



ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL

Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol. 04 No. 02. Oct-Dec 2025. Page#.1716-1731

Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17622931>**Victimization of Veil in *I Am Malala* and *Let Her Fly*****Oroosa Anwar**

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*The collapse of Twin Towers in USA on September 2011 has dramatically changed the relations between East and West and reinforced the dichotomy of binary distinction between us and them. Since then, Islamophobic sentiments have prevailed in West regarding Islam as a religion of terrorism, oppression, extremism and violence. In the aftermath of the tragic incident of 9/11, Muslims faced prejudice and discrimination, and they are regarded as backward and terrorists. The dress code of Muslims is used as a tool to strengthen these negative stereotypes against them, and Muslim veiled women are seen as oppressed beings and also as symbols of threat. This study aims at examining the representation of veiled Muslim women in the autobiography of Malala Yousafzai, *I Am Malala* (2013) and Ziauddin Yousafzai's memoir, *Let Her Fly* (2018). The selected texts will be analyzed from Post-Colonial perspective by using Stuart Hall's Theory of Representation (1997) and the model is based on the memoir interpreting strategies suggested by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson in their book Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives (2001). The findings reveal that the major premise of presentation of veiled women is to problematize their experiences and to reduce their diverse attitudes and situations to veil. Muslim veiled women are presented as a monolith who deny variations in their life experiences. The stereotypical representation of Islam has made it subaltern and other, and presented Islam as a scapegoat for gender –based othering to correspond to the Western ideology.*

Keywords: Islamophobia, terrorism, oppression, Muslims, Representation, Post-Colonialism, Other, 9/11, Subaltern, Stereotypes, Veil, Islam.

Introduction

Life narratives are writings which bind diverse life events to reveal the personality and self of the author. Life narratives do not consist of just event-specific tales rather they also entail the stories of the personal development of people to reflect their identities. An autobiography and a memoir are kinds of life narratives and they both are slightly differed from each other. A memoir and an autobiography, both refer to the construction of self and are interlinked. Hence, an autobiography is also known as a memoir and the vice versa. The popularization of the term autobiography in the West dates back to eighteenth century and before that there were other terms that were used for life writings such as 'the life', 'confession', 'memoir' and many more.

An autobiography refers to the description of all the life events of the narrator while a memoir comprises of one particular incident in the life of the protagonist and the whole memoir revolves around describing that particular incident. Lejeune (1989) defines autobiography as

“retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality” (p. 4). Hence, it is a practice of self-portrayal where that author, the subject, the narrator and the protagonist are alike. Unlike an autobiography, a memoir is based on a specific theme which has major impact on the life of the subject. The concept of memoir is elaborated by Thomas (2016) as “a type of writing where a prominent person, perhaps a politician, a military person or a theatrical name will produce a series of observations and descriptions on key aspects of their life, especially their achievements” (p. 16). Therefore, the reading autobiographies and memoirs provides an awareness about the sentiments of authors, their encounters, their fates and their selections.

The distinguishing boundary between an autobiography and a memoir is fluid. They both comprise of life stories of narrators and are used interchangeably. Their reading provides a perception of their particular time periods and their socio-cultural circumstances. People write autobiographies to inform audience about their lives and to be recognized and celebrated by the world. An autobiography and a memoir refers to a genre that aims to comprehend, experience and present oneself as it moves into and shapes behavior, self-awareness, political acts and discourses. It is believed by people of all roles that in order to achieve identity, it is crucial for them to write their life histories.

Life narratives offer large quantity of material to be studied from various perspectives. According to Donabue (2008), life narratives provide “material for study from a variety of perspectives: religious, literary, cultural, and linguistic” (p. 22). The selected life narratives will be investigated from religious perspective as the major concern of these narratives is the role of religion (Islam) in their lives. The paper focuses on the representation of veil in the selected narratives and aims at investigating the attitude of authors towards veil which is one of the most significant and most prominent practices of Islamic societies.

Research Objective

1. To examine the representation of purdah in *I Am Malala* (2013) and *Let Her Fly* (2018).

Research Question

1. How have Islamic practices of observing purdah been portrayed in *I Am Malala* (2013) and *Let Her Fly* (2018)?

Colonialism

Colonialism is a form of domination of colonizers and the subjugation of the colonized. It not only physically manipulates rather it implicates exploitation of colonized materially, psychologically and culturally. Material suppression involves the use of natural resources of the colonized by the colonizers for their advantage. The colonized people are exploited culturally by restructuring their social aspects like language, religion, food and dress. Psychological subjugation of colonized people refers to making them and treating them as primitive and inferior.

Colonial discourses revolve around the statements about the colonies, colonizing authorities and the relationship between colonizers and the colonized people. Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin (2013) described colonial discourses as “greatly implicated in ideas of the centrality of Europe, and thus in assumptions that have become characteristic of modernity” (p. 51). The prime concern of colonial discourse is to highlight the subservience and the flaws of colonized people therefore, stresses the debt of colonizing powers to revive their existence in colonized communities so as to reform their civilization through moral and cultural improvement. Colonial discourses construct the binary dichotomy between colonizers and the colonized by regarding colonizers as modern, superior and highly civilized while colonized people are identified by the attributes of being inferior, backward and uncivilized.

Postcolonial

Postcolonial writings in English differ from colonial writings as they are apprehensive of self-representations. The native authors reveal their sociocultural customs by these writings. This practice of writing began to review the influence of colonization on the sociocultural structure of previously colonized communities. Authors from formerly colonized societies “seek to not only reject colonial stereotypes of the native culture, but also to reverse them in the form of re-writing colonial texts” (Narayan, 2008, p. 38). This implies that writers of colonized states use the language of colonizers to diminish the negative stereotypes about them. Thus, postcolonial writings are tools of resistance for colonized people to break the negative stereotypes against them.

