In recent years, Western writings have analysed how the lives of Muslims spread across the world are marked by great cultural and ideological diversity. Hanif Kureishi, who was born on December 5, 1954 in Bromley, England and grew up there, is well aware about the ethnic and cultural conflicts experienced by immigrants that he dealt with as the subject matter in his major works. This chapter focuses on the depiction of the fundamentalists Muslims and how their ideology conflicts with postmodernism in Kureishi’s novel *The Black Album* (1995). However, Kureishi’s screen play *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) and the short story “My Son the Fanatic” (1997) will also be discussed towards the latter part of the chapter as these pieces of literary works too deal with the theme of fundamentalism.

Unlike the British authors who treated various aspects of colonialism and empire as the theme of their works, Kureishi prefers ‘race’ as his subject which he clearly reveals in his essay “The Word and the Bomb” (2005) that “Racism was real to me; the Empire was not” (3). He further elaborated upon it by saying:

Questions of race, immigration, identity, Islam – the whole range of issues which so preoccupy us these days – have been absent from the work of my white contemporaries, even as a new generation of British writers has developed, following the lead of V.S Naipaul and Salman Rushdie. (Kureishi, *Word and the Bomb* 3)
In a 1986 essay entitled “The Rainbow Sign”, Hanif Kureishi attempts to explain the topic of racism in the light of his own worrying experiences in London. Since then, his thinking about the clash between Islam and the liberal outlook of the West has been gradually evolving. The conflict is vividly depicted in his play *My Beautiful Laundrette*, in his novel *The Black Album* and in one of his short story “My Son the Fanatic”. However,

Kureishi avers that notions of Asian and British cannot be defined separately. His protagonists live the potentials and experience the pitfalls of mixing and metissage, emphasising the precarious ambivalent nature of all cultural translation. His work parodies the idea of homogeneous, distinct, racially distinct communities. (Ranasinha 122)

Though Kureishi belongs to Muslim community, he had very little knowledge about Islam before his career as a writer. He discloses it in his essay “The Rainbow Sign” in black and white term:

I had no idea what an Islamic society would be like, what the application of the authoritarian theology Elijah preached would mean in practice. I forgot about it, fled the suburbs, went to university, got started as a writer and worked as an usher at the Royal Court Theatre. It was over ten years before I went to an Islamic country. (21-22)

However, like John Updike and Orhan Pamuk, Hanif Kureishi too, remains watchful of the contemporary issues. The establishment of the theocratic Islamic Republic in Iran in 1979 provoked several authors to represent the Islamic
fundamentalism in their works and Hanif kureishi is not exceptional. In this context Mohammad Asim Siddiqui aptly says that:

Going beyond a vague and clichéd east-west encounter—a recurring theme in British and American fiction especially in the works of writers like E.M Foster and Pearl S. Buck – Kureishi specially takes up the issue of Muslim fundamentalism in what turns out to be a pseudo progressive multicultural London. Writing in postcolonial context, Kureishi is obviously aware of the issues of racial prejudice and lack of communication between the looked down upon Pakis and the complacent English. (Siddiqui 111)

In fact, Kureishi attempts to experiment with this theme in his screen play *My Beautiful Laundrette*. However, the fatwa against Salman Rushdie in 1989 prompted the writer to consider the issue as a major theme for his fiction, and thus, he deals with the theme of political Islam and its clash with postmodern culture in his novel *The Black Album*:

The fatwa against Rushdie in February 1989 reignited my concern about the rise of Islamic radicalism, something I had become aware of while in Pakistan in 1982, where I was writing *My Beautiful Laundrette*. But for me, that wasn't the whole story. Much else of interest was happening at the end of the 80s: the music of Prince; the collapse of communism and the “velvet revolution”; the rise of the new dance music, along with the use of a revelatory new drug, ecstasy; Tiananmen Square; Madonna using Catholic imagery in Like a Prayer;
The most distinctive characteristic of *The Black Album* is the shaping of the raw material of everyday life of postmodern era and its conflict with Islamic fundamentalism into the form of fiction. Basically, the storyline of Kureishi’s novels revolves around England because “for Kureishi the key issue is the unanticipated rapidity and scale of the unravelling of Britain’s long history as an imperial power” (Moore-Gilbert 3).

The plot of *The Black Album*, too, is set in London. The day to day life of the characters of different communities and their living conditions, language, daily work, troubles and hopes make the novel realistic and subsequently the form and content of the same is strengthened. In this way the conflicting ideologies of liberalism and that of the political Islam are treated.

II

In *The Black Album*, most of the characters identify the clash of cultures as purely between religious faith and postmodernism. In this context, Akbar S. Ahmed aptly says that there exists “an intellectual time-warp between Muslims and the West. So while postmodernism is already seen by some in the West as passé, yesterday’s cliché, the Muslim intellectual continues to grapple with stale issues contained in modernism” (*Postmodernism and Islam* 28-29). On the one hand Kureishi has shown the influence of the postmodern culture which includes popular culture (Music, T.V, cinema and literature), wine, drugs, sexuality, adultery, homosexuality and lesbianism on some of the characters in his work. In an interview to Amitava Kumar, he identifies his interests:
When I wrote that (The Black Album), I was involved with dance music, house music, and a new drug called Ecstasy, which I loved. Every ten years there had been a revolution: in the sixties, it was LSD and psychedelic music, in the seventies it was punk and speed and heroin, and in the eighties it was dance music and Ecstasy. So The Black Album kind of came out of all that. Also, my own life was falling apart. I was very involved in drugs and all kinds of dissident sexuality.

(Kureishi, “A Bang and a Whimper” 126)

On the other hand, the writer has depicted the activities of the radical Islamists vividly, who oppose postmodern culture as the Islamic Shari’ah law does not permit it. It leads to the clash between the two i.e. Islamic fundamentalism and postmodernity which is focussed through the protagonist as well as the other major characters of The Black Album.

So far as Kureishi’s fiction is concerned music single-handedly plays a great role. Jago Morrison rightly says that in Kureishi’s later fiction “there is a continuing interest in visual effect, in fashion and particularly in music” (Morrison 180). The Black Album is not exceptional. In this regard the contrast between the postmodern culture and the Islamic culture lies in the fact that the music is welcomed by the former but the same is forbidden according to the Shari’ah Law of Muslims. Shahid Hassan, the protagonist of the novel is a lover of music. He is trapped between the two opposing cultures—one is dominated by the ideology of Islam and the other by postmodern ideology. He knows very well that music is forbidden in Islam. Even his mother has reminded him about it. On one occasion, Shahid hesitates to take part in dance in spite of Deedee’s repeated sayings initially. He recalls “... what his mother called ‘wrong things’, pop music and drugs, in the way adults discussed wine or
But he fails to stick to his decision. As soon as the cab reaches the river side “into the mouth of south London” (57) and the radio is switched on, Shahid comes under the influence of the music/song:

Suddenly Shahid was hearing something that made his knees bob. Was it the Doors? No, crazy, it was something new, the Stone Roses or Inspiral Carpets, one of those Manchester guitar groups. Whoever it was lifted him. Music could act like an adrenalin injection on him, and he wanted to go woo-woo-whoa for being here with his lecturer who was taking him out ... When he stopped trying to hold himself together, he realized he was liking this. He was certain now that he wanted to be here. Yes, this wasn’t too bad; (Kureishi, Black Album 58)

At other time, Shahid reveals about his strong liking for music in front of Chad as he says that “I’m not living without music. Tell me the truth – you miss it too” (Kureishi, Black Album 79).

Shahid, who leaves his home in suburban Sevenoaks and gets admission to an ordinary college in West London, comes in contact with the radical Islamist Riaz Al-Hussain, an older student who lives in a room adjacent to his room. Soon after, they become friends. He joins Riaz’s group initially, but with the passage of time he becomes fed up with the bigotry of the group. Shahid shifts his attention towards the English pop culture, an expression of the postmodern culture where: “the girls wore short skirts or white Levi’s; the guys were in black or blue jeans, with holes in the knee; some wore black leather jackets over black polos or crew necks” (Kureishi, Black Album 112). Such a place is strictly prohibited for Muslims. Here lies the clash between the postmodern outlook and the Islamic Shari’ah law.
It is also noticed that Shahid and his teacher Deedee Osgood come on the same platform because of their common love of literature. Both Shahid as well as Deedee adore imagination and support those authors who use the imagination to express their opinions. Subsequently, Shahid develops an illicit relationship with Deedee Osgood ignoring the fact that such relationship in any form is prohibited in Islam. “Remarkably, The Black Album also provides Kureishi with an arena for his most mature love story to date. With all its sexual interludes and controversial politics, this novel is fundamentally about ... the mutability of love, religion, art and, pivotally, belief” (Kaleta 123). The initial liking of Shahid for his teacher Deedee Osgood converted into the yearning to carry out his carnal desire. Deedee, on the other hand, too, has shown her willingness as a result of which the sexual fantasy of Shahid is fulfilled through his sex with Deedee Osgood. However, his intimate relationship with Deedee, too, fails to restrict him to stick to this pleasure seeking culture, which is evident from the fact that he has disagreed to the dismissal of Riaz’s group by Deedee Osgood. His illicit relationship with Deedee further leads him to drug addiction. He becomes so wild and passionate for Deedee that he cannot but ‘hear’ her voice and “looked forward to her lectures more than to anyone else’s” (Kureishi, Black Album 24). Even, he used to sit in the middle of the first bench “the place he called ‘the stalls’ from where “none of her gestures would escape him” (27). According to Shahid it is only after meeting with Deedee that he becomes happy. Earlier he has spent a dull life except few days during which his friends “excited him” (29) mostly in the evenings. His craziness develops in him the erotic feelings and drives him to lose his rational faculty: “... he wanted to dream about Deedee, what she wore, what she had said, what they could do together, where they could go. More: he
wanted to see her again, maybe that night; as soon as she wanted, as soon as he could get there” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 70).

Shahid breaks down very often, if he is hurt by Deedee. On one such occasion, when Deedee ignores Shahid through telephone the latter has become a “regular” customer in the bar named Morlock, where the rhythm of “music” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 193) is not enough for the visitors. It is supplemented by “ruined woman”, “Vodkas and orange” and “beer”, (193) which are strictly prohibited in Islam. But Shahid doesn’t hesitate to visit such places. It suggests the clash between the postmodern Western culture and the Islamic way of life.

The aimless journey of Shahid with his lecturer Deedee Osgood by a cab at the dead hour of the night itself doesn’t suit the Islamic way of living a life and thus reflecting the clash between Islamic and postmodern way of life style. Subsequently, their behaviour thereafter, is undoubtedly against the Islamic Shari’ah law:

> He shut his eyes, dropped the pill into his mouth and swigged from the bottle. Then he stuck his arm out and bent it around her. Instantly she cradled her head into his chest. He wanted to kiss her now, he was gathering his courage ... But this was his teacher, for God’s sake, he could be expelled. (Kureishi, *Black Album* 58-59)

Shahid has accompanied his teacher Deedee Osgood to a restricted area/lane:

> Many of the men were bare-chested and wore only thongs; some of the women were topless or in just shorts and net tops. One woman was naked except for high heels and a large plastic penis strapped to her thighs with which she duetted. Others were grabbed in rubber, or
masks, or were dressed as babies. The dancing was frenzied and individual. People blew whistles, others screamed with pleasure.

