

duivelsverzen

De duivelsverzen

Oorspronkelijke titel

The Satanic Verses

Auteur(s)

[Salman Rushdie](#)

Vertaler

[Marijke Emeis](#)

Genre

Roman

Uitgever

Veen

Uitgegeven

1989

Oorspronkelijk uitgegeven

1988

Pagina's

494

ISBN-code

[9020423630](#)

Portaal



[Literatuur](#)



Titelpagina van een illegale Iraanse uitgave van *De duivelsverzen*

De duivelsverzen (Eng: *The Satanic Verses*) is een [roman](#) van de [auteur Salman Rushdie](#) die in [1988](#) verscheen. In [1989](#) kwam de [Nederlandse](#) vertaling op de markt.

Het boek begint bij de ontploffing van een gekaapt vliegtuig boven Zuid-[Engeland](#). Djibriel Farishta en Saladin Chamcha, twee Indiase acteurs, vallen uit de lucht op het Engelse strand. Beiden overleven de val. Djibriel Farishta transformeert vervolgens tot de [aartsengel Djibriel](#) (Gabriël), terwijl Saladin Chamcha verandert in de [duivel](#).

Het is een roman over de Engelse [immigratieproblematiek](#). Tegenstellingen als oost/west, aards/religieus en heden/verleden zijn in het verhaal verweven.

Het boek won in [Groot-Brittannië](#) de prestigieuze Whitbreadprijs en werd een bestseller.

Omstreden

De publicatie van *De duivelsverzen* veroorzaakte een controverse onder [fundamentalistische moslims](#). De oorzaak van deze controverse was de wijze waarop [Mohammed](#), binnen de [islam](#) gezien als [profeet](#), door Rushdie in het boek wordt neergezet; als een man die bezwijkt voor aardse genoegens. De titel heeft hierop betrekking. Het is een verwijzing naar de omstreden [duivelsverzen](#) uit de [Koran](#). Voor veel moslims is dit een [taboe](#).

Op [14 februari 1989](#) sprak [Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini](#) een [fatwa](#) over Rushdie uit die zijn executie aankondigde. Khomeini, de leider van [Iran](#), noemde het boek "godslasterlijk" en "een belediging van de [islam](#)". Verder veroordeelde Khomeini Rushdie voor de "misdaad" van [geloofsafval](#) (het verlaten van de islam). Volgens Khomeini's interpretatie van de [islamitische wetten](#) staat daar de doodstraf op. In het boek zou Rushdie laten blijken niet meer in de islam te geloven. Khomeini riep alle "vrome moslims" op de schrijver ter dood te brengen, alsmede de uitgevers van het boek. Khomeini zette een premie van drie miljoen [Amerikaanse dollar](#) op het hoofd van Rushdie. Daarna is Rushdie ondergedoken en boden de Britten hem bescherming.

Gedurende deze periode vielen tijdens gewelddadige demonstraties verschillende doden in [India](#), [Pakistan](#) en [Egypte](#). Moslinggemeenschappen over de gehele wereld organiseerden protestbijeenkomsten waarin exemplaren van het boek werden verbrand. De zanger [Yusuf Islam](#) (beter bekend als Cat Stevens) uitte indirect zijn instemming met de fatwa.

Diverse rechtsgeleerden ([oelema](#)) in onder andere [Egypte](#) en [Saoedi-Arabië](#) oordeelden dat de fatwa "onislamitisch" was. De fatwa werd door 48 van de 49 landen van de [Islamitische Conferentie](#) een maand later verworpen.

Na Khomeini

Na de dood van Khomeini (1989) verklaarde de Iraanse regering publiekelijk het doodvonnis tegen Rushdie niet uit te zullen voeren. Dit werd overeengekomen in de context van een bredere overeenkomst tussen Iran en het [Verenigd Koninkrijk](#) om de betrekkingen te normaliseren. In [1990](#) publiceerde Rushdie het essay *In Good Faith* om zijn critici milder te stemmen en publiceerde hij een verontschuldiging waarin hij zijn respect voor de islam herbevestigde. Desondanks trokken de Iraanse geestelijken de fatwa niet in.

De fatwa werd uiteindelijk in [1998](#) onder president [Mohammad Khatami](#) ingetrokken, waar niet iedereen het mee eens was. In [1999](#) zette een Iraanse stichting nog een prijs van 2,8 miljoen dollar op het hoofd van Rushdie. Volgens sommige critici gebruikte Khomeini *De duivelsverzen* om de interne onrust in zijn land na het einde van de [Irak-Iranoorlog](#) te smoren.

De roman is in alle islamitische landen verboden, evenals in [India](#) en [Zuid-Afrika](#). [Mohamed Rabbah](#), een politicus van [GroenLinks](#), verklaarde begrip te hebben voor het verbod, wat hem in sommige kringen kwalijk werd genomen.

In [1991](#) werd de vertaler van de [Japanse](#) versie vermoord en in [1993](#) werd Rushdie's [Noorse](#) uitgever verwond bij een aanslag in de buurt van zijn huis.

In [2008](#) werd er een theaterbewerking van het boek gemaakt door Uwe Eric Laufenberg en Marcus Mislin. Deze werd voor het eerst opgevoerd in het Duitse theater Hans-Otto Theater (HOT) in [Potsdam](#) op 30 maart. Het stuk duurde ongeveer vier uur en werd met twaalf acteurs gespeeld, met [Tobias Rott](#) als Saladin/Duivel en [Robert Gallinowski](#) als Gibril/Aartsengel.

Externe link

- [Parlementaire stukken waarin dit onderwerp ter sprake komt.](#)

Categorieën:

- [Roman uit 1988](#)
 - [Engelse literatuur \(India\)](#)
 - [Islam-gerelateerde controverse](#)

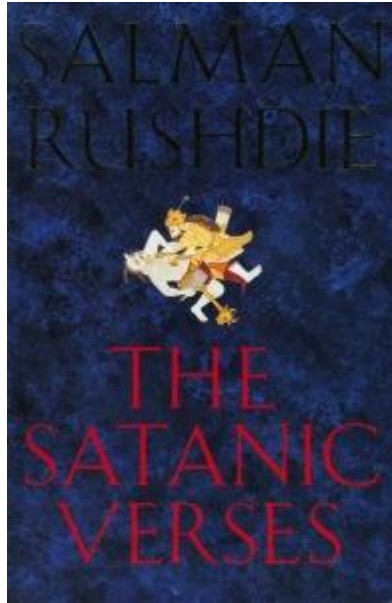
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The Satanic Verses

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

This article is about the novel. For the verses known as "Satanic Verses", see [Satanic Verses](#).

The Satanic Verses



Cover of the first edition, showing a detail from *Rustam Killing the White Demon* from a Clive Album in the Victoria and Albert Museum

Author [Salman Rushdie](#)

Country United Kingdom

Language English

Genre [Magic realism](#)

Published 1988

Pages 546 (first edition)

[ISBN](#) [0-670-82537-9](#)

[OCLC](#) [18558869](#)

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Preceded by [Shame](#)

Followed by [Haroun and the Sea of Stories](#)



[Salman Rushdie](#), 2008

The Satanic Verses is [Salman Rushdie](#)'s fourth novel, first published in 1988 and inspired in part by the life of [Muhammad](#). As with his previous books, Rushdie used [magical realism](#) and relied on contemporary events and people to create his characters. The title refers to the [satanic verses](#), a group of [Quranic](#) verses that allow intercessory prayers to be made to three [Pagan Meccan](#) goddesses: [Allāt](#), [Uzza](#), and [Manāt](#).^[1] The part of the story that deals with the "satanic verses" was based on accounts from the historians [al-Waqidi](#) and [al-Tabari](#).^[1]

In the United Kingdom, *The Satanic Verses* received positive reviews, was a 1988 [Booker Prize](#) finalist (losing to [Peter Carey](#)'s *Oscar and Lucinda*) and won the [1988 Whitbread Award](#) for novel of the year.^[2] However, [major controversy](#) ensued as Muslims accused it of blasphemy and mocking their faith. The outrage among Muslims resulted in a *fatwā* calling for Rushdie's death issued by [Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini](#), then [Supreme Leader of Iran](#), on 14 February 1989. The result was several failed assassination attempts on Rushdie, who was placed under police protection, and attacks on several connected individuals such as translator [Hitoshi Igarashi](#) (leading, in Igarashi's case, to death).

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Plot

The Satanic Verses consists of a [frame narrative](#), using elements of [magical realism](#), interlaced with a series of sub-plots that are narrated as dream visions experienced by one of the protagonists. The frame narrative, like many other stories by Rushdie, involves Indian expatriates in contemporary England. The two protagonists, Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, are both actors of Indian Muslim background. Farishta is a [Bollywood](#) superstar who specialises in playing [Hindu](#) deities. (The character is partly based on Indian film stars [Amitabh Bachchan](#) and [N. T. Rama Rao](#).)^[3] Chamcha is an emigrant who has broken with his Indian identity and works as a [voiceover](#) artist in England.

At the beginning of the novel, both are trapped in a hijacked plane flying from India to Britain. The plane explodes over the [English Channel](#), but the two are magically saved. In a miraculous transformation, Farishta takes on the personality of the archangel [Gabriel](#) and Chamcha that of a devil. Chamcha is arrested and passes through an ordeal of police abuse as a suspected illegal immigrant. Farishta's transformation can partly be read on a realistic level as the symptom of the protagonist's developing [schizophrenia](#).

Both characters struggle to piece their lives back together. Farishta seeks and finds his lost love, the English mountaineer Allie Cone, but their relationship is overshadowed by his mental illness. Chamcha, having miraculously regained his human shape, wants to take revenge on Farishta for having forsaken him after their common fall from the hijacked plane. He does so by fostering Farishta's [pathological jealousy](#) and thus destroying his relationship with Allie. In another moment of crisis, Farishta realises what Chamcha has done, but forgives him and even saves his life.

Both return to India. Farishta kills Allie in another outbreak of jealousy and then commits suicide. Chamcha, who has found not only forgiveness from Farishta but also reconciliation with his estranged father and his own Indian identity, decides to remain in India.

Dream sequences

Embedded in this story is a series of half-magic dream vision narratives, ascribed to the mind of Farishta. They are linked together by many thematic details as well as by the common motifs of divine revelation, religious faith and fanaticism, and doubt.

One of these sequences contains most of the elements that have been criticised as offensive to Muslims. It is a transformed re-narration of the life of [Muhammad](#) (called "[Mahound](#)" or "the Messenger" in the novel) in [Mecca](#) ("[Jahiliyyah](#)"). At its centre is the episode of the so-called satanic verses, in which the prophet first proclaims a revelation in favour of the old [polytheistic](#) deities, but later renounces this as an error induced by [the Devil](#). There are also two opponents of the "Messenger": a demonic [heathen](#) priestess, [Hind bint Utbah](#), and an irreverent skeptic and satirical poet, Baal. When the prophet returns to the city in triumph, Baal goes into hiding in an underground brothel, where the prostitutes assume the identities of the prophet's wives. Also, one of the prophet's companions claims that he, doubting the authenticity of the "Messenger," has subtly altered portions of the [Quran](#) as they were dictated to him.

The second sequence tells the story of Ayesha, an Indian peasant girl who claims to be receiving revelations from the Archangel Gibreel. She entices all her village community to embark on a foot pilgrimage to Mecca, claiming that they will be able to walk across the [Arabian Sea](#). The pilgrimage ends in a catastrophic climax as the believers all walk into the water and disappear, amid disturbingly conflicting testimonies from observers about whether they just drowned or were in fact miraculously able to cross the sea.

A third dream sequence presents the figure of a fanatic expatriate religious leader, the "Imam", in a late-20th-century setting. This figure is a transparent allusion to the life of [Ruhollah Khomeini](#) in his Parisian exile, but it is also linked through various recurrent narrative motifs to the figure of the "Messenger".

Literary criticism and analysis

Overall, the book received favourable reviews from literary critics. In a 2003 volume of criticism of Rushdie's career, the influential critic [Harold Bloom](#) named *The Satanic Verses* "Rushdie's largest aesthetic achievement".^[4]

Timothy Brennan called the work "the most ambitious novel yet published to deal with the immigrant experience in Britain" that captures the immigrants' dream-like disorientation and their process of "union-by-hybridization". The book is seen as "fundamentally a study in alienation."^[2]

Muhammd Mashuq ibn Ally wrote that "*The Satanic Verses* is about identity, alienation, rootlessness, brutality, compromise, and conformity. These concepts confront all migrants, disillusioned with both cultures: the one they are in and the one they join. Yet knowing they cannot live a life of anonymity, they mediate between them both. *The Satanic Verses* is a reflection of the author's dilemmas." The work is an "albeit surreal, record of its own author's continuing identity crisis."^[2] Ally said that the book reveals the author ultimately as "the victim of nineteenth-century British [colonialism](#)."^[2] Rushdie himself spoke confirming this interpretation of his book, saying that it was not about Islam, "but about migration, [metamorphosis](#), divided selves, love, death, London and [Bombay](#)."^[2] He has also said "It's a novel which happened to contain a castigation of Western [materialism](#). The tone is comic."^[2]

After [the Satanic Verses controversy](#) developed, some scholars familiar with the book and the whole of Rushdie's work, like M. D. Fletcher, saw the reaction as ironic. Fletcher wrote "It is perhaps a relevant irony that some of the major expressions of hostility toward Rushdie came from those about whom and (in some sense) for whom he wrote."^[5] He said the manifestations of the controversy in Britain "embodied an anger arising in part from the frustrations of the migrant experience and generally reflected failures of multicultural integration, both significant Rushdie themes. Clearly, Rushdie's interests centrally include explorations of how migration heightens one's awareness that perceptions of reality are relative and fragile, and of the nature of religious faith and revelation, not to mention the political manipulation of religion. Rushdie's own assumptions about the importance of literature parallel in the literal value accorded the written word in Islamic tradition to some degree. But Rushdie seems to have assumed that diverse communities and cultures share some degree of common moral ground on the basis of which dialogue can be pieced together, and it is perhaps for this reason that he underestimated the implacable nature of the hostility evoked by *The Satanic Verses*, even though a major theme of that novel is the dangerous nature of closed, absolutist belief systems."^[5]

Rushdie's influences have long been a point of interest to scholars examining his work. According to W. J. Weatherby, influences on *The Satanic Verses* were listed as [James Joyce](#), [Italo Calvino](#), [Franz Kafka](#), [Frank Herbert](#), [Thomas Pynchon](#), [Mervyn Peake](#), [Gabriel García Márquez](#), [Jean-Luc Godard](#), [J. G. Ballard](#) and [William S. Burroughs](#).^[6] [Angela Carter](#) writes that the novel contains "inventions such as the city of Jahilia, 'built entirely of sand,' that gives a nod to Calvino and a wink to Frank Herbert".^[7]

[Srinivas Aravamudan](#)'s analysis of *The Satanic Verses* stressed the satiric nature of the work and held that while it and [Midnight's Children](#) may appear to be more "comic epic", "clearly those works are highly satirical" in a similar vein of postmodern satire pioneered by [Joseph Heller](#) in [Catch-22](#).^[8]

The Satanic Verses continued to exhibit Rushdie's penchant for organising his work in terms of parallel stories. Within the book "there are major parallel stories, alternating dream and reality sequences, tied together by the recurring names of the characters in each; this provides intertexts within each novel which comment on the other stories." *The Satanic Verses* also exhibits Rushdie's common practice of using allusions to invoke connotative links. Within the book he referenced everything from mythology to "one-liners invoking recent popular culture".^[9]

Controversy

Main article: [The Satanic Verses controversy](#)

The novel provoked great controversy in the [Muslim](#) community for what some Muslims believed were blasphemous references. Rushdie was accused of misusing [freedom of speech](#).^[8] As the controversy spread, the import of the book was banned^[9] in India and it was [burned](#) in

demonstrations in the United Kingdom. In mid-February 1989, following a violent riot against the book in Pakistan, the Ayatollah [Ruhollah Khomeini](#), then [Supreme Leader of Iran](#) and a [Shi'a](#) Muslim scholar, issued a [fatwa](#) calling on all Muslims to kill Rushdie and his publishers, or to point him out to those who can kill him if they cannot themselves.^[10] Although the British Conservative government under [Margaret Thatcher](#) gave Rushdie round-the-clock police protection, many politicians on both sides were hostile to the author. British [Labour](#) MP [Keith Vaz](#) led a march through [Leicester](#) shortly after he was elected in 1989 calling for the book to be banned, while [Conservative](#) MP [Norman Tebbit](#), the party's former chairman, called Rushdie an "outstanding villain" whose "public life has been a record of despicable acts of betrayal of his upbringing, religion, adopted home and nationality".^[11]

Meanwhile, the [Commission for Racial Equality](#) and a liberal think tank, the [Policy Studies Institute](#), held seminars on the Rushdie affair. They did not invite the author [Fay Weldon](#), who spoke out against burning books, but did invite [Shabbir Akhtar](#), a Cambridge philosophy graduate who called for "a negotiated compromise" which "would protect Muslim sensibilities against gratuitous provocation". The journalist and author [Andy McSmith](#) wrote at the time "We are witnessing, I fear, the birth of a new and dangerously illiberal "liberal" orthodoxy designed to accommodate Dr Akhtar and his fundamentalist friends."^[12]

Journalist [Christopher Hitchens](#) staunchly defended Rushdie and urged critics to condemn the violence of the fatwa instead of blaming the novel or the author. Hitchens understood the fatwa to be the opening shot in a cultural war on freedom.^[13]

Despite a conciliatory statement by Iran in 1998, and Rushdie's declaration that he would stop living in hiding, the Iranian state news agency reported in 2006 that the fatwa would remain in place permanently since fatwas can only be rescinded by the person who first issued them, and Khomeini had since died.^[14]

Violence, assassinations and attempts to harm


With police protection, Rushdie escaped direct physical harm, but others associated with his book have suffered violent attacks. [Hitoshi Igarashi](#), his Japanese translator, was stabbed to death on 11 July 1991. [Ettore Capriolo](#), the Italian translator, was seriously injured in a stabbing in [Milan](#) on 3 July 1991.^[15] [William Nygaard](#), the publisher in Norway, was shot three times in an attempted assassination in Oslo in October 1993, but survived. [Aziz Nesin](#), the Turkish translator, was possibly the intended target in the events that led to the [Sivas massacre](#) on 2 July 1993 in [Sivas](#), Turkey, which resulted in 37 deaths.^[16]

In September 2012, Rushdie expressed doubt that *The Satanic Verses* would be published today because of a climate of "fear and nervousness".^[17]

In March 2016, PEN America reported that the bounty for the Rushdie fatwa was raised by \$600,000 (£430,000). Top Iranian media contributed this sum, adding to the existing \$2.8m already offered.^[18] In response to this, the Swedish Academy which awards the Nobel prize for literature denounced the death sentence and called it 'a serious violation of free speech', this was the first time they had commented on the issue since publication.^[19]

See also^[edit]

- [Novels portal](#)


- [Censorship by religion](#)
- [Censorship in India](#)
- [Censorship in Iran](#)
- [Censorship in South Asia](#)
- [Religious intolerance](#)
- [Richard Webster](#)

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18. [Jump up](#) [^] PEN condemns increased fatwa bounty on Salman Rushdie, [The Guardian](#), 2 March 2016
19. [Jump up](#) [^] Nobel panel slams Rushdie death threats, [The Local](#), 24 March 2016

Further reading^[edit]

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External links^[edit]

- [The Satanic Verses PDF](#) at archive.org.
- [Looking back at Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses](#) at theguardian.com
- [Notes on Salman Rushdie: The Satanic Verses](#)

- [The Rusdhie Affair's Legacy](#) by [Koenraad Elst](#)
- [Salman Rushdie Reads from "The Satanic Verses"](#) on YouTube
- [Swords to sell a god](#) by [Ram Swarup](#)

Satanic Verses

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

For the novel by Salman Rushdie, see [The Satanic Verses](#).

The **Satanic Verses** incident, known as *qissat al-gharaniq* (*Story of the Cranes*), is the name given to the alleged occasion on which the [Islamic Prophet Muhammad](#) is said to have mistaken the words of "satanic suggestion" for divine revelation.^[1]

Narratives involving these alleged verses can be read in, among other places, the [biographies of Muhammad](#) by [al-Wāqidi](#), [Ibn Sa'd](#) (who was a scribe of Waqidi) and [Ibn Ishaq](#) (as [reconstructed](#) by [Alfred Guillaume](#)),^[2] as well as the [tafsir](#) of [al-Tabari](#). The majority of Muslim scholars however have rejected the historicity of the incident on the bases of their weak *isnads* (chains of transmission) and the incompatibility of the incident with the theological doctrine of *'isma* (Prophetic infallibility, divine protection of Muhammad from mistakes).^[1]

The first use of the expression 'Satanic Verses' is attributed to Sir [William Muir](#) (1858).^[3]

Basic narrative

See the complete text of [Tabari's account](#) below

There are numerous accounts reporting the alleged incident, which differ in the construction and detail of the narrative, but they may be broadly collated to produce a basic account.^[4] The different versions of the story are all traceable to one single narrator Muhammad ibn Ka'b, who was two generations removed from biographer [Ibn Ishaq](#).^[2] In its essential form, the story reports that Muhammad longed to convert his kinsmen and neighbors of [Mecca](#) to [Islam](#). As he was reciting [Sūra an-Najm](#),^[5] considered a revelation by the angel [Gabriel](#), [Satan](#) tempted him to utter the following lines after [verses](#) 19 and 20:

Have ye thought upon [Al-Lat](#) and [Al-'Uzzā](#)
and [Manāt](#), the third, the other?

These are the exalted *gharāniq*, whose intercession is hoped for.

Allāt, al-'Uzzā and Manāt were three goddesses worshipped by the Meccans. Discerning the meaning of "*gharāniq*" is difficult, as it is a *hapax legomenon* (i.e. only used once in the text). Commentators wrote that it meant the [cranes](#). The Arabic word does generally mean a "crane" - appearing in the singular as *ghirniq*, *ghurnūq*, *ghirnowq* and *ghurnayq*, and the word has cousin forms in other words for birds, including "raven, crow" and "eagle".^[6]

Reception in Muslim exegesis

Early Islam

The Satanic Verses incident is reported in the [tafsir](#) and the sira-maghazi literature dating from the first two centuries of Islam, and is reported in the respective tafsīr corpuses transmitted from almost every Qur'anic commentator of note in the first two centuries of the hijra. It is generally considered a fabricated incident as the chains of narration are weak.^[4] The earliest biography of Muhammad, [Ibn Ishaq](#) (761–767) is lost but his collection of traditions survives mainly in two sources: [Ibn Hisham](#) (833) and [al-Tabari](#) (915). The story appears in al-Tabari, who includes Ibn Ishaq in the chain of transmission, but not in [Ibn Hisham](#). [Ibn Sa'd](#) and [Al-Waqidi](#), two other early biographers of Muhammad relate the story.^[7] Scholars such as Uri Rubin and Shahab Ahmed and Guillaume hold that the report was in Ibn Ishaq, while [Alford T. Welch](#) holds the report has not been presumably present in the Ibn Ishaq.^[8]

Later medieval period

Due to its defective chain of narration, the tradition of the Satanic Verses never made it into any of the canonical [hadith](#) compilations (though see below for possible truncated versions of the incident that did).^[8] The reference and [exegesis](#) about the Verses appear in early histories.^{[9][10][11]} In addition to appearing in Tabari's *Tafsir*, it is used in the tafsīrs of [Muqātil](#), 'Abdu r-Razzāq and [Ibn](#)

[Kathir](#) as well as the [naskh](#) of Abu Ja'far an-Nahhās, the [asbāb](#) collection of Wāhidī and even the late-medieval [as-Suyūṭī's](#) compilation *al-Durr al-Manthūr fil-Tafsīr bil-Mathūr*.

Objections to the incident were raised as early as the fourth Islamic century, such as in the work of an-Nahhās and continued to be raised throughout later generations by scholars such as [Abu Bakr ibn al-'Arabi](#) (d. 1157), [Fakhr ad-Din Razi](#) (1220) as well as [al-Qurtubi](#) (1285). The most comprehensive argument presented against the factuality of the incident came in [Qadi Iyad's](#) *ash-Shifa'*.^[4] The incident was discounted on two main bases. The first was that the incident contradicted the doctrine of *isma'*, divine protection of Muhammad from mistakes. The second was that the descriptions of the chain of transmission extant since that period are not complete and sound ([sahih](#)).^[4] [Ibn Kathir](#) points out in his commentary that the various [isnads](#) available to him by which the story was transmitted were almost all [mursal](#), or without a companion of Muhammad in their chain.^[12] [Uri Rubin](#) asserts that there exists a complete version of the isnad continuing to ibn 'Abbās, but this only survives in a few sources. He claims that the name of ibn 'Abbās was part of the original isnad, and was removed so that the incident could be deprived of its [sahih](#) isnad and discredited.^[13]

Imam [Fakhr al-Din al-Razi](#) commenting on Surah 22:52 in his [Tafsir al-Kabir](#) stated that the "people of verification" declared the story as an outright fabrication, citing supporting arguments from the Qur'an, Sunnah and reason. He then reported that the preeminent [Muhaddith Ibn Khuzaymah](#) said: "it is an invention of the heretics" when once asked about it. Al-Razi also recorded that [al-Bayhaqi](#) stated that the narration of the story was unreliable because its narrators were of questionable integrity.

Those scholars who acknowledged the historicity of the incident apparently had a different method for the assessment of reports than that which has become standard Islamic methodology. For example, [Ibn Taymiyyah](#) took the position that since tafsir and sira-maghazi reports were commonly transmitted by incomplete isnads, these reports should not be assessed according to the completeness of the chains but rather on the basis of recurrent transmission of common meaning between reports.^[4]

Al-Qurtubi (*al-Jāmi' li ahkām al-Qur'ān*) dismisses all these variants in favor of the explanation that once [Sūra al-Najm](#) was safely revealed the basic events of the incident (or rumors of them) "were now permitted to occur to identify those of his followers who would accept Muhammad's explanation of the blasphemous imposture" (JSS 15, pp. 254–255).

Modern Islamic scholarship

While the authors of the [tafsir](#) texts during the first two centuries of the Islamic era do not seem to have regarded the tradition as in any way inauspicious or unflattering to Muhammad, it seems to have been universally rejected by at least the 13th century, and most modern Muslims likewise see the tradition as problematic, in the sense that it is viewed as "profoundly heretical because, by allowing for the intercession of the three pagan female deities, they eroded the authority and omnipotence of Allah. But they also hold... damaging implications in regard to the revelation as a whole, for Muhammad's revelation appears to have been based on his desire to soften the threat to the deities of the people."^[14] Different responses have developed concerning the account.

Almost^[citation needed] all modern Muslim scholars have rejected the story. Arguments for rejection are found in [Muhammad Abduh's](#) article "Mas'alat al-gharānīq wa-tafsīr al-āyāt",^[year needed] [Muhammad Husayn Haykal's](#) "Hayat Muhammad",^[year needed] [Sayyid Qutb's](#) "Fi Zilal al-Quran",^[year needed] [Abul Ala Maududi's](#) "Tafhim al-Quran"^[year needed] and [Muhammad Nasiruddin al-Albani's](#) "Nasb al-majānīq li-nasf al-gharānīq".^[year needed]^[4]

Haykal points out the many forms and versions of the story and their inconsistencies and argues that "the contextual flow of Surah 'al Najm' does not allow at all the inclusion of such verses as the story claims". Haykal quotes [Muhammad Abduh](#) who pointed out that the "Arabs have nowhere described their gods in such terms as 'al gharaniq'. Neither in their poetry nor in their speeches or traditions do we find their gods or goddesses described in such terms. Rather, the word 'al ghurnuq' or 'al gharniq' was the name of a black or white water bird, sometimes given figuratively to the handsome blond youth." Lastly, Haykal argues that the story is inconsistent with Muhammad's personal life and is completely against the spirit of the Islamic message.^[15]

[Aqa Mahdi Puya](#) has said that these fake verses were shouted out by the Meccans to make it look like it was Muhammad who said it; he writes:

Some pagans and hypocrites planned secretly to recite words praising idolatry alongside the recitation of the Holy Prophet, while he was praying, in such a way that the people would think as if they were recited by him. Once when the Holy Prophet was reciting verses 19 and 20 of Najm one of the pagans recited: "Tilkal gharani-ul ula wa inna shafa-atahuma laturja"-(These are the lofty (idols), verily their intercession is sought after.) As soon as this was recited the conspirators shouted in delight to make the people believe that it was the Holy Prophet who said these words. Here, the Quran is stating the general pattern the enemies of the messengers of Allah followed when they were positively convinced that the people were paying attention to the teachings of the messengers of Allah and sincerely believing in them. They would mix their false doctrines with the original teachings so as to make the divine message a bundle of contradictions. This kind of satanic insertions are referred to in this verse, and it is supported by Ha Mim: 26. It is sheer blasphemy to say that satanic forces can influence the messengers of Allah. ^{[16][17]}

This entire matter was a mere footnote to the back-and-forth of religious debate, ^[citation needed] and was rekindled only when [Salman Rushdie](#)'s 1988 novel, *The Satanic Verses*, made headline news. The novel contains some fictionalized allusions to Islamic history, which provoked both controversy and outrage. Muslims around the world protested the book's publishing, and [Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini](#) issued a [fatwa](#) sentencing Rushdie to death, saying that the book blasphemed Muhammad and his wives.

Historicity debate

Since William Muir, the historicity of this episode has been largely accepted by orientalists. ^[18] Some orientalists, however, argued against the historic authenticity of these verses on various grounds. ^[19]

[William Montgomery Watt](#) and [Alfred Guillaume](#) claim that stories of the event were true based upon the implausibility of Muslims fabricating a story so unflattering to their prophet: "Muhammad must have publicly recited the satanic verses as part of the Qur'ān; it is unthinkable that the story could have been invented by Muslims, or foisted upon them by non-Muslims." ^[20] Trude Ehlert in [Encyclopaedia of Islam](#) finds Watt's reason to be insufficient stating "The story in its present form (as related by al-Ṭabarī, al-Wāḳidī, and Ibn Saʿd) cannot be accepted as historical for a variety of reasons". ^[21]

Regarding this argument, Shahab Ahmed in the [Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān](#) counters that "the widespread acceptance of the incident by early Muslims suggests, however, that they did not view the incident as inauspicious and that they would presumably not have, on this basis at least, been adverse to inventing it." ^[4] Similarly, [Alford T. Welch](#), in the [Encyclopaedia of Islam](#), argues that the "implausibility" argument alone would be insufficient to assert the tradition's authenticity. ^[22] He says that the story in its present form is certainly a later, exegetical fabrication despite the fact that there could be some historical basis for the story. Welch states that the story falsely claims that the chapter 53:1-20 and the end of the chapter are a unity, and that the date for the verse 22:52 is later than 53:21-7, and almost certainly belongs to the Medinan period. Further several details in the setting of the story such as the mosque and the sajda do not belong to the Meccan phase of Muhammad's career. ^[23] Welch also points out that the story was not mentioned in the [Ibn Ishaq](#)'s biography of Muhammad. He says that the above analysis does not rule out "the possibility of some historical kernel behind the story." One such possibility, Welch says, is that the story is of a historical telescoping nature: "that a situation that was known by Muhammad's contemporaries to have lasted for a long period of time later came to be encapsulated in a story that restricts his acceptance of intercession through these goddesses to a brief period of time and places the responsibility for this departure from a strict monotheism on Satan." ^[24]

John Burton argued for its fictitiousness based upon a demonstration of its actual utility to certain elements of the Muslim community – namely, those legal exegetes seeking an "occasion of revelation" for eradication of modes of abrogation. Burton supports his theory by the fact that Tabari does not discuss the story in his exegesis of the verse 53:20, but rather in 22:52. Burton further

notes that different versions of the story are all tracable to one single narrator Muhammad ibn Ka'b, two generations removed from Ibn Ishaq, but not contemporary with the event.^[24] G.R. Hawting writes that the satanic verses incident would not serve to justify or exemplify a theory that God reveals something and later replaces it himself with another true revelation.^[25] Burton, in his rejection of the authenticity of the story, sided with [Leone Caetani](#), who wrote that the story was to be rejected not only on the basis of *isnad*, but because "had these hadiths even a degree of historical basis, Muhammad's reported conduct on this occasion would have given the lie to the whole of his previous prophetic activity."^[26]

[Maxime Rodinson](#) finds that it may reasonably be accepted as true "because the makers of Muslim tradition would never have invented a story with such damaging implications for the revelation as a whole."^[27] He writes the following on the genesis of the verses: "Obviously Muhammad's unconscious had suggested to him a formula which provided a practical road to unanimity." Rodinson writes that this concession, however, diminished the threat of the [Last Judgment](#) by enabling the three goddess to intercede for sinners and save them from eternal damnation. Further, it diminished Muhammad's own authority by giving the priests of Uzza, Manat, and Allat the ability to pronounce oracles contradicting his message. Disparagement from Christians and Jews who pointed out that he was reverting to his pagan beginnings and rebelliousness and indignation from among his own followers influenced him to go back on his revelation. However, in doing so he denounced the gods of Mecca as lesser spirits or mere names, cast off everything related to the traditional religion as the work of pagans and unbelievers, and consigned the Meccan's pious ancestors and relatives to Hell. This was the final break with the Quraysh.^[28]

[Fred Halliday](#) states that rather than having damaging implications, the story is a cautionary tale, the point of which is "not to malign God but to point up the frailty of human beings," and that even a prophet may be misled by shaytan — though ultimately shaytan is unsuccessful.^[29]

Since [John Wansbrough](#)'s contributions to the field in the early 1970s, though, scholars have become much more attentive to the emergent nature of early Islam, and less willing to accept back-projected claims of continuity:

To those who see the tradition as constantly evolving and supplying answers to question that it itself has raised, the argument that there would be no reason to develop and transmit material which seems derogatory of the Prophet or of Islam is too simple. For one thing, ideas about what is derogatory may change over time. We know that the doctrine of the Prophet's infallibility and impeccability (the doctrine regarding his *'isma*) emerged only slowly. For another, material which we now find in the biography of the Prophet originated in various circumstances to meet various needs and one has to understand why material exists before one can make a judgment about its basis in fact...^[30]

In Rubin's recent contribution to the debate, questions of historicity are completely eschewed in favor of an examination of internal textual dynamics and what they reveal about early medieval Islam. Rubin claims to have located the genesis of many prophetic traditions and that they show an early Muslim desire to prove to other scripturaries "that Muhammad did indeed belong to the same exclusive predestined chain of prophets in whom the [Jews](#) and the [Christians](#) believed. He alleges that the Muslims had to establish the story of Muhammad's life on the same literary patterns as were used in the *vitae* of the other prophets".^[31] The incident of the Satanic Verses, according to him, conforms to the common theme of persecution followed by isolation of the prophet-figure.

As the story was adapted to include Qur'ānic material (Q.22:50, Q.53, Q.17:73-74) the idea of satanic temptation was claimed to have been added, heightening its inherent drama as well as incorporating additional biblical motifs (cf. the [Temptation of Christ](#)). Rubin gives his attention to the [narratological](#) exigencies which may have shaped early *sīra* material as opposed to the more commonly considered ones of dogma, sect, or political/[dynastic](#) faction. Given the consensus that "the most archaic layer of the biography, [is] that of the stories of the [kussās](#) [i.e. popular story-tellers]" (*Sīra*, [EJ²](#)), this may prove a fruitful line of inquiry.

