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**Identity in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth***

**Identita v díle Zadie Smith *Bílé Zuby***

Bakalářská práce

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**Abstract:**

The work focuses on the question of maintaining a religious identity in a multicultural society, namely today's Britain. Using Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth*, it explores the conflicts that can arise during the coexistence of both eastern and western culture. It also looks at the differences between the first and second generation family members portrayed in the novel. Particular attention is also paid to the religious identity of the ethnic and minority groups living in British society. The work also analyzes the changes in one's own perception of self identity whilst living in and experiencing the effects of British culture.

**Abstrakt:**

Práce se zaměřuje na otázku zachování náboženské identity v multikulturní společnosti, a to v současné Británii. Na základě knihy Zadie Smith *Bílé zuby*, práce zkoumá konflikty, které mohou vznikat ze vzájemného soužití západní a východní společností. Dále poukazuje na rozdíly mezi první a druhou generací členů tří rodin, přičemž zvláštní pozornost je věnována významu náboženské identity u etnických a menšinových skupin žijících v britské společnosti. Velká část práce je také věnována analýze změn ve vnímání vlastní identity pod vlivem britské kultury.

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# 1 Introduction

In today's world, the issue of identity is very common. As we move into the third millennium, the future of identity and ethnicity is very uncertain. On the one hand, society tends to be homogenous and other processes such as globalization and industrialism leave little space for sub-national ethnic identities. But recently, there are new tendencies to protect these sub-national groups especially because their ethnic heritages have made an impact on modern nations. These tendencies are based on the idea of preserving the originality of smaller cultures. Every culture is seen as a collection of original elements such as language, habits, faith and other aspects, which are all worth preserving.

Britain is a multicultural country and its policy is based on promoting harmony between various ethnic groups. For centuries, immigrants have arrived from abroad for various reasons and they took their cultures, religion, customs and language, which were all features of their identity. As a result, English culture has been greatly enriched but on the other side, this diversity has brought questions such as the process of assimilation or problems such as stereotyping or racism.

The aim of the paper is to provide a picture and identity of Muslim immigrants living in the UK, and to show the process of changing their values under the influence of British culture.

The first part of the paper provides information about national and ethnic identities and provides basic information about Western and non-Western concepts of the nation. The theoretical part is then applied to the situation in contemporary Britain.

The second part provides the theoretical background of multiculturalism and discusses positive and negative aspects of living in a multicultural society. The issue of multiculturalism is then applied to the diversity of Britain. This chapter describes the forming of various ethnic identities in Britain after the Second World War, and focuses on black identities and the Muslim community. It also gives a brief description of the problems these communities had to face after their arrival and shows the reactions of the British government in dealing with the presence of these minority groups in Britain.

The main body focuses on Asian immigrants living in Britain and describes their feelings from being a minority group living in a majority society. It gives an

image of their living standards, the problems with employment and their attitude to education. It also points out the influence of British culture on their identity, especially their religious identity and it shows the differences in the view of the world between first and other generations of Muslim immigrants in Britain. The change in religious identity is particularly obvious in the attitude of Muslims to Islam, which has changed from pure Islam to a more radical and politicized one and has caused the increase of various radical Islamist groups.

Another chapter is dedicated to terrorist attacks in New York and London. After the attack on the World Trade Centre in 2001 and the London Bombings in July 2005, the fear of Muslims and their religion increased and Islamophobia has become an everyday reality. The question of multiculturalism has been discussed a lot and the western countries have had to find a way to deal with this new phenomenon.

A view of life in Britain from the position of immigrants is reflected in the book *White Teeth* by young British author Zadie Smith, who is also the daughter of a Jamaican mother. The book tackles the everyday problems of three ethnically diverse families living in London in a multicultural society. *White Teeth* introduces a picture of a relationship between the first and second generations, points out the importance of roots and heritage, shows living conditions and habits of Muslim immigrants and illustrates the change in values under the influences of British culture.

The problem of maintaining an identity and the differences in their view of the world between first and second generation is shown within a Muslim family. Alsana and Samad Miah Iqbal come from Bangladesh and they find living in Britain very difficult. Their sons Magid and Millat represent the hopes and attitudes of the second generation of Muslims in Britain and their perception of the world is very different from their parents. They are put into two worlds – one, of modern British society and the second, their ethnic identity.

Archibald Jones is a working class Englishman and he marries Clara, a Jamaican immigrant. Their daughter Irie also tries to find out who she is and often feels frustrated by her past and family roots. However, she is aware that her past and her roots are important but she tries to look ahead more and lives for the present.

Chalfens are the third family. They are very liberal and although they are third generation of immigrants, they have been assimilated and they represent rich British

family. Markus Chalfen is a genetic engineer, his wife Joyce Chalfen is a biologist. They refuse to live in past events and they look more to the future. They are different from the Iqbals and with their view of the world they have a great influence on Millat, Magid and Irie.

The story takes place in North London, a place with high diversity and known for the mixing up of cultures, from 1970s till 1990s. Some scenes refer back to World War II, where Samad and Archie met and who find each other some years later in London.

## 2 Theory of identities

Each of us can be described as a collection of various identities. These identities can be either personal, defining us as individuals but also social, which refer to a social category. A. D. Smith comments that our individual identity is largely made up of social roles we occupy and of cultural categories (3). The social identity refers to individuals or groups marked by a label and distinguished by various characteristics that mean groups and individuals are defined on a basis of gender, ethnicity, religion or language. Therefore we can perceive our identity as one of personal significance and we try to find out who we are individually or perception of identity can have a collective sense that means we identify ourselves as a part of a group or a nation. In today's multicultural world, the specific identification is challenged and we risk a loss of identity as a person or what is even worse as ethnic group.

In the multiple of these identities there is a national identity, which seems to put people together to create a unit called a 'nation'. To explain the substance of national identity it is necessary to define the term nation. Encarta Encyclopedia states that a nation is a community of people or peoples who live in a defined territory and are organized under a single government and share some characteristics.

This is very brief description but a nation as a unit consists of many elements. According to Anthony D. Smith, we have to distinguish between two conceptions of nation – Western or 'civic' model of the nation and non-Western an 'ethnic' conception of nation. As Smith states, the Western model of the nation is predominantly spatial and territorial conception that means that a high level of priority is put on land and territory (9).

It is, and must be, the 'historic' land, the 'homeland', the 'cradle' of our people, even where, as with the Turks, it is not the land of ultimate origin. A 'historic land' is one where terrain and people have exerted mutual, and beneficial, influence over several generations. (A. Smith 9)

The importance of territory can be considered one of the cultural elements that create a national identity. There are more fundamental features of national identity and on their basis, Smith defines nation as 'a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members' (14). Smith takes his



theory further and according to him, national identity involves some sense of political community that means common institutions and a single code of rights and duties for all members of the community (9).

The nation was defined as a community of people characterized by a common language or territory, and the like. It would be a simple task if it worked like this in practice but in today's modern world we can hardly find a homogenous state. British national identity has been challenged by immigrants for centuries. These minority groups have brought their own culture and social organization. People within these groups meet Smith's criteria but they do not consider themselves British or are not considered British by their British fellow citizens. Therefore the psychological aspect should be added to these criteria. "The essence of a nation is rather a psychological bond that joins the people and differentiates it." (Connor 70)

The term ethnicity and ethnic identity has been frequently discussed recently but the sense of common culture is as old as the historical record. It refers to aspects of relationships between groups, which consider themselves as being culturally distinctive.

Each society in the modern world contains a group of people that somehow differ from the rest of society and the most suitable term for this group is an ethnic group. That is maybe the reason why ethnicity is sometimes wrongly considered to be the relationship between a minority ethnic group and the larger society. But ethnicity can exist even between polyethnic states as well as between national states.

As Hutchinson and Smith explain, ethnic identity refers to 'the individual level of identification with a culturally defined collectivity, the sense on the part of the individual that she or he belongs to a particular cultural community' (5).

The key terms of ethnicity are ethnic, ethnic identity and ethnic group or ethnic community. Today the word 'ethnic' in England usually refers to groups of recent immigrants who are seen sufficiently different. Sometimes the ethnic group is described as a nation but there has to be other elements considered when we are talking about ethnic group or community. Schermerhorn's well-known definition says:

An ethnic group is defined here as a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood. Examples of such symbolic elements are: kinship patterns, physical contiguity (as in localism and sectionalism), religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenotypical features, or any

combination of these. A necessary accompaniment is some consciousness of kind among members of the group. (qtd. in Hutchinson and Smith 6)

A.D. Smith argues that ethnic groups do not necessarily have to be ‘part of a larger society’ and instead of his long list of symbolic elements, he uses the term ‘elements of common culture’. According to Smith, an ethnic group can be defined as a ‘named human population with a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity among its members’ (Hutchinson and Smith 7).

Smith points out the importance of common ancestry, shared myths and memories. By common ancestry, he means orientation to the past, to the common origins that gives an ethnic group a sense of fictive kinship, an orientation to ancestors as well as to its historical formation (7).

