

DISCRIMINATION TOWARDS MINORITIES IN THE NOVELS OF ZADIE SMITH

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Abstract: - A pervasive social problem, discrimination refers to treating people or groups unfairly or with prejudice because of their inherent qualities, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or handicap. This widespread issue affects people's chances, experiences, and well-being in a variety of ways across many spheres of society. Racial discrimination is one of the most severe types of prejudice, with its roots in systematic biases and historical injustices. Racial prejudice has historically contributed to disparities in healthcare, work, education, and the criminal justice system. Because of entrenched prejudices and systemic impediments, excluded communities still experience unequal access to opportunities, resources, and fair treatment despite advancements. Another major problem is gender discrimination, which is frequently manifested in the form of unequal compensation, little possibilities for career growth, and cultural norms that support stereotypes. Obstacles affect women in many areas, which affect their social standing and financial freedom. Discrimination against people with disabilities leads to unequal access to public services, work, education, and social interaction. Their complete inclusion and engagement are nonetheless impeded by cultural attitudes and physical hurdles, even in the presence of legislative protections. It takes coordinated efforts at the legal, social, and cultural levels to combat discrimination.

Keywords: - Racial discrimination, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or handicap

Introduction: - Discrimination can be direct or indirect, overt or subtle, deliberate or accidental. Additionally, it may be founded on preconceptions, biases, or stereotypes that individuals may have either consciously or unintentionally. By increasing awareness, educating the public, encouraging diversity and inclusion, upholding anti-discrimination legislation, and confronting discrimination when it happens, discrimination can be stopped and prevented. Modern British novelist Zadie Smith has written on multiculturalism, identity, and discrimination in her novels. She is renowned for both her rich and nuanced characters and her clever and captivating writing style. To confront prejudices and eliminate discriminatory practices, legislation, equality-promoting policies, and awareness campaigns are essential. Diversity and inclusion education increases compassion and understanding, which in turn promotes respect and acceptance of all people. In the end, eliminating discrimination requires cooperation, compassion, and a dedication to building inclusive and egalitarian communities. It necessitates constant communication, self-reflection, and a commitment to protecting each person's fundamental rights and dignity, regardless of differences.

Among Zadie Smith's books that address discrimination is: Smith's first novel, *White Teeth* (2000), chronicles the lives of two families in London from the 1970s to the 1990s one British and the other Bengali. The book addresses several contemporary topics, including racism, colonialism, immigration, religion, generational strife, and the difficulties of defining oneself in a heterogeneous society. Regarding *On Beauty*: This, Smith's third book, is mostly based on *Howards End* by E.M. Forster. Two rival families, one black and one white, argue about personal, cultural, and academic issues in the novel's fictional New England university town.

The novel examines the conflicts between liberalism and conservatism, art and business, tradition and innovation, and race, class, gender, and aesthetics. *NW*: In her fourth book, Smith revisits her native northwest London, where four childhood friends are trying to make sense of

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their lives in a city that is changing and becoming more unequal. The story explores how the characters who come from a variety of racial, religious, and sexual backgrounds are affected by social mobility, gentrification, and discrimination. The novel also reflects the diversity and complexity of the metropolis by experimenting with various narrative formats and genres.

Novels by Zadie Smith frequently explore issues of race, identity, and social injustices, offering moving perspectives on prejudice. Her pieces, like *On Beauty* and *White Teeth*, examine the complex dynamics of prejudice in various social contexts. Smith's examination of discrimination is complicated and multifaceted, capturing the difficulties people encounter because of their racial, ethnic, and cultural origins. She highlights the difficulties faced by characters from many racial backgrounds in a multicultural society by navigating their experiences in *White Teeth*. The novel emphasizes how discrimination impacts people's destinies by illustrating the complexities of identity development and the influence of society's expectations on people's lives.

Furthermore, *On Beauty* explores academia and intellectual circles, exposing inequality in places reserved for the elite. The book examines liberal and intellectualism's surface layers, exposing hidden biases and prejudices that creep into settings that appear to be progressive. Smith highlights the nuances of prejudice in these privileged domains by showing individuals who are battling with their identities in the face of social pressures and expectations. Smith demonstrates the perniciousness of discrimination in a variety of contexts and forms throughout her books. She invites readers to examine their preconceptions, prejudices, and the social institutions that support discrimination, promoting reflection and discussion of these urgent problems.