Although there could be some historical basis for the story, in its present form it is certainly a later, exegetical fabrication. *Sūra* LIII, 1-20 and the end of the *sūra* are not a unity, as is claimed by the

story; XXII, 52, is later than LIII, 21-7, and is almost certainly [Medinan](#) (see Bell, *Trans.*, 316, 322); and several details of the story- the mosque, the [sajda](#), and others not mentioned in the short summary above- do not belong to the Meccan phase.^[32] Rubin also claimed that the supposed temporary control taken by Satan over Muhammad made such traditions unacceptable to early hadith compilers, which he believed to be a unique case in which a group of traditions are rejected only after being subject to Qur'anic models, and as a direct result of this adjustment.^[8]

Related traditions

Several related traditions exist, some adapted to Qur'ānic material, some not. One version, appearing in Tabarī's *Tafsīr*^[33] and attributed to [Urwah ibn Zubayr](#) (d. 713), preserves the basic narrative but with no mention of satanic temptation. Muhammad is persecuted by the Meccans after attacking their idols, during which time a group of Muslims seeks refuge in Abyssinia. After the cessation of this first round of persecution (*fitna*) they return home, but soon a second round begins. No compelling reason is provided for the caesura of persecution, though, unlike in the incident of the satanic verses, where it is the (temporary) fruit of Muhammad's accommodation to Meccan polytheism. Another version attributed to 'Urwa has only one round of *fitna*, which begins after Muhammad has converted the entire population of Mecca, so that the Muslims are too numerous to perform ritual prostration (*sūjud*) all together. This somewhat parallels the Muslims and *mushrikūn* prostrating themselves together after Muhammad's first, allegedly satanically infected, recitation of [Sūra al-Najm](#), in which the efficacy of the three pagan goddesses is acknowledged (Rubin, pp. 157–158).

The image of Muslims and pagans prostrating themselves together in prayer in turn links the story of the satanic verses to very abbreviated *sūjud al-Qur'ān* (i.e. prostration when reciting the Qur'ān) traditions found in the authoritative *mussanaf* *hadīth* collections, including the Sunni canonical ones of [Bukhārī](#) and [Tirmidhī](#). Rubin claims that apparently "the allusion to the participation of the *mushrikūn* emphasises how overwhelming and intense the effect of this *sūra* was on those attending". The traditions actually state that all cognizant creatures took part in it, humans as well as jinns.^[34]

Rubin further argues that this is inherently illogical without the Satanic Verses in the recitation, given that in the accepted version of verses Q.53:19-23, the pagans' goddesses are attacked. The majority of traditions relating to prostration at the end of *Sūra al-Najm* solve this by either removing all mention of the *mushrikūn*, or else transforming the attempt of an old Meccan to participate (who, instead of bowing to the ground, puts dirt to his forehead proclaiming "This is sufficient for me") into an act of mockery. Some traditions even describe his eventual comeuppance, saying he is later killed at the [battle of Badr](#).^[2] Thus, according to Rubin, "the story of the single polytheist who raised a handful of dirt to his forehead... [in]... attempt of an old disabled man to participate in Muhammad's *sūjud*... in... a sarcastic act of an enemy of Muhammad wishing to dishonor the Islamic prayer". And "traditions which originally related the dramatic story of temptation became a sterilized anecdote providing prophetic precedent for a ritual practice".^[35]

Tabarī's account

An extensive account of the incident is found in [al-Tabārī's](#) history, the *Ta'rikh* (Vol. I):

The prophet was eager for the welfare of his people, desiring to win them to him by any means he could. It has been reported that he longed for a way to win them, and part of what he did to that end is what Ibn Humayd told me, from Salama, from [Muhammad ibn Ishaq](#), from Yazīd ibn Ziyād al-Madanī, from Muhammad ibn Ka'b al-Qurazī:

When the prophet saw his people turning away from him, and was tormented by their distancing themselves from what he had brought to them from [God](#), he longed in himself for something to come to him from God which would draw him close to them. With his love for his people and his eagerness for them, it would gladden him if some of the hard things he had found in dealing with them could be alleviated. He pondered this in himself, longed for it, and desired it.

Then God sent down the revelation. 'By the star when it sets! Your companion has not erred or gone astray, and does not speak from mere fancy...' [Q.53:1] When he reached God's words, 'Have you seen al-Lāt and al-'Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?' [Q.53:19-20] Satan cast upon his tongue, because of what he had pondered in himself and longed to bring to his people, 'These are the high-flying cranes and their intercession is to be hoped for.'

When [Quraysh](#) heard that, they rejoiced. What he had said about their gods pleased and delighted them, and they gave ear to him. The Believers trusted in their prophet with respect to what he brought them from their Lord: they did not suspect any slip, delusion or error. When he came to the prostration and finished the chapter, he prostrated and the Muslims followed their prophet in it, having faith in what he brought them and obeying his command. Those [mushrikūn](#) of Quraysh and others who were in the mosque also prostrated on account of what they had heard him say about their gods. In the whole mosque there was no believer or [kāfir](#) who did not prostrate. Only al-Walīd bin al-Mughīra, who was an aged [shaykh](#) and could not make prostration, scooped up in his hand some of the soil from the valley of Mecca [and pressed it to his forehead]. Then everybody dispersed from the mosque.

Quraysh went out and were delighted by what they had heard of the way in which he spoke of their gods. They were saying, 'Muhammad has referred to our gods most favourably. In what he has recited he said that they are "high-flying [cranes](#) whose intercession is to be hoped for".'

Those followers of the Prophet who had emigrated to the land of Abyssinia heard about the affair of the prostration, and it was reported to them that Quraysh had accepted Islam. Some men among them decided to return while others remained behind.

Gabriel came to the Prophet and said, 'O Muhammad, what have you done! You have recited to the people something which I have not brought you from God, and you have spoken what He did not say to you.'

At that the Prophet was mightily saddened and greatly feared God. But God, of His mercy, sent him a revelation, comforting him and diminishing the magnitude of what had happened. God told him that there had never been a [previous prophet or apostle](#) who had longed just as Muhammad had longed, and desired just as Muhammad had desired, but that Satan had cast into his longing just as he had cast onto the tongue of Muhammad. But God abrogates what Satan has cast, and puts His verses in proper order. That is, 'you are just like other prophets and apostles.'

And God revealed: 'We never sent any apostle or prophet before you but that, when he longed, Satan cast into his longing. But God [abrogates](#) what Satan casts in, and then God puts His verses in proper order, for God is all-knowing and wise.' [Q.22:52]

So God drove out the sadness from His prophet and gave him security against what he feared. He abrogated what Satan had cast upon his tongue in referring to their gods: 'They are the high-flying cranes whose intercession is accepted [[sic](#)]' [Replacing those words with] the words of God when Allāt, al-'Uzzā and Manāt the third, the other are mentioned: 'Should you have males and He females [as offspring]! That, indeed, would be an unfair division. They are only names which you and your fathers have given them'... as far as 'As many as are the angels in heaven, their intercession shall be of no avail unless after God has permitted it to whom He pleases and accepts' [Q.53:21-26]- meaning, how can the intercession of their gods be of any avail with Him?

When there had come from God the words which abrogated what Satan had cast on to the tongue of His prophet, Quraysh said, 'Muhammad has gone back on what he said about the status of our gods relative to God, changed it and brought something else', for the two phrases which Satan had cast on to the tongue of the Prophet had found a place in the mouth of every polytheist. They, therefore, increased in their evil and in their [oppression](#) of everyone among them who had accepted Islam and followed the Prophet.

The band of the Prophet's followers who had left the land of Abyssinia on account of the report that the people of Mecca had accepted Islam when they prostrated together with the Prophet drew near. But when they approached Mecca they heard that the talk about the acceptance of Islam by the people of Mecca was wrong. Therefore, they only entered Mecca in secret or after having obtained a promise of protection.

Among those of them who came to Mecca at that time and remained there until emigrating to Medina and taking part in the battle of Badr alongside Muhammad there was, from the family of 'Abd Shams b. Abd Manāf b. Qussayy, ['Uthmān b. 'Affān](#) together with his wife [Ruqayya](#) the daughter of the Prophet. Abū Hudhayfa b. 'Utba with his wife Shal bint Suhayl, and another group with them, numbering together 33 men.^[36]

However in the introduction of his book he states:

Let him who examines this book of mine know that I have relied, as regards everything I mention therein which I stipulate to be described by me, solely upon what has been transmitted to me by way of reports which I cite therein and traditions which I ascribe to their narrators, to the exclusion of what may be apprehended by rational argument or deduced by the human mind, except in very few cases. This is because knowledge of the reports of men of the past and of contemporaneous views of men of the present do not reach the one who has not witnessed them nor lived in their times except through the accounts of reporters and the transmission of transmitters, to the exclusion of rational deduction and mental inference. Hence, if I mention in this book a report about some men of the past, which the reader of listener finds objectionable or worthy of censure because he can see no aspect of truth nor any factual substance therein, let him know that this is not to be attributed to us but to those who transmitted it to us and we have merely passed this on as it has been passed on to us.^[37]

See also

- [Demolition of al-Uzza](#)
- [Demolition of al-Lat](#)
- [Demolition of Manat](#)
- [Criticism of the Quran](#)
- [Allah as Moon-god](#)
- [Sirat Rasul Allah](#), one name for any traditional Muslim prophetic biography (al-sīra) of the Prophet Muhammad
- [List of religious hoaxes](#)

Notes

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4. Ahmed, Shahab (2008), "*Satanic Verses*", in Dammen McAuliffe, Jane, *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, Georgetown University, Washington DC: Brill (published 14 August 2008)
5. [Q.53](#))
6. Militarev, Alexander; Kogan, Leonid (2005), *Semitic Etymological Dictionary 2: Animal Names, Alter Orient und Altes Testament*, 278/2, Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, pp. 131–132, [ISBN 3-934628-57-5](#)
7. Tabari's works are often filled with weak and fabricated narrations as he stated in his introduction to his tareekh that he had collected every account that he came across without considering any verification. Most of the later narrations of the 'satanic verses' incident stem from the works of Tabari. Rubin, Uri (14 August 2008), "*Muhammad*", in Dammen McAuliffe, Jane, *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, Georgetown University, Washington DC: Brill

8. Rubin, Uri (1997), *The eye of the beholder: the life of Muḥammad as viewed by the early Muslims: a textual analysis*, Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press (published 1995), p. 161, [ISBN 0-87850-110-X](#)
9. [Jump up](#) *ibn Ishāq ibn Yasār, Muhammad: Ibn Hishām, □ Abd al-Malik, Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*
10. [Jump up](#) Ṭabarī, *Ṭabarī, Tārīkh ar-Rusul wal-Mulūk*
11. [Jump up](#) Ṭabarānī, Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*
12. [Jump up](#) The isnad provided by Ibn Ishaq reads: Ibn Mumayd-Salamah-Muhammad Ibn Ishaq-Yazid bin Ziyad al-Madani-Muhammad bin Ka'b al-Qurazi. [1] Tafsir ibn Khatir on Sura 22
13. [Jump up](#) Rubin, Uri (1997), *The eye of the beholder: the life of Muḥammad as viewed by the early Muslims: a textual analysis*, Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press (published 1995), p. 256, [ISBN 0-87850-110-X](#)
14. [Jump up](#) John D. Erickson (1998), *Islam and Postcolonial Narrative*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press
15. [Jump up](#) Muhammad Husayn Haykal, *Hayat Muhammad*, 9th edition (Cairo, Maktaba an-Nahda al-Misriya, 1964, pp.164-7)
16. [Jump up](#) Puya, Aqa Mahdi. (2008), *Aqa Mahdi Puya view, Satanic Verses* (PDF), Mahdi Puya^[dead link]
17. [Jump up](#) <http://www.al-islam.org/quran/>
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 - "Kuran", [Encyclopaedia of Islam](#), 2nd Edition, Vol. 5 (1986), p. 404
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22. ^a [Jump up to:](#) ^b "Muhammad", *Encyclopedia of Islam Online*.
23. [Jump up](#) Encyclopedia of Islam, "al-Kuran"
24. [Jump up](#) Burton, "Those are the high-flying cranes", *Journal of Semitic Studies (JSS)* 15
25. [Jump up](#) G.R. Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam*. Cambridge University Press, 1999, page 135.

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33. [Jump up](#) *Tafsir*, Vol. IX
34. [Jump up](#) Rubin, p. 165.
35. [Jump up](#) Rubin, p. 166
36. [Jump up](#) translated in G. R. Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History*, pp. 131-132
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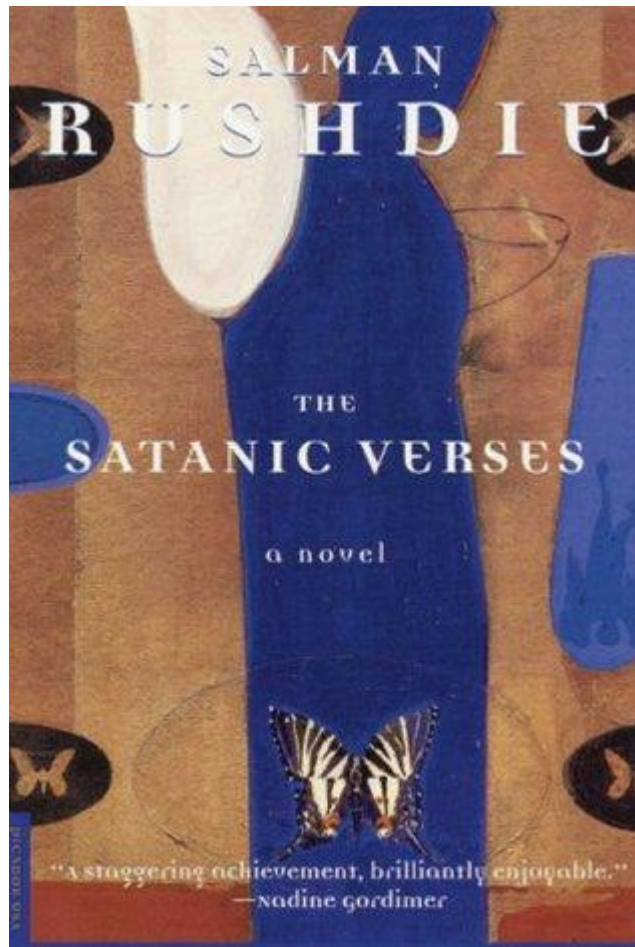
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The Satanic Verses

by [Salman Rushdie](#)

3.71 · [Rating Details](#) · [40,990 Ratings](#) · [2,897 Reviews](#)

One of the most controversial and acclaimed novels ever written, *The Satanic Verses* is Salman Rushdie's best-known and most galvanizing book. Set in a modern world filled with both mayhem and miracles, the story begins with a bang: the terrorist bombing of a London-bound jet in midflight. Two Indian actors of opposing sensibilities fall to earth, transformed into living symbols of what is angelic and evil. This is just the initial act in a magnificent odyssey that seamlessly merges the actual with the imagined. A book whose importance is eclipsed only by its quality, *The Satanic Verses* is a key work of our times. [\(less\)](#)

Paperback, USA, 561 pages

Published 1997 by Picador USA (first published 1988)

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He deserved what happened to him after he finished the book right? يستحق ما حدث له من جواز هدر دمه بعد ان انهى الكتاب صحيح؟ لانه وصل الى قمة التخلف وليس فقط بأمور الدين وانما في الخجل والحياء من الله عندما قرر كتابة مثل هذا الكتاب الذي يدعو الى الكفر بطريقة غير مباشرة

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Rini No. He did not deserve to have his life threatened for writing a book, ffs.

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why the satanic verses was banned ??

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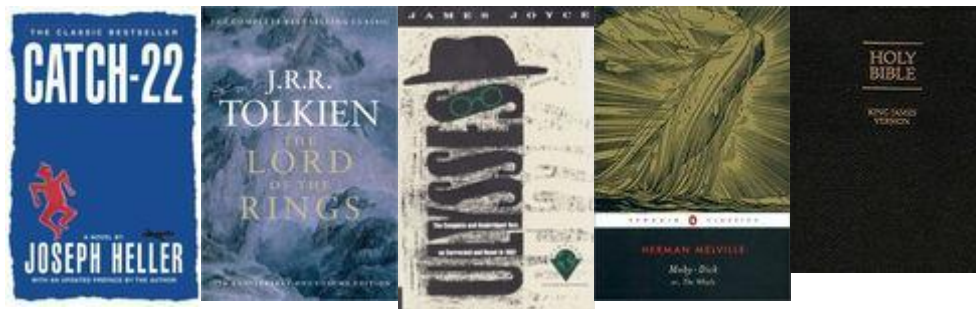


Sarosh Afzal Because iron age mind sets are intolerant of fictional writing and free thought/speech.

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[See all 7 questions about The Satanic Verses...](#)

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Jun 16, 2008 **Petra Eggs** rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)
Shelves: [fiction](#), [books-i-really-loathed](#), [2014-reviews](#), [reviewed](#)

I never got past page 60 in this book. I read and forgot and reread and forgot again up unto about the fifth reading when I thought to myself that I might rate [Midnight's Children](#) as one of the greatest books I've read, enjoyed the depiction of Benazir Bhutto as the Virgin Ironpants in [Shame](#) a great deal, but I also couldn't read [Shalimar the Clown](#) and thought that [Grimus](#) was excreble (not even Rushie rated this first offering of his oeuvre). So what was I doing trying so hard with the Satanic Verses? I felt that for a book to engender such a farrago of praise, death and destruction I must read it for myself and see what it was all about. But I couldn't. It bored me rigid.

However from the synopsis and reviews I have read of the book, I think it might translate into an excellent film, I just don't think there is a director alive courageous enough to make it, nor a cast who would act in it, and I don't blame any of them. But I do hate that the fundamentalists have got even that much of a victory.

Death to all those that oppose *freedom! Well not death, nah, not that, just shut up already and go

and moan to your friends and family like everyone else would.

(view spoiler)

Also see [Joseph Anton](#) for what I thought of Rushdie writing the Satanic Verses. [\(less\)](#)

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Feb 04, 2011 **Riku Sayuj** rated it [...](#) · [review of another edition](#)

Shelves: [favorites](#), [indian-fiction](#), [myth-religion](#), [r-r-rs](#)

Satanic Verses: A Composition

He had just finished his thirty-fourth reading of the play. The unsaid hate, the unseen events, the half-imagined wrongs; they tormented him. What could cause such evil to manifest, he just could not figure. He loved *him* too much to believe the simple explanation.

And then the idea starts growing on him - to explore the growth of evil just as Shakespeare showed, explored the tragic culmination of it. And because you show the growth, it can no longer be a tragedy, no, no it has to be a comedy. A tragicomedy. Yes. And he set to it. He painted Othello as an Indian actor, worshiped and adored and off on a mad canter to get his Ice Queen, his Desdemona. On his way he meets him - the poor man trying to forget his own roots and desperately reinventing himself, his Iago.

Yes Iago too was once a man. What twists of fate made him evil incarnate? He sets out his prime motif: The question that's asked here remains as large as ever it was: which is, the nature of evil, how it's born, why it grows, how it takes unilateral possession of a many-sided human soul.

Wait a minute, he blinks at his notes, if Iago is evil incarnate, does that not also mean that he is Satan incarnate? Chamcha then is Satan incarnate? Then Othello has to be God? A little bit more corruptible maybe? Let us make him the angel Gibreel, he decided. As an aside, as the angel, he can slip into that reality in his dreams and reenact the story (history?) of Prophet Mohammad in inflammatory fashion, maybe talk about the 'Satanic Verses' since his Satan can't help but gloat over his little jokes. Why not call the novel so too, except that it would mean something else - the verses that the real Satan of the story, Iago, sings in Othello's ear. He knows that this might be cause for misunderstanding, might ruffle a few feathers, but it is just a digression, the real story is beyond that - it is not the Event Horizon. But he can't help himself. He never could keep a story simple.

Ah, now something beyond mere Othello is taking shape is it not? If Iago is Satan, then surely it is in character to enjoy with consummate pleasure the sight of his own jealousy consuming himself - the green-eyed monster that feeds on itself. So Satan decides to narrate the story of one of his

incarnations? Or rather, possessions? The questions that are to run his plot are flowing freely now. How an ordinary man when in contact with an angel inevitably had to transform into Lucifer himself. How can one exist without the other. They meet and the spiral ensues and Iago mutates and agitates and like a cancerous growth his strange fate builds until he turns his wrath square on his angel, his Othello. And how can he then not try to destroy what he is not, what he can not be. There is the moment before evil, then the moment of, then the time after; and each subsequent stride becomes progressively easier. But what about before and after the madness? It surely must be an ordinary life, with ordinary joys and pains. It is a cosmic drama, he concludes.

In the process, every insinuated implication in the play is to be played out in this story - Cassio does sleep with Iago's wife, Iago is madly lustful of Desdemona, Othello is a deserving victim of directed revenge for very real ills and Iago needs no invented or unbelievable reasons for his actions. He is justified. It was inevitable.

Salman Rushdie sets down his pen.

He has vindicated Iago, many a literature lover's favorite character.

And for that, I am eternally thankful. [\(less\)](#)

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Jun 27, 2007 [Max Ostrovsky](#) rated it [L](#) · [review of another edition](#)
Shelves: [contemporary](#), [fiction](#), [fantasy](#)

Occasionally, I will go into Half Price Books and buy a book that hasn't been recommended by any one I know, by an author I've never read before, solely because of its "critical acclaim." I buy and read a book because I feel that I should, based on the general public's reaction to it.

It is a weakness.

Many months ago, I decided to buy Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. My decision was based on the controversy surrounding the book. It was thought to be so controversial, so blasphemous, that Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a fatwa on Salman Rushdie. It became every Muslim's sacred duty to hunt down this writer of fiction and kill him. So I thought (these were the days long before the reaction to Danish comics) wow, this book pissed off people enough that they want to kill him? Wow. I must read this book. It's gotta be good.

That's what controversy does. It brings a lot of attention to something that doesn't always merit the attention.

So, when I bought Rushdie's book, I fell for the hype. Partly because it was a subject that I did have an interest in. I'm an amateur theologian, and I can't find better amusement than blasphemy. Besides that, I love Magic Realism and this book had plenty of that.

What this book did not have plenty of was editing. This book was in serious need of an editor. There were parts that were more thrilling and exciting, but overall, the writing of the book was bland and uninspired for its very interesting subject matter.

Quick Plot Summary: Two Indian ex-patriots, now living in England living very famous lives are on an airplane when it is exploded by terrorists. They survive the explosion and the fall and upon landing begin changing. The garish obnoxious one, gains a halo, becoming the arch-angel Gabrael and the prim and proper other one gains horns and goat legs. The devil's story is his reintroduction into society and the angel's story is through his dreams, he inspires the prophet Mohammad. Everything culminates into a showdown between these two entities.

But along the way, nothing happens. We have pages and pages of unnecessary background information. And then, we have more pages and pages of unnecessary background information. We keep getting filled with pages and pages of unnecessary background information. Suddenly, we're faced with a book that is much larger, and more importantly, much drier than it should be. It really does have the basis for a great story. Wonderful things happen in this book that everyone should read, but it's not worth getting through all the unnecessary to get there.

I've never taken so long to read a book. Usually, I read a book when I want to and usually that's all the time. This book, I only read in great spurts when I was sitting and waiting. I read a bunch when I was sitting and waiting at a debate tournament. I read a bunch while I was sitting and waiting monitoring my students testing. I read a bunch while I was sitting and waiting in the bathtub for my health to return. Never was there a point when I wanted to pick up this book because it was interesting and I couldn't wait to get back to the story.

As big a fan of magic realism as I am, I was disappointed. If you're looking for a Muslim centric magic realism story that uses a lot of the same story telling techniques that Rushdie uses, I recommend a far superior story done by a far superior writer: Farnoosh Moshiri's *At the Wall of the Almighty*. [\(less\)](#)

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Jul 15, 2015 [Manny](#) rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)

From the archives: September 27 1988

The Satanic Verses, the controversial first draft of the Quran recently discovered after spending 1379 years in a safe deposit box, finally appeared yesterday to a mixed reception.

"Wheeeeeee! I'm so excited!!" said one fan who had spent all night lining up outside her local Barnes & Noble. "A new book by Allah! Can you believe it?!"

Other readers are however less enthusiastic about the novel, and take exception to its portrayal of the much-loved character Mohammad as a lecherous smalltime crook. Influential blogger AyatollahK has been particularly outspoken. "Allah never intended this book to be published," he said yesterday in a tersely worded post. "Salman Rushdie and HarperCollins are agents of Shaitan and will be hunted down like dogs."

[\(less\)](#)

[flag78 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Apr 24, 2007 **Taylor** rated it

Recommends it for: those who are not easily daunted.

Shelves: [fiction](#), [to-reread](#), [favorites](#), [own](#), [recommended](#), [desert-island-picks](#), [ramble-on](#), [the-power-of-love](#), [in-a-time-long-ago](#), [in-a-land-far-away](#), [surreality](#), [not-by-a-white-guy](#), [awards-and-accolades](#)

Here's the thing about this book that you will immediately grasp from what everyone says: it's a beast. I do not mean this in a bad sense. I mean this in the sense that it's overwhelming. It's long, complex (storylines that involve overlapping characters and storylines that don't overlap in time or space at all), dense and occasionally slow. It is not for the reader with ADD. No matter how quickly you think you might read, reading this book will slow you down. No matter how determined you are to catch every single detail and nuance of this book and what it means, you will not.

I can generally blaze through a book in a matter of days. It took me an entire year to read this book, and was almost certainly my longest read. I often had to go back and refer to other parts of the book to keep names and events straight. but you know what? it was worth every minute.

Rushdie is a master writer, and I can't tell you how much I took away from this book. I would have liked to taken a class on it while reading it so that I could have understood more of it, but even without one, I enjoyed every second of it. reading it is a labor of love, but it's a highly rewarding one. [\(less\)](#)

[flag67 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Feb 10, 2012 **Hend** added it · [review of another edition](#)

Shelves: [the-most-disgusting-book-ever-read](#), [indian-literature](#)

يقول المفكر البريطاني رولد ديهل

ان هذا النمط من اثارة الحساسية قد اوصل كتباً غير متميزة على الاطلاق الى قمة الكتب الاكثر مبيعا في العالم ولكن في نظري هذه طريقة رخيصة للوصول للهدف وفي نظري انه انتهازي خطير

ديلي نيوز مارس 1989

كتاب ايات شيطانية يدل على احد امرين اما الجهل المطبق بالاسلام والمسلمين او تعتمد تشويهه بغير حق

في اعلان عن كنيسة كانتربرى في انكلترا يقول الدكتور روبرت رونسى

ان فاقد القدرة على تمييز الحق هو وحده الذى يخفق فى ان يرى ان نشر هذا الكتاب قد اساء للمسلمين فى كل انحاء العالم واعتقد ان [...more](#)

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Jul 02, 2007 **Ben** rated it ..

People jumping into this book blindly may soon find themselves wishing they had informed themselves somewhat beforehand. I must claim an embarrassing ignorance about just about every aspect of this daunting work at the outset: I had only the faintest whisper of a memory of having heard the phrase "satanic verses" outside of a discussion of the ever-present religiously-sanctioned hit out on the author's life. I had very little knowledge of Indian culture and none regarding the cross-cultural experiences of Indian immigrants living in Great Britain, and I only knew the barest outline of the history of Islam. While reading this book, I fell head-first into every one of these gaps in my knowledge and quite a few more besides. To pigeonhole the Satanic Verses as a book solely concerned with and influenced by the above mentioned topics is to miss a great deal of what Rushdie put into it. Personally, while reading, I often found it helpful (and at times necessary) to educate myself along the way. Even still, I recognize that I have not grasped many of the story's finer points and subtler themes, and I suspect that, if ever in my life I am able and patient enough to deepen my understanding of this work, my rating will almost certainly improve. ([less](#))

[flag53 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Aug 10, 2014 **Jr Bacdayan** rated it ____

What kind of idea are you?

This question, scattered throughout the pages of this novel, is the intermediary between the author and his work. A waterloo of sorts, a windbreaker giving rise to the question of the material's purpose. It gives us some sort of glimpse as to why he chose to name it "Satanic Verses", insight to all its diabolical implications, and some sort of motive as to why it is disrespectful to Islam and the Prophet. So what kind of an idea is this? In turn, what kind of idea are we? It is said that people are only the sum of their ideas and beliefs. So what equaled to our sum? What are we made of?

Are you a preconceived idea?

When does the bias of the material end and when does the bias of the reader begin? If you're either a Christian or a Muslim, then surely the title of this novel made you pause, if only a little. Or maybe it drove you off altogether. I assure you this novel is not satanic in any devilish way. Now I ask the question: Do we really approach a book with an open mind, or do we give immediate judgment to books based on their titles? Do we read without bias or do we bear impasse to fairness. Do we aim to learn or do we aim to protect our knowledge? These questions, I believe, are critical when discussing reading materials which are controversial in nature. It occurred to me when, during an article review in one of my classes, my group-mates and I discussed the bias of an article about the Gaza affair. My groupmates interpreted the article in favor of Israel while I, on the other hand, viewed it a bit sympathetic towards Palestinians. I realized then that when it came to issues we have forehand knowledge of; people tend to see what they want to see. Justification of its stand is the priority of the mind rather than the absorption of new information. This selective receiving, blindsiding whatever parity the material has, is a greater source of misconstrusion rather than biased material. Sure, there will always be certain biases in all materials we read, but the bias of the mind is the sieve through which comprehension passes, it will only let in biases it supports. This greatly affects one's comprehension into the mold it wants to see. The bias of a material will be evident to an open mind, but the bias of a reader will affect even the most unbiased material. A good example is the reading of the Bible. The Bible is the foundation of Christianity. Everything that Christians believe in come from that book, but I believe it was Isaac Asimov who said "Properly read, the Bible is the most potent force for atheism ever conceived." It only shows that one's biases are the hands that mold one's reading experience. People's understanding is founded on the guidance of certain assumptions and axioms based on previous knowledge, but this principle can also be taken to an extreme. This "learned" mindset which has become second-nature to us, is a great hindrance to critical thinking and knowledge acquisition. Even the most gifted mind is beset by this problem, and I believe it takes years of practice to be able to read something without any inclinations.

So before you read this novel, I beg that you give a conscious effort to be open-minded and at least try to suppress the inevitable biases that you will have. A full cup will spill all that's poured into it, be an empty cup. Only then can one learn to fully appreciate this novel.

Different Ideas

Salman Rushdie's novel is a multi-layered magical tale with lots of possible implications. Its many facets, much like a dice that can roll to many of its sides, may have different meanings or might be driving together at one main point. It's hard to really pin-point the central theme of the novel. The author suggests that it is about migration and the problems that immigrants face, which is most obvious during Chamcha's early metamorphosis. The notion of "nationalism" and betrayal of one's country is thereby tackled. But then Mahound's, the Butterfly Girl's, and the Immam's respective arcs try to bring perspective to blind faith. Baal's tale warns one of trying to be someone else. The Old Woman's and Rehka Merhcant's respective accounts tell us not to devote our purpose to another person. The terrorist's example hints mockery in self-sacrifice. Farishta's

bizarre experiences advises us to not to be fooled by destiny or purpose. Alleluia's case conveys that uprightness is not always rewarded. The whole "immigrant mob" incident showcases that the mob mentality is not always right. Many possible ideas are present, one can choose which to focus on, which to ignore, which to accept. Which idea are you?

My idea

For me, the main idea of this novel is learning to understand that one must create one's own ideas. If you will notice, all the facets and interwoven tales are delved in problems when the characters place their life, their ideas on nationalism, faith, someone they want to be like, someone they love, on political beliefs, on destiny, on goodwill, on what everybody does. We are busy with these worldviews that we then ignore the question "What are my own ideas?" "Who am I apart from these things not of my own?"

"WHAT KIND OF AN IDEA ARE YOU?"

"Are you the kind that compromises, does deals, accommodates itself to society, aims to find a niche, to survive; or are you the cussed, bloody-minded, ramrod-backed type of damnfool notion that would rather break than sway with the breeze? – The kind that will almost certainly, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, be smashed to bits; but, the hundredth time, will change the world."

A bit of a cliché, I know. But one can't avoid the reality of what this says. Are your ideas your own, or were they placed there by society? Creativity, originality, uniqueness these things are being suppressed by a society that calls for conformity, for belongingness. What kind of idea will you be?

The World's Ideas

"Society was orchestrated by what she called 'grand narratives': history, economics, ethics. In India, the development of a corrupt and closed state apparatus had 'excluded the masses of the people from the ethical project'. As a result, they sought ethical satisfactions in the oldest of the grand narratives, that is, religious faith. But these narratives are being manipulated by the theocracy and various political elements in an entirely retrogressive way."

"We can't deny the ubiquity of faith. If we write in such a way as to pre-judge such belief as in some way deluded or false, then are we not guilty of elitism, of imposing our world-view on the masses?"

Worldviews, social constructs, axioms, these are also important as much as one's individuality. For one must take into account that one's self interest doesn't give one the right to step on another. "Let our aim be a way of life not diametrically opposed to, but better than that of the mob. Otherwise we shall repel and alienate the very people whose reform we should desire." I understand Salman Rushdie was disrespectful to Islam and to Muhammad, shouldn't he have been? It is not for me to say. It was his choice, and I refuse to cast another stone where I am but

an observer. But who are we to say that he deserves to die for his unbelief? It is one thing to ask for an apology, and another to take life altogether. Why should a review get deleted when it says bad things about an author? Free Expression is commendable but one must also remember repercussions. Acts are done in the name of ideas. Be careful what ideas you clash with, you embody, for unlike an idea which can change, the associated action cannot be taken back. The Fatwa placed on Rushdie's head speaks the truth about how conforming the world asks us to be, how the actuality of ideas cannot be undone. But sometimes, just sometimes, the realization stemmed from one person's ideas changes the world for the greater good. Will the possibility of criticism deter your idea?

What kind of idea are you?

Be your own kind of idea, think critically, question everything, don't be a passive receiver, be open-minded, be creative, unique, but also learn to respect ideas that are not your own. [\(less\)](#)

flag47 likes · Like · [see review](#)



Sep 11, 2016 [ميقات الراجحي](#) rated it — · [review of another edition](#)
Shelves: [روايات-قصص](#)

لا أعلم لماذا رشدي إنحدر بمستواه بهذا العمل ذلك (آيات شيطانية) فكراً وأسلوباً أدبياً. خصوصاً أنني قرأت له قبل هذا العمل رواية (أطفال منتصف الليل) أولاً وهي رائعة الجميلة، والتي أبدع فيها بموضوع الهند قبل وبعد الإستقلال، ثم قرأت (آيات شيطانية) ومن بعدها غير عمل له ومنها عمل جميلو (العار). فوجدت حيرتي في إنحداره لهذا المستوى ربما أراد تقديم تنازلات أكثر ليتأقلم مع المجتمع الجديد! كعادة بعض الكتاب العرب والمسلمين وغيرهم من القادمين من دول العالم الثالث كنوع من الإنسلاخ القائم في الأساس على تشضي الهوي [...more](#)

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Apr 14, 2010 [Rich](#) rated it ...

Salman Rushdie uses excessive language to cloud discordant plots, has a part-time occupation of scouring the news to write op-eds about evil Muslim organizations he reads about, and is obsessed with celebrity.

