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Comparative Analysis of Postcolonial Identity in *Brick Lane* and *Midnight's Children*

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Abstract:

This paper presents a comparative analysis of postcolonial identity in two prominent works of postcolonial literature, *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali and *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie. The paper examines how these novels explore the complexities of postcolonial identity and the impact of colonialism on the identities of colonized people. Through a close reading of the texts, the paper argues that both novels offer a nuanced portrayal of postcolonial identity that is shaped by a range of factors, including history, culture, language, and geography. The paper also explores the role of language in postcolonial literature and how it contributes to the establishment of identity. Overall, this paper contributes to the ongoing discussion of postcolonial literature and its impact on the identities of colonized people.

Keywords: Comparative analysis, postcolonial identity, *Brick Lane*, *Midnight's Children*, Monica Ali, Salman Rushdie, colonialism, history.

المخلص

تقدم هذه الورقة تحليلاً مقارناً لهوية ما بعد الاستعمار في عمليتين بارزتين في أدب ما بعد الاستعمار، بريك لين لمونيكا علي وأطفال منتصف الليل لسلمان رشدي. تدرس الورقة كيف تستكشف هذه الروايات تعقيدات هوية ما بعد الاستعمار وتأثير الاستعمار على هويات الشعوب المستعمرة. من خلال القراءة الدقيقة للنصوص، تجادل الورقة بأن الروايتين تقدمان صورة دقيقة لهوية ما بعد الاستعمار التي تشكلت من خلال مجموعة من العوامل، بما في ذلك التاريخ والثقافة واللغة والجغرافيا. تستكشف الورقة أيضاً دور اللغة في أدب ما بعد الاستعمار وكيف تساهم في تأسيس الهوية. بشكل عام، تساهم هذه الورقة في المناقشة المستمرة لأدب ما بعد الاستعمار وتأثيره على هويات الأشخاص المستعمرين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل مقارن، هوية ما بعد الاستعمار، بريك لين، أطفال منتصف الليل، مونيكا علي، سلمان رشدي، استعمار، تاريخ.

Introduction

The emergence of postcolonial literature followed global decolonization and independence movements. Researchers in cultural studies, literature, and history now examine it. Postcolonial literature examines colonialism, its effects, and the struggles of postcolonial cultures to define themselves. This study examines the postcolonial identities of Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. Postcolonial literature analyses colonised people's complicated and frequently contradictory identities. The indigenous world, the invading culture, and the individual's experiences shape these identities.

Postcolonial literature often addresses the struggle to belong. Postcolonial writers examine double consciousness, the sensation of belonging to both the ancient and new worlds. It can be challenging and isolating to feel like you don't belong in either environment.

Postcolonial writing often explores language. Postcolonial writers utilise language creatively to challenge the dominant culture and establish their identity. Many postcolonial writers use Creole or pidgin languages, which blend ancient and new cultures.

Postcolonial literature offers a distinct viewpoint on postcolonial life. It helps people grasp modern identity and culture. Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak have led the scholarly opposition to cultural dominance in this discipline. Postcolonial literature is concerned with hybrid identities, while diasporic literature demonstrates how colonialism influenced cultural identity. Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* examine postcolonial identity. Ali's *Brick Lane* depicts the struggles of Nazneen, a young Bangladeshi woman who moves to London after an arranged marriage, while Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* "follows A group of individuals born during India's independence. Both works depict post-colonial protagonists struggling with their own identities. Postcolonial identity is central to both *Brick Lane* and *Midnight's Children*. In *Brick Lane*, Monica Ali's character Nazneen struggles with her identity in a new country. Gender and communal patriarchy exacerbate this conflict. In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie employs magical realism to investigate postcolonial identity. As depicted in Rushdie's novel, the brutality and religious competition of postcolonial hybrid identity contribute to people's identity issues.