(Kureishi, *Black Album* 59-60)

For Deedee, it is normal to visit such a place but for Shahid being Muslim it comes under “wrong things” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 56). Leaving behind this place “they went into the marble hall and found themselves ... until they came to a Jacuzzi in which everyone was naked” (61). Deedee’s desire to tread in the world of “fantasies” with her young student Shahid where “you and I might be together more” (208), too, is anti-Islamic. Though such culture is welcomed in the West and is practised freely for entertainment but it is forbidden in Islam. As a result Muslims criticise such culture vehemently. This is how the Islamic ideology clashes with the Western culture of the postmodern era.

Shahid’s indecisive mind puts him in trouble at times. He feels the absence of Deedee Osgood very much but at the same time he likes to end the relationship so that he might not get involved too deeply. But the problem arises from the fact that he can’t come to a final conclusion as to what he should do. His indecisive mind makes him suffer. “He ached for Deedee, as if he had already parted from her. He was convinced that she would forget him in a couple of days, and that it was better to end the relationship before they became too entangled” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 137). It shows Shahid’s attachment for the postmodern culture. However, in some other time, Shahid recalls the religious speech that he has listened from Riaz in the past inside the mosque that: “without a fixed morality, without a framework in which love could flourish – given by God and established in society – love was impossible” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 240). It makes him “shudder in revulsion” with the thought that: “What
a dull and unctuous man he was; how limited and encased was his mind, how full of spite and acidity!” (240)

Moreover, Shahid’s relationship with Deedee is converted into addiction “to whom reality was clearly a lost kingdom, especially when he had a date to prepare for” (Kureishi, Black Album 80). When his sister-in-law Zulma urges him to take the responsibility of their family business, he refuses to do so. Shahid is afraid of the fact that if he takes the responsibility of the family business he might lose the freedom for which he has come to London. It creates panic in him. He is engrossed in the thought: “What would happen to him and Deedee if he became the manager of a travel agency in Kent? How often would they meet? More darkly, what would she think of him? What would he think of himself?” (190) It reflects Shahid’s callousness and indifferent outlook towards responsibility.

However, one important fact to establish is that whenever Shahid undergoes mental torment for one reason or the other he closes his eyes and thinks that he has gone to the mosque which soothes his mind most of the time. But the last time, his repentance over the past deeds compels Shahid to go to the mosque truly. It shows that his conscience is pricked:

He prayed as best he could, hearing in his head Hat’s exhortations and instructions; he asked God to grant him realization, understanding of himself and others, and tolerance. Feeling empty of passion and somewhat delivered and cleansed, he settled down with his notebook.

(Kureishi, Black Album 131)

But it is short lived. Shahid’s fickle mind prevents him to settle down in one decision. He remains confused most of the time and very often he fails to take any firm
decision. “His own self increasingly confounded him. One day he could passionately feel one thing, the next day the opposite. Other times provisional states would alternate from hour to hour; sometimes all crashed into chaos” (Kureishi, Black Album 147). His inability to take any decision is the major weakness in him. He can’t come to a conclusion whether he should follow Riaz and work actively in his group in accordance with the Islamic Shari’ah or seek pleasure by visiting pub, listening music and continuing illicit relationship with Deedee Osgood:

He had been tempted. He had dived headlong. But coming here was a good idea. He had returned to his senses before it was too late. If he hated himself, he had to commend himself, too, for regaining his purity. Hadn’t he swum away from the whirlpool and redeemed himself by returning to this place? Yes and no. He still felt uncomfortable; he couldn’t relax. Even in these cool rooms where he felt more tranquil than anywhere, his mind was working, justifying and excoriating. He knew only one thing. He would leave Deedee before more feeling was released. He would tell her this tomorrow. He could concentrate on his work with Riaz. (Kureishi, Black Album 132)

Shahid realises the harsh reality only after coming in contact with the “people whose eyes burned with blame and resentment” (Kureishi, Black Album 136). Even, he himself is the victim of racial attack. A white woman and her daughters have attacked Shahid, Chad and Tahira at the night of their duty at the flat of a family of a couple to protect them. The woman is “unafraid” and bold enough to face the three on duty. “’Paki! Paki! Paki! She screamed. Her body had become an arched limb of hatred with a livid opening at the tip, spewing curses. ‘You [sic] stolen our jobs! Taken our housing! Paki got everything! Give it back and go back home!’” (139)
Racial discrimination convinced Shahid to side with Riaz’s way of thinking, but only occasionally. “Sometimes Shahid found himself agreeing with Riaz. Surely these people had just enough to make their lives bearable?” (136) Observing the miserable conditions of the victims of racism, Shahid feels sorry for them, though for a short while: “It occurred to Shahid that Riaz’s group should do something amongst the people in the block, listening, handing out information, not dismissing them all. He made up his mind to talk to Riaz about it” (137).

Some of his friends try to convince Shahid by telling stories in “religious form” (Kureishi, Black Album 133) that Allah wants His believers to obey Him and to lead a life in a disciplined manner following every single dictate. They also remind him about the heaven and the hell which are awaiting for the believers and nonbelievers respectively in the world hereafter. They have done so in order to draw Shahid’s attention towards spiritual life, but it is in vain. Shahid comes under the influence of such religious preaching in the form of stories only when he listens to them but, he doesn’t care for them always. Shahid follows his father’s path. His father, too “have a faith” but he has not been punctual in attending prayer. In the words of Papa “it’s called working until my arse aches”, though he has brought up Shahid and Chili and have been “taught little about religion” (92). Shahid has to recall the last time when prayed. He remembers that during the time of his stay in Karachi he had visited the mosque quite a number of times but that too only “at the urging of his cousins” (Kureishi, Black Album 91). It shows that he neglects prayer which prevents him from going to the mosque at a regular interval. Being young, Shahid wants to enjoy life every way that pleases him. He does not want to restrict his freedom by obeying every dictate of his religion. Moreover “the religious enthusiasm of the younger generation, and its links to strong political feeling, had surprised him”
(91). Shahid’s negligence towards Islamic Shari’ah law and his excessive involvement in the postmodern culture leads him to make mistakes during the time of prayer:

While praying, Shahid had little notion of what to think, of what the cerebral concomitant to the actions should be. So, on his knees, he celebrated to himself the substantiality of the world, the fact of existence, the inexplicable phenomenon of life, art, humour and love itself – in murmured language, itself another sacred miracle. He accompanied this awe and wonder with suitable music, the ‘Ode to Joy’ from Beethoven’s Ninth, for instance, which he hummed inaudibly. (Kureishi, Black Album 92)

While his friends Riaz, Chad and Hat are working hard to strengthen the hands of political Islam, Shahid has vague concept about fundamentalism. And he is curious to have a clear idea about it. Shahid observes the serene faces of the ‘brothers’ around him in the mosque. But he is devoid of faith due to his insincere approach towards religion, which at times creates panic in him.

Shahid felt he had passed the point when he could question Riaz about the fundamentals. Shahid frequently fell into anxiety about his lack of faith. Observing the mosque, in which all he saw were solid, material things, and looking along the line of brothers’ faces upon which spirituality was taking place, he felt a failure. But he was afraid that enquiry would expose him to some sort of suspicion ... Understanding would surely follow; he would be blessed. (Kureishi, Black Album 96)
Shahid unlike Riaz and his other friends, submits himself to his selfish desire. Even, he suppresses/dominates over his conscience during the time of seeking pleasure from forbidden things in his religion. He also visits night club very often and listens music. This is how he overlooks his conscience as well the Shari’ah law of Islam:

The problem was, when he was with his friends their story compelled him. But when he walked out, like someone leaving a cinema, he found the world to be more subtle and inexplicable. He knew, too, that stories were made up by men and women; they could not be true or false, for they were exercises in that most magnificent but unreliable capacity, the imagination.... (Kureishi, Black Album 133)

Basically, it is Shahid’s yearning for Deedee Osgood’s love that makes Shahid self-centred. His opportunistic attitude is further revealed when the incident of bomb blast takes place. The bomb blast in the airport in London affected the communication and a large number of people are terrified. At such a critical juncture when “thousands of commuters” (Kureishi, Black Album 102) are “wondering what time they would get home that night, if at all” (103), Shahid chooses that point of time to meet Deedee Osgood. He has given priority to his selfish desire. The people are keen to know in details about the blast through different television channels and radio. But Shahid has least interest in it. He is driven by his desire of meeting Deedee Osgood with a hope to fulfil his carnal desire. He does so by overcoming so many troubles on his way to the flat where they have decided to meet. He ignores the “emergency” (102) and has started his journey first by walk and then by train which is among “some trains” that has the “only possibility of movement in the city tonight” (103) to meet Deedee Osgood at “her friend Hyacinth’s flat in Islington.” (102)
While his friends and group members like Chad, Sadiq, Nina and Tahira are doing their duty sincerely to protect the victims (the family of a Bengali couple) of the racial attack, Shahid’s concentration is elsewhere. He recalls the whole episode that has taken place between him and Deedee Osgood. “It had been the best night. Now he wanted to dream it again, luxuriating in what he remembered” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 124). Again when his friends on duty are “looking tired, sunk once more in the ordinary – and afraid, too, of racist attack – Shahid’s mind returned to Deedee” (130). However, the realization of his deeds interrupts Shahid in the process of his pleasant thought:

But instead of bathing in the warm memory of the love that they’d made and the pleasures she’d introduced him to, which they could delectably repeat and extend into the future, he became aware of a bitter, disillusioned feeling. How he’d been drowning his senses in the past hours! What illusions he’d been subject to! What torrents of drug-inspired debris he had allowed to stream through his head! What banal fantasies he believed were visions! And on Baker Street Station too! (Kureishi, *Black Album* 130)

Shahid has developed an interest in pornography too which is revealed when he shows his curiosity to know if Riaz has such kind of “weaknesses” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 150).

