Chapter I

Introduction

This chapter examines the socio-cultural milieu of Britain in the post war period that created the background for the emergence of a writer like Hanif Kureishi. It also surveys the literary landscape of contemporary Britain in an attempt to place him in a category he deserves. An outline of the following chapters will also be drawn here.

1.1 Post-colonial Britain and English Novel

India won independence from Britain in 1947 with partition that created one more independent country, Pakistan. The loss of ‘the jewel in the crown’ of the British Empire represented a key moment in the history of Britain. It signalled the beginning of the gradual dismantling of most of the Empire over the next fifty years or so. Malay won its sovereignty in 1957 along with Ghana. Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and most other British controlled African states achieved independence in the 1960s along with Jamaica, Trinidad and several other Caribbean nations. Rhodesia became independent Zimbabwe in 1980, and Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997. Colonialism ended with the political independence of these countries. However, the legacy of colonialism was here to stay and have a far reaching influence not only on the former colonies but also on Britain itself, both in terms of its global position in the new world order after 1945 (World War II), and also the changing nature of its population.

1.1.1 Immigrants and Race Relations in Britain

Britain has continued to maintain contacts with many of the former colonies with the establishment of the Commonwealth, an association of a group of countries formerly ruled
by Britain. This continued association along with a favourable immigration policy in the initial years has affected the pattern of migration from the former colonies. From the 1950s onwards, a large number of people moved from parts of the Caribbean, South East Asia, Africa and other parts of the world and settled in Britain’s urban areas. This influx of immigrants has changed the face of British society and culture in profound ways. This process, however, has not been very smooth. Many of the areas in which these new immigrants settled were deprived, where the original populations themselves were suffering from social and economic adversity. The newly emergent black and Asian population occupied certain labour market positions, lived in particular areas and faced particular forms of racism. There has always been resistance in some quarters to the development of these new communities from other parts of the world. To make it worse, the successive governments have played the so-called ‘race card’ rhetoric designed to create unnecessary phobia amongst established British population with images of being invaded and swamped. Enoch Powell, for example, made his infamous anti-immigrant speech ‘Rivers of Blood’ in 1968 depicting Britain as swamped with uncontrollable waves of immigrants which were throwing the country into impending doom. However, immigration was a gradual process over the time and never have the ethnic minority groups made up more than 8 per cent of the British population (Bentley 17).

Britain received immigrants earlier than this also in the first few decades of the twentieth century from the eastern European countries and relatively a small number from the Asian and African countries as well. During this time there was an implicit understanding on the part of the new immigrant population and the host communities that within two or three generations the immigrants whose language and culture appeared alien to the host communities would have acquired a level of the English language and would no longer seem out of place. However, they would retain much of their culture within the privacy of
their family and religious lives. Their difference would not be publicly visible and they would be integrated with the British society. This, according to C.W. Watson, actually happened with Irish and Italian and, to a lesser extent, Jewish migrants. The Asian and African immigrants, though small in number, were able to establish their individual identity for themselves “on the basis of their own singular personalities rather than as representatives of ethnic groups or members of a specific religious persuasion” (92).

