

**UNVEILING THE TAPESTRY OF IDENTITY: A CRITICAL
ANALYSIS OF IDENTITY THEORY IN *THE GOLDEN HOUSE***

Dissertation

*Submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the
award of Degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature*

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I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled **Unveiling the Tapestry of Identity: A Critical Analysis of Identity Theory in *The Golden House*** is a bonafide record of research done by **Anjali K S** (Register Number AIAWMEG004), has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Fellowship or other similar title.

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Place: P.Vemballur

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Chapter I

Introduction

Every human being, once in their life time may have questioned about their self-identity. This is a unique feature that human beings have from the rest of the animals. The power of reasoning makes them think about their existence which clears results in search of self or identity. Some finds their identity but most of them fail to understand their true identity. Our self is made up of different identities which can be categorized in terms of role in society, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, race, age, class and so on. Identity theory became popular during 1988. Many inventions, reformations and extensions happened in the field of this theory after 1988. The idea of questioning the self lead to these extensions. The identity theory mainly focuses on the different identities that are inhibited in an individual. It is a multicultural theory which has its foundations in literature, psychoanalysis, sociology etc. Although many studies have come on the work *The Golden House*, no one has analyzed the same through the lens of identity theory so far. In this project by analyzing the select novel *The Golden House* by Salman Rushdie under the light of identity theory, an attempt is made to achieve an understanding about the concept of identity and its significance in the contemporary world.

The first chapter provides a brief introduction to the subject. The second chapter deals with how identity is influenced by different external and internal factors and how it changes the identity of the characters in *The Golden House*. The third chapter deals with the escaping mechanism of disguising identity and the self-discovery of the characters in the end. The fourth chapter deals with the identity and role of the narrator Rene in this novel. And the fifth and the final chapter is the conclusion of the given study.

Many of the identity researchers proved the influence of society in one's behavior. The social identity that one acquires is the result of how we behave or react in certain societal situations. Delving in to the history of identity theory, Jan E Stets and Peter J. Burke in their work *The Development of Identity Theory* states the fact that Washington State University (WSU) was the main center where this identity theory thrived. Society and the structure has an important role in shaping one's identity like the role of father, mother etc. Everyone has their one concept about this role identity. The situations and experience makes them choose their particular role. For example it is common in our society to constrict the identity of a woman to their positions like wife after their marriage and to mother after giving birth. But these identities can co-exist together. It is possible to be a mother, wife, and a hardworking earner. It is our individual role choice which forms our identity.

Jan E Stets and Richard T. Serpe in their work *Identity Theory* give us more information about this theory. They discuss about the root of these theories as well as the major concepts of the theory. Identity can be read in many ways. The meaning of identity changes from person to person. It can be described as the self-recognition of an individual or how society sees an individual (35).

One of the most incredible extensions in the field of identity theory is the invention of perceptual control system. Identity verification, one of the important concepts of identity theory is connected with this perceptual control system. In a situation when an identity is activated a feedback loop with five components are activated. Identity standard, perceptual input, comparator and emotion. First one is one's self-perception about himself and the second one is the perception that he got from the feedback or the appraisals of the society. Comparator compares these two elements and the fourth process emotion gives us the idea how many similar these two

perceptions are. It is an automatic process which happens in every individual especially in those who think and observe more (Stets and Serpe 35).

Identities can be organized according to three bases that are Role, Group and person. Role identity is closely connected to the social structure. Without the participation of society this identity formation is not possible. Understanding our role and position in society is crucial in this process. These roles are the expectations that society has on one individual. It can be the role of a teacher, student or a parent. When we acquire such an identity we are obliged to perform certain duties connected to it. For example, being a teacher we have to be morally responsible for every action and words, and being a parent we have to take care of your children. Group identity is connected to a specific set of group that we are part of. The interactions with these groups make it more acceptable. It can be family, your workspace, your friend's group etc. Family is the most influential one in this. Through the interactions with these groups we acquire some identities. For example certain moral values from your family. If we are part of any organisation then we will have to behave according to that group's rule. All these attributes contribute to the group identity of that person. Person identity stands out from other two identities. This identity showcases the uniqueness each individual has. It acquires the traits that a human being acquires without the help of any other person or group. These traits outshine the most even if we are a part of a group. These ones are internalized by the person through his situations and experiences. There are situations where all these identities overlap. And it is always a hectic task to separate these identities (Stets & Serpe 38).

Identity salience is the ability of individuals to act out an identity according to the situations. It is the readiness or probability of revealing a particular identity to

someone. The salience of identity will be measured according to the certainty of their identity performance (Stets & Serpe 42).

Multiple identities are a common topic in the field of identity theory. Every individual has different entities in them. It is the situation that brings out each of these identities. These multiple identities are interrelated. It can read through two different perspectives. Internal perspective reflects on how these multiple identities are connected to the self. And the external perspective reflects on how these multiple identities are connected to the social positions that the individuals hold. Internal perspective includes control hierarchy which suggests the concept of hierarchical system of identity. William T. Powers introduced this concept of hierarchical system for the easy comprehension of complex identities. The highest level is called the principle level which consists of the person, group and role identities. The level just below this is called the program level. The principle level sets goals and standard for the program level and if it is accomplished the identity meaning remains otherwise it is modified. Among the principle level person identity is the highest level and is also called the master identity. This person identity influences the choosing of the role identity and group identity. For example if the person have a person identity of being cruel then he will choose his group identity and role identity like a robber or mafia etc. by choosing this way it will maintain all his multiple identities (Stets and Serpe 42).

Salience hierarchy is another aspect of internal perspective. The more salient identity will be active than the lower ones in most of the situations. The situations have great influence in triggering every identity. Situations decide the salience of each identity. The situational meaning gives the choice of identity to the individuals. Delving deep in to the external perspective of multiple identities role has an important

position in it. Human being is a social animal. Living in a society we have certain positions and these positions come along with responsibilities. P. A Thoits in his work *Multiple Identities and Psychological Well-being: A Reformulation and Test of the Social Isolation Hypothesis* argues that this different role helps in relieving stress and anxiety. These roles or multiple identities provide a light of meaning in people's life who is confused about their core existence. It increases over self-confidence and gives more positivism rather than creating confusions and chaos. Next aspect is group which emerges out of our membership in a particular group. There can be situations where the person claims identity of one group but in certain situations exhibit another identity. This is also based on the situations. Multiple identities thus co-exist together without destructing the other (Stets and Serpe 44-45).

The meaning of identity may not be same every time. It shifts according to time, experience and situations. It is a dynamic process which goes on gradually. The person will not find any difference in their identity, but if we observe precisely differences can be seen by passing of time. Identity change can occur in different ways. First when the standard identity meaning is different from the behavioural meaning. This conflict will reflect in the identity change. When the reflected appraisals of the people do not match with the standard identity meaning, the identity of the person will have a gradual shift according to these appraisals. Another way is the difference in situational meaning and the standard identity. There are many situations where we have to act out of our identity. For example after becoming a father, the identity of an employee will change to a father also. Social structure is free and open that we can choose the identity according to the situation and the salience. And the change of identity can occur according to the change of identity salience (Stets and Burke 75-78).

Identity theory is applicable in so many levels. Now a days gender has become a widely discussed topic. Gender is highly connected to identity theory. Gender is term which is constructed by the society. The idea that women are submissive and men are dominating can from the prejudices of society. Physically it is true that women are weak. But that does not mean that they are weak, under confident and talent less in every aspect. Identity theory had made much more changes in the society which undervalues women. Even in the empowerment of Queer people identity theory have helped a lot. Through the verification of their identity they discover themselves in various situations.

