

A Journey of Self-Realization: A Study on Muslim Women's Character in Shaylene Haswarey's *Hijabi Club*

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Abstract:

The Islamic cultural teachings, which are embedded in the Muslim women's headscarf (Sister Shelly, Josephine, and Yasmeen) and the emphasis on family bonds and love relationships (Yasmeen's case), are vital aspects that contribute to the holistic development of American-Muslim women and Arab-Muslim women into the Western norms and the Islamic culture. These Islamic teachings serve as a source of strength, identity, solidarity, support, and guidance fostering an environment where headscarfed Muslim female juveniles can navigate the complexities of the modern world while staying rooted in their cultural and religious heritage. In embracing these teachings, Muslim juveniles find a harmonious reflection of the Islamic traditions and their application in modernity, creating a context for rejecting intimacy and premarital relationships and raising a sense of purposeful patriarchal family dominance in their social life. The study traces the self-realization journey of the main female characters analyzing the impact of the Western cultural norms and the Islamic teachings on Muslim veiled women and juveniles in launching their free and independent life in the Western society, the patriarchal family customs, and early-age pregnancies in *The Hijabi Club*.

Key words: (Headscarf, Islamic teachings, Early-age pregnancy, Gender equality, Patriarchal family dominance).

رحلة تحقيق الذات: دراسة عن شخصية المرأة المسلمة في رواية نادي الحجاب" للكاتبة شيلين هاسواري

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المخلص:

إنّ التعاليم الثقافية الإسلامية المتجسدة في حجاب المرأة المسلمة (شيلي وجوزفين وياسمين) والتركيز على روابط العائلة وعلاقات الحب (حالة ياسمين) هي جوانب حيوية تساهم في التنمية الشاملة للمرأة الامركية المسلمة و النساء العربيات المسلمات في ضوء القيم الغربية والثقافة الإسلامية. تعتبر هذه التعاليم الإسلامية مصدرًا للقوة والهوية والتضامن والدعم والتوجيه مما يعزز بيئة يمكن للاحداث المسلمين المحجبين أن يتنقلوا في تعقيدات العالم الحديث مع الاحتفاظ بجذورهم الثقافية والدينية. ومن خلال تبني هذه التعاليم، يجد الأحداث المسلمون انعكاسًا متنوعًا للتقاليد الإسلامية وتطبيقها في الحداثة، مما يخلق سببًا لرفض العلاقات الحميمة والعلاقات قبل الزواج، ويثير الشعور بالهيمنة الأسرية الأبوية الهادفة في حياتهم الاجتماعية. تقوم الدراسة بتحليل أثر القيم الثقافية الغربية والتعاليم الإسلامية على المرأة المسلمة المحجبة والفتيات القاصرات، والعادات الأسرية الأبوية، والحمل في سن مبكرة من خلال رواية "نادي الحجاب" الكلمات المفتاحية: (الحجاب، التعاليم الإسلامية، الحمل في سن مبكرة، المساواة بين الجنسين، السيطرة الأسرية الأبوية).

Introduction

Islam is a religion with many cultural teachings that its followers follow as a guidance. Two key elements that deeply reflect these teachings are the headscarf worn by Muslim women, known as the "hijab," and the value placed on kinship and romantic relationships. In addition to serving as indicators of identity and modesty, these traits also constitute a more comprehensive

framework that encourages enlightenment, social harmony, and meaningful interpersonal connections (Cottee, 2015, p.155).

Islam also stands out as a vibrant tapestry with profound teachings that intricately weave the fabric of individual lives and societal dynamics in the mosaic of human cultures. The hijab, or Muslim women's headscarf, and the emphasis on love and family ties stand out among the many characteristics that demonstrate the diversity of Islamic culture (Winter, 2008, p.26.). These cultural components represent more than just modesty and identity. They also represent universal truths that cut across generations and geographic boundaries. This investigation probes the core of Islamic cultural teachings in an effort to shed light on the deeper meaning of the headscarf worn by Muslim women and the fundamentals of Islamic family ties and romantic relationships (Bower, 2012, p.5-8, . By revealing these features, it is crucial to comprehend how these teachings influence people's lives in such a way as to promote spiritual development, societal harmony, and the enduring power of interpersonal ties (Dallmayr, 2010, p.2-3).

