

**COMMODYING ISLAMIC FEMINISM: AN
INVESTIGATION INTO THE CULTURAL
PRODUCTION OF MUSLIM WOMEN LIFE
WRITERS IN EURO-AMERICAN LOCATIONS**

By

Farah Jabeen



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**Commodifying “Islamic Feminism”: An Investigation into the
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American Locations**

By
Farah Jabeen

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Submitted By: Farah Jabeen **Registration #:** 1163/M.Phil/ELit-S16/2016(Feb)

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Name of Discipline

Dr. Sibghatallah Khan

Name of Research Supervisor

Signature of Research Supervisor

Dr. Muhammad Safeer Awan

Name of Dean (FoLs)

Signature of Dean (FoLs)

Brig. Muhammad Ibrahim

Name of DG

Signature of DG

Date

CANDIDATE DECLARATION FORM

I Farah Jabeen

Daughter of Irfan Ahmed

Registration # 1163/M.Phil/ELit/2016/Feb

Discipline English Literature

Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages

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ABSTRACT

This research intends to investigate how the Muslim women writers living in Western metropolitan centers inscribe the othering of Muslim women to get financial stability in the West and establish their reputation as Islamic Feminists. In doing so, they seem to be writing in line with the concept of “Islamic feminism” which, I argue, has become a highly commodifiable and, thus, a questionable category in contemporary times. This research argues that representation of the Muslim women, especially in post 9/11 times, has become a highly consumable and marketable phenomenon, and most of them championing the cause of Muslim women in the name of Islamic feminism, write with their careerist concerns. That is why, because of their assimilationist mindset, they act as comprador intellectuals. The works I have selected for this research are *Lipstick Jihad* by Azadeh Moaveni, *Love in a Headscarf* by Shelina Zahra Janmohamed and *Standing Alone in Mecca: A Pilgrimage in to the Heart of Islam* by Asra Q. Nomani. In order to prove my argument, I am using two theoretical lenses i.e. Amina Wadud’s idea of Islamic Feminism, Graham Huggan’s concept of “marketing the margins,” and Kwame Anthony Appiah’s notion of “comprador intelligentsia.” I will invoke these theoretical positions to investigate if “Islamic feminism” is really an independent / autonomous category or it is complicitous with Western feminism to promote its agenda. The research is going to be investigative and qualitative in nature and, because of its interpretive and exploratory design, textual analysis will be used as research method.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
THESIS AND DEFENSE APPROVAL FORM	II
CANDIDATE DECLARATION FORM	III
ABSTRACT.....	III
TABLE OF CONTENTS	IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	VI
DEDICATION.....	VII
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 SITUATEDNESS OF THE RESEARCHER	3
1.2 DELIMITATION	4
1.3 THESIS STATEMENT	4
1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	4
1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	5
1.6 RESEARCH PLAN	5
1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	6
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	8
2.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE	9
2.3 CONCLUSION.....	27
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	29
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	29
3.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	29
3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	40
3.3.1 <i>Research Method</i>	41
3.6 CONCLUSION.....	43
4. COERCION AND FREEDOM: AZADEH MOAVENI’S LIPSTICK JIHAD: A MEMOIR OF GROWING UP IRANIAN IN AMERICA AND AMERICAN IN IRAN	45
4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	45
4.2 LIPSTICK JIHAD	46
4.2.1 <i>The Honourable Women</i>	48
4.2.2 <i>A Giant Cemetery</i>	50
4.2.3 <i>Moaveni’s Iran</i>	57
4.2.4 <i>Unveiling the Truth</i>	64
4.3 CONCLUSION.....	67

5. DISCRIMINATING MEN AND WOMEN: A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF SHELINA ZAHRA JANMOHAMED’S <i>LOVE IN A HEADSCARF</i>	68
5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	68
5.2 LOVE IN A HEADSCARF	69
5.2.1 <i>What Sells in the Marriage Market?</i>	70
5.2.2 <i>Princess of Traditional Muslim Family</i>	74
5.2.3 <i>Under the Veil</i>	79
5.3 CONCLUSION	86
6. LEGITIMIZING PROHIBITED ACTIONS: A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF ARSA Q. NOMANI’S <i>STANDING ALONE IN MECCA: A PILGRIMAGE INTO THE HEART OF ISLAM</i>.	88
6.1 INTRODUCTION	88
6.2 STANDING ALONE IN MECCA.....	89
6.3.1 <i>Out of Wedlock</i>	90
6.2.2 <i>The Legacy of Single Mothers</i>	96
6.2.3 <i>The Status Quo</i>	100
6.2.4 <i>Triumphs</i>	106
6.2.5 <i>Crossing the Boundaries</i>	109
6.3 CONCLUSION	111
7. CONCLUSION	113
FURTHER RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES.....	120
WORKS CITED.....	121

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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This research is a feminist and postcolonial investigation of contemporary women's life writings. I have selected Azadeh Moaveni's *Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America and American in Iran* (2005)¹, Shelina Zahra Janmohamed's *Love in a Headscarf*²(2010), and Asra Q. Nomani's *Standing Alone in Mecca: A Pilgrimage into the Heart of Islam*³ (2007) as my primary texts. I have invoked Amina Wadud's notion of Islamic feminism, Graham Huggan's theory of "marketing the margins", and Kwame Anthony Appiah's provocative concept of "comprador intelligentsia" as my theoretical lenses. I have got theoretical perspective from Amina Wadud's *Qur'an and Woman: Reading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (1999), *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reforms in Islam* (2006), Graham Huggan's *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001), and Anthony Appiah's "Is the Post- in Postmodern the Post- in Postcolonial?" (1991).

This research argues that representation of the Muslim women, especially in post 9/11 times, has become a highly consumable and marketable phenomenon, and most of them championing the cause of Muslim women in the name of Islamic feminism, write with their careerist concerns. That is why, because of their assimilationist mind set, they act as comprador intellectuals. The purpose to select this area of research is the growing international interest in literature produced on Islamic feminism and Islamophobia. Islamic feminism is a contentious and debatable term. It is not a stable category.

This research investigates that cultural artifacts from peripheries grab the attention of the West. Keeping this in mind, I propose that according to Graham Huggan's postulation of "marketing the margins", writers from boundaries highlight cultural issues of their former countries. In order to publicize their cultural productions, these writers and western publishing houses transform these writings into commodifiable goods (Huggan 2001: 6) (Appiah 348). Intellectuals and scholars from western educational institutions and editors of leading newspapers or, in other words, as Bourdieu calls them "legitimizing agents", admire these selective literary works in

astonishingly attractive words in the form of “blurbs, glossary notes . . .” (Waring and Bourdieu qtd. in Huggan 2001: 164).

This investigation also explores that among all genres of literature, memoir writing by women writers is most popular and reading public considers it authentic. The 9/11 has tempted westerners towards Islam. That is why, Muslim women memoir writers have gotten a special place in European academia. Being novel for the western reading public, the culture and traditions of the margins is known to the West the way they are presented by the selected writers. Comprador position of writers from peripheries is questionable who struggle to promote western agenda of portraying wrong picture of their former countries. Consequently, these “handful of writers” get prestige as Islamic feminists and financial security (Appiah 348).

In Islamic society, women do not get rights equal to men and face isolation. This alienation, according to Wadud’s concept of Islamic feminism, is due to male exegesis of Islamic holy scriptures. In her lecture, Liv Tønnessen asserts that

[t]he term “Islamic feminism” began to surface in the 1990s in various global locations. It first appeared in the writings of Muslims. Iranian scholar Ziba Mir-Hosseini exposed the rise and use of the term Islamic feminism by some women, as well as men, writing in the Teheran women’s journal *Zanan*, founded by Shahla Sherkat in 1992. (Tonnessen 2)⁴

Moreover, this term has also used by other Muslim women writers. Mai Yamani, a Saudi writer has used this term in her book *Feminism and Islam* (1996)⁵. Nilufer Gole is a Turkish scholar and has also incorporated this phrase in her work the same year⁶. Another Muslim intellectual, living in South Africa, Shamima Sheikh has used the expression Islamic feminism in her writings. By the mid-1990s, Muslim writers from different parts of the world play a vital role in publicizing the term Islamic feminism and started using it frequently. Wadud argues that considering men and women equal is only a “linguistic ambiguity” as it has nothing to do in the real world (Wadud 2006: 26). In order to give women their rights of an independent human being in Muslim community, it is necessary to reinterpret holy text of Islam by a woman. This research explores that selected Muslim women writers living in western countries are in agreement with this idea of Islamic feminism. All of them, Moaveni, Janmohamed, and Nomani depict Muslim women’s segregation in Islamic countries.

This research addresses that Muslim women writers, living in western countries, present Muslim women as isolated beings in Islamic society. Muslim women cannot participate and move freely in male authoritative society. Men cage them in the confines of veil from where women have no escape. In order to legislate their jurisdiction over Muslim women, men take help from religion and give proofs from religious text. This interpretation of Islamic Holy Scriptures has developed Islamic society and its cultural norms in such a way that women are always treated as aliens and inferior to men. Selected Muslim women writers, in accordance with Amina Wadud's notion of Islamic feminism, focus on re-examination of Qur'an and sunnah to return Muslim women their rights that they used to enjoy in the days of early Islam.

This investigation also argues that Muslim women writers, whose memoirs have been selected for this research, have questionable identity. They are known as Islamic feminists. On the other hand, these Islamic intellectuals are eager to bring anti-Islamic reforms that is a western motive. The delineation of Muslim women's isolation that is in line with the West has gotten them access to the academia. All of them are related, in one way or the other, to European publishing industry. It seems that they know the techniques of how to get their literary writings popular among reading public.

This research is qualitative in nature and it uses inductive approach. Qualitative approach of this research gives rise to reflexive and exploratory nature of the investigation. In order to analyze the text independently, I have used Catherine Belsey's essay "Textual Analysis as research method" (Belsey in Griffin 2007).

1.1 Situatedness of the Researcher

In order to describe situatedness of the researcher, I want to explain what is the driving force that has compelled me to choose this topic for my research project. Since there are different forms of feminism like Material feminism, Academic feminism, and Eco feminism, Islamic feminism is a newly emerged kind of feminism. Pakistan is a postcolonial country. It is colonizers' old technique to highlight women marginalization in colonized territories to legitimate their capture of peripheries. Although, my main thrust is not on postcolonialism but in academic circle binaries between the East and the West still exist. No doubt, Pakistan as an eastern society is a patriarchal community where women face marginalization. Pakistani people's sensitization on religion is also not hidden. International movements on Islamic feminism affect Pakistani community

with their beliefs, viewpoints, and slogans. Islamic feminists talk against patriarchy and sub standardize male Islamic exegesis. As a woman I have a right to unpack the concealed agenda of these Islamic feminists. Lest my argument be misinterpreted, Islamic feminists refer to the places where women are isolated. Since I am not generalizing, I do not want my readers to generalize.

Being a Muslim, Islamic literature always fascinates me. When I came across writings by selected Muslim women writers, I got surprised to observe Muslim women portrayal in their literary works. This delineation subscribes to the western representation of women in Islam. Muslim women's depiction in these literary works provokes and intrigues me to pursue and explore the motive of these westernized Islamic feminists. I therefore decided to critique the concept of Muslim feminism through a reading of the selected texts. Since I live in Pakistan that is an over sensitized country for religion, I, as an agentive subject, have the privilege to voice my concern. As an educated woman and researcher, I want to disclose that selected Islamic feminists' struggle to highlight western portrayal of Muslim women is for their careerist concern. In order to market their writings, they consider (contestably though) patriarchal interpretation of Islamic holy scriptures wrong and biased.

1.1 Delimitation

For my project, I exclusively focus on the memoirs *Lipstick Jihad* (2005) by Azadeh Moaveni, *Love in a Headscarf* (2010) by Shelina Zahra Janmohammed, and *Standing Alone in Mecca: A Pilgrimage into the Heart of Islam* (2007) by Asra Nomani. I delimit my research to aforementioned memoirs.

1.3 Thesis Statement

The Muslim women writers tend to subscribe to the Western notion of Muslim women representation in their memoirs so as to be commodified and known as Islamic feminists simultaneously. Their positionality as intellectuals/culture producers is questionable.

1.4 Research Objectives

- To analyse how selected Muslim women writers' intention to portray women in Islam accedes to western concept of Muslim women.
- To study how Muslim women's literary writings become commodifiable products.

- To probe why selected Muslim women writers' prestige as Islamic feminists is contentious.

1.5 Research Questions

- What are the strategies employed by the selected Muslim women writers to represent Muslim women?
- Why and how is the selected women writers' representation of Muslim women both consumable and questionable?
- How does the commodifiability of Muslim women's representation sync with comprador position of the selected women writers?

1.6 Research Plan

Since my research project is an attempt to add information to existing knowledge, I have cautiously worked to map out its presentation. I have divided my work into seven chapters. Following are the details of each chapter.

In chapter one, I have introduced my research work. I have mentioned my primary texts and theories that I have used to analyse these texts. Here, I have given the detail of the motive that has stimulated me to choose this topic and the lens to interpret the texts in hand. The same chapter gives details about thesis statement, research question, research objectives, and delimitation of my research project. In the end of the chapter one, I have discussed in detail the plan of my research. Chapter two of this investigation deals with literature review. In this chapter, I have used secondary texts to give a detailed review of my research project. Here, I have quoted secondary sources to support my argument. This part of my research project has enabled me to find gaps in the works of other writers who produce literature on Islamic feminism. I have also related my interpretation with the works of different Islamic feminists. The process of quoting secondary books, finding gaps, and relating them with my research have helped me substantiating my analysis of primary sources.

In chapter three, I have given details of theoretical framework. Theories from different intellectuals have helped me in analyzing my data. The same chapter provides explanation of research methodology that I have employed to interpret the texts. Chapter four is about analysis of my first primary text *LJ* (2005) by Azadeh Moaveni. Here, I have interpreted her delineation of Muslim women in an Iranian society. In

chapter five, I have analysed my second primary book *LHS* (2010) by Shelina Zahra Janmohamed. Her depiction of Muslim women in a traditional Islamic society furnishes a debate in Twenty First Century Britain. Chapter six deals with analysis of my third primary text *Standing Alone in Mecca: A Pilgrimage into the Heart of Islam* (2007). This chapter highlights writer's intention to bestow equal rights to both Muslim men and women. In the last chapter of this investigation, I have drawn conclusion of my research project. Here, I have summed up all of my arguments and have elucidated my findings.

1.7 Significance of the study

My research project is likely to help those who want to read memoirs of Muslim women to get the idea of Muslim women status in Islamic society. This research project may also help in comprehending how literature produced by Muslim women writers in the West describes their motive to represent the Muslim women. This study would further highlight how works of these writers are commodified by the West. This study is going to aid in generating a discussion on memoirs written by Muslim women to highlight issues of the margins which have become commodities. This study would also be significant in the manner that it is likely to investigate the area that has not been in discussion before i.e.; commodification of cultural production of Global South.

Endnotes

¹ See Moaveni, Azadeh. *Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America and American in Iran*. (New York, Public Affairs: 2005). After this, I will use *LJ* instead of *Lipstick Jihad* in the rest of the study.

² See Janmohamed, Shelina Zahra. *Love in a Headscarf*. (Massachusetts, Beacon Press: 2010). After this, I will use *LHS* instead of *Love in a Headscarf* in the rest of the study.

³ See Nomani, Asra Q. *Standing Alone in Mecca: A Pilgrimage into the Heart of Islam*. (Noida, Harper Collins: 2007). After this, I will use *SAM* instead of *Standing Alone in Mecca* in the rest of the study.

⁴ For details, see Ziba Mir-Hosseini. *Marriage on Trial: Islamic Family Law in Iran and Morocco*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000).

⁵ For details, see Mai Yamani, ed. *Feminism and Islam; Legal and Literary Perspectives*, (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1996).

⁶ For details, see Nilüfer Göle. *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*, Ann Arbor, (Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Literature review is an integral part of a research work. It is also beneficial for my research project. Here, literature review contextualizes my research project with current issues and arguments in the same field. It provides a list of relevant researches in my area of study. At the same time, it is helpful in finding gaps in these related researches. A large number of memoirs are available on Islamic feminism. Similarly, countless nonfictional work on feminism in Islam is also available. It is helpful to relate relevant critical writings with my research project to understand and to look for useful points in my research work. It is also helpful to find out gaps in these secondary sources that my research project is likely to fill. The work under investigation includes memoirs by European and American Muslim female writers that I study through the lens of Islamic feminism. The source for review includes autobiographies and other nonfictional writings theorizing Islamic feminism. I do not review these secondary sources chronologically but thematically.

This chapter consists of three parts. In the first part, I have presented brief overview of research and summary of objectives of literature review. The second part is the main body of the analysis/review of the secondary sources. Here I discuss that the works reviewed are relevant to my research project. Literature review is beneficial in understanding the research in hand. In this part of literature review, I discuss the gaps in already existing literary sources by doing this review. In the third part, I have concluded my literature review and related it to my research work and topic. I have objectively viewed works that are relevant to my research project and it has enabled me to contextualize my primary text. In addition to it, in the last part of literature review, I have connected this chapter to the next chapter.

There are many writings on Islamic feminism which have broader view. In order to control my review, I have carefully selected secondary texts. In this way, it helps me to find gaps

in previous scholarships partially if not completely and to relate it to my project. Moreover, I am aware of the fact that a researcher always has the risk of going to extremes of it or missing out something very important. I, therefore, make it clear that I have selected works of those contemporary writers which suit my project. In order to bring a counter-argument, my main focus is on writings of women and men on Islamic feminism and commodification of such works.

2.2 Review of Literature

I have selected several books and articles that are related to my research project. Amina Wadud's *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reforms in Islam* (2006) is a thought-provoking work. Here, she raises her voice for Muslim women sufferings. She lays the foundation of presenting arguments from Holy Scriptures, i.e. from Qur'an and Hadiths. Suffering herself from inequality in a male dominant society and facing harsh criticism as a result of bringing out Muslim women subjugation on the surface, Amina Wadud emphasizes on the need of Muslim women studies along with women studies in general. She also highlights Muslim women status in an Islamic patriarchal society whilst exposing their real place in Muslim community as mentioned in Qur'an and Hadiths.

Patriarchal influence on Qur'anic interpretation leads to restriction on complete justice and equality among Muslim men and women. Muslim men do not allow women to come and move in public sphere. Allah has created both men and women equal but patriarchy imposes constraints on Muslim women. Wadud asserts that "It is Muslim male double-talk to reflect and maintain male legitimacy and hierarchical privilege over women" (2006: 26). By creating distinctions among men and women, a person, according to Wadud, may lead to shirk because they contradict Qur'an that is Allah's words. In reality, by doing so, a man will be at variance with the creator of the universe-Allah Almighty. She writes: "When a person seeks to place him- or herself 'above' another, it either means the divine presence is removed or ignored" (Wadud 32). In order to communicate her views as a Muslim woman living in United States, Amina Wadud talks about problems faced by women in male dominant societies.

Amina Wadud, in her book *Inside the Gender Jihad* (2006), explains the causes of women discrimination in a Muslim Societies. According to her, the reason of Muslim women

alienation is Muslim men. All religious material, especially Qur'anic verses, is interpreted by Muslim men who construe for their own benefits. She holds, "People attach the word "Islam" to their arguments to acquire definitive authoritatively constructed limits on discourse" (18). They ignore women and problems faced by them. As a result, women have been suffering since fourteen centuries.

In an Islamic society woman do not enjoy freedom as men do. Wadud describes her experiences when she accepts Islam. As a Muslim scholar and activist, she faces criticism from religious scholars, especially, when she leads a mixed gender Friday prayer in New York. She herself states in "Preface" to her 2006 book that "Her act raised a firestorm of heated exchanges all over the Muslim and non-Muslim world" (Wadud vii). Those Muslims, who opposed this practice of leading a mixed gender congregation called her abusive names. They considered her as a non-Muslim in a Muslim attire (El Fadl 3, my paraphrase). She explains that men and women are declared equal by Almighty Allah. Due to male interpretation of Qur'an, women are restricted to participate in public sphere. They are held back to perform many duties which are only thought to be carried out by men. Here, women are assigned only few roles such as mothers, sisters, daughters, and wives. In fact, no Muslim woman showed the courage to speak or even write for their fellow beings' cause. According to Amina Wadud, when new discoveries and inventions are made in every field of life, why it is prohibited in religious matters, which is the supreme power in shaping our society as well as individual lives. For her, Muslims need "to read and think than to speak" (2006: xiii).

In Islam, men and women are equal and are responsible for their good and bad deeds. In his final sermon, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) declared that no one has superiority over other "except by piety and good actions" (Prophet Muhammad's Last Sermon 4). According to Wadud, due to interpretation of Qur'an by men, the statement, "men and women are equal" which is mostly used by religious scholars, is not applicable in real male dominant Muslim world (25). Amina Wadud's writing is not an ordinary writing. Her book is written after firsthand experience, where Wadud did not cross any religious boundaries. In fact, she explains those reforms in Islam that describe men and women as equal. Nina Hoel observes that in order to "address women's equal capacity with

respect to religious and spiritual leadership” and to stop Muslim women’s subjugation, there is a need of more struggle and awareness (Hoel 26).

In Wadud’s other book *Quran and Women: Reading the Sacred text from a Woman’s Perspective* (1999), she discusses the reason of creation of man. At the same time, she examines emphasis on men’s interpretation of Qur’an and its aftereffects on society. After A’ishah, the beloved wife of Muhammed, women only transported hadiths. Whereas, men criticized and evaluated these hadiths and Qur’anic ayahs. Wadud discusses and analyzes the differences between earlier interpretation carried out by men and recent explanation achieved by women. Hidayatullah asserts that Wadud wants explanation of Islamic text by women to release them from marginalization. She argues that Wadud emphasizes “the interpretation of the Qur’an in light of women’s life experiences” (Hidayatullah 82). She does not use any other source to give her argument but the Qur’an—the holy scripture of Muslims.

Astonishingly, Wadud describes the Holy Qur’an in a unique way. There are four sections in this book. The introduction of the book is very important for the reader. Here, Wadud gives new meanings to certain words and particular ayahs, related to women, to present additional and advanced interpretation. The new definition helps understand Muslim women’s real role in the society that is not found out since centuries. Wadud explains:

The term nafs has both a common and a technical usage. Although the common usage of nafs translates as 'self, and its plural, anfus, as 'selves', it is never used in the Qur'an with reference to any created self other than humankind. As for the technical usage in the Qur'an, nafs refers to the common origin of all humankind. (1999: 19)

Moreover, Amina Wadud also describes:

In the Qur'anic account of creation, Allah never planned to begin the creation of humankind with a male person; nor does it ever refer to the origins of the human race with Adam. It does not even state that Allah began the creation of humankind with the nafs of Adam, the man. This omission is noteworthy because the Qur'anic

version of the creation of humankind is not expressed in gender terms. (1999: 19-20)

The new role of Muslim women is free of all restrictions that is imposed by dominant patriarchal system on them. This book is useful for Muslims as well as non-Muslims. Due to the presentation of new meanings of Qur'anic text, this book can be taken as "tafsir". Webb calls Wadud's *Qur'an and Women* (1999) "It is virtually the first "reading" or Qur'anic commentary on the subject of woman articulated by a woman in the fourteen hundred years of Islamic history" (Webb 519). An important and unique thing about her explanation is that, it is free of any gender specific partiality.

Wadud says that when men interpret Qur'an they discuss problems, related to women, according to their own understanding. Here, men's prejudice against women is very much apparent. Women's issues are never discussed alone. Only those problems are tried to be solved which occur in relation to men while others are fully ignored. Whereas, Ali, Ahmed, and Silvers observe that Wadud is busy in "fighting the injustices sustained by patriarchy" (12). Distinctions, that religious clergies create, deprive Muslim Women from their basic rights.

Amina Wadud argues that Islam does not create any distinction. It is the interpretation by men that enforces restrictions on Muslim women. She holds: "Most troubling is the tendency to attribute these interpretations to the Qur'an itself rather than to the authors who hold them" (35). Some men think that Allah has created Adam first because he is a man. Whereas, nowhere in Quran Allah Almighty mentions that He created Adam first to give him superiority over his female partner Eve. Islamic feminists like Wadud and others try Muslim women come out of their segregation "by reinterpreting Islam's holy sources" (Barlow and Akbarzadeh 1481).

It is male-dominant society that breeds divisions between men and women. In Qur'an, the words and phrases used to address men and women are mostly the same. It means that both genders are considered equal. For Rehman and Eleni, a true Islamic society needs to "recognize gender identities" (8). Even if people of a society assign different positions to men and women, these differences give rise to social and cultural distinctions. Although, Qura'an does not regard people different but the interpretation by Muslim male

scholars creates divisions and these interpretations are the key principles to establish a Muslim society. There are some intellectuals who regard the true worth of women and consider them equal to men. They suggest that for Allah Almighty both men and women are of same value. Wadud also discusses that the problem is generated when these scholars consider men and women equal in religious matters and ignore them or give them very little importance when are faced with worldly issues.

In order to relate the above-mentioned literary works with the memoirs I have chosen for my research work, I compare some of their aspects with each other. Amina Wadud's first book *Qur'an and Women: Reading the Sacred text from a Woman's Perspective* (1999) was first published by Oxford University Press in 1999. The aforementioned press is among the top most leading printing presses of England. With the publishing of her book, Amina Wadud becomes very famous. Reviews given by notable writers and publishers attract common people to buy her writings. In 2005, she led a mixed-gender Friday prayer in New York. This act of hers "shocked the Muslim world" (Elewa, Ahmed and Laury Silvers 141). It has made a new history in Islam and contributed to gain her popularity.

Wadud's next book, *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reforms in Islam* (2006), draws more readers because of her fame as an imamah of a mixed-gender Friday prayer. Due to her controversial identity as an imamah, she was already famous. After that she was forced by the West or herself felt an urge to write a book on Islamic feminism. If some unknown author would have written the book it would not have been so famous and no one would have read it. So, it is an agenda to draw more readers. Different critics have analyzed her work. They have appreciated many aspects of her books. Here, analysts are unable to find the difference that I can detect. They could not find gap that my study is likely to fill. The gap that my study seems to find is that the title of this book is quite fancy. Jihad is a sacred duty for Muslims against all kinds of dangers to Islam. Amina Wadud uses this word against Muslim men. It means that Muslim women are on jihad against Muslim men. The title also shows that this book is about reforms in Islam by a woman. In this way, Islam and Islamic teachings are represented according to the Western notion.

In order to find gaps in the literary works produced by Amina Wadud, my research project intervenes here. She and her work are mostly appreciated in good words. Scholars and intellectuals have given positive remarks and comments on her books and the event of leading a mixed gender prayer. Occasionally, she has received harsh criticism, but it seems that no one has analyzed her work and her intentions through the lens of comprador intelligentsia. Kecia Ali in her book *A Jihad for Justice: Honoring the Work and Life of Amina Wadud* (2012) includes essays of different writers. All of them admire writings and struggle of Amina Wadud. No one criticizes her negatively. On the other hand, I have applied the above-mentioned lens and this helps me in understanding the intention of this so-called Islamic feminist and nature of her work.

Fatima Mernissi's *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Muslim Society* (1975) is an astonishingly innovative work. Fatima Mernissi is a Moroccan feminist and socialist. She is the author of many books on feminism especially Islamic feminism. Although, the term was not coined yet but she wrote about Muslim women and their oppression in Islamic society. *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Muslim Society* (1975) is her first monograph. In this book, she discloses differences between women's sexuality in Western and Muslim world and the reason of Muslim women subjugation. The book also describes that Muslim women are regarded as sexual beings and this view seems to impose more restrictions on women.

