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**The Buddha of Suburbia by Hanif Kureishi and the Youth's Attitudes
towards Society Issue**

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Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Autorka ve své bakalářské práci bude analyzovat prozaické dílo Hanifa Kureishiho *Buddha of Suburbia*. Nejprve bude obecně charakterizovat pojmy, se kterými bude dále pracovat, tj. ?menšina?, ?kulturní konfrontace?, ?integrace do společnosti? apod. Dále představí situaci menšin v britské společnosti v období odpovídajícímu zvolenému literárnímu dílu. Svůj rozbor pak konkrétně zaměří na pohled etnických menšin na majoritní společnost, konfrontaci etnické mládeže s většinovou kulturou a revoltu proti ní či naopak začlenění se do této společnosti. Tyto kulturní aspekty bude reflektovat ve vybraném Kureishiho díle. Svou bakalářskou práci autorka založí nejen na zvoleném primárním díle, ale především na odpovídajících sekundárních kritických zdrojích.

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V Pardubicích dne 30. 3. 2012

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Abstract

At the beginning of this bachelor paper the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* written by Hanif Kureishi is briefly introduced. The period covered by the book is analysed and terms dealing with politics, identity and other terms concerning the cultural context of the book are further discussed. In the practical part, behaviour of adolescents from an ethnic minority is scrutinized. The attitudes of young generation towards society and factors influencing shaping of their opinions on various social and existential questions as well as tackling the issue of assimilation into the major society are analysed from youth's point of view.

Key words

Revolt, attitudes, adolescence, identity, minority, culture, subculture, youth, the 1970s, Great Britain, Kureishi

Souhrn

V úvodu práce je stručně představen román od Hanifa Kureishiho *Buddha z předměstí*. Doba vzniku románu je analyzována a dále jsou popsány pojmy týkající se politiky, identity a další termíny související s kulturním kontextem díla. V praktické části jsou zkoumány projevy chování dospívajících z etnické menšiny. Přístup mladé generace ke společnosti a faktory ovlivňující utváření názorů na různé sociální a existenční otázky, stejně jako řešení problému začlenění se do majoritní společnosti z pohledu dospívajících, jsou podrobeny analýze.

Klíčová slova

Revolta, postoje, dospívání, identita, menšina, kultura, subkultura, mládí, sedmdesátá léta 20. století, Velká Británie, Kureishi

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1. Introduction

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to examine the various young people's attitudes towards society. At the beginning of adolescence years there is always a revolt, which should facilitate the progress to further development and show people a new way, their own way. Development is possible only through breaking with old traditions and to revolt against all that had been deep-rooted until the revolt started. Revolutionary ideas spring to mind as soon as school-leaving age is reached. It depends on individuals which way of revolution they will choose. It could be an open revolt influencing groups of people, leading to demonstrations on the streets or on the contrary it could be an inner revolt, individual fight against the patriarch system, prejudices or destiny. Either the whole world is influenced or it is a very personal, private thing but none of these options are less significant than the other. One of the personalities who have chosen to shake the world with his ingenious ideas is the versatile author Hanif Kureishi.

Hanif Kureishi, born in 1954 in London, is one of the most significant English writers of modern fiction. As the name insinuates, he is of Pakistani descent. Along with Salman Rushdie or Timothy Mo, Kureishi has become a symbol of controversial contemporary British writing. Not only is he a member of an apparently distinct race group from that prevailing in Britain, but his sexual orientation is also constantly under dispute. (Kaleta, 1998, 62) This places him in an invidious position of a minority within a minority, which on the other hand provides him with very interesting topics to write about. No wonder that his stories dealing with delicate issues are often inspired by his own life.

In 1990, a novel with autobiographical features *The Buddha of Suburbia* was published, after several powerful dramas of Kureishi's production such as *Birds of Passage* and *Outskirts* were put on the stage. (<http://www.hanifkureishi.com>) The unknown author became famous as these plays fitted into a niche in English theatre. Kaleta maintains that like Pinero's Victorian social dramas, Kureishi's plays both scrutinize and satirize London's daily events. Apart from writing with unconventional, underlying sexual tensions, Kureishi has constituted his plays to abound with dialogues of verbal battles between classes. (1998, 27) Although being a playwright had not fulfilled Kureishi, theatre scripts played the vital role in building his career. The book *The Buddha of*

Suburbia, which won the Whitbread Award for the best first novel, is a result of the long term search for his own voice.

The main character Karim comes from a lower middle class family living in the suburbs of south London. His Indian father Haroon works simultaneously as a civil servant and pursues a career as a yoga guru. He has a great success thanks to his exotic appearance as well as endearing manners, which are appreciated especially by women. Therefore, Karim's father is seduced by Eva, the mother of Karim's great love Charlie. After unsuccessful trying to deny his love for Eva, Haroon leaves his family and starts a new life with Eva in the city of London. Karim being impressed by London becomes an actor. Working in the acting company enables him to visit America, where he spends a couple of weeks with his step-brother. Eventually, Karim returns to his peer group in London, where he feels safe.

Now the analysis of the period will follow.

2. Spirit of the age

It is leadership, unlike love, that “makes the world go round.” (Garfinkel, 1988, 7) Although love can smooth the process, it is a private transaction, whereas leadership is a public transaction. “The idea of leadership affirms the capacity of individuals to move, inspire and mobilize masses of people so that they act together in pursuit of an end.” (Garfinkel, 1988, 7) The concept of leadership implies that individuals can make a difference. Great leaders are not just agents of any significance, which should serve purposes of class, spirit of the times, history, race or the will of the people. It does signify, whether a particular leader rules or another one does, because history is not predetermined. (Garfinkel, 1988, 7)

However, the idea of men and women as slaves of history accompanies mankind from the very beginning. “Rigid determinism abolishes the idea of human freedom - the assumption of free choice that underlines every move we make, every word we speak, every thought we think.” (Garkinkel, 1988, 7). The idea of human responsibility is quickly condemned as it is unreasonable to punish or reward people for deeds, which are not beyond their control. Fortunately enough, history has many times refuted the idea that individuals make no difference. Ingenious people show the way, which is then adopted and followed. They must act in accordance with the rhythm of their age. “Great leaders turn the inchoate emotions of the mob to purposes of their own. They seize on the opportunities of their time, the hopes, fears” and frustrations. (Garkinkel, 1988, 8). Leaders wait for these factors to occur in order to propose clarifying ideas, organize the community and subsequently alter the history.

One of those who have gone down the history is Mrs. Margaret Thatcher. Britain in 1970s faced a wave of social workers strikes for higher wages. All sanitation workers, hospital employees, schoolteachers and ambulance drivers stopped working in the winter of 1979 which resulted in the fall of government and new elections were held to choose a new government. (Garkinkel, 1988, 46) As soon as Mrs. Thatcher became a prime minister after the conservative party victory in 1979, she began to implement a recovery programme, which should have rescued “Great Britain from its 25-year slide toward socialism.” (Garkinkel, 1988, 8) Being a steadfast foe of communist regime, Mrs. Thatcher lived up to her nickname “The Iron Lady”. (Garkinkel, 1998, 43) Her

priority was to return Britain to old values such as hard work, thrift, self-reliance and strong sense of duty. During the 70's "Thatcher's hard-line anti-immigration stance was widely projected" which "returned the Tories to power" and the National Front support collapsed. (Gallix et. al., 1997, 140) However, the dream of the free economy initially plunged Britain "into the worst recession since the depression of the 1930s". (Garkinkel, 1988, 65) Even though it was believed that things would get worse before they got better, no one expected the rise of unemployment to more than ten percent and many businesses, which were no longer given assistance, had gone bankrupt during the Thatcher government's first year in office. (Garkinkel, 1988, 66)

Discontent with the unemployment rate and economic policy became widespread in 1981. Those who feared that the economic hardship would soon unleash violence were right. The first riots erupted within the same year in a "dirt-poor district of south London called Brixton, whose population was 36% black." (Garfinkel, 1988, 80) Under the pretext of police brutality, black youth took out their anger and frustrations and started to fight the police. No sooner did the riots (which spread to 30 other towns and cities including Manchester, Liverpool and London) stop, than 3 000 people were arrested. Unemployment was claimed to be the main cause of the riots not racial prejudice. (Garfinkel, 1988, 80) But Mrs. Thatcher stood firm. Instead of allowing government to spend on job training, the government, she announced, would propose a new law giving police more power. The tough politics she advanced came to be known as "Thatcherism". (Garfinkel, 1988, 82) The doctrine of cutting public spending was bringing the country to ruin. (Garfinkel, 1988, 83)

After the law restricting the power of trade unions passed in 1982, Great Britain took a turn for the better. The worst days of economic crisis were over. Even though the Conservative party regained its popularity, Mrs. Thatcher would have lost in the ensuing elections if a rapid economic growth had not been experienced. And then, in the spring of 1982, Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands and everything changed. (Garfinkel, 1988, 87). However rocky and useless the area of Falkland Islands was, the territory presented the strength of empire, the glory which was now shamed. The decision to take back the Falklands by power was proved to be right. The Falklands crisis was the turning point in Mrs. Thatcher's career. Once a hardly known politician,

she was, after the triumphant re-gaining of Falklands, catapulted to the top of the politician popularity scale, guaranteeing her a landslide victory in the parliamentary elections in 1983. The fate of Britain formed by these circumstances remained to be held in conservative hands for another decade. (Garfinkel, 1988, 98)

