

Racial Tensions and Identity Conflicts in Hanif Kureishi's Major Works

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Abstract:

In twentieth century British society, one-sided racist social policy that excluded diasporic people from social life started to change and British society transformed into a racially mixed one by dealing with immigrants from different parts of the world. In this multicultural society language was a means of power and it shaped identity. Debased language white supremacists used about immigrants limited their identity. *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Hanif Kureishi's first novel published in 1990, is a semi-autobiographical book focused on the protagonist, Karim's search for his social and sexual identity in 1970s Britain. His mixed-race as half-English and half-Indian leads him to ambiguity about defining his own identity. Loaded with the issues such as race, class, identity, sexual crisis and failed marriages, *The Buddha of Suburbia* mirrors racial tensions, prejudices and class conflicts between the working class and upper class in the constitution of multi-racial and multi-cultural British society during the 1970s. Published five years after *The Buddha of Suburbia*, *The Black Album* (1995) is Kureishi's second novel which explores some crucial issues such as Islamic radicalism, ecstasy, censorship and Prince in late 80s London, as well as religious and cultural clashes between Britain and its immigrants. On the other hand, *My Ear at His Heart* published in 2004 is a memoir which introduces us to the unpublished manuscript of Kureishi's late father's. In this memoir Kureishi mentions different life experiences and conflicts between himself and his father. Celebrating hybridity and heterogeneity in human nature not restricted by any authority or controlling power, Kureishi's works open the door for individual development and freedom of choice and opinion. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the racial tensions and identity conflicts in Hanif Kureishi's major works *The Buddha of Suburbia*, *The Black Album* and *My Ear at His Heart*.

Keywords: identity, racism, sexuality, ecstasy, censorship, multicultural, discrimination, fundamentalism, cultural conflicts

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Based on his identity as a British-Asian author, Hanif Kureishi's fiction reflects an ideological perspective on the politics of race and antiracism in contemporary Britain. Dealing with the issues such as "imagined homeland" and "the place of Islam" within British racial politics, Kureishi scrutinizes the moral and emotional aspect of ethnicity in a period of redefining British-ness. Kureishi's works subvert stable racial descriptions by making his characters open to transformation. The boundaries of the categories like class, sexuality or gender become blurred. The migrants to Britain following the Second World War were required to rethink national identity as well as enabling the emergence of a younger generation of black and Asian British authors, including Hanif Kureishi. In the face of these migrations and intellectual voices from the former imperial dominions, the aim of this paper is to demonstrate the racial tensions and identity conflicts in Hanif Kureishi's major works *The Buddha of Suburbia*, *The Black Album* and *My Ear at His Heart*.

The Buddha of Suburbia, Hanif Kureishi's first novel published in 1990, is a semi-autobiographical book focused on the protagonist, Karim's search for his social and sexual identity in 1970s Britain. His mixed-race as half-English and half-Indian leads him to ambiguity about defining his own identity. He is devoid of a sense of belonging, torn between alienated Indian immigrants and white British supremacists. Loaded with the issues such as race, class, identity and sexual crisis and failed marriages, *The Buddha of Suburbia* mirrors racial tensions, prejudices and class conflicts between working class and upper class in the constitution of multi-racial and multi-cultural British society during the 1970s.

Made up of two parts as "In the Suburbs" and "In the City", *The Buddha of Suburbia* reflects how significant the move from suburbs into the city is for the social transformation of characters throughout the novel. As expressed by the editor Susie Thomas in *Hanif Kureishi: A reader's guide to essential criticism*, "it is not just the myth of tolerant England that is blown apart in the novel but the myth of a homogenous Englishness. Instead, the novel shows Englishness as changing and unstable, varying according to class and gender as well as over time" (Thomas 2005: 64). Karim's father, Haroon is the Buddha of the title of the novel, called as God by Karim sarcastically. Unhappy in his job as a civil servant and also in his marriage, Haroon abandons his wife and other son Allie to live with Eva, who is another transforming character as a social-climber. Haroon transforms into a yoga teacher exploiting English people's preconceptions about his Indian identity by imposing Eastern mysticism and spirituality on them, while Eva desires to reach social mobility by attracting artists and intellectuals into her new circle in London through yoga parties she arranges for Haroon. Eva is the primary supporter of Haroon, forcing the social ladder upward as well as better economic conditions.