Smith's compelling stories act as a mirror for society, challenging us to recognize, face, and end the systemic discrimination that is ingrained in our neighbourhoods. Her perceptive

depiction of prejudice in all of its forms advances knowledge of the nuances of racial identity, race, and social injustices. Discrimination is apparent from the beginning of Zadie Smith's works. She teases at the beginning of her book *White Teeth* about the existence of discrimination in a multicultural society.

Here, she describes the discrimination committed by the hotel owner against Varin, an Indian youngster. Varin receives derogatory remarks simply for being Indian. Smith writes: Using a broom to punctuate every syllable, one of Mo's kitchen staff members cried, "Come on, Mr. Fatty-man." Bring some of that mashed pigeon thing with you and get your fat Ganesh Hindu rear up there, boy (Smith, 2001: 5). Race, identity, and class are major themes in Zadie Smith's books. Although her novels don't specifically address racism, they frequently discuss the experiences of marginalized communities and how societal norms affect them. Mo Ishmail treats his son Arshad differently from his Hindu employee Varin because of their religion: "You're my son, Arshad." I don't pay you to be ignorant. The book by Smith makes clear how discrimination occurs in multicultural societies like Britain, both based on religion and via it.

Smith demonstrates how religion frequently leads to prejudice and causes more harm than good, particularly in multicultural cultures where adherents of several religions coexist. The history of religious prejudice is provided by author David McLean in the Cardiff University paper *Religion and Discrimination in the United Kingdom*. Historically, the idea that discrimination based on religion was undesirable arrived relatively late to the various parts of the United Kingdom," the author says. Even now, with the most recent legislation providing scant direction, the courts are having difficulty defining its parameters.

Even though virtuous women and decent men would receive paradise on earth rather than a bad boy award, there were still a few million people who did not cut. Include that in the list of unbelievers, along with the heathens, Jews, Catholics, Muslims, and the impoverished jungle

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men in the Amazon for whom Clara had shed tears as a child. The Witnesses took great satisfaction in their theology, which excluded hell and instead punished people with unspeakable torment on the last day before death. However, Clara found it more upsetting to consider that the Great Crowd was enjoying them in a paradise on earth, while the maimed and tortured skeletons of the lost were lying beneath the dirt (Smith, 2001:38–39). Smith uses Clara as a platform to criticize the discriminatory aspects of religion, particularly those detrimental effects that seem to be more prevalent in multicultural settings like London. In Smith's works, discrimination based on race coexists alongside that based on faith.

Numerous forms of prejudice are prevalent in multicultural communities, and these discriminations are not limited to the dominant white culture's treatment of other immigrant cultures rather, they also occur the other way around. The US Employment Opportunity Commission states that discrimination against people of a particular race or because of personal traits connected with race is defined as "race discrimination." When someone is treated unfairly due to the color of their skin, this is known as color discrimination.

Discrimination based on race or color can also include treating someone unfairly only because they are married to someone who belongs to that race or color. One of the main themes in Zadie Smith's works is discrimination. Smith mostly discusses the various forms of discrimination that occur in multicultural communities in his writings. The reason Clara's grandma Hortense disagrees with her having an affair with Archie is that he is a different hue. Color is a significant theme in Smith's book. Character conflicts and problems are frequently caused by one of the fundamental problems that go hand in hand with class.

Therefore, it is possible to define racial discrimination as the act of one person, regardless of culture, discriminating against another person based on that person's skin color, ethnicity, ancestry, etc. However, there are other forms of prejudice besides racial discrimination. There

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are instances when the entire administration is to blame for the dreadful circumstances, not just one person. The government is also capable of discriminating indirectly. Reverse discrimination refers to the practice of a minority discriminating against the majority. Class-based prejudice is another form of discrimination that Smith writes about in his work.

A wonderful example of the class difference in multicultural nations is the description of the location, which asks, "What kind of place was this?" You see, that was the thing you couldn't be certain. She had seen the high road while riding in the front passenger seat of the removal van, and it had appeared to be unattractive, impoverished, and familiar. However, as she turned a corner, the roads were suddenly covered in gorgeous oaks, and the houses grew taller, wider, and more detached. She could also see parks and libraries (Smith, 2001:47). While it is true that a healthy society is created via the blending of many cultures, Smith contends that this narrative, like all narratives, is not entirely accurate. According to Smith, discrimination remains in people's minds and persists in multicultural communities regardless of how advanced modern thought has gotten or how strongly equality is promoted in popular culture. And the following passage from the novel *White Teeth* illustrates this.