Rushdie strangles his plot in The Satanic Verses by hitching every development to a forced and unnecessarily long description or metaphor. His overwriting prevents the development of narrative flow. He even returns to more metaphors about the same topic sometimes, like when he writes about stuff falling out of the plane in the first chapter again and again. It's not hard to read but it is distracting and he uses ingratiating language. He doesn't sound confident in his writing.

"Yaaaaaa! I'm falling out of an aeroplane! Wa-waaajaaaa!" The annoyance you now feel is the

same feeling I felt when I started reading *The Satanic Verses* a couple of days ago. I don't oppose metaphors and I don't even oppose varied styles and formats of writing, so long as they are effective. There is a difference between figurative language and purple prose. Look at this punctuation, pg. 15: "Oh: don't forget: she saw her after she died." Ok: Thanks: I won't forget. Oh: and Rushdie: I don't like kitschy conversational prose.

"It was the death of God." pg. 16. What a way to start a paragraph! God just died? Aw man, false alarm, it's just more crap like: "It was part of his magic persona that he succeeded in crossing religious boundaries without giving offence." Oh it was? I'll keep that in mind about the character from now on. Nah, I'll probably forget it. It doesn't matter though because it didn't mean anything to begin with. At least he threw in a book recommendation, Akbar and Birbal, in that paragraph to make it worth something. It's out-of-place. He's certainly proven to me that he's a master of the Orient at this point, though. (Someone told me not to use the term "orientalist" because it was "stale" so I'll use master of the Orient instead.) He also gives a shout-out to Hinduism and Buddhism in this paragraph. Just name-drop those religions as fast as you can and move on, I guess. No Satanic influence there.

Rushdie also relies on intentionally jumbled (what's it called when you do this stupid thing?) words and run-on sentences. This sucks. I remember writing words like that in elementary school because I thought it was funny. It's not funny. It's cutesy at best. I don't like reading over 500 pages worth of giddy and bubbly writing just to get through a stupid plot.

His realism is magical because he relies on controversial fairy tales to carry themes he is either too lazy or too incompetent to create through reality. His magical realism makes me feel like I'm watching what I imagine an Enya music video would look like. He's hiding a spastic plot behind mysticism. He fails to employ that mysticism to do anything more interesting than a competent author could do with the real and concrete.

According to RUSHDORK, I mean Rushdie, Satan interrupted the divine dictation of the Koran. It was supposed to go from the Archangel Gabriel's mouth to Mohammad's ear and then to the People. Satan stepped in like the jackass in a game of Telephone who gets the message wrong on purpose. Later, Islamic ninjas covered up Satan's interference and Mohammad's mistake. This is the plot hook of *The Satanic Verses*. Mohammad was influenced by the Devil even though the Koran has no trace of the two goddesses introduced by Zoroaster. How the hell does that work? Was Mohammad like "My utterances at dawn: t'was Satan. Sorry, guys." Maybe that happened -- but Rushdie never explains this. But it was probably, as a huge amount of speculative western scholarship has "uncovered" in the years since Rushdie's inflammatory book was published, just a fight amongst a few Muslims who accused a few other Muslims of attempting, in compiling *What the Prophet Said*, to add their own idols, who they wanted to be included in religious scripture. THAT HAPPENED COUNTLESS TIMES DURING THE FORMATION OF THE KORAN and western historians, in all their ignorance of Islam, got involved, so when they saw Muslims accusing each other, they took the chance to say "they're fighting about Satan's influence." It was a few phrases that got chopped in the cutting room of the Koran, but were scooped off the floor. MAYBE. Someone called them "satanic," probably a westerner, as Daniel Pipes speculates, and it

was on. Rushdie was ready to write.

Misappropriating history with such lazy disregard for truth or context, with such an ignorance that turns condescending by transmission -- this is the hallmark of Dan Browns, not great authors. It's as though Brown seized on some of the more inflammatory screeds from the Arian Heresy and wrote a book that went like, "Aha! The Knights Templar were time travelers!" It's not good fiction. That this intentionally inflammatory claptrap rose to the level of world-renowned Great Art speaks more to the global prejudice against Islamic theology than to the Satanic Verses' literary worth!

If you believe that Gabriel spoke Allah's divine words to Mohammad, I bet you don't also think that Mohammad received false words from Satan, do you?

If you believe that Gabriel did not speak Allah's divine words to Mohammad, I bet you also don't think that Mohammad received false words from Satan, do you?
Anyone?

The rest of this review has very little to do with The Satanic Verses but it does have to do with Rushdie:

Rushdie lives a pampered celebrity life now that he's no longer hunted by hundreds of assassins. He's an English knight, so maybe he'll fulfill his fantasy and go to the Holy Land to vanquish Muslims, just the bad ones though, as he is so adept at finding. Another review on Goodreads said that he had a cameo in Bridget Jones's Diary. That's lame. Sir Rushdie came out of hiding by walking on stage at a U2 concert. I didn't know he was a rock star, wow. We get it, you really like attention. He teaches English now at Emory University, far away from where the following treacherous Islamists lurk. Here are some thoughtful articles he's written:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/salman-rushdie-his-life-his-work-and-his-religion-419902.html>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/10/opinion/10rushdie.html>

http://www.faithfreedom.org/Articles/rushdie/yes_its_about_islam

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article3689883.ece>

Someone email Sean Hannity and just set up the interview already! Islam can't take this informed and logical onslaught much longer, Salman! Let it live!

He's been married four times. I'm cool with that... I live in the U.S. so I know that judging someone for that is wrong. That must sting Rushdie's massive ego a bit. Maybe he just doesn't care. A few parting shots:

He was most recently married to a model who poses nude, is decades younger than him, sits interviews covering how she loves certain parts of her body, repeatedly proclaims that she isn't boastful, and is a judge on a cooking show. Spare me the whole "EVERYONE would want that in

his life!" Here's some hubris on display from her steroidal celebrity Facebooky page:

"'Being married to a giant cultural figure like Salman Rushdie, I want to earn my seat at the table,' she says."

Why stop at Rushdie's table? Why not surpass him and become The Greatest Human Being to Ever Live? Her authorship includes a cookbook called Easy Exotic. Too many jokes there.

[\(less\)](#)

flag35 likes · Like · [see review](#)



Aug 27, 2007 [Johanna](#) rated it ...

Recommends it for: Magical Realism Fans, Neil Gaiman fans, studiers and enthusiasts of post-colonial politics

This book is not for the faint of heart. It is overwhelming in terms of plot, imagery, and its large cast of characters. However, it is completely worth it and it flows beautifully once you get in tune with the book. I bought the Satanic Verses when I was 17 and I was not ready for it--I read 15 pages and then put it away. I picked it up again 7 years later and could not put it down.

There is just....so much packed into this book. One would have to read it many many times to get the full meaning of it, but at the same time it is a highly enjoyable and pleasurable read. By combining the two, this book becomes perfect--you can enjoy it on first read, but you will want to read it again, and again. Rushdie is the consummate storyteller. Like Neil Gaiman, he is amazing at the actual "telling" of the story, as opposed to just having interesting characters and plots (although he does). He is a storyteller in the tradition of the old tellers, the bards and minstrels and trovadores of a bygone age. Rushdie keeps it alive.

However, a warning. There is a reason that Rushdie had a fatwa declared against him. This book does not portray the Prophet Mohammed in the best light. At all. That is something people may find offensive. I found it fascinating in terms of exploring the genesis of a religion. Rushdie keeps your guessing--in the end, you have to decide what you believe about the characters, including Mohammed. [\(less\)](#)

flag35 likes · Like · [see review](#)



Aug 07, 2010 [Aubrey](#) rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)

Shelves: [4-star](#), [reviewed](#), [1-read-on-hand](#), [person-of-everything](#), [r-2014](#), [r-goodreads](#), [antidote-think-twice-read](#), [antidote-think-twice-all](#)

I'm giving this four stars because I acknowledge the importance of what this book has to say. The importance does not outweigh the fact that Rushdie does the "oh look how badly they treat

women they must be bad!" dance while amassing almost a dozen girlfriends in the refrigerator and a couple personas whose bad ass character definition is completely subsumed by their (male) lover's plot lines, but stands alongside it, equally worthy of mention. It's a balancing of my importance as a self with my importance as an idea, something that men the world over could learn something from. Intersectionality does not dampen your critical thinking skills; solipsism does. And when it comes to gynephobia or any other ideological oppression, solipsism kills. *Mahound, any new idea is asked two questions. When it's weak: will it compromise? We know the answer to that one. And now, Mahound, on your return to Jahilia, time for the second question: How do you behave when you win? When your enemies are at your mercy and your power has become absolute: what then?*

The main reason why I think this book deserves to be read is because while Rushdie does fall into authorial/political traps in regards to women, he does so while deconstructing the very power structures that propagate those traps. It's not a matter of "I did my best and no one should criticize me" feel-good stagnancy, nor a philosophical degeneration into nonentity that likes to pretend privilege is not a thing, but a real look at the compromises we live by in the societal boundaries of good and evil. This angry and messy view of things is particular important when considering the book, its history, and the particular reader I am, an atheist woman who grew to adulthood in the wake of 9/11. I have my own issues due to my identity, but I'll never be thought a terrorist.

Emboldened by the lights and the patient, silent lens, he goes further. These kids don't know how lucky they are, he suggests. They should consult their kith and kin. Africa, Asia, the Caribbean: now those are places with real problems. Those are places where people might have grievances worth respecting. Things aren't so bad here, not by a long chalk; no slaughters here, no torture, no military coups. People should value what they've got before they lose it. Ours always was a peaceful land, he says. Our industrious island race.

I know people died for the sake of this book, I know people died for the sake of my country's obsessions with security and military industrial complex as a direct result of Islamophobia, and I know how easy it would be to use one to excuse the other. It's the same parsed feeling when Rushdie writes about current events in Ferguson twenty-six years before in fiction form, and then goes on to comment how the martyr of his particular story had a history of abusing women that does not receive coverage for the sake of solidarity. What's important here is how little confidence there is in regards to the "right" answer to all this, how Rushdie handles the choice between in such a way that the good and the bad of each are readily apparent and always in metamorphosis. Much like Murakami, I found myself questioning my own beliefs not because of how characters I had identified with had suffered, but due to the genuine interest the author had in questioning the lines of good and evil and what that all meant for our effort to live. Both of them have issues with writing female characters, but the "worth reading" quality is high enough to merit a pass.

Allie had a way of switching from the concrete to the abstract, a trope so casually achieved as to leave the listener half-wondering if she knew the difference between the two; or, very often, unsure as to whether, finally, such a difference could be said to exist.

If I can do it, so can you. Personal offence does not impress me when lives are on the line, and that goes for any and all lives. [\(less\)](#)

[flag33 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Jun 15, 2007 [Victoria](#) rated it ...
Recommends it for: Someone with a lot of patience

I have decided that it's time for me to leave this book. I have tried to stick with it. It jumps around way to much, has too many moments of abstract non-sensical story inserts and I often feel as though I have ADD when I pick it up. I always have to read the last few pages I read the time before in hopes of refreshing myself for the current reading session. Unfortunately because the book is so abstract, new characters constantly appear as if they have been there all along, causing immediate disorientation and confusion in this reader. There is just not enough continuity to make it satisfying. After I cheated on this book and read another instead I finally realized it is time for me to give it up. I am a typically faithful reader. It is not giving me what I need and I must move on. I do have a tinge of regret and a bit of a "you should give it one more try" lingering, but I am going to listen to my gut on this one and find something more fulfilling. ([less](#))

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Aug 25, 2007 [Lily](#) rated it ...

Life is too short to endure bad fiction.

The story started out interesting enough, with the characters literally falling out of the sky. It took me a awhile to get into the story, but I finally did. The problem was that every time you managed to get a hold of the basic underlying narrative it would evaporate and be replaced by a nonsensical dream sequence. The transitions between the two realities was so seamless that you frequently find yourself lost. Add all of that to the fact that you are trying to juggle the names of very foreign persons and places and it gets even worse.

I think that, perhaps, to approach this book and appreciate it you have to have a working knowledge of the Koran and Persian Mythology.

I also think that the book would have never been have read by as many people as it has been were it not for the controversy surrounding it. ([less](#))

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Jan 02, 2016 [peiman-mir5 rezakhani](#) rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)
Shelves: [داستان-و-رمان](#)

دوستان خردگرا، به نظرم 2 ستاره هم برای این کتاب زیاد بود متأسفانه با گنده کردن موضوع این کتاب مسخره توسط خمینی و عده ای ایرانی عرب پرست و نادان، تنها و تنها مردم سرزمینم خسارت دیدند

بله عزیزانم، با محکوم کردن و حلال کردن خون «سلمان رشدی»، باعث شدند که این مرد ناشناس و رمان نویس، به شهرت جهانی دست پیدا کند، و از طرف ملکه انگلستان لقب «سیر» را دریافت کند... بله، با این حکم، سلمان رشدی میلیونها دلار از [...more](#)، فروش همین کتاب در حساب مبارکشان رفت... پول سرزمین من خرج هزاران هزار طاقه پارچه شد

[flag27 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Dec 25, 2007 [Sheba](#) rated it

I can't really review Rushdie's work. I don't understand everything he writes about. But I do love him because his language and his prose and his stories are just so Indian.

He writes lushly, extravagantly, with story tripping over story, subplot over sub sub plot. Characters tromp through with no regard for their antecedents. The colors are candy pink, good luck red, and Aegean blue, and everything is crashing and tumbling into each other.

And on top, his stories are amusing, mischievous, clever, full of naughtiness and frank stupidity. And if someone rides his ass backwards through parliament, no one blinks, and Bollywood is even more bollyish and saints ride rats in homespun, and then all of sudden, his stories are so sharp, so smart, quick to cut and they leave you, well, feeling awed. Do I need to say more....

It is taxing to read Rushdie and you need time, "Verses" took me a month of straight reading; but Rushdie is a big beautiful genie of a writer and the ride is fantastic. [\(less\)](#)

[flag26 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Jan 11, 2017 [Paquita Maria Sanchez](#) is currently reading it · [review of another edition](#)
Shelves: [literature](#)

Holy hell. Swoony Tunes over here. Even people who wanted to assassinate Rushdie for being kind of an asshole(?) had to acknowledge that he is so absurdly good at fiction-craft, it leaves you flabbergasted at the end of each sentence. Problem is, I can't really quote it for you, because it's one of those books that is incredible when taken in its nesting-doll-ness, in how the most moving and/or (mostly *and*) funny quotes sort of echo and expand upon and curl inside and crawl on top of previous quotes/events in such a way that I would basically have to tell you half of that scene's action and several actions before it in order to express why such and such is such a great line, and even then it would fall flat like a "you just had to be there" style joke. A stacking, ever-running, ever-evolving joke inside an insight box that I can't even figure out how to show you. I am totally not prepared to even be Summary Salman Rushdie. Not at all.

When people write (orchestrate?) like this and make it look so effortless, so inevitable and yet illuminating and necessary and titillating, it makes me sad for most of the other writers. Sorry, guys. Jeesh, maaaaaybe it's Maybelline, but it seems more likely that he was born with it. Thankfully, that happened. Him being born, not Maybelline. What? Whatever, this is totally a draft of a review. Maybe. Probably it will sit here making me look stupid for all time.

Fury was apparently a bad place to meet Rushdie fifteen years ago. Hence the gap of fifteen years between Rushdie novels. That novel was OK, if I remember correctly? Forgettable. This, on the other hand, is just dizzying. I'm getting the reader tinglies! Staying up too late for more word-fix. I know this is probably not the best time to be reading a book so harshly critical of religion (and one in particular), but MAN it is good. It's sincerely been, so far, an experience akin to (at least my) first readings of Wallace or Pynchon. Neurons a-firin'! I had no idea, because I suck at listening.

All right, this is all getting pretty indecent...I will place a pillow over my boner, post-haste, and stop the dopey cooing and the slobber. Please accept my apology, elegant sir/mam. Also, read this. [\(less\)](#)

[flag23 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Sep 06, 2007 [Stanka](#) rated it ..

I'm doing my best not to think "Here goes Rushdie again." I never read this one before although I read every other book he ever wrote. And now, to fill the gap, I am stuck with the last unread jewel, except that it's somehow lackluster because Salman doesn't age or accumulate well. I mean, the more you read him the more he sounds the same. And has this ever happened to you: that you discover in a writer just a wisp of too much wit and it's wit that bores you?

Yes, I'm reading on, with strange compulsive patience that some readers acquire... Maybe we think, it'll get better or it'll reach a moment when all the nonsense will have become justified. And then, there is the miserable expository didactic style. You don't believe me? Ok, how about this: "Now, however, change had begun to feel painful; the arteries of the possible had begun to harden."

Arteries of the possible?!? No, really, is that writing?

Or this: "...she had no confidence at all, and every moment she spent in the world was full of panic, so she smiled and smiled and maybe once a week she locked the door and shook and felt like a husk, like an empty peanut-shell, a monkey without a nut."

A monkey without a nut? Now how exactly do you imagine such a character? And is she a husk or a monkey... Or is it both?

Amendment, if you'll allow me: finally, I reached the end and must say, almost despite myself, that it is worth the effort. What happens? Various disconnected and initially confusing strands of the story come together, more or less. There is, in any case, a feeling of wholeness and an idea that seems to animate it. And it is in this "main" idea that I recognize Rushdie and realize that he has

always been faithful to himself. I think he tries, here as elsewhere, to address the question of faith, but in a sense much broader than the mere religious one. What does it mean to believe something so strongly that the fiction comes to be real or reality is denied and becomes a miracle? This question matters as much to literature as it does to religion and here the two overlap. This I find to be a very powerful achievement of *The Satanic Verses*: to ask you when and how you believe and what the consequences of that belief may be... Or when and how you don't believe and what the consequences of that unbelief may be... So my favorite aspect of the book: the steady, intricate focus on fiction -- its reality and its delusions. [\(less\)](#)

[flag22 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Nov 20, 2008 **Manny** rated it ...

Shelves: [older-men-younger-women](#), [islam-and-arabic](#)

When the Danish Cartoon crisis erupted, I immediately went out and bought a copy of this book... though I'm afraid I didn't then go and read it in public places, as I should have done. It is indeed extravagantly disrespectful towards the Prophet, as everyone knows. What's somewhat less well-known is that it's also very disrespectful towards a figure who sure looks a lot like the late Ayatollah Khomeini. I wonder whether this wasn't the real reason for the fatwa? No doubt it has already been discussed at great length... [\(less\)](#)

[flag22 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Dec 10, 2008 **Ellie** rated it

I was massively underwhelmed by this. I have put off and put off reading it, and then I was told by a friend that it was her favourite book, so I thought I'd give it a go, and frankly I wish I hadn't bothered.

I found the writing pretentious, with very little story. It has the potential to be brilliant, as the bones of it is good, but there is so much waffle, rubbish and unnessessary wording that it fast becomes tedious and irritating.

That said its made him very rich, so good on him!

[flag20 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Dec 18, 2016 **Ghofran** rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)

Shelves: [pdf](#)

واحدة أخرى من الروايات التي تمثل القىء الفكري بكل معانيه وكأن الرجل أبى أن يحمل كل هذا الوسخ بداخله فتقيئه علينا في شكل رواية فهو لم يعتدي فيها على الإسلام فقط بل على كل الديانات السماوية ولكن كان للإسلام ونبيه عليه أفضل الصلاة والسلام النصيب الأكبر فدائماً كان وسيظل الإسلام شوكة في حلق أمثاله ممن كانوا إفراز نتن للثقافة والدعم الغربي ولنحطاط ولسداجة الفكر الإلحادي فهذا فكر لم يعمي أصحابه فقط عن الإيمان والأديان فإله [...more](#) الغني عنهم وعن إيمانهم ولكنه طمس على عقولهم وأصابها بحالة تيبس باتت غير قادرة ح

[flag19 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Jan 13, 2017 **Amanda** rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)

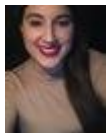
This is the third Rushdie book that I have read and he has a way of making me feel not smart enough to really get his books so I have a hard time rating them.

This one has been on and off my reading radar for at least 25 years. I remember all the controversy surrounding it when it came out and the fatwa that was placed on the author. I found I was more interested in the circumstances and the author than I was the actual book so I never read it.

Picking it up now I expected it to be somewhat dated (it's not). From what I remember the fatwa was placed on the author because he suggested that because Mohammed was illiterate and had the Qu'ran read to him by the Archangel Gabriel he could have fallen asleep at some point and Satan could have jumped in and impersonated Gabriel thus writing some of the verses in the Holy Book (Satanic Verses). So, I expected the book to be about this. This is not the main story of the book it's only a dream sequence of a character who fell from the sky from a blown up airplane (yep you read that right). The main part of the story is really about India and the race relations with England. I don't know a lot of history of this (hence the not smart enough comment earlier). What I found interesting, for lack of a better word, is that these same race issues are still happening. That's a bit disturbing considering this book was first published in 1988.

While I didn't enjoy this one as much as *Midnight's Children* or *the Ground Beneath Her Feet*, I did like it and think that it is (still) an important book to read. [\(less\)](#)

[flag18 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Dec 03, 2016 **Liz Janet** rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)

Shelves: [favourites](#)

[Recent Reads: Orientalism, The Satanic Verses, and The Geek Feminist](#)

“From the beginning men used God to justify the unjustifiable.”

I've been meaning to read this novel for years, ever since I first read his other magnificent novel “Midnight's Children”, and the wait was worth it, it is not disappointing in any sense of the word.

My one problem is that I expected this to be an novel set in ancient times, as I thought it had a bigger focus on ancient deities and Islam in general, instead I was greeted by a fantastic study on what is like to be alienated, as an immigrant, a minority. But I will still hope for him to do another work on what I originally expected, it is too good a subject to pass up.

“What kind of idea are you? Are you the kind that compromises, does deals, accomodates itself to society, aims to find a niche, to survive; or are you the cussed, bloody-minded, ramrod-backed type of damnfool notion that would rather break than sway with the breeze? – The kind that will almost certainly, ninety-nine times out of hundred, be smashed to bits; but, the hundredth time, will change the world.”

This work also had a focus on how religion can be politicized, and the fatwa on his head was more than proof on how such a thing was somehow allowed. It is odd, that the point he was showing in a fictional novel came to affect him in the real world in such a terrible way. What happened to him, and many others included in the publishing, and even translation of such a valuable work , should not be permitted by anyone of any religion or lack thereof, or even differing political opinions. It is an anchor that keeps society in the darkness, and it needs to end.

Rushdie's works in general are masterpieces, and this one is one of those at the top, only behind “Midnight's Children”. Hence, it should be thoroughly read an explored. Have fun!

If I see one comment about how I shouldn't like this book as a Muslim, or people complementing me for standing up to my faith or some nonsense like that, I AM GOING TO LOOSE IT!!!

Review to come, hopefully soon. [\(less\)](#)

flag18 likes · Like · [see review](#)



Oct 20, 2008 محمد rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)

الرواية فعلا مثيرة ، الاستطراد سمة أساسية في الرواية ، الخلط بين الثقافة الاسلامية و الهندية للأبطال واضح ، أيضا فكرة التناسخ ترد في فقرات كثيرة ، على المستوى الحقيقي و الخيالي الاجزاء التي تحكي قصة النبي محمد ستغضب أي مسلم معتدل ، هناك الكثير من الأحداث المختلفة ، و لا تقف الأجزاء الصادمة عند قصة الغرانيق الشهيرة فقط ، هناك الكثير من الأفعال التي يقوم بها الصحابة ، مجتزأه من احداث وردت في السيرة ، او مختلفة تماما [...more](#) في بعض الأحيان ألاحظ ان المترجم حذف بعض الجمل ، رغبة في الاختصار ، و مع ذلك فسلما ر

flag18 likes · Like · [see review](#)



Jun 22, 2016 **Samra Yousuf** rated it ...
 Shelves: [total-trash](#), [what-makes-writers-to-write-such-nv](#)

Do not put me directly in cabin of "iron-cage-mindset" for my rating it one star, the shambles of a novel actually proves its metal by all means to earn it.

I only picked this up for all its hype and to say the fact it disappointed me beyond any measure.....

and that's what a controversy does, it brings a lot more attention that doesn't always merit attention.

About book? well to say in brief its unbearably long, much drier actually too much drier than it should be, horribly interwoven and unnecessarily jumbled and confused somewhat..

Mr. Rushdie's realism is without a doubt "MAGICAL" because he relies on controversial fairy-tales to carry them-less themes of him, he seems to be either too lazy or too incompetent to create thorough realities. his "characters-in-shape-of-characters" are a source of eye-watering hard laughter throughout the what is named "NOVEL" due to their short-memory-loss symptoms that sprout from nowhere in dreaminess.

Novel actually have excess of everything, countless storylines(too-much-of-lines-to tell a story actually) tons of plots, themes, and every new paragraph loaded with as much new characters as never before.....ohhh and descriptions i forgot how! long descriptions (stretched-into-miles-sort-of) and narration (God knows who the heck is goddamned narrator) and words and more words too much words every kind of words (words words every where not a word to grasp) novel lacks only one thing THE EDITOR A GOOD ONE to tie up this scattered land of words.....

a word of advise for Mr. Rushdie, I am dire to deliver "next time you come up to criticize MOHAMMED (PBUH) and his lifestyle and teachings, try it with a story a bit less childish and jumbled than this hooluboolu pissed stuff.. [\(less\)](#)

[flag](#) [17 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Aug 24, 2012 **Stela** rated it ..
 Shelves: [magic-realism](#)

David Lodge observed somewhere that there are books you read and books you'd rather read about – I've often wondered during my lecture whether it's the second that applies to Rushdie's novel, with all the scandal and the death threats around the religious issues that went with.

By the way, I doubt the author didn't suspect his book would create controversies. Even if I don't know much about Muslim religion I do know about fanaticism and you can find, if you want to,

some pretty blasphemous allusions in the book, like the name Mahound, which was the derogatory name the English used for the prophet Mohammad during the crusades, or the devilish (in the book) image of Saladin, whose name is similar to that of another great Muslim hero during the same crusades, or the arguable Ayesha character, etc.

It was interesting to learn (via Wikipedia, of course) what are the Satanic Verses: it is said that Mohammad thought that some verses, in which he was permitted prayer to three Meccan goddesses, were sent to him by God as part of the Qur'an, instead of Satan. Even more interesting was to know that the phrase Satanic Verses was coined by western academics, the Muslims calling them Bird Verses.

I have to say I've had mixed feelings about this book right from the beginning. Many years ago, irritated by the awful (I thought then) truism of the first sentence, "To be born again, first you have to die!", I decided not to read it but eventually (and evidently!) I reconsidered and here I am, trying to make sense of this love-hate relationship I developed all along my reading ☺

What really annoyed me was that everything in this book is too ornate – as oriental carpets are and it is so tiring to follow such an intricate pattern sometimes! Indian immigrants, film industry, London noise, mystic revelations, religious pilgrimages, and so forth, in a jumble that turns your head, in order to build a colourful world in a frenetic, incessant to and fro movement similar to a tireless fair.

The alienation through immigration and loss of religion is an interesting subject but it misses some sort of equilibrium, compositional equilibrium that is – for example I found the religious layer was too emphasized and overall that there were too many themes that in the end remained undeveloped: it leaves you with the sensation of unfinished and overstuffed at the same time.

And yet. And yet. I don't think I've ever read something more beautiful than the chapter "The Parting of the Arabian Sea". And to suggest in the next chapter that it was only a scenario for a movie – absolutely brilliant! Also, I don't think I've encountered a more suggestive rendering of the sound of the city, deafening, shrilling, exhausting, contributing to the alienation of the characters. The death of Saladin's father is also an interesting example of sublimation of complicated relationships, whereas Gibreel's death is somehow burlesque.

I closed the book, I finished browsing my reading notes and I'm still not sure how I should feel about it. And I'm looking at *Midnight Children* on my shelf wondering whether I will read it or not. Maybe. Sometime. [\(less\)](#)

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Jan 21, 2011 [Djayawarman Alamprabu](#) rated it —
Shelves: [religion](#), [sastra](#), [culture](#)

I can't understand why Queen of England give Salman Rushdie a Knight of literature status?
Anyone who like to put dirty words and provoke people can easily produce such books like this!

Just like anyone who can draw can produce cartoon to mock one's religion. I wonder why is a big powerful country like Britain still uses old lame monarch system and believe in that Dumb Queen who actually like to read this so called book, that only brings a provocation after another with bad foul mouth language that's not even smart. (the most probable reason is that The queen never even read it in the first place)

If Rusdhie has at least some amount of humor like Southpark writers had, his foul mouth writing could sound Intelligent, but in this book is just purely lame.

[\(less\)](#)

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Aug 09, 2012 [Elham](#) rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)

هذه الرواية فضيحة مزدوجة .. فضيحة للحضارة الغربية التي افرزت هذا المسخ واحتضنته .. وفضيحة أيضا بالنسبة لعلمائنا الذين اكتفوا بالسب والشتم ولم يهتم أحدهم ببيان عناصر السقوط في الرواية فنا وشكلا ومضمونا لم أجد غير رد للكبير أحمد ديدات الذي تطرق إلى بنية الرواية والتي قال أنها مقتبسة من عمل أدبي آخر لكن لم أجد أحد من العلماء تطرق للناحية العقائدية وقصة الغرائيق التي أثرها رشدي في الرواية والتي حاول أثبات صحتها ليدحض بها نبوة سيدنا محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم جميعهم أكتفوا بالسب والشتم ولم يُقدم للفر [...more](#)

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Oct 12, 2015 [Margitte](#) added it

I have been trying to read this book day by day by day and just cannot get into it. I tried when it was published, put it aside for another day. Tried again many years later. This will have to be my pen-ultimate effort, I hope.

The writing is well done. Eloquent. Impressive. But apart from that there's nothing else gripping me to a point where I want to leave everything else and bed down with this book. The subject simply does not mesmerize me enough.

Will try again later.

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Apr 08, 2012 **EI** rated it ...

Shelves: [20th-centurylit-late](#), [1001-books-list](#), [india](#)

Here are a few things I picked up along the way:

-I didn't understand all of it. I probably didn't understand even enough of it.

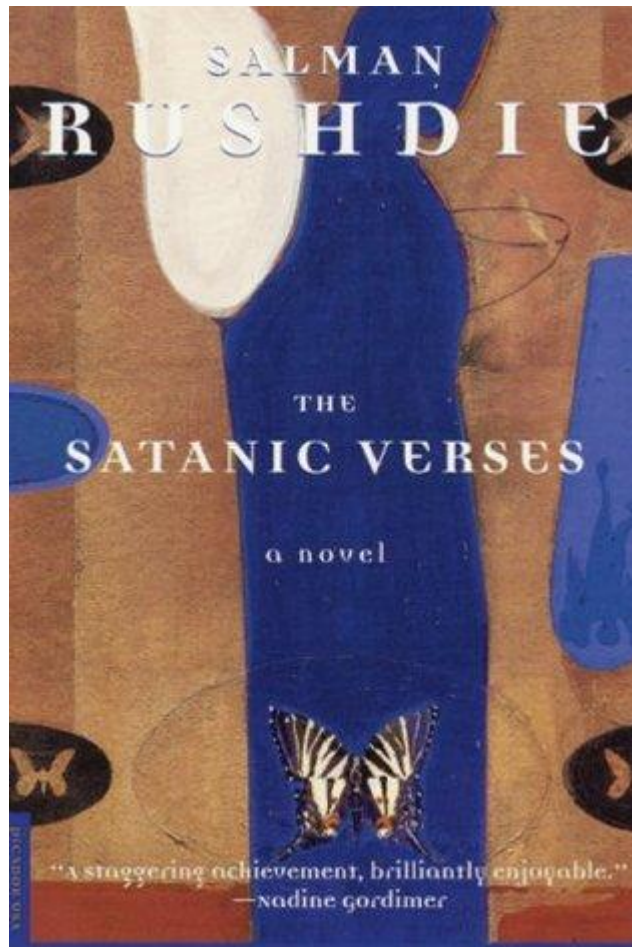
-But that didn't really matter. All that stuff I didn't understand? Was written so beautifully and so interestingly that I just wanted to lie down and let Rushdie pour his words all over me. Which, erm, isn't meant to sound as sexual as it appears to be when I look at written that way.

-There's this whole bit that involves butterflies that absolutely took my breath away. I could re-read that section over and over again and never get sick of it. I would like to write the whole section out in black Sharpie across my bedroom wall so I could stare at it every day. Alas, we rent and I'm not interested in painting over it before we move, so my walls will remain Sharpie-free.

-A fatwa, huh? For this? That cracks me up and makes me mad all at the same time. But it makes one realize the power of the written word.

Next time someone tells you print is dead, or that fiction doesn't mean anything, remember that Rushdie's life was on the line for this book. [\(less\)](#)

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The Satanic Verses

by [Salman Rushdie](#)

3.71 · [Rating Details](#) · [40,990 Ratings](#) · [2,897 Reviews](#)

One of the most controversial and acclaimed novels ever written, *The Satanic Verses* is Salman Rushdie's best-known and most galvanizing book. Set in a modern world filled with both mayhem and miracles, the story begins with a bang: the terrorist bombing of a London-bound jet in midflight. Two Indian actors of opposing sensibilities fall to earth, transformed into living symbols of what is angelic and evil. This is just the initial act in a magnificent odyssey that seamlessly merges the actual with the imagined. A book whose importance is eclipsed only by its quality, *The Satanic Verses* is a key work of our times. [\(less\)](#)

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Published 1997 by Picador USA (first published 1988)

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- [2 Years Ago](#)

- [See All 8 Answers](#)



Rini No. He did not deserve to have his life threatened for writing a book, ffs.

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why the satanic verses was banned ??

- [3 Likes](#) · [Like](#)
- [2 Years Ago](#)
- [See All 8 Answers](#)



[Sarosh Afzal](#) Because iron age mind sets are intolerant of fictional writing and free thought/speech.
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Aug 18, 2012 [Röhan](#) rated it ...

As an adolescent stepping out into the world of the big, burly and heavily mustachioed men (the men at the library), I was constantly in awe of the books at the top shelf that were territory wise out of bounds for my then miniscule self. Salman Rushdie hence stood on top of a pedestal for many years both literally and figuratively. As the tide of time caught up with me (and the little library in my town which still retained the old faces behind the desks probably with a tinge of grey in their hair to indicate the same) I began to indulge in those heady volumes on the top shelves and found Rushdie well worth the wait. But that was not the end of the story. There was a certain book by the same author that had gained the world's attention, whether fame or notoriety, remains a choice a personal discretion. To my dismay, all my attempts at combing the bookshelves for this prized volume had been futile.

When at last I decided to put aside my childhood induced fearsome loathing of the mustachioed librarian and his band of pirates (as I used to think of them then), my dismay turned to horror as my queries were met with scornful retorts that the book were banned in India and that I ought to find myself better things to read. End chapter. Period.

As the modern era digital genie, Mozilla Firefox blinked in acknowledging that my wish were granted and that the Satanic Verses were securely planted into the hard disk of my computer, I was filled by the puritanical urge to forego my quest from a few years back and let it rot in the memory of my laptop (where these verses in their binary avatar (01010111??) would plant the seed of the devil, or so the lawmakers said, into my new laptop.

Anyways, I couldn't refrain from the temptation and hence began my journey into the mystical landscape of Sir Rushdie's imagination. To my surprise, I found nothing of serious sacrilegious discord, which may be due to my ignorance of the basic tenets of the religious text which was said to be blasphemed. It took the book quite some time to take off, but once he gets into the groove Rushdie is a storyteller of overwhelming proportions. With a plethora of characters spread over history, the ride is not for the fainthearted.

