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Abstract: Multiculturalism, which emerged and gained significance as a result of increasing numbers of immigrants arriving in the Western countries, has been one of the most discussed issues since the second half of the twentieth century. These first and second generation immigrants have caused certain changes to come into existence in many aspects of the Western communities. After their arrival, they have often faced serious problems such as violent attacks, insulting looks and being behaved like outsiders in those lands. As a Pakistani immigrant who has most probably observed the British citizens' discrimination and racism against the immigrants in the British society, Hanif Kureishi often deals with the problems and whether the second generation immigrants' adaptation to a foreign Western setting like Britain is possible. The aim of this study is to reveal Kureishi's views on the British society's treatment toward the immigrants and their culture in the light of multiculturalism and its possibility not only in theoretical but also in practical terms by means of making references to the characters and events in *The Black Album*.

Keywords: Kureishi, immigration, multiculturalism, discrimination, racism, immigrants

Colonialism altered many facets of the world scenery, reshaping especially its political, social and cultural boundaries of both the Western and Eastern nations. Lots of native people were forced to abandon their homeland in order to be made to work as servants or workers in Western metropolitan cities. Apart from those being forced native servants, there were also others who immigrated to Western cities eagerly in order to get better jobs and sustain a better life with much better standards than those in their native land. This kind of movements to Western cities has culminated in a society in which a variety of people from different races and cultures have wished to maintain their lives, but the principal issue here is whether it is probable that these newcomers could be welcomed or behaved as intruders.

"The post-war years were a period of reconstruction and industrial growth in a Europe that was short of labor after the disastrous Second World War"; therefore, immigrants out of Asia, Africa and Caribbean arrived in order to supply the needed workforce of Europe and were frequently considered permanent visitors (Triandafyllidou et al. 7). However, these immigrants have been subject to ethnic and racial discrimination with regards to "economic inequalities, political under-representation, social stigmatization or cultural invisibility" albeit these problems were supposed to be obstructed through some precautions with the effect of some humanist exertions (Kymlicka 36). Discussing the unequal dissemination of available supplies, prospects and individual or group rights in multicultural societies, Irish Marion Young acknowledges that "To be sure, racialized social processes usually build on perceived differences in culture – language, religion, a sense of common lineage, specific cosmological beliefs, differing social practices, and so on" (81).

Multicultural issues have often been placed at the heart of such matters as the possibility of coexistence of diverse ethnic groups belonging to a different set of cultures and sustainability of multi-cultural and multi-ethnic social formation. These controversies can be seen even at the centre of defining what multiculturalism exactly is. Will Kymlicka asserts that "multiculturalism is characterized as a feel-good celebration of ethnocultural diversity, encouraging citizens to acknowledge and embrace the panoply of customs, traditions, music, and cuisine that exist in a multi-ethnic society" (33). Bhikhu Parekh

depicts the concept of multiculturalism as a "society … that includes two or more cultural communities" (6).

The definitions above, however, are on the verge of being refuted by a challenging view that is founded on the claim that multiculturalism cannot be restricted to such articulations which fail to notice unfavorable facts and crises perceived in multicultural societies of the West. For instance, as Giuliana B. Prato opines that, "… multiculturalism does not break down cultural barriers; it reinforces both these barriers and the attendant stereotypes, creating suspicion and hostility between minority groups and between them and members of the majority" (16). In addition, Tariq Modood upholds the idea that "The 'difference' in question is typically marked by various forms of racism and similar forms of ideologies as the migrants coming from societies or groups that have been historically ruled and/or perceived as inferior by the societies into which they have settled", underscoring the fact that racial inequality has been a predominant outlook of the Western population toward the other populations of the Eastern origin (2013, 6).

