
**EXAMINING THE ISSUE OF IDENTITY IN AYISHA MALIK'S NOVEL
"SOFIA KHAN IS NOT OBLIGED" THROUGH HOMI K. BHABHA'S
CONCEPTS OF 'HYBRIDITY, AMBIVALENCE AND MIMICRY'**

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies Ayisha Malik's Sofia Khan is not obliged from postcolonial perspective. The paper studies the novel from the view of the discourse presented by Homi K. Bhabha. The novel was published in 2015. The story revolves around a girl of Muslim ethnicity from Pakistan named Sofia Khan. She is living in London and is working there in a publishing company. The story is about the adventures of protagonist; her experiences and views the London from her perspective. The paper analyzes the characters and the main events from the research method of textual analysis. The study finds that the concept proposed by Bhabha, very much plays an operative role (viable role) on the British-Muslim- characters in their attempt to assimilate into their Host/Home country. It concludes that how these Muslim characters locate agency in the "in between space" within the process of mimicry and negotiate their identity in their effort to assimilate in colonizer's space.

Keywords: Ayisha Malik, Homi K. Bhabha, Hybridity, Ambivalence, and Mimicry, Postcolonial Study.

INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHOR

Ayisha Malik is born and is living in London. She works as publicist in a publication industry. She pursued higher education in English literature from Kingston University, South West London, England. She has worked on different genres of fiction e.g. Romance, Contemporary fiction, etc. As a wholly Londoner and Muslim by religion her writings are based on the concept of how Muslims live in a Western territory. Her correspondences on this notion, of living in a secular world being Muslims, are based on the experiences she holds

in London city. She says, “I hope that my writing goes some way into showing that “Muslim” is not “other” (Malik, 2016).

Sofia Khan is not obliged (2015) is her debut novel in which she attempts to normalize a religion which she thinks has been confronted with biasness of the western world. Hence she chooses a protagonist who is a normal Muslim living a normal life and is not reinforced by her parents for any force-marriage or any other oppression. Although, hijab is seen as the symbol of oppression and terrorism, Malik’s protagonist has nothing to do with these notions. Her next published book is *The Other Half of Happiness* (2017) (and a sequel to *Sofia Khan is not obliged*), in which Sofia is shown married to Conall who is a Muslim convert. The story deals with the marital issues like faith, the complications of family, sexuality, conjugal love.

INTRODUCTION TO THE NOVEL

Sofia khan is not obliged was first published in 2015. It is romantic fiction and considered as a chic lit. The novel charts the adventures of the protagonist named Sofia khan. She is a young Muslim woman with Pakistani heritage. When the novel starts she is shown in her thirties and living with her family in London. She works in a publishing industry. The novel narrates the different relationships she develops there in London with different men. Beginning with her breakup with her fiancé Imran who wanted her to live with his parents which resulted the end up of their engagement. Later, she is asked by the company to write a book on Muslim woman dating. The novel is completely based on a round of everyday events that she experiences. Naim is the person with whom she begins a relationship after, here too things do not end up well. The event of tube has a lot to do with the novel’s themes. When on the tube Sofia is called by a man as a ‘terrorist’ because of her dress up as a hijabi Muslim woman. She couldn’t to do that day anything in response as the train leaves except murmuring to herself “Forget him, I rationalized to myself, you should be used to racist abuse” (p.25).

Sofia then turns to a new man for friendship Conall who is an Irish. For Sofia, Conall’s attachment proves to be a brighter notion as he supports her in the troubling days. Conall is set to go to Afghanistan for three months. Before marriage takes place she rejects the proposal on the matter of his name as hers after marriage. She ends up wedding there without informing her family. Conall is turned to Islam and is on

a journey to Pakistan on a plane where he meets Sofia. Sofia is extremely happy to know his conversion and the novel ends with their journey together symbolizing the end with the two being a couple.

