IDENTITY CRISIS: A SELECT STUDY ON SALMAN RUSHDIE’S NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

Identity crisis is the major suffering of the many people in the present day world. It is quite natural every one thinks of their own identity to grow themselves with self respect. Afro-American, British and Indian every writer nowadays focused their writings keeping in the mind the sense of identity. There is no exception to the writer like Salman Rushdie. His novels also reflect the question of identity and explore the philosophical significance of ideals and concepts. He introduces a number of characters who are so intimately connected and when they separate they share the identity of one another. The present paper titled, “Identity crisis: a Study on Salman Rushdie’s novels” reflect how the characters in his novels strive for their identity. The chronological study of the novels written by him reveals how the characters suffer from the identity crisis. He also finds solutions to resolve the problem of crisis. He discusses ones identity is a part of universe and individual identity is its entity.

Keywords: identity, suffering, contemporary world, crisis, solution and entity.

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finally brings destruction upon himself and his world. Grimus, the Quest 'motif' of the Flapping Eagle, the protagonist is allegorically presented: at a domestic level, if it is a quest for his sister, the Bird-Dog, at a symbolic and more important level, it is his quest and interaction with Grimus, which provides the essential fictional value of the narrative. Flapping Eagle is a creature with a dual consciousness of Time and Time lessens. His quest is essentially beyond the realms of Time for conquering the limitations of Death. His quest is thus denuded of history and temporal consciousness. Thus one's identity is a part of universe and individual identity is the reflection of his entity.

"What you must ask yourself is this: is there such a thing as too much knowledge? If marvelous discovery is made whose effects one cannot control, should one attempt to destroy one's find? Or, do the interests of science override even those of society and, indeed, survival?"

The next novel, Midnight’s Children, has the backdrop of the political upheaval and constant threat of violence that marked the first three decades of independence. Saleem, the narrator of Midnight’s Children, is born on the eve of independence, and the events of his life closely parallel events in the development of both India and Pakistan. Most of Rushdie’s novels concern themselves with the identity of character and describe the violent struggles between different religions, classes, languages, and geographical regions. In the thirty years following independence, India and Pakistan fought three separate wars: two over Kashmir, and one over the creation of an independent Bangladesh. The political history is the starting points of the quest Saleem Sinai announce his emergence into this world in a moment of political reality: The world of Azids, the progenitors of the three generations of the Muslims is the beginning of the narrative. The historical recreation of the individual destiny is realized as part of an imaginative device in fulfilling the larger thematic purpose, namely, the search for identity in Saleem Sinai's mind.

"How many things, people, notions we bring with us into the world, how many possibilities and also restrictions of possibility! Because of the child born that midnight, and for every one of the midnight children there were as many more. Among the parents of the midnight: the failure of the Cabinet Scheme;... chicken-breast-eater of a wife;
and more and his Red Fort and Old Fort ....To understand just one life, you have to swallow the world."

Another novel by Rushdie named "Shame" also recreates the motive of identity in Omar Khayyam. Though Shame and Midnight's Children recreate identical thematic designs, the latter appears to be a far more complex and rewarding artistic experience. Unlike Saleem Sinai, Omar Khayyam is not truly bedeviled by a dual perception, between India and Pakistan. But he is deliberately stationed as a 'peripheral hero' experience, such as Independence and Emergency. He is a "peripheral hero", whose vision is meant to be as his destiny. His quest for reality is futile. He is peculiarly inhibited by history. If Saleem feels unredeemed in Time, Omar Khayyam develops even from its very conception a grim negation to Time. His drift from the shackles of a temporal order becomes an insistent urge for him even from his childhood. In the world of his three mothers, his drift is into an irretrievable past. A nihilist sense of nothingness is realized in the world of the past. As a result of such a stupefying experience, his psyche is fatally limited. Unlike Saleem, Omar Khayyam's quest is losing oneself into the death and decay of the sense of past history.

As Omar Khayyam gets ready to start his search for a world of sanity and hope on his twelfth birthday, in an anonymous city, this is also the beginning of the search, in the life and world of Nishapur and in the lives of his three mothers. Omar Khayyam's release into a world of future is, indeed, liberation into total freedom of spirit and mind. His release symbolically is into a world of knowledge and reality, against the decadence of a past history. Ommar Khyyam's insomnia is an aspect of the drift into eternity as afterwards realized in his union with Sufiya. As he cannot sleep, he cannot dream. His decaying mind and listless hope in search of identity are truly outside Time. The theme of insomnia continues, both in symbolic and real terms: symbolically, if he is a living witness to the decadence of the moral and political system of an anonymous country, in real terms, he is aimlessly drifting in a temporal world as his roots are only apparent but not real in Time.

The theme of identity operates with grim intensity and purpose. The political or even politico-cultural and other themes of India's national development are artistically and emotionally well integrated into the motif of quest for identity of Saleem Sinai. As his quest is essentially spiritual, the historical detail only becomes a transitory
phase in his growingly temporal awareness of the world of facts into an introvert world of intuitive perception of reality through Fantasy, or Dream and Memory. Thus, Rushdie's fictional world explores the world of eternity. As Grimus belongs to the genre of science fiction, Midnight's Children and Shame are mostly complementary in their thematic exploration of identity of their respective protagonists. The theme of identity in its broad historical terms may be defined as national identity, both for, Saleem Sinai and Omar Khayyam; but in its intrinsic value and meaning this quest becomes an "interiorized" reality and an aspect of their own emotional and life patterns. In this context, the question of expatriation for Rushdie is symbolic of such a predicament for himself.

References: