

**Multipositional Identities: Represented Through Shiva In The Alternative  
Side Of India In Midnight's Children**

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**Abstract:**

This paper wants to examine Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children' in the view of multipositional identities from the theoretic aspect of post colonialism. Born at the stroke of midnight on August 14/15, 1947, Shiva is Saleem's counterpart. Switched at birth with Saleem, Shiva is mislabeled as a son of a poor clown. From his birth, he does not get his original identity and represents the alternative side of India which is poor and aggressive. Postcolonialism focuses on cultural-hybridity which results in multipositional identities. Shiva is brought up as a leader of a street gang and possibly a murderer. Later in his young age he becomes a war hero in the battle between Bangladesh and Pakistan. Then he promotes to the rank of major. At the same time he is known as notorious lover among the women of Indian high society. As a result he gives birth to a number of illegitimate children. And at the end he dies nonetheless but a tragic figure. He is damaged and shaped by the forces of history and class. Born as a midnight's child, Shiva, named after the Hindu god of destruction is captured by the effect of post colonialism and celebrates the multipositional identities.

**Key-words:** Multi positional identities, identity crisis, cultural hybridity, class, History.

## 1. Introduction:

Multipositional identities is one of the major issue of postcolonial theory and the studies of multipositional identities which is the result of identity crisis have always been the focus of research for many scholars. The Indian texts after its independence have attempted to investigate on this particular idea of identity crisis and at the same time established multipositional identities of a one particular character. Now a days the identities are flexible in postmodern area. A person has different identities in different places, may be it causes for occupation and relation, but the major factor is the result of postcolonialism. As a part of study, Rushdie makes an attempt of multipositional identities represented through Shiva in the alternative side of India which is extremely poor in the popular novel '*Midnight's Children*'. This paper, then focuses on the major problem about fixed identity has faced by Shiva (apart from the protagonist of the novel, Saleem) and his activities and relationships. Born at the stroke of midnight of August 14/15, 1947, Shiva is actually Saleem's counterpart. Shiva lost his original identity at his birthtime as he is switched with Saleem by the ayah called, Mary Pereira. It is also a postcolonial affect. She wants to make her lover, Joseph D'Costa proud, she switches the nametags of the two newborn babies. Thereby borning in a wealthy family of Sinai, Shiva is brought up in a poor family of Wee willie Winkie and Vanita. This paper, then focuses on the problems of poor family and poor son like Shiva. Time by time Shiva changes his Identity both for existed himself in the upgrowing coutry of India and for earning livelihood. Borning with a pair of enormous, powerful knees and a gift for combat – ultimately lost from the society.

Shiva named after the Hindu God of destruction and recreation – ultimately is destroyed by other, is discussed in this paper as he belongs to the poor family. His struggles and sufferings for incorative in native culture offers him multipositional identities, impact of postcolonialism on poor families, class distinction, hegemony etc. are discussed in this paper through shiva.

## 2. Literature Review:

### 2.1. *Introducing Salman Rushdie:*

Ahmed Salman Rushdie was born in Bombay (now Mumbai) in India on June 19, 1947. His birth coincided with a particularly important moment in Indian history as nearly one hundred years of colonial rule, the British occupation of the south Asian subcontinent was coming to

an end. Almost three months after Rushdie birth, Pakistan and India achieved their long-awaited Independence when, at the stroke of midnight on August 14/15, 1947, power was transferred from Great Britain to the sovereign governments of each country. The period that immediately followed Independence proved tumultuous. Political and social tensions between Hindus and Muslims caused not only the division of India into two *separate* countries- a calamitous event referred to as partition – but also widespread riots that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. The violence that accompanied Independence was a prelude to the multiple wars, coups governmental abuses that plagued the region in the years that followed.