what was the place of the East in the discourse of the West? Both poverty and wisdom were being used for something. A benign religion such as Buddhism, along with the version of Hinduism people like George Harrison took up—less morally stringent than most Western religions—seemed to sit well with the increasingly frenzied capitalism of the West, creating a calm spiritual space in the midst of social fragmentation and technological progress (Kureishi 1990: 72).

On the other side, Karim gains fame through his roles of Indian identity in the theater world and he elevates from the suburban lower middle class to the metropolitan middle class. When closely examined, it is possible to realize that Karim transforms into a much more conscious and responsible identity for the other members of his family, coming to partial compromise through the end of the novel. While the suburbs are “a leaving place” for immigrants searching for social and economic development, London corrupts them with all its temptations such as sex, alcohol and drugs. Karim and his family are exposed to painful racist treatments in the mainly white suburbs, while they obtain partial freedom from these racial discriminations in the anonymous, multi-racial city, London.

The Buddha of Suburbia starts with Karim’s description of his own identity: “My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost [...] having emerged from two old histories”(Kureishi 1990: 3). Karim does not have certainty about his identity naturally, since he is originally Indian, but culturally almost English. The sense of belonging wholly to one culture is missing in him. He does not have a good command of both cultures simultaneously. This identity crisis pervades into all immigrant characters in the novel. The God figure, Haroon is called “Harry” by uncle Ted and Jeeta, while his son, Amar, is called only “Allie”, as part of cultural imperialism. It was bad enough his being an Indian in the first place, without having an awkward name too.”(Kureishi 1990: 33) Although Haroon struggles to be more like an Englishman for years, he ironically decides to return to his Indian origin as an Eastern mystic just to appropriate English people. As Karim denotes, “he’d spent years trying to be more of an Englishman, to be less risibly conspicuous, and now he was putting it back spadeloads”(Kureishi 1990: 21). To give another outlook on Haroon, Susie Thomas illustrates: “Haroon starts off as the mimic Englishman and, when this fails, he becomes a mimic Indian”(Thomas 2005: 66).

More involved in Buddhist rituals and philosophy as a renegade Muslim yoga teacher for his interests, Haroon is criticised by his childhood friend, Anwar as being more indulged in western way of life even though both of them feel like they belong neither to British culture nor to Indian culture exactly. They intend to keep up with English culture when they first come to England. However, the insulting, humiliating manners and racial prejudices they are exposed to decrease their sympathy and willingness to live within this culture and they make up an imaginary Indian world in which they feel more free and independent to satisfy their individual needs in this clash of cultures. Karim’s father defends his friend Anwar who insists on bringing an Indian husband for his daughter Jamila by using his patriarchal authority. He even goes on a hunger strike to persuade Jamila to realize his desire. Ridiculously he claims: “I won’t eat. I will die. If Gandhi could shove out the English from India by not eating, I can get my family to obey me by exactly the same”(Kureishi 1990: 60). As referred by Susie Thomas, “just as the novel has been credited with deconstructing a binarist discourse of black vs. white, it also subverts traditional gender roles”(Thomas 2005: 78), considering Jamila’s adamant manners against her father’s patriarchal control. Ironically enough, Anwar and Karim’s father do not desire to visit their place of origin as European culture seems to be more attractive to them. Yet Anwar forces Jamila to get married with an Indian guy, whom she does not have any emotional or sexual relationship even though they later share the same house under the link of marriage. To justify the conservative, racist behaviour of his oldest friend, Karim’s father reasons: “we old Indians come to like this England less and less and we return

to an imagined India”(Kureishi 1990: 74). To be alive in this repellent culture they struggle to maintain some features of their own culture in their imagination, far away from putting them into practice successfully. On the other hand, Jamila’s final acceptance of this kind of marriage but her refusal of any sexual intercourse between herself and her prospective husband Changez can be regarded as an opposition to the idea of return to origin because she is already indulged in this materialist, corrupt, imperial world in which dances, sex, drinking, and drugs are usual.

