

Reading the Paradigms of Magic and Reality in Salman Rushdie's *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty Eight Nights*

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Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to examine the dimensions of magic and reality in the curriculum of Rushdie's recently published work Two Years Eight Months and Twenty Eight Nights in English literature. The most interesting thing is that magic and reality in Rushdie's works have a great impact upon the readers in the contemporary time. The writers from the colonial countries have the impact of British colonial rule like J. M. Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer from South Africa, Michael Ondaatje from Canada, Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy from India. Rushdie's works are the true representation of post-colonial fiction. His writings have been marked with the tradition of Indo-English literature to the conventions and rituals of East and West. All his works have the themes dealing with worldwide generations but he has the interest focusing on the motherland and subcontinent. His magic and reality also cross the boundaries from one countries to another. He is genius in focusing on the relationships between humans and non-humans which are characterized in most of his works. He has learned from his ancestors about these aspects in his childhood. His works are the missing of cultures, in the sense, as telling the tale of the East then having the connection with the West. It is hardly possible to change stories within the paradigms of cultural conventions. He is the man who speaks for his subcontinent people.*

Key Words: *magic, reality, post-colonial, trans-culture.*

This paper focuses on reading the paradigms of magic and reality as a key note in Rushdie's present work. Magic and reality have always been inquisitive subjects in human history from the past to the present. As we are familiar with magical charms that it has the power to make its work according to the demand of need. So reality also plays its role to make the people believe the truth behind it. But to control human beings in Asian, European and African countries, religion is very important in making the people discipline. Rushdie is the master in mingling the Eastern and the Western culture and religion through his work. He is also acquainted with the importance of legends, Christians, Jewish, Islams and Hinduism in social scenario. Through these stories and fables, he wants to make people believe in the past whether they believe in these stories or not.

According to some critics, as defining to magic versus reality, when the difference between truth and illusion end, we say that this kind of method has been used. In third world countries, writers wrote on these topics at the time of political anarchy and social imbalance. They expressed their views through magic, omen, boon, curse, fantasy, ghost and mystic creatures comparing to South American literary works. In this literary genre, truth is very close to writer. Imagination plays an important role in creating such works and this process creates images into the mind of the writer and he presents these fantasies in the face of chief exponent. A writer fantasizes about his past or events which are related to him, these memories take real face in making the true story. That's why fantasy is called as a daughter of dream.

Rushdie is a man of self-will to tackle all the difficulties and come out of them. For this, he is in favor of giving freedom to all humans whether they should accept it or not. He criticizes the present system which is not applicable in terms of freedom to express them. On other hand, magic and reality are the parts of religion. Rushdie is always ready to talk about God and his existence in the universe. We all know that there is a supreme power who is handling everything according to its will. We do not have our role to interrupt the dogma of God in this circulation and only we are the follower of it. We must think if we go against it, we should be ready to put our lives in difficulties.

In his latest novel *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty Eight Nights*, he expresses his theme magic versus reality between believers and non-believers and proves his title of the novel through reasons and scientific analysis. The story is full of jinns, mythical, and supernatural characters and they exhibit magic upon human beings and entangle them for their selfish aims and purposes. In the story, there are two philosophers Ibn Rushd and Ghazali who are presented as believer and non-believer in myth (magic) and reason. Through the story, he has made two chains to defend the society as Ibn Rushd whose wife is Dunia, a great princess of lightning and her command over thunderbolt, defends reason, on the other hand, Ghazali, supports faith. The following dialogue between Dunia and Ibn Rushd presents a striking example of body and soul (physical and non-physical).

What happens," Ibn Rushd asked Dunia when the night wrapped them in silence and they could speak of forbidden things, "when a lighted stick is brought into contact with a ball of cotton?"

The cotton catches fire, of course," she answered.

And why does it catch fire?

Because that is the way of it," she said. "The fire licks the cotton and the cotton becomes part of the fire, it's how things are (Rushdie 8).

Here she is distinguishing between him and herself as a symbolic and materialistic existence in the human world. She has made a comparing study and exposed that fire and cotton could only become the source of their meeting. Dunia and Rushd both have love feelings even being the different in size and shape. Rushd thinks differently from Dunia because he was earthly creature.

Dunia suspects in the existence of God as magic also has reasons which proves that it has the reality and real things are in the shape and design of the materialistic world. Salman Rushdie speaks in his memoir, "If you exist and are as they describe you, omniscient, omnipresent and above all almighty" (A Memoir 282).