In 1940s and its aftermath, Britain also had to receive a large number of Muslim immigrants of the descent of such countries as Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Somalia, which had a remarkable impact on changing the structure of the British population (Weedon 145). "In the last decade (of the twentieth century), Britain and especially London have been a magnet for all kinds of migrants, many of whom are Muslims" (Modood 2006, 38). Since the conservative notion in Britain is persistent upon not accepting the British community as a multicultural one owing to a discriminatory approach and the belief that the cultural or national identity of the British is superior to that of the immigrants and since the British citizens often contemplate that these immigrants could defile their pure identity, it seems nearly impossible to witness that Britain will welcome and like beholding that the immigrants of various races and countries arrive in Britain in large numbers (Parekh 6).

As a Pakistani-British writer who mainly draws upon the sufferings and crises of the immigrants in multicultural Britain, Kureishi frequently deals with "the issues such as home, homelands, belonging,

inbetweenness, alienation, identity, hybridity, nationalism, racism, sexuality, fundamentalism, migration, ethnicity and the historical conflicts between East and West" (Diler 2). One is likely to observe that the characters in Kureishi's fiction are those who strive to resolve their identity crisis and dilemma that occur as a result of living in Britain and being torn between their native culture and the Western culture, those who sharpen their fundamentalist rage against the Western world on account of being frequently face to face with insulting and racist looks of the Western citizens, and those who aim to belong to the British culture while experiencing a remarkable degree of alienation from their native roots; however, one of the most outstanding traits of his immigrant characters is that they cannot reach a settled identity and are always confused by their quandary about whether they are part of their native world or the Western setting.

Concerning *The Black Album* by Kureishi, Chris Weedon conveys the idea that "It is a novel about second generation Pakistanis in London and engages with questions of identity through a radical contrast of life-styles ranging from affluent westernized middle-class living, through Muslim fundamentalism to serious involvement in drug culture" (148). Then, it can be accepted as one of the novels which raise the multicultural issues in Britain where second generation immigrants of diverse religions, cultures and nations try to maintain their lives in the face of the Western rage and racist attitudes toward them. Kureishi touches upon the potential problems which can emerge because of the British discriminatory political and social system in which these immigrants and their teenagers feel themselves in a state of danger and anxiety. Coming up against the racist and physical attacks of the British people who cannot stand seeing these immigrants in their land, they try to hold strength and brotherhood under the fundamentalist views as a sort of shield, thus deepening their hatred and fight against the spiteful white citizens.

These immigrants arriving in Britain in the middle and after the twentieth century strictly followed their native patterns of "kinship, custom, religion, language, post-imperial nationhood, and so on" that granted them a manifest awareness of an anti-British identity even though they admired the British civilization (Modood 2005, 458). Their

attempt to preserve their own culture and civilization in Britain has caused the British population to keep a certain distance between themselves and these immigrants, which can be said to be one of the subject matters that Kureishi wishes to convey. The experiences and observations of Shahid, the main character of the novel as second generation Pakistani son, prompt him to think that the wide gap within social networks of blacks and whites or even between different ethnic groups is evident in the British land as is mentioned by the author in the following lines:

> He had noticed, during the days that he'd walked around the area, that the races were divided. The black kids stuck with each other, the Pakistanis went to one another's houses, the Bengalis know each other from way back, and the whites too. Even if there were no hostility between groups – and there was plenty, if only implicit … (Kureishi 133)

Their social interaction that is confined to merely their own racial group member reveals the fact that Britain has not been able to embrace other racial communities and immigrants in a smooth way. If these different ethnic or racial groups were satisfied with entering a close communication with the white citizens, their social lives would include active relations and intimate dialogues with those British people. Finding relief and sincerity in their contacts with their own native people, these immigrants of Africa, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan avoid making friends or other close relationships with the members of the British race just as the British citizens abstain from approaching those immigrants without bias and racism. Thus, this kind of clustering in social networks and dialogues in Britain displays the barriers which seem indissoluble and too difficult to surpass in such a multicultural society.