But, with the coming of the Commonwealth immigrants in the 1950s onwards the situation changed dramatically. The attitude of the host community shifted from mutual understanding of the previous years to a growing hostility as reflected in incidents such as the Notting Hill race riots in 1958. C.W. Watson lists two significant factors for this kind of shift of attitude. One factor, he thinks, was the “cultural lag in the representation of other cultures” because of which the older, fin de siècle intellectual opinion was trickling down to the popular imagination even in the second half of the next century. The other factor, according to him, was “a corresponding shift away from an unspoken pressure on immigrant populations to become Anglicised to one which required immigrants to keep to themselves and abide by the rules rather than attempt the impossible of becoming Englishmen” (93). According to Watson the first factor, “cultural lag in the representation of other cultures” is easy to document. Films and popular fictions of the time portrayed the non-European other as alien with negative stereotypical traits. The portrayal of the eastern bazaars, Chinese opium dens and references to Tarzan, Jungle Jim, King Solomon’s mines all created a suspicion and contempt for the non-European. Differences of physical appearance, pagan beliefs and superstitions derived from descriptions of a previous generation of writers all were added as further dimensions of difference. This negative stereotyping of the Oriental and African other as lacking the culture and civilisation of the Christian West was not only confined to popular fictions but was also perpetuated by a
more sophisticated and elaborate fictional representation of the fag-end of colonialism by novelists, such as, Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, Paul Scot and Joyce Cary. One more factor that distanced the European from the non-European was the fact that, although the process of decolonisation was a benign affair for the colonies, the negative representation of nationalist politicians, the use of negative epithets for them, such as, terrorists, saboteurs, communists and also references to acts of barbarism and violence (which for the natives were acts of heroism) confirmed the orientalist narrative of the previous centuries depicting the non-European other as barbaric and in desperate need of Western enlightenment. Even the sympathetic representation of the non-European other was either “in the guise of the trusty servant or the Anglophile aristocrat, and in both the cases the image for public consumption encouraged an amused contempt, a tolerance of the ludicrous and the pretentious, of the kind fostered in much of the earlier literature of Kipling, Haggard and, one dare to say it Conrad” (Watson 94). This was often confirmed by the anecdotal references of the large number of retired colonial officials in the Britain of the 1950s. This kind of representation contributed to the growing sense of prejudice among the established British communities that the non-white others were all right in their position but they should not try to reach beyond that either through social mobility or through intermarriage. This kind of conceptualisation along with the changing economic condition of the time led to a sense of separateness and the desire to maintain social and cultural difference. But, at the same time the strict adherence of the immigrants to the social conventions and national laws was closely monitored. This has been reflected in the changing political attitude of Britain to immigration. Britain experienced race-riots in cities such as Brixton, Chapel Town, Toxteth and Moss Side in the early 1980s and in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in the early 2000s. Though it will be unjust to ignore other factors such as class, social deprivation, religion and community relation with police and
other state machineries as the causes of these riots, the ethnic identities of the disadvantaged groups and the presence of the right wing political groups such as National Front in the 1970s and 80s and the British National Parties in the last two decades have aggravated the tensions between the races.

1.1.2 Political Attitude of Britain to Immigration

In the post-war period Britain needed cheap labours to sustain its labour-intensive economy. But the home-based workers were not ready to do the most basic jobs at low wage; however, this was an attractive prospect for the skilled and unskilled labours from India, Pakistan and West Indies. The British Nationality Act of 1948 which confirmed the right to entrance and residence in Britain for virtually all the citizens of the Empire was motivated by this pure economic factor. However, later there has been a gradual attrition of this right. In 1962 the ‘open-door’ policy was ended and Commonwealth Immigration Act was introduced which brought in a system of employment vouchers for Commonwealth immigrants on quota basis. Further, the Immigration Act (1971) restricted domicile to those born in Britain, or whose parents or grandparents were of British origin. This was implicitly a racist condition since it suggested that nationality was determined by genetic inheritance. Finally, the most significant redefinition of nationality and citizenship came in the form of British Nationality Act 1981 which abolished the automatic right to British citizenship for children born in Britain. This Act was designed to restrict the naturalisation of immigrants’ children (Head 163-64).

According to Dominic Head the above sketch of the legislation has a number of implications. First, the acceptance of the subjects of the former Empire as British citizens in the post-war time which encouraged large scale migration to the ‘mother’ nation evaporated very quickly in the light of economic change and political expediency. Second, the shifting policy makes it clear that identity based on national affiliation is not absolute
but a political construction. This, in effect, created public confusion which allowed racism to grow. Genetic inheritance based response to the citizen of the Empire, may be unwittingly, colluded with public misperception of national identity which is racially exclusive. This “helped to foster a denial of postcolonial obligations and a rejection of the postcolonial heritage” (164).

