

**TOWARDS FREE THINKING: THE MAGICAL WORLD OF  
SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *LUKA AND THE FIRE OF LIFE***



*Project submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of BACHELOR OF ARTS in English Language and Literature*

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project entitled “Towards Free Thinking: The Magical World of Salma Rushdie’s *Luka and the Fire of Life*” is the record of the bona fide work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Jeena Ann Joseph, Assistant Professor, Department of English.

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## CERTIFICATE

I hereby declare that this project entitled “Towards Free Thinking: The Magical World of Salma Rushdie’s *Luka and the Fire of Life*” by Lakshmi Unnikannan is the record of the bona fide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to thank God for giving me proper guidance throughout the process of crafting this project.

I would like to extend my gratitude towards Dr. Alphonsa Vijaya Joseph, Principal, St Teresa's College (Autonomous) for her support.

I am deeply indebted to my guide, Dr. Jeena Ann Joseph, Department of English, St Teresa's College (Autonomous), who has acted as a constant pillar of support from the very beginning; without whose guidance and constructive feedback I would never have completed my project.

I am greatly thankful for Dr. Preeti Kumar, Head of Department of English, St Teresa's College (Autonomous) for her constant encouragement and motivation.

Lakshmi Unnikannan

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## Introduction

Censorship is one of the hindrances that writers often face. The act of suppressing an idea is seen as contemptible by the artists while for some others it seems to be necessary that they insist on censoring to avoid spreading of wrong ideas or morale in the society. Writers have had to deal with censorship for a long time, their works, if it is violent or excessively sexual in themes are either banned or highly censored so that the work becomes unrecognizable from the original. Writers like Nadine Gordimer, Toni Morrison, D H Lawrence, and many others were victims of censorship. Salman Rushdie and his works in particular have been at the center of controversy.

Rushdie born in Mumbai to a Kashmiri Muslim family primarily focuses his works on the disruptions and problems of migration between Eastern and Western civilization. He achieved recognition in the literary world through his second novel *Midnight's Children* which won the Booker Prize and was even selected as the best novel of all times. His fourth novel *The Satanic Verses* was banned over 13 countries including India that had large Muslim communities. Ayatollah Khomeini on issuing a *fatwa* declared the book blasphemous against Islam. The work stirred up disruptions in the Islamic world as his depiction of Prophet Mohammed was seen quite inappropriate. Even though he held that the novel was not anti-religious, he was subjected to scrutiny. He had to spend his life in hiding after the issue of *fatwa*, revealing how censorship and banning a writer's work can have a huge impact on a writer's life. His works are primarily of postcolonial in nature that are characterized by a style of magic realism.

Magic realism is a mode of writing in which the extraordinary or the supernatural will be presented as a day-to-day occurrence without explaining its cause or origin in a mundane real world. An example would be a girl who has wings but leads a very normal life like every other average school girl who has issues with homework, gets bad grades for math and history, etc. Here the wings are normalized, instead of explaining how the girl magically acquired it, this is represented as something that happens in the world. In a broad sense magic realism generally has these features: it's set in the real world, supernatural or extraordinary elements are normalized; comprises some form of myth taken from religion, culture, or tradition; time has no limits as it can be modified or is subjective according to the author's choice; and the works are mostly referred to as hybrid as they intertwine the mundane and the fantastical elements.

Magic realism is very frequently used to subvert ideas about reality that are represented in a variety of media, including literary realism, non-literary discourses, and time itself, which is thought of as being objective. *Luka and the Fire of Life* (2010) written by Salman Rushdie is a novel that has adopted his usual mode of magic realism. The novel is a sequel to *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990).

The circumstances under which Rushdie wrote the novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* was when his life was threatened by the *fatwa*. It was during this hard time Rushdie wrote the novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* in order to satisfy his son when he asked why he don't write books that he can read.

Years later, *Luka and the Fire of Life*, a token for his second son, appears to celebrate, in a more relaxed tone, his ten-year escape from death threats. After

regaining his life, the author continued to fight oppressive mind frames even more by using works written (not only) for (his own) children, thus performing two of the primary functions of a fictional text: providing counsel and education. The lessons he teaches are the ones he learned at the cost of his own life.

