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Cultural in-betweenness in Ayaan Hirsi Ali's *Infidel*

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Letter of Recommendation

Ms. Nisha Bhattarai has completed her thesis entitled "Cultural in-betweenness in Ayaan Hirsi Ali's *Infidel*" under my supervision. She carried out her thesis from September, 2017 to February, 2018. I hereby recommend her thesis to be submitted to viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "Cultural in-betweenness in Ayaan Hirsi Ali's *Infidel*"
submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Ms. Nisha
Bhattarai has been approved by the undersigned members of Research Committee.

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Abstract

The present research project concentrates on the in-between position of a Muslim girl in Western society. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, who runs away from Somalia when she is forced to marry early and takes shelter in Holland as a refugee. The unjust Islamic religious values make her criticize Islam severely and equality of men and women in Europe attracts her. Her rootness of Islam and love towards Muslim community does not let her avoid Islam completely and the failure of Dutch governmental policies makes her criticize Western values also. She does not embrace Western culture fully nor does she return to Muslim culture. She is caught between two different cultural values which makes her identity critical. She establishes herself as a renowned speaker and the West celebrates it but her position has not been celebrated by her own community. The more powerful space in the West she gets, the more death threats she faces. Though she accepts one cultural value, her life is still in danger. Her autobiographical text Infidel proves her in-between position between the two cultures.

Key Terms: Third Space, In- between, Culture, Religion, Identity, Values

Cultural in-betweenness in Ayaan Hirsi Ali's *Infidel*

This research focuses on Ayaan Hirsi Ali's transformation from subordinate position to autonomous individual by creating own agency between the two cultures which always remains paradoxical with reference to her heroic and inspiring autobiography, *Infidel* (2007). In particular, it explores her experience of Muslim and Western cultures and her position at border line between these two cultures. *Infidel* is a story of a courageous woman who escapes the hell of a woman's life in Muslim world and establishes herself as an international figure by staying in Western world. This research also tries to examine how she becomes able to sustain her position in an international scenario by standing on third space.

The aim of this research project is to illustrate the Cultural in-betweenness of a Muslim woman in Western world. She is from a devout Muslim family and she breaks down the norms and values of her religion and becomes a famous international personality. Though she runs away from her culture and religion, she is not able to embrace the Western culture. She is in the edge of two cultures. She harshly criticizes her religion and culture but somewhere she expresses her faith towards the God of Islam. In Western society, she does not see any strict rules and boundaries for women and feels free. But, she does not fully adopt the Western culture and even does not transform herself into a Christian. Similarly, she sees the concept of individual choice and equality between men and women in Western society but at the same time she criticizes the inability of Dutch governmental policies to accomplish the social integration of immigrants into Dutch society. She is surrounded by armed security force to keep her safe and it seems that she has been criticizing the failure of Western security for citizens after the murder of Theo van Gogh. Also, she is not welcomed to

her own community despite her love towards her root culture. So, whether she adopt Western culture or her root culture, she is not safe anywhere. Exploration of her paradoxical position in the autobiography helps to dig out her loves for root culture with transformative movement.

Hirsi Ali's analysis of the inherent tensions between Islam and the Western world presents the dominant issues for discourse in present time also. She could neither forget her community and family nor could she adjust in Western environment. She declares herself as an atheist but still she is advocating for Muslim culture. Now she is neither accepting her own root culture nor is she adopting Western culture. By standing in the border of two cultures, she is becoming alienated from her root culture. This research aims to see her struggle to escape away from Muslim community and struggle to fit in Western society. Further, it unfolds her incompatible position between Muslim culture and Western culture. She plays such a heroic and brave role to enlighten herself but she finds secured position neither in Western society nor in Muslim society. Ayaan's affection towards her root culture becomes an obstacle for adopting Western culture and her harsh tone and critique of Islam alienates her from her root culture. Her experience as a Muslim girl, who goes through genital mutilation and forced marriage, causes her to raise voice against Islam and Quran. Her ambivalent position between the two cultures creates her paradoxical identity.

However, Ayaan's autobiography has received wide critical acclaim immediately after its publication. Critics have tried to interpret this autobiographical text from various perspectives like experience related to the enlightenment, women empowerment, psychoanalysis, terrorism, refugee, subaltern, immigration and secularism. Among all of these her positions between two cultures have been

overshadowed. William Grimes writes about Ali's criticism on Islam in *The New York Times*. He says that; "Ms. Hirsi Ali's provocative comments on Islam and on the need for Muslim women to reject their traditionally submissive role (the subject of a short film she made with Mr. van Gogh) channeled mounting Muslim anger directly at her" (3). Grimes comment on Ali's treatment towards Islam directlyly shows the reason for insecurity in Western society as well as in Muslim. Ali speaks on the behalf of Muslim women against Islam's mistreatment towards women but it leads her life at risk. Woolfgang G. Schwanitz indicates *Infidel* as "This book is a breathtaking account by the seeker of truth. It is a powerful expose of the failure of Muslim immigrants to be integrated into a predominately non-Muslim European society" (551). It shows the struggle of Muslim immigrants in Western society due to their upbringing.