Moreover, the family unit plays a crucial role in the intricate web of Islamic cultural teachings, serving as a cornerstone that molds the very structure of Muslim societies. The notion of family has a special significance in Islam because it is based on principles that have endured for centuries. This investigation aims at clarifying the profound nature of Muslim patriarchal family ties and the enduring networks of support woven therein (Hellwig, 2011, p.18). The cultural teachings that emphasize the interconnectedness and

the roles of family members within a patriarchal structure is fundamentally woven for the protection and support of the Muslim female. By doing so, the deeply held principles that Muslim families rely on to remain resilient and strong, creating a sense of cohesion, protection, and unwavering support reach across generations and enhance the empowerment of these Islamic cultural teachings (Mahmoud, 2011, p.48).

In addition, the depth of Islamic cultural teachings contains a wealth of wisdom that skillfully leads people through life's challenges. One important aspect that comes out of this cultural landscape is the emphasis on Muslim female juveniles rejecting intimacy and early pregnancies (Eltahawy, 2015, p.4-5). These teachings, which are grounded in a profound understanding of morality, societal harmony, and human development, demonstrate a dedication to preserve the welfare and dignity of young Muslim women. This exploration delves into the foundational principles of Islam in an effort to shed light on the profound significance of the command to prevent early pregnancies and close relationships between Muslim female minors. Understanding these cultural teachings consents the interpretation of a narrative that promotes the safety, empowerment, and multifaceted development of young Muslim women within the confines of the Islamic tradition (Foley & Hoge, 2007, p. 10-11).

The Muslim Women's Headscarf: A Symbol of Modesty and Identity:

Muslim women embrace a sense of empowerment by choosing to express their religious and cultural identities through wearing the hijab. By

dispelling stereotypes about Muslim women, the headscarf helps society as a whole. In the larger context of a diverse and connected world, it acts as a declaration of individuality. The headscarf worn by Muslim women emerges as a symbol with profound cultural and religious significance in the rich mosaic of world cultures. The hijab is more than just a piece of clothing; it represents a harmonious union of modesty and identity that appeals to millions of Muslim women worldwide. These values are deeply rooted in Islamic teachings (Al Sundeary, 2012, p.544).

Besides, the principle of modesty, a virtue highly regarded in Islamic teachings, is at the heart of the hijab's symbolism. In the context of the hijab, modesty encompasses a woman's attitude, speech, and behavior in addition to her physical appearance. The headscarf emerges as a potent tool for dispelling misconceptions about Muslim women in a world where stereotypes are still prevalent. The headscarf transforms into a representation of female empowerment, showing that a woman's strength does not come from following social conventions but rather from the sincerity of her convictions (Mahmoud, 2011, p.49).

In addition, beyond its external appearance, the hijab has great spiritual significance in Islamic tradition. It is a practical way to show that one believes in and submits to the divine rules that are outlined in the Quran. The headscarf establishes a concrete connection between the wearer and their Creator and acts as a deliberate declaration of one's devotion to Allah. In this sense, the

headscarf becomes more than just a piece of clothing; it becomes a holy covenant and a means of worship on a daily basis (Furseth, 2011, p.32).

Family Bonds in Islam: A Pillar of Stability and Support:

Family ties are highly valued in Islam as the foundation of a powerful and harmonious society. The family is regarded as the fundamental unit of society, and the health of the family directly affects the health of the larger community. Islam places a strong emphasis on love, support, and respect among family members. The roles and responsibilities of family members are outlined in the Quran and Hadiths (Prophet Muhammad's sayings), which promote harmony and cooperation. Moreover, Islamic teachings on family ties place a high priority on love and compassion. The Quran urges spouses to support and care for one another as their partners (Foley & Hoge, 2007, p.31).

In addition, Islamic teachings encourage harmony and cooperation within the family. It is expected that conflicts and disagreements will be resolved patiently, kindly, and through compromise. The Quran urges believers to resolve disputes kindly, acknowledging that the family is a setting for individual and communal spiritual development. In Islam, the family serves as a small version of the larger community, and its health is inextricably linked to the health of society as a whole (Yefet, 2011, p.88).

Love Relationships in Islam versus Early-aged Pregnancies outside Marriage:

Islamic teachings approach the guidance of romantic relationships in a balanced way, taking into account the shifting dynamics of modern society while also respecting cultural norms. Islam encourages engagement, but only within the framework of Islamic values, which prioritize modesty, decency, and family life. The concept of community and interconnectedness as a whole is supported by marriage, which is seen as a sacred contract that unites families and individuals (Appiah, 2012, p.429).