The story of this magical novel is filled with supernatural realities, as we see that Dunia, a lightning princess, falls in love with a man of earthly creature. The magical characters lack in earlobes and it is their quality to be appeared. Human characters have the earlobes and they have satisfaction in opposition to non-human creatures. One special quality that makes difference is bearing the children by non-human creature, more than one at a time. Even Dunia bears seven children at one time, eleven second time and nineteen, on her third pregnancy, became pregnant three times. But it is not clear data of the truth of her real bearings. Magical creatures love humans because of their brilliance of mind as Ibn Rushd has. It appears that they are selfish from their nature and believe in continuous love. The brood of Dunia and Ibn Rushd is called as Duniyat, a new world, have peculiar ears, itchy feet and without earlobes.

Mr. Geronimo was a down-to-earth man felt first time that his legs were not touching the ground. He does not know the reason. The first sight of Dunia falls upon him and becomes attracted towards him. Eight centuries ago, she reminded that this face resembles to somebody and it was Ibn Rushd whom she first met. Mr. Geronimo was young and Dunia renews her ancient love with him. This happens because of reborn of Ibn Rushd, as the young entered a new body, to love her, satisfy her. But she wanted to reveal itself before him. Rushdie writes in his novel as Dunia says:

I am made of smoke. My mind is smoke, my thoughts are smoke, I am all smoke and only smoke. This body is a garment I put on, which by my magic art I have made capable of functioning as a human body functioned, it's so biologically perfect that it can conceive children and pop them up in threes, fours, and fives. Dunia accepts that humans and jinns are different and Aristotle to has accepted that "in humans the mind and body are one and cannot be separated (Rushdie 145).

It is said that everything happens with a cause. Most of the people think that magic is not true in the sense it is based on imagination and feelings. But it is true that reality lies behind the magic. To prove this Salman Rushdie explains that places of worship are full of terrified men and women seeking the protection of the Almighty as Ghazali's dust said to the dust of Ibn Rushd in the story that fear drives men to God.

Magical stories are not only limited to audience but also enchant children towards itself. It is the result of culture that magical stories have the power to capture the conscience and to confine them. Adults are not untouched with this genre and are influenced with its magical charm and beauty. Though they have logical and learned mind, then can't keep themselves separate.

We can say that magic is a difficult genre in the sense it is, sometimes, hard to believe. But it is quite understandable for it has the roots in history. Even in modern times, it is still an evolving subject into sub-genres and we see a non-humans play it's multiple roles in movies and other literary genres. This doesn't mean that the events and incidents which are happening in the stories or movies do not exist in reality.

Reality in literature, we feel that we live in, and it is not against the natural laws. We cannot prove our past and present as the real copy to this example. Reality has its role in literature genuinely, and we cannot break this view. From the very past, even to the present time, reality in literature attempts to present subject matter truly and doesn't plunge into the artistic conventions, magic and supernatural elements. Reality has its ground and base upon which it propels its story. Realism in stories has truth which is based on some true events and incidents which are presented, have some

connections to the past or present. Nonrealistic literature, on the other hand, based on faith and belief, which also breaks our realistic views and that which can't be happened. In magical literature, magic plays its role either to affect people or to harm them. In this way, there exist a bridge between non-realistic and realistic worlds and both are interlinked.

Reality is a relative term that works in the sphere of criticism and it is based on the modernist fundamental conceptual changes. Reality is a dominant genre in literature and it is perceived as truth and proof. Reality represents situation of life to both of middle and lower classes. Magical works, on the other hand, are a form of deformation of realistic works. Realistic works present something which is concrete and real that is reality. True perception of realistic works is a key trait of the genre of literary realism. Most of literary works is depended upon real incidents and causes which are the source of our knowledge and entertainment. Present movies are mostly based on the true stories of our past and even they criticize politics through movies which lay its effect upon audience.

Reality of a literary text cannot be neglected as it is the manifestation of true events which are plausible. A text which is written is the representation of the character that belongs to the real world and also have atmosphere which relates to the true situation of the work. In this way, we present social change through environmental description. Iser observes literary realism as "the basic and misleading assumption in that fiction is an antonym of reality. It is a source of confusion...when one seeks to define the 'reality' of literature" (Iser 85). Reality has the double quality as it is the raw material of the work, other, outcome it's work. Magic and reality both are the interconnected subjects in the works of Rushdie which are the real experience of his life and also making the readers to react to its reality. This is because of his prudence that readers are able in reshaping the reality.