Postcolonial History

Post-colonialism is colonialism's cultural, political, and economic legacy. The effects of colonialism on language, religion, education, law, and art are covered in this complex subject of study. In the 1960s and 1970s, researchers from former colonies wrote about colonialism's lasting impacts, creating the area of post-colonialism. These intellectuals believed colonialism had cultural, economic, and political effects. They claimed that colonisation had destroyed indigenous culture and identity by imposing Western principles.

Post-colonialism strongly influenced our understanding of colonialism and its aftermath. It has shown us how colonialism changed our world and sparked new resistance and activism. Colonialism shaped former colonies in several ways: Language: Colonialists' thought, and expression.

Faith: Colonialism typically spread the colonizer's faith. This can affect a former colony's religious practices. Education: Former colonies generally adopted Western educational systems. This can affect a former colony's education and worldview.

Law: Colonialism typically forced its legal system on the colonised. This can change the judicial system of a former colony and how people view justice and fairness.

Art: Colonialism suppressed indigenous art. This can affect the art and creative expression of a former colony.

These are some ways colonialism shaped former colonies. Post-colonialism is a complicated and growing subject of study. We can start to understand and solve former colonies' problems as we learn more about colonialism. The coloniser exploits the colonised country's resources and labour. Colonialism began in the 16th century and is multifaceted. When European nations began exploring and conquering new lands, colonialism began. European colonialism of Africa and Asia in the 19th century was the second wave. After World War II, the US and USSR competed for influence in the decolonized world, causing the third wave of colonialism. Colonialism changed the world. It displaced millions, destroyed cultures, and exploited resources. It also perpetuated inequality and injustice.

Brick Lane and *Midnight's Children* are postcolonial novels on identity. In *Brick Lane*, Ali follows Nazneen, a Bangladeshi girl forced to marry an older man and go to London. Nazneen struggles to adapt to London, stuck between Bangladeshi and British cultures. In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie recounts Saleem Sinai's birth at midnight on August 15, 1947, the day India gained independence from Britain. Saleem represents the new India and is gifted. Saleem finally accepts his identity as a "midnight's child," a product of India and Britain. *Brick Lane* and *Midnight's Children* examine postcolonial identity in depth. Colonialism fundamentally shapes identity. They also show how former colonists struggle to blend cultures. In Rushdie's *Midnight Children*, post-independent Nigeria's violence symbolises its postcolonial hybridity. Postcolonial hybrid identity involves reconciling colonial-era cultural, religious, and political convictions. According to Alistair Cormack, postcolonial subjects often endure a "double bind" where they are considered aliens by their host nation and commodities by their own men. This double bind contributes to layered 'othering', making it difficult for individuals to express their subjectivity and agency without being excluded. The pieces also show how postcolonial subjects battle to keep their identities and be accepted into society.

Brick Lane and *Midnight's Children* similarly examine how memory shape's identity. Rushdie builds India through recollections and dreams in *Midnight's Children*, which sometimes make sense but frequently don't. This divided and incoherent India mirrors expatriate communities' struggles to define themselves. In depicting a city that endured colonial transformations, Pieprzak also emphasises memory. *Brick Lane* and *Midnight's Children* depict postcolonial identity well. Challenges of Assimilation in a Postcolonial World

Both *Brick Lane* and *Midnight's Children* demonstrate the challenges faced by individuals in assimilating within a postcolonial world dominated by power structures shaped by historical events, religion, and ethnicity. Furthermore, Rushdie's novel depicts the tension between assimilation and cultural preservation as his characters grapple with their postcolonial hybrid identities.

The concept of nation also gives way to ethnicity and religious beliefs, which often lead to rivalry and violence. Moreover, the postcolonial context presents individuals with the challenge of reconciling their own complex identities with those imposed upon them by hegemonic power structures. In both novels, we see characters struggling to reconcile the tensions between their ethnic and cultural heritage with dominant cultural values and norms. Exploring Hybridity and Postcolonial Identity The concept of hybridity is central to both *Brick Lane* and *Midnight's Children*, which highlight the complexity of postcolonial identity (Anastasi, 2022).

Postcolonial identity has many facets and issues.