maybe there were similarities between what was happening to Dad, with his discovery of Eastern philosophy, and Anwar’s last stand. Perhaps it was the immigrant condition living itself out through them. For years they were both happy to live like Englishmen. Anwar even scoffed pork pies as long as Jeeta wasn’t looking. (my dad never touched the pig, though I was sure this was conditioning rather than religious scruple, just as I wouldn’t eat horse’s scrotum. But once, to test this, when I offered him a smoky Bacon crisp and said, as he crunched greedily into it, ‘I didn’t know you liked smoky bacon,’ he sprinted into the bathroom and washed out his mouth with soap, screaming from his frothing lips that he would burn in hell (Kureishi 1990: 64).

Kureishi makes his characters open to change and transformation rather than just reflecting the fixed characteristic features of his own family members as they are in this semi-autobiographical novel. He expresses: “when I began to write *The Buddha of Suburbia*, I saw early on that it couldn’t be a simple autobiography; I had to open the family to influence and change in order to make the story dramatic and unpredictable”(Kureishi 1990: 147). Likewise, Bart Moore-Gilbert indicates: “Kureishi’s choice of Bildungsroman as a genre is particularly significant, given that it is one which insistently presents identity as a developmental, unstable and shifting *process*, rather than a given and stable *product*”(Moore-Gilbert 2001: 127). Surprisingly an Indian husband brought from India does not satisfy Anwar unlike all expectations. He is disappointed by Changez, as he has an injured arm and that’s why he is incapable of helping Anwar in the shop. Even if Changez are more traditional than even Anwar, who draws a more traditional profile than Karim’s father, he has sexual intercourse with a Japanese woman called Shinko when he cannot find the intimacy he expects from a traditional Indian wife. Changez’s not having children from Jamila frustrates and annoys Anwar, who is seemingly punished for his coercive manners on Jamila. The funniest point in Jamila and Changez’s relationship through the end of the novel is that Changez is willing to live with Jamila and other friends in a communal house where he witnesses the lovemaking of Simon and Jamila as well as the lesbian relationship between Jamila and Joanna. After all, Changez looks after the child of Simon and Jamila in this house without any expectation of reciprocity to his absolute love for Jamila. Jamila also sleeps with Karim. Despite all these deceitful deeds Changez is still forgiving and sacrificing enough to tolerate the sexual intercourse of his own wife with other people. On the other side of the coin, Changez is a source of inspiration for Karim’s theater world. As Bradley Buchanan notes, “Changez is also the catalyst for Karim’s onstage exploitation of his own racial identity; having joined a theatrical group, and prompted by the unprincipled director, Matthew Pyke, Karim invents a character named Tariq who shares many of Changez’ own cartoonish qualities, and who affords Karim the chance to contemplate the

process of constructing an identity—which is Karim’s main task in the novel”(Buchanan 2007: 44).

Just as Kureishi’s father felt when he first came to England, Karim’s father is disappointed by racial discrimination in working life. Karim reveals: “the whites will never promote us, Dad said, ‘not an Indian while there is a white man left on the earth. You don’t have to deal with them—they still think they have an Empire when they don’t have two pennies to rub together’(Kureishi 1990: 27). While coming back from Shinko’s house, Changez is attacked by a gang calling him “Paki”, not being aware that he is Indian. Maybe Gene, Eleanor’s former lover, experiences the most pitiful downfall from the top position in his life and career as a result of racial conflicts between the East and the West.