On the cultural front also it has kept on changing from the wholesale ‘assimilation’ to ‘integration’ and ‘multiculturalism’. After a brief acceptance of the policy of assimilation in education in 1964, the United Kingdom government accepted the notion of ‘integration’. The then Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins in 1966 defined this as “not a flattening process of uniformity but cultural diversity, coupled with equal opportunity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance” (qtd. in Rex and Singh 6). Jenkins’ argument encapsulates both growing popular sentiment and liberal intellectual views both of which, though from different perspectives, were derived from a sense of ‘difference’. From the policy of integration Britain moved to a model of multiculturalism whereby it was assumed that the immigrants would retain a sense of their original cultures at the same time adapt to the cultural make-up of Britain. This was conceived as a celebration of difference. The debates that followed about the freedom of religious expression, multilingual education and the nature of entrenched racism in British social and political institutions are all attempts to reconcile a principle of difference with one of equality. This problem is not particular to the ethnic groups only but also concerns social classes, different communities of religious believers as well as gays and lesbians. The demand for equality in the public sphere, at one level, is directed against institutional racism and seems to represent a plea for colour-blindness.

But there is a problem with this kind of attempts because integration often means assimilation within the host culture which is insensitive to cultural and racial diversity.
This may lead to internal cultural imperialism. Many novelists have shown their concern to this problem. Salman Rushdie, for example, has discussed the problems of understanding race in Britain in an essay in 1982, where he discovers ‘the last colony of the British Empire’ (Rushdie 130). The problem of this new internal empire, according to Dominic Head, is the failure of Britain to stop seeking to colonize or demonize aspects of racial difference. Rushdie’s view is that Britain failed to embrace the inevitable fact of its postcolonial future which he sees as “a crisis of the whole culture, of the society’s entire sense of itself” (161). According to Head “the misperception of racial and cultural difference extends to those apparently benign attempts at ‘integration’, which Rushdie sees as code for a nullifying assimilation” and “it is ‘multiculturalism’ that excites his particular ire, a term too often concealing mere tokenism”(161). The problem is that the identification of cultural difference does not necessarily lead to understanding or embracing it, the opposite process of exoticization may also result. It seems that Rushdie’s approach to ethnic diversity is situated at a space between ‘official multiculturalism’ and wholesale ‘assimilation’. It is a space of the hybridised culture of the postcolonial migrant which is crucial to all inhabitants of the new emerging culture. Later, we will see in this thesis that Kureishi also shares this approach to ethnic diversity.

1.1.3 Immigrants and English Novel

The above debates and other political issues associated with the experiences of immigrants have been addressed by many contemporary novelists of Britain who are the children of immigrants. One of the aims of these novelists is to readdress the ways in which the immigrants have been constructed in the British literature of the previous decades. This kind of writings has often been labelled as ‘Black British’ literature. But, there are problems in lumping together a variety of writers with distinct ethnic and cultural
background. Some ideas of postcolonial theory have been useful tools in understanding these kinds of writings dealing with different cultural spaces. One such idea is Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity and what he refers to as third space. In his book *Location of Culture* (1994), by hybridity Bhabha means the ways in which two or more cultures interact and combine in a metropolitan space without privileging any one of the constituent parts but incorporating elements from the both. Hybridity can also occur at the level of racial identity whereby the children of mixed-race marriages could be described as hybrid but it is more importantly used in cultural sense. Hybridity in cultural sense refers to a ‘third space’ as the location of culture and rejects the binary opposition of culture and also rejects the belief that the origin of culture is race and ethnicity. The ‘third space’ is a new hybrid containing the dual heritage of both the cultures that went into its formation. Hanif Kureishi himself is a product of dual heritage, a child of mixed-race marriage, his father being an immigrant from Indian subcontinent and his mother an English woman. Some of the characters of his novels are also children of mixed race marriage and culturally hybrid.

