

## Identity Crisis in Tariq Rahman's *The Snail*

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**Abstract:** This study is designed to trace the identity crisis portrayed in Tariq Rahman's *The Snail*. The story deals with the crisis of identity that how the metaphoric character of *The Snail* changes his identity and faces the consequences. The study aims to highlight the identity crisis and its harsh consequences. The study is carried out through the lens of Homi K Bhabha's Theory of Hybridity. The data is analyzed through a close reading technique and resolved that the change in identity is the loss of everything, and the loss of identity is the loss of your social space.

**Key Words:** Hybridity, Post Colonialism, Identity, Diversity, Community

### Introduction

Tariq Rahman is an academic and critic who is well-known in his field. In addition, he writes short stories. His *Works and Other Short Stories* is a collection of stories from three previous volumes by the author. Tariq Rahman is a Pakistani writer whose primary goal in writing stories is to communicate the many emotions and experiences that the Pakistani people are experiencing. To some extent, his stories are a mirror of Pakistani society; yet, it is difficult to believe that he accurately portrays Pakistani society and culture as a whole. His works are unique and reflect his ideas and experiences while living in the country of Pakistan. He hasn't written many short stories, but the few he has are richly filled with the spirit of Pakistani culture, land, Poverty, exploitations, physical appearances, religious extremism, and psychological imbalances are among the subjects that he explores in Pakistan. His style and technique are also Pakistani, or to be more precise, informal. In terms of art and technique, he has not been influenced by any fictional writer; rather, he writes like one would write some form of pleasure essay or diary. In a nutshell, his stories are stories about Pakistani society, culture, and people because

they all deal with the same themes, problems, and characters.

An identity crisis is a stage in a person's growth where they begin to doubt their sense of self or where they belong in the world. Erik Erikson, a developmental psychologist, coined the phrase because he believed that one of the most difficult problems humans have to deal with is building their identity. Many countries gained their independence from their former colonial governments throughout the second half of the twentieth century, symbolizing the beginning of a new era. According to literary critics and cultural theorists, a postcolonial culture is described as any culture that has been influenced by imperialism from the time of colonization up to the current day. Throughout the history of the world, colonialism has had a significant impact on societies and individuals. It has affected the more general issues of culture, race, gender, and identity, and the more specific ones.

*The Snail* is the short story of Tariq Rahman, in which he portrays the concept of an identity crisis. *The Snail* is a metaphorical and fable short story. The story's protagonist, the Snail, represents those trying to alter their roots. It represented those who seek

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new challenges, often at the cost of their lives. The Snail is a unique character with a brain. The Snail is used as a metaphor for humans, who are given brains at the end of their tails. It means that when human beings are given a brain and do not use it properly and want to change their identity, it causes the destruction of their lives. The character in this short story wants to change his identity. When he changes his identity, he faces the consequences. His companions left him alone and is not accepted by anyone in society. After much despair, he died at the side of the pond.

## Literature Review

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One of the most important themes in Diasporic literature is how Africans in exile feel about their homeland. Adjei (2012) investigates the influence of black African and African patriotism on the views of diasporans toward Africa and Africans towards Diasporans in his work, *Back-to-Africa, 'Double Identity' and the Black Population Facing the Myth and Reality in Ghanaian Fiction*. The African Diaspora's reconnection with continental Africa is prevented by strong geopolitical, cultural, and historical obstacles. It is, therefore, still in flux as he further analyses the question of the eternal linkages between the African continent and its people.

It is obvious that when two different cultures line with the same territory, they will influence each other, and there will be a shift in cultural identity. According to Walt (2013), in his article, *Discourse on African American /Black Identity*: he stated that "Diasporic consciousness developed an alternative for understanding the identity formation of African people. Furthermore, he explains that the change from understanding identity along the basis of race and culture was initiated toward a conception that is entirely culturally based". He adds how African Americans faced the issues of identity when they went from Africa to America. When they were sent to the United States, they were separated from their roots.

After the British colonization of India, the crisis of identity became a major subject of discussion. Even when the British were there on the subcontinent, their language and culture were the main topics of discussion among the Muslim leaders. Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan gives an urge of English language in many of his speeches. Before the extension of British authority in India, India was prosperous and was doing very well. British made India their colonized state in 1558 and left India in terrible shape in 1947. This

colonization resulted in an identity crisis in India. Akram, Jamil, and Irshad (2015), in their journal, *issue of identity and double consciousness in a Colonized Nation: An Analysis of Ali`s Twilight in Delhi* explore the nostalgic state of mind that Indians have experienced as a result of colonization. They explained, "How the native Indians become the target of double consciousness between the indigenous identities inherited from their ancestors and the western influence identities acquired via the imitation of western natives." They further said that after colonialism, the British imposed their values and norms as standard and universal, causing a crisis of identity among the indigenous people. A study by Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin (1998) described the issue of an identity crisis as "an experience of creating western culture on native culture resulted in a clash between two cultures, eventually leading to an essential conflict in the native people." They highlighted this study as an example of how "a Western culture on native culture resulted in a clash between two cultures, eventually leading to an integral conflict in the native people."

