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**The Muslim Woman between the Religious
Assertion and Cultural Assimilation: The Resistant
Khadra in Mohja Kahf's The Girl in the Tangerine
Scarf (2006)**

المرأة المسلمة بين التأكيد الديني والاندماج الثقافي: المقاومة خضرة
في رواية الفتاة ذات الوشاح البرتقالي (2006) لمهجة كهف

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Abstract:

For many Arab Muslim women writers from countries that asserted independence from western invasion, the twentieth century has been the time to struggle against colonialism, racism, and discrimination. Indeed, Arab Muslim women writers started to call for their liberation and independence with great consciousness. This consciousness reflects the hidden struggle for asserting self-identities. Women writers fought for their position in society by compromising all the obstacles which impede their journey of liberating the self. In Mohja Kahf's famous novel "The girl in the Tangerine Scarf" (2006), the protagonist Khadra Shamy did not have the experience to actualize the new American identity. Her traditional identity was

characterized with moral values and virtues which honestly prove her Islamic principles. These principles are set to determine the faith of Syrian Muslim women. By that, the Islamic values and principles of the protagonist Khadra do largely contradict with the racist American norms. Such contradiction made Khadra feel confused whether to accept the modern American identity or restore and sustain her valuable Islamic identity which deeply guarantees the true sense of existence. Effectively, Khadra felt the need to clearly regulate her self-identity to better interact with the American culture. This article sheds lights on Khadra's journey of self-identity construction. It shows how Khadra struggled against the oppressive western rules to practically assert her Islamic identity that is based on faith, purity and resistance.

Keywords: Islamic identity; Arab-Muslim women; resistance; colonialism; oppression; racism.

الملخص:

بالنسبة للعديد من الكاتبات العربيات المسلمات من الدول التي نالت استقلالها من الغزو الغربي، كان القرن العشرون فرصةً للنضال ضد الاستعمار والعنصرية بحيث بدأت معظم الكاتبات بإبراز الوعي العميق بتحررهن واستقلالهن الفكري. يعكس هذا الوعي الصراع الخفي لتأكيد الهويات الذاتية. بالإضافة إلى هذا الوعي الفكري، كافحت الكاتبات من أجل السمو بمكانتهن في المجتمع وذلك من خلال تجاوز جميع العقبات التي تعيق مسيرتهن في تحرير دواتهن. في رواية مهجة كهف الشهيرة "الفتاة

ذات الوشاح البرتقالي" (2006)، لم تمتلك بطلة الرواية خضرة الشامي الخبرة الكافية لتمكين هويتها الأمريكية الجديدة. اتسمت هوية خضرة التقليدية بقيم أخلاقية وفضائل تثبت بصدق مبادئها الإسلامية. حددت هذه المبادئ مدى إيمان المرأة السورية المسلمة. ومن هذا المنطلق، برز هنالك نوع من التعارض بين قيم ومبادئ خضرة الإسلامية مع المعايير الأمريكية العنصرية مما جعلها محتارة ومتذبذبة بين قبول الهوية الأمريكية الجديدة أو الحفاظ على الهوية الإسلامية القيمة التي تضمن لها الوجود الذاتي. بسبب هذا التناقض، شعرت خضرة بالحاجة إلى تمكين هويتها الذاتية لضمان التفاعل القيم مع الثقافة الأمريكية. يُسلط هذا المقال الضوء على رحلة خضرة في بناء هويتها الذاتية من خلال إظهار كفاحها الأبوي والرامي لتأكيد هويتها الإسلامية القائمة على الإيمان والنقاء والصمود.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهوية الإسلامية؛ المرأة العربية المسلمة؛ المقاومة؛ الاستعمار؛ القمع؛ العنصرية.