Before Islam, women were not given much freedom. They were deprived of their basic rights. It is Islam that privileges them and they can enjoy a thorough independence. In pre-Islamic days, rules for paternity were very loose. There was no responsibility of children on the father in the case of second marriage of the woman. Mernissi is of the view that in an Islamic society men and women should have the freedom to choose their life partners according to their choice. Islam gives proper rules of paternity and frees Muslim women from the burden of looking after her children only by themselves. This thought-provoking book also explains that Qur'anic interpretation by men is the cause of these limitations. To uphold their patriarchy, women are passionate hunters and they can hunt men. Such words result in confinement of Muslim women to the four walls of their houses.

In “*The Veil and The Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women’s Rights in Islam*” (1991), Mernissi argues that in the early days of Islam Muslim male elite influenced Muhammad (PBUH) in decision making process. Constraints on Muslim women’s freedom “is neither because of the Koran nor the Prophet, nor the Islamic tradition, but simply because those rights conflict with the interests of a male elite” (Mernissi 1991: ix). While reviewing Mernissi’s work, Barbara Harlow observes that in an Islamic society, men do not allow women to live their lives according to their own will. For her, “authorized interpreters of the sacred texts” like religious male scholars and thinkers are responsible for this marginalization of women (in Islam) (43). Mernissi is of the view that these restrictions on women are not due to Islamic laws. In fact, these are the consequences of secular culture before Islam. Mernissi states that “male elite determined to eliminate or roll back any gains women had made under the Prophet's rule” (Bullock 529). Allah Almighty has created man and woman equal. For this, she gives reference from Qur’an, where man and woman are declared equal. Even Muhammad (PBUH) favored equality of men and women. On the other hand, it was Muslim men belonging to elite class, who did not approve of women empowerment. These aristocrats’ “egotistic, highly subjective, and mediocre view of culture and society has a sacred basis” (Mernissi 1991: ix).

At the advent of Islam, a new law was introduced. This presentation of new legislation was very difficult to accept for traditional Arabs who were in power. It was a kind of a war between traditionalists and modern practitioners. Consequently, these men in power did not allow the sharia’ law to be implemented in its true sense. In an Islamic society Allah is the supreme power. No person can change the laws made by Allah Almighty. Mernissi is of the view that it is traditional Islam, that limits Muslim women to participate in their country’s progress. Moreover, modern scholars dismiss the Islamic teachings as ideal for development of Muslim societies. It is Europeanization which is a hope for progress. Mernissi even analyses some hadiths that are against women. In the days of ignorance, women were treated like animals.

While talking about their sexuality, Mernissi explains that there were two systems of marriage that ran side by side during Prophet’s time. Both of them were opposite to each other. One was matrilineal trend that was known as *sadiqa* marriage. While the other one was *ba’al* marriage that was a patrilineal way of marriage. Matrilineal trend or *sadiqa*

marriage allows freedom to women but, due to the later interpretation of Qur'an, this trend is restricted. After the advent of Islam, the companions of the Holy Prophet wanted to continue limitations and restrictions to be imposed on women. As a result, hadiths against women are very much common these days.

Hadiths create distinction between men and women in Muslim society even if both are considered equal. For Margot Badran, in order to present Islam a feminist religion, Mernissi tries to analyse those hadiths of the Prophet Mohamed (PBUH) "that so blatantly "inferiorized" women" (20). But these concepts are deeply rooted into the cultures of Islamic societies. Moghadam holds that "Cultural refinement of some traditions, such as patriarchy, anti-woman attitudes...have been fed to our people in the name of Islam" (1141).

Mernissi writes for women's cause. Before she writes her monograph, she is unknown to the world. With the publication of *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Muslim Society* she is regarded as one of the first feminist who raises here voice for Muslim women's cause. Her work is sold on high price. The work is highlighted and commented by various writers in excellent words. A filmmaker and a writer Elizabeth Warnock Fernea and Robert Warnock Fernea work on issues of culture faced by African and people of Middle East. Both of them are greatly impressed by the work of Fatima Mernissi. In their book "The Arab World" they appreciate Mernissi's efforts in writing her piece of art. They suggest:

If a reader were to select only one book in order to gain insight into women's status and prospects in Islamic society, this study should be one chosen for its clarity, honesty, depth of knowledge and thought-provoking qualities. (482)

Thus, for them, Mernissi's book portrays a complete picture of Muslim women subjugation. Mernissi is of the view that Islam that is followed by Muslims now a days, does not give Muslim women their legitimate rights. For Suad Joseph, it is "Islamic law (Sharia) and institutions" that do not give women freedom to exercise their authority (468). Other critics have also appreciated Mernissi's writing. Pastner asserts that an important thing about the book is that it is written by an indigenous writer who describes Muslim "male-female relationship" (88). In an Islamic community, girls do not choose their life

partners. Their elders, especially parents select spouse for their daughters. This tradition was not there in early days of Islam.

Tradition of Muslim societies causes Muslim women's segregation. Mernissi reveals that it is culture that imposes such restrictions on women who have free will to choose their life partners for them. Geertz while reviewing Mernissi's work asserts that "Islamic beliefs are not so much opposed to women" (50). Although, Islam gives them permission but the tradition does not allow women to come out of their houses to find life mates and work to earn their livelihood. The reason is that Muslim men consider "women as potentially powerful and threatening" (Abu-Lughod 365). Moreover, Islam does not create distinction between men and women on the basis of their sexuality. Both are equal and have to follow some rules.

Not only do different scholars praise Fatima Mernissi's work of art but different leading newspapers and magazines and newspapers also cherish her efforts. Her book *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Muslim Society* (1975) is adored in the following words by *Tribune*: "A classic work" (Mernissi Front Cover). Another newspaper *Scotland on Sunday* describes it as "A fascinating book" (Mernissi, Front Cover). *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (1975) is published by one of the most famous publishing houses of United States. Many editions of this book have come to the market. The reason is that concept of Muslim women subjugation which is discussed in the book.

Although Qur'an considers all human beings equal but explanation of certain ayahs by men results in isolation of Muslim women. For Mernissi, some orders related to veil in Qur'an also resulted in alienation of Muslim women. These laws were revealed on Prophet Muhammad when some non-believers tried to scandalize his personal life. Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)'s "egalitarian project, are in fact based on . . . the emergence of woman's free will" that is given importance (Booth 21). Mernissi is the pioneer among women writers in getting critical of religious sources. She probably thought that it could result in reformation of religion according to the wishes of the West. The book was banned in majority of Muslim countries due to the material produced in it. According to Wikipedia, the publication and sell of Mernissi's *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist*

Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam (1991) was declared illegal in “Morocco, Iran, and Arab states of the Persian Gulf” (Fatima Mernissi n.p.).

Fatima Mernissi's works seem to be the best works produced on Islamic feminism but here, my research project intercepts. Critics consider her the first feminist who lays ground for later Islamic feminists. Her analysis of Islamic Holy Scriptures appears to be the first achievement in this respect. There are some intellectuals who do not consider her work a true representation of Islam. Geertz comments that “I do not recommend this book for use in introductory classes, for it can be misleading to the uninformed” (Geertz 50). Although, the writers I have chosen for my research work bring arguments from sacred texts such as Qur'an and Hadiths as Mernissi did, the gap that I find here in her work is that it seems Mernissi's real motive to produce this kind of literary work is to earn popularity for her careerist concern.

Analysts try to analyze her work that sounds very impressive, but it appears that they are unable to see her true intention. In fact, after doing her PhD, Mernissi might want to be known to the world while establishing a unique identity for her. If she had written on some older issues, she would not have been able to receive that much prestige. After highlighting Muslim women alienation in an Islamic society, Mernissi's fame reached to a high point. Her books were published many times after their first printing in many countries. As a result, Mernissi got economic benefits besides her exclusive identity.

Leila Ahmed's *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of Modern Debate* (1992) is a book produced in the name of Islamic feminism. Leila Ahmed is an Egyptian American Muslim writer who writes on Islamic feminism. After doing her PhD from University of Cambridge in 1960's, she was selected as first professor of Women' Studies and Religion at Harvard Divinity School. She started her writing career with a memoir in 1999 titled *A Border Passage: From Cairo to America-A Woman's Journey* (1999). Being a daughter of a middle-class father and upper-class mother, she was brought up in an environment where Islamic teachings and liberal values helped her write for Muslim women and their rights in Islam. Due to representation of Muslim women in her writings, she became famous as an Islamic feminist.

Leila Ahmed presents arguments and proofs from history related to women's status in Islam. Lidwein Kapteijns holds: "This courageous and provocative study is formidable historiographical milestone" (208). Not only does she discuss women's place in modern era but also explores their status in ancient times. Hence, she elaborates women and men's role in pre-Islamic Middle-East, in order to explore the peculiarity of women's place in early days of Islam. Leila Ahmed views that it was Arabs and their traditional way of living that is responsible for Muslim women isolation. Ahmed explores three communities in this respect. These three societies are:

1. Arabia in the early days of Islam
2. The golden era when women were given privilege and constitutional and religious laws were codified for them.
3. The third society that Leila Ahmed talks about is Egyptian society during last two centuries.

During last two centuries, there is a strong impact of western feminism that leads to climatic change and formulation of new codes for Egyptian women. Ahmed's book presents a healthy discussion on ideologies related to Muslim women. At the same time, it is helpful in understanding women's place in Islam after analyzing their role in comparison to modern discourse. There are several chapters in the book and every chapter analyzes and presents a separate argument. The exceptional things about Leila Ahmed's writing is that she quotes many writers and analyzes their work thoroughly. She clarifies that their works do not give a detailed overview of feminism in Islamic society. In this way, her work is one of its kind, as she presents a chronological study of status of women starting from pre-Islamic society in the Middle East to modern time.

According to Leila Ahmed, long before Islam comes in Middle East women are given many rights and enjoy freedom as men. With the spread of Greeks' Hellenic polytheism and after that Christianity, Egyptian women start to lose their status in society. It is long before Islam comes into this region. She writes: "the decline of the position and rights of women in Egypt occurred under the influence of European dominance and laws (1992: 33). She explains that the women's place remains the same even after Islam spread in the area. In this first part, Leila Ahmed elaborates women's rank in ancient time where veil "distinguishes respectable women from those who were publicly available" (Anjum 444).

The second part of the book deals with women and gender discourse, when Islam was expanded in the Middle East. Leila Ahmed reveals that Islam has given amazing rights to women as infanticide of girls is forbidden. On the other hand, Islam also allows divorce and marriage after divorce or death of spouse for women. Before Islam, only men enjoyed such rights. While discussing polygamy in Islam, Ahmed explains that both men and women have same rights on each other. She asserts that “Quranic verses regarding marriage and women appear to qualify and undercut others that seemingly establish marriage as a hierarchical institution unequivocally privileging men” (1992: 63).

For Ahmed, in the early days of Islam, women had many rights and they experienced many social roles. For example, they had equal rights as men had to marry someone of their choice. Men who could not maintain equality amongst their wives are not allowed to marry more than one woman at a time. Moreover, breaking the sacred relation of marriage is considered extremely revolting by God. Holy Scriptures of Islam elaborate all these codes and laws that are “stubbornly egalitarian, including with respect of the sexes . . . instituted in the first Islamic society” (Ahmed 1992: 63).

Conservative men from elite class of society interpreted sacred text during the Abbasid period. The explanation was highly biased in terms of granting women their permissible rights and freedom. These legislatives were “making the consequences for women far more negative” (Sanasarian 679). In this way, this analysis damaged Islamic ethical egalitarianism. She also mentions that clarification and explanation of the holy scriptures by some movements in the early days of Islam also contributed in bestowing women their rights. Here, Ahmed gives the reason of this men-centered interpretation during Abbasid era. She argues that it was due to amalgamation of different cultures in that area. Interaction with different people introduced a new form of living that was then followed by citizens. As a result of this union, women started to lose their rights. It was patriarchal culture of Christianity and Zoroastrianism due to which “Islam became contaminated” (Riesebrodt 453). Women who wanted to work, could earn their livelihood by performing selective duties at emperor’s palace and at the homes of the elite class. She holds that there were seventeen hundred women working at Al-Ma’mun’s palace as employees. “They could be hair combers, bakers, reciters of the Quran, washerwomen, midwives, washers of the dead, mourners at funerals, and female spies” (Ahmed 1992: 84).

Another reason of women's isolation was the tradition of slavery. Men belonging to elite class bought and sold beautiful women as slaves. Here, female slaves were exchanged with money as commodities. They were used as objects for sexual purpose. It had become an everyday practice in the Abbasid period. Those women, who had more qualities were sold on high price. So, for Ahmed, availability of female slave was one explanation for snatching rights from women. Due to this tradition, elite men got scared of the destiny of their female-relatives. They expressed satisfaction on the deaths of their daughters and other women relatives belonging to them. Ahmed quotes a contemporary poet who wrote some verses on the death of Hasan ibn al-Firat's daughter:

To be patient in misery
 Is equivalent to giving thanks for a gift.
 Among the blessings of God undoubtedly
 Is the preservation of sons
 And the death of daughters. (1992: 85).

In this way, Leila Ahmed accuses tradition, culture and male elite for androcentric explanation of Islamic sacred texts. She holds that in an Islamic society, women had more freedom and rights if male elite would not have interpreted religious text wrongly during the Abbasid period. Islam has egalitarian law but due to misogynist culture of Middle East Islamic sacred text was "interpreted in the most negative way possible for women" (Kapteijns 207).

Section 3 of the book deals with the modern discourse on Muslim women. The author discusses disagreement between the old discourse and the modern rhetoric on women in this part. Here, she also analyzes effect of European colonial period on native discourse in terms of the westernization and innovation in the code of life. Sherifa Zuhur demonstrates that Ahmed tries to highlight many "misconceptions about the misogyny that is endemic in the Islamic tradition" (392). During this period, Muslim and native culture are regarded inferior as compared to the superior westerners' way of life. Colonizers made "oppression of Muslim women, symptomatic of the backwardness" of colonized (Kandiyoti 688). As a result, for women, westerners regard veiling as some kind of weak point in Islam. In other

words, the West acknowledges it as Islamic inferiority. Westerners link Muslim women's veiling to "Islamic patriarchy" (Reynolds 30).

Leila Ahmed talks about the earliest wave of feminism in Egypt. According to her, this wave is characterized by a movement for the freedom and individualism of women. Ahmed observes that even

in literature the generation of women... produced a number of feminist writers, most from the urban middle classes . . . attacking the casual destruction of women permitted by the culture. (1992: 214)

Here, women do not want to follow "regional traditions and Islam practiced in a misogynist manner" (Zuhur 350). On comparison between veiled women, newly veiled women, and women without veil, Ahmed comes to know that all these women favor and expect egalitarian religious order. On the other hand, authoritarian sexist approach of Islamic teachings by fundamentalists is very new to these women.

In conclusion, Leila Ahmed emphasizes the need of contemporary discourse on Muslim feminism, where, dictation and domination from the West should not be included. Ahmed explains that "Western values...are themselves flawed" because the West does not expose the feminism in western society (Metcalf 198). For them, it is only there in eastern communities. Ahmed expounds that a little is explored about the Muslim world and a lot more is still left especially about Muslim women. Still prevailing colonial domination establishes veiled Muslim women identity as oppressive. Here, double standards of the West surprise her where European women can get contentment, happiness and ideal life through following their "cultural heritage, but Muslim women can pursue such goals only by setting aside the ways of their culture for the nonandrocentric, nonmisogynist ways (such is the implication) of the West" (1992: 245). For her, the West brings forward only the negativity of Muslim society, whereas, it does not highlight good characteristics.

Leila Ahmed's other seminal work *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence, from Middle East to America* (2011) is about the trend of veiling. This book also gives a thorough account of culture of unveiling. After that unveiling, it presents revitalization of veiling in Egypt and in the western countries, especially America. Here, Ahmed provides details of her own experience for her readers to understand the change in social, political

and cultural meaning of veil. She also describes the reason of liking for unveiling between Muslims. For her, it is colonialism that makes Muslim women to leave veil because some colonized considered “gradual and careful change in the status of women” was now an essential step in the advancement of Muslim societies” (2011: 19). This book consists of two sections. The first section is broken down into eight chapters. In this part of the book, history of unveiling and then veiling in the Islamic society is argued thoroughly.

Goal of Islamists, in describing the roles of women in an Islamic society, is very important. Leila Ahmed starts with Albert Hourani’s article “The Vanishing Veil: A Challenge to the Older Order” (1956). The article is written in 1956 and the author describes that veil is now vanishing from Muslim societies. According to him, it is Qasim Amin’s writing that revolutionize the Arab society. Qasim Amin explains that those Muslims will be successful who follow the footsteps of the English people. Hourani asserts that in Egypt women adopt the culture of unveiling first and then it is spread in “more advanced Arab countries,” like “Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq” (Hourani 35).

Western trained subjects of colonized territories produce westernized narrative. They consider that the major difference between an Eastern and a Western society is that in Western society both male and female members of the community work for the progress of their country. This is the fundamental reason of their development and domination over the East. What Leila Ahmed wants **to explain** is that, it was colonialism that classified the West superior and the East inferior. This article of Amin revolutionized Muslim society. So, in order to prosper, Muslim women stopped taking veil. This trend of unveiling was regarded as modernism in Muslim societies not as secularism. Moreover, Hourani suggests that this shift of culture from veiling to unveiling is “in no way contrary to the principles of Islam” (2011: 43).

Historical events that took place in Islamic countries help change the concept of veiling. The first one was the end of Nasser’s era, and cold war between Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The main conflict between two countries was propagation of secular laws in an Islamic society. For example, in Egypt, people considered unveiling as un-Islamic. Saudi Arabia wanted to prevent people from practicing such ideologies (Epsposito 655, my paraphrase). At the same time, Muslim Brotherhood -an organization, was founded that forced people

to follow Islamic laws. These are the “people who bombed places, including cinemas (2011:3). Other group was Muslim World League, where, members of the league spread the message of Allah and discourage secular practices. Ahmed argues that the main motive of the League is to “bring together mainstreams of contemporary Islamic ideology and theology and that it was seeking to represent within itself some contemporary mainstreams of Islamic thought” (2011: 62).

After the break down of Egyptian social system and due to defeat from Israel, and social chaos, people got attracted towards Islam. Muslim Brotherhood and other organizations played their powerful part to bring back Islam to life among Egyptians and Arabs. This revival of Islam marked the rebirth of veil. Ahmed states that “This was the time that the new veil...began to make its appearance on the streets of Cairo and other Egyptian cities” (2011: 77). Leila Ahmed collected all these stories from contemporary Muslim women who witnessed these incidents. In Egypt, adoption of veiling came as revolution. This Egyptian revolution was totally different from Iranian revolution, where government forced veiling. On the other hand, desire for veil was induced in Egyptian women who were willingly wanting to wear it. Ahmed observes a drastic change in middle class women’s lives who altered themselves. This period is marked by the “willingness and even active desire of an ever-growing number of women to wear” veil (Ahmed 2011: 116).

Reveiling among Muslim women is not restricted to Egypt and other Muslim countries. This movement spreads out to European non-Muslim countries as well. In America, the trend of veiling also became popular and adopted by many Muslims. Ahmed explains that many Muslims migrated to European countries and America. With these movement, Muslim organizations and Islamism also grew in these areas. Ahmed discloses that African Americans accepted Islam along with migration of many Muslims to America and this led to increased number of Muslims in America. “African Americans today make up it is thought about 40 percent of American Muslims” (Ahmed 2011: 11).

The concept of Islam as a religion attracted many westerners when fundamentalists contributed to spread of Islam. At the same time, Ahmed describes Muslim women and their status in the USA, especially after 9/11. During that time, westerners were violent against Muslim women who wore hijabs. Ahmed argues that “the media began reporting

incidents of attacks on Muslims, including attacks or harassments of Muslim women in hijab” (2011: 204). Instead of creating hatred against Islam, these events helped in attracting more people towards Islam. The 9/11 brought about cultural, political and social changes in America in relation to Islam and Muslim women. Ahmed explains the way American Muslim women are marginalized as a minority group and their resulting activism against this alienation. Thus, the first decade of this century is characterized by “the emergence of this wave of Islamic activism in relation to issues of women” with the “understanding of justice in America” (Ahmed 2011:294).

The rise of Islam in last four or five decades has turned it from a marginal religion to one of the influential religions in America. Similarly, veiling by Muslim women, that they had once denounced, now has been started first by Egyptian university students. Ahmed asserts that Muslim organizations played an important part “in promoting the veil and Islamic dress on university campuses” (2011: 132). From there, the notion of veiling changed in America as well and took the form of a “Quiet Revolution” among Muslim women (Ahmed 2011: title). This revival is the aftermath of the marginalization of Muslims, especially women as minority. These veiled women actively stand for American tradition of justice for everyone. On the one hand, this veil is a symbol of Muslim women and on the other hand, it stands for justice and equal rights in Islam for women.

Ahmed’s works are praised by all western scholars. Her book, *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil’s Resurgence, from the Middle East to America* (2011), not only does achieve fame but also lets her win Louisville Grawemeyer Award in 2013. Kambiz GhaneaBassiri commends her work and describes it as an academic attempt to clarify peoples’ comprehension of ideas related to religion. Ahmed represents veil’s “relation to empire, Islamism, piety, and feminism” (GhaneaBassiri 179). Elizabeth Brownson is the assistant professor-History at The University of California. For her, Ahmed’s work presents a complete picture of Muslim women activism in America. The book also tells that the motivating force behind this women activism “for gender equality” is “influenced by Islamism” (Brownson 329). Leila Ahmed presents a new concept behind veil. A professor Emerita in the School of Social Science in the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, Joan Wallach Scott, says that like many people Ahmed might be worried about the reveiling of Muslim women and this worry might be the driving force behind the

production of this excellent and unique work. Ahmed finds that the children of those who were once Islamic extremists are now “assimilating into the distinctively American tradition of activism in pursuit of justice...” (Scott 118). The book does not create a gulf between two different cultures of the world that are eastern and western culture.

Being an Islamic feminist, everything seems good about her effort for her fellow Muslim women’s cause. In order to find gaps in her work, my research project problematizes the concept of comprador intelligentsia. Ahmed might be regarded as a comprador intelligentsia, who works to advertise western agenda. Her intention seems to get financial benefits in a country, where, it is difficult to earn much.

As an Egyptian American, like the writers of books I have selected for this study named Azadeh Moaveni, Shelina Zahra Janmohamed, and Asra Nomani, it might be difficult for Ahmed to live freely in America with double identity. At the same time, it seemed to be hard for her to get economic stability in an environment, where, foreigners face racism and harsh criticism from the natives. She still remembers that her Palestinian teacher hit her hard on her face just because of the reason that she identified herself as an Egyptian instead of an Arab. In Egypt, Ahmed has Jewish and Christian friends who also have identity crisis. It seemed that she decided to come out of this crisis.

Ahmed has created her own identity in the West after working on their agenda and highlighting the issues related to women in Islam. While studying at Cambridge, Ahmed’s instructors showed their prejudice against her and other Muslims. This racist attitude from the West frustrated her and led her to come out of this dilemma of stereotyping. Due to this, she started writing for Muslim women’s cause. Like other intellectuals who serve as comprador intelligentsia, it seems that the West hired her at a time when westerners needed to know about Islam, especially women in Islam.

Ahmed’s writings provide the audience a distorted image of Islam, where, women are subjugated and oppressed. Although, her work might have brought some awareness among Muslim women, these writings seem to achieve the motive she wanted to get. They brought her fame as an Islamic feminist. Moreover she wrote her first book on Islamic feminism, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* in 1992. According to Harvard Divinity School website, she was made director of women studies program at

university of Massachusetts the same year and she stayed in the same position from 1992-1995 (Leila Ahmed n.p.). After that, according to Wikipedia, she is appointed as the “first professor of women's studies in religion at Harvard Divinity School in 1999” (Leila Ahmed n.p.). Facts like these, show that Ahmed writes on feminism in Islam to gain fame and financial stability.

Her works also reflect her struggle to cross social and cultural barriers and meet new identity. Due to immigration to a new country, it seems that she wanted to be acknowledged as a scholar. For this, she started to write to promote western motive. As a result, she is now known as an Islamic feminist who works for Muslim women cause. As mentioned earlier, Leila Ahmed received Grawemeyer Award in religion in 2013. This award is not given without any purpose. Before 2012, Grawemeyer University presented this award to those, who performed excellent in the fields of psychology, music composition, education and world order. The University of Louisville presents four Grawemeyer Awards each year. In 2013, university decided to include another category and “give a fifth award in religion” (Leila Ahmed n.p.). It seems that the West wanted to bestow her for the services she provided by highlighting Muslim Women oppression and, for this reason, a new category of Grawemeyer Awards was introduced. Ahmed might be part of those western intellectuals who subscribe to western motive of presenting Muslim women as segregated individuals. Thus, the gap in her work seems to be filled by my research project.

2.3 Conclusion

Graham Huggan, in “Preface” to *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001), argues that “postcolonial writers, and a handful of critics, have accumulated forms of cultural capital that have made them recognized” (viii). Many works have been investigated from the perspective of Graham Huggan’s “marketing the margins” (2001) and Anthony Appiah’s idea of “comprador intelligentsia” (348). However, not much critical attention has been given to cultural production of Muslim women writers living in the West. The present study aims to conduct an investigation on the works of Azadeh Moaveni, Shelina Zahra Janmohamed and Asra Nomani.

Above-mentioned Muslim women writers, living in Euro-American locations, who write for the suffering of women in Islam, seem to work as comprador intellectuals. Although, it appears that their purpose for producing this work is to serve religion by developing awareness among their fellow beings, it gives the impression that their intention probably is to become recognized in the West. This effort of them is for careerist concern. All of them have double identity and want to get settled in Europe and America. For this, they need to achieve financial success. Writing on issues that are hotly discussed is the best option to earn well. Graham Huggan quotes Bourdieu who argues that “the consecrated writer is the one who has the power to consecrate” the work of other writers (Bourdieu 42). Western publishers and reading community then help these writings get international fame.

The literature on such matters represents whatever Anthony Appiah explains in his essay “Is the Post- in Postmodern the Post- in Postcolonial?” (1991). He views that culture of formerly colonized countries is presented to the world according to the western notion because the writers and the intellectuals are western trained. For him, those artifacts gain popularity among the westerners that have “very Western look” (337). Motive of all above-mentioned writers is quite clear. They do not seem to work to serve their religion but only to highlight negative points of culture of Muslim communities. In this way, their writings are a tool to present a crooked picture of Islamic community. Reviews and comments from top most publishing companies, newspapers, websites, and TV channels help them earn fame and prestige. It sounds that no one has tried to find the real motive behind such writings. My research project is likely to fill the gap and tries to highlight the agenda of these writers and scholars. The theoretical lens of Islamic feminism and comprador intelligentsia help find gaps in these literary works. In the following chapter, I have discussed theoretical framework and research methodology that help me analyze my primary texts.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology are important parts of a dissertation. They provide guidance in the whole process of research. Under the heading of theoretical framework, I present theory that provides the direction for the research work. Theoretical lens helps answer research questions and research problem. In this section of dissertation, I have introduced and explained the theory I have chosen for my research project so that it has some theoretical basis. Research methodology is a technical term that helps describe and explain the process through which I have carried out this research. It is also going to be beneficial in predicting the ways I have used in obtaining knowledge. Research methodology also helps solve the problem in a structured way. In the section after theoretical framework, I have explained my methodological approach and research method.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

This work is investigated under the framework of “marketing the margins” initially presented by Graham Huggan in his influential work *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001) and Amina Wadud’s notion of “Islamic Feminism” that she has explained in her books *Inside the Gender Jihad* (2006) and *Quran and Women* (1999). I also use Kwame Anthony Appiah's concept of “Comprador Intelligentsia” introduced in his essay “Is Post- in Postmodern the Post- in the Postcolonial” (1991) as a supporting lens.

