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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01** **Craving Homes in Ila Arab Mehta's Fence**
Metty Joby
-
- 12** **Muslimah Hybrid Identity in Amulya Malladi's
The Sound of Language**
Bandaru.S.S.S.S.K.Seshu.
-
- 29** **To Veil or not to Veil: Tracing the Hijab in
Contemporary Muslimah's Writings**
Neda Parvin Shaikh
-
- 43** **Homesickness in Dur E Aziz Amna's American
Fever**
Khoirotul Attiba, Hasnul Insani Djohar, Putri Savira, Yasmina Shafa
Salsabila
-
- 57** **Existentialist Feminism in Etaf Rum's A Woman
is No Man**
Dania Dedi, Nina Farlina
-
- 73** **The Badshah Begums: Interrogating Identity and
Power in Mughal Fiction**
Suman Kumari
-

Muslimah Hybrid Identity in Amulya Malladi's *The Sound of Language*

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Abstract

This study analyses Amulya Malladi's novel *The Sound of Language* using a postcolonial and Islamic feminist approach. The paper explores how the novel reflects identity, Otherness, the imperial situation, and the experience of alienation in the diaspora. In *The Sound of Language*, the author portrays the main character's life in the Muslim diaspora. It depicts the subject's journey towards a multicultural identity and her mission to understand who she is and where she fits in the global community. This study examines how a Muslim subject develops their identity in a postcolonial European setting and analyses the problems raised by how the writer presents the character in the book. This research especially explores Malladi's identity-making process, engaging with concepts of Ngugi wa Thiongo's Language and Identity, Homi K. Bhabha's Hybridity, and Fatima Mernissi's Muslim women's liberation. In addition, this investigates how the author explores the connection between language acquisition and identity formation, examining how natives influence non-natives and the extent of Danish society's acceptance of Afghan culture and languages. The study reveals that Muslim characters in occidental societies, like Raihana does when she moves to Denmark, will develop a hybrid identity that incorporates both her Muslim background and the contemporary free-thinking society of the West. This article presents two subsections of a study: the Postcolonial and the Islamic feminist approaches. Both sections explain how Raihana formed her hybrid identity as a Muslim woman in a European country.

Keywords: *Hybridity, Identity, Language, Mimicry, Muslim Woman.*

Introduction

Identity is a vital aspect of human existence shaped by various factors. It is a developing process that changes over time, and acquiring an identity helps people to develop a sense of uniqueness and connection with groups. However, migrants may find it challenging to assimilate into new cultures, which can create an identity crisis. The experiences of Raihana in Amulya Malladi's novel reflect the struggles that many migrants face as they try to integrate into new societies while attempting to develop their own identities. Following are the list of theories that enabled the analysis of the text with two different approaches, namely postcolonial and Islamic feminist.

Ngugi Wo Thiongo contends in "Decolonising the Mind" that literature composed in the native tongues of the author's home countries can accurately convey culture, values,

and beliefs. Furthermore, he says languages other than a person's mother tongue or native language should be used as a communication medium as they cannot transport culture. We are limited to using our native language for it. Language, he contends, is a culture. Language serves purposes beyond simple communication. It's an emotion that binds us to our country. According to him, language is an integral aspect of who we are as a society, having a distinct shape and character, a distinct history, and an obvious tie to the outside world. But since language is so important, anyone who attempts to dominate a person's language may also colonise their cognitive systems. It is unacceptable that Danish society forces Raihana, an immigrant, to learn the Danish language, even if it is just a tool for communication. This argument highlights the issue of language and identity and sheds light on the unjust imposition of the Danish language on Raihana.

Edward Said explores East and West cultures and identities in his book *Orientalism* (2003). In short, orientalist discourse constructed the East and Islam as the antithesis of West and Western civilization. He notes that Orientalist intellectuals developed a conception of the Orient as unreasonable, wicked, childlike, and unusual while describing an Occidental society in contrast as reasonable, trustworthy, mature, and usual, the antithesis of all that is oriental. Accepting these Orientalist viewpoints would have an impact on the perceptions of Muslim Eastern postcolonial subjects like Raihana, who have immigrated to the West and are attempting to build an identity based on a hybrid notion of home. It is crucial to foster an environment where people can genuinely develop a sense of home, identity, and belonging, as any hindrance to these aspects could profoundly impact one's life. As per Said's claims, Raihana, an Oriental Muslim residing in Denmark, is the target of Western prejudice. Hence, Orientalism is relevant to this research.

