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An Analysis of Salman Rushdie's Novel, *Shame* through Homi K. Bhabha's Hybridity and Third Space

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ABSTRACT:- Published in 1983 and regarded as one of the preliminary works of postcolonial and postmodern literature, Salman Rushdie's Shame discusses the pros and cons of a hybrid culture, while it makes readers contemplate upon an ideal society structure based on interculturality with no interference with one's identity. In Shame, Salman Rushdie makes a scrutiny of the inner problems of Pakistan based on indivision and partition while he hopes to demonstrate that the translations of migrants can contribute to literary criticism as part of political acts through the protagonist, Omar Khayyam Shakil identified with the artist Omar Khayyam. Translation always refers to two locations, including the native and target language along with the migrant's journey in borders through a multicultural world. The imaginative frame of the novel alludes to the period of post-partition Pakistan as well as the racist events or movements in the early 1980s. Straddling two cultures time to time and having been exposed to cultural dislocation through migration early in his life, Salman Rushdie explores the problem of identity crisis in a cross-cultural world and analyses the reflections of a fragmented identity in his fiction through an autobiographical lens. Coming from a multi-cultural background, Salman Rushdie strives to undermine the negative connotations about the situation of migrancy and the exilic identities of migrant intellectuals and aims to change them into something positive by eliminating cultural barriers and cultural binaries. Therefore, this paper is dedicated to the study of hybrid identity in Shame, through the lenses of Homi Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and third space.

Keywords - Salman Rushdie, Shame, Homi K. Bhabha, hybridity, identity, third space

I.   INTRODUCTION

During the last century, one of the most prominent topics for discussion has been identity. Identity has affected our language, how we perceive ourselves and our national and international stance as well as our gender. Most of the social studies have allocated a great amount of time and space to the literature of identity. Linguistics, psychology, and literature have been dealing with questions aroused by theoreticians of identity. When one wants to find out who they are, they have been exposed to identity from a wide range of perspectives: gender identity, social identity, political identity, and cultural identity have been some of these perspectives to study and analyse one's own being. Since identity itself is a fluid being, always in process, and always in becoming rather than a fixed entity in itself, postcolonial identity has been one of the most intriguing forms of identity. Theoreticians like Edward Said, Michel Foucault, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha among many others have dedicated an amount of their study to postcolonial identity and migrant identity, which have become the most debated topics these days in the academic world because of the on-going migrant crises of the world. As far as collective identities are concerned in the second half of the twentieth century, Howard's theory of intersectionality is intriguing in the modern sense:

> Group labels such as adolescent, black, working-class were taken to be indisputable identity formations, often serving as social variables against which forms of social behaviour or linguistic usage could be measured... Indeed, a commitment to one or more of these 'labels' is invariably the most common response to the question 'Who am I?' It is only recently that the homogeneity implicit in this version of identity has been challenged and they are acknowledged to intersect. Howard (2000) refers to these as 'theories of intersectionality' [1].

In accordance with Manuel Castells, "people define themselves as belonging to certain entities" [2] (Castells, 2001) in the process of individuation. He implies that these entities such as family or relatives shape the identity

of individuals, while the individual is central to the cultural and social identity in mutual interaction with each other. Castells put the emphasis on individualism, which is the determinative of everything. Moreover, within the concept of globalization, the divided selves of novel characters who are always exposed to fragmentation and identity crisis in a fluid society are highlighted and associated with the turbulent political events in the history of Pakistan. The intrusion of the unknown is celebrated in fiction by Salman Rushdie within the frame of hybridity. Sneja Gunew explains: "While there have always been migrations and diasporas, after two world wars and many other conflicts this century the mix of people within borders increasingly rendered traditional national models anachronistic" [3]. The increasing case of these hybrid identities puts a growing number of people in an 'in-between' space where they are "neither just this/nor just that" [4], "neither the One... nor the Other... but something else besides" [5]. The presence of an outside reality that will intrude upon your comfort area affects the process of identity construction profoundly. It leads to a confusion in distinguishing between reality and representation, since it is very hard to accept them as the reality of daily life. On the other hand, for the construction and reinforcement of national culture, *Shame* always seems to disclose the flaws that inquires to be integrated, giving way for the creation of a narrative, where

> The scraps, patches, and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of national culture, while the very act of the narrative performance interpellates a growing circle of national subjects. In the production of the nation as a narrative, there is a split between the continuous, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of writing the nation [6]

