The Trope of Fantasy in Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*

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Abstract

**Purpose of the study:** This study aims to explore how fantasy probes the embedded messages of creativity and communication. It also seeks to reiterate the role of fantasy and imagination in confronting contemporary issues in real life.

**Methodology:** This study uses an interpretative approach using J.R.R Tolkien's theory of fantasy to analyze the text as an allegory. Through close reading and textual analysis, the text is analysed, relating the events to a personal and political context, which it allegorizes. Online scholarly materials on fantasy and storytelling, collected from various digital sources and libraries were explored to assist in analyzing the role of fantasy in dealing with the contemporary issues in the real world.

**Main Findings:** The study has found that the power of imagination has brought fantasy into existence and fantasy is analyzed as a tool to resist the contemporary issues regarding the freedom of thought and speech in the real life. The study has also found that storytelling brings a union in the community to build an egalitarian society.

**Applications of the study:** This study can be helpful in children’s literature, to prepare the children for their adulthood by equipping them with problem-solving skills and creative skills by empowering their power of imagination. It can also facilitate the children to be aware of their right to information and expression in their life.

**Novelty/Originality of the study:** The study proves the text as fantasy fiction, not just for fun with the supernatural features, but has embedded messages in the symbols and metaphors, revealed through the storytelling technique. Fantasy and creativity draw a link between the imaginary world and the real world as an outlet for repressed desires and also a tool to resist the contemporary issues of real-life through creativity.

**INTRODUCTION**

Ahmed Salman Rushdie is an Indian-born British writer. He published his first Children's novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990), written for his son Zafar after the declaration of a fatwa by Ayatollah, the supreme leader of Iran. Rushdie has created a 'new' world of fantasy to subvert the authoritarian forces of censure imposed on his creativity. The novel delves into the challenging areas of free speech and artistic expression by employing fantasy as a mode to explore the mystery of the creative process. In this context, the paper intends to analyze the anguish experienced by father Rashid, the master storyteller, due to his loss of the gift of gab. It also aims to explore Haroun's fantastic incidents during the mission to retrieve his father's lost stories, as a series of adventures take him through the 'Ocean of Story Streams to discover that it is polluted and the source of 'Kahani' is blocked by the 'Cult master of Darkness and Silence'. Such evil action of the cult master causes a battle between 'Gupwalas' and Chupwalas' representing the good and dark sides of society in the real life of the characters in the novel. The attempts made by Haroun to rescue both the story world and the art of storytelling through brave encounters and communication skills in the imaginary world allegorizes the conflict between speech and silence, which had its impact on the writer in the real world. Thus, the paper attempts to explore the novel as fantasy fiction, to explore the embedded meanings of creativity and communication, using J.R.R Tolkien's theory of fantasy. It also seeks to reiterate the role of imagination in confronting contemporary issues in the real life.

The form of a novel is used diversely for children with significant development in realism for children's writing, expanded in the 20th century. With a change in time and the order of life, storytelling has stepped from oral to written and the listening of stories has shifted from receptive to a dialogic form with the publication of a few courtesy and behaviour books, written for children's educational purposes in European countries during the 15th and 16th centuries. Yet, children were not privileged to read the books written by children writers or, the books written for children.

Opportunely, it was during the 17th century that the concept of childhood began to emerge in Europe as adults recognized children as different beings from them, who are innocent and need protection from the adults around them. Still, it was not recognised as children’s literature until John Newbery's widely considered, *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* (1744), which was less didactic and with more opportunity to build children's imagination and empathy was published.
The books also aimed at giving enjoyment to children with the journey in literature to land of amazing discoveries. Thus, children's literature is a branch of literature addressed explicitly to children and young people, comprising the texts that children have selected to read on their own. It is also a platform for the expression by an experienced adult to innocent children, where creativity is the most dominant medium, particularly in fantasy literature, making the boundaries between children's literature and adult literature fluid.