Homi Bhabha states the concepts of mimicry and hybridity in the works "Of Mimicry and Man" and "Signs Taken For Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817." He defined mimicry as the subjugated copying of the colonisers' language, attire, political views, or cultural attitudes. In a migration setting, immigrants would also want to hide their language and culture by doing this. By imitating the language and customs of their host nation, they seek to gain authority. Even then, they might experience alienation. Therefore, they recall their home countries. Immigrants use hybridity to establish themselves in the host nation to avoid such circumstances. According to Bhabha, hybridity is blending Eastern and Western characteristics in language, culture, politics, fashion, cuisine, and other areas. It makes intercultural communication easier as a way to develop a mixed or balanced identity. Using Bhabha's notion of hybridity, this paper analyses how Western and Muslim cultural influences shape the identity of the protagonist, Raihana.

Fatima Mernissi argues in "Beyond the Veil" that Muslim women cannot be fully emancipated if they continue to wear the veil and need to adopt Western clothing instead. Even in a setting of migration, Muslim men prefer to make the correct choices for their families by exerting power over female bodies. Men think that because Muslim women are becoming overtly Westernised, they must make the right decisions for their wives.



This perspective in the Islamic community does not allow women to experience the freedom that they dream of. Siblings, fathers, and spouses frequently viewed women's bodies as their possessions. All Muslim women have the authority to claim their bodies to be free and to defend themselves. It is their choice to decide whether to wear a veil, and no one else should decide. The limits put on Islamic women are dehumanising and cannot disappear until Muslim women are free. This book serves as a basis to analyse "The Sound of Language" under the subsection "Women and Identity." It justifies Raihana's choice to liberate herself by discarding the veil.

Zahra Ali's work "Feminisms in Iraq: Beyond the Religious and Secular Divide" explores the differences between Islamic and secular feminisms in the Muslim world, focusing on women's activism in Iraq. Ali's argument revolves around the idea that women's activism in the Muslim context tends to occupy a middle ground, balancing between the religious and secular aspects, and she emphasizes the existence of a seamless connection between these two frameworks. Ali introduces the concept of the "pious modern," which is highly relevant to Muslim women who embrace religion and modernity. She argues that social, political-sectarian, and religious dynamics shape Islamic feminism in complex ways. Utilizing the theory presented in Ali's work, the aim is to illustrate the story of Raihana, a modern Muslim woman who embraces her religious beliefs while simultaneously embracing modernity.

The concept of dislocation is complex and has far-reaching effects on an individual's sense of identity. Understanding how dislocation can affect one's sense of self is crucial to understanding the human experience. Additionally, there is a strong relationship between language, culture, and identity, and analyzing this relationship can provide valuable insights into how we construct our sense of self. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of identity, observing literature from different perspectives is essential. For example, analyzing a novel from a feminist perspective can shed light on how gender shapes identity. Finally, it is worth exploring the relationship between habits and identity, as our habits can help us to identify ourselves and give us a sense of stability and purpose in life.

Method

By incorporating postcolonial and Islamic feminist perspectives, this research aims to analyse the portrayal of Afghan characters in the novel "The Sound of Language". It analyses Raihana's struggles to find her identity in Denmark as an Afghan refugee and her recognition of the position of "Pious modern" Islamic women. The research question required a comprehensive examination, which involved consulting and comparing several previously published research papers and conducting a thorough review of all the books authored by Amulya Malladi. The next phase was reading English-language writings by Muslim women. It allowed for a cogent statement reinforcing the research question's case.

The theory was reinforced by extensively scrutinising and contrasting numerous literary research articles. The researchers searched extensively to identify the most suitable methodology and theorists who could provide evidence for the study topics.



Close reading would aid in interacting with the study issue; this search made qualitative research possible. Qualitative research offers a more profound understanding of practical issues that apply to most individuals who move out of their homeland and go through similar experiences in life. Research of this kind clarifies why human conduct varies with location and time. A broad reading of the book made it easier to understand how the author approaches the issue of a woman who is a refugee or member of the diaspora from both a postcolonial and feminist standpoint. Clarifying the contexts was made more accessible by text analysis. Not every paragraph and every context addresses the research subject. Therefore, close reading aids in identifying the supporting context cues and evidence for the argument and question. It becomes increasingly clear after closely reading that Raihana's eating, wearing, and language habits combine to create her mixed identity.