In most cases, women are deprived of their rights double more than males. Black American women are in the same situation. Buckingham (2019), *Black Women Be Knowing: Double Consciousness and the Maid's Tear in Get Out*, was used to analyze the film *Get Out*. In late capitalism liberalism, depicts the long-term identity problem of black Americans, particularly women. According to Buckingham's work, "In the movie *Get Out*, there is a moment in which a black enslaved maid laughs and weeps at the same time." This scene explores identity crisis, body language, clothes, and facial expressions to explore the ambiguous attitude that *Gets Out* is about black women who are both powerful and disempowered at the same time, which stands in contrast to the popular narrative of the film industry.

Khan (2019), in his article, *Cultural Clash: A Postcolonial Analysis of Tariq Rahman`s Charity*, discusses the problem of cultural clashes from a different perspective. According to him, when two or more cultures come together, it results in cultural conflict between them. As a result, he went on to say that in the postcolonial context, disputes emerge when the dominant class imposes their foreign or non-native values on the poor indigenous locals, increasing their already tense relationship and transferring these problems to the next generation. When intergenerational conflict is not resolved on a timely

basis through negotiation and reconciliation, it results in damage to the cultural foundations and historical roots of the participating civilizations.

Salmeen (2019), in her article, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist: Hybridity and the Struggle for Identity*, highlights the issues of hybridity and identity struggle as they are experienced by Changez, the protagonist of the novel. He is a Pakistani who has graduated from Princeton University and is working in the United States for a high-end valuation firm. The issue is examined in this work from the perspective of postcolonial theory. Changez tries his best to stay in the middle, but his personal, social, and political experiences force him to make a tough but expected decision that will affect everyone.

There is no doubt that skin and geographic differences cause an inferiority complex in the native people. As Walker (2019), in her article, *Double Consciousness in Today's Black America* quoted the work of Du Bois in her work that "double consciousness as a result of racial prejudice and oppression". The natives consider foreign people superior, it is just because of their ruling in trade, politics and technology. On the other hand, the nonnatives take full advantage of their strange behaviour. The elite natives try to be equal with them, and that's why they adopted their values customs and culture, which leads to an identity crisis in poor and middle-class natives. Furthermore, De Bois stated that for a better understanding of double consciousness and crises of identity, it is necessary to observe the experiences of Black Americans. The relation of black and white are the proof which compels Black American in spending of miserable life.

## Theoretical Framework

Short Story, *The Snail* is the subject of the current study, which is a socio-cultural analysis from a post-colonial perspective. Colonialism was simply a clash of cultures, languages, peoples, and thinking, all of which were grouped together under a single system dominated by Western empires. In order to generate Europeanized locals, European invaders infused Western ways of thinking, English language, and culture into the native setting. In a post-colonial context, it highlights behaviours and cultural values. Many scholars and theorists have explained the term "post-colonial" from different perspectives.

Bhabha (1994) coined the term "Hybrid" to describe those colonized indigenous, describing the

process as "a tension that occurs between diverse populations in order to mix them into one nation. According to Ashcroft (1998), "post-colonialism" has taken to define "the study of the territorial background of the European continent," and "we see many institutions of colonial background tied to European history." We witness extended actions and rather descriptive managerial issues of the British authority as we go over the facts.

## Research Methodology

The path by which researchers must conduct their research is known as a research methodology. It highlights how these researchers formulate their problems and objectives, as well as how they present their findings based on the data collected during the research period. The method used in research is a kind of mixture in which we interpreted, explained, analyzed, and explored the ideas and things that are related to the topic concerned. It is a systematic method that revolves around a research problem that has been explained in a systematic way; the gathering of data, analysis of data, interpretation of data, and then the conclusion of the study topic. The research is in sequence and in a proper channel that explores the ideas in a perfect way. There are two types of methodology: Quantitative and Qualitative. Quantitative research usually uses those researchers who follow the scientific paradigm. The attempt of this method is to measure the data and generalize results from a sample of a target population. While the qualitative method creates a complete and detailed description of the observation of a researcher, it provides predictions, explanations, interpretation, and contextualization of the collected data.

