

Rushdie (S). (2023). *Victory City*. Random House. P. 352. INR 699. ISBN: 9780670098460

### **Victory City: A Panegyric on Divine Litterateur**

It is with the publication of *Victory City* (2023), Rushdie's oeuvre has witnessed a symbolic resurrection of itself, which was first brought to prominence by his 1981 magnum opus - *Midnight's Children*. The narrative of *Victory City* is located in the empire of Vijayanagar, established during the medieval period (1336-1646), which covered a large region of South India. While composing the novel, Rushdie has tried to superimpose an epical pattern upon the traditional structure of a novel, which has given an innovative turn to the mechanics of his fiction writing. Following the framework of a classical epic, the novel begins with the story of three 'Pampas' – Pampa, the human being; Pampa, the river and Pampa, the goddess. Allegorically, while Pampa, the goddess seems to be an emblem of the classical muses who are responsible for the divine inspiration for a poet; Pampa, the river can be identified with the honeyed fountains of those muses (bestowing creative inspiration like Coleridgean Alph in "Kubla Khan") from which the Bachhian maidens used to draw milk and honey. And finally, Pampa, the human being — 'the blind poet, miracle worker and prophetess' — who loses her parents at an early age and suffers molestation, is entrusted with the 'divine duty' of story-telling.

Rushdie's *Victory City* is essentially an adaptation of Pampa Kampana's immense narrative poem, an 'immortal masterpiece' namely — *Jayaparajaya*, meaning Victory and Defeat, which, after its completion, was 'buried [it] in a clay pot with wax in the heart of the ruined Royal Enclosure, as a message to the future' (3). The narrator of the present novel functions as a mere mediator, 'a spinner of yarns', who only seeks to offer a derivative version of Pampa's composition in a plainer language for 'simple entertainment'. The novel is divided into four parts: 'Birth', 'Exile', 'Glory' and 'Fall'. The storyline is quite simple and lucid, though it carries a multiplicity of voices, follows a heteroglossic pattern and adheres to the structure of a frame narration.

It has been prophesied that Pampa Kampana will die only when she will complete her job of 'telling its story.' And it is her duty to represent the women in an unconventional way to the entire male-dominated world. Accordingly, she designs a city (Vijayanagar or Bisnaga) where women undertake such perilous jobs which elsewhere in the country are considered to be 'unsuitable' for them. Interestingly, Vijayanagar appears to be a replica of the 'Ladyland' ('free from sin and harm'), sketched by Begum Rokheya in her *Sultana's Dream*. Both of these dreamlands exhibit women empowerment and advocate a subversion of gender-roles. For instance, the safety of the city of Vijayanagar is ensured by the prowess of female guards who are 'wearing golden breastplates, shin-guards and forearm cuffs, with swords in golden scabbards at their waists and long hair braided beautifully on the top of their heads.' (41). Not only does the city deconstruct the image of a traditional woman, but also promotes female education for the betterment and mobilisation of the entire society. To highlight these key ideas, Pampa Kampana argues, "In Bisnaga City there are twenty-four schools for boys and thirteen schools for girls, which is not equality, or not yet, but it is better than you will find anywhere beyond the borders of the empire." (95). The assertion of Pampa echoes Sister Sara's famous speech from *Sultana's Dream*, "Our good Queen liked science very much. She circulated an order that all the women in her country should be educated. Accordingly, a number of girls' schools were founded and supported by the government. Education was spread far and wide among women. And early marriage also was stopped. No woman was to be allowed to marry before she was twenty-one. I must tell you that, before this change we had been kept in strict purdah."