Finally, the critical text "The Sound of Language" was analysed using the ideas of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Fatima Mernissi, and Zahra Ali on language and culture. All the above steps provided a foundation for understanding and analysing the novel's issues, the main character, and an analysis of the protagonist's personality. Textual analysis served as the foundation for literary research in this work. This research meticulously examined a wide range of pertinent materials, including academic papers, scientific studies, and reputable sources of information. It carefully analysed the data and findings presented in these materials. To ensure the validity and reliability of their claims, the researchers searched for further evidence that supported the main text. This additional evidence strengthened the arguments and provided a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. By consistently relying on relevant and credible sources, the research ensured the robustness of the conclusions and enhanced the overall quality of their study.

Results and Discussions

Language and Identity

Language helps with the construction of individual identity. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "Our values, beliefs, and identity are embedded within language" (Farhat). Across the world, many countries accept migration, but some want them to lose their personal choices and become a part of the migrant nation by adopting their culture and learning their native tongue. They aim to establish a single political entity ("State"). Usually, People who moved out of their motherland recall their identities out of nostalgia or fear of losing their culture and mother tongue. Immigrants unintentionally flip between new and old identities, leading to the hybridization of cultures and languages. According to Homi Bhabha, hybridity leads to the formation of the identity of immigrants (Bhabha, *Signs taken for wonders* 150). Sometimes, the acquisition of the vernacular of natives plays a pivotal role in determining self-identity. In the novel- *The Sound of Language*, the transitory state of Raihana gives us her identity. She moves in between Danish and Dari to assert her identity.



Taliban took control of Afghanistan at one time. Then, Americans came to Afghanistan to keep the Taliban down, so a war broke out between them. Some Afghans left their country during that time and went to Denmark. The natives of Denmark oppressed the culture and language of migrants and tried to erase what they brought with them in the form of Afghan culture and speech. This text picturizes how Danes tried to improvise the migrant by imposing them to learn their language. Danes are more content with making immigrants learn their language (Said, *Orientalism* 145). They even tried to imbue immigrants with a unique identity from their own. Therefore, they placed them under various native speakers to impart knowledge. If the refugees want to stay in Denmark, they should learn the language according to the directive. Therefore, Raihana stays with her distant relatives, Kabir and Layla. At that same time, she wants to learn Danish. In Denmark at Skive, a couple named Gunnar and Anna learns and practices Bee-Cultivation after retiring from their professions. Unfortunately, Anna passed away, and Gunnar went into depression after the death of his wife. None of his friends and relatives could console him (Pavlina Radia 253).

The language school in Denmark placed Raihana under the beekeeper named Gunnar. He must act as her Praktik. People can acquire language naturally and through formal teaching, otherwise known as formal and informal learning (Lisbeth and Thea 83). In natural acquisition, people subconsciously learn the grammatical rules from the situation they experience. Formal education entails assuming the position of the teacher and frequently transferring knowledge. Danes believe in both methods of learning. They teach migrants formally in their language school and later place them for an apprenticeship. The people of Denmark believe that integrating Danish into daily life makes learning more successful for refugees or migrants. As a result, the Danish Language School allocates newly immigrated foreigners to its citizens as apprentices. Raihana takes an interest in learning Danish. She considers learning Danish as a necessity for the emergence of a new identity. She assumes this language acquisition might be an experience for acquiring identity in Denmark. Therefore, she joins as a beekeeper under the guidance of Gunnar. Christina, a Danish teacher, asked Gunnar to teach Danish to her student Raihana.

Nevertheless, Gunnar says that he does not know any other language except Danish. Raihana can only speak and understand English and Dari. He questioned Christina about how he could teach the Danish language to Raihana. From this context, it is evident that a person's identity vests with the language of their country (Barry 2). People who speak a particular language indicate their identity by using it for their expression. Using a specific language gives them identification as a team member of a particular group. People of a nation speak their national language. In this novel, Gunnar identifies himself as a Dane who belongs to the group of citizens in Denmark, and Raihana too expresses her identity as an Afghan using Dari to assert her nationality (Barry 4). Hearing Gunnar, Christina tells him that Raihana is intelligent and requests him to try to teach her once. While Gunnar is still refusing, Ole suggests he can try it for a week, and then he agrees.



