

ANGELS AND DEMONS: CHILD ADULT EQUATION IN *HAROUN AND THE SEA OF STORIES* BY SALMAN RUSHDIE

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The novel *Haroun and the Sea Of Stories* has some strong autobiographical elements to it. In 1989, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the leader of Iran, issued a death fatwa against Salman Rushdie for his depiction of Islam in his award winning novel *The Satanic Verses* compelling Rushdie into protective isolation. *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is the first novel by Salman Rushdie after going into hiding and the critics have assumed that the novel must be a creative reaction against the fatwa. The novel is unquestionably an allegory on freedom of expression. But as children's fiction there are some other aspects which need further analysis. The author had claimed that he started writing the novel along with *TheMidnights Children*. In a 1991 interview with the poet James Fenton, Rushdie spoke of writing Haroun partly as in a fulfillment to his son Zafar. Rushdie promised Zafar that next book he writes will be one Zafar may enjoy reading. The title alludes to two outstanding Eastern collections of stories: the *Indian Kathasaritsagara*, and the *Arabian Nights* which feature the famous caliph Haroun al Rashid. In Rushdie's book, Haroun the titular hero is the son of Rashid Khalifa, a famous story-teller, who loses his powers of story-telling when his wife leaves him for Mr. Sengupta, a town clerk who hates fictional stories. The novel is set in an exotic Eastern landscape peopled by magicians and fantastic talking animals. The narrative itself is quite intricate with an interesting and captivating side to it. Before further analyzing the storyline as such an insight into the notion of child in the changing scenario.

The socio economic changes in the world have influenced the relation between child and adult. In the literature for children the adult are not portrayed as the 'other' because childhood and adulthood no longer exist in polarities, as archetypal representation of good and evil. The differences that marked each as child and adult have slowly faded. As a result the interests of the child and adult have merged into one and the same. The cultural role performed by the child is no longer required and has become displaced and appropriated by the adults themselves. Now the child is viewed as a reduced adult. We cannot categorize adult as demonic and children as angelic. The angelic qualities of both child and adult depend on their actions. They have acquired a space for themselves and they play an important role in the peaceful existence of the world. In this scenario *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* can be probed for its portrayal of the nuances of child adult relation.

The story is set in two different fantasy lands. The city in which Rashid Khalifa lives is a fantasy land in appearance. Rushdie describes the city as, *a sad city, the saddest of cities, a city so ruinously sad that it has forgotten its name*. The country Aliffbay is an imaginary place like R.K Narayan's Malgudi. The adult characters in this city are ordinary folks. Rashid Khalifa is a professional story teller. He lives in a humble house with his wife Soraya and young son Haroun. He is praised as Ocean of Notions by admirers and Shah of Blah by his enemies. Rashid Khalifa is portrayed as a loving husband and father. He is gifted with immense power of imagination and creativity. When he is asked to tell a story Rashid is always ready with a new story. Rashid just had to open his mouth and out would pop some brand new saga, complete with sorcery, love-interest, set in a fantastic land with catchy hummable tunes. Rashid has told Haroun that the stories come from 'the great Story Sea'. But everything went wrong when Soraya stopped singing. Soraya eloped with Mr. Sengupta, a Clerk at the offices of the City Corporation. Then everything went wrong. When Rashid opened his mouth, no story comes out: only a horrid barking sound. Mr. Sengupta is a sticky-thin and whiny voiced man. Mr. Sengupta's seeming rational criticisms about Rashid's profession caused the problems in the family.

That husband of yours, excuse me if I mention,' he would start in his thin whiny voice. 'He has got his head stuck in the air and his feet of the ground. What are all these stories? Life is not a storybook or a joke shop. All this fun will come to no good. What's the use of stories that aren't even true?(19-20)

This kind of words spoiled the spirit of Soraya and she fell for Mr. Sengupta. Rashid Khalifa couldn't bear this and he got drained of his gift of gab. But politicians of the valley of K wanted Rashid to tell stories that might fill their vote banks. The struggle for political power is made fun of by Salman Rushdie. There are several incidents in the novel which depict the ugly face of power struggle. They are described as having a fat-cat smiles. The narrator says,

Nobody ever believed anything a politico said, even though they pretended as hard as they could that they were telling the truth.(In fact, this was how everyone knew they were lying).The politicians needed Rashid to help them win the people's votes. They lined up outside his door with their shiny faces and fake smiles and bags of hard cash. Rashid could pick and choose."(20).