Law and order has benefited through this theory in many ways.No human being is born as a criminal. The situations and the harsh experiences they had in their life make them commit serious crimes. Identity theory explores the factors affecting ones identity formation like family, childhood trauma, economic factors etc. through analysing these factors we get an idea about the culprit which will help in choosing the methods for his redemption in jail or rehab (Stets and Burke 82-86)

Identity theory is closely connected with so many other theories. Social identity theory is the most common one in this list. The differences and similarities between these two often confuse the readers. Analysing the history of identity theory Stets and Serpe suggests;

In social identity theory, identities are understood in terms of membership in one category or another. Self-categorization involves people identifying the prototypical attributes of a category and seeing themselves as having these attributes. In turn, they will feel and act according to the norms of the group. Social identity theorists could incorporate the more nuanced understanding of identities in identity theory by describing the self in terms of meanings rather

than self- categorizations. The self could be conceptualized along an array of meanings, and in terms of having higher or lower levels of these meanings, rather than in dichotomous terms. (55)

People identify themselves mostly as a part of a group they have their own benefits of being part of that group. But identity theory focuses on all levels like person, group and role. Affect control theory is another theory which resembles identity theory. The main difference between these two theories is that the identity theory mainly focuses on maintaining the standard identity. In every situation they try to uphold the meaning held in their identity. But in affect control theory they try to maintain all the fundamental meaning according to the situations. This includes one's own identity, others identity in the situation, behavioural meanings in the situations and the setting meanings (Stets and Serpe 54).

Salman Rushdie is a British author born in India. Rushdie is famous for his controversial works and statements. *The Golden House* is his eleventh novel. His other notable works are *The Satanic Verses*, *Midnight's Children*, *Shame*, *Fury*, *The Moor's Last sigh*, *Grimus*, *The Enchantress of Florence*, *Shalimar the Clown*, *Quichotte*, *Victory City*, *Two Years Eight Months Twenty-Eight Nights* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Other than novels he also wrote essays, memoirs, and children's fiction. He has received several honorary awards like Golden Pen Award, Pen Pinter Prize etc. The most prestigious among these is the Booker Prize in 1981 for *Midnight's Children*. It also won Booker of Booker and Best of the Booker.

Controversies are always a part of Salam Rushdie's life. Among the controversy due to writing the novel *The Satanic Verses* stands first. The Muslim community sentiment was brutally injured by the publication of this novel. They condemned the novel as blasphemous. Rushdie even got death threats and many book

stores were destroyed in the protest. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini condemned this book from publishing. Rushdie went to exile because of the death threat. He continued to write with courage after the death threat. In 2022 he was attacked while attending an event in New York. He lost his left eye in this attack and he wrote a memoir on this attack titled *Knife: Meditations After an Attempted Murder*. Rushdie is one among the hit list of the terrorist organisation Al-Qaeda for insulting Islam. When he got the Knighthood in 2007 Al-Qaeda condemned this award by saying it is an insult to Islam.

Magic Realism is the style which mostly used by Salam Rushdie. His work *Midnight's Children* is a perfect example for this style. In that novel he tells the story of group of children who were born on the each time of Independence. Through his style of Magical realism he explores the supernatural powers of the children and connects the plot with the plight of India after Independence. More than imagination his commitment towards social issues are clear from his writing. He blends fantasy and reality together which results in open ended discussions about the political situations in post independent India. More than a fantasy novel it is a political allegory of India. Intervention of Indian culture and mythologies is an integral part in Rushdie's works. His cultural knowledge is clearly reflected in most of his novels. By talking the liberty of imagination he fulfills his dreams as a Indian writer who is in exile.

Being one of the major figures in diaspora literature, identity crisis has always been common topic in his works. From his debut novel *Grimus* he is dealing with topic of post-colonial diaspora in his works. His famous collection of essays *Imaginary Homelands* clearly depicts his inner turmoil and yearning for his homeland. He beautifully crafts the construction of imaginary homeland, which is

present in every diaspora writers mind. He shares his experiences in India when Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister. The essay collection, the portrayal of diaspora writer's life who is in search of some imaginary homeland. In this search for identity comes as major milestone. The search of cultural roots can be seen in his every novel.

The Golden House is a novel in which he clearly came out of his style of Magic Realism. The novel was published in 2017 followed by *Quichotte*. The novel is set in New York where the author explores the chances of regaining his Indian identity. Some reviewers compare this novel with F Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. His experimenting in his realism is main attraction of this novel. He uses his knowledge of mythology, cinema, fables, history and contemporary politics in this novel.

The novel is set around the life of Golden family which includes Nero Golden, a business man with dark past and his three sons. The novel starts with the inauguration of the new president of America Barack Obama. The Golden family has migrated from India to New York buys a house in New York's Greenwich Village. The neighbourhood of the Golden family were surprised with the new members because the house that they bought was one of the richest properties in New York. This curiosity of the neighbourhood is symbolised in our one character, Rene Unterlinden our narrator. Rene is an aspiring filmmaker and curious person. He chooses the life of Golden family as his first film. For that he starts spying on them. The head of Family Nero Golden is a mysterious person who hides something from his past. Later in the novel it is revealed that he was part of a mafia group. And the past he was hiding was related to wife's death. His wife died in the 26/11 Taj hotel attack in Mumbai. Being the part of that Mafia group Nero supported that attack which resulted in his wife's

death. This guilt has made him migrate to new place for a new life. But the fear of past haunted him throughout the novel. Rene describes;

The man calling himself Nero Golden veiled himself, in the first place, behind dead languages. He was fluent in Greek and Latin and had obliged his sons to learn them too. They conversed sometimes in the speech of Rome or Athens as if these were everyday tongues, just a couple of the myriad vocabularies of New York (Rushdie 39).

Before their migration they chose their new names from world classics.

Dandyish Petya, the first son of Nero Golden is an intelligent and eccentric personality. His life is full of computer games and modern technologies. Petya who is an introvert finds difficulties in his life with communication but he is comfortable with father and Rene. His love towards Ubah Turr is hidden because of his fear of communication. But things changes when he finds out that his younger brother Apu Golden has an affair with Ubah. Lucius Apuleius Golden, also known as Apu is described as a carefree artist who does not care about his brothers. The realisation of Petya that Ubah is not in love with him shatters him and he tries to kill Apu and Ubah.

The third son Dionysus Golden is a man with women's soul in him. He always felt the urge to dress up like a women and live like a women. But he never had an idea about this term identity. His migration to New York and his camaraderie with Riya makes him realise his true identity. Another character who comes in the story is Vasilisa, a Russian seductress. Rene describes;

Here is Vasilisa, the Russian girl. She is striking. One might say she is astonishing. She has long dark hair. Her body is also long, and exceptional; she runs marathons, and is a fine gymnast, specialising in the ribbon element of rhythmic gymnastics. She says that in her youth she came close to Russian

Olympics team, She is twenty-eight years old. Her youth was when she was fifteen. (Rushdie 74)

Nero met her in a party on their Christmas vacation. From the first night Nero decided to make her his wife. She made some contract with him before marrying Nero. The marriage was the turning point in Golden's life. Nero Golden thought he could easily control Vasilisa but later it turns out that Vasilisa was more powerful than him.

Vasilisa love made him blind and he never questioned her. Their contract said that they will never have a baby. But she was prepared with another plan. She wanted a baby so that she could inherit the wealth of Nero Golden. For that he indulges in physical relation with Rene. Her intention was to have a baby but after the baby was born Rene felt guilty. His identity as a father was born and that made Vasilisa tensed. Apu Golden who took a trip to India for exploring his self was murdered with his girlfriend by the Mastan, Nero's enemy.

