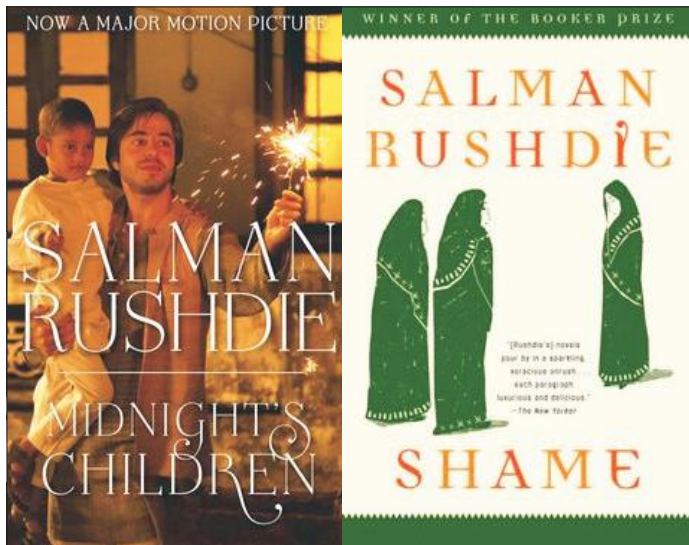


## PROBLEMS AND LOST OF IDENTITY IN THE SALMAN RUSHDIE'S 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN AND SHAME NOVELS - A STUDY

**P.R.V.N. Kesava Kumar**

Research Scholar, Department of English, K.L. University, Vaddeswaram, Guntur,  
Andhra Pradesh



### ABSTRACT:

The present study involves the idea of issues and lost personality in Rushdie's books and the journey of people for the self. Rushdie's field of fiction constitutes a noteworthy portion and the characters battle to build up their personality however all futile. To have the profound perception of the characters that lose their personality and self are as they are manikins in the hands of destiny. His books steadfastly portray the scrape of individuals with a fractional personality. The accentuation and the sense is never truant from his psyche. The characters that lose their personality, don't generally realize what they are scanning for yet at

the same time the look holds on for some dynamic quality which blazes inside them. In his books, Rushdie tries his best to express the character emergency and focuses on the submerged inside universe of a person. A sharp perception of the lost character of people in the public eye conveys to the fore, the pitiful state of their being, which at the focal point of every single person has unfortunately been victimized of from their own personality. Rushdie's own experience and history may have imparted in him values and a world view that can never be called conventional, religious, or even good with religion, in any case, the one quality his characters gangs that seems, by all accounts, to be as limitless as their distance and dream is their ceaseless positive thinking and unlimited trust. In Rushdie's books, many characters confront the issues of personality. The books *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* have been examined for this study.

### KEYWORDS

Lost Identity and Crises, Predicament, Dislocation, Quest, Traditional, Delusion.

### THE CHARACTERS WITH PROBLEMATIC PARENTAGE

In Rushdie's books many characters confront the issues of personality. There are for instance characters of ill-conceived parentage or characters who don't know who their folks are. In *Midnight's Children* the two principle characters Saleem and Shiva, who are both conceived at the stroke of the midnight when India picked up freedom, are swapped after their introduction to the world by a medical attendant Mary Pereira who needs to awe a Marxist revolt Joseph D'Costa she is enamored with. Along these lines Saleem, who is destined to poor guardians gets, on account of the mediation of Mary Pereira, to experience childhood in a rich family and in this way picks up another predetermination and new prospects

in life. The two young men share some basic qualities, (for example, a major nose and knees or the moment of their introduction to the world) yet in many regards they are direct inverses. As a kid Shiva is a pioneer of the youngsters posse where numerous young men are more established than him, Saleem gets frequently harassed by other kids and when Evie Burns shuns him from their group for attempting to meddle with her musings, he must be retaliated for by his sister. Shiva is eager, heartless and he makes superb profession when, as a child of a homeless person, he gets to be head administrator's Indira Ghandi's most loved general. Saleem, then again, is hesitant, never truly makes sense of what to utilize his otherworldly present for (he rather gives others a chance to control him) and the entire route through the book he is losing something. He loses his otherworldly blessing, his folks, and the affection for his sister, his memory lastly his better half Parvati. He is a fatalistic sort of individual who makes no endeavor to control his life effectively; he just takes the remarkably. At that point another swap of a youngster is made when Saleem's better half Parvati flees from her significant other and considers a kid (Aadam Sinai) with Shiva who then shows her out. She comes back to Saleem, who deals with Aadam after Parvati's passing. So Aadam is a twofold swapped kid who by swapping comes back to his unique family and he is named after Saleem's granddad who really is Aadam's natural amazing granddad.