Two Indian born expatriates are bound for London in a plane that is hijacked and blown to bits over the English Channel. They are both driven by separate motives, tempestuous desires and the mother of all emotions, love to the Isles whose natives proudly claim to have brought civilization to the world. They are the lone survivors of the crash and from this miraculous escape from the jaws of death, begins the tumultuous phase where Gibreel Farishta, the fading Bollywood celebrity metamorphoses into the angel Gabriel and Saladin Chamcha who forsake the identity and culture of his birth reincarnates into the devil himself. However, they are not the only cogs in this well oiled machinery. The non linear narrative is loosely based on the Prophet Mohammed and sways from the sub Saharan climes of Jahila, to the hinterland of the Indian mainland and the chic but cloudy streets of London over varying time frames.

The Satanic Verses is a work of art and as many would agree, is an acquired taste, one which lingers on for long after being consumed by the brain. Salman Rushdie has created a gem of a novel, one that can be compared to a beautiful lass. I personally have made her acquaintance and wish to renew it at some point in the future. For all those of you who haven't, I recommend you

do. Maybe the world wouldn't have such a problem if Sir Salman decided to cloak his baby in a black shroud with just slits for the eyes! [\(less\)](#)

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Oct 31, 2008 **Beth F.** rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)

Shelves: [1001-books](#), [2008](#), [infidelity](#), [banned-books](#), [magical-realism](#), [pea-soup](#), [eastern-hemisphere](#)

Salman Rushdie is a weird man. Sometimes he would write things like, "...Chamcha was going down head first, in the recommended position for babies entering the birth canal..." and "...Saladin, like a bloody lettuce, I ask you..." and he used a lot of big words I've never seen like "orotund" and "obsolescent" and the whole time, I kept thinking, 'wow, Salman Rushdie made a cameo appearance in the Bridget Jones's Diary movie and he has funny eyebrows like Jack Nicholson.'

Um. Right. This book was not an enjoyable read for me. It was dense and too long. I had to force myself to read a little bit every day because I kept picking up other books to read instead of this one. Once I made it past the first 100 pages, it became more interesting but it was still a dredge to read. I thought most of the scenes are way too drawn out. I'd have appreciated this book a whole lot more if the parts that involved Saladin and Chamcha were thinned down by a third and the parts that involved Mahound and his band of merry men and gals was beefier.

So anyway, unless you are a brainiac (and you're probably not so quit giving yourself airs) and/or are comfortable with several facets of Indian culture and also have a comfortable working knowledge of Islam, you're setting yourself up for failure if you decide to just sit down and noncommittally read The Satanic Verses. I don't think that's possible. I came close to quitting several times but didn't, thanks largely in part to this: <http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~brians/anglo...>

The document is almost 100 pages long but the way I see it, if you're actually going to put forth the commitment to read this dang book with the intention of understanding what the hell is going on, what's an extra 100 pages? Especially if they'll actually help you capture and understand some of the non-transparent characters and events that fill this book. It is divided up by chapters. I read the notes before starting each new chapter and referred back as necessary.

Obviously scanning this document while I was reading the book added to the length of time it took to work my way through this book. However, I feel no shame whatsoever in admitting that this book would have been so far beyond my level of comprehension if I hadn't had the help that I don't even care.

I'm relieved to be done with this book. [\(less\)](#)

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Jan 12, 2017 **Sarah Anne** rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)

Shelves: [classics](#), [magical-realism](#), [contemporary-lit](#), [author-man](#), [england](#), [literary-stockholm-syndrome](#), [2017-multicultural](#), [india](#), [islam](#)

I had to give myself the whole night to think of how I was going to rate this. I really liked the book but I also found it confusing. Yes, I know it's magical realism and the confusion is normal ;)

And now, about that part where I describe the book? Yeah, I don't really know what happened in it. Two guys fall from a plane as it explodes from a terrorist bomb. They miraculously survive and over the course of the novel they take on the characteristics of an angel and devil. Or do they? I think they do. Or I did. And then I wondered. And then I thought so again. But...

The story is also about India, what it means to be Muslim in India, what it means to be Indian in England, and race relations in England. This last was difficult for me because all of the race relations issues are still things that are happening in our present day society but this book was published 30 years ago.

What ultimately decided me in favor of five stars is the fact that this is a book that will stick with me for a very long time. It's one that will make me ponder and cogitate over the years, and I think in the end it gives me added insight into what it's like to be someone other than a nearly 40 year old white American female. ([less](#))

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Aug 29, 2012 **Tim** rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)

For eight days we wrestled. "The Satanic Verses" and I locked in heaving struggle. At times it nearly escaped as I chased it uphill, my straining hand holding fast its heel as it wriggled; then I myself would seek respite from the battle, clutching for the out-of-bounds only to be pulled back in. But we finished the struggle, and were better for it.

"The Satanic Verses" is, I suspect, one of the most unread of best-sellers. It is, indeed, a cantankerous beast with sections that one must slog through, but overall I think its reputation for impenetrability is somewhat undeserved.

The novel deals with migration, intermingling, hybridization of people, religion. The novel opens with two Indian actors with British ties and sensibilities falling from a plane blown up by terrorists over England. One, Gabreel Farishta, apparently comes to Earth as the archangel Gabreel (or its avatar), wearing a golden halo. The other, Saladin Chamcha, grows into a horned, hooved devil. The two try to come to grips with their (temporarily) changed forms and try to cope

with the struggles of life, their pasts and their relationships, romantic and familial. Gabreel experiences dreams in which he apparently is the angel he seems to be. This includes Rushdie's recreation/alteration of the prophet Muhammad's (here Mahound) supposed divine revelations, the Satanic verses of the title, and whether Mahound has himself altered these verses.

Gabreel has modern visions, as well; he supposedly inspires a village to make a pilgrimage to Mecca in which the people will cross the Arabian Sea, which they think will part for them.

When Rushdie first moves to the story of Mahound, the novel hits, temporarily, a brick wall that I was tempted not to clamber over. It is slow and disorienting at first. Our second visit to this vision, later, is much more involving. And the stories of Ayesha and her village's modern pilgrimage is by turns ponderous and incredibly beautiful (butterflies follow them, lighting on Ayesha like a blanket).

I expected to be baffled by what exactly was happening at times. I really wasn't; my problems in comprehension dealt more with just exactly what Rushdie was up to. Though I see the interconnectedness of the past and present visions and the story of Gabreel and Saladin (who slowly plots a revenge on Gabreel after the two have been separated in the wake of their miraculous fall to Earth), I occasionally was confused by just how Rushdie wanted us to relate them to each other. Just what is Rushdie, in the overall, going on about?

I really think Rushdie (and this novel in particular) would benefit greatly from end notes. Just as, with old classics, we might not in modern times understand archaic words or objects, so the non-Indian (or Britain-ized Indian) probably doesn't have a good understanding of Indian words or, particularly for me, Islam. Annotated edition, anyone?

It's hard to separate "The Satanic Verses" from the fatwa declared on its author that put him in fear for his life for many years. It contributed greatly to its readership (or those who owned it in curiosity and soon gave up on reading it at all). I don't claim to know much about Islam or Muhammad, though calling for someone's death because of a few small scenes in a novel seems, er, a tad extreme.

"The Satanic Verses" is a sprawling and voluminous creature. I don't think it, on the whole, is great. A paring down and a sharper focus would have helped. But Rushdie is one hell of a writer; that's what carried the day for me. If I missed some of the nuances of how all of it tied together, I delighted in Rushdie's use of language, and there are several moving scenes. A section late in the book at the death bed of a character is just lovely.

Would I recommend the book to others? Maybe. But NOT if: this is your first Rushdie (try "Midnight's Children"); you want a linear, easily comprehensible plot; you get frustrated when the plot doesn't go where you want it to; you have to understand everything; you are impatient. Otherwise, if you're adventurous, have a go. [\(less\)](#)

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Feb 01, 2014 [Ahmad Ebaid](#) rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)
Shelves: [أدب](#)

"إننا لا نثبت أن العالم هو مكان حقيقي إلا عندما نموت فيه"



وقبل أن تدخل لتقرأ الرواية وتتفاجأ بأسلوبها, فالرواية مكتوبة بتقنية أدبية تسمي "تيار الوعي", أو "تداعي الذاكر", حيث تنطلق الأحداث ضبابية غير متسلسلة أو مترابطة ليعبر بها الكاتب عن وجهة نظره.

الرواية مسلية في معظم أجزائها, والترجمة ممتازة لمترجم مجهول.

آية الله الخميني أعلن عن جائزة خمسة مليون دولار لقتل الكاتب, ولا أظنها لأجل النبي, بل لأجل أنه شعر أن الكاتب احتقره عندما ذكره في سطر وحيد شبهه فيه بالنبي محمد,

[...more](#) اسم بلدة الحجاج "تيتليير" قرأته

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Jan 12, 2009 [Whitaker](#) rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)
Shelves: [contemporary-fiction](#), [2009-read](#), [3965p-box3](#)

I liked it more than I thought I would. Rushdie is a bit exceedingly heavy-handed with the symbolism (I mean, Indian expatriate who denies his Indian roots turns into the incarnation of evil? Come on!), but makes up for it by his pungent prose. Beware though. If sentences like, "*Exit*

Pimple, weeping, censored, a scrap on a cutting-room floor." or "*Here he is neither Mahomet nor MoeHammered; has adopted, instead, the demon-tag the farangis hung around his neck.*" make you cringe then you'll want to avoid this like the plague. But if you find it bracingly different, then plunge right in. An Indian magic realist look at racism, identity, religion, and redemption. ([less](#))

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Apr 27, 2012 [Jean-marcel](#) rated it ...

It's always interesting returning to a book read years before and gaining a different perspective. I first read this my final year of highschool and it blew my mind at the time; I don't think I stopped talking about it for months. A few months ago I returned to the book and, while I still think it's great, and I probably got a lot more of the references, it's not as amazing to me as it was over ten years ago. Rushdie's style is occasionally flowing and lyrical, but then he'll throw in all sorts of references to pop culture or some obscure Indian films that go right over my head and occasionally even put a big, barely digestible lump in the narrative. Still, when this book is good, it's really poignant, tragic, and sometimes full of mirth.

I never liked the term "magic realism" much, but I suppose it can be applied to this novel. I do think it probably fits better with *Midnight's Children* though, as parts of *The Satanic Verses* are outright, unashamed fantasy (though fairly allegorical of course) and quite good at that. The premise of the book is that an Indian movie star and an expatriate Indian voice artist living in London meet on a plane that gets hijacked and blows up, and for some reason they survive their fall to earth, but become angelic beings in the process. Gibreel, the flamboyant, pompous film star, walks around with a big glowing halo (even if you can't always see it) and seems to be unable to do any wrong, except to his sometime lover, the mountain-climber Aleluia Cone, , whereas Saladin Chamcha looks like a goat-man, smells horrible and, until over halfway through the book, can only speak in animal noises. I understand better what Rushdie was trying to do with this parable in 2012, whereas in 1999 I just thought it was a crazy and awesome story, although I did grasp the moral implications well enough. Salman has a lot to say about prestige, what it means to be outcast, what it means to have a country, or be an alien in a country that you really wish was your own. Sometimes he's quite subtle with this, but at other times the heavy hand of symbolism causes a slight flinch.

In between the chapters telling the story of Gibreel and Saladin are historical stories running through about three separate narratives. Much of this has to do with the birth of islam, or pilgrims on the Haj, and these may be my favourite sections of the book. Rushdie brings the setting of ancient Jahilia to a strange, distant sort of life, and portrays the dealings and political machinations and religious fervour with a good deal of subtlety. It is, I think, these chapters that got Rushdie into so much trouble, as they do indeed appear quite blasphemous and make the prophet Mohammad out to be a bit of a huckster and a charlatan. I like a big helping of irreverent

mockery and this book does deliver on that count. It's interesting to observe, too, how these "side narratives" end up weaving into the main story in a way and tackling similar themes in different ways. I think that brings me finally to the greatest strength of the book: It's not just a simple, clear-cut tale that you can distill to a single statement or fragment of moral. There are many, many layers, and many things Rushdie wants to bring out into the open. Some of his messages even appear slightly contradictory, and yet that's part of the pleasure of the experience; this book will have you thinking and asking questions about your perceptions of the world around you, the home you live in and the people with whom you share it. ([less](#))

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Apr 03, 2016 **Oliviu Craznic** rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)

„Versetele satanice (SALMAN RUSHDIE, The Satanic Verses, 1988; stilul funcțional: beletristic; curentul literar: irealism [NOTE, 5]; genul literar: epic; specia literară: roman fantastic; subspecia literară: fantastic histrionic [contemporan]). Doi actori originari din India – unul celebru și unul neînsemnat –, în drum către Marea Britanie, scapă miraculos din explozia unui avion deturnat, căpătând în urma incidentului caracteristici angelice și, respectiv, diavolești. Titlul romanului se referă [...more](#)

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May 11, 2009 **Javier** rated it ...
Shelves: [prose](#)

For all it's hype, I was pretty disappointed with this book. Pretty is an understatement actually. This experience reminded me of my attempted reading of Thomas Pynchon's "V." I have come to the conclusion that idiosyncratic wording and arrangements are a turn off, and that's exactly what I found in the "Satanic Verses." The book itself is also confusing because there's two or three story lines intertwined with each other. What you basically have is a story about two Indian born characters, one an expatriate and the other a famous Indian Cinema star. Over the course of the book we follow the mis-adventures of the two as they progress through a series of odd dream like transformations after the bombing a plane they were traveling in.

These story lines use allusions regarding an apocryphal legend (history?) regarding a series of verses supposedly recited by the Muslim prophet Muhammad. These verses were said to have been recited in order to gain the support of locals who were still hesitant to submit to Allah. By reciting these verses, which espoused three goddesses these villagers worshiped, the hope was that the Muslims could win the support of the locals and secure new converts. Of course, being that such reverence for other deities are counter to the beliefs of Muslims, these recitations are considered blasphemous. In the end Muhammad retracts these verses after it was decided that

Satan had led him astray. These events are thinly disguised in the book by replacing the names of historical figures and places...Mecca is renamed Jahilia and the prophet is renamed Mahound...interestingly enough Jahilia and Mahound are considered pejoratives towards Muslims. These names signify the author's thinly disguised irreverence or disdain for Islam. I found myself not overly impressed because this was looking more and more like a polemic.

Gibreel, the Indian actor, is transformed into an angel, seemingly representing his ethereal nature, and aloof existence. He never openly renounces his Indian heritage as does Saladin, the Indian expatriate. Therefor he is portrayed as a cloven hoofed beast. Eventually they return to their normal states, but why and how is never discernible to me. Throw in an uninteresting love triangle(s) and another storyline involving a butterfly clad prophetess and you're left with a slightly over indulgent novel. I can only surmise that these were merely dreams by Gibreel in his increasingly deteriorating mental state, which is hinted at.

I'm still left wondering how these story lines connect to one another...and perhaps that's why it took me over two months to get through this book. I felt compelled to finish it only out of a desire to finish what I started, and relief came when I was done. Not exactly a good sign. [\(less\)](#)

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Feb 27, 2016 **Caroline** rated it _
Shelves: [20th-c-english-novels](#), [indian](#)

[Note: I listened to an excellent audiobook version of this, but it won't add pages to my annual count so I'm using this hardcopy version for my review. Please excuse misspellings due to the audio 'reading.']

This would be a five, except that I made the mistake of reading a brief account of Rushdie's life. Generally I think a writer's life is relevant (I'm not a 'text is all' reader) but here it made me feel as one does when an acquaintance tells you more intimate details about their life than you really want to know.

However, the book is of course a marvelous if unwieldy thing. There are lots of reviews, so I can't add much. I was glad that I have read some other Indian literature, classic and modern, so that I saw at least some of the references and was used to the slang, although I know I must have missed thousands of other references.

I enjoyed the complexity of his treatment of religion and belief, and of human behavior. Also the winding together of magic and the mundane world. Rushdie was probably the most powerful in showing how we are subject to the power of the mind to shape what we see while we believe it comes from somewhere else. Sometimes charlatans know what they are doing, sometimes we just fool ourselves, and sometimes we're really crazy. And how evil we can be.

I am not sure what to make of the conflagration and Saladin landing in clover once he gives up on England and returns to India. Is that the only solution? The narrator will take some more thought. I have read elsewhere that he is Satan; which makes the absence of the other party a gaping vacuum. ([less](#))

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Sep 16, 2015 **Sonia M** rated it ...
Shelves: [novels](#)

Μια μελέτη πάνω στο καλό και το κακό από τη σκοπιά των πολυθεϊστών (ινδουιστών) και μονοθεϊστών (ισλαμιστών), γραμμένη στο ύφος του μαγικού ρεαλισμού και με αρκετές δόσεις χιούμορ. Οι μεν πολυθεϊστές θεωρούν ότι και τα δύο προέρχονται από τους θεούς, οι δε μονοθεϊστές τοποθετούν το κακό ως αντίθετο στο θεό.

Ο Σαλμάν Ρουσντί επιχειρεί και μια τολμηρή βιογραφία του Μωάμεθ, όταν ήταν στα πρώτα του βήματα ως προφήτης, πράγμα που έκανε τους μουλάδες να βγάλουν καταδικαστική φετβά εναντίον του. Ο νεαρ [...more](#)

[flag10 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Aug 19, 2016 **إلهام مزبود** rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)
Shelves: [2016](#)

تعرفت على سلمان رشدي من خلال أحمد ديدات وبالضبط من خلال أحد كتبه التي كانت تحتويها مكتبة والدي والذي كان يحمل عنوان " شيطانية الآيات الشيطانية" **0**
لا أنكر أنني منذ سنوات و أول ما عرفت أن هناك من قام بتأليف كتاب معنون بآيات شيطانية تملكني الرعب واحسست القشعريرة تسري في كامل بدني، وعزفت عن قراءة الكتاب أو أي كتب أخرى للكاتب حتى رواية أطفال منتصف الليل التي قيل أنها من أروع الروايات،
بعد سنوات أحست أنني بتصرفي هذا لا أقل تفاهة عن المتعصبين والمتشددين لأي فكرة مهما كانت خلفياتها [...more](#)
حاليا أنا أؤمن بالإبد

[flag11 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Jul 10, 2007 **Radhika** rated it ...
Recommends it for: Rushdie fans

I only picked up this book because I wanted to know what the big hullabaloo was about. It was a slog in parts and not Rushdie's best work. And yet, one must acknowledge that the man is definitely a master of his pen. This book is quite ambiguous in many ways and it is likely that the author meant it to be that way.

"Verses" refers not only to the pseudo-Koranic verses which appear in the book, but also to childish rhymes and other words spouted by various characters in the book. There is a character called Mahound who may be based on the prophet Mohammed. There is also a schizophrenic character who might be angel or just a deluded, insane man and another physiologically morphing character who might be a devil or just someone who had weird protuberances grow on him. It is all quite a mishmash so I assume, the muslim reader who believed themselves justified in seeking Rushdie's death were much more interested, keen and astute readers than those of us not trained in the koran and haditha.

Hitchens could point out some absurdities in Judaeo-Christian-Islamic religion without fictionalizing anything and be called an atheist who is making his argument (hopefully my saying this does not lead to a fatwa on him). Rushdie does the same, albeit, in a convoluted story that jumps places, times and ideas and he is seen as heretical.

Anyway, it is not a great book. [\(less\)](#)

[flag9 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Mar 05, 2011 [Darwin8u](#) rated it ...
Shelves: [2011](#), [aere-perennius](#)

A near perfect novel. I loved the writing. I loved the characters. I loved how Rushdie was able to master heaven and hell, saint and sinner, heaven and earth in this dreamlike exploration of what it means to be an immigrant, an angel, a saint and a sinner. At times he writes like a post-modern satirist cum Pynchon, then suddenly he melts into his best post-colonial Achebe, and then off again on his magical realist, literary carpet à la Gabriel García Márquez. Rushdie's writing is a mountain you [...more](#)

[flag9 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Jun 26, 2008 [Adam](#) rated it

Excellent. Maybe not worth a death sentence, but excellent.

[flag9 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Oct 13, 2016 [Graham Wilhauk](#) rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)
Shelves: [read-in-october-2016](#)

I loved this. No really, Salman Rushdie nailed it again with this book. I didn't love this as much as "Midnight's Children," but this book officially makes Salman Rushdie one of my new favorite authors. So, why did I love this book so much? Let's get into it.

The story is one brilliant headache. It is confusing and it is very nonlinear. It switches from character to character and it gets heavy with its writing, but my god is it worth it. Especially the ending. MY GOD, that ending was beautiful yet gripping. It only makes you want more. The characters are also really fascinating. Gibreel and Saladin were two fascinating leads. I loved their complete contrast with one another and how well they work off each other in order to progress the story. It was really interesting. However, the best part about this book is EASILY the writing. I adored Rushdie's writing yet again. It was harder to get into in the beginning, but by 10 pages, you know the drill, you get on a roll with it. Some truly beautiful passages surface from this novel. I cannot rave more about Rushdie's writing. However, with all things good, there is some bad.

There are parts that just don't do much for me. Mainly these parts were in the beginning parts of the second half. It was not really horrific, it was just mediocre as CRAP and was a major letdown. Rushdie proved himself worthy of greatness in this book, and these parts just didn't live up to their counterparts. I didn't approve of these parts.

But overall, "The Satanic Verses" was a great experience and I am glad I got around to it. Rushdie is now one of my favorites for a reason. I loved the way this book portrayed characters, told the story, described things. It was all just brilliant. I would recommend reading "Midnight's Children" first since that is a LOT less confusing than this book is. However, if you loved "Midnight's Children" and want more, I cannot recommend this enough!

I am giving this one a 4 out of 5 stars. ([less](#))

[flag](#) [8 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



[Apr 26, 2007](#) [Reshma](#) rated it [...](#)

Recommends it for: those who are intrigued by confusion.

Well, I just finished it. Here's the thing. I made the mistake of reading this book a few pages at a time, spread out over a long time. Not the way to read this book. If you choose to read it, commit to it. Or it will confuse you more.

The "confusion" is not a bad kind of confusion. It's the kind that, after you finish reading the book, makes you want to stand back and smile, wondering how you got suckered into this ride and how you became consumed in it. You can spend endless hours trying to figure out the logic of events in this book, trying to classify things into categories, i.e. this was an hallucination, that was supernatural, the other was real. And the problem will be that you can't, because there are evidences that each event is both real and not real, in the past and in the present, etc.

The book starts with a plane blowing up in midair and the only two survivors falling to the earth. (Don't worry, I haven't given anything away!) And then the story continues, though metamorphoses, hallucinations, acts of the supernatural, etc. The reader constantly questions what is real and what is not real. To satisfy curiosity, you just keep reading. But in the end, which you hope will clarify things for you (and it doesn't; not for me at least) you just have to accept this story as is, without question. To quote the book, did these two men really go through these events as described? "...let's face this, too: they did." ([less](#))

[flag8 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Oct 28, 2013 [Nicole](#) rated it
Shelves: [favorites](#), [re-reads](#), [banned](#)

That really held up well.

I guess one other little thing, which is this: there are sentences in this book that rival Nabokov's photogenic mother, they are so good. When he is on his game, Rushdie is as good as anybody, and better than most.

[flag8 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Nov 26, 2016 [Chris P](#) rated it _

This novel caused such commotion when it was published, that it's famous for that rather than its content. Its very existence caused the death of a man and the nearly lethal injury of another, while Rushdie had to change his name and remain hidden for many years after Khomeini pronounced a death sentence on the author in 1989. What with the religious fanaticism of the Muslims, I think that Rushdie could have predicted what would follow. However, all this is by no means proof of the book's literary importance, since the latter is, of course, subject to things quite different than religious and social provocations.

First of all, while it is certainly unique in style and technique, I didn't find it so hard to follow as many have suggested, although I recognize that, ignorant as I am of most things concerning the eastern history and tradition, I was bound to miss many implications that were definitely there, despite the helpful footnotes every now and then. Therefore, one could say I missed a large part of the novel's essence. That said, I think that *The Satanic Verses* could now be considered a timeless, classic saga that makes social and religious prejudice and pretentiousness meet in an extremely witty, allegorical way, if only it was written differently. The reason I don't consider it such, is that I found it excessively garrulous, with Rushdie throwing in numerous useless details that tired me at some point and made me want to just get it over with. A fact that, towards the end, made me feel like he lost the point somewhere. Or maybe I did.

Despite all that, I found it fun and interesting, if a bit demanding, and definitely worthy of my time. A classic case of 3 stars. ([less](#))

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Sep 03, 2014 [David](#) rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)

Recommends it for: Indian satyrs, schizophrenic Bollywood actors, blasphemous prostitutes
Shelves: [religion](#), [literary](#), [historical](#), [audiobook](#), [1001-books-to-read-before-you-die](#), [magical-realism](#), [islam](#), [england](#), [india](#), [immigration](#)

This is the book that got a fatwa put on Salman Rushdie. Several translators and publishers were in fact killed by Muslims trying to carry out the Ayatollah's orders. *The Satanic Verses* is now etched in literary history as the book that caused literal calls for the writer's head.

Having read it, I can see how certain passages could be read as offensive to someone who is very, very serious about their religion and utterly devoid of humor (i.e., the Ayatollah Khomeini, and most religious fundamentalists), but it is certainly not an attack of any sort on Islam.

The Satanic Verses is about two Indian Muslim actors, Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, both of whom came to the UK, both of whom experience varying degrees of alienation and oppression because of their non-Western, immigrant status. The book is most centrally a parable of colonialism and a critique of Western materialism, ironically enough. It weaves through the troubled lives of Gibreel, who becomes metaphorically the Archangel Gabriel, and Saladin, who becomes his Adversary, and there are a number of sub-plots as we follow the entire span of both mens' lives. Much of it is humorous, much of it is soap operatic, much of it is inexplicable, with bits of fantasy mixed with prosaic earthiness. Saladin at one point turns into a man-goat. Gibreel has visions, perhaps brought on by schizophrenia.

It's the dream sequences interleaved with the protagonists' stories that caused the controversy. They include a retelling of the life story of Muhammad and the origins of Islam, and a dramatized version of some apocryphal Islamic writings known as the "Satanic Verses" in which Muhammad supposedly acknowledged the existence of several female pre-Islamic deities as subordinate to Allah. Then there is the scene in which one of Muhammad's enemies hides in a brothel, and then gets the prostitutes to assume the names and appearances of the Prophet's wives.

So, potentially offensive to humorless, pious Muslims. But really no more heretical or salacious than, say, *The Last Temptation of Christ*.

Rushdie's prose is rich and he handles humorous and tragic situations with equal facility, and I saw what he was aiming at, for the most part, though I think there are layers of nuance and cultural references I no doubt did not get. But I can't say I really enjoyed *The Satanic Verses* as much as I enjoyed *Midnight's Children*. It was a bit too heavy for me, and the dream sequences,

while also very well-written, seemed like a writing exercise more than a plot, like Rushdie being clever and literary. There are a lot of characters in this book, and at some points I had trouble paying attention.

I might revise my opinion on a reread, but while I'm sure diehard Rushdie fans will enjoy this book, for me it was only okay. ([less](#))

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Dec 22, 2012 [Alex](#) rated it

Shelves: [reading-through-history](#), [2012](#), [rth-lifetime](#)

This is a funny entry into the magical realism genre, because maybe nothing magical happens. (view spoiler) Rushdie uses this misty method to expose the ugliness of belief in magic, the rot of blind faith. It's a religious book, but not a superstitious one.

But also: (view spoiler) So it's magical after all? It's about faith.

Satanic Verses is about faith, and about Islam, and about Muslims living in England. Although I know some about some of that, none of it applies to my life, so it doesn't speak to me. *Infinite Jest*, by comparison, is about bored, fucked up white kids, so it totally speaks to me. That might be why *Jest* is one of my favorite books and *Verses* is not. Both are huge, complicated, post-modern, surreal epics; both, I think, deserve love and demand devotion.

None of what happens in *Verses* or *Jest* happens, maybe. They're cousins, these books.

Verses is an *achievement*. It does what it says it's going to do, which is to summarize the birth of Islam (in an irreverent / blasphemous way) and then update it to the present day in England. That's a tall order and it's a magnificent achievement. I respect it.

If you want some info on Islam coming into this, I can suggest [After the Prophet: The Epic Story of the Shia-Sunni Split in Islam](#), which is crazy readable, and [No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam](#), a liberal argument for Islam that also includes its origin.

Satanic Verses is cool. It's not my book, but for those it's for, I bet it might be *Infinite Jest*. I get what it's doing and it's doing it well. I'm glad I read it. ([less](#))

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Jul 14, 2015 [Umnia](#) added it · [review of another edition](#)

-آيات شيطانية-

رواية صدرت عام 1988 , أثارت جدلا كبيرا , تم منعها في 10 دول و قامت 8 دول بتظاهرات ضد الكاتب و رفضا للكتاب تلقت الرواية ردود فعل ايجابية عديدة لكنها بالمقابل احدثت ازمة دينية كبيرة في العالم الاسلامي صدرت بسبب هذا الكتاب فتوى من الخميني بإباحة دم الكاتب

النقاط التي اثارها الجدل

قصة الغرائبي*

"اظهار صورة النبي كشخصية "شريرة"

أظهر ان الصحابيون قاموا بتحريف القرآن*

بيت دعارة فيه نساء على اسماء زوجات الرسول*

[...more](#) الكتاب برأيي فشل ذريع من الناحية الفكرية , لم استطع اكمله بصراحة .. اكملت الفصل

[flag7 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Feb 08, 2010 **Navaneeta** rated it ...

Shelves: [contemporary-india](#), [post-modern](#), [satire](#), [favorites](#)

I was ready to be disappointed by this book. It's too hyped, too controversial to have appealed to me. Or that is what I had thought before I started on it.

But the truth is Rushdie caught me by surprise. This is actually as good as *Midnight's Children*, if not better. The way Rushdie interweaves the many stories, the many characters present through time in different *avataars*, is simply spellbinding. The book definitely takes digs at Islam, but I think what is under attack here is not just one religion, but all religions and all that is irrational in our *belief system*.

With this book, Rushdie goes back to being my favourite author. [\(less\)](#)

[flag7 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Jul 04, 2014 **sun surfer** rated it ... [review of another edition](#)

This is a heady mixture of transcultural, transcontinental and transtemporal magical realism concerning a quasi-comic no-holds-barred delving into Islamic experience from the 1990's back to the religion's beginnings, as well as taking on immigrant experience and assimilation including the two main characters travelling from India to the U.K. The book is full of interesting ideas interwoven into an overindulgent text, though the best sections are those loosely based on stories of Muhammad's life.

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Apr 20, 2012 [Sahil Sood](#) rated it ...

My initial reaction upon finishing the book (not-a-review): Phew! 4-grudging stars. I've been reading it for 8 months now. No Rushdie for me, for another 8 years, period. Much of the importance of the book is still lost on me; but I am awed by the sheer audacity and scope of the narrative. No one does it better than him, even if he does a little too much for his own good.

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May 23, 2013 [Jelena](#) rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)

Shelves: [love-beyond-words](#), [real-beautiful-wooden-shelf](#)

“The Satanic Verses” are my favourite novel by one of my favourite writers and would make my Top 10 any time of day (ok, Top 5). With magic realism as my genre of choice and Salman Rushdie as my personal sovereign in the field, I am incapable of writing anything that would even come close to a decent review. So I will at least try to sketch out some of the aspects of this novel I enjoyed most.

Staying true to the author’s trademark style, this is a vivid and powerful novel, baroque in its opulence. Again there are so many layers and characters (although not as many as in “Midnight’s Children”), dozens and maybe even hundreds of references and allusions, rich imagination and endless comical effects. This is no story for a lazy or inflexible mind, but at the same time the author never drowns his reader in intellectualism, but creates an account of exaltation and the passion of story-telling in epic proportions.

Some of the topics covered are again heritage and migration, change and belief and identity, with melange and hybridism to it. Identity in this case is more focused on moral and individual identity (even symbolically with the two protagonists being an actor and a voice actor, reinventing their birth name etc.), which is one of the aspects I appreciate very much.

The structure is not so much a fan, but rather consists of layers with characters, motifs and references piercing through them. Throughout the entire novel there are stories within the story, various forms of its re-enacting on different levels and even stories within dreams within the story, creating a multiple distance to the present-day sphere and to reality. As the main embedded narrative is transferred several times to different planes (with wonderful details like the recurring names of the characters) the result are twisted parallels, distorting mirror images of belief and unscrupulousness, but also vulnerability and loneliness. (The story of Mahound, of his ideals and political compromises, his business skills etc. is so rich in thoughts and emotions, but I would not be able to comment that without spoilers.) And still there is always the sophisticated and ironic

dance on the verge of myth and truth under the diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia.

I was fascinated with the idea of being seduced and tempted by words (one of the reasons why “Othello”, often referred to here as well, is one of my favourite plays), as well as the constant questioning of truth, reality and revelation (“It was so, it was not so” reminded me very much of “Moby Dick”).

The two protagonists are delightful as counterparts to each other and even to themselves, without that being a paradox. They are socially different and have different functions in the story; while one is more spiritual and bound to miscomprehend, the other is rather grounded in society and mostly misunderstood. Interestingly, their stereotypical mythical features will more than anything show the many facets of the human soul.

If I had to find just one word to describe this novel, I would call it noble. For all the human insecurities, faults, uncertainties, weaknesses and the constant need to raise questions about sacred and profane are treated with sympathy, respect and deep affection.

I could easily read “The Satanic Verses” over and over again without ever exhausting all of its substance or growing tired of it.

[\(less\)](#)

[flag6 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



May 04, 2012 [عبدالله المصري](#) rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)
Shelves: [القائمة-السوداء](#)

لم أقرأ هذه الرواية،، قرأت عنها عدة كتب،، بداية من كتاب لمنظم مظاهرة حرق الرواية في برادفورد مروراً بكتاب أستاذ أدب انجليزي وكتاب للشيخ أحمد ديدات وانتهاءً بذكرات سلمان رشدي نفسه التي نُشرت في جريدة التحرير شهر أكتوبر الماضي

[مذكرات سلمان رشدي](#)

[شيطانية الآيات الشيطانية](#)

[آيات سماوية](#)

الآيات الشيطانية - الظاهرة والتفسير

بداية القصة كما يرويها (شمس الدين الفاسي)،، وهو شيخ الطريقة الفاسية وينسب نفسه إلى آل البيت،، في كتابه (آيات سماوية) أن [...more](#) الرواية كانت قابعة في المكتبات لا تُباع ولا يذكرها أحد بال

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Aug 12, 2013 [Zorena](#) rated it ...
Shelves: [magical-realism](#), [india](#), [literature](#)

I remember I was working in a book store when this was first released to much controversy over death threats and due in part to that it became a best seller. I am pretty sure that is one of the main reasons I didn't read it then. The other being I didn't always want to read the newest releases. Even then I was reading books from older generations as much if not more so than the latest read. Now that both the book and I are older it was time to see what all the cartoons and threats were about.

I can see where the threats came from but not for the reason I had suspected. This book doesn't treat the prophet well but it definitely parodies the well known Ayatollah Khomeini and Rushdie does a superb job of it. It's unfortunate that he didn't do as great job with the rest of the book. I really feel that all the subplots didn't jell with one another. Each on it's own was better than the whole. I know this can be done better. Just look at *Cloud Atlas*.

