

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON

“ENVIRONMENT, AGRICULTURE & HUMAN WELFARE: AN OVERVIEW OF
SUSTAINABLE GOALS OF FUTURE”

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Interpretation Of Multiculturalism in The Novels of Zadie Smith

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Abstract

The novels on several subjects were written by Zadie Smith, who has emerged as the most notable diasporic voice of the twenty-first century. However, the multiculturalist's perspective is applied to the majority of her subjects. Her books cover a wide range of topics that people of color encounter. Smith uses a wide range of characters and a convoluted plot to tell about the battle. The satirical messages are also present in the literature. Multicultural identity serves as the primary theme throughout Smith's novels, which also depict the deplorable social situations and the repugnant characters who deal with them, fall victim to them, and generate conflict.

When different cultures come together, new issues emerge. Her character concepts have a diverse range of roots. Her books mostly focus on the relationships between diverse characters from varied racial, cultural, economic, social, and religious backgrounds across generations. Her books begin with the characters' internal struggles to discover and maintain their ethnic identity and ancestry in a heterogeneous world. Her books depict the wide range of problems related to ethnicity, culture, and religion that immigrants encounter due to their diverse backgrounds. Before Zadie Smith, most writers had written relatively little about London. Smith may be considered the well-known researcher who approached it from a multicultural perspective.

Keywords: - Diaspora, multiculturalism, multicultural identity, deplorable social situations and the repugnant characters.

Introduction: - Smith has refuted the widely held belief that the nation is stable. She has portrayed the chaos that a multicultural culture brings about in people's lives, particularly for immigrants who view it as a haven for a brighter future. Through her well-known pieces, she has rewritten the story of cosmopolitan London. In her writings, she elucidates the struggle that arises in the lives of those who are trying to figure out who they are while living together. They experience highs and lows and engage in a variety of immoral acts that cause harm to others, all while trying to figure out who they are.

As they work through the process of defining their own identities in the complex world of society, Smith's characters take into consideration the diverse cast that they are continually surrounded by due to personal struggles and issues with others. They contend with prejudice in addition to their issues and the sense of not belonging to the country. Smith has attempted to argue that the confusion that residents of a multicultural area feel about their identities there is the root cause of nearly all bad deeds and conflicts. They only remain together to benefit financially, yet practically every one of her characters struggles with identity.

People from a wide range of cultural origins, including English, Jamaican, Bangladeshi, and Jewish, are included in her novels. She has told the stories in English using Bangladeshi and Jamaican tones to give her works a multicultural authenticity. She has authentically shown a variety of mixed-race communities residing on the same territory. She represented White culture as a member of her multicultural community. She has depicted the complicated relationships in the dynamic world where people struggle to reclaim their own cultural identities after losing them. The novels that are being studied show the various dynamics of ethnic diversity and mixed cultures. Along with ethnic and religious issues, they also display gender issues that lead to conflict in society. One learns from studying the chosen literature that the characters deal with this kind of identity issue. We learn that the characters in her books undergo metamorphosis and growth before embarking on the journey of self-discovery. In her writings, Zadie Smith explores various multicultural communities. Her father is British, and her mother is Jamaican. In 1969, her mother moved to England.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON

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26TH November, 2023

Smith is an immigrant of the second generation. She was raised in a household where she was exposed to both British and African cultural values. She relocates to England, where she later launches her writing career. She starts writing about multicultural communities as a result. Numerous African and Asian immigrants have settled in England. She talks about how many Africans stayed in England throughout the colonial era. In exchange for their labor, the colonists took some of the workers.

She also discusses several colonists who brought their African wives and kids to England after marriage. Political or economic unrest may have prompted the Asian immigrants in her books to leave their home countries. The success of Smith's debut book, *White Teeth*, can be attributed to its inclusion of several ethnic communities and its analysis of the various issues surrounding intercultural coexistence. Samad, one of the primary protagonists, is an immigrant from Bangladesh living in England. He makes an effort to instill in his sons the moral and religious values of his home nation. He exerts his will with considerable power. He fails to live up to the social and religious standards that he wants his boys to follow. He gambles, drinks, and forms adulterous relationships.