Graham Huggan presents the idea of cultural productions of formerly colonized countries that are transformed into commodities for capitalist purposes. He further views that Western countries highlight controversial issues from global south for commodification purpose. Amina Wadud is an Islamic feminist and puts forward her

theory of gender equality in Islam. In Islam men and women are equal according to new interpretation of holy text that is presented by Wadud. Here, Amina Wadud is highlighting western notion of Islamic feminism.

A British born Ghanaian American, Kwame Anthony Appiah is a philosopher, novelist, and cultural theorist. In his essay “Is the Post- in Postmodern the Post- in Postcolonial?” (2012), he discusses so called intellectuals from formerly colonized countries and their writings that follow the agenda of the West. Appiah explains that it is not that everything is a source of enchantment for the West. Only those objects attract westerners that have more unusual, or in other words, unique aspects among the rest. Once these uncommon and rare cultural production is observed by any one from the West, they try to highlight it, in order to distinguish it from the Western culture and artefacts. To introduce and then to differentiate it from ordinary products, these artefacts from the Global South are transformed into commodities. Appiah holds:

[T]he best pieces are going for very high prices the less good pieces in terms of quality are not going up in price. And that's a fine reason for picking the good ones rather than the bad. They have a way of becoming more valuable. (338)

Graham Huggan approves of the same process. He argues:

Postcoloniality, put another way, is a value-regulating mechanism within the global late-capitalist system of commodity exchange. Value is constructed through global market operations involving the exchange of cultural commodities and, particularly, culturally ‘othered’ goods. (6)

These artefacts include many objects like cultural objects, artistic goods, and things from heritage. Among these artefacts, literary writings are more valued in academia. W.J.T. Mitchell suggests it in the following words: “[T]he most important new literature is now emerging from the former colonies of the Western empires” (14). These former colonizers are still fascinated towards the peripheries. In fact, it has become a fashion in academia to talk, argue, and discuss ideas and problems related to postcolonialism. Intellectuals and scholars are aware of the fact that discussing and writing on issues related to postcolonialism guarantee their successful career in western academia. To focus and signify the writings from formerly colonised communities is a part of postcoloniality.

Literary works that I have selected present a complete and clear picture of the culture of the society to which they belong. Not only literary writings do present current situation of the country but also depict a portrayal of past. They delineate fears and expectations of the people of this country related to upcoming future too. Another reality about these literary works is that life writings are more popular among all genres of literature. If these life writings are presented to the third world public, about whom they are written, the third world public do not pay attention to these life writings, nor do they help in making these writings famous. On the other hand, those cultures that are considered superior, contribute in turning them popular impressive works. Huggan spells it out: “Ethnic autobiography, like ethnicity itself, flourishes under the watchful eye of the dominant culture; both are caught in the dual processes of commodification and surveillance” (2001: 155).

Thinkers and ordinary reading public acknowledge life writings or memoirs more reliable in terms of their authenticity. As a result, from formerly colonized communities, memoirs are emerging as a new form of cultural production that is regarded authentic by common people and commended by intellectuals from academia. Sonja Kurtzer describes the fact in this way: “When [an] author speaks to a ‘white’ audience...the audience recognises as ‘authentic’” (27-28). Due to their appreciation and notion of authenticity, these memoirs are transformed into a commodity.

Writings that have new and exclusive ideas presented in them are given more prominence. Consequently, such literary works have more market value. Françoise Lionnet argues: “postcolonial women writers are searching for new cultural forms and hybrid languages that better represent the particularisms of the communities about which they write” (19). These cultural artefacts gain market value due to their novelty. In his essay “The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism”, Fredric Jameson argues that “aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production” (4). New and unusual artefacts have more market value. Goods are presented as basic necessities and consumers have no choice but to attract by these goods.

Among other cultural productions, religion of global south, especially Islam, has become a novel idea for the West. It is the impact of secularization that new ideas are

incorporated in religions to bring novelty in them. Apparently, it seems that America tries to highlight and want people follow only one religion that is Christianity. On the contrary, the West puts its efforts in reforming other religions as they did with Christianity. Appiah suggests in these words:

What we have seen in recent times in the United States is not secularization-the end of religions-but their commodification; and with that commodification religions have reached further and grown-their markets have expanded-rather. (344)

This is likely to be another reason for the fanning of writings on religion.

Artisans from global south display a vast range of books and cultural goods to the world, especially the West. These artefacts and their cultures are known to the West in the way they are presented by their thinkers and intellectuals. These philosophers, from Global South, try to look for some novel issues that represent them and their culture in its true form. They also want to discover those ideas and strategies that are offbeat from the rest and back them in earning prominence. Appiah also says: “To sell oneself and one's products as art in the market- place, one must . . . [be] distinguished from other producers and products-and one does this by construction and the marking of differences” (342). These writers do not write for their native people. The reason behind it is that they are aware of the fact that native people can challenge the authenticity of their writings. Indigenous people know many facts about their lives. That is why, authors introduce these works to the western community because realities are unknown to them. S. Kurtzer notices this fact. That is why, she holds:

Indigenous authors are having difficulties within their own communities in having their life experiences recognised as authentic and this in part is due to the demand for particular kinds of stories from ‘white’ audiences. (27–8)

Westerners accept such stories because they are unaware of true facts. . Literary writings of such kind are not popularized at once. Seemingly, it appears that something extraordinary is produced in these books or these memoirs have some magical effect on the reader that causes them to become famous so quickly. In fact, undercover it involves a long and complicated method.

The process of commodification of literary works from these formerly colonized societies depends on several institutions. It is Western universities/academia and publishing houses that are involved. Philosophers and intellectuals from western academia pay more attention to these writings by discussing the ideas presented in them. As, these works are under spot light, scholars of universities from the West, use these writings for their research projects. Moreover, famous printing companies publish these books that brings fame to these books. Appiah points out this fact as: “Postcolonial intellectuals are almost entirely dependent for their support on two institutions: the [western] university, and the Euro-American publisher” (348).

People assume that these publishing houses print only those literary writings that have some outstanding story weaved in them. Writers are aware of the part these publishing houses perform in transforming their works into commodities. That is why, these writers choose these leading presses to publish their works. Academia is another institution that helps in the process of commodification. Intellectuals and thinkers from western academia who have double identity are enthusiastic to produce writings that discuss affairs related to their homelands.

Other western philosophers take pride in giving admirable comments on their works. These alluring statements are printed on blurbs of the books. Front and back covers of these books are very important in turning literary writings into a commodity. There are remarks from outstanding newspapers as well as from great philosophers of the day. Wendy Waring observes different “paratextual traces” that are produced on the front and back cover of books from formerly colonized countries. Here, she notices that these blurbs “render the process of cultural production visible” (455). Pierre Bourdieu points it out: “These traces—cover design, front- and back-cover blurbs, glossary notes, epigraphs, italicised quotations, and so on [are] ‘legitimizing agents’ (Bourdieu qtd in Huggan 164). The story does not end here. There are different strategies of marketing that supplement this process of marketing. Normally, back covers of the books have stunning paragraphs from the same books. These are edited in a way that they attract readers. Moreover, acknowledgement page is also very inviting. Here, information about author is written in such awe-inspiring words that reader has no choice but to buy the book at once. Waring

suggests: “. . . the back-cover blurb, which reproduces a paragraph from the original text but edits it in such a way as to elide or attenuate the text’s otherwise conspicuous race and class markers” (461). For her, acknowledgement page also contributes in increasing market value of the book. Waring discloses that, this page contains variety of facts about the author:

a true-life story of a . . . woman’s struggle to raise a family of nine children in a society divided between black and white culture, . . . and which then continues with a dedication to the members of her family. (461)

There is further dedication that says that the work is: “Dedicated also to every black woman who’s battled to raise a family and kept her sense of humour”. According to Waring, such particulars give the impression that the book is “relat[ing] racism as a thing of the past to a popular reading culture” (461).

Some of the comments from these thinkers are printed in leading newspapers, where editors and famous news reporters give enticing reviews on these books. Most read newspapers like *New York Times*, *Washington Post* give admirable reviews. Famous reading journals that are printed by renowned universities also appreciates works of these authors. Muecke argues:

[F]or a whole range of hyperbolic tributes are accumulated on the book’s inside pages. . . . This bestseller format, clearly designed to appeal to ‘ordinary’, massmarket readers (‘a book for everyone’, *New York Times* Book Review) as well as more sophisticated, academically minded ones (‘[Morgan] writes well, with the art which conceals art, so that a series of narratives becomes a complex exploration of the meaning of the past’, (Westerly), complements a text which persists in being read in comfortable, unchallenging terms. (409)

Such comments and reviews invite readers to get books at once. A consumer decides to buy goods when he or she needs it. The other process involves advertisement of the commodity that enforces the consumer to buy it. Advertisement stimulates and attracts the consumers to buy a product of their interest. In order to decide to buy it, consumer needs additional information, which these comments provide for free. An interesting thing about these comments and reviews is that they are given in very satisfying and fascinating words.

This is the most important thing that influences consumer's buying decision. Moreover, shopping decision also depends on "the characteristics of the reviewer, and the source of the review" (Helversen and Abramczuk 1).

Western universities also perform an essential job in this respect. Scholars and intellectuals having hybrid identities at western universities are the main source of producing such literature. These universities are not mediocre institutions. Such universities have earned their reputation as research institutions of the West. W.J.T. Mitchell observes that universities that are famous for the production of postcolonial literature are: ". . . the former 'centers of the Empire, Europe and the United States'" (14).

Some reason is likely to be there that motivates these scholars and thinkers to work on the issues of their formerly colonized homelands and bring them on the surface through their impressive writings. It is important to note that, not every writer and all kinds of cultural writings are given privilege. Selected writers get the advantage that intellectuals from academia and editors of top most newspapers and magazines discuss, appreciate, and give their reviews and comments on their works. These comments and reviews serve as a stamp of success for works of writers from Global South. These few authors likely to get access to famous publishing companies to get their works published. Graham Huggan argues: ". . . this industry seems to privilege a handful of famous writers" (4). For Pierre Bourdieu this honour is not given without any reason. It is literary monopoly that seems to work behind it. For him it is: ". . . the monopoly of the power to say with authority who are authorized to call themselves writers . . ." (42).

It seems that these preferred writers are working on some kind of agenda that helps them get prominence. Most of the intellectuals who are producing literary writings have hybrid identities. These writers get their education in the West. Not only do they study in the western institutions but also get their training there. Due to this, they think and behave the way the West wants them do. As they live in the West, they want to earn a handsome salary to get some financial stability. Moreover, they want to draw reputation of a different kind for themselves.

Since, I am working on Islamic feminism, I only talk about Islamic feminists. Thinkers, who work on Islamic feminism in the West, want others to acknowledge them

as Islamic feminists. As Graham Huggan suggests: “These [publishing] agents are all contenders in the struggle to validate particular writers; and the writers themselves vie for the right to attain and, in turn, confer recognition and prestige” (5). Consequently, they transform their writings into commodities. Appiah also points it out:

Postcoloniality is the condition of what we might ungenerously call a comprador intelligentsia: a relatively small, Western-style, Western- trained group of writers and thinkers, who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery. (348)

These comprador intellectuals have made Islamic feminism a commodity. Arif Dilrik in his essay “The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism” (1994) opines that postcolonial discussions and writings are very much considered as an indicator of success in the academia. Arif Dilrik observes that “the themes of postcolonial criticism have been prominent in the cultural discourses of Third World societies” (335). The reason is the capitalistic culture that is promoted in the Western universities of the United States. He criticizes Appiah’s concept of comprador intelligentsia but reformulates it in slightly different words. He argues:

I think [Appiah] . . . is missing the point because the world situation that justified the term comprador no longer exists. I would suggest instead that postcoloniality is the condition of the intelligentsia of global capitalism. (356)

Here, I argue that writers from global south who produce writings on Islamic feminism are comprador thinkers.

In order to define Islamic feminism in detail, it is important to note that there are many scholars, thinkers, Islamists, and social activists, who have worked on Islamic feminism in their own way. Margot Badran defines Islamic feminism in her book *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* (2011) in these words: “a feminist discourse and practice articulated within an Islamic paradigm” (242). A contemporary Pakistani writer Afia S. Zia defines Islamic feminism in her book *Faith and Feminism in Pakistan: Religious Agency or Secular Autonomy?* (2018):

as essentially a postmodernist, diasporic scholarly project that does not recognise any single (male) interpretation or dominant narrative of Islam Instead, Islamic feminist epistemology claims an interest in research that includes multiple voices and historical debates in its endeavour to locate women's rights within an Islamic discourse'. In other words, it is 'an against the grain reading of Sharia and Qur'an.' (Solehria 34)

Intellectuals have explained this concept based upon their own insight. There are two major schools of thought in Islamic feminism. One group insists on reinterpretation of Islamic holy scriptures that are Qur'an and Hadiths. They are of the view that different scholars have interpreted Islamic holy text but this explanation is gender biased and has patriarchal influence. They view that this exegesis is not correct and complete as it is male oriented and is the reason of suffering of Muslim women. They want reinterpretation of these texts without any gender bias. "Most acclaimed Islamic feminists like Amina Wadud, Fatima Mernissi, Leila Ahmed, Nawal Al Saadawi, Asma Barlas, and Lila Abu-Lughod" belong to this group (Jamshaid 13-14)

Amina Wadud is an African American. Till 2008 she had been serving at Virginia Commonwealth University as a Professor of Religion and Philosophy. She is famous for leading a mixed gender payer in 2005 in New York to show that men and women are equal and women are capable of doing everything that men can do. Wadud views that Muslim women are suffering from alienation and not enjoying proper status in an Islamic society. It is interpretation of Holy Scriptures of Muslims by men that is responsible for lower status of women. She argues that male dominant society does not allow women to come in the public sphere. Wadud is of the opinion that according to Islamic text, i.e. Qur'an and Hadiths men and women are equal. But men do not approve of this status for women.

Man, in the upper sphere, is said to be equal to woman, located in the lower sphere, *only* as a matter of linguistic ambiguity or double-talk. The line of relationship between man's upper location and woman's lower is held in place if there is no potential of actual reciprocity. The relationship is static and prevents equality. The positions are not interchangeable. (Wadud 2006: 26)

She insists on the need of reinterpretation of Qur'an and Hadiths by women. She discloses that: "my research focus has been particularly on Qur'anic reinterpretation" (2006: 7). Wadud asserts that when Allah has declared both of them equal, why men are insisting on proclaiming women inferior. Old explanation of holy texts done by men seem to reveal justice among both genders. Whereas, men do not consider it right for women to perform certain tasks that men are eligible for. At one point in *Inside the Gender Jihad* (2001), Wadud quotes a Pakistani Professor: "Men and women are equal in Islam. Islam has nothing against anyone becoming a leader Whether they are male or female, if they are capable of being leaders, they can lead. *Women simply cannot lead*" (2001: 26). Such kind of description agitates her more when intellectuals present two opposing views for women and men. She writes:

If for any reason . . . a woman is located in the upper sphere the male hierarchy actually intended by this rhetoric is disrupted as is the line that connects them Their statement "women and men are equal" is linguistically unexamined. (2001: 26)

The interpretation by men is responsible for Muslim women isolation. Wadud` does not stop here. She gives an interpretation of Qur'an herself.

Patriarchal oriented explanation does not consider problems that only women face. Wadud opines that when Islam declares men and women equal, philosophers should maintain equality among both genders in their suggestions and lectures that are based on interpretation of Islamic Holy Scriptures. Wadud holds:

In [Muslim] society, people have assumed that males and females are different not merely in basic anatomy, but in elusive qualities of spirit, soul and ability. They are supposed to do the same things, think the same way, or share the same dreams and desires. (1999: 35)

Her elucidation is important as according to this clarification men and women are equal and women are illegible to enjoy full freedom to stand with men in every task of daily life. Amina Wadud's Islamic feminism presents western depiction of Muslim women. According to the West, in Islam men and women do not enjoy same status in society, rather Muslim women are inferior to men. To bestow women equal social position, it is necessary

to introduce reforms in Islam that is a misogynist religion. Wadud is highlighting the same view. For her, when new inventions and discoveries are made in every field of life, why it is illegitimate in religion. She suggests:

conservative thinkers read explicit Qur'anic reforms of existing historical and cultural practices as the literal and definitive statement [and] regard[s] those reforms as establishing precedent for continual development toward a just social order. (1999: xiii)

She points out that in the early days of Islam women were suffering due to existing cultural practices of the day. Islam introduced reforms to improve their position. Wadud explains: “In the Madinan period of revelation most reforms were for the benefit of the females” (1999: 78). So, in order to develop a just society, religious text should be reinterpreted to give women equal prestige.

Another school of thought includes Fatima Umar Naseef, Nadia, Zaynab al Ghazzali, and Zakir Naik. “This group of scholars reject to be called Islamic feminists” (Jamshaid 11). These scholars approve of interpretation given by Muslim men. According to them, this exegesis of Qur’an and Hadiths bestows rights to Muslim women.

Fatima Umar Naseef is of the view that Muslim men and women are equal in every aspect of their lives. Muslim women have unique status in society as well as at home. Almighty Allah has given this dignity and exclusive position to women. Fatima Umar Naseef observes that through Islam and Qur’an: “Allah the Exalted has honoured women” She also holds that Almighty Allah has “confirmed their [women’s] dignity, humanity, partnership with men” (vii). Beside Qur’an, Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) also confirms and approves women’s status in an Islamic society. Zakir Naik is of the same view, when he writes:

Islam believes in equality of men and women- ‘Equality’ does not mean ‘identity’. In Islam, the role of a man and woman is complementary, it is not conflicting. It is that of a partnership. (15)

Before Islam and even after Islam, no religion and society has given such privilege to women that Islam has granted to them. Naseef spells it out:

Islam is the only religion that truly cares about their [women's] well-being, dignifies their character and honours them. No celestial religion or positive secular legislation has elevated women to the status provided by Islam. (viii)

This shows that women have their exceptional prerogative in Islam that no other religion or community has lavished to them. It is important to note that wrong representation of Islamic feminism is prevailing because it is the western representation of Muslim women. Due to this, the literature on Islamic feminism presented by the first group is easily available. Brennan introduces a term “politico-exotic” (4). According to him, postcolonial writers arouse more distrust than a feeling of admiration about their native country. This postcolonialism influences these nations a lot. Instead of learning about their own culture, this suspicion let them study “multicultural anthologies designed as textbooks for undergraduate teaching” (Brennan 47-48).

I take the position that feminism in Islam that is described by the first group is western agenda to present a wrong picture of Islam. The concept of Muslim women's marginalization is the western notion of Muslim women's representation. Selected Muslim women writers work for this agenda. Not only do these writers serve the West but also establish their reputation as Islamic feminists and get financial support. These writers have controversial status as intellectuals. Feminists belonging to this group are so-called Islamic feminists and are comprador intelligentsia.

This theoretical perspective is helpful in analysing the texts I have selected for this research. After discussing theories and important key terms that are going to be used in this exploration, I put forward research methodology and methods that I have used in this research.

3.3 Research Methodology

As I have used Islamic feminist and postcolonial perspectives, the nature of this research is reflective/reflexive and exploratory. I have also used qualitative approach in order to analyze the text. I have given my personal interpretation while analyzing my primary sources: *LJ* (2005), *LHS* (2010), and *SAM* (2001). Explaining human nature through the eye of a researcher is the key point of qualitative research. That is why, keeping this point in mind, I have minutely analysed life writings of the writers I have selected for my

research project. In his PhD dissertation Sibghatullah Khan quotes Terry Eagleton that “author-intended meaning” is subjective whereas interpretation that comes from the reader is objective (Eagleton qtd. in Khan 181). Objective interpretation is flexible therefore, I have given my own interpretation (that may be contested) of the selected texts in order to avoid hermeneutic fixity throughout my research project. Considering research methodology, a blanket concept, I have subsumed my discussion of research method under it in the forth-coming subsection.

3.3.1 Research Method

For the analysis of my primary text, I have used Catherine Belsey’s idea of textual analysis as my research method. She has explained it in her essay “Textual Analysis as Research Method” included in Gabriel Griffin’s 2005 book *Research Methods in English Studies*. There are many research methods that are used to analyze a text. Research method chooses the path in which an analyst does his/her research. Sadie Williams, in her book, *Postgraduate Training in Research Methods: Current Practice and Future Need in English* (2003), suggests that although there are several research methods available but a researcher selects one or the other him/herself that suits his/her research the best. For him, “[from] a lot of research methods . . . you pick . . . up by yourself” (27). In the same way, I have selected Catherine Belsey’s explanation of textual analysis as research method for my research project. Moreover, since my research questions are exploratory in nature, Textual Analysis meets the requirements of my research work. In the forthcoming paragraphs, I have given an account of the method I have used in this research.

As my research project is qualitative in nature, textual analysis as a research method suits it best. For this I have used Catherine Belsey’s essay. In the beginning of her essay Belsey explains that in order to interpret a text, a research needs to look for every minute detail and value every single word. Belsey quotes Roland Barthes, a researcher should analyze a text independently while taking no help from autobiographical evidences. For him, a reader should analyse a text “without” taking any help from “history, biography, psychology . . . ” (Belsey 162). His essay “The Death of the Author” (1977) provides a thorough information on Textual Analysis. Barthes suggests that if a reader wants to analyze a text objectively with the motive of discovering something new, he/she has to do

it without relying on other references. In his view, a reader's "destination cannot any longer be personal" (Belsey 162).

Barthes states that a reader needs to pay attention to "all the quotations that make up the text, the traces by which it is constituted" (162). In this way, a reader is all in all while interpreting a text. But for Belsey, Barthes does not imply full freedom of the reader. He wants the reader to avoid "vague subjectivism", and reliance only on author's intended meaning (Belsey in Griffin 163). In this way, the reader has to bring forth new interpretation while avoiding complete dependence on author's subjectivity. Belsey notes that while interpreting a text, the researcher needs "extra-textual knowledge" (160). This knowledge can be derived from the culture or from biographical notes. Since my primary texts are memoirs of different Muslim women writers, I have focussed on Islamic cultural background presented in these texts while analyzing them. At the same time, "authors unavoidably help interpret their texts" because they are the main source of knowledge. (Khan 188). I have analyzed autobiographical notes present in these writings that are of great importance.

For Belsey, secondary sources are also of great importance to get this "extra-textual knowledge" (160). In order to analyze the text of my primary source, I have utilized cultural knowledge and other secondary sources like articles, books, journals, etc. on these writers. They help a researcher support his/her argument. Through secondary sources the researcher proves that he/she is not building a castle in air. In fact, for Belsey, using secondary works help a researcher in a way that whatever he/she says has been said before by some other critic or author. In this way, secondary sources provide a strong foundation for a researcher's argument. Belsey holds that: Secondary sources . . . provide well informed, coherent and rhetorically persuasive argument" (160). I have taken into account Belsey's strategies to incorporate secondary documents to support my arguments.

Belsey asserts that selection of words by an author in a literary writing helps the reader/ analyst understand and examine the text. Here, the language and setting of a literary writing are vital factors that change the meaning of a text. According to Belsey, "a familiar mark or image . . . shift[s]" the "meaning" of the text (164). Cultural and historical background presented in a text are also helpful. Belsey observes that "the text themselves

constitute the inscription of culture” (167). The text in hand highlights cultural norms of Islamic societies. Moreover, history of traditions of Islamic community are also important and are discussed vigorously. Language of the text enables the researcher observe historical details in the text and sometimes forces the analyst to go for historical interpretation.

Belsey asserts that a text cannot be viewed from monolithic angle. A piece of literary writing can have multiple meanings. “In other words, the essay does not support a vague subjectivism, in which the text means whatever it means to *me*, and there is nothing to discuss” (Barthes quoted in Belsey 163). Thus one cannot interpret a text from essentialist’s point of view, rather there is a vast range of angles through which a text can be explained. Since, I analyse the texts in hand that are written by authors who have gotten fame as Islamic feminists, in the next chapter I analyse these writings through a different perspective.

For Belsey, a literary writing does not depict only one civilization. It is a collection of many writings about several cultures that sometimes agree with each other and at other times are conflicting. She quotes Barthes, who observes that “a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures . . .” (Barthes in Griffin 162). For Belsey, this quality of literary writings where authors combine narratives of different cultures does not allow the researcher to consider his/her interpretation as final. Different readers interpret a culture in many ways. She states that “meanings are always ultimately undecidable” and that “There is literally no end to it” (Belsey in Griffin 173). As all primary texts I have selected are cultural texts, I have kept this aspect of cultural writings in mind while analysing the texts in hand. Furthermore, conclusion of my research project is not final. There is still room for further investigation.

3.4 Conclusion

Though Graham Huggan, in his *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001), talks about prevailing trends of postcolonial writers but I have employed this theory on Islamic feminists. Graham Huggan argues that postcolonial writers from Global South produce cultural artefacts in the form of life writings. For him, “Reconstituted exoticisms in the age of globalisation include the trafficking of culturally ‘othered’ artefacts in the world’s economic, not cultural, centres” (2001: 15). These memoirs are written by

comprador intelligentsia, a handful of westernized Muslim women intellectuals who seem to promote western agenda. Islamic feminists, in their autobiographies, portray Muslim women as marginalized members of Islamic community. In this way, they subscribe to western notion of Muslim women's representation. Huggan asserts that these literary works get prominence and appreciation among reading public through active intercession of academia and publishing houses of the West. Working for the West as comprador intellectuals, Huggan suggests, these writers struggle for their careerist purpose and earn recognition. He writes:

[C]onsecration is a cumulative, but also a self-perpetuating process by which recognised writers and/or literary works are able to acquire, maintain and reproduce the prestige that accrues to their consecrated status. (2001: 214)

I have utilized Catherine Belsey's essay "Textual Analysis as a Research Method" (2005) for the analysis for my selected texts. Through this method, I evaluate the text in hand according to my own understanding. This evaluation is not standard, because new interpretations are also possible. Moreover, qualitative approach is likely to help me analyse the literary works I have selected. The above-mentioned theoretical perspective and methodology have helped me interpret the text in hand. In order to find the answer to my research questions, in the following chapters, I have deployed the theories and research method, in the following chapters, to analyze memoirs of selected Muslim women writers.

CHAPTER 4

COERCION AND FREEDOM: AZADEH MOAVENI'S LIPSTICK JIHAD: A MEMOIR OF GROWING UP IRANIAN IN AMERICA AND AMERICAN IN IRAN

Rumors raged that bands of basiji were roving the streets in the search of women wearing sandals and capri pants. As punishment they forced them to dip their legs into a bucket of cockroaches. Either that, or they sprayed their feet with paint that took weeks to wear off, so the ankle-flaunting harlots would be forced to wear shoes and socks all summer.

---Moaveni, *Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America and American in Iran*

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I scrutinize the memoir of Azadeh Moaveni, *Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America and American in Iran* (2005). Journeying from Iran to America, it seems that Moaveni has been trapped between home in Iran and her exilic home in America. While quoting the narration of two cultures of different parts of the world, where she is trying to discover her individual identity, Moaveni is weaving a contrasting story. When two groups are on extreme altercation, the revolutionist Mullahs and growing new generation, she comes up with an appalling finding about her religion. I propose that, working as reporter in Iran for *Time Magazine*, Moaveni subscribe to the western agenda when she attempts to expose women's subjugation in Iran.