The author tells the readers about Raihana's quest to learn Danish. On one occasion, Christina told Raihana the death of his wife saddened that Gunnar, using the following construction: "Han er trist." Then Raihana interprets the sentence by breaking it down into a minimal unit of meaning in the Language (Yule 68). "Trist means sad," In this way, she tries hard to learn the language because only the Danish language can quickly connect her with people and thus to their culture. Raihana assumes it can help her to mingle with the Danes by practicing and obeying their culture (Thiongo 387). At just 20 years old, Raihana already understands Gunnar's pain and has been selflessly cleaning his house daily. Touched by her kind gestures, Gunnar decides to teach Raihana the art of Bee cultivation and the Danish language. Every day, Gunnar tries to converse with Raihana in Danish, despite hearing from others that it is challenging to master. However, he wonders about the potentiality of Raihana to learn the language. To be accepted as a permanent resident in Denmark, Raihana must learn the language. It is a requirement for her to be recognized and accepted as a member of the Danish community. Raihana has no other option but to learn the language to form her identity as a part of Danish society. Achebe stated of his English-language compositions, "It appears like a terrible betrayal and causes a guilty sensation. But I have no other options. This language has been given to me, and I want to use it" (Angela 19). Even Raihana faces the same situation. She finds using Danish awkward, but she strives to do so because her current situation prevents her from using any other language (Thiongo 397).

Wahida, a Muslim refugee, tells Raihana to act like a pious Muslim girl to get identified as a Muslim by the natives of Denmark. Raihana does not like that idea. Therefore, they fight over that point. Immediately the teacher of Raihana, Christina, tries to resolve the issue. She says in Danish "Vi taler Dansk. Hvad snakker om I," (p. 63) to stop them. As a sign of power teacher of Raihana, Christina uses standard Danish to express her displeasure or disagreement. Through this, Christina posed her national identity. Because she knows the usage of any other language would lessen her dominance. Therefore, Christina promptly used Danish to reassert her superiority like Obi did to the housekeeper in the novel "No Longer at Ease" (Bahman 238). She feels that the Danish language is the mark of her authenticity. She exhibits the power of nationality by using the Danish language to express her originality.

A language is a powerful tool for expressing identity and strength (Rovira 66); even Malladi uses the same notion in her writing "The Sound of Language." In this novel, Maria, the daughter-in-law of Gunnar and a native of Denmark, views immigrants like Raihana as a threat to Danish culture. She goes as far as to accuse Raihana of stealing the bee-keeping diary of her aunt. However, Raihana uses her knowledge of Danish to prove her innocence and returns Maria that diary. The ability of Raihana to speak Danish fluently helps her to convey her acquired identity to Maria and assert her presence in Danish society.

Throughout the story, the prejudice of Maria against immigrants (Said, *Orientalism* 319) and her refusal to accept the hybrid identity of Raihana is evident. Maria sees them as outsiders who have disrupted Danish culture because she linked nationalistic feelings of



identity to the usage of the Danish language by the immigrants like Raihana and other Afghans. However, Raihana's command of the Danish language challenges beliefs of Maria and proves that immigrants can integrate into Danish society while retaining their cultural identities. Maria herself testifies to Gunnar that:

"I thought she would not be able to speak Danish at all, would be lazy and useless... I thought she would be dumb." Maria admitted to her prejudice. (p. 119).

In the end, Maria admits to her prejudice and acknowledges that her assumptions about Raihana were wrong. This realization is a testament to the power of language in bridging cultural divides and fostering understanding (Rovira 66). It also highlights the importance of recognizing and embracing the diversity that immigrants bring to society. Through language and cultural exchange, individuals can connect and form meaningful relationships that transcend cultural barriers. It is leading to a more inclusive and accepting society (Rovira 71).

Despite initially doubting his ability to teach Danish to Raihana, Gunnar soon realized her intellectuality and dedication to learning the language. He adjusts his pace and speaks more Danish to Raihana to help her understand better. This change in behavior and attitude is a testament to the power of language in bringing people together and bridging cultural divides. Raihana's commitment to learning Danish in her spare time, such as by watching Hindi films with Danish subtitles, shows her determination to integrate into Danish society while retaining her cultural identity.

Through her language learning journey, Raihana gains fluency in Danish and strengthens her sense of identity. She can communicate and connect with Danish people more effectively, which helps her to feel more included in Danish society. This situation highlights the importance of language in identity formation and cultural exchange. Learning a new language can open doors to new experiences and opportunities, allowing individuals to broaden their perspectives and develop a deeper appreciation for diverse cultures.

Her desire to learn Danish drove Raihana to learn Danish, become independent, and secure a job in a bee-keeping place. This desire of Raihana highlights the importance of language proficiency for migrants in Denmark. Knowing the language of Danes is necessary for immigrants to find employment opportunities and integrate into Danish society. Danes recognized the significance of the Danish language in expressing their etiquette and values. They understand that their language is essential in propagating Danish culture and identity. However, they also fear that migrants may bring their native language and culture, which can potentially change the Danish culture. As a result, Danes prioritize those who can speak their language and prefer to maintain their dominance in the country.