Social, economic, political, and cultural obstacles exist and Postcolonial identities often confront the following challenges: Colonialism's legacy: Colonialism shaped former colonies' cultures, languages, and economics. This heritage can hinder identity development in certain countries.

Neo-colonialism: A former colonial power dominates an ex-colony economically and politically. People from these countries may feel that they are still under their old coloniser, which can complicate postcolonial identity.

Political instability: Postcolonial nations are often unstable. This makes it hard for people from these nations to feel safe and accepted, which hinders identity development.

Postcolonial societies are often culturally mixed. This implies people from these societies have been exposed to several cultures, making it hard to form a single identity and Postcolonial identities have overcome these obstacles and created new identities. These new identities typically combine ancient and new cultures and can empower them.

Examples of postcolonial identities overcoming challenges:

Art and literature can express and explore postcolonial identity. Many former colonial artists and authors have challenged conventional myths about their countries and created new places for self-expression. Activism can help postcolonial people overcome social, economic, and political issues. Former colonial activists have improved their communities and created a more just and equitable world.

Education can strengthen postcolonial identity. Former colonists have used education to learn about their history and culture and get the skills and information they need to flourish.

Postcolonial identity is complex and developing. Past, present, and future influence it. It presents problems and opportunities.

People who come from places that used to be colonies have to figure out how to be themselves in two different cultures. Linda Warley pointed out that the postcolonial subject is "double-interpolated" by competing indigenous and colonial ideas, which makes them feel like they don't belong and have no roots (Murtaza et al., 2020). Also, discrimination and racism are big problems for post-war people in the country that did colonising. These problems can make it hard for them to find acceptance and respect, and they can also make it harder for them to get a job, a place to live, or an education. But, as postcolonial theory points out, the word "post" in "postcolonial identity" shouldn't mean that colonialism is over and that it doesn't still affect the lives of people who are postcolonial (Edson & Nadaraj, 2021).

Postcolonial identity has a lot of problems and is hard to understand. People who come from places that used to be colonies often feel like they don't fit in either of their two cultures. They may feel like strangers in both their own and the country that took over their territory. This makes people feel hopeless. Former colonists often encounter prejudice and discrimination in their adopted country. They may have trouble finding work, housing, and schools. They may also feel unappreciated.

Postcolonial identity issues are solvable. However, they are genuine and difficult to overcome. If they can embrace their differences and fit in, former colonists can feel whole and complete. Postcolonial identity issues: Colonialism drove people to adopt the colonizer's culture, destroying their own. Because of this, people may feel lost and alone.

Internalised racism: Former colonists were taught that their culture was inferior to the country that conquered them. This instilled internal racism. This might make people question their worthwhile they try to adopt their

culture. Discrimination: People and institutions in former colonies routinely mistreat former colonists. They may have trouble finding work, housing, and schools. They may also feel unappreciated.

Colonists frequently feel like outsiders in both their own culture and the country that took them over. This can make you feel hopeless and out of place. Despite these issues, colonists typically create new identities. Accept their numerous identities, find a place to fit in, and fight hard to overcome bigotry and discrimination.

Here are several postcolonial identity solutions for former countries:

Accept their uniqueness. Former colonies frequently have many identities, including their traditional culture, the country that took them over, and the country where they now dwell. Accepting all their identities helps them find their actual selves.

Colonial descendants frequently feel like outsiders. They may feel distinct from their own culture, the country that brought them in, and the place where they dwell. When they find acceptance and respect, they can feel like they belong.

Combat racism. These issues plague colonists. They can make the world fairer for themselves and others by solving these challenges.

Postcolonial identity issues are genuine and challenging. Accepting their numerous identities, finding a place to fit, and fighting discrimination and racism might help former colonists create a new, positive identity.

Postcolonial Quotations *Brick Lane* and *Midnight's Children*

Brick Lane

- **"I am a stranger in a strange land"**

Many postcolonial people have been uprooted. Nazneen feels lost and alone in London. She doesn't know anyone, speaks no language, and doesn't belong. Postcolonial people often feel like outsiders in a new country with a foreign culture.