Over all the story depicts Sofia's trials and tribulations to balance her professional life, the public humiliation she faces, her book writing, her love affairs, and the emotional crisis of her many friends and relatives.

The novel has been receiving critical reception since its publication for a complete new perspective of a Muslim woman dating in hijab and her adventures. The novel depicts the challenges of growing up in a secular world as a Muslim. Malik's attempt, at a broader perspective, looks deep into various postcolonial concepts like that of culture-clash, problems of immigrants, stereotyping, and diversity in *Sofia Khan is not obliged*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sofia Khan is not obliged is a recently published novel hence there are not much scholarly works on it. There is only research article published on this novel. Apart from the single research article there are a few reviews available at different sources. As a result this study is exclusively innovative in terms of its theoretical framework applied on it.

Scholes (2016) reviews the novel and declares that the novel brilliantly exposes life of Muslims in England. The beliefs that west usually possess about Muslims that they are oppressed and 'other' are banished. As Sofia and other Muslim characters are living their life according to western norms; not oppressed rather free hand. The review compares Sofia with that of Bridget Jones and declares that perhaps not quite as pithy as Bridget Jones – a tighter editing could no doubt have cut a quarter of the text without any loss in terms of plot – but with its light, comic confessional tone, the diary entry format, and even some echoes between the plots, the comparison is inevitable – albeit without Bridget's alcohol consumption or romances.

A review of the *Sofia Khan is not obliged* appeared in 2017 written by Elderdash. This review opines that the novel is completely a new turn with some refreshing topic of Muslim narratives, other than what went for so long like that of politics, gender specific oppression etc. The story of a normal girl, living in England with family, gives some noteworthy departure from the ordinary narratives about Muslims. Things that consisted some conflicts are faced by the

protagonist are handled efficiently and this is what makes the story lively. Overall, “Sofia Khan is not obliged” is a funny send-up of love, marriage, generational conflict, and the push and pull second generation kids are always balancing (Eldemerdash, 2017).

2019’s study from Nahar, et.al., is the scholarly work on this novel. Their study focuses on the theme of hijab. Hijab is one of the themes of this novel. This study takes this account from the Islamic perspective of ‘Haya’. ‘Haya’ is a combined package of versatile good aspects of a person; consisting one’s religious belief, modesty, having the sense of self-dignity, the way of gazing, talking and behaving to others and also the way to interact with both men and women (Nahar, et.al., 2017). The study analyzed Sofia’s practice of hijab and evaluates it through her transformational journey. She is analyzed as a feminist, provocative, outspoken and assertive woman, along with her practice of hijab. The study finds that the theme of Muslim dating is turned into the icon for the diasporic community. Apart from this, the study suggests that through the practice of ‘haya’ one can develop spirituality. By applying the concept of ‘haya’, Malik has brilliantly depicted Muslim women abroad.

Thus, by the reviews and only one scholarly article conducted on the novel, it has been made clear that there is a need of research on the novel from various theoretical frameworks. The literature review made the gap of studies on this novel, identifiable, hence an elaborate work of research needs to be conducted on this novel.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As the nature of the study is qualitative; hence research method used for this study is textual analysis. Mckee proposes detailed literature related to the definition and practice of textual analysis. When we perform textual analysis on a text, we make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text (Mckee, 2003). For it is designed to put much importance to text and asserts multiple relative answers to the research questions. The text of the novel is analyzed. The events and characters are taken to analyze with their details.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This paper studies Ayisha Malik’s *Sofia Khan is not obliged* from postcolonial perspective. Postcolonial literature is associated with the regions once colonized specially by the Europe. This theory depicts the issues of after-effects in terms of culture, politics and

human behavior. There are many theorists of postcolonial discourse like Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi K. Bhabha, etc. To carry out this, the concepts of Hybridity, Mimicry and Ambivalence proposed by Bhabha are chosen to study the novel. The concept associated with these terms is related to the experiences of the colonized against the supremacy of colonizers. As Sofia- the protagonist is living in London-as a Muslim what she experiences and how she cope with the situations in terms of hybridity, ambivalence and mimicry, is analyzed through her character and the events related to her.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: HYBRIDITY, AMBIVALENCE AND MIMICRY

