



CULTURE AT CROSSROADS IN HANIF KUREISHI'S *THE BLACK ALBUM*

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the personality emergency of the characters in *The Black Album* by Hanif Kureishi and thereby delineates the predicament confronted by the Pakistanis. Kureishi's *The Black Album* comprises personal components as well. Other than being an author, as a Pakistani in overseas, Kureishi has himself confronted numerous deterrents, battles and marginalization by the whites. As a diasporic author he clearly illustrates the issues of misfortune of values, devout and political abuse of common masses, suicide assaults, and sectarianism and the resulting advancement of an individual's discernment of his personality in an estranged social system.

Keywords : Marginalisation, Salad bowl culture, Identity Crisis.

The Black Album is one of the prominent novels of Hanif Kureishi. Kureishi himself being a diaspora has discussed his own experiences and the problems faced by him. The characters in

this novel stand between two extraordinary shafts, caught between two societies, uncertain to select one for themselves. On the off chance that they go for Western way of life, the Whites make fun of them. In the

event that they take after the culture of their beginning they are looked at with doubt. Steven H. Shane said that, “In the novel, we see that no culture and no person has a place to any specific gather or exists in any immaculate shape within the present day world.”(16). Establishment of one’s identity is an unstable and shifting process, such characters do not feel at home in their new country. They suffer from a alienation and rootlessness.

As outsiders of the nation and culture, the immigrants are pushed into state of perplexity where they cannot be clear almost their personality. The characters are battling for survival and sense of belongingness whereas deep down they feel unequivocally pulled into western free way of life. They feel baffled within the West confronting bigotry and discrimination.

The word diaspora alludes to one’s presence, hanging between two societies with blended characters. The characters in this novel are enticed by the western way of life and at the same time pulverized beneath their authentic and social foundations. All the characters of the novel, rightist Riaz, forceful Chad, generous Osgood and clashed Shahid appear to be captured in a confuse of

considerations and philosophies. Everybody attempts to find a reason to fix their identity.

Globalization offers a parcel of patterns and personalities to an individual. Diaspora presents an intersection point between the two different civilizations or a collision between two contradictory lifestyles.

“Post-colonialism/postcolonialism’ ... analysis of European territorial conquests, the various institutions of European colonialisms, the discursive operations of empire, the subtleties of subject construction in colonial discourse and the resistance of those ... and their contemporary colonial legacies in both pre- and post-independence nations and communities. While its use has tended to focus on the cultural production of such communities... (Bill Ashcroft, 169). In Kureishi’s eminent novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia* he bargains with the issue of personality emergency. Karim voices his misfortune of personality “But I don’t care-Englishman I am (in spite of the fact that not pleased of it), from the South London rural areas and going someplace. Maybe it is the odd blend of landmasses and blood, of here and there, of having a place and not, that makes me restless an easily bored” (3).

Kureishi in his book of essays *The Word and the Bomb* says, “Racism was genuine to me; the realm was not.”(3). This racial segregation disturbs the sense of distance and looking at oneself as the ‘other’. Lacan says, “...our identity is given to us from outside, and we are constitutively alienated. The imaginary or narcissistic character of all desire merely conceals this basic fault, this radical alterity or otherness in human existence.” (Rivkin 124)

These are the precise words that Kureishi employ to depict his claim which he encounters with respect to his two different roots in having a Pakistani father and an English mother whereas living in Britain. The same can be said about the characters in *The Black Album*. They try to create a place for themselves in British Society, each in their own way, but the troubles are reality. Kureishi says that, when describing his own childhood experiences, “we were Britain’s children without a home” (*Dreaming and Scheming* 70). Kureishi moreover depicts how his need of personality has two points of view. He is neither a British nor a Pakistani, which becomes obvious while visiting his relatives in Pakistan. They had their see on the issue of personality and having a place based on

the truth that Kureishi was a blend of east and west. “We are Pakistanis but you may continuously be a Paki” (*Dreaming and Scheming* 18) they told him, underlining the reality of not having a place and of not being acknowledged for who he is.