The idea of marriage as a sacred covenant lies at the core of Islamic doctrine on romantic relationships. Marriage is a spiritual union that is acknowledged and blessed by God, not just a legal contract. In a physical and emotional sense, spouses should offer one another support, comfort, and adornment. In Islam, strong emphasis is placed on the sanctity of marriage and advance a moral code that calls followers to uphold modesty, chastity, and the avoidance of intimate relationships before marriage (Mahmoud, 2011, p.49). Islam's holy book, the Quran, stresses the value of upholding purity and the necessity of acting responsibly in interpersonal interactions. Up until they enter into a legal union through marriage, adherents are urged to maintain their virginity.

The Islamic cultural teachings embedded in the Muslim female's headscarf and the emphasis on family bonds and love relationships were studied by reflecting on the cultural and religious heritage, application in modernity, rejection of intimacy and premarital relationships, and purposeful patriarchal family dominance.

The Hijabi Club

The study covered the detailed life of high school teenaged girls of the novel living in California. First, Sister Shelly, who had an intimate relationship outside marriage which resulted in a daughter, is the single independent mother in the novel who launches the Hijabi Club to maintain social security and premarital safety for her daughter and other females. Second, Josephine, who is the daughter of Sister Shelly, is one of the novel's narrators and who wears the headscarf with pride and satisfaction. She is a convert Caucasian American “*who is a co-founder of the interfaith club at her school. She is an outgoing teenager who loves hosting slumber parties with her friends, working on community service project, and trying to live the way God wants her to live*” (Haswrey,2011,p 18). Third, Yasmeen who is an Arab American Muslim and the new vulnerable Hijabi club member who wants to follow the Islamic teachings but is still indecisive and wavering between the Western cultural norms. She dreams of becoming a cosmologist and of living the free life of the non-Muslim teenagers. For this reason she is unconvinced of the way that her tough and domineering father raised her. Fourth, the submissive mother of Yasmeen who is completely obedient following her husband's decisions and orders. Fifth, the controlling and invincible father of Yasmeen who cares for his daughter on his own way and develops unhealthy communication and attitude with Yasmeen. Sixth, the female friends, Ashley and Fatima, who dive into certain behaviors apart from the Islamic teachings, are presented for the

early-aged pregnancy by Ashley and the need of solidarity and support for Fatima.

The study examines the effect of the Islamic teachings on the Muslim female juveniles in the Western society, and consequently their journey of self-realization .

The Hijabi Club is distinguished for shattering preconceived notions about Muslim women. It offers representations of Arab-Americans and American-Muslims who have adopted a conversion life. They seem quite different from the stereotypical images of Muslim women circulated in the western societies. Given the constant emphasis on Islam in media and in political discourse, the need for accurate representations of Muslim women by Muslim women writers is especially crucial (Bower, 2012, p.4). In fact, the majority of the narrative events take place in America, where Sister Shelly, a white converted Muslim woman and the novel's matriarch, serves as a connection between the American culture and the Middle Eastern cultures. She supports Muslims in becoming fully integrated members of the American society. She offers Josephine and her friends a safe place to discuss the problems they face as female Muslim teenagers by hosting rest at her home, the so-called Hijabi Club (Ali, 2020, p.81).

The novel also emphasizes the significance of wearing the Muslim headscarf as a means of discouraging sexual affair before marriage and, more essentially, for affirming a woman's right to sexual integrity. As a sign of their

faith and integrity, Sister Shelly and her daughter Josephine boastfully wear the headscarf (Ali, 2020, p.83). Muslim girls are said to wear the headscarf when they reach puberty, at which point it is expected that they will choose to do so. Because the wearing of the headscarf coincides with young women entering puberty, discussions about the headscarf are also linked to some efforts to educate female juveniles about sexuality (Baumeister, 2013, p.244). The novel, thus, serves as a reflection of the problems young Muslim women face in western societies, particularly the decision to wear the headscarf. Not only does the novel highlight the patriarchal understandings of Islamic traditions among the Muslim families and their cultural variations, mostly those from Middle Eastern backgrounds, but it also “presents the Muslim women's perspective on issues such as teenage pregnancy, premarital sex, and interfaith dialogues” (Ali, 2020, p. 82). Beyond the notion of the oppressed woman, *The Hijabi Club* focuses on the reasons of women's choices and demonstrates the huge influence which many cultural disputes have on young women.

