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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EXPLORING MULTICULTURAL ASPECTS IN ZADIE SMITH'S *WHITE TEETH*.

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Abstract

Zadie Smith made an astonishing debut novel *White Teeth*, published in 2000, when she was twenty four years old. She deals with many issue connected with living in a multicultural society and with the gap between the first and second generation of immigrants. Zadie Smith's first novel *White Teeth* (2000) has been analysed as the diverse and multicultural society of the present-day city of London. The roots and history of the first generation of immigrants have made identity issues for the second generation in the novel. The main aim of this paper is to demonstrate the aspects of multicultural social space and instability of identity and family relations depicted in the novel. The second generation of immigrants, who live in London, tries to mix the dominant culture (English culture) with their familial culture in order to have a different identity. They also want to escape from their families.

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Introduction:-

Zadie Smith was born in the north-west of London in the year 1975. She graduated at Cambridge University. She has come from a mixed marriage and she lives in a multicultural London which has had a great impact on her writing. She is young, intelligent, attractive and representative of multicultural Britain. She made an astonishing debut novel *White Teeth*, published in 2000, when she was twenty four years old. 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. She has described the importance of the pre history of her characters, the legacy of their origins and the question of how they arrived at the present. Many of her characters are still closely connected with their descendants and their roots and feel frustrated by living in a modern country. She has written five novels i.e. *White Teeth* (2000), and the other novels are notably *The Autograph Man* (2002), *On Beauty* (2005), *NW* (2012) and *The Embassy of Cambodia* (2013) as well as number of short stories and essays. Zadie Smith has gained many awards including EMMA (BT Ethnic and Multicultural Media Award) for Best Female Media Newcomer *White Teeth*.

Theoretical Framework:-

Britain is a diverse country. Many people have come to Britain over the centuries and multiculturalism became part of a British policy and ideology as well. Most immigrants had come from the former colonies and they include the Indians, Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants, Black Caribbean, China and Black Africans. The significant wave of immigration had started at the end of the Second World War. There were labour shortages in Britain and the government has begun looking for immigrants to fill the gap on the labour market. After 1945, the economically successful countries of Western Europe had faced shortage of unskilled labour as well as offering niches from 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").

Living in a multicultural society has led 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.

Living in the white racist society had helped to create a black identity where such an identity previously did not exist. Britain had 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. Majority 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.

The first generation's ambiguous past makes things problematic for their children. *White Teeth* represents a myriad of ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse characters mainly Anglo-Jamaican, Bangladeshi and Jewish – adjusting, negotiating and creating a sense of "Britishness" and a sense of belonging in the city of London at three different historical periods of time: the Second World War and post-war years, the period of social changes of the 1980s, and the late 1990s. Smith has focused on the conflict between the first and the second generation of immigrants as well as the third generation. She has presented this problem in two dimensions; they are cultural history and personal history which has reflected by both the first and the second generations. This has taken back the issue to the discussion of space and time; history is something that the second generation escapes from. It is understood that not only the complexity of identity occurs but also the conflict between generations.

Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*:-

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 story had taken 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. The book has tackled the everyday problems of three ethnically diverse families living in London in a multicultural society. A sprawling saga of several generations that spans the twentieth century that the novel's characters travel to and from Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Jamaica, Italy and Scandinavia, but all of them congregate in the street of London. The three families around which the plot weaves: the British and the Jamaican Joneses, the Bangladeshi Iqbal, and the Jewish Catholic Chalfens live within a short distance of each other and their common geographical location overrides their desperate heritage to link their destinies. 'White Teeth' introduces a picture of a relationship between the first and second generations, has pointed out the importance of roots and heritage, described the living conditions and habits of Muslim immigrants and illustrated the change in values under the influences of British culture.

The novel celebrates the vibrancy and a local colour lent to them by their immigrant communities in the multicultural London. She explained to Stephanie Merritt that "White Teeth" is not really based personal family experience (.....) when you have come from a mixed race family, it makes you think a bit harder about inheritance and what's passed on from generation to generation. But as for racial tensions, I am sure my parents had the usual trouble getting hotel rooms and so on, but I don't talk to them much about that part of their lives." The theme of inheritance suggests prominent in the novel, and so although there may not be simple transcription of real life person as *White Teeth* character, autobiography of relevance. Finally, she has stated that the novel 'White Teeth' was not written with the intention to bring up all these questions concerning immigration and multiculturalism, but it is not less important for that. "I didn't want the community in *White Teeth* to be representative of immigrants in England, that's not my job really, I'm not a politician, and I wouldn't claim such an optimistic vision of other people's experience, but I have a good time. I love living here (London), the novel describes modern London society as it is observed by a young author, Zadie Smith."

Most of the characters in the 'White Teeth' have come to London due to colonialism and they are often aware of their postcolonial identities. Therefore, living in multicultural society causes confusion about their ethnic identity.