Underlining the point that ethnic minorities and immigrants in Britain feel resented and distressed by the lack of being officially recognized and represented and drawing attention to the pressing need to make improvements in the present political structure, Modood professes that "Thus the framework has been and continues to be modified over time and is at least partly shaped by ethnic minority

political mobilization, and includes efforts to redefine race, ethnicity, racism, discrimination and, ultimately, British citizenship" (2005, 472). To illustrate, Riaz voices his pleasure and excitement for the fact there is a political figure who can represent the presence and troubles of the immigrants in Britain by saying that "[the] progress, as you will want to know, with Councillor Mr Rudder of Labour Party, is looking good, looking good" and that "[he] understands the position and importance of the minority in this country. He has stated … that he will put his big back right into [their] cause" (Kureishi 181). In addition, Hat calls Mr. Rudder "Friend of Asia", and Tariq utters: "My sentiments too. This sympathy for our people is as rare as an English virgin" (Kureishi 181).

The responses of these immigrants to the presence of such a politician suggest their need to have political representatives in the political area and assembly of the British government. For them, political recognition and representation in the British land can amount to proclaiming their problems and offering ideas in order to revise their roles in the eyes of the British citizens and government because equality in a society cannot be separated from the political argument, being one of the markers of being recognized or regarded as a real citizen and an indivisible part of the society. Just as other sects of the country such as Right and Left party groups can declare freely and openly their problems and needs, so these Muslim immigrants or the ones belonging to other religions in the novel have the right to be accepted and respected by the British nation. Their lack of political representation is one of the factors which force them to suppose themselves as being subject to manners and reactions that make them feel that they are not an equally real part of the society; thus, they can consult to other methods to represent their presence and sufferings such as violent acts and protests which could broaden the sharp lines between themselves and the white population.

Attempting to allude to the unjust and prejudiced legislation system in Britain and Europe where immigrants have been deprived of their essential rights for citizenship concerning their lifestyles and individual priorities, S. Jagdish Gundara articulates that "While many metropolitan societies have constitutionally safeguarded democratic frameworks, there are nevertheless denial of economic, social, linguistic, religious and legal rights" (24). Then, the religious rules and preferences of the

Muslim immigrants in Britain or any other country compose their inevitable and moral rights, which is one of the major concerns that Kureishi draws upon apparently in the novel. As a Muslim immigrant woman in the novel, Tahira, for example, points out the troubles and anxiety of the Muslim women due to their clothes and covering their heads in accordance with their religious principles:

> But we women go to a lot of trouble to conceal our allures. Surely you've heard how hard it is to wear the hijab? We are constantly mocked and reviled, as if we were the dirty ones. Yesterday, a man on the street said, this is England, not Dubai, and tried to rip my scarf off. (Kureishi 105)

This complaint of Tahira can be thought to symbolize not only the problems of the female Muslim immigrants but also the general plight of the Muslim immigrants both in Britain and other Western countries since Tahira's experience discloses the Muslim immigrants' vulnerability. Tahira cannot defend herself by suing this kind of verbal and physical attacks or offensive remarks as there is not any official rule in the existing law that can provide protection for these Muslim groups against any disturbing attitudes towards them. Consequently, the author implicitly criticizes the failure and insufficiency of the current British law in sheltering both the minority and dominant groups in an objective and unbiased manner. As Peter Jones brings up the significance of acknowledging the minority group's rights and beliefs as well as the majority groups:

> It is not about whether a society should be committed to Christianity or to Islam or, indeed, to atheism. Rather all parties to the argument are assumed to accept that members of the society should be able to hold and to live according to their own beliefs; so the issue amongst them is simply about the way in which the society should accommodate the diversity of beliefs that they hold … Indeed, it now seems anomalous that its protection should be confined to Christians. If its purpose is to protect from what they find offensive, why should that protection be extended

to some citizens but not to others? That seems plainly inequitable. (114-118)

The protection under discussion is concerned with each kind of sensibility of a religion, including its venerated figures, worship, principles, and rituals. If any of these holy things and figures is outraged or desecrated in a society, the law is obliged to interfere with such disrespectful acts and do what is necessary for protecting the insulted ones whatever their race and religion are. Nevertheless, as Muhammad Anwar argues it, "… ethnic minorities including Muslims are still victims of racial discrimination. The Race Relations Act 1976 does not fully protect Muslims because religious discrimination is not unlawful in Britain" (40).