On the other hand his characters were wonderful and some of the scenes had me chuckling. Poor Saladan, when he experiences his change and is confronted by the local police is hilarious. The glimpses into Indian culture were most welcome as well. I love learning especially if it's fun or done with beauty.

This is well worth reading because the writing is wonderful even if the cohesion isn't. I look forward to Midnight's Children. ([less](#))

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Jan 09, 2016 [Rafal](#) rated it ... · [review of another edition](#)
Shelves: [zombie-paper-editions](#), [salman-rushdie](#)

Wróciłem do tej książki po latach. Z poprzedniego razu pamiętałem tylko, że mi się podobało, choć podejrzewałem, że było to spowodowane fascynacją czytania autora, na którego dopiero co został za tę książkę wydany wyrok śmierci. Ale na szczęście po latach mogę potwierdzić, że mi się podoba.

Apokryficzny realizm magiczny - chyba tak można to w skrócie opisać.

Sposób pisanie o religii, który dla człowieka wierzącego być może jest drażniący ale dla kogoś mającego do religii (szczególnie instytucjon [...more](#)

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Jul 16, 2016 [Fino](#) rated it ...
Shelves: [fiction](#), [post-modern](#), [man-booker-fiction](#), [favorites](#), [indian-20th-c](#)

Unfortunately, most people know this book from the scandal and fatwa it generated around the personage of its prolific and outspoken author Salman Rushdie rather than the book itself. The

thing that enraged some Muslims (and the Ayatollah of Iran most of all) was Rushdie's hypothesis that Mohammed, being completely illiterate and having the Qu'ran being narrated to him by Archangel Gabriel could have dozed off at one point and that Satan could have impersonated Gabriel without Mohammed noticing causing some verses of the Holy Book to be written by him. That's it. Just a theory. No more than when Kazantzakis imagines Jesus fantasising about accepting Mary Magdalene's sexual advances. In Rushdie's book, this is not even the main story, just an internal narrative in a dream of a character that falls out of an airplane of all things. The book is highly imaginative and although I preferred *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*, remains for me one of his best works. So read it if for any other reason as to oppose censorship and support artistic freedom and artistic license. ([less](#))

[flag7 likes](#) · [Like](#) · [see review](#)

What is so controversial about Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*? Why is it banned in different countries?

20 Answers



Reem Saied, Programmatic Media professional

[Updated Jan 1](#)

The first thing I did when I left India to go abroad for higher studies was buy a copy of *The Satanic Verses* (its banned in India by Customs) and read it to find out what the fuss was about.

I found nothing ... ABSOLUTELY NOTHING... in the novel which was even remotely insulting to Islam. It was a very funny novel and a brilliant piece of literature. I loved it better than *Midnight's Children*. If anyone it was Amitabh Bachchan and Rekha (Bollywood stars) who could have protested as some of their 70s gossip was used. But again in a funny way (and no one outside India would even know the parallels).

The so called "Jahilia" passages (a dream sequence) which had parallels to the Islamic Prophet's story is also not even remotely controversial in my view. It's clearly described as hallucinations or deliriums by the main protagonist and is NOT at all the author's commentary on the Prophet. The "satanic verses" episode too where Mohammed "compromised" with the faith to include Lat, Uzza, Mannat as worthy of "intercession" is a famous legend RECORDED in Islamic history itself. Besides its a book of FICTION and must be read as such. If any book is controversial, it's the "sayings/traditions" (called Hadeeth) of Islam some of which are very derogatory and hostile towards women & non-Muslims and even contradict the Quran itself.

Any liberal Muslim who read the *Satanic Verses* entirely with even a smattering of English language would find there is nothing in it to protest about. I know a lot of liberal Muslims who eventually read it and were hugely disappointed to find nothing controversial in it. Many felt guilty about supporting the fatwa on an innocent man and regret it today (The larger point is: EVEN if someone DELIBERATELY mocked ANY religion, there is STILL nothing wrong with it. The answer to a book is a book, not violence.) Liberal Muslims even today don't know what the fuss was about.

The book was on sale in Muslim countries for weeks and no one cared until a dying Ayatollah declared a "fatwa" on Salman Rushdie for "blasphemy". The TRUTH was the Iranian Revolution was battered after the failed Iraq War, and the Islamic Govt of Iran needed a scapegoat to distract attention & "rally the faithful".

You know what is worth protesting?

The shocking, disgusting way in which Islamic fanatics shot a 14 year old girl (Malala) because she wanted girls to get an education & the tragic way in which thousands of innocent men, women, children are bombed, killed, maimed every day in some "jihad" attack or the other in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria, Sudan and many other states. This is what deserves outrage. Not books, movies, paintings, music, sculptures.

But you don't see much "effigy burning" of the Boko Haram or Taliban or ISIS by Muslim fundamentalists do you? Yet 1000s of extremists marched in many countries to demand that Salman Rushdie be killed for writing a book.

That is the hypocrisy of extremists. That a WRITER was condemned to death because of "Blasphemy" (which is NOT a "crime" as it has NO HUMAN VICTIM, and is protected by Article 19 of the UN Human Rights charter), while there is no outrage against the Taliban, Hezbollah, Hamas and other terrorist organizations, who MURDER innocent people.

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- [Is Salman Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses" still banned in India? Why?](#)



Kuldip Singh

[Written Oct 24, 2012](#)

This from Wikipedia - The temptation of Christ is detailed in the Gospels of Matthew,[1] Mark,[2] and Luke.[3] According to these texts, after being baptized, Jesus fasted for forty days and nights in the Judean Desert. During this time, the devil appeared to Jesus and tempted him. Jesus having refused each temptation, the devil departed and angels came and brought nourishment to Jesus.

Satan fears religious leaders. Satan sees them as a threat to his dominance. Satan did not spare Jesus Christ.

Whether the Holy Prophet was tempted or not, I do not know. The Satanic verses is Salman Rushdie's imaginary interpretation of what he thought/viewed. A controversy has been made out of something that is not controversial.

Many years ago, I asked my Spiritual Master, "All the chaos in the world- who is responsible for it?" The Master replied, "2 classes of people who live by the philosophy of divide and rule. One is politicians and the other preachers.

Hence, there is nothing controversial about The Satanic Verses. The reason it is banned in some countries and not other countries; it all depends on the politicians/preachers personal agenda to acquire power.

Going off tangent - I think we should ponder - The Ayatollah who issued the fatwa sentencing Salman Rushdie to death passed away not long after issuing the fatwa.

As for Salman Rushdie - he has managed to get married a couple of times or so. Besides staying alive.

Moral of the story - it is not for us to take anybody's life.

16.9k Views · [View Upvotes](#)



Anonymous

[Updated Apr 24, 2015](#)

The Satanic Verses is controversial since it tried to mix magical realism with a description of the origins and various facets of Islam.

It created a world that although fictional closely paralleled the life of Prophet Mohammed during the time he was receiving teachings from Allah. Rushdie depicted the initial doubts in Mohammed's mind about the true path. The book also depicted polytheism (with *Al-lat*, *Mannah* and *Uzza* being the presiding deities) that was practiced in Meccah before the advent of *Al-lah*.

The most controversial was however the reference to the eponymous *Satanic Verses*. The Devil was supposed to have deceived Mohammed into thinking that those verses were uttered by Allah. This obviously is a sensitive issue bound to cause ridicule about the authenticity of the entire Quran.

Add to that fact depictions of the Supreme Being,
... not abstract in the least. He saw, sitting on the bed, a man of about the same age as himself", balding, wearing glasses and "seeming to suffer from dandruff

rants about too many rules introduced by religion:
rules about every damn thing, if a man farts let him turn his face to the wind, a rule about which hand to use for the purpose of cleaning one's behind ...

One of Rushdie's characters refers to Mohammed as "Mahound", a conjurer, a magician and a false prophet.

The book supposedly insults the wives of the Prophet by having whores use their names, yet the wives are explicitly said to be chaste and the adoption of their names by whores is to symbolise the corruption of the city then being described (perhaps symbolizing Mecca in its pre-Islamic state).

There are also references to other characters part of Islamic history/mythology where the characters do something similar or entirely contrary to their namesakes according to Rushdie's whims.

All the above make for a compelling potpourri for fanatics to wrap their heads around and issue fatwas or ban the book.

I am reading *Joseph Anton* by Rushdie at the moment where he talks about the thought process that went into creating the various segments of his novels. The fact that most rankled him about *The Satanic Verses* conspiracy was that people said that he did it on purpose.
... *He did it for money. He did it for fame. The Jews made him do it. Nobody would have bought his unreadable book if he hadn't vilified Islam.* That was the nature of the attack, and so, for so many years, *The Satanic Verses* was denied the ordinary life of a novel. It became something smaller and uglier; an insult. There was something surreally comical about the metamorphosis of a novel about angelic and satanic metamorphosis into a devil version off itself.

Throughout his memoir Rushdie tries to reason that he did not mean to stir up the storm that was created by his book :

... the book about migration and transformation that he had written was vanishing and being replaced by one that scarcely existed, in which

Rushdie refers to the Prophet and his companions as 'scums and bums' (he didn't, but he did allow those characters who persecuted the followers of his fictional Prophet to use abusive language),

Rushdie calls the wives of the Prophet whores (he hadn't, though whores in a brothel in his imaginary Jahilia take on the name of the Prophet's wives to arouse their clients; the wives themselves are clearly described as living chastely in the harem),

Rushdie uses the word 'fuck' too many times (well, OK, he did use it a fair bit).

[italics and parenthesis Rushdie's]

Rushdie also thought that his book showed the Prophet in a positive light, contrary to the allegations

And the material derived from the Prophet's life was, he thought, essentially admiring of the Prophet of Islam and even respectful towards him. It treated him as he always wanted to be treated, as a man ('the Messenger'), not as a divine figure (like the Christian 'Son of God'). It showed him as a man of his time, shaped by that time, and, as a leader, both subject to temptation and capable of overcoming it. [...] His prophet flirted with compromise, then rejected it; and his unbending idea grew strong enough to bend history to its will.

Rushdie attributes most of his knowledge about the Prophet's life to a course he did in Cambridge, *'Muhammad, the Rise of Islam and the Caliphate'*. About the Verses in question he has this to say.

... most of the major collections of *Hadith*, or tradition, about the life of the Prophet - those compiled by *Ibn Ishaq*, *Waqidi*, [...], - told the story of an incident that afterwards became known as the incident of the satanic verses.

The Prophet came down from the mountain one day and recited the sura (number 53) called *an-Najm*, the Star. It contained those words,

'Have you heard of *al-Lat*, and *al-Uzza* and *al-Manat*, the third, and the other one? They are the exalted birds and their intercession is to be greatly desired.'

At a later point - was it days later? Or weeks? Or months? - he returned to the mountain and came down, abashed, to state that he had been deceived on his previous visit; the Devil had appeared to him in the guise of the archangel, and the verses he had been given were therefore not divine, but satanic, and should be expunged from the Quran at once.

On reading all about the Prophet, Rushdie thought:

Good story, he thought when he read about it. Even then he was dreaming to be a writer, and he filled the good story away in the back of his mind for future consideration. Twenty years later he would find out exactly how good a story it was.

29.1k Views · [View Upvotes](#)



Geoff Sebesta, veteran of the Cola Wars.

[Written Oct 23, 2012](#)

I am a complete atheist, I have no strong feelings about any religion one way or another outside of my personal observations about them. Not all religions are the same to me, but I do believe that they are all metaphorical interpretations of the lives of the men and women who wrote them, and that is all they are. I just want to make that clear.

If I were Muslim and I read the Satanic Verses, I would be FURIOUS. Don't get me wrong, it is a good book, and I really enjoyed it. But the book is pointedly insulting to the Muslim faith. It portrays Allah as, literally, a scary monster with horns and claws. It portrays Mohammed as disgusting, lying, perverted hypocrite. The tone is snide and patronizing. I was laughing with shock as I read it at how overtly hostile it was to the mythological underpinnings of the religious faith of SO many of the poorest and most oppressed countries in the world.

All writers know that people take their mythology seriously.

I know everybody feels like they have a stake in this grand geopolitical game, but it seems a scientific truth to me (and I have never been to a Muslim country) that Muslims are people too, and that they can read, and that they can tell when they are being insulted.

It isn't about the fatwa, that sort of stuff happens everywhere, no exceptions. We have plenty crazy people in America who kill people over stupid crap. John Lennon didn't have a fatwa against him but he still died. It happens in every country. Brevik didn't declare a fatwa but he still killed a lot of people. "Crazy people doing crazy things" do not speak for the sane and normal people everywhere, and it is an insult to them to act like they do. If an American does not feel responsible for James Holmes's misreading of Batman, why should some guy in Egypt be responsible for this fatwa guff? Because a person in a position of nominal authority said so? We had a freakin' presidential candidate start singing "Bomb bomb bomb, bomb bomb Iran" in 2008 and you want me to hold them responsible for what some nitwit said thirty years ago? No.

Are books banned here in America sometimes? Yes, they certainly are. Usually great books that are challenging to the imagination of the oppressive classes. America's still a pretty good place, even when you can't find Huckleberry Finn in your high school library.

Salman Rushdie exercised the Divine Right of All Authors by writing a book that was shocking and provoking and got in people's faces, and he made crazy people angry. It sucks. But it is not the fault of the Muslims.

Normal Muslims absolutely have a right to be offended by this book, which was written to offend them. If you believed in any religious faith (and I don't know why you would, but I accept that you do) and someone wrote a book like this, you would not like it. This book is quite clear in its opinion that all who follow Mohammed have been duped by a series of monsters, both inhuman and human.

If you wrote a book like this about Gallileo and the Spirit of Reason then I might not like it.

Rushdie wrote a good book and I thank him. It made crazy people angry and I'm sorry. But let's not lose sight of the fact that he was trying to make a lot of people angry, and it so happened that it got away from him, and transformed his life into something difficult and strange. If you want to be a great writer, great writer things are going to happen. Fault, responsibility, and blame are difficult questions. However, one can say with 100% certainty that Salman Rushdie made this happen.

12.2k Views · [View Upvotes](#)



Joe Geronimo Martinez, It's likely I've read your Holy Book, unless you're a Scientologist.

[Written Oct 16, 2012](#)

I didn't quite complete the Satanic verses. I found them a little dull and I think some of the satire may have been lost on me.

But I do think that it was a mocking parody of faith that would certainly upset some people.

It's called Satanic Verses. That should be a hint it is intended to be controversial.

I have no problem with some countries banning it, they aren't usually democracies. The fact that something is banned in Saudi Arabia should be a source of pride.

Where I really really do disagree though is on the fatwa. **THIS IS NOT ON**. This is where governments have to clamp down. These calls to murder are not acceptable in the modern world. The countries that issue these should be boycotted until they retract.

9k Views · [View Upvotes](#)



Y Bijoy Singh, Writer, Editor, Blogger

[Updated Sep 8, 2015](#)

Islam as a religion doesn't believe in Idol worship and multiple gods. Islam is a monotheistic religion. And for Islam there is only one God: Allah.

What is Satanic Verses in Islam?

Prophet Muhammad made a mistake when he approved some Arab contemporaries in Mecca of his time to worship three female deities: al-Lat, al-Uzza and Manat as he got revelation about them. But later Prophet Muhammad retraces this revelation saying it was induced by Satan. This episode is called the Satanic Verses in Islam.

What is so controversial in the novel?

Following three Dream Sequences are found to be offensive to the Muslims:

1. Salman Rushdie has used this Satanic Verses episode in his novel, and has mentioned a satirical poet, Baal, who is skeptical about Prophet Muhammad and the authenticity of his messages in Quran. But when Muhammad become victorious in Jahilla (Parody of Mecca) Baal went underground in a brothel, where the prostitutes assume the identities of the prophet's wives.

2. The episode of Ayesha, one of the characters in the novel (Ayesha was the Favorite wife of Prophet Muhammad) is laden with sexual tension, where her fostering father Mirza Saeed lust for her. Miirza Saeed's wife Mishal is ill. Ayesha proclaims she got a revelation from Angel Gibreel that Mishal has breast cancer and that it will be cured if the entire village walk to Mecca including walking across the Arabian Sea. This ended in catastrophic result where all the walkers disappeared into the Water.

3. There is also a dream sequence featuring Ayatollah Ruhollah who is portrayed as fanatic expatriate religious leader. Incidentally, Ayatollah Ruhollah issued Fatwa against Salman Rushdie in 1989.

That's why it's banned in many different countries of the world, including India for the same reasons like:

1. Challenging the basic teachings of Islam of One God Allah
2. Portraying Muhammad in a poor light
3. Questioning validity of Quran as Muhammad retraces some of his verses
4. Naming Muhammad's wives as whores
5. Associating Ayesha with fake revelations and the insect angle
6. Making mockery of Islam through some parody elements in the book

In fact, India was the first country to ban The Satanic Verses, under Customs..because the novel was still not published in India at that time. So India ban the import of The Satanic Verses, fearing the book might hurt the religious sentiment of Muslims in India.

At the end of the day: Creative freedom can't be greater than human lives. If a work of art is offensive to some people and can cause great danger to human lives and property...it is better to ban it rather than inviting violence where people can get killed.

10.5k Views · [View Upvotes](#)



Subhankar Das, Anti-religious
[Written Mar 5, 2016](#)

The problem with that book was it criticised Islam a bit too vehemently. In that book the brothel of the city of Jahilia was staffed by prostitutes with the same names as Muhammad's wives. It portrayed Saladin, the Muslim hero of crusades as devil. Muslims around the world found

Rushdie calling Abraham bastard for casting Hagar and Ishmael in the desert as highly offensive towards their faith. Rushdie referred to Mohammed as "Mahound", a conjurer, a magician and a false prophet. That the book vilified the companions of the Prophet, calling them "bums from Persia" and "clowns". That book was completely anti-Islamic, and that too in a highly offensive way, no wonder it angered all the followers of Islam.

2.3k Views · [View Upvotes](#)



Harry Small, works at Adobe Systems

[Written Oct 24, 2012](#)

The Satanic Verses is controversial because a nutjob tyrant needed to find an issue to distract attention and quell growing unhappiness with his incompetent administration of Iran. Khomeini was facing massive unpopularity due to an ill-managed war with Iraq and a humiliating climbdown in political rhetoric. He had claimed that he would "drink poison" before agreeing a truce with Saddam's regime and then did just that, after the lives of countless Iranian soldiers had been lost. So he went ahead and proclaimed a death sentence for a western novelist whose work he almost certainly hadn't read.

Rushdie's book owes its name to certain interesting passages in Hadithic texts which suggest that inconsistent prophecies (or Satanic verses) made by Mohammed and later removed from the Koran were a result of dictation from the Devil, not the Archangel Gabriel. The parts of Salman Rushdie's novel that caused such manufactured outrage (almost exclusively amongst people who were largely illiterate and thus incapable of reading the book anyway) are in the dreams of a psychotic character who's imagining that he's the Angel Gabriel. Just to be clear then - the fictional dreams of a fictional madman. The idea that this could be construed as an attack on Islam is laughable.

To their eternal shame most spiritual and political leaders in the West in one way or another sided with the Ayatollah and denounced Rushdie for writing a book. And a beautiful, layered and well-judged book at that. Essentially, the Satanic Verses is only controversial if you haven't read it or you believe that any exploration of religion that goes beyond blind sycophancy is somehow blasphemous and/or insulting.

7.2k Views · [View Upvotes](#)



Amer Qavi

[Written Oct 26, 2012](#)

Why is it banned in so many countries? - because it is deemed to be inflammatory.

Very much like:

- "a gratuitous and aggressive act of intrusion on people's innermost beliefs", was the ruling by a French judge in 2005 when banning the use of da Vinci's 'The Last Supper' in a clothing advertisement
- The renowned artist, M F Hussain was forced to leave India following several charges, court cases and rabid attacks on his house by Hindus upset with his paintings of Hindu gods and goddesses
- 'Ben-Gurion's Scandals' is banned in the US and Israel to this day
- A textbook entitled 'Taking The Civil Road' was banned from Israeli schools in April 2012

Whether in the US, Israel, France or India, freedom of speech is a euphoric notion and not a right, as is frequently professed. The Muslim world is no different.

Insulting someone for the sake of literature is an abuse, rather than a use, of freedom of speech. As a Muslim, I found the Satanic Verses to be gratuitous and inciteful drivel. I find no literary value in a piece of writing that compares anyone's wife to a whore — let alone the wives of the

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

We can go on and on praising Rusdhie's literary style in our apologetically secular living-room banter, but at the end of the day, he is an intelligent man, knew what he was doing and the consequences of his actions.

The fatwa reaction to the book is a whole different matter that is intimately entwined in culture, religion, illiteracy and politics.

5.3k Views · [View Upvotes](#)



Zafar ul Haq, life goal

[Updated Mar 28, 2015](#)

Salman Rushdie's work was clearly meant to denigrate Prophet and it did so.

The name of the chapter in which he goes on to denigrate was meant for that exactly.

[Mahound](#)

What is a Mahound?

Mahound or Mahoun is a variant form of the name [Muhammad](#), often found in Medieval and later European literature. The name has been used in the past by Christian writers to vilify Muhammad. It was especially connected to the Christian belief that Muhammad was a god worshipped by Pagans, or that he was a demon who inspired a false religion

[Salman Rushdie](#), in his novel [The Satanic Verses](#), chose the name Mahound to refer to Muhammad as he appears in one character's dreams.

Source:

Wikipedia

6.6k Views · [View Upvotes](#)



Gwydion Madawc Williams, What's God got to do with it? For me, religion is an aspect of who we are.

[Written Oct 15, 2012](#)

It attacks the notion that Muhammed actually did have a revelation from God.

The actual "satanic verses" are one item, accepting the goddesses of Mecca as valid.

There's also the matter of a scribe writing down the verses with intentional errors, to see if Muhammed would notice and he does not.

It's the same sort of ridicule that has undermined Christianity.

There was also the unfairness that British law has never dropped the option to prosecute for blasphemy against Christianity. Tony Benn tried to get the relevant laws officially repealed, which would have put Britain in a strong moral position by saying that blasphemy is not an offence. He received little backing: law makers prefer to hang on to old laws that they can use if the occasion suits.

6.8k Views · [View Upvotes](#)



Sivapriya Nagendran, ^_^

[Written Oct 8, 2012](#)

Nothing much. A gross violation and denial of a man's right to write by irrational religious fanatics.

Oh yes, I almost forgot - he is a Muslim. That's the whole crux of this controversy !

For a "detailed account", you can check the Wiki page

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The...>

4.1k Views · [View Upvotes](#)



Bala Krishnan

[Written Oct 9, 2015](#)

Salman Rushdie is known to be one of the most controversial author of our times. He is known for his exceptional artistic style. Most of his works were based on magical surrealism, a very novel type of writing where the characters are intertwined between dream and reality. It will look like a fantasy dream with very rich portrayal of vivid imaginations and fictitious characters. Having said this, what's so special about Satanic Verses that sparked controversy around the world and many leaders condemning his writing and advocated death penalty for Salman Rushdie. He touched the core concept of religion. The underlying background of a small group of 3-4 members transforming into cult and then forming a bigger cult i.e., religion. In the book, author discuss about origin of religion and how traditions, superstitious rituals followed leading to blind and established faith practiced in religion. It also discuss how the literal interpretation of such thing like god or higher power were blindly followed though it is a fictitious work and used blindly by followers. Take a look some of the widely followed religious scriptures around the world. They claim that world is flat, earth is 10,000 years old or man was created from rib of women. All these claim though they are anti-scientific without any factual basis people believe them for real. There are people who are ready to die to prove the literal interpretation of their prophet to be for real. This book questions the core of those ideology. There is no such thing like sacred or holy. As soon as something is revered as sacred, they become immune from criticism. What we might think glory for one person might appear trivial for the another. This book questions the dogmatic beliefs which has been indoctrinated for years. As an atheist, I found this book to very amusing. It makes you to think and question your belief ? It should be taken in a lighter note. But people got extremely offended and called for the banning of the book. They call it blasphemy as it was making reference to their religion. Another dimension, it also discuss about identity crisis which immigrants face when they move to another country about mostly people who go to western countries from eastern countries like India. The author himself have grown up in three different places like India, Pakistan and UK. There are immigrants who have problems with assimilation when they move to liberal countries in Europe or US. It explores about the dilemma and conflicts between older generation and younger one, western and eastern, traditional vs modern world. If you have a strong faith in something, please make sure that this book is not for you. If you are an open minded person, you will enjoy it. Modernity is the willingness to get offended. It's rare virtue these days to take sarcasm in a lighter tone and not getting offended personally. After all, we are all social beings who love to make fun of each other and laugh at our absurdities and mistakes. By spreading joy, you are not going to lose anything. Spread the love and joy. Peace.

4.5k Views · [View Upvotes](#)



Vivek Sahay, Live Life Quora Size

[Written Oct 16, 2012](#)

Yeah.. even I was about to say the same thing to Afzal. Am sure you wouldn't have read it and like millions of other people you are also getting carried away. Salman Rushdie is a very scholastic

person and for once trust the fact that a scholar will not humiliate or insult any community or religion (not at least his own religion). I have read 2 of his books and they are good piece of literature. The Satanic Verses is not available in India but I read it when I was in US. Satanic Verses refers to an incidence in which God spelled certain verses to Prophet Mohammad PBUH which was later supposed to form a part of the Holy Quran, but soon it was withdrawn as it was realized and that the devil in an attempt to deceive Prophet spoke those words. Something like that..

These verses called satanic verses never went to The Holy Quran but were compiled in another book by a Muslim historian Mohammad Ibn Isqa Yassar. He wrote an autobiography of Prophet and he mentioned in his autobiography about the versus which the devil spoke to Prophet Mohammad PBUH.

Coming back to Salman Rushdie's work – it's a piece of literature clearly classified as "fiction". He tried to pull out a lighter side of many serious issues.

I think you should read the book. It's hard to find a copy of Satanic Verses in India but you can read the book which Ibn Isaq wrote and get an idea what exactly satanic versus is all about

<http://www.flipkart.com/life-muh...>

After having read just trust on a scholar like Salman Rushdie that he won't write anything to harm or just for fun - for god sake he is not a comedian !! He has written a hilarious book and that's not me who said that - big media houses like The Guardian and The Times read, reviewed and found the book to be nothing but "Exhilarating, populous, loquacious, sometimes hilarious, extraordinary . . . a roller-coaster ride over a vast landscape of the imagination"

Happy reading :)

7.7k Views · [View Upvotes](#)



Anonymous

[Written Apr 22, 2015](#)

why Muslims hate this book ? of Salman Rushdie – The Satanic Verses

Date written:

1988

Synopsis: Arguably the most controversial novel of the late twentieth century, The Satanic Verses was banned in India within a week of its publication, and within six months had given rise to a virulent international controversy over the proper limits on 'freedom of speech' and the true place and function of literature in society. The Satanic Verses is the story of two men, Gibreel Fasishta and Saladin Chamcha, who have survived the fall from an exploding plane and started to develop distinctly inhuman characteristics as a result. Rushdie's narrative weaves as easily through modern Bombay and London as through ancient cities of sand, taking the reader into shared dreams, mad pilgrimages, and the violent birth of a new religion with keen insight and sharp irreverence that earned Rushdie international notoriety, and far worse.

Notable figures:

Gibreel Farishta – A vain, mentally unbalanced Indian film star who takes on many roles portraying gods. Adored by his fans and tensely tolerated by his industry colleagues, Gibreel is finally thrown off balance by surviving the fall from the Bostan and, in his dreamlike metamorphosis into his angelic namesake, wanders the streets as a schizophrenic. Gibreel is arrogant, jealous, and sometimes dishonest, but his candor about his own problems, even during dreams and fits of insanity, makes him a more sympathetic character than he might otherwise be. Saladin Chamcha – A voiceover artist and ardent anglophile, Chamcha's transformation turns him into a devilish, goatlike creature to match his shortened temper and anguished disillusion with the western world and former Indian domestic life he believed to be invaluable.

Pamela Lovelace – Saladin's estranged wife, Pamela is a progressive activist and a bombshell

westerner whose growing dissatisfaction with Chamcha becomes clear to her only after his reported death. When he returns, in his new goatish body, to find her having an extended affair with his best friend, Jumpy Joshi, Pamela is unfazed and unrepentant.

Zeeny Vakil – Saladin's lover, a doctor and a political activist.

Mimi Mamoulian – Saladin's partner/co-star in many of his voice impersonation/voiceover gigs, Mimi is practical, vulgar and kindhearted.

Rushdie, Salman. *The Satanic Verses*. New York: Picador, 2000.

Salman Rushdie / *The Satanic Verses 2*

Rekha Merchant – Gibreel's former (married) lover, who commits suicide with her children when he leaves her. Rekha's avenging spirit haunts Gibreel at intervals throughout the remainder of the novel.

Alleluia Cone – A flat-footed mountain climber, Alleluia was once Gibreel's lover but ends up repeatedly saving his life when he winds up at her doorstep in increasingly worse condition over the course of the story. Unfounded and explosive jealousy finally moves Gibreel to murder Alleluia and his old film industry supporter, S. S. Sisoda, in the gathering climax of the novel.

Mahound – The prophet representing Muhammed in Rushdie's text, whose name is taken from an old European slur on the Prophet's name. Mahound is not portrayed as an entirely unworthy character, but his human character flaws and growing lust for power at any cost eventually overshadow his better traits. Mahound keeps a harem of twelve wives with him, who through a brothel of women who appropriate their names, become unexpectedly prominent characters in the text.

Salman – A lapsed believer and Mahound's former scribe, he lost his faith in the Prophet once he began deliberately changing the record of revelation, simply to see if Mahound was enough of a prophet to notice the difference. When Mahound let the changes slip by, Salman became disgusted and finally deserted the camp, coming to an uneasy alliance with the satirical poet Baal of Jahilia.

Ayesha (I): the Prophet's youngest and favorite wife.

Ayesha (II): A young concubine who takes on Ayesha's name and gains the affections of the disgraced poet Baal, posing as a guard in the brothel while in hiding from Mahound's forces.

Ayesha (III): A village girl and epileptic prophetess who led the people of her town on a grueling foot-hike to Mecca, taking them straight into the sea she believed she could part.

Ayesha (IV): A cruel modern tyrant in Desh who has set herself against a powerful Imam (representing the deposed Shah of Iran).

Bilal I: A former slave and faithful follower of Mahound

Bilal II: A fanatical acolyte of the modern Imam

Hind (I): The powerful, wrathful wife of Abu Simbel and longtime opponent of Mahound, she converts once she realizes that Mahound has gained control of her city. Having personally murdered Mahound's uncle (ripping open his chest and eating his liver) in revenge for slaying her brothers, Hind acts to save her own life and remains a follower of the powerful sect until her death.

Hind (II): The avaricious, coldhearted wife of Muhammed Sufyan, who grudgingly gives Chamcha shelter in her home.

Mishal Akhtar: Mirza's wife, slowly dying of breast cancer, who forms an attachment to the young prophetess Ayesha and insists on joining the march to Mecca over her husband's furious protests.

Rushdie, Salman. *The Satanic Verses*. New York: Picador, 2000.

Salman Rushdie / *The Satanic Verses 3*

Mishal Sufyan: Hind and Muhammed Sufyan's oldest daughter, she supports the angry, goatlike Chamcha through a painful time of coming to terms with his new body.

Some Minor Characters:

Karim Abu Simbel, Jumpy Joshi, Mirza Saeed Akhtar, Muhammed Sufyan, Khalid I, Khalid II, Hanif Johnson

Book notes (Points of controversy):

On Saladin, the would-be Indian expat:

"Salahuddin Chamchawala had understood by his thirteenth year that he was destined for that cool Vilayet full of the crisp promises of pounds sterling at which the magic billfold had hinted, and he grew increasingly impatient of that Bombay of dust, vulgarity, policemen in shorts, transvestites, movie fanzines, pavement sleepers and the rumored singing whores of Grant Road..." (37)

“ ‘Best place for you is here,’ [Sufyan] said, speaking as if to a simpleton or small child. ‘Where else would you go to heal your disfigurements and recover your normal health? Where else but here, with us, among your own people, your own kind?’

Only when Saladin Chamcha was alone in the attic room at the very end of his strength did he answer Sufyan’s rhetorical question. ‘I’m not your kind,’ he said distinctly into the night. ‘You’re not my people. I’ve spent half my life trying to get away from you.’ (261-262)

Sacrilegious portrayal of the Prophet’s revelation:

“It happens: revelation. Like this: Mahound, still in his notsleep, becomes rigid, veins bulge in his neck, he clutches at his centre. No, no, nothing like an epileptic fit, it can’t be explained away that easily; what epileptic fit ever caused day to turn to night, cause clouds to mass overhead, caused the air to thicken into soup while an angel hung, scared silly, in the sky above the sufferer, held up like a kite on a golden thread...Gibreel begins to feel that strength that force, here it is at my own jaw working it, opening shutting, and the power, starting within Mahound, reaching up to my vocal chords and the voice comes.

Not my voice I’d never know such words I’m no classy speaker never was never will be but this isn’t my voice it’s a Voice.

...

Being God’s postman is no fun.

Butbutbut: God isn’t in this picture.

God knows whose postman I’ve been.” (114)

“Baal asked: ‘Why are you sure he will kill you?’

Rushdie, Salman. *The Satanic Verses*. New York: Picador, 2000.

Salman Rushdie / *The Satanic Verses* 4

Salman the Persian answered: ‘It’s his Word against mine.’ ” (381)

Whores taking on the name of the Prophet’s wives:

“How many wives? Twelve, and one old lady, long dead. How many whores behind the Curtain?

Twelve again; and, secret on her black-tented throne, the ancient Madam, still defying death.

Where there is no belief, there is no blasphemy. Baal told the Madam of his idea; she settled matters in her voice of a laryngitic frog: ‘It is very dangerous,’ she pronounced, ‘but it could be damn good for business. We will go carefully; but we will go.’ ” (392-393)

Gibreel’s lack of faith despite being the angel of the Prophet:

“Mr. Gibreel Farishta on the railway train to London was once again seized as who would not be by the fear that God had decided to punish him for the loss of faith by driving him insane. (195)

Immediately after this reflection he becomes involved in conversation with Mr. Maslama, a pompous passenger seated next to him, who ends up knocking off G’s hat, noticing a halo and affirming that if Gibreel is insane, the rest of the world has gone insane right along with him:

“ ‘It’s a straight choice,’ he trembled silently. ‘It’s A, I’m off my head, or B, baba, somebody went and changed the rules.’ ” (195)

Rushdie, Salman. *The Satanic Verses*. New York: Picador, 2000.

