



RESEARCH PAPER

Stasis to Mobility: Tracing Empowerment and Identity in Ayesha Malik's Sofia Khan Series

¹Anzalna Noor, ²Sadia Qamar and ³Aamer Shaheen

1. M. Phil Scholar, Department of English Literature, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, Department of English Literature, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Assistant Professor, Department of English Literature, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

*Corresponding Author | aamershaheen@gcuf.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

The present paper closely reads Ayesha Malik's Sofia Khan Series novels: *Sofia Khan is Not Obligated* (2015), *The Other Half of Happiness* (2017), and *Sofia Khan and the Baby Blues* (2022) following the observations made by Sayima Aslam in her theoretical work *From Stasis to Mobility: Arab Muslim Feminists and Travelling Theory* (2017). Aslam emphasizes women's transformation from stagnation to empowerment and discusses the female subjectivity within patriarchal society. This research paper focuses on the characters of Sofia Khan and her mother Mehnaz, examining their transformational journeys from stasis to mobility. Throughout their intertwined journeys Malik's trilogy of Sofia Khan novels depicts the intricate realities of contemporary Muslim women that how women regain their identities and their positions differently under societal pressure while living in a male dominated society. This research paper highlights how Malik's trilogy of novels, contributing to discussions about female empowerment in South Asian postcolonial fiction, suggests that real fulfillment is created by openness to change, persistence, and reinventing one's self with the limiting social constraints.

KEYWORDS Ayisha Malik, Identity Formation, Mobility, Sayima Aslam, Sofia Khan Series, Stasis, Travelling Theory

Introduction

Ayesha Malik's trilogy of Sofia Khan Series novels: *Sofia Khan is Not Obligated* (2015), *The Other Half of Happiness* (2017) and *Sofia Khan and the Baby Blues* (2022), explores the characterization of Sofia Khan and her mother Mehnaz describing love, marriage, motherhood, and identity of British-Pakistani Muslim women. The trilogy of novels centers on the main character of a young Muslim woman of Pakistani origin: Sofia Khan, along with her mother Mehnaz, representing various forms and phases of mobility. The protagonist is Sofia Khan who struggles to face the social expectations imposed on her as a modern Muslim woman living in the West then confronting the challenges of cross-cultural marriage and finally juggling between motherhood and her independence. Her mother, Mehnaz, in contrast to Sofia, belongs to an older generation that is influenced by traditional values but is gradually changing as her daughter goes against the stream.

Malik, through their respective character arcs, shows that both of these characters: Sofia Khan and Mehnaz, struggle to achieve a balance between their personal wills and what society wants from them, illuminating the ways both women take control over their lives and become empowered. This paper highlights the different pursuits of these women

they adopt in an attempt to exert self-determination by examining the relationship between tradition and modernity as shown in Malik's trilogy of Sofia Khan Series novels.

Literature Review

Malik's trilogy of Sofia Khan Series novels has attracted general scholarly attention around discussions on Muslim womanhood in contemporary western society - specifically concerning family pressures, cultural identity, love, and self-empowerment. Since her first publication, numerous critics have engaged with Malik's writings through different theoretical approaches; each highlighting distinctive characteristics of identity, culture and gender in her literary works. Chandio and Waseem (2021) illuminate the profound cultural background and multiple themes in *Sofia Khan is Not Obligated*. Their paper explores the novel in the context of Said's concept of 'Orientalism' to comment on the conventional Western imagining of Muslim women. They highlight how the main character of the novel, Sofia Khan, encounters these stereotypes by demonstrating abilities such as independence, confidence and assertiveness, eventually transforming herself and subverting the traditional narrative that commonly portrays Muslim female figures as passive or even submissive.