To be precise, Pampa, the great sorceress, emerges as a New Woman who is independent, autonomous and does not remain confined to the patriarchal structure. She even goes to the extent of banishing her own sons (Erapalli, Bhagwat, Gundappa), since they express a sort of male chauvinistic attitude. The novel beautifully touches upon feminist viewpoint, representing Pampa as a Matriarch of Bisnaga. In a nutshell, she is the creator and nurturer of the 'miracle city'. She, by destabilising the preconceived

notion which considers women to be secondary to men, interrogates the binary opposition that has shaped human consciousness. Akin to Charlotte Perkin Gilman's *Herland*, the city of Vijayanagara tries to proffer a feminocentric worldview which becomes all the more perceptible, when Pampa asserts, "You see around you the formidable women of the palace guard. And you must know that we have women medicos, women accountants, women judges and women bailiffs too. We believe in our women." (95). But the idealised vision gradually gets stigmatised owing to criminality, religious bigotry, political intrigue and constant rivalry between the Sangama brothers — creating a tumultuous situation, fraught with political threats from inside as well as outside, which has ultimately caused the downfall of the empire.

However, the genesis of Vijaynagar takes place owing to the plantation of magical seeds by two Sangama's brothers, Hukka and Bukka, whom Pampa instructs— "Now these are the seeds of the future. Your city will grow from them." (14). Later Rushdie describes the organic growth of the city through his magical words — "then the miracle city started growing before their astonished eyes, the stone edifices of the central zone pushing up from the rocky grounds, the majesty of the royal palace, and the first great temple too." (15). The wall, encircling the city, gets constructed in a miraculous way: "The wall was rising from the ground as he watched, higher every hour, smoothly dressed stones appearing out of nowhere and placing themselves alongside and on top of one another in immaculate alignment without any visible sign of stonemasons or other workers; which was possible only if some great occultist was nearby, conjuring the fortifications into being with a wave of his imperious wand." (28). It is noticeably Rushdie's reversion to the mode of magic realism, he is noted for, by which he has blended fact and fantasy, history and myth, and has woven together the world of reality and that of magic, in order to discard the realistic mode of narration. Rushdie has subverted the recorded truths in order to make them look fantastic and miraculous, for he tries to undermine or manipulate the readers' sense of familiarity, both geographical and epistemological, to the real place. Even, the fact that the people of Vijaynagar are also born out of seeds may hint at an ecocritical understanding of the text, since it refers to the symbiotic relationship between Man and Nature.

The Portuguese traveller Domingo Paes, who actually visited Vijayanagar, is reanimated as Domingo Nunes in the novel. His predilection for travelling, exploration and expedition immediately remind the readers of Raphael or Gulliver. Even, the name of the city gets changed (from Vijayanagar to Bisnaga) only because of a mispronunciation resulting from the speech impediment of the Portuguese traveller. Salman Rushdie, having employed such strategies, basically offers an alternative worldview through the subversion of scientific facts and non-literary or historical discourses that allows a comprehensive and legitimate source of knowledge regarding the actual world. What Rushdie creates, in the form of Vijaynagar, is a chronotopia of supernatural reality that traps the readers by generating a sense of utmost wonderment and fascination.

Like Perkins, Rushdie does not drive out the issues of sexuality and motherhood from his novel. While the herlanders are portrayed as asexual, Pampa Kampana's carnal desire or sexual appetite is not thwarted. She falls in love with the Portuguese traveller; starts a clandestine affair; and due to the liaison, she gives natural birth (in contrast to parthenogenesis in *Herland*) to three daughters (Yotshna, Zerelda and Yuktasri). But as she was already married to Hukka Raya 1, the first king of Vijaynagar empire, the children are officially considered as the daughters of Hukka Raya 1 and Pampa herself. After the death of the former king, she ties the matrimonial lock with his brother Bukka Raya 1, who ascends the throne subsequently. And she thus keeps on witnessing 'an empire rise and fall' and documents it in her *Jayparajaya*, which is "made up of twenty-four thousand verses, and we learn[ed] the secrets of the empire she had concealed from history for more than one hundred and sixty thousand days." (3).