In her review of *Infidel* Anne Applebaum writes "this book is something more than an ordinary autobiography" published in *The Washington Post*. Many scholars have given their opinion about the book. In her review Sherry Elizabeth Saturno writes, "Deeply human and fascinatingly complex, Ms. Hirsi Ali conveys her message of hope and freedom in a clear and incisive voice" (2). She reviewed this book as a Muslim girl's search for freedom which carries humanistic feelings and undying hope for freedom. Further, she writes:

Post 9/11, she postulated that there was a connection between terrorist attacks and radical Islam. Her disenchantment with Islam, her appeal for Muslim women to abandon a subservient role, and her incendiary remarks on the Muslim faith prompted her to receive death threats, which led her to the United States under a heavy security presence. (2)

Hirsi Ali's comment on Islam and appealing voice for Muslim women becomes a life

taking threats for her which compels her to live in USA with armed security force.

Scholars Mohammad Rashidi Pakri and Renuka Devi Anandan explore that the book deals with postcolonial-feminist and power and ideology. They argue, “*Infidel* depicts the control and abuse of women and girls, a practiced norm of oppressing women via culture and laws as constructed by men who institutionalize power in society” (199). They criticize oppression of Muslim women in the name of religion and culture which are all man-made which Hirsi Ali portrays in her autobiography. Moreover, they argue; “This memoir is a stinging critique of a bad cultural phenomenon that has been picked up and practiced by society in order to purify girls” (199). The rituals and norms are only practiced on women and girls who are constructed by patriarchy of Muslim society. Hirsi Ali severely criticizes these bad practices which have been practiced only on women and girls in her community.

Many scholars have presented their views regarding Hirsi Ali’s autobiography. Unlike the above mentioned perspective this research deals with her in-between position among the two cultures by exploring her affection towards Muslim women and Western society.

This project tries to explore and analyze Hirsi Ali’s *Infidel* by applying theoretical tools of Homi K Bhabha’s ideas presented in *Location of Culture* on the basis of third space or liminal space. Derived from Latin *limen* meaning “threshold”, liminal refers to a transitory, in-between state or space, which is characterized by indeterminacy, ambiguity, hybridity, alienation, identity crisis, globalization, marginality, dislocation and potential for subversion and change. As a diasporic intellectual, Bhabha talks about the location of culture of those diasporic people. By reading Bhabha’s book, it is clear that the notion of space does not refer to physical location but to position in discursive and imaginary system. He talks about the hybrid

identity of diasporic people. When people migrate from their place to another place they carry their culture with them and there is the interaction between two different cultures and this space is called third space. This space is the product of the culture from native homeland and the culture from the country which is adopted. It is called 'liminal space'. Cultural differences can be conceptualized in terms of cultural dichotomies. The notion of cultural in-betweenness therefore is when one is caught in-between cultures; the home culture and the new culture which is stranger, neither the original nor the present. When they practice the hybrid culture, it even challenges the authenticity of so called dominant culture. Similarly, Hirsi Ali's position between Western culture and Muslim culture and her dual identity between these two cultures create third space where neither she accepts Western culture fully nor she returns to her Muslim community.

Bhabha's influential work *The Location of Culture* focuses on "the emergence of the interstices" (2) where "these in-between spaces provide the terrain of elaborating strategies of selfhood- singular or communal- that initiative new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (2). The in-between space helps to provide a new identity to society along with an individual. Bhabha says that, "Subjects are formed 'in-between', or in excess of, the sum of the 'parts' of difference" (2). Here, a difference refers usually to race, class, gender and culture where the exchanges of values and meanings may not be always collaborative and dialogical. Hirsi Ali's autobiography is a best example to analyze the in-between position of a person where the new subjects are formed. Hirsi Ali enlightens herself; she forms her new identity and makes herself an infamous personality in the world where we can say that her formation of new identity is the collaboration and contestation of Western world and Muslim world.

