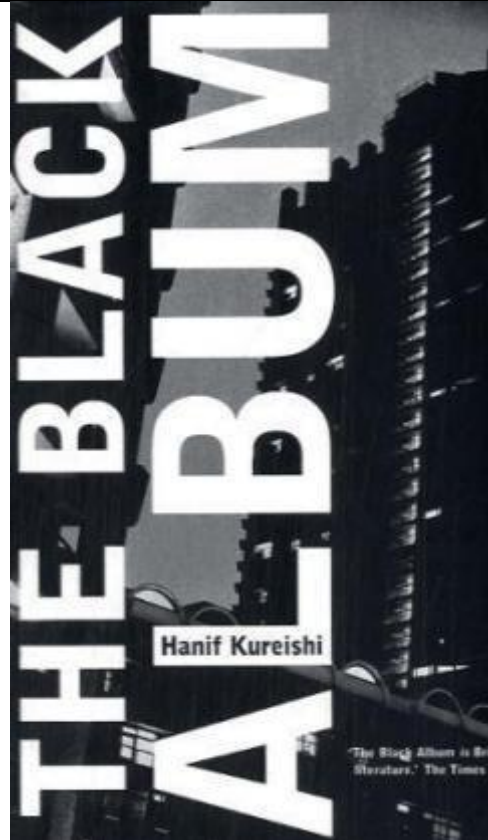


**Conflicting Ideologies of Fundamentalism Versus Liberalism in
Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album***

Dr. M. Mohankumar, M.A., M.A. (Ling.), M.Phil., Ph.D.



Courtesy:

<https://www.abebooks.com/9780571177127/Black-Album-Hanif-Kureishi-0571177123/plp>

Abstract

In the globalization scenario, materialism, sectarianism, communalism and fundamentalism have hackneyed words. Traditional conviction to morality and humanism have been put to acid test in the changing phase of post-war society. The west has always been playing the dialectic of 'Self', playing mischief with 'other' and causing havoc in the epistemology of humanism. Edward Said's analysis of Orient vs. Occident is executed based on the conflicting ideologies of whites and non-whites.

Hanif Kureishi is an empiricist in postcolonial aesthetics. All his fictions depict racism, ethnicism and multiculturalism. His novel *The Black Album* deals with the conflicting ideologies of racism in the form of fundamentalism and liberalism. Racism has been the most favoured subject of Imperialist narratives since the Victorian Age. Be it in America or Africa, racism has wrecked the finer spirit of humanism. In the globalised world, it has taken the other turn towards terrorizing fundamentalism. It always keeps itself in stiff opposition to the western liberalism. Shahid in *A Black Album* is the symbol of conflicting ideologies between fundamentalism and liberalism. He is the spokesman of liberal face of Islam. He is pulled towards militancy by convincing force of Riaz. However, he is dragged into sensuality of Deedee Osgood, who brings him out of militancy and drives him towards the path of liberalism. This paper attempts to analyse the conflicting ideologies between militant fundamentalism and liberal humanism.

Keywords: Hanif Kureishi, *The Black Album*, Religious Ideologies, Fundamentalism, Liberalism, Muslim Minorities, Post-war London.

Hanif Kureishi's Novel on Migrants

London, which was once the imperial capital, has attracted different kinds of ethnic races towards it. In the post-war world, the great city has become the capital of multiculturalism. The white men have learned to adopt themselves in the multicultural milieu. Multiculturalism is the result of the inflow of migrants from the postcolonial countries. Diaspora scenario has changed the shape of the erstwhile colonialism. The erstwhile colonial London has become the postcolonial capital. The novels of the migrants deal with the themes like multiculturalism, the conflict between the minorities and whites, and the quest for identity. Hanif Kureishi is a Pakistani writer, who migrated to London. He is a novelist, a filmmaker, and a short story writer. He has written seven novels such as *The Buddha of Suburbia*, *The Black Album*, *Intimacy*, *Gabriel's Gift*, *The Body*, *Something to Tell You* and *The Last Word*. He has directed many screen plays. His screenplay *My Beautiful Laundrette* received an Oscar Nomination for the best screen play. He writes about Islam and the West. His novel *The Black Album* portrays the conflict of Islamic minorities with the whites and also the conflict between fundamentalism and liberalism.