Tackling contemporary social issues is a risk-associated expectation from children but preparing to resist the challenges in life is what the literature offers. Fantasy also affords to offer imaginative freedom to the readers as it is more than just imaginary—fairy tales and unrealistic elements. An Indian-born British writer, Salman Rushdie, who won the Booker Prize, the Whitbread Prize, and the European Union's Aristeion Prize for literature was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for his services to British literature. He published Haroun and Sea of Stories in 1990, which has elements of magic and imagination to take the children to the created world, exposing them to the creative nature and guiding the children to learn reality, which offers recovery reaction to the silencing tendencies of fatwa with the exclusion of intermingling—speech heterogeneity, and fluidity. Fantasy refers to both sub-creative art in itself and a quality of strangeness and wonder in the expression, derived from the image. For Tolkien (2008), "fantasy is the making or glimpsing of other worlds" (p.135). Tolkien also connects fantasy with unlikeliness to the primary world of the fact and considers the creation of a secondary world with its own rules and laws. Thus, the father of fantasy J.R.R. Tolkien's ideas about Sub-creation, Recovery, and Eucatastrophe are being traced from the novel

To explore how fantasy probes the embedded meanings of creativity and communication. Further, the study elaborates how the creative skills of imagination can solve contemporary issues in real life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review is a survey and analysis of the explored literature in the chosen topic area to synthesize the idea and summarize the findings in an organized way to ensure an in-depth knowledge of the focused area of the study. It is also to identify the unexplored areas of the study, fill the research gaps, and ensure the originality of the current study. The study attempts to review the existing articles, journals, and book chapters of Salman Rushdie's Haroun and the Sea of Storie(1990) to identify the study scope for the topic, Fantasy as a Weapon of Resistance.

According to Somava Maiti (2016) in her research journal, The Art of Storytelling and the Memory in HSS and LFL, the novels celebrate the triumph of Storytelling, expressing oral tradition and the nonlinear model with multiple intertwined storylines. The event of changing Turtle to Peacock by Haroun for his father has a subtle reference to the tale of Bird and Peacock, and Bird and Turtle. In addition, Water Genie Iff reminds the tale of The Arabian Nights, and Haroun also feels that his father is a juggler with many stories mixed, controlling the affection of his audience. In the meantime, the Hoopoe is a brain box with a memory cell, which leads to the ultimate goal of regaining the identity of the father Rashid through his memory restoration. Thus the knowledge and memories of mythical creatures, wisdom, and cultures from the father's stories play a vital role as a mechanism in tackling the challenges in the fantasy world, thus memory and history have a reciprocal relation, for which nurturing memory is more important than defending it.

Meenakshi Mukherjee(1998), in her book chapter titled, Politics and Children's Literature: A Reading of Haroun and the Sea of Stories examines Ray and Rushdie's parallel as a storyteller between Ray's films and Rushdie's novels with the element of fantasy. They both counter the principles of silence, suspicion, and strife with the celebration of art, articulation, and life, leading to a happy ending. Mukherjee, affirms that both have the illustration of the triumph over heteroglossia and pluralism in society, with the further elevation of the scene with unusual characters like flying carpets, talking, and rhyme-spouting fishes which give the essence of fantasy though both are a parable of art.

However, Anita Bhattacharya (2016), a content developer in Accenture private limited in India, has explored the style of Haroun and the Sea of Stories in her research article, Borrowing and the Art of 'Batcheat': Intertextuality and Dialogism in a Postcolonial Study of Salman Rushdie's Haroun and the Sea of Stories. The paper begins with, "Storytelling is an ancient medium of language and cross-pollination of lore, myths and legends" which has begun with the oral tradition of chants, songs, and pictures. Rushdie has framed a story about Storytelling within a story with the association of allusion of to the collection of legends, folktales, and fairytales called Katha-Surti-Sagar, written in the eleventh century by a Brahmin called Somadeva, literally meaning the ocean of the streams of stories. Father and the son whose adventures would decide the fate of the stories and life of the storyteller and the boat where Snooty Buttoo arranges for their stay is called Arabian Nights Plus, suggesting the Arabian tale One Thousand and One Nights. The paper is rich with the analysis of intertextuality and dialogism to promote communication in HSS. However, there is a scope to enhance the value of speech by drawing a relation between intertextuality and dialogism in speech.