Muslim women are facing social, educational, and political discrimination in an Islamic society that is assumed to be providing them full freedom. Amina Wadud asserts that Islam grants men and women equal rights but "some traditional interpretations . . . have repressed the potential of woman" (1999: 12). Promoting western agenda, Moaveni points out that veil for women is the worst barrier in this Islamic regime. I have noted that Huggan suggests that whenever postcolonial writers got a reward, they "grew both monetarily and, exponentially, in prestige" (2001: 107). Living in America with double

identity Moaveni wants to earn her name as an Islamic feminist. In this way, she can get economic security. After 9/11, she finds it the best time for writing a memoir, a genre that is already popular in academia. A renowned printing press has published her book and transformed it into a commodity. Being a journalist herself, I argue, it is easier for her to get flattery remarks from famous journalists and intellectuals from academia about her writing that has contributed in commodification mechanism.

Azadeh Moaveni is an Iranian-American. Her parents migrated to America in 1976 before she was born. After completing her early education, Moaveni studied Arabic in Cairo after getting fulbright scholarship. From Cairo, Moaveni got a chance to go to Iran to report students' struggle against hard core religious authority. She worked as a Middle East correspondent for *Times* for two years. She observed and noted down every minute detail to compile it into her first memoir. After the success of her first book, she writes her second memoir *Honeymoon in Tehran* in 2009. She is also a co-author of Shirin Ibadi's memoir *Iran Awakening* (2006). Moaveni's quest for identity took her to Iran as a *Times* Magazine reporter, where she found Iran a forbidding land. Grown up in a free environment of San Jose, California, with freedom of expression, Iran seemed to her as a golden cage where no one is alive. She describes every bit of detail about women's oppression that, according to Appiah, is a "contemporary Western thing" and goes very well with western representation of Muslim women (Appiah 337). I analyze Moaveni's text under the following subheads:

- Lipstick Jihad
- The Honourable Women
- A Giant Cemetery
- Moaveni's Iran
- Unveiling the Truth

4.2 Lipstick Jihad

Before 9/11, Iranian literary works were not gaining momentum. Authors needed endowments to publish their works by famous publishers. *LJ* was published in 2005, as Huggan suggests it was the time, when the tradition of memoir writing by Muslim women life writers began hitting the market and presented “cultural authenticity” (2001: 157). It was post 9/11 time, when literary text on Islam was seriously needed. Iran has become a hub for journalists because US has shown her deliberate involvement in Middle East to let its freak flag fly. US is also keeping an eye on Iran due to

Iran's proximity to the fiasco in Iraq and to the instability in Afghanistan, its exclusive placement in the "axis of evil," and the current "Nuclear Issue," Iran is a journalistic hot spot. (Mozaffari 516)

Ayatollah Khomeini's 1979 Islamic revolution suddenly has started facing opposition in President Ahmadinejad's reign, when students especially women have stood up for their freedom. During Khomeini's government, revolting magazines that seemed to cause any kind of resistance among common public were banned but now they have started to publish with different names. Silent rebellious writings of intellectuals, journalists and other authors have taking their place in these magazines. The country seems to be full of antagonism, where youth is resisting against accepted Islamic teachings and laws. This is likely to be the best time for the publishers to portray this picture of Islam in America.

Other genres of literature from global south are still not gaining the ground. They seem to weave fanciful fictions that are not reliable in terms of their authenticity. When women writers try some other genre of literature, they include their real-life experiences to make their works get attracted by publishers. The reason is that they are aware of the fact that narrative writings are still not beginning to catch on among publishers and common reading public. The case of life writings is quite distinct. The reason is that “ethnic/Native autobiographies, particularly by women are implicated in a Western metropolitan ‘politics of the exotic’” and unveil supposed truth, that is, demonstrated in them about different cultures (Hawthorne qtd in Huggan 2001: xiv). Huggan argues that “there is a mainstream demand for ethnic (minority) autobiography” and these autobiographical writings give insight about disparate living styles of “exotic” cultures (2001: 155). Due to this fact, not only are memoirs getting popular but also becoming a source to draw money for the

printing presses and writers. Nahid Mozaffari suggests that printing presses of America do not consider other forms of writings credible. On the other hand, autobiographical writings are becoming famous. She holds: “memoirs . . . have taken over the cultural landscape for bizarre reasons and are making loads of money. (Mozaffari 516)”

4.2.1 The Honourable Women

Ostensibly, Moaveni went to Iran to search for her roots and for careerist purpose, but under the cover she divulged a new story. Her memoir *LJ* is divided into nine chapters. Each chapter begins with an epigraph taken from some Middle Eastern revolutionists that introduces the theme of the chapter. The way, Moaveni uses the writings of these revolutionists represents that she is trying to associate herself with their struggle against existing orders of their countries. Her presumption does not let her know that her struggle is against her religion and the government that imposes religious laws on its citizens. I propose that being an American to the core of her heart, Moaveni’s total attempt seems to highlight western agenda.

From the very beginning of the book, I argue, Moaveni depicts Muslim women as oppressed beings, deprived of all bare necessities. McCombs and Shaw suggest that mass media transfer audience’s attention to unimportant issues by giving them too much significance. They hold that “We judge as important what the media judge as important” (Griffin 378). Under the cover of quest for identity, Moaveni’s writing turns out to be the western representation of Muslim women. She uses different tactics to illuminate western agenda. While describing her mother, Moaveni discloses the culture of Islamic Republic of Iran. Iranian consider those women virtuous who are married and give them more respect if they have a successful marriage relation. In this way, for Iranians, only married women are honorable, while, unmarried ladies who want to or forced to live alone do not receive any respect.

Whole responsibility is on women’s shoulder to have a good relationship with their husbands whether he is a good or bad person. Whereas, Amina Wadud argues that Islam does not allow divorce rights through granting “a darajah or an advantage” to man only “over the female” (1999: 79). It means considering women responsible for successful marriage is meaningless and is another way of charging them for no wrong doings. Here,

Moaveni's portrayal of her mother represents her western motive of highlighting women's inferiority in Iranian patriarchal society. Moaveni's mother is more of an Iranian. According to her mother, to believe men and women equal is a western notion, that means women are capable of doing everything men can do. Moaveni holds:

Was this the same woman who thought it regressive and awful that Iranian culture valued women through their marital status and rated their respectability according to the success or failure of their marriage? (Moaveni 21)

Through this portrayal of her mother Moaveni shows that being an Iranian woman who has brought up in Iranian culture, her mother is unable to consider men and women equal. She believes "it was only modern to consider women fully equal to men" (Moaveni 21). In line with Wadud's notion of Islamic feminism, Allison Weir suggests that in Islam, both man and woman are equal. Sacred "texts of Islam . . . argue for women's rights and for the equality of women with men" (Weir 98). Some people consider that Adam is created first to give man superiority over woman, but it is a wrong proposition. Even Qur'an declares men and women equal.

Revolution in Iran in terms of women's freedom came in late 19th century. During this era, different activists tried to perform their part in giving women their rights. Among them was Muza Ali Mohammad of Shiraz who founded the Babi Movement. Many women left their home and veil to join this movement. M. Tajuddin views that Fatima was an activist who "discarded the veil and actively participated in preaching and fighting" (Tajuddin, 158). During 1921-1925 Reza Shah took over the government. His "White Revolution" (Riesebrodt and Pass 116) brought a radical change into the country. It was the era when women were given freedom, a freedom only in terms of unveiling.

Reza Shah followed Turkish revolution, where President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk heartened women to stop wearing veil in order to help in the process of their country's progress. Whereas, Reza Shah forcibly imposed rules to stop women to wear chadur. (Moghissi 39, my paraphrase). He came to know that: "without a radical change in her (woman's) situation, any progress would be condemned to remain incomplete" (Haas 160). Middle class women warmly greeted this law. In pre-revolutionary Iran, they considered veil a symbol of oppression. Hassam Vaez observes that during Shah's reign women were

encouraged “to participate in society and specifically on the banning of the veil” (Vaez 411). An interesting fact about this law was that many elderly people especially women did not accept it. In order to motivate women to come out of their houses to work, to become independent and to contribute in their country’s progress, those educated women took the initiative who had western living style. Main sectors where women started working were teaching and nursing. This helped in changing the traditional roles of women in the country (Keddie & Richard 57, my paraphrase). However, banning of veil had a negative effect on them. It is due to this law that even educated Iranian men “did not let their wives to be career women” (Kurzman 297).

4.2.2 A Giant Cemetery

Moaveni visited Iran for the first time in 1998. It was the time when, along with other restrictions, women faced strict limitations in this Islamic regime. She argues that these constraints are still there in Iran. “...here the social regulations governing laws of interaction ceased to apply. There was no consensus on anything at all, except for the fact that the country had been ruined...” (Moaveni 19). Moaveni has to go outside while wearing veil, with no lipstick at all. She asserts that whenever women “just wanted to go to work...simply accepted the erasure of their personality through the *roopoosh* uniform” (43). Women cannot go out of their homes without covering their feet with socks. Although, they have the freedom to wear sandals during summer but their ankles must not be visible. “My family and I wore dark veils and sandals with socks, wiped off our lipstick when we saw police in the distance” (Moaveni 40).

Whether women are house wives or working ladies, they face strict rules equally. Being a journalist, Moaveni needs to stay out till late at night. In order to save her from being arrested and punished by local police, that is known as *basij*, her aunt comes with her to drop her home because “if a male cousin was dropping me off late at night in case, we were stopped at a check point” (Moaveni 40). To see all these restraints for women, Moaveni considers Iran an alien state. In Islamic Republic of Iran, women are living in pathetic condition. There are certain rules for women to follow rigidly. Veil is the only dress for them to put on while leaving their homes. This veil is not the ordinary one because women have to cover their whole-body including feet in a dark cloth. They cannot even

wear lipstick in public. Feldman Observes that government of Iran “take up women’s rights and human rights as matters of concern” (Feldman 163).

In Iran, religious establishment has complete hold on the government. They believe women as the source and root of every corruption and vice. For Moaveni, according to Holy Scriptures of Islam, a woman is a main source of inflaming a man’s desire. In order to protect men from committing sin, clerics in Iran have imposed restrictions on women. These restraints affected women’s dignity in society and politics. Moaveni argues that this alienation has harmful effects on women. “You realize that the physical scars of the torture will heal, but the nightmare of prison rape will haunt you forever. Your personality will never be the same” (Moaveni 41-42). Due to these restrictions, women have lost their social prestige and even their identification as an ordinary citizen. In this way, women stop taking part into the public sphere. Moaveni states that “everywhere it seemed, there were barriers” (55). There are many religious groups and forces that work to impose laws on people. Their main target are women whom they marginalize from everyday life in society. Clergy in Iran, deprive women to come in contact with men and their status as mothers, sisters, and wives is severely damaged. “For women, there were eternal limits on dress and comportment . . . young couples also faced endless prohibitions” (Moaveni 55). These religious clerics are everywhere, on the roads, in the markets, outside the restaurants, and in the streets.

The morality police is a continuous threat to peoples’ privacy. They do not care for any limits and intervene in citizens’ personal lives. While answering a Lebanese editor’s question about restrictions in Iran, Moaveni states: “You had a war, but no one ever stole your personal freedom. No one crept into your bedroom, into your mind and tried to insert their hateful morality” (Moaveni 207). In accordance with Huggan’s idea of “marketing the margins”, Moaveni’s portrayal of Iranian women, I propose, is totally the motivation of the West, that she wants to present before the world. In fact, a reason to write a memoir is that

Ethnic autobiographies, signal the possibility of indirect access to ‘exotic’ cultures whose differences are acknowledged and celebrated even as they are rendered amenable to a mainstream reading public. (Huggan 2001: 155)

Amina Wadud writes that in order to improve the quality of life, Muslims should “accept the full humanity of women by removing the veils put over women being female” (2006: 256). Like Amina Wadud, Moaveni is busy in focusing on women’s repression in the form of veil. Many intellectuals from western academia believe that characterization of veiled women as exploited citizens by male dominant society is a matter of exaggeration and a western notion of Muslim women’s representation (Ahmed 1992, Fernea 1998, Gucek and Balaghi 1994, Barzangi 2004, Webb 2000).

It is westerners’ old strategy to highlight and discuss only one side of the picture of eastern countries as they point out negative features. Moaveni only talks about constraints on women, the law of veiling and the restriction on them to come into the men circle. She never discloses the liberty of women in educational, legal, and professional fields. Moaveni meets a female young journalist named Fatimeh. According to Moaveni,

her identity as an independent woman, a photojournalist, and a professional in her own right was still wholly vulnerable to the undermining traditions of her family (Moaveni 185).

McCombs and Shaw point out that in order to publicize an agenda, media highlights unimportant incidents to convince its viewers that these incidents are significant. They view that “mass media have the ability to transfer the salience of items on their news agendas to the public agenda” (378).

During her stay in Iran, Moaveni meets many unmarried girls who are educated and work with her. In agreement with Huggan’s notion of “marketing the margins,” Kurtzer in her essay “Wandering Girl: Who Defines “Authenticity” in Aboriginal Literature?” (1998) points out that writers with double identity write about unique issues of their former countries. These writers produce these works for western public and get them published in the West. One reason to write in other countries is that these writers do not want citizens of the former countries challenge the authenticity of their work. Kurtzer observes that writers face “difficulties within their own communities in having their life experiences recognized as authentic” (Kurtzer qtd. in Huggan 2001:164). In line with Kurtzer’s description, Moaveni only presents darker side of her former country because Osanloo

observes that Iranian “women perform as entitled citizens endowed with rights in the court” (149).

Moaveni continuously criticizes government and religious institutions for women’s segregation in Iran and eager to prove through every mean. Critics like Al-Saji hold that mostly western demonstration of veiled women is misrepresentation of Muslim women. For him, western portrayal of Muslim women serves for two motives. This delineation highlights Muslim women’s alienation in Islamic society and it paints “negative mirror in which western constructions of identity and gender can be positively reflected” (Al-Saji 877). Like the West, for Moaveni, veil is a delineation of oppression when she calls veiled women with abusive names like “washed-out ghosts and angrily painted peacocks” (Moaveni 43). Here, she tries her best to portray women in veil as repressed beings. Leila Ahmed claims that she herself used to consider veil as a representation of women’s subjugation. On the other hand, her research shows that in European countries, where Muslim women do not face any restraints, “[wearing] veil serves as a call for justice” (Ahmed and Keating 42).

Islamic feminists always think about Muslim men the only reason of women’s oppression in Islam. In line with Islamic feminism proposed by Amina Wadud, Moaveni describes that apart from all constraints on Muslim women in an Islamic regime, it is interesting to note that there are less restrictions on men. One of Moaveni’s American Iranian boyfriend lives nearby her apartment. Moaveni envies him “whose American lifestyle was viewed as the bachelor. But for me, the tiniest misstep to the left or right of propriety was swiftly catalogued as “Westernized” misbehavior” (Moaveni 199-200). Men do not need to wear any veils. However, even if a girl is with an elderly female relative, and wants to see her boyfriend, clergy try to stop her either by hook or crook. When one of Moaveni’s cousins goes to meet her boyfriend with her aunt, it seems that *komiteh* catch her misconduct and try to punish her in the public. They use all possible ways to humiliate women as Moaveni writes:

He tilted his head back toward her boyfriend. So if he’s not your boyfriend, if you’ve never seen him before, you won’t care if I hit him, right? And he punched Nikki’s boyfriend in the cheek. I felt her body tense next to me, but her eyes didn’t

flicker. The *komiteh* watched her reaction closely you can beat him till he's bloody, she said coldly, but I've already told you I have no idea who he is (Moaveni 54).

As women do not have the access to men's circle, the only allowed mixed-gathering is the birth and death anniversaries of Prophet and imams. These teenagers know about the "social significance of *Ashoura*" (Moaveni 57).

A literary writing presents culture of one or more societies. Catherine Belsey asserts that "the culture in the text" is of great importance (Belsey in Griffin 167). This picturization of culture helps the reader in understanding the text a lot. As in *LJ*, Moaveni portrays Islamic culture where Muslim women's isolation is very common in every field of life. On religious ceremonies, when people come out of their houses, religious clergy observe their activities during procession. Iranians have to follow a proper code of conduct even on these occasions. People especially teenagers cannot walk together. Moaveni sees a *Basij*

and asked him who had sent him here [He replied,] They sit around with their candles pretending to mourn Hossein, when all they really want is to let out their sexual desires. It's our Islamic duty to control this. (Moaveni 58)

These rules are so strict that if these clerics catch young people communicating with each other, *Basij*s panelize them. They do not care for girls or boys. "a young girl wearing clown-like make-up...continued chatting into her cell phone. A *Basij* . . . cracked a baton over the back of her head" (Moaveni 58). This social exclusion has a negative effect on young people of Iran, destroying their life in a society, and damaging their mental and physical health. According to Moaveni, it is very common to see many injured young people as "The clashes between socially deprived teenagers and vigilante thugs were always volatile, and black eyes and broken arms were not uncommon" (Moaveni 59). The representation of brutal penalties towards common public can easily be seen everywhere in Iran.

Writers get fame through a process called market realism. Tariq Ali in his article "Literature and Market Realism" (1993) describes the phenomenon in the following words,

Just as the rival hamburger concerns advertise their respective wares, so the giant publishing concerns of North America and Britain buy authors and exhibit them like cattle. Potential bestsellers are auctioned by a new breed of literary agent. (1)

Here, Ali's use of expression "cattle" for writers seems to present them as purchasable things. Authors like Moaveni are "potential bestsellers" because they present novel issues from margins in their literary writings (Ali 1). The concept of market realism is connected with Huggan's view of "marketing the margins". Through representation of Muslim women segregation in an Islamic country, as Huggan describes, Moaveni seems to earn fame by highlighting problems of peripheries.

Citizens of this Islamic republic cannot commemorate fetes. *Norouz* is another Iranian traditional festival that they celebrate on the new year. Usually people cannot express their emotions on this celebration. Some boys and young men explode fireworks to enjoy themselves. Religious establishment and government are consuming their energies to suppress emotions of Iranian youth, making women as well as young men a marginalized community. Due to constraints on girls, they cannot enjoy celebrations on festivals as Moaveni notes:

The neighborhoods looked like battlefield . . . the streets were filled with smoke and women who were out cowered near buildings for shelter, afraid one of the firework-bombs would blow off a limb. Holidays like this gave young men, seething at the double humiliation of economic and social privation, an outlet to release some of their anger with satisfying loud noise and bangs. (Moaveni 60)

In order to avail remaining joys of their everyday lives, Iranians have learnt to dodge *basij*s and *komitehs*. When these clergies lay hold of young people of opposite sex together, they easily trick *basij*s to believe that these young people do not know each other. For them, dodging the police is an adventure.

Constraints and punishment in one's own country make people live like spirits. As an Iranian-American, Moaveni comes to Iran to find her identity, to enjoy her culture, that she has read and heard, in story books and from her parents. I observe that in agreement with Huggan's notion of "marketing the margins" Moaveni is aware of the reality that there are "individual buyers who pick up the latest ethnic autobiography to expand their own cultural

horizons” (Huggan 2001: 12). That is why she chooses to write a life writing where she represents Muslim women’s marginalization in an Islamic regime. Living in Iran in such a restricted environment, Moaveni comes to know that limited opportunities in life make Iranians to forget their elegant traditions that were once their identity. She states that

Iran, fountain of my memories, the leisurely black and white world of old films like My Uncle Napoleon, had been wiped away, replaced by the Islamic Republic (Moaveni 44).

Moaveni reveals every negativity in her former country and blames Iranian government’s strict rules for this gloomy situation in the country. Not only do religious clergy inflict restrictions on the common people but also observe them all the time to follow these rules and laws strictly. If someone fails to act in accordance with these laws, they punish them badly at the spot. In this way, an Islamic country has become a torture cell for its citizens. “Every few months, a drug smuggler was hanged in public, a woman murdered for dressing immodestly” (Moaveni 125).

Islamic feminists along with westerners always criticize veil as a barrier for a country’s progress. Iran is an under-developed country and Moaveni reasons out women’s isolation in the form of mandatory veiling. Wadud’s Islamic feminism also approves of veil as an unimportant thing and a depiction of culture only because according to Qur’an modesty is significant “not the veiling and seclusion” (Wadud 1999: 10). Moaveni asserts that veil does not allow women to move freely in men’s circle. According to Statistical Center of Iran, women make 49.6% of the total population of Iran (Selected Findings of the 2011 National Population and Housing Census 2).

The government of Iran has shunned all Iranian women to come to the public sphere. After Islamic Revolution in 1979 in Iran, there came a radical change in peoples’ lives, especially women. Co-education at school and college level is not allowed, and unmarried girls cannot go abroad alone for higher studies. In agreement with philosophers like Amina Wadud and Moaveni, in his provocative essay Jailani argues that modern intellectuals do not consider Islamic laws suitable for a peaceful society. Veil is the representation “of submission and a threat to freedom and individual” (Jailani 52). Constraint on women at home and work places has resulted in making Iran an under

developed country. Islamic Revolution stopped women from doing certain jobs. Women “graduated from university---when they walked into an ailing economy that offered no jobs commensurate with their qualifications . . . [they] stay home” (Moaveni 181). Moaveni likes and idealizes Shah’s reign but she is unaware of hidden realities of his regime. Although, Shah’s government instigated women to work, but he did not give them right to vote. Even women could not take part in election as the leader of the state. In other words, women could not avail any political right during Reza Shah’s era. Shojaei states that Shah’s reign forced women activists “to face . . . Iranian men’s disagreement” (Shojaei 260). These problems increase social and political issues that Iranian citizens face.

4.2.3 Moaveni’s Iran

Moaveni’s approval of Islamic feminism in the form of western agenda is very much obvious in her writing. Like Wadud, she wants western reforms in Islamic regime. That is why, whether deliberately or unconsciously, she mentions the way of living and the freedom she enjoys in the West. The same living style and independence she wants to avail in an Islamic regime. Although she was not born and brought up in Iran during Shah’s reign, but she has heard about the freedom and veil banning during that era. For her, that is the era for women to avail full freedom and equality because there is no restriction of veil on them during that time period. One of Moaveni’s maternal aunts still has nostalgia for Shah’s government. Moaveni holds:

Tehran under the Shah, with a nightlife so dazzling she abandoned her studies in England to come home to party—weekends at the Caspian, smoking grass on the beach in bikinis; weeknights in Tehran, making rounds of private clubs, drinking champagne in dresses from Paris. (Moaveni 12).

Moaveni idealizes Shah’s reign due to independence from veil in that era. In his article “A Triadic Re-Reading of Zaynab al-Ghazali and the Feminist Movement in Islam” (2010), I. O. Uthman calls the group of feminists who blames patriarchal exegesis of religious text the main reason of Muslim women’s segregation and isolation as Muslim feminists whereas, the group who does not want reinterpretation of holy scriptures of Islam and reasons out culture as a source of Muslim women alienation in Islamic society and “who hold tenaciously to the Islamic teachings and use Islamic matrices in their struggle for a

change in their societies that would benefit all, especially women” is named by him as Islamic feminists (Uthman 2010: 66). In another article of his “A re-reading of the Egyptian Zaynab al-Ghazzali, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Feminist Movement in Contemporary Society” he calls the latter group “authentic Islamic feminists” and the first “Islamic feminists” (2011: 408).

The scholars of the latter group restrict themselves within the boundaries that Islam has created and religious scholars have defined. These intellectuals do not have an inclination for reinterpretation of Islamic religious scriptures. They are of the view point that this explanation of Qur’an and Hadiths bestows rights to Muslim women. Whereas, if, Muslim women are facing alienation and subjugation, it is all due to the culture of specific community. Islam gives them full equality and freedom “because they originate from the same race and are equal in terms of humanness” (Naseef 49).

Critics observe that religious texts and legendary stories have a central place in creating identities. The way holy scriptures present women, their code of conduct along with their dress, help in bestowing power and identity to them and “create the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ divide” (Parveen and Siddiqui 7). Moaveni’s relatives who live in America and she herself do not follow Islamic principles. They take pride in eating pork, drinking alcohol, ignoring Ramadan, going to disco at night parties. These things were also allowed in pre-revolutionary Iran.

Recognition of westernized writers as intellectuals, I argue, is questionable. Religion is an invaluable thing that has no role to play in the lives of these Iranian Americans. For them, those who offer prayer and build a mosque are religious fundamentalists. For Moaveni, going to Islamic center in the West and listening to a sermon is the most boring thing. On the other hand, when she goes to a Hindu ashram, she likes and feels relaxed. “maman took up Hinduism The hours I spent cross-legged in these candle-lit, incense-infused rooms were among the only moments I felt comfortable in my own skin” (Moaveni 10). This represents her secular attitude and detest for her own religion.

Moaveni belongs to those westernized Iranians who love their Iranian standards and at the same time they cannot surrender their western freedom. Drinking alcohol with

friends at night is not a weird habit, because throughout the world, young and old people execute it out regularly. But in Iran it is illegal. Moaveni gets irritated to see that if local police catch someone giving out smell of alcoholic drink, they get a severe punishment. Breath analyzer test is very difficult as it injures the throat badly. After that, police arrest the offender in the jail for a whole night or beat them in the streets of Tehran. Moaveni's description of local morality police's alienated behavior towards Iranian women is in line with Wadud's insistence on reinterpretation of Islamic Holy Scriptures. Wadud argues that

It is indispensable to women's empowerment that they apply their experiences to interpretations of the sources when they participate in the development and reform of Muslim politics. (2006: 7)

Like Wadud, Moaveni is of the view that women's segregation is due to male dominant exegesis. If an unmarried girl is the culprit, she faces dire consequences. The penalty for this crime is that morality police forces her to marry the man with whom she is caught. Secular Iranians like Moaveni and her relatives want freedom to carry out everything that Islam prohibits strictly.

Moaveni's criticism on veil does not stop here. Amina Wadud puts forward that veil was only a cultural norm in pre-Islamic society where men of authoritative tribes force their women to wear veil "as an indication of protection" (Wadud 1999: 10). It is not declared mandatory by Qur'an. Living in an Islamic Republic is very laborious. Moaveni finds fault with this policy of the government where veil is of great importance. Every woman has to wear veil when they leave their home. Moaveni gets irritated when while driving a car her veil annoys her. She states that "the veil impaired my sideways vision, and I constantly feared it would slip off while I was driving. What do you do first? Uphold modesty or prevent an accident?" (Moaveni 79). The West do not approve of veiled identity of Muslim women. One reason is that most of them do not know about the religious necessity of veil. Moreover, there are some Muslim women who do not want to wear veil and unaware of the compulsion from Islam. These women contribute in formation of identities for veiled women. Davary asserts that for many westerners ". . . veil symbolizes traditionalism" (Davary 48).

For Iranians, veil is a matter of having an Islamic or secular identity. When, while driving, Moaveni's scarf slips down on her shoulder a passerby "noticed my confusion. And laughed. *Khanoum* (lady), you have lost your Islam" (Moaveni 79). She draws a comparison between Iran, that is a country with more literate citizens, and Afghanistan, where people are backward and ignorant. In Iran going in men's circle without a veil is like showing a woman's face in Taliban captured Afghanistan where such women are stoned to death. Moaveni discloses that in Iran women without veil get almost similar retribution.

Westerners do not have the concept of punishment that is why Moaveni's frustration increases day by day when she sees and hears about some serious punishments. If morality police catch anyone having and selling alcohol, they get seventeen lashes as a penalty. Moaveni observes that there is a complete code of conduct for citizens that local police issues. Police and government do not compromise the things that fall under the category of corruption.