Much of the book has concentrated on a Bangladeshi family and the issue of ethnic identity. 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 novel has explored cultural and racial identity within contemporary British society, the cultural and family heritage and as Nick Bentley has stated that teeth are markers of history, genealogy and also they show individual's journey through their lives (Bentley, 2008: 55). All of us are born with a set of teeth, but it is the way of life we choose, the accidental events that happen and the class we belong to and how our teeth look like. Zadie Smith highlights the fact that modern society embraces by having white teeth, which also refers to "fakeness" in the modern society. The 'Whiteteeth' is a sign of social status as well as a question of money.

Racism and Discrimination:-

Racism is one of the important influences on young people's sense of identity. The mixing and co-existence of cultures inevitably lead 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). The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) was set up under the Race Relation Act 1976 in order to promote racial equality. 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 of minorities has brought with them would disappear.

The following excerpt in *White Teeth* also indicates how Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are seen in Britain. Millat is aware that he is never 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 Millat was a Pakistani, 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 football player 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 (Zadie 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).

Furthermore, Smith is right to acknowledge the racial tensions that stem from cross-cultural and cross-class relationships including Alsana's distrust of the Chalfens, Samad's desire to raise his sons in Bangladesh, and Joyce Chalfen's assumption that Irie cannot have inherited her intellect from her working-class parents. MP Diane Abbott might even say that by publishing *White Teeth*, Smith participates in the movement to make Britain, "...a more open, more multi-racial society than ever before where different races and cultural influences are beginning to be positively acknowledged and given equal respect". Indeed, at the end of the novel, race, class, and culture have mixed more than ever before. Irie's daughter, symbol of the uninhibited future is one quarter afro-Caribbean, one quarter half old-stock white English, and two quarters Bengali.

Globalization and Identity:-

Globalization and universalism have led into two opposite things. One leads to multiculturalism, which is the preservation of different cultures within a society and hybridity, which is blending of one culture into another and the other leads to identity crisis and confusion. Parekh suggests that due to globalization, no society can remain unaffected, self-contained and isolated. 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. 'White Teeth' sets the background for understanding present-day multiethnic and multicultural British society by establishing a genealogy for British society which moves back to the British colonial period and uncovers, especially in the case of the life of Hortense

Bowden, the history of British colonial rule and postcolonial policy. In this respect, the formal structural aspect in the novel complements the opening quotation that reads: "What is past is prologue". Her novel *White Teeth* has been described as a landmark novel for multicultural Britain (Whitbread judges) and as a generic mix that reflects the trans-cultural state of present-day Britain. In many novels of post-colonial literature, it is discussed with the terms such as roots, and root-lessness as the characters struggle to find the harmony between their culture and family history and their lifelines which have led to the confrontation with the former empire/western world. In an interview at Hay Festival 2012 Salman Rushdie had said that "The roots of self are the place that you know, the community that you come from, the language that you speak and the cultural assumptions within which you grow up. Those are the four great roots of the self and very often what happens to migrants is that they lose all four - they're in a different place, speaking an alien language, amongst people who don't know them and the cultural assumptions are very different. You can see that's something traumatic."

The issue of identity has become very common in the 21st globalized world. 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. 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. David Buckingham has described identity as an 'ambiguous' term that can be used for many different purposes. Everyone has their own specific identity that differs from the others, such as Samad's sons, Millat and Magid. Although identity is something complex and not a thing one can choose, Millat and Magid have the same prerequisites and cultural background but each of them has his own identity. Buckingham has argued that identity lets people know themselves, who they are and who others are. At the same time, it lets others understand their operating environment differently. It is believed that identity is a process; one cannot consider it as a 'thing' that individuals can possess or can do. This process can be produced through history and a period of time. We can find our identity by understanding ourselves (who we are) and our environment. It means that this process continues through the past "history", the present and to a certain extent the future, and time is something that humans cannot control which means that identity is shaped based on what one experiences through life and not something that one constructs by individual.

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 have come from Bangladesh and they have found that living in Britain is 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. Markus Chalfen is a genetic engineer, his wife Joyce Chalfen is a biologist. They are very liberal and although they are third generation of immigrants, they have been assimilated and they represent rich British family. 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.

Identity Issues in *White Teeth*:-

Much of the book has concentrated 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).

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 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 has separated from his own family, Joshua from his father and Hortense from his daughter Clara.

Smith addresses the multiplicity of identities and experiences that are to be found in contemporary British society through the inclusion of three different models of family life with their own particular configurations of space. She does not only acknowledge the existence of such “other” spaces but presents them as in an ongoing process of negotiation and change. As Massey has argued that recognising the existence of alternative spaces entails the acknowledgment of plurality itself:

The argument is that the very possibility of any serious recognition of multiplicity and heterogeneity itself depends on recognition of spatiality. The political corollary is that a genuine, thorough, specialization of social theory and political thinking can force into the imagination a fuller recognition of the simultaneous coexistence of others with their own trajectories and their own stories to tell. (Massey, 2005: 11)