Raised in a well-to-do Muslim household, Rushdie received excellent education. Rushdie was educated at the Cathedral school, Bombay before he moved with his family to Pakistan at the age of seventeen. He was then sent to Rugby Boy's school, England before attending King's College, Cambridge, from where he graduated in 1968, though he carried with multipositional national identities, after his graduation he choose to remain in Britain, working as an actor and advertising copywriter before becoming a full-time writer. He produced his first novel '*Grimus*' in 1975, about a native American who receives the gift of immortality. His literary career is full of prizes and achievements. His '*Midnight's Children*' was awarded Prestigious Booker Prize for fiction, the James Tait Black Memorial Prize, an Arts Council Writers' Award and the English Speaking Union Award. The book establishes his international reputation. His some others books are – '*Shame*'(1983), '*The Jaguar Smiles*', '*The Satanic Verses*'(1998), '*The Moore's Last Sigh*',(1995) etc. In his writings, Rushdie has aimed at restoring the effect of postcolonialism on the third world countries.

## 2.2. *Brief Summery of Midnight's Children:*

The novel consists of three sections and twenty six chapters. Each section deals with a particular expressions of before independence of India, in the independence time and after the independence time of India. Throughout the book the narrative switches between past and present, modern life and traditional ways, and such techniques also show the identity confusion of the protagonist, Saleem. The book at the same time focuses the alternative side of India, which is poor – represented through Shiva. He is suffered from identity crisis throughout the whole life. The novel covers a time span of sixty(1927-1977) and Shiva is

introduced in the second part of the book. Saleem the protagonist of the novel how he brought the midnight's children together in the parliament of his brain, breaking through the barriers of language and eventually transmitting an image of himself into their brains. They each have a horrible sense of self image. He introduces himself to Shiva, who recognises him as the rich kid from the estate his father used to work on. Shiva suggests that the two of them should be leader of the gang of midnight's children, "my father said I got born at exactly midnight also – so don't you see, that makes us joint bosses of this gang of yours!" But Saleem, with his idea of conference as "a sort of loose federation of equals" turns down the proposal. Shiva scorns and mocks Saleem's attempt to create a meaningful purpose for the conference. Shiva, Saleem notes is the god of destruction and the Hindu pantheon's most patent deity. However Shiva's father tried very much to mutilate him in order to make him a better beggar. In spite of these contributions of his father Shiva at the last moment saved himself by gripping of his father with his powerful knees. But at the end, he died nonetheless like a tragic figure and is damaged and shaped by the forces of class and history. But his son is brought up by the care and guardian of Saleem.

### 2.3. Critical analysis:

Born in a rich family of Sinai, Shiva is deprived from the happiness of life from the very moment of his birth. It is because of the impact of postcolonialism in India. Amina and Vanita both go into labour, and, at exactly midnight, each woman deliver a son. Meanwhile, a midwife at the nursing home, Mary Pereira switches the nametags of the new born babies, thereby giving the poor baby (Saleem) a life of privilege and the rich baby (Shiva) a life of poverty. This is not a picture of India. Mary Pereira does it to satisfy her radical socialist lover D.Costa as he betrays her and her sister Alice. Shiva has also the power and quality to establish himself as the protagonist of the novel, the main leader, the main leader of the gang of midnight's children. But it is due to his class and history, he is deprived from it. And it is for these various deprivations, Shiva is compelled to become the destroyer of the Midnight's children. He also tries to kill Saleem. This paper would examine if Postcolonialism would not impact on the third world countries then might be the problems also would not arise regarding Shiva. Switches at the birth time, Shiva throughout the whole novel does not get an original and fixed identity. He is sometimes a gang leader or a murderer or a warrior or sometimes a notorious lover. In that case history and class also play a major role. As Shiva

belongs to the poor family, no one care for him. However, Shiva not like the other midnight's children stands all these hegemonies of histories and class and gives the proposal of joint leadership in the conference of midnight's children with saleem. But here, the class deprives him. In this way the revolutionary mode raises slowly in the mind of Shiva and that is why by breaking all the system of history and class and the impact of postcolonialism, Shiva is roped with multipositional identities in the novel who represents the unwritten alternative side of India which is poor and Hindu.

### *3. Multipositional Identities in Midnight's Children:*

Multipositional Identities have described as a period of uncertainty and confusion in which a person's sense of identity becomes insecure, typically due to a change in their expected aims or role in society. Apart from Shiva, all the major characters in the novel like Saleem, Saleem's mother called Amina, Saleem's sister Jamila Sinai at all deal with multipositional identities and a quest for fixed identity.