Shared memories and myths include heroes and events that put members of an ethnic group together. These myths and symbols play a vital role in unifying their population and ensuring their continuity over many generations and survival in a multicultural society.

The orientation to the past and to tradition is significant in *White Teeth*. Everyday life and actions of immigrants are determined by their roots and heritage and presence of past is seen as inescapable, especially for the first generation of immigrants. Samad Iqbal is the personification of such a traditional man and not only is he proud of his origin but he also wants his sons to maintain the attributes of their culture.

To Samad, as to the people of Thailand, tradition was culture, and culture led to roots, and these were good, these were untainted principles. That didn’t mean he could live by them, abide by them or grow in the manner they demanded, but roots were roots and roots were good. You would get nowhere telling him that weeds too have tubers, or that the first sign of loose teeth is something rotten, something degenerate, deep within gums. Roots were what saved, the ropes one throws out to rescue drowning men, to Save Their Souls. And the further Samad himself floated out to sea, pulled down to the depths by a siren named Poppy Burt-Jones, the more determined he became to create for his boy roots on shore, deep roots that no storm or gale could displace. (Z. Smith 193)

The excerpt illustrates Samad’s respect for his ethnic, cultural, and historical roots. He thinks they are pure and true principles and there is no way how to persuade him that some things can change during a time and that present is more important.

While the characters of second generation try to escape the past and roots, Samad is determined to live according to these principles. The more he feels that these principles are destroyed by modern values of British society, the more concerned he is about maintaining family's sense of history. But he often forgets that his sons rather want to adopt British identity and live their own lives than live in past events and according to their father's ideas.

### **3 Multiculturalism**

Not long ago multiculturalism was understood very positively but nowadays, the view of it has slightly changed. Perhaps thirty or forty years ago, West European countries and Americans did not talk about national identity but the issue of identity is now challenged very often. On one hand, the nation states belong to supra-nation organizations like the European Union and they are going through the process of globalization. Parekh suggests that due to globalization, no society can remain unaffected, self-contained and isolated (8). On the other hand, the nation states have had to face an intense process of immigration by minority groups with their own culture and social organisation.

A multicultural society includes two or more communities. Not only do individuals have their own demands but also these communities have inherited characteristics and various needs. Parekh divides the demands of such groups basically into two categories. According to him, some of the groups just long for equality between all members of society but some groups go further and want wider society to recognize and respect their differences (Parekh 1). These demands require many compromises and changes of attitudes in such society.

While acceptance of differences calls for changes in the legal arrangements of society, respect for them requires changes in attitudes and ways of thought as well. Some leaders of the new movements go yet further and press for public affirmation of their differences by symbolic and other means. (Parekh 2)

On one side, the established community is often unwilling to change anything from its own and settled elements of national identity. Contrary to it, the ethnic groups naturally try to preserve their own traditional habits, language and religion because they are the basic elements of their identity which are necessary for their existence and survival in a majority community. As a result the response of the established societies to the presence of these minorities might take two forms.

It might welcome and cherish it, make it central to its self-understanding, and respect the cultural demands of its constituent communities; or it might seek to assimilate these communities into its mainstream culture either wholly or substantially. (Parekh 6)

Multicultural society creates a climate in which different cultures are mutually influential on each other. The influence can be very positive, particularly in the fields of music, art, literature, clothes and the like and may bring a new wave of inspiration and ideas. But sometimes the differences between cultures are remarkable and they may cause tensions and conflicts. However, in both cases identity is a subject of change and rarely remains static. Identities can change during our life, they are not fixed and they can change according to situation. Each individual perceives his or her identity differently. Parekh claims:

“Like the identity of an individual, that of culture changes slowly and in parts, allowing its members time to absorb and adjust to changes and reconstitute its identity on a new basis.” (149)

Facing the influence from other societies, individuals may differ in a relationship to their cultures. Parekh comments that three ways are most common. Some people are deeply loyal to their culture, some are rooted in their culture but are more innovative and accept beliefs and values of some other cultures and lastly, some people are loyal to no particular culture and they change values and lifestyles (150).

However, many western countries such as France, Germany and Britain have to deal with many problems, which have occurred in the connection with immigration and in treating with minority societies. The main aim of all multicultural societies is to ensure a peaceful coexistence of all members and to fulfil their demands. Therefore, multiculturalism is mainly about the relationship between these groups, trying to hold these societies together, and maintaining the political unity whilst recognizing cultural diversity at the same time.

They need to find ways of reconciling the legitimate demands of unity and diversity, achieving political unity without cultural uniformity, being inclusive without being assimilationist, cultivating among their citizens a common sense of belonging while respecting their legitimate cultural differences, and cherishing plural cultural identities without weakening the shared and precious identity of shared citizenship. This is formidable political task and no multicultural society so far has succeeded in tackling it. (Parekh 343)

It requires a lot of effort and tolerance on both sides to reach these goals. Newcomers as well as settled people should take more time to find out about each other and understand each other in order to live side by side and peacefully. Sometimes, an interesting point of multiculturalism is mentioned. Many Muslims think it celebrates

diversity in clothes, cuisine or music but it sidelines human equality and human rights (Hussain and Osler 141). This tendency can be seen in the following paragraph in *White Teeth*.

This has been the century of strangers, brown, yellow, and white. This has been the century of the great immigrant experiment. It is only this late in the day that you can walk into a playground and find Isaac Leung by the fish pond, Danny Rahman in the football cage, Quang O'Rourke bouncing a basketball, and Irie Jones humming a tune. Children with first and last names on a direct collision course. Names that secrete within them mass exodus, cramped boats and planes, cold arrivals, medical checks. It is only this late in the day, and possibly only in Willesden, that you can find best friends Sita and Sharon, constantly mistaken for each other because Sita is white (her mother liked the name) and Sharon is Pakistani (her mother thought it best - less trouble). Yet, despite all the mixing up, despite the fact that we have finally slipped into each other's lives with reasonable comfort (like a man returning to his lover's bed after a midnight walk), despite all this, it is still hard to admit that there is no one more English than the Indian, no one more Indian than the English. There are still young white men who are angry about that; who will roll out at closing time into the poorly lit streets with a kitchen knife wrapped in a tight fist. (Smith 326 - 327).

It shows the attitude towards multiculturalism. On one side, it is popular in Britain to be inspired with foreign countries and give British white girls exotic names but on the other side, when it comes to a basic idea of multiculturalism, which is living of various communities side by side peacefully, there are still many people who disagree with such an idea and do not like the presence of immigrants in their country. As a result, many Pakistani parents rather choose an English name for their children to avoid possible discrimination.

Britain is a diverse country and always has been. Many people have come to Britain over the centuries and multiculturalism became part of a British policy and ideology as well. Most immigrants came from the former colonies and they include the Indians, Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants, Black Caribbean, immigrants from China and Black Africans. The significant wave of immigration started at the end of the Second World War. There were labour shortages in Britain and the government began looking for immigrants to fill the gap on the labour market.

After 1945 the economically successful countries of Western Europe faced shortage of unskilled labour as well as offering niches for entrepreneurs in areas of business which indigenous entrepreneurs were unwilling to occupy. They also needed professional skills which had to be provided from outside. (Rex, "Ethnicity" 241)

Living in a multicultural society leads to questioning the costs and benefits of multiculturalism. Although these ethnic minorities have enriched this country immensely, especially in areas such as culture, economic prosperity or social life, still many problems occur particularly now with Islamic immigrants. Great diversity can lead to many conflicts based on social and economic inequality, racism, differences of culture and religion, prejudice and discrimination. Therefore, there is a need of a policy which would produce one united society made up of many ethnic communities without trying to destroy or alienate their cultural traditions and identities.

The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) was set up under the Race Relation Act 1976 in order to promote racial equality and deal with the problems mentioned above. While support for multiculturalism continued, a new policy was demanded by national politicians. According to CRE, the policies have changed and there is now movement from the policy of assimilation to integration.

The development of multiculturalism as a policy in the first place was to some degree an understandable reaction to a disillusionment with policies of the 1950s and 60s, when the aim, said to be 'integration', was really assimilation - the absorption of minority migrant communities into the majority community with no noticeable effect on the culture and way of life of the majority, while expecting that the culture and way of life minorities brought with them would disappear.

(<http://www.cre.gov.uk/diversity/integration/index.html>)

Ethnic minorities in Britain differ not only in their origin but also in their demands and needs. Some only long for equality and assimilation but some took advantage of liberal and democratic values in Britain, they refuse to assimilate and they demand more freedom and equality even within public life. Therefore, different minority groups must be treated individually. Parekh claims:

The questions relate to cultural rights of minorities, the nature of collective rights, why cultures differ, whether their diversity is a transitional or permanent phenomenon, whether and why it is desirable, whether all cultures deserve equal respect, whether they should be judged in their own terms or ours or by universal standards and how the last can be derived, and whether and how we can communicate across and resolve deep differences between cultures. (9)

Even now, many years after the start of mass immigration to the UK, there are many debates on how to balance many apparently different societies and their demands.

The recent CRE's policy of integration minority groups has three essential components – equality, participation and interaction between all sections of the community (<http://www.cre.gov.uk/diversity/integration/index.html>).

