

**ADVOCACY FOR FREEDOM  
IN  
SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *HAROUN AND THE SEA OF STORIES***



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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 “Advocacy For Freedom in Salman Rushdie’s *Haroun And The Sea Of Stories*” is the record of bonafide work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Ms. Tessa Fani Jose, Assistant Professor, Department of English.

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## CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that this project entitled “Advocacy For Freedom in Salman Rushdie’s *Haroun And The Sea Of Stories* ” by Abijah Bertina Arby is a record of bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

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**An Abstract of the Project entitled  
Advocacy for freedom in Salman Rushdie's**

*Haroun and The Sea of Stories*

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This project deals with the Advocacy for Freedom in Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. The story begins with a young protagonist Haroun Khalifa who lives with his father Rashid, a celebrated storyteller known for his ability to entertain, instruct and persuade crowds on behalf of politicians and his mother Soraya. The project explores the severe oppression's faced by the characters Haroun, Rashid and Soraya and their longing for freedom. However these characters experience existential crisis and showcases what they perform to unleash them for their meaningful living within the autocratic sphere. By using existentialist philosophy, as a theoretical tool, the individuals are seen as free agents who create their own meaning and purpose in life. In the book, the characters are constantly struggling to maintain their individuality and freedom in a world that seeks to control and suppress them. For example, the protagonist Haroun's father loses his storytelling ability and becomes a shell of his former self, unable to express his individuality and creativity. So, Haroun endeavors to emancipate his relatives for the collective existence.

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## CONTENTS

	Introduction	1
Chapter 1	Human spirit and Existential Crisis	5
Chapter 2	Advocacy for Independence in <i>Haroun and the Sea of Stories</i>	11
	Conclusion	15
	Works consulted	17

## Introduction

“It is a rejection of all purely abstract thinking, of a purely logical or scientific philosophy; in short, a rejection of the absoluteness of reason.”

-Soren Kierkegaard

Existentialism is a form of philosophical enquiry that explores the issue of human existence. This philosophy regards the world to be without meaning and it sees men to be engaged in struggles to discover meanings. And also existentialist philosophers explore questions related to the meaning, purpose and value of human existence.

Jean Paul Sartre overtly adopted the word as a self description and through the wide distribution of the postwar literary and theoretical output of Sartre and his associates, notably Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau Ponty and Albert Camus existentialism became identified with a cultural movement that flourished in Europe in the 1940's and 1950's.

Among the major philosophers identified as existentialists were Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, Martin Buber, Jean Wahl and Gabriel Marcel, and the Russians Nikolai Berdyaev and Lev Shestov. The nineteenth century philosophers, Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche are precursors of the movement. Existentialism was as much as a literary phenomenon as philosophical one.

By the mid 1970s the cultural image of existentialism had become a cliché, parodied in numerous books. According to glossary of literary terms Existentialism

is a gospel that views each person as an insulated being who is cast into an alien universe and conceives the world as possessing no inherent human truth value or meaning. This thesis explores how Salman Rushdie's novel, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* projects a young boy, Haroun who suffers fear and repression. The novel projects the boy who is doubly victimized by society forces due to being poor and secondly being socially deprived off opportunity for sound health, education and expression of desires.

The research employs existentialism as a theory to study how the characters suffer fear and repressions. The narrative surrounds Haroun and his quest to heal his fathers lost gift for storytelling. Haroun lives in an ancient mega city that is so sad and serious that its people have forgotten its name .

Haroun lives in this demoralized place with his father Rashid khalifa, a professional storyteller more known as Rashid the ocean of notions or further insensitively as the shah of Blah. Haroun and Rashid represent the human individual's attempt to develop and preserve a ideal being. As the study is from the viewpoint of existentialism, it studies the human psyche in the context of loss and freedom. How Haroun as a boy suffers in the society is the focal point of the study. He represses his desire for his existence in the hostile society.

This oppression is because of the socioeconomic phenomena. Human freedom is one of the most noticeable forms of suppression. It occurs in all spheres of society and thus the boy is a potential victim .



Haroun and Rashid represents two sides of the spectrum of existential that represents the existence of human sense of self and thus affects the way human beings lead their lives.

This research demonstrates how one's being is explored through the conflicting characters Haroun and Rashid . Haroun loses his mother at a young age, which awakens him of his existence. His awareness of existence is enhanced when he experience non-being, through the loss of others and are thus more apprehensive of what it means to live. In addition to sharing similar qualities, Haroun and Rashid share similar pasts, and an awareness of death .

This indicates that they have equivalent foundations on which they build their selves. They therefore serve as prime examples of how an individual can succeed and fail in the attempt to develop ,and preserve their being . Indeed ,Haroun and Rashid are from similar backgrounds . However ,their actions , and motives reveal significant differences. Within the fictional world the protagonist Haroun represents the ideal being ,while his father represents the unsuccessful attempt to fulfill one's potential . Besides the human sense of being is connected with the questions of love , hate , anxiety.