- **"I am a product of two cultures"**

Colonialism typically creates hybridity. Bangladeshi Muslim Nazneen has resided in London for years. She is a mix of Bangladeshi and British culture. Postcolonial persons often straddle two cultures and experience this hybridity.

- **"I am a Muslim, but I am also a Londoner"**

This line depicts how postcolonial people can be connected to their homelands and new countries. Nazneen is pleased to be Bangladeshi and Muslim. She also considers herself a Londoner. Postcolonial people often feel split between their homelands and new countries.

Midnight's Children

- **"I was born at midnight on the day of Indian independence"**

Saleem becomes a symbol of India and a postcolonial allegory with this line. Saleem's birth coincides with Indian independence, making him a national emblem. His journey is an analogy for India's struggles to find a new identity following colonisation.

- **"I am a midnight's child"**

This sentence emphasises Saleem's unique status as a product of India's colonial past and autonomous future. Saleem attributes his powers to Lakshmi. He can see and hear others' thoughts, giving him a unique perspective on India. Saleem's experience shows that postcolonial cultures still feel colonialism's effects.

- **"I am a divided child"**

This line symbolises India's Hindu-Muslim and rich-poor divides. Saleem's mother is Muslim yet he's Hindu. He symbolises Indian divisions. Saleem's story highlights postcolonial nations' religious, ethnic, and class divisions.

These are some of *Brick Lane* and *Midnight's Children*'s depictions of postcolonial life. These works illuminate colonial legacies and remind postcolonial cultures of their struggles.

The 20th and 21st centuries' postcolonial literature has explored identity, cultural struggle, and colonialism's legacy. Postcolonial identity is depicted in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, which offer unique takes on these subjects. Both novels explore how colonisation affects identity.

Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of *Midnight's Children*, contends with the effects of British colonialism on his Indian identity. Hybrid Identities and the Loss of Unity Both books investigate postcolonial and migrant hybrid identities. Both works illustrate the brutality and turmoil of hybrid identities. Rushdie depicts India's struggle for post-independence unity as a result of the loss of a cohesive national identity as a result of ethnic and religious factions at odds with one another. Ali depicts immigrants attempting to strike a balance between their native values and those of their adopted nation.

Both novels illustrate how postcolonial nations lose their cohesion when ethnic, religious, and political identities replace national ones (Jokanovic, 2018). These works address hybridity in various ways. Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* challenges colonial power structures through the use of hybridity. According to *Brick Lane* by Ali, hybridity causes ambivalence and disarray.

Despite their hybridity differences, both works depict postcolonial identity and its difficulties in a complex manner. The works also illustrate the challenges of juggling multiple cultures. The postcolonial literature of Achebe, Naipaul, Zadie Smith, and Aravind Adiga focuses on hybrid identities. Hybrid identities are becoming more important in transcultural and international contexts. Postcolonial literature often discusses hybrid identities, as the sources indicate. In Management and Organisational Studies, hybrid identity has been studied in Indian call centres and the development of "modern market citizens" in Malaysia. Postcolonial hybrid identity is complex, with both pros and cons.

Bhabha's notion that hybridity creates ambivalence, and chaos, and disrupts unequal authority relations and power is crucial to comprehending postcolonial identity. Hybridity highlights how cultures are always hybridised and can be liberating and disruptive, undermining post-colonialism. *Midnight's Children* and *Brick Lane* offer a comparative view of postcolonial identities, with Rushdie using hybridity to challenge colonial power systems and Ali taking a more ambiguous approach. Postcolonial hybrid identity, where people fight to reconcile many cultural identities in a changing society, as depicted in the novels. Transnational networks, borderless communications, and enhanced mobility due to migration have increased story and identity hybridity. Hybrid identity upsets power structures and is difficult to navigate. Hybrid identity empowers and allows self-expression. Thus, combining management studies and cultural theory can help us comprehend postcolonial hybrid identity better (Nazir2019).