Infidel is the remarkable autobiography of a courageous and admirable young woman. What is remarkable about it stems mainly from the cultural differences that she describes. In her early life, Hirsi Ali had a strict and brutal Muslim upbringing within a rigorous clan system in war torn Somalia. She is supposed to go to Canada via Germany to her new husband with whom she is forced to marry. Instead she crosses the border into Holland and goes to a refugee camp, and gives her grandfather's surname as hers, changing her birth date by two years and claims refugee status. When she becomes successful to run away from her forced marriage she encounters Western culture where she finds herself safe and free. Because she was born a woman under Islam, seeing Europe for the first time she says:

I might have a decent life, but I would always be dependent always on someone treating me well. I knew that another kind of life was possible. I had read about it and now I could see it, smell it, in the air around me: the kind of life I had always wanted, with a real education, a real job, a real marriage. I wanted to make my own decisions. I wanted to become a person, an individual. With a life of my own. (187)

Her first step to the Europe seems like her dream was fulfilled. She always wanted a life where there was an individual choice and personal freedom which she found in Western society. She does not like anyone's control over her own life regarding education, job and marriage. She always wants her real life and she wants to live it with all joy and freedom and she is sure about the fact that she could find all these things in Europe when she is feeling it and smelling it in the air.

Being a Muslim girl from a strict Islamic background many problems occur to her in the edge between the two worlds. The cultural difference which she faces in her

struggle is remarkable. Bhabha describes the cultural difference; “Culture only emerges as a problem, or a problematic, at the point at which there is a loss of meaning in the contestation and articulation of everyday life between classes, genders, races, nations” (50). Culture sometimes becomes problematic in our everyday life when its meaning is misinterpreted. Hirsi Ali’s everyday life becomes complicated between these two worlds because the dual culture she is facing in her everyday life becomes problematic. She could not able to interpret and assimilate the cultures in her everyday life. Bhabha focuses the matter of cultural difference in this way:

The concept of cultural difference focuses on the problem of the ambivalence of cultural authority: the attempt to dominate in the name of a cultural supremacy which itself produced only in the moment of differentiation. And it is the very authority of culture is knowledge of referential truth which is at issue in the concept and moment of *enunciation*. (50-51)

This enunciation of cultural difference problematizes the ambivalent division of past and present, tradition and modernity at the level of cultural representation and its cultural supremacy. It is the process of signification culture as knowledge which challenges its authority.

In Hirsi Ali’s life also the differentiation of cultures problematizes the cultural supremacy or the authority of one culture. Her attraction towards West and Western values challenges the authority or supremacy of her Muslim root culture. As Bhabha says, “The enunciation of cultural difference problematizes the binary division of past and present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and its authoritative address” (51). The cultural difference always challenges the past and present, tradition and modernity at the binary representation of cultural supremacy. It even challenges the dichotomy of “cultural representation” and its “authoritative

address". Hirsi Ali's traditional views of Islamic upbringing have been challenged by the Western modern values when she started her journey towards the West from the very beginning.

She describes her journey from strict Muslim world where women were treated so brutally and the Western world where there is no any differences between man and woman with vivid descriptions. She compares these two worlds on the basis of her journey:

I moved from the world of faith to the world of reason— from the world of excision and forced marriage to the world of sexual emancipation. Having made that journey, I know that one of those worlds is simply better than the other. Not because of its flashy gadgets, but fundamentally, because of its values. The message of this book, if it must have a message, is that we in the West would be wrong to prolong the pain of that transition unnecessarily, by elevating cultures full of bigotry and hatred toward women to the stature of respectable alternative ways of life. (347-348)

She writes about her experiences growing in a devout Muslim family where female genital mutilation and forced marriage is practiced as religion. And she sees west as a utopia for women in comparison to the Muslim world.

Her autobiography investigates the severe sufferings of Ali as well as all Muslim women from patriarchal ideology and Islamic orthodox religion which compel them to remain submissive under its domain as well as their constant resistance against such domination. She writes, "These women stand for hundreds of thousands of Muslim women around the world" (xix). So this is not only Hirsi Ali's story but it says the story of all Muslim women around the globe. It portrays a vivid detail of Muslim culture and its treatment towards women. Hirsi Ali describes about

genital mutilation which is practiced in the name of purification to all girls around the age of five.

After the child's clitoris and labia are carved out, scraped off, or, in more compassionate areas, merely cut or pricked, the whole area is often sewn up, so that a thick band of tissue forms a chastity belt made of the girl's own scarred flesh. A small hole is carefully situated to permit a thin flow of pee.

Only great force can tear the scar tissue wider, for sex. (31)

This vicious practice in the name of religion is so painful to us while reading. Muslim people believe that this circumcision makes girls pure and it is necessary for the dignity of purification. They believe that "uncircumcised girls will be possessed by devils, fall into vice and predation, and become whores" (31). So this practice is necessary in their community.