Britain has the reputation now as that of a country filled with liberal and democratic values, promoting the integration of all communities but some nationalists may ask about 'Britishness' as a common national identity. And questions such as whether assertion of British national identity is needed or what is 'British' still remain under discussion.

### **3.1 Immigration to Britain**

During the 1950s, immigrants from the West Indian islands in the Caribbean came to many areas in Britain. These islands include Jamaica, Trinidad, Montserrat, Barbados and the like and the people from the Caribbean are usually referred to as West Indians. The arrival of a black community caused the rise of racial violence and prejudice in Britain. Many immigrants had not expected it because they were all British citizens and had the right to enter and settle down in Britain.

A second general point about West Indians is that we confirmed the popular notion that West Indians come to England as to their mother country. Imbued with a deep sense of England's tradition of fair play, they expect equal treatment and no colour discrimination. These beliefs and hopes are almost universally destroyed after a few weeks in England. (Rex and Moore 101)

When Caribbean migrants came to Britain they were regarded monolithically as 'blacks' and the colour of their skin provoked unfriendly reactions. The situation in 1960s in Britain is described by Indo-Trinidadian as:

Leaving the West Indies and coming to Britain is like entering a land where natives suffer from a curious kind of colour blindness in the contemplation of human groups. This special form of blindness manifests itself in an insensitivity to racial discrimination and variant shades within the category 'black'. It registers two crude categories, black and white. (James 155)

West Indians came to Britain for many reasons. Some came to work for a while, wanted to save money and return back home. Some were seeking better opportunities for themselves and their children. Some had been recruited because Britain was short of workers (Rex and Moore 100). Despite the shortage of labour, many found it difficult



to find a job or were paid less than their white colleagues. Most of them did not have much money so they had to find cheap housing, usually in the poor city areas.

Living in the white racist society helped to create a black identity where such an identity previously did not exist. Britain made them 'feel' black. Although the first generation of immigrants in Britain experienced racism and they were on the lowest level of social hierarchy in Britain, most of them stayed in Britain. Either they did not have enough money to go back and start again or they were aware that the standard of living in Britain was higher than in the country of their origin. However, some of the immigrants still dream of going back to their country. Various institutions were set up to deal with the racial inequality of black Caribbean migrants but later they were extended in Britain to deal with the problems of South Asians.

Immigrants from South Asia started to come in large numbers after Second World War from poorer countries or from former colonies. Because their numbers expanded rapidly, most of the West European countries soon started to face problems which were connected with immigration. From the very beginning, South Asians (Bangladeshis, Indians and Pakistanis) felt a limited acceptance by white people. This was probably based on belief that workers from ethnic minorities would eventually return to their country of origin (Abbas 9). As the following excerpt proves, Samad's feeling can represent feelings of many South Asians. They had a different expectation not only about the relationship with British people but they were disappointed about the country and its culture as such. They most suffer from the fact that they were treated as an inferior group and they were only just tolerated. Samad is desperate because he feels like he belongs nowhere. British people do not consider his family British and at the same time he can not go back to his country of origin.

These days it feels to me like you make a devil's pact when you walk into this country. You hand over your passport at the check-in, you get stamped, you want to make a little money, get yourself started... but you mean to go back! Who would want to stay? Cold, wet, miserable; terrible food, dreadful newspapers - who would want to stay? In a place where you are never welcomed, only tolerated. Just tolerated. Like you are an animal finally housebroken. Who would want to stay? But you have made a devil's pact ... it drags you in and suddenly you are unsuitable to return, your children are unrecognizable, you belong nowhere. (Z. Smith 407)

During the 1960s, the number of immigrants reached a zenith and there was a need of a new policy. This policy called Commonwealth Immigration Act (1962) was

supposed to be effective in controlling the number of immigrants but finally it caused the opposite result. As Soper and Fetzer comment, European states gradually closed borders to low-skilled workers but allowed their family members to settle down in Western Europe (2). On the basis of the 1962 Act, the settlements of South Asians became more permanent and family-orientated. Because many of these immigrants were Muslims, states like Britain, Germany and France suddenly had to face a culture with a completely different view of the world, different cultural needs and mainly with a different religion. There were many issues referring to education and law that had to be solved. In Britain and other countries, there is a widespread debate on what the goals of public policy toward Muslims ought to be.

On the one hand, governments sometimes pursue policies that encourage Muslims to assimilate themselves to the values of Western society, even when that means abandoning some of the particular features of their identity. At other times, states have encouraged Muslims and others to celebrate religious diversity and for Muslims to maintain their most deeply held religious values. (Soper and Fetzer 3)

In Britain, the difference is remarkable between liberal western thinking and non-western societies, of which some are not liberal at all. For most Muslims in Britain religious practices, including reading and praying, are central to their day. It requires a strong belief, devotion and discipline. Their Muslim identity is not just the way they identify themselves but they also want other people to identify them as Muslims. When they lived in South Asia, their religious identity was not challenged as it was after their arrival to the UK. Nilufar Ahmed comments:

In Bangladesh, women could more or less take their faith for granted as they were living within an Islamic setting. However, in the UK they often felt their faith was threatened by an un-Islamic way of life, and even more so in the case of their children – they were worried about how their children would gain an appropriate religious upbringing in a culture where faith could not be taken for granted. (196)

The passage expresses the fear of losing their Muslim identity in a secular British society. The more Muslims come across to misunderstanding of their religion, the more they are aware of their religious identity and afraid of their children's future. Therefore, most Muslims feel that religious education is particularly important for maintaining their identity and spreading the message of Islam

## 4 Racism and discrimination

Racism can be an important influence on young people's sense of identity. The mixing and coexistence of cultures inevitably leads to social conflicts. Generally, racism is described as a belief or assumption that inherited biological differences cause some human subpopulations to be fundamentally different from, or superior to, others (Encarta Encyclopedia).

Contrary to Pakistanis, the community of the West Indians did not have many own political organizations because they simply wanted to assimilate and share values of their host society. Therefore, they were surprised when racial discrimination and inequality appeared. Due to the low number of organizations, the West Indians tried to avoid contacts in which such discrimination was likely to appear (Rex and Moore 157).

Pakistanis were more aware of their identity and they wanted to maintain it. They lived culturally apart from the host society and they wanted the host society to recognize their religion and their values. "They are seen not only as coloured but as culturally foreign." (Rex and Moore 164) Pakistanis have their own culture, religion and institutions and when they feel discriminated they take advantage of British democratic values and try to solve various issues through their institutions. Contrary to racial discrimination of West Indians, most of the issues are connected with their religious identity which is seen as the most significant aspect of their identity. In Anwar's view, compared to other ethnic minorities, Muslims were never protected by law: "The Race Relationship Act 1976 does not fully protect Muslims because religious discrimination is not unlawful in Britain." (40) Anwar adds, in practise it means that some Muslims were sacked because they wanted to pray at their workplaces or Muslim women have problems with wearing hijab (40).

With the Rushdie affair in 1989, the wave of discrimination increased. Soon after publication of the *Satanic verses*, Muslims began protest against it because it ridiculed Islam and Muhammed. Muslim leaders wanted Rushdie to apologize; they demanded for a ban on the book, later they publicly burned a copy of the book in Bradford. But instead of gaining any support or at least some positive attention, they spread suspicion and fear. "They were called 'barbarians', 'uncivilized', 'fanatics', and compared to Nazis." (Parekh 300) The situation got worse when several Muslim leaders

wanted Rushdie's death and he was forced to go into hiding. Although many British Muslims did not agree with killing Rushdie, the media presented Muslims as dangerous fundamentalists.

This situation led to the Runnymede Trust report (1997). As Chris Allen highlights, the report began to focus on religion rather than race (54). The fear of Islam and Muslims is described as Islamophobia and it is based on interpretation of Islam in western countries and differences in values. The Runnymede Trust (1997) stated that Islamophobia comes out of the disdain or dislike of all things 'foreign' (Abbas 11-12). Seven features of Islamophobia were identified:

Muslim cultures are seen as monolithic; Islamic cultures are substantially different from other cultures; Islam is perceived as implacably threatening; Islam's adherents use their faith to political and military advantages; Muslim criticism of Western cultures and societies is rejected out of hand; the fear of Islam is mixed with racist hostility to immigration; and Islamophobia is assumed to be natural and unproblematic. This taxonomy of the features of Islamophobia is very relevant today. (Abbas 12)

The following excerpt in *White Teeth* also indicates how Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are seen in Britain. Millat is aware that he will never be treated as a British, although he was born in Britain. They are regarded as the thieves of jobs, or are just unemployed and take from the state. There is also an obvious tendency amongst the British to connect Pakistanis and Bangladeshis with lower class jobs; the smell of curry also indicates that Pakistanis are mostly employed in catering. Millat feels that despite much effort he would never be able to succeed in a British society which ridicules his culture, his clothes and his religion.