To sum up what the several decades brought it could be said that the “frenzy of psychedelic sixties spur[red] the *doo-da* seventies. The seventies inherited the new world order of the young. “ (Kaleta, 1998, 82) Whereas “in the sixties ‘doing your own thing’ had been boldly laid on the table, in the seventies finding oneself [...] doing what felt good, was what everyone was doing.” (Kaleta, 1998, 82) According to the critics of the decade the “jaded attitudes” left from the sixties were on the wane, innocence had been lost. (Kaleta, 1998, 82) The seventies were full of anticipation, which resulted in mass hysteria of individualism. The desire for self-expression gave rise to the punk rebellion, which quickly faded away with the rise of Thatcherism. The seventies were the age which lost the idealism of sixties, the age in which the conservatism of Thatcherism had its roots. Among other things, Thatcherism had tightened the social morals in Britain, which resulted in hard thinking over individual’s status and searching for identity in what was starting to be a multicultural society. (Kaleta, 1998, 82-83)

3. Identities

It might have been pleasant to live in London two centuries ago, but nowadays the metropolis is so much concerned with racial intolerance that it does not represent an ideal place for living, especially for people with dark skin. Racism in Britain stems from the colonial past, when all people from former colonies felt free to spend their lives in the centre of the empire. The “so-called guest-workers” from outside Europe were attracted to the new world. After the recession of 1970’s when the demand for labour ceased, many of these workers decided to settle in their new homes. (Modood, 1997, 1) It was the act of moving elsewhere that many incomers deprived of their national identity and gave rise to the frequently used denomination: multiculturalism. (Modood 1997, 1)

In order to understand the term multiculturalism it is important to define the term nation first, which is closely related to the meaning of the word identity. Weber defines a nation as a community of people which tend to “produce state of its own”. (1948, 179) People in the state are bound together by a common culture, a sense of solidarity and a national consciousness. (Easthope, 1999, 3) Other authors maintain likewise that “the national community promotes the self-agency of its members through national sovereignty.” (Easthope 1999, 213) It follows that the nation as a state and nation as a culture are not always located within the territory of one country due to the massive migration that has currently occurred. In the past the territory of a state could have been easily delineated as well as its culture was distinctively unique. Culture and nation have been set apart. The current division of these two terms began taking its form in the middle of the 20th century.

It was the act of India gaining its independence in 1947 that ushered in other colonies demanding full sovereignty. The colonised nations established their own governments in agreement with their former oppressor. It significantly influenced Britain, both in terms of its position in the new world order, and “in the changing nature of its home population” (Bentley, 2008, 16-17). “Up until 1962 there was absolutely no restriction on immigration from countries of the ex-Empire and newly created Commonwealth.” (Gallix et. al., 1997, 132) The uncontrollable waves of migration mirror in the present state of things. According to Bhabha

our existence today is marked by a tenebrous sense of survival, living on the borderlines of the 'present' for which there seem to be no proper name other than the current and controversial shiftiness 'post': *postcolonial, postmodern* [...] (1994, 1)

As mentioned above, the term postcolonial sprung up in order to explain the new theories "and assess the impact of this enormous shift in the political organization of the world". (Bentley, 2008, 17) At the dawn of 21st century, there is no longer only one culture located within one state. The old cultures have been mixed with the new ones and so the multicultural supstate emerged. However, it is important to stress that "whatever the truth about particular people and countries," the immigration resulted in fear of "otherness" (negative images of the others), racism and exclusions. (Modood 1997, 1-2)

According to Frederickson the term racism is used to "describe the hostile or negative feeling of one ethnic group toward another and the actions resulting from such attitudes." (2002, 1) The prejudice may evolve in unjustified lynching and genocidal practices, which "constitute an almost universal human failing." (Frederickson 2002, 1) Although the "spiritual equality of all human beings" was first recognised in the times of old Christians, peoples are still not willing to accept this fact. (Frederickson 2002, 17) Many decades after the racist ideologies have been discredited racism remains the main international problem. (Frederickson 2002, 100-139) The debates on racism in up-to-date Britain are not much the same as it used to be a decade ago. From being of no interest to the public the theorising and research on racism have become a part of core academic disciplines such as sociology, politics, anthropology, and surprisingly a subject of literary theory. (Solomos, 2003, 1) According to Solomos it is the social and political status of second or third generation descendants of immigrants that presents a central topic of many hostile public discussions nowadays. (2004, 4) In 1968, Enoch Powell, "a respected classic scholar and member of the Shadow Cabinet [...] deplored the immigration policy that had introduced 'an alien element' into the country." (Gallix et. al., 1997, 138) Also Mrs. Thatcher used the political advantage gained from making the issue of 'black' immigration a part of electioneering. She declared "We must hold out the clear prospect of an end to immigration." (Gallix et. al., 1997, 139) Nowadays, the laws for restriction of immigration are necessary.

“Today, although the sun has set on Great Britain’s political Empire” the influence on the rest of the world has still remained significant. (Kaleta, 1998, 1) Simultaneously, the immigration has altered the English culture to a large degree. Multiculturalism emerged from the process and is now considered to be typical for Britain, although it took a while to think of the society as multicultural and “a lot of work went into creating that idea.” (Bakewell) Current events in Great Britain highlight the importance of this issue and the ease with which it can lead to disorder. Moving around, the immigrants are in many cases not able to identify themselves with the new nation and so the sense of national identity is missing. Immigration may lead to exclusion of these odd individuals, strangers yearning for identity.

Identity is by no means transparent or unproblematic. (Weedon, 2004, 5) From the medical point of view “a specific genetic inheritance and human culture are both necessary conditions for the development of human identity.” (Easthope, 1999, 14) To be more precise other authors perceive an individual as a “‘knowing subject’ conceived of as a sovereign, rational and unified consciousness in control of language and meaning.” (Weedon, 2004, 5) State, religion, family, culture, the law, politics and media “produce the ideologies within which we assume identities and become subjects.” (Weedon, 2004, 6) Identities are further consolidated by repetition. (Weedon, 2004, 7) In the case of immigrants the identification with culture is lost. Hybridity is the word designating the status of immigrants. Several authors state that the term refers to combining two or more cultural influences in the creation of a third distinct category. The combination of individual and cultural practices forms a dual heritage identity. Important characteristic of the dual situation is that neither of the constituent parts takes precedence over the other. (Bentley, 2008, 208) Minority cultures within a state are often seen as fixed traditionally and unchanging. (Bertossi, 2007, 87) However, Hanif Kureishi states in one of his novels that:

It is the British, the white British, who have to learn that being British isn’t what it was. Now it is a more complex thing involving new elements. So there must be a fresh way of seeing Britain and the choices it faces: and a new way of being British after all this time. (qtd. in Nasta, 2002, 173)

Nevertheless, the longing of bewildered individuals for identity can be quenched through the search for another community.

Meanwhile society or company has very similar meaning to community the first two have neutral or negative meaning, but community is a word of an exclusively positive meaning. (Bauman, 2001, 1) To expound on the real meaning of the word, community has often been referred to as something similar to a paradise. Inside the community the fear of outcasts is allayed. Supportive environment provides members with happiness and confidence therefore community is the right place for the most vulnerable people, young people. (Bauman, 2001, 1-3)

It is the precarious future that forces the young generation to seek security in new fellowships. (Nayak, 2003, 167) Not knowing other options, youngsters often tend to join these units without thinking twice. However, there exists also the darker side of being in a community. Every group works on a cage principle. One can see the world outside but cannot leave the boundaries of community. Personal freedom is the price, which people must pay for living in safety and many of them are willing to renounce their rights. (Bauman, 2001, 2-4) On the other hand, there are still communities which do not ask for so high a price. Several groups were created to connect individuals with the same views. Ideological groups are referred to as subcultures.

Subcultures are perceived as modern communities, which were created as a response to young people's negotiating an uncertain future. (Nayak, 2003, 167) The rapid expansion in service sector economies and the decline of manufacturing have resulted in negative expectations for young people's future. (Nayak, 2003, 3) "Long-term unemployment, part-time work, unskilled jobs, fixed-term contracts" and other unfavourable patterns, which deepen the sense of insecurity, are being applied. (Nayak, 2003, 3) Nayak points out that alongside the insecurity and uncertainty surrounding the labour market, the industrial expansion, improvement in communication and transport networks contribute to the transformation of daily habitation so that the formerly very different terms 'local' and 'global' are no longer set apart. (2003, 4) Not surprisingly, in the current climate of change young people adapt to the new conditions in different ways. However, the upshot of adaptation is the very same all over the world. The need of individuals to belong somewhere gives rise to the forming of groups. Having acquired identity, groups start acting intrinsically as 'cultures'. And so called 'subcultures' emerge.