The novel explores the themes of filial love, death, the power of will, and courage. It also successfully deconstructs the mainstream idea of time and death. Not only does the novel deconstructs the notion of many aspects seen as absolute and objective it also does reconstructs such notions and provides new possibilities. *Luka and the Fire of Life* centers around Luka Khalifa who is the younger brother of Haroun and has the power for cursing. The 12-year-old Luka sets out on an adventure to revive his father's life, who was cast under a spell by the antagonist of the story Captain Aag, a.k.a. Grandmaster flame. Luka is accompanied by his faithful pets, Dog and Bear on his journey in the quest for the fire of life along with his friends from the magical world.

This study aims to show how the elements of magic realism in Salman Rushdie's *Luka and the Fire of Life* are used to subvert notions of reality. To examine this, Hegerfeldt's five prototypical features of magic realism as outlined in *Lies that Tell the Truth: Magic Realism Seen Through Contemporary Fiction from Britain* (2005) is used. The features are, firstly, by using realistic writing styles to convey fantastical characters and events. Words are employed to portray both fantasy and reality. Second, by employing an "ex-centric" or marginalized focaliser, the novel is also able to question popular conceptions of reality, particularly the traditional understanding of time. It suggests that time can be subjective since it is influenced by the marginalized characters' consciousness. Thirdly, non-literary discourses could be distorted



using words. Fourthly, although Time neither has a physical nor an abstract form, it is likewise supernaturalised or personified in the story. Discussion of the conflict between acceptance and free will appears as it is dictating the fate of the characters in the story, who seem to oppose it through their own free choice. Finally, literalization, which occurs when figurative statements take on literal meaning and blur the lines between language and reality, is used to depict a corrupted reality.

This project tries to analyze the novel based on the five prototypical features of magic realism and how it deconstructs and reconstructs many aspects of reality. Chapter one deals with how the novel has implemented and follows the features of magic realism and further details of the plot, the chapter will also analyze the use of narrative techniques and the choice of diction that has facilitated the use of magic realism.

As the book was inspired by video games, chapter two looks into how gaming is used as a primary source of engagement in the novel. The inclusion of gaming in a novel not only provides enthusiasm for the children of the current generation but also portrays the twenty-first century cultural and generational concerns for the importance of technology in day-to-day life. Rushdie tries to bridge the gap between the older and the younger generation. He defies the mainstream concern of how gaming is detrimental to the younger generation as it curbs the mental capability of children's ability to the imagination.

## Chapter 1

### Codes of Subversion

The novel *Luka and the Fire of Life* centers around 12-year-old Luka Khalifa, the younger brother of Haroun. They live in the city of Kahani, the parents Rashid Khalifa often referred to as Shah of blah is a storyteller while Soraya is a woman who is considered practical and is someone who is grown used to the tell-tale fantasy of her husband and at the end of the novel to her children. Soraya often tells that Luka is a time-turner, as she gave birth to Luka when she was forty-one and at the time Haroun was eighteen years old. Luka's birth baffled and wondered Rashid and his birth was something that made them young again as they experienced the excitement and joy in each of Luka's achievements when he got older, "...a fellow who can turn back Time itself, make it flow the wrong way..." (10). One day on his way home Luka sees the Great Rings of Fire (G.R.O.F) which is the most celebrated circus in all of Alfibay and he sees how the circus master Captain Aag a.k.a. Grandmaster flame treats the animals unkindly, seeing this hurt Luka shouts and curses Captain Aag's establishment, "May your animals stop obeying your commands and your rings of fire eat up your stupid tent" (6). On the next day to Luka's surprise, a bear, that has a tag on its collar reading "Dog" and a dog that has a tag on its collar reading "Bear" appears, and they become Luka's lifelong companions. Later, he finds out the circus had its downfall as he cursed and on seeking revenge Captain Aag casts a spell on Rashid that makes him sleep. Nobodaddy is something that strongly resembles Rashid but is a transparent ghost-like figure from the magical world who is summoned to get his soul, and gets solid each time Rashid gets closer to death. To prevent this, it is Nobodaddy

who himself tells Luka about the Fire of Life that can revive Rashid from his sleep which burns at the summit of the Mountain of Knowledge on the shadow of which the Lake of Wisdom flows. Luka with his willpower and courage crosses each stage that is termed as levels, such as in games, overcomes the difficulty with the help of his magical friends and procures the Fire of Life and re-awakens his father.