Hirsi Ali is always against with such practices and she finally escapes from her forced marriage and creates her autonomous identity as a social activist and a renowned public figure in Western world. Though, she is from a devout Muslim family and community she always wants to live her life with full of freedom and proper education. She wants to know about the whole world not only the Islamic world where life of women is completely hell. It is not like that she never wants to become a devout Muslim but when she wants to be a devout Muslim she is taught that the cause of death of their Muslim brothers is the West. She writes:

As much as I wanted to be a devout Muslim, I always found it uncomfortable to be opposed to the West. For me, Britain and America were the countries in my books where there was decency and individual--- In my own personal experience of the West--- which was, admittedly, minimal---it really didn't seem to be terribly evil--- We were taught that, as Muslims, we should oppose

the West. (109)

It seems that she always wants to live a life like people in West where people have their individual freedom and choice. She wants to be devout with her religion but her religion always teaches to oppose the West which she does not like. It also seems that she loves Western world and the life at Western world. Finally, she is able to make her individual choice and established herself in Western world and becomes a role model for all Muslim women.

Though she escapes from Islam's strict clan systems and attracted towards Western values of freedom and individual choices she does not transform herself into Christianity. She sees the clash of groups even in Christianity and she writes:

Half of Holland was Protestant and half Catholic...Two big blocs developed in Dutch society, Protestants and Catholics. Later a third bloc developed for social democrats, who were both Protestant and Catholic, and there was also a much similar group of nonreligious, secular people called the liberals. These blocs were the "pillars", the foundation of Dutch society... These pillars operated just like clans. For generations, Dutch Catholics and Protestants went to separate schools, hospitals, clubs, shops; they even had separate channels on TV and separate radio stations. (238)

She finds the similar religious beliefs of Islam and Christianity which is creating the clash of different groups. This division of groups is creating the discrimination among the people of same society. This clash of groups is always becomes the cause of religious war. Similar thing which she faced in Islam she sees in Holland and it seems that this becomes the cause of becoming an atheist.

Hirsi Ali details her life story regarding the time she spent in Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia and Kenya as oppressive periods in her life and claims that her

escape to the West led to her freedom. When she arrives in German a kind of foreign feeling comes to her and while roaming around the German streets she says:

After a little while I took off my coat off; I thought I might stick out less. I Still had on a headscarf and a long skirt, but it was the most uncovered I had been in public for many years. And yet I felt anonymous. There was no social control here. No eyes silently accused me of being a whore. No lecherous men called me to bed with them. No brotherhood members threatened me with hellfire. I felt safe; I could follow my curiosity. (185)

She finds German totally different where she feels safe and there is no any fear of her Muslim brotherhood that would punish her for being uncovered. There is no any restriction over a girl's life and she does not see any social control which makes her safer even in a strange world.

She feels totally an exotic in European world with all kind of personal freedom. She writes, "I felt I had been thrown into another world, calm and orderly, as in the novels I'd read and certain films, but somehow I had never really believed them before" (185). Still it is hard to believe for her that she is in the real world. She has only read and saw that type of calm and ordered world in novels and movies and she is amazed by seeing the real world through her eyes. Further, she writes, "I could see that even the planets and solar system were different here. I was Alice in Wonderland"(185). This type of stupid feeling comes in her mind. For her, European world was totally unbelievable and unimagined world which only exist in novels and movies.

Her step into the European world and her original identity as a Muslim girl borrows the clash of cultures in her struggle to establish herself in Western world. Her upbringing in a devout Muslim family and her individual choice to live her life in

Western world where she feels safe and free is the main cause of the clash of two cultures in her life. Her harsh criticism over her religion and her quest for self and freedom in Western world creates a threshold which is called “Third Space” in Homi K Bhabha’s word. She neither forgets her Muslim culture and community nor does she feel easy to embrace Western lifestyle which shows the in-between position of two cultures. Cultural in-betweenness is synonymous to “hybridity”. The term hybridity was developed by the postcolonial theorist Homi K Bhabha which depicts the effect of cultural identity crisis where the individual suffers from cultural war and is unable to take a stand.

A same thing happens to Hirsi Ali when she is in European world. She is caught between the two cultures and unable to take a stand. She is in a strange world she is not able to believe that the world in front of her eyes is the real world but she is happy to be there. She states, “Everyone was anonymous here, but it gave me a feeling of freedom and power to be managing my way around these strange places. I felt safe” (186). Now she is in new and strange world but she feels safe in that world because no one will recognize her and there is no need to be fear of anything. This feeling gives her power and strength to manage a decent life in Western scenario. But she feels uneasy to adopt the Western lifestyle and the people, “Sometimes it did feel good to be around Somalis, to relax with people I completely understood. Adapting to Dutch people was still a huge effort for me” (224). This statement proves her uneasiness to adopt the Dutch people and their company. She loves to be with Somalis which shows her affection towards her community.