The Self-sufficiency of a Muslim Single Mother

Sister Shelly, a young single mother, has experienced marginalization, severe stress, and discontent. However, she has gained strength, flexibility, and insight from her own experience and from her family's support. She credits her strength as a self-sufficient single mother to her love of God, her parents' encouragement, and her growing Muslim faith. She feels that once she has become a pious Muslim, the headscarf is to be worn with pride and confidence. She also realizes that wearing a headscarf is as an expression of her identity as

she matures physically, intellectually, and spiritually. In fact, through her conservative clothing and headscarf, Sister Shelly has learned to differentiate between how she presents her dress wear outside her house and how she keeps the western styled clothes inside her house. She states:

“Nope, just wearing my indoor clothes. Since Josephine’s non-Muslim friends are coming, I thought I’d look like a teenager. I wanted to show her friends that even though we dress a certain way outside, it doesn’t mean we can’t dress up inside. Of course, only around women” (Haswarey, 2011, p. 129).

The novel discusses the headscarf debate through Sister Shelly who cleverly draws on Western culture to make her point as she recognizes that wearing a headscarf implies a connection to extremism. Also, being ‘white’ gives her the ability to do so what non-white Muslims cannot do, thus, by contrasting various ethnic circumstances and understanding the importance of the headscarf as a fundamental bond related to female sexuality and early pregnancy. By arguing the sexual politics of the headscarf as well as bringing up women's activity and personal life once again, Sister Shelly's vision drifts away from the former traditional influences. Both Sister Shelly and her daughter, Josephine, assert that they wear the headscarf as independent and powerful women, and not as a mark of subjugation to men and the patriarchal societal expectations.

The novel also proceeds the depiction of the conventional structure of unreal and ethnic narration where the issue of wearing and unwearing the headscarf is a topic of discussion. Besides, the ethnic backgrounds, the restructured Islamic teachings, and the Muslims' cultural diversity in the western culture all collectively deal with particular early pregnancy and gender equality issues (Yefet, 2011, p.95). The three club types — the Hijabi Club, interfaith Club, and Book Club — that are represented in the novel show social connections between people from different backgrounds. They also enhance tolerance and thoughtfulness between traditionally different communities through the religious tolerance medium, established by these women, which considers these women's headscarves a depiction of their Muslim status. In fact, Sister Shelly and Josephine are the first characters in the novel to embrace religious diversity, and they later persuade others to do the same, creating a community that is religiously tolerant. On the other hand, Yasmeen happily accepts the cultural background variations and the interreligious meetings they perform. In fact, she seems encouraged to adopt their self-discovery strategy and to reconsider her family's cultural practices and their unfavorable interfaith gatherings.

Besides, Sister Shelly and her daughter Josephine, as Muslim females, encounter the debate between the Westernized Islamic teachings and the Middle Eastern cultural and conventional practices by using the iconic influence of their headscarves. Through Yasmeen's cultural problematic issue, the various ways that Muslims portray the headscarf are inquired in her journey

of self-discovery of wearing the headscarf and its influence on females' identity (Ali, 2020, p.48).

In addition, the proliferation of the Islamic teachings has been greatly supported by the rise of female leadership in North Africa and the Middle East regions (Hellwig, 2011, p.20). Sister Shelly and Hajja Faiza, who are depicted as modernist preachers in the novel, make a compelling case of the reason why women should hold positions of leadership in mosques and communal hubs in accordance with modernist Islamic teachings instead of a liberal view of gender equality. Sister Shelly, thus, acknowledges that it is challenging for her to limit her independence and to only adhere to gender roles if she resides in the Middle East. On the contrary, she is capable of making choices about her pregnancy whether to keep her child, as well as continuing her work to establish interfaith activities and community service, and to have a good family connection with her Mormon parents. Concerning her decision to marry a young Muslim Afghani man, Imam Sheikh Tariq, she also states that her marriage would not have been possible in the Middle East (Mahmoud, 2011, p.41).