Though, Shahid dreams about Deedee Osgood very often neglecting the reality but, he is not altogether devoid of rationality. The behaviour of his group of friends, especially that of Riaz, Chad and Hat surprises him:
Now, though, Shahid was afraid his ignorance would place him in no man’s land. These days everyone was insisting on their identity, coming out as a man, woman, gay, black, Jew – brandishing whichever features they could claim, as if without a tag they wouldn’t be human. Shahid, too, wanted to belong to his people. But first he had to know them, their past and what they hoped for.” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 92)

The strength of Shahid’s character is further reflected through his protest against Deedee Osgood, who doesn’t want the former’s involvement with the “aubergine”. He also protests Deedee’s remark against Mr. Rudder as a “cynical bastard” because “he [Mr. Rudder] wants a closer association with our community” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 209). However, Shahid bursts out in anger and reveals in front of Deedee, how the people of his community are treated there in England:

“We’re third-class citizens, even lower than the white working class. Racist violence is getting worse! Papa thought it would stop, that we’d be accepted here as English. We haven’t been! We’re not equal! It’s gonna be like America. However far we go, we’ll always be underneath!” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 209)

Deedee Osgood, unlike Shahid, who is oscillating between the two cultures, is a true representative of postmodern culture. Her passion for pop culture is an expression of postmodernity. She doesn’t want to compromise with freedom at any cost. She likes “music”, “clothes” and “men” and, the freedom of “going out” at will:

She went to punk clubs; Louise’s in Soho, where Vivienne Westwood and Malcom McLaren held court, and to the Roxy, where Elvis
Costello and the Police played. She worked in bars, ending up in a smart topless place in the West End. (Kureishi, *Black Album* 113)

Osgood leads a relaxed life. It hardly matters if her relationship with her husband or somebody like Shahid is worsened. Being a freethinking woman of the postmodern age, she knows how to face such problems. She opts for the other options without any hesitations. She considers herself as “liberal” and a sensible lady, according to whom “surely a wise woman would keep away from love and find some practical arrangement of sex, friendship and art to replace it?” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 207) It clearly reflects her love for freedom, which too is a feature of postmodernity. She is a “feminist” (44) and she likes to talk about books with great interest “if they were written by women” (29).

In the ‘liberal’ West one can see “women in hooped skirts” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 193) and Deedee Osgood is not exceptional: “... the way she dresses, in clothes too tight for her, bulging everywhere like a potato in a sock” (228-29). It is the dress that she generally wears during office hour in the college. Otherwise, Deedee Osgood, being grown up in the Western culture easily wears miniskirts and short dresses to attend a party or even during the time of roaming here and there.

Deedee Osgood’s yearning for pornography is another expression of postmodernity which clashes with the ideology of Islam. She belongs to a family of “nudists” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 221) in Riaz’s words. Sadiq, too, disapproves of her because “she is regularly aborted” and “she has an account with the clinic” (228). Her sexual encounter with Shahid is an ideal example of an expression of postmodernity. In fact, the readers cannot deny the view of Inglehart and Norris as expressed in the article ‘The True Clash of civilizations’ that “... when it comes to attitudes toward
gender equality and sexual liberalization, the cultural gap between Islam and the West widens into a chasm” (67). They further elaborate upon it by saying that “Muslim societies are also distinctively less permissive toward homosexuality, abortion, and divorce” (67).

Chili, unlike his brother Shahid, is not in a dilemma in choosing one out of the two cultures—Islamic and postmodern. He has opted for the Western culture, or the Enlightenment without any hesitation. He never repents about his past deeds and has enjoyed life to the fullest. Chili too, loves music and likes to go out at will. He visits “clubs and enjoyed pubs” (Kureishi, Black Album 156). Sometimes he visits the “Morlock” (193) and at other times he is seen “at the bar of the Fallen Angel” (195). But the irony lies in the fact that while Shahid tries to save a family under attack from racists, Chili lives precariously in the drug and clubbing sub-culture of late 80s London: “Chili’s relentless passion had always been for clothes, girls, cars, girls and the money that bought them” (41).

However, Chili views literature from merely practical perspective which according to him is of no use. Chili feels proud simply because he has never read any literary book and arrogantly says to Shahid that “literature’s a closed book to me” for which Shahid considers Chili as “functionally illiterate” (Kureishi, Black Album 43).

Papa’s preference for T.V. programme ahead of prayers is notable. Unlike Shahid’s father, uncle Tipoo is very sincere in saying prayer, which at times irritates his father: “And on the occasions that Tipoo prayed in the house, Papa grumbled and complained, saying, why did he have to make such noises during repeats of his favourite programme, The World at War?” (Kureishi, Black Album 92) This attitude of Shahid’s father is what we call the influence of the postmodern era. Papa gives
much importance to a TV programme and seeks pleasure from it. In this context Akbar S. Ahmed aptly says that:

The present encounter, with its universal Western culture and pervasive technology, is perhaps the most forceful of onslaughts on Muslim civilization yet precisely because it is so amorphous and because it appears in the most unexpected forms in the most unexpected places, Islam appears so threatened and vulnerable. The VCR and TV need no passport or visa; they can invade the most isolated homes and challenge the most traditional values, and in their character and origin they are part and parcel of Western civilization.

(97-98).

Papa, too, disapproves fictional writing and is surprised to know about Shahid’s interest in literature. The thought of Shahid’s interest in fiction bothers him, chiefly, because of the fear of criticism from ‘relatives’.

III

Contrarily, in The Black Album, Hanif Kureishi has depicted the adverse reactions of some other characters like Riaz, Chad, Hat, Sadiq, Tahira and Nina (having Pakistani roots), who have aversion towards the Western culture. They do not even show least interest or enthusiasm for the Enlightenment. Among these characters Riaz is the group leader. The other characters are not only loyal towards Riaz, who is “dangerous” and “too radical” (Kureishi, Black Album 69), but also have firm faith in their leader’s capabilities. Though the roles of these characters are little in comparison to the role of Riaz but they have played their task effectively. They also tread the same path as their leader does with a radical approach. Therefore, the clash of
fundamentalism—Islamic and postmodern is obvious and reflected through the activities of these characters.

Riaz Al-Hussain, who had come from Lahore to England at the age of fourteen in order to study law, plays a dominant role in the novel. Kureishi has portrayed him as a radical Islamist, who is in fact against the imitation of the Western culture. Riaz tries his best to lead his life according to Islamic Shari’ah Law. He is very punctual in attending prayer (or performing namaz) and is conscious about whether the thing that he eats or drinks is “hallal” (Kureishi, Black Album 173) or not. In fact, the Holy Qur’ān states: “O ye people! eat of what is on earth, lawful and good; and do not follow the footsteps of Satan for he is to you an avowed enemy” (2:168). Riaz tries to follow this principle of ‘lawful and good’ when he chooses food.

After getting his admission in the ‘local college’ where Shahid studies, Riaz gets involved in politics. He devotes much of his time to form a group/an organization to protest against the perceived injustice done to the people of his community. “The meaning of his life was his creed and the idea that he knew the truth about how people should live. It was this single-mindedness that made him powerful and, to Shahid now, rather pitiful” (Kureishi, Black Album 173-74).

Riaz “the sallow, balding man” with “weak, bookwormy eyes”, though behaves nicely with other fellows, “... this gentle way was surely deceptive” (Kureishi, Black Album 2). He takes the maximum opportunity to divert Shahid’s attention and tries to generate in him the attitude of fundamentalism. While Shahid suffers from identity crisis, Riaz identifies this susceptibility in no time and includes him under his wing. He continuously tries to incite him with an intention to strengthen the hand of political Islam, so that they can raise voice against the ‘liberal’ Western
culture which clashes with Islamic ideology. With the passage of time Shahid comes to know the intention of Riaz and thus the former tries to get rid of the latter at the initial stage of their conversation. But Riaz does not let himself down in front of Shahid and “provoke” the latter in the following manner: “I’m suggesting what do these people – our people – really have in their lives?” (8) By ‘our people’, Riaz refers to the people belonging to the Muslim community. This thought is enough to germinate the seeds of fundamentalism in their minds which slowly and steadily but surely has led to the clash of fundamentalisms.

However, Riaz follows certain principles in his life and keeps “one thing on his mind: the future and how to forge it” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 150). He doesn’t want to compromise with certain things that might harm his dignity: “Folly didn’t entertain him; he wanted to correct it. Like pornography, religion couldn’t admit the comic” (150). Unlike Shahid, who has interest in pornography, Riaz has strong abhorrence for the same:

... Riaz lacked a taste for the vulgar; he wouldn’t yet be tainted by corruption and probably not much by curiosity. He wouldn’t wonder why the women were lying in the childbirth position, in those clothes ... and why they exposed themselves for money; or what the men who masturbated over them wanted; or why it was that everyone seemed to be voyeurs these days, armchair sex being the coming thing. (Kureishi, *Black Album* 150)

Being the leader of the group, Riaz leads from the front. He is a good orator and can draw the attention of the people in no time. A large number of people gather
They were well attended by a growing audience of young people mostly local cockney Asians. Not being an aged obscurantist, Riaz was becoming the most popular speaker ... for he entitled his talks ‘Rave to the Grave?’, ‘Adam and Eve not Adam and Steave’, ‘Islam: A Blast from the Past or a Force for the Future?’ and ‘Democracy is a Hypocrisy. (Kureishi, *Black Album* 80)

In this way Riaz captures the attention of the people initially. He is a fluent speaker and doesn’t take the help of ‘notes’:

He may have begun his talk under the guise of discussing Islamic identity, for instance, but soon he would be expatiating on the creation of the universe, the persecution of Muslims world-wide, the state of Israel, gays and lesbians, Islam in Spain, face-lifts, nudity, the dumping of nuclear waste in the Third World, perfume, the collapse of the West, and Urdu poetry.” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 81)

He becomes such an influential leader that his “absence” in any meeting irritates the followers and becomes “annoying”. Everyone wants Riaz’s presence in every meeting or gathering that would take place. They fail to take any decision without their leader. Such a great demand of Riaz is the result of his total concentration on his community. Riaz not only gets hurt if the people of his community are humiliated anywhere in the world but also wants to fight against such injustice. His rebellious mind comes through as he speaks out about the injustice done to the Muslims of Kashmir, Palestine and Afghanistan: “We don’t turn the other check. We will fight for our
people who are being tortured in Palestine, Afghanistan, Kashmir! War has been declared against us. But we are armed” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 82).

Riaz opposes the political philosophy of anarchism and condemns the idiosyncratic (individualistic) society of the West. He wants to raise voice against the “anarchist” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 173) elements who dominate the society. According to him “there must be order in society for the elements to cohere” (173). Being educated and aware about the evils of the West “of so called free expression”, Riaz thinks it is the responsibility of all the members of the group “to give them a voice” so that, they can stand beside “our people” who are “half literate and not wanted here” (173). Referring to the people of his community who suffers in the West, Riaz says that: “We cannot just forsake our people and live for ourselves ... If we did, wouldn’t that mean we had totally absorbed the Western morals, which are totally individualistic?” (173) This is how Riaz has denounced the Western way of seeking pleasure and self-absorption.

