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ISSN 2278-9529
Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal
www.galaxyimrj.com

The Families in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*

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Article History: Submitted-29/01/2018, Revised-14/02/2018, Accepted-15/02/2018, Published-28/02/2018.

Abstract:

White Teeth is the first novel of the contemporary female writer Zadie Smith, giving her a quintessential overnight position among the greats of British literature. The novel is quite extensive, both in terms of the number of pages and the abundance of topics. Faith, religion, fundamentalism, extremism, feminism, love, coming of age, colonialism, origin and identity are all dealt within this best-seller. Besides, the family concept has turned into the disputable concentration for some imperative issues confronting Western social orders at the turn of the 21st century. And White Teeth also recounts the stories of three families: the Joneses who are half-English, half-Jamaican; the Iqbals, a Bangladeshi family, and the Chalfens, a white English family unit of Jewish origin. Therefore, the focus of this study is the families and their values in Zadie Smith's White Teeth written in 2000.

Keywords: Zadie Smith, Family, Multi- Culture, Religion, White Teeth.

Introduction

Contemporary British woman novelist Zadie Smith as a youthful creator of blended racial foundation, clearly fuses her own particular encounters of a differing urban life. She was born to an English father and a Jamaican mother in 1975 in London where she experienced her childhood in the city's multicultural precinct of Willesden. It is precisely in this district of North London where she also places the families in her first novel *White Teeth* published in 2000. Yet before that, at eighteen years old Smith earned a grant for Cambridge University where she got a degree in writing. As of now amid her years at college she had distributed short stories, and her clenched hand novel *White Teeth* made a media sensation. In her first novel and in addition to her following works she manages the social personalities of second and third era migrants living in the UK and the United States' multi-ethnic social orders. The principle characters of her books are attempting to build up a feeling of character and are attempting to characterize their mixed decent connections.

As Gunning (17) points out Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* can seem equally dismissive of the claims that ethnicity requires special moral consideration and is scathing about the patronizing impulse of multiculturalism. Smith also draws a representation of British society which is a multi-faced society of blended races, dialects, and traditions. Moreover, Gillet (100) expresses that *White Teeth* directly addresses multiculturalism in Britain. This situation demonstrates itself in the person's look for an individual personality, which is the real topic of *White Teeth*. In this case, Smith touches the issue of personality development in a post-

colonial Britain by utilizing components of the family history to cast a light on her characters. Furthermore, Odoobo (2009) indicates that the novel is a journey to the London rural areas where British of Asian origin struggle to assimilate in England, and in the process result into another meaning of being English.

The novel *White Teeth* consists of a plethora of episodes narrated with an ironic undertone and in a casual, modern language. Bruce King in his review summarizes Smith's work as in the following:

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

Zadie Smith in her novel composes for the most part about individuals from various racial and national legacies, political convictions and perspectives. Additionally, as for Smith's *White Teeth* book title, human teeth are all the same colour, regardless of different colours of skin. Therefore, the whiteness of teeth could also be seen as a feature which unites all mankind and thus becomes a symbol of tolerance and equality. The novel also gives alternate points of view of first and second generation migration life in Britain. It focusses on the development of individual characters inside a diaspora and the issue of self-determination. Accordingly;

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

Smith intentionally uses generalizations and, while pandering to the book-lovers' highly contrasting thought, she likewise dishonours it in the meantime. Besides she shows that people, as individuals, are socially developed and, while unique, they are all human and are aching for and engaging similar wishes. Personality and the way in which individuals of blended parentage can build up their own specific individual hybridity inside a multicultural society is at the focal point of *White Teeth*. John Mullan (2002) also expresses his feelings about *White Teeth* in these words:

White Teeth has satirical aspirations and some passages of unalloyed satire. These contribute to the sense that it is a novel whose picture of multi-cultural England has escaped obligations of political correctness. Its marginal characters are often satirically imagined types, their absurdity representative rather than distinctive.

Besides, critics regularly call attention to the way that Zadie Smith's books are just concerned with character. As stated before, her brilliant novel *White Teeth* fixated on the account of three families living in London with the focussing on the characters' personality emergencies. Simultaneously, Jagger and Wright (i) emphasize that the family has become the

questionable centre for numerous imperative issues confronting Western social orders at the turn of the 21st century. In the same way, Smith tails the families for the duration of their lives with a blend of direct and non-straight portrayal. By thinking back through history, Zadie figures out how to help the way that a large number of the characters' issues are identified with their personality and she shows how "possibility, decision and destiny" are conclusive in what shapes the person. As indicated by Thompson (2005), Smith challenges thoughts of social legacy similar to a vital piece of the distinguishing proof process through which workers and their consequent ages develop. Or maybe, the characters of *White Teeth* recognize their valid selves through a blending of the past and introduce, a rootedness which sticks to both individual histories and current conditions.