The term 'subcultures' was introduced to "interpret young people's social lives." (Nayak, 2003, 13) It was originally "imposed on 'underground' groups that were felt to differ from the social 'mainstream'." (Nayak, 2003, 13) The word 'subcultures' used to have "connotations that suggested these groups were subterranean, subordinate" and "subversive social formations". (Nayak, 2003, 13) Eventually the subcultures acquire identities such as Skinheads, Rastas, Punks or Goths. In general, subcultures are supposed to have "different ethos that could challenge or transgress the values held by wider society" for example "through the anarchism of Punk". (Nayak, 2003, 13) Consequently the group's values might be materialized through other given activities, such as an interest in the music scene. A lot of authors constantly characterise subcultures as "'counter-cultures'" which are "against the values, beliefs and social practices of the prevailing society." (Nayak, 2003, 13) Other writers "suggest that subcultures may coalesce around a loose configuration of values". (Nayak, 2003, 13) The fact that subcultures are presently highly recognised is substantiated by research of 'Thatcher's Generation', which confirms that "young people now take pride in being out of the system." (Easthope, 1999, 225)

Identities might be assigned also by religious belief. One of the main problems in Britain is the growing diversity of new creeds, some of which are not indigenous to this country and even not compatible with Christian values oriented Europe. A typical example of religious fatalism proved to be Muslim culture. Although the "Muslim immigrants to Europe are not potential terrorists and do not seek to impose their beliefs on others" they are often targets of suspicion. (Frederickson 2002, 149) Whether Muslims are about to assimilate into the new country or not is the question. Many people are shocked by the authoritarianism of Islam, the capability to believe "in things with so fervency and conviction." (Kidd) To be brought up in a religiously fanatical family seems to be quite difficult for those with the third generation of immigrant status, especially from the point of view of their future assimilation into the culture, which is more close to them than the one of their parents. Moreover, ethnic minorities in Britain are counted on hundred thousands, whereas the existence of mixed ethnic origins people presently called "new ethnicities" are often not factored in censuses. (Gallix et. al., 1997, 133)

4. Core factors shaping young people's attitudes

Critiques analysing the book assert that the “material is very beautiful, often very severe – but always alive. It doesn't matter that it is set back in the 1970s. It still questions what it is to be British.” (Cripps) The humorous but also heated confrontations alongside embarrassing moments spicing up the story could pass as mundane, had it not been for the presence of typical refractoriness of racial minority members. It also might be the unpredictability of the teen characters, the disobedience of revolting youth that make the novel so riveting. Either way, the popularity of the book and the claim to be a “typically British novel” owes to the hitting of the right note. (Yousaf, 2002, 29) In contrast to spirit of the period foreground in terms of fashion and music, which makes reading the book an authentic tour throughout the seventies, the topics, which had been discussed when the novel was published, have remained current. (Ravani, 2002, 63) Youngsters and the main character of the book alike are clear about their intentions while, paradoxically, at the same time being hazy about their future. ‘Careless or thoughtful?’ is the question to be asked when dwelling on the intentions standing behind youths' behaviours. The problematic nature of attitudes is dramatically altered when the racial issue is considered. To dissect the issue of youths' attitudes, the perception of the world must be understood first from their point of view.

From the very beginning Karim makes his intentions crystal clear. Not knowing what the fate will bring, Karim is open-minded. His search for identity will comprise of drug taking, sexual experiments, and above all moving to the city of London, where life is “bottomless in its temptations”. (Kureishi, 1999, 8) Being utterly bored with his life just as all the teenagers are, Karim is a highly susceptible individual, who longs for experiences. Being aware of this situation, Karim admits to be “looking for trouble, any kind of movement, action and sexual interest” he can find. (Kureishi, 1999, 3) And it cannot be said that he will fail to find what he has been searching for. In the pursuit of giving a sense to his miserable life Karim embarks on adventure. Basically, the teen years bring a perilous state of mind - boredom that pushes teens to start acting. A parallel but not necessarily identical link is made between Karim's origins and behaviour, as he blames the mix of races for being so careless by saying: “perhaps it is the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not, that

makes me restless and easily bored.” (Kureishi, 1999, 3) The main character considers himself unable to act in a different way as it is his background and age that predetermine him to behave accordingly. To be more precise, there is already no way of choice.

Blaming and making excuses might provide a shelter for those who feel insecure and vulnerable. However, behind every excuse at least one reasonable cause exists. To lift the shroud of mystery that surrounds the acts of young people the causes must be thoroughly examined. In this story, it is doubt that seems to be the cause, the trigger for the main character’s wondering. (Flynn) Unambiguousness is by no means what the main teenage character is dealing with. On the contrary, ambiguity accompanies Karim in all respects.

One of intriguing examples of irresolution is the bewildering state of Karim’s sexual orientation. For this society is of typical social control with all the rules more or less obeyed, but the norms are changing. (Bancroft, 1990, 173) *Buddha of Suburbia* is a detailed chronicle of 1960’s and 1970’s Britain with its changing sexual and political morals. (Ruvani, 2002, 1) When shame and looking down one’s nose at different people is no longer the case of the new generation’s loosening morals, the plural sexuality might offer an opportunity of choice, one of which people are allowed to make on their own. Thus Karim influenced by reading Kerouac’s *On the Road* and being aware that age is to his benefit, makes his choices. (Kureishi, 1999, 10) To be attracted to another man is neither odd nor humiliating. Haroon, Karim’s father, taught his little boy to flirt with girls and boys alike, which inspires Karim to no longer differentiate between gender as a crucial sign of attraction but between charm and honesty, graces and courtesy. (Kureishi, 1999, 7) At the beginning it is Charlie who is the centre of Karim’s attention.

Trying deliberately to exclude Charlie from his mind, on the way to Eva’s house, where Karim’s dad is going to deliver a performance, Karim stops off at a pub, just in case Charlie would pop in for a drink. (Kureishi, 1999, 8, 10) But different love is not what makes the main character scared. A search for shame in Karim’s behaviour would be in vain as he considers it normal to be in love with a boy. Moreover, this kind of love is equally exalted and developed as love to a woman would be. The object of attraction,

Charlie, is an eighteen years old boy “upon whom nature had breathed such beauty [...] that people were afraid to approach him, and he was often alone.” (Kureishi, 1999, 9) Not surprisingly, Karim supposes that all men unanimously feel the same about Charlie. Once describing his future lover’s extraordinary beauty he does not forget to add that “men and boys got erections just being in the same room as him [...] women sighted in his presence, and teachers bristled.” (Kureishi, 1999, 9) From Karim’s point of view sexuality is not strictly innate or immutable. Karim’s love for Charlie is “unusual as love goes” but not genuine - on the contrary, the consuming passion is combined with envy. Although being indecisive, Karim Amir is by no means a homosexual. Describing his unusual state and simultaneously trying to make profit out of it he says:

I was unusual, I knew, the way I wanted to sleep with boys as well as girls [...] I liked being handled by men [...] but I liked [...] all of women’s softness [...] I felt it would be heart-breaking to have to choose one or the other. (Kureishi, 1999, 55)

Nevertheless, the affection for Charlie, his main love at the moment, prevents him from getting entangled in other affairs. Having sex mainly in public toilets, as there are not many places to go, causes Karim to link love with the smell of “urine, shit and disinfectant cocktail.” (Kureishi, 1999, 53) Although not worshipping monogamy or “anything old like that”, he refuses to flirt with his female friend and occasional lover Jamila, as he is deeply concerned about his intense feelings for Charlie. (Kureishi, 1999, 55) Family drama put aside, his messed-up feelings preoccupy him.

Later in the story, Karim is able to name his emotions more precisely. When sitting in such a decent and peculiar position on a bidet with his trousers down, he has “an extraordinary revelation.” (Kureishi, 1999, 15) For the first time in his life the main character comes to a kind of conclusion. To live intensely, to be surrounded with “mysticism, alcohol, sexual promise, clever people and drugs” should become the goals of his life. (Kureishi, 1999, 15) The place where he finds out what to do is highly symbolic. The vulnerability of the young person, the rashness and absurdity of his decisions are being mocked. But it is not always the symbolism of places but people and dialogues that try to expose important facts. Certainly, one of the most important factors in shaping of Karim’s personality is the relationship with his father.

The father of Karim is named Haroon Amir, but relatives keep on calling him “Harry” as the English find it “bad enough his being an Indian in the first place, without having an awkward name too.” (Kureishi, 1999, 33) After being asked to visit a performance of his dad, Karim, who always wishes to be “somewhere else”, immediately takes the opportunity to quit the family house, where things always have been “so gloomy, so slow and heavy”. (Kureishi, 1999, 3)

Youngsters are naturally compelled to feel unhappy in their families. The book also does not describe an exemplary family life. Margaret, Karim’s mother, is a woman who has been put in a difficult situation. Whilst being aware of the fact that her husband is unfaithful to her, she is unable to act. The unwillingness to get divorced or even face an unpleasant situation openly leaves her living in limbo. Being an ordinary submissive suburban woman, Margaret, often self-conscious, behaves compliantly. (Kureishi, 1999, 4) Only rarely she gives utterance to her feelings. “My life is terrible, terrible! Doesn’t anyone understand?” (Kureishi, 1999, 19) However, divorce would not be appropriate for Karim’s parents. The act of splitting up would be fiercely condemned by their suburban neighbours. “In the suburbs people rarely dreamed of striking out for happiness [...]. Security and safety were the rewords of dullness.” (Kureishi, 1999, 8) Karim, strongly opposed to the prevailing opinion, wanting to move out, asks himself a question: “Why couldn’t she be stronger?” (Kureishi, 1999, 8, 19) His mother just punishes herself and never fights back. But the relationship with mum seems not to be of much importance to Karim as he is fully occupied by issues concerning his own personality.