INTRODUCTION:

According to Castells (2010), the identity of individuals is the source of meaning, experience and existence as well. This identity is attached to social values and traditions. It inspires people to find a sense of existence in a collective society. The social identity is the marker of existence. For different sociologists, the process of identity construction is defined by norms and principles which urge individuals to identify the self in a collective social frame. The social action of individuals is determined by the cultural attributes which assert their meaningful connectivity. In this respect, the social identity underlines the role and function of individuals in a strategic way

that reflects their relational connectivity. According to Spence (1996), the identity of individuals is the source of social representation. This identity should be traditionally distinguished to better assert the uniqueness of the social actor.

1. Self-identities and social connectivity:

In society, there are different roles which relatively influence the behavior and attitudes of individuals. Social roles are defined by the norms that are structuralized by institutions and organizations which relatively construct the meaningful sense of connectivity. Such connectivity obliges individuals to negotiate and arrange the social source of meaning to clearly construct individualistic identities. For Gidden (1991), the collective source of identity construction is stronger than the source of individualization. The individual process of identity construction is based on attitudes, behaviors, actions, and performances which distinctively represent the social members. By contrast, the collective source of identity construction is based on values, traditions, and principles which urge individuals to control their identities by themselves. Identities are meaningful only when individuals internalize them. This process of internalization constructs their meaningful mode of social interaction. By that, the social actor gives a source of

meaning to his identity by referring to various strategies of collective interaction and functional internalization.

In this regard, the process of self-identity construction takes different dimensions. Such process of construction is affected by historical, geographical, biological, and sociological aspects which all together determine the type of identity for each social member. Individuals arrange the social materials which make meanings to their constructed identities. This arrangement reflects the collective source of social existence. Well-constructed identities are meaningful due to their strategic reliance on society's norms, structures, and determinations. The social construction of individual identities always takes a place in a special context that is marked by connectivity, power, and relationships. These aspects are the basic components that construct diverse identities. By that, different identities are unified by the social structure of collective connectivity.

Evidently, social identities are largely determined by the structural aspects of power, relationship, and connectivity. Castells proposed a hypothesis which practically identifies the process of identity construction. He clarified that each identity is recognized by the social structure of internalization. Such process of internalization helps to distinguish between three essential types of identity. These types are legitimatizing

identity, resistance identity, and project identity. The first type of identity is widely introduced by the dominant social institution which extends and rationalizes dominance over individuals. Different social institutions and organizations use power to control the individualistic sense of identity construction. Moving to the second type of identity (resistance identity), it is implemented by those social actors who are in devalued positions due to the powerful structures of domination and control.

Stressing the third type of identity (project identity); it is implemented by those social actors who are motivated by the cultural mode of identity transformation. Individuals, who are socially oppressed and dominated, feel the need to liberate themselves by effectuating the new project of identity transformation. According to Castells, the resistance identity is the most important identity that could be constructed in societies where oppression and domination are still affecting the right of liberation. In addition, it covers the collective sense of resistance, struggle, and defense against the ideological invasion of various social institutions. Castells further argued that individuals who fail in constructing a proper identity of social resistance can largely apply the project identity to perfectly achieve their liberation demands.

It cannot be denied that some societies are still applying the structures of domination and oppression. These offensive structures are set to impede the liberated process of identity construction. Oppressed men and women often seek for a new place which asserts and redefines their social existence. The social liberation does largely attract oppressed individuals who intentionally need to effectuate the process of identity transformation. To large extent, Castells' theory of identity construction illustrates how individual identities are deeply connected to the social network which, in response, controls the personalized manners of identity development. The social network facilitates the distinction between diverse modes of identity construction.

2. Islam and Muslim immigrants in America:

Arab and Muslim immigrants before 9/11 events were experiencing severe racial discrimination, alienation, and brutality. Many young Muslim immigrants were excluded and marginalized due to their ethnic differences. Those immigrants lived without clear identities that reflect their sense of belonging. The western media delivered falsified ideologies about Islam and Muslim immigrants. These ideologies served to widen the gap between westerners and immigrants. Indeed, immigrants with Islamic identities were regarded as fanatics due

to their preserved traditions. They are often perceived as terrorists whose presence threatens the American people. According to many Arab literary critics, Muslim minorities should resist and struggle against the dominant western discourse which severely terrorized their Islamic performance. Minor Muslim groups need to re-direct the oppressive practice which can deeply challenge their revolutionize resistance and resilience as well.