The plot of *White Teeth*

In Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, tragedy and comedy lie close together in the multicultural melting pot of London Willesden. Questions about origin and tradition, about religion and skin colour, about integration and identity are raised in this novel. Besides, *White Teeth* is a multifaceted book with many layers which cover a number of strands of activity associated with the different characters who are similarly vital to the improvement of the plot. Moreover the novel contains a considerable measure of supposed critical parts that are told by methods for flashbacks. The structure of the book speaks to the significance of history, individual and in addition aggregate history, to the lives of the primary characters, and in addition the way that it is difficult to get away from one's past.

In the novel the story goes back to the Second World War, when the Englishman Archibald Jones (Archie) and the Bengali Samad Iqbal meet as young soldiers and become friends through a common secret. Thirty years later, both men in London are struggling with burst dreams, younger wives, unruly children and the big issues of their lives: race, religion, colour and history. The plot threads are so varied, the fates are so well interwoven that a brief synopsis of *White Teeth* is not possible. Down to the minor characters, Smith equips her characters with loving biographies, creating a world in which the reader can completely submerge.

The main characters in *White Teeth* are Archie, his young Jamaican wife Clara and her daughter Irie, and Samad Iqbal, his wife Alsana and their twin sons Magid and Millat. As mentioned before, Archie and Samad became friends in the British Army during the Second World War. Samad is from Bangladesh and decides to move to London in the 70s with his young wife Alsana, where he only knows Archie. Archie has separated from his first wife at this time and meets the 19-year-old Jamaican Clara, thus they marry and move into the neighbourhood of Samad. The two wives are almost pregnant at the same time and so their children grow up together.

Even though the plot of *White Teeth* is loosely prepared around Archie Jones, it is Samad Iqbal who initially consists of the weight of Smith's complicated analysis of the way records and family tree have produced a war between multiculturalism and fundamentalism in turn-of-the-century London. Samad's complicated stories as a Bengali Muslim preventing to defend the British crown in World War II, his agonized responses to the

forces of assimilation in London, and his struggle to reconnect his twin-sons with a Bengali identification is clearly described in *White Teeth*. His wife Alsana on the other hand becomes rude towards him after he has separated the twins, so they face a crisis within the marriage.

Remarkably, *White Teeth* recounts the narrative of these two families with various foundations living in North London. They are basically connected by the companionship of the two fathers, the Bangladeshi Samad Miah Iqbal and the Englishman Archibald Jones, who became more acquainted with each other while serving in the British armed force amid the Second World War. The kinship between the two altogether different men is fixed forever when Archie finishes Samad's request to execute a French researcher who should work together with the Nazis. Thirty years later they live in a similar London neighbourhood, are both married to twenty years youngster women. Samad's twin-sons Magid and Millat, and Archie's daughter Irie, are close friends, and in common are second-generation immigrants in multicultural London. Additionally Alsana Iqbal, who had been guaranteed to Samad in marriage even before her introduction to the world, and Clara Jones, little girl of the Jamaican workers Hortense and Darcus Bowden, progress toward becoming companions in their regular battle with their elderly spouses, their solid willed children and their multicultural London condition.

Later on in the novel, a third family, the half Jewish, half Catholic Chalfens, who speak to a pretty much run of the mill British family, join the plot. As the concentration shifts from the parental age to their high-school children, the clash of the heroes against the apparitions of their past turns out to be not so much incensed but rather more effective. Irie, from whose point of view the last entries of the book are principally told, is the person who at last joins all families and their histories: she has laid down with the two twins Magid and Millat, around the same time, and will along these lines never have the capacity to tell who the natural father of her little child is. The man who at the very end of the novel lives next to Irie and satisfies the part of a father to the baby is Joshua, the most established child of the Chalfens. In this way, the novel closes on the hopeful note that Irie has freed her little girl from the limitations of family history, which has dependably pained her in her own particular immaturity, as at last each of the three families and their extraordinary histories are joined in this little family.

The Families in *White Teeth*

As mentioned above, *White Teeth* is the account of three North London families, one headed by Archie, the other by Archie's closest partner, a Muslim Bengali named Samad Iqbal who know each other for many years. However, Archie and Samad are an unequivocally impossible match. The third family called Chalfen assumes a minor part when compared to other two ones.