In between this Dionysus Golden identified his real identity. But the family rejected his new avatar. In the heat of moment he committed suicide blaming the society for not allowing him to be who he is. This death shattered Riya. Because she was the one who helped him in realising his identity. And Petya also dies in mob firing. The death of his three sons shattered Nero Golden. He was in state of destruction. His only happiness was his last born baby Vespa Golden. Rene in the heat of guilt confesses to him that he cheated Nero with Vasilisa. But he did not say a word. He was silent and continued treating Rene in the same way he treated him earlier.

The novel ends with the death of Vasilisa and Nero Golden in a fire accident in Golden House. Vespa is saved by Vasilisa. And to Rene's shock it is revealed that Nero has made him the Guardian of Vespa Golden and his properties. It is not

revealed that it was suicide or a murder. “The news report the next day were unanimous. The crooked landlord charged with manslaughter in the second degree. A tragedy. And a wonder that the young boy survived. Case closed” (Rushdie 367).

Jagdish Batra in his article *Salman Rushdie's The Golden House: Classical Worldview for Post Modern Time* discovers the postmodern styles in this novel. Even though he escaped from his regular style of Magic Realism he has included his postmodern style in this novel. He created and hid the identity of the narrator in postmodern style. He used unreliable narrator so that the reader could expand their horizon of imagination. The different nationalities of the characters in the novel created postmodern situation suitable for cultural explorations. New York became an imaginary homeland for those characters.

His ambiguity in his narration created a mystery in the novel. In the beginning the author not taking the name of the country from which Nero came. But from the narration the reader gets to know about his nationality. He gives hints about Indian culture, politics and geography for the readers to understand. Another major attraction the novel is the implementation of allusions. He uses all his knowledge about movies, history, politics etc. to make the novel more interesting (503-505).

Chapter II

Identity Formation in *The Golden House*

Among the things which differentiate human beings from animals identity has always been in a vital position. Every individual has their own identity which is an amalgamation of their different traits. The word identity has a strong connection with literature all over the world. Literature always had a keen interest in delving into concepts like an identity crisis, identity formation, the quest for identity etc. Quest for identity has always been a favourite theme for the diaspora writers like Salman Rushdie, Jhumpa Lahiri, V.S Naipaul, and Amitav Ghosh. The Identity of each individual is formed as a result of internal and external factors. The external factors include culture and norms, historical and political events, media and popular culture, economic factors etc. Whereas the internal factors include the family dynamics, peer influence, trauma, memory and experience that the person had in their life.

The Golden House contains a wide plot which gives an opportunity for scholars to research identity formation. The novel contains a wide range of characters that are entirely different even after living in the same house, each of their characters is exclusive which makes the study more fascinating. The story deals with the life of Nero Golden who led a glorious life in India. His migration to New York happened for a reason and resulted in many changes in his life. The fluidity of the characters and their identity serves as the backbone of this novel.

Family is where we start our journey. It always binds its members together. Family is the place where interactions happen and it is the starting point of everyone's identity creation. It works as a group in our society and each family holds unique characteristics.

These basic characteristics will be always inherent in each of the family members. Family can be seen as a system and as a group. It processes identity as a group. The individuals possess this group identity as well as their own identity. Identity formation happens through different stages.

The process takes place continuously throughout the life span of man. The family is a place where a person is connected from his birth to death. So identity formation is influenced by familial dynamics. While exploring the dynamics of the relationship between the members of Golden house, it clearly gives the picture of a dysfunctional family. Nero Golden being the head of the family never had a fatherly relationship with his sons. Even his wife was just an object to him.

Nero Golden and his family migrated to New York because of the death of his wife. His sole aim to cover up his identity gave him the silhouette of a mysterious man. He never wanted his sons to identify who he was. That gap he maintained between his sons made him lonely and pretentious. Even the three son's identity formation was influenced by his interactions. The process of socialization starts with our family. The way we interact with our fellow beings is always taught by our own family. An individual internalizes their Family's culture, norms and values which shapes their social identity. In the Golden House they never had a motherly figure. Their stepmother Vasilisa was young like them which made them more awkward. Their lack of care and affection is reflected in their characters as well.

After their migration, they take up a new name by the order of their father. More than a fatherly bond Nero reflects a power dynamics here. He cried:

Tell them, screw the identity parade. Tell them, we are snakes who shed our skin. Tell them we just moved downtown from Carnegie Hill. Tell them we

were born yesterday. Tell them we materialised by magic, or arrived from the neighbourhood of Alpha Centuari in a spaceship hidden in comets tail. Say we are from nowhere or anywhere or somewhere, we are make-believe people, frauds, reinventions shape shifters, which is to say, Americans. Do tell them the name of the place we left. (Rushdie 8)

His character as a fatherly figure changes rapidly after the birth of his last son Vespa Golden. The thought of being powerless made him weaker and closer to his last son. Even after knowing that Vespa was not his actual son he never took any revenge against his wife and Rene. This entire change of identity from a powerful and enigmatic personality to an old man waiting for his death is intertwined with familial relations. His son's unexpected death changed his entire personality.

The relationships between the brothers were not smooth in the Golden House. Dionysus Golden, Nero's third son was born out of an illicit affair. His brothers always kept a distance from him. From his childhood onwards he did not have anyone to share his identity crisis.

Being a man living with women's soul he was confused and his family never shared a bond with him. This lack of attachment leads to his identity crisis which was solved after he migrated to New York. His acquaintance with queer community made him realize about his gender identity. The support that he never had from his family members were given by this community. His father's presence always made him anxious. It was Vasilisa who first understood the feminine energy of him and then Riya. Vasilisa's wardrobe always amused him but his father's footsteps made it blow away. After his sex change he was rejected by his family which resulted in his suicide. In his suicide note he writes;

It isn't because of the difficulties of my own life that I do this. It's because there's something wrong with the world which makes it unbearable to me. I can't put my finger on it, but the world of human beings doesn't function well. The indifference of people to one another. The unkindness of people. It is disenchanting. I am a passionate human being but don't know how to reach out anyone anymore. I don't know how to touch you, Riya, though you are the kindest person I know. (Rushdie 267)

His family never accepted his identity which led to his death. This mirrors the real-life hatred toward the queer community. Every individual has their own identity. It should be encouraged and nourished from their family first. The acceptance and love that he wanted from his family was always a dream for him because of his identity.

Nero Golden hid his love for his sons because of his bad past. But in certain situations, it came out of the cover. He had more love towards Petya Golden who was dealing with some health issues. He was a strange man for the neighborhood. "He was physically clumsy, and sometimes, when agitated, clumsy too in mouth, stammering and stuttering and being infuriated by his own ineptitude" (Rushdie 43). He spent his time more in the world of video games making and mending them. This made him an eccentric personality for others. His immense knowledge of worldly affairs and literature mad him a scholarly person. But his poor conversation skills made his personality dull. Because of his physical conditions, Nero Golden always took excessive measures to protect Petya. This made him an introvert. He never shared a bond with his brother which resulted in the attempt to murder Apu. He had a different outlook on life and emotions. These entire emotions were crafted out of his loneliness. And his hatred towards life came out whenever he was drunk. "In his agitated condition he sat down heavily on the

windowsill with his legs dangling, and cried out to the skies, “I am here by myself! Lam here because of myself! I am here because of nobody! Lam here all by myself!” (Rushdie 47). His desire to be free from his father’s control is evident from these words. And he was ready to choose the way of suicide for that freedom. When Nero Golden cared a lot about Petya he ignored Apu. The attention that Apu craved was a curse for Petya. Nero’s affection towards Petya made Apu loathe his own blood, resulting in stealing his girlfriend.

Vasilisa their stepmother also had a traumatic childhood and a dysfunctional family. She was alone and never had anyone to comfort her. Poverty made her life more pathetic. The bitterness of poverty made her selfish enough to marry an old rich man. She uses her charismatic beauty to trap men. But not a mere man she wants her protector. The insecurity and hardships that she faced during the days of poverty moulded her identity. She was cunning enough to trap Nero Golden. Even after seeing Vasilisa kissing her gym trainer Nero Golden, the notorious gang leader, the mafia don, forgave her.