In contrast to the viewpoint about postcolonial writings as sources of resistance, there is another conflicting perspective which refers to postcolonial writings as sources of self-Orientalization. These writers are called as Neo-Orientalists and are native informants who re-orientalise themselves. These writers “distort the representation of the Orient, seizing voice and platform, and once again consigning the Oriental within the Orient to a position of 'The Other'” (Lau, 2009, p. 571). These authors do self-othering of their societies by perpetrating specific features of their culture. Such writers are diaspora writers whose identity and ancestry is derived from the Orient. These diaspora writers are considered as authentic sources for constructing images and literally representing their societies.

Perception of Veil

Veil is an English word that means a cover that is used to conceal the face, head and body of the women of South Asia and Middle East. Fadwa El Guindi (1999) gave four dimensions of the meaning of veil, “the material, the spatial, the communicative, and the religious” (p. 6). The material meaning refers to clothing and spatial dimension means a curtain to segregate physical space. Communicative sense regards veil as a tool to conceal and religious aspect of veil considers it as an act of dispassion from world. Instances from history reflect the practice of veiling as popular among non-Arabian cultures but in present day, it is identified with Muslims. Veiling is a complex phenomenon that cannot be covered by a single term so there are varieties of terms that refer to it.

Being a diverse phenomenon, veil is addressed to by using multiple terms like burnus and haik (Algeria), jilbab (Indonesia), chador (Iran) and abaya (Saudi Arabia). There is not a single word that refers to body and head covering rather multiple words such as hijab, burqa and niqab, are used to refer to face masks worn. Hijab is regarded as the modest dress by Grace (2004) who states that it “is prescribed, and often compulsory, in Islam” (p. 16). Hijab is an Arabic word that means a ‘barrier’ and its literal meanings are that of a ‘curtain’. Hijab is a segregating tool that differentiates secular from profane. In wider reference, hijab signifies religious faith of women and marks their identity.

The history of veiling and the role played by it in the relationship between East and West has great impact on the contemporary attitude of West towards veil. The practice of veiling pre-existed Islam and flourished outside Middle East. Its roots were in the practices of gentries of Greece, Byzantium, biblical Palestine, India and Babylon. Veil was ascribed two primary functions of providing security and giving identity. Veiling became a symbol for the identification of class, whether it marks upper or lower class has changed with time. In its original era, veil identified high class. The practice of veiling was considered as a way to apply modesty and develop gender roles.

In the seventeenth century, Europeans travelled to Middle Eastern states and “they saw the veil as an embodiment of the degradation of women and proof of Eastern inferiority, and

unveiling became part of their “civilizing mission” in the Middle East (Coger, 2011, p. 10). During the occupation of Britain in Egypt, the Egyptian gentry advocated liberation and modernization of women by removing their veils. This introduction of modernist thought of West in the upper classes of Muslim society manifested the development of a historical inclination that has continued through these days and this historical trend is “the interpretation of the hijab by the West as a symbol of female oppression and need for civilization in the Muslim world, and the exploitation of women’s liberation (synonymous with unveiling) to legitimize their own values and actions” (Coger, 2011, p. 10). Western women were idealized and Muslim women were presented as their counter image to project Victorian women as proper and pure.

Theoretical Perspective

Theory of Representation (1997) was proposed by Stuart Hall and according to him, representation is a process of making mental images by transferring messages and it uses internally generated knowledge to manipulate information. According to Hall, “meanings are produced at several different sites and circulated through several different processes or practices (the cultural circuit). Meaning is what gives us a sense of our own identity, of who we are and with whom we belong” (Hall, 1997, p. 3). Representation is neither real nor objective rather it is a previously constructed image and involves “use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things” (Hall, 1997, p. 15). Representation is a manner of transferring information to the world and it can be in the form of a picture, symbol, name or word.

Representation has three principles which are Reflective, Intentional and Constructionist. Reflective approach refers to existence of meaning inside the object, event, person or idea. Meaning is already present in the object and language is a mere mirror to reflect already existing reality. Intentional dimension of representation states that meaning is dependent upon the intention of the writer and author uses language to impose his own meaning on the world. Constructionist approach explains that meaning making depends upon the symbolic function of language. As language is a socio-cultural entity so thoughts are generated in verbal forms and their meanings are also dependent upon their socio-cultural context. Constructionist regard meaning as a relational entity that cannot be isolated from its socio-cultural context. Hence, meaning is generated by relating it to the social code.

Stereotyping

Stuart Hall (1997) discussed the concept of stereotyping in representation which is a reductionist approach that attaches some specific and simple traits to people. According to Hall (1997) “stereotyping reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes difference” (p. 258). The act of stereotyping fixes particular characteristics with people and exaggerates them. Stereotyping unites and includes Us while it excludes Them. Stereotyping over-generalizes concepts and beliefs about specific group of people and misrepresents people by attributing them with certain characteristics.

Model of Analysis

Life narratives are non-fiction texts and to interpret them, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson suggested some strategies in their book *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (2001). Out of those strategies, two most suitable strategies are chosen for interpreting the selected texts and these strategies are following:

1. Evidence

Evidence is a strategy to interpret and evaluate life narrative by observing the tactical placement of evidences and instances by the narrators to strengthen their stance.

2. Ethics

The prime concern of this analyzing strategy is the examination of certain disclosures and revelations in the life narratives and their impact on the reputation and status of people being described in them.