Riaz, the radical Islamist, also condemns homosexuality vehemently as it is strictly prohibited according to Islamic Shari’ah law. Riaz says that “... God would burn homosexuals forever in hell, scorching their flesh in a furnace before replacing their skin as new, and repeating this throughout eternity” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 119). It also leads to the clash of fundamentalisms—Islamic and postmodern. Riaz is fed up with the West, which according to him is not suitable place to live in. His aversion towards the West is reflected when he says to Shahid that: “The whites are very insular, surely they won’t admit people like us into their world?’ ... This will never be my home ... ‘I will never entirely understand it” (175). Being helpless, Riaz realises the importance of media. In this regard Akbar S. Ahmed aptly points out that: “The pervasiveness of postmodernism—its hope, ambiguities and challenge—is not
possible to understand without an understanding of the media ...” (222). Riaz, now, agrees with Shahid regarding the role of media and says to him that: “The media, yes. That is the right direction for us to go in. We must utilize all channels for the message of devotion. I hope you will soon be submitting an article on this matter of blasphemy to the national newspaper” (175). Riaz emphasises the same issue again and politely asks Shahid to “write a draft of an article about the Western arrogance with regard to our right not to be insulted” (176), if possible. Riaz, further attacks the Western culture that dominates the postmodern age through his poetry:

The wind-swept sand speaks of adultery in this godless land,

Here Lucifer and colonialists are in charge,

The unveiled girls smell of the West and envy the shameless. (Kureishi, Black Album 234)

Ironically, Riaz mocks at the lustful life of the West as he says in his speech: “My sentiments too. This sympathy for our people is as rare as an English virgin” (Kureishi, Black Album 181).

Riaz rejoices the most after the declaration of Ayatollah Khomeini’s fatwa against Salman Rushdie for writing The Satanic Verses (1988). Rushdie, according to Khomeini, insulted Muslim faith writing anti-Islamic contents in his novel, and that is why the Iranian leader declared death penalty. Obviously this made great news. In his book Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise, Akbar S. Ahmed has written that:

Muslims believed that the Prophet and his family were insulted and the authenticity of the Qur’an challenged. Ayatollah Khomeini elevated the Muslim response into an international affair by issuing a fatwa, a
declaration, condemning the author, Salman Rushdie, to death; then, by dying, Ayatollah left the issue suspended in mid-air to eternity; no Iranian could revoke or cancel it. (2)

In fact, The Black Album is written as a response to this fatwa against Salman Rushdie. In the novel, the protest is conveyed through the story of a group of Muslim students headed by Riaz and their involvement in the firebombing of a bookshop which stocked The Satanic Verses. It is an indication of resistance by Muslim “brothers” against Salman Rushdie for hurting the religious sentiments of the Muslims. According to Riaz and his cohort, a suitable action should be taken against him. During the time of preparation for the book to be burnt, Riaz tells Shahid that the best kind of punishment for Rushdie is: “Stone dead. That is the least I would do to him.” (Kureishi, Black Album 172). This man obviously sees the West as a threat to his fundamentalist beliefs, and is evidently capable of using violence to defend them.

Riaz’s grievances against Salman Rushdie for writing anti-Islamic contents in his novel is further revealed during the time of his speech in front of the other members of the group. Actually, the members gather in Riaz’s room in order to know the results of the ‘meeting’ in which Riaz has conversed with Mr. Brownlow and Mr. George Rugman Rudder, the leader of the Labour Party about the problems of the people of the minority community in England. Riaz, in brief, conveys them the message that there is hope of improvement and shifts his topic of discussion from it to “other filthy matter” (Kureishi, Black Album 181) that is about fiction. Hinting at Salman Rushdie’s the controversial novel The Satanic Verses which misrepresents the life of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his wives; Riaz tries to convince them that the fiction is nothing but a distortion of fact. He addresses the group and says:
You see, all fiction is, by its very nature, a form of lying – a perversion of truth. Isn’t the phrase “telling stories” used when children tell lies? There are harmless, perverted tales, of course, which make us chuckle. They pass the time when we have nothing to do. But there are many fictions that expose a corrupt nature. These are created by authors, who cannot, we might say, hold their ink. These yarn-spinners have usually grovelled for acceptance to the white elite so they can be considered “great authors”. They like to pretend they are revealing the truth to the masses – these uncultured, half-illiterate fools. But they know nothing of the masses. The only poor people they meet are their servants. And so, really, they are appealing to what is filthy in us. It is easy to do. Dirt attracts us.” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 182)

He continues,

And as one would deprecate a disrespectful nature in another person, it is impossible to see how such a spectacle could be valued as literature ... ‘After all, for what higher purpose can such literature possibly exist?’ (Kureishi, *Black Album* 183)

Gradually, Riaz tries to ignite the minds of the other members of the group against such writers, who, like Salman Rushdie misrepresent the life of the Prophet in particular and Islam in general. Riaz criticises such authors, for they lead an isolated life away from the masses. He even cites example in order to increase the degree of their rage against those authors. Riaz draws their attention and says:

We are discussing here the free and unbridled imagination of men who live apart from the people ... And these corrupt, disrespectful natures,
wallowing in their own juices, must be caged as if they were dangerous carnivores. Do we want more wild lions and rapists stalking our streets? After all, he went on, ‘if a character comes into your house and spits out that your mother and sister are whores, wouldn’t you chuck him from your door and do bad things to him? Very bad things?’ There were many smiles. ‘And isn’t this what such books do?’ (Kureishi, *Black Album* 183)

Moreover, he adds:

Must we prefer this indulgence to the profound and satisfying comforts of religion? Surely, if we cannot take the beliefs of millions of people seriously, what then? We believe nothing! We are animals living in a cesspool, not humans in a liberal society ... To me these truths about the importance of faith and concern for others are deeper than the ravings of one individual imagination ... Up to a point. And then no further. Is there one society in which any individual can be allocated unlimited freedom? Anyhow, we must now move forward ... We have to discuss what action we will be taking against this book. (Kureishi, *Black Album* 184)

Riaz and his group members stick to their decision of burning the controversial book *The Satanic Verses*. Though, Shahid tries to escape from the book burning scene but, the circumstances here forced him to attend it:

It was before lunch on a fine and normal day; classes were full. Soon everyone would pile out into the playground. And there he’d [Shahid] be, guarding the flame with brother Riaz, Chad and the others ...
wanted to cooperate now, giving himself over to bitter nihilism, destruction and hatred. (Kureishi, *Black Album* 220)

According to Riaz’s instruction the students gather at the playground of the college which has been “chosen” “as the site” to burn the book, and “cheers” and “shouts” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 222) with joy. While Hat tries to make the students calm down by escorting the people into the playground, Mr. Brownlow spreads his helping hands to him. As soon as the playground is filled with the students “Chad strung the book on the pole and thrust it into the air” and “Hat poured petrol over the pages” (222). Without prior permission of the college authority, they have opted for “such a demonstration”, under the leadership of Riaz. Shahid, who, too is involved in it “wanted to witness every page in flames” (222).

Chad tilted the book. Its pages quivered in the breeze like birds’ wings. Hat thrust a lighter into them ... People hooted and clamoured as if they were at a fireworks display. Fists were raised at the flaming bouquet of the book. And ... Sadiq began cheering; so did Hat, Tariq and the others, their pleasures undiluted. (Kureishi, *Black Album* 225)

While celebrating the burning of the controversial book, Shahid’s friends have been watching him closely. Shahid tries to keep himself away from their sight but he fails to “evade their eyes” especially Hat’s eyes, who observes him from a distance having a pale look: “Shahid looked away immediately, with a guilty expression, as if he weren’t enjoying it as much as he should ... It wasn’t as if he felt nothing, like many of the people looking on. If anything, he felt ashamed.” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 225).

In the midst of all these, Riaz presents his speech in front of the crowd very artistically. The success in the mission leads to the shout of the curious students who
are impatient to listen to Riaz’s speech. On the other hand “Riaz was his usual ironical self, pausing deftly while building his standard argument about the crimes committed by whites against blacks and Asians in the name of freedom. God, like a fair wind, was assisting him” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 224).

While Riaz and the other members of his group were rejoicing during the time of the book burning process, Shahid remained passive despite his help to his leader by bringing ‘a boom and some strings’ for the purpose. It is so because Shahid doesn’t support the burning of the book *The Satanic Verses*. But, at the same time he doesn’t have the guts to protest against it. “This isn’t right,’ Shahid said to someone beside him. ‘What’s happening to our community?’” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 225) Whereas to the other members of the group “it [is] only a book” and, thus, they seek pleasure from the book burning demonstration: “A shiver flared through the chapters; scorched pages whirled across the crowd. One paragraph took off towards Kilburn, several pages flew towards the Westbourne Park; half the cover went straight up” (225). It’s only after the arrival of some policemen at the spot that the mass begins to scatter in every direction. It is Deedee Osgood, who calls for the police.

Riaz and his group members, then, gather at the mosque to discuss anything and everything related to the issue in order to take the final decision. But the question arises whether the college authorities would be able to punish those revolutionary students, who have taken part in the book burning ‘demonstration’:

The college principal would have to castigate the book-burners, but Shahid doubted if she’d take further action, for fear of exacerbating the situation. She’d long been suspicious of Riaz’s group, but, afraid of accusations of racism, she’d secured them a prayer room and
otherwise avoided them, even when their posters were inflammatory.

(Kureishi, *Black Album* 226)

After the incident of the burning of Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*, Riaz has become famous especially in media for his notorious deed. The producer of late-night programme has invited Riaz on television to “give his opinion” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 242) about the burning of book in public. “For those TV people Riaz is a fascinating freak. They’ve never met anyone like that before. He could end up with his own chat show” (242-43).

In *The Black Album*, the fear of racial discrimination has created an additional panic in the minds of the fundamentalists especially of Pakistani origin. Riaz becomes furious at the news that the Whites have attacked a Pakistani family. The “culprits” have attacked both husband and wife and “smashed” the head of one and “punched” the other. Moreover, they have threatened the family by saying that “they would return to slaughter the children” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 90). This incident hurts Riaz so much that he takes the matter very seriously and tries to sort out the problem as soon as possible. He leaves no stone unturned to help the victims. He seeks the help of the council, Mr. George Rugman Rudder and has decided to shift the family to a “Bengali estate” which too is not possible instantly. “So Riaz had taken action. Until the family moved, he would guard the flat and seek out the culprits, along with Hat, Chad, Shahid and other boys and girls from the college” (90). Accordingly, Riaz along with other members of his group has reached the victim’s flat to guard the family from further attack. The weapons that they have taken with them are something like “clattered cricket bats, clubs, knuckle-dusters, carving knives and meat cleavers” (90). In fact, Riaz is trying every possible way to defend the people of his community. In spite of the fact that Riaz has been “risking his life” (109) to protect
the harassed couple, Deedee considers him as the “worst” (108) human being because he “maintained his unpopular individuality” (109). In support of her view/statement she says that:

Riaz was kicked out of his parents’ house for denouncing his own father for drinking alcohol. He also reprimanded him for praying in his armchair and not on his knees. He told his friends that if one’s parents did wrong they should be thrown into the raging fire of hell. (Kureishi, Black Album 109)

However, Shahid respects Riaz. The influence of Riaz over Shahid is reflected through the latter’s conversation with Deedee Osgood. Shahid is not ready to agree with Deedee’s criticism of Riaz and, considers Riaz as one of the “kindest” (Kureishi, Black Album 109) man. In order to justify Riaz’s deeds, Shahid says to Deedee that:

‘Some people have anger and passionate beliefs. Without that nothing could get done’ ... ‘The thing is, Deedee, clever white people like you are too cynical. You see through everything and rip everything to shreds but you never take any action. Why would you want to change anything when you already have everything your way?’... ‘But we’re the victims here! And when we fight you say we’re getting worked up about nothing! You sit smoking dope all day and abuse people who actually take action!’ (Kureishi, Black Album 110)

Chad, the “adopted” son of a British couple whose mother was a “racist”, suffers from identity crisis from the very early stage of his life which he has realised after attaining the age of a ‘teenager’. He shares Riaz’s view. He also expresses concerns about being despised by the Westerners. He recalls how he is neglected and
rejected both in Pakistan as well as in Britain. This feeling of “exclusion”, in particular, torments him to such a great extent that “he wanted to bomb them”:

> When he got to be a teenager he saw he had no roots, no connections with Pakistan, couldn’t even speak the language. So he went to Urdu classes. But when he tried asking for the salt in Southall everyone fell about at his accent. In England white people looked at him as if he were going to steal their car or their handbag, particularly as he dressed like a ragamuffin. But in Pakistan they looked at him even more strangely. Why should he be able to fit into a Third World theocracy? (Kureishi, *Black Album* 107)

Chad’s attempts to “find a place” in the Labour Party with a hope to survive smoothly, too was in vain because “it was too racist and his anger was too much” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 108). At last, he joins in the radical group led by Riaz. Since then, he doesn’t even want to be called a Pakistani, though his birth place is Pakistan. Chad claims that he is “no more Paki” but “me a Muslim” (128). He is contented with his present identity and would love to live the rest of his life maintaining the same. He becomes an active member of the group and tries to put every instruction of his leader into action.