He has underestimated her. He has made an incorrect assessment both of his own vulnerability and her determination. Beneath all his strength there is loneliness and she can smell that as a hunting dog smells its wounded quarry. Loneliness is weakness, and this is Baba Yaga in the skin of Vasilisa the Fair. If she wishes, she can eat him up. She can eat him up right now. (Rushdie 87)

In order to inherit the wealth of Nero Golden she wanted a son. And she chose to cheat Nero because he was old and was not capable of procreation. She had an affair with Renee only to have a son and literally abandoned him after the baby was born. She never allowed Renee to see his son. She thought his affection for Vespa may cause suspicion in Nero.

Guilt is something that has its gripes around our necks until death. Guilt sometimes mends our identity. Nero Golden the man of the house develops his identity as a powerful and mysterious man because of the previous life that he had in his homeland. His powerful connection with the mafia changed his identity from a common man to a manipulator who whitewashed the illegal activities of a notorious mafia. With corruption comes power and hierarchy, which leads man into more darkness. The dark environment which he lived in India gave him power and wealth. But soon it created a catastrophe. He lost his wife in the terrorist attack in Mumbai on 26/11. His mafia had a connection in planning this attack which made him tormented by guilt. After his wife's death, he and his family migrated to New York. But the mysterious and enigmatic personality of Nero Golden remained unchanged. Rene the narrator describes his entry to that of a fallen European monarch. "Regarding his own missing wife he was silent. In his house of many photographs, whose walls and mantelpieces were populated by rock stars, Nobel laureates and aristocrats, there was no image of Mrs Golden, or whatever she had called herself" (Rushdie 5). The guilt that engulfed him after the death of his wife made him more secretive. Nero tried to conceal his past identity from society, especially from his family which made him mysterious to others. He formed a fake identity even a fake name for him and his entire family to survive the trauma and guilt that he suffered. Nero was even finding guilty in the death of his son's death. In the process of concealing the true identity of being a mafia don he forgot about the dangers that awaited them in India. If he had made his son more clear about who they are they would have been alive. This thought of guilt transforms him.

Rene also feels guilty because of his illicit relationship with Vasilisa. This transforms his entire life. Before being a father what he shared with Vasilisa was just a lustful bond. But by the birth of Vespa, he starts feeling a fatherly affection. The effect of being a father changes his whole identity. His guilt of cheating Nero Golden makes him confess the truth. And to his surprise, Nero did not react. This makes him guiltier and he chooses to be his close companion. Nero trusted him like a son. After his death, Rene found the document. "There's just this document. If some harm should befall upon us both, I appoint as the boy's guardian Mr Rene Unterlinden" (Rushdie 369). The same happens in the case of Riya. She feels guilty for Dionysus's death and chooses to accompany Nero in hard times. Her character from an energetic young woman transforms into a daughterly demeanor. She spent more time with Nero comforting him in his hard times. She even resigns from her position in the Museum of Identity.

Trauma and guilt are always knitted together. Trauma in many ways leads to identity formation. In some cases, trauma itself becomes their identity. Identity formation takes place in each phase of our life. The experiences and the trauma help in this formation. One's emotions and emotional equilibrium can be disrupted by trauma. This leads to our identity change or identity crisis as well. Because of this a stuck in identity development can also happen.

Nero Golden is tired with the trauma of his wife's death. Because of his connection with the attack he feels guilty and moves to New York. His fear of danger makes him more mysterious to others. Avoiding relationships is one of the symptoms of experiencing trauma. They feel like they are born to be alone. They fear about hurting others because of their presence. This symptom of trauma transforms him to a less affectionate father. Even his fatherly affection is

foreshadowed with this trauma. The trauma after his son's death again changes his identity in to fatherly figure. The metamorphosis of Nero Golden to a father comes out his thoughts about his son's death and his old age. He no longer wants to hold the identity of a strong mafia man. He realizes his end is round the corner and decides to shed his false identity and embrace his true self.

Dionysus Golden is also affected by the trauma from his childhood. He surrounded himself with this guilty and become silent. Whenever he asked about his mother the reply was harsh and cruel. "That was a woman of no consequence. She went away, got sick and died" (Rushdie 64). This was his stepmothers reply. His mother's identity was unknown to him. This always mixed up with his identity and made him more confusion. The lack of blissful childhood and the childhood trauma affects the identity creation in many ways. He was always an outcaste in his family. "They had already mastered Latin and Greek when D was still learning to talk, and they used secret languages to banish him from their conversations" (Rushdie 64). He wanted to loved and cherished but that never happened. The love that he got from Riya changed his life. It gave him the courage to reveal his real identity. But the trauma that was given by his family by rejecting his gender made it more badly. And his took the decision to end his life.

The resignation letter written by Riya reflects the trauma that she had in her life. The trauma that she had in her childhood made her the way she is. But the death of his love and the guilt shook her confidence. In her letter she wrote;

I acknowledge that lam a plural entity. I am the daughter of my deceased psychotic father. I am also the mourner of my dead love. I am alternatively, one of the tribe of skinny people. I am, additionally or contrariwise a scholar. I am equally dark hair. I have these views and not those views. I can define

my selves in different ways. This is what I am not: I am not one thing. I can contain multitudes. (Rushdie 289)

The lack of affection and care from childhood made Apu Golden think that it was right to woo his brother's love interest. He was unsympathetic towards his brother and called him a stupid man. Among the three sons, Nero Golden cared more about Petya who was facing some psychological problems. Apu never got the attention that he always craved for. This made him hate his own brother and even stole his love Ubah Tuur. This changes Petya's entire personality into insane man and he attempts to murder them.

Culture is a complex word. It is the amalgamation of our beliefs, values, and morals. The place we live has a close connection to the culture that we follow. Likewise, the identity of a person and the culture or the place he lives has a strong connection. It is a defining factor in one's identity formation.

The migration of the Golden's to New York changed their entire personality. Dionysus Golden who always had crisis in his gender identity found relief in New York. While comparing to India New York had more acceptance towards transgender community. He got more opportunities to explore his own identity in terms of gender. In New York, he finds out his identity through The Museum Of Identity. Rushdie writes;

There was a museum for Native Americans on Bowling Green and there was the Italian American Museum on Mulberry Street and the Polish American Museum in Port Washington and there were two museums for Jews, uptown and downtown, and those identity museums too obviously, but the MoI- the Museum Of Identity- was after bigger game, its charismatic curator Orlando Wolf after identity itself, mighty new force in the world, already as powerful

as any theology or ideology, cultural identity and religious identity and nation and tribe and sect and family, it was a rapidly growing, multidisciplinary field, and at the heart of the Identity Museum was the question of the identity of the self, starting with the biological self and moving far beyond that.

(Rushdie 71-72)

Until then gender identity was a fog for him. While exploring the museum he got his identity. The comfort that he got from the cultural space of New York made him feel his own identity. India has a glorious history with the queer community. Even there are characters like Shikandi in Mahabharata who is a transgender. But when coming to the matter of acceptance India's prejudices and hatred towards them stand first. In 2017 Supreme Court granted the right to express their sexual orientation. But acceptance never came in their; life. While living in India his chances of revealing his identity was just a dream. In fact, he never realized his identity. Once he entered the Museum Of Identity his way to the world of pronouns other than he/she became visible. The bond Dionysus Golden had with Riya has a huge impact on his identity development. While living in India he had an inner thought about his gender identity. But because of being in the dysfunctional family he never had the courage to speak about it. When they migrated to New York their father asked to choose a new classical name for which he chose the name Dionysus. It is the name of a God, who was born twice. Like that god he was also born twice, once in his mother's world and in his father's world. Like him he was a man-womanish God. This inner feeling of being a man with woman's soul may have resulted in choosing this name.