A comparable circumstance of confounded parenthood happens in Shame where one of the three sisters Shakil gets pregnant, they swear a kind of vow that they won't give the mystery a chance to out and the promise makes the bond between them so solid, they get to resemble one individual. They all begin to thicken, as far as they can tell the work torments when giving the birth, breastfeed the youngster and raise him as though they were every one of his moms. Omar Khayyam Shakil in this way never learns nor which one of the sisters is his mom neither who his dad is. A quarter century a similar triple pregnancy happens and Omar's sibling Babar is conceived.

### **THE CHARACTERS WITH LOST IDENTITY**

In the course of their life the sisters' bond grows so tight that they become virtually indistinguishable and even they cannot tell themselves from each other. They realize this when Omar Khayyam first tells them he wishes to leave home and they start to quarrel what to do. What follows is described:

*"Their quarrels died down when he made his second escape; but they were never properly reunited until they decided to repeat the act of motherhood....."*

*"And there is an even stranger matter to report. It is this: when they were divided by Omar Khayyam's birthday wishes, they had been indistinguishable too long to retain any exact sense of their former selves and, well, to come right out with it, the result was that they divided up in the wrong way, they got all mixed up, so that Bunny, the youngest, sprouted the premature grey hairs and took on the queenly airs that ought to have been the prerogative of the senior sibling; while big Chhunni seemed to become a torn, uncertain soul, a sister of middles and vacillations; and Munnee developed the histrionic gadfly petulance that is the traditional characteristic of the baby in any generation, and which never ceases to be that baby's right, no matter how old she gets. In the chaos of their regeneration the wrong heads ended up on the wrong bodies; they became psychological centaurs, fish-women, hybrids; and of course this confused separation of personalities carried with it the implication that they were still not genuinely discrete, because they could only be comprehended if you took them as a whole"(Shame, p. 40).*

There are other characters in Rushdie's books that completely lose the notion of their selves. The narrator of Midnight's Children Saleem suffers a shock and a complete amnesia after the city he lives in is bombed and most of his family dies there. He forgets everything about his previous life and he also loses his human skills and manners. By that time he has already lost his magical gift of telepathy and has gained a superhuman sense of smell instead so is he sent to a special army unit which uses dogs for searching for rebel units in the mountains and where Saleem gains a status of one of these dogs. He becomes a man dog.

So not only does he lose his self, he also loses his humanity and becomes an animal.

But not just any animal; he becomes a dog which is in Muslim culture considered an unclean animal (Muslims for example cannot touch anything a dog has touched). A similar thing happens to Naveed Hyder (Shame) who gives birth to twenty seven children in six years and who disintegrates with their numbers: *"Begum Naveed Talvar, the former Good News Hyder, proved utterly incapable of coping with the endless stream of humanity flowing out between her thighs.[...] Her old personality was getting squashed by the pressure of the children who were so numerous that she forgot their names, she hired an army of ayahs and abandoned her offspring to their fate, and then she gave up trying. No more attempts to sit on her hair: the Absolute determination to be beautiful which had entranced first Haroun Harappa and then Captain Talvar faded from her features, and she stood revealed as the plain, unremarkable matron she had always been"* (Shame, p. 207).

### THE DRAMATICALLY CHANGING CHARACTERS

Some characters change dramatically through the course of their lives, usually due to some trauma they suffer and the change of their personality is usually demonstrated by a physical change and often by a change of name. Aadam Azis (Midnight's Children) loses his faith in God and this loss makes a hole in his chest. At first the hole is invisible and only he can feel it, but as he gets old, the hole becomes visible to everybody. Saleem Sinai's sister is called the Brass monkey by everybody because of her copper hair. She is a naughty child who sets the shoes on fire and fights with older kids. We never even learn her real name until she grows up, her hair darkens and she becomes Jamilla singer - a religious fanatic, who by her popular shows supports a radical Islamic government and never shows her face in the public only performs behind the screen. As a child she is independent and uncontrollable, as an adult woman she becomes easily manipulated so she does not see the crimes of the government she is supporting. While she is a child we can see some traces of fanaticism in her (for example influenced by her Christian ayah she wants to wear a nun's outfit) but we see her from a totally different point of view and therefore when she grows up she seems like a totally different person.

Similar thing happens with Bilquis (Shame). First we meet her as a young girl whose father thinks of himself as an emperor (he is an emperor of a cinema palace) raises her as if she was a queen and because of that she walks with her head in the clouds which makes her look stuck-up to the people in her neighborhood. After the cinema is blown up by the Muslim radicals she loses her father, her empire, her clothes and her eyebrows. After she marries Raza Hyder and her first son is born dead, she loses the ability to bear sons. Then the narrator does not pay attention to her for a while and we meet her some years later when she has developed a phobia of hot wind because of the horrible experience with the explosion in her father's cinema. Together with her failure to give birth to a son, especially after she has lived with her husband's family where most of the children are male and she is naturally expected to have sons as well, it has driven her mad. When we see her as a young girl, she is naked; as she grows older she is always covered from her head to feet with clothes. She even hardly ever takes her burqa off. Of course this is partly due to the growing Muslim fundamentalism in Pakistan but it is also a sign of her growing shame over her body. There are many other characters who change radically throughout the book and the technique when one side of the character is revealed and then many years later; we can see a character from the other side is used frequently.