> Like Riaz, his leader, Chad too expresses his joy at the news of Ayatollah Khomeini’s fatwa against Salman Rushdie. According to him such step should have been taken against the author much earlier. He says, “That book been around too long without action. He insulted us all—the prophet, the prophet’s wives, his whole family. It’s sacrilege and blasphemy. Punishment is death. That man going down the chute” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 169).
Chad’s religious orientation is also reflected as he “held on to him [Shahid] as if he had to save him” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 80) and says:

Take me seriously! We are not dancing monkeys. We have minds and sense. Why do we want to reduce ourselves to the level of animals? I am not descended from an ape but from something noble! You’ll find yourself looking deeper into things. Aren’t you with us? (Kureishi, *Black Album* 80)

Like a follower of Islam, Chad further unburdens his heart in front of Shahid. He says, “‘We are slaves to Allah ... He is the only one we must submit to! He put our noses on our face’ ... ‘Our stomach, for instance. How can you deny his skill and power and authority?’” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 80). Hinting at Shahid’s illicit relationship with Deedee, Chad says to Shahid that “I don’t, Chad, you know I don’t. And you know I respect you as a brother too, that’s why I’m asking you to stop!” (80). Chad pursues Shahid further to go to the mosque (Shahid had already visited twice before) to “watch Riaz’s Sunday talks” with a hope that Riaz’s speech might have made an impression on Shahid’s mind; which would lead to the solidarity of “our trust with Allah” (80) but who cares.

Then, during the time of the book burning process Chad’s “severe look” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 169) to Shahid for the latter’s liberal outlook hints at his wholehearted support of fundamentalism. Chad is not only “enjoying the moment” with great joy, but also shares it with others. Chad, too, doesn’t like the encroachment of other in their work. Nobody has the right, not even Deedee Osgood has the right to insult them. Deedee’s interference in book burning incident makes Chad very angry. He has dubbed her as hypocritical: “She is against authority yet tried to have us
arrested” (228). According to Chad, she is “trying to show us up in front of everyone” that they have been celebrating “wrong occasion” (229). He further says to Shahid: “Don’t underestimate our power! If we took your advice, we’d never do nothin’, ’cept lie down like pussy cats with our legs in the air!” (230)

Since the time Chad had come in contact with Shahid at the restaurant owned by Hat’s father, the former pursues the latter. During the meeting referred to earlier, Chad’s hasty entry at the restaurant not only interrupts the conversation that takes place between Riaz and Shahid but also creates further panic in Shahid. Out of that fright Shahid reveals in front of them: “I wanted to be a racist” (Kureishi, Black Album 10).

In order to make their group effort successful, Chad tries to convince Shahid about the role and duties of the Muslim ‘brothers’ towards Islam. In the name of religion, Chad tries to divert Shahid’s attention by sowing the seeds of fundamentalism in his mind slowly and steadily. Though they have taken formal leave of each other at the restaurant at their first meeting, but shortly after their departure from there, Chad knocks at the door of Shahid to meet him personally. The motive behind his meeting is to examine Shahid closely in order to know his attitude towards Islam and his feelings about the ‘brothers’ of his community. Chad’s intention is to arouse in him the feeling of fundamentalism. Very shrewdly, Chad wants to know from Shahid, his opinion about Riaz immediately after entering the latter’s room. Getting a positive response from him, Chad slowly reveals his inner self by disclosing the secret plan, the blueprint of which is designed by Riaz: “I’ve been keeping away these last few days because there’s some project special to his [Riaz’s] heart he has to complete. I know he’ll offer me first look soon – it nearing the end. But he’s not working too hard?” (Kureishi, Black Album 13) Chad’s convincing speech makes
Shahid so confident that he promptly reacts saying “he’s at it all the time” (13) as if he has concrete knowledge about the whole plan. Such prompt reaction of Shahid without any hesitation reflects his straightforward self. But at the same time it also shows the flexibility of Shahid’s character for showing confidence without having any prior knowledge of “exactly what he’s [Riaz] working on” (Kureishi, Black Album 13). Chad tries to appease Shahid by reminding him about his desire to be “a racist” (10). Recalling the whole incident that has taken place in the recent past, Chad says to Shahid, “What you said in the cafe – it touch [es] my heart right through” (14).

Moreover, Chad’s blind support for Riaz as an ideal leader is clearly reflected through his excessive submissiveness that makes him like “a dog without a master” (Kureishi, Black Album 218). But Chad doubts Shahid’s loyalty towards the leader and his duty and responsibility towards the radical organization of which they are part. He reveals his suspicion in front of Shahid pointing at the latter’s effortless life and says:

But I do know that, unlike you, I [am] not a coward ... Because you are always talking, never taking action! And you know why? Because you had an easy life! That shit you tol’ me the first day, you invent it to make yourself interesting! Oh, yeah, I know how much you are a liar.

Actions will be taken! (Kureishi, Black Album 219)

Chad does not like Western music and he reveals it in front of Shahid that: “Pop music is not good for me. Nor for anyone. Why are you making me think about that now?” (Kureishi, Black Album 19) Music is a grey area in Islam. But Chad dislikes the Western music or rather music in general. His hatred for the Western music and culture is so strong that he wants others also to avoid it. In this context Maria
Degabriele aptly says that “Kureishi represents this Islamic rejection of pop culture and postmodernity as something that is founded on a rejection of Western imperialism” (Degabriele). Here lies the clash between the Western cultures of the postmodern era with that of the Islamic fundamentalism. Chad’s adverse opinion about the West is further revealed when he says to Shahid that: “It’s true, people in the West, they think they’re so civilized an’ educated an’ superior, and ninety per cent of them read stuff you wouldn’t wipe your arse on” (Kureishi, Black Album 21). Chad pursues Shahid very often to convince the latter about the authenticity of Islam and the purpose of their mission. He reminds Shahid about Almighty Allah, who has created human beings with a purpose. He tries to convince Shahid that mere merrymaking would make life worthless/meaningless because “there’s more to life than entertaining ourselves!” (21) He further says to Shahid that:

“We are people who say one important thing - that pleasure and self-absorption isn’t everything! ... One pleasure – unless there are strong limits – can only lead to another. And the greater the physical pleasure, the less respect for the other person and for oneself. Until we become beasts.” (Kureishi, Black Album 128)

Chad’s hatred for the Western culture and socialism is further reflected. He points out the drawbacks of that society and tries to convince Shahid: “It’s hell-fire for disbelievers, you know that” (Kureishi, Black Album 81). Chad fails to influence Shahid with his speech. Finding no way out and the situation going out of his control, Chad reveals his own full support for the group by patting on Shahid’s shoulder. Simultaneously, he tells “something else” to Shahid that is how “our people” (82) suffer racial attack. Under such a circumstance Shahid cannot but join the group, though the decision is against his will.
Chad condemns Deedee Osgood because she has taken a Muslim girl, who has been “twisted against the truth” by the postmodernists “into hiding”. According to Chad, “The young girl was forced to say the religion treats women as second-class citizens” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 229). Chad further elaborates upon the point by saying: “Would I dare to hide a member of Osgood’s family in my house and fill her with propaganda? If I did, what accusations? Terrorist! Fanatic! Lunatic! We can never win. The imperialist idea hasn’t died” (229). The primary reason behind Chad’s grievance against Deedee Osgood is her belief in the postmodern ideology which clashes with the ideology of Islam. Another reason behind Chad’s anger against Osgood is her involvement in “some escort work” (113), which she had reluctantly shared with Shahid earlier:

Those days London was full of Arabs, who thought they liked girls ...

We sat in their apartments all night ... There’d be piles of it [money], hundreds of pounds on my bedside fable. Like cocaine, you could feel it drifting through your fingers, blown away on clothes, eating out, [and] drugs. Until ... until one of the other women gave me an article by Gloria Steinem. It was an account of becoming a Playboy bunny.

(Kureishi, *Black Album* 114)

Chad’s extreme concern about his community arouses in him the desire to fight against any kind of injustice and “degradation of our people” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 82) irrespective of any time and place. He personally supports Riaz wholeheartedly to fulfil his mission, but at the same time he wants a number of other people from his community to join them. He reminds about the punishment to those who would hesitate to join in the mission, as he says that: “Anybody who fails to fight will answer to God and hell-fire!” (82)
Chad and Riaz soften the heart of Shahid through their impressive speeches, which help Shahid to get into “the spirit of the thing” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 83). Shahid becomes so much emotional by the speech of the duo that “his blood was warming; he felt a physical pride in their cause, whatever it was” (83).