Written in a realistic mode where in magical and fantastical elements are narrated in a casual, realist tone is one of the key elements of magic realism in the novel. The fantastical and the supernatural are narrated as something totally normal and circumstantial, therefore, intertwining fantasy and reality. This form of writing distinguishes the novel from fantasy and science fiction genre. As Hegerfeldt claims, “Magic realist fiction characteristically hitches itself to a megastory [realistic landmark] to give itself a realistic veneer” (74). As a result, the same concept is employed to depict happenings that cannot be explained by rational science, realism as the fundamental form of representation in fiction is undermined.

*Luka and the Fire of Life* connects the story to the real world through familiar references and affairs. The one which connects it to the twenty-first century is to the reference to Luka’s gaming consoles. The reference to Mr. Sherlock, one of Luka’s schoolteachers, “eliminate the impossible and what remains, however improbable is the truth” (35), this iconic quote of Sherlock Holmes by Arthur Conan Doyle connects the readers to the reality. It also enables the children to identify with the protagonist of the story who is a normal boy who goes to school, has difficulty with some of the subjects in the school, has to face the bullies and so on and so forth. “At mathematics and chemistry,

unfortunately, he was not so hot” (13). This kind of statements appropriates the realist mode of writing and once the readers adjust to this mode, the real world is duplicated in the novel.

The story is not a fantasy fiction or a fairy tale as it has all the qualities and essential elements of magic realism as outlined by Hegerfeldt. The most important element is that when Luka visits the World of Magic, kept hidden for thousands of years by Aalim, the Guardians of the Fire of Life and the Lords of Time: Jo Hua (the past), Jo Hai (the present) and Jo-Aiga (the future, it is accepted as a part of reality by the people in Kahani. Just like the normal world the magical world also takes various forms and shapes and differs in their geographical location from time to time. “The World of Magic has taken many forms in different times and places, and it has had many different names. It has changed its location, its geography, and its laws, as the history of the Real World has moved from age to age” (141).

Third person narrator in the novel who has all the information and provides it to the reader describes the incidents in the magical world with seriousness as of the incidents that takes place in the normal world. The description of the places in the magical world is given in accurate details similar to that in normal world, where the River of Time, whose miraculous waters originates from the Ocean of the Streams of Story, tumbles down into the Torrent of Words and into the Lake of Wisdom, which stands in the shadow of the Mountain of Knowledge and from where the Fire of Life burns at its top. The narrator does not use words or phrases that can be dismissive in nature like “according to the legend” or “it was said that...”. This eliminates the possibility of the narrator not believing in the magical world.

The tone of the narrator reinforces the idea that this all could have happened in the actual real world. The narrator who has access to the inner thoughts of the characters represents the magical elements as “undeniable fact(s)” (Hegerfeldt). The possibility of Luka’s adventure as a dream is ruled out as Rashid in the novel admits that it was indeed Luka who has saved his life. The combination of two of the novel's major techniques—presenting a vivid vision of an event or location and utilising a careless narratorial voice to convey credible magical elements—to demonstrate that commonplace happenings are as magical as magic itself is normalised and that subverts realism in the story.

The next magic realism element according to Hegerfeldt is the use of employing an "ex-centric" or marginalized focaliser. Here Luka is a marginalized figure as he is a child who is left-handed and particularly has a different point of view from others. Luka’s gullibility in the magic world is evident as he is someone who very much admires the stories told by Rashid and secretly wants to go through an adventure by himself as he is quite in awe for Haroun as he himself had been on adventure with the sea of stories.