Netton / *Text and Trauma* 1

Critical notes: Ian Netton – *Text and Trauma: An East-West Primer*

“The *Satanic Verses* may be likened to a bubbling cauldron whose principal ingredients are two people and three places.” (22)

On weighted names:

Gibreel Farishta / Jibrīl + Farishta / Gabriel + angel (22)

Saladin Chamcha / Salāh al-Dīn + chamcha / Medieval Islamic war hero + spoon/humble (23)

Azraeel / ‘Izrā’īl / Islamic angel of Death (23)

Jahilia / Jāhiliyya / “a state of ignorance; pre-Islamic paganism, pre-Islamic times” (23)

Bostan / Bustān / the garden (of Paradise) (25)

Mahound / Muhammed / Demonic European slur on the Prophet’s name (26)

Comparisons between the text and Islamic mythology:

“In conversation with Baal, a disillusioned Salman admits to altering the revelations deliberately as he recorded what Mahound dictated.” (34)

“With the death of his father, Saladin is compared by Rushdie to the orphaned founder of Islam, Muhammad, thus subtly linking him to previous chapters. The difference, of course is that the Prophet of Islam was orphaned at a very early age, whereas Saladin’s own orphaning is a product of middle age.” (38)

“Rushdie’s Gibreel in *The Satanic Verses* is a highly ambiguous figure. Very much a ‘sacred link’,

he is also portrayed as a flawed link, sometimes seeming to merge with, or at least be reflected by, his very human namesake Gibreel Farishta who is, in any case, 'a symbolic angel.' (123)

Opening revelation and miracles of some quality to all:

"Finally all the pilgrims reach the Arabian Sea and they enter it behind Ayesha, washing out of their depth. Ayesha, Mishal and the credulous villagers appear to be drowned. However, those few who have survived the expedition—like Sarpanch, Osman, Sri Srinivas—give testimony afterwards that at the very last moment the Sea did indeed part for the pilgrims." (37)

On the legend of the Satanic verses:

"There are a number of variant traditions, but they do not alter the import of what al-Tabarī narrated. And some scholars have accepted his version of events. Watt, for example, notes that 'at one time Muhammad must have publicly recided the satanic verses as part of the Qur'ān.' He finds it 'unthinkable that the story could have been invented later by Muslims or foisted upon them by non-Muslims.'...Elsewhere, Watts says: 'The story is so strange that it must be true in essentials.'" (85)

Netton, Ian. Text and Trauma: An East-West Primer. Oxford: Routledge/Curzon, 1995.

Ramadan / Western Muslims and the Future of Islam 1

Critical notes: Tariq Ramadan – Western Muslims and the Future of Islam

Points on scholarly and modern Islam:

On Sharia:

"If the idea of 'establishing rules' is indeed contained in the notion of Sharia...this translation does not convey the fullness of the way it is understood, unless its more general and fundamental meaning is referred to: 'the path that leads to the spring.' ...We have seen that this corpus of reference is, for the Muslim consciousness, where the universal is formulated: God, human nature, which makes itself human by turning on itself and recognizing the 'need of Him,' reason, active and fed by humility, and, finally, Revelation, which confirms, corrects, and exerts a guiding influence." (31)

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Mohammed Khateeb Kamran, I believe in Islam

[Written May 26, 2013](#)

Shaikh Ahmed Deedat explains why Non-Muslims should also feel offended by that book:

A summary of the speech:

THE PEN AND THE SWORD

So far 'Satanic' Salman has succeeded in causing the death of 40 Muslim men, widowed Muslim women and orphaned Muslim children with his poisoned pen, proving the old saying (if proof was needed) that "The Pen is Mightier than the Sword!"

Despite all my anger, sorrow and bitterness I still lead with my fellow Muslims in travail – "Stop crying "don't wail! No more protest marches or book burning!" All our visible signs of pain and anguish are giving the enemies of Islam gleeful sadistic pleasures. I say, STOP IT! Turn the Tables.

TURNING THE TABLES

Let us learn a lesson from the life of Jesus Christ (peace be upon him). His detractors came to him again and again with posers and riddles as recorded in the Christian New Testament. His own people, the Jews, came to him, with mockery on their lips and mischief in their hearts, saying "Master, we caught this woman in the act of adultery, what must we do to her? Jesus turned the tables on the Jews. Again, on another occasion, they said, Master, must we pay tribute (taxes) to Caesar or not? Once more again Jesus turned the tables on the Jews in the Temple of Solomon on his triumphant march onto Jerusalem with his disciples, he physically overturned the money changers' tables and with a corded whip, whipped them out of the Temple.

We shamefully acknowledge that we lack the potency to whip anybody, but every Muslim who reads these words and understands what he is reading can turn the tables on every Westerner

who defends Rushdie.

UNEXPURGATED RUSHDIE

There is no way of cleaning the stable without dirtying your hands. I have seen numerous TV programs debating Rushdie's 'Satanic Verses.' But not one, I repeat again NOT ONE Muslim defender of our Cause grappled with the nettle. One who came nearest was one of our intellectuals who when prodded as to what in Rushdie's book created such terrible umbrage in the Muslim minds, in Rushdie's work? He timidly quoted the word "bhaen-chud" from Satanic Salman's – "The Satanic Verses."

What did this word "bhaenchud" mean to some 50 million American viewers on ABC or was it PBS TV network ? Absolutely NOTHING!

"Bhaenchud" is only for starters. You have been warned. This publication, the word "UNEXPURGATED" which means that Rushdie's text in his original "The Satanic Verses" are not tampered with. That nothing is done by me to remove, expunge, erase any obscene or pornographic word or phrase. If you can't stomach Rushdie's "shit"* in print. Please tear up this publication and throw it in your toilet pan. In all my lectures on Rushdie, I had warned my audiences in advance that my talks were "Definitely not for Prudes, children, and Bashful Men and Women!

From now on, you can look forward to sharing the "gems" (the shit which Rushdie has excreted) with your Western friends and neighbours. Create opportunities to expound "The Satanic Verses"

*. This is a very mild expression from Rushdie's Book. See and hear me on Video "IS JESUS GOD?" a debate with Dr. Shorosh in which I was hard put skirting round and round this word and yet never coming to uttering it: in deference to my audience.

A NOVEL APPROACH

Begin like this-"Admitted that Rushdie has many filthy, dirty, and obscene things to say about Islam and its heroes and heroines: but sir, do you know what he has to say about you, his benefactors and protectors, what thanks he gives you for his up-bringing, cultural and moral deportment, and un-solicited refuge and hospitality?"

On the very first(@)page of "The Satanic Verses," Rushdie calls his god fathers the British "PROPER LONDON, BHAI!(#) HERE WE COME! THOSE BASTARDS DOWN THERE WON'T KNOW WHAT HIT THEM."

Bastards! He could have said those sons of bitches. But wait, let Rushdie get warmed up. The first time I ever uttered the word "bastard" was in the early sixties at a public meeting in the City Hall of Durban, at question time, I happened to quote a verse from the Holy Bible to illustrate a point; I had read:

"The bastard shall not enter the congregation of the Lord; even unto the tenth generation...? Deuteronomy 23:2

(@) The actual first page of Chapter One is numbered 3. Because this Satan has counted Nos. 1 and 2 without enumerating them. ie. No. 1 is a dedication to his living companion in 'Hell' (of his own making) with just 2 words FOR MARRLANE" his second spouse, on the whole page and No.2 is a prologue on "SATAN" by Daniel Dcfoe from his book "The History of the Devil," which astonishingly enough is Rushdie himself. (Read the reproduction in the book), you can't help agreeing, how "prophetic" are those words! (#) "BHAI" What is "bhai"? Satanic Salman has used a dozen exotic Hindi words on the first page alone in his the very first chapter, gleaned from the gutters of Bombay. But wait for what he spews out from the sewers of his birth place. He scatters his obscenities a hundred names without translating them to tantalize his Western dimwits.

This one word – bastard, nearly brought the roof down on me! How could Deedat utter such a word? Remember, I was only quoting!

My audience did not know that this Anglo-Saxon unsavory word bastard was repeated in the "Book of Books" only three times, in nearly 1500 pages. Rushdie does it 29 times in his bid to beat all records for all times in his tome of 500, double spaced, sparsely typed pages. Observe this evil genius constructing a one letter sentence out of it.

"THAT, AND ALSO HER, THE ICEWOMAN. BASTARD. (note: this b-a-s-t-a-r-d is a sentence by itself) NOW THAT I AM DEAD I HAVE FORGOTTEN HOW TO FORGIVE." Page 8 of the Devil's

"The Satanic Verses," in short TSV in all future references.

This Devil incarnate has learnt from his British peers the art of staccato sentences. Now watch him do the impossible with words.

He can introduce THREE "Bastards" in a single short sentence

.... "THAT BASTARD, THOSE BASTARDS, THEIR LACK OF BASTARD(*) TASTE." (page 137 TSV)

WHAT A PRIZE!

Could Viking/Penguin the publishers of this filth have given Rushdie eight hundred thousand dollars (\$800 000) as advance money for this? Not likely! They have good (?) business sense. They smelt their "PIECE OF PIG EXCREMENT" (Rushdie's words page 7 TSV) "ROTTEN COCKROACH DUNG" (page 13 TSV Not smelly enough? Rushdie excretes his shit quite late in his book, in his own words – "THE SHIT STARTS" (page 434 TSV). Please check up! "THIS SHIT, YOU CUNTS," "IT'S SHIT," "IT'S FUCKING SHIT," "SHIT DINNER," Four "shits" on one page alone 441 TSV, Page 449 "THREW SHIT." Page 461 "WHITE MAN'S SHIT," there must be something special in it for this Brown Britisher, because he says – "BLACK SHIT IS BAD," on page 529 of his bullshit book the TSV.

(*) Rushdie's own emphasis

PROLOGUE

Satan, being thus confined to a vagabond, wandering, unsettled condition, is without any certain abode; for though he has, in consequence of his angelic nature, a kind of empire in the liquid waste or air, yet this is certainly part of his punishment, that he is . . . without any fixed place, or space, allowed him to rest the sole of his foot upon. Daniel Defoe, *The History of the Devil*

All this shit of Rushdie will not satiate Peter Mayer the Director of Penguin and his fellow gluttons. They need something more sticky and stinky to satisfy their depraved tastes. And, Rushdie is their man of the hour. There will never be another to get away with the lampooning of Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Jews. Blacks as well as all Whites! Not even sparing the "Iron Lady," nor the Queen of Great Britain. If you, the reader have come thus far, you might as well go the whole hog. Finish this book!

SELECTIVE SENSITIVITY

Everyone in the West, British and American, giants of the literary world, are not impervious to sacrilege, insults and profanities as contained in "The Satanic Verses." Roald Dahl, a British author and member of the Literary Guild had some pertinent remarks as reproduced here from "The Daily News" dated March 1st, 1989.

THE DAILY NEWS WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1, 1989

Rushdie

LONDON: Author Roald Dahl has launched an extraordinary attack on fellow writer Salman Rushdie, calling him a "dangerous opportunist".

In a letter to yesterday's Times newspaper, the world renowned author of children's books said: 'Clearly he has profound knowledge of the Muslim religion and its people, and he must have been totally aware of the deep and violent feelings his book would stir up among devout Muslims "in other words he knew exactly what he was doing and he cannot plead otherwise."

Dahl said this type of sensationalism did get "indifferent" hooks to the top of the best-seller list "but to my mind it is a cheap way of doing it.

"To my mind, he is a dangerous opportunist." He later told reporters:

"I think he's a twit."

Cynical supporters of Rushdie's rights of freedom of speech and expression might say that for Dahl it was a question of "sour grapes." Not having been nominated on the shorter list of the prestigious "Booker Award," himself.

CHRISTIAN AND JEW UNITE!

What would they then say of the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Robert Runcie who has said in the first official statement by the Church of England - "ONLY THE UTTERLY INSENSITIVE CAN FAIL TO SEE THAT THE PUBLICATION OF SALMAN RUSHDIE'S BOOK HAS DEEPLY OFFENDED MUSLIMS BOTH HERE AND THROUGHOUT THE WORLD." The Anglican Primate continued: "I UNDERSTAND THEIR FEELINGS AND I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT OFFENCE TO RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF THE FOLLOWERS OF ISLAM OR ANY OTHER FAITH IS QUITE AS WRONG AN OFFENCE AS TO THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF CHRISTIANS."

And what have the dullards on the Rushdie bandwagon to say of the Chief Rabbi of Britain Lord Jakobovits who was the first religious leader in Britain to “DEPRECATE....THE OFFENCE CAUSED” by the book, has reiterated his view that it “SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED.” In a letter to The Times (4th March 1989) the Chief Rabbi also agreed on the need to “PROHIBITING THE PUBLICATION OF ANYTHING LIKELY TO INFLAME, THROUGH OBSCENE DEFAMATION...”

What motives can we attribute to the three above? Nothing other than the Love of God and the Love of Man based on Eternal Truths.

The Holy Quran describes these godly men as – “And among them (the Jews and Christians) are Mu'mins, (meaning Faithful, Sincere People)...” Holy Quran 3:110

But lest we are deluded into complacency, the All-Wise Merciful God reminds us in the concluding phrase of the above verse – “But the majority of them are perverted transgressors.” How amply are the words proven true, again and again! Are these atheistic and materialistic so called Jews and Christians beyond redemption? No! We are never to despair! There is still much good in them. Learn to talk to them rationally, not emotionally. Give them living examples from their daily lives in their day to day affairs.

MPs ANGERED

Date lined from London, on the 22nd May, 1989, was a roaring headline in “The Daily News.”
CALL FOR BAN

LONDON: Furious British MPs have called for American actor Mickey Rourke to be banned from Britain. Harry Greenway, Conservative MP for Ealing North, said: “I hope the British Government will never allow this man to set foot on our shores. I am shocked beyond belief.” The MPs were particularly incensed by his use of a four-letter word to describe Mrs Margaret Thatcher’s policies.

Foreign service.

I sympathize with the British in their righteous indignation. Though the English speaking people, both British and American bandy around not only four-letter words, but five and seven letter profane words in their normal cultural and social relationships. Yet they are highly sensitive when the same words are used in connection with their own heroes and heroines.

DOUBLE STANDARDS

What grates me most is the rank hypocrisy of the one thousand and one Poets, Playwrights and Pimps; Editors, Essayists and Eunuchs;

Novelists, Newspapermen and Non-Conformists who signed and paid for adverts in the National Newspapers in support of Rushdie’s right to absolute freedom of speech and expression. Yet not a single one of those thousand will raise an eyebrow in defending Rourke’s right to use just a four-letter word even once. Not against Mrs. Thatcher in person but against her economic Policies.

Their hypocrisy is unbearable!

What was that “four-letter” word which roused such fury and ire among a people reputed for their calm, placid, sagacity? It is downright silly to beat around the bush. That emotive word is F-U-C-K! Because of this single four-letter word, Lady Chatterly’s Lover was banned in South Africa for twenty years! Even the dullest of the English speaking people conjure up the word fuck, when the expression “four-letter” is used.

A TETRAGRAMATTON

The Jehovah’s Witnesses, a very active and most militant evangelistic Christian sect, never use the expression “four-letter word” in any of their literature though a four letter word is the king-pin of their preaching. (S) They have invented a fourteen letter word to describe a four-letter word. Imagine!

They ever and anon substitute - “TETRAGRAMATTON” instead of simply the word “four”
Rushdie has overcome this typical British aversion by making a “four-letter” word into a seven letter word by simply adding the present participle suffix to the word FUCK by adding I-N-G, making it FUCKING. See how adroitly he made the whole British nation swallow the word FUCKING while Rourke’s “FUCK,” was getting stuck in their throats.

(S). Obtain your FREE copy of the book – “What is his name?” from the Center for fuller explanation.

“OH. SHE’S (Maggie) RADICAL ALL RIGHT. WHAT SHE (Maggie) WANTS-WHAT SHE (Maggie) ACTUALLY THINKS SHE (Maggie) CAN FUCKING ACHIEVE (%) IS LITERALLY...

FROM FUCKING SURREY AND HAMPSHIRE... NOBODY'S EVER TRIED TO REPLACE A WHOLE FUCKING CLASS BEFORE...

THIS COUNTRY THAT'S STUFFED FULL OF FUCKING OLD CORPSES.

(Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses" page 270).

It is strange that the British can stomach four "fuckings" in one paragraph from Rushdie but one "fuck" from Rourke infuriates them. Is it because Rushdie is their brother-in-law and son-in-law combined. (Remember! His divorced 1st wife was British) A cursory count will give you 5 FUCKS and 52 FUCKINGS in this what the Western world has called a literary masterpiece! Don't forget, only 52, just one "FUCKING" for every week of the year!

One can't help agreeing that "The Satanic Verses" is a masterpiece for fucking-up the English language. He has conjoined his word "FUCKING" with every letter of the alphabet. Here is a quick summary of some of them. Verify the rest at leisure.

A "FUCKING A.".....245

.."FUCKING ALLIES"....269

.."FUCKING AMERICANS".280

.."FUCKING ARGENTINA".268

B "FUCKING BEATLES"...163

.."FUCKING BEDPAN"....169

C "FUCKING CLASS".....270

.."FUCKING CREEP".....178

.."FUCKING CLOWNS"....101

.."FUCKING COMMANDOS"..80

D "FUCKING DIFF?".....262

.."FUCKING DYNASTY"...265

.."FUCKING DOGS".....410

.."FUCKING DREAMS"....122

E "ENJOY FUCKING".....149

G "FUCKING GUITAR"....269

H "FUCKING HORNY".....158

.."FUCKING HELLHC)LE".180

I "FUCKING IDIOT".....526

please forgive me, if it is getting too boring. Here is a little variation

FUCKING TANK.....\

FUCKING PEE AITCH DEE..\

FUCKING COUNTRY.....\ All this from a

FUCKING LIFE...../ single page 268 TSV

FUCKING NATION...../

THE BASTARDS...../

Why you enjoy fucking with this one. p.149

You are fucking my woman p.207

Don't holy men ever fuck? p.278

God's own permission to fuck p.386

I have had enough of this "fucking shit" (words borrowed from Satanic Salman) let me end with a last bit "WILD DONKEYS FUCKING WEARILY AND DROPPING DEAD STILL CONJOINED" (page 479 TSV)

Dear reader, if any pervert, dolt or dullard protests that the foregoing quotations are out of context, then obtain the text (Satanic Salman's Satanic Verses). If you already have it then please buy three high-lighters- red, yellow and green, and go to town in colour coding Rushdie's shit. RED for all the "fuck" and "fucking" words. YELLOW for all the Hindi exotic words, like "bhaenchud", "yaar", "haramzada," etc. And GREEN for quotable verses I'll refer you to them later.

Thus armed with a colour-coded "The Satanic Verses," you can plaster the cynics and mockers of Muslims with Rushdie's excrement. They ought to relish it, never mind how much they protest. It's food for the maggots! Like randy hooker – Pamela Bordes; Mother India also gave birth to Salman Rushdie, alias Satanic Salman, also "Saladin Chamcha" or "Spoon" and "Gibreel Farishta" all are one and the same-Rushdie of "The Satanic Verses" fame. Nurtured in the Western culture, both Pamela and Salman spurned their faiths. At the tender age of thirteen, Rushdie was thrown into the laps of the West. He studied at Rugby and Cambridge in England and

imbibed its culture. He went the whole hog. Listen to his philosophy. page 211 TSV ie. "The Satanic Verses". He wrote-

"BUT TO BE RAISED IN THE HOUSE OF POWER IS TO LEARN ITS WAYS, TO SOAK THEM UP, THROUGH THAT VERY SKIN THAT IS THE CAUSE OF YOUR OPPRESSION. THE HABIT OF POWER, ITS TIMBRE, ITS POSTURE, ITS WAY OF BEING WITH OTHER. IT IS A DISEASE, BILAL, INFECTING ALL WHO COME TOO NEAR IT. IF THE POWERFUL TRAMPLE OVER YOU, YOU ARE INFECTED BY THE SOLES OF THEIR FEET." TSV p.211

It is worth highlighting the above quotation in GREEN. Rushdie is giving here the source of his own inspiration and nourishment. He has imbibed the worst of both worlds! Now see, how he repays his British god-fathers for all their kind and generous hospitality.

He charges his British benefactors as an incestuous people. He calls them "THE SISTER FUCKING BRITISH." (%) TSV p.80. This is the unkindest cut of them all. He marries Pamela Lovelace according to his story in the TSV. And according to his own philosophy she was destined "FOR FUCKING AND THROWING OVER," (\$) which he did by, divorcing her.

Where did he get the information from that the British fuck their own sisters. Perhaps his Pamela may have confided in him, and maybe he betrayed her trust.

(%) All emphasis in this quote, are Rushdie's own!

THE IRON LADY

My wife has a special liking for Mrs. Margaret Thatcher. She cannot explain. She does not understand her politics. Perhaps it is the clarity of her voice and forceful speeches that attract her to the "Iron Lady".

Islam forbids the giving of offensive nick-names to anybody. I take it that Iron Lady is not offensive. If it is, my apologies. I owe Mrs. Thatcher nothing. But my wife and I were offended on learning that beside disparaging her successful economic policies with obscenities, (Refer earlier pages). Now he makes his character to say – "I'M TALKING- ABOUT YOU-KNOW-WHO," VALANCE EXPLAINED HELPFULLY. "TORTURE. MAGGIE THE BITCH." TSV p.269.

Mickey Rourke (p.8) used only a four letter word for Mrs. Thatcher's POLICIES and Britain was incensed, but when Rushdie applies a five letter title (B-I-T-C-H), it become Kosher(@) Halaal, Permissible! Strange. Oh British, how did Rushdie bewitch you with b-i-t-c-h?

(%) All emphasis in this quote, are Rushdie's own!

(S) For further explanation on this phrase see the section under "All 'white' women!" title

(@) Kosher: The Jewish term for what they consider to be Halaal or permissible

IS TSV A NOVEL?

Rushdie claims that his TSV is only a novel, it is fiction, it is a dream within a dream. Don't you remember that every movie before its screening, at one time, displayed a notice to wit – "All characters in this film are fictitious and the similarity of any name to persons living or dead are merely coincidental." Tell that to Mark Thatcher or Carol Thatcher, Mrs. Thatcher's son and daughter and see what they do to you! Nobody will blame them for any grievous bodily harm. Try! Try!

In the house of Islam, anyone traducing the fair name of any lady, living or dead, will be required to produce four "EYE WITNESSES" to the alleged indiscretion to qualify as a "bitch," and if under cross-examination one of them fails, all the four witnesses will receive 80 lashes each. Cruel! Barbaric! You say. You would not say that if your mother's integrity was involved. I bet! If Rushdie himself was an eye witness to his wife's adultery, he may divorce her on that ground but he would not be allowed to have her arrayed before an Islamic Court without three other impeccable eye witnesses to corroborate his charge, failing which he too will receive eighty lashes.

NEW MEANING

The Western world has developed an art of glamorizing filth and sin. IMMORALITY is now termed "new morality!" A BASTARD is now called a "love-child!" and a BITCH which normally meant a female dog; when applied to a woman it implied that she was like the bitch in season (rut) – given up to uninhibited sexual abandon, free to all comers. This word is derogatory no more if you apply a superlative to it i.e. simply add the adjective "super" make it "SUPERBITCH!" SUPER BITCH

It is defamatory and libelous to call a woman a bitch, but not if you call her a "super bitch." My country South Africa is an industrial giant. It produces 50% of the total electricity of the

African continent. 60% of Africa's total industrial output. It is like a part of the United States in Africa. At the moment it is out to outshine Hollywood. She is on the verge of completing a soap opera for TV called "WHIRLPOOL" to compete with Dynasty and Dallas and later export it to America. Our leading lady for Whirlpool is Jana Cilliers our own. She is being advertised as "SUPERBITCH" "The Daily News" dated March 17, 1989.

Would the British people be happier if another upstart changed Rushdie's "MAGGIE THE BITCH" to "Maggie the Superbitch!"??

THE QUEEN NOT SPARED

I was born British. I still cherish a British passport over 60 years old. I don't know what's it worth. English has become my mother tongue. I dream in English and I also swear in English. I have visited Britain a dozen times. More than once I was tempted to visit the Speakers Corner, Hyde Park, London, enjoying the many passionate and vehement harangues. It's free for all. One is allowed to curse, abuse and swear anybody and everybody. The law of libel and defamation does not apply in this haven of free speech and unbridled expressions. Yet I am told that Her Majesty the Queen of England is above any abuse or tirade. She is sacrosanct! Not only in Hyde Park but throughout Britain either by word of mouth or through the media, "Thou shalt not denigrate the queen".

A retired employee at Buckingham Palace wrote a book entitled "Officially Speaking." About the goings on in the Royal precincts. About drunken orgies and sexual frolics among the Royalty. The publication of this piece of Royal gossip has rightly been suppressed by Mrs. Thatcher's government.

Amazing England! Rushdie prevails where a blue blooded Englishman fails. Thanks to Maggie and her British votaries of free speech.

ONLY DREAMING SEX WITH QUEEN

"Chamcha (another name of Rushdie in the TSV) he found himself dreaming of the Queen. of MAKING TENDER LOVE to the MONARCH. She was the body of Britain, the avatar of the State, and he had chosen her, JOINED WITH HER; she was his Beloved, the moon of his delight" (page 169 of TSV)(1). What is Rushdie telling his readers, if not that he fucked her Majesty. "Joined with her," above compare with his expression "STILL CONJOINED," on page 12.

I expect some British blockhead of the literary world to cry – "Oh! Rushdie only fucked our Queen in his dream." It is all fiction! After all, we can't hold a man accountable for his dreams. That is true, but "O pervert!" Rushdie was not dreaming when he penned those words!

(1). Mark this quotation with a green marker and memorize it.

ALL "WHITE" WOMEN!

Lest the commoner say that "Rushdie only lampoons the high and mighty like the Prime Minister of Britain – Maggie and the Monarch of Britain – The Queen!" Let me remind them that he has not forgotten you the plebeian – the ordinary Whites in the country. Nay, he honours all whites, wheresoever they abide.

This choicest piece of racism should also be highlighted with a glowing green pen and memorized. "WHITE WOMEN – NEVER MIND FAT, JEWISH, NON-DEFERENTIALLY WHITE WOMEN – WERE FOR FUCKING AND THROWING OVER." (Page 261 TSV)

In Rushdie's perverted mind, the fate of every "white women" was for fucking and throwing over. The only qualification required by Rushdie is that they be "WHITE" It does not matter their Shape or size. Whether with a hooked Jewish nose or an Anglo-Saxon angular nose. Whether you can recognize their nationality or not. Whether they be English, or Irish; Scottish or Welsh; German or French;

American or Canadian – provided they are white! "THEY ARE ONLY GOOD FOR DISCARDING AFTER FUCKING" Says Rushdie!

PUBLIC READING OF TSV

The Satanic Verses were being read in Britain and America. One Susan Sontag of the Literary Guild among others read this religious regularity in New York to her doting audiences, both, black and white, young and old.

Some Afro-American (^) youths imbibed the message. "WHITE WOMEN ARE FOR FUCKING AND THROWING OVER!" For after all, what is reading if not brain-washing. We are what we eat and we are what we read!

Dr. Vernon Jones, an American psychologist of great repute, carried out experiments on groups of

school children to whom certain stories were being read, and at the end of his experiments he concluded – “That these stories made certain slight but permanent changes in character, even in the narrow class-room situation.”

(^) Rushdie call them “Niggers”! see page 461 TSV “Nigger eat white man’s shit.” And on page 449 “Niggerjimmy” and “mushroom.”

SATANIC INSPIRATION

Susan Sontag, a white woman, relished her reading of “The Satanic Verses.” so did her admirers. One young listener was inspired! He was waiting for an opportunity to put Rushdie’s idea into action.

It didn’t take long. Soon afterwards with five others – the gang of six – one Muslim and five Christians were prowling at night in Central Park, New York, looking for adventure. They saw a “WHITE WOMAN” jogging. She triggered their imagination! They went a “W-I-L-D-I-N-G”(*) as the “Times” magazine, of 8th May, 1989, reports. They bashed the poor woman into unconsciousness, and fell on their prey like a pack of wolves. -

They gang raped her one by one in turn which no wild beast ever does. The blood and the sweat and the gore titillated their libido!

That poor jogger was an innocent victim. It should have been Susan Sontag, or Marriane Wiggins (Rushdie’s 2nd wife) who says that if she was not Rushdie’s wife then she too would have read “The Satanic Verses,” to her clientele, in public from city to city.

(^) Rushdie call them “Niggers”! see page 461 TSV “Nigger eat white man’s shit.” And on page 449 “Niggerjimmy” and “mushroom.”

(*) WILDING: A new word meaning, went berserk sexually Like a pack of wolves scenting blood!

TSV SHOULD BE READ TO ALL BLACKS!

If I was a sadistic racist, I would have liked to have “The best of Rushdie” read in Harlem, New York; and in every ghetto in America and in Notting Hill in the U.K. and among all the blacks of the world, in Africa and in Asia and in Eskimo land. Let the non-Whites of the world know that according to Rushdie’s new Bible – “WHITE WOMEN – NEVERMIND FAT, JEWISH, or NON-DEFERENTIAL WHITE WOMEN – WERE FOR FUCKING AND THROWING OVER”!

You Peter Mayer! Director of Viking/Penguin, you son of a bitch, you gave Rushdie \$800, 000-00 Dollars as advance money for this filth.

All those whites – Poets and Playrights, Essayists and Editors, Novelists and Newsmen who are in support of Rushdie’s smut, let them read the above quotation from the shit of Rushdie to their mothers, to their sisters, to their wives and daughters. Make their mouths water, that Rushdie wants them to be fucked by black people and thrown away. Rushdie has already set the example, he has FUCKED AND THROWN AWAY (one British girl, his 1st wife) and perhaps before you get this into your hands, he would have done the same to another (American girl -Marriane Wiggins) also FUCKED AND THROWN AWAY!

I am asking all those sons-of-bitches who rushed to Rushdie’s support without really reading his TSV, the real reason for their unqualified support. Did they not come across these “tasty eats”?

“MOTHER-FUCKING AMERICANS” TSV p.80

“MOTHER-FUCKING SPARKS” TSV p.85

“MOTHER-FUCKING DREAMS” TSV p.122

“BHAENCHUD(##) NIGHTMARE” TSV p.109

(#). Bhanchud: Means “sister-fucking” in the gutter lingo of Bombay. Rushdie wisely questions on page 441 TSV “How are you supposed to understand a man who writes a made-up lingo of his own”?

COMPARED WITH WHORES

There is no end to Rushdie’s shit. He has 547 pages full of it. Though he has some brilliant things to say at times. He equates himself, and all the writers, authors, novelists etc. With hookers and harlots, prostitutes and pimps. He makes one of his characters to utter :

“WRITERS AND WHORES. I SEE NO DIFFERENCE HERE.” TSV 392

TRIBUTE TO RAJIV

Before I end this most agonizing little essay, I had ever written. I must thank Rajiv Gandhi for being about the first (?) country in the world to ban "The Satanic Verses." Stop attributing motives to people! My own country the Republic of South Africa was in the forefront on banning the book, as well as debarring Rushdie from entering the country. This was in early October 1988! Long before many a Muslim nation!

I congratulate the Prime Minister of India for his sagacious move. The devilish book would not only have wounded his Muslim subjects in India but it would have also seared his Hindu co-religionists as well. The devil Rushdie has spared no one.

RAMA REVEILED

Nobody has yet drawn the attention of Rushdie's Hindu admirers as to what he has to say about the gods and goddesses of their faith.

"HERE WAS A LECHEROUS, DRUNKEN RAMA AND A FLIGHTY (@) SITA: WHILE RAVANA, THE DEMON-KING, WAS DEPICTED AS AN UPRIGHT AND HONEST MAN 'GIBREEL (that's Rushdie himself again in his TSV) IS PLAYING RAVANA,' GEORGE EXPLAINED IN FASCINATED HORROR. 'LOOKS LIKE HE'S TRYING DELIBERATELY TO SET UP A FINAL CONFRONTATION WITH RELIGIOUS SECTARIANS, KNOWING HE CAN'T WIN, THAT HE'LL BE BROKEN TO BITS.'" TSV pS39.

Rama the 7th incarnation of god, according to the Hindu religion, venerated and worshipped by hundreds of millions of Hindus in India, is character assassinated as a lecher, one given to excessive sexual cravings and debauchery, and the demon-king is portrayed here as a righteous man. And Sita is painted as a flirt. This is typical of Rushdie. He turns gods into devils and devils into saints! And the Swiney confesses that the likes of him "WILL BE BROKEN TO BITS!" – "GUY SEEMS HELL-BENT ON A SUICIDE COURSE." TSV page 538. He has uttered here words of wisdom, but alas, he has learnt nothing from them himself.

BEFITTING END

Mired in misery, may all his filthy lucre choke in his throat and may he die a coward's death, a hundred times a day, and eventually when death catches up with him, may he simmer in hell for all eternity!

3.7k Views · [View Upvotes](#)



Don Low

[Written May 15, 2016](#)

Basically the book makes out that Mohamed is not a prophet regarding the situation in the quran regarding 3 idols and their worshippers. He was willing to compromise his monotheism to get in their good books. Then later more or less said that Satan made him say it(no excuse)

Muhammad is the ONLY prophet that got a revelation, telling that this was part of God's message, then retracting it, sustaining that it was of Satan. There is not one example of a holy prophet in the whole Bible where this happens. [" *But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak . . . that prophet shall die.*" (Deuteronomy 18:20);.. But of course his gullible listeners at the time did not know the god of Israel nor had a bible to point this out to Mohamed.

How many other words were influenced by Satan? Why would God make light of a prophet speaking Satan's words as God's? Didn't God command in the Old Testament that false prophets should be put to death? Didn't Jesus predict that false prophets would come and mislead many? (Matthew 24:11)]

1k Views



Nath Yogi, A disciple of the true Guru. I follow only my Guru Siddha Nath forever.

[Written Sep 8, 2015](#)

Nothing controversial. It is just a book written by someone.
Those who identify themselves as Islam religion by birth or conversion are afraid that reading this book may damage their faith in Allah.
But it helped the author to become world famous. As a result he earned name and fame.
You can understand how feeble is their practice of faith.

714 Views · [View Upvotes](#)



Jamie Tzemran, Armchair expert in all things that matter.

[Written Oct 24, 2012](#)

I think that it was a great book that caused a lot of people to think and caused a lot of fanatics to reveal themselves as such. It is provocative but it is not in any way insulting. It is fiction and that should not insult unless the person chooses to be insulted. The insult is not given, it is taken. People took insult from the book when no insult was there. If you think it is rubbish, that is fine, it is a book of fiction and your view is perfectly valid but if you feel insulted then your ego is far too big for my world as that implies that you think that Rushdie aimed this at you. Compared to a story like "Life of Brian" (which was brilliant) this is lame. Was I insulted by "Life of Brian"? of course not.

3.4k Views · [View Upvotes](#)



Laura Wrzeski

[Written Jun 19, 2015](#)

That novel is so boring that I bet nobody who raised a fuss about it ever actually read it. Wish I hadn't. I could have been cleaning out my fridge or something...anything.

2.5k Views · [View Upvotes](#)

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- I never read anything by Salman Rushdie before. So which book should I start with and why?
- With which book should I begin, if I want to read Salman Rushdie?
- Can Salman Rushdie be called a cultural Muslim?
- Should Salman Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses" be adapted to a Broadway musical akin to "The Book of Mormon" musical?

The Satanic Verses 25 Years Later: Why the Rushdie Affair Still Matters

09/26/2013 10:06 am ET | **Updated** Nov 26, 2013

Todd Green, Ph.D. _Author, “The Fear of Islam: An Introduction to Islamophobia in the West”

When Viking Penguin published Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* 25 years ago this week, all hell broke loose. The novel, written by a celebrated Indian-British author who hailed from a Muslim family, set off a chain of events that included bookstore bombings, book bans and burnings, and blasphemy accusations. The real low point in what came to be known as the Rushdie Affair occurred when the Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa ordering Rushdie's death. Rushdie was forced into hiding for the better part of a decade.