Chad’s straightforward self, pious outlook and sincerity towards his duty as a Muslim is revealed when he says to Shahid that: “We have journeyed beyond sensation, to a spiritual and controlled conception of life. We regard others on the basis of respect, not thinking what we can use them for. We work for others, which is what we [are] doing right here now” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 129). The confidence level of Chad is very high. He has firm faith in the dictates of his religion. He believes firmly that if they abide by the Shari’ah law of Islam, they can easily save themselves from any and every kind of bad influences. Pointing at the degrading Western culture and the bad influences of the West, Chad says to Shahid that:

> If we stick to this ... however they try to corrupt us, we can resist ... It a serious business but Allah is beside us. What could be wrong with such an idea of pure living ... A man is more advanced, surely, if he conquers himself, rather than submits to every desire? (Kureishi, *Black Album* 129)

Chad’s inclination towards fundamentalism is further exposed through his conversation with Hat. Hat’s father, who has a restaurant, wants his son to become an accountant. But according to Hat’s father Chad and the other friends of Hat belonging to the radical group come on his way as obstacles and are preventing Hat from pursuing his goal. In fact, Chad doesn’t discourage Hat directly to fulfil the desire of his father “to be an accountant” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 91). But at the same time he
doesn’t encourage the daily life style of an accountant, too. While working in the office as an accountant, one has to work together with women. It is one of the major reasons which according to Chad is objectionable. He has unburdened his heart by revealing such feelings in front of Hat:

He think[es] we [are] stopping Hat being an accountant. But we ain’t. We only say accountants have to meet many women. And shake hands with them. They expected, too, to take alcohol every day and get involved in interest payments. We not sure Hat won’t feel left out, you know?" (Kureishi, *Black Album* 91)

Hat also works actively with the other members of the group. Being a part of a radical organization, he keeps strict vigilance of the forthcoming danger that might cause harm to the organization. He obeys his leader Riaz and does his duty sincerely. To be abided by the order of his leader, Hat got ready to help the victims of the racial attack. He along with Shahid takes the family to a safer place that is to a near-identical flat in Bengali area. “Hat had fetched some speakers from his bedroom and borrowed a college microphone”(Kureishi, *Black Album* 222). But Shahid’s indifferent attitudes and activities create doubt in Hat’s mind. It puts question mark on Shahid’s sincerity towards the given task as well as towards the organization. “What’s the problem, Shahid, boy? A few of us notice you get moody. Someone said you [are] hiding something” (168).

Hat is very faithful so far as his responsibility towards the group is concerned. He verifies Shahid’s motive regarding the “original manuscript” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 233) that Riaz has given to Shahid for typing “in good faith” (234). To his surprise, Hat comes to know that Shahid doesn’t do it accordingly. Shahid says to Hat
during the time of their conversation that: “I wouldn’t put them into print! I wouldn’t mix it up with religious words....” (234). Such a statement of Shahid has increased Hat’s doubt upon him. It makes Hat angry so much that he cannot but say to Shahid: “You [are] a raving evil spirit and a double-agent working for some other people!” (234)

Unlike Shahid who doesn’t “know” if he is “believing anything at all at the moment?” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 235). Hat is contented with the way of life Islam permits. Hat warns Shahid reminding the latter about the authenticity of the religion of Islam. “Good. But our religion isn’t something you can test out, like trying on a suit to see if it fit! You gotta buy the whole outfit!” (235). Though Tahira, one of the members of Riaz’s group does not have faith in Shahid, whom she thinks as “an egotist with an evil smile” (235); but the rest of them including the leader “trusted” (235) him. But, now, Hat too, doubts Shahid. According to him Shahid’s indifferent attitude might have affected the organization. Though Hat converses with Shahid in a friendly manner, at the same time he remains alert in order to track the latter’s next plan.

Hat, too, like his leader Riaz criticizes the practice of homosexuality in black and white terms. He hates gays as his leader does but with a little mercy on them. According to him “homosexuals should be beheaded, though first they should be offered the option of marriage” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 119).

Sadiq’s role is very little so far as the storyline of the novel is concerned. However, he too adores political Islam and is an active member of Riaz’s group. His contribution in the book burning process cannot be ignored because “Sadiq had obtained a can of petrol” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 222) for burning *The Satanic Verses*. 
So far as Tahira is concerned, she too is not free from the influence of fundamentalism. To abide by Riaz’s instruction Tahira along with Shahid has already purchased “a broom and some string” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 220) for the purpose of book burning. However, Tahira’s polite refusal to carry those to their leader compels Shahid to do the same by himself. While carrying those, Shahid has come across Deedee Osgood behind the building on his way to the playground where the demonstration is going to be held. To which, Deedee Osgood has shown much curiosity to know from Shahid the reasons behind the arrangement of such things. Tahira, who watches them from a distance, is witness to this incident. Tahira also puts forward her opinion against Deedee Osgood for the latter’s interference in the book burning incident. She extends her support to Riaz to remove Deedee Osgood from the latter’s position for attacking on minority and says: “And today she has prevented us from free expression. Isn’t that racist censorship?” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 229)

Nina, too, like Tahira is a minor woman character in the novel *The Black Album* and is a member of the same radical organization of which Tahira is a part. She also works according to the instructions of Riaz, the group leader. She not only participates in the book burning process by herself but also distributes “leaflets” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 222) along with the other members of the group so that other students of the college might take part in it. It shows Nina’s active involvement in the organization and her devotion towards the same.

The other members of the group have also played their part effectively in the book burning process in one way or the other: “Meanwhile, other brothers and sisters were distributing leaflets in the canteen, on the stairwells, in the common room, and had been posted outside classrooms as the students broke for lunch” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 222).
This is how Kureishi has shown only one side of the fundamentalist character in *The Black Album* (as well as in “My Son the Fanatic” which will be discussed afterwards). In an interview to Colin Maccabe, he agrees:

Well, I like to think that I do, and also in the film “My Son the Fanatic,” I like to feel that, in so far as I can, the characters are sympathetically portrayed. And that this is an argument worth having and there are points on both sides. But I suppose that in the end I would betray the fact that I don't like fundamentalists, and fundamentalists don't like writers. So, you know, there is going to be a kind of animosity between us from the start.... (Maccabe 54)

Zulma is neither a part of any radical organization nor does she support it but, still she shows her aversion towards the fashion of the West. Being born and brought up in a cultured Pakistani family, she follows the Islamic way of life and is clad in burqa when she goes out in public. She criticises the short fashionable dresses worn by women in the Western society. She is fed up with her husband Chili’s extravagant way of leading a life. But at the same time, she doesn’t like Shahid’s involvement in any radical organization. She is surprised to see Shahid in “a political meeting” in which the topic of discussion is related to “the fatwa” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 185). The participation of Shahid, who “used to be so shy about everything”, in such a meeting with some “bloody students” (186) of his college is really beyond her comprehension. It makes Zulma worry to such an extent that her “concern” for him increases. And thus, she warns Shahid not to fall into “a religious framework” (187). At Shahid’s refusal to it, Zulma wants to know the reason behind his attachment to it: “Why, then, are you spending all your time with those religious fools?” (190) It shows that Zulma neither appreciates the Western culture nor does she encourage violence or
any political organization in the name of religion. She is, even, shocked to know from Charles Jump, a Christian by religion, who pokes his nose into their conversation and says to Shahid:

‘Isn’t it a fact that you have joined the militant Muhammadans?’...
‘Because I’m telling you, we know they are entering France through Marseilles and Italy through the south. Soon they will be seeping through the weakened Communist regions, into the heart of civilized Europe, often posing as jewellery statesmen while accusing us of prejudice and bigotry’. (Kureishi, *Black Album* 190)

Mr. Charles Jump further says: “You will slit the throats of us infidels as we sleep. Or convert us. Soon books ... and ... bacon will be banned. Isn’t that what you people want?” but “surely, this invasion of terrorists must be eradicated from society like a disease?” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 191) In order to detach Shahid from any religious organization and to save their family “business”, Zulma insists him to “take charge” (191) of it till the time Chili is not moved. She has become fed up with her husband’s careless attitude towards life and decides to go back to Karachi with her little daughter Safire. But she fails to convince Shahid as the latter wants to continue studies to fulfil his father’s desire: “Papa wanted me to be educated. Fools irritated him. He liked people with vigour, conviction and intelligence” (190).

Zulma, being brought up in the conservative Pakistani culture dislikes wearing miniskirts or any kind of short dresses. This “light skinned beautiful” woman avoids such fashionable dresses and even doesn’t like others to wear such type of dress. That’s why she would like to complain to her husband Chili about Shahid that: “Why
are his girlfriends so badly dressed and mousy? Can’t he find a beautiful Pakistani girl?” (Kureishi, Black Album 83)

However, One of the obvious reasons behind the failure of the European ideas in winning the hearts of most of the Pakistani characters in the novel, apart from pride and fear of losing faith and established values, is that they see that the Western people themselves have neglected what West signifies to them. In this context Christopher Butler states that postmodernism mirrors a “general loss of confidence within Western democratic culture” (Postmodernism a Very Short Introduction 110). In The Black Album, the essence of Butler’s view of existing postmodern indifference is captured by the speech of Mr. Brownlow, who appreciates the actions of Riaz and his group members including the “women” members in the following words:

They’re just standing by their miserable class. When have they ever given a damn about you – the Asian working class – and your struggle? Your class is arguing back. No one will colonize you, put you down or insult you in your own country. And the liberals – always the weakest and most complacent people – are shitting their pants, because you threaten their power. Liberalism cannot survive these forces. And if you meet any of them, be sure to tell them that their pants are going to be on fire pretty soon. (Kureishi, Black Album 215)

This very person who had earlier informed Riaz that Mr. George Rugman Rudder, the leader of the Labour Party “wanted” to “support the Islamic school, which is definitely on Riaz’s agenda” (Kureishi, Black Album 241) because “he’s [Mr. Rudder] succeeded brilliantly on our behalf” (177), now informs Shahid that the whole thing turns upside down after the demonstration of the burning of The Satanic Verses.
Subsequently, the whole community suffers due to the crime committed by a few people of the community.

IV

The clash of Islamic Ideology with Marxism is also evident in *The Black Album*. Hanif Kureishi has shown the differences between the two ideologies through the confrontation between Riaz and Dr. Andrew Brownlow. Dr. Andrew Brownlow, who is “a Marxist-Communist-Leninist type”, teaches history in the same college in which Riaz studies and is actively involved in politics:

The Marxists, too, were finding the issue of the fatwa difficult. It was only partly a coincidence that Islamic fundamentalism came to the west in the year that other great cause, Marxist-communism, disappeared. The character of the stuttering socialist teacher in *The Black Album* was partly inspired by some of the strange convolutions of the disintegrating Left. (Hanif)

Mr. Brownlow makes a great effort to come to terms with the fall of communism. He supports Riaz’s ideology and considers him and his own politics as the apt successors of the working class fight. Brownlow’s communist bent of mind is unmistakable:

He come[s] from the upper-middle-classes. He could have done any fine thing. They wanted him at Havard. Or was it Yale ... He refused them places down. Yeah, he tol’ them to get lost. He hated them all, his own class, his parents – everything. He come[s] to this college to help us, the underprivileged niggers and wogs an’ margin people. He is not a bad guy – for a Marxist-Communist. (Kureishi, *Black Album* 32)
He is very “strong on anti-racism”, condemns racism and more than that “he hate[s] imperialist fascism and white domination” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 32). This outlook of Mr. Brownlow encourages Riaz and the other remembers of his group because his ideology resembles partly with their ideology. Even, Riaz and Chad come forward and praise the Marxist approach. But at the same time the question of compatibility of this ideology with the ideology of Islam, prevents them from supporting it. “Communism. What a good idea, don’t you think? Riaz said ... He went on, ‘But in the end atheism doesn’t really suit humanity” (33). He adds, “Atheism won’t last ... Without religion society is impossible. And without God people think they can sin with impunity. There’s no morality” (33). Riaz further adds: “Gluttony, nihilism, hedonism – capitalism in a nutshell. Along with it, we are witnessing the twilight of Communism. Those revolutionaries weren’t even able to achieve socialism in one room. Altogether we are seeing the shrivelling of atheism” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 33).