According to Freud, all artistic activities are driven by dream mechanisms, and HSS is elucidated based on the conscious and unconscious mind. Arindam Ghosh (2017) in his paper, A Psychological Journey Through Dreams for Artistic Self- A Psychoanalytical Perspective of Rushdie's Haroun and the Sea of Stories confirms that the setting of the story shifts to a fairyland of fantasy. The repressed desire of Haroun to bring back his mother and the lost Storytelling gab of the father is expressed adventurously in the imaginary world, getting an outlet for his emotion. It also results in the transformation of reality to normal with the wish-fulfillment of regaining the village's identity and happiness, which turns out to be a psychological victory as well. The return of Soraya from Sengupta also adds soothing effects on the consciousness of
Rashid and the journey from reality to fantasy and then back to reality is the Freudian journey from ego to super-ego and then back to ego, the transformed land of reality. The paper concludes with a psychoanalytical view that the conscious craving builds father-son rapport and the possibility to heal Haroun's psychic disease of inattentiveness.

Another research scholar Nabaran Ghosh (2011), in his paper titled Haroun and the Sea of Stories: A psychological journey, claims that the psychological journey of Haroun and Rashid consciously restores the power of Storytelling, which gets repressed in their unconscious selves by the conscience. It is represented by Soraya, who continually disapproves of Rashid's gift of the gab, which results in Rashid's loss of power in Storytelling. So Rashid, and Haroun's repressed desire of getting back the power, find fulfillment in their dreams by bringing reconciliation between Gup and Chup city on the moon land. The journey of the protagonist from the real world to the world of dreams and then again returning to the real world is a tripartite journey from the 'ego' through the 'super-ego' to the 'ego' again, from the Freudian psychoanalytic perspective. Forces of dark succeed in restoring the gift of the gab. And it is only after the expression of this unconscious desire that Haroun overcomes his psychic disease, the inability to concentrate upon a thing for more than eleven minutes. He further conveys that the novel can also be an expression of the unconscious motives of the author himself as it is expressing Rushdie's predicament after the publication of his book, The Satanic Verses (1988). The two most important characters in the novel are Rashid and the CultmasterKhattam-Shud, the fictional embodiments of Rushdie and Ayatollah Khomeini respectively.

As per Mikkel Guldager (2014) in his article Magical realism and hybridity: Salman Rushdie's Haroun and the Sea of Stories and Luka and the Fire of Life, HSS and LFL are more than a simple allegory or children's book as they accentuate the loss of identity and happiness, where Haroun's quest is to regain his father's gift of imagination and Storytelling when Luka strives for the gift of life and the continuity and in a process, reconciles two allegedly incommensurable cultures of India and the West. Both the novels are expressed from a boy's perspective to downplay the aftermath of The Satanic Verses (1998), either to disseminate or secularize a discourse based on imagination, which is more important than knowledge since knowledge is limited to all we know and understand while imagination embraces the entire world. However, the paper intends to argue that the imagination depends on knowledge, as the fantasy world is the reformation of the frame story in both HSS and LFL. It is an argument between Soraya's perspective on the metaphysical universe as useless skills and Rashid's favour of it as amazing creativity. This argument turns out to be incommensurable as all stories are real in the Rushdiesque universe, because of which Haroun is detached from postmodern capitalistic society and Luka can escape from the real world threats of dogma. However, this paper argues that it cannot be escapism since the journey to the secondary world is to resolve the issues of the frame story, which the study aims to explore with textual evidence. On the other hand, Guldager also states that hybridized message emerges from imagination, language, and the family bond. Most importantly, the link between what is real and what is a story conveys multiple messages. When reality and fantasy get clashed and the intertextuality results in Rushdiesque hybridity, nothing comes from nothing and everything is convertible and compatible.

Ved Mitra Shulka (1990) in his journal article, Salman Rushdie as a Children's Writer: Reading Haroun and the Sea of Stories (1990) and Luka and the Fire of Life (2011) analyzes that Rushdie believes in the concept of internationalism as he deliberately interconnects literary and cultural heritages from across the globe, with the words from different languages, alluring the international readership. Moreover, mental and emotional comfort is portrayed through the construction of an imaginary home, which Luka and Haroun attempt to preserve. Along with those themes, he brings the art of storytelling and its utility as both the novels revolve around a storyteller and storytelling with a modern touch on an ancient story. In connection to his analysis of the nature and themes of the children's book Rushdie’s meanings in the story would have been far enriching for the readers if the paper could have looked at the novels from allegorical perspectives.