Another theory that has proved to be useful is Stuart Hall's concept of 'new ethnicities'. Hall identifies two phases in the historical development of racial politics. The first phase began when the term 'black' was coined to refer to the common experiences of racism and marginalisation in Britain uniting communities across ethnic and cultural boundaries organising a politics of resistance against racism. This resistance involved challenging the simplified objectification and negative stereotyping in the representation of black experiences in mainstream literature and culture. There were two principal objectives of this resistance. One was ‘the question of access to the rights to representation by black artists and black cultural workers themselves’ and the other was the contestation of the marginalised, stereotypical and “fetishised nature of the images of blacks by the counter position of a ‘positive’ black imagery” (Hall 199). This type of resistance which Hall calls
“relations of representation” gained ground after the 1950s and championed the development of what was called ‘Black British’ literature and art. The second phase developed from the first and Hall terms this as “the end of the innocent notion of the essential black subject”. This phase marks the entry of the black people to the discourses of post-structuralism, post-modernism, psychoanalysis, feminism and the politics of representation with the recognition that “black” is ‘essentially a politically and culturally constructed category’. This “brings into play the recognition of the immense diversity and differentiation of the historical and cultural experiences of black subjects” (Hall 200). This leads to a wide range of ‘new ethnicities’ related not only to issues of race but also class, gender, sexuality and youth. Hanif Kureishi as a novelist can be categorised within the ‘new ethnicities’ because as a writer he demolishes the idea of ‘essential black’ and touches upon issues related not only to race but also to class, gender, sexuality and youth in his novels.

1.2 Changing Cultural Milieu

The post war Britain was also marked by rapid cultural changes. The concepts of gender and sexuality underwent a radical change. In her influential book The Second Sex (1949), Simone de Beauvoir wrote “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman ... it is civilisation as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called feminine” (293). What follows from this is that the ideas of gender, i.e. the traits that are considered to form what is masculine and what is feminine in one’s identity and behaviour, are largely cultural constructs. Considering these codes as cultural construct and historically contingent rather than natural or essential made it possible to argue for a resistance to the roles assigned by the society for men and women. The proposition that ‘one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman’ was the guiding principle
of the new wave feminism that nourished the political campaigns in the 1960s and 70s under the banner of Women’s Liberation Movement. In Britain the feminist activists and writers were closely associated with socialist political movement and they generally saw women’s rights as part of a wider social agenda including class. In literary criticism the feminist movement developed into two directions in the 1970s. One was led by Kate Millett who in her book *Sexual Politics* (1969) tended to identify the sexist and often misogynist positions of the male-authored books of the past. This strategy of criticism was often called phallocentric criticism. The other was led by Elaine Showalter, the originator of the term ‘gynocriticism’ and the author of the book, *A Literature of their Own* (1977). Showalter, along with Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar and Ellen Moers wanted to develop an alternative canon of women’s literature, a body of writing often referred to as gynocriticism. Feminism has been a far reaching influence on British fiction. Many award winning female writers emerged during this period and many of the female writers have been included in the syllabus of contemporary fictions.

Along with the Anglo-American tradition of feminist literary criticism which was an outcome of the Civil Rights Movements, some of the British writers have been influenced by the French tradition of feminist criticism. The preoccupation of the French feminists was the poststructuralist theories of language. French feminists such as psychoanalysts Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray and the creative writer and philosopher Helen Cixous attempted to examine the Western philosophical thought and ideology to expose how male supremacy was reproduced and perpetuated. Helen Cixous argued that whole basis of Western language and philosophy has been based on ‘dual hierarchical system’, such as, the binary of “activity/passivity”, “sun/moon”, “culture/nature”, and “man/woman”, such that, it places the female either in a position of inferiority or invisibility (Cixous 578). In her writings she tried to rectify this imbalance in a new type of writing labelled as *écriture*
féminine which combines literary creation with criticism to represent the unique female experience through language and syntax. However, this was problematic because it took the feminine writing back to the characteristics traditionally associated with femininity in male-centric or patriarchal discourse. An alternative approach could be taking over by women of those characteristics normally associated with masculinity and in the Britain of 1980s the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher has been a living incarnation for this. Though Ms. Thatcher was not an icon of this kind of feminism because she openly disagreed with the views of the feminists of 70s and 80s, her achieving the top position of power and her taking on what may be regarded as masculine characteristic suggested that gender role was independent of biological sex.