Besides being a bisexual, Karim is torn between two other contradictory things, two worlds. The British one, where he feels pertain to, is not willing to accept him for his appearance and consequently the Indian world, which should welcome him, refuses him as well because of being too English to fit in. Moreover, Karim has never got much in touch with his father’s culture. When his acquaintance starts “behaving like a Muslim” not only is it in Karim’s opinion bizarre, but it also strikes him as utterly incomprehensible. (Kureishi, 1999, 64) It is reasonable that after being rejected by the British culture, the one he feels close to, the main character’s search to belong in a world or rather society not determined by question of race may start. (Weedon, 2004,

80) Although Karim describes himself as an Englishman he denies the statement forthwith once admitting that being “a funny kind of Englishman” is his lot. (Kureishi, 1999, 3) Nevertheless, searching and finding is typical for the novel.

The Buddha of Suburbia is “a novel of social comedy written in a style relying on extrapolation.” (Keleta, 1998, 68) Humour and sarcasm play vital roles in understanding the novel. Attitudes of the characters as well as the conflicts they experience are designed to lambast the racial issues. The seriousness of the dialogues is often undercut by sarcasm. However, the main topic is undoubtedly the racial prejudice and humour should only lighten the seriousness in order to make the book initially inform and as a result prompt people to ponder on how much truth lies in the story. Nevertheless, for Kureishi’s creative writing the commentary on wider themes than the racial abuse is typical. The “ambivalence and ironic distance makes his work more difficult to interpret politically. His irony itself is a refusal to commit” and the satire “imbues the narrative with alternative meanings.” (Ravani, 2002, 5-62) The tendency to satirise both the ethnic minority’s culture and the majority’s British culture actually shields Kureishi from the disgrace of Britons and immigrants alike. Being partly an autobiographical novel, the endeavour to speak openly about the local conditions in Great Britain coerced Kureishi into saying what he had to say not only about the Asian community but about attitudes of the whole British society. (Flynn)

Haroon, just as Karim, encounters racial prejudice, but both characters deal with it differently. Being aware of his status, Karim has no illusions. When first talking about education, he particularly stresses one situation faced during a school lesson:

Recently I’d been punched and kicked to the ground by a teacher because I called him a queer. This teacher was always making me sit on his knee, and when he asked me questions like ‘What is the square root of five thousand six hundred and seventy-eight and a half?’, which I couldn’t answer, he tickled me. Very educational. (Kureishi, 1999, 63)

Definitely the dealing with improper confrontations is exceptional. Hardly any person would actually fight with the teacher, not even verbally. Teasing and bullying make the main character sceptical but at the same time reconciled. However, the process of reconciliation may make people exasperated. Because of being called “Shitface” or “Curryface” by schoolmates, Karim is disgusted by compulsory education. (Kureishi,

1999, 63) Bullying is the order of the day. Karim considers himself “lucky to get home from school without serious injury”. (Kureishi, 1999, 63) What world is his father living in when all he is able to is think about his son becoming a doctor? (Kureishi, 1999, 63) From Haroon’s point of view his son’s future could be optimistic. “He’ll go to university, oh yes. He’ll be a leading doctor in London.” (Kureishi, 1999, 7) Although it has passed more than twenty years since Haroon disembarked on the bank of the Clyde, he still makes plans, not for himself but for his son. However, as time goes by even Haroon, the Indian, has come to terms with the unwritten law of the former Empire. One day, talking about work, he utters:

The whites will never promote us, [...] Not an Indian while there is a white man left on the earth. You don’t have to deal with them – they still think they have an Empire when they don’t have two pennies to rub together. (Kureishi, 1999, 27)

The promotion might not happen because of his indolence, but his disrespect to authorities is obvious. “To hell with the Queen!” is not an exclamation which should come out of a decent citizen’s mouth, yet Haroon has adopted this idea. Out of ignorance a belief in self-respect emerged and the father became a philanderer as a form of rebellion against the norm.

Eva, Haroon’s future mistress, disturbed the whole family household from the moment she entered it. (Kureishi, 1999, 11) Eva Kay is forward, brazen, wicked and that is the reason why Margaret has never been keen to visit Eva’s place. (Kureishi, 1999, 8) Karim describes Eva as a woman who would not:

seem attractive straight-on in a passport photograph. She had no conventional beauty, her features were not exquisitely proportioned and her face was a bit chubby. But she was lovely [...]. Her face was constantly in motion, and this was the source of her beauty. (Kureishi, 1999, 86)

She often moves freely from age to age, sometimes she becomes childlike, sometimes mature, and naturally adheres to the chosen roles. Karim finds her an honest sensible adult, openly human unlike other secretive withdrawn grown-ups. There is no cold maturity about her. (Kureishi, 1999, 86) Eva is spiritually oriented. It was her who encouraged Karim to read books. She deems it a bare fact that people, the youth in particular, are interested in reading, as a result of which she often asks: “What are you reading?” And then she induces Karim to recount his findings while making other

recommendations. (Kureishi, 1999, 21) No matter how sympathetic and inspiring Eva's presence is, she is the cause of several unhappy lives. Although it might be distressing, "the indefinable human truths are at the core of" not only this story but all Kureishi's writings. (Kaleta, 1998, 176) The woman will unintentionally steal a father of a family albeit a hard emotional battle precedes it.

After several Haroon's public Oriental philosophy sessions combined with yoga, held mainly in the circle of Eva's intimate friends, it is clear that Eva is not going to leave the lives of Amir's. "She was present when Dad was withdrawn and preoccupied – every night [...] she was there when he heard a sad record or anyone mentioned love. And no one was happy [...] Life was tense." (Kureishi, 1999, 46) When it finally comes to confrontation and Haroon must decide on what to do next, he suddenly feels insecure. The truth is he was trying not to face confrontation for as long as possible. Haroon tries to avoid making decisions, yet, there is no other option than to stick his neck out. Being asked to clarify his intentions, an expression of tremendous pain spreads over his face. (Kureishi, 1999, 65) The overwhelming passion ambushes him. To sketch his intense feelings experienced with Eva, Haroon says:

All the time I am not with Eva I miss her. When I talk to myself in my mind, it is always her I talk to [...] I feel that if I am not with her I will be making a great mistake, missing a real opportunity. (Kureishi, 1999, 66)

Haroon, the man who neither hides desire nor finds it utterly wrong, makes his dream come true even though he eventually regrets splitting the family. "I've decided I want to be with Eva." (Kureishi, 1999, 90) It is the utterance which shatters Karim's world, partly destroys it and ushers Karim into the world of adults. There is no more hiding in the world of maturity. Sure enough, Haroon and Eva's "hands constantly fluttering towards each other", there is a new couple in the picture. (Kureishi, 1999, 86) However, Haroon and Eva are not the only one newly formed couple. The time has come for Jamila to be married.

5. Dealing with authorities

Patriarchy is a term used to delineate authoritative behaviour of male members of a particular social or religious group. Elaborate system incorporating prescribed behaviour patterns is implemented at the expense of youth and especially women of all age brackets. The goal of such a hierarchy is to suppress individuality as a source of endangerment. The established dominance over women and youth has endured up till now. The male superiority is confirmed by aggression and may even perpetuate an implicit battle between sexes. Even though patriarchy is not the only absolutistic system in practice, for youth it is definitely the first to deal with.

Being a sophisticated girl, Jamila, born in a family of Indian immigrants, often strolls around the city with Karim. Talking and laughing during their trips, they acquire different identities:

Yeah, sometimes we were French, Jammie and I, and other times we went black American. The thing was, we were supposed to be English, but to the English we were always wogs and nigs and Pakis and the rest of it. (Kureishi, 1999, 53)

Jamila, as well as Karim, often faces displays of explicit but unjustified hatred. Surprisingly it is the girl who does not tolerate racism. Being equipped with “a PhD in physical retribution”, Jamila once insulted by a passerby, sprints through the traffic before throwing the offender off his bike and “tugging out some of his hair, like someone weeding an overgrown garden.” (Kureishi, 1999, 53) Compared to Jammie Karim is a rather moderate and frightened boy. For instance, if strangers on the streets spit on him he practically thanks them for not making him “chew the moss between the paving stones.” (Kureishi, 1999, 53) Whereas Karim sees the white British realistically and perceives them as a potential threat, his dad has always felt superior to the British. The summary of instructions on dealing with former colonisers has been inculcated in Karim’s mind since early age. According to Haroon his Indian childhood kindled profound emotions in him such as “political anger turning into scorn and contempt” with which he is still filled. (Kureishi, 1999, 250)

For him in India the British were ridiculous, stiff, unconfident, rule-bound. And he’d made me feel that we couldn’t allow ourselves the shame of failure in front of these people. You couldn’t let the ex-colonialists see you on your knees, for that was where they expected you to be. They [the British] were exhausted now;

their Empire was gone; their day was done and it was our turn. (Kureishi, 1999, 250)

The above written passage depicting mutual racism highlights the mastery of Kureishi's writing, which not only includes humour in ordinary situations but also incorporates highly idiosyncratic even outrageous opinions as constituent parts of stereotypical lives.