Comparative Analysis of Monica Ali and Salman Rushdie's Works

Comparative Analysis of Monica Ali and Salman Rushdie's Writings in Comparison Postcolonial identity is a recurrent issue in a lot of postcolonial literature, and it is extremely important to the works of both Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. Both books investigate the hardships and challenges that individuals have when attempting to navigate their way through numerous cultural identities, particularly when they are caught between their homelands and adoptive homes, their ethnic affiliations, and their political convictions.

Both books also examine the ways in which individuals might find meaning in their experiences. The two novels' approaches to hybridity, on the other hand, couldn't be more different from one another. The novel *Midnight's Children* written by Rushdie accepts the concept of hybridity and makes use of it to disrupt power relations and authority that were formed during the time of colonialism. On the other hand, *Brick Lane* by Ali has a tendency to perceive hybridity as something that can result in ambivalence and disorder.

In spite of these distinctions, both novels provide nuanced perspectives of postcolonial identity and the complexity that result from hybridity. In addition, they bring to light the difficulties that individuals confront when attempting to navigate their many identities (Padika et al., 2020).

As depicted in Rushdie's *Midnight Children*, the violence that rages in post-independent Nigeria highlights the challenges that people who are wrestling with hybrid identities under postcolonial contexts encounter. The problem of hybrid identity becomes more pressing as the idea of the nation gives way to other categories of identification, such as ethnicity, religious beliefs, and political convictions. Frantz Fanon made the prognostication that the concept of unity would disintegrate as a result of the competition to fill positions vacated by former colonial masters, which would result in religious strife. The problem of hybrid identity has become even more complex and difficult to resolve in today's society as a result of the proliferation of transnational networks and increased mobility. Concerns regarding hybridity, diaspora, and creolization have been at the forefront of postcolonial literature for quite some time (Ito2021).

For instance, the work that Homi Bhabha did on cultural hybridity and the impact that it had on postcolonial identities was influential in the field. However, in order to have a full comprehension of postcolonial identity and hybridity, one must also take into account the beneficial effects of these concepts. However, hybridity also opens places for the rupture of asymmetrical power relations, despite the fact that it contradicts and

undermines post-colonialism. Both *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali and *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie give unique insights into the difficulties of postcolonial identity building, despite their divergent perspectives on hybridity.

In addition, the relevance of hybrid identities in postcolonial contexts has been investigated not only in literary works but also in academic research. These investigations have been carried out both in the West and in the Global South. Although the idea of hybridity has been given significant thought in management and organisational studies, very few papers have made use of Bhabha's core discoveries regarding hybridity and the possibility that it may disrupt asymmetrical power relations. Both *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali and *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie are significant works of literature that present complex assessments of postcolonial identity and hybridity. Both authors are known for their contributions. In addition to this, they both shed light on the difficulties that individuals encounter while attempting to navigate the numerous identities that are present in postcolonial contexts.

The Formation of Identity in *Brick Lane* and *Midnight's Children*

Long has postcolonial literature been preoccupied with the complexities of identity formation under hybrid conditions. Both *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali and *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie offer unique insights into the challenges faced by postcolonial individuals who are attempting to negotiate several identities. *Brick Lane* was written by Monica Ali, and *Midnight's Children* was written by Salman Rushdie. The underlying idea behind both of these works is that postcolonial identities are formed as a result of cultural influences as well as political, social, and economic forces. In addition, both books analyse the ways in which creolization and diaspora have an effect on the experiences of postcolonial subjects. Despite the fact that they have many parallels, Ali and Rushdie tackle the subject of identity creation in very different ways. According to Skale (2017), Ali's short story *Brick Lane* focuses mostly on the challenges that individuals have when attempting to reconcile their cultural identity with their move to a new country and their subsequent settlement there.