The success achieved by feminist movement in the 70s and 80s in changing cultural perception of the roles for men and women were more visible in the 1990s when the cultural theorist started talking about a post-feminist situation. It was felt that the main aims of the second wave feminism of the 1970s and 80s had already been achieved and the critique of patriarchy has become an anachronism. Critics like Judith Butler argued that the masculine and feminine binary of gender categories were artificial constructs supported by imposed heterosexuality which could be deconstructed and a multitude of possible gender positions would become available (Tolan 338). This signalled the post-feminist era when the division between man and woman was finally transcended. However, this had serious implications because the very possibility of feminist politics would evaporate if the category of woman became meaningless. From this emerged what is labelled as ‘third wave feminism’ to oppose the former idea. The 1990s saw the rise of significant popular cultural trends and movements. One, according to Nick Bentley was “the so-called ‘ladette’ culture, a form of social behaviour that advocated the pleasures and codes of practice that had previously been the enclave of young men, such as heavy drinking,
clubbing, and active pursuance of sexual partners” (14). One example of this popular movement was the rise and success of the Spice Girls. They presented themselves as a kind of post-feminist gang who used sexuality on their own terms.

One of the impacts of the success of feminism was the changing notions of masculinity. From the original tenets of feminism it follows that masculinity is also a cultural construct and men are equally conditioned by the prevailing gender codes as women. According to Betty Friedan as Nick Bentley refers to “men weren’t really the enemy – they were fellow victims suffering from an outmoded masculine mystique” (qtd. in Bentley 14). The idea of New Man began to circulate in the 1980s. This referred to a male who was in touch with feminine sensibilities and broadly agreed with the idea of women’s equality. Many male writers explored this new gender dimension and developed this new definition of masculinity. Writer such as Martin Amis and Julian Barnes in the 1980s and Nick Hornby, Tony Parson and John King in the 1990s explored the new concepts of masculinity in their works.

The later part of the 1960s also saw a change in attitudes towards homosexuality. Gay Liberation Movement of America and Western Europe coincided in interest and agenda with the Women’s Liberation Movement in the late 1960s. In Britain homosexuality was decriminalised in 1967 by the Sexual Offences Act but the everyday prejudice and acts of violence against homosexuals continued. Because of this the Gay and Lesbian rights movements continued in the 1970s and 1980s. The riot at the Stonewall Inn, a lesbian and gay club in New York City in May 1969 served to bring to public attention the injustices done to the lesbian and gay community, which in effect strengthened the resistance against this kind of prejudice in Britain as well as America. Since then many laws have been enacted to redress some of the inequalities meted out to the homosexuals. Britain has
granted the rights and responsibilities of a civil marriage to the same-sex couples by enacting the Civil Partnership Act of 2004.

In the late 1980s and 90s ‘queer theory’ was developed and popularised by the gender theorists with an aim to disrupt the way in which sexual and gender identities are constructed in societies. Queer theory was influenced by the ideas of poststructuralist theory in general and Michel Foucault’s *The History Sexuality* (1976) in particular. Foucault pointed out that alternative sexual practices were coded differently across different societies and through histories. Sexual relations between men were common in the fifth century Greek society. Only later it was discovered to be a sign of identifiable perversion. Foucault argued that ‘homosexuality’ as a social, medical and ontological category was invented in the late nineteenth century and imposed on sexual practices. Queer theory aimed to champion aspects of gay culture because it was regarded as a deviance by many members of the mainstream culture. The word ‘queer’ had originally been used as a term of abuse against homosexual men and women but ‘queer studies’ or ‘queer theories’ reclaimed it and gave it a positive meaning as a comprehensive term to refer to a variety of possible sexual orientations. Theorists such as Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Lee Edelman produced important works in this area related to literary studies. This changing perception of gender and sexuality find expression in the contemporary literary writings and Hanif Kureishi as a novelist of the contemporary times frequently engages with these issues in his novels.