He knew that he, Millat, was a Paki no matter where he came from; that he smelt of curry; had no sexual identity; took other people's jobs; or had no job and bummed off the state; or gave all the jobs to his relatives; that he could be a dentist or a shop-owner or a curry-shifter, but not a footballer or a film-maker; that he should go back to his own country; or stay here and earn his bloody keep; that he worshipped elephants and wore turbans; that no one who looked like Millat, or spoke like Millat, or felt like Millat, was ever on the news unless they had recently been murdered. (Z. Smith 233-234)

The presence of discrimination also signifies the fact that Samad decides to move his family from East London to North London because he finds living in East London dangerous for his kids. As he suggests, due to a high percentage of immigrants in North London, things were more liberal (Z. Smith 59).

## 5 Living standards of South Asians in Britain

Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslims in Britain live at the lower end of the social spectrum. This status is a result of a combination of many factors, namely bad housing, poor education and high levels of unemployment (Peach 23). The following chapter will discuss these three, closely related, factors in detail.

Generally, Bangladeshi and Pakistani Muslims live within their own community where they feel more comfortable and secure and they prefer place where mosques are nearby. They tend to live in the worst housing conditions. They usually live in cheap terraced houses where sometimes central heating is missing. South Asians have strong family ties and there are usually more generations living together. They often have more children therefore overcrowding is a problem. But there are many reasons why South Asians experience economic exclusion. Brenda Kirsch explains:

“The poverty of these two groups is a result of combination of two factors – high rates of male unemployment, low rates of women’s economic activity, low wages and large households.” (15)

People from minority ethnic groups enriched Britain of many new skills and business. But still the workers are likely to be found in lower paid manual jobs. Many of them still have to face racial discrimination and many of them are affected by unemployment. As previously mentioned, women’s economic activity is very low. The reason why they stay at home reflects the traditional Islamic values of *purdah* and *izzet*. As Ceri Peach explains, *purdah* means protecting Muslim women from contact with men outside their immediate family and *izzet* refers to family honour. He also highlights that there are severe economic consequences arising from these traditional values (30). Many immigrants invested in their own businesses such as catering, textile industry, many Pakistanis run taxis or minicabs.

England has always been a church-state and it recognizes many religions. Despite this fact, the number of people with no faith grows and for Muslims, education is a tool to succeed in such a society and spread Islamic faith. Therefore, Muslims started to set up their own schools in the 1970s in order to promote an Islamic way of life and maintain their identity in a secular British environment. Due to the close link between church and state in England, Muslims were entitled to state funding.

Conflict in Britain has crystallized on the question of whether the state education system will fully finance private Islamic schools under the same conditions that apply to Christian and Jewish ones. (Soper and Fetzer 3)

However, their demand was turned down several times. Muslims were frustrated because they perceived it as discrimination. Many of them refused to assimilate and with separate Muslim schooling they had at least chance to face the pressure of assimilation (Soper and Fetzer 45). Finally, Blair's government supported pluralistic faith system and British Muslims gained state funding for their schools. Nowadays, there are eighty Muslim independent schools in Britain and five of them have received state funding (Anwar 32). Soper and Fetzer points out an irony of this situation because Muslims reached their goals at the same time when secular ideas and policies were becoming dominant in Britain (157).

Praying and other religious activities play a significant role in lives of most Muslims. First generation of immigrants kept their religion mainly within their community life. Later, they demanded to construct mosques where they could run their praying. In contrast to other European countries, Britain has a much better sense of tolerance and Muslims did not experience many difficulties with gaining permissions for building mosques (Soper and Fetzer 48).

Generally, South Asians especially Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are poorly educated. Muslim families can choose between state schools with British education and Muslim independent schools. Audrey Osler and Zahida Hussain see the advantage of Islamic schools in coherence between the values promoted at home and at school (132). These values have a particular orientation to the family, cooperation between school and parents and a deep understanding of Islam. Children attending Muslim schools also experience no discrimination and prejudice. As Osler and Hussain think, parents who send their children to mainstream schools do not want to separate their children from the values of the western world and as some parents suggest, their children should taste 'the real world' (135). The children can experience the comparison between these two worlds and make their own judgement.

Hussain and Osler also suggest that some parents choose Islamic schools because they support Muslim identity and only proud Muslims can succeed in the nowadays world (137). The main concerns of Muslim parents is to provide an education that will develop Islamic values, educational qualifications and future

economic independence, identity, self-esteem and confidence as Muslims, and preparation for life in a multicultural society (140). Some parents even send their children to Pakistan so they can witness Islamic values first hand.

The importance of religion and the desire to instil a religious understanding in their children have motivated many families endeavour at all costs to provide religious instruction. Many felt it was obligation they owed not only to their children but also to Allah. (N. Ahmed 200)

This is also true in the case of Samad Iqbal. He is not satisfied with British education because, according to him, it does not provide deep knowledge of Islam and his sons have to take part in Christian festivals such as Harvest festival, which does not have any importance for them (Z. Smith 129). He starts to feel that his family is corrupted by England and he is given two options by his friend. Either he is supposed to assimilate or send his sons to Bangladesh (Z. Smith 191). Samad sees the solution in giving his sons a proper Islamic education. The only way to achieve that is to send them back to Bangladesh, where they can learn about their culture. Because he does not have enough money to send both his sons there, he has to decide between them. Finally, he decides to send Magid because he was his favourite and capable of becoming a proper Muslim (Z. Smith 196). He makes his plan without his wife Alsana because he knew she would never agree with it. She is aware that living in Britain is not easy, but it is still much better than the danger of living in Bangladesh.

It is different for the people of Bangladesh, formerly East Pakistan, formerly India, formerly Bengal. They live under the invisible finger of random disaster, of flood and cyclone, hurricane and mud-slide. Half the time half their country lies under water; generations wiped out as regularly as clockwork; individual life expectancy an optimistic fifty-two, and they are coolly aware that when you talk about apocalypse, when you talk about random death an masse, well, they are leading the way in that particular field, they will be the first to go, the first to slip Atlantis-like down to the seabed when the pesky polar ice-caps begin to shift and melt. It is the most ridiculous country in the world, Bangladesh. (Z. Smith 211)

This excerpt describes the living conditions of the people living in South Asia. The country is frequently affected by disasters caused by extreme weather changes. Although many problems occur in Britain, they look ridiculous compared with troubles people have to face in South Asia. Alsana is aware that here her family live in relative safety and she does not have to worry about her life or the lives of her relatives. While

in Britain, the death of so many people would be perceived as a disaster, in South Asia it is an everyday reality.

Samad's view of living in Britain is completely different. He thinks that living in a safe British environment, where there is no danger, has completely spoilt his sons. He is disappointed because they will never become heroes like Mangal Pande. Although Millat and Magid are protected from disasters and poor living conditions, Samad feels that his sons can never become real men because there are no challenges in British society (Z. Smith 219).



## 6 Western society and Muslim society

The most significant difference between these societies is within the question of religion. When Muslims came to Britain during several waves of immigration, they expected churches full of people on Sundays and generally thought that religion played an important role in the lives of British people. But the reality was different. Although Britain has an officially established church and there is a close link with politics, religious belief has declined in recent years. Fetzer and Soper state:

The religious aspirations that remain are increasingly considered a matter of individual conscience, a personal choice that should have very little influence on public policy. As a consequence, religion has become less important in British politics and less influential in shaping cultural institutions and assumptions. (36)

Because the number of Muslims increased rapidly and according to the 2001 census, 1.6 million Muslims lived in England, Scotland and Wales (Soper and Fetzer 36), Britain was forced to deal with a new religious issue. Muslim activists wanted Britain to recognize their religion publicly and that led to various policies attempting to accommodate the religious needs of immigrants in Britain. They have referenced the establishment model and contemporary church-state practises and demanded public finance of Islamic schools, the building of mosques, and the provision of social welfare services through Muslim agencies (Soper and Fetzer 18).

Religion also plays a vital role in a life of Samad Miah Iqbal and he believes that Islam makes him a better person. He is a very moral and traditional man and he often feels frustrated about British society and its attitude to religion. He particularly realizes his religious identity when he is tempted by differences of western culture. This excerpt describes his frustration when he falls in love with white English woman.

But of course he was in the wrong religion for compromises, deals, pacts, weaknesses and *can't say fairer than that's*. He was supporting the wrong team if it was empathy and concessions he wanted, if he wanted liberal exegesis, if he wanted to be *given a break*. His God was not *like* that charming white-bearded bungler of the Anglican, Methodist or Catholic churches. He God was not in the business of *giving people breaks*. The moment Samad set eyes on the pretty red-haired music teacher Poppy Burt-Jones that July of 1984, he knew finally the truth of this. He knew his God was having his revenge, he knew the game was up, he saw that contract has been broken, and the sanity clause did not, after all, exist, that temptation had been deliberately and maliciously thrown in his path. In short, all deals were off. (Z. Smith 140)

In the excerpt, Samad is aware of differences between Islam and other religions. He knows that Allah demands strong devotion and discipline and he also knows that if he breaks the rules, he will not be forgiven but more likely he will be punished by throwing temptations.