Chad, too, supports Riaz’s view and says that: “There’s only extremity and ingratitude and hard-heartedness, like beneath this Thatcherism” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 33). He continues pointing at the atheist that: “They been saying God dead. But it [is] being the other way round. Without the Creator no one knows where they are or what they [are] doin’” (33). He further adds: “You know ... without God-consciousness you can get away with everything. And when that happens you’re lost. Now I know God is watching me. With him seeing every single damn thing, I have to be pretty careful about what I’m up to” (34).

Despite such a wide difference in their ideologies, Brownlow supports the mission of Riaz’s group who have been trying to protect the Pakistani victims from further attack by the British “lunatics” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 93) wholeheartedly.
He applauds them for raising voice against such attack. “Brownlow opened his arms expansively, as if he wanted to embrace everyone” (93). Riaz and other fellow students of his group fight to rescue “our brothers” who are the victims of racism. Dr. Brownlow supports them out of sympathy as well as to protest “crimes against humanity” (93). His speech is based on the communist ideology. Pointing at the heinous deeds of the “immoral people” that surrounds them, Dr. Brownlow says that “it’s obvious not surprising” (93) and that is exactly what one can expect from such ‘lunatics’. Very aptly, Dr. Brownlow says in front of the group of students that it is “important to visit wastelands regularly” (93), which would help one to realize the reality in such places and under such conditions.

Brownlow further criticizes the capitalist class that rules over the underdogs. Favouring the working class people, Brownlow has expressed his sympathy for them in helpless manner. He says: “The people here can’t oppose the corporations ... Powerless, they are. Badly fed. Uneducated and unemployed. Can’t make jobs from hope” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 94-95). Contrarily, Riaz does not agree with Dr. Brownlow. During the time of their conversation “on their night-watch” (96), Riaz discards Dr. Brownlow’s view by citing the example of the “Third World” (95) countries which are still underdeveloped where the people are even deprived of the basic requirement of day to day life like “electricity” (95). But the people living in those countries are not ‘racist’. Riaz further gives the example ‘Soweto’ where the condition of the people is miserable to such a great extent that “they dream of having fridges, televisions, cookers!” But, “… are the people racist skinheads, car thieves, rapists? Have they desired to dominate the rest of the world? No, they are humble, good, hard-working people who love Allah!” (95)
Interestingly, Dr. Brownlow, a staunch supporter of communism, once reveals in front of Shahid and Riaz that “often wished ... in my adult life, sometimes becoming desperate, that I could be religious” (Kureishi, Black Album 96). But he has failed to convert that idea into action. Being an atheist, he doesn’t believe that “would be marvellous to believe that soon after death ... one will slip – I mean, sip – grapes, melon, and virgins in paradise” (96-97). On the contrary, he makes fun of those who believe in the concept of heaven and hell: “Wonderful on one’s knees. Existing in an imaginary realm ruled by imaginary beings. Wonderful to have all rules of life delivered from on high. What to eat. How to wipe your bottom ... How abhorrent too! The slave of superstition” (97). Brownlow’s “counter-attack” through such anti-Islamic remark hurts Riaz greatly but he is not “disconcerted” by it. Contrarily, Riaz “looked on with the confidence of a class player who has anticipated the next moves.” (97) Furthermore, Riaz’s manner of retaliation dumbfounded Brownlow:

‘Please excuse me ... you are a little arrogant ... Your liberal beliefs belong to a minority who live in northern Europe. Yet you think moral superiority over the rest of mankind is a fact. You want to dominate others with your particular morality, which has – as you also well know – gone hand-in-hand with fascist imperialism ... This is why we have to guard against the hypocritical and smug intellectual atmosphere of Western civilization’. (Kureishi, Black Album 98-99)

It is politics that has affected Andrew Brownlow’s relationship with his wife Deedee Osgood, and ultimately it leads them to split up. “May be they would never see each other again; or if they did, they’d barely say hello” (Kureishi, Black Album 240).
The oppression suffered by women in a patriarchal society whether it is in the liberal Western society or the society dominated by the religious fundamentalists, is also evident in *The Black Album*. Tahira is an ideal example in this context. She wears Islamic dress like burqa and scarf which shows her obedience towards Islamic Shari’ah law. She vehemently criticizes the Western culture of the postmodern era as “our people have always been sexual objects for the whites. No wonder they hate our modesty” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 228). She, herself faces problems very often for wearing veil as it does not fit in the Western society where fashionable dresses that expose the body are welcomed. It leads to the clash of fundamentalism—Islamic and postmodern. For instance, during the time of her conversation with Chad, Tahira reveals that she is one among the several victims who suffers harassment for covering her body from head to feet. She says to Chad:

... We women go to a lot of trouble to conceal our allures. Surely you’ve heard how hard it is to wear the hijab? We are constantly mocked and reviled, as if we were the dirty ones. Yesterday a man on the street said, this is England, not Dubai, and tried to rip my scarf off. (Kureishi, *Black Album* 105)

But at the same time, she attacks the patriarchal society in general for imposing certain restrictions on them which are biased in nature. Pointing at Chad’s “tight trouser”, Tahira says to him that: “You brothers urge us to cover ourselves but become strangely evasive when it comes to your own clothes. Can’t you wear something looser?” (Kureishi, *Black Album* 105) She further reminds Chad that being
Muslim the latter should follow Islamic Shari’ah law properly. She asks Chad, “...aren’t you thinking of growing a beard?” (105)

VI

In fact, My Beautiful Laundrette (1985) is the first piece of Kureishi’s literary works that deals with the theme of fundamentalism and racial prejudices. In this screenplay, Kureishi has shown the tension between the British and the Pakistani immigrants in modern London. My Beautiful Laundrette is essentially not radical in nature but the cultural clash is evident in it. The main plot revolves around Omar, a young immigrant from Pakistan who starts laundry business in London with his gay British lover and sells drugs so as to earn money to support his other business. Majority of the characters in My Beautiful Laundrette are the immigrants from Pakistan and all of them belong to the Muslim community. In spite of the problem of racial prejudices, many of them are attracted to the West and their own culture becomes alien to them. They are not practical Muslims and the Western culture is dominant over their own. As a result the conflict between the two cultures occurs.

Omar, the young protagonist in My Beautiful Laundrette, born of Pakistani parents lived in a flat in South London. He is influenced greatly by the pop culture of the West. He is a frequent visitor of the club/bar owned by Anwar and “of course a table is always here for you” (Kureishi, My Beautiful Laundrette 33). He enjoys the music and drinks “champagne” there at the bar. He assists Salim in the illegal business of “powder”. He is “greedy” (36) like his uncle, who would like to accumulate more and more money. It leads him to commit a theft in a house along with his friend Johnny. Omar becomes so much engrossed by the Western culture that he utters the name of “Christ” (25) instead of Allah at difficult times.
Moreover, in *My Beautiful Laundrette*, Kureishi has shown the clash of fundamentalism—Islamic and postmodern through the protagonist’s involvement in homosexual relationship with Johnny, his co-worker in the laundrette business. Omar’s violation of the Islamic Shari’ah law shows that he is attracted to the West, Europe, or the Enlightenment. While returning home from Nasser’s house, they have come to the laundrette first and from there they part with each other with a warm hug and an obsessive kiss: “Johnny puts his arm round Omar. Omar turns to him and they kiss on the mouth. They kiss passionately and hold each other” (Kureishi, *My Beautiful Laundrette* 37). Then, again during the day of the inauguration of the laundrette “Omar touches him, asking him to hold” (43) and “... starts to unbutton Johnny’s shirt” (44) at the back room of the laundrette: “Omar and Johnny are making love vigorously, enjoying themselves thoroughly” (44).

Kureishi has depicted Omar’s Papa ‘the leftist communist socialist’, who was once “a famous journalist”, as a “great drinker” (Kureishi, *My Beautiful Laundrette* 21) in *My Beautiful Laundrette*. He develops the habit of drinking “vodka” routinely. In the past when he was young, he used to visit the bar and sometimes he comes back home along “with some women” (20). Omar’s uncle Nasser, too, drinks wine and has love for music. He has a “mistress” (22) named Rachel, though he has introduced her as his “old friend” (16).

Betting is also forbidden in Islam but, Nasser is involved in it during a horse race competition. “Nasser goes to the betting counter and hands over his betting slips. He also hands over a thick pile of money” whose face becomes pale with “disappointment” after his horse “Elvis loses the race” (Kureishi, *My Beautiful Laundrette* 49). He has already faced the racial attacks in the past like any other immigrants in England, and lives a worried life but still he prefers to stay there, rather
than going back to Pakistan. In order to justify his stay in England, Nasser says to his brother hinting at Pakistan that: “... that country has been sodomized by religion” (66).

Nasser’s daughter Tania too treads the same path. She tries to draw Omar’s attention from behind the window during the time of the latter’s visit to the former’s house. Without any hesitation “she bares her breasts” in order to “distract the serious-faced Omar” (Kureishi, *My Beautiful Laundrette* 21). Then, again during her visit at the laundrette on the day of the inauguration of the same, she is welcomed by Johnny by a kiss and she reciprocates without any hesitation. These mannerisms are the result of the influences of the Western culture on the girl.

Salim, another character of *My Beautiful Laundrette* has also come from Pakistan and lives along with his Anglo-Indian wife in their “large detached house” in South London. He, too, very often, utters the name of “Christ” (Kureishi, *My Beautiful Laundrette* 30) instead of Allah. He not only drinks wine but also “carries a bottle of whisky” (34) sometime during his visit to Nasser’s house. There, he plays “cards” (54) in the company of Nasser, Omar and Johnny. Salim too, uses abusive language. He mocks at Omar using the American slang saying the latter not to “fuck your uncle’s business” (35). He is a frequent visitor to the bar owned by Anwar where the latter’s son Tariq serve wine and other things to the customers.

VII

Apart from the screen play *My Beautiful Laundrette* and the novel *The Black Album*, Kureishi has also dealt with the theme of fundamentalisms in his short story “My Son the Fanatic” (1997). It shows Kureishi’s constant concern with the complex world of the clash between the Islamic fundamentalism and the Western values at this
time. Like that of *The Black Album* which touches on Islamic radicalism, this short story too, is about the fundamentalism of the youth, published in the short story collection *Love in a Blue Time* in 1997.

The play *My Beautiful Laundrette* and the novel *The Black Album* based on the same theme have prepared Kureishi sufficiently for a thorough and sustained treatment of Islamic fundamentalism in “My Son the Fanatic”. In this short story, the writer has shown the clash of fundamentalisms through Parvez a Pakistani taxi driver and his son, Ali. Parvez is assimilated into the Western culture of the postmodern age. Contrarily, Ali follows the Islamic rules strictly. “The fundamentalists in Kureishi’s stories are not first-generation immigrants, bemoaning a world that has been taken from them ... but their children, yearning for an Islam they have never known. It is less a clash of civilisations than a war of generations. The first generation desires material prosperity, the second seeks to fill a spiritual void” (Malik 201).