Smith paints the picture of Alsana observing the distinctions between two parks and how, in doing so, she discerns the distinctions between the two classes. While Gladstone Park is depicted on one side without a fence, signifying a society free from all forms of discrimination, Smith also shows Queens Park, encircled by thick fences, symbolizing a society split into "the narrow domestic walls. In addition, Smith makes the argument that those in positions of wealth and influence in society must work towards lessening discrimination; this is a duty they frequently declare but seldom carry out. Smith attempts several humorous takes on various ideologies, including liberalism.

A political and moral ideology based on individual rights, liberty, equality, and the value of democracy is known as liberalism. It places a strong emphasis on the defense of individual liberties, free markets, little government interference, and societal advancement through incremental adjustments and reforms. Depending on one's experiences and point of view, liberal opinions might differ greatly.

Certain liberal tenets, especially in their application or interpretation, may be viewed by some as faulty or deceptive. Critiques frequently center on topics like corporate power, economic injustice, and the constraints placed on individual liberties within a liberal framework. Investigating other points of view is crucial to obtaining a thorough comprehension. Fundamentally, liberalism promotes equal rights and opportunities for all people, regardless of their origins, gender, ethnicity, or religion. As she went by, she read the new, strange signs for Mali's Kebabs, Mr. Cheungs, Raj's, and Malkovich Bakeries. She was cunning. She recognized what this was. "Liberal?" Hoosh-kosh bullshit! In any case, no one was anywhere more liberal than anybody else (Smith, 2001:61). Alsana thinks that liberalism is a lie and that although people of various racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds appear to be getting along and starting businesses together, that is only the beginning of what she sees as hidden but still present discrimination (Smith, 2001:3).

Discrimination against immigrants can take many different forms, such as xenophobia, unfair job treatment, restricted access to services, and social prejudices. While liberal societies frequently strive to welcome variety and offer equal chances, Smith's books explore the reality that immigrants may still face discrimination as a result of cultural differences, worries about the economy, or political rhetoric that feeds into anti-immigrant sentiments. She highlights the reality that, despite liberal countries' best efforts to do away with it, discrimination in multicultural society persists. In *White Teeth*, Alsana repeatedly emphasizes to her unborn child

how difficult and crucial it is to survive in a world where discrimination is the only thing that exists: Although she was petite, her feet were gigantic. When you looked at her, you had the gut feeling that she still had more growing to do. She quickly gathered her hair into a neat bun and tightened her coat around herself to block the breeze. Then she started walking up a long green path that she had never gone before, past the library. "Little Iqbal, survival is all that matters," she repeated to her bump (Smith, 2001:63). Another phrase that requires clarification is reverse discrimination. When people feel they are being discriminated against because of attempts to rectify prior discrimination, this is referred to as reverse discrimination. It's frequently employed by those who believe that diversity or affirmative action programs adversely affect them, particularly if they are members of a majority group.

Depending on your point of view, the idea might be controversial and understood in numerous ways. Despite being a member of a minority herself, Alsana is ignorant of the fact that she is also guilty of treating individuals differently. The following passage from *White Teeth* illustrates this. "Black people are often friendly," the article reads. Alsana smiled at Clara and inadvertently added this information to the brief "pro" side of her list of advantages and disadvantages regarding the black girl. Alsana liked to pick out one example of each group that she detested for spiritual pardon. There had been enough of such redeemed characters from Whitechapel. All of these fortunate people were granted Alsana's golden reprieve and miraculously emerged from their skins like Indian tigers.

They included Mr. Van, the Chinese chiropodist; Mr. Segal, a Jewish carpenter; and Rosie, a Dominican woman who kept popping around, much to Alsana's chagrin and delight, in an attempt to convert her into a Seventh-day Adventist (Smith, 2001:64). Discrimination against Black people has been pervasive in society for millennia and occurs in many different contexts. There are many ways in which this systemic prejudice shows up, impacting daily encounters,

employment, education, and the legal system. Slavery and segregation in the past created the groundwork for this prejudice and left a long-lasting mark on social systems.