## Research Design

A researcher's framework and techniques that are used for the research are known as the research design. The research design enables the researcher to choose the methodologies that are most suitable for the research. The present research is about the identity crisis in Tariq Rahman's short story *The Snail*. In the present research, a qualitative study approach is used by the researcher using Homi K. Bhabha's theory of Hybridity. Through close reading techniques and using Homi K. Bhabha's theory of Hybridity, the researcher analyzed the short story *The Snail* by Tariq Rahman, especially one of its characters, the snail.

## Data Collection

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The study is based on a qualitative method of data collection. The data is directly taken from the short story by Tariq Rahman, *The Snail*. The information was collected from the examined narrative *The Snail*. There are many works of Tariq Rahman, but the researcher chose *The Snail* because there are elements of identity crisis in this work. The text of the narrative is the main source of information. The secondary data is used to back up the findings. Secondary data has been collected from dictionaries, articles, journals, internet browsing, and earlier research on a similar but unrelated object. The methodology is based on a story analysis to determine the impact of colonialism.

## Research Method

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For analyzing the identity crisis in *The Snail* by Tariq Rahman, the researcher used the qualitative method. In the qualitative method, the researcher analyzed the short story, *The Snail*, by Tariq Rahman through a close reading technique. Through close reading techniques, we observe the facts and details around the text. In the close reading technique, we study the work closely to notice certain features and analyze them. In the close reading technique, we focus on the plot, characters, settings, themes, symbols, and so on. In the present research, the focus is on the identity crisis in Tariq Rahman's short story *The Snail*, especially on the character, The Snail.

## Analysis and Discussion

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The narrative begins with a snail in a pond filled with life, as many creatures live there. Compared to other snails, this one has been bestowed with a brain located at the end of his tail. One day, after he had eaten, he felt threatened and hid in a shell. After a while, when he emerged from the shell, he saw an unknown creature, a small creature with two legs and skin that was entirely free of any hair. Fear gripped the entire community, and the snails hid their bodies inside their shells, according to a snail, which was extremely cowardly. After that, the snail society became a source of irritation for him, and he failed to show adequate respect to the elders of the community. He began to hate the shell that had been placed over his body. He decided to focus on a journey to achieve the secret to achieving joy one day. He finally decided to speak with Toad. The Toad agreed sadly and walked out the door. He also had conversations with his friends, the butterflies, and the worms, who teased him and made

fun of him. He finally bursts out of his shell and experiences himself as if he were born again. However, in the process, he severely injured himself and nearly went insane from anxiety and suffering. His companions, the butterflies, moths, and worms, have abandoned him and fled. He was in such pain. He had the feeling that everything was irretrievably lost. He grows ill and weak as a result of this. He was invited to speak with the pond's inhabitants, but no one seemed interested in hearing what he had to say. When he came to the river, he was on the verge of passing out when he suddenly spotted a creature with two large legs that were far larger than anything he had seen before. After emerging from the water and wearing his grey hard steel shell, the two-legged creature went away at high speed away from the scene. The Snail lost his life and died as a result of his actions.

*The Snail* is a metaphorical and fable short story. The protagonist of the story, the Snail, symbolizes those people who want to change their roots. It symbolized those people who want to achieve new things, and for this purpose, they put themselves in danger and most often lose their lives. The Snail is a character who is unlike any other normal snail, and it is blessed with a brain, as the author indicates: "It was blessed with a brain which was tucked away in the remote extremity of its tail".

The Snail is used as a metaphor for humans, who are given brains at the end of their tails. It means that when human beings are given a brain and they do not use it in the proper way and want to change their identity, then it causes the destruction of their lives. He was a bold snail who didn't like the behaviour of his fellow snails when an unknown creature emerged in the pool. He dislikes the shell that has been placed over his body, claiming that hiding under it is cowardly. He tried unsuccessfully to persuade his fellows to sabotage their shells, but they refused; as a result, he sabotaged his shell and was severely wounded. All of his friends abandoned him because he was unattractive without his shell. He died on the bank of the pond one day after battling intense pain for several days. The snail belongs to the community, but the shell was the identity that made him unique from the rest. The shell symbolizes the security and identity of the Snail, but when he tries to overthrow it. It became the cause of his death.

There are enigmas, and these questions help to develop the plot and add to the themes of the story. These questions create suspense and mysteries that

push forward the story, and it also helps the reader to think critically and reach the main theme of the story and its conclusion. As in the story, the Snail asked Mr Toad about his shell, and the Toad questioned: "*What of it, Snail? What of it? Does it do any earthly good to have a bloody shell?*" These questions made him more confused. He is not sure about his identity. He concluded the snails were stupid for hiding their slim, lovely bodies for so long in these ugly shells. After that, he met with other friends, and they also made fun of him. Then he decided to take off his shell and change his identity. He felt naked and helpless for the first time as he removed his shell. All his old friends fled away from him and left him alone. It symbolizes that when you change your identity, then you belong to nowhere and your own people will run away from you. After much disappointment, he wanted to relieve his despair feelings, and the Snail begins to use his inventive mind, as many arguments arose in his mind and he questioned: "*What was beauty?*" He answered himself that it was only a temporary illusion that when he changed his identity, he would look smart from rest, but he was mistaken. The real beauty is in your ancestry, your old identity, and your legacy, which make you unique. It symbolizes that when a human wants to change his identity, he loses everything and his society does not accept him, and he will never be a part of its people.

