

A Critical Evaluation of Salman Rushdie's *The Old Man in the Piazza*

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Abstract

Salman Rushdie's "The Old Man in the Piazza" demonstrates the story of an old man who everyday sits at cafe, staring at sun's declining in the west direction. He is the witness to see the transformations of a beautiful lady called "language". How the story catches in the vortex of "yes" and "no" and after it accepts the transitions of language while it is in the adieu mode. Being a silent observer, how much he speaks from his ever-inquiring eyes about all the activities of the piazza, is minutely narrated in the story.

Keywords: old man, piazza, story, witness.

As a reader, I can say that this post-colonial piece entitled *The Old Man in the Piazza* is a short story with a purpose. Sometimes it sounds like a parable. It is an omniscient narrator who is the anchor of knowing how to present the story beautifully. He speaks about an old man whom the centre of the story revolves around. Everyday this old man comes to piazza at four o'clock at the time of sun's declining in the west

direction. How he walks, what he orders and where he goes back at 8 pm (no one knows) is well and minutely narrated. He is the silent observer like an audience of all the activities in the piazza. Most of the movements of his day today life happen in this place. People around this place come front for arguing to each other. Bad and chaotic discourses are prevalent everywhere. They are free to speak about likelihood of hurricanes, scandal of bribery, secret and illegal affections of Catholic priests, flavours of ice creams and much more petty subjects of here and there. Every day Except Sunday was packed with fervour of argumentation as the seventh day of the week like Sir Roger at Church (a periodical essay by Addison) was for developing good habits of cleanliness and offering their prayers to God.

Next section of the story bewails over the so-called dark age, began forty years ago where 'no' was not considered right anyway. This was the charm of 'yes' that everyone has to cope with this positive remark of the annoyance in any situation. Either it may be the condition of bread and wine could transubstantiate into flesh and blood, or immigrant population transformed at night into drooling sex monsters or covering the

topic from soul to war. It was necessary at all times to assent. Through the story I can be a witness of the odyssey of the language that is changing with the march of time.

Language is personified as a woman in the story as the word 'she' is used for it or I can say 'her'. She was no longer allowed to say yes to 'no'. After struggling with the ups and downs, she succeeds finding some variations of 'yes' like 'of course', 'certainly', 'for sure', 'absolutely', 'totally', 'no question about it' or to some extent 'agreed'. So, the god of 'no' is enough funny to play with it. I sense the feeling of absurdity in this segment of the story. She wants to soar but mournfully she is creeping on her leaden-feet. She is looking for such a place where she can sit and meditate over the identity crisis of her (one of the major themes of the post-colonial literature) for a while. She is looking in adieu mode.

The old man suddenly rapt in his old reminiscences of his youth where he could listen to the water that soothe the aching heart of him that causes by the rejection of the ladies. Now he is growing older as he has nothing to do better with himself but he definitely knows the meaning of unspoken 'no'. He is well equipped with relaxing about being excused from a life of objection, of critique, even of protest. With him She is now growing mature. She sprang from the corner of the piazza to take revolt and came out with a long, piercing shriek that drove into the world's ears like a stiletto. She promised not to stop from a constant

state of affirmation, eschewing negativity and accentuating the positive and spreads like breezing in the hot summer days. Now I am going to reach at the climax point of The Old Man in the Piazza as after up we count down so with her. Now she, like him is quiet with the things happening rapidly. Transition is the law of nature, and nature of language is changeable otherwise it begins to look stale. Today the old man still sits there but no longer afraid of the rush of forgotten words from his mouth and he watches the disputatious citizenry. It is true that our language is promiscuous. Technically speaking that her all following companions are to about to lose their morality.

The narrator mentions no other character except the old man. There is the resemblance of Byronic creatures as they were too socio-conscious and fashionable but internally they have the hollow shame. They fight for no reasons and faithfulness in the relationships is totally absent. American culture dominates the psyche of the society. They allegorically symbolise the post-colonial cultural theory. The illegal argumentation over the unwanted issues to heat the environment of the piazza bar and their relations too. The language used for the women is symbolical as two names of the country mentioned here i.e., Italy and French. The heroines of that period in Italy named Anna Magnani and Sophia Loren were compared with the language. So far as my approach access these two Italian actresses are famous for her real

characters portrayal and modelling as sex symbols respectively.

I suppose, after going through the story that the importance of Piazza is not less than the other things mentioned here. The structure of the piazza is magnificent and splendid with the golden stone, with burgundy shutters at the window and copied many times with permission of the owner. The centre of the story is piazza which is also a speechless character. The beauty of its is like the beautiful masterpiece of literature. As we love them and be ready to accept at the sake of the originality, same with the pillars of piazza. The sense of imitation explores

the new theme in literature. The replicas of originals provide some pleasure as profoundly as if they were the real thing. It can be accepted like a homage to the original one. Magic realism and naturalism are the favourite devices of Rushdie and he has done justice in introducing them in this parable.

Reference

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