In the valley of K we meet Mr. Buttoo an arrogant and pompous politician. It is obvious that Mr. Buttoo is not favored by the people of the valley of K. He has no regard for them either. His only ambition is to win the election and to remain in power. Mr. Buttoo had a movie- star smile and he spoke in most insincere manner. These politicians have secluded themselves from the ordinary people. They all enjoy a luxurious life which power has brought them. In the midst of wealth, power and luxury they forgot about the people who gave them the power. Mr. Buttoo calls his subjects as 'ignorant and crazy for make-believe'. The ordinary people can be influenced very easily. They will fall for some make believe story by Rashid and for that reason he has been hired by Mr. Buttoo. Apart from these politicians who misused their power the ordinary folks are also corrupt. They have no regard for the fellow beings. For example the bus drivers in the Bus Depot played some mischievous game on the travelers very often.

"One driver would start his engine, adjust his mirrors and behave as if he were about to leave. At once a bunch of passengers would gather up their suitcases and bedrolls and parrots and transistor radios and rush towards him.

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Then he'd switch off his engine with an innocent smile, while on the far side of the courtyard, a different bus would start up, and the passengers would run all over again."(32)

The central theme of the story line of the novel is partly the acting out an explanation given by Rashid to his son on account for the consequences of Soraya's desertion of her husband. Haroun had great admiration for his father. He was in fact proud of his father's ability to narrate stories. He had always asked Rashid "where did all these come from?"(10). And Rashid would always tell him that the stories come from the great Story Sea and one has to be a subscriber to the waters of the Sea. Children have the habit of taking responsibility of the misfortunes that befall the adults in their life. Haroun does the same. Haroun feels that his question "what's the use of stories that aren't even true?"(22) has hurt his father more than the elopement of Soraya. Haroun tries very hard to cheer up Rashid on their way to the valley of K. Haroun understands the sadness of Rashid and blames himself for it. When he meets the water genie Haroun is scared but only curious. It takes a whole lot of courage for a boy to set off for a journey to an unknown realm. He takes the most important decision in his life all alone.

Now Haroun Khalifa made a decision that would prove to be the most important decision of his life. 'MrIff,' he said politely but firmly, 'you must take me to the Gup City to see the Walrus, so that I can get this stupid blunder about my father's water supply reversed before it's too late.(59)

Thus starts the adventures of Haroun in which he not only restores his father's gift but also solves the problems between The Guppees and Chupwalas. Haroun becomes part of the fight between good and evil ,between democracy and dictatorship. The city of Gup and the city of Chup are in another moon called Kahani. According to Butt the Hoopoe The Moon, Kahani revolves so fast that no earth's instruments can detect it. There is an age old rivalry between the city of Gup and Chup. These words are taken from Hindustani and stand for gossip or nonsense and silence respectively. The tension between silence and story is represented through the Gup and Chup. The land of Chup is always bathed in sunshine and the land of Gup is always in dark. It is difficult to categorize the inhabitants of Gup and Chup either as adult or young. The only young character in the novel is Haroun. In the city of Gup there are the king Chattergy, his daughter Princess Batcheat, her fiancé Prince Bolo and other dignitaries. The villain in the novel is Prince of Chup, khattam-Shud. The name means "completely finished", "over and done with". Khattam-Shud is the antagonist of the novel, but it is also a concept larger than a single character. Khattam-Shud is the antithesis of story; it is complete silence. He is the arch enemy of stories and now he intends to conquer the language itself. He is responsible for Rashid Khalifa's affliction. His followers have abducted the princess Batcheat. According to Rashid Khalifa the followers of Khattam-Shud plan to offer Princess Batcheat as a sacrifice to their cult of dumbness and muteness, Bezaban. Some of the devotees of Bezaban had sewed their lips and died of hunger and thirst. They are planning to destroy the well of story itself by adding poison to the water. Khattam- Shud wants to control the whole world. He says