Shop owners selling pets such as dogs and monkeys; clothes bearing pictures of western movie and rock stars; coffee shops serving women immodestly . . . and shops that displayed women's underwear or nude mannequins in their windows. (Moaveni 126)

These misconducts cannot be tolerated by Iranian morality police. Real corruption in the country is that Iranian aristocracy is free of all restrictions that ordinary people face. In order to come out of her exasperation, Moaveni decides to go to gym to do some exercise. The health club she joins is reserved for aristocrats. It is surprising and annoying for westerners like Moaveni to observe that there is separate exercise timing for men and women. Women, in the club, belong to upper class clerics' families. Tehran is the capital of Iran, a main city, but here people are suffering a lot due to morality police and rigid rules they enforce. In other cities, the condition of law implementation is worse and people are living in pathetic condition. Instead of making social and economic condition of its subjects better, the government is busy in turning the state a cage for citizens.

Throughout the book, Moaveni utilizes her energies in arraigning the rules and regulations introduced by Islamic Republic of Iran towards women in terms of veil. Her plan as a "Comprador Intelligentsia" (1991), as suggested by Appiah, is very much obvious in her

delineation of women's subjugation in Iranian society. Here, "aesthetic value" of her work is "crucially bound up with market value" (Appiah 338). When she gets too much disgruntled by these principles at one point, she taunts this Muslim country where every fun becomes "very Islamic Republic (Moaveni 80)". Appiah views that the West seems to be in opposition of every religion except Christianity. In reality, westerners try to highlight other religions to transform them into commodities. Appiah holds that "Even in domains like religion . . . modernity has turned every element of the real into a sign, and the sign reads "for sale"" (344).

Being an agent of the West, Moaveni depicts religious values as constraints for human beings. She and other Iranians, having opinions like her, want citizens to enjoy every non-Islamic social freedom along with unveiling as they used to enjoy during Shah's regime. Shirin Zubair is a professor at Baha-ud-Din Zakariya University, Multan. She points out that women fashion magazines help in creating women identities because pictures of charming and attractive women in these magazines have a strong impact on peoples' psychology. According to Zubair, these images predict that women have nothing to do in their lives except paying attention to their looks. She views that women's magazines play a vital role in "the construction of...women's socioreligious identity[ies]" (Zubair 176). In the same way, Moaveni's book depicts only one side of the picture of Iranian Muslim women. Being a westerner she does not like this veiled identity of Muslim women and tries her best to portray wrong representation of Muslim women.

Westerners' all efforts are to bring about reforms in Islam. Moaveni's western beliefs do not let her think in other way but to have a negative opinion about a Muslim country where Almighty Allah is the supreme power. Continuously, Moaveni is trying to give arguments against veil. She gets irritated with the idea of styling women hair when it has to be tied up under the cover of thick veil. For her, when women are in complete burka, they do not need to wear modish and elegant dresses. Resulting sweat and itching due to veil is always depressing for her. Due to orders of veil for women in Iran by Ayatollah Khomeini, Moaveni doubts his intellect and opines "Ayatollah Khomeini probably did not consider the damage the veil would inflict on women's hair, when he mandated Islamic modesty" (156). Just like the West, Moaveni is trying to classify veiled women as oppressed citizens. Saba Gul Khttak has earned her Ph.D. in political Science and has

worked as an ex. executive of SDPI. She is of the view that in order to justify their colonization, it is colonizers' old strategy to present colonized women as downtrodden and the one who are abused by colonized men. Khattak quotes Laura Bush who states that "Life under Talibans is so hard and repressive [where women] face beatings for laughing out loud". On the other hand, when US took over Afghanistan Afghani women face intolerable consequences of this war. There "the circumstances became unbearable . . . [for] refugee women [who] underscore the need for peace" (22). With the representation of problems women confront due to veil in Iran, Moaveni stands in the same line as the West does. She uses similar technique to bring reforms in Islam by giving trivial arguments against veil. Moaveni's is a western characterization of the women that let her and other Iranian women consider veil as a barrier to express themselves to the world around them.

In Iran, media is not free and people connected to any kind of media face lots of restrictions. The whole group of journalists, who are staying in Iran with Moaveni, remain conscious about police raid at their office. They keep their mobile phones turned on to keep each other informed about the situation if their newspaper is going to be banned or police arrest anyone of them. After Moaveni's arrival in Iran, security police take her interview to know about her intentions of visiting Iran. They also want to confirm that whether she is a CIA agent or not. In line with Amina Wadud's Islamic feminism, I propose, Moaveni condemns the establishment that does not permit women journalists full freedom to work like male journalists.

Even female workers do not get any privilege. When Moaveni wants to interview a Palestinian militant group in a hotel, the hotel management stops her to enter the room. Although, it is an American hotel but in accordance with the guidelines given by Iranian government, no women can enter the rooms. Whereas, a full group of male journalists are there to record the event. Although, she gets infuriated while arguing with them that there are fifteen other people in the room, but the man, who stops her, does not listens to her. To her surprise "he wouldn't budge, and spoke to me with his eyes averted, as though I were a prostitute" (Moaveni 87). She feels much humiliated at this attitude from hotel administration. Islamic feminism is very much apparent in Moaveni's observation of Iranian society. At one point, when local morality police catch her and her male coworker, against her Americanness, she remains silent to release themselves from their snare. Here,

Moaveni castigates government to have same strict rules that are applied to ordinary women and for female workers. She craves to enjoy freedom at least for female journalists to work with men.

The West wants every kind of independence for men and women. Anthony Appiah points out that new artifact from Global South is appreciated and is a source of attraction for western public. Moaveni writes on religious issues to commodify her writing and for Appiah “with that commodification religions have reached further and grown-their markets have expanded-rather than died” (Appiah 344). Moaveni’s occupation as a journalist of *Time Magazine*, as Huggan points out, seems to let her aware of the reality about “marginal writings” that highlight religious issues of Islamic society (Huggan 2001: 157).

In order to avail freedom with no limits, Moaveni and people like her, want hoteling with friends of opposite sex till late at night without any constraint. Like Europeans, they want to come out of the restriction of marriage to enjoy company of their friends of opposite sex. It means, these westernized Iranians crave for an Islamic state where every non-Islamic law is allowed, an empire that frees women from veil. While researching the motives behind French government’s act of banning of veil in public, Katherine Kim reveals that veil is a symbol of authority of Muslim men over their women. She argues that veil displays “inequality between the sexes and which is totally devoid of democracy” (Kim 293). Like Amina Wadud, in her presentation of Islamic feminism in accordance with western demands, Moaveni suggests that Islamic patriarchal system does not free women to take part in their country’s progress due to veil. Wadud holds that “Modesty is beneficial for maintaining a certain moral fibre in various cultures and should therefore be maintained” but not veiling (1999: 10). In this way, to come out of these restraints, for Moaveni, Muslim women should adopt unveiling.

In the West, women face no constraints. When anyone wants to free women from this isolation, people of Iran consider them as nonsense. Moaveni’s friend Reza wants reformation in Iran in order to improve people’s way of living when

He saw how the political conservatism of the Islamic regime was bound up in its fear and hostility toward women and their sexuality. He was alone in this. The other reformists refused to discuss such matters... (Moaveni 107)

While arguing against western depiction of veil, intellectuals like O' Brien proposes that the West has a wrong idea that one day these women, who are forced to unveil themselves by the West, are going to be filled with gratitude for their freedom. Brien observes that veil of Muslim women is like a “constant Reminder . . . that makes Muslim men the owners of women” (110). Mostly, colonizers legitimate their presence in colonized lands with the image of women alienation by patriarchal system of the society with colonizers' struggle to set them free. For example, France validated its colonization in Algeria through notion of liberation of veiled women from their oppression. For Brien, colonizers “represent[s] veiled Muslims in Europe as benighted and subjugated” (125). Moreover, Moaveni asserts that all restrictions are for women only. Whereas, men do not need to wear burka. To depict veil as demonstration of oppression and backwardness intellectuals, feminists, and philosophers speak against it that contributes in alienation of veiled women. Rikke Andreassen argues that westerners blame women's “oppression[s] with reference to migrants' culture or to Islam” (Andreassen 216).

4.2.4 Unveiling the Truth

Genre and the topic Moaveni selected, that Huggan describes as “ethnic autobiography” (2001: 155), seem to be the most eminent one in contemporary world. After 9/11, when Muslims seemed to be responsible for the attack on America, people especially Americans wanted facts about Islam and its believers. For Mozaffari, 9/11 was the incident that pushed Americans, against their will, in a situation where they had to know about the strange and aggressive [Islamic] world around them. She holds that in order to know about the unknown territories, Americans have no choice but to rely on “the different cultures and difficult problems through the lens of one person at a time” (Mozaffari 517).

After 9/11, Americans have to look for memoirs by these Islamic feminists that likely to be the best sources to get information about Islam. Being a journalist, she knows very well the popular genre and likes and dislikes of the readers. The way she portrays Iranian women and limitations they face in the form of veil is the best strategy to popularize her memoir. Françoise Lionnet analyses women life writings and observes that postcolonial women writers prefer writing memoirs while describing “whole heritage of life-stories” (Lionnet qtd. in Huggan 2001:162).

Moaveni describes Islamic society in a new way. She is sharp enough to work on two themes. While describing her identity crisis both in America and Iran, she narrates women's isolation in strict Islamic society and freedom and rights they avail in restriction free America. Malek states that Moaveni highlights "important issues related to the Iran of 2000-2001" (438.) Moaveni's western agenda of working on Islamic feminism and presenting Muslim women as a detached gender becomes very successful because she seems to be achieving all of her motives behind writing her first memoir and due to this westernized representation of Muslim women, she is a "comprador intelligentsia" (Appiah 348). Not only have her life writing become famous but also earned her prestige as Islamic feminist in western academia.

Autobiographies from peripheries usually get fame and success. Appiah in his essay holds that western educational "institution whose intellectual life is overwhelmingly constituted as Western" and printing presses contribute in transforming a piece of writing into a commodity (348). Moaveni's memoir does not become popular at once. She took pain in getting readers for it. Huggan points out that "prestige is generated through the multiplication of media images" (2001: 211). Intellectuals, editors, and scholars' reviews about any book are very important in transforming it into a commodity. Moaveni knows about their value, that is why she has printed admirable comments in her book. Moreover, "market-oriented 'paratextual apparatuses'... characteristically surround contemporary Aboriginal women's life-narratives" (Huggan 2001: 157).

Analytical and commendable comments are everywhere in the book. In her thought-provoking essay, "Is This Your Book? Wrapping Postcolonial Fiction for the Global Market" (1995) Wendy Waring talks about importance of "paratextual traces" that turn a book into commodity (Waring qtd in Huggan 2001:164). These traces are, in the form of blurb, present on the front and back cover of Moaveni's book. A long list of these admirable reviews is also added before title page. *New York Times* defines her way of writing as "unusually well and perceptively" (Moaveni x). *St. Petersburg Times* appreciates Moaveni's book as "deeply personal glimpse of Gen X Iranians in the United States and Iran [that]...possesses an irresistible vitality" (Moaveni x).

On the back cover of the book, Moaveni added reviews from *Chicago Tribune* and *Washington Post Book World*, where latter says “Moaveni has a . . . memoirist’s knack for finding meaning in her own internal conflicts” (Back Cover). These types of critiques seem to be very helpful for the readers to know about the theme of the book that they looking for. The other institutions that Appiah spells out, are western universities where articles written by different scholars from western academia also play an important part in this process of commodification. These critiques give a deeper view of life writings. For example, Amy Malek puts her analysis of LJ into these words “[the book] reveal[s] the intricacies of life in modern day Iran” (Malek 436).

In order to modify a book into a commodity, its title is very significant. Writers choose fancy titles to attract readers who are left with no choice but to buy the book without caring for their prices. Moaveni’s book that I have selected for my research project has a fancy title. Here, jihad is an Arabic word that is a sacred duty and means a struggle against peoples’ wrong doings, cruelty and hostile forces against Islam. Lipstick Jihad means a struggle by Muslim women to get freedom to wear lipstick. From Islamic point of view, it seems quite an embarrassing title because as mentioned earlier jihad is a sacred duty against odds. Moaveni uses this word for Muslim women who are already enjoying an Islamic life that bestow them freedom and respect.

For the West, the title represents Muslim women’s struggle to get basic right of wearing make-over. The name of the book also represents women oppression and subjugation in an Islamic society. In an interview that is also printed at the end of the book Moaveni herself admitted that she wanted some catchy title for her book to attract a lot of readers. She writes that choosing the title for her was

absolutely arduous...I wanted an evocative and edgy title that would sting a little. A sting captures attention unlike anything else; a sort of good shock...That’s how “Lipstick Jihad” was born. My mother was convinced it would elicit a fatwa or at least a hate crime against me. (Moaveni 252)

In this way, the very title represents western motive of describing women alienation in a Muslim country. This book is printed by Public Affairs, that is a famous publishing press of America. Popular brands have the feature to turn ordinary objects into commodity, that

is why *LJ* is sold on high price. As a result, this book plays dual role. Huggan argues that writers who promote western motive get in return “recognition and prestige” for themselves (5). Here, working on western notion of Islamic feminism helps Moaveni earn money and provides her financial stability. It also gives her fame as an Islamic feminist by working on and highlighting western agenda.

4.3 Conclusion

LJ by Azadeh Moaveni is a memoir that highlights Amina Wadud’s view of Islamic feminism that suggests that Muslim women do not enjoy freedom because “research and observation primarily showed grave inequalities” (2006: 22). Wadud’s view is in line with western representation of Muslim women in an Islamic society. The western view of Muslim women is that they do not have permission to move in men’s circle and remain confined in four walls of their houses. If they want to come and work in male-dominant society, they have to wear veil as a mandatory dress code that, according to Wadud, is “culturally and economically determined demonstrations of modesty” which the Islamic law does not approve of (Wadud 10).

Moaveni, in her memoir *LJ*, portrays Iranian society where she goes to search for her identity as a Persian girl. In her quest for her roots, she discovers women subjugation in Iran. As she was born in America and raised like Americans, she considers veil a symbol of oppression that she observes in Iran. Appiah’s idea of “comprador intelligentsia” seems to be applicable on Moaveni because whatever identity of Muslim women the West wants, Moaveni portrays the same description. At the same time, Huggan suggests that “[it is] a value-regulating mechanism within the global late-capitalist system of commodity exchange” (6), where Moaveni transforms her book into commodity through attractive reviews by intellectuals and editors of leading newspapers and magazines. Public Affairs Books is a leading publishing house that helps market *LJ* and such memoirs effectively. In this way, Huggan argues that, like postcolonial writers who get “privileged status on others”, Moaveni gets economic security and earns her name as an Islamic feminist (Huggan 2001: 213).

CHAPTER 5

DISCRIMINATING MEN AND WOMEN: A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF SHELINA ZAHRA JANMOHAMED'S *LOVE IN A HEADSCARF*

*Nice girls don't climb mountains, an Auntie told me.
Why not? I asked.*

*Because it is not the kind of thing a girl should
do...There are other exciting things you can do.*

---Janmohamed, *Love in a Headscarf*, 130

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore Shelina Zahra Janmohamed's memoir *Love in a Headscarf* (2010). She is a British writer. Starting her quest for a husband, Shelina Zahra Janmohamed does not know that it will become a difficult hunt through arranged marriage tradition. Her desire to complete her other half by getting married, her parents' responsibility to find her a husband, and her buxom Aunties' effort to earn her status in the form of a husband seem to be futile when so many suitors fail to come up with her wish list. While finding a husband, Janmohammad highlights trends in traditional Asian Muslim societies that represent Muslim women's subjugation. Here, I argue that Janmohamed seems to subscribe to western notion of Islamic feminism that emphasizes reinterpretation of Islamic religious text to create equality among men and women.

Janmohamed's search for a husband takes a new turn when, after 9/11, many suitors reject her due to her headscarf. This is the time when she comes to know about the image of traditional Muslim women with a headscarf. Now she decides to pen down her emotions when she feels sorry for those subjugated Muslim women. Appiah suggests that writers from formerly colonized countries talk on new issues of their former countries to sell their "art in the market- place" on high prices (Appiah 342). It is the West that instruct them to

disclose partial truths about those communities. A leading publishing house printed her book and renowned newspapers and magazines advertised her writing through admiring reviews about the book. In return, as Huggan proposes in his concept of “marketing the margins” (2001), she gets fame as well as economic security.

Shelina Zahra Janmohamed is a British writer and blogger. Her grandparents migrated to Tanzania from India. There they converted to Islam and, from Tanzania, her parents shifted to Britain. In this way, she is an Indian-British Muslim. She has written articles for several newspapers and magazines like *The Times*, *The Guardian*, and *The National*. She represents British Islam as she comments and writes columns for EMEL Magazine. Her blog is known as *Spirit 21*. Janmohamed contributes regularly to the Guardian and the BBC. After the success of her first memoir, Shelina Janmohamed writes another book with the title *Generation M: Young Muslims Changing the World* (2016). Due to her accomplishments as a British Muslim, *The Times* and UK Equality and Human Rights Commission regard her as one of the powerful women among UK’s one hundred most influential women (Shelina Zahra Janmohamed, n.p.). Many westerners consider Shelina Janmohamed’s choice of taking a headscarf as a forced subjugation of her by her supposed husband or her parents but her protest on and representation of Asian Muslim women’s alienation and lack of equal rights distribution among British Muslim men and women is likely to be in line with Amina Wadud’s Islamic feminism. I analyze Janmohamed’s text under the following subheads:

- Love in a Headscarf
- What sells in the Marriage Market
- Princess of Traditional Muslim Family
- Under the Veil

5.2 Love in a Headscarf

Searching for true love after marriage, according to Islamic teachings, Janmohamed depicts distorted picture of her religion where traditional Islamic society does not grant Muslim women a prestigious status. In accordance with Islamic feminism presented by Wadud, Shelina Janmohamed wants to achieve every single accomplishment that men have reserved for them only. Her memoir starts with the arrival of first suitor at her home when she is only nineteen years old. Older generation who represent traditional Muslim women want every girl to get married as early as possible. Shelina Janmohamed's book is divided into eight chapters with an epilogue. Each chapter is further divided into three subheads where she described her search for her husband and different traditions of Muslim societies.

5.2.1 What Sells in the Marriage Market?

Janmohamed reveals women alienation in traditional Muslim families. The theory of Islamic feminism that I have incorporated in this research project is apparent throughout the book. The very first concept of Amina Wadud's opinion of equality among both genders in Islam is evident in Janmohamed's book because for Wadud, human beings are created "as a single nafs", when Shelina Janmohamed describes expected and demanded traits of a girl for boys' families (Wadud 1999:18). Parents of boys and boys themselves prefer young girls for the marriage because it is easier to train and mold these girls according to their families' values. Contrarily, the boy's age does not matter.

While looking for a perfect girl for their boy, boy's family inferiorize girls in every possible way. Due to early marriage it is impossible for girls to get proper education, enjoy traveling and their free life at their parents' home. When girls get education like Master's degree before marriage, so-called respectable boys' families believe that they are "too confident and clever" (Janmohamed 12). It is important to note that the girl should be less educated than the boy because it is helpful to impose the husband's authority. If the wife is equally or more qualified than husband, she can question any wrong concept of her husband and the husband cannot say that "It is because I am your husband and I am more educated than you, so I must be right. Do not question me! In a surly dignified manner" (Janmhamed 47). Moreover, the girl's height should measure less than the husband to abuse his power.

For Janmohamed, these traits that the boys' families prefer to find in a girl for their sons are against Islamic laws and teachings. Janmohamed quotes Prophet Muhammad who prefers virtuous partner to the beautiful one. "Look for piety and faith and you will get everything, including beauty and wealth with it" (Janmohamed 48). While appreciating and reviewing Amina Wadud's *Quran and Women* (1999), Haifaa Jawad views that women in Muslim societies suffer alienation due to patriarchal domination. She holds that: "... Islamist women are calling for a ...vision inspired by models from early Islam during which women enjoyed a just and fair treatment" (Jawad 111). Arguing on the tradition of age where girl should be younger than the boy, Shelina Janmohamed comments that Islamic history does not approve of this culture. Hazrat Khadija, the first wife of the Holy Prophet, was fifteen years elder than him. Janmohamed questions "if the relationship at the very heart of the birth of Islam had a woman who was older than Muhammad, [why] was there an unspoken yet rigid rule that the girl should be younger than the boy?" in contemporary Muslim society (127). Girls' skin colour is also very important. Asian families like girls with white or pale colour. On the contrary, having dark colour is a symbol of ugliness.

The representation of women's isolation in *LHS*, is in line with Huggan's "market-oriented view of ethnic autobiography" when Janmohamed markets tradition of Asian Muslim society in the West (Huggan 2001: 156). For Liam Connell, in the name of globalization, writers produce cultural artefacts from Global South and western publishers transform these artefacts into commodities. Connell holds that: "the world of international art-house...comes to form a more satisfying union between industry and art by commodifying otherness" (Connell 92).

Boys' parents consider and present their sons as a prince charming who is free of any fault. While hearing an Asian match-making program on radio, Janmohamed describes a mother's demands for her son. She wants "someone who is about eighteen, fair, homely, and domesticated, and from a good family. She should be slim and white . . . not tall, please" for her thirty, dark skinned son who has "put on a bit of weight" and who is "still studying and living with his mother" (Janmohamed 49-50). Although Janmohamed reveals a bitter truth about tradition of Muslim societies but I argue that she subscribes to western agenda with this representation of Muslim women for a western reader who has nothing to

do with culture of Muslim world. Janmohamed's depiction of traditional Muslim families' search for girls' qualities during a wife hunt for their sons seems to be in line with Appiah's theory of "comprador intelligentsia" where writers from the margins produce "writings with which the West is largely not familiar" to get their work stand unique (Appiah 348).

The wife to be should be a cooking expert. She should know how to cook delicious foods and to serve the husband's whole family. She should respect and take care of them along with her responsibilities towards her husband. Whereas, the husband is free of any responsibility towards the wife's family. He only needs to show his jurisdiction in every matter. Hibba Abughidieri agrees with Amina Wadud's view of Islamic feminism and gives arguments in favor of women leadership in her essay "Revisiting the Islamic Past, Deconstructing Male Authority: The Project of Islamic Feminism" (2010). She suggests that patriarchy in Muslim societies is accountable for stopping women to exercise their power in society. She argues that for Islamic feminists, it is male "authoritative exegetical narratives that conveniently forgot, diminished, or silenced women's agency" (134). For Janmohamed, in traditional Muslim families, wives stay at home and do not work. In fact, boy's family look for such girls who are less educated so that they do not go outside of their homes to work somewhere. In the match-making show, the mother of the boy wants a girl "from a good family to stay at home and look after his mother" (Janmohamed 50).

In order to reveal herself to be a cooking expert, the girl needs to behave properly and should serve the boy's family with some home-made dishes whenever they visit her before marriage at her parents' home. Since, I have used Catherine Belsey's Textual Analysis as research method, I have analyzed culture of Muslim societies. Belsey holds that: "the text "makes" us rethink our attitudes" (Belsey 163). In this way, language of the text helps in understanding and interpreting a literary writing. In *LHS*, Janmohamed uses words that depict women oppressing anti-Islamic traditions of Muslim societies. Being homely is another significant quality in a girl. This characteristic helps the girl in cleaning, laundry and other house chores. Amy Zalman discloses that during her research on Islam, Wadud comes to know that women are living as second-class citizens in Islamic societies. She asserts that Muslim feminists "insist on participating in debates traditionally restricted to men, about Islam and its formulations of divine justice" (Zalman 19).

Janmohamed's delineation of characteristics through which a boys' families judge a girl, I propose, is illustration of Islamic feminism even in the modern societies of the West. Girls are representation of a human being who is perfect in every aspect but boy's characteristics are never discussed. Hibba Abughidieri in her description of Islamic feminism points out that patriarchy in Islamic societies leads to marginalization of women in Islam. According to her: "The exclusion of women from the historical production of sacred knowledge, then, is a serious matter of marginality and elision" (134). In this way, the boys' families do not need a wife for their sons but a maid who should be expert in house-keeping.

In traditional families not only do parents but also grandparents supervise match making session. While describing a "*Nylon Naani's*" secret tricks to find a girl, Janmohamed argues that instead of the boy and the girl who are going to be married their families meet and determine the girl's physical and personal qualities. During this brief session, the girl has to please and satisfy the boy's family. Another quality that is important is to find a girl who is not independent because for them, independent girls cannot be good wives due to their decision-making power. As a result, the husband to be fails to impose his authority. In accordance with Wadud's idea of Islamic feminism, Kabeer discloses that men in Islamic society enjoy full authority and freedom of choice. Moreover, "traditional exercise of patriarchal authority...shifts the right of control to all men" (Kabeer in Kandiyoti 14).

Women's inferiority and their subjugation in an Islamic society is due to preference of tradition upon religion. Instead of following Islamic teachings in their true sense, Muslims prefer non-Islamic traditions. Janmohamed asserts that "in traditional societies where a woman used to have little choice in her partner, her interest would be futile" (48). In an interview to Divya Girishkumar, Shelina Janmohamed unfolds that she tries her best to liberate Asian Muslim women from images that the West has created about them. In fact, she becomes agitated whenever she listens about such stereotypical description of Asian Muslim women. Answering a question to Girishkumar, Janmohamed states that: "one day when I went into a bookshop, the books about Muslim women were all misery memoirs" (368).

Here in *LHS*, while trying to develop an awareness among westerners, not only does Janmohamed portray Muslim women alienation in traditional Muslim society but also puts forward Amina Wadud's western notion of Islamic feminism where Wadud wants "More female-inclusive interpretations" of the holy Qur'an to "raise the legitimacy of women's claims to authority within the intellectual tradition" as the interpretation of Islamic sacred text by men is the source of women's segregation (2006:7). Shelina Zahra Janmohamed holds that religion gives women freedom in every fields of life but culture bans that independence. Digging out characteristics in her husband to be, Janmohamed does not feel the "click" that is according to her, normally absent in traditional Muslim societies (Janmohamed 26). Men avail this freedom but women cannot. Shelina Janmohamed gives the example of Moses and Safora:

Moses, a strong and handsome young man, has arrived in town and is watering his sheep at a well along with the local shepherds...After Safora's encounter with Moses she returns home and recounts this incident of strange man to her father. Her father has a business and she advises him that Moses would make an excellent employee because of his strength and good character. As a result of their conversation, her father dispatches her to invite him to dinner Perhaps Safora conveys her "click" to her father. (27)

Thus, religion grants this freedom to men and women equally. In accordance with Wadud's Islamic feminism, Caroline Sawyer in her review of a documentary made on Amina Wadud's efforts as a Muslim feminist "The Noble Struggle of Amina Wadud" (2008) argues that patriarchal domination of Muslim society leads to inequality among genders and women's oppression. She suggests that male authoritative Islamic exegesis "forbid[s] a woman from standing before men in prayer" (139). Although, Janmohamed's family allows her to prefer this 'click' but religious clergy of the mosque does not endorse it (Janmohammad 27).

5.2.2 Princess of Traditional Muslim Family

Janmohamed's depiction of women's repression in traditional Asian Muslim societies is evident in her illustration of particular features that boys' families try to look for in girls. Girls and their families are inferior in every aspect of relationship whereas, boys are always authoritative and superior. Girls' families cannot show their concern and interest in marriage proposal first:

The first show of interest must be from the boys' party. The girl's party cannot make the first move, otherwise they will be considered "desperate." If the girl's party wishes to initiate a discussion with a potential match, they must do it through a third party who should make it look like it was the boy's party's idea. (Janmohamed 47)

Despite the fact that Janmohamed is living and raised in the West, her parents, family relatives teach her and other Muslim girls from early age to maintain a good married life.