The values of Islam are described in Qu'ran. It contains 114 chapters called Surahs. Chapter number 17 explores the ideal of Islam that means the main values typical for Islam. According to A. S. Ahmed, the essence of Islam can be summed up in 5 'pillars':

..*tauhid*, faith in one God, unity; *salat*, the daily prayers, a constant reminder of the transitory nature of life and *tauhid*; *sawm*, fasting during the month of Ramadan to develop moral and physical discipline; the annual *zakat* redistribution of wealth to the poorer section of society; and *haj*, the pilgrimage, once in a lifetime, to be part of the annual congregation of Muslims in Makkah. Islamic ritual emphasized unity among the Muslim community, the brotherhood, the *ummah*; its philosophy emphasized peace, *salaam*; (hence Islam). (17)

Ahmed adds that the Prophet Muhammad was respected by all his followers and all the main elements such as respect for learning, tolerance of others, generosity of spirit, concern for the weak, gentle piety and the desire for a better, cleaner world constitute the Muslim ideal (21). Pure Islam forbids promiscuity, injustice, rebellion, female infanticide and demands abstaining from alcohol and pork meat, eating moderately, talking softly and sleeping little.

Samad is aware of these values and he tries to live according to them but it is very difficult for him and sometimes he fails to follow them. He feels corrupted by the British way of living. But as a representative of the first generation of Muslims in Britain, he still considers these values to be part of his life. In the following dialogue between him and his friend Archibald, he explains why he does not eat pork and how this habit is deeply rooted in his culture.

“Why don't you eat it?” said Archie, guzzling his two chops down like a madman. “Strange business, if you ask me.”

“I don't eat it for the same reason you as an Englishman will never truly satisfy a woman.”

“Why's that?” said Archie pausing from his feast.

“It's in our culture, my friend.” He thought for a minute. “Maybe deeper. Maybe in our bones.” (Z. Smith, 96)

This excerpt shows how elements of Samad's culture are deeply important. Beside his belief, there are features like eating habits that are part of his identity. Samad is still closely tied with his ethnic identity and he strengthens it by maintaining all these habits.

The difference between West and East is also remarkable in the question of marriage. While it is common for western people to meet a partner first before getting married, the situation in the East is sometimes completely different and marriages are arranged in advanced even before a certain couple meets.

“You mean your wife's not bloody born yet?”

“What of it?” asked Samad, pulling a cigarette from Archie's top pocket. He scratched a match along the side of the tank and lit it. Archie wiped the sweat off his face with a greasy hand.

“Where I come from,” said Archie, “bloke likes to get to know a girl before he marries her.”

“Where you come from it is customary to boil vegetables until they fall apart. This does not mean,” said Samad tersely, “that it is a good idea.” (Z. Smith, 98)

Samad's marriage was also arranged in advanced and when Archibald learns that from Samad, he is very surprised. But Samad points out that the customs and habits of the East and West are different and it is hard to say what is wrong or right. It is just different. Many of these habits are kept by Muslims till now. However, the period of this pure Islam did not last long and through the centuries, Islam has changed a lot and has declined as well. A. S. Ahmed points out that colonization affected the Muslim ideal the most (117). The Islamic rules are imitated by many followers nowadays but they are challenged by values of western world, therefore we can recognize various mutations of Islam. These values are completely different. A.S. Ahmed comments, the ideal cannot be attained in a hostile environment and therefore some tension in society appears.

The twentieth-century emergence of nation-states and minority status have accentuated Muslim problems. Living as a minority in a non-Muslim society in the twentieth century poses special problems: closure or destruction of mosques, lack of religious education, and hostile official policy. It also illustrates the capacity of Muslims to adjust and survive. (108)

The progress in science, consumer society of the West and individualism are contrary to Muslim values. A. S. Ahmed sees the West as a society with too much freedom, people are not satisfied because they want more of everything and the family

as a unit does not exist anymore. In contrast Muslim families are still relatively cohesive and Islam still points out community (220).

### 6.1 The influence of British society on Muslim identity

As previously mentioned, identity can change under the influence of other cultures. Many ethnic identities in Britain remain ambivalent, people do not have unitary or singular identifications, and many second-generation individuals identify with being 'British' as well as being 'Pakistani' or 'Muslim'. The problem of self identification for individuals from ethnic minorities remains complex, especially for younger generations of immigrants. They were born in Britain but are often brought up according to their ethnic, cultural and religious patterns, of which their parents adhere.

Millat disappeared from home for weeks at a time, returning with money that was not his and an accent that modulated wildly between the rounded tones of the Chalfens and the street talk of the KEVIN clan. He infuriated Samad beyond all reasons. No, that's wrong. There was a reason. Millat was neither one thing nor the other, this or that, Muslim or Christian, Englishman or Bengali; he lived for the in between, he lived up to his middle name, *Zulfikar*, the clashing of two swords. (Z. Smith, 351)

The previous excerpt shows Millat's confusion about his identity. While his father wants him to be a proper Muslim, proud of his origin and religion, Millat fights with the dilemma of being more British, this can mean wearing modern clothes, listening to the modern music, going out with white girls, or being a proper Muslim, which means praying five times a day, no alcohol, sexual abstinence and the like. Even his brother sometimes hides his identity and he presents himself under the English name Mark Smith so that he can play with white boys and so that he feels like a British boy.

Magid really wanted to be *in some other family*. He wanted to own cats and not cockroaches, he wanted his mother to make the music of the cello, not the sound of the sewing machine; he wanted to have a trellis of flowers growing up on one side of the house instead of the ever growing pile of other people's rubbish; he wanted a piano in the hallway in a place of the broken door off cousin Kurshed's car; he wanted to go on biking holidays to France, not day-trips to Blackpool to visit aunties; he wanted the floor of his room to be shiny wood, not the orange and green swirled carpet left over from the restaurant; he wanted his father to be a doctor, not a one-handed waiter; and this month Magid had

converted all these desires into a wish to join in with the Harvest Festival like Mark Smith would. Like everybody else would. (Z. Smith 151)

These are all desires of a young child who lives amongst the young people of a different society. It goes so far that he starts to be ashamed of his identity, of his parents, of the place where he lives and he just longs for having things the other kids of his age have. But his desires are contrary to the desires of his parents.

But no one fucked with any of them any more because they looked like trouble. They looked like trouble in stereo. Naturally, there was a uniform. They each dripped gold and wore bandanas, either wrapped around their foreheads or tied at the joint of an arm or leg. The trousers were enormous, swamping things, the left leg always inexplicably rolled up to the knee; the trainers were equally spectacular, with tongues so tall they obscured the entire ankle; baseball caps were compulsory, low slung and irremovable, and everything, everything, everything was Nike™; wherever the five of them went the impression they left behind was one gigantic swoosh, one huge mark of corporate approval. (Z. Smith 232)

This excerpt describes outer appearance of Millat's bunch. The pressure of British society is strong even in the question of clothing. The members of Millat's group try to look the same as other white boys and try to look rebellious and self-confident as most youngsters. Wearing enormous trousers, baseball caps and trainers and everything Nike is not only an attempt to follow the fashion trends at that time but also a need to feel more British and gain a respect from their British peers. Such an attitude is contrary to the attitude and wish of Millat's parents. Samad always wanted his sons to wear traditional Muslim clothes to promote Muslim identity and honour traditional Bangladeshi culture. He feels that although his wife is already negatively influenced by living in England, he does not want his sons to be a mixture of both cultures like Alsana. She wears a sari, traditional Muslim clothes and symbol of Muslim identity together with a pair of trainers, a symbol of British fashion (Z. Smith 198). The mixture of Asian and British symbols forms a strange and funny mutation of identity. The following dispute over clothes shows how difficult it is to maintain identity in a host society even for first generation of immigrants. Parents try to pass on the values and habits of their descendants but are not able to face the pressure of British culture themselves. Samad often suffers from such situations but it is obvious that influence is unavoidable.

“You do not even know what you are, where you come from. We never see family any more – I am ashamed to show you to them. *Why did you go all the way to Bengal for a wife*, that’s what they ask. *Why didn’t you just go to Putney?*” ...

... “And that is a beautiful lungi you have on, Samad Miah,” she said bitterly, nodding in the direction of his blue-towelling jogging suit topped off with Poppy’s LA Raiders baseball cap. (Z. Smith 199)

Sometimes, immigrants want to feel British but Islamophobia has excluded them from ‘the British nation’ and they often feel like outsiders within their own country. Their ethnic identity is heterogeneous with having a Pakistani or Bangladeshi identity, being a Muslim and simultaneously asserting their identities as British citizens. Some immigrants still consider their Islamic faith the main aspect of their identity. Apart from the fact that they are still aware of their South Asian origin, therefore, their British identity is usually in the third place. Such confusion may lead to more radical ways of adopting identity. However, most young people know enough about their religion and cultural values and they mostly consider themselves as being British Pakistanis or British Bangladeshis. All of these examples show that perception of identity is very personal.

There are often problems between first and second generation of Muslims. The younger generations are definitely influenced by British culture. Cultural values strongly held by old generations of South Asians are threatened by cultural values of their host society. Now, when South Asians Muslims reach the third generation in Britain, issues of concern have shifted from cultural assimilation and social integration to religious identity and discrimination. The first generation of South Asian Muslims maintained religious and cultural norms hidden within the private life and community spheres. Other generations had to undergo many periods when they had to face racism and cultural pluralism.