Though she avoids her religion and Muslim community she often shows her affection and belief towards Muslim God. When she heard about the second plane attack in the World Trade Center and when she sees the footage on television she

says, “I found myself screwing my eyes tight shut and thinking, in Somali, ‘Oh Allah’, please let it not be Muslim who did this”(268). Her mental state after seeing the footage and news shows that she still believe in “*Allah*” and she does not want to see her Muslim brotherhood as a criminal who did that type of horrific accident. This shows her affection and attachment towards her religion and Muslim brotherhood. She falls in such a dilemmatic situation that neither she could accept Western culture nor she ignores her root culture.

Bhabha comments on the African American artist Rene Green’s “‘architectural’ site-specific work, *Sites of Genealogy*” that the matter of difference is often constructed with binary logic. Similarly, Hirsi Ali’s in-between position or cultural difference is also constructed with binary oppositions of two cultures. Bhabha comments on Green’s work; “The stairwell as liminal space, in- between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white” (5). The in-between state or the liminal space is the result of symbolic interaction of two different things. In the same way, Hirsi Ali’s in-between position is also the result of the interaction of two different cultures. Her bloodlines of Muslim brotherhood and her interaction with Western culture get mixed up and the matter of difference occurs which is symbolic interaction of two cultures. The matter of cultural difference often occurs in Hirsi Ali’s life while struggling in Western society.

After the 9/11 attacks she becomes too rude to Islam and she criticize that Islam is the religion which “spreads a culture that is brutal, bigoted, fixated on controlling women, and harsh in war” (272). For her, Islam is a brutal religion and always biased towards women which dominates the life of women. But at the same time she shows her affection towards Islam in the following words:

We Muslims could shed our attachment to those dogmas that clearly lead to ignorance and oppression. In fact, I thought, we were lucky: there were now so many books that Muslim could read them and leapfrog the Enlightenment, just as the Japanese have done. We could hold our dogmas up to the light, scrutinize them, and then infuse traditions that are rigid and inhumane with the values of progress and modernity. We could come to terms with individual expression. (273)

Though she severely comments on Islam she is still connected with Muslim. She often says “We Muslims” which shows her belongingness to Muslim. It does not mean that she hates Islam but it seems that she wants Muslims to enlighten. She criticizes Islam for never going through a period of modernization and reform where it embraced the values of enlightenment, such as scientific inquiry, reason and individual rights. She wants her religion with subversion and transformation. She does not want the “rigid and inhumane” Muslims. She wants Muslim brotherhood with the “values of progress and modernity”.

At the same time she is fascinating by seeing the freedom and the enjoyable lifestyle of Western people. Her sister Haweya says her that she is becoming *Kufr* abandoning prayers and obedience to Allah. Haweya describe Hirsi Ali’s Western ideas as a virus which is destroying her moral values. But Hirsi Ali says:

The more I read Western books, the more I wanted to read them. The more I learned about government, about the development of the individual, about systems of thought like social democracy and liberalism, the one the product of the other, the more I preferred things this way. The concept of individual choice improved people’s lives so visibly, as did equality between men and women. I was enamored of the idea that you should think precisely and

question everything and build your own theories. (248)

She is so fascinating about Western ideas of the individual choices and equality. She wants to explore more about Western ideas and the social democracy which is not in Islamic world. She likes the Western concepts about the questioning everything which helps to improve individual's life by building their own theories. All these things attract her in Western society.

But at the same time she shows a kind of fear of freedom that she gets there. Though she gets all kinds of freedom and individual choices there she finds herself lonely and empty:

I was not blind to the disadvantages of all these freedoms. I felt the loneliness and sometimes even the emptiness of our lives. It was sometimes tiresome to have to find out everything by myself, instead of relying on the comfortable, clear lines of doctrine and detailed rules. At times I, too, feared the limitless freedoms of Holland. (248)

She is happy to be there in Holland, she wants to know more about West but sometimes she feels uneasy and loneliness to be there. She gets freedom there but she has the fear of freedom. All the comfortable lifestyle which she wants in her life makes her empty and she finds uneasy to manage all things by herself.

All this situation of Hirsi Ali indicates the effect of being rootlessness. She is far from her own community and culture, she even criticizes her religion and culture badly but at the same time she feels lonely. When person goes far from their culture they feel alienated and it becomes hard to adopt second culture. Jeane Moore defines rootlessness or homelessness as, "The homeless experience as a lack of belonging or being can result in a person being out of place" (144). She wants a life with personal choices and she finds it but she is not able to embrace the freedom and lifestyle. She

has some fear of being rootless with her Muslim community and Islam. She is far from her culture, family and community and she feels hard to adopt Dutch culture and people which shows her condition of being rootless.