However, the narrative of *Victory City* not only parodies the episteme of traditional history, but also tries to 'demarginalize the literary through confrontation with the historical' because, "Fictions could be as powerful as histories, revealing the new people to themselves, allowing them to understand their own natures and the natures of those around them, and making them real." (47). The novel is quintessentially an example of historiographic metafiction — a term coined by Linda Hutcheon — which relies upon textual play, self-reflection, intertextuality and historical re-conceptualisation. The

setting is drawn from history and even the origins of the characters are deeply rooted in history. Unlike history, fiction can never be confined to particular occurrences and it can easily withstand the ravages of time, which is why the novel ends with the last words of Pampa herself. The last line reads — “Words are the only victors.” (338). Interestingly, Pampa has transformed the city of Vijaynagar into a ‘city of words. She knows that the kings and queens of the city are not going to be remembered for their deeds, but ‘they will be remembered in the way’ she has ‘chosen to remember them’ through her epic poem. And thus, the novel closes with a note of literalisation.

Like *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, *Victory City* too thematically focuses upon the importance of – to borrow the parlance of Horace — ‘poetic licence’ in terms of story-telling, fictionalisation and myth-making. Rushdie tries to revive the rich and indigenous storytelling tradition of ancient India in both of these novels. In *Haroun and the sea of stories*, Rushdie conceives a city (Kahanai) which remains immersed in gloominess and melancholy and even fails to remember its name: ‘There was once, in the country of Alifbay, a sad city, the saddest of cities, a city so ruinously sad that it had forgotten its name. It stood by a mournful sea full of glumfish, which were so miserable to eat that they made people belch with melancholy even though the skies were blue.’ (15). It is only when Rashid’s ability of storytelling is restored, the city recovers its identity and shakes off the canopy of melancholia. Haroun, the son of Rashid, notices ‘that, as a matter of fact, the city streets were full of people fooling around in the same way, running and jumping and splashing and falling and, above all, laughing their heads off.’ (207). Rushdie has skillfully incorporated the similar weltanschauung in *Victory City* in which the humdrum existence of the residents of Vijaynagar is cured by the germs of stories; it is only because of stories, the residents of Vijaynagar are back to normal life, and they are connected to each other. Consequently, the city seems to be alive and jovial: “Everyone has been told their story. The city is fully alive.” (36). As Rushdie foregrounds, stories offer a nation, its uniformity and contribute to the formation of a cultural memory that connects its inhabitants to build the nation as a psychological entity.

In fine, Rushdie, using the fountain of his magical ink, delineates a miraculous city which is embellished with words, myths and stories. However, the supernatural world is based on a realistic setting, which interrogates the production of the historical knowledge system, by employing a fantasy narrative which pertains to the subversion of recorded facts. Although *Haroun and the sea of stories* and *Victory City* — both have some elements in common, the latter has lensed a fresh perspective by incorporating an omniscient female focaliser. And, while glorifying the idea of story-telling, or for that matter fiction, *Victory City* raises the issue of gender through the powerful portrayal of Pampa Kampana.

#### Works Cited

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. Herland. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1979. Accessed 26 April 2024.

Rushdie, Salman. *Haroun and the sea of stories*. Granta Books, 1991. Accessed 25 April 2024.

RUSHDIE, SALMAN. *Victory City: The New Novel from the Booker Prize-Winning & Bestselling Author Salman Rushdie*. Penguin Random House India Pvt. Limited, 2023. Accessed 25 April 2024.

Sultana's Dream. Tara, 2005. Accessed 25 April 2024.

#### Reviewed By:

Tufan De, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh; Email: [detufan1@gmail.com](mailto:detufan1@gmail.com); Mo. +91-89782566995

**Erikson, (T). (2019). Surrounded by Idiots: The Four Types of Human Behavior. St. Martin's Essentials. P. 304. Rs. ₹2,505 ISBN: 978-1250179944**

### **Surrounded by Idiots: The Four Types of Human Behavior**

Surrounded by Idiots: The Four Types of Human Behavior and How to Effectively Communicate with Each in Business (and in Life)" is a book written by Swedish behavioral expert Thomas Erikson. The book explores the idea that people can be categorized into four distinct behavior types, each represented by a different color: Red, Yellow, Green, and Blue. These colors symbolize various personality traits and communication styles. The author, Thomas Erikson, is a Swedish behavioral expert who has extensive experience in training and consulting on interpersonal communication and leadership skills. This book is based on the DISC model, a psychological theory that categorizes people into four main behavior types, each represented by a different color.