Selected Texts and Authors

Malala Yousafzai wrote her autobiography *I Am Malala* (2013) along with a British journalist Christina Lamb. It consists of five parts named as Before the Taliban, The Valley of Death, Three bullets, Three Girls, Between Life and Death, A Second Life. Malala Yousafzai shares her life story with people informing them about her life in her hometown, Swat, under the rule of Taliban, and hers and her father Ziauddin Yousafzai's struggles to promote girls' education. She shares her activities like giving interviews to TV channels, meeting government officials in Islamabad and writing diaries for BBC blog under the pseudonym 'Gul Makai'.

Malala introduces her family in her narrative. She is the eldest daughter with two brothers, Khushal and Atal. She presents her father as an education advocate, and a liberal and broad-minded person who did not impose any restrictions on his wife, Toor Pekai, and his daughter, Malala Yousafzai. Malala's grandfather, Roohul Amin was a religious cleric and is portrayed by Malala as a strict and conservative person who is mistreating the females of his house because he asked them to observe purdah, and also his wife and daughters served him. Malala's mother Toor Pekai is presented as a traditional woman who was always anxious about purdah when she lived in Swat but when she came to United Kingdom, she had to present herself as Malala's mother, so she unveiled herself which is presented as a sign of modernity.

Malala's autobiography reveals the tyranny being spread by Taliban in Swat valley. Malala always segregated herself from other girls of her school and neighborhood by presenting herself as a girl who does not care about observing purdah as it hinders her from viewing the world and blocks her way towards modernity. As Malala presented herself as an education advocate who spoke in favor of girls' education at international forum, she was shot by Taliban on 9 October 2012 on her school bus and after receiving initial treatment in Peshawar Combined Military Hospital and Rawalpindi Military Hospital, she was taken to Birmingham in Queen Elizabeth Hospital. She got her treatment over there and is now residing there with her family and is getting education in Oxford University.

Ziauddin Yousafzai wrote his memoir *Let Her Fly* (2018) with British writer Louise Carpenter as his co-author. This memoir comprises of four chapters namely Father, Sons, Wife and Best Friend, Daughter. Ziauddin belonged to a poor family and had six siblings, one elder brother and five sisters. His parents saw a spark in his eyes and encouraged him to eradicate their poverty through the ladder of education. In his memoir, Ziauddin thanks his father for giving him modern education by sending him to school rather than to a madrasa which, according to him, promotes backward education.

Ziauddin presents himself as a liberal and progressive person who created an environment of freedom in his house and allowed all his family members freedom of choice. His marriage was a love marriage and he adores his relationship with his wife, Toor Pekai before and after getting married to her. Ziauddin deliberately discusses the freedom which he gave to females of his family, Toor Pekai and Malala, and relates their freedom with the practice of not observing purdah. He never even asked his wife and daughter to observe purdah rather he taught them the lesson that purdah is not only related to a single clothing veil rather it should be in the heart. Hence, he preached a new idea to his audience that purdah is not signified by a veil which is just a cloth rather it is essential to have purdah in heart.

Analysis

In the life narratives, *I Am Malala* (2013) and *Let Her Fly* (2018), the representation of the practices of observing purdah, veiling and wearing burqa are contrary to the teachings of Islam. Veil is presented as a compulsion on Muslim women and veiled women are portrayed as suppressed beings forced to wear veil. Violence is associated with Muslims and Islam is presented as a religion that is against modernity and deprives women from gaining equal rights as men have, and this idea associates the tradition of observing purdah with the subjugation of women. The stereotypical image of Islam being portrayed in the selected texts relates the tradition of observing purdah with domestic violence, therefore women are presented as helpless souls whose prime aim is to serve male members of family and to observe purdah. They are portrayed as prisoners in their own homes because of the Islamic traditions they are following. Malala and Ziauddin declare these Islamic practices as the manifestations of patriarchy.

Suppression of Women through Purdah

In *I Am Malala* (2013) and *Let Her Fly* (2018), Malala and Ziauddin have associated purdah with the subservience of women. It is presented as an imposition on Muslim women who are forced to follow Islamic teachings. Muslim women are depicted as intimidated figures who are forcefully wearing burqas and observing purdah because they are living under the control of male members of their families who are forcing them to observe purdah.

Puberty Imprisons Women

Islam ascribes rules for every aspect of life and to observe purdah is a practice of vital significance for Muslim women. When girls enter the age of puberty then they have to observe purdah as it is commanded by Allah. Both the narratives, *I Am Malala* (2013) and *Let Her Fly* (2018), criticize the phase of puberty because it forces women to observe purdah and to bring modesty in their lives.

In her narrative *I Am Malala* (2013), Malala recalls the days of her childhood when she was happy and free to play with her childhood mates, girls and boys. Meanwhile, she refers to her fear about that time when she will enter the phase of puberty and will become an adult, then she and other girls of her age would be asked:

To stay inside. We'd be expected to cook and serve our brothers and fathers. While boys and men could roam freely about town, my mother and I could not go out without a male relative to accompany us. (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 20)

Malala is resolute to not stay inside her house after becoming an adult because her father, Ziauddin has inculcated in her mind that she is "as free as a bird" (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 20). She expresses her dislike for the practice of observing purdah when Muslim girls enter puberty and draws a concise picture of adult Muslim girls that when they enter puberty then they are supposed to stay inside whereas the majority of adult Muslim girls is going outside of houses to get education or to do jobs. She articulates her disagreement with the tradition of observing purdah and cooking and serving fathers and brothers by staying at home. Malala objects to the gender roles by criticizing the freedom given to boys to roam freely about the town while women are forced to stay at homes.