In *The Black Album*, after his father’s passing, Shahid feels as though he has to break away from the family and make a new start in the city. “The city would feel like his; he wouldn’t be excluded; there had to be ways in which he could belong.”(16). Shahid reflects on his duality, which he encounters with Deedee his darling, on the one hand, and Riaz, his fundamentalist companion, on the other. These two sides are alternate extremes; they are the representatives of Britain on the one hand and of conventional devout values and lifestyles on the other.

Shahid on the one hand, is lured by way of life of London and on the other hand he tries to find his roots in Islam and Pakistan. Shahid and other characters attempt to find their genuine nature. For this, a few are connected to religion, whereas others to radicalism. In both the cases, their aim is similar. Shahid feels frustrated with religion. The condemnation of different shapes of craftsmanship like music, move

and writing by so called fundamentalists compels Shahid to question the freedom offered by religion.

Their genuine personality is smashed beneath forced pictures of colonial past on their minds within the novel, whereas with the risk to be overwhelmed by the aggressors in reality. The show of an aubergine in which Allah's title is engraved highlights the shallowness of Islamic devotees for whom a human being is not sacrosanct wonder of God but a vegetable is. For the so called fundamentalists, there is no sin in slaughtering anybody who likes thinking in devout things.

The souls of commoners are subjugated to these devout beasts. Chad and Riaz, casualties of bigotry, need exact retribution on the white settlers. Their assault on the racists, devastation of profane book *Satanic Verses*, dangerous endeavor on Shahid and Osgood are all impressions of savagery which are in struggle with lessons of Islam that favors peace to war, pardoning to exact retribution and balance to radicalism. Their behavior, just like the fear monger acts of the devout bunches in Pakistan, mutilates the picture of Islam. Fear monger assaults reflect the same frantiness as apparent within the forceful found

behavior of Chad and Riaz. They are judgmental and self equitable in their approach. They feel advocated to murder somebody for the purpose of their beliefs. The mortification they confront at the hands of citizens of London makes them half aggressive maniacs and half stifled citizens. In London, they got to confront titles like Paki, blackies and coloured. This not only smashes their nobility and self regard but moreover makes their personality questionable. This forced character as a result of rude naming puts so much weight on the characters that they recognize themselves with what others think of them and disregard who they truly are and get included in psychological militant exercises. "I needed to be like everybody else" (*The Black Album* 15).

The identity crisis is delightfully summed up in the following lines depicting Shahid's frustration, "He believed everything; he believed nothing. His own self confounded him. One day, he could passionately feel one thing, the next day the opposite." (*The Black Album* 187). This highlights a parcel of perplexity, in which a individual cannot delineate the genuine sense of religion, when individuals having a place to same religion are not prepared to possess him,

nor can he recognize himself with the individuals exterior his nation with diverse set of convictions. Shahid's father changes his exceptionally reason of life after moving to London. His shallow etiquette, reserved quality from religion and materialistic approach are oblivious endeavors to be portion of a dynamic society. Chad, a Dark Pakistani Muslim kid, embraced by an English couple, faces prejudice from them as well as society. As a result, when he develops up, social dismissal of him does not permit him grasp that culture. In his wrath, he gets to be a fundamentalist. His rootlessness is summed up in this way. "In England white people looked at him as if he were going to steal their car or their handbag, particularly as he dressed like ragamuffin. But in Pakistan they looked at him even more strangely" (*The Black Album*107)

The diasporic peopleremains in search of home. This myth of domestic indicates not as it were the thought of home but as a shield that gives security. They are pushed to the fringe by status quo, bureaucracy, medieval framework, political and devout mafias. They are marginalized and uprooted in abroad. "... element of marginalization evident in the earliest uses of 'ethnic'...contemporary usage...groups

that are not traditionally identified with the dominant national mythology" (Bill Ashcroft 76). In *The Black Album* appears the darker perspective of Islamic fundamentalism, how it shadows the excellencies of human race just because of frustrated and conflicted existence. To sum up, misfortune of personality is the major situation confronted by individuals caught up between two universes. Frequently they are concluded as outsiders in both universes in spite of their best endeavors to absorb within the encompassing environment. It is troublesome to broadcast one's personality, whereas different clashing bunches at war with one another denying a person of this essential right. A person is considered the 'other' by the inverse bunches no matter even if he is magnanimous or devout.

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