The British population's racist attitudes toward the immigrants and violent attacks inflicted upon them are among the central subject matters which Kureishi focuses on, and internal racism is one of these key points. In order to grasp the concept of internal racism, it is necessary to cite the definition of "external" and "internal racism" of John McLeod, who maintains that:

> *Internal racism* is directed at those who live within the nation but are not deemed to belong to the imagined community of the national people due to their perceived 'race'. Internal racism can result in its most extreme and violent form in the *extermination* of racialized individuals … or the oppression of racialized groups who are awarded a low position in the social hierarchy … (112)

The novel touches upon the racist approaches and violence that the immigrants try to endure throughout their lives in the British nation even from their childhood. The author, for example, narrates the childhood memories of Shahid that have to do with the British children's fierce manners against him in the following lines: "Even when Shahid vomited and defecated with fear before going to school, or when he returned with cuts, bruises and his bag slashed with knives, she behaved as if so appalling an insult couldn't exist" (Kureishi 73). Also, the novelist portrays the effects of the British people's racist insults on

Shahid's subconscious which can be traced in his efforts to write stories as is mentioned in the novel:

> The first effort he copied – he created a sandwich of flimsy carbon paper which resulted in two smeared reproductions – was called 'Paki Wog Fuck Off Hone'. It featured the six boys who comprised the back row of his class at school, who, one day when the teacher had left the room in despair, chanted at Shahid, 'Paki, Paki, Paki, Out, Out, Out!' He banged the scene into his machine as he relived it, recording the dismal fear and fury in a jagged, cunt-fuck-kill prose that expressed him, like a soul singer screaming into a microphone. (Kureishi 72)

The reflections of racism can also be observed in Shahid's current life and in particular locations of London where the black members of the immigrant communities cannot pass through without fear and anxiety of being beaten and attacked by the white population. To illustrate, Shahid gives an account of his worries and fear to Riaz:

> Everywhere I went I was the only dark-skinned person. How did this make people see me? I began to be scared of going into certain places. I didn't know what they were thinking. I was convinced they were full of sneering and disgust and hatred. And if they were pleasant, I imagined they were hypocrites. I became paranoid. I couldn't get out. I was confused and … (Kureishi 10)

Additionally, the writer recounts the presence of some settings which the dark-skinned immigrant generations have to pass through by running very quickly and sneakily in order not to be caught, even not to be killed, by the racists; for instance, in the novel it is narrated that "This area was notorious for racists. He began to jog, and then to run", which reflects Shahid's effort to escape from any violent attacks of the white citizens on his way to meet Deedee (Kureishi 100). After meeting Deedee in the office, Shahid realizes that a boy outside waits and begins to think that this boy could attack him, saying to Deedee that "there are racists outside, waiting for me" (Kureishi 101).

The existence of such certain locations in London in which the immigrants cannot live and enter denotes the existence of deep racist notions against these immigrants who have dark skins. Thus, the novel underscores the fact that if equality and peace had been dominant in the British society in the last decades of the twentieth century, each citizen would have been able to walk around freely and comfortably without any fear of racist attacks and insulting attitudes whatever their skin color was. The relationship between the British citizens and the black skinned immigrant families or their children in the eyes of the white British can be perceived from the views of Frantz Fanon as regards the feelings of abomination and scare which white people display upon seeing black people:

> The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly; look, a nigger, it's cold, the nigger is shivering, the nigger is shivering because he is cold, the little boy is trembling because he is afraid of the nigger, the nigger is shivering with cold, that cold that goes through your bones, the handsome little boy is trembling because he thinks that the nigger is quivering with rage, the little white boy throws himself into his mother's arms: Mama, the nigger's going to eat me up. (86)

Fanon's elucidation of white people's concerns and uneasiness on seeing black people can be supposed to endorse the idea that even little white children's subconscious bears the effects of racism and that this impact reveals how deep-seated and prevalent the racist thoughts are in the white Western nations. Despite not committing any obvious crime or not exhibiting any immoral act which deserves to be condemned and punished, dark skinned immigrants can be interpreted as those who are just the embodiment and victims of racism and being subject to racist oppression issuing from the white citizens of the West as is discussed by Fanon above and suggested in the novel as well.