Fearing that he will lose out on the Bengali cultural values he was raised with, he sends one of his sons back to Bangladesh. He finds it hard to accept the lessons that British schools are teaching his students. The social and theological ideas of Britain serve as the foundation for both the curriculum and the schools. His sons had a special affection for the curricula offered in British schools. Smith demonstrates how acculturation has impacted Asian (Bangladeshi, Indian, and Pakistani) and African cultures with an emphasis on their integration.

The *Autograph Man*, Smith's second book, explores several issues. Within the book, one of the most significant themes is multiculturalism. The protagonist of the book is Alex. His mother is English, and his father is Chinese. He balances the two cultures as he grows up. He has had a special bond with his father since he was young. After his father's untimely death, he is left to navigate England's diverse society on his own. She's African and she's his girlfriend. It dawns on him that she is not his ethnicity. He finds it difficult to accept this partnership.

Smith has discussed the few mixed-race characters in her books in a few interviews. Her experiences growing up in Britain are reflected in these personalities. Smith's own experiences as an immigrant from Britain are similar to those of Irie in *White Teeth* and Esther in *The Autograph Man*. Smith investigates immigration impartially and objectively. She makes connections between human experiences and places, time, people, and other external circumstances sometimes through magical realism and other times through the hyperreal metropolitan space.

This paper examines postmodern circumstances and multiculturalism in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man* through a qualitative lens. The language, religion, cuisine, education, economy, and way of life of immigrants in Britain are all examined in this thesis. When someone moves to a foreign nation, these components undergo significant modifications and present moral quandaries. An investigation of the coexistence of postmodernism and multiculturalism in literary works and artwork is presented in paper. An analysis of the multicultural components of *The Autograph Man* and *White Teeth* may be found in paper. The question of whether cultural integration can improve immigrants' quality of life is supported by this analysis. Finally, chapter six presents a comparative analysis of the books, closely examining Smith's works and demonstrating the unavailability of integration.

Diversity of culture is the focus of multiculturalism. The meaning of this phrase varies depending on the social and political context. While a multicultural society is one in which people from many cultural origins live together, multiculturalism in politics refers to how the state views its citizens from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The government

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON

“ENVIRONMENT, AGRICULTURE & HUMAN WELFARE: AN OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE GOALS OF FUTURE”

26TH November, 2023

authorizes certain cultural practices while enacting laws to restrict the activities of smaller cultures. Multiculturalism is becoming more and more commonplace worldwide.

It is therefore noted in the literature as well. Texts discussing migrants in other countries and their distinct cultural customs are reminiscent of real-world events. Humans are inherently endowed with certain traits and dispositions. Some of the traits and inclinations gain acceptance throughout time. Nonetheless, customs could differ throughout societies. As a result, culture both forces similarities among some tribes and allows for differentiation among others. When one group tries to coexist with another, the disparities show. People frequently bring up issues when attempting to strike a balance between the two.

As a result, a multicultural community is born. A multicultural society is defined by Bhikhu Parekh. A society that encompasses two or more cultural groupings is considered multicultural. It could react to this multiplicity of cultures in one of two ways, either of which can take on multiple forms. It may embrace it, value it, and respect the cultural requirements of its constituent groups; alternatively, it may work to fully or significantly integrate these communities into its dominant culture.

The two key concepts in multiculturalism are assimilation and mainstream culture. The minor ethnic groups may gradually give up to the dominant culture through cultural assimilation. They can also embrace the prevailing culture to some extent. In a town or country, the mainstream culture is the one that is prevalent and represents the majority of the population. For instance, ethnic minorities like Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis may or may not experience cultural assimilation while living in England, yet British culture is the country's predominant and mainstream culture. According to Michael Ryan, "The things we humans make when we translate ideas into objects is the more familiar meaning of the word culture. The second meaning of culture comprises cultural artifacts, such as things we give the built environment." People from diverse cultural origins may wish to make their unique ideas a reality in a multicultural society. For instance, some Bangladeshis residing in England might feel compelled to construct a makeshift Shaheed Minar in honor of International Mother Language Day.

