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Auszug aus:

"The Free Radio" von Salman Rushdie

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Thema:

The Free Radio – Salman Rushdie

TMD: 4938

Kurzvorstellung des Materials:

- Salman Rushdie was born in India in 1947. At the age of 17 he and his family moved to Pakistan. In 1968, he graduated from King's College, Cambridge. After his graduation he stayed in Britain, first working as an actor and advertising copywriter before becoming a writer himself. Rushdie currently lives in New York
- Rushdie has published a number of works, the most famous one probably being *The Satanic Verses* (published in 1988), a reinterpretation of the story of the Prophet Mohammed. It was banned in a number of countries with a predominantly Muslim population. Rushdie was even forced into hiding due to a life-threat by the Iranian government, which was only repealed in 1998. The short story "The Free Radio" was first published in 1994 in the book *East West*.

Übersicht über die Teile

- Background Information: Birth Control in India
- Plot
- Narrative Point of View
- Characters
- Study Questions
- Model Answers

(Ohne Primärtext)

Information zum Dokument

- Ca. 4,5 Seiten, Größe ca. 77 KByte

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Background Information: Birth Control in India

India's population has been booming for decades and as early as 1951 the government implemented a national family planning programme to help slow this boom down. Presently, the population grows at a rate of 1.8%. India is the home of one sixth of the earth's population. With the current rate of growth, India's population will double by the year 2040.

About 75% of the population live in rural areas. These areas vary greatly in economic, social and religious lifestyle, which makes a national family planning programme difficult to implement effectively. Only about 48% of the population use some form of birth control.

Even though condoms and hormone pills are available in India, there is little use of them. Fewer than 7% of married couples use these means. Most couples who use birth control do so via sterilisation and it is mostly the women who take these measures.

Most women, who opt for sterilisation, wait until they have at least two boys or at least four children. This points to one major population problem in India: The family's preference for boys over girls. Due to the dowry system it is much more expensive to raise girls than to raise boys. Though this system has been outlawed officially, it is still practiced. Furthermore, a girl contributes nothing to secure her parents' welfare later on in life because after marriage she becomes part of her husband's family.

The short story "The Free Radio" hints at a moment in India's attempt for birth control. Some years ago, there was an attempt to teach people about birth control. The incentive for people to attend the lectures was a free transistor radio. However, this effort failed because families felt the need to get children in order to provide for their old-age.

Plot

The story revolves around Ramani, a young rickshaw-driver in some unspecified Indian town. Ramani is good-looking and has inherited the rickshaw from his parents, so he is supposed by all villagers to have a secure future.

Instead of fulfilling their expectation, though, Ramani falls in love with the widow of a thief who is about ten years older than him and has five children.

They first meet when Ramani drives his rickshaw into the town just as the widow is doing some shopping. She calls him over and makes him drive her and all her children home. After this event Ramani and the widow are a couple.

At the same time, Ramani often hangs out with some friends who drink illegal alcohol and are generally considered bad company for Ramani. When people try to warn him, he just laughs. The youngsters are all members of the Youth Movement during the time of Emergency in India and as an identifying mark they wear wristbands.

Ramani does not wear a wristband, but he likes to spend time with those young people. They put ideas into his head like going to Mumbai to become a movie-star with his good looks.

One day the narrator of the story, a retired teacher, decides to talk to the widow, because he is worried about Ramani. He tells her to stop going out with Ramani but she refuses to talk, yelling at the teacher and cursing him instead. During this exchange the narrator learns that Ramani has already asked the widow to marry him, but that she has turned him down because she does not wish for more children.

Shortly after this incident, a big white caravan, sent by the health officer, arrives in the town. In this caravan medical operations, which are not specified yet, take place. Every night, several men enter the caravan to get something done to them. Not long after the arrival of the caravan, Ramani suddenly starts telling people about a personal gift he is about to receive from the government, namely a transistor radio.



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