Fundamentally, the novel forms a sort of dialogue alternating between its two narrators, Josephine and Yasmeen, as they truthfully show their Muslim perspectives throughout the novel. For example, Yasmeen seems much more hesitant about whether to wear the headscarf than Sister Shelly and her peers in the Hijabi Club. As a result, the novel's dualistic structure establishes the ideological presuppositions of each narrator while comparing their respective

points of view. To illustrate, as committed Muslims, Josephine and her mother, are happy to wear the headscarf, but Yasmeen finds it extremely difficult because she thinks it makes people judge her in hurtful ways. Consequently, using a dual narration as a narrative technique in the novel enables the depiction of opposing viewpoints whether to wear the headscarf in Western societies. Also, this narrative technique indicates two different and opposite perspectives and determines the Muslim cultures' diversity in the West (Foley & Hoge, 2007, p.19). For example, while Yasmeen is much more torn about whether to wear the scarf than her mother, Josephine, Sister Shelly and her peers in the Hijabi Club, candidly express their Muslim perspectives throughout the novel. As a result, the narrative's dualistic structure demonstrates the ideological presuppositions of each narrator while comparing their respective points of view.

The Dilemma of the Muslim Female Juvenile

Sister Shelly's story, a committed Muslim who managed a prosperous life with her daughter, Josephine, and remained independent and socially successful, is the bedrock of Yasmeen's journey in observing the Islamic religion and its teachings. Besides, Sister Shelly grows her faith into consistent adherence to the Islamic teachings while still managing to uphold the American cultural values with relative ease. Not only does she convert to Islam after experiencing sexual abuse and becoming pregnant as a juvenile, but she also chooses to practice the Islamic beliefs as a means to protect her daughter and other juvenile females from similar situations (Ali, 2020, p.90). Moreover,

Sister Shelly learns that the headscarf, which is part of the Muslim dress code, helps women reduce men's desire for them. She also learns about patriarchal cultural norms, even though she acknowledges that Muslims do have strict laws against underage pregnancies. The desire to control and suppress women's sexual nature is the driving force behind many discriminatory laws and social practices that oppress women in Muslim culture with regard to women's sexuality (Bucar, 2017, p.22).

On another side, Yasmeen is aware of the psychological barriers preventing her from being attached to her father. She is unable to relate to her father effectively and is unable to appreciate him as her mother describes him. Despite her father's advanced education, she is more prone to depression and low self-esteem. This is due to her father's control over her. As a result, she attempts to live her usual western lifestyle behind his back .

“I know my parents are too controlling, but at least I have my own laptop. My dad thought it would be a good idea for studying. How gullible he is! Over 90 percent I am emailing or chatting with friends” (Haswarey, 2011, p. 65).

She observes Josephine wearing a headscarf which supposedly lessens young men's attention to her, and will in turn help prevent early pregnancies and sexual experiences before marriage. Though Yasmeen is still doubtful of her faith customs, Sister Shelly's decision to have these juvenile females practice the Islamic teachings makes them devoted adherents of the religion.

The female juvenile characters in the novel search for the idealistic Muslim men to date, but they passionately seek compassionate and well-adjusted spouses who treat them fairly and upkeep their moral convictions (Hellwig, 2011, p.25).

In addition, Yasmeen is ready to start living independently outside her family and find her own voice as an accomplished woman. Her mother is the epitome of weakness and subordination, undermining the patriarchal discourse that permeates her family. Her perspective becomes clear when she thinks back on the different stages of her journey—through the American Muslim community and the non-Muslim cultural groups—and compares it to her father's discriminatory and patriarchal methods. She also takes into account the relationship of dominance and control that exists between her father's cultural identity as a Muslim from the Middle East and his patriarchal methods. Yasmeen also believes that religion no longer plays a significant role regarding her parents' outdated cultural customs, and she plans to leave the family home after she graduates from high school. In fact, she perceives the headscarf as a sign of male prejudice, freedom restriction, and thinking within the parameters of Islam. Yasmeen also feels that the headscarf is a means for her father to impose his authority and control over her family and validates his reasons from the Islamic teachings .

“Of course, I view club as an escape! Don’t we all? Tell me, if we didn’t come here, we’d all be at home watching TV with our parents. Maybe, I don’t feel as comfortable here, because I don’t practice Islam as well as you all, and

my friends at school are different, but don't tell me we all don't come here to escape daily life!" (Haswarey, 2011, p. 35).