Therefore, minor cultures might potentially have an impact on the other country. Once more, some people might value their culture above their own life. Bengali speakers in East Pakistan, for instance, objected to West Pakistan's coercive imposition of Urdu as their official language. This act sparked the 1952 Language Movement, which resulted in fatalities. In multicultural countries, certain groups of people prioritize their culture over their interests. They live in a society with many different cultural influences, and they create their communities. First-generation immigrants typically find it difficult to renounce the culture they have grown up with when they relocate to a new place. They would rather hold onto their original culture. Some individuals are willing to accept the customs of the new culture. They might favor assimilating. Most second-generation immigrants favor the dominant culture of their new country. They find it challenging to relate to their parents' culture. They have no trouble assimilating into the prevailing culture. They may find it challenging to strike a balance between their parent's culture and the new one.

Children of Pakistani parents who were born and raised in England, for instance, might favor British culture. At school and via their friends, they pick up knowledge about British culture. Their parents might practice Pakistani culture at home. As such, they may find it challenging to strike the ideal balance between the two cultures. Discussions about Asian and African values trying to survive in multicultural England can be found in multicultural literary texts. English societies are firmly anchored in their own culture, even though they see themselves as being open to other cultures. As a result, they could conduct critical analyses of Asian and African cultures. They frequently display racial hatred, prejudice, and the forcible expulsion of non-immigrants from their country. Asians who work in England are frequently the targets of racist remarks and harsh immigration regulations that

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON

“ENVIRONMENT, AGRICULTURE & HUMAN WELFARE: AN OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE GOALS OF FUTURE”

26TH November, 2023

result in their forcible expulsion from the nation. On the other hand, some immigrants can elevate their status via career and educational advancement.

A growing number of Asian immigrants are marrying citizens, and the *jus soli* gives their offspring permission to live there. Their children are continually given the chance to live in any of these circumstances. A multitude of cultures coexist in the vastness of British society as a result of all these circumstances. Certain Asians and Africans request authorization to participate in their traditional cultural rituals. Certain behaviors are permitted, while others are not. In many European nations, the scenarios varied. The hijab, a scarf used by Muslim girls to cover their heads, and veils are prohibited in France.

Parekh has penned Francois Bayrou, the Minister of Education, issued an order on September 10, 1994, stating that although wearing "discreet" religious symbols was permissible, "ostentatious symbols which in themselves constitute elements of proselytism or discrimination" were not, and the hijab was one of those symbols (Smith, 250). Parekh also brings up the problem of the British government supporting schools for religious beliefs Anglican, Catholic, and Jewish—but refusing to support schools for Muslims. Concerns regarding the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism in Muslim schools have been voiced by the government.

Nonetheless, Muslim schools that are privately sponsored are permitted in England. Food and clothing play major roles in a heterogeneous culture. People wear various clothes anywhere throughout the world. There are numerous laws about motorcycle helmet use in Europe. Some Sikhs, however, objected to donning a helmet since they thought it was better to wear their turbans.

Though several of them received penalties, their protests eventually convinced the authorities to allow them to wear turbans rather than helmets. According to research, turbans can prevent serious injuries; however, their effectiveness in preventing injuries is comparatively lower than that of helmets. The corporate staff, drivers, restaurant employees, and nurses all have uniforms that they wear. As a result, Asian immigrants to Western nations often struggle with the issue of dressing differently. The next point is that food varies greatly throughout the world.

A migrant can struggle to adjust to the less spicy meals. "Food undergoes a fairly rapid process of integration, even though newly arrived migrant communities have a short-term desire to eat the food of their homeland," argues Panikos Panayi (Smith, 174). The problem of finding halal food is one common issue in a multicultural culture. Muslims look for cuisine that is approved by their faith. A few newcomers choose to process their food. They consume bread and vegetarian fare. Additionally, some Muslims butcher their hens at home. A few of them also open restaurants to serve only halal cuisine.