Even the culture changed the identity of Apu and Petya as well. "if Petya arrived in New York as the heavy- drinking polymath who was afraid of the world and

found living in it a constant hardship, then Apu came as a sober romantic artist and the promiscuous metropolitans, flirting with everything that was visionary yet with clarity of vision”(Rushdie 55).

Chapter III

Disguising Identity and Self Discovery

Identity is the main theme that threads the entire plot of the Golden house. Each character in the novel, especially the members of The Golden House deals with identity crisis and other aspects of identity shift. The paths they have crossed throughout their journey made their identity. And in some characters case their experiences had made a huge impact in their identity shift as well. Identity of an individual is not static. It is dynamic in nature and it changes according to different factors. Each character of this novel goes to different life situations which makes their identity more fluid.

Mercy N. Adams in her research article *Identity Change Strategies: How People Exit Stigmatized Identities* explains about people who hide their identities. She also explains the methods to exit from these disguised identities. Most of the people who have a bad past have the tendency to hide their identity. Sex workers, criminals who feels guilty or anyone who had done something unforgiveable has more chances in hiding their identity. For that they choose to be more mysterious and dark.

The life of our protagonist Nero Golden the mysterious enigmatic personality follows such a pathway with self-discovery and redemption in the end. Nero Golden had a hidden past which was dark. From his first appearance itself he maintained his identity as powerful and mysterious wealthy man. The neighbourhood especially Rene the narrator made so many assumptions about his identity and character. The hidden secret of life was always a curious case for his neighbourhood. Rene describes;

He wasn't ex-anything, his manner said; he was majestic in all things, in his stiff- collared shirts, his cuff links, his bespoke English shoes, his way of walking toward closed doors without slowing down, knowing they would open

for him; also in his suspicious nature, owing to which he held daily separate meetings with his sons to ask them what their brothers were saying about him.

(Rushdie 5)

His appearance made him more powerful. He never raised his voice to anyone except few people. Even after that he was projected with power. Even his dressing was powerful enough and the neighbours were scared of him. They made futile attempts to be in his close circle. “This was a powerful man; no, more than that – a man deeply in love with the idea of himself as powerful” (Rushdie 4).

He came to New York with his three sons. The absence and the silence of Nero Golden about his wife made his aura more mysterious to others. The reason for his exile is revealed at the middle of the novel. The death of his wife and the trauma that was created out of this incident made him flee from India. In India he had an identity of a mafia don. And the terrorist attack that happened in Delhi with his help resulted in his wife’s death. This guilty of killing his wife and being a monster was the main reason for Nero Golden to disguise his identity.

He made efforts to hide his identity from his sons. Being in the criminal circle he had made enemies and death threat was always there. After his migration to New York he maintained the identity as a wealthy business man. But the fear of his son’s security made his mysterious to others. As a father figure he loved his children but never showed that because of this threat. He thought his affection may cause danger to his sons. In order to keep them safe he hid fatherly affection.

In the Golden House he made rules and regulations to keep them safe. He changed his identity and even his name. The reader does not know what the real names the Golden are. Hiding their identity was apart of his escape mechanism. Human being in their emotionally and physically vulnerable situations finds way to

escape from reality. Here Nero chooses to disguise himself as an escaper from the guilt as well as the death threat. He escaped from reality but never realised what he lost through this disguise. The bond that a family should have was never present in the golden house. The absence of mother was never levelled by the father. He was never a father for them. In his efforts of disguise he lost his family.

His fear of death threat made him hide his real past from them but if he had revealed the threat of going to India Apu would have chosen to be careful and he wouldn't have died. He did everything that could hide his nationality. The passports, driving license, money transactions, forgeries, their ID cards, health insurance, everything changed according to their new identity. They even adopted new classical names. They chose the name Petronius, Lucius Apuleius and Dionysus. It was perfect metamorphosis. But the skin colour revealed that he was not an American by birth. Even the house that they lived in didn't have any traces of their nationality. Nero Golden tried to hide his emotions and his love for his children but his over-protective nature towards Petya, who was mentally weak, showcased his true identity. But in the race of disguising identity he took the decision to hide his affection.

The changes in his character started after Vasilisa's arrival. At first he thought he could control her. But in her magic spell of beauty he was powerless. Even after he realised that she was cheating he forgave her. At that point Nero Golden started embracing his true identity. His true identity of an emotionally vulnerable person who is yearning for love was unmasked. Marrying Vasilisa was a kind of business for him. But soon he realised his emotional bond with that woman even after finding out that she was a snake. His search for love and true identity became more visible when he started to realise his powerlessness. Nero started to realise the ultimate truth of life, the ultimate destination, death. Once he realised he discovered himself. His true

identity as an affectionate father became visible when he chose Rene as Vespa's guardian. If he was in his old identity he would have killed both Vasilisa and Rene for cheating him. But his realization about his nearing death he chose to be more peaceful with his life. The mysterious life of the powerful Nero Golden ended with his true self.

Embracing one's identity is one of the main aspects in the identity theory. India has a great history with the transgender communities. The concept of Arthanaarishwara is popular in our mythology. Even mythological characters like Shikandi are represented in our epics. But even after all this historical evidence our society finds this transgender community as a taboo topic to be discussed. By living in such a stigmatized community it is common for the transgender people to hide their true identity in order to survive in this society.

Dionysus Golden, the third son of Nero Golden, lived such a life by hiding his own identity. He always felt an inner urge to be dressed up as a woman but he never realized the concept of identity. Throughout the novel Rushdie changes his pronouns from him to she. The confusion in his gender is clear from the narrative as well. This confusion is more evident from his decision to choose his name as Dionysus Golden. "So like the God Dionysus the child was twice born, once mother and then again into his father's world. Dionysus the god was always an outsider, a god resurrection and arrival, 'the god that comes'. He was also androgynous, 'man-womanish'" (Rushdie 63).

India was never a suitable place for Dionysus to explore his identity as transgender. Their migration to New York gave him the space to think about what he is. Coming out as a transgender is considered a sin in our country. Only a few people have the courage to do so. In most cases, family plays a crucial role. D never

had any familiar connection. Even his brother's considered him as an outsider. Being born out of a illicit affair he never had mother figure in his life. And Nero Golden always maintained power relation between his sons. From his childhood he felt lonely and didn't have anyone to share or discuss this identity confusion. In many situations his inner persona of a woman jumped out. When a fight happened between his stepmother and Nero the other two boys took the side their mother's side but Dionysus choose his father. He convinced his father that his stepmother was not suitable to be homemaker. By this he got the keys from his step mother which was a humiliation for her and an achievement for D. while doing the household and ruling the servants he felt a satisfaction of completing his identity.

New York gave him so many opportunities to explore himself. His acquaintance with Ivy Manuel and Riya plays a significant role in his identity formation. Ivy Manuel was a lesbian but she never wanted to endorse any tag of identity. She never cared about people accepting her identity and never made any attempts to gain that identity confirmation. From Ivy he gets to know about Riya and she opened the world of identity for Dionysus Golden. The obsession, that D had with the concept of identity got massive with Riya's company. She introduced him to the Museum of Identity and its operator Orlando. Riya always had an idea about identity and how it works. The time spent working on this idea made her a suitable person to solve D's identity mystery. "God is dead and identity fills the vacuum" (Rushdie 72). This was her core understanding about identity. According to him there were only two genders in this world, male and female. But Riya educated him with more ideas like cis gender, gender fluid, bigender, agender, gender queer, non-binary etc.

Dionysus Golden was always fascinated by the thought of gender. He thinks about the incident when he met a hijara in India. All of the brothers were scared of the

hijara. But D felt something, some kind of fascination in dressing up as another gender. It was terrifying and irresistible at the same time.