Moreover, the narrative technique shows Josephine and Yasmeen alternate narrating young women's resilience and weakness as they experience sexual abuse. The consequence of abuse and how both Muslim and non-Muslim characters' divine journeys refuse the patriarchal belief systems and proceed toward personal empowerment are both obvious (Hellwig, 2011, p.24). As an alternative, they rely on well-established religious traditions and contemporary religious organizations, continuing to reap the potent advantages of belonging to a group. Yasmeen explores faith throughout her journey, and spirituality gains strength among young females who become pregnant at an early age and care for their children while their male partners leave. Moreover, After Yasmeen finds out about Sister Shelly's three non-Muslim American friends - Julie, Melody, and Ashely - who are involved in undesirable early pregnancy with careless partners, Yasmeen discovers Sister Shelly's viewpoint about dating and intimacy at an early age to be quite satisfying. This serves as a crucial foundation for Yasmeen and the other young females in the novel to distinguish between spirituality among women of various religious backgrounds and patriarchal cultural practices .

Premarital Relationships versus Islamic Teachings

Yasmeen makes an effort to be a westerner especially in the party she attended, but she finds it challenging to conceal some identifying

characteristics, such as her name and her background. While wearing the headscarf, she feels strange in the crowd, but when she takes it off, she becomes anxious. In spite of this, she discards her headscarf and, in turn, the Muslim dress code as soon as she arrives because she finds the party and American culture, generally, an environment of freedom and acceptance. Thus, she relishes the chance to wear trendy and fashionable clothing in public without covering up. Her mini-skirt and sleeveless shirt grab the attention of many attendees and raised their feelings of desire toward her.

At the party, Yasmeen met Nick, a white American whose father works with her father at the hospital. He *“has this nice thick blond hair, blue eyes, muscular arms, and a smile to die for”* (Haswarey, 2011, p. 30). Nick could easily label Yasmeen as a foreigner in which it was the first time he hears her name. *“I loved the states. Ashley, my friends from school, and I started dancing. After a while, this really hot guy came up to me. I have never seen him before... pretty name for a pretty girl...what kind of name is that?.... It’s Arabic... That’s cool. I like foreign names, especially foreign girls”* (Haswarey, 2011, p. 29). In turn, Yasmeen feels comfortable knowing Nick as he refrains from drinking alcohol while introducing himself to her, and behaving as an adult in terms of drinking and sexuality as all other teenagers’ attendees. In fact, the trends of gender inequality which concerned Yasmeen are typically different from those that her mother encountered which could be in the form of social equality with men in terms of accessing education and having arranged marriages. Yet, now her mother has been turned into a submissive wife .

As a Muslim female, Yasmeen was careful of the Islamic traditional teachings in terms of marital relationships where the wife has to obey her husband and submit to his authority, and that, under certain circumstances, a woman can only have one husband while a man can have multiple wives. She also discovers that, contrary to the prohibition against having sex before marriage, early marriages may be arranged with parental approval (Garner & Parves, 2020, p.34). Therefore, abode by her cultural values of physical contact restrictions, Yasmeen resorts to develop her emotional intimacy that includes only occasional hand touches. *“Why are couples going upstairs? Nick laughed. “Use your imagination, and you will know. Isn’t that embarrassing?”* (Haswarey, 2011, p. 31).

Soon later, Yasmeen fell in love with Nick who leaves his after his conversion to Islam. In fact, this kind of behavior is justifiable in Yasmeen’s religious culture in which a Muslim man can marry a non-Muslim woman, but that is not applicable to the woman. A Muslim woman’s husband must be Muslim (Hellwig, 2011, p.20). As a result, a conflict rose within Yasmeen as she can neither express her love to Nick nor talk about him to her parents and to the Hijabi Club members. *“Nick took my hand and gently kissed it. It felt so romantic, like a knight kissing a princess”* (Haswarey, 2011, p. 75). Hence, the irony in the narrative explores the hard situation in which Nick does not accept Yasmeen after his conversion to Islam, claiming that to her insufficient Islamic beliefs and inherited values, and that their dating and premarital relationship conflicts the Islamic teachings. The novel illustrates how newcomers are

welcomed and integrated into religious communities and contrasts Nick's experiences at the mosque and churches. As Nick emailed Yasmen after the party, “*It was really nice to getting to know you last night .. I kept thinking of you .. I would like to see you again*” (Haswarey, 2011, p. 65). In fact, Christian organizations use the idea of faith-based hospitality to refute arguments made in public (Wilson, 2011, p.168). However, the contribution of these institutions to immigrant social cohesion and civic participation is assessed (Foley & Hoge, 2007, p.116).