Gene was a young West Indian actor. He was very talented and sensitive [...].he was better than a lot of people. So he was very angry about a lot of things. The police were always picking him up and giving him a going over. Taxis drove straight past him. People said there were no free tables in empty restaurants. He lived in a bad world in nice old England. One day when he didn’t get into one of the bigger theatre companies, he couldn’t take any more. He just freaked out. He took an overdose. Eleanor was working. She came home and found him dead (Kureishi 1990: 201).

Gene is just a victim of racial discrimination who couldn’t find any chance to survive in this racially oppressive society despite the great potential to realize his ideals in himself. That his career life is subverted by racial discrimination ruins all his hopes in life. However, while this materialist and multi-cultural society brings restrictions for such people like Gene, it may liberate other people like Haroon who skilfully turns his racial background into an advantage. In his view, the solution to the needs of this materialist world is the replacement of materialism with spiritual values. Haroon elucidates the matter of his age as follows:

we live in an age of doubt and uncertainty. The old religions under which people lived for ninety-nine point nine per cent of human history have decayed or are irrelevant. Our problem is secularism. We have replaced our spiritual values and wisdom with materialism. And now everyone is wandering around asking how to live. Sometimes desperate people even turn to me (Kureishi 1990: 76).

Published five years later than *The Buddha of Suburbia*, *The Black Album*(1995) is Kureishi’s second novel which explores some crucial issues such as Islamic radicalism, ecstasy, censorship and Prince in late 80s London, as well as religious and cultural clashes between Britain and its immigrants. The novel originates from the controversies based on the imposition of the fatwa on Salman Rushdie by Ayatullah Khomeini in 1989. As confirmed by Kureishi himself, “every ten years there had been a revolution in the sixties, it was LSD and psychedelic music, in the seventies it was punk and speed and heroin, and in the eighties it was dance music and Ecstasy. So *The Black Album* kind of came out of all that”(126, Kumar and Kureishi). The rise of Islamic radicalism during the Rushdie affair attracts Kureishi’s attention and he puts

this controversial topic in the center of *The Black Album* with the criticism of fascist manners of both racists and anti-racists in multiracial Britain society in late 80s.

As the title of the novel refers, this book is a means to celebrate the multicultural, multiracial British society in the twentieth century. In *Hanif Kureishi*, Bradley Buchanan stresses: “the central features of Kureishi’s depiction of English life are arguably not based on stable racial or ethnic identities but instead on the blurring of class boundaries, the rise of feminism, the emergence of gay and lesbian movements, and the institutionalization and commercialization of youth culture and popular music, as well as an increased awareness of the arbitrariness and contingency of identity (be it racial, religious, or cultural)”(Buchanan 2007: 14). *The Black Album* is the name of the American musician, Prince’s lost album, available only illegally, as its release was cancelled in 1987. The protagonist of the novel, Shahid is a big Prince fan. Thus the illegal sale of this album and being the title of this novel are not a coincidence. The title associates an opposition to censorship and celebrates racial, cultural or sexist hybridity as the way Shahid’s socialist professor, Deedee Osgood describes Prince: “he’s half-black and half-white, half man, half woman, half size, feminine but macho, too.”(Kureishi 1995: 25) In spite of the evolution of a multicultural British society on the one side, racism still keeps its presence strongly on the other side, as understood from Shahid’s own experiences:

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 go out. I knew I was confused [...] I didn’t know what to do (Kureishi 1995: 19).

Shahid’s psychology is so terribly shattered by racial differentiation that he comes to the point of losing his self-confidence and starts to be suspicious of his own identity as well as opinions of others about himself. Maybe, he experiences double consciousness considering his claim: “I wanted to be a racist”(Kureishi 1995: 19). External conditions force him to be a racist provocatively. His claim denotes the fact that racism is not one-sided. The feeling of being excluded by the host culture triggers mutual hatred and leads to absolute racism. The feeling of isolation and not belonging to either culture, British or Indian, creates cultural conflicts for Shahid. The author refers to Shahid’s in-between position tragi-comically like that:

When he got to be a teenager he saw he had no roots, no connections with Pakistan, couldn’t even speak the language. So he went to Urdu classes. but when he tried asking for the salt in Southall everyone fell about at his accent. In England white people looked at him as if he were going to steal their car or their handbag, particularly as he dressed like a ragamuffin. But in Pakistan they looked at him even more strangely. Why should he be able to fit into a Third World theocracy?(Kureishi 1995: 107)

Shahid is not adopted by either culture absolutely. His accent betrays him helplessly. His presence as a person with a Paki background is not welcomed as it is regarded as

a threat to their living standards. Shahid tells one of his experiences in which he was exposed to racist remarks dramatically: “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!’ (Kureishi 1995: 139).

Class conflicts constitute another humiliating aspect of the twentieth-century British society for foreigners. When Shahid’s father first came to England, he didn’t lose his hope immediately in the face of racial violence and opposition. However, racial tension has never disappeared and they have never been regarded as equal to English on the contrary to what Shahid’s father supposed. As portrayed by Shahid himself, their situation is more pitiful than even the situation of the white working class: “we’re third-class citizens, even lower than the white working class. Racist violence is getting worse! Papa thought it would stop, that we’d be accepted here as English. We haven’t been! We’re not equal! It’s gonna be like America. However far we go, we’ll always be underneath!” (Kureishi 1990: 209).

The Black Album focuses on book burning and the imposition of the fatwa on Salman Rushdie in 1989 although the name of the book is not mentioned obviously throughout the book. The book is only implied in the words of Shahid and Riaz, the group leader. Shahid checks Riaz’s opinion of Rushdie’s books: “I found it accurate about Bombay. But this time he has gone too far” (Kureishi 1995: 9). “I am telling you that it is not ourselves in general, not the people, but the mind of the author that we are being informed of. That is all. One man.” (Kureishi 1995: 183) This implicit account of *Satanic Verses* indicates its illegal and offensive status in society. *Satanic Verses* was regarded as an offensive book which insulted to Islamic faith, although Rushdie wrote to India’s Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi in October 1988, after India banned the novel, and claimed “that the book isn’t actually about Islam, but about migration, metamorphosis, divided selves, love, death, London and Bombay.” The book was banned in many Muslim and non-Muslim countries through Ayatollah Khomeini’s fatwa and this provocative book and censorship caused many bookshops to be bombed, which is directly related to Islamic fundamentalism and Islamic radicalism.

This event of blasphemy puts a focus on the concept of respect for the belief of others. Maybe as readers we can draw the idea from the novel that authors have to recognize that blasphemies cause offence and distress for religious people, which is undesirable and that justifies prohibiting blasphemies. Exposed to censorship as a consequence of a so-called blasphemy, Salman Rushdie puts forward such a justification:

“This is, for me, the saddest irony of all; that after working for five years to give voice and fictional flesh to the immigrant culture of which I am myself a member, I should see my book burned, largely unread, by the people it’s about[...]I tried to write against stereotypes; the zealot; protests serve to confirm, in the Western mind, all the worst stereotypes of the Muslim world.” –Salman Rushdie, *Observer*, 22 January 1989

The protagonist Shahid remains between his professor Deedee and his Muslim, fundamentalist college friends. He also experiences identity crisis as a young British-

Asian in London, which is one of the indispensable features of postcolonial novels. In a parallelism to the fatwa on Salman Rushdie as the focus of *The Black Album*, the meaning of literature, translation and rewriting are explored topics which has critical importance in the lives of characters in the novel.