The theoretical tool of Soren Kierkegaard's existentialism pictures how Haroun plans to tackle the difficulties for his survival in the novel . The notion of existentialism propounded by Kierkegaard that views man not as a species but as an obtainable individual. “ *The Haroun and the sea of stories* ’ explores the nature of human behavior depicted by Haroun . His life is desolate and confusing. His search

for wholeness of self remains incomplete despite numerous efforts. The reason behind this entire fatal situation is indeed the clash in the society. So the study is from the view point of existentialism , it studies the human psyche in the context of loss and freedom .How Haroun as a boy suffers in the society is the focal point of the study . He represses his desire for his existence in the hostile society . This oppression is because of the most noticeable forms of suppression .It occurs in all spheres of society and thus the boy is a potential victim.

My research explores the nature of the freedom in the novel by examining the moral justification of freedom that suffers from challenges imposed by society. It portrays the free mind seen as deviant due to the labeling of as socially deviant. As far as the organization of the project is concerned, the first chapter introduces the entire study with the sufficient reflections on the theoretical tools employed for the analysis of the text. The second chapter is textual analysis, which focuses on the freedom that is imbalanced in existential and social structure. It cultivates disparity of freedom.

## Chapter 1

### Human Spirit and Existential Crisis

*Haroun and the sea of stories* is a novel by Salman Rushdie that explores the relationship between language, storytelling and imagination. In the novel, Human spirit and Existential crisis are important themes that are intertwined with the large narrative. The Human spirit is represented in the novel through the character of Haroun's father, Rashid, who is a famous storyteller known as the "Shah of Blah". Rashid's ability to spin tales is a reflection of his own spirit, which is full of life, imagination and creativity. However, when Rashid's ability to tell stories is threatened, his spirit becomes weakened and he falls into a deep existential crisis.

The theme of existential crisis is also present in the novel, particularly in the character of Haroun. Haroun's journey to the Sea of Stories is a metaphor for his own search for meaning and purpose in life. Throughout the novel, Haroun struggles with questions of identity, belonging and the nature of reality. His journey to the Sea of Stories ultimately helps him find the answers he is looking for and gives him a renewed sense of purpose and hope.

Existential theory is a centuries old philosophy. It embraces personal freedom and choice. It tells that humans choose their own existence and meaning. European philosopher Soren Kierkegaard is regarded to be the first philosopher of existential theory. Walter Kaufman defines "Existentialism as the philosophical theory which holds that further set of categories governed by the norm of authenticity is necessary to grasp human existence". The themes that are

associated with existentialism are dread, boredom, alienation, the absurd, freedom and nothingness. Salman Rushdie's novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* tells about a young boy named Haroun who suffers fear and repression. The boy is victimized by the society forces to being poor highlights the issue of unhappy and depressed caused because of imbalance in psychological and social structure that cultivates disparity between the rich and the poor.

So the existentialism, in fact begins as a voice raised in protest against absurdity of pure thoughts, a logic of thinking but the immanent movement of being. It calls the spectator of all time and of all existence from the speculations of pure thought to the problems and the possibilities of his own conditioned thinking as an existing individual seeking to know how to live and to live the life he knows. The word Existence is the key concept in Existentialism and also refer specifically to human existence.

Existentialists also support this view and describe man as a concrete individual capable of being an unique. The Existentialist considers that to be an existent one has to be capable of being conscious that one exists. In this sense man alone can exist. Kierkegaard was the first person who used the word existence in a religious sense. His main interest was the possibility of man's self realization. According to him, to what extent can man realizes himself by withdrawing from the irresponsibility, superficiality and forgetfulness of everyday life. So, for Kierkegaard existence is the attainment of self possession in the spirituality directed and determined life of the individual.

The narrative surrounds Haroun and his quest to heal his father's lost gift for storytelling. Haroun lives in an ancient city that is so sad and serious that its people have forgotten its name. Haroun lives in this disheartened place with his father, Rashid Khalifa, a professional storyteller better known as Rashid the Ocean of notions or more insensitively as the Shah of Blah. Rashid's wife Soraya runs off with their neighbor, the unimaginative Mr. Sengupta, who is far too sensible to see the value in fiction. Haroun and Rashid represent the human individual's attempt to develop and preserve an ideal being, the central features of existentialism present in Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. Haroun and Rashid are not only the protagonist and antagonist of the novel, but also represent two sides of the spectrum of existentialism.