Furthermore, the novel represents Yasmeen as a young Muslim female who experiences gender-based stereotyping from her patriarchal culture. On the other hand, Fatima represents the Muslim woman’s need for solidarity and support from that patriarchal culture. A blend of stereotyping depicts the unrevealed forms of discrimination as Fatima monitors Yasmeen for the purpose of reporting to the Hijabi Club and to the Muslim community the suspected pregnancy of Yasmeen. In fact, Fatima's commitment to Islamic teachings is reflected in her innate involvement in the patriarchal Muslim culture. Fatima confronted Yasmeen for going out, “*I don’t want to be rude, but you risked our club ... I know things haven’t been going well between you and your parents, but sneaking out and going with your cousin while having Josephine cover for you is not smart.*” (Haswarey, 2011, p. 34). In the novel, this character acts as an illustration of how a woman can conform to patriarchal stereotypes. Specifically, Fatima's faith leads to particular behaviors rather than morality that upholds deference to men's authority and ignores what constitutes

right or wrong behavior on their part (Goodwin, 2002, p.25). In contrast to Fatima, Yasmeen stands up for Ashley and helps her figure out how to handle her difficult pregnancy. Ashley exhibits a particular form of gendered violence as her partner does not value her. Ashley becomes pregnant against her will while dating Brian, and because of this, she might face social humiliation .

The Pregnancy of a Muslim Juvenile

The novel gives at least three instances of teenage pregnancies involving irresponsible young sexual partners in which the mothers must cope alone. Predictably, Yasmeen's father enters her hospital room when she is thought of to be pregnant, and he reacts violently toward Sister Shelly, the Hijabi Club, and the Muslim community. The story's turning point is when Yasmeen passes out while dancing at Sister Shelly's wedding reception, signifying the failure of her plan to live an independent, westernized lifestyle (Ali, 2020, p.123). "*Her performance was by far the best yet! ... She kept going and going, until she finally collapsed!*" (Haswarey, 2011, p. 381).

This condition puts Yasmeen in the most contentious situation for her family and Islamic culture, including a potential pregnancy, risk to her health, and dancing in public. Yasmeen's collapse also provides several important aspects of the story. Firstly, the incident is a turning point to have Yasmeen and her patriarchal father start talking. Second, it reveals Yasmeen's hidden behaviors, including her covert dating, eating disorder, and unique viewpoint

on Muslim headscarf and religious customs. Thirdly, it enables Yasmeen to depart from her home country and begin a new life in Jordan.

The patriarchal attitudes that are ingrained in the Islamic clarifications and which support a social custom to control women are the foundation of Yasmeen's father. Yasmeen's physical and mental well-being are impacted by these limitations when placed in the free Western context. The second half of the novel describes how institutionalized power like this creates patriarchal control and collectively develop unauthorized women. Yasmeen's father addressed Sister Shelly, "*One thing I know for sure is Yasmeen not going to your house anymore ... I don't know what is going on at your so-called club, but this may not have happened if my wife and kept a closer eye on her*" (Haswarey, 2011, p. 388). Sister Shelly, Uncle Kareem, and other Muslims gather around Yasmeen at the hospital with Yasmeen's mother remaining completely motionless. This incident further explains how inferior women are in Yasmeen's family. Yasmeen's father roared angrily, "*I just want to let you know how disappointed I am in all of you ... I should have never let Yasmeen go to your house on the weekends*" (Haswarey, 2011, p. 286). With the father's new rules, structured domestic violence is also made clear (Hellwig, 2011, p.21). He first forbids Yasmeen from going to public places. Second, she sleeps with her to be completely monitored while her father decides to homeschool her. The devoted mother is expected to carry out her husband's controlling decisions despite her inferior status and even when she disagrees with them.