Furthermore, advancement requires elevating the voices of the marginalized and confronting deeply rooted biases in society. Society will not be able to start genuinely eradicating the deeply ingrained prejudice against Black people unless it is dedicated to equality and justice continuously. However, Smith makes the argument in her book that prejudice against Black people is so ingrained that it is difficult to eradicate. Because of the extreme depth of racial discrimination, white Englishman Archie imagines what his child, who is expecting a black lady named Clara, will look like. He learned of the news while at work. Two and a half months was Clara's time to go. "Love, you're not!" "It is!" "You're not!" "I am!" And I tell the doctor how it will appear, with half black people and half white people and all that business. And I think everything is possible. There's even a possibility it has blue eyes! Can you imagine that, Kyan? Archie was unable to envision that. He was unable to envision any part of himself competing and emerging victorious in the gene pool against a piece of Clara (Smith, 2001: 65). Archie finds it impossible to imagine what his child would look like if Clara had black skin.

When racial discrimination occurs, hypocrisy frequently emerges because of the contradiction between accepted social norms and real behaviors and actions. Racial discrimination hypocrisies occur when people or organizations profess to advocate equality but act discriminatorily or harbor prejudices. An organization might outwardly advocate for diversity and inclusion, but it might not have fair procedures or representation in its internal operations. In a similar vein, someone may profess anti-discrimination sentiments yet nevertheless have biased opinions or engage in discriminatory behavior. Racial prejudice can be difficult to confront since it can appear subtly and is frequently engrained in society systems.

Ethnic discrimination has a significant negative influence on people's opportunities, self-worth, and mental health. Though obstacles still exist, movements supporting inclusive policies, anti-discrimination laws, and civil rights have made great progress. To demonstrate how persistent ethnic discrimination is, Smith uses the following passage from a wartime account, in which Samad Iqbal, the tank's wireless radio operator, is hated by Roy Jones, the white co-driver since Jones is a Muslim. "I was just making an objection, sir," reflects the novel's discriminatory attitude towards minorities. When a man has a pug-dog who follows him around with his pug-dog eyes, it is difficult for him to focus on his Foxtrot Fs and Zebra Zs, and then his dots and dashes, sir. Such eyes would be associated with a man full of in Bengal. Roy, who detested Samad and his Ponce radio operator antics, said, "Shut it, Sultan, you poof" (Smith, 2001: 81).

Conclusion: - Discrimination against Indians has taken many forms and appeared in several areas of society. Indians in education have faced prejudices that restrict their options and impede their advancement in the classroom and their careers. Similar to this, prejudices at work frequently lead to unfair compensation, restricted prospects for career advancement, or even exclusion from particular positions. Indians frequently experience discrimination in social settings due to cultural differences, religious beliefs, or clothing choices.

Discrimination can occasionally result in social exclusion or the reinforcement of negative stereotypes. Furthermore, instances of hate crimes committed against Indians, which are fueled by misinformation and xenophobia, demonstrate how serious the problem is. One of the most well-known examples of prejudice against Indians in multicultural culture is the Celebrity Big Brother Scandal, in which Indian actress Shilpa Shetty faced discrimination. However, as things turned out, it was a difficult task: eighty-five percent of people did not know the truth, making it difficult to bear the weight of the truth. However, far more pernicious than the stupid

were the 10% who, although possessing what Rakim claimed to know, deliberately hid and distorted the facts to maintain the eighty-five percent's ignorance and get the upper hand.

Narrator BF: He talked a lot about the harsh reality of living in large American cities, such as New York, Chicago, Baltimore, and Los Angeles, where I had never been and could hardly fathom the suffering of our people. Division in the writer's biology: He taught me how to represent my name mathematically and then to work with these figures in a certain way, according to the laws of Supreme Mathematics, so that the final result indicated, "The battle to overcome the division within." Nothing was easier for me to understand than the idea that I was born half right and half wrong; yes, as long as I did not think of my actual father and the love I bore him, I could tap this feeling in myself very easily. I didn't understand everything he said, though, because we were usually high during these conversations.

Author's observations regarding multicultural societies: I was mannish now, corrupted by the city. I was unaware that the 10 percent had constructed the cities. That they were purposefully used as a means of oppression? He didn't lose sight of his concerns during these lengthy strolls. In ways that would surprise me, he framed what we saw with them. He added that the plantation owner from our ancestral island, which none of us had ever seen, had used sugar to finance the construction of the big Georgian buildings facing the sea, with their façades as white as sugar. And the small churchyard where we occasionally congregated at night to smoke, drink, and sprawl out on the grass was the site of Sarah Forbes Bonita's marriage a tale he recounted with such enthusiasm that you would have assumed he had wed her himself.

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