1. REDS: Dominant and assertive individuals.
2. YELLOWS: Social and spontaneous personalities.
3. GREENS: Patient and empathetic people.
4. BLUES: Analytical and structured individuals.

Erikson delves into how understanding these personality types can improve communication and relationships in both personal and professional settings. He offers insights into how to identify and interact with individuals of each type, emphasizing that successful communication depends on adapting your approach to match the preferences and needs of the people you are dealing with. This book provides a framework for understanding human behavior and offers practical advice on how to communicate effectively with people of different personality types. It is a guide to improving interpersonal relationships and working more harmoniously with others. From body language to conflict handling, this book gives you all the tools you need to understand and influence those around you- in and out of the office - and ensure the idiot out there isn't you!

#### **UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR BEHAVIOR TYPES**

##### **REDS**

“Can I Win Something? In That Case, I’m In.”

“Time is Money”

“Only Dead fish go with the flow”

“Let Me Tell You How Things Really Are”

**Characteristics:** Reds are characterized by their assertiveness, confidence, and strong desire for control. They are often natural leaders who thrive in competitive environments. Reds are goal-oriented, and they enjoy taking charge and making quick decisions. They are not afraid to voice their opinions and can be seen as direct and no-nonsense individuals.

**Communication Style:** Reds prefer clear and concise communication. They value efficiency and want others to get to the point. They can be impatient with long-winded explanations or indecisiveness. It's essential to be direct, assertive, and confident when communicating with Reds.

**Strengths:** Reds excel in leadership roles, as they are decisive and action-oriented. They are great problem solvers and are not easily swayed by emotions. Their assertiveness and determination often lead to successful outcomes.

**Weaknesses:** Reds can come across as domineering and insensitive to others' feelings. They might not always consider alternative viewpoints and can be seen as controlling. Their impatience may hinder collaboration and teamwork.

## YELLOWS

“That Sounds Fun! Let Me Do It”

“The More the Merrier! Your Friends Are My Friends”

“I Know Lots of People. All of Them, in fact.”

“They know how to Sell Snow to Penguin”

“Highly Optimistic”

**Characteristics:** Yellows are social butterflies who thrive on interaction and spontaneity. They are enthusiastic, optimistic, and love to have fun. Yellows often have a magnetic personality and enjoy being the center of attention. They are good at connecting with others and are generally outgoing.

**Communication Style:** Yellows are responsive to engaging and entertaining communication. They enjoy humor, stories, and a lively atmosphere. When communicating with Yellows, it's important to be sociable, enthusiastic, and open to spontaneous discussions.

**Strengths:** Yellows excel in roles that involve interaction, creativity, and networking. They can inspire and motivate others with their infectious enthusiasm. They are adaptable and can handle change well.

**Weaknesses:** Yellows may struggle with tasks that require structure and discipline. Their love for fun and socializing can lead to a lack of focus and procrastination. They might also avoid confrontations and difficult conversations.

## GREENS

“How Are We Going to Do This? It’s Not Urgent, Right?”

“The Best Pal in the World”

“Once They’ve Said They’ll Do Something, Consider it’s Done”

“It’s Good to Know What’s Going to Happen. Every Time”

**Characteristics:** Greens are patient, empathetic, and focused on maintaining harmonious relationships. They are excellent listeners and are known for their caring and supportive nature. Greens avoid conflicts and seek to create a peaceful and comfortable environment.

