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Uprootedness And Cosmopolitan Moments In Salman Rushdie's The Golden House

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Abstract

Diaspora refers to the expression of one's feeling of being an outsider or alien in some other, the feeling which keeps on popping up repeatedly in front of them. The diasporic people were migrants, slaves, transported convicts, labourers etc. The reason behind the chase of the people was colonisation. As a result, the diaspora's culture contained nothing but what the migrants imagined of their homelands and their feelings of tradition. It is an echo of reminiscence of the movement, the thoughts of their homelands, the sense of tradition and the circumstances. Both cultural fragmentation and ambivalence run a parallel in the diaspora.

Rushdie expresses his dilemma as an immigrant when he says he is an Indian-born who migrated to Pakistan, then to England and settled in New York. This immigration to various places greatly affects his life, which outpours in his works. His works show how he finds himself unable to cope with the alien lands and look for his roots. As an immigrant, Rushdie feels alienated from his country as well as from his religion.

Rushdie is a child of two different cultures and is one of the few Indians to write about the two communities with almost equal affection and understanding. His achievements as a writer, to a large degree, depend on his fictional prose. His fictional prose is significant for Rushdie as a writer and the development of Indian English in general.

Whatever Rushdie feels, he writes. The ideas presented by his characters are his ideas, and the voice of his characters is his voice; for this, Rushdie creates fantastic characters.

Keywords: Identity, displacement, cultural, nomadic, dislocation, transculturalism.

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Introduction

“Uprootedness and Cosmopolitan Moments in *The Golden House*” deals with cosmopolitan vernacular identities that will be explored in Rushdie’s *The Golden House*. This paper tries to prove that the novel is another postmillennial one which can be considered a representation of cosmopolitan fiction. This chapter also vividly traces the employment of various cosmopolitan narrative devices. This paper also investigates why the novel is set on the theme of universal identity with the Nero Golden, who choose to settle in New York. Identity has become an option in the contemporary world, besides investigating the vernacular conception of identity issues and thematic demonstration in the novel that employs new formal and narrative qualities.

Universal Identity

Universal identity is the progress made by self, determined by the detachment from a set of people and creating distinctive options, inclusive of the vital procedure of self-title. The novel’s major characters are fine illustrations of self-creating with their options. Migration, to Rushdie, to New York does not mean being an exile but an alternative. The father of the three in the novel terms himself Nero Golden as the great king of Rome, and his three sons also name themselves with Greek names:

They conversed sometimes in the speech of Rome or Athens, as if these were everyday tongue, just a couple of the myriad vocabularies of New York. Earlier, in Bombay, he had told them, ‘Choose your classical names,’ and in their choices, we can see that the sons’ pretensions were more literary, more mythological, than the father’s imperial longings..... They became Petronius, Lucius Apuleius and Dionysus. (*The Golden House* 41)

Nero’s feeling of self-title is of a rich cosmopolitan with economic and cultural benefits. He possesses his safe zone that conveys his real ‘self’ in which he feels the power of authority, as head of his family, posing in the courtyard of his golden house and the future emperor.

Vasillisa Arsenyeva, who seduces Nero for his wealth, is a significant character. Her self-image reflects the Golden’s’. Her aspirations to arrive in America to eliminate her past in Russia are evident. She affirms: “I have been able to come to America and I am grateful for it but also I know my presence here is the fruit of my own labour, so there is nobody actually to thank.” (TGH.89).

Nero’s eldest son Petya, Petronious Golden in America, is portrayed as a genius boy of the contemporary world despite his social deficiency, including his anxiety disorder, verbal outbreaks and high-functioning autism. He is found to consume his time playing video games in his room filled with blue light. Later, he became the maker of many popular video games that earned him an immense reputation. The universal language of Petya is his mobile games that are very popular among users and are recognised worldwide by the public. His games are listed at the top and are given prestigious acknowledgement. His constant visit to his doctor Murray Lett, a hypnotherapist, does not give fruitful results. Especially after the woman he falls in love with, Ubah Tuur, has been proposed to by his sibling, Apuleius, he suffers the loss of the long-term love of the couple. As his peace of mind is shaken, he loses his tranquillity to the point of beginning fire in the hall where the artists exhibit their works.