The world, however is not for Fun', replied Khattam –Shud. ' The world is for controlling. 'Which world?' Haroun made himself ask.Your world, my world, all worlds,' came the reply. They are all there to be Ruled. And inside every single story, inside every Stream in the Ocean, there lies a world, a story world that I cannot Rule at all. (161)

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The use of shadows in the book is complex and intricate. The shadows do not represent evil or good. They do not exist in the extremes of light and dark. Instead they are combinations of light and dark. Therefore, the duality of shadows represents the careful balance of good and evil. Mudra the shadow warrior, is disgusted with the growing cruelty and fanaticism of the Cult of the tongueless ice-idol Bezaban. He is no longer an ally of Khattam-Shud. Here the shadow has a life of its own. It is not a manifestation of evil. Shadow' represents the balance between light and dark, goodness and evil. From the shadow's own words,

“ -And of course there can be quarrels between the Shadow and the Substance or Self or Person; they can pull in opposite directions-how often I witnessed that!- but just as often there is a true partnership, and mutual respect.-So Peace with the Chupwalas means Peace with their Shadows too.” (132).

Thus both the Shadow and the Self have to work together in order to keep the equilibrium. Khattam-Shud has separated himself from the Shadow, thereby disrupting the equilibrium between himself and Shadow. Thus Khattam-Shud is now Shadowless and the embodiment of extreme darkness. Although Gup and Chup both fall on extreme ends of a spectrum of speech, Rushdie is careful not to let these lands fall at the extreme ends of a spectrum of good and evil. Factors such as the manipulation of stories, the secrecy of the Walrus and the Eggheads, and the questionable reasoning for casting darkness over Chup all suggest that Gup is not the embodiment of goodness. In fact any land that participates in war cannot be entirely benevolent and good. Likewise, Chup is initially seen to be evil and destructive. But it is only due to the work of Khattam-Shud. He is the cause of all the troubles in the Kahani and in Aliffbay.

Through his courageous efforts Haroun saves the Ocean of Stories. Like a sensible person he realizes that it is important to clean the roots itself. In Haroun's point of view the Guppees are not entirely good. He seems to convey that self proclaimed truth can be wrong at times. There are indications that the light side of Kahani is not as innocent as it is made out by the Guppees. In their arrogance they seem entirely ignorant of the dire consequences the loss of light cause for the Chupwalas. They have brought the rotation of Kahani under control. As a result there is always sunshine in the Gup City where as the City of Chup is under permanent darkness. Thus the destruction of the technology is necessary for resolving the problem. Haroun wonders “Why did the Chupwalas live in Permanent Night? Must it not be very cold indeed if the sun never shone at all? (81) Such sentiments are characteristic feature of a child. The Guppees are under the presumption that they own the Ocean of Stories. Haroun has an outsider status whenever he resists the Guppee point of view. When they encounter the first representative of the evil side, Haroun resists the rigidity of the attitude of the two sides. He points out the obvious necessity of the differences that both sides have ignored. They are not at all bothered about cooperation and complementation. Haroun ruminates on the beauty of silence as opposed to speech. As he says,

“But it's not as simple as that,” he told himself, because the dance of the shadow of warrior showed him that silence had its own grace and beauty just as speech could be graceless and ugly; and that action could be as noble as words; and that creatures of darkness could be as lovely as the children of the light. “If the Guppees and Chupwalas didn't hate each other so,” he thought, “they might actually find each other pretty interesting. Opposites attract, as they say (125).