In the case of protagonist Saleem, he is switched at his birth time with Shiva and from that moment he is deprived from his own original and fixed identity. For the first ten years of his life, though, neither Saleem nor his family knows of his humble roots, and so he is raised as the son in an educated and wealthy family. Because he was born at midnight on the day of Indian independence, he grows up knowing that his birth was marked with honours, by a newspaper article and a letter from the prime minister. He comes to find that he has supernatural powers., which he uses to communicate with the other children born on the same day he was, finding that they are all gifted, but not as gifted as he is, except for Shiva, the child with whom he was switched at birth. He sees himself in them, especially in Shiva. He understands his power through theirs powers, and he lacks the personal attributes which Shiva, Whom he understands to be his opposite, has particularly aggression.

Saleem's later years are humbling, which helps him understand the life of a poor anonymous peasant such as the one to whom he was born. In the bombing of a Pakistan that kills off most of the members of his family at the end of Book Two, he loses his memory, Thereafter he uses the name Buddha: though the name implies religious insight, he achieves nothing in this guise other than leading his fellow soldiers to their deaths. He lives in a ghetto among carnivals workers, adapting a Marxist philosophy, but in the end the homes of the poor are simply bulldozed by the rich. The novel ends with Saleem's finding a balance in his life, an

identity that is both anonymous and singular: he works in a pickle factory as a humble labourer, but there, with his extraordinary sense of smell, he is able to create the greatest pickles and chutney ever realism: Saleem has a son and a new wife to live for, but by the last page he has given up expectation that he alone will be able to affect drastic changes.

The character Amina, the second mother of Saleem also, is walking through multipositional identities. Daughter of a doctor called Adam Aziz, she known as Mumtaz Aziz. But she changes her identity to Amina after marriage to Ahmed Sinai. Before this, she marries Nadir Khan, a revolutionary poet and changes her identities.

Jamila Sinai represents the ladies of rich family and portrays the multipositional identities of them, Saleem's younger sister, Jamila Sinai, initially is called the Brass Monkey, born into the world of little fanfare, known as a plucky, tomboyish girl. She eventually changes her identity by becoming most famous singer in Pakistan. Later when she finds Saleem is not her biological brother, she deals with his exile out of the country by turning to the Catholic religion. In her teens, living in Pakistan, Jamila is found to have beautiful singing voice, a friend of the family puts her on the radio, and she becomes a national sensation and a symbol of Pakistan's pride. She is never seen in public, and nobody knows that she is actually an Indian. Saleem falls in love with her, but she refuses to see him and sends him away. In convent, she rebels against her dietary constraints by secretly eating leavened bread, baked by catholic nuns, and she openly criticises the Pakistani army when they abuse her brother Saleem.

### *3.1 Shiva's Identity Crisis In Midnight's Children:*

Shiva examines near about thirty years of his life covered by the narrator Saleem in order to understand who he is. Throughout the story, he is torn by conflicting evidence that he is either a special, magical existence or quite an ordinary one. He is actually born to a rich family of Sinai, but is switched by the Ayah called Mary Pereira with a poor baby (Saleem) and brought up in near to Wee Willie Winkie and Vanita. Thus, from the moment of his birth he lost his original identity. Franz Fanon, a post-colonial critic argued that, for the repressed and suffering native, colonialism destroyed the very soul. This impact of postcolonialism marks on the identity of Shiva as the ayah, Mary Pereira does this inhumanistic job to satisfy his radical socialist lover D.Costa who rejects her. After the very independences of the third world countries, all the Britishers compel to leave the countries. And D.Costa is also such a

person who also compels to leave the country and at the same time his beloved Mary. And all the results go to the natives of India. They suffer a lot and are confused with their identities. And as he is from his birth time belongs to a poor family which is never highlighted to the colonial masters as well as to the elite authorities of the country Shiva stands as a representative of the alternative side of India. This paper reveals one of the major problems or diseases of post-colonial impact i.e. multipositional identity or identity crisis is not only seen in the elite class but also floods in the poor families.

According to F. Fanon, as he states in his '*Black Skin, White Masks*' (1967), a national identity is framed in three stages. In the first, the native intellectual is under the influence of colonizer's culture, and seeks to emulate and assimilate it by adorning his own identity. The native thus is a symbol, stands for the power and domination of the British. The same desire of mastering over the follower is seen in the early childhood of Shiva, in his area. He becomes the leader of a street gang. In his leadership he also becomes a murderer like the whites.