Dr Harneet Kaur Sandhu (2017) looks at the novels from a Postcolonial perspective as they offer an insightful journey into the altered consciousness of a child in his journal article, Storytelling in Salman Rushdie's Fiction for Children: A Postcolonial Take. Symptomatic of the inflexion of postcolonial enterprise, the gentle fairytales delve into problematic areas of free speech, artistic expression, and liberty, offering a concrete resolution at the end. The paper adds to the judgment, declaring that Rushdie uses seemingly fantastical and phantasmagorical characters as a weapon to convey his tumultuous context by going back to pre-colonial history and folktales to write in an amalgam of reality, fantasy, illusion, and dreams. The narration floats in the same plain between the degrees of illusion, marginalization, and exclusion where the need for dialogue and communication is expressed too. Muslim scholars trained in Islam and the
Islamic laws believe that the idea of knowledge belongs to them and it's too precious to share, which is portrayed as Alims in the fantasy world, who stand between the fire of life and Luka. But this study would have been more apparent to observe from the allegorical aspect, rather than the postcolonial approach.

After reviewing the existing body of work by different scholars, it is found that many scholars' attention has been drawn toward thematic aspects of storytelling for children. Scholars have attempted to analyze the meanings portrayed in the novels through critical analysis, but the real essence of the intended message of the stories remains unexplored. The reviews of the available scholarly literature make it clear that storytelling is not just for entertainment in the fantasy world but also to resist controversial issues of reality with the assistance of literature. Therefore, the paper aims to examine the chosen novel from Tolkien's Fantasy perspective, linking reality and fantasy through storytelling techniques.

METHODODOLOGY

This qualitative research uses an interpretative approach using J.R.R Tolkein's fantasy theory and allegory to analyze the text under the category of children's literature. An allegory is a symbolic narrative with embedded meanings and a fantasy deviates the stories from logical reality to the free space magical world of the individual's choice to tackle the issues magically. Fantasy can also be seen as an outlet for repressed desire as the created world is beyond the confined reality world. Thus, the study intends to achieve the aim and objectives through close reading and textual analysis to interpret the content, narrative technique, and the meanings that surround the text by relating the events to a personal and political context, which it allegorizes.

Salman Rushdie’s children’s book Haroun and the Sea of Stories (1990) consists of twelve chapters with two hundred and twenty-two (222) pages. A rhetorical question, ‘What’s the use of stories that aren’t even true?” is repeated four times by different characters in the beginning part of the novel and it captures the zeal to explore the symbols and metaphors of the story to analyze the intended meanings. Online scholarly materials on fantasy and storytelling, collected from various digital sources and libraries are explored to assist in analyzing imagination in storytelling. To acknowledge the writers of the chosen sources, the American Psychological Association (APA), 6th edition referencing tool is adopted in the study.

FINDINGS / RESULTS

Upon reviewing articles, journals, and book reviews, the study has found that Haroun and the Sea of Stories (1990) is not just a book for fun with fantasy elements. Instead, fantasy carries the message of reality. Moreover, the power of imagination has brought the dream into existence which Rushdie has fluently portrayed through the narrative art of Storytelling in Haroun and the Sea of Stories (1990). As a result, the researcher has analyzed the novel as a fantasy, a tool to resist the contemporary issues of real life.