The resistance against racial discrimination and political exclusion creates a kind of counter-discourse which significantly asserts the need for accepting other marginalized groups. Such discourse can clearly interrupt the classical representation of imperialism. It further stands against the western politics of alienation. Diasporic authors opened multiple horizons which serve to embrace the silenced minorities. The overemphasized exclusion of Muslims, Arabs, blacks and other minorities urged diasporic writers to structuralize new norms of re-identification and re-affirmation as well. Effectively, the racist distinction that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or sexuality is largely debated by post-colonial authors to restrict the hostile rejection of "others". The increasing rejection and exclusion of large minorities fortifies the act of resistance. Such resistance against the colonizing culture creates new possibilities for enhancing the universal cultural diversity. The benefits behind this universal

culture empower the force of interaction between different ethnical groups.

Therefore, post 9/11 literary productions started to focus heavily on defining and re-identifying the image of Arab and Muslim American identities. Authors started to restore the distorted image behind Arabs and Muslims. Many Arab literary productions tried to re-construct and re-affirm Arab American identities by perpetuating the linguistic, cultural, and ethnical connections which these identities offer. Indeed, Arab Americans develop hyphenated identities that fuse different cultures, languages, and ethnicities all together. By that, the literary perpetuation of such hyphenated identities can, to large extent, re-assert the humanistic value behind Arab and Muslim immigrants. The falsified media image about Muslims and/or Arabs has severely deepened their state of dehumanization. Arab and Muslim minority groups have been regarded as terrorists who threatened the world peace. Definitely, the well-designed media image has stereotypically fostered the new version of islamophobia.

Although multiculturalism and co-existence have been ideologically developed as essential principles which characterize western societies, serious efforts are made by racist and anti-Muslim groups to disrupt these principles. Western

policymakers started to develop a new propaganda about Muslims to define them as terrorists especially after the dramatic attacks of 9/11. The war against Muslim terrorists was the western propaganda which called for freedom, security, and stability in different regions in the world. The Geopolitical strategy of the United States and its allies in Middle East created serious consequences which affected the state of stability in the region. The United States played a major role in restricting the state of fear, violence, and the violations of human rights. In fact, it has ideologically supported the application of international-law order and peace policies. In addition to the role of United States, Muslims have also supported the application of peace policies and worked against the spread of violence, racism, and terrorism as well.

Effectively, Muslims have seriously struggled to restrict the newly emerged propaganda about Islamophobia. This struggle was strategically endured to eliminate the stereotypical assumptions about Islam and Muslims all around the world. Anti-Muslim propaganda was developed to restrict the oppressive activities and racist attitudes of extremist Muslim groups. Extremist Muslims and Islamic jihadists distorted the image of Islam due to their violent acts and terrorist attacks. These aggressive attitudes refreshed the ideology of islamophobia and deepened the discourse of hatred. Through

islamophobia, Islam was considered “as a complicated and multifaceted social, historical, economic and political phenomenon” (Sheehi, 223). As a reaction to this, Muslim intellectuals and activists started to raise the western consciousness about the humanistic value behind Islam. They started to explain how Islam glorifies ethnic tolerance, cultural diversity, and racial acceptance. These Islamic characteristics can greatly serve the struggling voices which stand against the existing anti-Muslim propaganda.