The family Jones comprises of three relatives, Alfred Archibald (Archie), his second wife- a Jamaican immigrant- Clara Bowden and their daughter Irie. Archie is an Englishman who was first married to Ophelia Diagilo, an Italian lady who left him following thirty years

of marriage. Zadie Smith depicts Archie's feelings about his first wife and marriage as in the following:

Archie's marriage felt like buying a pair of shoes, taking them home and finding they don't fit. For the sake of appearances, he put up with them. And then, all of a sudden and after thirty years, the shoes picked themselves up and walked out of the house. She left. Thirty years (White Teeth 11).

This episode acquaints the reader with the story, for Archie needs to submit suicide due to his destroyed life which was dictated by his opportunity in the armed force and his marriage to Ophelia. The conduct of Archibald Jones depicted toward the starting as of now demonstrates his powerless character that he can't manage troublesome circumstances in life and that Archie has no fearlessness. He owns some struggles in making any decision in which he cannot undertake without the help of a coin. Besides, Archie has no inspiration to proceed with his life which does not bode well any longer. Notwithstanding, Archie does not look for any answer for the change of his life since he doesn't feel in charge of himself or for others. His closest friend with whom he feels exceptionally associated since 1945 is Samad Iqbal. Amid the story the character of Archibald Jones changes slightly. He tunes in to struggles of other individuals and tries to tackle them which is a proof that it is less demanding for him to think about different problems or individuals than to think about his own particular issues.

Later in the story Archie meets the considerably more youthful Clara at a gathering of a hippy-cooperative also, weds her a little while later. Clara, who is a tall dark Jamaican woman with a Caribbean complement, was nineteen years of age when she initially met Archie. The young girl emigrated with her mother from Jamaica to London when she was a teenager and has a missing tooth as a result of an accident. Nevertheless, Archie discovers her lovely in all faculties with the exception of possibly, by ethicalness of being dark, the established. Despite all the disapproval of her mother, Clara concludes to abandon her home and weds Archie Jones, trusting that he can furnish her with the better life she seeks after. After a short time the couple's daughter Irie – a second generation immigrants' child- comes to world. For many second generation immigrants' youngsters, this biracial foundation is a hazardous one, particularly as Irie's external appearance is that of a black Jamaican young person, in spite of the fact that she has never been to Jamaica.

When we initially meet Irie, she is unsure about her race and might want nothing superior to blur into the white working classes, to be free of the racial polarities that characterize her personality. She yearns for a "neutral space" (White Teeth 426) free of race and verifiable battle. Besides, in her puberty, Irie has wild twisted hair, however needs to have it straight to look more like a genuine English young girl who typically has no twisted hair. Paul Jay in his *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies* identifies Irie's physical struggles in this way:

Her self-consciousness about race is rooted in her relationship to her body, for "the European proportions" of her mother's figure had skipped a generation, and she was landed instead with her

grandmother's substantial Jamaican frame, loaded with pineapples, mangoes, and guavas. It is Irie's body that is divided between the two identities she has inherited. She becomes obsessed with losing weight in order to get rid of what she thinks of as her Caribbean flesh and gets extensions to transform her kinky hair into a full head of long, straight, reddish-black hair. At school she identifies her own dark body with the female figure in Shakespeare's "Dark Lady" sonnets (168).

Irie ponders whether there may be an association between her own body and the body being portrayed in Shakespeare's works, and she gets a handle on at a connection between the lyrics' talk about darkness and magnificence and her own particular nerves about the excellence of her dark body. Moreover, Irie's hesitance about race is paralleled by her expanding consciousness of how class contrasts shape her character. As Jay points out (168) "Englishness, she begins to see, is defined not only in terms of whiteness but in terms of a vaguely defined middle-class." Irie is additionally somewhat pudgy which makes her extremely despondent furthermore, her modesty in obscure circumstances demonstrates her to have no self-assurance. To cover these human errors, Irie utilizes a profane dialect in her training to make an outlook. Besides, she doesn't know excessively about her mother's history on the grounds that nobody needed to advise her. Despite everything, Irie not only trusts to move forward her quality of life and increment her conceivable outcomes but also is working her way towards a full run of choices she needs to be able to have in her life. Later she becomes pregnant, but is not sure who the real father of her baby is. The reason for that is because Irie had a relationship with both of the identical twins Magid and Millat, and it is impossible to determine the real father since these two men are genetically the same. However in the end of the novel Irie and the white English Joshua of Jewish religion become lovers.