Why was *The Satanic Verses* so controversial? The novel offended many Muslims because of its portrayal of Islam as a deceitful, ignorant, and sexually deviant religion. Rushdie described Mecca as 'Jahilia,' a term signifying the period of ignorance prior to the revelations received by Muhammad. He referred to Muhammad as 'Mahound,' a medieval Christian designation that implied Muhammad was some kind of false deity. He gave the names of Muhammad's wives to twelve prostitutes in a brothel. And most controversially, he invoked a discredited tradition in Islam, the so-called "satanic verses," in which Satan inspired Muhammad to compromise with the people of Mecca and to allow them to continue to worship other deities in an attempt to lure them to Islam.

The heart of the controversy pertained to freedom of expression and what limits, if any, should be placed on this freedom when it is used to criticize if not demonize a minority religious community. Rushdie and his most ardent defenders insisted that freedom of expression was a non-negotiable principle. Muslim concerns over the novel were either of secondary importance or simply irrelevant. Some of Rushdie's critics, including prominent religious leaders in Britain such as the Chief Rabbi and the

Archbishop of Canterbury, acknowledged Rushdie's right to express his opinions on Islam but chastised him for abusing this freedom to malign and ridicule Muslim beliefs. They sought to balance freedom of expression with the fair and just treatment of Britain's Muslim minorities.

There is plenty of criticism to go around for the participants in the Rushdie Affair. Some Muslims in Britain, for example, exercised poor judgment in how they responded to the novel. Public book burnings conjured up horrible episodes of repression in Europe's past, from the Inquisition to Nazi bonfires. Other Muslims voiced support for Khomeini's fatwa, giving many non-Muslims in the West the impression that Muslims were inherently prone to violence or otherwise incapable of "fitting in" to Western societies. And while still other Muslims defended Rushdie's right to express his views and denounced Khomeini's fatwa, the media tended to lump all Muslims together, and this made it more difficult for the broader public to understand what were otherwise some legitimate concerns about the novel.

While the reputation of Muslims took a severe hit during the Rushdie Affair, as we reflect on this episode 25 later, it is Rushdie's defense of freedom of expression that deserves more scrutiny. Rushdie and some of his more outspoken supporters adopted a fairly uncritical approach to freedom of expression, assuming at times that this freedom benefits all members of Western societies equally. But is this true? Not really. The supposedly free exchange of ideas and opinions in fact arises from individuals and communities who occupy unequal positions of power and privilege. More often than not, cultural and political elites have access to a pulpit from which they can preach their views and shape public opinion. Not everyone is so fortunate.

Rushdie was a member of Britain's cultural elite. This had not always been the case. He was, after all, a child of two worlds, India and Britain, cursed with what he refers to in his memoir as a "double unbelonging." But as a renowned author, he rubbed shoulders far more with the movers and shakers of Britain than with the country's growing number of Muslims. His

fame as an author gave him access to publishers and media outlets that enabled his voice to be heard and his views to be spread far and wide. Most Muslims in Britain, by contrast, occupied the lowest rungs of the socio-economic ladder. They lacked influence in the mainstream media as well as access to political power. Their voices, therefore, were often ignored or otherwise went unheard, and this reality undoubtedly fed their frustrations and influenced the forms their reactions took during the Rushdie Affair.

It is an illusion, albeit a powerful one, to believe that a free exchange of ideas exists in any pure form in the West. Racial, ethnic, and religious minorities rarely have possessed the same opportunities to shape public opinion as those with political power or cultural capital. More to the point, there is a long history in the West of political and cultural elites dictating or distorting the narratives of minority religious communities. Mormons, Catholics, and Jews, for example, struggled to communicate their own stories on their own terms to Protestant America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Instead, Protestant lawmakers, religious leaders, and newspaper editors sometimes used their power to co-opt the narratives of these religious communities in order to promote outright bigotry and discrimination.

The Rushdie Affair demonstrated just how resilient this phenomenon was. It is quite ironic that Rushdie, an ex-Muslim, wielded more power to shape popular opinions of Islam than all of Britain's Muslims combined. We still see these uneven power dynamics at work in more recent episodes, such as the Danish Cartoon Controversy, or in the disproportionate attention given to Islamophobic personalities such as Michele Bachmann, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and Geert Wilders. Non-Muslims in positions of power and influence, from authors to politicians to journalists, continue to dictate the often negative terms in which the story of Muslims and Islam is told.

What we still must learn from the Rushdie Affair is that freedom of expression, while in theory an extraordinary concept, rarely functions in practice in a way that is truly and equally inclusive of the diversity of voices

and perspectives in Western societies. In the case of Muslims, we still have much work to do when it comes to discussing Islam in a manner that does not privilege the voices of non-Muslim cultural and political elites, particularly when their portrayals of Islam either endorse bigotry or otherwise perpetuate stereotypes that do not reflect how many Muslims understand themselves and their own religious tradition. This does not mean Islam should be exempt from criticism or debate. But it does mean that until we level the playing field between the Salman Rushdies on the one hand and the West's Muslim minorities on the other, we will remain in the shadow of the Rushdie Affair, and a fuller, more robust freedom of expression will struggle to find the light of day.

Follow Todd Green, Ph.D. on Twitter: www.twitter.com/toddhgreen

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The Satanic Verses Study Guide

The Satanic Verses is a magical realist epic with three major plotlines. The first of these plotlines follows two Indian actors, [Gibreel](#) Farishta and [Saladin](#) Chamcha, after they miraculously survive a plane crash over the English Channel. The second and third plotlines are elaborate descriptions of dreams that Gibreel has after the crash. One focuses on the Muslim prophet [Mahound](#) (based on Mohammed), as he wrestles with his faith to found a new religion. Another follows [Ayesha](#), a prophet who leads the people of her village on a futile pilgrimage. Rushdie draws on a variety of influences, including Islamic history and theology, Bollywood cinema, and immigration politics.

The Satanic Verses is [Salman Rushdie](#)'s fourth novel. When it was published in 1988, the author was already well-known and critically respected. His novel *Midnight's Children*, published eight years before, had won the Booker Prize and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize, and was a bestseller. So when *The Satanic Verses* was published, it was poised to garner plenty of attention from critics and the public at large.

And attract attention it did. Some Muslim clerics and literary critics found Rushdie's use of Islamic theology very offensive. The main point of contention was his exploration of the 'satanic verses,' a series of possibly apocryphal verses in the Qur'an, in which Mohammed seems to recognize 'Allah's daughters' – three female demigods. The story generally goes that Satan tricked Mohammed into recognizing the goddesses, but Mohammed retracted what he had said once he realized he had been fooled. However, this piece of Islamic history is extremely controversial, and some Muslim scholars argue that it never happened at all.

Several countries with Muslim populations, including India, Egypt, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and South Africa, banned *The Satanic Verses*, although the censorship often ended up becoming as controversial as the book itself. In February 1989, the Iranian Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini declared a fatwa on Rushdie – that is, a call for his murder. As a result, the United Kingdom – where Rushdie is a citizen – severed its diplomatic relations with Iran. Rushdie successfully went into hiding, a period of his life that he chronicles in his 2012 memoir, *Joseph Anton*. However, the Italian and Japanese translators of the novel, as well as its Norwegian publisher, were violently attacked; the Japanese translator, Hitoshi Igarashi, died of his wounds.

In later years, both sides made attempts to resolve the conflict. The Iranians promised to retract the fatwa in order to improve their relationship with the United Kingdom. For his part, Rushdie made an official apology to Muslims, and even converted to Islam a year after the book's publication. However, none of these attempts were long-lasting. Rushdie stopped being a Muslim shortly after his conversion, and Iran eventually reaffirmed the fatwa. The novel remains controversial to this day, although it has also been recognized for its stylistic virtuosity, and is studied by many scholars of postcolonial literature.

The Satanic Verses Summary

Part I

The jumbo jet *Bostan* explodes over the English Channel. Two passengers plummet down to the water and survive: [Gibreel](#) Farishta, a famous Bollywood actor, and [Saladin](#) Chamcha, an obscure voice actor who lives in London. The narrator gives some background on the two men. Gibreel had a hardscrabble youth – he started working as a delivery boy as a teenager. When his parents died, he moved in with a foster family, the patriarch of which eventually arranged for him to become an actor. Shortly before the fateful flight, Gibreel had a bout with mental illness, but recovered. This caused him to lose his faith in God. Soon after his recovery, he met and fell in love with [Alleluia](#) Cone, an English mountain climber. Out of jealousy, his former lover, [Rekha](#) Merchant, committed suicide. Her ghost haunts Gibreel for the rest of the novel. Although Gibreel's affair with Alleluia was brief, it inspired him to follow her to London to start a new life.

Saladin, born Salahuddin Chamchawala, grew up in Bombay, where he was molested by an older man and had a troubled relationship with his father, [Changez](#) Chamchawala. He always dreamed of moving to London, and got his wish when his father sent him to boarding school there. He became estranged from his father when Changez remarried; Saladin was particularly incensed that his new stepmother had the same name as his actual mother – [Nasreen](#). After university, Saladin became a voice actor and shortened his name for commercial reasons. He married a beautiful but troubled white woman named [Pamela](#) Lovelace. Shortly before the fateful flight, he returned to India to perform in a George Bernard Shaw play. There, he started an affair with an old friend, [Zeeny](#) Vakil. He falls in with Zeeny's friends, [George Miranda](#) and [Bhupen Gandhi](#), both of whom are active in left-wing politics. Right before he leaves to return to London, Saladin breaks up with Zeeny because he felt she was too sympathetic to his father, Changez.

The doomed flight was hijacked by four Sikh nationalists, who landed it in the desert and held the passengers hostage for 111 days. Eventually, they took off for London. However, while over the English Channel, the hijackers fought amongst themselves, and accidentally detonated the plane.

Part II

During the fall from the airplane, Gibreel has the first of several elaborate visions. This vision introduces the Jahilia subplot, which is a revisionist retelling of the early history of Islam. It follows [Mahound](#) – an analog for Mohammed – a businessman who starts a new religion called Submission in the pagan city of Jahilia. (Submission is the literal translation of the word ‘Islam.’) The religion is unique for being monotheistic in an exclusively polytheistic culture. He faces opposition from the authorities, especially Karim [Abu Simbel](#), the city’s Grandee. Abu Simbel hires [Baal](#), a poet, to write verses attacking Mahound. Nevertheless, Abu Simbel remains nervous about the growing sect, and allows Mahound and his followers to be persecuted.

One day, Abu Simbel offers protection for Mahound’s sect if he acknowledges three of Jahilia’s most important goddesses alongside Allah. Mahound climbs a mountain to consult with the archangel Gibreel, who reveals to him the word of God. Gibreel seems to affirm Abu Simbel’s request, so Mahound publicly acknowledges the existence of ‘Allah’s daughters.’ However, he soon recants, declaring that the revelation about the goddesses actually came from Satan, not God. He publicly repudiates his earlier proclamation. Abu Simbel and his wife [Hind](#) retaliate by murdering Mahound’s wife and uncle, and confining his followers to ghettos. Eventually, Mahound and the other adherents of Submission flee to the more tolerant city of Yathrib.

Part III

Gibreel and Saladin undergo a curious transformation during their fall – they take on the personalities and physical characteristics of the archangel Gabriel and Satan, respectively. Eventually, they wash up on the English coast, where they are taken in by [Rosa Diamond](#), a senile old woman. Someone sees the men crawling out of the water and reports them as illegal immigrants. The police arrive to arrest Saladin, who has started to turn into a goat. They do not arrest Gibreel, probably because he is dressed in Rosa’s late husband’s clothing. Saladin begs for Gibreel’s help, but his fellow survivor does nothing. Gibreel befriends Rosa Diamond and listens to her long, rambling stories about her colorful youth in Argentina. One night, he takes her dancing, and she dies shortly thereafter.

On the way to London, the police officers beat Saladin, now a bleating goat-man, and refuse to believe he is a British citizen. Despite their racism, Saladin is eventually cleared and taken to a hospital to recover from his injuries. His physiotherapist, [Hyacinth Phillips](#), and his fellow patients do not seem particularly surprised by his transformation, since they have all been transformed into animals as well. The narrator implies that this is a result of the prejudice they face from white English people. They escape the hospital en masse, and Saladin goes to his apartment.

The narration switches briefly to the perspective of Saladin’s wife, Pamela, who is having an affair with Saladin’s old friend and rival, [Jumpy Joshi](#). As it turns out, Saladin managed to call home from Rosa’s house, but Jumpy answered the phone. When he tells Pamela her husband is alive, she does not believe him until he arrives to surprise them.

Meanwhile, Gibreel rides a train to London, where a fellow passenger, [John Maslama](#), informs him that he is the archangel Gibreel. Gibreel does not believe him, and he heads to Alleluia’s house.

Part IV

This section describes two more of Gibreel’s dreams. The first is a short, standalone dream; the second is the beginning of the novel’s longer Titlipur subplot. In the first vision, a conservative Imam enlists Gibreel to help him regain control of his homeland, Desh (an analog for Iran). Gibreel does not want

to help, but finds himself enslaved. [The Imam](#) forces Gibreel to fight the goddess Al-Lat, who has been incarnated as the empress of Dosh, [Ayesha](#). Gibreel kills her, and the Imam becomes the absolute ruler of Dosh.

The second dream takes place in the rural village of Titlipur. A landowner, [Mirza Saeed](#) Akhtar tries and fails to conceive a child with his wife, [Mishal](#). They adopt an itinerant toymaker, Ayesha, after finding her in their courtyard eating butterflies. She is beautiful but insane. As Ayesha grows older, Mirza Saeed begins to desire her, but does not actively pursue her.

One day, Ayesha's hair turns white, and her dress turns into butterflies. She claims she has lain with the archangel Gibreel, news which breaks the heart of her suitor, [Osman](#) the clown. After this, Ayesha and Mishal become very close. One day, Ayesha diagnoses Mishal with terminal breast cancer, which a doctor confirms. She makes a prophecy that Mishal will be cured if the entire village makes a pilgrimage to Mecca on foot. This is impossible because the Arabian Sea stands between Titlipur and Mecca, but Ayesha promises that the archangel will part the sea for them when they arrive. She convinces the village to follow her. Mirza Saeed is skeptical, but follows in his Mercedes to make sure that Mishal stays safe.

Part V

Despite their romantic rivalry, Jumpy Joshi hides Saladin at the hotel owned by his neighbors, the Sufyans. The Sufyans do their best to help Saladin; their daughters, [Mishal Sufyan](#) and [Anahita](#), are delighted by his transformation. Meanwhile, Saladin learns that his colleague [Mimi Mamouljian](#) is dating the scam artist [Billy Battuta](#), and that he has lost his job as a voice actor on a television show about aliens. Saladin eventually grows too large to stay with the Sufyans, so Mishal and her older boyfriend, [Hanif Johnson](#), take him to stay in the basement of a nightclub. Saladin spends that night consumed with hatred for Gibreel, whom he blames for all of his problems. The rage transforms Saladin back into a human.

Meanwhile, Gibreel rekindles his affair with Alleluia. However, he eventually has a vision wherein an angel orders him to leave Alleluia and spread the word of God through London. He complies, but everyone on the street thinks him insane. He has initial success with [Orphia Phillips](#), a ticket seller, but when he tries to solve her romantic woes, he worsens her situation. He eventually becomes so frustrated that he walks into oncoming traffic, desperate for attention.

The car that hits him is driven by S.S. [Sisodia](#), who concocts a scheme to produce a new film to return Gibreel to the spotlight. Sisodia brings him home to Alleluia, and together they take him to be treated for schizophrenia. Almost immediately after Gibreel begins to recover, Sisodia offers him a role playing the angel Gibreel. To promote the film, Gibreel agrees to headline a dance show in London. When he appears, the audience rushes the stage, and Gibreel levitates into the air and disappears. When he wakes up, he is back on Alleluia's doorstep.

Part VI

This section resumes the Jahilia plotline twenty-five years after the end of Part II. Submission has spread in Yathrib and Mahound has grown more powerful, so he decides to make a second attempt at converting Jahilia. However, his disciple [Salman](#) has lost faith, after noticing that Mahound's proclamations always seem to benefit Mahound at the expense of others. Fearing he would be punished, Salman flees to Jahilia and confides his doubts in the poet Baal. Shortly after Salman

arrives, Mahound follows and converts most of Jahilia – including his old nemesis, Abu Simbel. He establishes a theocracy that tightly controls the lives of the people, and persecutes dissenters like Salman.

Baal goes into hiding, joining the male staff of a brothel called The Curtain. Still itching to undermine Submission, Baal encourages the prostitutes to take the identities of Mahound's twelve wives – a conceit that titillates the brothel's patrons. This goes on for years. One day, Salman stops by to say goodbye to Baal, complaining that life in Jahilia has become too miserable for him to stay. Shortly after that, the brothel's employees are arrested, tried, and executed. Not much later, Mahound dies; his last vision is of the goddess Al-Lat, one of the deities he repudiated in Part II.

Part VII

Saladin's wife Pamela becomes pregnant by Jumpy Joshi. Meanwhile, a prominent black activist, [Dr. Uhuru Simba](#), is falsely accused of being a serial killer, the gruesome Granny Ripper. His arrest infuriates the immigrant and left-wing communities, who begin to demonstrate on his behalf. Saladin and Jumpy attend a meeting about the Simba case. At the meeting, Saladin sees Mishal Sufyan, to whom he is attracted – but her forehead is burning. He also has a vision of the angel Azrael, Gibreel's lieutenant, coming down to smite him. These omens make him realize that the accident has changed him, and he decides to succumb to evil and kill Gibreel.

Saladin has an opportunity to do this at a party hosted by Billy Battuta and Mimi, held on the set of a film adaptation of Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*. Most of the main characters from the London plot are invited, and when Saladin spots Gibreel there, he prepares to exact his revenge. However, Gibreel is sedated by antipsychotics, and does not recognize Saladin's intentions. As they talk, Saladin mentions Jumpy, and Gibreel convinces himself that Alleluia is having an affair with Jumpy. Gibreel tries to murder Jumpy, but only succeeds in knocking him out.

Saladin visits Gibreel a few more times, but can never quite bring himself to commit the murder. On one visit, Gibreel subjects Saladin to a long, explicit monologue about his sexual encounters with Alleluia. Saladin uses this information in prank-calls to Gibreel, which makes him believe that Alleluia is unfaithful. The tactic succeeds in exacerbating Gibreel's mental illness, and he leaves Alleluia. Meanwhile, John Maslama – the businessman from the train – stays committed to the idea that Gibreel is the archangel, and sells Gibreel a trumpet that Gibreel names Azrael.

Dr. Uhuru Simba dies in prison under suspicious circumstances, which incites the immigrant community to riot. The unrest intensifies when the Granny Ripper murders continue, proving that Simba was innocent. Two fires start in the Brickhall neighborhood – one at the Sufyans' café, and one at the community relations center. The second fire kills Jumpy and Pamela; the first becomes a point of confrontation for Gibreel and Saladin. When Saladin sees the café fire, he attempts to save the Sufyans, but is trapped under a beam. Gibreel, who has realized it was Saladin who made the phone calls, follows Saladin into the burning building with the intention of killing him, but decides at the last minute to save him instead.

Part VIII

Part VIII resumes the Titlipur plot. Ayesha's employer, the toy merchant [Sri Srinivas](#), joins the pilgrimage when he sees the enormous flock of butterflies that follow them. However, things soon begin to go wrong. Pilgrims die from thirst and exhaustion, and Ayesha develops an authoritarian streak, insisting that the pilgrims leave the corpses by the side of the road rather than burying them.

Mirza Saeed tries to convince the villagers to turn back, but most of them ignore him. However, he does gain some supporters, including Osman, Sri Srinivas, Mishal's mother [Mrs. Qureishi](#), and [Muhammad Din](#), a village elder whose wife was one of the first fatalities.

Word begins to spread of the pilgrimage, and it becomes both a media sensation and a point of sectarian tension. When the group arrives at the seaside suburb of Sarang, a violent mob awaits them. However, a torrential rain disperses the angry mob, keeping the the pilgrims safe. That Friday, they worship at a mosque. While there, Ayesha allows the Imam to order an abandoned baby stoned to death. This horrifies the pilgrims, and many of them lose faith in Ayesha.

They follow her to the beach anyway, where the butterflies take the shape of the archangel Gibreel. This restores their faith, and they walk into the water and begin to drown silently. Mirza Saeed and the other doubters dive in to rescue them but do not succeed. When the doubters awake in the hospital, all except Mirza Saeed claim that they saw the sea part underwater for the pilgrims to walk through – despite the fact that the pilgrims' bodies have started to wash up on the shore. Mirza Saeed returns home alone and allows himself to starve. Just as he is dying, he has a vision of Ayesha, and finally opens his heart to her. The sea parts, and they walk to Mecca together.

Part IX

Eighteen months after the Brickhall fires, Saladin gets word that his father is dying. He immediately forgives Changez and returns to India, where he tenderly cares for his father and reconciles with his stepmother, [Nasreen the Second](#). When his father dies, Saladin is impressed by the man's courage. He changes his name back to Salahuddin Chamchawala, and falls back in with Zeeny, John, and Bhupen. He even attends a communist demonstration, something he would never have done before. Gibreel returns to India after making his Jahilia and Titlipur visions into films, both of which flopped. S.S. Sisodia brings Alleluia to Gibreel's house and tries to reconcile them, hoping that if Gibreel's love life is happier, he will regain his box office magnetism. Still tortured by Saladin's prank calls, Gibreel murders them both. He then goes to Saladin, confesses what he has done, and kills himself. Saladin sadly leaves the house with Zeeny.

The Satanic Verses Character List

Gibreel

"For fifteen years," main character Gibreel Farishta was "the biggest star in the history of Indian movies" (11). Shortly before his fortieth birthday, he becomes seriously ill but miraculously recovers. However, instead of returning to Bollywood, he tries to move to London. On the way there, his plane is hijacked and explodes over the English Channel. He and Saladin are the only survivors of the explosion and the subsequent fall. After the accident, Gibreel begins to take on the personality and physical characteristics of the archangel Gibreel – although it is unclear if this transformation is real or a result of schizophrenia.

Saladin

Born Salahuddin Chamchawala, Saladin Chamcha moved to London to study as a teenager. He has always loved British culture and eschews his Indian heritage as much as possible. He now works as a voice actor and is estranged from his father, his only remaining family in India. After the air accident, he transforms into an incarnation of Satan, much to his dismay.

Rekha

Rekha Merchant is a wealthy, married neighbor with whom Gibreel Farishta was having an affair before he left India. She killed herself and her children by jumping off the roof of her apartment building after Gibreel left her for Alleluia Cone.

Pimple Billimoria

An up-and-coming actress who was scheduled to perform with Gibreel on the day he disappeared from India. She eventually plays the role of Ayesha in *The Parting of the Arabian Sea*, a film Gibreel makes based on the Titlipur plotline.

Naima Najmuddin

Gibreel Farishta's mother, who died when he was a teenager.

Babasaheb Mhatre

The General Secretary of the lunch-porters' guild in Bombay. When Gibreel's father died, the Babasaheb invited Gibreel to live with him; he later arranged for Gibreel's first job in the film industry.

Alleluia

Alleluia (Allie) Cone is a beautiful English mountain-climber. Gibreel falls in love with her shortly after recovering from his illness, and eventually moves in with her in London. Despite her own personal issues, she is a faithful helper to Gibreel when he is treated for schizophrenia.

Changez

Saladin's father, Changez Chamchawala, owns a successful business manufacturing agricultural sprays. He is also a nationalist politician. He has a strained relationship with his son.

Nasreen

Nasreen Chamchawala is Saladin's mother, who dies when he is a young man.

Pamela

Pamela Lovelace is Saladin's troubled young wife.

Zeeny

Zeeny Vakil is Saladin's lover in Bombay. She is a fearless, sexually aggressive writer. She published a controversial text on Indian identity, and is active in the communist movement.

George Miranda

A Marxist filmmaker with whom Saladin connects upon his return to India.

Bhupen Gandhi

A friend of Zeeny's who works as a poet and journalist.

Mimi Mamouliau

A highly skilled, Jewish voice actress in London. She and Saladin considered starting a relationship before the start of the novel, but decided against it because of their religious differences. She eventually becomes involved with Billy Battuta.

Nasreen the Second

The woman Changez married after his first wife died. The fact that she shares a name with Saladin's mother fuels Saladin's anger toward his father.

Vallabhai

The Chamchawala's housekeeper, and husband to Kasturba.

Kasturba

Vallabhai's wife, who dresses as Nasreen as a fetish for Changez.

Eugene Dumsday

A flamboyantly-dressed American missionary who sits next to Saladin on the *Bostan* before being released.

Tavleen

One of the *Bostan* hijackers. Although she is a beautiful woman, Saladin suspects she is more willing to kill than her male comrades are.

Dara, Buta, and Man Singh

The male *Bostan* hijackers. Unlike Tavleen, they are reluctant to use violence to achieve their goals.

Jalandri

A passenger who is murdered by Tavleen.

Mahound

The main prophet of Submission in the Jahilia plotline. He is an analog for Mohammed. Before becoming a prophet, he worked as a businessman. Although he is initially sincere in trying to spread his faith, he eventually becomes corrupted by power, and turns into a ruthless theocrat.

Abu Simbel

Karim Abu Simbel is the head of Jahilia's ruling council (the Grandee). He initially fears Submission because it weakens his power, but he eventually converts to it.

Baal

A poet in Jahilia who writes verse against Submission when Mahound first starts to spread the faith. He remains a dissident even when the religion takes control of the city.

Hind

Karim Abu Simbel's wife, not to be confused with Hind Sufyan in the London plot. She has an affair with Baal, and despises Submission.

Bilal

One of Mahound's disciples, who also appears briefly at the beginning of the Titlipur plotline.

Khalid

Mahound's most ruthless disciple.

Salman

A Persian disciple of Mahound who eventually becomes critical of Submission.

Hamza

Mahound's uncle; Hind kills him at the end of Part II.

Rosa Diamond

A senile woman who sees Gibreel and Saladin wash up on the beach after the plane crash. She hosts them in her house.

Don Enrique Diamond

Rosa's late Argentinian husband. She calls him Henry.

Martín de la Cruz

An ostrich-hunter whom Rosa met in Argentina, and with whom she might have carried on an affair.

Aurora del Sol

Wife to Martín de la Cruz, and rival to Rosa during her days in Argentina.

Juan Julia

Aurora del Sol's lover, also called the Vulture. Martín de la Cruz murders him, but the Diamonds help him cover up the crime.

Doctor Babington

The doctor on the Diamond estate in Argentina.

Officer Stein, Officer Bruno, and Officer Novak

The immigration officers who arrest Saladin. They beat and humiliate him in the Black Maria on the way to London.

Hyacinth Phillips

Saladin's physical therapist when he is hospitalized in London for pneumonia.

Jumpy Joshi

Childhood friend of Saladin and the lover of Saladin's wife, Pamela. He eventually moves in with her, and impregnates her.

Muhammad Sufyan

Jumpy's intellectual uncle and neighbor, and the owner of the Shaandaar Café. He and his family help shelter Saladin after his transformation.

John Maslama

A wealthy Indian immigrant who talks to Gibreel on a train to London. He owns the Hot Wax nightclub and record stores, and eventually sells Gibreel the trumpet that he names the archangel Azrael.

The Imam

A ruthless cleric who, with Gibreel's help, fights the goddess Al-Lat to control the state of Desh at the beginning of Part IV.

Ayesha

Three characters in this novel are named Ayesha. The first one to be introduced is the empress of Desh whom the Imam wishes to overthrow in the short dream at the beginning of Part IV.

Most prominently, another woman named Ayesha is a main character in the Titlipur plotline. This Ayesha is an insane foundling who leads her entire village on a pilgrimage to the Arabian Sea, on what she believes are orders from the archangel Gibreel.

In the Jahilia plotline, Ayesha is also the name of a fifteen-year-old prostitute. She calls herself this after Mahound's youngest and most beautiful wife.

Mirza Saeed

Mirza Saeed Akhtar is a zamindar, or landowner, in the village of Titlipur. He wrestles with desire for Ayesha, whom he and his wife Mishal adopted as a girl. When Ayesha leads the pilgrimage to the sea, he does not believe that she is a prophet, but nevertheless comes along to protect his wife.

Bibiji

A local saint in the village of Titlipur.

Osman

A clown, and one of Ayesha's suitors. He follows her on the pilgrimage, but eventually loses his faith in her.

Mishal

Mishal Akhtar is Mirza Saeed's wife. She wants to conceive a child, but is hampered by the fact that she and her husband have long since lost their sexual passion for each other. When she is diagnosed with breast cancer, Ayesha promises that she will be cured if the entire village completes a pilgrimage to the Arabian Sea. She becomes one of Ayesha's most devoted followers.

Mrs. Qureishi

Mishal Akhtar's mother, who accompanies her on the pilgrimage.

Mr. Qureishi

Mishal Akhtar's father, and the director of the state bank. He lives in the city, but briefly appears to try to convince Mishal to leave the pilgrimage.

Sri Srinivas

A toy merchant in one of Titlipur's neighboring villages. Although he is a Hindu, he joins the pilgrimage.

Hind Sufyan

Muhammad Sufyan's wife, not to be confused with Abu Simbel's wife in the Jahilia plot. Hind Sufyan is very religious, so she becomes suspicious when Saladin appeals to her family for help after becoming a demon.

Mishal Sufyan

Muhammad and Hind Sufyan's seventeen-year-old daughter, who is having an affair with the lawyer Hanif Johnson.

Anahita

Anahita is Muhammad and Hind Sufyan's fifteen-year-old daughter. She is foul-mouthed and rebellious.

Billy Battuta

Mimi Mamouljian's Pakistani boyfriend. He hosts a travel show, but also makes money as a scam artist.

Hal Valance

The producer of *The Aliens Show*, on which Saladin acted before the plane crash.

Baby

Hal Valance's young wife.

Sisodia

S.S. Sisodia is a stuttering producer of Bollywood films, and a manipulative presence in Gibreel's life.

Hanif Johnson

A well-to-do lawyer and prospective candidate for Prime Minister; he has an affair with Mishal Sufyan.

Pinkwalla

A deejay at the Hot Wax nightclub in London. He is friends with Mishal Sufyan and Hanif Johnson.

Otto Cone

Alleluia's Polish father. He survived a concentration camp during World War Two, an experience that dramatically affected Alleluia's childhood.

Alicja Cone

Alleluia's mother, who begs her to leave Gibreel. After her husband Otto's death, she remarries and moves to Stanford, California.

Elena

Alleluia's older sister. She was a model, and died of a drug overdose.

Jack Brunel

An animator, and one of Otto Cone's friends who has an unrequited crush on Alleluia.

Orphia Phillips

A ticket vendor who interacts with Gibreel after his transformation to angel. She is Hyacinth Phillips's sister.

Uriah Mosely

Orphia Phillips's co-worker ex-boyfriend, who causes her great pain by abandoning her for Rochelle Watkins.

Rochelle Watkins

Uriah Mosely's new lover.

Ibrahim

A butcher in Jahilia who sells illicit pork; Also the name of the ancient religious figure who abandoned his daughter Hagar in the desert.

Musa

A man from Jahilia who questions the fact that Mahound has twelve wives despite the fact that Submission only allows a man four wives.

Dr. Uhuru Simba

A black activist who is arrested for the Granny Ripper murders.

Charlie Sellers

Saladin's agent.

Amin

A waiter at the Shaandaar Café who replaces Mishal Sufyan.

Antoinette Roberts

Uhuru Simba's mother, who leads the campaign for his acquittal.

Inspector Stephen Kinch

London's chief of police.

Muhammad Din

Sarpanch Muhammad Din is the head of the village council in Titlipur, and husband to Khadija.

Khadija

Sarpanch Muhammad Din's elderly wife, the first of the Titlipur pilgrims to die en route to the Arabian Sea.

Panikkar

Changez Chamchawala's hospice doctor.

Swatilekha

Bhupen Gandhi's new girlfriend, introduced in the final pages of the novel.

Mrs. Mhatre

Wife of Babasaheb Mhatre, Mrs. Mhatre is characterized by the stifling affection she shows her husband. Babasaheb adopts Gibreel in large part because he hopes an adopted son will dilute those affections.

Maurice Wilson

A yogi who attempted to scale Everest alone in 1934, and who died in the attempt. Alleluia sees his ghost both on the mountain and throughout the city.

Bilal X

One of the Imam's disciples in the vision that opens Part IV.

Al-lat

One of the pre-Islam pagan goddesses that Mahound accepts in the 'satanic verses' episode. In Part IV, Gibreel fights and defeats Al-lat at the Imam's behest.

The Satanic Verses Glossary

avatar

an incarnation of a deity on earth; usually mentioned in reference to Hinduism

ayah

a female servant or governess

beedi

a type of flavored cigarette, popular in India

Black Maria

the traditional English police van

dajjal

a false prophet in Islam

dhaba

an inexpensive highway diner

estancia

a large estate in Argentina

gazal

a type of elegiac poetry with a set structure

Hajj

the pilgrimage to Mecca, which all Muslims are required to make once during their lifetime (unless they are too ill or poor to do so)

kurta

a long, loose-fitting shirt worn in South Asia

manticore

a mythical creature with a human head, the body of a lion or tiger, and the tail of a serpent

panchayat

a council that governs a village or small town in India

pir

a Sufi mystic or religious leader

pardah

the system of concealing women from men, which includes modest clothing as well as physical separation in the home and the community

Satanic verses

a series of verses in the Qur'an that refer to Allah's daughters; they are a source of great controversy among Muslim scholars - some argue that they never existed at all, while others argue that they came from Satan, and that Mohammed quickly repudiated them

tiffin

lunch, or another light afternoon meal

turbot

a species of flatfish

untouchable

a reference to the lowest Indian caste; members of this caste were considered literally untouchable by members of higher castes, and were considered dirty and forced to live separately from others (Since 1950, India has made an effort to eradicate the caste system, although members of low castes still face discrimination in certain circles.)

zamindar

a landlord

zenana

an area - usually part of a house - reserved for women

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A Fundamental Fight

When Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa, or death sentence, on Salman Rushdie for writing *The Satanic Verses*, 25 years ago, the novel became more than literature. Talking to Rushdie and those who stood beside him—Ian McEwan, Martin Amis, E. L. Doctorow, and others—Paul Elie assesses the extraordinary impact of a prophetic, provocative book, which turned its author into a hunted man, divided the cultural elite, and presaged a new era.

BY

• PAUL ELIE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY

• ANNIE LEIBOVITZ

MAY 2014

THE ALLIANCE A circle of friends and advocates provided crucial support to the author during the fatwa. From left: agent Caroline Michel, writer and editor Gerald Marzorati, novelist Ian McEwan, the BBC's Alan Yentob, Salman Rushdie, and his sister Sameen, a retired lawyer, photographed in London, 2014., Photograph by Richard Avedon. © The Richard Avedon Foundation.

Nobody said anything about *The Satanic Verses* at the Morgan Library that night, not even the author. But the book gave the evening an aura of the forbidden that will always surround Salman Rushdie.

The Morgan is one of New York City's grandest literary spaces—with three Gutenberg Bibles and a Shakespeare First Folio, for starters. On that night last November it was the site of a gathering to celebrate the Man Booker Prize, the venerable British award for fiction. The guest of honor was Rushdie, winner of the prize in 1981 for *Midnight's Children* and then of the "Booker of Bookers" for the best novel in the prize's first 25 years.

He swept in just after seven P.M., natty in a gray suit and patterned shirt, which matched the dress worn by his companion, the socialite Missy Brody—and matched his Vandyke beard, now wholly gray. He greeted the publishing titans on hand: Sonny Mehta, Steve Rubin, Nan Talese. He chatted at the bar with his pal Bill Buford, the former fiction editor of *The New Yorker*. Then he and Buford took the stage and talked about Rushdie's role as the "godfather of Indian fiction."