Another notable article by Nahar et al (2019) considers *Sofia Khan is Not Obligated* (2015) through the factor of modesty and hijab. The researchers take an interest in Sofia Khan's choice of wearing hijab, and regard it as a personal choice of faith and Islamic goodness, instead of a representation of oppression in the Western discourses. They contend that Sofia Khan's decision to wear hijab is a conscious decision that encounters traditional western perception of Muslim women as more of weak and submissive figures in the community. Malik's works have been praised for being both culturally rich and for their humor about what it is like to be a Muslim woman. Eldemerdash (2017) praises the novel because it breaks stereotypes and presents a refreshing narrative about the problems faced by Modern Muslim women in British society. Furthermore, Chandio and Buriro (2021), applying Bhabha's concept of hybridity, ambivalence, and mimicry, claim the fact that Sofia Khan's "in-between" identity enables her to navigate both Pakistani and British cultures without complete integration.

Although the sequel to the novel *The Other Half of Happiness* has not been widely reviewed in academic circles, limited scholarly engagement particularly by Kate Macdonald (2017) highlights the humor of the novel and its warmth. While the novel engages with serious themes like faith, identity, and cultural negotiation, it is proved to have a charming and relatable voice. The review highlights how lighthearted romance juxtaposed with darker inward-looking exploration of the internal struggle that Sofia Khan goes through depicts her journey to self-acceptance against the challenges of her multicultural world.

It is worth considering another review on *The Other Half of Happiness*. Denny (2023) offers a highly positive review, which praising its emotional depth, authenticity and the skill with which the author develops a gripping and heartbreaking plot. Denny gives credit to Malik in keeping consistency in the character of Sofia Khan as she puts her in a completely different and challenging situation. She also likes the resonance of emotions in the story as the problems Sofia Khan encounters have a realistic touch. These views are significant to understand the role that Malik's work plays in breaking the stereotypes, championing diversity, and giving a new perspective concerning love, spiritual beliefs, and modernity.

In *Sofia Khan and Baby Blues*, Ayisha Malik skillfully continues the Sofia Khan character arc by blending humorous elements in the story with romance and profound themes to give an unexpected twist to the story. According to Mhairi McFarlane (2022), the book is “fun, fresh, and funny,” that introduces serious issues such as postpartum depression or emotional knots of motherhood. Reviewing the novel, Jenny Colgan (2022) calls it a smart romcom praising the novel to bring some dense topics in the same light and astuteness the previous books stimulated.

Nevertheless, other critics, like Naila (2022), have been frustrated with the actions that Sofia Khan took, especially not showing the ability to make logical decisions despite her experiences with her previous partners. However, despite these criticisms, this novel has been liked by various readers because of its authenticity and the frank depiction of how difficult the lives of Desi and Muslim women are. Other critics on the contrary have claimed the depth of the emotion covered in the novel and commended that it is a real-life depiction of motherhood, family, and personal development. According to B. S. Casey (2022), the fact that Sofia Khan does not match the societal norms considering that she is divorced, lives with her parents, and finds it difficult to cope with the quest to adopting Millie, only makes it relatable to the character. These traits, which are considered failure or weakness in the mainstream stories, are some of the reasons why Sofia Khan’s journey is so fascinating. Both critics note that this decision makes the story more plaintive, bringing to it the weight of both the personal and the universal.

The present paper analyzes how Malik’s trilogy of Sofia Khan Series novels examines in particular Sofia Khan’s feminist development from stasis to mobility and exploring women’s struggle to find their identity, endurance, and power in the contemporary British Muslim society in general. The paper presents a unique approach by offering new lens provided by Sayima Aslam. Through a round-up of the discussions around Malik’s characters of Sofia Khan, in the relevant academic criticism, this segment of literature review finds the room to explicate how this trilogy of Sofia Khan Series novels gives a new perspective on self-empowerment and identity transformation.

Theoretical Framework

The current paper closely reads Malik’s novels in the light of the critical observations made by Sayima Aslam in her seminal work *From Stasis to Mobility: Arab Muslim Feminists and Travelling Theory* (2017). Aslam uses Edward Said’s term “travelling theory” coined in his work *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983). Said discusses how things, discourse of intellectuals and theories travel in different cultural, historical and geographical lines. Aslam underlines the fact that the ideas of feminism are dynamic and do not stay localized in one period, location, or situation. One of the primary areas of the analysis conducted by Aslam is the works of Fatima Mernissi, a Moroccan sociologist, and Nawal El Saadawi, an Egyptian novelist. Both authors focus on the stagnation of gender relations within Arab societies and draw attention to the changes that are currently taking place in response to global restructuring. Aslam suggests that gender restructuring is a local and international process, which is closely connected to overall changes in society, politics and the economy (Aslam, 2017, p. 7).