The concept of hybridity, Mimicry and ambivalent by Homi K. Bhabha is chosen to foreground the analysis of this study. These concepts define the ways in which the colonized others resist and rebel against the power of the colonizer, a power which is not as stable as it seems to be. The paper/ study analyses how, ambivalence, hybridity and Mimicry play an operative role (viable role) on the Birtish-Muslim-characters in their attempt to assimilate into their Host/Home country. It analyses how these Muslim characters locate agency in the “in between space” within the process of mimicry and negotiate their identity in their effort to assimilate in colonizer’s space.

Hybridity usually refers to the formation of new trans-cultural forms within the contact zone resulted by the establishment of colonization. The term hybridity is a most important concept conceptualized by Homi K. Bhabha whose investigation of colonizer-colonized relationships highlights their interdependence and the reciprocated construction of their subjectivities, which in turn is closely related to mimicry and ambivalence.

The term ambivalence basically refers to a mental, social, cultural or behavioral state of people. Bhabha clarifies that the hybridization of any culture creates the ambivalent condition. Bhabha asserts that “[There] is a strategy of ambivalence in the structure of identification that occurs precisely in the elliptical in-between, where the shadow of the other falls upon the self. From that shadow (in which the postcolonial *a* plays) emerges cultural difference as an enunciative category; opposed to relativistic notions of cultural diversity, or the exoticism of the “diversity” of cultures” (1994:85). Ambivalent state creates such a condition in which individuals feel their culture and behaviors belonging to ‘no one’s land’. Ahmed

asserts that the “hybridity and ambivalence differ in term of their meanings and their implications. One is the outcome of the other one. Hence, ambivalence is a fundamental aspect of hybridity (2020:20).

Mimicry according to Bhabha is “copying the colonizing culture, behaviors, manners and values by colonized”. Mimicry is a pattern of behavior where colonizer attempt to discipline colonizers in a hope to achieve authority over them. Mimic men seem to possess all characteristics of the colonizers. However, upon a deeper analysis, they only possess a shell of an image and possess neither presence nor identity of the colonial power. It a tool of discipline and control where colonized are conditioned to become “almost the same but not quite” ... “almost the same but not white” (Bhabha 1994:86-89). It allows colonized to reflect the image of colonizers but an imperfect one, Their behavior is conditioned in such a way to maintain the superiority of colonizers over colonized but Bhabha sees Mimicry as a tool for empowerment for colonized as it plants the seeds of its own destruction as there are subversive forces/ agency in MIMETIC MOVENTS” . It disciplines colonizers behavior in way that may ultimately goes beyond the colonial authority. Mimics the colonial authority so much that it destabilizes the power it mimics so “Mimicry at once is resemblance and menace” (Bhabha, 1994:86).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Positive Assimilation: Sofia, the protagonist of the novel, is a practicing young Muslim woman living in London. Her character is a great example of how to mix with the majority group while asserting the aspects of one’s religious identity. She is, to a great extent, a practicing Muslim; she offers prayers, wears hijab, observes fasting in Ramadan and restrains from alcohol and pre-marital sex, but like those born in London she also wears skinny jeans, works in a publishing house, talks about boys, becomes judgmental, watches popular TV series, worries about finding the soul mate, goes on dates with men she meets on the internet and discusses the interests any women of her age discusses. Hence, Malik's presentation of her protagonist is genuinely realistic and relatable. She is flawed like any normal person on earth. Her experiences are relatable as demonstrated by her words “we are confused, assertive and romantic, and most of the time don’t know how we feel about skinny jeans and beardies” (216) She is a British-Muslim. She loves her God and her city (216), showing and proudly

embracing the religious and national aspects of her personality without experiencing any identity crisis or dilemma.