Malala and her friends appeared on Dawn TV and ATV Khyber to give interviews about the condition of Swat under Taliban's rule. While discussing them she says that as her friends reached the age of thirteen or fourteen, "my friends' brothers and fathers did not allow them because they had entered puberty and should observe purdah and also they were afraid" (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 117). Again Malala negatively presents the phase of puberty and relates it with the tradition of observing purdah by saying that as her friends had turned to

thirteen or fourteen they were not allowed by their brothers and fathers to appear on TV channels for interviewing, rather they were asked to observe purdah. She has drawn an inaccurate and incomplete picture of her friends by relating purdah and puberty with their imprisonment. She does not clarify her readers that who was afraid and of whom.

Malala and her friends appeared on TV channels to give interviews against Taliban who were in full control of Swat. It is completely biased to associate puberty with not permitting girls to appear on TV because Taliban were continuously threatening people and Malala's friends' brothers did not let them speak against Taliban as it was dangerous for them. Malala ignores the security provided by purdah to women and attempts to portray adult girls as prisoners because they are adult. Rather than emphasizing the facts, Malala blames Islam for imprisoning women to convey the message to the world that Islam is a religion of compulsion.

Islam asks Muslim women to observe purdah after they enter puberty. Puberty is also known as teenage that is a crucial phase of life and Islam suggests the ways of living after entering this phase of life so as to keep Muslims away from lewd acts. It was not Islam that asked Muslim women of Swat to be imprisoned in their homes rather it was the terrible rule of Taliban that was imposing restrictions upon women and was depriving them of their fundamental right of getting education. Islam does not imprison women because if Islam had commanded women to be imprisoned after becoming adults, then there would not be any verse in Holy Qur'an about observing purdah. The command of purdah is for the women who move out of their houses and who work in public sphere. Islam is giving them the tool of security in the form of purdah and burqa.

Malala discusses her views about the stage of becoming an adult and says that on 12 July, she turned to fifteen "which in Islam means you are an adult" (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p.193). Malala states that from Islamic point of view that when a person becomes fifteen years old then he/she is considered as an adult. She acknowledges Islamic definition of an adult but neglects Islamic teachings in this regard. After giving concept of an adult, Malala talks about the killing of the owner of Swat Continental Hotel by Taliban. The strategy for mentioning adult age here is understood when Malala criticizes Islamic concept of an adult by saying that one day in school, she and her friends were "hungry but because we were fifteen we could no longer go outside" (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 201). Here Malala's aim is revealed to strategically mention Islamic concept of an adult and afterwards to indirectly criticize Islam. Initially she said that fifteen years is an age that makes you an adult and later on she says that one day in school, she and her friends were hungry but could not go out to buy something because they were fifteen. She attempts to humiliate the image of Islam to portray it as a religion of violence that has strict rules and restrictions, and is an imposition on its followers.

Islam is a religion of love and mercy, and it does not promote violence. It is not written anywhere in Qur'an that women should not go out of houses and should be imprisoned even if they die out of hunger. Qur'an comprises of verses which guide Muslim women and men also to observe purdah. The teachings of purdah are for public spheres when women are out of their houses. So, it is absolutely partial approach of Malala that she associates Islam with the imprisonment of women. She attempts to show just one side of the picture by saying that fifteen is an age of adult and does not elaborate the teachings of Islam for this phase of life.

Ziauddin Yousafzai portrays himself as an educated and a liberal man in his memoir *Let Her Fly* (2018). He expresses his thoughts about the social status of women and proclaims that women are deprived by patriarchy from attaining their fundamental rights, and for him patriarchy signifies Islamic teachings about observing purdah. He describes his relation with his wife Toor Pekai and attempts to portray himself as a progressive man who does not suppress his wife and

gives her freedom to forge into the new world. Like Malala, Ziauddin attempts to misrepresent puberty by relating it to the imposition of purdah on women. He compares Toor Pekai's past (childhood and puberty in Swat) with her present (as Ziauddin's wife). He elaborates her life by relating her childhood with her freedom and puberty by her imprisonment. He presents himself as a liberal husband who gave freedom to his wife in every aspect of life, either outside the house or inside it.

In order to criticize puberty, like Malala, he refers to Toor Pekai that being a child, she gave importance to her independence and she had a strong character. She used to run around Ziauddin's neighboring village, Karshat. But "adolescence and purdah had meant that her movements became restricted and her face was veiled" (Yousafzai & Carpenter, 2018, p. 94). A conservative picture of Muslim society is drawn to give the impression to the world that when Muslim girls enter puberty then their movements become restricted and they are chained at homes. Ziauddin says that Toor Pekai's face was veiled which implies that she did not willingly wear veil rather she was veiled by someone else which depicts Muslim women as being forced to wear veil and that they are not happy to wear it.

Ziauddin portrays Muslim societies as prisons for women because they impose restrictions on women, and force them to observe purdah and wear veil after entering puberty. He tries to draw a falsified image of Muslim women as suppressed beings who do not have their own choices and are compelled to observe purdah. Ziauddin remembers preadolescent playmates of his childhood who were "carefree and careless, not yet considered old enough to invite shame or challenge honor" (Yousafzai & Carpenter, 2018, p. 23). Ziauddin presents the little preadolescent playmates of his childhood as careless and carefree girls and according to Ziauddin these girls were not old enough to challenge honor of their families. A dreadful picture of the girls of Swat is drawn to present puberty as a horrible stage of life.