Apuleius, who likes to be identified as Apu, is another self-possessed universalist cosmopolitan based on his choices and identification in New York after departing from his old country. Cultural cosmopolitanism highlights the probable fluidity of the identity of a person. Apu makes use of cosmopolitan territory to become what he desires to be. His greed for America allows him to be omnivorous and likely to adopt any social changes. Rene is astounded by his attachment with America when Apu turns emotional with tears after coming across Rene’s account, which occurred at night when Barack Obama was chosen American President. They both feel elated at the election results reflecting their response to America’s approval of difference. The result of the election with the idea of

cosmopolitanism is indicated in Rene's incident at night when the American President is elected. Like Rene, cosmopolitans red the city to celebrate the victory:

"I walked the streets half the night, going to Rockefeller Centre and Union Square, watching the crowds of young people like myself shining with the knowledge that, perhaps for the first time, they had by their own direct actions changed their country's course" (TGH.53).

The event made Rene realise that conviviality is an incredible one in American history, which will establish to be disclaimed later on with the political hyper-vigilance of the novel.

Apu Golden is depicted as a greedy **agoraphile** who wanders the city; as other cosmopolitans do, he embraces them all. He visits the clubs, the gamblers and the dancing queens. "Away from his studio, he ran" (55).

Matching himself with the concepts of observing the city, he lives like an artist involving himself in abstract ideas. Class divisions that he cannot overcome characterise the city's cosmopolitan life. The art studio at Union Square, run by Apu, has become a hub for cosmopolitans. Apu organised an exhibition for displaying his paintings of his customers and entitled the show "The Privilege of Owning Yourself", which stands unique and suggests the liberty of choice in describing identities. His attire, too, depicts him as a universalist cosmopolitan. The new lifestyle indicates that Apu's status aligns with the Mikhail concept. Apu knows the strategy in which he can keep different groups of friends and elite cosmopolitans.

The youngest of Nero Golden, Dionysus, possesses the characteristics of a self-fashioning cosmopolitan individuality concerning what he desires to become. To his desire, he chooses to be called Dionysus, the mythological name, and further, it is shortened to "D". Gender identity plays a significant role with D, who chooses to make a feeling of 'god' in him chiefly because Dionysus the god was a stranger, and of resurrection. He bears the characteristics of a woman. The pseudonym was chosen by the youngest of the Golden. He has completely become free to choose his gender identity in cosmopolitan New York. Riya, the girlfriend of D, detects some novel gestures in him since being queer from being a man. She remarkably interrogates him about his desires at home to occupy the position of his stepmother. Riya, a supporter and girlfriend to D, is a curator of a museum and a lesbian, which eases him with a sense of belonging to her: "MTF was male to female, FTM was vice versa. Now she was pouring words over him, gender fluid, bigender, agender, trans with an asterisk: trans*. (TGH.73). D can assume the suitable ones for himself from this lego-set of identities.

Riya is well aware and skilled at reading the hints and observing the chaotic past of D and his gender personality, which conveys that he is likely to change. Recollecting the past, D watches him with great excitement at a Michael Jackson concert in Bombay. At twelve, with the presence of a gigantic "hijra" with clothing typical of the opposite sex, D senses mixed feelings of disgust, incredulity and fascination. The incident lies as a cause of D's ultimate transformation. The choice of D is encouraged by Riya – whatever it be – by referring to and reading a book loudly about the concepts of cross-gender identity in India's history. Riya continues to know about those hijras who typically adopt those new forms to alien lands, where new groups form around them. The lifestyle of hijras echoes in the life of D and makes him discard his lifestyle in the house of the Golden. Thus D moves into Riya's house in Chinatown. A contemporary identity crisis is very much evident at the heart of the novel. D's unstable gender identity can be witnessed to leave from being a cosmopolitan. D, like other persons in the Golden, fails to achieve vernacular cosmopolitanism as found by Riya. Eventually, D dies due to lacking the basic vernacular sensation of love.