Concentrating on the cultural and national identity, and its reflections on literature, post-colonial writers handle the issue of gender in order to reveal their ideas and share their personal experiences about post-colonialism. Many Middle-Eastern or South-Asian writers focus on gender to analyse identity in their novels. Questioning and scrutinizing femininity and masculinity, Salman Rushdie's *Shame* delve into identity to demonstrate how the characters in the novel are both associated with certain individuals (like historical figures) and the nation of Pakistan in general. One of the most acclaimed and controversial writers of his period and the winner of the Booker of the Bookers, Salman Rushdie has dealt with gender, identity, authenticity, heritage and the concepts of shame and shamelessness in his novels, and has written tremendously on hybrid identities which have been exposed to erasure and invisibleness as well as reconstruction and deconstruction through postcolonial lenses by having been left rootless at times, yet achieved, sometimes failed to achieve a sense of identity. Furthermore, closely identified with postcolonial and postmodern fiction, Salman Rushdie resorts to symbolism, magic realism and historiography, to make a criticism of actual political figures in the history of Pakistan. Having a multi-cultural background, Salman Rushdie strives to undermine the negative connotations about the situation of migrancy, and the exilic identities of migrant intellectuals and to change them into something positive. Therefore, this paper is dedicated to the study of hybrid identity in *Shame*, through the lenses of Homi Bhabha's concept of identity and hybridity.

II.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF HOMI BHABHA'S HYBRIDITY

The term hybridity, which manifested itself firstly in biology through the mixing of different species, has been used in the postcolonial discourse in the last decades. Until Bhabha, the term had negative connotations. It used to mean that in the colonised and coloniser dichotomy, it was just the colonised that had been exposed to erasure. Nevertheless, Bhabha suggests that it is a mutual process, and this dichotomy results in hybridisation of both participants of the act, and it is not necessarily a cause of erasure but a cause of existence. In accordance with Bhabha's concept of the 'third space', hybridity is not so much a convergence of two original identities into a new transcendent one, but rather that the hybrid identity will always be intrinsically split [7]. Bhabha underlines: "the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge" [8]. Antony Easthope suggests that, "Bhabha's hybridity is essentially Derridean difference applied to colonialist texts - the presence of a dominant meaning in a dominant culture can be called into question by referring to the hybridity or difference from which it emerges" [9]. Difference suggests the lack of something, yet when mirrored in a different angle, it erases the other participant as well in Bhabha's account, and a new hybrid form emerges. As stated by Hall, "identities are constructed through, not outside, difference... it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks" [10]. Individuals depend upon the Other to be able to assert that they have a distinct identity because the Other functions as a mirror effect on them just as Derrida' concept of 'difference' is based on the literal difference of words from each other for the meaning to be generated in a signifying system.

When one thinks of hybridity and existence in recent terms, it could be useful to think of language as the constituent of identity. In the primordial times, one could think of a coherent and unified being, maybe a

Scottish villager who never left their village and was exposed to the same language and culture all their lives. The same could apply to many nations in the past. However, through the process of creating identity, through the process of mirror stage and creating identity in the postmodern world, one cannot think of a unified identity since our identities are created and recreated through the interaction with the other. Mikhail Bakhtin's heteroglossia and polyglossia could come in handy to define postmodern and postcolonial identities that have been defined in language. "Homi Bhabha develops his notion of hybridity from Mikhail Bakhtin, who uses it to discriminate texts with a 'single voice' (lyrical poems) from those with a 'double voice' (such as novels, whose narrator cites characters speaking in their own voice — these texts are hybridic)" [11]. In a sense, Bhabha's hybridity is created through polyglossia in the contemporary world). The individual self is inclusive of the "postmodern self", which is directly connected to some key terms such as 'subjectivity', 'fluidity', 'uncertainty', 'decentring', and 'fragmentation'. However, simultaneously there is an inclination towards resurrecting the real self in this unsecure world. The postmodern individual does not have a permanent self as it has a hybrid existence. It is exposed to a constant process of change as long as it constructs and deconstructs itself again and again while interacting with the Other and different selves.