Luka’s left-handedness is mostly seen by people as an abnormal personality trait. Therefore, Rushdie tries to demarcate from the regular norm of considering right-handedness as something virtuous. And he subverts the notion by referring to how left way might actually be the right way “Maybe you are correct to believe that the left way around is the right way, and that the rest of us are not right, but wrong” (164).

One of the most important aspects of reality that is being subverted is our notion of time. The time in the magical world is controlled by Aalim. The

perception of time in the novel both adheres to the conventional notion of physical time and absolute time. We get to know the Aalim's notion of time through two instances one through Luka's memory:

*The Aalim are set in their ways and dislike people who try to rock the boat," Rashid Khalifa had told the sleepy Luka one night. "Their view of Time is strict and inflexible: yesterday, then today, then tomorrow, tick, tock, tick. They are like robots marching along to the beat of the disappearing seconds. What Was, Jo-Hua, lives in the Past; What is, Jo-Hai, simply is right now; and What Will Come, Jo-Aiga to a place we cannot go. Their time is a prison, they are the jailers, and the seconds and minutes are its walls. (158)*

This excerpt conforms to the notion of the conventional physical time where days are divided into 24 hours and the hours into minutes and the minutes into seconds. This again when carried away makes days into weeks, weeks into months and months into years and so on.

While the excerpt that conforms with the absolute time is when the Aalim speaks about time:

*The ages go by heartlessly whether people wish them to do so or not. All things must pass. Only Time itself endures. If this World ends, another will continue. Happiness, friendship, love, suffering, pain are fleeting illusions, like shadows on a wall. The seconds march forward into minutes, the minutes into days, the days into years, unfeelingly. There is no 'care'... (201).*

The Newtonian concept of time is maintained in the thought of Aalim which is understood from the above excerpt.

All of this is defied by Luka when he says that something in the past can be relived through the memory and the future is all of one's imagination and hopes while the present is present because of certain temporary sequences. Therefore, Luka's recollection of Rashid's bedtime story illustrates Rashid's alternative conception of time throughout the book, which subverts physical time.

The novel uses the fourth magic realism feature where realistic elements are turned into fantastic. This is done through the super naturalization of time as Aalim and the three Jo's are represented as super natural figures who guard the Fire of Life and maintain the order in the magic world.

The final element of magic realism that can be found in Luka and the fire of life is literalization, which involves the blurring of the lines between verbal and physical representation. This is portrayed through Luka's curse becoming real. "May your animals stop obeying your commands and your rings of fire eat up your stupid tent" (6). Here the novel has denied the barrier between actions and words as the barrier between words and actions are blurred. The same pattern is again repeated at the end of the novel when Luka curses the Aalim (201-201) upon his realization that the Aalim does not have concern for others and their only concern is for their existence. Thus, when Luka's curses materialise, it highlights how words are a passage to what might possibly happen. Therefore, blurring the lines between words and actions.

Since the above-mentioned elements of Hegerfeldt's five prototypical features are followed it could be said that the novel *Luka and the Fire of Life* has successfully subverted reality by using its realist mode of writing.

The novel has implemented the general aspects of magic realism that are usually seen in this mode of writing. The first one would be the setting of the novel where usually the setting would be in a real-life world and supernatural or fantastical elements are normalized. But, here in the novel it is set in the fictional world of Kahani but everything is just as normal like every other normal real world. The reference to Luka's gaming consoles, references to geography and even Angelina Jolie makes the city of Kahani that is on the land of Alfiba a normal city. The unusual begins with the reference to Great Rings of Fire (G.R.O.F) which is a successful circus where the antagonist of the story Captain Aag exploits his animals so as to make them perform. This is something that is very much normalised in our existing world where we enjoy ourselves in a circus while the animals are forced to perform. Therefore, Rushdie here tries to critique the idea of such enjoyment and he expresses this through the young Luka who feels a great amount of pain knowing the conditions in which the animals are treated and he curses Captain Aag "May your animals stop obeying your commands and your rings of fire eat up your stupid tent" (6). This shows how the lines are blurred between actions and words as the curse becomes real and the animals start a rebellion. The World of Magic is the fantastical element in the story as the world has rivers that are symbolical representations of time, this can be seen something similar to the Indian belief systems where each and every component of nature symbolically represents something or the other. Like river Ganga is seen as a holy river that purifies the soul, likewise the river of