People who have come from different backgrounds reflect the cultural and ethnic mosaic of British society. While in general, the novel depicts that mosaic, in particular *White Teeth*, set in contemporary North London, detects the struggles of two immigrant and/or multi-ethnic families and two men—Samad Iqbal, a Bangladeshi, and Archie Jones, an English— who met in 1945 as the soldiers of a tank crew in the final days of World War II and then became lifelong friends. The novel examines the conflicts of their interlinked immigrant families living in multi-ethnic and multicultural Britain. Their friendship continues on their return to England after the war and during the time period in which they marry and have children. While Archie Jones marries much younger Clara, a Jamaican girl, and has a hybrid daughter, Irie; Samad Iqbal marries Alsana, a Bangladeshi girl, who is also much younger than him, by a traditional arranged marriage and has twin boys, Magid and Millat. By the initiation of Archie’s and Samad’s children, who experience the dilemma of not belonging to an exact place and want to discover who they are, the conflicts of those second generation children of multi-racial or immigrant parents come on the surface. In the novel, Iqbal family thinking about solving those conflicts, sends one of the twins, Millat, back to Bangladesh. They expect, at least one of the twins, to be raised up according to traditional Islamic values. The other twin brother, Magid, grows up in London. Unfortunately, the plans collapse ironically and Millat, who grows up in Bangladesh turns back to London as an atheist, and their English-educated son Magid becomes a radical Islamic supporter in London. Besides Iqbals’ twin sons, Archie’s hybrid daughter Irie has also some similar identity conflicts in her life as a hybrid daughter of a multi-ethnic family.

When the problems of multi-ethnic and multicultural London are dealt with in a book such as *White Teeth*, it is inevitable to mention the conflicts of immigrant or multi-ethnic families and their second generation children. Definitely, being brown for hybrid children of multi-ethnic families creates a problematic situation in the first place. It is true that whiteness nowhere features as an explicit condition of being British, but it is widely understood that Englishness, and therefore by extension Britishness, is racially coded. In fact, this problem is mainly a result of societal attitudes and outer forces against post-colonial or immigrant families. Although earlier colonies have gained their independence, those nations and also the people of them are still considered as the ones under the dominance of

England. They are still patronized by the British, who view them as colonials rather than as genuine Europeans. In this sense, to gain self-actualization and an identity, the children of multi-ethnic families generally pass from a process in which they have many different identity crises of which whiteness or being seen as the other are only some.

Multiculturalism in 'White Teeth':-

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. But recently, there are new tendencies to protect these sub-national groups especially because their ethnic heritage has 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. 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 the life, they are not fixed and they can change according to situation. Each individual perceives his or her identity differently.

Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* portrays London as a mixture of different cultures, ethnic groups, and religious beliefs. London is described as a multicultural city in the 20th century, as a result of British colonialism. To some extent society can be defined as a multicultural place, as long as it is constructed by two or more different cultures, religions, or languages, this can be identified in *White Teeth*. Smith combines two families, the Iqbal's (the immigrants) and the Joneses, who have different national identities but also different worldviews, cultural and religious values. Though, the characters live in London and have been assimilated and integrated, still some of them try to hold themselves to their rituals, religious beliefs, and cultural values in order to protect their roots and identity from external influences. However, this seems to be problematic for some of the migrated characters at the first generation, where English people's culture and values have great influences on the second generation. Newcomers as well as settled people 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. Majority of the Muslims think that 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. 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. 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 has criticised 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 believes 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. Smith points out the importance of identity in multicultural societies and immigrants' inability to escape from their history that is determined by influences of their predecessors. The change of time and space between the two generations is a central theme of the novel.

Critical reviews on *White Teeth* did not cease to highlight the novel's multiethnic, multiracial and multicultural aspect (Russo 2000; Hanks 2002; Mason 2005). In this respect, the characters in *White Teeth* are the epitome of hybridity and cultural diversity. Their initial common feature is the shared-spatial locus of the city of London. The spatial dimension is thus, central to the novel. The metropolis is the backdrop that channels social interaction and becomes the primary space of possibility; a place where a homogeneous and united view of "Britishness" is challenged.

Conclusion:-

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 they have 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. *White Teeth* encourages the reader to move away from the opposite binaries of insiders and outsiders and to think about British society in pluralistic terms. In such a setting there is scope for other conceptions of social space. These alternative spaces produced by social diversity challenge a view of space as hosting single, monolithic communities with homogenous identities. London is not only the city where new spaces of interaction among ethnically diverse characters are created but it is also a dynamic location that allows for new identity positions to emerge. Identities are presented in *White Teeth* as extremely malleable. This is particularly visible in the case of second-generation characters. Millat, Magid, Irie and Joshua are continuously negotiating their past family origins, their present circumstances and the prospects for the future. In those situations, everything is possible. They are adjusting to their family and social environment and Smith playfully takes these adjustments to comical extremes: the difficult teenager who turns into a religious fundamentalist while living in London whereas his twin brother, brought up in Bangladesh, becomes a fervent opponent of religion and a science-lover or a responsible and studious son of a respectable scientist who at the end of the novel rejects his father's experiments and becomes an animal rights activist. 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. The main role of this issue plays one's own perception of identity.

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