### THE MEMORABLE CHARACTERS

Rushdie often borrows some characters from mythology. For example Shiva and Parvati belong to the most important Indian gods; they are husband and wife and have several children, one of them being Ganesh - the elephant-headed god. Shiva is usually described as the god of destruction and restoration,

Parvati is a loving-wife-and-mother goddess. In *Midnight's Children* Shiva is a warrior with lethal knees and Parvati becomes Saleem's wife but because Saleem refuses to sleep with her, she runs from him to Shiva. After she gets pregnant Shiva makes her leave by beating her up so she returns to Saleem, who after Parvati's death takes care of her and Shiva's son Adam, who has an exceptionally big nose and ears. This is an interesting way to deal with the myth.

Rushdie also uses many archetypal fairy tale and mythological characters such as the beauty and the beast (Sufia Zinobia) a devil and an angel or three sisters. Such borrowing of the motifs and reworking them into something slightly different is also a feature common in oral literature. If we look at Rushdie's characters most of them are somehow extraordinary. In *Midnight's Children* the main character has magical powers, his sister becomes a famous singer, his wife Parvati alludes to a goddess and has a child with another god-like character Shiva. And Shiva and Parvati have magical powers as well. In *Shame* there are two characters who become prime ministers of the country, there is a woman who turns into a beast, a woman who has children and her husband is police chief with the gift clairvoyance. There are other characters that are not exceptional and do not do anything extraordinary, but they are somehow distinct for one particular attribute or a deed. Adam Azis (*Midnight's Children*) has a hole in his chest because he has lost his faith. His wife Naseem is known as the reverend mother because of her

Puritanism and Rigidity. Bilquis Hyder lost her eyebrows in the accident in her father's cinema, which never grew back. She is also afraid of the wind. Rani Harappa makes the eighteen shawls depicting the crimes of her husband during his premiership. She embroiders them while she is imprisoned in her house and guarded by her husband's opponents who never bother to look at what she is embroidering. She then wills them to her daughter who is planning a political career. Her daughter known as the virgin iron pants is famous for refusing to get married although she has had many offers. The point is that we do not have much information about these characters and we do not know about their other qualities, we only know them for one extraordinary deed or a quality.

## CONCLUSION

As many other post colonial writers Rushdie expresses in his novels the problems of finding identity. This is done through his characters that frequently face either loss of identity or a confusion of identity. They do not know or forget who they are, exchange their personality with someone else or transform into something different. This is a way to express the problems of identity Indian society has to deal with due to its colonization and decolonization.

Rushdie's novels, especially the earlier ones, are always strongly connected to the history of India and Pakistan although they are fictions. Rushdie also uses other features of oral literature, such as creating memorable characters, dividing books in cycles, anticipations, parallels and repetition, use of frame stories and embedded stories.

*Shame* is a satire on a pair of conjoined opposites "the playboy and the puritan, the socialist democrat and the autocratic dictator, who are seen as two sides of the same coin. *Shame* is a companion piece to *Midnight's Children*; the former is a Pakistani" fiction and later is a complement to the earlier Indian fiction. The two novels, however, also differ significantly in form and in atmosphere. *Midnight's Children* is an agitated, over-reaching, and over-crowded fiction in which the excesses of the text strain against the limits of sentence, chapter and book. *Contradictory Shame* is a cramped, claustrophobic, even paranoid, fiction, haunted by the narratives that are unable to tell, and oppressive in its unrelenting focus on the narrow and social strata with which the novel deals. There is a one narrator in *Midnight's Children* who strives and struggles to incorporate everything into his text and in *Shame* no one will be unable to orientate the reader himself or herself in relation to the fiction.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Rushdie, Salman. (1995). *Midnight's Children*, Vintage.
2. Rushdie, Salman. (1995). *Shame*, Vintage.
3. *Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 1989. Connor, Steven.
4. Salman Rushdie. (2011). *Contemporary World Writers*. New Delhi: Viva Books Pvt. Ltd.
5. *Post-colonial Views of Identity and History in the Works of Salman Rushdie* by Barbora Hoferková.
6. *The Characters with Lost Identity in Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children and Shame*. Retrieved from [www.apjor.com](http://www.apjor.com).