Sophia forms a hybrid identity through assimilation but at the same time criticizes brainlessly mimicking the Western culture and in doing so losing one's identity. She tries to assimilate in the cultural corpus of the metropolitan host country but on her own terms i.e. through maintaining the distinctive aspects of her personality. Her wardrobe and her lifestyle assert her British-Muslim identity. She adopts her religious identity after 9/11 "when a shift had taken place" and Muslims had been "displaced" (2016:47). After listening to a sermon in a mosque, where the Imam encourages all the Muslims to do good deeds despite being condemned and marginalized, she starts wearing hijab and doing good deeds though she honestly informs the readers that her "good deeds are kind of limited to giving up my seat on the tube" (2016:48). Her adherence to her religion is an attempt to be engaged in a collective effort to improve her group's position as according to the Imam at the mosque Muslims should not pay head to people who blame all the Muslims for the actions of few (2016:47). This shows that the stereotypes associated with Muslims are illogical and based on generalizations.

She is, like any other woman, concerned about marrying the right person at the right time as she humorously tells her friend Fozia that she does not want to be alone in her sixties and to be a "Mad Woman in the Attic" (p.160). Like other aspects of her life, the qualities she looks for in her potential life partner are also guided by her religion; she cannot live with a man who does not share her religious beliefs. Like any other assertive woman she is of the opinion that emotional dependency is bad for personal growth" (2016:6). She is a person with whom readers can relate easily. Her affiliation with her religion does not make her an abnormal person. Her parents who are first generation migrants love to listen to Bollywood songs and watch Bollywood movies (p.120) but she with her friends spends girlie evenings watching back to back episodes of *Sex and the City* and enjoying brownies and pizza (p.125) like women of her age who might not be Muslim.

Religion is not a compulsion for her. She loves her religion and God. She finds solace in prayer, and perceives Qur'an as a source of guidance that helps develop a good attitude and perspective (p.48). She

considers her faith her strength since she feels lucky to have “something to lean on” when experiencing emotional crisis (p.330). She reasons out why she obstinate herself from drinking, partying and having sex before marriage as she does not find these good for her mental, physical, and spiritual health (p.161). She wears scarf for “part religious reasons, part for good reason” (p.200). She loves her religion and seeks a partner who can be helpful in her religious journey (p.181), but she does not like it when “people start using Islam to tell you to be a bloody doormat” and to not have an opinion of one’s own (p.272). She values familial relations and lives with her parents. Although her parents had a troubled relation, her way of life is normal for her but she rhetorically asks her friend Sujata that “white people really don’t get us, do they? They all think we’re mental, living with our parents until we get married an all sorts” (p.318).

“We are Muslims but don’t we have the struggles as most other girls?” (p.216). Malik in a humorous way tells her readers the challenges faced by Muslim women who try to assimilate in the West on their own terms. Sophia’s patriotism, her love for Britain, her city London is not the result of any pressure to be accepted by the dominant social group. She truly loves her country and her city; however, her display of Muslim identity makes her suspectable. Every now and then while chatting with Naim, a guy from New York, she shows her preference for London over New York. For instance, on one occasion when Naim asks her “I’m still figuring out what your city has to offer that New York doesn’t, she replies “I think you’ll find London has plenty to offer that NY doesn’t. You just have to look in right places” (2016:56-57). When a suitor shares with her “It makes me really angry...when our people start berating the country we live in. We should remember that we are guests here so need to abide by the rules (p.245). After listening to it she thinks to herself “being a guest would leave me without a country...time to pack your cases...you might be a guest. I am home” (p.245). She along with her family prepares Christmas lunch to show solidarity with the country. She thinks to herself “Just because we don’t celebrate it doesn’t mean we can’t partake in national day of stuffing ourselves with Turkey” (p.174) which shows that she associates herself with her country.

