

Surviving the Knife: Salaman Rushdie's Life of Defiance

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Abstract

Salman Rushdie an acclaimed British Indian Author was attacked on 12, August 2022 at the Chautauqua Institution, preparing to give a lecture on "the importance of keeping writers safe from harm". After the publication of the satanic verses in 1988 fatwa was ordered against him. His life was under threat after the fatwa.

On 12, August 2022, 24 years old young man was attacked 75 years old Salman Rushdie, a brutal attempt on his life. But now he is back to his life and recently published a book "Knife". After reading the book I understood that nobody could silence him, now he is inspiring the world through his life and pen. Here I am presenting Salman Rushdie as a great inspiration to the world. Even though he attacked and faced death he never silenced. He expresses his thoughts and concepts to the world.

Key Words: Knife, Second Chance, Inspiring, Future

Introduction

Ahmed Salman Rushdie was born on June 19, 1947, in Bombay (now Mumbai), India, right into a Muslim circle of relatives of Kashmiri descent. His father, Anis Ahmed Rushdie, became a successful businessman, and his mother, Negin Bhatt, became a teacher. From a younger age, Rushdie became exposed to a mix of the Indian way of life and Western education, attending the Cathedral and John Connon School in Bombay earlier than being despatched to Rugby School in England.

Salman Rushdie, one of the maximum vast literary figures of the overdue twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, has had a profession marked through exceptional achievements and profound controversies. He is the writer of fifteen novels, which includes *Midnight's Children* (which he received Booker Prize and Best of the Booker), *Shame*, *Satanic Verses*, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, and *Quichotte*, all of which have been shortlisted for the Booker Prize, a group of story, *East, West*; a memoir, *Joseph Anton*; a piece of reportage, *The Jaguar Smile*, and 3 collections of essays, maximum currently *Language of Truth*. His many awards blanketed the Whitebread Prize for Best Novel, which he received twice; the Pen/ Allen Foundation Literary Service Award; the National Arts Award, the French *Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger*, the European Union's *Aristeion Prize for Literature*, and the Italian *Premio Grinzane Cavour*. He is a member of the American Academy Arts and Letters, a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, prominent Writer in Residence at New York University, and a former president of PEN America. His works were published in more than 40 languages.

12 AUGUST 2022

On August 12, 2022, at around 10.47 am on a sunny Friday morning in upstate New York, United States. An attacker rushed the stage of Chautauqua Institution, where Rushdie was about to give a talk about "the importance of keeping writers safe from harm". The assailant stabbed him fifteen times with a knife, almost killing by a young man.

Salman Rushdie shares his experience: "I can see the moment in slow motion. My eyes follow the running man as he leaps out of the audience and approaches me, I see each step of his headlong run. I watch myself coming to my feet and turning towards him. I continue to face him. I never turn my back on him. There are no injuries to my back. I raise my left hand in self-defense. He plunges the knife into it. After that, there are many blows to my neck, to my chest, to my eye, everywhere. I feel my legs give way and I fall".

Henry Reese, a co-founder of City of Asylum, was on the stage to begin the interview with Rushdie, During the assault, Reese sustained a shallow knife wound and deep bruising in the vicinity of his right eye. The amphitheater seats over four thousand people. It was not full, but there was a big crowd. Rushdie was seated at the right of the stage. Then in the

corner of the right side, the man in black ran towards Rushdie, black cloth and black face mask attacked him. A doctor who was present for the lecture immediately tended to Rushdie.

It is not the first time that Rushdie spoke at Chautauqua twelve years back earlier August 2010 he visited the place. Chautauqua, the town named after Lake Chautauqua, on whose shore it stands. The word Chautauqua comes from a language spoken by the Erie people, but both the language and the people are extinct, so the word's meaning is unclear. It may mean "two moccasins" or it may mean "a bag tied in the middle". Now Chautauqua has changed a lot since the old one was rebuilt in 2017. "Within the walls of the institution, silver-haired liberal minded folks gathered in an idyllic community and lived in comfortable wooden homes where it didn't feel necessary to lock the doors. To spend time there felt like a step backward in time, into an earlier, innocent world that may only have existed in dreams," said Rushdie.

After the attack, Rushdie asks some questions which he has written in his latest book *Knife*: why didn't I fight? Why didn't I run? Am I so feeble that I couldn't make the slightest attempt to defend myself? Was I so fatalistic that I was prepared simply to surrender to my murderer? His family members were given answers to the questions for him. You were seventy-five years old, and he was twenty-four years old. You couldn't have fought him, and you couldn't run faster than him and you weren't armed.

"I experienced both the worst and best of human nature, almost simultaneously," said Rushdie. While he was attacked it was a young human who tried to kill him, and it was too brutal experience for Rushdie in his life. Now he slowly back to his life only because there were good human beings who saved his life from death to life. Even Rushdie couldn't have seen these people's faces, and he didn't know their names either. So, there are two possibilities in one person's life either you can kill the people, or you can risk your life to save the stranger who is lying on ground.

According to newspapers report the attacker had twenty-seven seconds with him. Rushdie made some reflection on the twenty-seven seconds: "if you are religious person, you can recite the Lord's Prayer in twenty-seven second and there are possibilities to read the Shakespearean sonnet 130, 'my mistress'...

