

Satirical Elements Juxtaposed: Paradigm of Contemporary Conflict in the Novel of Salman Rushdie 'Quichotte'

Ronald¹, Dr. Sugantha Ezhil Mary²

¹Research Scholar, Department of English, VELS Institute of Science, Technology and Advance Studies (VISTAS) Pallavaram, Chennai- 600117, India.

²Assistant Professor, Department of English, VELS Institute of Science, Technology and Advance Studies (VISTAS) Pallavaram, Chennai- 600117, India.

ABSTRACT: Salman Rushdie highlights in his postmodern and postcolonial narratives the complex and definite reality, interwoven with fragmentation, self-reflexivity and metafiction. Representing the contemporary ethos employed with magical realism to juxtapose the dimension of prevailing issues faced by contemporary society, Rushdie in his novel *Quichotte* satirically foreground the significant impact of Social Media and Technology. *Quichotte*, published in 2019 is an adaptation of the famous literary novel *Don Quixote*. It is a satirical novel that narrates the story of Ismail Smile, a traveling salesman, who creates a hero of a romance novel named *Quichotte*. This complex and ambitious novel engage in a range of literary techniques, irony and humor to question the world we live in and urge readers to catechize the values and premise that underpin it. Rushdie uses humor and irony to comment on conflicting contemporary issue such as celebrity culture, fake news and commodification of love.

KEYWORDS: Media Culture, Pop Culture, Quest, Reality and Fantasy, Satire

INTRODUCTION

Salman Rushdie is a British-Indian Postcolonial and Postmodern novelist, essayist and critic, renowned for his novel *Midnight's Children* that won him the coveted Booker Prize in 1981. Rushdie's works can be categorized under postcolonial literature, a genre that emerged roughly in the 1980s. His works often explore the themes of displacement, hybridity, identity and cultural conflict that are fundamental to postcolonial literature. His writing often purveys with the complexities of living in a multicultural society and the tensions that arise from conflicting beliefs and values. His works have had significant impact on contemporary literature and he is considered to be one of the most important and influential writers of his generation. *Quichotte* is a novel by Salman Rushdie that tells the story of an aging Indian salesman named Ismail Smile, who becomes infatuated with a television actress named Salma R. He embarks on a quest to win her heart, mirroring the journey of *Don Quixote* from Miguel de Cervantes' famous novel.

In his pursuit of Salma R's love, Ismail Smile travels across an America that is both real and surreal, encountering various eccentric characters along the way. The boundaries between reality and fiction blur as the narrative weaves in and out of different levels of storytelling. *Quichotte*, like many of Rushdie's works, has a strong satirical edge. The humor and irony employed to critique the contemporary society profess the truth of paradigm shift where existing technology and social media have prevailed to be either dominating or manipulating narratives to augment the magnitude of reality.

CONTEMPORARY CONFLICTS JUXTAPOSED WITH SATIRE

Celebrity culture, fake news, and commodification of love are some of the conflicting paradigm in today's contemporary society. Reference to celebrity culture can be seen in the novel like the popular Reality Show called 'Desperate Housewives' in which a character named Salma R, works as a judge. The show is a camouflage allusion of real-life shows like 'The Real Housewives'. Another reference is the character *Quichotte* who is obsessed with Salma R and spends a lot of time from following her on social media to reading about her life in tabloids. Other celebrity culture is evident with reference to Hollywood and the movie industry, for example Abdallah, *Quichotte's* nephew who struggles to become a screenwriter in Hollywood. The obsession of achieving fame and fortune is apparent throughout the novel, specifically the desire of *Quichotte* to win over Salma R which in some part depicts his longing for fame and fortune.

Fake News is another phenomenon projected by the character Shadow, the darker aspects of *Quichotte's* personality, including his insecurities, anxieties, and fears. Shadow works in a run-down movie theater in New York City. He is fanatical with conspiracy theories and spends most of his time online, consuming and spreading fake news. He is also a member of a group called the Shadow Brigade, which is dedicated to spreading false information in order to create chaos and sow dissent. The novel critiques the phenomenon of fake news and the manipulation of information in the media.

This impact of technology and social media on our lives is satirized by Rushdie with the character of Sancho that represents the real world, while Quichotte's adventures take place in a virtual world of his own making. Sancho acts as a mediator between Quichotte and the rest of the world. He represents the traditional, simple way of life that is threatened by technology. Sancho, as a farmer is content with his simple existence, but he is forced to confront the realities of the modern world when he joins Quichotte on his quest. Through Sancho's eyes, Rushdie is able to show the negative impact of technology on society, such as the way it can isolate people from each other and lead to a loss of human connection.

The novel satirizes the commercialization of love and relationships. Quichotte's quest for Salma R is portrayed in this aspect. Salma R, like many other characters in the novel, is a product of the entertainment industry, and her persona has been carefully crafted to appeal to a mass audience. Quichotte's obsession with Salma R represents the commercialization of love, as he has fallen in love with a fictional character that has been created to sell products and generate revenue. Throughout the novel, Rushdie criticizes the entertainment industry's manipulation of emotions and the commodification of love. He suggests that love has become a commodity that can be bought and sold, and that people have become accustomed to the idea of falling in love with fictional characters rather than real people.

CONCLUSION

Salman Rushdie employs various satirical elements to critique and comment on contemporary society. The contemporary nature of storytelling is aesthetically presented with the uses of intertextuality to satirize the literary canons and the structure of the novel. He uses celebrity culture as a way to comment on modern society's obsession with fame and fortune, and how this obsession can lead to disillusionment and disappointment. The representation of fake news also is a timely and thought-provoking exploration of a complex and pressing issue. It offers a satirical and critical take on the role of the media in shaping public perception, and the challenges of navigating a world in which truth and fiction are increasingly blurred. The impact of social media in Quichotte is complex and multifaceted. Rushdie shows both the positive and negative aspects of social media, highlighting its ability to connect people across distances and provide a platform for marginalized voices, but also the way in which it can reinforce existing power structures and create new forms of inequality. And the commodification of love in Quichotte critically explores the way in which our cultural values have been shaped by market forces. Rushdie shows how the pursuit of love has been commodified and sold back to us in a pre-packaged form, and how this has contributed to a sense of disconnection and isolation in modern society. On the whole, the novel highlights the absurdities and dangers of modern society and its various cultural and societal obsessions.

REFERENCES

- [1] Rushdie, Salman, *Quichotte*. (Penguin Books 2021)
- [2] Majumder, Atri and Khuraijam, Gyanabati, *Salman Rushdie's Quichotte and the Post-truth Condition*, *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* (ISSN 0975-2935), *Special Conference Issue* (Vol. 12, No. 5, 2020. 1-9)
- [3] Ravinthiran, Vidyan, *Quichotte by Salman Rushdie review: this magical satire is preaching to the converted*, *The Telegraph*, 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/what-to-read/quichotte-salman-rushdie-review-magical-satire-preaching-converted/>