Catherine Belsey in her essay *Textual Analysis as research method* asserts that secondary sources are very important in interpretation of a literary text. These sources make the argument strong and provide a proof that avoid it from "pure subjectivism" (Belsey in Griffin 161). This is the reason I have used articles and reviews of different authors. These reviews and critiques help me strengthening my arguments.

Parents prepare their girls and teach them tactics to keep a successful life after marriage but for boys, family do not bother to advise them for their future married life. Commenting on the banning of women leadership in religious rituals as Amina Wadud does, Etin Anwar is of the view that in Islam public sphere is only for men who are the heads of their families. Contrastingly, women are the heads of the household and do not need to have any concern with leadership of public sphere. Anwar holds that according to male oriented religious interpretation of Islamic Holy Scriptures "only men are empowered to lead the prayer and have the power to express themselves through public piety" (198).

Here, two things are clear that male dominant Muslim interpretation of Islamic text does not allow women to become leaders of men or even women. Furthermore, women are responsible in household so it is their business to keep in existence a peaceful married life. Men have nothing to do in this respect. The reason is that religion gives the authority of divorce to men. Wadud writes that divorce is allowed in Islam but tradition that "allows

the male a *darajah* or an advantage over the female, has been pointed out as indicating an inequity in the Qur'an" (1999: 79). Janmohamed's annoyance persists on aunties' advice when they continue their guidance for her future married life. She holds:

It is going to be very hard for at least two years, the Aunties would caution. Do whatever he asks you for during that time, and then he'll do whatever you want for the rest of your lives It was an investment plan for future comfort and happiness. (Janmohamed 59)

Here again, women's subduing is apparent because men are free of any charge. For Wadud, male interpretation of Qur'an assigns authority of divorce to men. That is why, they do not take the responsibility for a successful married life. According to Wadud, it is the liability of both men and women to struggle to perpetuate peace among them. Wadud holds that "There is no indication in the Qur'an that all power of repudiation must be removed from women" (Wadud 1999:80).

Along with traditional Asian Muslim families who look for young girls, boys also prefer younger girls. Islamic history does not accredit these concepts. The Holy Prophet himself got married for the first time to a woman who was 15 years older than him. Khadija- the first wife of the Holy Prophet gave her husband love, respect, and was a source of contentment for him. Islam has lenient and human friendly rules and regulations. It is people who twist and turn these laws to meet their requirements. Janmohamed observes that there are "the discrepancies between what people *say* is Islam and what Islam *actually* is" (Janmohamed 128). Shirin Rai observes that Muslim feminists are trying to liberate women from patriarchal domination and also struggling to provide them Islamic rules to live a better family life because men restrict "women's access to the public sphere both in the economic and political fields" (Rai in Ashfar 32).

There are different family rules in Asian Muslim society and the western community. In traditional Muslim society "If a family kept a daughter in the house too long it was considered shameful" (Janmohamed 100). People assume that being unmarried means that the girl is with some faults. On the contrary, a son is always important and a mark of pride for a family. In conformity with Amina Wadud's view of Islamic feminism, Georgina Waylen argues that all human beings are equal in front of Almighty Allah. In

order to “reduce gender inequality” state should take some action (Waylen in Ashfar 20). Whether a Muslim family lives in the West or the East, a son receives supremacy over daughters. The reason is that the son is taken as a source of bringing wealth to the family whereas, girls take the family fortune in the form of dowry at their marriage.

In traditional Muslim families, girls’ choice and consent does not matter. It is the intellect of her parents that decides her future. Janmohamed quotes the incident of her grandmother who got married at very young age without her consent because for her parents, her likes and dislikes do not matter. Janmohamed notes:

When she was fifteen, her father---who by all accounts was a very kind, generous, and compassionate man and also deeply pious---took her to the window of their house and pulled the curtains back slightly. He pointed at a small man walking away from the house and told her, ‘you are engaged to this man’. She was married soon after. (Janmohamed 101)

This way of marriage is still present in traditional Muslim families (Janmohamed 101). Traditional Muslim societies regard themselves traditional because they think that they follow Islamic principles and modern people do not care for them. On the contrary, traditional families instead of following religion go behind cultural norms. It is their misconception that these conventions have come from religion. As it is mentioned earlier that people distort Islamic laws to benefit themselves and these falsified beliefs are so deeply rooted that people deem them as religious guidelines. For Janmohamed, women’s subjugation is the outcome of this phenomenon where women face restrictions to come and move in patriarchal society.

Mohammad explained that women were equal in value to men, and the best of men and women were those who worked hard to be good human beings. In this, he said clearly, men and women were no different. (Janmohamed 128)

These rights for women were explained long before and were implemented in the first Islamic society in Medina.

There is a strict criterion for girls to adopt certain occupations and have only a limited number of habits to please themselves. Whereas, for men there is no boundaries as they

can go to the other corners of the world. For them, these are their accomplishments and add positive attributes to their personality. Women, conversely, fall from the category of “nice girls” (Janmohamed 130). In harmony with Amina Wadud’s opinion of Islamic feminism, for Janmohamed, women’s isolation is due to these cultural ethics that are deeply seeped in daily lives of traditional Asian Muslim society. Janmohamed holds that “It would be simpler to admit that fundamental idea of equality had got blurred” (Janmohamed 128). Restrictions and constraint on Muslim women is not a part of Islamic teachings. “Muslim feminist theologians argue that atomistic treatments of the Qur’an have resulted in misleading, dis-torted understandings of the Qur’an, especially in relation to verses about women” (Hidayatullah 90). When Riffat Hassan reinterprets ayahs of Qur’an that are related to the creation of mankind, she concludes that nowhere in Qur’an it is written that supports the idea that “man was created prior to woman or that woman was created from man” (Hassan 1991a: 44). In this way, man’s superiority over woman is baseless.

Criteria for an acceptable good girl is quite strange in traditional Muslim society. Belonging to an educated modern Muslim family, Janmohamed’s parents give her liberty to do everything she wants to achieve. But the concept of modesty and sobriety stops many girls in traditional society to attain many things they are capable of. Amira Mashhour advocates that Qur’an reveals that Almighty Allah has created man and woman equal but male dominant exegesis does not approve of “ultimate equality between the sexes” (Mashhour 563). Janmohamed questions that when both man and woman have same origin and Qur’an, that is Allah’s words, does not fabricate any distinction, why are people insist on treating women differently. To this she herself replies that “those who perpetrated such horrible acts of violence and oppression ought to be expose what they were really after: power and control” (Janmohamed 152).

In Muslim society, tradition imposes restrictions on girls to choose limited number of professions and hobbies. The aunties who represent traditional Muslims try to hold her back when she decides to climb a mountain. For them, “nice girls” do not climb a mountain because it does not suit them and this is a boys’ thing to go for such adventures. In Islam, there are many examples when women climbed mountains. About mountain climbing Janmohamed asserts that

I just think it will be exciting, and a challenge There are other exciting things you can do Don't think you are a boy, that you can do whatever you like. You're a girl and you have to know your place. (Janmohamed 131)

Such are the arguments that traditional aunties use to give her. On the other hand, when the Holy Prophet went to the cave of Hira to contemplate and where Allah revealed him as His Prophet, Khadija used to go to him to deliver food while climbing the same mountain. To this argument, aunties show their annoyance but still do not seem to be convinced.

Satisfying herself after ascending the Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Janmohamed resolves to buy a racing car. Here again, her relatives try to persuade her not to take the car to the mosque to avoid people's harsh criticism where "the small matter of owning such a car would completely wipe out [her] previous nice reputation" (Janmohamed 134). But people do not know that it is not a matter of a car. In fact, it is all about turning peoples' mind towards equality of men and women. In accordance with the notion of Islamic feminism presented by Amina Wadud, religious clergy use all possible ways to suppress women. In order to validate their arguments to suppress Muslim women, "the Qur'an, the Shari'a (Islamic law), and Hadith were all used by religious guardians of patriarchy" (Mojab 127).

5.2.3 Under the Veil

Although, Janmohamed's efforts seem to improve Muslim women's status in the West, but under the cover she takes pain to highlight Muslim women oppression in the East. Although, she tries to assert her readers that her headscarf is a matter of her choice and it is Islam that sets her liberty to act according to her own will. But her description of several suitors who do not want women in headscarf reveals her true motive of presenting women's repression in a Muslim society. Kanishka Chowdhury in her essay "Interrogating "Newness": Globalization and Postcolonial Theory in the Age of Endless War" (2006) supports Huggan's concept of 'marketing the margins'. She explains that intellectuals transport cultural goods from Third World countries to the West. These transportation process achieves capitalist motive. Moreover, Chowdhury suggests that "the profits from these transactions are controlled by and distributed among an elite minority" (Chowdhury 129).

Janmohamed's delineation of Islamic feminism that portrays Muslim women's isolation belongs to traditional Asian Muslim society. She wears a headscarf but she is aware of western notion of women with headscarf. While presenting arguments in favour of headscarf, she describes the image of veiled women in the eyes of westerners who consider that Muslims "are backward, living in the Middle Ages, with a religion of ignorant Arabs...Muslim women are oppressed, forced to cover up and not to express [themselves]" (Janmohamed 184-185). At the same time, she supports Wadud's concept of choice for wearing headscarf. In some Muslim families, male head of the family forces women to wear hijab. Whereas "The Qur'an is very clear, there is no compulsion in religion" (Janmohamed 153). It is an illegal thing because according to Janmohamed, Islam has given women the freedom to wear a hijab or not. Wearing black burqa is also wired because it hides a person's identity and it projects that these women are concealing the "projection of their persona" (Janmohamed 153). On the other hand, this black cloak gives the impression of an "alien" to westerners. Janmohamed articulates that coercing hijab is inhuman when there is no compulsion from the religion.

In Muslim countries, cultural practices are stronger than religious teachings. For Belsey, "cultural criticism" helps to interpret culture that a writer presents in a text (Belsey 167). The text in hand projects tradition of Muslim communities as misogynist. According to Janmohamed, patriarchal system of these societies distort religion for their own purpose. "They would mutate beliefs for their benefit and claim this was the Truth" (Janmohamed 71). Whereas, these Muslims look down on those who practice religion in its true sense. For them, these practicing Muslims are not normal humans rather for them the practicing of the religion is to show off their religiousness. That is why whenever Janmohamed or any woman like her try to follow real Islam, other nonpracticing Muslims silence them.

Women's subjugation in the form of inferiority of the girl and girl's party is a new matter in question for the West. Janmohamed wants to highlight those customs that lead to early marriage of girls without their choice as in the case of her grandmother. Caroline Davis is of the view that literature from formerly colonized countries highlight issues of these countries. Moreover, the publishers not only do earn money but also help in the process of "commodification and exoticization" of such literature. Davis quotes Huggan who asserts that: "cultural raw materials of the former colonies have been turned into finished products

in the former metropolitan countries” (Davis 241). The whole procedure of turning raw material into finished goods is accomplished by printing presses.

Islamic feminists like Janmohamed crave Muslims to abide by real Islamic teachings where women do not have any responsibility to look after her home, do cleaning, laundry, cooking and to take care of her husband’s family. Her only duty is to be a good partner of her husband who can stand with him in every difficulty of life. She holds:

The husband certainly is responsible for providing maintenance and shelter for his wife and family. [Wife] can participate in meeting their financial needs if she wants to, or if she needs to, but she doesn’t have to. (Janmohamed 102)

But tradition gifts a woman with lots of responsibilities. These traditional practices are very surprising for the West. Huggan proposes that “ethnic autobiography” are a source of highlighting cultural problems of Global South. He further states that capitalism gives rise to

conditions and concerns [that] place pressure on Aboriginal writers to produce work that attracts a wider audience while remaining acceptable to members of their own communities. (Huggan 2001: 163)

Speaking about the characteristics of an acceptable girl for a boy’s family, Janmohamed views that women face many constraints. Parents raise their daughters to be submissive and docile for the male head of the family. Janmohamed becomes surprise when her grandmother instructs her to say sorry to her future husband even if it is not her fault because “men are different from women” (Janmohamed 103). This represents dissimilar way of upbringing girls and boys receive from their families where boys are always getting privileges as compared to girls.

Although, hijab or headscarf is a part of a Muslim woman’s dress but westerners pose questions and feel annoyance to see a woman in headscarf. When some westerners argue with her on headscarf, a Muslim man comes forward and answers their question. To this, Janmohamed becomes irritated because this man represents all Muslim men who regard women weak and frail and snatch women’s right to fight hostile forces themselves. In her thought-provoking book *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace*

(2007) Sarah Brouillette describes that postcolonial writers are agents who bring forth writings from Global South to the West. These writings present problems of formerly colonized countries to the western reading public as exotic. She asserts that these writers work as: “literary intermediary between his Third World subjects and the privileged audience that reads about their plight” (Brouillette 35).

For the West, Muslim women who wear headscarf are not human beings. For them, “the long black clothes were a way of reclaiming control over [women’s] image” (Janmohamed 153). While advocating her decision to wear a headscarf, Janmohamed holds that it is a matter of choice and religion gives this freedom. No one have forced Janmohamed rather she gets fascinated with it so she makes up her mind to wear one. But westerners do not understand that Muslim women can exercise their free will. For Janmohamed, the West views Muslim women as aliens who are from other world and cannot live like ordinary humans. Shelina Janmohamed expresses that the West itself has created this impression of Muslim women and she struggles to erase this image. She articulates that “after all, it was modesty that was the Islamic value at the heart of the discussion; the headscarf was only one component of that” (Janmohamed 153).

For nonpracticing Muslims, those who practice Islam and wear headscarf are “fundamentalists” (Janmohamed 163). Western discrimination is responsible for other Muslims to create this identity for practicing Muslims. That is why girls from such families do not get permission to wear a headscarf. Janmohamed argues that when Muslim women want to wear a certain kind of dress why the West and western Muslims feel irritation. On the contrary, some people force women to wear hijab. Janmohamed notes:

Where women were forced to wear it, I believe it was wrong. But the fact that they were forced to wear it was not the problem itself: it was the symptom of more serious underlying inequality. That inequality wasn’t part of the blueprint of Islam. (Janmohamed 164)

When these people do not force men to wear a particular Islamic dress, women should also have the freedom to dress themselves according to their choice. Coercion of veil or headscarf is representation of inequality that is prohibited in Islam. Qur’an claims the common origin of all human beings. Consequently, all are equal and have same worth.

Janmohamed shows superiority on being a citizen of UK where she has freedom of expression and action. But inhabitants of Asian Muslim societies especially women cannot act according to their will. Bringing into spot light and discussing cultural practices of Global South in her book *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in Postcolonial Nation* (2005), Elleke Boehmer asserts that goods from formerly colonized countries serve in the process of commodification (Boehmer 11, my paraphrase).

Janmohamed wants all Muslim women to struggle to come out of their isolation. She gives the example of Aasiya who was the queen of ancient Egypt and the wife of Pharaoh. Aasiya was a very good, obedient, and submissive wife and a good companion of her husband. She never interfered in her husband's stately matters, though, she knew that he was a murderer and a cruel ruler. But when it comes about her free will she never compromised. She refused to worship her husband and followed the truth. She declared to worship one God. As a punishment the Pharaoh threatened her to death but she remained determined and faced death. Assiya could have enjoyed the same luxurious life and status but she chose to follow her heart and sacrificed her life and her status to make a history for other women.

Janmohamed admires Aasiya's decisiveness as a woman who had very limited choices. She wants every Muslim girl to follow the example of Aasiya's courage to come out of their subjugation. In line with Huggan's notion of "marketing of margins" (2001) John Marx explains that postcolonial writers introduce novel ideas and cultural issues from formerly colonized countries in their literary writings. It is politics of the West to appreciate and encourage these writers for their work. As a response publishing companies transform these writings into expendable products that serve for capitalists' agenda. Marx reviews Sara Brouillette's work where Brouillette holds that writers "present [their literary work] to publisher who turns that work into a sealable goods" (Marx 816).

Whether Muslims live in the West or anywhere else, their easternness do not let them leave their traditional traits. Although, Janmohamed's parents have raised her on western principles with freedom of expression but whenever she likes a boy as a future husband for her, she wants the boy to take initiative in proposing her like traditional Muslim women do. She knows that Khadija-the first wife of the Holy Prophet, being a woman, took the

first step in sending her proposal to the Holy Prophet. Janmohamed discloses that the very essence of Easternness have deeply seeped into the personality of Muslim girls. It also happens with Janmohamed when she looks for her future husband. “Notions from Hollywood to Bollywood that ‘the man has to do it’ and that ‘it should just happen’ had taken root inside me much deeper than I had imagined” (Janmohamed 206). For this, she blames the distinction in a boy and a girl’s upbringing and training in Muslim families.

Islam teaches the lesson of equality of both genders. The layers of culture since fourteen centuries, Janmohamed views, have rusted the original religious laws. Education and modernity guides Muslims to go back to their roots-the real Islam to wipe out discrimination among men and women. Calling attention to issues of women’s isolation help Janmohamed earn fame in western media and European academia. In line with Amina Wadud’s notion of Islamic feminism, who emphasizes reinterpretation of holy text of Islam from women’s point of view because “in most Muslim majority or minority communities, Muslim women do not enjoy a status equal to men” (Wadud 1999: ix), Janmohamed asserts that “It was the challenge of the fresh eyes of each generation to reexamine and revisit the truth of the principles that were accepted as universal” (Janmohamed 71). Like westernized Islamic feminists, Janmohamed insists to introduce reformation in Islam.

Janmohamed’s depiction of Muslim women’s alienation during match making hunt introduces a new way of segregation of women in Islam. This is a novel complication in Muslim traditional society for the West. This presentation of new idea helps Janmohamed achieve a name in the West. In harmony with Huggan’s idea of “marketing the margins”, Lydie Moudileno in her essay “Fame, Celebrity, and the Conditions of Visibility of the Postcolonial Writer” (2011) suggests that: “...articulation of celebrity [results in the] process of recognition in Western literary circles” (Moudileno 63). Moudileno views that problems and plights of Global South have transformed these communities of margins into resources and consequently writings and writers from these countries earn prestige. She argues that:

the current success of postcolonial studies in Western intellectual circles [reveals that] the forces that have transformed marginality into an asset, thus conferring value to both the postcolonial text and its author. (Moudileno 63)

With the help of delineation of Muslim women's isolation in her work Janmohamed receives prestige. Janmohamed's ultimate effort seems to promote western agenda of portraying Muslim women as oppressed creatures. At the same time, she wants Muslims to rub out differentiation between men and women. For her, this distinction does not allow women to come out of their houses and show their potentials. For her, women are capable of doing lots of things along with looking after their homes and taking care of their children. They can achieve lots of accomplishments. Janmohamed's endeavour seems to work when she raises some awareness among Muslims. Seeing Janmohamed working for her fellow beings, Muslims may let their daughters come out of their homes to work and let them achieve their dreams. Traditional families may also start raising their sons and daughters in the same manner and remove all inequalities between their children.

According to Wikipedia, Janmohamed is working "as an influential commentator on British Islam" (Shelina Zahra Janmohamed n.p.). Her efforts to present British Muslims seems to be in line with her motive to highlight representation of women in Islam that is 'in' in western academia. When Janmohamed raises the issue of Muslim women's alienation, it helps her achieving glory as an Islamic feminist. Appiah calls these writers "comprador intelligentsia" because she is "western-style, western-trained" intellectual who works on western motive to get financial benefit through publication of her book by a leading printing press (Appiah 348).

Janmohamed has gotten her memoir published by Beacon Press that is a non-profit printing press. But the price of her memoir is not less rather it is much more. Beacon Press is a famous printing press and the stardom as a non-profit publishing company gives Beacon Press assistance to transform its books especially memoir into commodity. In fact, it is the theme that is new to turn the book into commodity. Bourdieu suggests that attractive incentives like comments and prizes on a piece of writing help raising its market value. For him, these comments are usually present everywhere on the book but they "indicate a tension between" the text and its "legitimizing agents" because these reviews do not tell exact narrative presented in the literary production (Bourdieu 1993 qtd. in Huggan 2001:164).

LHS has gained worldwide fame due to reviews from intellectuals and leading magazines. Kanishka Chowdhury argues: “The knowledge industry exists in many forms in the West, most clearly in the pages of American newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*” (Chowdhury 129). *Harper’s Bazaar* is a famous magazine of UK. The magazine describes her work in admiring words. According to the editor, Janmohamed through husband hunt comes to know that “something being true to her religion means challenging tradition” (Janmohamed 2010: Back cover). This comment is very helpful for the reader to get glimpse of the narrative of the book that represents that in Islam tradition is always challenging for a woman.

Harper Bazaar appreciates this piece of writing with another praising comment when it calls the book “An Islamic spin on the ‘Looking for The One’ genre” (Janmohamed 2010: Back cover). Sumbul Ali-Karamali is the author of *The Muslim Next Door: The Qur’an, the Media, and that Veil Thing* (2008) reviews this literary writing and classifies it as the “most universal of themes. Perfect for bedside table, but enlightening, as well” (Janmohamed 2010: Back cover). The front cover contains review from *The Good Book Guide* that is an on-and offline-mail orderbook business, reviews the book as “Her journey is at times hilarious, but . . . fascinating insight into what it means to be a Muslim woman” (Janmohamed 2010: Front cover). These attractive comments guide readers to get the book at any cast because they want to know about Islam and these comments give an insight that something novel and controversial is in there.

5.3 Conclusion

According to Wadud’s concept of Islamic feminism, that is, a western representation of Muslim women, Muslim men dominate Islamic societies where women “are less human than men . . . and are of less value” (Wadud 1999: 35). Janmohamed’s memoir *LHS* discusses women’s position in a traditional Islamic society where they are submissive. Their parents face difficulties to find husband for them because boys’ families want a wife who is beautiful and an expert in housekeeping. This issue from Janmohamed’s roots, the homeland of her forefathers, seems to be in accordance with Huggan’s notion of “marketing the margins” (2001). According to Appiah’s conception of “comprador intelligentsia,” Janmohamed is amongst those “Western- trained group of writers” who

labour to promote western agenda, and consequently, Janmohamed gains popularity as an Islamic feminist (348). As it is a cultural production from peripheries, the comments from famous magazines and intellectuals from academia transform the book into a commodity. Leading publishing houses also contribute in the process of commodification and raise market value of the memoir that help Janmohamed gain economic stability in a country where she lives with double identity.

CHAPTER 6

LEGITIMIZING PROHIBITED ACTIONS: A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF ARSA Q. NOMANI'S *STANDING ALONE IN MECCA: A PILGRIMAGE INTO THE HEART OF ISLAM*.

Women in Islam are so very well defined by hadud. These hadud are used to control everything about their lives, from our sexuality to where we can pray in mosque that are our places of worship.

---Nomani, Standing Alone in Mecca, 41

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I investigate the Indian-American writer Asra Q. Nomani's memoir *Standing Alone in Mecca: A Pilgrimage into the Heart of Islam* (2007). In order to search for spiritual peace in a religion, Nomani embarks on an expedition from Dalai Lama to Professor Khaled Abou El Fadl, and finally finds what she is looking for. But there are more obstacles from within that are hostile and seem impossible for her to cross. It is her enthusiasm, zealotry, and support from her fellows that keep her going on her project. While struggling to legitimize her child out of wedlock, I argue, Nomani seems to subscribe to western agenda of Muslim women's representation. She tends to validate those acts in Islam that are strictly forbidden. Why does she not struggle for legitimizing prohibited actions when there are many like her to provide their assistance to her? In line with Islamic feminism suggested by Amina Wadud, Asra Nomani endeavors to give rights to women (in Islam) equal with those enjoyed by Muslim men.

According to Appiah, Nomani is a "western-trained writer" who seems to be working on western motive of presenting Muslim women's segregation in Islamic societies (348). Appiah's opinion corresponds to that of Huggan, who proposes that new writings from global south are a source of attraction for publishing houses who are "valuable promoter[s] of cross-cultural understanding" and transform memoirs of writers from

peripheries into consumable goods for the western readers (Huggan 2001: xi). Concludingly, these authors get publicity and identity as Islamic feminists.

Asra Q. Nomani has earned a lot of achievements. Her parents migrated from India to America and she joined them, when she was four with her elder brother. Before working as a *Wall Street Journal* correspondent, Nomani has done her M.A. in International Communications from American University in 1990. After 9/11, she has worked in Pakistan as a reporter for Salon.com. Nomani has also written for *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Slate*, and *The American Prospect*. At the same time, Nomani possesses the authorship of two books and three articles. She has founded ‘Muslim Women Freedom Tour,’ an organization that has planned, and managed mixed gender prayers led by Muslim women in various parts of America. Going beyond the limits set by religion, Nomani is trying to question old exegesis given by dominant patriarchy to give Muslim women equal rights that the Prophet (PBUH) has given to them fourteen hundred years before. In order to promote western notion of Muslim women’s representation, as given by Amina Wadud, Nomani pens down every single detail of her pilgrimage to Mecca and her effort against Muslim patriarchy at her home town in America. I analyze Nomani’s *SAM* under the following subheads:

- Standing Alone in Mecca
- Out of Wedlock
- The Legacy of Single Mothers
- The Status Quo
- Triumphs
- Crossing the Boundaries

6.2 Standing Alone in Mecca

While probing for a right religion that can define Asra Nomani’s role as a woman, she starts her journey from America to her homeland India. Here, while doing pilgrimage in Mecca, she realizes that instead of expounding her feminine role, it seems that tradition of Islamic society imposes rigorous constraints on her. Trying to legitimize her conception

out of wedlock, Nomani's efforts to convince her boyfriend to marry her seem to be futile because he is breaking promises after promises. When Taliban murder her coworker and friend Daniel Pearl, Nomani does not want to stand with them by killing her unborn baby. Instead of sinking into the river of shame, due to the guilt of Islamic notion of 'zina', Nomani comes out of her sufferings with her "head held high" (Nomani 40). Her book is divided into seven chapters where each of them tells a unique struggle of Nomani.

6.3.1 Out of Wedlock

Following Islamic teachings and offering prayer five times a day, Nomani's Pakistani Muslim boyfriend does not stand with her when she needs him the most. For him and other Muslims like him, their baby and she are illegitimate because she has committed adultery. Although, in Islam there are certain sexual boundaries but living in western environment, when Southeast Asian parents do not discuss these boundaries with their children, these dire consequences cannot be stopped to happen. Muslim men can have sex out of marriage as it does not harm them and their reputation in any way. They can leave their girlfriends to get themselves free of any charge. But, with women, the case is different. They carry babies, a proof of illegal sex in Islam.

Nomani knows that she has done something wrong. Now, she understands the logic of hadud laws when a Pakistani leader told her that

In 1979, Pakistan passed laws based on hadud, or 'boundaries' for moral conduct. I knew these rules were used to control us, but now I learned that violation them could have more serious consequences. My situation could land me in prison. (Nomani 41)

This concept of illegitimacy has connection with marketing because according to Nomani, Muslim men do not face any shame, guilt, and punishment for this crime but women do. This represents women's alienation in Islam. Nomani's intelligence is very much obvious when she picks a remarkable topic for her book. Being a woman with double citizenship, she knows how to get herself assimilated in a country with different cultural norms. Huggan asserts that authors from peripheries write about the tradition of their homelands so that they can be subsumed by westerners. In his article "The Postcolonial Exotic" (1994) he quotes Appiah who asserts that in order to remove differences between them and the West,

“writers wish to strike back against the center...they wish to undo the opposition between a European Self and its designated Others” (Appiah qtd. in Huggan 1994: 24).