Except for racist abuse, Jamila as a modern-educated and rebellious girl, holding strong opinions on individual freedom, must deal with another cultural paradox. In order to exercise, Jammie often attends karate classes and runs long-distance training circuits through the city. Anwar, claiming allegiance to Muslims, suspects his daughter of dating boys on the sly during her frequent trips to the city. Being deeply disturbed by this suspicion, Anwar secretly decides to marry Jamila off to an Indian. The idea that is gnawing at his mind - his daughter behaving indecently, must be eradicated. As a result, Jamila is sentenced to spend her life-time in an arranged marriage. Unfortunately, the "society appears to be at a loss to understand how to cope with adolescent sexuality." (Bancroft, 1990, 183) Anwar would rather force his only daughter to suffer in an unwanted bond than let her decide freely about her love affairs.

Certainly, Jamila being raised up in the modern politico-sociological patterns of 1960's Britain does not want to be forced to marry. However, her father exerts over Jamila the absolute patriarchal authority. "I won't eat. I will die. If Gandhi could shove out the English from India by not eating, I can get my family to obey me by exactly the same [way]. [...] Our way is firm." (Kureishi, 1999, 60) This irrationality makes Karim depressed. Even the speech on contemporary morals cannot persuade Anwar to cease recklessly destroying his own body. After Anwar's going on a "Gandhi diet" Karim feels sure to "cross Anwar and Jeeta off [his] list of normals." (Kureishi, 1999, 60-64)

Back in the 1970's the novel explores not only racial prejudice emerging as a reaction to immigration but also the disquieting question of morals. The ongoing decline in morals is inextricably linked with religion and beliefs. Talking about belief, the author of the novel approves, after a long consideration that seeking pleasure is the ultimate goal in life. In an interview Kureishi declares:

I think that's why we need a culture. I mean a culture explores the notion of, of law, of morality, of the establishment, in order to argue with it, in order to enlarge

our area of freedom and possible pleasure. I think pleasure is the only possible thing to live for, the only game in town, and the only interesting thing. I mean most religions are based around the idea of punishment and morality.... most religions are absolutely obsessed with sexuality, but they're also obsessed with, with punishing sexuality, which is another way of having your sexuality, which is sort of perverted sexuality. Or inverted sexuality, you might say. I think that's a very complicated way to get your pleasure, and very dangerous for the world. And I think Islam has become very decadent in its refusal to en...engage with the rest of the world, or to engage with liberalism. (Bakewell)

Religions in general find pleasures deplorable. As pleasures are often linked with punishment Muslims in particular have mastered this subject. Apart from pleasures, Muslims find all the West things contemptible. (Gardner) The hatred they feel is aimed at nearly everyone. They dislike women, gay people, and many other things. Actually, “they don’t like anything much”, do not enjoy anything much, just hate much. (Gardner) The hatred may also stem from a blind obedience to authorities, which in the Islamic world are represented by religion and patriarchy.

In this story the close relation between father and son is thoroughly examined. The author himself has a complicated relationship with his father, which is reflected in Karim – Haroon’s mutual relation. Journalists claim that Kureishi is difficult to interview alone as “he is always accompanied by the spectre of his father, Rafuishan Kureishi.” (Hari) Karim being influenced by his father’s displays starts calling his dad ‘God’. The God nickname is given yet with reservations because Haroon must prove to be fully entitled to the name. Being fairly impressed, Karim wonders whether God realises his potential or “turn out to be merely another suburban eccentric.” (Kureishi, 1999, 22) The hypothesis that Haroon might be a charlatan proves to be fallacious. “Dad was plumper than he’d ever been. He was turning into a porky little Buddha, but compared to everyone else [...] he was life itself, vibrant, irreverent and laughing.” (Kureishi, 1999, 84) When Karim decides to become an actor instead of a doctor Haroon is not disenchanted with his son’s choice – quite to the contrary – he approves it. Consequently the main character has become more interested in his personal issues rather than dissect those of his parents, the authority of whom is naturally unshakeable.

However, the respect for father gradually disappears. Karim has begun to see Haroon not as his dad “but as a separate person with characteristics that” are contingent. (Kureishi, 1999, 192) Dad has become another individual, who represents a part of the

world, not its source. The opinion on his dad has dramatically changed. Karim starts reflecting on his dad's past:

Women had always looked after [him...], and he'd exploited them. I despised him for it now. I began to think that the admiration I'd had for him as a kid was baseless. What could he do? What qualities did he have? Why had he treated Mum as he had? I no longer wanted to be like him. I was angry. He'd let me down in some way. (Kureishi, 1999, 194)

Later Karim's ideas develop even further as he happens to see his dad in a state of temporary decrepitude. Having a white collar around his neck, pressing his chins up around his jaw, dad is willingly deprived of all superiority. Karim reminisces:

I thought of how, when I was a kid, Dad always out-ran me as we charged across the park towards the swimming pool. When we wrestled on the floor he always pinned me down, sitting on my chest and making me say I'd obey him always. Now he couldn't move without flinching. I'd become the powerful one; I couldn't fight him - and I wanted to fight him - without destroying him in one blow. It was a saddening disappointment. (Kureishi, 1999, 261)

The sudden change, the unexpected reversal, shakes teenagers' lives. No more hiding from responsibility is acceptable. The transition period ends in adultery. Despite the revelation that Karim is the stronger one now, he still likes Haroon but in a different caring way, which concludes that "children may also be a sort of parents to their parents." (Bakewell)

The given moral values are often shattered and twisted. Changez, being infuriated by Karim's tendency to lighten love dramas, describes his dear friend and adviser as a "little English, with a yellowish face like the devil. The number of morals you have equals none! I have my wife. I love her and she will love me." (Kureishi, 1999, 184) Certainly, the main protagonist does not fret about serious issues. Unlike the majority of students Karim consciously ruins his life. Not showing up at any of exams results in failing all of them. Even though, Karim lies to his parents about taking the exams. Apart from failing all school exams, Karim's ignorance is demonstrated through his relationships with friends. Irresponsibility equals immaturity. (Kureishi, 1999, 110)

According to Ruvani, Karim is a typical male protagonist, who evades any kind of commitment, either emotional or political. (2002, 77) Political situation is not the only issue in the centre of Kureishi's interest even though it may seem to be the most widely

researched problem. Kureishi is concerned with exploring “loyalty and commitment in a spectrum of relationships.” (Ruvani, 2002, 77)

Jamila pleads with Karim to participate in a street demonstration for equal rights of minorities, however, Karim rather stalks his unfaithful white middle-class girlfriend in preference to fighting for his real rights in a demonstration against the National Front. After breaking up with his girlfriend, Karim regrets his absence in all the demonstrations. Being asked to help “the Party” when it “requires funds right now”, Karim manages to keep his promise and obtains a great deal of money from a middle class member. (Kureishi, 1999, 230) However, to demonstrate a genuine commitment to any Party or political movement is simply too demanding for a never enthusiastic Karim. His devotion to political groups is questioned as much as the loyalty to his close friends.

“I love you as a brother,” Karim confesses to Changez affectionately. (Kureishi, 1999, 107) The relationship between Changez and Karim is quite complex. Karim initially shows loyalty towards Changez but then betrays him twice. The first betrayal relates to their friend Jamila with whom Karim occasionally used to sleep. Even the marriage does not present a good enough reason to cease to make love with the already not single woman as Karim is “always forgetting” that Changez is married to Jamila. (Kureishi, 1999, 183) The husband accidentally discovers the true nature of so-called friendly relationship of Jamila and Karim. Being caught lying naked on the bed with Jamila, Karim scuttles out of the flat, thinking that he has just betrayed everyone including himself. It is suffice to say that although the relationship with Jamila persists the friendship with Changez is disturbed.

The second incident questions Karim’s loyalty again but in a completely different way. This time psychological blackmailing is used. To create a character of a new theatre play the inspiration cannot be sought in the behaviour of Changez. Changez being infuriated by the inconsiderate behaviour of Karim declares:

If you try and steal me I can’t see how we can be friends to talk to each other again! You entered my wife, [...] Now promise you won’t enter me by the back door and portray me in your play. (Kureishi, 1999, 185)

Disobeying Changez, Karim creates Tariq a character based on Changez and in the play Tariq has great success.

6. Dealing with success and loss

Although nearly each person seeks success not many are able to cope with fame and popularity. No matter where the high level of personal satisfaction derives from, every individual will sooner or later find happiness. For someone happiness is tantamount to fame, which is followed by recognition.