Pakistani culture is foreign for her. She feels embarrassed when her mother decides to decorate their house with “fairy light” in what

she considers “Traditional Pakistani Style”, but she is happy that “Maria is getting married on New Year’s Eve” which she finds can be a good excuse since she “can pretend to people” that they “have broken with tradition and decided celebrate Christmas this Year” (2016:117). She refers to the tradition of decorating home with fairy lights not as a part of her culture but as “Pakistani Style”. She finds it “mindless” to decorate “wicker basket for the bangles to be handed out at the mehndi” (p.148).

The novel highlights that the journey of assimilating in the Western society is not smooth for Muslim women who assert their religious identity. The novel exemplifies a few cases in which Muslims were abused because of manifesting their Muslim identity by wearing veil and growing a beard. On one occasion upon seeing Sophia wearing scarf a bigot verbally abuses her and calls her a terrorist on her way to work. Due to the rush of people she does not comprehend what that person just said but after a few minutes when she realizes that she was racially abused she gets shocked and finds it the “most unexpected opinion”. Initially to calm herself down she says to herself that “you should be used to racist abuse, Sophia” but “such flimsy words make no difference” to her. In her view, “It was a decent rationale, but didn’t quite do the job of putting [her] world back into the balance”, she stares at the ground and looks at her shoes thinking “lovely, teal, snakeskin, peer toes” and ultimately in comic rage shouts “Oi Terrorists don’t wear vintage shoes, you ignorant wanker” (2016:13). Not only does she experience verbal abuses, her friend accompanying her are also subjected to the same kind of treatment. Connell is called a “fucking traitor” during a protest because he was accompanying her, a brown hijabi woman rather than a white hijabless one if she were “white and Hijabless, no one would’ve have accused him of such a thing” (2016:327).

The novel by depicting Sophia’s experiences tells how Muslims often experience the sense of exclusion at work places as well. During a conference her name was not mentioned in the author’s speech and she was referred to as “that scarf girl” throughout the event (2016:137). Not only does she face racial remarks of her racist colleagues because of wearing hijab but also faces challenges in finding a place to pray peacefully. This is highlighted in an incident when her “makeshift prayer room has been turned into a medical room

with an entry code” (2016:137). She enquires from the administrative guy about the lock and if she can get the code for the medical room. She gets access to the room only after answering a few awkward question that yes, she needs a place to pray on a regular basis and she does pray five times a day all year round. Although she gets the entry code, she finds that the door to the room has been replaced and now it is a “huge glass pane” so whosoever walks past is able to see her “arse in the air” (pp.137-138). It becomes a bit uncomfortable for her, but soon “God fixes it” for her and a guy from the facilities puts up blinds on it (2016:144). Through this incident the novel points at the failure of workplaces in the West at inclusivity as Sofia says “Bad praying space, good canapés” (2016:21). Her experience highlights the failure of the West to acknowledge diversity and create an inclusive space or culture where Muslims can live and work comfortable and effectively. It is not only Sophia’s decision to wear scarf and offer prayer but also the West’s failure at inclusivity that makes assimilation difficult and challenging. Although she does not do bars and clubs but she tries to fit in the society, she attends work Christmas party and obstinate herself from alcohol (p.162). It shows that she makes efforts to assimilate in the Western society, but the latter does not make efforts to embrace her completely.

Her affiliation to any aspect of her identity triggers unfavorable response from the people of her community and those outside her community. During her cyber dating a Pakistani Muslim man texts her “A Hijabi??? Seriously??!! You’re living in the West!!! (2016:40). She thinks to herself “I wished him luck with his identity crisis (2016:40). Her decision to wear hijab is also met with derision by her mother who is a Muslim. She keeps on suggesting her to take off her hijab to find a potential husband. The lack of countenance for her hijab as reflected in these responses shows the perception of hijab and the Western society as incompatible with one another. In another instance, she ridicules the two extremist approaches prevailing in society by saying “There are Men who will marry a hijabi-but then expect her to move with a hole in the wall, or thinks she is going to be this weird paragon of traditional values. And then there are the men who are all, “You are living in west-what’s with the hijab” (2016:43). These words not only reflect the belief about the incompatibility of Hijab and the Western

society but also the misconceived notion of people regarding the Muslim women in hijab as submissive and brainless.

