

**Symbolism of Wine and Water in Salman Rushdie's
*The Enchantress of Florence***

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Among the other literary devices, symbols grab the attention of the readers, because of its ability to make people think broadly. Symbol stands for something other than itself. It stands for different interpretations and meanings. Water and wine are the predominant symbols used by Salman Rushdie in his novel *The Enchantress of Florence*. Water is a symbol of life, purity, and rebirth. Wine is the ancient mythological symbol of fertility, blood and life. Wine also stands for richness, intelligence and celebration. In Akbar's court there was frequent argument between winemen (pleasure lovers) and waterers (reason lovers). Salman Rushdie as a novelist is very much cautious about the importance of wine and water and he has very subtly employed them as important symbols to show the fertility of Fatehpur Sikri and Florence. Symbols evoke deep and sometimes unconscious responses in a reader. In the last section of the novel Rushdie shows that the scarcity of water in the city is due to the curse inflicted by the foreigner on them. "The water contained to drain away. The death of the lake was the death of Sikri as well" (TEF 346). The novelist used symbolism in an intelligent way to express the wealth and richness of the city.

"Literature is a mirror of life; it reflects the events faithfully and offers pleasure to the readers" (SHOMS 1). To tackle with different themes and subjects, writers use literary devices like symbols. Some writers use symbols to give an artistic beauty and a depth for their creations. "Seeds of symbolism in literature may be traced in the allegories of Langland, Spenser and Bunyan, the poetry of the Metaphysical, William Blake and to some extent in the poetry of the Romantic poets" (DS 64). Symbolism, says Yeats, deepens the philosophy and enables the artist to grapple with divine reality, and that with the help of symbols deeper effects can be created and subtler indefinable shades can be expressed. The choice of symbols is based on the subject and theme that the writer chooses.

Salman Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence* is an historical novel which tells the story of two famous cities of the renaissance world. The novel has several narratives knit together by a common thread and is divided in to three parts. To start with, it is the story of the Mughal

emperor Akbar, as he struggles to answer the great questions of love, life and how to rule his people, what exactly it means to be a king, and what it means to be human. The story takes us back to the Court of Akbar-the-Great in Fatehpur Sikri, during the period of renaissance with the real historical figures like Birbal.

When dealing with the courtly life and lives of the kings and queens' symbols like wine and water are unavoidable. Wine is the symbol of royalty and celebration. After great victories and during festival times wine will be served in abundance in the court for the king and the ministers. Wine is the symbol of fertility and it happens inside the court. Outside the court the fertility of the kingdom is the judged by the water. In ancient Greece, great intellectuals in symposiums discuss important topics of the day by drinking wine. In fact the dictionary meaning of the symposium is 'a drinking party or convivial discussion, especially as held in ancient Greece after a banquet' Healthy wine is the part and parcel of royalty. The Crown Prince Salim in this novel is a wine addict and spends all the time with brothels. Prostitution is also an important institution of any court. On the other side he is an excellent archer and horse rider. His father, Akbar the Great feels that he is a constant threat as his successor. "Salim was his favourite son, and most likely assassin" (TEF 71).

Wine is the ancient mythological symbol of fertility, blood and life. Wine also stands for richness, intelligence and celebration. In Akbar's court there was frequent argument between winemen (pleasure lovers) and waterers (reason lovers). The manqul party containing the religious thinkers and mystics drank only water, while their opponents the ma'qul celebrated pure philosophy and the sciences and poured wine down their throats all day long. "When the sword of the tongue is drawn, the emperor thought, it inflicts deeper cuts than the sharpest blade" (TEF 97). If we need the proof, it is to be found in the war of the philosophers that took place each day in the embroidered and mirror worked tent of new worship. There was a constant hubbub here, the noise of the kingdom's finest thinkers gashing one another dreadfully with their words. Thus Akbar's court was intellectually very strong with the likes of ministers like Birbal and Abul Fazl.