To encourage language learning, the government of Denmark provides special funds for Danish teaching, and those who have mastered the language are more likely to receive citizenship. For Raihana, learning Danish is crucial for her identification and integration into Danish society. Her struggles to learn the language are a testament to the power of



language in identity formation and cultural exchange (Bhabha, *Of mimicry and man* 125). The enthusiasm of Raihana to learn the tenses of the Danish language reflects her eagerness to establish her identity. She makes great efforts to remember them and eagerly waits for an opportunity to use them. Gunnar has noticed her attempts to respond to him in Danish to establish a sense of camaraderie and belonging. Raihana has always looked for chances to improve her fluency and learns from every opportunity. The quick progress of Raihana ignites jealousy in Layla, and she feels envious of the recognition Raihana is receiving among the Danes. However, Kabir consoles her, reminding her that everyone has their own pace in language learning, and he comments that language acquisition is a journey. Learning Danish is helping Raihana to intertwine her language and identity and carve her identity into a new cultural context.

In his book *Paradoxical Citizenship*, Edward Said cites Homi K. Bhabha, who developed the idea of hybridity to illustrate the distinctiveness of experience and identity that past residents exchange. In this context, Bhabha has said, "These hyphenated, hybridized cultural conditions are also manifestations of a vernacular pluralism that emerges in mixed communities and expressly transcends a particular national place" (Said, *Paradoxical citizenship* 117). For example, Danes fear that Afghan refugees have a native language other than Danish. They are afraid that Dari might one day replace Danish and become the dominant language in their nation. Therefore, they insisted that migrants must learn Danish. Unfortunately, most Afghans fail to incorporate Danish into their lives. Therefore, they use Danish at their workplaces and Dari in their Personal spaces. It led to the formation of hybridized identity.

Malladi mirrored the vernacular plurality in Raihana's choice of Danish at her workplace and the use of Dari while talking to anyone from her community. According to Amulya, Dari reflects the language of the Afghans and gives them feelings of collective identity. Raihana switches between these languages because she wants to learn Danish as early as possible and be an independent woman in Denmark. This transition between these two languages helped her maintain ties with her community, just like how it worked for Obi in the novel "No Longer at Ease" by Achebe. To Raihana, Dari Language created a sense of belongingness to the Afghan community (Liebscher and Dailey-O'Cain 14). Not just Raihana but characters such as Kabir and Layla use Dari to symbolize a shared relationship among ethnic communities.

The statement of Robert J. C. Young (140), "The colonial language becomes culturally more powerful, devaluing the native language as it is brought into its domain, domesticated and accommodated," applies to the anxiety felt by the Danish people regarding the presence of the Afghan language in their society. Danes fear that the language of migrants might eventually dominate and displace Danish as the primary language. This fear reflects the concern that the cultural power dynamics of language could lead to the devaluation of Danish and the erosion of Danish identity. Language and identity are complex issues, especially in migration and multiculturalism. Therefore, the fear of losing national identity and culture is common. However, it is vital to recognize that language is dynamic and adaptable, and its evolution and diversification are natural



and necessary aspects of cultural exchange and growth. Therefore, preserving the national language and culture is crucial while embracing the diversity that migration brings to society.

One day, while returning from house of Gunnar, Raihana was hit with a stone by Anders, who was the grandson of Gunnar. Anders had been influenced by the Nazism of Hitler and, without the guidance of his parents and grandparents, had started targeting people who were not Danes. It included Raihana, who began to avoid leaving the house after the incident. Finally, however, with the help of Layla, she regained her courage and began to venture out again (Pavlina Radia 257).

Later on, Kabir, Layla, and Raihana went out for dinner with Gunnar and his family. During the meal, the fluency of Kabir in Danish surprised the other guests. After lunch, Kabir revealed to Gunnar that Raihana had gotten engaged to Rafeeq, who works for a company in Denmark. Upon hearing this news, Gunnar congratulated Raihana and advised her to obtain Danish citizenship as early as possible. Kabir reassured Gunnar that Raihana was working hard to improve her Danish language skills and would soon be able to speak as fluently as any Dane.

In conclusion, language and identity play a significant role in shaping our experiences and interactions with others. The works of Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" and Amulya Malladi's "The Sound of Language" demonstrate the struggles of oppressed communities trying to assert their identities in the face of dominant cultures. Both novels illustrate how language and culture are intertwined, and the subjugation of one often leads to the suppression of the other.