The second family presented in the novel is the family Iqbal whose individuals are Bangladeshi Muslims and touched base in London in 1973. They settled down in Whitechapel where they confronted prejudice and violence, but after a year they moved to Willesden. Samad Iqbal is a moderately aged man who is knowledgeable and consequently extremely disappointed with his activity as a waiter in his cousin's restaurant. Additionally, Samad is having a hard time with the British culture and he never really feels welcome in England, only tolerated. Although he is a studied man, he can only work as a waiter all his life, nor can he reconcile his religion and values with Western society.

Samad is caught between devout obligations and common enticements, but tries to live his life in a world which is losing religion. He considers that in some place there is the other Samad who is an exceptionally great and devout man, but he has to bargain with the genuine Samad who cannot stop boring other individuals. Thus ethnicity and religion play a major role in Samad's view of individualism.

For Samad, immigrating to London from Bangladesh achieved a higher way of life for himself and his family from one perspective, yet then again it positively had extremely negative consequences for his mental and otherworldly prosperity. Later Samad demolishes

his marriage by concealing his intends to isolate the twins from Alsana, who can't excuse him for covertly taking one of her sons. And with his secret love affair with the music teacher, Samad felt regretful because of being together with a white race woman.

Moreover, Samad's lifestyle and religious attitude that he believes the west has corrupted are all central to Smith's larger goals in the novel. Despite the fact that he utilizes his entire existence and capacities to live as indicated by the standards of Islam, he never fully figures out how to achieve this objective. Samad, who encounters religious struggle, expects all from his children and his wife for what he has failed to do. He is specifically crucial because thru him Zadie Smith focuses on a set of transitional forces shaping modern globalization, and in a presence that chronicles their approaches.

Actually, Samad wants to be a good Muslim, and expresses his feelings as "I am a Muslim but Allah has forsaken me or I have forsaken Allah, I'm not sure" (White Teeth 59), but the temptations of the Western world make it difficult for him to follow the strict laws of the Koran. It is obvious that Samad is caught between religious obligations and common allurements, yet tries to carry on with his life in a world which is losing religion. For him, getting to be a British citizen implies abandoning not as it were his nation, but too his culture, which speaks to one of the greatest of Samad's individual struggles. When his identical twin-sons Magid and Millat, who behave different from each other, are nine years old, he meets at a parents' evening of their red-haired music teacher Poppy Burt-Jones in July 1984. After having an affair with this teacher, Samad tries to be stricter with himself. Furthermore, this man thinks that he is corrupted by England (144), realizing that his sons may fall prey to Western customs and possibly reject their own values and customs, and he is also afraid that they will receive the wrong education in England. But he does not have enough money to send them to Bangladesh. Finally, Samad scrapes together the money to bring up at least one of his sons in the old homeland. With Archie's help, he takes Magid to the airport without the knowledge of his wife Alsana who never forgives him because of separating the identical twins.

So, Millat continues to grow up in London and gets on the streets while Magid goes to school in Bangladesh. Millat constantly worries his parents, but the boy is confident enough not to be intimidated by his father because he knows that he is not a failure. It is not revealed about Magid exactly how it is there in Bangladesh, but he returns eight years later as a diligent and educated law student with the disappointment of his father, who had hoped that he would become strictly religious in the old country. Yet, Samad mentions his misfortune as in the following:

You try to plan everything and nothing happens in the way that you expected...' ... '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 (White Teeth 407).

As Odoobo (2009) comments, Magid is the image of fundamentalist Muslim convention, while Millat, who talks the exact up and coming road dialect of the youthful London intense, is the image of the assimilated Brit. To the surprise, it is Millat who joins a fundamentalist Muslim group in London, not because of conviction, but because he is looking for support and leading figures.

In spite of the fact that Samad's wife Alsana assumes a minor part in the novel, she merits being said because she is one of the examples for the first generation immigrants. This woman was twenty years of age when she came to England and was at that point coordinated with Samad. She is from a regarded family in Bangladesh, yet in Britain she is sewing at home to increment the family wage. Likewise her husband, Alsana is a religious woman of Islam and believes that everything is arranged by Allah. In the entire novel, Alsana has a solid disposition towards English life, and she has the desire to protect her Bangladesh culture, thus she does not acknowledge her son Millat being engaged with the Chalfen family.

