

A.Zubedha Begum- The multiculturalism in zadie smith's novel white teeth(2019)

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BY-PASS ROAD, NEWTOWN,
VANIYAMBADI - 635 752.



Mayas Publication

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Published In First



**Published by
Mayas Publication[®]**

Tamil Nadu | Kerala | Karnataka | New Delhi
Maya1984Kannan@gmail.com
www.mayaspublication.com
www.eijfmr.com

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Book Name: ONE DAY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LANGUAGE,
LITERATURE, MEDIA AND CULTURE

ISBN: "978- 93- 89507- 00-3"

Edition: **First**

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THE MULTICULTURALISM IN ZADIE SMITH'S NOVEL WHITE TEETH

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ABSTRACT

This research paper mainly focus on the concept of multiculturalism with reference to Zadie Smith's novel, *White Teeth*. Zadie Smith has a place with one of Great Britain's most commended youthful creators since her first novel *White Teeth* was distributed in 2000. The novel *White Teeth* is a vibrant portrait of contemporary multicultural London, told through the story of three ethnically diverse families. Up to this time, she has written five significant books and a few short stories which were converted into various languages, and promised her a conspicuous place in the contemporary British literary scene.

"The very reason I write is so that I might not sleepwalk through my entire life".

Zadie Smith.

The contemporary British writer Zadie Smith was born on 25, October 1975 in northwest of London who is an essayist, novelist, short-story writer and also a tenured professor in the creative writing faculty of New York University since September 2010. She was born to a Jamaican mother, Yvonne Bailey, and an English father, Harvey Smith who is well known for her treatment of race, religion, and cultural identity and for her novels eccentric characters, savvy humor, and snappy dialogue. Additionally Smith as a youthful creator of blended radical foundation, clearly fuses her own particular encounters of a differing urban life. In both fiction and non-fiction, her writing is observant and funny, with a foundation of fierce intellectual curiosity.

Zadie Smith's most prominent novel *White Teeth* has become a bestseller since its publication in the year 2000, has been read by Millions of readers all over the world, praised by literary critics and earned prestigious Literary prizes including the Whitbread First Novel Award, the Guardian First Book Award and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Fiction. It is a well- thought multilayered novel with the prevalent umbrella theme of multiculturalism, covering many sub themes and motifs such as history, identity, the past, present and future, citizenship, belonging, racism, religion, humanity and many more. Smith uses the 'white teeth' as a metaphor throughout the novel to point the attention to several issues. Given the fact, that the novel deals with characters of different origin and race Smith employs the symbol of teeth to carry out the idea that teeth are the same for everyone, or more precisely that everyone is the same under the skin.

The book *White Teeth* became one of the best novels dealing with multiculturalism. A multicultural society consists of two or more different cultures which are different in language, religion, traditions and their systems of values. Britain and especially London became multicultural mainly by immigrants who left their countries mostly for political or economic reasons in the search for freedom and a better standard of living. *White Teeth* is the story of three families from three different cultural backgrounds, the English-Jamaican Jones, the Bangladeshi Iqbal's and the Jewish Chalfens, presents mainly between 1974 and 1992, set in Willesden, a multicultural suburb in North London, where Zadie Smith herself lives. And so, as many great novels do, *White Teeth* dramatizes the difficulties of life in a multicultural society. While the novel presents a portrait of modern multicultural London, its characters are obsessed with history, and events like the

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Indian Mutiny of 1857, the planter experiences in Jamaica, and World War II are crucial understanding of the story. A multicultural society includes people from several different cultures. People of different colors, nationalities, languages live together in one community. In this regard Sarah Joseph views:

Multiculturalism is used to refer to a desired end-state, as a way of referring to a society in which different cultures are respected and the reproduction of culturally defined group is protected and social diversity celebrated. (2002:159)

Smith also draws a representation of British society which is a multi-faced society of blended races, dialects, and traditions. Moreover, one of the critic Gillet expresses that *White Teeth* directly addresses multiculturalism in Britain. This situation demonstrates itself in the person's look for an individual personality, which is the real topic of *White Teeth*. The novel *White Teeth* consists of a plethora of episodes narrated with an ironic undertone and in a casual, modern language. Bruce King in his review summarizes Smith's work as in the following:

This is a multicultural English novel, set in well-off North London, in which the three main families are Muslim, half-Jamaican, and Jewish, and in which few nonminority characters appear; the Irish bar is run by a Muslim. (White teeth 116)

The most prominent theme in the novel, *White Teeth* by critically acclaimed author Zadie Smith is multiculturalism. Smith introduces themes such as immigration and the clash of different cultures in the arena of London. Multiculturalism is therefore presented in this novel through the tremendous variety in all of the characters and how they come from numerous religions, countries and different locations and are all crammed together in London. Accordingly,

White teeth includes an ambitious range of characters and narratives that represent the multicultural nature of contemporary Britain and shows how historical factors affect the ways in which people in the present relate to each other. (Bently 52)

White Teeth is a well-thought multilayered novel with the prevalent umbrella theme of multiculturalism, covering many sub themes and motifs such as history, identity, racism, humanity and many more. Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth* portrays British multicultural society of twentieth Century London. The novel depicts the life of three families with a migrant background from three different cultures spanning over three generations: the Joneses (an Anglo-Jamaican family), the Iqbals (a Bengali family) and the Chalfens (a white Jewish family). In fact the author herself has a mixed-race background, her mother being of Jamaican and her father of British origin.

The novel *White Teeth* presents how the major characters undergoes difficulties of life in a multicultural society. And it mainly focusses on how Archie and Samad develops friendship beyond their racial and cultural differences in a multicultural Britain. Thus, Smith's *White Teeth* focuses on the deep contemporary issues of characterizing personal identity and where people originate from. *White Teeth* is the first novel of the contemporary female writer Zadie Smith, giving her a quintessential overnight position among the greats of British literature. The novel is quite extensive, both in terms of the number of pages and the abundance of topics. Faith, religion, fundamentalism, extremism,

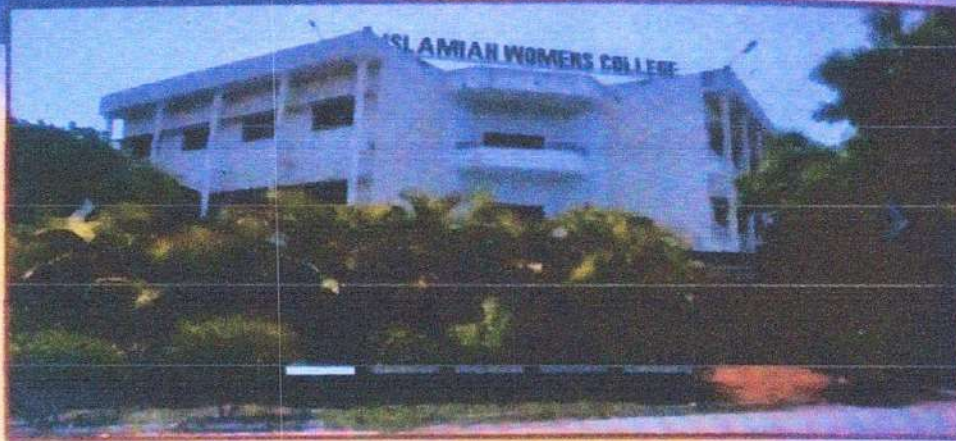
feminism, love, coming of age, colonialism, origin and identity are all dealt within this best-seller.

To sum up, multiculturalism builds a bridge between different cultures. But bridging the difference presupposes a minimum of balance between the cultures. After all, each culture has its own value and it articulates diverse aspects of good life. So multiculturalism respects differences and ensures equality for culturally and socially diverse groups. Multiculturalism ensures that all the members of a society, regardless of their caste and religion, have equal opportunity to reach their full potential with dignity and respect.

WORKCITED

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M.R.P. 950.00/-

ISBN 97893-89507-00-3



9 789389 507003