This interaction of two worlds in her life creates cultural hybridity. Homi K Bhabha describes; “This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (5). Hirsi Ali’s position in the edge of two cultures and the identification of her position in two worlds creates the possibility of hybridization of two cultures in her life. She is from Muslim community and now she is in West. Though she tries to avoid Islam, often she shows her affection towards Islam and Allah due to her upbringing as a Muslim girl. And her desire of living a life with proper freedom and individual choices leads her to Western world. All this depicts the possibility of cultural hybridity which is the product of symbolic interaction of two different cultures.

Hirsi Ali’s *Infidel* is a fine explanation of a brave woman’s life and ideas. She is a campaigner for women’s rights and fierce defender of Western values. She speaks against the violence and ill treatment towards women in Islam. They have to attend Quran classes and she says that Quran is always biased towards women; “The Quran said “Men rule over women. “In the eyes of the law and every detail of daily life, we were clearly worth less than men” (102). It was written in Quran that men have all the rights to rule over women and they cannot disobey them. This biasness always shatters Hirsi Ali and from her early age she starts to raise her voice against the words written in Quran. She recalls her particular day when she raises her voice against Quran while attending a Quran class which is about “how women were supposed to behave with their husbands” (103). She writes about the day:

We owed our husbands absolute obedience; he told the mothers and teenage girls who had gathered to listen to him. If we disobeyed them, they could beat us. We must be sexually available at any time outside our periods, “even on the saddle of a camel”, as the *hadith* says...But Boqol Swan yelled, “TOTAL OBEDIENCE: this is the rule in Islam.” It enraged me, and I stood up behind the curtain. In a shaky voice I asked, “Must our husbands obey us, too?”

There is nothing wrong with that question, but Boqol Swam’s voice rose, hard and dry. “Certainly not!”

I dug my nails into my hand to stop myself from shaking and went on, “Men and women are then not equal.”(104)

She is rebellious from her early age and she does not like the domination of the women in her community. This biasness towards women and the inequality of men and women forced her to raise voice against her own religion but the patriarchal society always dominates the voice of women. She always defends women in her community and she speaks on the behalf of women in Islam that’s why she raises her voice in public against Quran.

She is not letting the West be pure from her criticism. As a feminist she criticizes the ill-treatment towards women in West also. When she wants to know about the honor killings which happens to girls in Holland she does not find any registered murder in Ministry of Justice; “The Dutch Government registered the number of drug related killings and traffic accidents every year, but not the number of honor killings, because no Dutch official wanted to recognize that this kind of murder happened on a regular basis” (296). Even in West girls are murdered in the name of honor of their family. Girls are killing by their husbands, fathers and brothers to save their precious family honor. She criticizes the ignorance of Dutch Government

towards women and their rights. The Dutch government keeps the records of accidents and drug related killings but the murder of women are ignored to keep record. The position of women in both worlds is not good and she criticizes the both worlds which are ignorant and brutal towards women and their rights. Hirsi Ali is the victim of Islamic orthodox which treats women as an animal so she leaves Muslim community. In Europe she sees the equality of men and women but here also she faces the ignorant matter of honor killings.

It is clear that she speaks so rudely about Islam but at the same time she also makes criticism on the immigrant policy of Dutch Government. When she is working as a Somali- Dutch translator she sees a hidden part of violence and abuse toward women among Muslim refugees. She has to visit prisons, hospitals, and women's shelter for criminal investigation while doing her job. The cases often entailed the brutalization of women. Seeing the condition of women in asylum Hirsi Ali criticizes the failure of Dutch Multicultural strategy of leaving Muslim alone to develop their self-esteem:

But I was beginning to see that Muslims in Holland were being allowed to form their own pillar in Dutch society, with their own schools and their own way of life, just like Catholics and Jews. They were being left politely alone to live in their own world. The idea was that immigrants needed self-respect, which would come from a strong sense of membership in their community. They should be permitted to set up Quranic schools on Dutch soil. There should be government subsidies for Muslim community groups. To force Muslims to adapt to Dutch values was thought to conflict with those values; people ought to be free to believe and behave as they wish. (245)

She makes criticism on the immigrants' policy of Dutch government which left the

Muslim immigrants alone to form their place in Holland. The Dutch government is forcing the immigrants to adopt Dutch values. The Dutch multiculturalism which is creating separate pillars or immigrant communities formed by culture or religion which make the immigrants feel like they are from separate groups rather the citizens of the nation. Her criticism shows that the government is ignoring the human rights “to be free to believe and behave as they wish”. It seems like she is also criticizing the belief systems of Catholics and Jews while talking about the immigrants’ policy.