1.3 Contemporary British Fiction

Until very recently the term ‘contemporary’ in literary studies referred to the works produced in the post Second World War period. The word ‘contemporary’ means the immediate present, so marking such a long time, starting from the 1950s to the first decade of the 21st century, as ‘contemporary’ seems problematic. During this long time of more
than half a century Britain has undergone economic, demographic, cultural and ideological changes. Since serious literature responds imaginatively to its socio-cultural and intellectual climate, British fiction during this long time also has interacted with the same and has incorporated the socio-cultural preoccupations of the time. The first few decades of the post-war period is marked by the counter-modernist and realist trend in fiction. Writers like Anthony Powell, Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene became more popular than the experimentalist like James Joyce or Samuel Beckett. These writers rejected the aesthetic of experimentation “as the obtuse, inaccessible preserve of an intellectual elite” they also rejected the Victorian realism of fixed set of social or ethical mores as “purblind hypocrisy”. Writers such as Kingsley Amis, John Wain, William Cooper, C.P. Snow, Angus Wilson and others following the footsteps of Powell, Waugh and Greene brought in a new wave of post-war realism which was “intelligent, reflective of contemporary mores and habits, amoral and contemptuous of the class distinctions and ethical norms” (Bradford 11). Though there were a number of writers such as William Golding, Muriel Spark, Anthony Burgess, Iris Murdoch, Doris Lessing and John Fowles who were difficult to classify in terms of their relationship with modernism or with new realism, something that could be regarded the norm was the counter-modernists of the 1950s with their mimetic engagement with contemporary life. According to Richard Bradford the novelists of the post-war period rejected modernism not as a kind of aesthetic reaction but as a new necessity. They faced with a new Britain with transformed socio-economic infrastructure initiated by the post-war Labour Government. The following decades saw new levels of social mobility in the form of popular cultures and an explosion of mass media heavily influenced by America. The “social change was so rapid and varied that the logical response, for the novelists, seemed to be to attempt to record it, to incorporate its
particulars and incidentals as guilelessly as possible; mimesis rather than experiment became the preferred technique” (Bradford 11).

For the generation of novelists who started their career in the 1970s modernism was already an antiquated phenomenon and the war and its socio-cultural aftermath a remembrance from their parents. Hanif Kureishi as a novelist belongs to this generation and he also has adopted the mimetic technique or realist mode.

The writers who started their careers in the 1970s and who have made their presence felt in the last three-four decades have undergone a very different socio-cultural milieu. A number of literary critics and historians such as James F. English, Richard Bradford, and Nick Bentley have used the phrase ‘contemporary fiction’ for the period from the mid-1970s to the present day. The reason behind marking 1975 as the borderline was the election of Margaret Thatcher as the leader of the Conservative Party and her subsequent election as the first Prime Minister in 1979 which marks a key moment of transition in the socio-economic, cultural and political climate of Britain. The politics of consensus of the post World War II period that established Britain as a welfare state and a mixed economy having state owned and private industries that represented a balance between the socialist and capitalist policies was dismantled by the Thatcherite economic policies. A widespread policy of privatisation was implemented and the basic industries and economic infrastructures such as coal, steel, gas, telecommunications, council housing, transport and even water were privatised. The policies of Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government came to be known as Thatcherism. According to Nick Bentley, “the development of Thatcherism rested fundamentally on policies that shifted responsibility for social welfare from the state to the individual. On the surface Thatcherism produced an ideology of individual success and the accumulation of wealth” (Bentley 4). Thatcherism became a watchword to describe a fundamental change in the ideology of the nation. This was
perceived differently by different groups; some celebrated it at the same time some hated it. According to Richard Bradford, the detractors 'argued that it encouraged and glorified greed, material ambition and shallow self-aggrandisement, while at the other end of the spectrum it was applauded as the emancipation from a culture of dependency, an opportunity to experience a new form of liberalism which incorporated a plethora of wealth-creating choices(Bradford 31). Indeed, the economic policies of the Thatcher government divided the British society into two classes, one, the rising wealthy class with their unembarrassed consumption and the other, impoverished, unemployed working class due to shift of focus from earlier basic industries such as coal, steel and ship building. This led to the development of resistance movements amongst the sections of population who were deprived of the benefit of the new economic culture of individualism. The new socio-political situation provided a wealth of fresh material for the contemporary writers of the realist fictions. Hanif Kureishi as a contemporary novelist of the realist mode engages with these issues in his novels.