The discussion between Ghazali and Ibn Rushd is also about the truth and humanity which makes it clear. Rushdie explores the truth and writes, "The battle between reason and superstition may be seen as mankind's long adolescence, and the triumph of reason will be coming of age" (Rushdie 57). The discussion goes on whether god exists or not. To solve this puzzle, he takes the example of a child. When it can stand on its feet and makes its own way in the world. Now it does not need for his father to depend upon him. Here, father is addressed as God. As in these lines it is clear that "Faith is our gift from God and reason is our adolescent rebellion against it. When we are adult we will turn wholly to faith as we were born to do" (Rushdie 58).

One thing that I want to add through the story is that love is very rare in the jinn world; even they are not noted for their family lives. Jinn may become mother or father but their generations have no ties. They have no good relations. Sex is incessant among them all without having difference between father and daughter. Dunia was as an exceptional figure in the story. In comparison to human world there is a line between human relations, a society which differentiate between right and wrong, good and bad, proper and improper, and values the relations. This attracted Dunia Jinn to love a human and humans have given them a chance to attract people, to imprison them in magic webs.

The story of Adam and Eve is also about the secret history of the world. Rushdie writes, "Man and women invented god, who at once eluded their grasp and became more powerful than his creator, and also more malevolent" (Rushdie 83). On the other hand, Rajasthan writer Vijay Dan Detha, who has also used the term magical reality in his writings. He has cleverly beaded his stories that revealed the truth through the mouth tale stories of his territory. In his stories, poor wins over rich in a true sense.

Literature, in this sense, has always helped to shape our idea of reality which is possible only through literary genres. Mostly, reality is depicted through fiction and has laid a great burden upon it. So, in general, we can say that reality affects a continuation and naturalization of fiction about reality, and has a closer relationship with other literary genres. Of course, it would be a great misunderstanding if we make a comparative study between two literary genres reality and non-reality. Like magical works, they create magic with the help of magic power upon human characters and they are affected. Magical creatures are non-humans and they live in smokeless figure into the sky. While literary reality creates a reality through fundamental truths. Morris quotes that "realist novels never give us life or a slice of life nor do they reflect reality" (Morris 4).

As question arises whether it is possible to define reality or not? How can it be expressed in literary genre? Today, as we know that human comprehension cannot encompass reality in its entirety. We can define it from the very close of our own understanding with perspectives, our sensations, experiences and reflections on reality. And it is clear that understanding of reality is totally based on concepts and basic truths. Iser argues in his work that, "No literary text relates to contingent reality as such, but to models or concepts of reality, in which contingencies and complexities are reduced to meaningful structures" (Iser 70).

In short, we can analyze that realism does not intend to refer reality, but it is only the perception of the earlier ideas based on real incidents. Rushdie's works also draw elements of reality and has the ability to change the perception of reality to the audience as well as readers.

Talking for magic versus reality it is noteworthy to explain 'magical realism' as it shares magical incidents in the rational world. Magical realism has the traits of portraying unreal elements in a natural form which acts like human beings. The writers who have used this kind of technique are the products of Latin American Literature. The authors in this category include Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Isabel Allende and others. In English literature, the chief exponents are Salman Rushdie and Alice Hoffman.

As a distinguished literary genre, magical realism aims to study the paradox of the opposites. It challenges both of the life and death as past versus present. Magical realism has two opposite exponents, one based on the facts of reality and the other exposition of supernatural, smokeless creatures as a prosaic reality. These elements are relevant in the works of Salman Rushdie.

These kinds of elements are also explicable in *The Tempest*, magic and reality stand opposite to each other may be considered on different levels thorough the whole of the play. The play also embraces both the natural and the supernatural world. As, in the play, the action takes place before twelve years and Prospero has a different kind of power.

Twelve years since, Miranda, twelve year since,
Thy father was the Duke...
...middle of the paper...
...and the event; then tell me
If this might be a brother.
Mr. I should sin
To think nobly of my grandmother.
Good wombs have borne bad sons (Shakespeare 1, 2, 139-144).

Also, in Salman Rushdie's current work, which is inspired by the traditional 'wonder tales' of the Eastern countries, his novel is a masterpiece as it depicts the past incidents and conflicts which are the subjects of discussion in present world. *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty Eight Nights* is full of satirical and bowdy tales, including Indian philosophy as kismet and karma, rapture and redemption from the world. The story of the novel binds human mind with magical power how a jinn, falls in love with a mortal man. And furthermore, how they create their own world, with producing an astonishing number of children, unaware of their magical powers. In this way Rushdie has included magical charm in novel and further he says that when magic comes out it becomes as reality which is applicable in the novel.