Hirsi Ali is blaming the Dutch government for the violent nature and poor condition of Muslim immigrants. She does not like the Multiculturalism policy of Holland, “Holland’s multiculturalism--- its respect for Muslim’s way of doing things-- wasn’t working. It was depriving many women and children of their rights”. The policy is creating problems among the Muslim immigrants which are avoiding the rights of Muslim women and children. Similar way Bhabha makes criticism on Multiculturalism on an interview with Jonathan Rutherford. According to him, “as we know very well, that in societies where multiculturalism is encouraged racism is still rampant in various forms. This is because the universalism that paradoxically masks ethnocentric norms, values and interests” (208). Bhabha’s concept on multiculturalism proves the fact that leaving Muslim immigrants alone to make their own place in Dutch society and forcing to adopt Dutch values creating the clash of two societies. It was creating two worlds with separate schools, separate lifestyles and it becomes hard for the Muslim immigrants to socialize in Dutch community. The multiculturalism policy of Dutch government is forming the racism in the form of Muslim immigrants and Dutch people. Thatswhy, Hirsi Ali is blaming Dutch government for the sympathetic condition of Muslim immigrants in Holland.

Hirsi Ali’s journey from Muslim world to Western world is remarkable

regarding to her enlightenment. Her love for freedom and individual choices helps her to become established in Western society where she finds herself and she came to know about the importance of sense of self. She says, “In the Muslim world there is hardly a self (xii).” She escapes from the strict traditional values of Islam where there is no any sense of self. Further she writes, “Every Islamic value I had been taught instructed me to put myself last” (219). The hypocrites values of Islam make her escape from her own root culture which teaches to keep Allah at first not the self. She came to know about the self and individual choices when she sees the lifestyle of Western kids. She writes:

Another thing about these kids fascinated me: everything was about the self--- what they liked, expressing their style, treating themselves to something they felt they deserved. There was a whole culture of self that I had never known in Africa. In my childhood, the self was ignored. You pretended to be obedient, good, and pious for the approval of others; you never sought to express yourself. Here people sought their own pleasure, just because they felt like it.

(251)

The Western value which is all about the self and personal freedom attracts her. She never sees this kind of values in her community and the lifestyle of Western kids fascinated her. From her early childhood there in her community because of the patriarchal orthodox she ought to remain silent and obedient to others. When she knows the importance of self she becomes able to enlighten herself.

The cultural difference which she faces in Western society becomes her quest for new identity and self. Though she is in-between of the two worlds, it helps her to form a new identity. According to Jeffrey Weeks:

Identities are not neutral. Behind the quest for identity are different and often

conflicting values. By saying who we are, we are also striving to express what we are, what we believe and what we desire. The problem is that these beliefs, needs and desires are often patently in conflict, not only between different communities but within individuals themselves. (89)

Individual's quest for identity is the cause of difference and the clash of different values. Person's beliefs, needs and desires are always conflicting and this conflict is not happens within different community but within person's psyche also. This conflict becomes the main reason for form a new identity.

Similarly, Hirsi Ali's position at conflicting cultural values becomes the reason for quest for identity. She wants to know about herself and what she wants and her beliefs needs and desires becomes conflict between the Muslim community and Western community. By exploring herself she falls under the conflicting beliefs of Muslim and West which helps to find her and form a new autonomous identity. Homi K Bhabha also talks about the conflicting values which help to form a subjectivity of an individual. According to him; "the exchange of values, meaning and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable" (2)? The exchanges of different values do not always happen in collaborative or dialogic way but it happens in binary or antagonistic way also. Now it can be said that the exchanges of Islamic values and Western values in Hirsi Ali's everyday life does not happens in dialogic way but it is happening antagonistically which becomes conflictual to adopt one culture.

Hirsi Ali becomes a strong voice for the Muslim women who are still in the domination of patriarchal ideology in the name of religion. She criticizes Islam is not "a religion of peace" after the 9/11 attacks which makes her life risky. After the making a short film *Submission* with the director Theo van Gogh many death threats

comes to her. Her criticism over Islam makes the Islamic followers more fury. Her attempt to approach Islam's anti-woman ideology from a different viewpoint causes the murder of famous film director Theo van Gogh. On November 2, 2004 Theo van Gogh was shot and stabbed to death in broad daylight by an angered Muslim because, they are very angry with the insult of Islam in *Submission*. The murderer left a letter with death threats in the name of Hirsi Ali on the chest of Theo. Here, it seems that Hirsi Ali is criticizing the failure of Dutch security force for not providing safety for their citizens. She writes, "The entire country felt a sense of shock that someone could be murdered this way--- in Holland, of all places--- just for making a film" (320). Holland is the country where peace and compromise are highly valued but an artist has been killed brutally shocked the whole country.