There are dietary limitations for non-vegetarians in the Hindu community. Some of them favor consuming cuisine made by members of their caste. varied regions of the world have varied culinary options, and these options frequently coexist in a multicultural culture with difficulty. Culture and religion are closely related. Any civilization in the world would be hard to locate without the influence of religious institutions.

It is also challenging to locate a religion that is wholly apart from society at the same time. Parekh says that "religion and culture influence each other at various levels." Religion influences a society's set of values and customs, thus when people or groups convert to a different religion, their way of thinking and living significantly alters (Smith, 147). Religion prescribes rules for things like marriage, eating, attire, and prayer. Thus, religion shapes the cultures of various countries. For instance, Islamic law has a significant influence on the cultures of Middle Eastern nations.

The majority of the nations in America and Europe adhere to Christian laws and customs. The Christian religion includes Christmas Day. Christmas Day celebrations have evolved into a cultural event over time. The streets are decked out. Toys, food, and clothing

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON

“ENVIRONMENT, AGRICULTURE & HUMAN WELFARE: AN OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE GOALS OF FUTURE”

26TH November, 2023

with Christmas themes are available. Other religious groups purchase them and commemorate this day as well. Variations in religious beliefs lead to variations in cultural customs. One such group is mentioned by Panayi: "Moreover, to dispel 'misconceptions prevailing among non-Muslims regarding Islam and Muslims, a Pan-Islamic Society came into existence as early as 1903 and was renamed the Central Islamic Society in 1910 (Smith, 171).

Political and economic institutions are inextricably linked to culture. People are engaging in transnational corporate operations as a result of the advancement of science and technology. People travel for work purposes across national borders. They consequently frequently encounter various cultural customs. It is required of a new employee to adhere to the work culture that is widespread in the organization. In the process, the new hire's culture may also become known to the former staff members. When people from various cultural origins get together, there is an exchange of cultural customs. People travel abroad to increase trade and the economy. Politicians also give attention to international relations. Immigrants with diverse cultural backgrounds are being welcomed by several nations.

This situation can arise from their need to expand the labor force within the nation. People can now engage with people from other countries and cultures because of globalization. Still, there are roots to this movement in the globalization of Western culture. The ideas and values of the Eastern countries are viewed as less important than those of the Western countries. Both Africans and Asians face discrimination. According to Parekh, "the requirement that a candidate for an academic position have earned their first degree within the nation, or that a police officer must be six feet tall, discriminates against Asians and immigrants, respectively (Smith, 210).

Every immigrant must adhere to the school's curriculum. The languages of many communities and tribes are distinct. Language distinguishes Jews from Boers and Anglo people, according to Sander L. Gilman (Smith, 132). In South Africa, the Boers are descended from Dutch or Germans, whereas the Anglos are descended from English people in Australia, North America, and South Africa. Thus, disparities in language can also exist between countries. Speaking the new language becomes a challenge for someone who moves abroad.

For migrants, giving up a language they have spoken for a long time might be challenging. However, there are difficulties involved with picking up a new language. Languages may also be thought of as the cultural bearer. Certain words could be exclusive to that specific culture. These words are determined by community actions. Therefore, learning a language can have an impact on a person's acquisition of certain cultural knowledge. A migrant frequently picks up dual language skills—a blend of the new language and his or her native tongue. One example of a language hybrid is Creole, which combines two distinct languages. Diverse cultures balance and enhance one another, despite the conflicts and difficulties that arise in multicultural societies. One culture can't include all facets of human nature and behavior.