DISCUSSION

The beginning of the novel with the phrase ‘Once upon a time...’ anticipates fantasy. According to a linguist and a storyteller Tolkien, fantasy is the other world, created by using human imagination, where the magic language is made appropriate, and the inner consistency of reality is being achieved in the narration. In Haroun and the Sea of Stories, Rushdie creates another world of enchantment by drawing on reality with the characters and the nature reflecting Haroun's fact life in the sad city of Alifbay, which has forgotten its name, tormenting the maturing Haroun with an identity crisis. Haroun’s parents seperate on the backdrop of Mr Sengupta's objections to Rashid’s storytelling, as, “What’s the use of stories that aren’t even true?” (p.12). It disrupts the order and unity in the Khalifa household when Sengupta elopes with Haroun’s mother, Soraya, leaving the father and son frozen in pain and discouraged, even forgetting his gab of Storytelling as mentioned, “every clock had stopped”(p.13). "Rashid Khalifa, the legendary Ocean of Notions, the fabled Shah of Blah, stood up in front of a huge audience, opened his mouth, and found that he had run out of stories to tell” (p.2). Literature brainpower is politicized, when Rashid is being threatened of cutting off his tongue when he is unable to captivate the audience with his story as he has lost his gab of storytelling and it is the fact in the real world of author as well due to the censorship, to which Rushdie uses a classic move of sub-creation in fantasy literature, allowing the story to move forward in a way reflecting his situation further through the image of dark, cold and silent Chhup city in the created world of Kahan, which also replicates the political, personal and psychological impact of the fatwa against him by Ayatollah, the supreme leader of Iran, for publishing The Satanic Verse (1988). Unlike the freedom of speech and unity in Gup city, Chhup city is separated with the rule of silence. Shutting their mouth is shows their loyalty to the cult master khatam shud, and this silence corresponds the censorship of Rushdie by Ayatollah. As Hassan (2014), one of the prolific theorists of postmodernism in his essay entitled, The Critical Scene: Issues in Postmodern American Criticism mentions, “Haroun and the Sea of Stories is a product of a revolt against the genteel tradition, with a credo directed against rigidity and dogma, against a designed and imposed uniformity”, Rushdie rebels against the fatwa and censorship on him after the publication of The Satanic Verses, through his creativity in the writing. So in a quest to reclaim stories for the story-teller, his father, Haroun travels to the world of fantasy, where the name of the characters are according to their nature or named in language terminology such as Princess Batcheat 'Conversation' and Prince Bolo 'To tell' in Hindi and Khatam-shud, the cult master who poisons the stream of stories and suspends the flow of stories to the storyteller, Rashid.
If, the water genie and Butt, the mechanized Hoopoe are transposed from the conjunctions used by Rashid to Haroun, "so kindly desist from Iffing and Butting and be happy with the stories you enjoy " (p.18). The writer has linked the imagination and reality to develop the creativity of the readers, as stated by Tolkiens (2008), "The work has to assist the reality of the primary world if inner consistency of reality in the secondary world is to be achieved (p. 155). Scholes (1981) has also said in Thursday's Child: Trends and Patterns in Contemporary Children's Literature, "no man has succeeded in imagining a world free of connection to our experiential world, with characters and situations that cannot be seen as mere inversions or distortions of that all too recognizable cosmos" (p.7). The gesture of Abhinaya of the shadow warrior, Mudra to communicate in Chup city also strike the traditional dance of India. Further, the sea in the novel shows a resemblance to Somadeva's Kathasatirhagagara (1839), which means the ocean of the streams of the story. It gives the flavour of Storytelling tradition in India, also linking the sea to the ancient myth of Sagarmanthan, the churning of the ocean, which contains a profound message of the indispensability of the oceans to all existence in being the receptacle of both the poison and divine nectar bestowing immortality.

Ultimately, Ocean is the Story in reality portrayed with both reasons and imagination of the significance, linking the secondary world to the primary world but the creativity and imagination retain the essence of magical and uniqueness. Elementally, stories are fluid like as it appears in Rushdie's vision because they are subject to change and undergo alteration like the streams toward the sea. Sea is also characterized more by interconnection and intersection than by separation and distinction as it is the union of many streams. On capturing the mechanical Hoopoe, they take out its brain, suggesting that all thinking of the people must be silenced. Further, the pollution of the seawater and the plentimaw fishes in the story are a potent metaphor for the worst consequences of silencing the people in the reality of the author's life. So, Rushdie pleads for freedom of expression through his visit to the imaginary world, as Tolkien articulates it as an escapism, which provides the opportunity to be removed from the misery of the primary world and discover the strength to overcome it in the secondary world. Harouri's journey to the land of the Moon to clear the Sea of stories polluted by the prince of Silence and the foe of speech, the cult master Khattam-Shud is adventurous with the peculiarity and delightful essence. Fantastic characters such as Egheads at P2C2E house, the shadow warrior Mudra, floating Gardeners, plentimaw fish, If the water genie and Butt, the Hoopoe with telegraphic communicating skill and bravery of the child protagonist to delight the young readers, which also retaining the uniqueness and originality of the creation as Tolkien also mentions, "a good craftsman loves his material, and has a knowledge and feeling for clay, stone, and wood which only the art of making can give” (p.147).