**Communication Style:** Greens appreciate open and empathetic communication. They want to feel heard and understood. When interacting with Greens, it's important to be a good listener, show empathy, and express appreciation for their efforts.

**Strengths:** Greens are great team players and mediators. They can diffuse tense situations and create a cooperative atmosphere. They are reliable and dependable, making them excellent in roles that require patience and empathy.

**Weaknesses:** Greens may avoid making tough decisions or taking risks, as they fear conflict and change. Their desire for harmony can lead to indecision and difficulties in assertiveness. They might also struggle with setting clear boundaries.

## BLUES

“Why Are We Doing This? What’s the Science Behind It?”

“Excuse Me, but That’s Not Quite Accurate.”

“It’s Not a Big Deal-I was Just Doing My Job.”

“Excuse Me, but Where Did You Read That? And What Edition Was It?”

“The Devil Is in the Details.”

“Silence Is Golden”

**Characteristics:** Blues are analytical, detail-oriented, and systematic. They are driven by a need for accuracy and order. Blues are often seen as methodical and structured individuals who thrive on data and facts. They are excellent planners and organizers.

Communication Style: Blues prefer well-organized and fact-based communication. They want information to be accurate and comprehensive. When communicating with Blues, it's important to be detail-oriented, precise, and logical.

Strengths: Blues excel in roles that require precision, analysis, and attention to detail. They are great at problem-solving and planning. Their structured approach leads to high-quality work.

Weaknesses: Blues may struggle with change and unpredictability. Their insistence on accuracy can lead to perfectionism and a fear of making mistakes. They might appear rigid and inflexible in their thinking.

## **Real-Life Illustrations of the Four Behavioral Archetypes"**

### **A Competitive Neighbor**

Our neighbor, a Red, thrives on competition. Initially disinterested in gardening, she transformed her yard to rival my mother's stunning garden after hearing praise. With unwavering determination, she pursued new projects solely to surpass my mother, surprising all with her relentless drive to excel and outshine.

### **Marita's Sunshine: The Joy of a Yellow Personality**

My cousin, a Yellow, effortlessly charms everyone with her easy going nature. She radiates positivity, finding joy in every moment. Her carefree attitude is contagious, lifting spirits even in gloomy weather. Despite quirks in conversation, her infectious laughter brightens any room. Through her unique perspective, she teaches the beauty of embracing life's ups and downs with a smile.

### **Steadfast and Supportive: The Heart of a Green Personality**

One of my closest friends from my undergraduate years is a Green. She loved doing all her work one night before the deadline, never in a hurry. She is a very Reliable friend. There was one time I remember I could not finish my assignment on time because I was really sick. I called her and asked her for her help and she said "I assure you I will do it, in fact consider that it's done" That is how considerate and thoughtful she is. Helping comes naturally to her, it simply makes her happy.

### **Precision Perfected: Living with a Blue Personality**

My Dad is Blue. He precisely possesses the behavior traits that a blue has. Like this one time we got furniture from the store which had an instruction manual with it on how to connect the objects at each and every step. He read the instructions twice, examined what everything looks like, and confirmed that the different pieces of the new cabinet match the pictures in the instructions. With a slightly damp not too wet-cloth, he carefully wipes down all the different parts because they are likely to be dusty. He tallies the number of screws in the box so that he will not be surprised at the end if anything is missing (and if there are any parts left over, he may very well take the whole thing apart again).

### **Conclusions**

"Surrounded by Idiots" by Thomas Erikson introduces behavior types based on four colors: Reds, Yellows, Greens, and Blues. Adapting communication to these types enhances relationships, reducing conflicts. Individuals vary and may show traits from multiple types. Flexibility is key. Whether in personal or professional settings, understanding these principles fosters better connections and more successful interactions.

### **References**

Erikson T. (2019) Surrounded by Idiots: The Four Types of Human Behavior. Vermilion, Penguin Random House.

### **Reviewed By:**

Lochan Thakur, M.A. Applied Psychology, Amity University, Noida