Ziauddin further explains the activities of his playmates that they played the games of mimicry and copied their mothers and elder sisters by wearing their shawls over their heads and faces. Ziauddin says that "within a few years, when my playmates were around the age of twelve or thirteen, the shawls would become theirs to wear all the time" (Yousafzai & Carpenter, 2018, p. 23). When the playmates of Ziauddin will turn to twelve or thirteen, the shawls they play with will become theirs to wear. It implies that shawl is an imposition for Muslim women and after becoming adolescent, they are forced to wear them either they want to or not. After giving a beautiful description of little fairies who are playing games and are wearing shawls over their heads and faces, Ziauddin diverts the attention of audience to the negativity that he associates with adolescence. He says that "the need to protect their honor in adolescence would pull them down off their rooftop playgrounds and away from the streets where they had once run from house to house, to live in purdah, within four muddy walls" (Yousafzai & Carpenter, 2018, p. 23). The little girls playing mimicry outside of their homes will be imprisoned in their homes after becoming adult.

Ziauddin presents puberty as a terrible phase of a girl's life which brings fear and tensions for her. He presents preadolescent childhood friends as careless girls who play without any tension and afterwards he portrays the phase of puberty in a terrible way as a stage in girls' life which leads to complexities of honor and shame. He neglects decency by showing it in a way that it creates trouble for girls after entering puberty because then they have to observe purdah. Ziauddin portrays Muslim society as an old-tradition community where adolescent girls are pulled down from their rooftops where they played once. The phrase 'pulled down' implies that women are not willing to observe purdah and live inside houses rather they are forced to do so. Ziauddin uses the word 'muddy walls' which gives the message that Muslim women are

imprisoned in their own houses. Ziauddin constructs the picture of a concise and conservative Muslim society which chains women with the traditions of observing purdah and imprisons them inside their houses.

In contrast to the picture of Muslim women being described by Ziauddin, there are women in Muslim societies who are working and getting education. They are not imprisoned in their houses even after entering puberty. They are living lives according to their will. Islamic commands that ask women to observe purdah are the guidelines for those women who go out of their houses to get education or to earn livelihood because Islam is not forbidding them from seeking their goals rather it sets some rules so as to protect women, not to humiliate them.

Exasperation against Burqa

An outer garment worn by Muslim women is called a burqa and it is the sign of identification for Muslim women and it is a tool of their empowerment. Allah commands Muslim women (in chapter 33 and verse 59) to cover themselves with outer garments so that they may not be molested. Hence, burqa secures women and gives them identity but Malala Yousafzai and Ziauddin Yousafzai, in *I Am Malala* (2013) and *Let Her Fly* (2018), have presented burqa as an obstacle in the ways of women.

Malala Yousafzai is known as a girl from Swat valley who is an education activist. Therefore, she is the representative of all the women of her hometown and her words are to be authenticated as she is regarded as true informant. Malala discusses women of Swat as being hidden behind veils and burqas whenever they left their houses. Women of Malala's hometown "could not meet or speak to men who were not their close relatives" (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 54). There is no shame and no objection on the part of a Muslim woman to not to speak and meet with a strange man. It is her honor and pride that compels her to stay away from such lewd acts. Malala presents Muslim women as suppressed and helpless figures who do not have their own choices in life and when they leave their houses they cover themselves up and 'could not meet men' implies that they are being forced to not to meet and speak with any man.

After portraying women of her hometown as oppressed beings, Malala presents herself as a free and an independent girl who does not care about the traditions and customs of her society. She portrays herself as a modern girl who does not care about the practice of observing purdah and says that "I wore more fashionable clothes and did not cover my face even when I became a teenager" (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 54). Initially she referred to women of Swat as suppressed figures observing purdah and hiding themselves and later she presents herself as a liberal girl who is carefree and does not follow Islamic traditions even when she entered the phase of puberty.

Malala attempts to convey the message that burqa is an imposition on Muslim women and says that mullahs (religious scholars) are compelling women to wear burqas. She further humiliates the picture of burqa by saying that "wearing a burqa is like walking inside big fabric shuttlecock with only a grille to see through and on hot days it's like an oven. At least I did not have to wear one" (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 55). After blaming mullahs to force women for wearing burqas, Malala presents burqa as an uncomfortable dress that is a long fabric which has a grille to see through it. She emphasizes on associating the negativity with burqa and calls it as an oven which is extremely hot to wear in hot days. She is biased as she tries her best to humiliate burqa by saying it as a painful dress that encompasses whole body and only a grille is provided to see through. Then she calls it an oven to portray burqa wearing girls in extreme trouble who are forced to wear it. After properly humiliating burqa, Malala expresses her freedom that she

is not obliged to wear a burqa and her tone reveals her thankfulness that she does not wear a burqa.

Malala Yousafzai draws an imprecise image of burqa as a dress which is really problematic to wear. She calls it a large fabric and attempts to negatively present it before the world by associating oppression and suppression with it. On another place in her narrative, she says that "burqa makes walking difficult" (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 131). Malala gives the impression to the world that burqa is an irritating dress that completely covers the body of woman and hinders her vision of the world by providing just a grille to view the world. She says that for her, it is a matter of choice to wear burqa or not and she bluntly expresses her happiness for not wearing burqa. She ignores the wisdom underlying Allah's command to wear burqa and shows her hatred for it.

Malala claims in her narrative that Islamic religious scholars force women to wear burqa but Ali (1987) states in the translation of chapter 33 and verse 59 that:

O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons [when abroad]: that is most convenient, that they should be known [as such] and not molested. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (p. 210)

The translation of these verses implies that it is a command of Allah for Prophet PBUH to ask to his wives and daughters, and also to believing women to observe purdah and cover their bodies when they go out of their houses. Afterwards, Allah mentions the benefits of observing purdah that it makes it easy for women to go out of houses and also it identifies them as pious and modest women, and saves them from being molested. There are fallacies regarding burqa and veil wearing women that they are oppressed but in reality, they attempt to please Allah by obeying His commands. Hence, wearing burqa, veil and hijab are the signs of obedience of Allah and only those can understand these modest acts who have an awareness of Islam.