Nazneen, the main character of the book, goes through an internal conflict as she tries to reconcile her Bangladeshi origin with her new life in London. In contrast, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* explores the multiple strata of identity that exist within postcolonial contexts, adopting a more complex approach to identity formation. Rushdie demonstrates through his protagonist Saleem Sinai how postcolonial identities are intertwined with larger historical and political processes both works also show how hard it is for people to find a balance between their different identities in a structured power structure. This is especially clear in *Brick Lane*, where Ali looks at how female migrants are treated as aliens in their home country and "commodities" in their own communities. This "double bind" is part of a multi-layered process of "othering," which suggests that their expressions of subjectivity and agency place them right away in a space of deviance and defiance in postcolonial societies.

In a similar way, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* looks at the violence and problems of post-independence India as a country trying to figure out who it is. The book shows how postwar identities often give way to narrow religious, ethnic, and political identities that make it hard for a country to be one. Also, both *Brick Lane* and *Midnight's Children* show how important language is in forming post-war identities. Suleri and Mufti have argued that Rushdie's engagement with Islam is complex and problematic, as opposed to exemplifying Western secularism ideals in opposition to Islamic fundamentalism.

Instead, Rushdie's indigenous poetics are connected to the novel's influence on Islamic politics. While Ali and Rushdie approach the topic of identity formation in different ways, both illuminate the complexities of postcolonial identity and the difficulties individuals confront reconciling their cultural heritage with migration, settlement, and change. Both novels also emphasise the role of power structures in forming postcolonial identity and how this affects an individual's capacity to articulate subjectivity and agency within these larger historical and political processes (Nunes & Alves, 2021). The comparative analysis of *Brick Lane* and *Midnight's Children* reveals how postcolonial hybrid identity is influenced by a variety of factors, including language, religion, ethnicity, and politics.

Postcolonial Identity in *Brick Lane* and "*Midnight's Children*"

Language, religion, ethnicity, and politics shape postcolonial identity within historical and political processes. Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* analyse how power dynamics and history shape postcolonial hybrid identities. Ali's novel explores how Bengali immigrant women in London's expressions of subjectivity and agency are immediately perceived as deviant and even resistant due to their double bind as immigrants in a host nation that treats them as aliens and as commodities by men in their own communities (Hurley, 2019). However, Rushdie's novel depicts the brutality and hardships experienced by post-independent Indians as they fight with their postcolonial hybrid identity, which narrows to ethnicity, religion, and politics. Rushdie's postcolonial India transcends ethnic and religious conflict. Political power systems and historical events

define postcolonial identity. Power Structures Shape Postcolonial Identity Power shapes postcolonial identity beyond history.

Power Shapes Postcolonial Identity Power shapes postcolonial identity beyond history. In *Brick Lane* and *Midnight's Children*, power structures constrain the protagonists' autonomy and subjectivity. In *Brick Lane*, Bengali women are immigrants to their host nation and commodities to their own men. This power structure limits their autonomy and subjectivity, generating a stretched identity that often contrasts with cultural standards. In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie explores how political beliefs and historical events shape postcolonial identity. He illustrates how Saleem Sinai's midnight child and Indian citizenship collide with his communal dedication. Rushdie explores how political power relations affect postcolonial identity through Saleem Sinai's public persona and loss of narrative control.

Power structures affect postcolonial identity in *Brick Lane* and *Midnight's Children*, the authors claim.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali and *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie investigate postcolonial identity and the challenges of managing the complex power structures that determine it. Both works show how people strive to balance their ethnicity, religion, culture, and politics. They also show how history and power structures shape postcolonial identity. The novels present a sophisticated perspective of postcolonial identity in modern literature and how people navigate their identities in dominant cultural norms and power structures. Postcolonial diasporic literature in English is generated in a rarefied postmodern atmosphere and includes cosmopolitan writers like Rushdie and Qureshi. Postcolonial literature and criticism continue to help us understand the world's complexity, especially regarding identity, culture, and power. Alistair Cormack's research of postcolonial subjectivity in *Brick Lane* illuminates the double bind female migrants suffer as aliens by their host nation and commodities by their own males. This double bind reinforces Bengali immigrant women's 'othering' by portraying their subjectivity and agency as deviant and resistant. However, postcolonial studies have been criticised for homogenising colonised people's experiences and ignoring intra-racial differences.

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