Despite the efforts behind these struggling voices, the power of anti-Muslim discourse has successfully projected false images about Islam and Muslims. The western discourse of anti-Islam was so powerful that it has monopolized mass media. Bail (2015) asserted that the voices of Muslim civil society groups remained unheard due to those anti-Muslim organizations which have largely “captivated the mass media emotional warnings about the looming threat of Islam for the future of Western civilization” (p.136). He further clarified that the falsified images being delivered about Islam may “enable fringe organizations to transcend their obscurity and humble resources by appealing to the media’s legendary appetite for drama” (p.51). As being mentioned, the western anti-Islam propaganda succeeded in projecting Islam as the main impediment to achieve progress, democracy, freedom, and human rights. The

western image of Islam was ideologically empowered with aspects of terrorism, violence, and oppression. These Islamic ideologies serve the culture of inferiority and traditional extremism.

The United States believed that it is its “moral responsibility” (Sheehi, 73) to liberate people from the so called extremist ideology of Islam. It started to interfere in Muslim-majority countries and liberate people from the strict oppression of Islamic traditions. As a reaction to this, Muslim elites strongly argued that Islam has always been the religion of freedom, modernity, and prosperity. They further argued that the history of Muslim countries was culturally prosperous and socially prestigious. Indeed, ancient civilizations and cultures witnessed progress under the administration of Muslim policymakers and leaders as well. The prosperous history of Islamic countries advocated structures of socio-cultural prestige and modernity. The modern aspects of cultural progress and social prestige have been historically immersed within prosperous Islamic traditions. Due to these valuable Islamic traditions, “modernity is entrenched in all regions of the world, Muslims and non-Muslim” (Sheehi, 225)

3. Arab-American Muslim women and western feminism:

The representation of women in American society is still problematic. Arab, black, Muslim, and Asian women are made invisible within the western feminist discourse. The western feminist movement often represents women of different races as hostile, barbarous, and uncivilized. Western feminists largely assume that those women need to be rescued from the traditional social practices that restrict their liberation. They further clarify that white western women have historically struggled against the oppression of dominant men and succeeded to apply new gender equality rules. This undergone struggle, in western feminism, should be applied and effectuated by all women. From critical perspectives, the philosophical assumptions of western feminism are based on ethnocentric traditions which deliver biased and falsified conclusions. Carby (1996) argues that the western feminist movement neglected issues of race and ethnicity and focused on discourses which highlight the solid interaction between patriarchy and oppression. This dual interaction has been voiced to combat the dominant gender rule within western societies.

In this vein, postcolonial feminism explores the major challenges facing the representation of Muslim women in western societies. It often perpetuates the resonating voice of female struggle. This struggle is advocated to mitigate the oppressive western thought which profoundly aims to exclude

women from different ethnical references. The sense of nationalism behind non-western women does urge them to resist against the colonial racism. Such resistance develops another type of discourse which calls for a universal cultural assimilation. Moreover, postcolonial feminism tends to re-write the history of women who have been marginalized and excluded due to the double structure of colonization. Those women faced severe experiences of racial humiliation and sexist prejudices within diasporic societies. These negative experiences marked the hostility of western cultures. So, the resistance of diasporic Muslim women, in particular, is voiced to assert the need for interactive cultural discourses which properly advocate the sense of belonging and assimilation as well.

In her *Beauty and the (B) East: A Postcolonial Reading of Disney's Arab Woman* (2016) Hajar Eddarif argued that Arab and Muslim women are silenced, objectified and mostly considered as barbarians due to their religious principles and arabic traditions that are negatively interpreted by the western culture. This racist culture projected Muslim and Arab women in a negative manner. Muslim immigrants, in general, are regarded as terrorists who commit violent crimes and deadly massacres. Muslim men and women often behave badly with westerners and treat them as colonizers who mercilessly invaded their homelands and occupied their countries. Muslim men and

women, in the viewpoints of western media, are fanatics who are more likely to perform violent actions and terrorist attacks. Beard Muslim men have criminal attitudes which deeply reflect the pre-historical barbarity. Similarly, veiled Muslim women do intentionally cover their faces to commit suicidal attacks and murdering crimes. Such Muslims with Islamic backgrounds are evil doers. They generally represent the dark mythical image of evil, brutality and cruelty as well.