The relationship dynamics between Riya and D was static. Starting as friends, then to lovers, their journey helped D feel the inner persona. They found something missing between them. It started the discussions of transgender identity, the concept of Ardhanarishvara. Riya was the first one who identified D's original identity. She intentionally included these mythological concepts of transgender identity in their conversation. She read;

According to the poet saints of Shaivism, Shiva is Ammai- Appar, mother and Father combined. It is said of Brahma that he created humankind by converting himself into two persons; the first male, Manu Svayambhuva, and the first female, Satarupa. India has always understood androgyny, the man in the woman's body, the woman in the man's. (Rushdie 103)

But these discussions made him more agitated. Because he knew that he is not a man but he never wanted to accept that. The fear of society and the rejection from his family made him disguise his identity. The stories that he heard about hijara and their operation to change gender made him more terrified to accept his reality. Whenever he thought about the operations where genitals were cut and stitched by hijara themselves, not any medical professionals made him terror struck. D tried to escape from the reality. But Riya understood what he was, and what he was escaping from.

When he was awe struck by Vasilisa's wardrobe he identified his urge to be a woman. Vasilisa also noticed his interest and made possible help. She even helped him to try out her dresses. But the footsteps of Nero Golden reminded him his act of disguising. He was sure that his father the powerful, enigmatic Nero Golden will not accept his son's identity. It was a matter of reputation for Nero. And reputation was

always connected to Nero's identity. D knew that he was moving close to self-discovery and took every possible step to slow down. Vasilisa's intention to reveal D's identity was not pure. She wanted Nero to hate his sons so that her son Vespa could inherit the wealth. But this incident made Dionysus think about his identity. Ivy and Riya encouraged him to embrace his identity. "Transition is like translation. You're moving across from one language into another" (Rushdie 112).

The professional help that Dionysus took made him more confused about his identity. He felt that both the professionals and Riya were not trying to understand his core problem. His loneliness and the trauma that he had in his childhood were not interesting for them. He started asking uncomfortable questions to strangers about his identity. The confusion of identity became worse. But these questions gave him the answer of his own identity. D arrived at Golden in her new avatar. Rene describes;

Now it had become appropriate to change her pronouns and say simply she, her, herself!- very well then, she was wearing a long scarlet Alaia evening dress, over which her cascade of hair shone alluringly in the sun, and she carried a small jewel-encrusted Mouawad bag. So, dressed to kill, handing her key to the chauffeur so that he might open the front door for her, D Golden for the last time, perhaps, as herself – her true self, the self she had always feared she might be, and whom she had had such difficulty in setting free. (Rushdie 266)

But that was his last day. D discovered her identity but she never had the courage to embrace and live with that identity. His suicide is a mirror of the hatred towards the transgender community. D's life ended with his self-discovery as a woman. Studies have shown that the rate of suicide among transgender is high due to the rejection and harassment from their own family and society. New York was free space for D to

flourish his life as women. But the fear of society and the family made him chose death.

The identity of Vasilisa is mysterious throughout the novel. She is portrayed as evil stepmother throughout the novel. But her reason for being selfish is clear from her past. The poverty and the trauma that gave her made her selfish. She wanted a protector. Throughout her life she was searching for such a protector. And that search ended with Nero Golden, her tsar. Her identity is purely formed out of her past. Her sole purpose was to be saving in future. For that she chooses to be evil. She planned everything accordingly, and even Nero could not escape form her spells. She was the one who changed Nero Golden. She understood his weakness and his loneliness. With her beauty and honey dropping words she made him surrender. Being an old man searching for redemption Nero got trapped in her spider web. He agreed with very demand she made. Rene observes:

The old bastard dragging himself defeated in to her presence to acknowledge her majesty, to beg her to stay, and to agree to her terms. Standing before her with bowed head until she reaching up drew him down to her and fell backwards onto her pillow and after that allowed him again the illusion of being master in his own house even though he knew as well as everyone else that she was the one on the throne. (Rushdie 168-169)

The identity of Vasilisa becomes more confusing because of the narrative by Rene. He describes her identity as Baba Yaga under Vasilisa's skin. But her intentions were clear from the beginning. To achieve her goal she was ready to cheat Nero. That why, she chooses to have sex with Rene and make Nero believe that the baby born was his son. She chooses to stay away from Rene to save the secret. But Rene stared to feel the fatherly affection which made things worse. But the only this that remained

constant throughout her identity was her motherly love. As a mother she did everything for Vespa. She even sacrificed her life for him. Her life ended with her self-discovery as a mother, not a selfish seductress.

The Golden House or the Murray Mansion that the Golden family lives itself is a representation of disguising identity. Nero Golden made every attempt to hide his identity. Behind the splendid golden House there lies the miserable faith of a dysfunctional family. Nero chooses Murray Mansion the grandest one in that neighbourhood for a reason. He wanted to project his fake identity as a wealthy business man. Its grand construction construction and history made it more impressive. Nero planned, about his future and bought this mansion in 1980s itself. He was aware that the illegal businesses that he had in India will make him flee. But the tragedy that befallen on them was unexpected. The house was mysterious and grand like its owner Nero Golden. The neighbourhood always wondered about the ownership before their arrival.

The house was artificial from inside. It never had anything which showed their original identity. Garden, floors, doors, windows, furniture, even the flowers looked without soul. The family had British accent but non-white complexion which made people make assumptions about their origin. In order to conceal his identity, he never allowed anyone other than his close circle this house. Like the Nero golden the golden house was also mysterious to the neighbourhood.

Everything seems grand and perfect from outside, but the turmoil happening inside that house was hidden. The house itself changed after the arrival of Vasilisa. One of her demands in her contract with Nero Golden was to renovate the house according to her wish. She changed the entire interior designs, the curtains, and the furniture and even assigned special rooms for very member. This change can be

interpreted as the influence of Vasilisa in the identity change of Golden. The house which was owned by Nero the self-proclaimed king soon came under Vasilisa's control. And tier wedding was her coronation.

From the day of wedding itself the sons realized that Nero is now Vasilisa's lapdog not their powerful father. Her mission to cleanse the golden house started from the next day itself. She invited a priest to cleanse the house with holy water. It seemed like the house was possessed with some evil spirit. She wanted everything that is old out of the house. And the in the end the golden house, the symbol of Nero Golden's disguised identity became ashes with him and Vasilisa. It appeared like a fire accident. But so many evidences pointed out it to be suicide. From the testimony of neighbours, Nero looked drowsy. The post mortem report showed that he was poisoned. And there were large pile of clothes, which were Indian outside his house. It revealed his real nationality. All servants were on leave that day. It looked like a perfect plan by Nero golden. He wanted to show his vulnerable part, who yearns for love. But the humiliation that he had because of Vasilisa may have led to this decision. It can also be Vasilisa's plan. She may have thought that Nero will harm her son. So she may have killed him and scarified her life also. The awe inspiring golden house and the disguised identity of Nero golden ended with these flames. "So ended the story of the golden house. They thought they were Romans but that was just a fantasy" (Rushdie 366).

Chapter IV

Identity Formation and Characterization of Rene

The Golden House by Salman Rushdie is undoubtedly a novel which revolves around the different aspects of identity theory. Salman Rushdie as a diaspora writer always tried to include his yearning for a home land in his novels. In this novel he exhibits a different approach towards migration. More than migration the family in this novel chooses this as an escape mechanism from their past. That escape from their past resulted in their identity formation as well as the identity shift.