SUPPORT SYSTEM More of Rushdie's allies, from left: writer Carol Blue, literary agent Andrew Wylie, publisher Frances Coady, editor Nan Graham, writers Siri Hustvedt and Martin Amis, author and editor Bill Buford, and Hustvedt's novelist husband, Paul Auster, New York, 2014.

Their topic was *Midnight's Children*, not *The Satanic Verses*, but the notorious book made its presence felt. There in a display of memorabilia was a first edition of the novel, a Booker finalist in 1988; a matted photograph of Rushdie, just past 30, slim, handsome, untouched by terror; and a flyer for a 1989 reading given by famous American writers (Sontag, Mailer, Didion, DeLillo) after Iran's supreme leader, the Ayatollah Khomeini, pronounced a fatwa, or death sentence, and placed a \$1.5 million bounty on the novelist's head.

Terror is never fully out of mind when Salman Rushdie is in the house. Because it was a private event, the Booker talk did not appear on the Morgan's calendar and Web site, and this was for the best: no need to raise the author's visibility and prompt some kind of response like the ones that—25 years ago—sent him underground in the first place.

'I suppose we'll be here for you next week, Salman,' Paul Theroux said.

Here was a memorial service for Bruce Chatwin, the tousled, witty travel writer, who had died of AIDS (without naming the disease). Chatwin had converted to the Greek Orthodox faith in his final days, so the boldfaced names of literary London were crowded into a church in Bayswater that February afternoon in 1989. Not just writers; there were "socialites, aristocrats, lords and ladies, travel agents, art dealers, spies, toffs, yobbos,

the Duke of Westminster,” Theroux now recalls. Not just any church: “a big Asiatic and gaudy-looking Greek Orthodox thing, like a vast consecrated muffin, with bearded patriarchs intoning weird verses—over our irreverent, once cackling Bruce. Who wouldn’t laugh?”



A LOOMING PRESENCE Salman Rushdie, writer, London, September 26, 1994.

Rushdie wasn’t laughing. His novel had been under fire since the fall for its depiction of Muhammad, Islam’s founding prophet. Mullahs were burning the book on British high streets. India and South Africa had banned it. There were riots in Islamabad (five dead) and Kashmir (one dead, 100 injured). That morning a BBC reporter had cold-called Rushdie at his house in North London and told him Khomeini had issued a fatwa: how did it feel to be sentenced to death?



“It doesn’t feel good,” he said. But it wasn’t going to keep him from the memorial for a friend. “Fuck it, let’s go,” he said. His then wife—Marianne Wiggins, herself a novelist—went with him to the church. They took seats not far from Theroux, who said, jokingly, “I’m not sitting near you—I don’t want to be in the line of fire.” Martin Amis, Harold Pinter, and Antonia Fraser were in neighboring pews. They all sat baffled through the service—what did a klatch of muttering religious patriarchs have to do with literature, anyway?

A mob was waiting for them outside—a mob of reporters and photographers. “Are you Salman Rushdie?”

A photographer snapped a picture of him, and it shows the arched eyebrows, comb-over, and boxy eyeglasses that caricaturists were already turning into “SATAN RUSHDY,” enemy of Islam.

His friends attended a reception nearby; he went out into the menacing new world that he had seen coming better than anybody.

There are plenty of moments from 1989 when the world changed: the meeting of man and tank in Tiananmen Square, the release of the dissident Czech playwright Václav Havel, the unbricking of the wall in Berlin. But nothing shook the world of belles lettres like the moment when an Islamic dictator said an Anglo-Indian deserved to die for writing a novel. “When a book leaves its author’s desk it changes,” Rushdie has written, and the ordeal of *The Satanic Verses* presaged the ways the world would change. The big themes of the past quarter-century were previewed there: the rise of Islamist fanaticism; the inequities that sparked a growing rage toward Western values; the impact of media in a global epoch.

The controversy made Rushdie, for his day, an archetypal man on the run—as Edward Snowden is for ours—and he has spent his life since then trying not to be defined by it. Underground, he was forced to take an alias, and he compounded the first names of the authors Conrad and Chekhov into a nom de guerre. He titled his [2012 memoir of the ordeal for this alter ego—Joseph Anton](#)—and wrote it in the third person, as if to slip out of the skin of his notoriety. It is a bold, brave book: the narration makes us feel the fatwa closing in around him, and the story is one Kafka or Kubrick might have imagined, a religious war waged against an ordinary man.

It works so well that it keeps us from seeing how powerfully the novel and the fatwa defined the age for the people who knew Rushdie then, worked on the book, and stood up for it. Twenty-five years later, they decided to retrace those terrifying months, as did the author, who opened up to *Vanity Fair*.

“*The Satanic Verses* is the first chapter of the very long and unpleasant story that has, as one chapter, 9/11,” Ian McEwan says. “I initially read the book in purely literary terms—as an extraordinarily playful, exceedingly

intelligent novel—and it's taken all this time to wrench it back into the realm of the literary.”

“It was the first taste we had of the theocratic sensibility,” remarks E. L. Doctorow, who was active in a campaign by PEN (the global organization devoted to defending free expression) in support of *The Satanic Verses*. “It was our first taste of the relationship between faith and violence in that part of the world.”

Martin Amis (who in a [1990 piece in *Vanity Fair* profiled his friend](#) who had “vanished into the front page”) says the controversy forced writers to be “more serious” about their work—and their rivals’ work, too. “The notion that writers are a bitchy, touchy, catty, competitive crowd, always scoring points off each other—this was absolutely obliterated by the Rushdie affair,” he believes. “Any writer who was bitchy or catty looked very trivial after the fatwa, because it was a matter of life and death.”

A Beast of a Novel

Rushdie was already known as a provocateur when he was chosen for **Granta**’s first “Best of Young British Novelists” issue, in 1983, along with McEwan, Amis, Kazuo Ishiguro, and Graham Swift, all of whom would become his friends. Already *Midnight’s Children* had won the Booker Prize—and had drawn legal action from India’s prime minister, Indira Gandhi, who felt her family had been defamed by Rushdie’s portrait. (The case was settled out of court. The offending sentence was struck from subsequent editions.)

“*Granta* was based in Cambridge, and Salman came down for a reading in that interregnum [before the Booker],” remembers Bill Buford, the journal’s editor and an early champion. “I warned Salman, ‘Sometimes five people show up.’ ” But this time “half the Anglo-Indian population of Cambridge was there. A woman stood up and said to Salman, ‘Thank you for being the first person to write about my India.’ ”

Rushdie had left his homeland for England at age 13, following the path of his rich and dissolute father. As a student at Cambridge, and later as an adman with Ogilvy & Mather, he had an agonized relationship to India and Islam. He was an outsider in India (as a Muslim), in England (as a “wog”), and in Islam (as an unbeliever), all at once. So he made *Midnight's Children* and its successor, *Shame*, which deals with Pakistan, novels about doubleness. “He knew he could write a book that the Anglo-American critics would get—all the clever boys,” Buford says, “but what the clever boys weren’t getting is that he was writing for that other audience, too.”

On a roll, Rushdie started a giant-size novel about India, Islam, and London. “I didn’t know if it was one book or three,” he has said. “I must have been feeling very confident. I’d had these two very successful books, and that put a lot of fuel in my tank, and I thought I could do anything.”

He spent the next five years writing *The Satanic Verses*, applying the magic-realist touch to headline news: terrorist airline hijackings, pilgrimages to Mecca, rough-and-tumble immigrant London, and Thatcher-era British unrest. He made the Prophet into a comic figure called Mahound (Muhammad, put profanely). He etched an acid portrait of a “bearded and turbaned Imam” akin to Khomeini. He took the novel’s title from a passage of Koranic lore in which words in praise of gods other than Allah—female gods, no less—were said to have issued from the tongue of the Prophet, placed there by the Devil. In the novel, those words of praise would be Mahound’s own. “We don’t talk about our novels while we’re writing them, but he explained the ‘satanic verses’ to me at a party,” McEwan recalls. “It was all new to me.”

He was becoming politically engaged: publishing a book in support of the Sandinistas, joining Harold Pinter’s group of writers against Thatcher, and evolving as a voice against racism in Thatcher’s England, telling white Britons that until they discarded their prejudices “the citizens of your new, and last, Empire will be obliged to struggle against you.”

But his real struggle was with the *Verses*. “I thought of the novel as a huge monster I was wrestling with,” he says. “I was often worried that I would not be able to get on top of the beast and pin it to the ground. [When it was

done,] I was utterly exhausted. One holds so much of a novel in one's head during the years of work that when it's done and the thing in your head evaporates it's a little like having your brain removed. I felt lobotomized."

He had reason to think that the novel would enchant the London smart set *and* would speak for England's people of color. The protagonists were themselves divided: Saladin Chamcha, a businessman "torn, to put it plainly, between Bombay and London, between East and West," and Gibreel Farishta, a Bollywood film star who "has lost his faith and is strung out between his immense need to believe and his new inability to do so." Doubt shaped the depiction of "Babylondon"—"its conglomerate nature mirroring his own"—and of religion, which at different points is treated profoundly, done up in Bollywood-bright cinematic hues, and mocked in the manner of the novel's own "blood-praising versifiers" and "lampoonist[s]."

The Satanic Verses, says E. L. Doctorow, was a "kitchen-sink novel—one in which the author puts in everything he can think of."

A few friends read it early on. "It was one of the grandest books I could remember reading," Buford insists. "But about halfway through I realized I didn't have the cultural equipment to appreciate it. What I wanted was to say to Salman, Could we go for a weekend and talk about your book? But what Salman wanted to know was 'Well, is it good or not?'"

The Art of the Deal

Andrew Wylie, the literary agent, sold *The Satanic Verses* to Peter Mayer, the publisher of Viking Penguin, on the ides of March 1988.

Mayer's small, family-owned house, Overlook Press, had published Rushdie's first novel, *Grimus*, in the U.S., but had gotten priced out of publishing *Midnight's Children*. Now he was in charge of an international publishing company and was in a position to reclaim his lost author in a big way.

Wylie was representing Rushdie for the first time. Today Wylie is a potentate whose list of more than 700 clients is fitted to his taste as snugly as his bespoke suits. Then he was an outrider with a yen for hard cases—radical journalist I. F. Stone, for one—and a reputation for having been a Max’s Kansas City scene-maker (late nights, graphic verse, public spats).

As the story goes, Wylie read *Shame* and got in touch—“When I’m in London, can we have a drink?”—and when Rushdie said yes, Wylie caught the next flight over. Rushdie rebuffed him. Some months later Wylie called and told him he was en route to London again. “He said, ‘Where are you?’ I said, ‘Karachi.’ He said, ‘What are you doing in Karachi?’ I said, ‘Representing Benazir Bhutto.’ ” Wylie later said that he signed Bhutto—her apparent to her executed father as prime minister of Pakistan—just to impress Rushdie. They met in London and soon Wylie was representing the author in the United States.

And representing *The Satanic Verses*. “I first read 100 pages—Salman sent them to me in New York,” he recalls today. “I was stunned by them—by the broad imagination, the rich style, the humor and intelligence of the text. I knew from the outset that the book was a masterpiece. . . . It was on the basis of those pages that we developed the plan about how best to sell the book internationally.”

Wylie proposed that the surest way to get a big advance was through a world-rights, English-language deal with himself as the deal-maker. Rushdie agreed and parted ways with his U.K. agent, Deborah Rogers, joining Wylie and his U.K. partner, Gillon Aitken.

Wylie, good to his word, landed an astronomical sum from Mayer: \$850,000. The publisher carried the bulky typescript to the Adelaide Festival and bestowed it on editor Tony Lacey, who read it in three days straight. “I remember being thrilled by it,” Lacey now says, “though for a publisher it’s hard to separate the genuine literary thrill from the excitement of being offered the new novel of a major writer.”

Mayer says he “read the book in one go on a flight from New Zealand to England. I didn’t understand all of it, because I don’t know a great deal about Islam. I didn’t know that ‘Mahound’ was a dirty word. I don’t say it proudly,” he adds; his was typical of “our Western ignorance of other societies.”

And the sprint toward publication began. Viking editor Nan Graham was assigned to shepherd Rushdie’s book into print, and she enlisted as a second reader Chuck Verrill, who had recently “inherited” another Viking author, Stephen King. “It came in a box from Wylie: this extraordinary father-son story, and an immigrant story, too,” explains Graham, now publisher of Scribner. “And funny too—though I worried that he called Mrs. Thatcher ‘Mrs. Torture.’ Here was a novel saying, ‘I am the colonized and I will speak your language better than you do—I will outsmart the colonizer.’”

“The manuscript arrived trailing clouds of glory,” one former Viking colleague contends. “Peter decided that this was the book we would take into the major leagues of world literature, and when the big guy is saying that, the company falls in line.”

Viking U.K. ordered a first printing of 23,500 copies—sizable for little England. In New York, Graham pushed hard for 100,000 copies and a party at Da Silvano, in Greenwich Village. “We had an expensive immigration story to publish, and we had to be very ambitious. We told [the reps] what we had—that this was the greatest piece of literature to cross our desks in a very long time.”

Publishing dates were staggered to create buzz: a British rollout in September; a U.S. debut the following February. Meanwhile, the head of Penguin India asked Mayer to let him delay publishing the novel to avoid triggering any public backlash. “Their order was for something like 200 copies,” Mayer recalls, “so I said, All right.”

Condemned in Advance

Pankaj Mishra—one of the leading Indian writers of the generation after Rushdie’s—was 20 when word of the novel reached Varanasi, which had seen religious violence. “My first, non-literary, selfish thought,” he confesses, was: “I hope there isn’t another Hindu-Muslim, Muslim-police riot here.” Mishra wound up reading the “bits about Islamic history” in a clandestine copy of *The Satanic Verses* “smuggled in by the visiting father of an American exchange student and passed around in brown paper covers.”

That’s because the book had been banned in India after a friendly interview with Rushdie was headlined AN UNEQUIVOCAL ATTACK ON RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM. Soon enough, a Saudi-funded newspaper in London ran a story about it, and *The Satanic Verses* was condemned—sight unseen.

It was published in London on September 26, 1988, with a dust jacket describing it as a “great wheel of a book.” Penguin took out an ad (“Wonderful stories and flights of the imagination surround the conflict between good and evil”) and threw a launch party for its list of autumn titles, at which Rushdie met Elmore Leonard and Robertson Davies. Rushdie had a high-spirited dinner with his editors. Lacey, the book’s U.K. editor, recalls the relative naïveté of that evening: “Salman, my paperback colleague Tim Binding, and I vying over who could recite the most Bob Dylan lyrics.”

The novel of doubleness led a double life that fall. In one, it was reviewed, bought, read, and discussed by London literary people. Was *The Satanic Verses* “several of the best novels that Rushdie has ever written” (*Times Literary Supplement*)? “A novel of metamorphoses, hauntings, memories, hallucinations, revelations, advertising jingles, and jokes” (*The Times*)? Or an adventure in “unreadability” (*Observer*), a “wheel that would not turn” (*The Independent*)?

In its other life it was condemned by people who hadn’t read it. “I do not have to wade through a filthy drain,” said one detractor, “to know what filth is.” Much of the controversy centered on dream sequences involving the Prophet, which were photocopied and passed from imam to imam, such as the sequence in which the agonized unbeliever, Gibreel, dreams of a brothel

where the prostitutes take the names of the Prophet's 12 wives, the better to lure men off the pilgrim path.

Rushdie had wrestled the beast to the ground—but the beast was still a beast.

Penguin hoped that a second Booker Prize for him might quell the controversy. Bruce Chatwin—whose novel *Utz* was short-listed alongside *The Satanic Verses*—had suggested to Rushdie that they should make a plan to share the prize if either of them won. Rushdie and Peter Carey—nominated for *Oscar and Lucinda*—joked about the award. “I hope you win,” Rushdie said. “I couldn’t win if I wrote *Ulysses*.” On the night of the ceremony, security officers at the Guildhall detained a man who claimed he was a reporter named Salaman. As the short list was read out, a joker in the crowd gesticulated wildly, pretending that a bomb had just gone off. The Booker went to Peter Carey.

In the weeks that followed, there was no groundswell among expat South Asian Muslims saying that the novel spoke for them. Instead, there were death threats and burnings of the author in effigy. Things started small, with a letter one imam addressed to a “Brother in Islam” calling for a signature campaign against “this Satanic book.” Only 20 people showed up for a demonstration in Bradford, in northern England. A burning of the novel near Manchester drew several thousand—but no media coverage. Wised up, some imams put out a press release before another burning—outside the Bradford police station. The size of the volume—542 pages—made it hard to ignite, one imam later claimed, laughing, “so we had to actually find a can of petrol to pour on the book.” It burned, eventually, and the stories plastered across the tabloids the next few days enshrined “the Rushdie affair” alongside the Sex Pistols, striking coal miners, and I.R.A. bombings as one of the peaks of post-empire British discontent.

“This is, for me, the saddest irony of all,” Rushdie said a while later, “that after working for five years to give voice and fictional flesh to the immigrant culture of which I am myself a member, I should see my book burned, largely unread, by the people it’s about, people who might find some pleasure and much recognition in its pages.” It was darkly ironic, too, that

the events swirling around the book—charges of blasphemy, demonstrations, book burnings, an imam fighting “by proxy”—could be found in its pages. *The Satanic Verses* was not just provocative: it was prescient. In its bravura opening passage, the protagonists Saladin and Gibreel—passengers ejected from a hijacked aircraft after a bomb explodes in midair—talk wildly to each other as they plummet to earth over the English Channel. That December, with the book in shops across the British Isles, Libyan terrorists exploded a Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, Scotland (a city mentioned in the book)—an attack that killed 270 people.

There was a further irony, remembers author Reza Aslan—the Iranian-born American Muslim who ran into controversy last summer with his book on the historical Jesus. It’s that *The Satanic Verses*, as he reckons, actually wasn’t all that offensive. “The view is that the novel presents a view of Islam that is profoundly heretical,” he says. “But for anyone with some knowledge of the Koran and the controversy, the surprise is how orthodox the novel is in its treatment of Islam. The passages about the satanic verses are perfectly in line” with many traditional commentators on the Koran. In line with scholars, yes—and yet both observant and secular British Muslims were outraged, marching against the novel near the Iranian Embassy on Hyde Park. “I tried to write against stereotypes,” Rushdie wrote, but “the zealot protests serve to confirm, in the Western mind, all the worst stereotypes of the Muslim world.”

Bruce Chatwin died; Marianne Wiggins told Rushdie that she was leaving him. Even so, he accompanied her to her own book party at Michelin House, in Chelsea, and all eyes were on them. “She and Salman were glissant, in pride,” the poet Robin Robertson recalls. “Then a waitress dropped a tray of champagne and the whole place went silent.”

Occupational Hazards

Viking Penguin’s New York offices were located in a cast-iron building on 23rd Street between Fifth and Sixth. Just before the novel came out in America, there was a series of bomb scares. The offices were evacuated each time, leaving the staff to stand on the sidewalk for a couple of hours—“and it was winter,” one employee recalls. “It was cold out there.”

“You would hope to find a phone booth where you could keep doing your work,” Nan Graham recalls. “Or I would finish lunch and call the office to see whether we were open—because otherwise I would just edit at the restaurant: at least it was warm there.”

On some days the company would remain closed until the next morning, and employees would decamp to McQuaids or the Old Town Bar. A young man in editorial and a young woman in sales were turning the pages of *The Village Voice* on the sidewalk one afternoon when the word of closure came. There was an old Fellini film playing at Cinema Village. They made a date of it. Eventually, they fell in love and got married.

Gallows humor went around: If I have to get killed for literature, does it have to be for *this* guy?

In London, authorities stationed police outside Penguin’s Kensington offices and set up a metal detector. Penguin beefed up security in New York too. Fretful parents of assistants called Mayer and urged him to pull the book. At least one U.S. staffer quit rather than work in fear; another sought treatment for anxiety. Two dogs that sniffed mail—Sailor and Yalta—became known to all.

“I didn’t know that it was an occupational hazard being a publisher,” Peter Mayer now says, seated in his smoke-filled SoHo office, at Overlook Press, which he rejoined after leaving Penguin in 1996. He recalls a blood-spattered letter that showed up at his apartment in Kensington; in New York, his young daughter was threatened, and parents at St. Luke’s School, on Hudson Street, asked him to withdraw her, lest a death squad come to the school and shoot the wrong student. He heard the same argument from the board in a building where he was trying to land a co-op: “ ‘What if the killers come and they go to the wrong door?’ I said, ‘The wrong door? You mean, if they come to my door, it’s the right door?’ ”

Going Underground

London's Reform Club, on the Pall Mall, has had many illustrious authors as members: Henry James, Arthur Conan Doyle, H. G. Wells, E. M. Forster—and Graham Greene, who, one winter's day in 1989, lunched at the club with international writers living in London.

"Rushdie!" he called out. "Come and sit here and tell me how you managed to make so much trouble! I never made nearly as much trouble as that!"

"This was oddly comforting," Rushdie recalled. England's most famous living author was making light of the fix he was in.

Then the fatwa against *The Satanic Verses* came down and things turned nasty, and London literary society took sides.

"Nobody has a God-given right to insult a great religion," John le Carré bellowed in *The Guardian*, "and be published with impunity." He also proposed that Rushdie do the right thing and withdraw the book. V. S. Naipaul, who felt he had been taken to task for his own acid portrait of Khomeini in *Among the Believers*, decried the support for Rushdie as hypocrisy: "Certain causes are good, and then other causes become good. Now the good people are saying something else. I wish the good people were a little more consistent."

Germaine Greer (that good feminist) would eventually mock Rushdie as "a megalomaniac, an Englishman with dark skin." John Berger (that good Marxist) urged Rushdie to tell his publishers to cease and desist so as to stop a "holy war" before it started.

Roald Dahl (beloved children's-book author, professed anti-Semite) was the most open in his contempt. "Clearly he has profound knowledge of the Muslim religion and its people and he must have been totally aware of the deep and violent feelings his book would stir up among devout Muslims. In other words, he knew exactly what he was doing and he cannot plead otherwise." *The Satanic Verses* was selling strongly, and Dahl insisted that Rushdie had stirred up trouble to get "an indifferent book onto the top of

the bestseller list.” Dahl added dismissively: “He seems to be regarded as some sort of a hero. . . . To my mind, he is a dangerous opportunist.”

The “hero,” meanwhile, was on the move. “I was hauled out of an editorial meeting” to take a call from Rushdie, British editor Tony Lacey recalls, “and I had to ask him what a fatwa was: I’d never heard the word. He said he would be going into hiding.”

From hiding, Rushdie issued a statement of regret for “the distress that publication has occasioned to sincere followers of Islam. Living as we do in a world of many faiths this experience has served to remind us that we must all be conscious of the sensibilities of others.” From Tehran, Khomeini doubled down: “Even if Salman Rushdie repents and becomes the most pious man of all time, it is incumbent on every Muslim to employ everything he has got, his life and his wealth, to send him to hell.”

Reza Aslan, looking back (he was a teenager when the book came out), says this was no surprise. Iran had just ended an eight-year war with Iraq, and Khomeini was eager to change the subject. And this new war was personal. “An offense against early Islam—*that*, in the end, wasn’t the reason for the fatwa,” Aslan says. “The book’s vision of the black-turbaned mullah who opens his jaws and swallows innocent people—that is what was offensive to Khomeini.”

Rushdie’s friends circled round him. Deborah Rogers—the agent he had dismissed in favor of Wylie—put their rift behind them and suggested her country place as a safe house: who would look for him at a cottage owned by the agent he’d just dumped? Harold Pinter and Antonia Fraser hosted a stealth reunion of Rushdie’s family at their house on Campden Hill Square. As Ian McEwan lent Rushdie his cottage in Gloucestershire, a routine was taking shape, McEwan says: “Security people making a sweep of the house, and then Salman bounding in with a strange mixture of high energy, craziness, and relief that he was all right.”

Rushdie: “It was the first time I’d been able to meet with any of my friends since February 14. . . . We had a ridiculously funny and relaxed dinner together, as if we were all colluding in a fiction of ‘normality.’ ”

McEwan: “I remember standing the next morning with Salman in the country kitchen, a gray English morning, and he was the lead item on the BBC—another Middle East figure saying he too would condemn him to death. It was a very sad moment—standing buttering toast and listening to that awful message on the radio.”

Rushdie: “Ian was very upset. For me, there were threats like this every day, sometimes two or three times. . . . I was shaken, I’m sure, but Ian is a loving man, and I think he was even more shaken than I was by the violence of the assault on his friend.”

The British establishment set itself against the book and its author: from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie (who invoked England’s blasphemy laws), to the foreign secretary, Geoffrey Howe (who deemed the novel “extremely critical [and] rude” about Britain). Even Jimmy Carter—he whose presidency had been quashed by Khomeini—weighed in against the “insult to the sacred beliefs of our Moslem friends.”

“I had an argument with Prince Charles at a small dinner party,” Martin Amis recalls. “He said—very typically, it seems to me—‘I’m sorry, but if someone insults someone else’s deepest convictions, well then,’ blah blah blah . . . And I said that a novel doesn’t set out to insult anyone. ‘It sets out to give pleasure to its readers,’ I told him. ‘A novel is an essentially playful undertaking, and this is an exceedingly playful novel.’

“The Prince took it on board, but I’d suppose the next night at a different party he would have said the same thing.”

The Columns

Salman Rushdie, in short order, was England's most famous living author, but he couldn't go to America to promote his new book, such was the challenge of remaining among the living. There would be no canapés at Da Silvano.

Instead, there would be a book launch like no other. At midday Wednesday, February 22, a cadre of writers met at Jerry's, on Prince Street, in Lower Manhattan, and then strode in the rain to the Columns, a loft space near Houston Street. Several thousand people were in line outside. The occasion was a reading from *The Satanic Verses*, marking publication day. Across the street, a counter-demonstration was under way.

"There was never an easier situation for PEN: a respected Anglo-Indian with pals in London and New York's literary circles versus the bearded brute in Iran," Gay Talese reflects. "We were all on a 'safe' and locally popular issue, for a change."

As Rushdie tells it in his memoir, the reading came about after Susan Sontag—who was president of PEN—"whipped" her fellow writers into line. A photo from the next day's *Times* shows an impressive row of New York literary lions: Sontag, tightly wound; Talese and Doctorow, somber in jackets and ties; Mailer loose of coat and collar; DeLillo staring at the camera from the background. Here again, like the gathering of the literary tribe at that church in London a few weeks earlier, were a generation's great voices coming together with great clarity of purpose to recognize a writer's life.

The idea for the gathering came from Gerald Marzorati, who had carved out an excerpt of the book that ran in the December *Harper's*, and then wrote a Rushdie profile for *The New York Times Magazine*. Why not a public reading of Rushdie's novel, to be coordinated by PEN and *Harper's* publisher John "Rick" MacArthur? "I was given the task of choosing excerpts because very few people in New York had actually read the book," Marzorati says, pointing out that the roster of participants was very broad—from Abbie Hoffman on the left to Midge Decter on the right. Edward Said was there; so was Leon Wieseltier. Robert Caro was there; so was Tom Wolfe. Joan Didion was there; so was Larry McMurtry.

The Columns held 500 people, and as the writers entered, cries could be heard from the demonstrators outside. “Death to Rushdie! Death to Rushdie!”

The first author stood up to read, and his opening remark was a kind of answer. “My name is Robert Stone,” he said, “but today we are all Salman Rushdie.”

They read and spoke into the evening. Mailer said of the fatwa, “This must be the largest hit contract in history.” Talese recited the Lord’s Prayer. Wieseltier declared that “one day the Muslim world may recall with admiration its late-20th-century Anglo-Indian Voltaire.” Rushdie’s close friend Christopher Hitchens transformed a single sentence from the novel into a brilliant defense of the whole: “To turn insults into strengths, whigs, Tories, Blacks all chose to wear with pride the names they were given in scorn; likewise our mountain-climbing, prophet-motivated solitary is to be —Mahound.”

“It was inspiring and electrifying,” recalls Gerald Howard, a former Viking editor who was there. “It broke the fever of fear the literary world was living in.”

There was one more surprise. A few days earlier B. Dalton had announced plans not to sell *The Satanic Verses*, and Waldenbooks decided to remove it from its shelves. This in turn had prompted a call for readers to boycott the two chains. At the Columns, writers denounced the giant booksellers; yet at the same time, many worried about the impact that a boycott might have on sales of their own books.

Viking’s Nan Graham and Chuck Verrill got an idea. Maybe the king of horror fiction could make this particular horror story turn out right. They reached out to Stephen King. And King called B. Dalton’s chief, Leonard Riggio, the same day. King gave Riggio an ultimatum: “You don’t sell *The Satanic Verses*, you don’t sell Stephen King.”

B. Dalton carried *The Satanic Verses*—and sold it by the thousands.

“You can’t let intimidation stop books,” King now says, recalling the episode. “It’s as basic as that. Books are life itself.”

It felt like an ending. But the story of the story that is *The Satanic Verses* was just beginning. In the next few months it would play out daily, through events reported in the news section of the papers rather than the review pages. Bombs exploded in Cody’s bookstore, on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley, and half a dozen bookshops in the U.K. The novel’s Japanese translator was shot and killed, its Italian translator stabbed, its Turkish translator attacked. Its Norwegian publisher was shot and left for dead. (He survived.) Two clerics who spoke out against the fatwa—one Saudi, one Tunisian—were shot and killed in Brussels.

New York’s John Cardinal O’Connor derided the book (which he had not read), prompting an aggrieved open letter in the *Times* from 17 Catholic writers. Cartoonist Garry Trudeau devoted a week of “Doonesbury” to reporting the verdicts of the Tehran-based “Islamic Revolutionary Critics Circle,” which recommended “death by stoning for Leo Buscaglia, Erica Jong and Donald Trump,” and condemned Jeffrey Archer, Eric Segal, Jackie Collins, and Michael Korda—the last “for his turgid prose in *The Fortune*.”

Rushdie was now “a man with no fixed address” and a visit to him was a madcap affair. “I was told to go to a gay cruising area of Regent’s Park,” Marzorati says. “A guy would approach me and ask for a light, and I was to whisper a sentence I had been told to memorize. Then I was taken to a car, placed in the back, blindfolded, and driven to a safe house, which I have always thought was in Camden Town. There I found Rushdie, among his guards—already two-thirds of the way through a bottle of red wine—puffy, sleepless, heavier than when I had seen him last. We finished a second bottle of wine. He was scared—mostly, I think, of the thought that this was the rest of his life. And who wouldn’t be? Of course, it wasn’t the rest of his life, except it was.”

Rushdie embraced Islam; then, just as suddenly, he turned away. Many in England’s Old Guard rounded on him, having figured out that he was a popular cause but not a popular person. Sir Stephen Spender coolly explained that “it is mass immigration that has got him into the trouble in

which he now finds himself.” Former prime minister Edward Heath lamented that Rushdie’s “wretched book” had cost Great Britain “masses of trade.” Auberon Waugh asked “just how much we should exert ourselves, as deeply stained white imperialists, to protect him from his own people.” Hugh Trevor-Roper trumpeted that he “would not shed a tear if some British Muslims, deploring [Rushdie’s] manners, were to waylay him in a dark street and seek to improve them.”

In the following months two big things happened. The Ayatollah Khomeini—aged 89—died in Tehran, leaving the fatwa in place. And Penguin opted not to publish *The Satanic Verses* in paperback. A milestone in the annals of free speech degenerated into an episode in the history of corporate compromise.

“We had a board meeting where the members were split right down the middle,” Tony Lacey remembers. “Editorial (me and others) [were] arguing for publication; others [were] arguing very powerfully that we had too many vulnerable employees around the world—someone saying it wasn’t us that would get attacked but somebody running a Penguin office in Athens or Istanbul.

“Peter [Mayer] swayed the meeting towards publication, and we decided to do it. But that very night a small incendiary device was thrown into a London bookshop, and the following day we postponed the decision.”

Mayer insists that he and Penguin struck the right balance: they published the book, they held their ground in the face of great pressure to withdraw it, and they kept everybody safe. More than 60 people died in the controversy. None were Penguin employees.

Andrew Wylie scoffs at the idea that Penguin’s decision was an agonized response to rapidly unfolding events. “There was a concerted effort by the U.S. and U.K. publishing community to block the paperback publication,” he says firmly. “That effort was spearheaded by Peter Mayer of Penguin. . . . It was shameful, really; there was nothing admirable about it.”

Gradually, Rushdie began to appear in public: led through a back door into Waterstones Piccadilly; conveyed by motorcade to Columbia University; taken by the Royal Air Force to Washington, where he lunched in secret with Daniel Patrick Moynihan and other senators at the Capitol, then surreptitiously took tea with *Washington Post* publisher Katherine Graham in Georgetown. But he would be a man with no fixed address for another decade—into the age of Bridget Jones and Monica Lewinsky, of Amazon and al-Qaeda.

‘When a book leaves its author’s desk it changes.’ The world changes with it, and so does literature, if the book is strong enough. *The Satanic Verses* is a world-changing book. In 1991, Don DeLillo brought out *Mao II*, a novel organized around the twin towers of literature and terrorism and featuring a writer in hiding. In 1993, Islamic terrorists attacked the World Trade Center, and among those implicated was a blind Egyptian sheikh, Omar Abdel-Rahman, who had denounced *The Satanic Verses*. Amis, McEwan, and Hitchens were turning more and more to the subjects of terror and radical fundamentalism, and after the Trade Center was destroyed, claiming nearly 3,000 lives, the writers amped up the volume. “We respect Islam—the donor of countless benefits to mankind, and the possessor of a thrilling history,” Amis wrote, “but Islamism? No, we can hardly be asked to respect a creedal wave that calls for our own elimination.” McEwan focused a novel—*Saturday*—around a rally in London against the war in Iraq. Hitchens articulated his fervor against “Islamofascism,” eventually speaking out against all organized religion and explaining how the events of 1989—when “my friend Salman Rushdie was hit by a simultaneous death sentence and life sentence, for the crime of writing a work of fiction”—contributed to his eventual view that “religion kills.”

By then Salman Rushdie had moved to New York and taken up an emphatically public life with Padma Lakshmi, the model and actress turned gourmand. Their life became a thousand and one nights chronicled unkindly in the tabloids, whose columnists seemed to begrudge him his very existence. He had close friends in America. Wylie was in New York, Hitchens was in Washington, and in time Martin Amis would join them, settling in Brooklyn, a few blocks from the Atlantic Avenue import shops, many of their signs in Arabic.

“The fact of being alive compensated for what life did to one,” Rushdie wrote in *The Satanic Verses*, and he has asserted the fact of his aliveness. In the quarter-century since the fatwa, he has published a dozen books and given scores of public readings and addresses. In 2007 departing prime minister Tony Blair successfully recommended him for knighthood. He has fulfilled a lifelong dream of adapting *Midnight’s Children* into a feature film. And he has seen *The Satanic Verses* become, remarkably, just another great book on history’s shelf, regarded less as a forbidden book (talk of the fatwa has diminished with the years) than as a classic of contemporary English-language literature.

Christopher Hitchens’s very public passing from cancer in 2011 prompted Rushdie to reflect on death and his friend. “With most writers, you can see the arc of the work,” he told Hitchens’s widow, Carol Blue, “and you know where the career is going. But with Christopher it’s as if he was stopped midsentence.”

It is easy to forget, but Rushdie’s career might have ended midsentence, too.

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