Every culture has its limitations, but it also possesses elements that other cultures lack. Diverse cultures complement and correct one another in a multicultural society. They make up for the shortcomings and constraints of other civilizations. Human behavior has the power to alter cultures. To live in a multicultural society, people must therefore learn how to have conversations. They have to learn to be tolerant of different customs and cultures. The many communities can coexist harmoniously as a result. Zadie Smith depicts the diasporas of multicultural England in her two novels, *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man*. An examination of her private life demonstrates her multiracial identity. Her mother is Jamaican, while her father is British. She faces the challenge of growing up in England without feeling like a part of any one culture.

She depicts characters going through comparable difficulties in her writings. But in

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON

“ENVIRONMENT, AGRICULTURE & HUMAN WELFARE: AN OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE GOALS OF FUTURE”

26TH November, 2023

addition to Jamaican and British cultures, she has included many other civilizations in her writings. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the diverse communities present in England, she has also contributed her expertise in numerous religions. Characters from Europe, North America, Africa, and South Asia can be found in the two works. In both writings, postmodernism and diversity coexist side by side. Cultures undergo integration and take on new forms, which demonstrate the postmodern state. The issues of language, diet, attire, integration, education, relationships, religion, economic stability, genetic variances, and historical knowledge are faced by the characters.

These conundrums can be connected to postmodern and multicultural contexts alike. They also bring up the question of whether cross-cultural communication and understanding are feasible. To determine whether a solution is feasible, it is necessary to conduct a thorough analysis of the circumstances that give rise to these conundrums in literary texts. In *White Teeth*, language crossing is a significant phenomenon.

Conclusion: - Zadie Smith, a person of mixed race, witnessed her brother's persecution due to his darker skin tone. Her sole childhood pal was African. Smith has persevered through feeling like the "other." She has personally found it difficult to adapt to England's heterogeneous society. She has decided to write about these heterogeneous communities in the majority of her works as a result. Aside from British and African nationals, she has studied various ethnicities. Smith both contributes to and recalls some of her own experiences through *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man*. All multicultural civilizations around the world face issues such as racial prejudice, class discrimination, language barriers, lifestyle issues, identity crises, and religious difficulties. These kinds of incidents make one wonder about their surroundings. Investigating social and political systems and navigating one's traumas and societal norms are skills that are learned. A person who has undergone assimilation experiences a state of disconnection from both their native and foreign cultures. It is an odd bargaining between a person and national limits. The mind is never truly absent from two places at once.

Smith also addresses postmodern themes in his works. Intersexuality, simulacrum, irony, paranoia, and magic realism are all present. In addition, Jameson's claim that postmodernism is the cultural logic of late capitalism demonstrates the interconnectedness of capitalism with multicultural postmodern societies. Smith demonstrates how micro-narratives take the place of meta-narratives in both books. Additionally, Smith clarifies that diversity is not limited to immigrating to another nation. Within one's nation, acculturation may occur. Acculturation is conceivable if any character interacts with a foreign culture via any medium while still at home. Telephone, television, newspaper, internet, and forty photos can all contribute to acculturation. The absence of distinctions between high and low culture has also gained significance in the postmodern era. Thus, a combined discussion of postmodernism and multiculturalism has aided in understanding the circumstances faced by migrants.

Cultural assimilation is unavoidable, even though it has some negative effects. Thus, embracing many cultures can have a good effect similar to racial harmony. The characters, Alex, Esther, Archie, Marcus, Magid, Irie, and Marcus, embrace integration and popular culture. They can choose a route in the confusing environment as a result. No culture should be allowed to rule over migrants. Only conversations between the major and minor cultures should be used to teach them how to bargain. A peaceful community can result from successful negotiating. Both locals and visitors should steer clear of racial prejudice, economic inequality, and injustices based on language and religion. These are the main points that Smith makes in his writing. She has attempted to bargain with the chaotic, multicultural society of England as well as with herself in her own life. She married an Irishman, accepted her mixed identity, and has continued to be a part of multiple nations, cultures, and languages. She also writes and lectures a lot about diversity.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON

“ENVIRONMENT, AGRICULTURE & HUMAN WELFARE: AN OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE GOALS OF FUTURE”

26TH November, 2023

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