Even During the war between the two factions, Chup armies wears with cylindrical noses white and Gup armies with red noses wear worn at night, which would excites the readers. 'Recovery' in the fantasy, according to Tolkein, means 'to acquire again'. The renunciation of speech captivity not only occurs within the story but also in the author, creating, narrating, and editing his stories allegorically, which provides a diversity of voices from the past as memory, present as a continuous change and future as his anticipation. The fantasy world created out of Rashid's stories and travelled by Haroun helps to recover a new way of perceiving the reality of the value of Storytelling, the speech. In Bharat's article (2015) "Creative Fear in Salman Rushdie's Haroun and Luca", Rushdie uses fantasy as a method of coping with his fears of the world, and to identify the realities of extraordinary situations in his novel, so that it is possible to imitate real-life fears and anxieties with problem-solving skills. Therefore, the writer’s fear of censorship after the fatwa is a tool to boost their resilience of Haroun since the way toward the adventurous imaginary world demands creativity, knowledge, and memory to overcome the challenges with supernaturally powered creatures on the way to regain his father's lost gab of storytelling.

Further, the crowd in the Valley of K with Mudra, rejecting their leader Khatamshud, means that the people retrieve their strength to revolt against the falsity, to which they have submitted their loyalty due to the fear of oppression and backlashes. Haroun restores balance in the world of Chup and Gup in the valley of K, offering them both day and night, thus revealing the importance of balance between silence and speech to manage the binaries created within the nations. Nikolajeva (2003), exposes fantasy as being more open to gender transgression and it enhances the clarity of the story since Blabbermouth, one of the strongest and toughest characters as a fighter in the story is disguised as a male, following the trait of her guts, without surrendering to the gender norms in the society. Such thematic narration is worthy of applause in the novel, to educate young readers through relativity for divinity and self-respect. However, the level of the protagonist’s challenges paves the plot toward the eucatastrophe, with the consolation of the issues introduced in the story. It is made clear that Haroun's young age isn’t a hindrance to accomplishing the quest of his mission of tackling the most powerful creatures with his creativity, knowledge, and a heroic stand before all the challenges. Even he is successful in retrieving the memory of the city's name as Kahani, aside from regaining his father's lost stories and bringing back mother Soraya, who had eloped with Mr Sengupta at the beginning of the story. The use of stories that aren't even true' is recognized with value as the plot reaches its end; to Rashid Khalifa, they are a way of life, to Haroun, a mechanism used to make sense of a world beyond control and comprehension, to all of humankind, they are a spiritual and cultural inheritance waiting to be apprehended by the listeners.

The novel’s ending brings the beginning of reiteration of the storytelling tradition with Haroun's mother singing, signifying the continuation of song and the story to enclose life with history, myth, and cultural values.
CONCLUSION

This paper has displayed fantasy features with Tolkein's fantasy theory that stands to defend free speech and the value of storytelling. Among other fairy-story elements of creativity portrayed in the novel, the most important is the sub-creation for the characters to escape from the mundane reality, not accepting the defeat but to strengthen the weaknesses, revive the conflicts by incorporating various perspectives and leading to eucatastrophe with consolidation. Such aspects of storytelling give the sense of multiculturalism in the novel with a diverse dimension, concerning the children’s interests and ability in different areas, conveying multi-level ethics of life. On top of that, the issues, in reality, are being resisted with a magical sense of fantasy, connecting the imagined world and the real world.

LIMITATIONS AND STUDY FORWARD

The study has reviewed the articles, books, and research papers to assist the findings. And the scope of attention is moved to magical realism since the novel exists with both imaginations, which have supernatural elements and reality. Thus the aspiring researchers have a great capacity to analyze the novel from a magical realism perspective.

CONFICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICAL STANDARDS

With this, I, as a research scholar, declare that I have no conflict of interest with the organization. Rather, I am obliged to be learning under the guidance of the Organisation. Thus I offer my immense appreciation for accepting my paper and looking forward to seeing more opportunities.

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REFERENCE