In "Things Fall Apart," the dominance of the English language over the Igbo people led the erosion of their cultural identity, and in "The Sound of a Language," some Danes attempted to suppress Afghan voices by burning the home of Raihana, and some helped them to earn their identity. The novel highlights the importance of recognizing and embracing diversity in society and the damaging effects of cultural hegemony.

The novel Malladi also portrays the impact of trauma on language and identity. Raihana's experience of being attacked and losing her home leads to her inability to speak Danish despite its importance in asserting her position and strengthening her testimony. However, with the help of Layla and Kabir's kindness, she recovers from her fear and learns to embrace her cultural identity while still integrating into Danish society.

Overall, both novels emphasize the importance of language in creating a more inclusive and accepting society. They demonstrate that attempts to suppress or erase language identities can lead to trauma and the loss of originality. The works encourage us to celebrate and appreciate cultural diversity, learn from one another, and foster mutual respect and understanding. The power of language to shape our identities and experiences cannot be understated, and its recognition is crucial for building a diverse and inclusive society.

Women and Identity



Women's identity is a complex and multifaceted concept shaped by various factors, such as culture, tradition, social norms, and personal experiences. However, these factors can vary significantly from one and another country, and women who immigrate to a new country face unique challenges related to their identity (Goodenow and Espin 263).

Amulya Malladi's novel, *The Sound of Language*, explores the story of Raihana, a first-generation immigrant from Afghanistan who struggles to reconcile her cultural identity with the expectations of Danish society. Through the protagonist's experiences, the novel highlights the contrasting cultural views of gender and their impact on Raihana's identity.

"For immigrant adolescents...developing a firm identity involves steering a course between refusing to adapt to American life at all and acculturating too rapidly" (Goodenow and Espin 173). The developmental process of first-generation immigrant women's identity is laborious. These people face problems. First, they struggle to keep the tradition and values of their homeland; second, contradictory gender roles of women expected in the migrant society; Third, they interact between the cultures of their native land and migrant nations.

As an Afghan woman, Raihana faces the challenge of navigating the expectations of both her native culture and the dominant culture of her adopted country. This duality can create confusion and conflict as immigrants attempt to balance their cultural roots with the desire to integrate into their new community (Goodenow and Espin 265). Raihana's decision to remove her hijab and abaya to work at her new job in Denmark exemplifies this conflict. This simple act symbolizes a significant shift in her identity as she moves away from the expectations of her traditional culture and towards the norms of her new society.

However, this transition has its challenges. As a first-generation immigrant, Raihana must navigate conflicting gender roles between her native culture and her new community. In Afghanistan, gender roles are deeply ingrained and often involve strict expectations of women's behavior, dress, and marriage. These expectations can conflict with the more liberal expectations of Danish society, where women have more freedom and agency in their lives. In *The Sound of Language*, Raihana's journey to self-actualization involves navigating these conflicting expectations and creating a unique identity that is true to herself. Through the subthemes of habits and external appearance, we see the gradual evolution of Raihana's feminine identity as she becomes more comfortable in her new environment.

The concept of feminine identity is particularly relevant in Raihana's story. As a woman, she must navigate the expectations of her native and adopted cultures, which can be vastly different. Modesty, obedience, and domesticity are associated with femininity in Afghanistan. Afghan society expected women to prioritize their families and play a subservient role in their households. In contrast, Danish society places more value on individualism and personal freedom. Danes encouraged women to pursue careers and participate in public life.



These conflicting expectations can create a sense of tension for immigrant women like Raihana. With the need to adapt to their new environment, women like Raihana must balance the desire to stay true to their cultural roots. In doing so, they may experience a shift in their identity, particularly in terms of femininity.

Ultimately, *The Sound of Language* provides a nuanced exploration of the complex factors that shape women's identity, particularly in the context of immigration. Through Raihana's story, we see the challenges and rewards of navigating multiple cultural expectations and creating a unique identity that is true to oneself (Goodenow and Espin 263).

External Appearance

Migration can pose unique challenges for Muslim women, as they often have to confront sexist assumptions from their communities and the larger society of their new home. These challenges are two-fold: first, women must contend with preconceived notions from individuals within their communities and nations, and second, they must adapt to the customs of their new environment, which can affect their sense of identity (Butler cit Gilliat-Ray 215).