With all the nations interacting with one another and particularly when the formerly colonised countries are taken into consideration, talking about a unified and non-hybridic identity would not make much sense and Easthope claims that "the non-hybridic has two related features. One is a commitment to 'unitary' or 'originary' identity, identity as 'presence', identity therefore represented by the supposedly transcendental ego" [12]. However, this transcendental ego would mean being closed to a space and rejecting all the developments of humanity. Even the Amish and the Aborigines are being exposed to change in the contemporary world. When particularly the coloniser/colonised dichotomy are taken into consideration, "any cultural claim staked upon the homogeneity of the nation already authorizes the alternatives, detours and embellishments that antagonize its intention" [13]. This would mean, through language and through translation when there is interaction between two species or two cultures, there would be a new arena for the identity to be reconstructed. Bhabha claims that in the core of the discourse of identity there are two standpoints: "the philosophical tradition of identity as the process of self-reflection in the mirror of (human) nature; and the anthropological view of the difference of human identity as located in the division of Nature/Culture" [14]. Hybridity, therefore, is created in this dichotomy, in the crash or melting point of these cultures. Since we are no longer talking about the melting pot of Ford, or no longer living in a world which is evidently occupied by a single culture, it would not be wrong to assume that each culture is mutually affected by one another. However, the centre and the periphery still exist, and while there is interaction between cultures, one is more likely to be affected from the other more.

To summarise the viewpoint of Homi Bhabha, this paper is basically about how language and how translation create identity together in the postcolonial discourse. Although the starting point is difference, the melting point is about polyglossia. In each culture that has interacted with the others, one can also think of the migrant situation which is reflected in Salman Rushdie's novels in a high degree. The second part of the paper therefore deals with Rushdie's *Shame* in that he unites not only two cultures but three cultures in interaction and their roots or rootlessness based on artificial and authentic difference and mirror stage. The characters in the novel similarly reflect their fragmentariness or hybridity.

III.   CULTURAL HYBRIDITY IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *SHAME*

Unlike its predecessor novel *Midnight's Children*, which was set in India right after the partition as a political allegory, and reflected the status of the two emerging countries, *Shame* is set in a country; one might assume Pakistan, but not quiet Pakistan according to the narrator of the novel. Salman Rushdie often states his resentment to the partition of India and Pakistan. He claims that the partition did not take place on natural grounds, but it was a difference that was artificially created. He celebrates the multi-vocal status of India, and has been for the cultural interaction of Pakistan and India. Pakistan is an acronym, for its constituents, for its people. It is created in language and the narrator of the novel says, "It is well known that the term 'Pakistan', an acronym, was originally thought up in England by a group of Muslim intellectual…So it was a word born in exile which went East, was borne across or translated, and imposed itself on history; a returning migrant" [15]. The hyphenated statuses of the words borne across and translated suggest that this partition did not take place on natural grounds. Byrne also states that this results in the prominence of migration, since the act of naming can also be contemplated as a kind of migration. Although for Rushdie, the hybrid identity that is tried to be created within this country was already there within the borders of India, since the partition took place, translation and migration turn out to be tropes that contribute to the creation of hybrid identities throughout the novel.

The protagonist, the hero, of the novel, Omar Khayyam Shakil, is borne on the deathbed of his grandfather right after the partition and independence. He is an upside-down hero; he is a peripheral hero. In postmodernist fiction, the centre and the periphery, once again another dichotomy is played with by the novelists. The protagonists of these postmodernist novels are taken from the periphery, and their identities are constructed in a wide range of becoming. Omar Khayyam is a poet, who belongs to a different culture, yet is

aroused by Salman Rushdie to give a hybrid character to the novel's hero. Rushdie states that "the three sisters gave a name, too, to that underlit corridor edifice that was now all the country they possessed: the housed was named 'Nishapur'" [16]. Nishapur is both the name of the estate of Omar Khayyam Shakil and the hometown of Omar Khayyam, the poet. Taking a medieval poet from the archive, "The house, then, becomes the metaphor for a larger, collective past, and its inhabitants, the three sisters, a metaphor for a people who will not feel shame, will not give in to repentance" [17]. The central theme of the novel, shame, will never be felt by the protagonist of the novel through the desire of the three sisters. The cultural part of Pakistan, shame, is banished from Omar Khayyam Shakil's identity by the sisters. However, shame is a part of the space the country encompasses. "Wherever I turn, there is something of which to be ashamed. But shame is like everything else; live with it for long enough and it becomes part of the furniture. In 'Defence', you can find shame in every house, burning in an ashtray, hanging framed upon a wall, covering a bed." [18].

The birth and the miracles surrounding the birth of Omar Khayyam are also astounding in that they create a hybrid identity as well. The three nose-in-the-air daughters of the rich father get pregnant after a controversial party night when all the constituents of the place were at the mansion Nishapur. One of the Shakil girls get pregnant to the child of a former colonizer, yet all the girls have the same symptoms. They all act as a unit, as one person and "they swear a sort of oath that they will not let the secret out and the oath makes the bond between them so strong, they become like one person" [19]. All the mothers of Omar Khayyam breastfeed him, and act as one mother, and he never finds out who his real mother was. Therefore, he has been nurtured by three mothers: England, India, and Pakistan.