Social Cohesion and Cultural Identity

Through assimilation, inclusion, and social cohesion, the chance of cultural resolution between Muslims with Middle Eastern ancestry and Muslim converts or American-born Muslims becomes acceptable (Foley & Hoge, 2007, p.31). Therefore, for the representativeness rather than just for a demeaning target, rational and multifaceted negotiations between various community groups and the Muslims are important. Effective and noteworthy structural and collective inclusion is required. Due to changing political and social conditions, Muslim women's situations varies greatly (Bakhshizadeh, 2018, p.171). In order to preserve the honor of the family and society, Mr. Brown and Dr. Zaid are allowed to exercise their male dominance over the other family members and treat women like minors, regarding the patriarchal cultural practices that are supported by religious doctrine. They both use the idea of honor as an excuse for their demeaning behavior toward Yasmeen, Sister Shelly, and Juliet at home in an effort to uphold family honor. Because they serve as the society's guardians of honor, this only serves to reinforce the idea of a patriarchal system based on religion (Ali, 2020, p.91). Dr. Zaid confronted Sister Shelly, "*Stop living through your daughter's life and be a responsible mother ... You have poisoned these girls with your Western culture*" (Haswarey, 2011, p. 386). Mr. Brown wants Yasmeen to leave their house because she doesn't have her parents' approval, "*I don't think you should be here ... If anyone finds out a girl is sneaking and coming to our house without her parents' permission, our family's reputation will be ruined*" (Haswarey, 2011, p. 350).

Obviously, the novel focuses on the influence of Muslim women's opinions from the West on the public insight of the Muslim woman's headscarf, which claims that it does not support terrorism, violence, or the oppression of women (Al Sundeary, 2012, p.538). According to Sister Shelly, the headscarf is a sign of devotion to God and submission to the spiritual life. Yasmeen's headscarf, which is an extended version of her mother's, contrasts this with the patriarchal cultural practices of men that collide with antiquated Islamic clarifications. Josephine thought upon Jamal's note to follow him to another room, "*A sincere Muslim brother does not secretly give a girl a note, asking if he can say something without her parents around*" (Haswarey, 2011, p. 283). Because of this, the novel elicits an empathic response from the Muslim woman about a secular and humanist readership in the West who can manage a free life and practice autonomous beliefs, restructured Islamic visions to deal with various religious and cultural backgrounds. Yasmeen considers religion's function to be ambiguous and to diverge from the real work of spirituality and worship by imposing patriarchal cultural norms .

Besides, maintaining one's virginity and intimacy before marriage is a key theme associated with the headscarf in the book. By choosing to cover one's head when in public rather than because it's required to follow Islamic teachings (Gartner, 2014, p.136), Sister Shelly helps young American women to manage intimacy prior to marriage. Sister Shelly, a white convert to Islam, had an early pregnancy at a young age with an unidentified partner. She, then, begins to use the headscarf and Islamic teachings as a method of education and

cultural awareness to know about sexuality by giving female juveniles practical and unconcerned methods of self-control .

Conclusion

It is clear that Shaylene Haswarey's women characters are true to life. She presents authentic high school teenagers through launching their life into a western society of culture and beliefs that are different from theirs specially those concerning Islamic beliefs , and through their struggle to enhance their Islamic identity and get others' acceptance.

The headscarf worn by Muslim women is represented by the hijab, a multifaceted symbol that transcends questions of modesty and self-identification. It is a fabric of culture woven from many spiritual beliefs of the female characters such as Sister Shelly and Yasmeen, the American Arab Muslim , in particular, empowering their Islamic teachings despite residing in a western society and culture. Beyond its original purpose of covering, the hijab comes to represent perseverance, rejecting discrimination and reaffirming the female characters' agency- Sister Shelly, Josephine, and in writing their own histories. In brief, the hijab, a symbol of these women characters' self-identity and modesty, is evidence of Muslim women's perseverance and rich cultural legacy worldwide .

Additionally, family ties are not just a social construct in Islam. The family members in the novel such as Mr. Brown and Dr. Zaid are also a sacred contract that reflects the divine wisdom woven into the very fabric of their

family existence. Yasmeen and Sister Shelly, navigating through the complexities of life, can use the stability and support found within the family unit as a compass. Family ties are a source of stability and support in Islam, reflecting the timeless values that promote harmony within Yasmeen's family and Sister Shelly's motherhood and contribute to their children's overall well-being. These values include love, respect, and shared commitment .

Shortly, early pregnancies outside marriage in Islam prompt a nuanced examination of the relationship between moral standards, personal experiences, and cultural expectations. This is clearly depicted in Yasmeen's and Sister Shelly's pregnancy. It is crucial to approach these circumstances from a place of balance grounded in empathy, comprehension, and observance of Islamic teachings that were given in and supported by both the Hijabi Club and through the Muslim girls' parents who showed encouragement and support of their own education. Eventually, Islam upholds marriage while also acknowledging human imperfection and offering a path of regret and redemption. Islam directs its followers towards a compassionate response to the difficulties posed by unmarried young pregnancies by encouraging supportive communities, thorough education, and responsible parenting .

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