Mimicry/Negative Assimilation: The novel also depicts the characters who embody negative aspect of ambivalence. Apparently they try to mimic all characteristics of the dominant white group; however, on a deeper level they neither possess the power that white men have, nor do they have a powerful presence like the white man do. Their mere imitation of the dominant culture is meaningless and makes them an object of ridicule. Sophia's parents and her other relatives face identity confusion. They are Muslims by faith but have adopted the lifestyle of the White Londoners. It seems that her family and relatives have two different identities. Their outer personality is White but they are practically still typical Muslim Pakistanis on the inside. Her parents "cry about the loss of their culture and roots and curse the day they immigrated to England", but on the other hand her mother always tries to convince Sophia not to wear hijab as she finds it a barrier in the pursuit of a suitable husband (2016:29). Though they face racial discrimination at the hands of the white dominant group, they want to look like them. They also exhibit a discriminating attitude towards Black/ Brown people, an attitude that is considered mainly possessed by the white people. They do not want their children to "marry white person" but they compel their children to "try to look like one" (2016:16) Sophia's mother wants Sophia to apply Fair & Lovely cream to get White skin. She instructs pregnant Maria, Sophia's younger sister to "start drinking lots of coconut milk ... that makes baby very fair-I don't want a dark dark baby" (2016:242).

The father of the suitor whom Sophia calls "beardie" is also an example of a mimic man who is apparently a white English man but has a traditional and conservative mind set regarding gender roles. Sophia humorously describes him as a man "who by the way seemed to be having a mid-life crisis with leather jacket, pointy shoes and more gel in his hair than his son (2016:249). He suggests Sophia to leave job in a publishing house and pursue teaching as a career, as it is a suitable job for females (p.250). However, when his son asks him to offer prayers, he refuses him by saying "Oh beta you pray we'll pray later"...Nowadays children do all praying" (2016:249). His response shows him as an example of negative assimilation where people, in order to get accepted in host societies, avoid religious practices.

Sophia's paternal cousin and his wife are also examples of mimic men who are like empty shells. They have changed their names into "Baby and Bobby" and have adopted the cultural values of the dominant group. While commenting on the change they underwent after settling in London, Sophia's mother tells her husband that "Baby and Bobby taw have become like English person since coming here. Don't speak Urdu any more. Have birthday parties for children and invite only friends as if family is nothing" (2016:249). Like Westerners they do not value familial relationships, maintaining blood ties and living with parents. He ignores his father which makes him a drunkard (2016:173). Through these characters writer criticizes the approach where people blindly adopt all the cultural values of their host society to assimilate in it. To fulfill the criterion of affiliation, they cut all the ties with their culture and its values.

In mimicking the values of West these Muslims negatively perceive the practicing Muslims on the basis of their religiosity and label them as fundamentalists and extremists without realizing that by doing so they are mediating their othering in the West. When Tahir's cousin gets arrested on the charges of terrorism, Maria exclaims "you hired a terrorist to photograph our wedding" (p.167) her mother gets worried that "Tahir had a fundamentalist cousin if his cousin is one than what is he" (p.168). Sophia's mother again adopts the same kind of attitude towards Beadie when he leaves the meeting to pray on time. She asks his mother whether her son is "fundamentalist" or not because they are "normal" not "extremist" (p.252). Praying on time seems abnormal to them. Their attitude is an example of internalization of Western Culture where commitment to religion is considered as an abnormal thing. They have adopted their ideology/opinion, way of thinking without realizing how It struck me as being not a little bit funny that White was accusing me, brown hijabi, of being a racist (p.243).