Aslam makes use of two important notions of this theory: stasis and mobility. Stasis can be defined as fixed, firm and in most cases confining notions or states that hold people or communities where they are. Stasis therefore is an institutionalized form of oppression that causes women to remain in a place where their potential cannot be realized which further cements the patriarchal control of their lives. In her analysis, Aslam talks about these limitations that can be expressed in various forms. Social taboos, gendered

expectations, and projects of religious interpretations are the important powers that hold women in fixed, submissive positions (p. 58-79). On the other hand, mobility is not a one-dimensional term that goes beyond the physical transition, it is multi-dimensional term. Aslam explains that the ideas of feminism do not remain the same; they change and are transformed when they move to other cultural, social, and political spheres (p. 26).

Consequently, by using the lens of feminist mobility, this research seeks to focus on revealing the underlying significance behind the journey of female characters of Malik's novels. It attempts to learn how these women, in their quest to live freely, discover their identities, develop as individuals, and address the interchange between tradition and modernity. This theoretical framework highlights that feminist theory not only becomes a source of power, but also a strong force that can cope with changes in the needs of other women all over the globe.

Results and Discussions

This study is based on textual analysis of Ayisha Malik's *Sofia Khan is Not Obligated* (2015), *The Other Half of Happiness* (2017) and *Sofia Khan and the Baby Blues* (2022). Malik flawlessly merges humor, cultural insights, and character development into a story that examines the complexities of identity and religio-cultural expectations through the life of Muslim women in British Society. The first novel of the Sofia Khan Series centers on the protagonist: Sofia Khan, a young, witty and feisty woman in her early thirties, living in London, as she attempts to deal with pressures of marriage, career goals, and personal independence in multicultural London. At the beginning of the novel, Sofia Khan feels overwhelmed by the pressure to get married, both from society and her family. She refuses to accept the offer of her former boyfriend Imran, which would require her to stay in a house, attached to his family house. She refuses to marry Imran because after marriage she would have to live with his family. She dislikes this arrangement which she calls a 'hole-in-the-wall' situation. This marks Sofia Khan's first act of resistance against society where she prioritizes the emotional gratification over the family norms. Although she is not keen on marrying in the traditional manner, Sofia Khan continues to face significant pressure from her family and broader South Asian cultural expectations, where a woman is regarded worthy in terms of marital status and performance in a domestic set up. She works in a publishing house, where her boss gives her the task of writing a book about Muslim dating, which marks the beginning of her professional life as a writer. She experiences difficulties at work. She is being stereotyped due to her visible Muslim identity and wearing hijab at her workplace, thus causing her further alienation. A turning shift occurs in the novel when she is labeled as a "terrorist," in a racist encounter on subway. This experience compels her to realize the cruelty of the society that she has to live in and is often not treated with equality due to her ethnicity and religion (Malik, 2015, p. 12). The fact that this event made an emotional impact on her highlights the psychological pressure of trying to belong to too many inconsistent identities and makes her feel like an outsider even more.

The conflict between faith and modernity, thus formulating consequent identity is the main highlight of the novel dealing with a British Muslim woman. Malik presents a rich source to examine the contrast between stasis and mobility especially through the characters of Sofia Khan and her mother, Mehnaz. Both of these women, influenced by the contexts of different generations and cultures, live at the points of inertia (stasis) and movement (mobility) that can be combined with the theoretical paradigm of stasis to mobility as given by Sayima Aslam. Sofia Khan, being a British-Pakistani Muslim woman, is trapped in a conflict in which the tradition, family, and cultural biases restrain her decisions. Her stasis is represented in various spheres of life: family, marriage, career, and