The third family in Smith's novel is the middle-class Jewish English one called the Chalfens. This family exists of the couple Joyce and Marcus and their four children named Joshua, Jack, Oscar and Benjamin all who are proud intellectuals. The Chalfens do not have any friends, they require just themselves and believe that their little family is a fixed group for them. The feminist and Catholic Joyce Chalfen – a horticulturalist graduated from Oxford, and her husband Marcus is a researcher concentrating on specific reproducing. Both Chalfens say immediately what they think about, and essentially expect to make something better for humanity and life.

Joshua, the most mentioned child in the novel, is the oldest son of this family and the school-friend of Millat and Irie who once were caught by their headmaster while consuming marijuana. As a result, these teenagers were punished, so they became closer to each other. And since Joshua is good at Biology and Maths, he is obliged to help Millat and Irie in those school subjects. When Millat and Irie first met the Chalfens at their home, the couple behaved hospitable to their son's friends as if they had known each other for a long time. Remarkably, Irie and Millat spend a great deal of their time with this family because Irie is delighted by their intellectualism, and Millat by their generosity in general. As Irie and Millat spend notably more time in this house than their own homes, their mothers become distressed by thinking that they are going to lose their children. Interestingly, the Chalfens take much more care about Irie and Millat than their own son and as a result Joshua becomes jealous. Later, Millat helps the Chalfens in housework and earns his own money, and Irie becomes the assistant of Marcus during his researches about altering the DNA of a mouse.

Conclusion

Zadie Smith has a place with one of Great Britain's most commended youthful creators since her first novel *White Teeth* was distributed in 2000. Up to this time, she has written five significant books and a few short stories which were converted into various languages, and promised her a conspicuous place in the contemporary British literary scene. Her *White Teeth* focuses on the deep contemporary issues of characterizing personal identity and where people originate from.

Smith's *White Teeth* is brimming with cleverness and incongruity and the entire novel denotes a huge millennial work in the terms of depicting a multicultural society. Smith's novel for the most part closes on a constructive note and commends multiculturalism through a portrayal of on the level of individual characters and extends to the level of society, thinking about verifiable and ethnic foundation. The novel is usually loaded with mind and capacities as ironical mirror to the general public.

The account of *White Teeth* is set in a multicultural London and it contains a rich accumulation of characters, and the content uses both practical and awesome methodologies. The reasonable approach can be found in the ways the settings are envisioned and repeated that show scenes which could really happen in these rural areas. Moreover, the incredible approach can be found in the way the creator makes the plot one stride encourage with a slight embellishment, so the reader all the more effortlessly can see and comprehend the complexities.

The characters of *White Teeth* in Smith's London originated from different main-lands, societies, and religions, which makes the convergence of movement and race a standout amongst the most instantly clear subjects of the novel. But additionally, these characters found much more unique approaches to adapt to their circumstance. Smith portrays the colossal disaster of movement, which incorporates lost strength and status and the struggle to assimilate in another culture without losing one's local character.

In *White Teeth* Smith presents three unique families of totally extraordinary religions and life styles. The first family in the novel consists of Archie, his nearly thirty year's younger wife Clara and their daughter Irie. Archie always carries a coin in his pocket and arranges all his plans according to this coin by tossing it. The humanist Archie who is a white Englishman is not prejudiced against race, so he marries the black Jamaican Clara who is proud of her ancestors. In their marriage Archie is a traditional husband who takes care of his family, and Clara who lives the desired life is faithful and dutiful towards him. Their hybrid daughter Irie on the other hand does not like her physical appearance and thus struggles among her friends, however she is happy in her life.

The Iqbals are the second family who consists of Samad, Alsana and their twin-sons Magid and Millat. Regardless of their numerous distinctions in ethnic foundation, the groups of the characters Samad Iqbal and Archie Jones include a fundamentally the same as unique. While Archie is the cliché working Englishman, an atheist and of Anglo-Saxon origin, Samad is a Bengali Muslim. Their spouses, Clara and Alsana, are altogether different also Clara is a Jamaican Jehovah's witness, and Alsana is Bengali, at any rate generally. Even though these two women do not have much in common, their friendship continues. Be that as it may, connections can be found that extension these social or religious holes. For example, both Archie and Alsana are paying little respect to their differentiating societies. Another case is the way that both Alsana and Samad are Bengali.

The third family in the novel are the Chalfens with four smart, well-educated children. Both the Jewish Marcus and his Catholic wife Joyce are very rational people but do not have

any friends. Their family dialogues deal with a range of different subjects and the children are lucky because of getting all the guides they need for their lively improvement.

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