From the mythic point of view, it is evident that stories do not have always to be true to realist documents. That is in the case only when we include elements of fable or mythological elements or fantastic or fairy tale; we are just on the way in getting at the truth through a multiple ways. It's a second door to dive into the truth. And it's very interesting when people hear the word 'magic', they are surprised to hear the magical realism. Most of the people believe that it's nothing but only about fantasy. But it becomes important when we add reality with it, and also it is grounded in quite vision of the real world and for this they use techniques to express that vision which don't necessarily to be realistic.

This new term magical realism is a newest name for a very old thing. This genre came into being in late 1950s in Latin America. The writers of this genre used fantasy, dream and magical elements in their works which has the same status as observable facts. Rushdie's expression about the battle between the good and evil is the rendering of the black and the white. Rushdie has been interested in the general idea of writing an area of fictions which may encompass the readers about his internal talent.

Salman Rushdie's novel *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty Eight Nights* takes its inspiration from *Arabian Nights*. It is the collection of fairy and folk tales of Arabic Islamic Golden Age, and it has characters like jinn, ghost, smokeless creatures who play with human beings. Such kinds of creatures even fight like in wars as the story of Satan in *Paradise Lost* who also begins a war against God, the creator of universe. These stories are like mythic and magical but they have the reality when mixed with the true event or incidents. As Rushdie's *Midnight Children* is also a product of his magical reality with the exuberance of Diwali fireworks. In the story, Lifafa Das reminds suddenly Nadir Khan's friend the painter and imagines, "is this Indian disease, this urge to encapsulate the whole of reality? Worse: am I infected too (*Midnight Children* 75).

Dunia story is too much related with creating magic and she does not believe in her ancestor's customs and beliefs. She wanted to play with humans in much more transformed figures and making them more shocking in the fabric of real. She tells Geronimo that they have such kind of figure which can change in natural form as does the chameleon, leaving our predecessor in this field. As she tells,

If we wish to change sex, well then, we straightforwardly do so by a simple process of gene manipulation. If we are in danger of losing our tempers, we can use the touch pads embedded in our forearms to adjust our serotonin levels, and we cheer up (Rushdie 207).

With respect to the above quotation, here, we analyze that magical creatures are not like humans, but they can use magic to serve their purposes whether the medium may be right or wrong. The story does not negotiate the presence of such kind of creatures in the universe. It is true fact that our scientists and other researchers have done a great job in finding out mysteries in the nature and they are even have searched some of the mysteries in the universe so that they could present the reality before the world. Magic and reality both are the two important aspects of the mind. One thing may be magic for someone, the same thing also become a reality to the other one. When we lack any kind of authentication of the work, we visualize as it possesses magic because of the unknown quality of our consciousness.

This story belongs from a time to remote about whether we should call it history or mythology. Many of us would address it as a fairytale because of their beliefs and morals that are related to their past. And most of the persons among us become agree. Each story has its past and present connected to the incidents and atmosphere which leads it to futuristic reality. To speak about magic, a story of the imaginary is also a way of recounting a tale about the actual that is called as real or reality. Discussing this, Rushdie puts some examples of ancient mythological pantheons that are known as having the powerful weapons. These male deities are: *Indra*, *Zeus*, *Thor* from whom the earthly creatures fear because they can harm them, punish them, and can put to an end. This may be fictional to some people but every myth has the fact upon which it proceeds from one person to other.

In this story, we come on a tale of Oya female jinn, who has its origin in an earlier intervention into human affairs several millennium years ago, now also known as sky fairy. This Oya, later on addressed as Dunia. In this context, we analyze that stories have the circle likewise the earth which revolves around the sun. The magic of the story is that Oya had a husband named Shango, the Storm King, who disappeared eventually leaving no fact. Dunia sees his lover's presence in Geronimo that is one hypothesis. Dunia is far from virginal like other jinn and was known as fecond of Duniazat. She possesses the power over water as well as fire. It may well have existed, but it is not a part of our present narrative and we lack information about it.

Dunia's magic of power is much more effective than any other jinn in the legendary. Its magic is as the lightning and roaring of the light in its hands. It can charge anyone in the battlefield as it wishes. She was the princess of the fairyland. Defining the power of its magic Rushdie writes,

The battle against the dark jinn, this lightning became a crucial weapon. And so it was that lightning freaks, a group accused during the mighty paranoia of those days of being behind the disruptions that became known as the strangeness, in fact became the prominent and eventually legendary front line of the resistance to the Zumurrud gang of dark jinn as it set out to colonize, even to enslave, the peoples of the earth (Rushdie 209).