In the second stage, the native discovers that he can never become truly white, or white enough for the colonial masters to treat him as an equal. The native intellectual now returns to study his own culture, and might even romanticize his traditions and past. Perhaps, Shiva also able to realize this truth and that is why he leaves all his childhood activities and participates in the independence war of Bangladesh in 1971, when he is 24. Shiva lives up to his name and becomes a war hero and eventually prompted to the rank of major. And as Fanon suggests that there is no critical engagements with the native cultures, just as a celebratory tone, Shiva's participation in this war is also in a celebratory tone. Here, it is proved that in spite of his crisis regarding a poor and his depravation from the true identity, here he takes a major role of war hero and a major. Metaphorically, in a deeper level it is undoubtedly proved that the post-colonial impacts leads Shiva and far for which he wears several clothes of identities.

In the third stage, the native intellectual is truly anti-colonial. He joins the ranks of his people and battles for colonial damnation. This is accompanied by a careful analysis of his own culture- such as analysis hopes to abandon those elements of native culture that seems dated or even oppressive so that a new future (after colonialism) is made for. Shiva from the alternative side of India also participates in this view and that is why he participates in the Independence War of Bangladesh. In a deeper sense the result of it also shown as in this time

Shiva is able to dominate the colonial culture as well as the culture of elite class in India and he becomes superior to the high society and that is why the women of Indian high society fall in love with Shiva. By failing all the colonial masters and elite people he becomes a notorious lover among the women of Indian high society, sharing a number of illegitimate children.

Through these three stages, Fanon was moving away from a purely representational and cultural view of national identity towards mere materialistic-economic one. Fanon was one of the first theorist to realize that the anti-colonial struggle must be fought at the level of both culture and economic domains- with the theory of Franz Fanon, it must be admitted that Shiva, the representative of the alternative side of India would compel to frame his identities in multiple way within the compel frame his identities in multiple way within the cultural and economic domains in spite of born with a blessed pair of enormous a powerful knees in a rich family of Ahmad and Amina Sinai.

One of the most widely employed and most disputed terms in post-colonial theory, “hybridity” commonly refers to the creation of new trans-cultural forms within the contact zone produced by and this results into multipositional identities within a single character. The term ‘Hybridity’ has been most recently associated with the work of Homi K. Bhabha, a postcolonial theorist, whose analysis of colonizer/colonized relations stressed their independence and mutual construction of their subjectivities. Bhabha contends that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in a space that he calls ‘third space of enunciation’. Cultural identity and individual identity always emerges in this contradictory and ambivalent space. For him, the recognition of this ambivalent space of identity creates a multiple identity creates a multiple identities within a character. The alternative protagonist of the novel *Midnight’s Children*, Shiva is also going through the hybrid culture, as his area of lives impressed by his colonial rule and at the same time they have some original and exceptional culture. The mixture of two cultures of opposite sights create a hybrid culture in Shiva’s areas. And that is why Shiva is also captured by the hybrid culture and it helps him to create a lot of identities within himself. For example, at the beginning of his life, he is called as the leader of street gang. In that case the two cultures are viewed as Shiva act as the colonial master of domination towards his followers whether his followers represents the original helpless poor followers of India.

Bhabha begins his reading by noting how identities in the colonial encounter are never stable or fixed. Colonial encounters are transactions between the colonizer and the colonized. The European in the colony constructs his identity only through rationality based on difference. Building on Lacanian psychoanalysis and poststructuralism, Bhabha proposes that identities, even in the colonial context, are based on differential relations. The colonizer establishes his identity by positioning himself against and in opposition to the native. This means, effectively, the colonizer can never pose a self-identical identity, because it requires the colonizer to validate it. (We recall here poststructuralism's argument that all identity or meaning is based on the difference of one letter/sound/signifier from another, suggesting that both are linked together in the formation of identities.) Identity therefore, is constantly shifting, liminal and displaced. With this move, Bhabha suggests that we cannot see colonial identity as a fixed or monolithic; it is unstable shifting and irrational. In *Midnight's Children*, the protagonist of the alternative side of India, Shiva's identity according to Bhabha's notion also remain fixed on monolithic. He, in the novel is an outgoing process of identities as he severally shifts his identity both from economically or rationally. When he was a little boy in a poor community, he became the leader of street gang, eventually a murderer. A few later he wants to establish himself as the leader of midnight's children in references, called by Saleem and later he becomes a war hero in the relation with the independence movement of Bangladesh. He even becomes a notorious to the women of the higher Indian society. It is also depended on religion.