To large extent, these negative western assumptions about Muslims are based on falsified interpretations. Arabs and Muslims are peace providers. They often treat others with tolerance and respect. From socio-political dimensions, Arab and Muslim communities are strongly attached to their homelands. Those Arabs and Muslims are affected by the nostalgic sense of their homeland. This type of affection urges them to defeat the challenges they encounter within the Diaspora. Muslim immigrants have the nationalistic sense which deeply inspires them to defend for their nations. This defense is part from their existence and resilience as well. The faith of Muslim immigrants urges them to tolerate others from different races and ethnicities. Hereby, the true Muslim believers are sociable and open-minded. Those believers accept the cultural diversity and respect the religious difference. By that, the Islamic identity of Muslim immigrants is purified with

humanistic principles, values, and principles that perpetuate the representation of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him).

3.1.Khadra's Islamic backgrounds and the western cultural diversity:

Muslims in America are very careful about their attitudes, behaviors and performances. American Muslims always make a reference to their Islamic background, Arabic traditions, and moral values. The Islamic religion is practically reinforced to reflect their modern lifestyle. Kahf's protagonist Khadra Shamy looks deeply inspired by the valuable Muslim traditions. She has never eaten the port meat or committed a sinful act. Khadra knows what is "hallal" and "haram" for Muslims. Evidently, she clearly knows that Muslims will be judged by God for their "haram" or sinful acts. The Islamic rules and regulations, for Khadra, should be set to protect the human soul from any behavior that is religiously illegitimate. Khadra's appropriate Islamic behavior denotes the valuable aspects behind her oriental identity.

In America, Khadra started to unravel the hypocrisy of people surrounding her. She recognized that not all American Muslims apply the Islamic values and principles. When Khadra's brother Eyad asked for the hand of the Sudanese girl

Maha, his parents refused this idea due to her skin color. For Khadra, such decision carries racist attitudes which do not represent the Islamic values. The racist behaviors and hypocrisy of such parents denote the negative judgments of American Muslims. Khadra gradually recognized that some American Muslims can easily become racist, hypocrite, and judgmental especially when it comes to issues related to race and ethnicity of African Americans. For Khadra, hypocrite Muslims can commit crimes and do “haram” things. Those Muslims are not truly equipped with the values of Islam. Such Muslims are more interested in the prestigious life of the host country America.

In the view of Khadra, the racist Muslim man often regards himself as a superior man. Such feelings of superiority and dominance do not reflect the true religious identity of Muslims. In Islam, all humans are equal and no one is more privileged than the other. The superiority over other human creators (due to their ethnicity, race or skin color) is against the religious principles of Islam. The racist behavior of white Muslim men can greatly lead to reinforce the culture of narcissism. Stressing Khadra’s religious perceptions, the racist attitudes of white Muslims (more particularly her parents) reflect the devalued human practice. Indeed, the racist behaviors of white Muslims can deeply affect and hurt the human dignity of black Muslims. By that, the discrimination between black and white Muslims,

Arab and non-Arab Muslims should not be based on physical appearance, social status or prestige, but should be based on dignified values and purified virtues which perfectly assert the true Islamic identity.

Khadra's Islamic principles are strategically set to emphasize the religious value behind Islam. This value is, in fact, deeply installed within khadra's soul. The purity of the soul can greatly inspire different readers about the spiritual aspects behind Islamic identities. For many literary critics, religion is the most fundamental aspect which most of Arab Muslim diasporic writers emphasize on their writings. Such attachment to religion and Islamic traditions denote the resistive power behind their existence. Indeed, the nostalgic sense to homeland traditions, Arabic origin, and Islamic backgrounds urges diasporic writers to struggle against the racist attitudes of host countries and prove self-existence. This struggle is integrated to reinforce the process of identity-construction. The literary reference to Islamic identities is fortified to transcend the national heritage and the socio-cultural status within a western context. These identities translate the intention of integration within the western culture.