To Salman Rushdie, the universal identity has something to convey with his wisdom, insisting on himself as a renowned-city writer. He believes that New York City has become a part of how the world is now, fairly due to the vast migration. Thus, diversity has become a common element of identity. With this

outline, a cosmopolitan outlook must be considered as an ultimate form of the identity-making procedure of the characters of Rushdie.

The characters in *The Golden House* represent various complex allegiance, interest and identity repertoires. The novel renders individuals independent of commitments to any cultural, ethnic or racial community. They are the important constituents of contemporary cosmopolitanism. Universalism requires assorted forms of individual and cultural belongingness. The novel's narrator elucidates the Golden's dream to free themselves from the rooted.

The conditions of contemporary identity disposed towards the 'personal', 'detached', 'individual' and 'private' point out the untrue aspirations of universalist cosmopolitanism in new territories, termed 'the new world' in which the individuals desire to get away from memory, roots, language and race. They desire to move into the land called America.

The Golden House observes universal tendencies and disassociation from vernacular identities, a venture of American cosmopolitanism. The contradiction over universalism lies with the ghost stories of an old lady, Mrs. Stone. She lives in the Gardens and visits Rene after his parents' death. She says she saw a black-boy ghost walking on his knees on Macdougall Alley. Others, too, can witness the ghosts of dead people. The stories of ghosts are not new to Rene; he even directly observes Nero Golden conversing with the spirits of his dead wives and seeking forgiveness for having killed them. These supernatural elements are carefully handled in the narrative, and it is evident that the indispensability of the past keeps bothering the citizens who wish to forget their past.

The new form of cosmopolitanism allows discussion of national, gender and other forms of identity. The presence of gender in these museums is evident, and gender fluidity has become a universal phenomenon which exists in different cultures. Though gender identity is traced to be alterable from ancient times, as noted in the statues of gods and goddesses, this variety has become an acceptable part of life in cosmopolitanism. This has become an everyday discussion for D and his female friends. The two women recommend the transformation of transgender, transsexual, and cross-dresser instead of the type 'he'.

You should think about pronouns, however. Words are important. If you're giving up he, who steps in? You could choose they. If you decide you don't identify as either female or male. They equals unknown gender identity. Very private.

'There's also ze.'

'There's also ey.'

'There's also hir, xe, hen, ve, ne, per, thon, and Mx.'

'You see. There's a lot.' (TGH.111).

Like other of identity, gender is a part of the choice that shapes cosmopolitan identities. Thus it is proved that much freedom is dangerous, and it ruins life's ending as D's. Having lost in the abundant choices and a state of uprootedness, D fails to balance the identity crisis, the vulnerable disease of contemporary time.

Universal identity is a choice compiled by a set of self-designing processes rather than associated with any allegiances. Therefore, the concept of choice must be meticulously handled so as not to consider it a complete disassociation from local affiliations altogether. Vernacular cosmopolitanism stresses the inability to sweep away an identity's historical, local description. As a result, the Golden's take a wrong turn to be called cosmopolitans by striving to manage the local and vernacular identifications. They desire to relinquish their roots and origin and aspire to confirm their identity formation. Their precariousness drags the Golden's to a destructive end.

Rushdie expresses his dilemma as an immigrant when he says he is an Indian-born who migrated to Pakistan, then to England and settled in New York. This immigration to various places greatly affects his life, which outpours in his works. His works show how he finds himself unable to cope with the alien lands and look for his roots. As an immigrant, Rushdie feels alienated from his country as well as from his religion. Rushdie is a baby of two cultures and one of the Indians to document the two communities with equal affection and understanding. Whatever Rushdie feels, he writes. The ideas presented by his characters are his ideas, and the voice of his characters is his voice for this; Rushdie creates fantastic characters.

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