folk tales compiled in Arabic during the Islamic Golden Age. The stories of Scheherazade from the *Thousand and One Nights* are told against death to prove the ability of stories to civilize and overcome even the most murderous of tyrants, whereas most of the animal fables of the *Panchatantra* are strongly stood with clever and mighty beings supporting the natural law of existence. Michael Hanne also talked about the swaying powers of fiction and claimed extensive social, political, and cultural effects of political fiction. He stated that a work of "fiction could start a war, break up marriages, drive readers to suicide, close factories, bring about a law changes, swing an election, serve as a weapon in a national or international struggle, however assertion of this kinds are obviously naïve and oversimplifying the complex ways in which literary text can be said to work in the world". (The Power of the Story 4)

Historically, especially since imperialism, politicians have been the great agents in bringing drastic changes not only in physical map of the world but also, as a part of their diplomatic and regimen functioning, they are at the hem of distorting, making or remaking different conflicting narratives of the world. In fact they have got very good at inventing fictions which they tell us as truth. History of most parts of the world is disputed away from objective reality and is found spiced with numeral social, political, economical and imperial factors. In the presence of ambiguity of varied versions of history it, then, becomes the job of the makers of fiction to start telling or retelling the real or at least objective truth. "Few makers of fiction have wrestled more with the question of how their work can engage with the truth than Rushdie himself. Not the truth of facts, of course, or of science, but the truth of human experience, and in particular the experience of change and transformation, of dislocation and belongingness". (Critical Perspectives 71)

As a perfect showcase of magical realism stories written under the title *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty Eight Nights* are in fact the stories of many parts of the world which are afflicted with terrorism, extremism and irrationalism devoid of centre to the extent of loss of gravitational forces even. Beside this man's hunger for wealth leading more and more exploitation of natural resources resulting into natural disaster and other

unexpected natural happening around the world are some of the areas toward which the stories of this book have invited reader's attention. In fact the book is the stories of people of this entire world inhabited with human and superhuman beings, social and anti social beings, rational and irrational, believers and disbelievers, liberal and fanatic continuing in their struggle for supremacy. But here Supremacy and dominance of universality of human nature is to be asserted to bridge the cracks that started appearing on the surface of the earth.

Indeed, Rushdie sees this as his role to bridge the cracks between realism and fantasy, east and west, present and past and fiction and history. It is an attested truth that history is unkind to those it abandons and can be equally unkind to those who make it. Throughout of his writings Rushdie seem to claim that our stories contain the stories of others and are themselves contained within the larger, grander narratives, the histories of our families, or homelands, or beliefs. So when a story is part of others stories which themselves are the part of the other stories, are always influenced and get influenced by one another. Moreover, we have to agree that to tell a story of the past is to tell a story of the present whether it is a history, or mythology and fantasy. It is because to recount a fantasy, a story of the imaginary is also a way of recounting a tale about the actual. To Rushdie, the role of a fiction writer in our time of descending transformations is all the more important when metamorphic and implacable forces are at work like never before.

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