Effectively, the Islamic identity is purified with good qualities of religious integration, tolerance, and reconciliation.

These values urge Muslims to accept and respect other traditions, cultures, and ethnicities. Therefore, the intention to integrate within the western society reflects the positive cultural interaction of Arab Muslims. As being already illustrated, Arab Muslims, after the terrible attack of 11/9, faced serious oppressions which dramatically devalued their Islamic identities. Muslims were regarded as terrorists who represent serious treats to western host countries. Most Arab Muslims started to lose their sense of belonging and integrity due to the hostile representation of western media. This ideology created negative assumptions which severely affected Arab and Muslim minority groups. The hostile media image against Muslims created cultural barriers between the eastern world and the western world. Such barriers threatened their presence and existence among westerners.

3.2. Against The western ideology of reversing veiled identities:

In their paper entitled *Negotiating Liminal Identities* In Mohja Kahf's *The Girl In The Tangerine Scarf*, Susan and Bahar (2013) clarified that the term "Muslim woman" carries negative forms of exploitation. Arab Muslim women are mostly oppressed and silenced by dominant men. Mohja Kahf, as many other contemporary Arab-American Muslim women writers,

focused on different oppressive practices which Muslim women encounter when wearing the veil (the hijab). Khadra has clearly experienced a kind of identity split. This Muslim woman faced serious challenges when assimilating into the mainstream American culture.

Khadra belonged to a strict Muslim community. The majority of Muslims within this community were correctly spreading the religious principles of Islam. Those Muslims were against the negative interpretations of Islam by Indiana Americans. Khadra's hijab was the symbol of innocence and purity of Arab Muslim women immigrants. It symbolized the Islamic heritage and dignity of Muslim women. The tangerine scarf, as being mentioned in the title, reflects the covering veil which protects khadra from sinful acts and "haram" behaviors. The covered head reinforces the Islamic ideology of protecting the human honor. Muslim women should keep away from "haram" and transcend the honor of their bodies. Khadra's veil is the sign of Islamic purity. It is the purity of Muslim women whose Islamic identity unifies them and enlightens their feminist inspirations. The feminist value of Arab Muslim women is elevated by the significant force of Islam. This Islamic force is privileged by the spiritual discourse which resistively stands against racist and oppressive practices.

In her book, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (2000), Sara Ahmed argued that western feminists often consider veiled women as “strangers”. The veil, for them, is a sign of female oppression. Women who wear traditional costumes (hijab, purdah, jalbab, and sitar) are severely attacked and humiliated. The strangeness of the veil (and other covering costumes) is universalized as a traditional experience of imposing oppression. Sara Ahmed further explains “universalism could also be read as a fantasy of proximity. For, at one level, reading the veiled woman as an oppressed woman who is sexually controlled involves a fantasy that one can inhabit the place of the other that one already knows what ‘the other’ means and therefore needs. Or, to put it differently, the emphasis on the universal wrong of the ‘purdah’ (and the assumption of women’s right ‘not to wear the veil’), involves the fantasy that one can ‘get inside the skin of the other’ (and speak for her).” (p.166)

In addition, Leila Ahmed in her *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil’s Resurgence, from the Middle East to America* clarified that the veil is set to offer well-unified meanings about the Islamic background and the religious identity of Arab Muslim women. The veil expresses the motivations of women whose Islamic principles reflect the humanistic value behind their gender roles. According to Scott (2001), Muslim women are

motivated to wear veils to explicitly express their religious commitments. Scott says: “many women insist that they have chosen to wear the veil as a way of signifying their religious commitments. Others admit that they have succumbed to pressure from Islamists in their communities. Still others have a more explicit political agenda: for them the veil is a way of rejecting the materialism of western capitalism and endorsing a program of social justice.” (p.118)