Haroun becomes a leader who makes decisions independently. His solution to the crisis indicates that he has not succumbed to the rigid, black and white world view. He realized that the

root cause of the problem is polarizing itself on the Moon. And he eliminates the root of the problem. He drinks the wishwater, the magical golden liquid given by the water Genie. Haroun comments on his own solution to the conflict: "From now on, Kahani will be sensible Moon ... with sensible days and nights" (176). Light does not triumph in the final resolution. It is a return of alternating light and darkness that improves the situations in the moon. The solution puts an end to the segregation. There is an equal distribution of light between two sides. "It is a victory.... Over our old Hostility and Suspicion" (193). It should be remembered that the villain is not killed by the hero. The death of Khattamshud is only a side effect of the conflict. Haroun destroys the technology invented by the Eggheads. But the Guppees are not enraged by this act. More surprisingly Haroun is even rewarded by the Guppees "for the incalculable service...done to the people of Kahani" (200). The fact that Haroun is rewarded points to an admission of guilt on their side. Haroun's solution is at once ingenious and considerate of both sides. Unlike typical heroes of children's stories and fairy tales whose mission it is to kill the villain, Haroun does not resort to violence. Killing Khattamshud would simply mean fighting the symptom without removing its cause. In an extraordinary act of self fulfillment he restores Kahani to its original state of alternating day and night. As a result, the villain is crushed by his own giant sculpture as it falls on him. Thus the Chupwalas are released from tyranny. Sunlight reappears and allowing positive energy and identity of the Chupwalas are restored. Haroun acts as a unifying force in the Kahani. As a result of Haroun's wish "Peace broke out ... a peace in which Night and Day, Speech and Silence would no longer be separated into zones by Twilight Strips and Wall of Force" (191).

All these action as in a perfect fantasy novel take place at night and in the morning Rashid Khalifa narrated the same story to the people of Valley of K. When they heard the bravery of the young hero the people decided to put an end to the snobbery of Buttoo. Thus indirectly Haroun saved the people of the valley. To his further delight Haroun realized that the sad city has remembered its name. Thus the Walrus has granted his request, "I want you to provide a happy ending, not just for my adventure, but for the whole city as well" (202). In his personal life too everything ended in a nice note as Soraya returned to Rashid. Thus without any blood spilling Haroun has achieved great things. The world established at the wish of a child has a Utopian concept. Everything is fair and good in this new world order. The evil is completely destroyed and peace is established.

Various notions of children are common: innocent, dependent etc. The child is often considered as needy, weak, defenseless and incapable of identifying good and evil. In this complete weakness the child stands for a strong power: the power of innocence. This is the power which helps every child hero in children's literature to stand against the bullying adults. Many of the beloved heroes and heroines of children's literature from Cinderella and Snow White to Rapzanel and Oliver Twist have had a troublesome childhood. They were raised by monstrously wicked adults. These heroes overcome all the hurdles and establish their identity. They all began their childhood as victims of child abuse by elders. From this victimization the children realize their power and destroy their opponents. The child hero of postmodern fantasy is eager to prove himself. The children of postmodern fantasy are more intelligent and experienced due to the changes in the world. He will risk his life for his friend. He takes control of the situation and acts bravely.

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Haroun's adventures are to save his family from disintegrating. He has nothing to prove in life. He is confident and courageous. Thus the novel shows kids in different emotional and intellectual perspectives. Every child is unique. It is impossible to categorize them as weak minority. Salman Rushdie portrays Haroun as miniature form of adults who is intelligent and ready to act. Haroun represents children who are supposed to solve problems initiated by adults. Haroun displays a certain amount of wisdom, reason and compassion throughout the novel. Haroun's problems are the result of dysfunctional family. The broken relation between parents affected him negatively. As Miss Onita said Haroun's problem is psychological. At every eleven minutes Haroun loses concentration because Soraya eloped at Elven O clock. Though Rashid Khalifa is a virtuous man he is quite weak and emotionally unstable. He even cries before his son. . Rashid Khalifa failed to recognize the changes in Soraya's attitude. He lived in the world of stories and fairy lands. Thus he thought that everyone around him is as happy as he is. He failed to notice the meanings of frequent visits by Mr. Sengupta. When he falls for depression it falls on Haroun's shoulder to console him.

The actions and emotions of Haroun and the grownups remind us that there is a potential adult in every modern child. They do not enjoy the bliss of innocence in the same degree as children of past. Nowadays innocence is associated with ignorance and being ignorant of the world does not help a child's progress in the society. The child is the investment for future. Haroun Khalifa is the only person capable of bringing order to a chaotic world. He shows the adults their mistakes and brings them back to virtue. Since the adult do not make a better world for them the children learn the ways of the world and works for a better future.