1.4 Hanif Kureishi and His Works:

Hanif Kureishi is a contemporary novelist, playwright and film maker of multicultural Britain. His works mirror the condition of Britain of the last three-four decades which is marked by rapid and radical socio-cultural changes. Kureishi was born of a mixed parentage in the post war period, grew up in the welfare state of Britain, lived through Thatcherite England and is writing through the time of Tony Blair to the present day. Kureishi is a product of the lost empire, a second generation immigrant Englishman born of an English mother and Pakistani-Muslim father. His very multicultural background is indeed a fertile ground of creativity. He has produced a considerable number of screenplays, a few collections of short stories, some novels and a few books of non-fiction. This thesis will only study his novels.
In many of his books the main characters are artists, such as, actors, writers, painters and musicians. In *The Buddha of Suburbia* the protagonist, Karim Amir is an actor and his half-brother, Charlie is a pop-musician. Shahid, the protagonist of *The Black Album* is a budding writer. In *Gabriel’s Gift*, Gabriel is a promising painter and his father Rex is a musician. The lives of the artists are complex. Stiff competition, uncertainty, innovation, fact or fiction, responsibility and morality are some of the dilemmas of the artists. By foregrounding the dilemmas of the artists Kureishi foregrounds the dilemmas of the creative writers and makes his own writings self-reflexive. Chapter II of this thesis entitled ‘The Artistic Self’ will deal with the theme of art and artists. Gender and sexuality is one of the recurrent themes in the novels of Kureishi. Kureishi deals with the themes of development of sexual orientation, fluidity of sexuality, sexual relationship, relationship between ethnicity and sexuality, and pursuit of sexual pleasure in a very uninhibited manner from the perspectives of contemporary theories on sexuality. Chapter III of this thesis entitled ‘Redefining the Sexual’ will deal with the theme of gender and sexuality. The settings of many of his novels are in the 60s and 70s, a turbulent period in British history and politics. This period is marked by Britain’s dilemma to deal with large number of immigrant population from her previous colonies and the rise of racist politics. Initially, Britain adopted the policy of assimilation, followed by first, the policy of integration and second, multiculturalism. Kureishi, himself being the son of an immigrant father and a British mother has observed these developments very closely. In his novels we find the snapshots of many multicultural interactions and the problems of developing a multicultural identity. Chapter IV will investigate Kureishi’s take on the policy of multiculturalism and the development of multicultural self. The failure of multiculturalism as a policy to counter racism and social exclusion of the immigrants, specially Muslims first came to light in 1989, the year following the publication of Salman Rushdie’s novel
The Satanic Verses resulting in world-wide protest, book burning in Bradford, England and Ayatollah Khomeini’s fatwa against Rushdie. This event raised questions related to the limits of the freedom of expression guaranteed by liberal democracy; level of tolerance of a particular religious or cultural community to criticism, stereotyping or deconstruction of their sacredly held beliefs, customs and texts. This event also raised questions to the efficacy of the policy of multiculturalism to help the minority safeguard their religion and culture from the onslaught of the majority liberals and also to maintain social and racial cohesion. The situation changed furthermore in the post-9/11 world. Some of Kureishi’s novels address these issues and debates. Chapter V will explore Kureishi’s take on these issues. This will be followed by a conclusion.
Works Cited