Parvez, though, a taxi driver but wants his son Ali to be an “accountant” (Kureishi, “My Son the Fanatic” 119). So, he works hard to earn sufficient money for his son’s bright career. But to Parvez’s surprise, Ali doesn’t like to be an accountant because of the following reasons: “Western education cultivates an anti-religious attitude. And, according to Ali, in the world of accountants it was usual to meet women, drink alcohol, and practise usury” (127). He takes such decision to avoid those things, which according to him are forbidden in Islam. This radical change in Ali, the protagonist of “My Son the Fanatic” makes his father suspicious about him. Parvez does not understand as to what makes his son to change so much. Initially, he is “bewildered” to see his son becoming “tidier” (119). So, he keeps on watching the other activities of Ali to “seek clues”:
... one day, beside the dustbin, Parvez found a torn bag which contained not only old toys, but computer discs, video tapes, new books and fashionable clothes the boy had bought just a few months before. Also without explanation, Ali had parted from the English girlfriend who used to come often to the house. His old friends had stopped ringing. (Kureishi, “My Son the Fanatic” 119)

Ali has also thrown away the “guitar” (Kureishi, “My Son the Fanatic” 119) and takes away his “pictures” (120) from the wall of his room. Ali has crossed the limits through his “unusual behaviour” which makes his father “slightly afraid” (119). Now, he doesn’t talk much and maintains “silences”. Even, he is “developing a sharp tongue”: “One remark Parvez did make, ‘You don’t play a guitar anymore,’ elicited the mysterious but conclusive reply, ‘There are more important things to be done’” (119).

In fact, Ali has done all this only to concentrates on his religion, Islam. He has successfully come out from the influences of the Western culture of the postmodern era and follows the dictates of his religion strictly. He is “growing a beard” (Kureishi, “My Son the Fanatic” 122) and “without fail, when he was at home, he prayed five times a day” (123). This shows his sincerity towards the religion. He believes that the “reward” is kept in “paradise” (126) for the true followers of Islam. He is contented with what he is at present and would like to carry it on in future too.

Ali, too, disapproves “the West” because it’s “a sink of hypocrites, adulterers, homosexuals, drug takers and prostitutes” (Kureishi, “My Son the Fanatic” 126). His utter helplessness compels him to be satisfied with the hope that the Islamic law might
rule the world in future and such practices would be resisted. He emphasises on the authenticity of the religion of Islam and says to his father that:

“The Law of Islam would rule the world; the skin of the infidel would burn off again and again; the Jews and Christers would be routed.”

(Kureishi, “My Son the Fanatic” 126)

Ali further says:

“My people have taken enough. If the persecution doesn’t stop there will be jihad. I, and millions of others, will gladly give our lives for the cause.” (Kureishi, “My Son the Fanatic” 126)

Contrarily, Ali’s father is engrossed in the Western culture. During his childhood in Lahore, Parvez had been taught the Qur’ān by a ‘Moulvi’. However, Parvez had “avoided all religions” since the day the “Moulvi had attached a piece of string to the ceiling and tied it to Parvez’s hair, so that if his head fell forward, he would instantly awake” (Kureishi, “My Son the Fanatic” 123). Parvez, has spent twenty years in England. He used to pass his leisure time together with the other Punjabi taxi driver by “playing cards” and “exchanging lewd stories” (120) apart from other modes of pastimes which are prohibited in Islam. And, now, after seeing his son’s “eccentricity” (119), he starts drinking “whisky” (120) and, “taking drugs” (121) very often which, too, is forbidden in Islam. He doesn’t make head or tail as what makes his son take “wrong turning” (120). But,

He didn’t, as his father expected, flinch guiltily from his gaze. In fact the boy’s mood was alert and steady in this sense: as well as being sullen, he was very watchful. He returned his father’s long looks with
more than a hint of criticism, of reproach even, so much so that Parvez began to feel that it was he who was in the wrong, and not the boy!

(Kureishi, “My Son the Fanatic” 122)

Ali accuses his father in the restaurant (where the latter has taken the former to the place) for not abiding by the Islamic Shari’ah and condemns his father’s sinful Western way of life and his drinking of alcohol. “In a low monotonous voice the boy explained that Parvez had not, in fact, lived a good life. He had broken countless rules of the Koran” (Kureishi, “My Son the Fanatic” 125). To support his statement, Ali has pointed out his father’s weaknesses in this regard. He witnessed the fact that earlier his father had “ordered his own wife to cook pork sausages” and “relish pork pies” (Kureishi, “My Son the Fanatic” 125). In addition to his father’s alcohol addiction and the involvement in “gambling” (124), Ali also questions his father’s friendship with Bettina, a prostitute who dares “laid her hand on Parvez’s shoulder” (130). Through all these, Parvez has violated the laws of the Qur’ān. Ali’s hatred for the West and its culture is reflected as he says to his father that: “The Western materialists hate us ... Papa how can you love something which hates you?” (126)

Being a radical Islamist, Ali wants his father to follow the Shari’ah of Islam strictly. He asks his father to “mend his way” (Kureishi, “My Son the Fanatic” 126) and, insists him to “have a beard” (127). Though, Ali’s father wants him to “enjoy yourself without hurting others”, Ali considers “enjoyment” as a “bottomless pit” (129). Ali is only concerned about “our people” who are “oppressed” (129) throughout the world. Ali does not agree with his father who believes “beauty of living” lies in entertainment and in goodness in everyday life. He says to his father with “aggressive confidence” that: “Real morality has existed for hundreds of years.
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Around the world millions and millions of people share my beliefs. Are you saying you are right and they are all wrong?” (Kureishi, “My Son the Fanatic” 129)

The major flaw in Ali’s character is that he ignores the Western education dubbing it as anti-Islamic. Indeed, it is not so. It is Ali’s lack of proper religious knowledge and the misguidance from the other Islamists who guide him that prompts him to say so. Moreover, Islam is a religion of peace but Ali is arrogant and violent. He doesn’t even “offer” his father his hand when the latter “stumbled and fell in the road” (Kureishi, “My Son the Fanatic” 127).

Bettina, a minor character in the story “My Son the Fanatic”, too, is the representative of the postmodern era. Her way of life suits the age. She is a very good friend of Parvez since the latter has saved her from an aggressive client. To keep pace with the contemporary period, she usually wears “short skirt” (Kureishi, “My Son the Fanatic” 130). Though, she is a prostitute but it doesn’t affect her friendship with Parvez. She guides Parvez with valuable suggestions with a hope to redeem Ali and tells her friend “what to watch for” (121). She earns Parvez’s confidence to such a great extent that the latter prefers to share the confidential matters with Bettina rather than to “discuss with his own wife” (127). But, Ali has objections to his father’s relationship with Bettina as she is a call girl who exposes her body and drinks wine too, which are not approved in Islam. When Ali affronts Bettina, Parvez becomes angry and hits his son who politely asks: “Who’s the fanatic now?” (131)

VIII

What characterizes Hanif Kureishi’s approaches is his belief in the power of literature as a social and cultural force. A thorough study of the author’s The Black Album reveals that there are options for the characters to choose between the two
options—Islamic and the postmodern. Shahid, the protagonist of The Black Album is involved in trivial things and the flexibility of his character weakens the main plot and structure of the novel to a certain extent. He is in dilemma: “He wanted to appear neutral but knew that wasn’t possible ... He was someone who couldn’t join in, couldn’t let himself go.” (Kureishi, Black Album 225). Kureishi’s portrayal of the Western culture of which Deedee Osgood is the embodiment with her love of ‘music’, ‘clothes’ and ‘men’ and, the freedom of ‘going out’ already mentioned above is comprehensive. Furthermore, Osgood’s frequent visits to a ‘pub’ and clubs, her yearning for dance in the rhythm of music, her sense of dressing like wearing “skirt” and other short dresses, her habits of consuming drugs, her involvement in prostitution and subsequently her illicit relationship with Shahid—all are aspects of the Western culture of the postmodern age that does not harmonize with Islam. Contrarily, Riaz and his group are of the opinion that West is at the moment tainted by postmodernism, and these immigrants from Pakistan are not quite ready to accept the postmodern view that one must “seek to live willy nilly in the presence of ambiguity, serendipity and relativity” (Naugle 8). To decide to join the secular West would then only imply losing faith and losing ethical sense. The thought of inferiority in comparison to the Westerners creates panic in them as Chad says to Shahid that:

Don’t he [Riaz] say we [are] becoming Western, European, socialist? And the socialists are all talk. They are paralysed now for food! Look at that slug Brownlow, for instance! Or his wife, that Osgood woman! ... They are existing at the lowest level! And we think we want to integrate here! But we must not assimilate, that way we lose our souls. We are proud and we are obedient. What is wrong with that? It’s not we who must change, but the world!’ (Kureishi, Black Album 81)
Maria Degabriele very aptly sums up this point: “As we have seen, to become secular is something that frightens many of the characters, while others are more afraid of feeling belittled by having to compare themselves to the Europeans.”

Similarly, the presentation of the clash between the ideology of Islam and the postmodern culture through the characters like Omar, Papa, Nasser, and Salim (who have succumbed to the postmodern culture) as depicted in My Beautiful Laundrette is praiseworthy. In “My Son the Fanatic”, the excessive attachment of Ali in Islamic faith contrary to his father Parvez, who is “too implicated in Western civilization” as he thinks “we have to fit in” (Kureishi, “My Son the Fanatic” 125) in England is equally praiseworthy.

Use of language is also presents a contrast between the worldviews of Western postmodernism culture and the culture of Islam. For instance, in The Black Album, Shahid, who has a little knowledge of his religion, is surprised at his ‘college professor’, Mr. Brownlow’s repeated use of the word “fuck” (Kureishi, Black Album 213). Similarly, in My Beautiful Laundrette, Omar’s father very often uses the taboo words even to his son when he gets angry. His uncle Nasser funnily asks him once if his “penis works” (Kureishi, My Beautiful Laundrette 46) and at some other time when Omar comes with a complaint against Salim, he angrily says “is he squeezing your balls?” (49) He doesn’t even hesitate to call his eldest daughter Tania as a “little bitch” (59). It is, no doubt, the result of the influences of the Western culture on them but, Islamic Shari’ah law doesn’t allow it. The Muslim brother depicted in The Black Album would rather exercise restraint in their speech. The concepts of sacred and profane apply very much to the use of language even in day to day life.
Finally, it can be said that the clash between the two worldviews, depicted in the stories, plays and novels of Kureishi, especially in *The Black Album*, is his response to the changing times. The world after the fall of communism is not the same it was earlier. The force of competing ideologies is pulling people in different directions. Kureishi succeeds in opening up the debate. And he does it well.