Nowadays many Muslim parents are worried about their children because the British culture where they grow up influences their view on life and their values. They live in a country where there is a high divorce rate, which is contrary to the Muslim’s orientation on the family unit. Many parents think their children do not have an adequate religious education despite the fact that there are eighty Muslim independent schools. Therefore, their religious education and the gaining of proper values are not sufficient and many parents are disappointed with this fact.

‘Well take Alsana’s sisters – all their children are nothing but trouble. They won’t go to mosque, they don’t pray, they speak strangely, they dress strangely, they eat all kinds of rubbish, they have intercourse with God knows who. No respect for tradition. People call it assimilation when it is nothing but corruption. Corruption!’ (Z. Smith 190)

Here Samad Iqbal expresses the fear of living in Britain, pointing out the differences between his community and modern western country. He can feel that not only his identity is challenged in such a society but he is particularly afraid of their sons’ future, in the following excerpt, he confesses his fear to his best friend Archibald:

‘Archibald, did you take a wrong turn at the Ganges? Weren’t you listening to my dilemma? I am corrupt, my sons are becoming corrupt, we are all soon to burn in the fires of hell. These are problems of some urgency, Archibald.’ (Z. Smith 192)

When Samad learns that his son Magid, who was sent to Bangladesh, will not become a proper Muslim, he is very disappointed and has an argument with Alsana. His wife Alsana is more tolerant and understands that her sons are growing up in different society and therefore she can not expect them to be what she would like them to be. It is important for her that Magid is well educated and a good person and she knows that he has to find his identity himself. She is aware that there is a gap between the first and second generations and that her son has to make his own mistakes in order to learn about life.

“You say we have no control, yet you always try to control everything! Let go, Samad Miah. Let the boy go. He is second generation – he was born here – naturally he will do things differently. You can’t plan everything. After all, what is so awful – so he’s not training to be an alim, but he’s educated, he’s clean!” (Z. Smith 289)

The language and culture are largely lost in the second and third generation. The second and the third generation of the immigrants have generally different ideas and opinions about education, politics, sex and the like. The children of immigrants can obviously see the past with less emotional risk than their parents because they were born in Britain and have not experienced living in the East. Their identity is challenged in all aspects of everyday life.

Internally, young British Muslims are increasingly found to be in precarious position of having to choose between one set of loyalties in relation to the other (Islamic vs. British), being impacted by radical Islamic politics on the one hand

and developments in British cultural citizenship on the other. This creates tensions and issues: it encourages some to take up the ‘struggle’ more vigorously, while others seek to adopt more Western values. (Abbas 16)

Most young Muslims have assimilated and want to live peacefully with their fellow British citizens. But many Muslims still feel they are not treated equally and they are even more aware of their Muslim identity. They do not agree with their parents that they have tolerated discrimination for years and their attitude towards various forms of discrimination is becoming more and more radical.

It is probably a part of human nature that people who feel some constraints or who suffer from social exclusion search for collective identity that helps them to improve their status (Akhtar 176). Therefore, many Muslims in Britain understand their religious identity as a means of providing them with a sense of belonging and group solidarity. Many Muslims including Samad understand Islam as the way to be a good person and without the discipline of his religion he would be wild and out of control. He sends Magid to Bangladesh to understand this psychology of Islam and take different approach to religion.

“That is the very reason I sent the child there – to understand that we are weak, that we are not in control. What does Islam mean? What does the word, the very word, mean? *I surrender*. I surrender to God. I surrender to him. This is not my life, this is his life. This life I call mine is his to do with what he will. Indeed, I shall be tossed and turned on the wave, and there shall be nothing to be done. Nothing! Nature itself is Muslim, because it obeys the laws the creator has ingrained in it.” (Z. Smith 288)

There is a psychological aspect too because Islam helps many Muslims to discover their identity. As A. D. Smith adds, the message of religious identity is either national or universal and it is never addressed to or primarily aimed at a particular class (6). Therefore, class or race would never be barrier to attaining the Muslim ideal.

Nowadays in Britain, there is an obvious increase in the number of various Islamic groups. As Akhtar explains, the emergence of Islamic groups is caused by bad living conditions of Muslims in Britain. In his view, Muslims experience two types of exclusion – economic and cultural (167). When people unite in such a group, they feel more powerful and are inclined to protest against these conditions. The turn to Islam is characterised by the wave of youths who try to face the racism and religious discrimination they have to face in Britain. It is typical for young people that their way



of showing discontent is more radical and visible. Akhtar takes this thought further and contests:

Radical groups are able to utilize this turn to religion to their advantage by uniting all the disparate issues faced by Muslims across the globe and building up a simple parable of oppressor and victims. All Muslims everywhere are depicted as the victims of one credible oppressor. (165)

The reasons to join Islamic groups are either to get out of the feeling of confusion and loss of identity or some members join the group because of discrimination. Some had to face offence, some of them experienced violence, they were beaten up or kicked out and all those attacks have grown into feelings of anger in them and long for 'pay back'. This is the reason why Mo decides to join the group. He has faced discrimination and violence for a long time and he felt anger that he could not do anything with it. When he reads KEVIN leaflets about the war between Muslims and western morals, he finds most of its content true and he wants to be part of this war.

The second reason for Mo's conversion was more personal. Violence. Violence and theft. For eighteen years Mo had owned the most famous halal butchers in North London, so famous that he had been able to buy the next door property and expand into sweetshop/butchers. And in this period in which he ran the two establishments, he had been a victim of serious physical attacks and robbery, without fail, three times a year. (Z. Smith 472)

It is also obvious that the new radical Islamic groups that arose after several anti-Muslim events such as the Rushdie affair in Britain (1989) or first Gulf War (1990–1), they also promote rather different values than the Islam of the first-generation of immigrants.

The popularity of politicised Islam does not imply a strict adherence to the religion's practices and rituals, precisely because what is important is not spiritual or moral guidance. Instead, what attracts is the idea of resisting the dominant, negative hegemony. Islam provides the vehicle for political mobilization in relation to economic exclusion, and group solidarity in connection with social exclusion. In neither case does the turn to religion have to be accompanied by an acceptance of actual religious practise. (Akhtar 169)

Members of Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation (KEVIN) finds Millat in a state of confusion when he was not sure about himself and they offered him a way out of this. Its members refuse English education and find the understanding of the world in Islam and active service for God. They criticise the West and its policy. They spread their opinions and ideas through the leaflets and demand all the members

recognize such values. Their main aim is to portray Britain as a superior country trying to suppress other minorities. This is the way Hifan, Millat's friend and member of KEVIN, tries to persuade him to join the clan:

‘You could have what I have, instead of this terrible confusion you are in, instead of this reliance on a drug specifically imported by governments to *subdue* the black and Asian community, to *lessen* our powers. (Z. Smith 295-296)

Generally, the aim of such groups is to portray western countries as a dominant construct and Islam is described as a way that will bring change from the social and cultural struggle. The members of Islamist groups are mostly young British Muslims. Akhtar demonstrates a danger of such groups on Islamist group called Hizb al-Tahrir.

Hizb al-Tahrir members are well-educated, well spoken university graduates and professionals: they produce a glossy magazine and make articulate appearances on *Newsnight*. This, it appears, has made an impact on some British Muslims.”(174)

In the following passage, the members of KEVIN criticise the way western women dress, the way they think and show erotic fantasy. Millat's relationship with his English girlfriend Karina Cain also changes under the influence of KEVIN. He starts to see the things he has not seen before, he does not like the way she dresses and finally they fall out.

“Don't talk to me about white women,” groaned Shiva, wondering how many generations of Iqbals he'd have to give the same advice to. “It's got to the point in the West where the women are men! I mean, they've got the same desires and urges as men – *they want it all the fucking time*. And they dress like they want everyone to *know* they want it. Now is that right? Is it?” (Z. Smith 373)

Akhtar claims, the attitude of older generations of Muslims living in Britain is very negative and even they are afraid of the influence of such groups on their children (172). As these groups support rather different ideas, it is very important not to treat all Muslims the same and it is necessary to strictly divide the notion of moderate Islam and the radical one.

## 7 Terrorism in New York and London

Events of the past few years have considerably raised people's curiosity about Islamic faith. In September 11, 2001 four planes were hijacked by al-Qaeda terrorists. Two of the planes were piloted into the World Trade Centre, resulting the collapse of both towers, the third plane crashed the Pentagon and the fourth one crashed in Pennsylvania. According to Wikipedia, in addition to 19 hijackers, 2,973 people died.

There have always been anti-Islamic tendencies but the attack on New York in 2001 forced people to look closer at the differences between Islamic belief and western culture. Muslims all over the world experienced some kind of discrimination but after attacks on the World Trade Centre, the number of attacks and discrimination of Muslims increased not only in the USA but in Western Europe as well.