identity; each emphasizing an impasse: her feelings and emotions restrained. By demonstrating Sofia Khan's character, Malik shows how more universal problems of minority women in terms of negotiating their own agency within oppressive socio-cultural structures exist. Cultural pressure to get married is one of the greatest contributors to stasis in Sofia Khan's life and determines most of her dealings with her family and other members of the community. Consequently, she is continually reminded of her unmarried status at every gathering she attends; therefore, her identity revolves around the single expectation of getting married. She becomes increasingly frustrated as she reflects on why her mother is so eager for her to marry despite her own negative experiences with marriage. This feeling of being trapped within limiting traditions is further emphasized when her mother, pressurizing her to follow cultural traditions, laments over the fact that she is still unmarried, saying: "Shame, Soffo," she said, "people marry three, four times and you cannot even meet a boy" (p. 60). This remark reveals the pressures imposed on Sofia Khan not only by society but also by her family, which reflects her feeling of being trapped within the boundaries of her culture.

The shift from stasis to mobility that Sofia Khan experiences is reflected in her decision to write a book about Muslim dating - an idea that makes her realize her identity, beliefs, and the limitations of her culture. This turning point in the story becomes a tool of self-empowerment, an ability to take back a voice and define it in her own words. Aslam's theoretical perspectives on stasis and mobility help to understand Sofia Khan's journey and examine her movement as more than a physical transformation but also an emotional and ideological. Writing would be a kind of fighting against the culture and a self-discovery. The idea of composing a book, grounded in her own experiences, serves as the avenue for her self-discovery.

Furthermore, Sofia Khan's decision to go to Pakistan with Conall signifies a big step in her journey toward mobility. When she tells her mother: "I am going to Pakistan" (p. 326), she demonstrates her dissatisfaction with control of her own life as she wants to pass her limits and cross into the freedom to live her life. Another change in her way of thinking can be identified through her inner dialogue when she exclaims, "I wanted to go to Karachi. I wanted to go to India. I had to leave and do something with my life" (p. 326). She does not feel alright with the way things are anymore; she needs to move, experience something new and to enter into a world that appears to be closer to her changing image of self. At this point, the choice made by Sofia Khan is not only about travelling, but it is also about becoming an independent person. She is finally taking up her own course and she is moving away from the restrictions which had formerly restrained her being. Her progress is marked by her ability to refuse any room to external forces in her life: whether it is through her dis-engagement with Imran, through her involvement in speed dating or whether to wear hijab or not. Ultimately, the entire experience becomes a transformative journey of self-discovery and empowerment for Sofia Khan, and resonates with the way that how Aslam implies mobility as a process of breaking free from confinement and finding a new way of existence within the boundaries of personal power.

In her sequel novel *The Other Half of Happiness* (2017), Malik presents different, more serious, and introspective narrative style as she examines the complexities of marriage, individual fulfillment, and compromise as opposed to the pursuit of love. Although *Sofia Khan is Not Obligated* (2015) is all about Sofia Khan's journey toward finding love and discovering her identity, its sequel focuses on what happens after marriage, and how women are supposed to fit the cultural and emotional role of being a wife. Here in the sequel, Malik explores the questions of identity, self-esteem, and the constant struggle to balance love and self-control. She demonstrates that the idea of "happily ever after" is, in

fact, far more complex than it appears. The novel explores the issues of intercultural marriage, family, and personal evolution.

Malik portrays Sofia Khan's journey as the striking example of how Sayima Aslam explains the transition from stasis to mobility. Sofia Khan's agency can be seen through her choice to marry Conall even though this was culturally problematic and the family did not support her. Their wedding ceremony, held in Karachi, is exclusive and small, performed by only one imam and two witnesses in Tooba Mosque, which represents Sofia Khan's agency in making a personal and highly autonomous decision (Malik, 2017, p. 7).