Hadud laws in Islamic countries have their effects on Muslim women only. Lily Zakiyah Munir approves of Amina Wadud’s concept of Islamic feminism when she asserts that “Patriarchal ideology . . . exaggerates biological differences between men and women, ensuring that men always play the dominant role” (192). Nomani explains that hadud laws in Muslim countries like Pakistan not only do control women’s sexuality but also constraint every aspect of a woman’s life. Violation of these laws lead to stoning to death, a punishment limited to Muslim women only because of the culture of Islamic society. Criminal sentences for crimes like ‘*zina*’, where lashing and stoning are the main punishments, are given to women only. Shahnaz Khan observes that: “State practices do not provide impoverished women equality of rights or protection” (96). Whereas, tradition imposes no restriction on men. Nomani’s boyfriend abandons her due to his family tradition where women who have children out of wedlock are not acceptable. “He looked at me stunned He didn’t want me to keep the baby, and all of his fanciful talk about marrying me disappeared I felt completely illegitimate” (Nomani 40). On the other hand, he remains blameless as nobody proves his contravention and Nomani “was not acceptable in his family’s traditional ethos” (Nomani 47). In order to clarify her notion of Islamic feminism, Wadud states Islamic law in her “*Qur’an and Women*” in the following words: “Allah does not distinguish on the basis of wealth, nationality, sex, or historical context, but on the basis of taqwa” (1999: 37).

Trying to legitimize her son, Nomani comes to know about compulsion of punishment for illegal sex in Muslim society. Ziba Mir Hussaini who is a legal anthropologist and holds her PhD from Cambridge University holds that “*Zina* laws are at the root of violence against women” (40). Nomani gets surprised to know that punishment for ‘*zina*’ or illegal sex is stoning to death even if a woman asks for forgiveness. Their begging for absolution does not help them. It is only stoning to death that can release them from the charge. Nomani explains that puritan clerics are responsible for declaration of these punishments on women. Noor subscribes to Islamic feminism symbolized by Amina Wadud when he interprets some of the hadiths by the Prophet (PBUH). In his views: “The Prophet (SAW) exercised extreme caution in passing the death penalty by stoning” (Noor

106). At one point when a person tells the Prophet (PBUH) about a case of adultery, the Prophet did not pay attention and silenced him and replied, “If you leave him with his private offence, it is better” (Muhammad 22: 6633; Muslim 9: 3202).

In order to seek forgiveness for her sin, Nomani goes to perform hajj as it is hajj that washes away all sins. But here in Saudi Arabia she is afraid to get punishment if somebody observes no wedding ring in her hand. In line with Graham Huggan’s “marketing the margins” (2001) Caroline Davis in her review of Sara Brouillette’s *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* (2007) suggests that Sarah Brouillette discusses the effect of globalization on writing trends of authors. For her, writers keep in their minds changing likes and dislikes of their readers. She “explore[s] the relationship between the postcolonial author and the international marketplace in which the literary text is published, promoted, disseminated, and received” (Davis 492).

Although Nomani notices many contradictions in Saudi Arabia but all restrictions are for women only. she goes to see her cousin who also comes to perform hajj in Saudi Arabia from India. Here, she gets amazed to see their accommodation. There is only one big room with one dozen beds and all men and women in a group who are not ‘mahram’ to each other live and sleep in that room. Saudi government does not take any action on this mixed gathering where there is a possible chance of ‘zina.’ Nomani gets surprised to notice it:

My experience with my mixed-gender tour group, my forays into the Sacred Mosque where men and women prayed together and my look at my relative’s pilgrimage accommodations revealed to me the inherent contradictions in Muslim society. (Nomani 132)

While describing readers’ attitude towards literary writings, Sara Brouillette gives example of Southeast Asian writer Zulfikar Ghose. She asserts that authors, who do not cater for the reading trend of their reader, suffer a lot. If they fail to include stories from their formerly colonized homelands in their writings, they are unable to become famous as postcolonial writers. Brouillette states:

Ghose's lack of attention to South Asian themes and politics has constrained his success as a postcolonial author, reflected in the difficulties he has faced in finding

a publisher for his recent novels, and in the difficulties, reviewers have had in defining his works. (Brouillette146)

This represents the importance of literature from Global South that weaves new stories to maintain reader's interest. These narratives are noteworthy for publishers as well as reviewers. In order to represent restrictions on Muslim women only, Nomani quotes a Syrian poet Nizzar Kabbani, who pens down details of his brother's pride when he commits adultery. He maintains that God will forgive his major sin but will not pardon those who seek His exoneration. He "noted the sexual double standards that emerged with the idea that women must be protected while men are free to wander" (Nomani 133). Mansoor Moaddel describes Muslim women status in Islamic society. For him, in Islam women are confined to their homes as they are veiled from head to toe and "considered a source of dangerous temptation and a threat to male celibacy, endowed with a lower aptitude, and dependent on men" (109).

In order to maintain discipline and harmony in Muslim community, Nomani asserts that there should be no punishment for women as well if they commit adultery in Islam. The act of stoning is itself an inhuman sentence. This punishment would make suffer mother and the child equally. Nomani holds:

Muslim societies would do well to heed modern thinkers who would have us love the soul - both the mother's and the child's - without loving the sin...To punish mothers seemed to me to be only cruel but also a violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (Nomani 222)

Nomani's representation of punishment for adultery is in line with western notion of sentence for '*zina*' crimes and it shows her motive of subscribing to the western agenda. For Appiah, she is a comprador thinker, a westernized scholar who knows "that the distinction is to be made this way" through misrepresentation of Islam (Appiah 347). According to Nomani, if, it is a normal and acceptable code of conduct in the West, why is it a punishable offence in Islam? She states:

I wanted to raise him (Nomani's son) in an environment . . . in which we both acknowledge that he might have sex before he was married Over the ages,

healthy relations between men and women have been repressed in the name of religion. (Nomani 170)

Rather the punishment for *zina* is outdated. In accordance with Amina Wadud and Nomani's view of Islamic feminism, Mehran Tamadonfar is of the opinion that with the passage of time when Islamic society evolves in order to keep pace with the world, law making and imposing authorities should bring some positive change in laws rather than sticking to the same out dated legislative. Tamadonfar views that

[b]oth the inadequacy of Islamic laws for modern governments and their inconsistencies with modern-day issues have left leaders of Muslim countries with little choice but to incorporate modern, largely western, legal theories and principles into the traditional Islamic ones. (205)

Moderate thinkers consider westernized Islamic laws as the only way to create tolerance, peace and solidarity.

Wahhabism is the leading sect in Saudi Arabia that defines all rules and regulations of most of the Islamic states. Some of the ideologies and rules of this group are wrong when they "departed more than most from the original teachings of the Prophet" (Nomani 97). Nomani gets a rule book from Saudi government when she goes to do hajj. This book is all about women's segregation and seclusion by covering them in veils and then making men their masters. Not only this, if women commit sinful act of adultery the punishment is lashing and stoning to death. In agreement with Islamic feminism presented by Amina Wadud, Sanaz Alasti describes that religious laws that are related to the corporal punishment in Islam is now old fashioned. Alasti holds that there are Muslim scholars "who consider the texts relating to hudoud as obsolete and argue that these references have no place in contemporary Muslim societies" (28). For Nomani, acceptance of the sin and shame is far greater punishment than stoning because "when you're not physically stoned for this kind of "crime", you are struggling with a lot of the . . . shame" (Nomani 227).

In Islam, when a Muslim performs hajj all of their sins are washed by the grace of Allah Almighty. Nomani goes to perform hajj in order to repent and to ask for God's forgiveness. Ziba Mir Hussaini quotes Professor M. Hashim Kamali who is a Professor at International Islamic University of Malaysia and teaches law there. In his books *Islamic*

Commercial Law: An Analysis of Features and Options (2000) and *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (1998), he discusses the logic behind Islamic punishments. He illustrates that reason of punishment is to make the sinner leave evil doings. For him, if a person asks for repentance, “there is room for repentance and God’s forgiveness. The objective is not punishment but rather self-reformation and the shunning of evil ways” (Kamali qtd. in Hussaini 28). In this way, Nomani considers herself blameless on the Day of Judgment because she asks for Allah’s mercy.

Modern Muslim thinkers are better than puritan Muslims as these Modern scholars have a soft heart and love for all Muslims irrespective of the sinners and the innocent ones. Noor quotes Professor W. Montgomery Watt who was a Scottish historian and a Professor of Islamic studies at University of Edinburg. Professor Watt views that several Islamic rules are for specific time period and for specific society only. With the passage of time when society changes, the applicability of some of these rules cease whereas, others are continued to apply. What Professor Watt states that: “We seem to have to say that the precise commands which God gives to believers depend on the form of society in which they are living” (Watt qtd. in Noor 105).

Religious scholars who believe in early interpretation of Islamic text and cruel penalties belong to puritanical religious group. Nomani discovers a “job-training shelter” where illegitimate children with their mothers get shelter. She argues that Muslims should “support mothers instead of stoning them...The clerics who condemn mothers to death simply subscribe to the most puritanical interpretation of Islamic law” (Nomani 223). Anyone who commits adultery is sentenced to a savage and barbaric death. According to her, these *zina* laws are brutal and inhumane and should be abandoned. Alasti expresses that lashing and stoning are painful and degrading sentences and are in opposition to Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention against torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. In fact, such punishments are against international laws so they should be stopped. She notes:

Stoning is a kind of punishment that no matter for what reasons or charges is executed; it contradicts the International human right agreements such as Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (2)

Nomani argues that men always blame women as the cause of illegal sex. She asserts that “I saw women are the ones who are condemned for sexual activity, while men are allowed to walk away” and remain blameless (Nomani 173). In order to hold women responsible for a sin, pregnancy can be the proof of adultery. In most cases, men go free and women are put into jail with their babies. It is patriarchy that snatches all rights from women and secludes them as aliens in the society. Irene Oh asserts that in Islam mothers are worthy of “kindest of companionship, even before fathers” (642).

Here, Nomani’s view about sexual ethos of Islam and her depiction of western laws as the only source of freedom for Muslim women seem to be in line with western notion of Muslim women. The way she highlights laws on having children out of wedlock are not representation of liberation. Her intention behind writing a book on Islamic feminism and working on issues like this seem to be subscribing to western agenda of presenting Muslim women as segregated and subjugated beings.

6.2.2 The Legacy of Single Mothers

While describing her dilemma of a single mother, Nomani equates herself with other single mothers in Islam. In his article “Prizing the ‘Otherness’” (1997) Huggan proposes that writers from margins get positive reinforcement in the form of prizes. He holds that: “Literary prizes, do more than reward the significant achievement of a writer; they stake a claim in the right to judge-to legitimize-that writer's work” (1997: 413). These rewards motivate them to write and highlight cultural issues of their homelands to entertain the West. Although, Nomani has not gotten any prize for her writings but as Appiah asserts that being a comprador intellectual and “educated in the Western style”, Nomani focuses her attention to cultural problems of Islamic society to subscribe to western agenda and as a result it seems that she has earned her name and identity as an Islamic feminist (Appiah 346).

The very first woman Nomani talks about is Hajar in Islam or Hagar in Christianity. Nomani views that she is the guiding force on her journey to Saudi Arabia. Hajar was a slave of Abraham and mother of their son Ismail. Due to clashes with Sara, Abraham’s first wife, Abraham was ordered by Almighty Allah to leave Hajar in lonely desert of Mecca. In Mecca when water was finished, Hajar tried to look for it. “Hajar ran seven times

between this place called Safa and another hill called Marwah, searching for water". On her return to her son on eighth trip, Hajar found a spring of water under the feet of her son that he was kicking on the ground while crying. It was Hajar who named the spring as 'Zamzam' (Nomani 92).

Islamic feminists highlight those issues in their work that fascinate their readers. Working on highlighting segregation of and punishment for women who commit adultery in Islamic society, Nomani pens down a new issue in Muslim society to draw readers for her book. In accordance with Graham Huggan's concept of "marketing the margins" Pierre Bourdieu in his thought provoking work *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) asserts that writers from formerly colonized countries write about their culture. In fact, Bourdieu's focus "is on the various ways in which writers accumulate cultural capital" that in turn help them receive appreciation and popularity (42). In order to get fame and identity as an Islamic feminist, Nomani writes about Muslim women's marginalization and seclusion. Hajar was a courageous woman. As a single mother, Hajar gave Nomani strength to stand face to face with the world. When Hajar's husband was going to leave her in abandoned land of Mecca she tried to convince her master husband Abraham not to leave her in a deserted land but when he told her that it was God's command, she stopped pleading him. She had her strong belief in God who would do no harm to her and her son.

It was God who gave her sturdiness to be courageous and challenge a Prophet's authority. She came to know that she had to live all by her own so she stopped requesting her husband who was not an ordinary man but a messenger of Almighty Allah. She lived, survived and took good care of her son in an uninhabited land. Almighty Allah did not leave her alone. To see her courage, Almighty Allah had transformed this isolated desert into a populated city of Mecca. For Nomani, Hajar lived alone four thousand years ago and faced discrimination in man-made world and now Nomani faces same circumstances. Like Hajar, Nomani is a single mother and the father of her son abandons her as Ismail's father did. She has to cope with all challenges of the world that she will face while raising her son. She struggles the same way as Hajar did for the survival of her son. Hajar suffered due to patriarchy of that time and Nomani is suffering because of same dominant male members of her society. Nomani idealizes Hajar:

She had the courage to decide to raise her son by herself... Her life story had special meaning to me, abandoned by my baby's father. She gave me courage in my decision to raise my son alone. (Nomani95)

This courage helps Nomani to fight hostile forces of her society. For Nomani, the relation between a child and its mother is very strong as it is very difficult to take care of every need of a child. It is only the mother who can understand and feel the needs and requirements of her child. That is why, a mother cannot leave her child alone and both mother and child should not be separated from each other in the name of worldly punishments. She states that the Prophet advised a companion of his that it was his mother who deserved his love and care the most. Saneya Saleh, in agreement with Amina Wadud's Islamic feminism, regards that the Prophet (PBUH) always gives women importance. At one-point the Prophet (PBUH) says, "Paradise lies at the feet of mothers" (36). Nomani is of the view that society that is domineered by men do not mention services and sacrifices made by women. Although, Hajar's hardships and anguish while raising her son is greater than Abraham's and but she is nowhere in Islamic history and Islamic religious text. Here, Nomani writes:

Hajar should have had revered place in Islam. Instead even her choice of a bride for the son she raised was rejected. She is not mentioned by name in Qur'an. And the history books have always identified her as her son's mother. (Nomani 93)

She was recognized due to her husband and her son's name. the Prophet Muhammad honored her by her son's name. On the other hand, Muslims remember and pay tribute to Abraham for building Ka'bah during hajj.

Every year millions of pilgrims follow her path on mounts of Safa and Marwah to credit and honor her distress but her name and the incident is known to very few Muslims. It is dominant patriarchy who does not accept achievement of any Muslim woman. That is why they have erased her name from the pages of history. Subscribing to the western notion of Islamic feminism, what Trible and Russel write in their book *Hagar, Sara, and Their Children* (2006) is that Hajar's story is important for all women irrespective of religion who are victim of patriarchal system of society. Women, whether they are Muslims or belong to any other religion, who suffer due to segregation on gender or racial basis, can

relate themselves with this courageous woman Hajar (Trible and Russell 164, my paraphrase).

Hajar is an inspiration for all segregated Muslim women as she decided to come out of her alienation in a dominant patriarchal system where only male member of the family was the head. She made a choice and lived with her son alone. Nomani considers Hajar's story as the most important story of Qur'an because it gives strength to down trodden women who suffer due to gender discrimination. Her decision to take a stand against odds of patriarchy is unique at that time.

Hajar's struggle for the search of water is not simply a rummage, it is an exploration of water of life, a life all by herself, a life without any fetter. Similarly, the birth of Nomani's son gives Nomani a new life and a goal. Hajar's "story is timeless and universal and gives strength to all women and men who make lonely choices in life and who face alienation for those choices" (Nomani 95). Describing Hajar's courage as a guiding force Trible and Russel assert that women who face subjugation must have their strong belief and nerve: "to venture out of the security of the known into the insecurity of the unknown" and have the spirit to bring into life "a new world from which the injustices and inequities that separate men from women, class from class, and race from race, have been eliminated" (164). Nomani has such courage as her sufferings give her a lesson to stand proudly to face the world.

Hajar denounced tradition and trusted in Almighty Allah. Nomani chooses religion as Hajar did many years before. Nomani considers herself better than puritan Muslims who follow tradition and impose constraints on innocent people. For Nomani, both Hajar and she are innocent but they seek Allah's mercy when patriarchy abandoned them. For Nomani, Abraham is "a deadbeat dad, sacrilegious and irreverent" who like Nomani's baby's father did not care for his son Ishmael (Nomani 98). In an article Amina Wadud also calls Abraham "the deadbeat dad" because he left Hajar in the uninhabited desert of Mecca. Here, Wadud knows that patriarchy and tradition did not allow Abraham to take care of his only son. Hajar was a slave and when she gave birth to a son, Sara could not tolerate her and as a result to comfort his wife and to carry out God's order, Abraham, like

ordinary husbands and fathers, left his wife “in the desert to fend for herself and her child” where she ran out of water (Wadud Hajar: of the desert n.p.).

Nomani draws similarities between Hajar and herself. Hajar struggled a lot to find water for her son. She was sincere to her son and trusted Almighty Allah to the core of her heart. It was this belief that was answered in the form of ‘Zamzam’. In the same way, Nomani asks for a true and easy life for her son. She does not believe in worldly standards of goodness and meanness. She regards universal values that define a person. For her these values are present in her and it is enough for her to make herself and her son legitimate. She opines:

It is defined by the core universal values of what it means to be a good person. I went through that struggle. And that is how I became legitimate. The sincerity of Hajar’s heart allowed her to find her zamzam...God knew her sincerity and answered her prayers. (Nomani 100)

Elyse Semerdjian in her book *Off the Straight Path: Illicit Sex, Law, and Community in Ottoman Aleppo* (2008) explains that in contradiction with Islamic text Muslim judges, in Ottoman Aleppo, went for lenient sentences especially for crimes like illegal sex. Changes in law on adultery crimes helped Muslim judges in “commutation of the mandated punishment for hadud crimes” (al-Qattan 120). This shows that Muslims of that time preferred human value on man-made artificial world.

6.2.3 The Status Quo

Imposing restrictions on women and subjugating them has nothing to do with the notion of giving protection to women. The Prophet (PBUH) was a very humble, merciful and forgiving for everyone especially for women. He treated men and women irrespective of gender bias. Judith E. Tucker observes that in traditional Islam, laws represent that women are inferior to men and sometimes show gender bias against women in executing punishments. Tucker writes that

Although, the texts of law privileged men and in some cases sanctioned differential treatment of men and women, women's use of the courts gave them a platform to defend their rights and seek justice. (Tucker 34)

Nomani observes that there are ‘hadud’ laws in many Muslim countries to restrain women. These laws control every aspect of women’s life from their sexuality to their status at worshipping place. Although, Saudi Arabia is famous as a country where women face severe segregation and seclusion but in Mecca Nomani becomes amazed to see mingling of men and women without any gender barrier. In the holy Mosque of Haram, during hajj all men and women stand shoulder to shoulder with each other in prayer. It seems that no gender discrimination is observed in Mosque of Haram.

Muslim men impose restraints on women in the name of religious boundaries. Women cannot perform hajj alone. When Nomani decides to go on hajj in India the compulsion of her ‘mahram’ does not allow her to perform this duty. Traditional Islam thrusts this restriction on women. Nomani travels alone to different parts of the world and rides a motor bike freely in India. Nomani notes that

it was my vehicle of empowerment. I rode Hero Honda Splendor into the Himalayas, having cut my long hair and wearing pants and jackets...But I couldn’t fly into the holy cities of my religion. (Nomani 30)

In fact, no religious text in Islam supports this law. Pinar Ilkkaracan in her article “Women, Sexuality, and Social Change in the Middle East and the Maghreb” (2002) describes that cultural practices in Muslim societies and lack of knowledge of Islamic holy scriptures is the key factor in gender discrimination against women in Muslim countries. Due to absence of information on religion, sentences like honor crimes, the stoning of women accused of adultery, and virginity tests are made laws in several Islamic countries. Ilkkaracan states that this absence of knowledge “Create[s] extreme form of control over women and their sexuality by incorporating and universalizing the worst customary practices in the name of religion” (Ilkkaracan754). Such practices lead to women’s segregation in Islamic society.

Another thing that is compulsory for women in Saudi Arabia is veil for women. They cannot come out of their houses without a veil. This veil is the representation of women’s isolation in Muslim communities. In line with Amina Wadud’s view of Islamic feminism, Abdessamad Dialmy and Allon J. Uhlmann observe that in Arab society, struggle to turn people back towards Islam again starts with veiling of women. “[T]he movement of Islamization of Arab society begins initially with the Islamization of the

woman's body through the call for the veil” (Dialmy and Uhlmann 17). Although there is a relaxation of hijab for hajjis, if even a single hair comes out of hijab, it is taken as clear defiance of religion. Obligation of mahram is so strict that if hajji women want to go out of their accommodation, they need a male mahram to accompany them.

Male oriented-exegesis of religious text decides the way of and place for women worship. On coming back to her home, Nomani tries hard to offer prayer in the main hall of Morgantown mosque as women use to do in Mecca but every time, she faces opposition. No man, except her father, is willing to let her pray in the male main hall. Graham Huggan in his article “The Postcolonial Exotic” (1994) asserts that “Exotic artifacts from other cultures circulate as commodities within the global economy-it is precisely their availability that renders them exotic” (1994: 26). The portrayal of women alienation in Nomani’s work classifies her work as an exotic artifact and the availability of her book in metropolitan centers of the world transforms her work into commodity. Nomani craves to offer prayer in the main hall of Morgantown Mosque. Her disgust for tradition of Islamic society is apparent. She wants Muslims quit these cultural norms and wishes to introduce reformation. Nomani wants to attend Islamic study sessions while sitting in men’s hall but no one cares for her. Rather men in the mosque try their best to throw her out of the mosque.

Nomani struggles to find a better worshipping place for women because the places reserved for women are dirty, constricted and narrow. Instead of enjoying their worship women feel disgust at such areas. On the other hand, men’s hall is spacious, properly lit and clear. Men at Morgantown Mosque consider Nomani a ‘fitna’ for their spirituality. They feel themselves spiritually strong at Mecca and weak in America when Nomani asks them let her pray in the main hall without any gender barrier while following the custom in Mecca. Their effort to intimidate her and her father remain futile when she gives them proofs from religious text. Pinar Ilkkaracan is of the view that in traditional Muslim society men and women are different beings. In comparison to men’s rational and controlled nature women are impulsive and lack self-control. This difference in women’s behavior can lead to a destruction in society if they remain unbridled. Ilkkaracan states that, “men are rational and capable of self-control and women are emotional and lacking self-control. Female sexuality, if uncontrolled, could lead to social chaos (*fitna*)” (757).

In the early days of Islam, the Prophet did not impose restrictions on women. Women worked as businesswomen and adopted other professions as well. Khadijah, the wife of the Prophet owned her own business. Being a woman, she sent her proposal to the Prophet herself and was not shy of it. Nomani holds:

Muhammad was twenty-five and single. Khadija was forty and a widow. She had no fear about making the first move, however, and he had no fear of a working woman who was more successful than himself. (118)

Nomani's representation of Muslim women's isolation in her memoir symbolizes her motive of publicizing culture of Islamic society \in international market. Her motive results in transforming her writing into commodity as Huggan proposes that when cultural products are accessible in international market these products are transformed into "exotic" items and commodities (1994: 27). According to Nomani, today, Muslim women face lots of constraints and are tortured and even killed if they claim rights as Khadija's. They cannot run a business but forced to do petty jobs in Saudi Arabia. After marriage with the Prophet, Khadijah served as prophet's comforter and sometimes "as the Prophet Muhammad's boss" (Nomani 119).

Aisha was another wife of the Prophet who seemed to be the first journalist. Although she did not write for any newspaper or magazine but the record of *hadiths* by her is still preserved and has a great value in Islamic jurisprudence. While collecting *hadiths* "she met with male scribes in the mosque" (Nomani 140). The Prophet himself was the first feminist who gave equal rights and respect to women. There was a hospital in the Mosque of the Prophet where a woman provided her services to treat injured soldiers. The Prophet never imposed limitations on women to offer prayer. Nomani writes:

Qur'an gave women rights of inheritance and divorce centuries before women gained such right in the West During the Prophet's time and for some years hereafter, women prayed in the Prophet's mosque with no partition between them and the men. (Nomani 138)

At one occasion, the Prophet (PBUH) came to know about some men who seated themselves near a beautiful woman the Prophet did not stop the woman from offering prayer in the mosque, rather he ticked the man off.

Muslim men do not follow teachings and laws of Islam in their true sense. They alienate women by bounding them in the restraint of veil. Muslims in other countries honor Saudi Arabian rules as standard. During hajj, instead of veil, women have relaxation to wear only hijab. Then why is it made a compulsion outside the sacred place. Amina Wadud is of the opinion that there is no religious text that makes veiling mandatory. Modesty is a virtue to be followed by both men and women equally. Islam gives importance to the “virtue of modesty and demonstrates it through the prevailing practices” (Wadud 10). The Prophet (PBUH) built Islamic society on egalitarian basis, it is male oriented interpretation that has brought changes in the basic law of equality in Islam. Aihwa Ong approves of Amina Wadud’s Islamic feminism and argues that in Malay culture women are inferior and submissive as compared to men who are custodians of women of the whole village because they exercise self-control, cautiousness, and sensibility. For Ong in Malay Islamic communities, women are

full of animalistic lust [and their] . . . code of morality was often explained in terms of men's greater rationality and self-control (akal) and women's greater susceptibility to animalistic lust. (Ong 261)

Due to these qualities they cannot lead a clan or state. Men create boundaries to control women’s sexuality but this segregation and seclusion breed more sins. Anything that is hidden generates more curiosity as compared to uncovered objects. Same is the case with veiled women who seem more attractive to men and as a result, can cause a chaos. In her article “This Battlefield Called My Body: Warring Over the Muslim Female” (2014), Jameelah Medina, in agreement with Amina Wadud’s notion of Islamic feminism views that forcing Muslim women to wear veil indicates that in Islam outward appearance of love for one’s religion is more important than respecting and loving it as a result of fear of hell. It also implies that pleasing the world is more important than making Almighty Allah happy. She states that “When a woman or girl feels forced, shamed, or scared into wearing the hijab, it may become virtually meaningless” (Medina 877).

While struggling to give women their Islamic right to offer prayer in the mosque, Nomani tries to avail every possibility. She phones Ibrahim Hooper who is one of the founders of Council on American-Islamic Relations for his help in this matter. At that time

the man is standing in front of French Embassy in America and is protesting against French Government ban on headscarf in Public schools. Ibrahim Hooper talks to Nomani but never responds to her request to provide his help. For Nomani, “The Muslims world was galvanized to protect the rights of women to wear scarves on their heads” (Nomani 293). These men get infuriated when they hear any restriction from Non-Muslims on them especially that belongs to their power structure. But they do not pay attention to anti-Islamic issues that Muslim practice in their own community and that stop women from getting their religious rights.

Muslim men seem to get mental satisfaction to exercise their control and power on women. It is not about women’s modesty and preventing men from falling prey to women’s sexuality. For Nomani observes that state laws are meant to control women and to make them submissive. It is not women’s sexuality that men want to control to avoid them from any ‘fitna’, it is in fact “the status quo” that men want to maintain. “It was a battle those seeking equity and those preserving the status quo” (Nomani 150). To uphold this, men take help from traditions to impose boundaries on women. When Nomani wants to run between the mounts of Safa and Marwah other women stop her from doing so. Whereas in the early days of Islam women had to run as Hajar did. Latter interpretation and male authority on it is responsible for these restrictions. Nomani opines:

The legacy of male rule after the Prophet’s time was becoming clear to me: the spirit of Muhammad had been betrayed by centuries of men who instituted rules to protect their power. The women of the first ummah in Medina took full part in its public life, and some, according to Arab custom, fought alongside the men in battle. (Nomani 141)

Although, Islamic holy scriptures like Qur’an speaks of egalitarianism but these days most religious practices are based on “patriarchal misinterpretation” (Mernissi, 1987; Sabbah, 1984; An-Naim, 1990; Ahmed, 1991, 1992; Hassan, n.d.; Wadud, 1999, qtd. in Ilkcaracan 755).