In aftermath of the attacks, West European governments became aware that many of the terrorists had lived in Europe, and that other radical Islamists were still in their midst.” (Soper and Fetzer 143)

The war on Terror, as Bush called it, started but many Muslims probably interpret that as a war on Muslims. In the aftermaths, Muslim had to face ‘physical assaults, verbal abuse, and property damage to mosques and Muslim-owned businesses’ (Soper and Fetzer 155). Chris Allen describes that the British National Party took advantage of the post-9/11 climate in Britain and presented Muslims as terrorists who should not be part of British society. “A BNP campaign leaflet entitled *Islam out of Britain* unapologetically sought to explain ‘the threat Islam and Muslims pose to Britain and British society.’” (Allen 56)

This leaflet selectively quoted several excerpts from Qur’an to show how Islam is dangerous and how it threatens democracy. The excerpts of the campaign threatened ‘how Unbelievers will burn forever in the fires of Hell’ (56). But Allen contends:

So when the leaflet mentions Qur’anic references to ‘fire’, it is engaging in textual and literalist misrepresentation: in the Qur’an such references are much more metaphorical and represent number of other ideas and themes. As a result, the style of the Qur’an is much more difficult to understand than other commonly known scriptural sources in Europe and therefore can be easily misrepresented. (57)

With the increase in the number of far-right groups, the number of anti-Muslim reaction appeared as well in the aftermath of 9/11. Various magazines such as the British Times, The Telegraph or The Independent described the events and expressed their negative attitude towards Muslims. Generally, Muslims were seen as a threat to western world and multiculturalism as a failure.

“By extension, all Muslims in the West were thus being marked as potential, if not actual, terrorists – both of which are grossly disturbing and Islamophobic claims.” (Allen 61).

On July 7, 2005 London experienced four co-ordinated attacks that hit public transport during the morning rush-hour traffic. Three bomb explosions hit underground trains and one bomb destroyed a bus in the city centre. During these attacks, 52 people were killed and more than 700 people were injured. According to the BBC, it was later revealed that the terrorists were Muslims fighting in the name of Islam. Three of them were born in England and had a Pakistani-Muslim identity; the fourth one was a Jamaican-born Briton, who converted to Islam (Suicide bombers’ ‘ordinary’ lives). According to their relatives, none of them showed any signs of committing such a crime. However, as the BBC reported, the three Pakistani terrorists visited Pakistan for a while and according to their relatives, staying in their country of origin had an immense influence on them and they returned very religious (Suicide bombers’ ‘ordinary’ lives).

The bombing created a huge wave of media attention, had an immeasurable psychological effect on British society and Muslims in Britain had to face another wave of suspicion and hostility. However, the western world should not blame all Muslims for what happened. The Muslim leaders condemn the attacks and pointed out that the vast majority of Muslims are decent people and find these terrorist acts contrary to Islamic faith.

In addition, I welcome the statement put out by the Muslim Council who know that those people acted in the name of Islam but who also know that the vast and overwhelming majority of Muslims, here and abroad, are decent and law-abiding people who abhor this act of terrorism every bit as much as we do. (In full: Blair on bomb blasts)

Many Muslim organizations tried to create a dialogue with the government in order to demonstrate that the majority of Muslims were moderate and peaceful and offered to help with the investigation into the attacks.

The BBC adds that the attacks were timed with the opening of the G8 Summit of the world's leading industrial countries; it was the day after London was chosen to host the Summer Olympic Games in 2012 and the blasts took place on the anniversary of the Bradford riots four years previously (London Attacks – In Depth).

The attacks have had a deep impact on western countries. In their aftermath, Muslims were being marked as potential terrorists and as an enemy of the western world. They have an image of being fundamentalist and are often associated with terrorism. For many Muslims, this has enforced their feeling of being different. The governments of many western countries first had to solve the issue of national security. The question of multiculturalism has also become a part of public policy-debates. In many reports, there was an obvious turn against it and some insisted on assimilation and adopting British identity. Some theories imply the existence of two separate domains within a state, one public and the other of culturally diverse communities. John Rex adds:

In the public domain all individuals are treated equally. In the domain of the separate communities each of these may speak its own language, practise its own religion and adhere to its own customs and family practices. So far as Muslims are concerned this recognises their right to practise their own religion but does not recognise their right to have their religion made part of the public domain. (Rex, "An Afterword" 240-241)

This view is more sympathetic to multiculturalism but the question is in which way British Muslims react to such a concept of multiculturalism because for many of them, Islam is their whole life. The meaning of religion has also been discussed and recent theories suggest that the terrorist attacks have not just created a division between Christians and Muslims in Britain but it is also a conflict between those who have faith and those who have no faith. Stuart Jeffries reports that generally the role of religion in education is raised and it has become more dominating. He suggests that Islam has always been publicly conscientious and other religions are trying to do the same now (11).

On the other side, there are people who ignore religion and they see it as a threat. Their feeling has been reinforced by the terrorist attacks and their attitude

towards it is even more negative. Jeffries adds that these secular fundamentalists are equally dangerous because they believe they have absolute truth and have no room to talk to others (9). Therefore, the government tries to find the best possible solution of this situation and it will take some time and compromise to reach a consensus.

## 8 Zadie Smith and *White Teeth*

Zadie Smith was born in 1975 in north-west London to a Jamaican mother and English father. The fact that she comes from a mixed marriage and she lives in a multicultural London has had a great impact on her writing. Her first novel *White Teeth* deals with many issues which were already mentioned. Most of the characters in the novel have come to London due to colonialism and they are often aware of their post-colonial identities. Therefore, living in a multicultural society causes confusion about their ethnic identity.

Much of the book concentrates on a Bangladeshi family and the issue of ethnic identity. Samad and Alsana represent the first generation of immigrants in Britain coming from Bengal. Samad is a very religious man, proud of his ancestry. Throughout the book, he is still searching for his roots and often looks back to his past. Over the years in London, he talks with his friends about his country, its habits, and the heroic acts of his great-grandfather Mangal Pande who shot the first bullet in the Indian Mutiny of 1857 (Z. Smith 259). Although the reality about Pande's heroism is not all true, for Samad he is a hero. But he often comes across a lack of understanding of his cultural heritage and his friends and sons show no interest in the past events which are so important for him (Z. Smith 185). The following passage proves that he is afraid of losing his identity and regrets coming to Britain. He is aware that under the impact of British society, Islam does not have such an importance for his sons because at school many religions are part of the curriculum. His cultural tradition is fading away and he himself is often tempted by the values of the host society, in this case when he has an affair with a white woman.

“I should never have come here – that's where every problem has come from. Never should have brought my sons here, so far from God. Willesden Green! Calling-cards in sweetshop windows, Judy Blume in the school, condom on the pavement, Harvest festival, teacher-temptresses!”(Z. Smith, 145)

As an attempt to preserve at least some of the values of South Asian culture, he sends one of his sons to Bangladesh. He hopes Magid will gain essential knowledge to become a proper Muslim, he will learn about the country and mainly he will live up to family expectations. However, the result is that Magid who spent his youth in

Bangladesh becomes an English intellectual and Millat who stayed at home, becomes an Islamic fundamentalist.

There are no words. The one I send home comes out a pukka Englishman, white suited, silly wig lawyer. The one I keep here is fully paid-up green bow-tie-wearing fundamentalist terrorist. I sometimes wonder why I bother. (Z. Smith 407)

Finally, Samad realizes that he is an immigrant in a host society and that he has spent almost all his life searching for identity. After so many years in Britain, he still feels like a stranger and he is aware of the fact that he will never be happy.

“He knows what it is to seek. He knows the dryness. He has felt the thirst you get in a strange land – horrible, persistent – the thirst that lasts your whole life.” (Z. Smith, 530)

Many parents, who come to Britain, are now facing exactly the same problem. They are afraid that their children will either become western citizens with no relationship to their origin or that they will be influenced by radical Islamic groups and will participate in acts of terrorism. The issue of fundamentalism in any form is mentioned a lot in the book and it shows the danger of such an attitude. It forces people to see only one perspective of a certain thing and this is very limiting and dangerous. Not only does Millat become a member of a radical Islamic group, but also Joshua Chalfen joins the FATE organization protests against animal cruelty (Z. Smith 404). Millat joins KEVIN to get out of the state of confusion he is in, Joshua Chalfen’s reason to join FATE is more to make his father angry and protest against his Futuremouse project. Clara’s mother Hortense believes in being Jehovah’s Witness and dedicates all her life to such a belief. The reasons for becoming part of such groups differ but mainly it is to gain some status and rebel against something. But generally, fundamentalist thinking separates the members of such groups from other people who do not share their opinions, like Millat separates from his own family, Joshua from his father and Hortense from his daughter Clara.

Irie Jones is a representative of a second generation of immigrant and is probably most frustrated by the past. Because her mother Clara rejected the Jehovah’s Witnesses and refused to talk about her past and her father is English, they have no desire for her to follow a certain cultural tradition. Irie is trying to find who she is and in order to find her roots she decides to seek out her grandmother.