Sofia Khan tries to examine her new life after marrying Conall, an Irish convert to Islam. The character of Sofia Khan towards the journey of her mobility is also an attribute of the fact that she manages to make huge life decisions, like her choice to get married to Conall. Although her relationship was quite complicated, and her differences in culture might seem too challenging, she does not lose her agency in making such a major life choice, she also faces challenges within her marital life. However, her mother remains in a state of stagnation and cannot accept her daughter's decisions. She expresses her frustration to Sofia Khan that forty years later her baba moved himself to London to make a better life and now she was where he was: "Conall's mama baba don't say anything, but they are goray, White people don't think of these things like us" (p. 19). The statement made by Sofia Khan's mother is indicative of generational gap and the challenge of comprehending change. However, the opinion of her mother is rooted in traditional interpretations, whereas Sofia Khan takes steps to a more independent and self-determined life. Despite the difficulties, mobility grows in her because she is adapting to her new life as a married woman. Conall is so serious about his job that this makes her feel insignificant and confused about her role in the new setting. The novel takes a look at the difficulties of combining love and individual identity in marriage. She finds herself being questioned about what visions as a wife she has, what she wants to do as a writer and what is demanded of her as a Muslim woman. But Sofia Khan's mobility is not linear.

Another significant aspect of the novel is Sofia Khan's work life. Her boss asks her to write about her married life, since her first book focused on dating among Muslims, therefore, this one may explore Muslim marriage. She wants to write about it but worries about Conall's reaction. Once she starts talking about the book with Conall, he objects to the idea that the book might reveal their personal lives and he states: "This is the problem with the society [...] Lives are exhibitions, everybody struggles to be seen, when the world is falling apart" (p. 35). This moment reflects tension between their relations because she struggles with her dreams of becoming more personally developed and a professional versus the fact that Conall does not want their relationship to be an entertainment. Despite this, Sofia Khan moves on and she is intent on grabbing hold of her dreams. She asserts: "I don't want just to be his wife. I want to do something" (p. 35). This statement demonstrates that her ideological movements are apparent in her decision as she writes a book about marriage in the Muslim culture even though her husband disagreed with the action. Her journey also represents an emotional and psychological transformation because she is learning to accept her independence, what it means to be a wife and what is her own personality and career goals. Sofia Khan's story is not only the experience of physical movement, but simultaneously an ideological transformation also that shows traditional limits and familial expectations as well.

On the other hand, Sofia Khan finds out that her mother is going to get married again to her old friend Waseem, who comes from Pakistan to marry her. Waseem reveals that he and Mehnaz - Sofia Khan's mother, used to be very good friends before she got married (p. 87). This revelation deeply disturbs Sofia Khan, especially since it comes only

nine months after her father's death. She also has a hard time believing that her mother is able to move on too rapidly which indicates Sofia Khan's emotional stagnation. Waseem tells Sofia Khan that love never dies, even after many years, and when he announces his intention to marry her mother, Sofia Khan's heart begins to race. This scene clearly reflects Mehnaz's mobility, as after decades of conforming to societal pressures, she finally decides to marry Waseem (p. 87). Choosing to marry, based on love rather than fear of judgment by society, is one of the significant turning points in Mehnaz's life, signifying her progression toward agency and self-empowerment. While Mehnaz has managed to accept this change in her life, Sofia Khan struggles to come to terms with it. Later, Mehnaz tells Sofia Khan that she has spent her whole life being told what to do; including who to marry and where to live, but now she no longer cares and believes people should do as they wish (p. 90). Mehnaz' conviction indicates her newfound self-sufficiency.

However, Sofia Khan's world is shaken when Conall reveals the secret that he has already been married, has a family in Ireland, and that his son is suffering from a serious form of cancer. This unexpected revelation leaves her unprepared and raises her doubts about honesty and trust in their relationship. The disclosure of Conall's former family in Ireland leaves her in the state of emotional stasis. She realizes that "Conall isn't who I think he is" (p. 147). It is a turning point in their marriage as it makes them reflect on their pasts and how it implies their future together.

Moreover, Conall requests Sofia Khan to wait for him until he returns from Ireland, which keeps her emotionally stuck and unable to move forward, to progress, as she struggles to accept the sudden changes in her life. Such emotional paralysis is most apparent in the fact that she is closely bound to Conall. She goes with Conall to Ireland to see his son. Then she returns to London alone for her work, feeling as if her entire life is spent moving from country to country around him (p. 216). She questions why she is continually the one altering her location simply to follow his movements. Her internal conflict deepens because Conall wants to remain in Ireland, whereas she is tied to her work-related career in London.