The veil for Scott is worn to express different intentions. These intentions could be purely religious or simply serve to express the rejection of strict Islamists’ ideologies. The veil of Arab Muslim women does not serve the materialistic interests of western societies. This veil reflects the Islamic value which is clearly based on justice, tolerance and equality. In this respect, the meaningful value behind women’s veil serves the unified power of resistance and resilience as well. In her article “The Muslim Woman: The Power of Image and the Danger of Pity” (2006) Abu-Lughod clarified “we have to resist the reductive interpretation of veiling as the quintessential sign of women’s unfreedom” (p.4). Abu-Lughod was among the few Muslim feminists who protested against the western manipulation of veiled women. The veil symbolizes the universal heritage of Islam. Its universality expresses the pre-conceived liberation from any materialistic thought.

Indeed, Khadra's veil fosters the ideology of Islamic idealism. It is the symbol of religious tolerance, sympathy, and purity. Women who are profoundly attached to Islam and its idealistic principles often tolerate and accept the "other" regardless the religious difference or ethnical belonging. Khadra's veiled face rendered her as a "foreign woman" who is culturally and religiously "different". This ideology of difference was culturally perpetuated to impose the racist discrimination against African and Arab Muslim women. Such imposed discrimination urged khadra to question her identity and belonging as well. In the American society, the face-veil was negatively interpreted. This negative interpretation reflects the political, cultural, and religious hostility being traditionally imposed to distinguish the whites from other races. By that, face-veiled women have never been part from the prestigious white society. The western culture does systematically eliminate the Islamic mode of liberation being oriented by scarf-wearing women.

From critical perspectives, Khadra's Muslim community was as racist as the American society. Some Muslims do not have the pure Islamic faith. Those Muslims use Islam to deceive women. In fact, such racist Muslims often apply oppression and manipulation to restrict the freedom of women. The cruelty and barbarity of fanatic Muslim men delivered negative images

about Islam as “din of tawhid”. Khadra experienced different forms of oppression by Muslim men within her community. Through this oppression, she recognized that Islam has different and varied versions. All these versions do not clearly reflect the purity of Islam. The hypocrisy of her community urged her to rebel and revolt against the structures of oppression and manipulation being traditionally integrated under the name of Islam. For Khadra, Islam becomes the symbol of revolution and rebellion against experiences of cruelty, manipulation, and oppression as well.

Accordingly, Khadra’s religious faith and Islamic devotion were explicitly expressed through her veil. The colors of the veil are changing to reflect her revolutionary determinations. Khadra wore a black veil during her teenage years to express her revolt against “the harsh behaviours” which do not reflect the Islamic values. She revolted against the acts of killing and murdering children and women. The black veil symbolized the dark side of western civilization. It also symbolized the cruelty and brutality of racist Muslims. After visiting Saudi Arabia, Khadra felt depressed and shocked about the version of Islam seen there. She noticed that women were not allowed to pray in mosques. She was also sexually exploited by Saudi teenagers for being an American. Khadra went through serious sequences of depression. After this dramatic experience, she decided to wear

a white veil with tiny flowers just to express her Islamic revival. The white color symbolized purity, honor, and dignity. Khadra's white scarf indicated the end of a "neoclassical phase".

Despite Khadra's efforts to tolerate the deep self, her community continued to impose racism, oppression, and manipulation. These negative aspects made Khadra feel confused and frustrated. After her marriage with the Kuwaiti man Juma, Khadra thought that she will live peacefully and enjoy her life but, unfortunately, all her dreams went wrong. Juma, the committed Muslim man, did not accept his wife's western lifestyle. For Juma, Khadra was too American due to her modern feminist thought. He forced Khadra to perform traditional feminine tasks which serve his demands and desires. The dramatic experience of marriage made Khadra's identity get gradually collapsed. Khadra's rebellious attitudes and revolutionary determinations urged her to re-collect herself and re-assert her identity. Khadra understood that life is not only black and white. The father's aunt Teta led Khadra to new experiences which helped her to recognize the beauty of life and enjoy its inspiring colors. Teta bought a new scarf for khadra, a tangerine scarf, to vividly refresh her youth and softness.