After the attack while he was on the floor his first thought was about his loved ones and whether he would be able to see them again was his first concern. Even though Rushdie was carried by people he felt profound loneliness. He shared his pain while he was at the hospital. Two doctors had treated him, and he was wailing with pain. He was asking what was wrong with his hand...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. He was flown by helicopter to UPMC Hamot, a tertiary-level hospital in Erie, Pennsylvania. The novelist's literary agent, Andrew Wylie, said on the evening of August 12 that Rushdie had undergone surgery, was on a ventilator, and was unable to speak. Wylie said that Rushdie faced the prospect of losing one of his eyes, in addition to the possibility of liver damage and multiple severed nerves in one arm. On August 13, Wylie said that Rushdie had been taken off the ventilator and was able to speak and joke. On August 14, Wylie said that Rushdie was on the "road to recovery", adding, "It will be long; the injuries are severe, but his condition is headed in the right direction." Rushdie's son Zafar said, "Though his life-changing injuries are severe, his usual feisty and defiant sense of humour remains intact". On October 23, Wylie reported that Rushdie had lost sight in one eye and the use of one hand. By February 6, 2023, Rushdie had recovered enough to appear in an interview with *The New Yorker*. Speaking about surviving the attack, he stated: "I'm lucky. What I really want to say is that my main overwhelming feeling is gratitude."

Who is "THE A"?

Salman Rushdie's book *Knife* he has given entire chapter for "The A". For Rushdie "The A" "means the person who attacked him at Chautauqua on 12 August 2022. Rushdie never mentioned his real name in the book *Knife* instead he wrote "the A". Rushdie expresses his emotion when he uses the term "The A" instead of the real name, "I don't want to use his name in this account. My assailant my would-be assassin, the Asinine man who made Assumption... I have found myself thinking of him, perhaps forgivably as an ass. However, the text, I will refer to him more decorously as "The A". What I call him in the privacy of my home is my business", said Rushdie.

Who stabbed Salman Rushdie?

Hadi Matar is a citizen of both the US and Lebanon. He was born in California and his parents who emigrated from Yaroun, a mixed Shia-Christian village in the south of Lebanon where support for Hezbollah and the Iranian authorities is common. Matar's father returned to his cinder-block home in Yaroun several years before the attack, and his mother and her three children had recently moved from California to New Jersey.

Law enforcement officials have identified the attacker as Hadi Matar. The 24-year-old man reportedly hails from New Jersey. An initial sweep of Matar's social media accounts by law enforcement showed him to be sympathetic to Shia extremism and the causes of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), a law enforcement person with direct knowledge of the investigation told. Though there are no direct links between Matar and the IRGC, law enforcement officers reportedly found images of slain commander Qassem Soleimani and an Iraqi extremist sympathetic to the Iranian regime in a cell phone messaging app belonging to Matar. Soleimani was a senior Iranian military officer who served in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. From 1998 until his assassination in 2020.

Influencing and Inspiring

Miland Kundera believed that life is a one short affair, no second draft, can't revive what happens. But when we look at the life of Salman Rushdie, we may question the idea of Miland Kundera after attack on 12 August 2022 Rushdie came

to his second life which Miland Kundera believed impossible. When there is a second opportunity in life, there comes some questions in everyone's life.

What do you do with it?

How do you use it?

What should you do the same way, what might you do differently?

After Salman Rushdie got a second opportunity, he called himself a beloved, beloved on earth. Hates will be there but beloved trumps over all hate. After the attack Salman Rushdie was so grateful to his wife Eliza who taken him psychologically and physically.

One of the great inspiring is that after half year of the attack he wrote the proposal of book *Knife*, even though there was another book in his thought that is novel *Victory City*. His decision to write a book after a major attack always influences every writer. After the attack he lost one eye and suffered a major injury to his hand but within half a year he thought of writing the book.

On Monday March 23, 2023, Salman Rushdie with his wife return to the UK and was received by the security team. Even after reaching the UK Rushdie strongly and emotionally looking at his second life and taken a strong decision that second chance should concentrate on "Love and Work".

Salman Rushdie tells all writers about the war, conflict in the world and what is the role of writer in the matter. The powerful may own the present but writers own the future. Through the work of writers, the misdeed of the powerful will be judged in the future. Writers should add their voice to common people. He again shows the purpose of his second life that: "not for private pleasure alone but to Work and Love".

Again, Rushdie speaks on Religion that private faith of anyone is nobody's business except that of individuals concerned with it. Religion becomes everyone's business when religion becomes politicized, even weaponized and its capacity for harm.

In April 2024 Salman Rushdie published the book "Knife". Why the name Knife? "During the empty sleepless night, I thought a lot about The Knife as an idea. A knife was a tool, and acquired meaning from the use we made its meaning. It could cut open the world and reveal its meanings, its inner workings, its secrets, its truths. It could cut through from one reality to another. It could call bullshit, open people's eyes, create beauty. Language was my knife. If I had unexpectedly been caught in an unwanted knife fight, maybe this was knife I could use to fight back", said Rushdie.

The book *Knife* ends with a question that could our happiness survive such a blow? Salman Rushdie holding his wife's hands and confidently says "yes we have reconstructed our happiness". As a writer Salman Rushdie influenced and inspired the world through his works and words. But now he has influenced through his life, at age of seventy-five he is back to the life as a person and writer.

Conclusion

There are many who have inspired the world through their thoughts and imagination as writers but there are only a few who inspired the world through their life, Salman Rushdie belongs to the second group. After the brutal attempted murder he is not given his life, he comes back to his life as a person and a writer. Even after six months of the attack he started to think about writing a book based on his experiences. He expressed hie view on life and looking forward to the future.

Salman Rushdie is the great inspiration to each of us, life is in our hand what ever happened to our life we have strength to overcome all over struggles, that is the life of Salman Rushdie tells us.

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