time has its super natural abilities that makes it one of the most important elements in the magical world. Then comes how the rats and the otters are naturalized as they have the ability to rule and control the world. The animals in the magical world have the ability to speak and are anthropomorphic characters, thus this is something that is seen as normal throughout the entire novel. Another major important aspect in the magical world is how a person's name gives the power to control them. This is made evident when Luka calls out the name of Insultana as Soraya. This is something that is strange but is presented in the novel as entirely normal. "Knowing a magic creature's name gives you power over it, yes it does!" (83). Therefore, this element of magic realism can be ticked on in the novel *Luka and the Fire of Life*.

The next element is how the myths are comprised in the novel taken from religion, culture and tradition. "Myths are the 'magic eyes' and 'the main gateway' of his fictions. Rushdie has created the mythical, historical and realistic worlds in his novels with the help of myths. He has portrayed the mythical characters in his novels. He has depicted reality through myths and also criticized the contemporary life". (Bharath)

The Sphinx from Sophocles' play *Oedipus the King* who asks the travellers riddles in the road of Thebes is kind of replicated in the old man who asks similar riddles to allow people to get past the river of Time. "Yes! The old man of the river was a riddler, that was what Rashid has said about him..." (52). Here in the novel, we can see how Rushdie has adopted the myths and has incorporated them to suit it to the level of imagination of the young readers. The novel also lights a spirit to re-kindle the myths by portraying how the Gods in the magical world has no longer effects on the people in the normal world. And

Rushdie here has mixed the myths of other culture, tradition and religion together and made a combined whole of them. For example, the beauty Goddess who represents different cultures and religion come together to contest one another as to see who is the loveliest among them. The references to Kishimonjin, the Japanese rasetu, Mylitta the moon Goddess of ancient Sumer, Aztec vampire queen Xochiquetzal and the many other Goddess all represents the lost tradition or the fading of those myths. Therefore, the novel is a sophisticated synthesis of mythology.

The subjectivity of time is another aspect that is used to subvert the reality as discussed earlier. Magic realism is used in the novel to highlight various notions about Time in order to give an alternate viewpoint on the nature of Time that differs from the prevalent ideas about Time that are drawn from the physical sciences. It appropriates the traditional notion of Time from the viewpoint of the physical sciences, only to subvert it later to demonstrate that the physical sciences by themselves are insufficient to understand the nature of Time.

The novel also intertwines the reality and the fantastical. Even though the story is set in the fictional city of Kahani, the city is as normal as any other normal world. The references to the daily hustle bustle of Luka's school the mention of the MUU consoles and many other people whose existence in the real world is valid is mentioned in the story. Thus, the reader is not alienated to the city of Kahani instead gets instantly familiarised. The fantasy is added when Luka enters to the World of Magic that was divided and the barrier was something that could not be crossed. Luka's intrusion into the World of Magic to revive his father is then presented as a video game since he is tasked to collect

lives and has to press the golden button at the end of each stage named as levels. This is something that the young readers are instantly able to relate with due to the influence of the video games, hence Luka's adventure becomes a part of reality to the young readers. This blurs the division between fantasy and reality in the novel, thus, intertwining the fantasy and the mundane.

Therefore, it is evident from *Luka and the Fire of Life* that magic realism is a strong tool in subverting the reality. Luka is representation of what can be achieved and how his deviation from the norm is actually Rushdie's deviation from reality.

## Chapter 2

### Codes of Reinterpretation

Young adult fiction combines fantasy storytelling with video games. In this type of fiction video games are employed as a narrative technique, creating more engaging possibility for the protagonist. In this twenty-first century gaming has become a part of most teenagers' and young adults' life. Games tend to be something that is exactly the opposite of the real world, as they provide a more colourful and illusioned world. This provides an increasing cause of concern for the older generation, as they worry that this illusioned space will somehow be detrimental to the younger generations' perception of reality. This kind of unnecessary cause of concern is rejected by Rushdie in *Luka and the Fire of Life*, as he has incorporated the aspects of gaming in the novel and has put gaming in a positive light.