Kureishi also sheds light on the British people's belief that the immigrants in their country construct prospective risks in terms of housing, jobs and economic issues by occupying and consuming these services which the British people think belong to only themselves as the

author narrates it in the response of a woman to Chad and Shahid in the following way: "'Paki! Paki! Paki!' she screamed. Her body had become an arched limb of hatred with a livid opening at the tip, spewing curses. 'You stolen our jobs! Taken our housing! Paki got everything! Give it back and go back home!'" (139). Hatred and this spiteful manner of the woman can be said to result from the conception of the native British people that "[if] newcomers who have not contributed to the pool take away the resources, that will leave less for [their] children" (Kymlicka 56). Therefore, these permanent guests are not wanted in Britain in that the distribution of resources such as education, employment and accommodation in the country will cause those resources to be allotted to those guests as well as the native British citizens and their children, and the amount of taking advantage of the resources for the British ones will decline due to the presence of the immigrants.

Some facts with regard to the educational conditions and employment of the immigrants in the European countries seem to confirm Kureishi's major argument on the discriminatory attitudes against the immigrants' skin colors and religions. For instance, younger generations of the immigrants, especially Muslims, usually believe that their parents, as well as themselves, have contended with racist and discriminatory acts of the British community after populating in Britain (Anwar 46). It is also reported that black people and Muslims are recurrently set aside in their job applications even if they have notable abilities and qualities for these jobs (Fekete 202). Consequently, the main criterion in providing any service for any citizen in the British society can be said to be what their native roots are rather than any justifiable norms. This sort of attitude toward them throws them into miserable conditions in which they cannot prove their skills and noteworthy intentions for the welfare of the society. Instead of assisting these immigrants to exhibit their potential gifts and productive sides, the British government probably impels them to remain as silent and ineffectual figures that are supposed to continue their lives in poor conditions or that had better abandon Britain so as to return back to their native land, thus leading them to maintain their marginal positions and to feel that they cannot be embraced by Britain without prejudice and inequality. While trying to underline the fact that some

improvements were made in the law several decades ago with the aim of eradicating racism in the country, Chris Allen claims that "… as the new racist ideologies target the same communities that were targeted in the pre-legislative period, so these same South Asian communities in Britain, now because of their Muslim identity, remain in focus" (51). In other words, the British citizens' racist and discriminatory manners and utterances are retained under some unsustainable pretexts and in the form of attacks on the immigrants' religious values. The government has not achieved anything in putting an end to this discriminatory policies that aim to oppress the immigrants so far.

In sum, Kureishi is possibly of the opinion that the Pakistani immigrants as second generation members like their parents can be thought to suffer from the racist behavior of the British community and the racist policies of the British government because the government does not seek to step in the oppression and attacks, which are carried out both physically and verbally, directed to the immigrants. Consequently, multiculturalism in the British land cannot be put into effect due to the presence of prejudice and insult against these minority people as well as rejecting their crucial rights that they need in preserving their cultural and religious principles. Being exposed to oppressive behavior and views in this surrounding of dominantly white skinned and Christian people, these immigrants have not been fully adopted by the white citizens because of not only their dark skins but also their Islamic beliefs. The novel discloses the apparent anxiety and fears of these immigrants whenever they go out and meet the white British people who accept them as potential threats for the society. In such an atmosphere where even the existence of the immigrants with their otherness through their cultures, identities, religions and other traits can be disturbing and irritating enough to provoke the British people, the author seems to believe that multicultural issues are left in the air without any satisfying product.

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