The pond in the short story symbolizes the society and the various type of people who live in it, as well as the fact that the people of the society do not embrace rapid change; if you pursue such a change, you will not be among them, like the Snail in the short story who lived among other creatures in the pond. When the Snail saw another creature with a smooth body, the Snail wanted to be like that. He did not want his shell anymore because he considered hiding in a shell cowardly and then he wanted to remove his shell and change his identity. First, he met with Toad and asked in a way: "*Dear Mr Toad*", it symbolized that the Toad species is superior. The Toad replied arrogantly: "*The damn thing hangs on you like a \_ like a \_ well, like a bloody shell. Besides, it makes one loathsome. So ugly in the middle, you know. Ask me, take it off.*" Then the Snail talked to other friends, butterflies, and other insects, they also laughed at him that he still did not accept the change, we have accepted the change in their infancy, and it is the irrational legacy of the snail world to not accept the change, as in the text: *They had shaken off theirs in early infancy.*" They laughed at the Snail. The Snail started to shake off his shell, and

when he took it off, he wounded himself badly, and all his old friends fled from him and left him alone. It represents that when you want to bring big changes, your near friends will leave your side as know you have nothing, but when you have power, some people will roam after you, and when you lose everything, all will run away from you.

There are three main stages of the story: In the first stage, the Snail wants to change his identity when he sees a creature with two legs having smooth skin, which has disturbed the community. The Snail hide in his shell, and when he saw the other snails who hide in the shell, he felt it extremely cowardly. He started hating the shell that had been placed over his body. He decided to change his identity and remove his shell. First, he met with Mr Toad, who agreed and went away. Then he met his old friends, butterflies, moths, and worms, who also laughed at him that they had removed the shell in our infancy. The Snail started to take off his shell. When you wanted to change your identity or shift from your roots, you will face three challenges. First, you will completely change your identity. Or the second, you will be mixed up. Or the third, you will be completely conservative. Here the Snail wants to change his identity completely.

In the second stage, he wounded himself terribly when he removed his shell. He felt like he had been reborn. He felt exposed and powerless in a way he had never experienced before. Butterflies, moths, and worms, his friends, have abandoned him and fled. He was in extreme misery. He had a distinct impression that everything had been permanently gone. As a result, he becomes ill and weak. He was invited to talk with the residents of the pond, but no one seemed interested in hearing him out. He was in immense pain, and no one wanted to help him. He was in extreme misery. The ants attacked his body, making him cry with the needles of their stinging stabs. He walked to the pool, and it was full of life. He was the only one who was miserable.

In the third stage, when he reached the river, he noticed a creature with two legs, unlike anything he had ever seen before. After emerging from the water and wearing his grey hard steel shell, the two-legged creature went away from the scene. As a result of his actions, the Snail despaired, lost his life, and died. Here the snail completely changed his identity. After losing his identity, he faced the consequences of that change. He was not accepted by his own community and was

left alone. After much despair, he died at the side of the pond.

## Conclusion

In a nutshell, the current study, *Identity Crisis in Tariq Rahman's work The Snail*, concludes that there are three levels of change. Firstly, complete changes in identity, secondly partial changes in identity, and thirdly completely neglecting changes in identity.

From this study, we conclude that it is a metaphoric short story. There is a character symbolically who wants to change his identity and, when he loses his identity, he faces the consequences and dies at the end of the story. So, if someone wants to change his/her identity, either he will change it completely, he will change it partially, or he will be conservative to the changes. Here as the researcher thinks, the second one is the good one because when you want to accept the changes in an optimistic way, then it is worthwhile. On the other side when

someone accepts the changes blindly, then he/she will leave his/her identity, roots, and history.

The major findings of this research are that when you change your identity blindly, you will lose everything; even your own society will not accept you. In *The Snail*, the snail wants to change his identity when he sees the creature with smooth skin. He met with friends who persuaded him to change, and when he took off his shell, he wounded himself badly and changed his identity, then his friends fled away from him and left him alone. After being disappointed, he reached the pond, he noticed a creature with two legs, unlike anything he had ever seen before. After emerging from the water and wearing his grey hard steel shell, the two-legged creature went away from the scene. As a result of his actions, the snail despaired, lost his life, and died. He faced the consequences of the identity change and died after much despair at the end of the story.

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