Another important characteristic of hybridity that is reflected in the novel is the border. The border is where when you trespass it, you might need a passport, or you might need a new kind of identity. Bhabha himself states this concern over the border and ask the following questions about the border: "Vacillating boundaries - psychic, cultural, territorial. Where do you draw the line between languages? between cultures? between disciplines? between peoples?" [20]. When Omar Khayyam Shakil reaches to the border the very first time, in the Impossible Mountains, he feels like this: "at once a cloud came down and sat on the ground right along the frontier, like it couldn't get across without a visa, and that Shakil was so scared he passed out, he got vertigo and fainted, even though he had both feet on the ground" [21]. He feels rootless, without an identity at that very moment. Needham claims that this paves the ground for Rushdie to create "characters/experiences situated on borders [and] constitute one of the ways in which Rushdie scrutinizes the questions or problems that beset definitions of a post-colonial expatriate's identity" [22]. Realising this, we could claim that this sense of rootlessness, and the sense of being shattered and being put in an upside-down situation creates the hybrid identity that Khayyam Shakil yearns for in the long run. Since identity is created in the language, another trope that needs to be emphasised is the concern with translation. Through translation, identity is created. However, what are translated here are not merely the words. Rushdie's narrator finds themselves in a difficult situation as to how to create identity and how to reflect it:

> The narrator of *Shame,* finding himself in this liminal borderline position, must be drawn into in the juggling of cultures, histories and languages … his investigation of the difficulty of finding a space to speak from comes through the problems of speaking from both inside and out of the territory he rewrites. His vision is self-consciously partial as he both narrates and reads the events, detached and yet connected. He inhabits a problematic space, realising Bhabha's 'in-betweenness' having been translated from one culture to another but not existing fully in either" [23].

Translation becomes the turning point of identity in *Shame* as the novel's hero gets his name from the Persian poet Omar Khayyam. Omar Khayyam's works have been translated into many languages in Europe and the poet "underwent, as the narrator points out, what was 'really a complete reworking of his verses, in many cases very different from the spirit (to say nothing of the content) of the original.' The narrator's identity, too, as 'a translated man,' …is open to similar dislocations and distortions" [24]. However, since our focus is not hybridity, is something lost in translation as many suggest it? Can something be gained? What is gained in translation is hybridity as Rushdie claims in the novel: "Outsider! Trespasser! You have no right to this subject! [. . .] We reject your authority. We know you, with your foreign language wrapped around you like a flag: speaking about us in your forked tongue, what can you tell but lies?" [25]. One might feel like it is impossible to give the exact meaning, but through translating, and through distance, one could project identity and the language to a new discourse. It gives ways to distortions but also a new way of thinking and speaking. The word shame is taken from Urdu in the text as a word that cannot be translated into English in the sense that the Pakistani uses it; however, its lack, sharam, the lack of its representation or misrepresentation in Said's terms also creates a new hybrid identity in Bhabha's context.

Another trope that should be focused on is historicism in terms of identity. The idea of rootlessness is transparent in *Shame*. Pakistan, as a new country, was separated from India based on religious reasons. However, the characters feel themselves stripped of their history and past and are projected to a new realm. One of the prominent characters in the novel, Bilquis "experiences partition as an explosion, one that strips her naked

and simultaneously strips her of her past. Also, critically, it locates her, enforcing a religious identity and a separation from the population of Delhi behind the walls of a fortress" [26]. The idea of losing one's whole identity overnight is reflected like an earthquake, an explosion in the novel. "Having been stripped naked by history, the process by which she is reclothed mirrors that of Pakistan's new and fragile state. Undressed by history, she is dressed by the future, in what appears as a realisation of what Bhabha terms the ambivalence of nation" [27]. Since a national identity is no longer possible in its own, her identity intermingles with the identity of a nation. She just does not lose her identity and history: She loses her father in that explosion too. Similar to Omar Khayyam Shakil, her parentage and the parental roles were upside down. Lacking a mother, her father turned into a woman for her to nurture her. Both India and Pakistan, as locations, are reflected to be left without a family member. Characters experience doubleness, identity crises or internal conflicts while forging a new identity for themselves and tracing their history. They are exposed to reconstruction and deconstruction all the time. "For the migrant, like Bilquis Hyder, time cracks, space changes, the trappings of identity are removed and replaced. She crosses, migrates, loses and remakes" [28].