Meanwhile, Mehnaz continues to assert her mobility. Comparing her life to that of her mother, she tells Sofia, "If Allah doesn't stop me, then why should anyone else?" (p. 155), emphasizing that she has the right to seek happiness even when judged by society. The experience of Mehnaz's journey shows a transition from stasis to mobility, where she is not constrained by the socially imposed thinking, rather she decides with an eye on her own happiness.

A pivotal turning point in Sofia Khan's life occurs when she decides to break up with Conall. Remaining in the marriage proved far less emotionally fulfilling than leaving it, a fact reflected in her decision to divorce her husband. The most critical moment arises when Conall states: "No chance of you and me getting married again until you marry someone else" (p. 383), marking the end of this chapter of her life. This moment becomes a significant stage in Sofia Khan's mobility, as she finally acknowledges the necessity of moving on. She begins her transition toward mobility, as she realizes the need to move on, address personal crises, and take a forward step. She decides to start a business with Sakib, further signifying that she has fully embraced mobility. She recognizes that this is her chance to pursue something new in her life, unconstrained by her failed marriage.

Furthermore, the act of leaving Conall's house and going to stay with her mother once again physically symbolizes her emotional mobility. She reflects that it is the first time in many years she can go to sleep with a clear mind, showing how calm, she has become, and how she is now able to view things clearly (p. 301). She does not only walk to forget

the failed marriage; she walks to take her life back to learn its meaning. Her choices also mean that she changes; she takes risks, and in the end, finds a sort of autonomy, which shows that the mobility is not just physical, but also emotional and ideological.

In the third novel of Sofia Khan trilogy: *Sofia Khan and the Baby Blues* (2022), Ayesha Malik brings Sofia Khan to yet another turning point in her life. Now twice-divorced and back at her mother Mehnaz's home, in this novel, Sofia Khan is no longer stuck in a state of stasis; instead, she moves further towards mobility. The most significant shift happens when she decides to adopt an orphan child, rather than a more respectable one of bearing a child. This choice shows that she does not accept any social demands concerning motherhood and the family which may include biological roots and the traditional path. Sofia Khan's progress continues when she leaves her mother's house and starts working as a freelancer. Nonetheless, her decision to become independent and live independently shows that she is moving towards independence and this can be described as both literal and metaphorical mobility.

The ultimate change that happens to Sofia Khan is her choice to forgive Conall, even with their uninhibited history. She is not sure what to do when Conall reenters her life and says that he wants to renew their relationship. Nevertheless, when she thinks about the wrongs they have committed in the past, she realizes that they both have grown up. This is another evidence of mobility as she is no longer stuck in the pain of the past and emotional discrepancy rather, avails the opportunity of being more sagacious, growing, and reconciling.

Her thoughts on the future and their relationship indicate her need for emotional satisfaction and stability. She believes in creating a partnership where she never repeats the same mistakes and where both partners are truthful about their feelings. This is reflected when she imagines a future and states: "We both live happily ever after, never make the same mistakes twice, and always tell each other what we are feeling. We will be in a position to read each other's minds" (Malik, 2022, p. 72). This shows her ability to forgive and move forward without losing her sense of self. This final sequel novel, in the Sofia Khan Series so far, closes with Sofia Khan planning to marry Conall again, but now on her own terms, with Millie and her family present. This ending highlights her transformation. She has moved from dependency and cultural judgment to autonomy and resilience. Sofia Khan's journey in this final novel reflects Aslam's idea of mobility, showing how women can break free from limitations and create lives based on personal choice, self-awareness, and strength.

The above discussion, through the analyses of the three novels comprising Sofia Khan Series, reveals the way Malik emphasizes the complications of female empowerment, and identity change at South Asian Muslim diasporic space. By applying a theoretical framework developed in the light of notions established by Sayima Aslam on Malik's Sofia Khan Series novels: *Sofia Khan is Not Obligated* (2015), *The Other Half of Happiness* (2017), and *Sofia Khan and the Baby Blues* (2022), the research paper studies the way in which the main characters, Mehnaz and Sofia Khan struggle to deal with emotions, social norms and role-identifications in diasporic context. This research paper highlights the shift from the emotional stasis based on the cultural and familial oppression to mobility that symbolizes empowerment and self-actualization. The study adds a new dimension to cultural and gender studies by locating agency in contemporary Pakistani Anglophone diasporic literature and offers fresh perspectives for continued exploration of female identity and empowerment in a globalized environment.