Another important symbol that is used throughout the novel is 'water'. It determines the wealth and richness of the kingdom outside the court.

Without water we are nothing, the traveller thought. Even an emperor, denied water, would swiftly turn to dust. Water is the real monarch of the world and we are all its slaves. Once at home in Florence he met a man who could make water disappear. The conjurer filled a jug to the brim, muttered magic words, turned the jug over and instead of liquid, fabric spilled forth, a torrent of coloured silken scarves. (TEF 9)

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 19:1 January 2019

Editors: Dr. V. Sangeetha, Dr. B. J. Geetha, Dr. K. Sindhu, Dr. S. Boopathi and Ms. S. Sneha Sri

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Salman Rushdie's beautiful pictorial description of the city, Fatehpur Sikri highlights the wealth and richness of the city. It has been very aptly described by the traveller who comes all the way from Florence to the enchanting land of Hindustan. He describes the beauty of the city from the mirror image of water of the beautiful lake in Sikri.

In the day's last light the glowing lake below the palace-city looked like a sea of molten gold. A traveller coming this way at sunset – this traveller, coming this way, now, along the lakeshore road – might believe himself to be approaching the throne of a monarch so fabulously wealthy that he could allow a portion of his treasure to be poured into a giant hollow in the earth to dazzle and awe his guests. And as big as the lake of gold was, it must be only a drop drawn from the sea of the large fortune – the traveller's imagination could not begin to grasp the size of the mother ocean! (TEF 5)

Overall, Fatehpur Sikri was the most beautiful place to inhabit in the Eastern world. Salman Rushdie is very much cautious about the importance of water. The scarcity of water may lead to the devastation of kingdoms. The traveller thought, "Without water we are nothing... even an emperor, denied water, and would swiftly turn to dust. Water is the real monarch and we are all its slaves" (TEF436).

It is very true that Akbar removed capital from Fatehpur Sikri either because of the danger of invasions from the north-west (Afghanistan and Persia) or because of the scarcity of water in the capital city, where there was no permanent source of supply of sufficient water. Rushdie has beautifully fictionalized this scarcity of water into a splendid lake drying up on account of a curse. This marked the destruction of Fatehpur Sikri:

The lake is leaving us, the people were screaming, the golden life-giving lake, which once a traveller arriving at sunset had mistaken for a pool of molten gold. Without the lake the ice blocks from Kashmir could not bring fresh mountain water to the palace. Without the lake the citizens who could not afford Kashmir ice would have nothing to drink, nothing to wash or cook with, and their children would soon die. The heat of the day was mounting. Without the lake the city was a parched and shrivelled husk. The water contained to drain away. The death of the lake was the death of Sikri as well. (TEF436).

Rushdie, in this novel also gives the reason of drying the lake in his own style mixing fancy and fables. Somehow the revenge of Moger'dell Amore, the rejected Mughal of love, is petty: his departure coincides with the drying up of the golden lake that conferred greatness to the city of Fatehpur Sikri. Niccolo claimed the crossing of the two opposing realms: imagination

and reality; Akbar proclaimed the two existences, yet not their overlapping. Akbar's refusal to accept Moger'dell Amore is punished by the drying up of the lake and beautifully described by using water as a symbol of fertility. "If that is your lesson for me, Mughal of love", he silently addressed the departed foreigner, "then the title you gave to yourself is false, for in this version of the world there is no love to be found anywhere" (TEF440). This shows the impermanence of things in this mortal world and a change that can overtake even the most potent of people and mightiest of men like Akbar the Great.

Symbolism is an essential tool in addressing topics indirectly, in the modern days. Therefore, the novelist used symbolism in an intelligent way to express his beliefs and his own views on the courtly life of Akbar. To conclude, Salman Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008) is full of symbols. However, it would impossible to deal with all the symbols. The present study has focused more on the major ones and tried to explain their meanings in order to add an extra meaning to the novel.

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