Protagonist Shahid

Shahid is the protagonist of the novel. He struggles to survive between fundamentalism and liberalism. His mind is never static. He could not adapt to the westernization. He is racially discriminated. He is frustrated about his dual identity. Shahid feels that Riaz's ideology is moral. Riaz, Shahid's friend wants to be a strict Islamist. But the life in the multicultural London makes him think of his own people. So he tries to maintain a healthy relationship with Riaz. The friendship with Riaz and his mates helps Shahid to regain and to be committed to the religion of his ancestors. For Shahid, the friendship with Riaz is an epiphany to know the humiliation of his community. He studies literature and so he is fond of stories. Chad accuses Shahid's habit of reading stories. He asks Shahid to work for the empowerment of his people instead of reading stories. Shahid tells him to study the book *The Possessed* by Dostoevsky which would impress him. Chad replied to him that no books would ever impress him. He says that his mind always

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 18:8 August 2018

Dr. M. Mohankumar, M.A., M.A. (Ling.), M.Phil., Ph.D.

Conflicting Ideologies of Fundamentalism Versus Liberalism in Hanif Kureishi's
The Black Album

wanders around the dispossessed. He means that his people are dispossessed. He says, ". . . people in the West, they think they're so civilized an' educated an' superior . . ." (21). Both Chad and Shahid spend a lot of time talking about their religion. They discuss the extremity of ingratitude meted out to their people under Thatcher's era and among Whites.

Deedee

Shahid loves the friendship of Riaz, the fundamentalist. At the same time, he develops a sensual relationship with Deedee Osgood, the college lecturer. They both spend a lot of time at the college library and at home. They would discuss subject matters and soon their relationship and meetings grow into an intimate affair. In their wandering, Deedee loves to show him the parts of London city. Deedee as an adulteress enchants Shahid through wiles and guiles. Chili, Shahid's brother too never worries about social and moral convictions. He was an epicurean and he wants to 'seize the day'. He desires to sleep with as many girls as possible. Once he slept with a woman even while her husband watched. He is even encouraged by his father. Papa wants Shahid also to be like hedonistic Chili. But Shahid does not like to lead an epicurean life. Papa tries to change Shahid. His attempt of making Shahid to sleep with a girl fails. Whenever Shahid is sent with a girl out, he would be so innocent. He reads the poems of Shelley and Keats to her. When Shahid later migrates to London, he hates the city for its immoral things. But Shahid's relationship with Deedee transforms him wildly and he prefers to lead the wayward life.

Deedee is as enchanting as a sorceress and she speaks of drugs, Pop music and wine which Shahid's mother considers as "wrong things"(56). The friendship of Deedee and the life of London make him transformed into a Londoner. At the same time, he believes that he is strongly indebted to the doctrines of God's work. He often oscillates between morality and immorality, fundamentalism and liberalism. He is unhappy that he loses the life of spirituality, due to the sorcery of Deedee. Deedee regrets for taking Shahid where there are only whites. She is sad that she does not have children while her friends have. She reasons out her adultery.

Chad

Chad advises Shahid to remove the 'impure' from his life. He preaches that they are created by Allah. He denies that they were the descendants of monkeys. Chad threatens Shahid that he will be put in the hell-fire if he disbelieves Allah. He says, "It's hell-fire for disbelievers, you know that" (81). He tells Shahid not to mingle with Brownlow or Deedee Osgood as they have lost their souls.