There has always been a debate on whether video games are good or bad. One set of people believes it to be an absolute waste of time which includes parents as well as other experts while the other set constituting scientists and psychologists believes it to have some remarkable benefits for children. They have also enlisted the positive effects that video games have on children and some are that it increases problem-solving abilities, hand-eye coordination, planning, resource management, multitasking, quick thinking, and making fast analysis and decisions. According to game theorists, video games seek to develop independent minded people out of children and young adults by teaching them the ideals of self-defence, protecting others, and the need to face obstacles.

Visual media and computer games, which may readily entice young minds away from books, are seen by purists of literature as threats to the fundamental act of reading. Through Luka, Rushdie tries to suggest that technology is necessary in the contemporary world and that video games help in civic engagement among the younger generation. Gaming incorporates storytelling elements such as fantasy, narrative, and discovery. This possibility of using game for multiple purposes may have prompted Rushdie to use it as a structural device in his novel. The novel dramatizes conceptions of Rushdie, that preciousness of time and mortality are central. It also introduces the readers to the concept of using technology to keep alive storytelling.

Luka cursing the Grandmaster Flame earns his hate and contempt, which provokes the Grandmaster to put a curse on Luka's father, Rashid, which puts him in a coma. To get his father to come back to life, Luka embarks on a journey in the magical world which he soon realizes is similar to his video games. As it is predictable in a video game's frame story. The omniscient narrator enters Luka's head to highlight how he, and perhaps the readers who are his age, are aware of the rules, battles, equipment, and phases of a game. Due to Luka's mastery of video games, he is therefore well accomplished to finish the task of reviving his father to life:

Fortunately for Luka, he lived in an age in which an almost infinite number of parallel realities had begun to be sold as toys. Like everyone he knew, he had grown up destroying fleets of invading rocket ships, and been a little plumber on a journey through many bouncing, burning, twisting, bubbling levels to rescue a prissy princess from a monster's castle, and

metamorphosed into a zooming hedgehog and a street fighter and a rock star, and stood his ground undaunted in a hooded cloak while a demonic figure with stubby horns and a red-and-black face leapt around him slashing a double-ended light sabre at his head. Like everyone he knew, he had joined imaginary communities in cyberspace, electro-clubs in which he adopted the identity of, for example, an Intergalactic Penguin named after a member of the Beatles, or, later, a completely invented flying being whose height, hair colour and even sex were his to choose and alter as he pleased. Like everyone he knew. (11-12)

Even though Soraya previously insisted that video games are not useful in reality, Rashid tries to defy her statement by pointing out how his hand-eye coordination and many other cognitive abilities have significantly improved.

They are useless skills. . . . In the real world, there are no levels, only difficulties. If he makes a careless mistake in the game, he gets another chance. If he makes a careless mistake in a chemistry test, he gets a minus mark. Life is tougher than video games. This is what he needs to know, and so, by the way, do you (15).

Here Soraya stands for the older generation who are sceptical about video games and who refuse to deny the possibility of deriving good results from video games, while Rashid on the other hand advocates how it is helping Luka to develop his cognitive abilities which according to him are something that books or schools are not able to impart.

Luka, at first, enjoys this kind of journey but soon is confronted with the reality that his father's life lingers around his success. On this realization, Luka is ready to sacrifice his life several times, and so does he face death many times. When he is defeated, he accepts it as he is very much familiar with the frameworks of video games. His adjustment towards his multiple death indicates the twenty-first-century child's understanding of immortality shaped by his exposure to cyberspace. His ability to respond to a stimulus highly increases over time. He solves riddles and puzzles, is quick to efface a problem, etc. Therefore, Rushdie combines video games with his writing to conquer the attention of the younger generation.