One side she criticizes Islam for being violent and aggressive and another side she criticizes the Dutch government for the failure of security after the murder of Theo. Her life becomes more critical after the death threats. She could not walk freely around the country nor could she go back to her country. The special security force of Holland, DKDB is always with her for giving her high security but she is not feeling safe in Holland. It's not safe to stay in any places in Holland even with heavy security, "I couldn't be safe in any hotel in Holland" (321). Her everyday life becomes more dangerous in Holland. She is threatened by her own Muslim brotherhood because of her fierce criticism on Islam. She even could not stay freely in Holland after being an atheist. Her position becomes like a pendulum. She could not return to her country because of the fear of her own Muslim brotherhood and she could not stay there in Holland freely because of the death threats.

Hirsi Ali's in-between situation and the realization of pendulum position can be discussed from Homi K Bhabha's perspective. According to him:

The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious. (53)

The mobilization of two different worlds happens through a passage or it is called 'Third Space' which creates meaning of the language in a performative way or institutional way. Similarly, Hirsi Ali's position between the two different worlds is mobilizing through a passage which is called Third Space. Her position is in Third Space in discursive way not in a concrete geographical location. In his review Richard Peet writes:

Bhabha uses the term 'Space' in at least two different but related ways which are often difficult to distinguish. 'Space' refers to an enunciative position in the territory of a discourse --- hence the contradictory and ambivalent Third space of enunciation. 'Space' also refers to a hybrid cultural position, a liminal space between designations of identity, seen as a site of disruption, intervention and innovation. Much of the power of Bhabha's argument comes from the dialectical interplay between the two meanings of 'Space'. (379)

In Bhabha's argument the term 'Space' has its two meanings. In one meaning 'Space' refers to "an enunciative position in territory of discourse" which occurs only in discourse not in particular geographical location. Similarly in another meaning refers to "a hybrid cultural position" which occurs when individual caught between the two cultures. Peet argues that the meanings of 'Space' in Bhabha's argument is the result of "the dialectical interplay between the two meanings." So, 'Space' means a hybrid cultural position or an enunciative position which happens in the territory of discourse.

While analyzing Hirsi Ali's position from Peet's argument, she is in a hybrid cultural position. She avoids her Muslim culture and slowly she is adopting Western cultures but still she shows her affections towards Islam and Muslim brotherhood. Her hybrid cultural position is making her difficult to embrace Western culture and values fully. This is her enunciative position at the territory of discourse which is contradictory and ambivalent of two cultural values. Her situation in Europe becomes more critical when her Dutch citizenship has been discarded. She lies about herself and cooks up a false story to get shelter in asylum. She is no more Dutch to stay safely in Europe nor is she welcomed to her country. Her frequent questioning to Islamic values puts her life at risk not only in Islamic community but also in European world.

To sum up, Ayaan Hirsi Ali is a bold and courageous woman to transform herself from subordinate position to an infamous personality in-between of two different cultural values. Her brave move to escape from her force marriage and frequent criticism over Islam puts her life at death risk but she does not stop to show her attachment towards Muslim women and Muslim immigrants in Europe. Though, she does not like Islam, she shows her desperate concerns towards Muslim brotherhood after the 9/11 attack. She becomes a Dutch citizen and she is happy to be there in Europe but all these things are not enough to make her happy without her family and relatives. Her emptiness and loneliness prove her love towards her family and Muslim community.

She finds all those things what she desires in her life to live in Europe but she even criticizes the policy of Dutch government and the freedom of European society. She avoids her religion but she does not transform herself into Christianity because of the divisions of groups in religion. Avoiding one cultural value and adopting another

new cultural value becomes hard for her. The dominant European cultural values that challenge her Muslim upbringing and her everyday life become hard. She is not able to assimilate both Muslim and European values together which bring a kind of identity crisis of her. Frequent death threats make her everyday life more critical even in Western world. She is not safe anywhere. She could not return to her Muslim community because of her severe criticism over Islam nor is she safe in Europe. She is in the borderline of the two cultures and she is not safe anywhere whether she adopts Muslim culture or Western culture. Despite her love towards her root culture she is not welcomed to Muslim community and all kind of personal freedom in Europe which she wants in her life is not making her life easy and enjoyable. Still she feels uneasy to live her life with all kind of freedom because of the fear of that freedom.

The ill-treatment towards women in Islam forces her to raise her voice against Islam which brings her life at death risk. Though she does not find any discrimination between man and woman in West she is unhappy with the ignorance matter of honor killings by Dutch government. She finds the same ignorant towards women in Europe also and it disappoints her. She is not able to embrace European cultural values because of discriminations. Her in-between position is putting her identity at crisis. It seems that she does belong to anywhere neither in Muslim country nor in West.

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