One area where Muslim women face particular scrutiny is their choice of clothing. The Quran commands its followers to dress modestly, but some have interpreted this as a requirement solely for women. It gives simple guidelines for social decency and does not impose any general religious obligations for women's clothing. The rules that limit what women can wear in Muslim customary law represent the patriarchy in our societies that attempt to gain dominance over women's physicality. Khaled Hosseini's "A Thousand Splendid Suns" is a stark reminder of this reality. In the novel, the character Rasheed enforces strict rules for his wives, forcing them to cover themselves in a burqa to avoid attracting the gaze of other men (Verghese 224). Society imposes oppressive behavior that makes women feel responsible for the actions of men and forces them to adhere to strict dress codes that erase their identity. The novel highlights how a particular community, like Afghan society, imposed gender roles and social norms on women, depriving them of agency and autonomy. The burqa, which covers women's entire body and face, oppressed them and made them feel invisible and trapped. This oppressive behavior demonstrates how men in patriarchal societies use force and masculinity to conquer women's personal space.

Malladi's novel "The Sound of a Language" explores the struggles of Islamic women when they migrate to foreign lands. The story centers on Wahida, an Afghan refugee who settles in Denmark and tries to impose her religious beliefs on other Afghan women. She argues that the external appearance of a person expresses their identity (Tajfel and Turner 16). In particular, she emphasizes the importance of wearing a hijab to protect the chastity of Muslim women. However, the beliefs of Wahida clash with those of Raihana, another Afghan woman living in Denmark, who rejects the idea that wearing a hijab is necessary to be a good Muslim woman.



Wahida believes that they have to protect their tradition by wearing a hijab, and she considers wearing a veil as a sign of respect (Ferdows 284), which is the responsibility of a true Muslim woman. Therefore, she warns Raihana to follow the clothing norms of their community.

"... You should wear a hijab and abaya Raihana, walking around like this... it's not right. You have to show them that you are a good Muslim woman."—Wahida.'

"I don't think a Muslim woman is good because she wears a hijab and abaya," Raihana said tightly. (p. 27).

Through the discussion between Raihana and Wahida, Malladi highlights whether Muslim women should wear a veil (Winkelman 125). Raihana argues that we cannot judge the religious commitment of an individual solely based on their external appearance. The character and occupation of a person contribute to the individual and religious identity. Raihana argued that traditional gender and religious expectations should not force women to choose their clothing.

The novel of Malladi sheds light on issues faced by third-world migrants and refugees, which is the challenge of seeking self-identity while also feeling responsible for upholding the culture of their homeland. This conflict can lead to migrants and refugees imposing their cultural beliefs on others rather than respecting individual choice and freedom.

Ultimately, the issue of clothing for Muslim women is complex. It requires nuance and understanding. While some women may opt to wear a hijab or abaya as a sign of respect or religious devotion, others may reject this traditional dress and choose a more modern interpretation of their faith. Women should not be pressured or forced into conforming to societal expectations that do not align with their personal beliefs and values (Mernissi 59).

In conclusion, the challenges faced by Muslim women when migrating to a new country are significant and multifaceted. While cultural traditions and expectations can influence an own sense of identity, it is important to respect individual choice and freedom. The clothing issue for Muslim women requires sensitivity and understanding, as it can get tied to religious devotion, personal expression, and cultural expectations. Ultimately, it is up to each woman to decide what clothing aligns with her values and beliefs, and society should respect and support these choices.

Habits

Islam is a religion that has a significant following in Afghanistan, and Muslims in the country typically adhere to the teachings of the Quran in their daily lives. One such teaching is the importance of avoiding harm to oneself, as stated in the Quranic verse, "Be not cast by your own hands to ruin; and do good. Lo! Allah loveth the beneficent" (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:195). As the Quran deemed smoking and drinking habits which harm human health, many believers of Islam prohibited smoking weed and consumption of alcohol.



The Quran taught Raihana, the protagonist of the novel "The Sound of Language," how to live her life when she grew up in Afghanistan. She observed in Afghanistan that smoking and drinking were uncommon among women, as Islam forbids these habits. However, when she moved to Denmark, she noticed that men and women commonly smoked and consumed alcohol. Habits, behaviors, and culture enable a person to identify with his surroundings (Butler 36). In the novel, Raihana, the protagonist, identifies herself as an Afghan woman in Denmark (Ali 51). In this context, Raihana recalls the astray she saw in her car of Christina when she drove her to her house in Gunnar. Even in the language school, Raihana saw the rooms mentioned with titles like smoking, non-smoking, and the kitchen. Christina, the teacher of Raihana, often used to go into the smoking room. Even Gunnar smelled like cigarettes when she first met him. Therefore, she thinks it is common to see people who smoke there. Despite this cultural difference, Raihana never judged the Danes based on the standards of the Islamic community and instead tried to understand their perspectives. In her quest for identity, Raihana learned to respect individual choices without compromising the values that she acquired from her community.