Chad does not permit Hat to become an accountant as the accountants have to shake hands with the girls. It is considered to be wrong according to the moral code of religion. Riaz and Chad have convinced Shahid and others to have a consciousness of 'their religion', he often questions Riaz about fundamentalism. When Riaz announced that the author of *Midnight's Children* should be punished, Shahid asked him to forgive and forget his attack. Shahid questions Riaz, "Would you kill a man for writing a book?" (172). It shows the liberal outlook of Shahid. Riaz replies that it is needed for the sake of forsaken people. Shahid feels sick at the madness of Riaz to commit such cruel actions. Shahid's ideas on the book of Salman Rushdie are similar to the ideas of Deedee Osgood. She asks Shahid to escape from the fundamentalist group,

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 18:8 August 2018

Dr. M. Mohankumar, M.A., M.A. (Ling.), M.Phil., Ph.D.

Conflicting Ideologies of Fundamentalism Versus Liberalism in Hanif Kureishi's

The Black Album

convincing him that he was a blasphemer, atheist and a pervert. But Shahid does not have the courage to deny god. He lives in an in-between state. He was unwilling to leave 'his' religion. He is confused whether to follow the religious ideology or to abandon his relationship with Deedee Osgood. Shahid has tolerance for all the religions and he is the liberalist.

State of Oscillation

In *The Black Album*, Kureishi maintains the neutral stance of Shahid, who straddles between fundamentalism and liberalism.

In his state of oscillation, Shahid is unable to decide which path that he should travel. Finally, he prefers to lead the worldly, sensual life of Deedee. He realizes that man's constant quest for identity finally culminates in liberalism or liberal outlook. Religious moral prescriptions do not liberate, and they bind. Shahid understands that liberalism would supersede fundamentalism.

In London, the Muslim minorities are attacked. Riaz would often address the people about the persecution of Muslims in London. He would also speak about the gays, lesbians and of other minority groups in the world. He would tell his friends that their motto should be to fight against the persecution of their people in Palestine, Afghanistan and Kashmir. He also tells them that the one who does not fight for their people has to answer Allah.

To Conclude

The novel portrays the inhuman treatment of white people meted out to Muslims.

In *The Black Album*, both Riaz and Chad are the self-styled religious mongers. They refuse to deviate into all-embracing liberalism. In their preview, the whites are viewed as the Self or the dominant master class. The Asian Muslims, such as Riaz and his friends, are constantly living under the fear of being persecuted, attacked and tortured by the whites.

On the other hand, the whites view the Muslim as fundamentalist. They refuse to look at the liberalism and humanism of the soft-core Muslims like Shahid. Shahid stands as a connecting link between the racism of the whites and the fundamentalism of London-inhabited Muslims, Riaz and Chad. Shahid represents, he has 'tolerance' towards men of other religions, especially the whites. So, he prefers to sail on the smooth waters of liberalism with Deedee Osgood.

Shahid, as a liberalist, voices out his mild protest against the rioters who proclaim to burn the copies of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. He tries to convince his Muslim friends not to burn it, as they should view the novel as a piece of literature. He stays away from all the fanatics. His middle-position stand makes him a post-colonial man, neither supporting fundamentalism nor condemning racism. He is sentimentally neo-Muslim and anti-racist. He is an epitome of liberalism.

Work Cited

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 18:8 August 2018

Dr. M. Mohankumar, M.A., M.A. (Ling.), M.Phil., Ph.D.

Conflicting Ideologies of Fundamentalism Versus Liberalism in Hanif Kureishi's

The Black Album

Kureishi, Hanif. *The Black Album*. London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 2000. Print.

Dr. M. Mohankumar M.A., M.A (LIN), M.Phil., Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of English

PGP College of Arts and Science

Namakkal-637207

mmohaenglishliterature@gmail.com

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 18:8 August 2018

Dr. M. Mohankumar, M.A., M.A. (Ling.), M.Phil., Ph.D.

Conflicting Ideologies of Fundamentalism Versus Liberalism in Hanif Kureishi's

The Black Album