*Luka and the Fire of Life* encourage readers to consider gaming as a means of improving problem-solving skills and reimagining the great controlling structures of life, such as Time, by using the straightforward structure of the classic adventure game as a metaphor for conformity. Throughout the novel, the reader is aware of the presence of gaming. This keeps the child readers more and more engaged with the novel, they gain a sense of acceptance where they feel that gaming can help them in some real-world situations. Rushdie tries to constantly emphasize the fact that Luka's genius in gaming is what helped his father to come back to life. This further shows us how Rushdie is among the people who try to find some good out of video games rather than ridiculing it to be some time pass or a waste of energy.

Rushdie has incorporated the gaming effect in the novel through his narrative as follows, Luka on entering the Magic World sees Nobodaddy and mistakes him for Rashid, but soon he realizes that it is his father's opaque doppelganger figure that becomes solid when Rashid loses his life slowly. Soon

Luka finds out from Nobodady that to save his father's life he has to steal the fire of life, and for that, he has to embark on a journey in the world of magic. He realizes that this World of Magic is something similar to his video games because as he enters it, at the corner of his eye appears the life counter and the level counter.

We see that in gaming, entertainment and challenge are two important factors, which provides children a competitive edge in the real world. We can see how Luka rises to the occasion when he is compelled to save his father from the clutches of death. His competitive spirit was not something that was not only aroused by his will to save his father, it could be well said that it was fuelled by his competitive spirit that he already exhibited when he played his consoles. Luka's admiration to the Magic World is shown throughout the novel, even though many obstacles were thrown into his path, he was also enjoying the quaintness of this world. Thus, the novel produced both the effects of competitiveness and entertainment.

The feel of the game is provided by giving the reader a sense of urgency, like in every other video game, where something or the other is waiting to free itself from the clutches of some danger or the other. Likewise, this is the case with Rashid's life which provides the reader with an understanding of Luka's journey. In Luka's every mistake, there is something he has to forsake which mostly is his life but whenever he loses it, he can regain it by collecting lives that are hidden away as vegetables, rocks, or coins. On completion of each level, he is required to press a golden button that saves his progress, if this is not done, he will come back to the first level from where he started, making him lose precious time to save Rashid. Like in every video game, Rushdie also presents



some adjustments such as instead of hitting the golden button after each level, there is an option to skip those and after reaching a particular level and pressing that golden button will automatically record the previous levels, this information, however is not acquired by Luka inherently but is passed on by Insultana of Ott.

Challenges are important aspects of a video game because they prepare the player to make decisions and to live in the adult world. While completing the nine levels of the game to become a successful fire thief, Luka faces a number of challenges. These challenges make him wise in the game world. At the end of the novel, Luka emerges as a superhero, as the sole possessor of the Fire of Life, with which he resurrects Rashid Khalifa and, by extension, his stories. The game allows Luka to do so, and by putting themselves in Luka's shoes, readers become virtual superheroes as well. By using gaming Rushdie has not invented a whole new aspect of fantastical narrative, as gaming in itself has the quality of storytelling, fantasy and discovery.

Hence, through *Luka and the Fire of Life* Rushdie show how technology in a wider aspect has become vital for the twenty-first century. The text not only has portrayed the benefits that can be derived from video games, but also has tried to bridge the gap between the younger and the older generation.

## Conclusion

Salman Rushdie uses his writing as a platform to defy the mainstream. Even though his works have stirred up many commotions he still remains to be someone who challenges many of the mainstream ideals particularly by employing magic realism. He vehemently opposes the idea of censorship and strongly advocated for the freedom of writers. His speech *On Censorship* delivered at the PEN World Voices Festival emphasizes the fact that how freedom and the assertion of freedom is vital for an artist's creation, it also defies censorship by talking about how a censored piece is then seen as a "censored art". "The censor labels the work immoral, or blasphemous, or pornographic, or controversial, and those words are forever hung like albatrosses around the necks of those cursed mariners, the censored works" (Salman Rushdie).