Conclusion

This paper critically analyzed *Sofia Khan is Not Obligated* (2015), *The Other Half of Happiness* (2017), and *Sofia Khan and the Baby Blues* (2022) written by Ayesha Malik using the feminist theory of Saiyma Aslam as given in her book *From Stasis to Mobility: Arab Muslim Feminists and Travelling Theory*. The study reveals that how Sofia Khan's journey from singlehood to marriage and motherhood marks a progressive transformation from limitations imposed by emotional and cultural norms to autonomous agency. While the first novel in the Sofia Khan Series shows how she is restricted by social expectations, the sequel depicts her mobility, illustrating her movement from restriction to empowerment, whether in her decision to marry Conall, write a book on Muslim marriage against her husband's wishes, or separate from Conall and continue her life. In the third novel, Malik represents how Sofia Khan adopts a child, Millie, and decides to reconcile with her first ex-husband, representing a further shift towards mobility. Similarly, Mehnaz's decision to marry Waseem - her friend from the past - after the death of her husband also highlights generational mobility and challenges the stronghold of established traditions. With these characters of Sofia Khan and her mother Mehnaz, Malik showcases the ongoing negotiations between tradition and the individual freedom. She reveals that the mobility is not only physical, but also emotional and ideological. The paper provides insight into contemporary discussions on gender, identity, and generational transformation in Muslim women's writing and paves way for future studies to further examine how the issues of agency, tradition and autonomy are represented in other contemporary South Asian and Muslim women literature, using the same theoretical lens.

References

- Aslam, S. (2017). *From stasis to mobility: Arab Muslim feminists and travelling theory*. Oxford University Press.
- Carrie, S. (2016, May 9). *Sofia Khan is not obliged by Ayisha Malik* [Review]. *Smart Bitches, Trashy Books*.
- Chandio, F., & Buriro, G. A. (2020). Examining the issue of identity in Ayisha Malik's novel *Sofia Khan is not obliged* through Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, ambivalence, and mimicry. *Grassroots*, 54(2), 270-284.
- Chandio, F., & Waseem, M. (2021). Examining the portrayal of a Muslim woman in Ayisha Malik's novel *Sofia Khan is not obliged* from an orientalist perspective. *International Review of Social Sciences*, 9(1), 216-222.
- Claire. (2019, July 15). Review: *Sofia Khan is not obliged by Ayisha Malik*. *Nerds Like Me*.
- Denny. (2023, September 19). *The other half of happiness by Ayisha Malik* [Review]. *Readers First*.
- Eldemerdash, N. (2020). *Never go with a guy to a second location: A review of Sofia Khan is not obliged*. *Medium*.
- hooks, b. (2000). *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate politics*. Pluto Press.
- Macdonald, K. (2017, March 9). *Ayisha Malik, the other half of happiness*. *Kate Macdonald*.
- Malik, A. (2015). *Sofia Khan is not obliged*. Twenty7 Books.
- Malik, A. (2017). *The other half of happiness*. Zaffre.
- Malik, A. (2022). *Sofia Khan and the baby blues*. *Headline Review*.
- Naila. (2022). Review of *Sofia Khan and the baby blues*, by A. Malik. *Goodreads*.
- Nahar, R., Lazim, Z. M., & Yusof, N. M. (2019). The notion of modesty through hijab: An analysis of 'haya' in *Sofia Khan is not obliged*. *Journal of Islamic, Social, Economics and Development*, 4(17), 58-73.
- McFarlane, M. (2022). Review of *Sofia Khan and the baby blues*, by A. Malik. *Goodreads*.
- Colgan, J. (2022). Review of *Sofia Khan and the baby blues*, by A. Malik. *Goodreads*.
- Casey, B. S. (2022). Review of *Sofia Khan and the baby blues*, by A. Malik. *Goodreads*.
- Said, E. W. (1983). *The world, the text, and the critic*. Harvard University Press.