Rene Unterlinden, the narrator of this novel has a paramount role in developing the story and the identity of every character in this novel. More than the narrator Rene is part of this story and his engagements with the characters make it more crucial. And these interactions act as a key factor in developing Rene's identity as well. Murray Mansion in Rene's neighborhood has always fascinated him because it was one of the richest properties that he has seen. And it was unoccupied for more than fifteen years. On the day of new president's inauguration, the golden family arrived which created a hot news in the neighborhood. Like other neighbors Rene also started to make assumptions about each member of the family. Being an aspiring film maker he saw this mysterious family as a chance for his new film. Some of his assumptions become real in the course of time. His interactions with the family makes him part of the family. More than for the purpose of film making his identity gets involved in the process.

He is placed in the role of an unreliable narrator. This narrative technique gives information in wrong direction as well as in right directions. Sometimes the narrator lies about the storyline. And they have a reason for doing this. They will have their own version of truth. To make that truth believable they will choose anyway. He

uses the historical and political events, popular culture, media etc. as reference while narrating the story. This s gives us an idea about the identity of Rene.

Rene the person who is hiding behind the first person narrative introduces himself in the fourth chapter of the novel. “Call me Rene. I have always liked it that the narrator of *Moby Dick* doesn’t actually tell us his name” (Rushdie 23). This shows his interest in literature and world classics. From the first he understands that his identity is tied together with the Goldens. His parents were professors who had their own opinion and thoughts about everything they confront. Being the only son Rene somehow inherited their classical quality of analysis which helped him in understanding the Goldens. They like the Goldens were migrated from another place. They had clear idea about the alienation that they are facing because of their migration. His parents knew the love that this new country is showering on them was fake. The deceptive face was clear for them. His childhood was filled with books, movies and intellectual talks because of his parents. And the main inspiration for Rene to be film maker was their parents. From their intelligence he knew that he could not compete with the old people in books. Film making was kind of identity performance for Rene. He expressed his own imaginary world through it. After the arrival of the Goldens he got the courage to write a movie. They were the trump card for his success. He wanted to paint portrait of his neighborhood through his lens.

From the arrival itself he makes assumptions about each character. Nero golden the old short man was always an interesting topic for him he observed his superiority in his every move. He realized the fact that he was a man who loved to be the center. He spied the Goldens found out the absence of a mother in that family. This made way for e more assumptions about her identity. They talked about her having illicit affairs, mental illness etc. There was nothing in that house which reveled

their identity. They were unwilling to open up about their past. But their complexion have the hint that there are non- whites with British accent. He assumed their nationality as Indians. And from the old photograph of their mother is made an assumption about the reason for the sadness in her eyes. He gives reader a story about the migration and death his wife. But Rene being an unreliable narrator cannot be trusted fully.

The identity of most of the characters is formed through Rene's description. This description shows the identity of Rene as well. His idea about Vasilisa the young wife of Nero makes the narration more different. Vasilisa, the Russian beauty came to Nero's life unexpectedly. Her appearance was just like a seductress with long black hair and fine gymnastic body. She claims her nationality as Siberian. From the first glance itself Rene found out her disguised personality. He describes her as deceptive liar with beautiful face. He makes his own story about her in his mind. She always wanted a protector because of her poor childhood. Rene claims that she owns a magic doll. And makes a story about her evil stepmother and Baba Yaga. He describes;

When, as a child, an earlier Vasilisa was sent by her wicked stepmother to the house of Baba Yaga, the witch who ate children, who lived in the heart of the heart of the forest, it was the magic doll who helped her escapes that she could begin her search for her tsar. So the story goes. But there are those who tell it differently, saying that Bab Yaga did eat Vasilisa, gobbled her up the way she gobbled everyone, and when she did, the ugly old witch acquired all the young girl's beauty. (Rushdie 75)

Rene uses this image of Baba Yaga to describe all her actions and her inner intentions. These may be his made up story. But the fact that she was selfish was true. The Golden family met Vasilisa along on a summer vacation. She was in search of tsar.

Rene identified her as the Baba Yaga with blonde hair. Nero golden was her perfect choice, because he was old and wealthy. And secretly he was yearning for love, which Vasilisa understood before anyone did. The assumptions that Rene makes about Vasilisa from her appearance indicated the face of our society who judges women. Even before talking to her he made up a story about her past. And he used this in his film narration as well. His narration makes the identity of Vasilisa, the Fair.

Vasilisa had a poor childhood with no clothes, food or any other happiness. Her father was drunkard who never cared about him. In her heart she always yearned for the fatherly warmth. Her childhood was full of migrations because of different natural calamities and political oppression. This made her identity unstable and fragile. She never had a home or a family. After reaching America with her beauty and mind she made everything that she has now. But because of the childhood she had she always wanted to make her future stable. That is why she was searching for tsar. She had suffered from sexual abuse from her uncle and her mother's boyfriend. This made her seductress who chases men and looted their money. She knows the fact that the Goldens are living a deceptive life. Or them their father is everything. And they worry about inheritance as well. But Vasilisa wants Nero to prioritize her and her son first. But they don't have to fear her. Because she just want her future to be safe. She is not that evil to cause danger upon Nero's sons. She has signed the agreement to not have a baby with Nero to make them believe that they don't need to fear her womb. But all these plans were changed with time.

Rene gives another version of her monologue. Here he is purposefully creating a dual identity for Vasilisa as the witch Baba Yaga. This multiple identity of Vasilisa creates a negative impact on the readers. She has the wisdom and crookedness of spider. Here she is the puppet of Baba Yaga. Deep inside, she is not realizing that it's

not her true voice. Baba Yaga deceives her, makes her believe that she is evil from inside and out. The true of identity of Vasilisa is concealed by this Baba Yaga identity. Like every other characters identity Vasilisa's identity is also determined and revealed through Rene. She is like a sacred little lamb in actual life. But Rene's description makes her a beast. What she did was to protect herself and her son. At last her true identity of a mother who scarified h life is also revealed.

Rene the most complex character in this novel goes through an identity formation throughout the novel. His descriptions about each character give us the idea about his own identity. He choose film making because his love for imagination. The urge to indulge in others life is clear from Rene. He started to spy the Golden house for his movie. But gradually it became a part of his identity. With the close connection he had with each character he realized the fact that everyone on this world has their own reasons to hide their identity. The transformation of Nero golden was the most inspiring one for Rene. Even after describing Vasilisa as cruel women, he made love with her. She wanted a son, an heir. Nero being an old man was not capable of reproduction. After his parent's death Rene was, more close with Goldens. That's why she chooses Rene for this act. Even after this kindness Rene choose to cheat Nero. That's why he felt guilt after Vespa was born. From the staring of the pregnancy Rene felt changes. He became romantically attracted to Vasilisa. But for her he was just pawn. This love and guilty together made him confess the truth. But Nero surprised him with his reaction. He said nothing. He continued loving Vespa. And in the end he mad Rene the guardian of Vespa and the Goldens wealth.

Transformation Rene's character is the most interesting development in this whole novel. He started this spying as a identity performance. He was selfish in his acts. And he judged people based on their looks and made his own stories. But the

guilt that he encountered after cheating Nero resulted in his change. And also the fact that he already had a girlfriend made this act more selfish and vulgar. Suchitra who helped Rene in his hardest situations was cheated. When his parents die she was the one who took care of him. And Nero gave him a shelter to live and treated him as his friend. He helped him to deal with the death of his parents. He advised;

Your anger is unnecessary. You are young and I am old. I ask you to learn from me. Your country is young. One thinks differently when one has millennia behind one. You have not even two hundred and fifty years. I say also that I am not yet blind so I am aware of your interest in our house.. Because I think you are kind of a good guy I forgive this, my alternative being to have you killed.