While they share similar backgrounds and characteristics, Haroun stands for an ideal being with additional qualities that Rashid does not. While Rashid aims in life to overcome non-being: to achieve immortality. Haroun proves to be the more insightful individual. He accepts the existential facts of death, freedom and love, whereas Rashid, Haroun's father distances himself from them, dedicating his life to achieve immortality. Even within the fictional world, Haroun and his father are juxtaposed in their attitudes to these existential givens. Existentialism is a branch of psychology that looks at how existence determines the human's sense of self and thus affects the way human beings lead their lives.

Existence means the ability to know that is there and can take a stand with reference to that fact. It means to be aware of one's presence in both space and time and to know that one is responsible for this existence. Haroun and Rashid are from similar

backgrounds. However, their actions, and motives reveal significant differences.

Within the fictional world, the protagonist Haroun represents the ideal being, while his father represents the unsuccessful attempt to fulfill one's potential. Besides, the human sense of being is connected with the questions of love, hate, anxiety. The juxtaposed approaches of Haroun and Rashid help to understand concepts and perspectives of existentialism such as non being, freedom and love. This explores that love and freedom and the way Haroun and Rashid deal with each other affects their approaches to existence and their beings.

Employing the concepts of Kierkegaard Nietzsche, Sartre, Jaspers, Heidegger regarding existentialism. The theoretical tools of Kierkegaard's existentialism pictures how Haroun plans to tackle the difficulties for his survival in the novel.

For Kierkegaard “ man exists in a state of usual crisis and the foremost task before him is to become subjective”. For this, He must have to choose , to act for himself without ignoring his contingency however, man does not have within himself the declaration of his crisis, but he has the possibilities of raising the query of his crisis and of feeling the significance to himself of his own emergencies.

As this focuses on the role-played Haroun performs the good aspect of human nature, the concept of existentialism employed to analyze the human existence is useful. Man is a free entity having freedom of choice. He even makes choice when he chooses not to make any choice. Man can become whatever he wants to become through his choices, but at the same time, he cannot avoid the consequences of his choices. In this method Nietzsche views man in a very peculiarly personal and

philosophical system kind. According to him, the character of man is extremely problematic. He is foremost unsafe animal holding in his hands the foremost dangerous power of processing himself however at an equivalent time the stalwart and can be ready to survive even once killing god.

Nietzsche believes that death of god has crystal rectifier to arousal of a brand new state of affairs, which would see the emergence of a brand new man whom he referred to as "Superman". The Superman is one who will not surrender himself to rules, who refuses the will of the community or the common good he is the individualist the master with the courageousness to describe his ethics and values in his own interest.

The construct of Superman as expressed by Nietzsche has relevancy in analyzing the character of Haroun whose contribution for the family is no less than that of a divine figure . He sees him a superman on the far side normal smart and evil. Karl Jasper explains " man who essence reflects in his freedom as a result of freedom is his highest dignity "

Freedom comes through the act of alternatives and man acknowledges his true self that may be obtained through freedom. Jasper discusses this notion of human nature that solely in those moments once he exercises his freedom is totally himself. Salman Rushdie novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* tells about the Suffers faced by the boy and his repressed desire for his existence in the hostile society and the oppression faced by him in the socioeconomic phenomena.

The novel revolves around Haroun's quest to get back his father's storytelling gifts. Haroun's resolution is closely related to Rushdie's desire for free speech. Advocacy for freedom manifests not only in the projection of postcolonial element but also in the use of the narratives, closely associated to a fairy tale world where there is obviously no restriction of communication and expression. Freedom relies on the magnitude of consciousness, one has. The more conscious humans become the greater extent of freedom they seek, which makes existence meaningful.

Salman Rushdie's novel portrays Haroun and Rashid who stand for opposite poles; good and evil respectively in order to discuss human reality. The novel also touches on the idea of censorship and the danger of suppressing free speech and creativity. The villain of the story, Khattam-Shud, seeks to destroy all stories and impose a single, rigid narrative on the world. Through Haroun's adventures, Rushdie shows the importance of freedom of expression and the dangers of limiting our imaginations.



## Chapter 2 - Analysis

### Advocacy for Independence in *Haroun and The Sea Of Stories*

*"Haroun and the Sea of Stories"* by Salman Rushdie is a tale that advocates for independence, creativity, and free expression. The novel revolves around the importance of storytelling, the power of imagination, and the dangers of censorship. Through the characters of Rashid Khalifa and his son Haroun, Rushdie highlights the value of independence and the need to resist oppression.

Rashid, a master storyteller, is known for his independence and free-spirited nature. He believes in telling stories that come from his heart, rather than conforming to the expectations of others or society. However, when he loses his ability to tell stories, Rashid becomes disillusioned and depressed. This loss of creative freedom also affects Haroun, who feels lost and disconnected from his father.