Charlie Hero, then called Charlie Kay, has become a well-known star of a music group previously called “Mustn’t Grumble” but presently known as “The Condemned”. (Kureishi, 1999, 153) The social orientation of the group has altered. As the name reveals, the musicians respond to the transformations of society. At the beginning, the band plays in pubs, meaningless gigs and as a support to some bigger concerts. (Kureishi, 1999, 68) After several months or even years, the group becomes disintegrated. The spirit of the age has changed and Charlie has to adapt to the changes. One night Charlie and Karim visit a small gig in London, where a band with a totally new style of music plays. This encounter rocks Charlie’s world. The new chaotic music style combined with the weird appearance of the musicians makes the boys feel anxious. The two frightened boys, Karim and Charlie, are mortified. London, a place where “the kids looked fabulous; they dressed and walked and talked like little gods”, is killing them. (Kureishi, 1999, 128) Shrieking: “Fuck off, all you smelly old hippies! [...] Fuck off to hell!” the main singer, a little wild kid, seems to be aiming with his exclamations directly at Karim and Charlie. (Kureishi, 1999, 131) After recovering from this shock, Charlie yells: “That’s it! That’s it! The sixties have been given notice tonight. Those kids we saw have assassinated all hope. They’re the fucking future!” (Kureishi, 1999, 131) The music is very authentic, very original, very aggressive. The young singers are immersed in their songs. It is the night when Charlie’s career takes off.

Since that night, Charlie’s attitudes have not substantially changed. He succeeded in finding his subject or rather mastered in exploiting all possibilities offered to him. The similarity between the two teenagers echoes throughout the story. Actually, the attitudes of all the young characters occurring in the book are congruent with the 1970s’ philosophy. According to Kureishi to escape administrative destiny, as a lower middle class civil servant, which used to be the case for adolescents living in the suburbs, is

possible. (Gardner) Therefore both Charlie and Karim are brazen opportunists. A lot of things have happened to them; “big things” to Charlie and “smaller but significant things” to Karim. (Kureishi, 1999, 144) Although Charlie is aware that he is just a merely talented boy, the assertion of his step-brother shakes his confidence as a singer. Karim disrupts Charlie’s world by saying:

To go somewhere you gotta be talented [...] . You’re a looker [...] a face [...] . But your work don’t amaze me, and I need to be amazed [...]. You know me. I need to be fucking staggered. And I’m not fucking staggered. Oh no.” (Kureishi, 1999, 121)

Karim does not much revel in teasing others, however, the situation between him and Charlie remains fraught. Ambition and determination compel the aspirant-rock-star to spare no effort in rising to fame. In this case being impressed by transgressive behaviour of the Punks, individuals launch into experimenting. Initially, teenagers often hold unrealistically high expectations of a rosy future for themselves. Society with all its rules and given norms, determines paths to follow. Instead of just bemoaning to their fate, teenagers rebel against prescribed principles. Only one person, who is already supposed to face a promising future, will even surpass all assumptions. Once attending a public school, or rather playing truant, Charlie has gradually started dressing quite prominently. With his striking features, hollow cheeks, dyed silver hair, reflecting clothes, he stands out “from the rest of the mob.” (Kureishi, 1999, 68) While others have “a combination of miserable expectations and wild hopes” Charlie is awaiting enviable fate, unlike Karim, who has “only wild hopes.” (Kureishi, 1999, 68) However, mere talent without motivation rarely stands behind success. Jamila as a stalwart feminist could not be deceived by Charlie’s appearance and is able to see his hypocrisy. “Under the crushed-velvet idealism which was still the style of the age” iron ambition is embedded. (Kureishi, 1999, 75)

Charlie chooses to run away from home yet occasionally visits his mother, who has recently moved to a flat in the city of London. To steal a picture or two per a visit makes Charlie’s drop-ins purposeful. Nevertheless, nobody feels to have the right to judge Charlie’s actions. Eva remarking: “Wasn’t Gene Jeanet a thief?” decides to be indulgent towards her son and discourages others to discuss the missing paintings case.

(Kureishi, 1999, 125) Disrespect for personal property is not the only character feature that Charlie lacks.

Charlie has mastered in using insults. During one interview he announces: “We’re shit [...] Can’t play, can’t sing, can’t write songs, and the shitty idiot people love us!” (Kureishi, 1999, 153) After leaving London, his arrogance is intensified. One day a desperate shameless journalist in pursuit of doing an interview with Charlie grasps the punk star’s arm, which proves to be a “fatal move”. (Kureishi, 1999, 252) Charlie being immersed in his own cruelty,

chopped down on him, but the man held on. Charlie hit him with a playground punch on the side of the head, and the man went down, stunned, on to his knees, waving his arms like someone begging forgiveness. Charlie hadn’t exhausted his anger. He kicked the man in the chest, and when he fell to one side and grabbed at Charlie’s legs Charlie stamped on his hand. (Kureishi, 1999, 252)

This incident makes Karim want to leave America. However, living in the big city, New York, Charlie needs a witness of all his successes to be there. Without a witness all his effort would go in vain. With Karim accompanying him throughout the pitiful years in Beckenham, Charlie deserves to be astonished by great places he visits and famous people he meets. (Kureishi, 1999, 250) Nevertheless, Karim still looks “so English”, which means “so shocked, so self-righteous and moral, so loveless and incapable of dancing [...] narrow”. (Kureishi, 1999, 255) Coming from England, the “Kingdom of Prejudice”, Karim feels homesick. (Kureishi, 1999, 255) Even the putative motion clumsiness of the English is not spared mocking.

A typical object of ridicule is an immigrant, Changez. He as a hilarious character figures in most of the funny situations. Through Changez, Kureishi depicts contempt and humiliation Indians reap in England. Changez’s fascination with Jamila, which will later turn rather into an obsession, makes a clear example of the mocking at the cultural experience. Even though, after being blackmailed, Jamila succumbs to her father’s will and marries Changez, the marriage is not fulfilled. Jamila obeys the authority of her father, but as a confirmed feminist will never surrender to men. Changez is not granted the privilege to touch his wife. During one dialogue with Karim, Changez swears to make his wife love him, however, Karim is sceptical. Intentionally, the frustration of

Changez is smartly underscored by humorous ambiguity. The desperation drives Changez insane to the extent that he even threatens to commit suicide:

‘Of course I will do it. I will cut my throat.’
‘What with?’ [Karim asks]
‘A prick!’ (Kureishi, 1999, 184)

Furthermore, Changez, a confirmed Muslim, thanks Christ Almighty in heaven for resolving an insolvable conflict. (Kureishi, 1999, 162) Even though Changez often tends to moralize, his own attitudes are readily adopted and changed, too.

Discussing loss and success, there is another aspect to be considered. Affections and affairs including affiliations and the outcome of these bonds are vital themes of the novel. The first outburst of emotions, the first love-making, the first affliction are the characteristic words used to recount Karim’s relationship with Charlie. Although, the love has survived for a long time, Karim ultimately realises that he does not care about Charlie. This sudden revelation attests the growing old of both boys. Karim is no longer “up for anything.” (Kureishi, 1999, 252) Moreover, it is not just Karim who has grown old and matured. With maturity comes trouble either political, philosophical or existential.

It is understandable that thorny issues such as politics perceived from the young people’s point of view present a new area of interest. The book analyses various attitudes to norms and to what extent a young person is influenced by the realization that not only exists in the social hierarchy but the class division of society is also constantly discussed. There is no possibility of omitting the class issue, “the only subject there is in England”. (Kureishi, 1999, 164) Supposing the majority of people first face the problem of class hierarchy in their early twenties, the list of values shaping their opinions seems to be complete, however, a new factor – class - must be added, which throw youth into confusion, again. Accent represents one of the attributes of social status.

“[...] once I practically stopped talking at all, my voice choking in my throat, when Eleanor said my accent was cute. ‘What accent?’” Karim manages to say but Eleanor, the young middle class woman, is reluctant to dissect the question of accent. (Kureishi, 1999, 178) She distresses Karim even more by saying: “You’ve got a street voice [...]

You're from South London- so that's how you speak [...]. It's not unusual. It's different to my voice, of course." (Kureishi, 1999, 178) Karim instantly decides to lose the accent: whatever it is. Parallel to his accent the old world is left behind.

Karim starts dating Eleanor. It may suffice to say that his father is relieved. Certainly there already exists no danger of his son turning out to be a homosexual. Even though Karim enjoys the physical part of the relationship as Eleanor is not self-conscious and does not hide desire unlike Karim, the social part of the relationship is distorted. Karim is aware of a darker side to the relationship.

I was misled by my ignorance of London into thinking my Eleanor was less middle class than she turned out to be. [she] lived in Notting Hill and – sometimes – talked with a Catford accent... Eleanor's father was an American and owned a bank; her mother was a respected English portrait painter; one of her brothers was a university professor. Eleanor had been to country houses, to public school and Italy, and she knew many liberal families [...]: painters, novelists, lecturers [...]. Her mother was a friend of the Queen Mother. (Kureishi, 1999, 173)

Sure enough, Eva would forfeit all her property to "edge her body into" the domiciles Eleanor resided as a child. (Kureishi, 1999, 173) Whereas to repress Eleanor's social background is very difficult even though she tries very hard and says obscenities nearly every five minutes, to conceal her origins entirely is downright impossible. It concludes that her behaviour is perceived as a mere pose, which strikes all her acquaintances as pretentious. Such demeanour evokes scepticism.