The migrant character emerges as a hybrid character in the novel. The narrator, like Bilquis Hyder defines themselves as "I, too, know something of this immigrant business. I am an emigrant from one country (India) and a newcomer in two (England, where I live and Pakistan, to which my family moved against my will)" [29]. Being a migrant is a forced identity as Althusser would have called this as repressive. This repression is reflected in the novel as:

> I must tell you what things were like in those early days after the partition: the city's old inhabitants, who had become accustomed to living in a land older than time, and were therefore being slowly eroded by the implacably revenant tides of the past had been given a bad shock by independence by being told to think of themselves, as well as the country itself as new … The newness of those days felt pretty unstable; it was a dislocated, rootless thing [30].

The characters feel lacking, yet they have to form a new kind of identity, which is somehow overwhelmed by nostalgia. For the sake of cohesion, one needs a long time as well as a coherent hybrid identity. "*Shame*'s emphasis upon mobile and dispersed identities accords with its focus upon the historical experience of the *mohajir* community and the influence it has exerted upon Pakistani nationhood" [31]. Pakistan, becoming a migrant community, suffers from this mobility and fluid characters with fluid identity. However, since hybridity and identity are terms of becoming, this novel could be representing it par excellence.

The past and the present intermingle in the novel through the character of Sufiya Zinobia. She reflects the perfect hybrid character of the novel. Her name means bad news. Although she is a woman in terms of appearance, she is a child in her mental age. "The past only accrues meaning as it reverberates in the 'present.' [She represents] the oppressive contradictions of the post-colonial subject. Rushdie informs us that his protagonist was born out of the ghost of an immigrant girl in London, axed to death by her father for sleeping with a white boy" [32]. Sufiya is claimed to be haunted by the past, but she is the present. She is the only character, who, although being locked into a closed space, achieves freedom. Since she alludes to the madwoman in the attic, Sufiya's hybridity is threatening as it can deconstruct cultural absolutism. However, in order for a hybrid identity to emerge, we need a clash, and we need a reconstruction and deconstruction through discourse.

IV.   CONCLUSION

Salman Rushdie achieves in creating a wide range of hybrid identities in *Shame* through translation, migration, centre/periphery dislocation, and rootlessness. Although at first, these identities seemed to be problematic in a sense, they would achieve a more coherent sense of being in the future. As identity itself is a referent to the idea of becoming, these postcolonial characters are projected to becoming through discourse in the novel through the lenses of Homi Bhabha's term of hybridity. As an expatriate writer, Salman Rushdie focuses on the problems of definition for the identity of a post-colonial Indian writer struggling to acquire a politically viable place in England and questions it in a 1983 essay:

> What does it mean to be an "Indian" outside India? How can culture be preserved without becoming ossified? How should we discuss the need for change within ourselves and our community without seeming to play into the hands of our racial enemies? What are the consequences, both spiritual and practical, of refusing to make concessions to Western ideas and practices? What are the consequences of embracing those ideas and the practices and turning away from ones that came with us? [33]

Rushdie's novel *Shame* presents a more optimistic frame in terms of hybrid societies and the situation of migrant communities. The occasion of "shame" refers to the in-between situation of migrants that act with an ambivalent identity in an unsecure world despite their hope to destroy the cultural borders and to get rid of the feeling of shame. As a postcolonial writer in a migrant position, Salman Rushdie employs the politics of shame in her novel to demonstrate how migrants feel or what they go through in their intersection with the Other.

Writing from the frontiers of his nation, he intends to demolish all the borders that prevent migrants from completing their transformations in their identities and finding themselves. As observed by Edward Said, "most of the post-colonial writers bear their past within them – as scars of humiliating wounds, as instigation for different practices, as potentially revised visions of the past tending towards a future, as urgently reinterpretable and redeployable experiences in which the formerly silent native speaks and acts on territory taken back from the colonialist" [34] (Said, 1986: 54-55). Moreover, with its decentred subjects, fragmented narrative structure, and the plurality of roots and worlds, *Shame* is portrayed as a postmodern novel that sheds light on the problems of a postcolonial society that focuses on the reconstruction of cultural and national identity in literature. By playing with the word 'shame' and creating magical characters, Rushdie makes a criticism of traditional gender roles and reflects tradition as a barrier in fighting against British racism. Searching for how shame and shamelessness shape society and individuals, Rushdie also delves into gender bias, violence born out of shame, and male violence in the recent history of Pakistan through symbols and metaphors.

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