But on the other side, there are the Chalfens who also play an important role in Irie's life. Marcus and Joyce Chalfen focus on both the present and the future so Irie is placed in between these two worlds. Finally, although she is closely connected to her family traditions, she is equally aware of how the past and her cultural heritage complicate the present. She criticises the Joneses and the Iqbals for their tight connection with past, for retelling the same old stories about Pande, for collecting things and placing them in the attic. According to her, other families live for the present because that is important (Z. Smith 515). In the following passage, she draws a comparison between the way children are brought up in British families and Asian families.

“They don't mind what their kids do in life as long as they're reasonably, you know, *healthy. Happy.* And every single fucking day is not this huge battle between who they are and who they should be, what they were and what they will be. Go on, ask them. And they'll tell you. No mosque. Maybe a little church. Hardly any sin. Plenty of forgiveness.” (Z. Smith, 515)

She criticises the way parents are forcing their kids to live according to their expectations and want them to follow their religious beliefs and cultural values. She thinks that life is not about trying to be somebody else and living according to somebody else's ideas. She suggests that there should be more respect and tolerance between parents and their children.

## 9 Conclusion

The great number of South Asians and people from former British colonies came to Britain in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the immigrants wanted to earn money and return back, some of them searched for a better standard of living and settled down in Britain. However, they have all brought their ethnic identity which includes their cultural heritage, beliefs, and memories. These elements of their identity have immeasurably enriched Britain but have brought about many problems and questions to be answered.

After their arrival, many immigrants had to face various forms of discrimination and racism. People from the West Indies experienced racial discrimination, South Asians often encountered prejudice and discrimination because of their religious identity. Many Muslim activists wanted the state to recognize their religion and demanded more rights for the Muslim community. Therefore the British government reacted and changed its policies in order to promote equality between all members within the idea of multiculturalism.

Comparing to the policies of assimilation in 50s and 60s, Britain is now promoting a policy of integration, which is based on equality, participation and interaction between all communities. Contrary to the policy of assimilation, it also respects ethnic identities and does not want to destroy their cultural values. There are also differences between the first and second generations of immigrants in Britain. While the first generation of Muslims held their cultural and religious norms within their private lives and took discrimination as a part of living in a host society, young Muslims nowadays take advantage of liberal values of Britain and demand more freedom even within public life. Some of their demands have already been accommodated and that shows Britain's great sense of tolerance. The main role of this issue plays one's own perception of identity. Some Muslims want to be part of British society and live without problems with their British fellow-citizens but some want to maintain their Muslim identity and choose even radical ways to reach their goals.

After 11 September 2001 and the London bombings of July 2005, things have changed radically. Religious identity of various communities has become a focus and people with faith are treated as a threat. The situation is particularly difficult for

Muslims because they are often associated with fundamentalism and terrorism. Western countries are now dealing with many questions such as what the relationship between Muslims and a secular society should be, what policies should be applied and how to ensure a safe coexistence of various communities in one state.

Zadie Smith deals with many problems connected with living in a multicultural society and with the gap between the first and second generation of immigrants. Many of her characters are still closely connected with their descendants and their roots and feel frustrated by living in a modern country. Their values are completely different from those of western countries; they face religious prejudice and discrimination. Some of them still feel like strangers even after so many years spent in Britain, some of them choose to join radical fundamentalist groups in order to gain status and find their own identity. Some of them have assimilated and feel that their British identity is in the first place.

## Resumé

Práce se zaměřuje na otázku identity muslimů v západním světě, přičemž hlavní důraz je kladen na život muslimů v Británii a uchování jejich náboženské identity. Zároveň je zde zpracována teorie identit, zejména národních a etnických. Kombinací faktů ze sekundární literatury a analýzy literárního díla Zadie Smith *Bílé zuby*, práce poskytuje obraz současné multikulturní britské společnosti.

Británie se stala častou destinací lidí z celého světa, zejména ve druhé polovině 20. století. Velká vlna imigrantů přišla po 2. světové válce, kdy ekonomika Velké Británie potřebovala nahradit chybějící pracovní síly v mnoha odvětvích průmyslu. Příchod nových etnických identit z bývalých kolonií na území Británie způsobil formování multikulturní britské společnosti a přinesl mnoho pozitivních změn, ale zároveň také vyústil v řadu problémů a opatření souvisejících s imigrací.

Většinu přistěhovalců tvoří lidé z bývalých britských kolonií, zejména z Jižní Asie a Karibiku. Od začátku se však s těmito skupinami pojily problémy s diskriminací a s nízkou ochotou jihoasiatů asimilovat se do tamní společnosti. Zatímco přistěhovalci z Karibiku trpěli zejména diskriminací na základě jejich rasy, muslimové měli od počátku problémy se svou náboženskou identitou. První generace muslimů měla tendenci sdružovat se v komunitách, kde uchovávala i své náboženské tradice. S postupem let však muslimští aktivisté vybudovali koordinovanou síť muslimských organizací a v liberální britské společnosti požadovali stále větší pravomoci. V mnoha případech se projevila demokracie a tolerance a muslimům se podařilo své požadavky prosadit. Přesto však různé projevy diskriminace zapříčinily vznik různých radikálních hnutí, které podporují islám a svou fanatickou propagací této víry šíří strach po celém světě.

Muslimská identita je tvořena zejména tradičním způsobem života, hodnotami, jakými jsou úcta k rodině, historii a vzdělání v podobě šíření víry, která je často hlavním aspektem jejich identity. Islám vyžaduje přísnou disciplínu a oddanost. Britská společnost je však mnohem liberálnější a zejména druhá generace muslimů v Británii nemohla uniknout jejímu vlivu. Proto se spousta mladých muslimů nachází v situaci, kdy musí čelit vlivu své etnické identity a tlaku ze strany svých rodičů a na druhé straně

jsou ovlivněni moderním světem britské společnosti. Tuto situaci řeší muslimové individuálně; někteří touží uchovat si svou náboženskou identitu jako hlavní aspekt své identity, někteří se rozhodli vzdát svých tradičních hodnot a převládla u nich britská identita a někteří jsou svým postavením v britské společnosti zmateni. Zároveň spousta muslimů touží být britskými občany v pravém slova smyslu, ale strach a předsudky z islámu u jejich spoluobčanů je z této pozice vylučují. Jako východisko z nejistoty a zároveň jako boj proti diskriminaci, volí spousta mladých muslimů spolupůsobení v různých islámských radikálních skupinách.

Strach z těchto radikálních skupin je velice aktuální. Teroristické útoky z 11. září 2001 v New Yorku a z července 2005 v Londýně nejenže vystrašily celý svět, ale zároveň donutily vlády v mnoha zemích přehodnotit postoj k etnickým skupinám a k multikulturalismu jako takovému. Muslimové jsou v poslední době často spojováni s terorismem a strach z islámu pod pojmem islamofobie je nyní každodenní realitou. Hlavním úkolem mnoha politických vlád je tedy zabránit negativním předsudkům vůči muslimům, ale zároveň uchránit své občany před islámskými radikálními skupinami.

V poslední době se téma strachu z islámu rozšířilo na strach z víry všeobecně. V Británii se objevil fenomén, kdy proti sobě nestojí křesťané a muslimové, či jiní vyznavači náboženství, ale společnost se rozdělila na ty, kteří vyznávají nějakou víru a na ty, kteří tvrdě vystupují proti ní. Oba názory jsou velice vyhraněné a někde mezi stojí názor liberálně smýšlejících lidí, kteří jsou si vědomi nebezpečí obou těchto radikálních skupin.

Teoretické poznatky se odráží v knize Zadie Smith *Bílé zuby*, která rozebírá téma multikulturní společnosti a vztahy mezi jednotlivými skupinami. Děj se odehrává v Londýně a reflektuje otázky týkající se jihoasijské komunity žijící v Británii. Kniha se dotýká všech zmiňovaných témat jako jsou sociální a ekonomické podmínky jihoasiátů v Londýně, uchování tradičních hodnot v moderní společnosti, vliv britského prostředí na přetváření etnické a náboženské identity a rozdíly mezi první a druhou generací přistěhovalců v Británii. Dále kniha rozebírá i téma fundamentalismu v podobě různých radikálních náboženských skupin a sekt, přičemž poukazuje i na různé vnímání identity všech hlavních postav. Hlavní hrdinové tří různých rodin, pocházející ze tří rozdílných etnických skupin se po svém vypořádávají se svým původem, se svou identitou a se životem v moderní společnosti.

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## ÚDAJE PRO KNIHOVNICKOU DATABÁZI

<b>Název práce</b>	<b>Identity in Zadie Smith's <i>White Teeth</i></b>
<b>Autor práce</b>	Kateřina Sajbtová
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<b>Vedoucí práce</b>	Mgr. Olga Roebuck, M. Litt.
<b>Anotace</b>	Práce se zaměřuje na otázku zachování identity v multikulturní společnosti a problematiku asimilace menšinových skupin. Na hlavních hrdinech knihy <i>Bílé zuby</i> autorky Zadie Smith jsou prezentovány otázky jako je vliv britského kulturního prostředí na životy přistěhovalců a na přetváření jejich etnické a náboženské identity.
<b>Klíčová slova</b>	Multiculturalism in Britain, South Asian Immigration, Muslim identity, religious identity, assimilation