Holy Qur'an guides women to cover their bodies when they are out of houses. Qur'an guarantees security and protection to those women who observe purdah and promises to give them the identity of modest women. Purdah is the mark of identification of Muslim women and it differentiates them from non-Muslim girls. Malala stigmatizes burqa and presents burqa wearing women as fanatics. She segregates herself from other burqa wearing girls and disowns burqa that "burqa is not part of our Pashtun tradition" (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 142). She shows her detachment from burqa to convey the message as if observing purdah will make her backward. She grossly misrepresents burqa and also fails to acknowledge the resolution and determination of burqa wearing women to obey and please Allah. She neglects the identity and the social status that is guaranteed in Qur'an by Allah to those who observe purdah.

In her memoir, Malala discusses her visit to Saudi Arabia from United Kingdom at the age of sixteen, to perform *Umrah*. She rejected the rule of wearing burqa even in Mecca where young girls wear burqa while older women wear shawls. She is strictly against burqa that she did not wear it in Mecca for performing *Umrah*. Malala did not accept the rule to wear burqa and says: I went to a shopping mall with my mother as she wanted to buy a special burqa to pray in Mecca. I did not want one. I said I would just wear my shawl as it is not specified that a woman must wear a burqa. (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 260)

Through these lines, Malala expresses her hatred for burqa and regards burqa wearing as her personal choice. Contrary to her viewpoint, it is essential for younger girls to wear burqa during performing *Umrah*.

After the tragic incident of 9/11, Muslims all over the world faced criticism and were labelled as terrorists. Their dresses were highly objectified and were humiliated at international forum. A usual misconception (especially in West) about Muslim women's dress is this that they are

suppressed by their religion and are terrorists as burqa and veil hide their faces and it is difficult to sort out their identity. These negative stereotypes are further reinforced by Malala in her narrative. In order to humiliate burqa, she recalls those days when she was in Swat and one day she was shopping and a shopkeeper “laughed and told us he got scared thinking we might be suicide bombers as many suicide bombers wore the burqa” (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 131). Being a native informant, she wrongly presents Muslim women as oppressed beings and then Muslims as terrorists who wear burqa to be succeed in suicide bombing. She categorizes burqa wearing women and Muslim men as suicide bombers and agrees to Western ideology against Muslims and Islam.

Malala Yousafzai relates suicide bombing with those who wear burqa to exploit Muslims in general. As Muslims believe in Allah and His Holy Book, Qur’an that forbids them from killing themselves or others without just cause. As Usmani (2006) states in translation of chapter 2 and verse 195 that: “Do not put yourselves into destruction with your own hands” (Usmani, 2006, p. 61). Qur’an ensures Allah’s unhappiness and wrath for those who take their lives. English translation of chapter 23 and verse 108 states: “He will say: Stay in it, humiliated, and do not speak to Me” (Usmani, 2006, p.642). Holy Qur’an warns Muslims that if they will commit suicide then Allah will be angry with them and will never talk to them. Islam highly condemns suicide and it is grossly wrong to present Muslims as suicide bombers.

Malala herself is tangled in the thought to wear burqa or not. She said once that “when you’re very young, you love the burqa because it’s great for dressing up. But when you are made to wear it, that’s a different matter. Also it makes walking difficult” (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 131). Malala admits the dignity of burqa and acknowledges that it is a great dressing. Malala had these thoughts of greatness of burqa in her childhood but she asserts that when a girl is forced to wear it then it becomes a different matter for her. She deliberately states that burqa creates hurdle in a smooth walk which means that all burqa wearing women cannot walk properly because burqa is imposed upon them. Her intention is to convey the message that burqa is a compulsion and Muslim women are made to wear it. Islam does not compel people in any matter rather it just gives them guidelines to live an honest and modest life. It is up to the choice of people that what they adopt and what not. Therefore, it is grossly wrong to say that Muslim women are forced to wear burqa whereas it is their own choice and they believe that they will be rewarded for this act.

Malala attempts to degrade burqa wearing by portraying it as a childhood activity when a child is innocent and is not mature enough to decide between right and wrong. But when the child grows older and becomes mature enough to make choices then burqa becomes a problem for the person. According to Malala, after becoming adult and mature, girls do not choose burqa to wear as it makes their walking difficult and in such situations the society compels them to wear a burqa. Initially she said that burqa is favorite of children because they think it is a great dress but when they grow older they become conscious of their looks and dressings, then it becomes difficult for them to wear a burqa. After that she says that burqa is such an uncomfortable dress that makes walking difficult.

Ziauddin Yousafzai presents himself as an educated liberal man who believes in the freedom of women and let them roam freely in public places without male chaperon and without burqa because according to him, burqa is the main obstacle in women’s way towards progress. Ziauddin says in his memoir that he did not ask his wife and daughter to stay at homes rather he appreciated their liberty from Islamic traditions. He appreciates his wife for encouraging Malala to get education and then says that their area of contradiction is covering their bodies

in public places. Toor Pekai covered herself up and always asked Malala to cover her face but she always ignored her advice and Ziauddin adores Malala for this bravery.