FINDINGS

With the above presented analysis and discussion of the novel, this study comes to find that it's not just her identity as British National but her identity as a Muslim that gives her that authority. Her connection with Islam as reflected in her wearing scarf, praying and fasting does not make her a potential terrorist. She is a devout Muslim, yet she is a modern, tolerant and rational woman who is actively thinks

about how to define herself as she uses different terms, thereby reflecting the agency involved in shaping her decisions. Sophia's decision to wear a scarf does not only show the possibility of resisting the pressure of negative assimilation but also a strategy to challenge the stereotypical perception of scarf as a symbol of oppression and those wearing it as backward and terrorist 'others' for the "so-called" liberal and civilized West. But her efforts to negotiate her Muslim identity and refusal to adhere to norms valued by the white societies invite risk and prejudice on various occasions. Her strong adherence to her religious identity makes her more suspectable than the ones with less adherence to their religion and makes her assimilation experience challenging. She faces moments of verbal and physical violence at the hands of socially dominant group. Malik deals with a very serious issue of the assimilation of Muslims in general and Muslim women in particular in the Western societies in a lighter tone which makes her novel enjoyable. Sophia Khan's witty remarks about the way Muslim women who wear hijab are perceived in the West makes fun of the readers' stereotypical/biased attitude towards the Muslim women). Her humorous tone makes it possible to encourage readers to reconsider their opinions about hijab-wearers.

Sophia forms a hybrid identity through assimilation. She criticizes mimicking in a mechanical fashion the practices and beliefs of the West in an effort to be accepted in the Western societies. They neither value their familial relations nor their religious values like the white people. They negatively perceive the practicing Muslims on the basis of their religiosity and label them as fundamentalists and extremists without realizing that by doing so they are mediating their othering in the West. Sophia is both a Muslim and a citizen of London instead of something between the former and the latter. She embraces both her religious as well as national identity and is not willing to forsake any of these aspects of her personality. In her view, these aspects of her personality are not incompatible i.e. her identity as a Muslim and as a Londoner are not mutually exclusive. She tries to assimilate in the cultural corpus of the metropolitan host country but on her own terms while maintaining the distinctive aspects of her personality. Through her wardrobe and lifestyle she asserts her Muslim identity. She does not try to hide her religious identity as an attempt to be accepted in White society. She asserts her religiosity by wearing

head scarf, abstaining from shaking hands with the opposite gender and seeking accommodation for her prayer at work. The novel, in a humorous tone, depicts the serious issue of Muslim women's discrimination due to their religious identity at the hands of both people from the host society and people from the homeland. She highlights the double discrimination of Muslims without being too harsh. Through this novel the writer shows that this othering of Muslim women is what mediates their oppression and makes it challenging for them to assimilate in the western societies.

CONCLUSION

This paper conducts research study on 2015 published novel *Sofia Khan is not obliged* written by Ayisha Malik. Ayisha Malik is born in London. She received her education in England. Having the firsthand experience of how Muslims are treated abroad and having heard multiple stories by different women out there she set to write about Muslim woman dating abroad. *Sofia Khan is not obliged* is her debut novel published in 2015 followed by *The Other Half of Happiness* (2017)- a sequel to *Sofia Khan is not obliged*. This paper studies the novel from postcolonial perspective. The study takes discourse suggested by Homi K Bhabha. Bhabha's concept associated with hybridity, mimicry and ambivalence. These terms are taken into account to discuss the novel. The novel finds that the concept of Bhabha, concerning these particular terms, operate in the novel. To sum up the story is about Sofia and her life in London. The story brilliantly exposes how the Muslims considered as 'others' suffer public humiliation on account of their ethnic practices and how they face the challenges of growing up in a secular region. Malik's attempt, at a broader perspective, looks deep into various postcolonial concepts like that of culture-clash, problems of immigrants, stereotyping, and diversity in *Sofia Khan is not obliged*.

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