Bhabha's work reveals colonial discourse as unstable and fractured ambivalent and open to subversion- each time colonialism seeks to impose its authority through a repetition of the sign, the native's repetition of the sign dismantles it by adding or subtracting any intended or original (colonial) meaning depending on his (natives) needs. Shiva's changing of identities also depends on his native's need. In fact in a deeper sense it is also observed that though it is true that he has multipositional identities in his different age and in different places but actually these are the repetition identities. At first he is a leader of the street gang and a murderer, then wants to lead the midnight's children, then reputationally becomes the leader/war hero of the independence war of Bangladesh and really a leader called Major. Then he becomes a notorious lover means he again becomes the leader of the lovers. Thus Bhabha's notion become true to the character of Shiva. Bhabha here speaks of 'repetition with a difference'. It is also applicable in the context of Shiva's identities. He stands with a multipositional identities in the novel and it is also proved in this paper that his

multipositional identities are the repetition of the first and now this paper would argue that his repetition of identities is caused with a little difference. At first he leads the street gang within his areas, and then his area is increased in midnight's children group and then in an independence war and then among the whole lovers be it poor or elite as the higher Indian women fall in love with him. Thus repetition of his leadership is changed through time to time.

A concept elaborated by Homi Bhabha, hybridity is thus the rejection of a single or united identity, and a preference for multiple cultural locations and identities. Hybridity can take the form of revival of a pre-colonial past, such as folk or tribal cultural forms and conventions within nativist or even reactionary movements, or adapts the contemporary artistic and social productions to present-day condition of globalization, multiculturalism and transnationalism hybridity, as seen in post-colonial theory, is the answer to the dangers of cultural binarism. Bhabha believes that in between, hybrid nature of identity is preferable to that of fixed, stereotypical one. In both cases, however, one could argue that such a nomadic, in between identity does not always work for say, working class immigrants.

#### *4. Sum Up:*

In this study, Shiva's multipositional identities were investigated. Attempt was done to elaborate on Shiva's life and his floundering in holding on to his original identity. Throughout the whole novel, Shiva's character is portrayed by Saleem, the protagonist. Saleem pieces together and reconstructs Shiva's story from Parvati's account, from the leader of a gang of hooligans in a Bombay slum to India's "most decorated war-hero" is fraught with ironies because he has risen to "commanding heights" as Saleem has fallen and become a penniless slum-dweller. The war of 1971 has reinvented Shiva's life and turned him into a national ideal. The legends of his awe-inspiring exploits during the war spread throughout the country and he is elevated both in military rank and social status. He is invited to innumerable social gatherings to be applauded and monopolized by the noblest and fairest of the country. The beautiful wives of the rich and powerful are attracted to the charismatic army officer and fall into his arms. He grows more refined and sophisticated, and develops a reputation as a great lover and a notorious seducer. As a result a number of illicit children are born from his affairs few later, Parvati tells him that she is pregnant with his child. Their relationship grows violent and Shiva begins to sleep with prostitutes, siring a line of poor illegitimate street urchins to match his earlier lines of rich ones. After the death

of Parvati Shiva comes and captures Saleem. Saleem and other midnight's children undergo sterilisation operations by order of Prime Minister-the doctors removed testicles and whole wombs from the midnight's children who as a result lose all their magical powers. Saleem learns that Shiva had a voluntary vasectomy. He begins to laugh since Shiva's namesake was the god associated with procreation, and Shiva himself has already fathered a whole new generation of midnight's children. Shiva is arrested and later killed by a woman.

Throughout the whole discussion it must be argued that Shiva never achieves his true identity, remains unable to accept or give love represents the alternative side of India who remains unable to shake the legacy of poverty that shaped him multipositional identities. To conclude, Shiva's multipositional identities and his struggles and conflicts within, is some way or rather also typical experiments of writers like Salman Rushdie.

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