Through their journey to the Sea of Stories, both Rashid and Haroun learn to embrace their independence and to trust in their own abilities. They come to understand that true creativity comes from within and that they should not be limited by the expectations of others. The novel emphasizes the importance of creativity and individuality, encouraging readers to embrace their own unique perspectives and to stand up for their right to free expression.

Moreover, *"Haroun and the Sea of Stories"* touches on the importance of independence in the face of oppression and censorship. The character of Khattam-Shud seeks to control and limit the stories that people can tell, in an attempt to impose his own narrow worldview on the world. Through their journey, Haroun and Rashid

learn to resist this oppression and to fight for the freedom of expression. The novel advocates for the importance of independence and creativity, as well as the need to resist oppression and censorship.

Furthermore, the novel challenges the idea that there is only one correct worldview or narrative. Khattam-Shud seeks to impose his narrow worldview on the world, but Haroun and Rashid learn that there are many different stories and perspectives that can exist side by side. The novel encourages readers to embrace diversity and to recognize the value of different perspectives and narratives.

The novel highlights the power of storytelling in shaping our perceptions of the world. Rashid's stories have the power to inspire, to bring people together, and to create positive change. Similarly, the stories that Haroun encounters in the Sea of Stories have the power to heal and to inspire. The novel emphasizes the importance of storytelling in our lives, reminding us that stories have the power to change the world.

The novel's advocacy for independence is particularly relevant in today's world. In a society where conformity and adherence to norms are often praised, it is easy to lose sight of the importance of individuality and creative expression. Rushdie's novel reminds us that we should not be afraid to embrace our own unique perspectives and to stand up for our right to free expression.

*"Haroun and the Sea of Stories"* by Salman Rushdie and Soren Kierkegaard's philosophy on existentialism both explore the themes of independence and individuality. In Rushdie's novel, the characters of Rashid and Haroun Khalifa learn to

embrace their own unique perspectives and stand up for their right to free expression. In Kierkegaard's philosophy, individuals are encouraged to take responsibility for their own lives and to create their own meaning in a seemingly meaningless world. By combining these two perspectives, we can gain a deeper understanding of the importance of independence and the need to resist oppression.

Similarly, Kierkegaard's philosophy emphasizes the importance of individuality and authenticity. He argues that individuals must take responsibility for their own lives and create their own meaning in a seemingly meaningless world. This philosophy encourages individuals to embrace their own unique perspectives and to resist the pressures of conformity and societal expectations.

Kierkegaard's philosophy can be seen as advocating for a similar idea of independence and authenticity. He argues that individuals must create their own meaning in a world that often seems meaningless. This means rejecting the pressures of conformity and societal expectations and instead embracing one's own unique perspectives and values.

The novel's advocacy for independence and Kierkegaard's philosophy on existentialism are particularly relevant in today's world. In a society where conformity and adherence to norms are often praised, it is easy to lose sight of the importance of individuality and creative expression.

Rushdie's novel and Kierkegaard's philosophy remind us that we should not be afraid to embrace our own unique perspectives and to stand up for our right to free

expression. The combination of "*Haroun and the Sea of Stories*" by Salman Rushdie and Soren Kierkegaard's philosophy on existentialism provides a powerful advocacy for independence and individuality. Both perspectives emphasize the importance of embracing one's own unique perspectives and resisting the pressures of conformity and societal expectations. By combining these two perspectives, we can gain a deeper understanding of the importance of independence and the need to resist oppression.

## Conclusion

*"Haroun and the Sea of Stories"* by Salman Rushdie and Soren Kierkegaard's philosophy on existentialism offer a powerful advocacy for freedom and individuality. The novel emphasizes the importance of creativity and independence, while Kierkegaard's philosophy encourages individuals to take responsibility for their own lives and to resist the pressures of conformity and societal expectations.

Through the characters of Rashid and Haroun, the novel demonstrates the importance of embracing one's own unique perspectives and standing up for one's right to free expression. Their journey to the Sea of Stories teaches us that true creativity comes from within and that we should not be limited by the expectations of others.

Kierkegaard's philosophy offers a similar message of freedom and individuality, emphasizing the importance of creating one's own meaning in a world that can often seem meaningless. This means rejecting the pressures of conformity and societal expectations and instead embracing one's own unique perspectives and values.

In today's world, where conformity and adherence to norms are often praised, the advocacy for freedom and individuality offered by Rushdie's novel and Kierkegaard's philosophy is more important than ever. They remind us of the importance of embracing our own unique perspectives and standing up for our right to free expression.

The combination of "Haroun and the Sea of Stories" and Kierkegaard's philosophy on existentialism offer a powerful message of advocacy for freedom and individuality, reminding us of the importance of creativity, independence, and resistance against oppression.

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