Rushdie was not only censored for his work *The Satanic Verses* but he was threatened with death by the *fatwa* issued on 14 February 1989 by Ayatollah Khomeini, the supreme leader of Iran. He then had to spend almost ten years of his life in hiding. This was the time when Rushdie wrote *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990) which kept him distracted and also allowed him to expose the risks associated with storytelling, it is an allegory defending the value of stories over silence while discussing the risks associated with storytelling. He was also a victim of many failed assassinations. The recent attack on August 12, 2022 left him severely wounded. He was stabbed ten times by a 24-year-old suspect, Hadi Matar. He was attacked when he was about to give a public lecture at the Chautauqua Institution in Chautauqua, New York, United States. The suspect

born to an immigrant family from Yaroun in the south of Lebanon, a village that supports *Hezbollah* and the Iranian Government. He expressed his dislike for Rushdie and his writings. Rushdie suffered four wounds to the stomach area of his abdomen, three wounds to the right side of the front part of his neck, one wound to his right eye, one wound to his chest and one wound to his right thigh. This attack on his life can be interpreted as a threat to other artists for their creations. It is evident that Rushdie uses Magic Realism as a tool to deal with controversies, which helps to get him away from censorship. When Luka's father is cursed to death it portrays how censorship affects the life of writers and their works. Rashid, Luka's father also known as "Shah of Blah" (7) is induced into a coma, we see how his stories disappears from the face of earth. His coma is a kind of censorship to his stories and ideas. Rashid likewise Rushdie is in imminent danger of death. What they both have in common is that they are both producers of stories that some section of society despises. Hence, they are either banned or censored, or worse comes to worst they are threatened by death.

*Luka and the Fire of Life* which has elements of video games to it, is another reference to his life in hiding. When the *fatwa* compelled Rushdie into hiding he used gaming as an escapist mechanism from reality. He primarily played Super Mario World, and as detailed by *The Millions* Rushdie found pleasure in playing the game "had grown fond of Mario the plumber and his brother Luigi and sometimes Super Mario World felt like a happy alternative to the one he lived in the rest of the time."

Rushdie a master in magic realism tries to make his readers aware of the disparities and inequalities that happen in the world. As we all know magic realism is a strong tool to critique reality, by employing it, not only does he take

the readers to the different worlds of magic and reality but also, he constantly tries to question reality. Through his work *Luka and the Fire of Life* he has undermined the rigidity of time by flexing it to his needs, by doing this he provides a new perspective of time that most of us would not have thought about. His works urge the readers to develop the habit of questioning reality. He also emphasizes that what is found as a deviation from the norm should be treasured, like Luka who is left-handed is seen as different from the normal, it is this difference that helps him to steal the fire. He shows the disparities or unfairness of the world by representing those aspects in a bad light. For example, Luka's bully in school, Ratshit shows the appalling nature of human beings that exist in schools or workplaces. The novel also displays his ability to invent new words and acronyms such as P2CE (Process too complicated to explain) and the coinage of words such as Insultana who is Luka's friend from the magic world.

His novels primarily have a fairy tale structure to them. The way Rushdie writes children's books is a mixture of magic realism, and fairy tale and most importantly he tries to cater to the needs of the twenty-first-century generation's needs. The fairy tale structure in gaming is the other aspect that Rushdie has brought in his novel. Gaming as we all know has an inherent fairy tale structure to it, therefore the novel is a product of this kind of combination.

By combining Magic realism and video games, Rushdie attempts to question the social issues of the current generation. Using narrative techniques that are quite unique in nature, he tries to make the readers aware of the discrepancies and problems of the real world. Luka being left-handed, represents the marginalised section and by bringing in the element of video

games he tries to blend in the concerns of the generation. He caters to the needs of the younger generation by mixing video games with magic realism. By using these kinds of techniques, Rushdie is trying to keep the storytelling tradition alive.

To conclude *Luka and the Fire of Life* is an excellent example of how magic realism is used to defy the conventions of the mainstream, and to question the notions of reality. It is a novel that has realized the need for technology in this twenty-first century world. Hence, through the novel, Rushdie successfully infused the idea of magic realism and the importance of gaming in his young readers.

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