Ziauddin discusses the women of his hometown who observe purdah whenever they went out of their houses. He presents burqa as a thick cloth that is of triangle shape and is like a cap that tightly ties the head. Burqa flows from head to feet and covers entire body of women. He describes burqa as a highly uncomfortable dress that is triangular in shape and fits tightly on the heads. After giving such a subjective and biased description of burqa, he elaborates the skills to wear it.

It takes skill to wear a garment like this because walking requires managing the burka flapping around your feet. But once mastered, the burka provides a window through which its wearer can view the world without being seen by eyes other than those of her husband. (Yousafzai & Carpenter, 2018, p. 130)

Burqa is presented as a dress that flaps around the feet of women and can put them in trouble. If a girl masters wearing burqa then it gives her a window to see the world through it. If a girl wears burqa then she cannot be seen by any man other than her husband which is a satire for Ziauddin but for a Muslim girl it is her honor to not to be seen by strange men because she is not a thing to be seen. Ziauddin draws an inaccurate picture of burqa and after that he elaborates wearing burqa as a very difficult thing to do which requires skill. He does nothing other than humiliating Muslim women who wear burqa and presents them as suppressed beings who are always in trouble because they wear burqa which is a tight cloth that covers whole body and provides a window to women to see the world.

Ziauddin tries to present himself as a progressive man for whom observing purdah or face covering are not of much importance. In his memoir, he all the time neglects and misrepresents burqa and veil to humiliate Muslim women and in contrast to them, he portrays his wife and daughter before the world as liberated women. Toor Pekai was not educated so she valued education and encouraged Malala to get education. They both agreed about the importance of education but they contradict each other with regard to covering them in public places. In his memoir, Ziauddin expresses viewpoints of Toor Pekai and Malala about purdah. He says that:

Pekai did not wear a burka but as I have said, she covered her face with a scarf. Malala wore a scarf but exposed her face. Malala refused to comply when Pekai asked her to cover more of her face. She did not want to view the world from behind a veil. She wanted to see it with an open face, just like the men did. I agreed with her. I saw no shame in this. (Yousafzai & Carpenter, 2018, p. 130)

Toor Pekai is presented as a traditional woman (while living in Swat) who is worried about her purdah and also reminds her daughter to cover herself in public sphere. Ziauddin stresses that Toor Pekai covered her face with a scarf and never wore a burqa. Malala used to wear a scarf but she did not cover her face. Toor Pekai asked her to cover her face but she answered her that she wants to view the world with an open face not by hiding behind a veil. She contradicts her mother because she does not want to live like girls who observe purdah rather she is a liberated and modern girl who does not want to hide herself behind a veil. After sharing his wife's and daughter's viewpoints, Ziauddin agrees with Malala for not covering her face and ignores Qur'anic verses that ask women to cover themselves.

Distorted Representation of Veil

In contemporary times, the practice of wearing veil has become an issue and is highlighted as a symbol of terrorism and oppression. For West, veiling is considered as an imposition on Muslim women and it hinders them from making progress. These wrong notions about veil are further strengthened in *I Am Malala* (2013) and *Let Her Fly* (2018).

In her narrative, Malala presents herself as a liberated and modern girl who never wears veil. Malala recalls the time when Taliban ruled in Swat valley and created a terrible atmosphere in whole valley. At that time, Malala and her father were campaigning for promoting girls' education and appeared on TV channels to give interviews against Taliban. Her mother advised her to be in purdah and asked to "hide my face when I spoke to the media because at my age I should be in purdah and she was afraid for my safety" (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 136). Malala gives the message to the world that burqa and purdah ensure security but she is not obliged to observe purdah because she is a modern girl. She refers to this fact but she is not ready to acknowledge the benefits of wearing burqa. Toor Pekai's views that burqa provides safety, resonate with Qur'anic verse 59 of chapter 33 that is elaborated by Ali (1987) "they should be known [as such] and not molested" (p. 210).

Malala portrays her as a modern girl who is different from other girls of her school in Swat. The differentiating criteria between Malala and other girls is the veil. Other girls wore veil while Malala never wore it. She recalls a time when she was 12 years old and was in 7th grade. She associates the act of veiling with shyness and backwardness, and says that "I was different to the other girls as I did not cover my face and I used to talk to every teacher and ask questions" (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 152). She misrepresents veiled girls and women by presenting them as figures of shyness because they are not confident and veil is a tool for them to hide themselves. In comparison to them, she presents herself as a talkative girl who is confident and does not shy to ask questions from her teachers.

While studying in Khushal School, Malala delivered a speech at prize distributing ceremony. Her fellows also delivered speeches but she segregates herself from them by highlighting their act of observing purdah and not coming in front of audience. The voices of girls were projected into the hall but they were not visible. Unlike her fellows, Malala came out of the room and stood in front of audience to deliver speech. She states that "people in the audience seemed surprised and I wondered whether they thought I was showing off or whether they were asking themselves why I wasn't wearing a veil" (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 153). Rather than focusing on the content of speech, Malala associates people's astonishment with her unveiling. There could have been many other factors for the surprise of people like the body language, facial expressions, tone, content of speech, but all these factors are ignored and people are portrayed as surprised because Malala appeared before them unveiled.

Malala's and Ziauddin's views about purdah and veil correspond to each other. In his memoir, Ziauddin presents himself as a liberal, open-minded and modern man who is in favor of promoting girls' education but he becomes biased in presenting his religion, Islam. In an attempt to forge into the new world, he reinforces Western ideology against veil and purdah, and humiliates and misrepresents Muslim women as suppressed beings who are forced by their customs to observe purdah and are oppressed by Islam.