When he was young, Kureishi saw that “it was taken for granted that to be black or Asian was to be inferior to the white man.”(Guardian) That was the reality of diasporic people as Kureishi mentions in *My Ear at His Heart*: “my father had been bullied and suffered racism in India and in Britain[...]we came to believe that exclusion and revilement was our permanent fate; nothing would change and no one would make a space for us”(Kureishi 1995: 129) However, this one-sided social policy started to change and British society transformed into a racially mixed one by dealing with immigrants from different parts of the world. In this multicultural society language is a means of power and it shapes the identity. Debased language white supremacists use about immigrants limit their identity. Riaz, the group leader in the novel, writes poems and asks Shahid to translate his writings into English for publication, but Shahid rewrites or changes some parts of them, which annoys Riaz. There’s a criticism of storytelling and rewriting throughout the novel, so translation and transference issue in literary world seems a risky condition, which can lead you even to death because of distorted facts or manipulation of facts in fictional world. Shahid questions the fatwah about Rushdie’s writing implicitly by such questions: “And story-telling. This is the issue! Why we need it. If we need it. what can be said. And –and what can’t be. What mustn’t be said. What is taboo and forbidden and why. What is censored. How censorship benefits us in exile here. How it might protect us, if it can do that.” (Kureishi 1995: 182) Expressing his reaction against the fatwah, Shahid stresses the significance of the freedom of opinion: “A free imagination, Shahid said, ‘ranges over many natures. A free imagination, looking into itself, illuminates others’(Kureishi 1995: 183).

Shahid’s friends are anti-racists, but by thinking they’re in possession of the Truth and it’s their duty to create a new, uncorrupt world, they are playing roles as Islamofascists. They interfere in people’s private lives, especially Shahid’s in the novel. The tension between the East and the West is based on mutual hatred, as confirmed by Riaz and his group members through their extreme acts and manners about book burning and the protection and defense of Islamic faith and values. Sarcastically, Shahid questions the act of book burning and makes such a comment: “What sort of people burn books and read aubergines? I’d heard books were on the way out. I never imagined they’d be replaced by vegetables. Presumably, libraries will be replaced by greengrocers. No, I am giving you an ultimatum.”(Kureishi 1995: 210)

A special emphasis is put on the issue of identity which various social, cultural or religious groups are distinguished through. No ethnic or cultural groups deny their background or avoid exhibiting their distinctive features within this multi-cultural and multi-racial society regardless of the possibility of being excluded as indicated by Shahid: “These days everyone was insisting on their identity, coming out as a man, woman, gay, black, Jew—brandishing whichever features they could claim, as if without a tag they wouldn’t be human. Shahid, too, wanted to belong to his people. But first he had to know them, their past and what they hoped for”(Kureishi 1995: 92). His mixed identity because of his hyphenated background as British-Asian is the

primary reason for his identity crisis incited by Britain's alienating policy that that time.

My Ear at His Heart published in 2004 is a memoir which introduces us the unpublished manuscript of Kureishi's late father'. Thanks to this manuscript entitled *An Indian Adolescence*, Kureishi discovers lots of details about himself and his father. In this memoir Kureishi mentions different life experiences and conflicts between himself and his father. One important point Kureishi emphasizes in the memoir is that his father thought himself as a failure, since most of his novels were rejected by numerous publishers. Even if Kureishi's father was proud of his son who has reached success as a writer more easily, he deeply felt his own failure in writing, which was his ideal occupation throughout his life. In fact, Kureishi is the epitome of his father's unrealized dreams and this situation caused some conflicts between Kureishi and his father.

Through symbolic characters in *An Indian Adolescence*, Kureishi learns about his father's family life and life experiences, which are also the subject of *My Ear at His Heart*. According to what Kureishi finds out from this manuscript, his father was a neglected child, while Omar, his uncle, is Colonel Kureishi's favourite son. Omar is called "Mahmood" and his father is called "Shani" in *An Indian Adolescence*. The unfair treatment by the same father makes Kureishi's father jealous of his brother, Omar. Another book Kureishi's father wrote is *The Redundant Man*. In two novels Kureishi's father focuses on sexual passion and failure in marriages, including that of his parents and his own. In *The Redundant Man* Yusef is made redundant in his job as a humble worker and abruptly transforms into a wealthy businessman. Yusef's wife, Salma is very religious like Bibi and Kureishi's mother. She finds her transformed husband repellent for his worldly, mundane manners, so she strives to save her husband by returning him to Islam, but she cannot succeed. This aloofness between spouses or in mismarriages makes wives more devoted and dedicated to Allah, by distancing themselves from their husbands and children just as Bibi prays to Allah as a devout woman when Colonel Murad dances with other women and drinks. Having a mismatched marriage, Bibi also withdraws into her own shell, just praying to Allah, which restricts her contact and good communication with her children. Kureishi comments on this contrast among neglected women in his family between their inner and outer world: "at least my father was able to see, because of his mother, that excessive devotion to religion is a form of narcissism, a barrier, in fact, between oneself and the world, a convenient way of neglecting the individual and replacing him with God." (Kureishi 2004: 144) by adding "neither my father nor uncle, nor any of the other brothers, as far as I could see, were religious (Kureishi 2004: 143). Having many examples of mismarriages in his family, Kureishi has fears that he himself will live his parents' life and not surprisingly he splits up with his wife in real life.