3.3.Between exclusion and assimilation: resisting diasporic conflicts:

Khadra suffered from serious identity crisis. She was a displaced subject without a home. In order to overcome this, Khadra felt the need to locate herself within the American society. She was looking for a place where she can assert her belonging. The search for a homeland in a non-Muslim country demonstrates the necessity of locating self-identities. Khadra found herself struggling to ensure the sense of belonging in a western country that strictly oppresses Muslims, Arabs, and Africans from different countries and ethnicities as well. She was an Arab-American Muslim woman with great Islamic devotions. Due to her Islamic background, Khadra was judged as a violent woman with aggressive and terrorist attitudes. In fact, she was fixed in a position of marginalization. Such position urged Khadra to struggle against the discourse of patriarchy which severely marked her silence and subordination. She tried hardly to break down the western codes of oppression that negatively represent women of Muslim communities.

Khadra was seriously struggling to eliminate the negative stereotypes of western cultures. These cultures often identify females with Arab Muslim identities as passive objects. Those passive females have to serve the interests of western oppressors. Through Khadra, Kahf devised thematic strategies to re-write Muslim American female identities. She introduced Khadra as a female warrior who struggles to assert a proper

Islamic identity. This identity stands against the western oppression which decisively intends to manipulate Muslim women. Khadra was in a position which urged her to construct a strong relationship with various places just to create a space of belonging. This space makes her feel relaxed and conformable. Such space can further reveal the hostility of diasporic societies. It represents the spiritual nuance between a person and his/her hometown. As being argued by Charles Stivale (2005) “home is... not a pre-existing space... It is the continual attempt to create a space of comfort for oneself, through the arrangement of objects, practices, feelings and affects.” (P.79)

Khadra went through diverse stages of identity transformation. Her identity has been reformed several times as to assert the undergone process of self-acceptance. Through this process, Khadra started to accept the reality behind her hybrid identity and gradually embraced her Americaness. Khadra left Indiana and went to see a new place which reflects her new hopes and glorifies her inspirations. Indeed, she decided to move to Philadelphia where she can peacefully live and interact. For khadra, Indiana was the place of contradictory hopes. There, she was always remembering Zuhura, the young African American Muslim girl, who was “looking for a way to be, just be” (p.358). Khadra was in a position which helps her to assert her Arab-American Muslim identity. She found a new space which

guarantees her American integration. This new space helped her to locate her presence among different women. Indeed, this space was the home where Khadra and many other women could “just be”. In this new homeland, Khadra found her lost identity. She found the place where she belongs. She finally recognized that self-identities have to be liberated from the conflicting ideologies which are trapped within.

CONCLUSION:

As the title entails, the tangerine scarf interprets the life experiences of Khadra. It covers the silence and the voice of diverse identities. These identities are trapped within well-enclosed frontiers which dramatically restrict the humanistic value behind existence. Khadra’s covering scarf embodies the long journey of veiling and unveiling diverse experiences with the struggling self. The scarf denotes the colorful nature of the deep human nature. The deep silence of the human nature conveys inspiring experiences that are only understood through the voice of the struggling soul. Khadra’s life experiences urged her to give voice to her struggles, devotions, and inspirations as well. These experiences veiled her struggling identity with different colors. The veil’s colors represent the dramatic life stages which khadra went through. In each stage, Khadra stands and announce the painful victory behind the rebellious self. Khadra’s resistance reflects the shifting expectations behind the

veiled face. The veil interprets the resilient identity which was successfully released and liberated to assert the human value behind Muslim women.

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