Constraints on women is only due to the status quo that men want to enjoy. They always desire to be superior and for that they take help from anti-Islamic laws to make women subjugated and inferior. In Morgantown mosque, a student gives a Friday sermon

that supports women's isolation. He distributes books on laws of Islam that narrates that beating of women is allowed in Islam. Adila Abushraf proposes that Islam is not responsible for women alienation, whereas, "discriminatory traditions, and their reinstatement in policy practices" result in low status of women in Muslim countries (Abusharaf 715).

The same student who shows his aggression and hatred towards Muslim women, in another Friday sermon, calls unchaste women "worthless" and narrates a story of a young man and a girl who have illegal sexual relationship. At the time of marriage, the man chooses a virgin over his girlfriend as she is worthless for him and "didn't deserve his respect" (Nomani 302). Nomani argues that what about the man who is equally involved and responsible for the sin. There is no charge on the man but the girl is criticized and left alone. There are double standards for men and women in Islamic society. Nomani writes about other so-called Muslim men. She writes that

I regularly saw the man from my mosque and his brother at the club, accepting cases of beer His brother was a young man who came to Friday prayers in a luxury convertible and quietly slipped in and out of the mosque in a traditional gown. That night he was dressed in jeans and a T-shirt, and the women lined up outside the bar were wearing micro-skirts. (Nomani 344)

For her, this is Wahhabi version of Islam that is accountable for women's isolation and men committing sins move around free of any charge.

6.2.4 Triumphs

Nomani wants to start a journey to release Muslim women from meaningless shackles of tradition that are considered to be important part of religion. In order to raise awareness among Muslims living in USA and other parts of the world, Nomani writes articles in *Times Magazine* and *Washington Post* about her alienation and suffering that she faces as a single mother in the mosque while trying to enter the mosque from main gate and offering prayer behind men. Lionnet, in line with Huggan's notion of "marketing the margins", asserts that in order to become famous, writers from Global South always looking for new themes "that better represent the particularisms of the communities about which they write" (Lionnet 19). Nomani is aware of the genre of literature that is popular among westerners. It seems

that she is very much cautious while choosing the topic for her memoir- a genre that is blindly admired by western reading public. Appiah suggests that culturally othered goods that are “‘genuinely’ traditional piece[s]”, are attractive to Europeans help in gaining fame for the writers of the margins (Appiah 346).

In response to her articles, Nomani receives appreciation. She wants to build a community on egalitarian foundations. Moderate Muslims assure their support for the holy cause as Asra Nomani is fighting to get women’s Islamic right to hold their heads high and to worship in the mosque in a respectable way. Due to her struggle, not only does the modern Muslim world but also non-Muslims come to know about the discrimination she receives at the mosque and want to release women in Islam from senseless unnecessary restraints. She writes that: “To my surprise, I received about fifty e-mails from Muslims expressing their support” (Nomani 226). Moreover, “A Muslim associate producer from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation” and a CNN producer invite her in their morning shows to develop consciousness for Muslim women’s rights among westerners. Nomani expresses her ideas and spreads her message to the world.

Subscribing to Islamic feminism presented by Amina Wadud, Nomani tries her best to provoke Muslim as well as non-Muslim world to observe her plight. Saneya Saleh demonstrates that women’s segregation and seclusion have nothing to do with Islam. Social norms and culture of pre-Islamic societies are responsible for current low status of Muslim women. Here, she asserts that Muslim women’s alienation in an Islamic community is due to “extra-Islamic traditions which are Middle Eastern and involve Middle Eastern societies generally” (Saleh 35). When Nomani talks to Saudi ambassador about harsh and hateful sermon of one of the Saudi students, he tells her that Saudi government does not allow anyone to seclude women in mosques. Rather they should offer prayer behind men without any separation or curtain. He continues:

You know what I tell these students? he said. They had a choice to come to study in America. They could have studied in Pakistan or one of the Gulf countries, but they chose America. If they don’t like it here, I tell them, ‘There are three flights a day back to Saudi Arabia’. (Nomani 268)

Due to her struggle for Muslim women, Nomani faces harsh criticism from traditional Muslims. They call her a western agent instead of a Muslim. She even gets death threats from extremists but she remained determined and does not lose hope.

Nomani's determination and hard work finally bring her success. When she writes to Islamic council about her alienation in the mosque, they send a written document to the committee of the mosque to allow her and other women to enter the mosque from the front gate. Islam always regards women as respectful, whereas, patriarchy in Muslim societies considers them inferior. Saleh argues that for the Prophet (PBUH) instead of worldly riches, "The most valuable thing in the world is a virtuous wife" (Saleh 36). It seems that Nomani's struggle succeeds in raising awareness and understanding among Muslims that may stop Muslim women's segregation in Islamic society. Due to her hard work, a renowned Muslim scholar Professor Khaled Abou El Fadl calls her at his home. He is a different Muslim intellectual. He is not an ignorant person but has gotten his education from Egypt and Kuwait in Islamic jurisprudence. Being a modern scholar, Abou Fadl approves of moderate Islam and Islamic egalitarianism. He believes in real Islam where traditions, culture, and interpretation by patriarchy has no place.

When it was time for prayer, 'the Professor' did another remarkable thing. He prayed with his son on his left side and his wife on his right side. Naheed, my mother, and I lined up behind them He believed in the intrinsic right of women to stand on a par with men. (Nomani 352)

Due to her and other modern Muslims, Islamic world starts to change. In the West several mosques begin to give respect and equal place to women. For Nomani, an Islamic revolution has started where Muslim women get similar rights. Even a non-Muslim observes her struggle and told that: "You're an agent of change. You are a leader of progress that is inevitable" (Nomani 370). While discussing embracing of Islam by American women, Rahat Raja opines that in America, women do not get equal rights to men whereas, "Islam is not oppressive to women" (Raja 9). According to Nomani, the change in Muslim women's position in society does not stop here. Nomani, with the help of other courageous Muslim women, organizes a Friday prayer where Amina Wadud leads

mixed gender prayer. This is not an easy task as Nomani and other women get death threats. It seems that she is gaining success in producing a consciousness among Muslims.

6.2.5 Crossing the Boundaries

What Nomani wants to be accepted in Islam are forbidden actions. She wants to reformulate Islamic laws in a way to legitimize illegal sex. Her intention to bring reformation to Islam is apparent when she expresses the idea of no penalty for ‘*zina*’. After committing a major sin, Nomani is still not afraid of hell. During hajj, she states that “I could only repeat the first half of the prayer. I just couldn’t get motivated by fear of this concept called hell” (Nomani 87). Her words represent that for her, hell has no real existence. It is just a concept to frighten away Muslims and to force them to be on the right path that Islam describes. Huggan proposes that writers from formerly colonized countries always eager to look for “culturally ‘othered’ literary/cultural works” to be produced for western public (2001: 138).

Nomani promotes Amina Wadud’s notion of Islamic feminism where Wadud argues that “Most men have at one time or another heard, or perhaps even believed, that women are "inferior" and "unequal" to men” (1999: 7). But for Qur’an men and women are equal in every aspect. In order to please the West, as Appiah holds, Nomani highlights “aesthetic tradition” of her forefathers’ homeland (Appiah 337). For her, veil is representation of suppression. To save Muslim women from this repression, veil should be banned. She holds that: The *nikab* is the most hard-core covering that Muslim women use...they looked like ninjas (Nomani 87). In their book *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (2007), Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin define Appiah’s concept of a comprador intelligentsia as a citizen of formerly colonized country who belongs to elite class and identifies him/herself with colonizers. For them, comprador intelligentsias are those “academics, creative writers and artists – whose independence may be compromised by a reliance on, and identification with, colonial power” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 47). In this way, it seems that a comprador works for colonizers. Nomani appears to be a comprador scholar as she agrees with western notion of Muslim women’s alienation in Islamic society. The way the West criticizes Islamic laws Nomani does the same thing.

Westernized Muslim writers seem to in opposition of Islamic jurisprudence. Nomani criticizes every law of Islam and calls these rules as “God’s so-called laws” (Nomani 184). She does not believe in intuition and judges every law of Islam through reasons. Nomani attacks Abraham’s blind faith in Allah Almighty when he left Hajar in the inhabited land of Mecca. He knew that Mecca was an uninhabited land where no food and water was available but he left his wife and his son alone there. She also analyses critically the act of slaughtering his son Ishmael when he did not get any order from Allah Almighty through revelation and relied on his dream only.

It’s said that Allah told Abraham to sacrifice his son, now grown So, Abraham put blade to Ishmael’s throat Abraham had passed this test of courage and would be recorded in history as brave. Where is the courage in blind faith? (Nomani 186)

Criticism on Ibrahim and admiring Hajar are the ideas that are new for westerners. Nomani finds faults with basic rights of women in Islamic community especially when men even restrict women from worshipping.

The concept of Muslim women’s segregation where they do not get permission to pray according to their religion, is surprising for Europeans. Being a journalist, Nomani is likely to know the fact very well that goods and artifacts from peripheries are sources of attraction for westerners. Not only does she contact scholars and intellectuals like Amina Wadud, Professor Abou El Fadl, Ingrid Matson, and Godlas from western academia to publicize her work but also takes help from them in her struggle. While conducting mixed gender prayer, Nomani performs the “role of muezzin” and was not covering her head as women are instructed to do in Islam (Sharify-Funk and Hadad 42). Graham Huggan in his article “Prizing ‘Otherness’ A Short History of Booker” (1997) quotes Gayatri Spivak who explains that Western educational institutes contribute in publicizing of cultural products from global south. She holds that: “Western (Euro-American) education system...is increasingly invested in the promotion and certification of "marginal" products” (Spivak qtd. in Huggan 1997: 412).

Other sources like comments from leading newspapers and intellectuals from western academia also help in publicizing process. The back cover of Nomani’s book

contains reviews from editors of major newspapers of the USA. While talking about different institutions that render the process of commodification, Huggan argues:

Another is the metropolitan publishing industry, which has placed its stake in the postcolonial as a convenient device for the merchandising of exotic-culturally "othered" goods. (1997: 413)

The Washington Post appreciates her book in the following words: “An engrossing overview of Islam’s internal debates as seen through the eyes of a young single mother wrestling with her faith” (Nomani Back cover). This comment represents that apparently Islam seems to be a peaceful religion but Nomani’s book gives real picture of Islam where a single mother needs to struggle hard for her survival in an Islamic society. She has also included reviews from *Publisher’s Weekly*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Booklist*. Huggan quoted Wendy Waring who is of the view that along with blurbs, acknowledgement page also plays a vital role. On that page, publishers give description about the work that “render the process of cultural production visible” in such a way that buyer considers the book real life story of the writer and has no choice but to buy the book (Waring qtd. in Huggan 164).

In order to become famous and earn an identity, Nomani wants to have a consensus of all Muslims to change Islamic laws of punishment especially for ‘zina’. For her, these penalties are inhuman and should be eradicated in this modern world. Her motive to highlight western agenda is visible when she wishes to find a convenient life for Muslims where there is no fear of punishment and reward. Dilrik states: “My neighbors in Farmville, Virginia, are no match in power for the highly paid, highly prestigious postcolonial intellectuals at Columbia, Princeton” (Dilrik 343). For Arif Dilrik, through this representation of hard life for Muslim women Nomani, as an intellectual, seems to achieve her goal of earning power and recognition.

In this process publishers also help her. Nomani seems to be aware of the role of printing presses. That is why she gets her book published by a renowned publishing house “Harper Collins”. In his article “The Postcolonial Exotic” (1994) Graham Huggan argues that publishers are acquainted with “the metropolitan marketing of postcolonial literature” (1994: 26). That is why Nomani’s book is sold on high price.

6.3 Conclusion

According to Amina Wadud's concept of Islamic feminism, men and women "are given the same or equal consideration" in Islam (Wadud 1999: 15). In the early days of Islam, there was equal status for both genders. It is later patriarchal exegesis and cultural influence that are responsible for current isolation of Muslim women in an Islamic society. This notion of Islamic feminism is western representation of Muslim women. For Graham Huggan, literary writings from margins attract "market reader" in the West. He further states that

the text itself may demonstrate awareness of the implications of its own commercial packaging, playing of the expectations of the 'market reader' by providing a series of internal paratextual commentaries or translations of its own. (2001: 165)

Nomani portrays the image of Muslim women's segregation in her book *SAM* (2007) and subscribes to western agenda. Throughout her writing Nomani tries to portray Muslim women as subjugated members of society. Patriarchal dominant society restraints them in the strict boundaries of veil and control their sexuality through giving them barbaric punishments like stoning to death and lashing them. Nomani is of the view that Muslim women do not get freedom to worship according to Islam which is their religious right. Nomani wants that all sentences for adultery crimes should be eradicated from an Islamic community and women should be given full freedom to worship and lead in their own way. In agreement with Appiah's notion of "comprador intelligentsia," this representation of women (in Islam) has "the influence of the Western world" and likely to help her earning fame and reputation as an Islamic feminist (341). Huggan's view of "marketing the margins" seems to be applicable on Nomani's writing when she delineates Muslim women's alienation in her work as an issue of Global South. In this process, western academia and printing presses help her a lot and transform her writing into commodity. Flattering remarks from editors of renowned newspaper and academic personnel help her writing become famous.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In the light of Islamic feminism presented by various theorists, with special emphasis on Amina Wadud, this research answers research questions posed in chapter one. Since I have used textual analysis as a research method to analyse my primary texts, textual analysis is in accordance with qualitative research. In this way, my research is exploratory and interpretive. In order to find answer to my research questions, I have used Amina Wadud's Islamic feminist theory and Graham Huggan's notion of "marketing the margins". Along with these theories, I have also incorporated Anthony Appiah's concept of "comprador intelligentsia". I have employed Catherine Belsey's Textual Analysis as a research method. By utilizing above-mentioned theories and research method in analysis of texts in hand, I have been able to answer my research questions.

My basic research concern has been to look for the selected Muslim women writers' grand design that they utilize to represent women in Islam. I wanted to look for strategies and tactics these life writers use to represent Muslim women in western media. I also wanted to search how representation of Muslim women has turned to be consumable and questionable. I continued with the concept that the delineation of Muslim women as alienated member of Islamic society seems to unveil these writers as comprador intelligentsia.

In order to answer my research questions and vindicate thesis statement, I have analysed my primary text using abovementioned theories and research method. I started off with the presumption that Muslim women writers present women in Islam as alienated and isolated members of Muslim community. In this representation, these women writers subscribe to western concept of Muslim women. Literary writings that present this portrayal of women in Islam become commodity. In the process of commodification, western academia and publishing houses play a crucial role. As a consequence, these women writers earn an identity as Muslim intellectuals and Islamic feminists. At the same

time, these Muslim women writers get economic stability in the West. Their recognition as scholars and Islamic feminists is open to question and that has provoked my investigation.

After analyzing all three texts while applying theories of Islamic feminism and postcoloniality, I have been able to answer my research questions. From the very first chapter of my research, I have attended to the question of Muslim women writers' identity as Islamic feminists while they are in agreement with western notion of Muslim women representation. In the following paragraphs I have summed up the finding of this investigation with a foregrounding of my research questions that I have changed into affirmative statements and italicized them.

Muslim women writers living in America and European countries present Muslim women as segregated and secluded members of Islamic society. In order to answer my controlling question, I have addressed them from the very beginning of this investigation. Criticizing forced veil from Iranian government, Azadeh Moaveni highlights Muslim women's seclusion in male dominant society in an Islamic country. In *LJ*, Moaveni brings Muslim women's segregation in patriarchal authoritative society into spotlight in the form of veil that is the only dress code for them. Government has employed different forces to coerce women to wear veil. This is what Malina Dunk describes: "dark brooding mullahs come to spoil the party and chastise women into silent masses of black" (Dunk 252). Women in Iran cannot even wear sandals without socks in summer and lipstick in public. The *basij*, *komiteh*, and clergy punish men and women on any violation of strict governmental laws. Women face severe restrictions in the Islamic regime of Iran where their religion grants them full freedom to move and work in a society.

While searching for a life partner for herself, Shelina Zahra Janmohamed describes difference between a man and woman in Islamic societies. Traditional Muslim families probe girls who are a human being out of this world for their ordinary qualified, ugly, and fat boys. Girls' families need to be down to earth and cannot send proposal of their daughters first, otherwise they will be taken as "desperate" (Janmohamed 47). "Nice girls" cannot adopt professions and hobbies of their choice for themselves because these lines of work and pastime activities are boys' (Janmohamed 130). Whether it is cooking in the kitchen, serving mother-in-law and rest of the boy's family, cleaning house, doing laundry,

taking care of her children or maintaining a happy relationship with husband no matter what, girls have to be perfect in every way.

Women prayer in mosque behind men without any barrier has become a matter of status quo for Muslim men in America. Standing against dominant Muslim patriarchy, Nomani fights to get women's right to worship in mosques at a clean respectable place. In order to keep Muslim women from participating in men's sphere, male authoritative Islamic community impose non-religious constraints on them. In Mecca, men and women perform hajj and other religious rituals altogether while standing in same rows. On the contrary, women face alienation and segregation at mosques in other Islamic societies. Other religions like Hinduism privilege women because these religions have goddesses. But in Islamic culture, as Nomani holds, great Muslim women like Eve, Hagar, Khadija and Aisha who should have been there on the pages of history are nowhere (Nomani 91, 94). Courage of these women is a leading example for every Muslim woman.

Hadud laws supposedly help avert illicit sexual relationship but these laws are meant to impose sexual control over women. In the case of any misconduct, authorities blame and punish women whereas men go free. Nomani's boyfriend does not have courage to marry her and leaves her alone when she conceives their baby. Being a Muslim and staying in an Islamic country, Nomani has worst night mares of her life as a single mother because if anyone had caught her, she would have been stoned to death. On the other hand, father of her son lives a free live without the fear of being caught due to adultery.

The representation of Muslim women by Muslim women writers is consumable and questionable as these writers do not seem to be categorized as intellectuals or scholars. What Moaveni wants is a freedom that westerners enjoy. Before Khomeini's reign, women wear western dresses and there was no constraint on mixed gathering and drinking alcohol. Moaveni yearns for independence of this kind. Moaveni's relaxation in a Hindu worship and her hatred towards Islamic way of living reveal her motive of presenting only a darker side of an Islamic community. On the other hand, many Iranians welcome Islamic revolution to end up anti-Islamic culture from Iran.

Putting forward an identity for Muslim women of traditional Islamic families, Janmohamed herself enjoys full freedom but eager to present a gloomy picture. In every possible way,

in line with Islamic feminism presented by Amina Wadud, Janmohamed's whole emphasis is on reinterpretation of Holy Scriptures of Islam. For Janmohamed, people distort religious laws to benefit themselves. In order to get her rights that Islam bestows on her, she tries to practice Islam in its true sense but she is silenced by traditional women. Headscarf is a matter of choice for her because it hides individual persona. Traditional Muslim families want to see docile, submissive and coward women who do not stand in face to face with men. Her view of Muslim women is in accordance with western notion of women in Islam.

Legitimizing her unfathered son, Nomani puts her force on bringing reformation in Islam. Her whole strength revolves round getting no offence to have children out of wedlock. Nomani intends to modify Islamic laws in such a way that women get authorization of leadership over men. That is why, she struggles for, manages and persuades Amina Wadud to lead a mixed gender Friday prayer in New York. For this, she even does not care for death threats from extremists.

Muslim women writers produce literary writings for their careerist purpose as immigrant citizens and want to earn prestige as Islamic feminists. All of my primary texts, as Graham Huggan asserts, are "ethnic performances, intellectualised exotica, a range of culturally 'othered' styles and goods" from the peripheries that attract westerners (2001: 68). After 9/11, representation of Muslim women as estranged beings became a marketable phenomenon in America and European countries. Taking advantage of this truth, Azadeh Moaveni writes her first memoir that highlights an important issue of peripheries that is Muslim women's subjugation in an Islamic regime. In Iran women cannot move in male dominant circle freely. They have to cover themselves in thick layers of veils.

Similarly, Janmohamed presents traditional Muslim families' way of finding a perfect match for their sons. Here, flawless girls are in search who are master in house chores and can easily accept values of boys' families. Muslim women's alienation is very much apparent when fat, aged, and jobless boys' mothers looking for ideal and faultless girls for their sons. Through the representation of Muslim women's segregation in Islamic society Janmohamed seems to earn a fame of Islamic feminist. Her memoir is sold on high price and helps her earn more in a western country.

In *SAM* Nomani presents women's seclusion through male dominant circle. If a Muslim woman commits a crime, the patriarchal notion of Islamic society does not give her an equal status to men. They impose every possible restriction to stop her from entering a mosque. Nomani tries her best to restore Muslim women's status among Muslim society but men do not let her do so. Nomani's memoir where she reveals Muslim women's subjugation helps her become famous as Muslim feminist. Her book attracts a lot of readers and as a result she gets financial benefits.

Leading publishing houses transform artifacts from global south into commodity. The texts in hand are printed by famous printing presses. Western academia contributes in the process of commodification through reviews and admirable comments that attract "globalized 'market reader'" (Waring 462). The reviews from editors of leading newspapers are there on the front and back covers of these texts that help transforming them in consumable products. These writers, as Appiah remarks, are comprador intellectuals who "produced" writings "for the West" to promote western agenda of portraying Muslim women as secluded gender in male dominant Islamic society (346).

The commodifiability of Muslim women's isolation by chosen women writers rewards them achieve comprador position. Moaveni's intention in presenting only one side of the picture and her craving to live a western way of living in an Islamic regime stand her out as a "comprador intelligentsia" (Appiah 348). Throughout her memoir, Moaveni arraigns coercion of strict dress from Iranian government. She talks very less about positive traits of the Iranian culture rather she displays her hatred and disgust towards her religion that does not allow women to live an autonomous life. This is the scheme of the West that want to present wrong picture of Islam. Moaveni works as a reporter for *Times*. Since she has been working in a leading newspaper, she knows about "ins and outs" of publishing industry where, memoir writing is very famous and holds readers' attention. This life writing makes her known as Muslim feminist.

Shelina Zahra Janmohamed's effort to portray Muslim women's alienation and printing of her book through a non-profit publishing house to contribute in the process of commodification of her memoir seems to help Shelina Zahra Janmohamed get fame and popularity as an Islamic feminist. Instead of depicting a bright side of Islam, Janmohamed

presents a wrong portrayal of her religion. Struggling to subscribe to western motive to disgrace Islam, Janmohamed wants to get economic stability in the West where she can stand out independently. Being a “western-style” thinker, Janmohamed achieves all goals through delineation of Muslim women’s segregation (Appiah 347).

Nomani’s struggle lets her present distorted reality about her religion and seems to categorize her a “comprador intelligentsia” (Appiah 348). In line with concept of Islamic feminism presented by Amina Wadud, Nomani stresses upon reinterpretation of religious text to give women their rights. Consequently, Nomani’s motive to bring forth western agenda is revealed. Her struggle to raise her voice to give Muslim women their rights lets her win an identity as Islamic feminist. Moreover, the selling of her memoir on high price provides her financial stability in the West.

Appiah views that artifacts from peripheries attract western “cultural consumers” as fantasies. After comparing all my primary texts, I have come to my findings that Islam has allured westerners in post 9/11 scenario. Selected Muslim women writers try their best to paint a mis-founded picture of Islam—a misogynist religion where women face segregation and seclusion in male dominant society. This depiction of Islam lets them transform their writings into marketable goods. In line with Graham Huggan’s concept of “marketing the margins”, Moaveni, Janmohamed, and Nomani’s represent “cultural otherness” through delineation of women’s othering as a result of patriarchal notion of Islamic society (2001: 10). For Appiah, postcolonial literature relies on western universities “Western, and the Euro-American publisher and reader” for their publicity (Appiah 348). Intellectuals and thinkers from academia admire the texts in hand in amazingly commendable words. In the process of commodification, publishing houses also carry out an important part. As Wendy Waring views that leading publishers have designed front and back covers of all three texts and edited “paratextual texts” to transform them into consumable products (455). Along with it, leading newspapers like *Times Magazine* and *Washington Post* publish “hyperbolic tributes” about these memoirs that fascinate readers (Huggan 2001: 171). It’s not that every writer from margins get their works famous. These, as Appiah argues, are selected “western-style, western trained group of writers”, who have gotten this privilege and among them Moaveni, Janmohamed, and Nomani are prioritized

(Appiah 348). Consequently, these writers achieve fame as Islamic feminist and financial sturdiness. In my view, comprador position of these writers is questionable.

In the text in hand, at times, selected Muslim women writers' literary writings may work to bring Muslim women's isolation in spotlight and may raise awareness among Muslims. But my research is to highlight their assimilationist purpose to earn prestige and financial benefits. That is why, I have pointed out their western agenda only.

Selected Muslim women writers insist to have an exegesis of Qur'an and Hadiths by women in Islam. Postcolonial writers, while highlighting issues of formerly colonized territories, create binaries of the West and the East, or 'Us and 'Them', Muslim women writers are also creating binaries between male authoritative exegesis and women-oriented interpretation of holy texts of Islam. Men explain sacred text according to their own perception and ignore problems and complications that women face. On the other hand, women try to produce exegesis that is Muslim women-centered only. Interesting thing about women-oriented exegesis is that selected Muslim women writers are insisting to produce an explanation of Qur'an and Hadiths just for their occupational motive. They want to grow "exponentially in prestige" and get an identity for them (Huggan 2001: 107).

In line with Huggan's idea of "marketing the margins," selected Muslim women writers want to achieve an identity as Islamic feminists for them in the West. For this purpose, they produce writings that highlight cultural issues of Global South in the form of Muslim women's subjugation. These life writings of selected Muslim women writers are transformed into commodity. Leading publishing houses and intellectuals help increase their market value. Scholars from academia and editors give appealing comments while reviewing these memoirs that attract reading public. In accordance with Appiah's notion of "comprador intelligentsia," I argue, these selected Muslim women writers are among "western-style, western-trained group of writers and thinkers" who subscribe to western idea of Muslim women representation (Appiah 348).

Further Research Possibilities

Since my research project is about Islamic feminism, it opens possibilities for further research. It has prepared the soil for future researchers to study about Islamic feminists. There are lots of Muslim women writers who write on Islamic feminism like Kecia Ali, Ayesha Chaudhry, Ziba Mir Hussaini, Huda Shaarawi, Zainah Anwar, and Manal al-Sharif. The way Azadeh Moaveni writes, (as analysed in this project), the feasibility of research in Muslim women writers' work is vast. Pakistani American women authors, like Asma Barlas and Riffat Hassan, write on Islamic feminism. These writers can be read as cultural products from the margins with the perspective of Islamic feminism. In addition to the Islamic feminist and postcolonial lens, writings of above-mentioned authors can provide a foundation to describe these writers as comprador scholars. Delineation of Muslim women by Janmohamed and Nomani in their life writings can also be found in Manal al-Sharif's memoir *Daring to Drive: A Saudi Woman's Awakening* (2017). Whenever, one wants to study Islamic feminism practiced by Muslim women writers from peripheries in the back ground of comprador position of those writers, this investigation is going to work as a good references and recommendation.

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