Kureishi's father grew up without the expected love and affection from a father due to Colonel Murad's extremely authoritative and discouraging manners toward himself and he always felt the need for an affectionate father that would guide him. That's why Kureishi's father has a tendency to be more caring about his children unlike his own father. There are some similarities between Kureishi's life and his father's life. Kureishi's father wants to become a writer to get rid of any doubt in his life and he also induces his son to become a writer, but the main difference between them in

achieving this dream is that Kureishi's father could not advance bravely enough in this profession and remained dull and passive as a civil servant, while Kureishi is much more initiating and brilliant than his father as a prospective writer who tried to live his father's dream with the impression that leading the life of a writer will bring him more success and happiness. Thus a concealed competition between Kureishi and his father led to some conflicts and complexities in their relationship. In an interview between Amitava Kumar, Kureishi indicates:

I think my work shocked him. There was sexuality in it, and gay sexuality, and a certain amount of drug-taking. On the other hand, he grew up on Somerset Maugham—a gay writer if there ever was one. So my work was both a kind of defiance of him and a following of his dream. My father died after I had written *The Buddha of Suburbia* and before I wrote *The Black Album* (Kumar & Kureishi 2001: 120).

Continuously Kureishi questions the tension between his father and himself conceives this tension stems from his father's inability to succeed as a writer subconsciously. He elaborates: "I suppose the main difference between us was that he thought himself to be a failure. He never had the success in his life that he wanted, whereas I'd say success came to me quite difficult. He was pleased for me, but it made him feel worse about himself"(Kumar & Kureishi 2001: 120-1). Both he and his father like cricket in which they are successful, but he expresses: "the idea of being a writer replaced the idea of being a cricketer, for me as for him"(Kureishi 2004: 54). Cricket is interrelated with politics, and ironically Indians are much more successful in cricket than the British, so this sports bears an imperial importance between two sides: the colonizer and the colonized. As Kureishi points out, "for Omar, cricket is political; it is where the British can be eaten at their own game."(Kureishi 2004: 40) He also explains: "according to Omar, the British, ordinary enough in their own country, change as they pass through the Suez Canal. Eastwards of Port Said they became empire-builders. In other words, leaving home enabled them to become different, more powerful people"(Kureishi 2004: 37).

The final part of *The Black Album* is much more optimistic and hopeful than that of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, since it opens the door for individual development and freedom of choice and opinion by celebrating hybridity and heterogeneity in human nature not restricted by any authority or controlling power. Kureishi himself confesses: "I'm also interested in people who liberate other people (Deedee Osgood liberates Shahid) she liberates his sexuality, and she also frees him from fundamentalism, she shows him a way out, a way through this tangle of drugs and religion"(Kumar & Kureishi 2001: 128). Hence Kureishi puts freedom into the basis of his life and works by exalting differences rather than humiliating them. According to him, an individual can find himself when he or she feels free in very sphere of life. The feeling of rebellion against prohibitions within human nature is regarded as a stimulus for creativity, innovation and ingenious ideas. Challenge against authority is celebrated for the sake of a heterogenous identity.

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