While in Denmark, Raihana met Wahida, who revealed that her cousin, Asslam, works as an apprentice to a Butcher who deals with pig meat.

"Even pig's meat. He hasn't said anything to anyone, but my husband told me. It's an evil world that makes a good Mussulman, soil his hands so."

"Why can't he find a Praktik elsewhere?" Raihana asked. (p. 27)

In Islam, dietary regulations known as Islamic Sharia define which foods are halal (Arabic for "lawful") and which are haram (Arabic for "unlawful"). Islamic law prohibits the consumption of pork. Therefore, Muslims avoid eating, handling, or being in contact with pork ("Islamic"). When Raihana learned about the work of Asslam, she expressed concern and asked Wahida why he could not work elsewhere. This reaction highlights Raihana's adherence to the religious teachings of the Quran. The Quran explicitly declares pork as haram in the following verse:

"He has only forbidden you what dies of itself, and blood, and flesh of swine, and that over which any other (name) than (that of) Allah has been invoked; but whoever is driven to necessity, not desiring, nor exceeding the limit, no sin shall be upon him; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful" ("Surah Al-Baqarah 2:173").

Muslims widely follow this verse around the world. Therefore, they consider the consumption of pork to be a sin. The reaction of Raihana to the work of Asslam demonstrates her firm belief in this teaching.

The novel "The Sound of Language" portrays the clash between different cultural and religious practices, such as smoking, drinking, and dietary regulations, specifically between Afghanistan and Denmark (Subhashini 29). Throughout the novel, Raihana, the protagonist, demonstrates a deep commitment to her Islamic faith and adheres to its teachings. The work of Asslam with pig meat, which goes against her religious beliefs,



particularly troubled her. Raihana's journey of self-discovery and identity formation in a new and unfamiliar environment is a central theme of the novel (Subhashini 29).

One of the key takeaways from Raihana's story is the importance of tolerance and respect for cultural practices and beliefs. While Raihana holds firm to her beliefs and values, she also demonstrates an openness to learning about and understanding the culture and habits of those around her (Little and Givern). This willingness to engage with others and accept cultural differences is vital for Raihana's journey toward self-identification.

Another significant aspect of Raihana's self-identification is her deep commitment to Islam and its teachings. Raihana's adherence to the Quran and its prohibitions on certain habits and behaviors are a fundamental part of her identity. As a result, she draws strength and meaning from her faith throughout the novel. At the same time, Raihana is aware of the significance of interpreting and applying Islamic teachings in a way compatible with her values and experiences.

Overall, the novel "The Sound of Language" illustrates the complex interplay between culture, religion, and identity in the context of immigration and refugee experiences. A deep commitment to her Islamic faith and a willingness to engage with and respect the cultural practices and beliefs of others marks Raihana's journey toward self-identification (Little and Givern; Subhashini 29). As a result of her experiences, readers gain a better understanding of the importance of tolerance, empathy, and respect in building bridges across cultural and religious divides.

Conclusion

This study examined how Raihana, a Muslim Afghan woman developed her identity as a postcolonial subject after moving to Denmark, a topic raised by Amulya Malladi in her book *The Sound of Language*. Additionally, studies have demonstrated that identity formation results from linguistic and cultural alienation. This study started with a biographical analysis to raise awareness about Amulya Malladi's life history and the events that influenced her to write this novel.

In her book *The Sound of Language*, Malladi discussed the hijab dilemma, feminism, personal reinvention, and how language and cultural alienation contribute to the search for identity formation. Ultimately, the book's protagonist attempts to form an identity based on her experiences moving between different cultures and geographical regions and adjusting after losing her home of origin. By moving, the main character embarks on a journey to change who she is to blend in with Denmark. The transition from an Afghan Muslim woman who speaks Dari to a Modern Islamic woman who speaks Danish is complicated. Raihan's account documents all the difficulties refugees encounter due to language and cultural differences.

With success, Raihana comes to terms with her hyphenated identity. To manage her dual identities as a Danish refugee and an Afghan Muslim, she actively seeks out knowledge. She does, nevertheless, find herself making an effort to hide her Afghan and



Muslim heritage. Her guilt compels her to adhere to certain religious principles regarding eating and smoking. Overall, "The Sound of Language" provides a poignant commentary on the complexities of identity formation and the challenges faced by refugees and members of marginalized communities. The novel reminds us of the importance of empathy and understanding in creating inclusive and welcoming communities for all individuals. Diverse experiences and identities have made our society. They need to be acknowledged and respected.

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