(Rushdie 151)

He saw a different Nero Golden in front of him. Even after knowing his spy work Nero chooses to keep him. Rene started learning from the Golden's, how to cope up with pain endured by someone's death. He already knew that they were not saints. But their life was inspirational for him. Moreover the film about Golden's was his reason to live. Suchitra never liked the Golden's and Rene's friendship with them. But she supported him in his work. She knew his potential and tried everything to support him. Slowly he started to live without thinking about his parents.

But his selfish nature came out slowly. He fell in the spider web of Vasilisa. She wanted a heir to the Golden's properties. And she was not ready conceiving through any stranger. He hesitated at the beginning, told her that it was a dangerous decision. But his inner man wanted to make love with her. And he chooses to cheat Nero and Suchitra. Rene after realizing the evil plan of Vasilisa he continued to support her. He concealed the fact that he was the father of Little Vespa. But the attitude of Vasilisa

changed after being pregnant. She wanted Rene to be away from her. But Rene already fell for her. More than he felt a fatherly affection to the baby.

Guilt entangled him whenever he encountered Suchitra. He wanted to disclose the truth. And he made excuses in his mind that art is connected to betrayal. The happiness of Nero after learning about becoming a father feared him the most. If he finds out that he is not the father, this happiness will turn into such an emotion that will burn the entire neighborhood. After the baby was born Rene made efforts to be around the baby. He requested Nero give him the role of the baby sitter. Rene's desperate efforts to be around him were never encouraged by Vasilisa. According to her it was so dangerous to their plan. After having the baby Rene was just stranger to her. The identity of Rene drastically changed from a selfish filmmaker to a complete human being is quite fascinating. In the end of the novel he completes his movie and he gets the guardianship of Vespa. The dream of being film maker and being with Vespa becomes reality.

The most interesting feature about Rene is the narrating technique that he uses. The references that he uses to describe and compare the characters and the situations showcase his identity as a film maker. His interest in film, mythology, popular culture, literature can be detected from these symbols. In the beginning itself he establishes the political scenario of the country by hinting the new president's inauguration. In the entire novel the conversation between Suchitra and Rene hints about this political situation. And he compares it with Joker and Batman, the film characters. He also makes references from several Hindi films as well which makes the narrative more interesting. even he gives different narrative within the plot. The monologue of Vasilisa and its Baba Yaga version, the different version of Riya's resignation letter points out the creative version of Rene.

In many ways the identity of Rene resembles the author. Like Salman Rushdie he is a migrated artist. The postmodern narrative techniques and his classical world view also resonates with Salman Rushdie. In many ways the character of Rene helps I the identity formation of The Golden. And through helping their formation Rene also acquired his identity as filmmaker and as an empathetic human being.

Chapter V

Conclusion

Literature has a huge impact on human race from the beginning. The definition of literature varies from people to people, places to places. Some consider it as the mirror of life; some compares it with science and history. Some people find it as techniques for self-reflection and revelation. The pages of history have proven that many revolutions happened from literature. It is always a space for the voiceless to express their concern. A world without literature is so boring and monotonous. Literature makes human beings think about the life that they had not seen in real life. The experiences that they read through these make them sensible about their existence.

Identity has always been an interesting topic in literature. The search of identity in diaspora writers are always a path breaking topic in the field of research. Even in contemporary literature the theme of identity plays a crucial role. But the phase has changed a lot. New additions like gender identity, disabled identity have entered the realm. The world is changing rapidly likewise literature is also adapting to it. Even after being a progressive society some people does not understand the value of owning an identity and respecting others identity. Especially in the case of queer community. Even after approving the queer community as legal people in India, people still find difficulties in accepting them. The irony is that the same people are the devotee of Arthanaarishwara.

Identity has been always his main theme of Salam Rushdie's novels. In most of the novels he dusted the theme with his style magic realism. *The Golden House* also contains the same theme but in a realistic way. He came out of his comfort zone to analyze the issues of identity. He explores the identity crisis as a migrant and also a

human being. Identity is the mirror of our self, emotions, characters; behavior etc. identity cannot be defined in any particular word. It differs for different people. Identity formation a crucial process in every individual's life. It is a dynamic process which includes external and internal factors. This gradual process of identity formation happens in the characters of *The Golden House*. In the starting Nero Golden is portrayed as mysterious personality. The skillful narrative techniques of Rushdie make the readers confused and anxious about Nero's identity. The main factors that affected the identity formation Nero Golden was his wife's death. He felt guilty for being part of the Taj attack which causes her death. So he migrated to New York with his three sons.

The past guilt and the fear of enemies always haunted him to the core. So he chose to hide his identity and asked his sons to hide theirs as well. His guilt wanted his sons to be out of this evil mafia circle. So he took the mask of a cruel, mysterious, enigmatic and unkind figure. But his heart always yearned for love. That became evident after the arrival of Vasilisa. The identity change of Nero starts from the point where he meets Vasilisa. Even after knowing about her plan he chose to be with her. Because he wanted to be loved. Even if the love of Vasilisa was fake he wanted to be caressed. He was being old and his power was withering away. He wanted comfort in his life. And he got that comfort in Vasilisa's fake love.

The novel emphasizes on different topics of identity theory. Identity change is the main one among them. The migration changed the identity of every character. Nero became a fatherly figure and a husband who wanted love. After Vespa was born she became softer and attached to his sons. But the death of his three sons shattered him and lead to his death. Another identity change which is prominent is that of Dionysus Golden. In India he was not himself. His inner female persona was revealed

when he reached New York. With the help of Riya he becomes she. She discovered herself. But the rejection of his family made his mental condition worse which resulted in his suicide. *The Golden House* clearly mirrors the condition of transgender community in our world. Even after being in a society which supported transgender Dionysus committed suicide. The recent suicide reports of Queer people shows how much evil our society is. Even the social media pages are celebrating the death of Queer people.

The novel also focuses on the development of identity through the factor of familial connections. The Golden brothers never had an intimacy. The first two treated the last one D as outsider because he was born to another woman. This loneliness made Dionysus confused about his identity. He became an introvert because of the bullying that he faced in that house. And he never had the courage to discuss his gender or sexuality with them,. The bond he got from, Riya helped him to understand his identity. The family which is dysfunctional always disrupts the identity formation of an individual. It inhibits or influence s the identity. Family has great role in which we are. The three sons have throe own identity issues because of family, guilt, and trauma etc. the novel focuses on these factors affecting their identity and how the migration changed their identity. The main character Nero is also their victim of identity crisis as well.

Another theme that is discussed is the disguising of identity and self-discovery. Nero golden disguised his identity as cruel person but in the end he died as loving and caring man. Dionysus golden who was confused in his gender lived in an disguising identity of man. With the help of Riya he regained his self and discovered herself.

The contribution Rene the narrator is highly appreciable in the identity formation of every character. He was there as observer and a companion in very crucial situations of the novel. Salman Rushdie uses an unreliable narration to match the identity of Rene. The identity of Rene is more confusing than others. He is also portrayed a mysterious selfish person. But his identity as father makes him more softy. He started spying in the Golden as part of him film. It was his identity performance. Art made him fell what he was. But in the end he transformed into a kind human being with the role identity of a father.

Through this novel Salam Rushdie emphasizes on the need of identity and self. It is mirror to his self as well. While living in culturally diverse community he had his confusions about his identity. That idea if identity is focused on this novel. More than cultural discrepancies the author focuses in the factors affecting identity and the identity change and self-discovery of human beings.

The Golden House provides the realistic portrayal of identity crisis and identity formation. And through the novel he provides a social message of supporting each other despite of their identity. Beyond identity we all are human beings. Whatever is our identity we have the right to choose our identity and live our life according to it. Identity is a unique feature. We have to accept whatever we feel as our identity. Disguising or faking identity is not a solution. The experiences and the knowledge that we gain through our life time gives us the opportunity to choose our identity .Salman Rushdie through his novel gives an awakening to the readers to embrace our identity with whole heart.

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