Ziauddin supports freedom of women and in this regard, he discusses his wife Toor Pekai and daughter Malala Yousafzai, to present them as free from any social constraints. He associates his viewpoints with modernity and in his journey towards modernity, he neglects and misrepresents veil and purdah. He conveys the message to the world that freedom of women is dependent upon their freedom from customs and in this regard he highlights veil and purdah as obstacles in women's ways and stop them from becoming modern.

Toor Pekai is portrayed as a traditional woman who is anxious about her dressing and always covers herself in public. But rather than highlighting the devotion of Pekai towards her religion, she is presented as afraid of her fellow beings and to please them she wears veil and burqa. It is said that "when it came to the scarf, Pekai feared the judgment of other women" (Yousafzai &

Carpenter, 2018, p. 97). Pekai's act of wearing scarf is shown as practice adopted in fear of fellow beings to inculcate in the minds of audience that Muslim women are really oppressed beings. At another place in his memoir, Ziauddin says that "Pekai's view of the scarf was connected to her religious devotion and also to the opinion of everybody living around us" (Yousafzai & Carpenter, 2018, p. 96). This statement has two parts and both contradict each other. Firstly Ziauddin says that wearing scarf exhibits Pekai's devotion to her religion and immediately after that he says that she wore scarf because she wanted appreciation from her fellow beings. He manipulates purdah observing women by considering their acts as the acts done in order to please human beings not Allah.

Ziauddin exploits the image of all Muslim women who wear veil and burqa by referring to his own wife who observed purdah because of the judgment of her fellow human beings and tried to please them. He further misrepresents Muslim women as females who are brainwashed by people, especially Taliban, to observe purdah. He expresses the thoughts of his wife who was taught in her childhood to observe purdah to become a good Muslim. He says "Her whole life she had been taught to believe that being a good Muslim means covering yourself from the eyes of men who are not your husband" (Yousafzai & Carpenter, 2018, p. 96). He asserts that observing purdah is just misinterpretation of Qur'an by Taliban. He says that "misinterpretations of the Holy Quran that suppress women are how the Taliban attracted female followers at first, because they played on women's desire to always want to be better Muslims" (Yousafzai & Carpenter, 2018, p. 96). Ziauddin gives the message to the world that Qur'an does not demand Muslims to observe purdah and those who observe it they are misguided by Taliban who misinterpret Qur'an.

Ziauddin Yousafzai completely negates and rejects the verse of Holy Qur'an that commands Muslim women to cover and protect themselves from those men who are not their husbands. It is said in translation of chapter 24 and verse 31:

And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what [must ordinarily] appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands. (Ali, 1987, p. 171)

Allah commands Holy Prophet PBUH to ask Muslim women to lower their gaze in order to protect their modesty. They should display their ornaments and beauty only to their husbands and should cover their bosoms. Qur'an clearly states the ways to be adopted by Muslim women to guard their modesty and Ziauddin calls them the misinterpretations of Holy Qur'an by Taliban.

Ziauddin presents veil as an uncomfortable garment which creates a lot of trouble for women. He presents veiled women as prisoners of their own veil who cannot relax in veil. Ziauddin portrays Toor Pekai as a liberated woman who was living like a prisoner in Pakistan and "until we left Pakistan in 2012 following Malala's attack, she could never bring herself to relax the way she covered her face" (Yousafzai & Carpenter, 2018, p. 96). It implies that Ziauddin's wife was living a life full of trouble and this trouble was created due to her veil that did not let her relax. They got freedom from veil when they went to United Kingdom after the attack of Malala. The lives of people in Swat became miserable under the rule of Taliban. Ziauddin's family suffered under Taliban's rule and they were given threats by Taliban. After Malala's attack by Taliban, they went to UK and got freedom from Taliban but Ziauddin associates this freedom not with freedom from Taliban rather with freedom from veil and purdah.

Ziauddin negates the practice of veiling and burqa wearing. He promotes a new concept about purdah. He told to Toor Pekai that "Pekai, purdah is not only in the veil. It is in the heart"

(Yousafzai & Carpenter, 2018, p. 96). Like him, Malala also promotes the same notion in her autobiography while referring to the first year of Taliban in Swat. She was operated twice in that year and during that time, Toor Pekai was with her in hospital. She was worried about talking to strange and unknown men that this may displease Allah but Ziauddin consoled her by saying that “purdah is not only in the veil, purdah is in the heart” (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 96). Ziauddin and Malala promote the view that only dressing does not symbolize purdah rather purdah is in heart. They negate Allah’s commands and standards for modest dressing. They present their own thesis about purdah that it is only in heart and intentions matter not dressing. They humiliate all Muslim women who observe purdah by making their intentions doubtful and by degrading their dressing.

Conclusion

The main premise around which the life narratives *I Am Malala* (2013) and *Let Her Fly* (2019) revolve, is the objectification of Muslim veiled women. They adopted Western liberal framework to present veil by portraying veiled women as oppressed beings who are imprisoned in their homes and are rendered to stay out of public sphere. They presented veil as an obstacle in women’s ways which deprives them of their agency and autonomy. Burqa is highly criticized by portraying it as an uncomfortable dress that is really difficult to handle and it is a tight dress that does not let its wearer to relax. Malala and Ziauddin portrayed veiled women as greatly oppressed by their religion because it renders them subordinate social status. Veil is presented as keeping women away from doing things out of their homes and as an obstacle that interferes with their activities. It is conveyed that purdah is a barrier in women’s ways and purdah observing women suffer from false consciousness that it is an Islamic practice rather it is called as a mere misinterpretation of Holy Qur’an. Therefore, Malala and Ziauddin constructed veil as a symbol of oppression of Muslim women.

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