"There was extremity in her soul." (Kureishi, 1999, 187) Karim ascertains that it might be more than a pose. He gradually investigates Eleanor's manners. Sometimes Eleanor exaggerates her eccentricities and gives utterance to her feelings in a rather absurd way. For example, one evening Karim visits Eleanor at her flat. At first he is disconcerted, unable to recognise the place as there are clothes everywhere. In the middle of the room there is an ironing-board and a naked Eleanor ironing. Pressing down hard with the iron, she weeps, her tears falling all over the pile of clothes. When she lifts the face of the iron Karim feels that she wants to place it on herself, however, Karim manages to avert accomplishment of the self-harming deed. (Kureishi, 1999, 186) Without a reason, Eleanor abandons herself to depression. After his research is done, Karim is able to conclude that Eleanor might have a very sensitive soul though she is disadvantaged by her origins. The stigma of class persists. As far as relationships are considered, middle

class has its eccentricities Apart from infidelity, the breakup of the couple caused tremendous differences between their social statuses. Coming from a social background where success is awaiting everyone no matter how talented or diligent they are, one has to “work hard to fail” unlike lower middle class members where the process goes vice versa. (Kureishi, 1999, 187)

“Like it or loathe it, the gentrification is undoubtedly one of the most important trends to have affected Britain this century.” (Gallix et. al, 1997, 148) No matter how wedded the Kureish’s work is to the minority experience, it reflects on, apart from subjects typical for England such as unemployment and class, the male behaviour and its effects on society. Jamila reproaches Karim’s opportunistic behaviour through criticising his fascination with the middle class. “You always do what you want anyway. You listen to no one. I’m worried that they’re taking you over, these people. You’re moving away from the real world.” (Kureishi, 1999, 195) However, when talking to Pyke, Karim is again reminded of his social position.

A famous alternative theatre director known as Pyke begins every day with gossips. Sitting at a table with his feet high on another chair, surrounded by actors, the unscrupulous director creates a relaxing atmosphere. In contrast to Karim’s previous experience with Shadwell’s chaotic rehearsals the sessions with Pyke are quite pleasant. Confidence between individual actors is consolidated by various games. Each actor is supposed to portray a well thought-out character the creation of which is up to actors themselves. Up till now Karim has played ethnic roles as his destiny is to be “a half-caste in England”, which is difficult to “accept – belonging nowhere, wanted nowhere.” (Kureishi, 1999, 141) Though the majority of British people are not willing to espouse this view they

are not some sort of monolithic block, made up of one culture or one ethnic group. Britain is a country with a long history of blending and mixing ethnic groups and cultures. (Gallix et. al, 1997, 148)

Karim’s bewildering situation is first clearly recounted by Shadwell:

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha,! [...] What a breed of people two hundred years of imperialism has given birth to. If the pioneers from the East India Company could see you. What puzzlement there’d be. Everyone looks at you, I’m sure, and thinks: an

Indian boy, how exotic, how interesting, what stories of aunties and elephants we'll hear now from him. And you're from Orpington. (Kureishi, 1999, 141)

But Karim's skin is not of a dark brown colour. He as well as all his friends calls himself 'Creamy' as his skin is by no means black but only lightly brown coloured. Karim suffers when his skin must be covered in "the colour of dirt" in order to look more authentic as the protagonist of Mowgli in a theatre play. (Kureishi, 1999, 146) The above cited passage does not relate to racism directly but to its insidious form. Later even Karim's accent must be altered. Being asked to change his way of speaking the main protagonist desires:

I wanted to run out of the room back to South London, where I belonged, out of which I had wrongly and arrogantly stepped. I hated Shadwell and everyone in the cast. (Kureishi, 1999, 148)

Claiming the change of accent presents a "political matter to" Karim. He tries to struggle with the fate of a second generation immigrant, but he eventually surrenders and adopts the new humiliated accent. (Kureishi, 1999, 147) After making this inappropriate concession, the play is produced and soon after watched by Pyke, to whom Karim is eventually invited to dinner.

Several months later, Terry, a fellow actor and friend of Karim, alludes to something that the director Pyke has done to Karim. "I've heard. Everybody talks." (Kureishi, 1999, 240) Karim accent change might be referred to as what Pyke has done to Karim. Seducing Karim's girlfriend might also be the case. However, the destiny to play only "someone black" probably represents the real source of gossips. (Kureishi, 1999, 170) The black character, Gene, who was Eleanor's lover,

killed himself because every day, by a look, a remark, an attitude, the English told him they hated him; they never let him forget they thought him a nigger, a slave, a lower being [...]. We become part of England and yet proudly stood outside it. But to be truly free we had to free ourselves of all bitterness and resentment, too. How was this possible when bitterness and resentment were generated afresh every day? (Kureishi, 1999, 227)

The novel ends when Karim turns twenty- two. Minority experiences and politics have not eluded him. After returning to London, Karim reveals major changes.

The town was being ripped apart; the rotten was being replaced by the new, and the new was ugly. The gift of creating beauty had been lost somewhere. The

ugliness was in the people, too. The Londoners seemed to hate each other. (Kureishi, 1999, 258)

Moreover, there are no hippies or punks: instead everyone is “smartly dressed”, which anticipate the rise of Conservative Party under Mrs. Thatcher. (Kureishi, 1999, 270) Karim being slightly shaken by these changes is feeling abandoned, lonely. Friends perceive him as an individual with “tremendous personal problems” for Karim still keeps on wondering. (Kureishi, 1999, 276)

I sat in the centre of this old city that I loved [...]. I was surrounded by people I love, and I felt happy and miserable at the same time. I thought of what a mess everything had been, but that it wouldn't always be that way. (Kureishi, 1999, 284)

7. Conclusion

This bachelor paper discusses the various attitudes towards society from the point of view of young people as members of minority groups. As in majority ethnic groups the older generation try to pass their values to the youth though in many cases not successfully. It may suffice to say that almost all young people do not care about society unless it imposes restrictions limiting their individuality. The restrictions might encourage youths to rebel.

The revolt arises mainly as a reaction to tough times and difficulty to accept change but it may also stem from the distressing, convoluted way of searching for identities. The motives of revolt undoubtedly appear throughout the story. Though minority experience is certainly in the centre of Kureishi's attention, he refers to his novels as typically British, which might represent a way of author's personal dealing with being a second generation immigrant.

The 1970s might have plunged youth into sudden loosening of morals but the issues being dissected remain still the same. Some individuals might change history, some might even commit crimes, however, if anything happens, it will eventually alter youngsters and coerce them to mature. The revolt is a crucial part of this process. The searching for one's identity is accompanied by experiencing and challenging the norm as well as morals. The revolt shapes the attitudes of teenagers and leads either to assimilation, which equals surrendering to the fate or exclusion. The main characters revolt mainly against injustice, which originates from the untrustworthy handling of minorities.

Karim turns out to be an opportunist as he simply does not care about anything, which implies that as far as the main young protagonists are concerned Karim's process of assimilation is the easiest one, even though he fails to identify himself with the rules of the ethnic majority. But he should not be blamed for his idiosyncrasy. His self-knowledge journey also leads to maturity. However, reaching maturity not in the least provides him with understanding things. Therefore, he still keeps on wondering.

On the other hand, women are more decisive on questions of right and wrong motives. Jamila confronts the absolute Islamic authority of her father, but manages to win the

battle with old-fashioned Muslim laws while paradoxically being pursuant to it. Women face their issues straight and through fight try to alter the society whereas men are more opportunist-like and tend to blend in with the crowd.

The majority minority conflicts persist as well as the generation ones. However, each individual deals with the twists of fate differently. None of the countless unique ways of dealing with confrontations should be perceived as improper. The difficult thing to understand is that neither way of searching for identity and assimilating into the society is wrong but simply remarkably diverse.

8. Resumé

Cílem této bakalářské práce *The Buddha of Suburbia by Hanif Kureishi and the Youth's Attitudes towards Society Issue* bylo analyzovat postoje mladé generace ke společnosti. Na začátku práce je čtenář blíže uveden do kontextu skrze analýzu doby, ve které bylo dílo napsáno. Přestože se první vydání románu datuje k roku 1990, děj se odehrává z velké části v Londýně 70. let minulého století. Tudíž se toto dílo obsahující detailní popisy událostí, míst, oblečení a hudby stává autentickou kronikou jednoho desetiletí nedávné minulosti. Pro soudobý kulturní vývoj Velké Británie je stěžejní její imperialistická minulost.