Supernatural creatures have even magical figures, as most of the scholars have much disputes of the subject concerning the total size and length of male and female. Debates keep on going that jinn or jinnia are constant, they cannot reproduce, and even they are blessed with immortality and cannot die. And this can be proved with the history of the war of world is our best evidence in this regard. We read *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* the great epics in Indian mythology. We hear that there are *devs* and *bhoots* who have the capacity to fight. An interesting story of *bhoots*, which was also displayed in Lord Shiva's marriage party and had enjoyed and danced. Was this not a truth? Should we not believe? This magical story is full of reality as much as we can analyze it. These historical stories, events, incidents, folk tales, fairytales, all are somewhere related to some truth.

In the story of the novel, we are introduced with the war of the worlds in which *devs* and *bhoots* take part for their existence. Dunia and Geronimo now return to earth to take part in the war. It is told about the jinn that they do not believe in promises and relations that why Dunia swears a solemn oath, the mirror of her own 'as jinn and smokeless creatures do not possess real human figures' to Geronimo to help her. For her selfish purpose, she makes him free from her magical bondages and releases some magical power to him. She asked him to forget the past rumours. He, being in the influence of her charm, swears to her promise to fight at her side whether they should perish in the attempt. It is even

rumoured in the societies that jinn or fairy loves human to the core of their heart. At his agreement she expresses her love as addressed in these lines. “She kissed her cheek to show him his approval. ‘There’s a boy you need to meet, ‘she told him. ‘Jimmy Kapoor, who also goes by the name of Natraj Hero. A brave boy, and your cousin (Rushdie 214).

Fairy tales are not only magical but also has reality. For this, we must dive deep into the history of the past to find the truth. Rushdie writes that:

histories are half-truths, ignorance, deceptions, false trails, errors and lies, and buried somewhere in between all of that, the truth, in which it is easy to lose faith, of which it is consequently easy to say, it's chimera, there's no such thing, everything is relative, one man's absolute belief is another man's fairy tale; but about which we insist, we insist most emphatically, that is too important an idea to give up to the relativity merchants (Rushdie 220).

We must accept that somewhere truth exists in pros and cons of the fact. Before the existence of humans on the earth, there must have been the world of such kind of creatures on this land and in the process, male and female came into existence, for they are the supreme creation of God and that's why there established a relation between them. It may be mythic but we cannot turn our face from the truth.

Geronimo Manezes compares his life because he is in the spell of magic jinn who makes her work done as she wishes. This kind of thinking makes his heart full of agony and distrust. All the things which are happening before his eyes are beyond his expectation. He, now, reminds his past days of his mistakes, he has done in his life. As he reminds in the novel in his own words, “In those lonely pendant hours he had faced the darkest things in his life, the pain of separation of from what that life had once been the agony of the rejected path, the path that rejected him” (Rushdie 223).

Even he does not believe in his present figure as he feels himself transformed in other skin. Now he reminds the life as in *Afterwards* (a poem) that the journey is not stopped here. We still have to go forward for a newer life and suffering. Here, he has no power like the Lightning Princess, because he possesses flesh and blood that makes him slower in comparison to supernatural creatures. But she, being in love with him, releases some secrets of smoke and fire so that she may take avail of him in her need. Rushdie, here, speaks about the magical world and the reality of it, we should not keep it apart from the facts. He writes, “That pessimism was not the only way of looking at the world that things could change for the better as the worse, and that miracles did happen” (Rushdie 225).

The discussion between Ghazali and Zumurrud focus on the reality of magic as Rushdie writes, “Both human beings and the jinn live in that time; we have births, lives and deaths, beginnings, middles and endings” (Rushdie 232). Most of us hear and believe that dark jinn seek pleasure in assaulting on women as they are considered to be secondary even in that time. Women were also manipulated by the jinn in that time of upheaval of the dark ages.

The story resembles to the *Arabian Nights*, of unknown author. The stories in the book must have truths while they all are rich with magical powers. We read *Iliad* and *Odyssey* which also possess mythical stories of supernatural creatures. In the modern time we take pride in saying that we have become reasonable people. We cannot retain ourselves from dreaming, as dreams are like things which make them true. And often we wish for the dream to return and also long for nightmares.

With his profound prudence, Rushdie has a perfect combination between the understanding of Oriental and Western philosophy, myth and modern developments. He has the magical power to web his stories together with magic to reality, supernatural to human in a true relation. Rushdie is expert in weaving Eastern Mythology with Western thought. The novel portrays the world where supernatural elements are ordinary, but they are the part of the everyday reality. Through this technique he has labelled magic with reality. The novel has postcolonial content happening in independent India.

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