Britské kolonie získaly nezávislost, v důsledku čehož se impérium rozpadlo, a Spojené království postihly velké změny. Všichni obyvatelé ex-kolonií měli právo strávit svůj život v samém centru bývalé mocnosti, a tak se z Velké Británie stal multikulturní stát. Jelikož od počátku vzniku Commonwealthu neplatila žádná omezení na příliv imigrantů do země, na začátku 70. let byla Británie vystavena obrovským kulturním změnám. Commonwealth měl za úkol nadále propojovat bývalé kolonie s Británií a vytvářet mezi nimi přátelské vztahy, ale skutečnost byla jiná. Stále rostoucí počet imigrantů pocházejících převážně z bývalých kolonií měl za následek vznik městských ghett, osídlovaných právě rasovými menšinami. Ve většině případů žijí etnické menšiny svou vlastní kulturou a nejsou ochotny se podřídít principům a pravidlům všeobecně platným pro danou kulturu a stát. Zatímco status první generace imigrantů byl velmi pozitivní a jejich přítomnost v zemi vítaná, děti přistěhovalců vzhledem k míšení nedomorodných ras s Angličany získaly identitu smíšenou, která je velmi problematická. I v očích původních obyvatel se jejich postavení změnilo.

Hledání vlastní identity je velmi složitý a táhlý proces. Smíšená identita se stala problémem nejen z pohledu původního obyvatelstva Británie, které vnímalo přistěhovalce i obyvatele se smíšeným původem shodně negativně, ale také sami jedinci z těchto rodin měli problémy se začlenit do společnosti. Stále více přibývalo případů rasové nesnášenlivosti a rasově motivovaných útoků. Lze říci, že neustále vzrůstající příliv imigrantů byl považován za negativní faktor, nepříznivě ovlivňující zemi. Sociální stávky, které ve velkém vypukaly napříč celou zemí stejně jakož i nárůst nezaměstnanosti, byly přisuzovány za vinu imigrantům, kteří království pouze

vykořisťují. Ať už hlavním důvodem bylo cokoliv, přistěhovalci se setkávali s otevřenými projevy rasismu. Pro rasismus ve Velké Británii je typické, že zavrhuje i obyvatele, kteří nepochází z etnických menšin, jinými slovy se v Británii už narodili, ale jejich původ je smíšený. Přestože se postupem času původní obyvatelé s imigranty smířili, nesnášenlivost stále přetrvává skrze skryté formy rasismu, jako je například diskriminace v práci, či v případě mladých lidí zákazy stýkat se s etnickými minoritami. Etnická diversifikace Velké Británie však nepředstavuje jedinou změnu, se kterou se lidé v 70. letech potýkali.

Pro přelom 60. a 70. let minulého století je typický náhlý zvrat ve vnímání morálních hodnot. Na rozdíl od 50. let, která byla ryze konzervativní, se v následujících dvaceti letech společnost ubírala liberálnějším směrem. Nejen uvolňování morálky zavdalo vzniku subkultur. Ve světě plném odlišností se mladý člověk často ztrácí. Zatímco záměrem tak zvané Hippie generace byl boj za rovná práva pro všechny menšiny, ať už etnické či jiné, pro Punkovou subkulturu, která záhy vystřídala Hippie hnutí, je typický anarchismus a s ním spojená jistá ignorance. Morální uvolněnost a zrušení mnoha konvencí způsobilo, že mladá generace byla zmatená. Punková subkultura se vynořila jako reakce na stoupající nezaměstnanost, špatné pracovní podmínky a nudu, se kterou se mladí lidé, ale nejen oni, potýkali. Anarchistický přístup Punků ke společnosti představoval způsob odporu, který dokázal zmírnit nespokojenost mládeže.

Avšak i Punkové hnutí během několika let zesláblo, až zcela vymizelo, a na počátku 80. let byla Británie připravena na nástup konzervativní strany k moci a vznik tak zvaného „Thatcherismus“. Jelikož na rozdíl od hlavních postav si je čtenář vědom toho, jaké historické události budou následovat, čtení poutavého románu *Buddha z předměstí* je spojeno s jakousi nostalgií, která je zdůrazněna především v závěru románu, jehož děj končí těsně před nástupem Thatcherismu na scénu, pro který je typické zpřísnění pravidel, stejně jakož i konec individuální volnosti a částečně také svobody.

Podobně jako symbolika zasazení děje mezi koncem Hippie kultury, stoupaním vlivu Punku a nástupem Thatcherismu, je typické též Karimovo hledání identity a jeho dospívání. Když je Karimovi sedmnáct jeho cesta za účelem nalezení vlastního místa ve společnosti začíná. Rozpolcenost nad otázkou vlastní sexuální orientace je pro hlavního hrdinu charakteristická stejně jako jeho nerozhodnost, ba téměř neschopnost zapadnout

do majoritní společnosti, a tak zůstává Karim uvězněný mezi dvěma kulturami. Přestože se kniha z velké části zabývá otázkou sexuality, tak tento aspekt hlavní dějovou linií nijak výrazně nezastiňuje.

Kromě sexuální orientace, která bezesporu představuje jeden z faktorů ovlivňujících utváření názorů mladého člověka na společnost, ale především je důležitou součástí hledání vlastní identity, je stěžejní i vztah hlavních hrdinů k autoritám. Neotřesitelnou autoritu v případě Karima i Jamily představuje otec, který je vždy první a jedinou přirozenou mocností. Oba protagonisté se snaží z počátku své otce poslouchat a vnímají je jako nenapadnutelnou autoritu, ale později se naučí, jak tento druh nadvlády obejít a uvědomí si, že nadřazenost starších postupně slábne s jejich vlastním dospíváním. Najednou je Karim ten mocnější ve vztahu otec - syn. Převrácení sil přináší změnu, která je pro mladé lidi velmi těžko akceptovatelná, jelikož představuje otřesení dlouho zakořeněné pravdy o rozložení sil.

Karim postupně ztrácí důvěru ve svůj první vzor, svého otce. S odstupem času začíná otce vidět více realisticky, a již pro něj nepředstavuje střed světa ale pouze jeho součást. Navíc všechna otcova rozhodnutí už nejsou posuzována jako naprosto správná, přestože tomu tak v minulosti bylo. Přichází kritika a s ní se vytrácí respekt k otci. S přibývajícímí roky je Karim schopen vidět, že rozvod jeho rodičů a rozpad rodiny byl způsoben z velké části otcem a jeho sobeckostí.

Další uměle vytvořenou autoritu představuje stát a jeho rozdělení společnosti na mocenské třídy. Fakt že existuje klasifikace obyvatel na třídy, ze kterých je téměř nemožné se během života vymanit, může být pro mnoho mladých lidí velmi frustrující.

Další stěžejní faktor pro formování názorů je způsob, jakým se hrdinové vyrovnávají s úspěchem a ztrátou. Sláva člověka změní. Některé jedince nenadálá sláva učiní arogantními a neváží si svého úspěchu stejně jako punková hvězda Charlie. Jiní jsou ochotni se slávy vzdát, kvůli svým morálním hodnotám nebo prostě jen proto, aby mohli žít normální život. Přestože existuje mnoho různých vlivů, které shodně ovlivňují mládež, od rodiny až po přátele, u každého člověka se na utváření názorů podílí faktory jiné, tudíž přetrvává i mnoho odlišných názorů na společnost.

V důsledku nespokojenosti s normami, zastávanými morálními hodnotami i osudem, se mládež uchyluje ke vzpouře. Rebelie se poprvé projeví ve vztahu k rodičům, a následně skrze jednání s ostatními autoritami. Ani protesty proti poměrům ve společnosti a nespravedlnosti však nedokážou uspokojit očekávání mladých lidí. Rasové otázky bezpochyby provází Velkou Británii, počínaje koloniální minulostí, vznikem Commonwealthu, až po multikulturní současnost. Rasovým míšením vzniká naprosto jiná generace, která i když velmi vizuálně odlišná od původních obyvatel představuje soudobou tvář Británii a neméně patří do jejího kulturního odkazu. Revolta mladých proto mnohdy končí začleněním se do společnosti. Neustálé protesty a demonstrace proti poměrům však pomáhají mladým lidem, a nejen těm z etnických menšin, utvořit si a posléze patentovat svou vlastní identitu ve společnosti, která je ze začátku často odmítá.

Hlavní mladí protagonisté pocházejí z etnicky odlišné skupiny, a tudíž otázka jejich budoucí asimilace do společnosti záleží především na tom, do jaké míry jsou ochotni se podřítit daným normám a přijmout většinovou kulturu za svou. Největším problémem shledávají hlavní mladí hrdinové s jejich dospíváním spojený měnící se status ve společnosti. S dospělostí se od nich očekává i určitá úroveň morálních hodnot, které není vždy lehké dosáhnout a udržet.

Mládež v jakémkoliv desetiletí, ať už zasažena otázkou etnicity či nikoliv, řeší stále ty samé otázky identity. Přístup ke společnosti se také nijak výrazně nemění, revolty, které mají za úkol ulehčit asimilaci s převládající kulturou, přichází vždy jako přirozené reakce na jednání se společností, která se snaží korigovat projevy individuality mládeže.

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10. Appendices

1. Hanif Kureishi, the postcolonial British writer



Source: <http://www.hanifkureishi.com>