

In a tug-of-war amongst two societies, what occurs to women who reach adulthood? What occurs when one of those populations is exposed by the other to humiliating prejudices?

This issue has characterized their existence with an extremely high Arab immigrant community residing in Europe and the U.S. For Alya Mooro and the thousands of women of Arab descent she questions, it has been a tough road to establishing an identity in the face of mixed signals.

We will follow along in this overview as Mooro recalls her hardships with the absence of representation in the media of and for females like her the stress to comply with impossible ideals of Western beauty, and her path towards a happy relationship with both sex and Islam. The difficulties of Mooro will finally lead her to catharsis, exploration, and self-actualization.

Chapter 1 - Alya felt stuck between two cultural groups, as an Arab kid growing up in Britain.

Growing up regardless of her distinctive personality characteristics, Alya sometimes felt characterized by her foreignness.

Individuals of color are frequently exposed to shallow mockery in overwhelmingly white Britain. This explains why persons who are not white are sometimes mistaken for other individuals with the same ethnicity. For instance, in articles about the grime artist Stormzy, the British media accidentally used a picture of the Belgian footballer Lukaku.

Alya witnessed this personally as well. She was also confused at school with the other brown girls in her school: another Egyptian girl, and a half Pakistani and half Italian girl.

But Alya is not the only one who has tried to describe her personality constructively. It has always been ambiguous what "Arab" implies: both UNESCO and Wikipedia mention various numbers of Arab nations. In the Middle East, many cultures historically do not call themselves Arabs at all a sentiment shared by Egyptians as well.

Differently, however, Diaspora Arabs had to establish their culture. Arab culture has solidified in London's melting-pot, overshadowed by so many other ethnicities. In comparison to the white British tradition, Alya's Middle Eastern neighbors and her own family united over their similarity.

But even though Alya and her friends describe themselves as Arabs, that does not imply that they have a position. Arab girls who grow up in the UK are frequently pressured to choose between being classified as black or white. In strongly divided classes, as well as informal ways, this exists where "Arab" is also not an alternative.

She found that mass media do not show authentic representations of Arab people in search of role models. For example, while coverage has increased since 9/11, it is just because there are more terrorism headlines, and Arabs are classified as terrorists.

Research that examined TV shows in 2015 and 2016 found that 92 percent of cable shows did not have Middle Eastern seasonal regulars. Of those who did, 78% tended to be militants, spies, troops, or tyrants, and 67% spoke with an accent.

This is particularly devastating to kids, who only see warped images of themselves portrayed in the media. Kids may become aimless without strong role models, and probably even carry out the stereotype. It is much simpler to become that person if the culture wants Arab kids to be frustrated.

Chapter 2 - Arab women are under immense strain to look attractive, an ideal usually characterized by the physical features of Europe.

To be visually beautiful, all women face the strain, and all women are assessed by their looks. Being beautiful unlocks opportunities and produces possibilities: the Halo Effect is called this.

But the burden is more severe for Arab women. Arab people, by tradition, their communities, and themselves, are kept to a higher degree. One of Alya's Egyptian-British friends told her that she sometimes shops with her hair twisted up in London, but she would not think of it in Egypt. Worse, she would judge everyone in Egypt who came out as sloppy with their hair up.

As a young adult, the representations of beauty surrounding her made Alya feel isolated. For factors ranging from colonization to the emergence of the Media, European physical features are found more desirable. How to adhere to the norms of appearance around her was one of the first lessons Alya knew. But for anyone in her skin, it's hard and uncomfortable to adhere to European beauty norms.

Their normally curly, dense, and black hair is seen as a challenge for most Arab women to contend with. For starters, Alya began chemically flattening her hair with toxic shampoos when she was 13, as a way of matching this ideal, which damaged her hair and gradually also induced hair loss. To this day with her hair in its normal condition, she has never done something significant, socially, or professionally.

When it comes to body hair, bi-weekly shaving of any and all body hair under the eyelashes with hot wax is the usual practice for Arab women. According to Alya's beautician, it's a difficult experience for girls as young as nine.

While this is evolving steadily, it is still considered relevant when a famous woman decides not to shave her hair from her body and chooses to be seen in her natural form in public.

Her body, which was not as slim as the depictions of beauty around her was another obstacle Alya encountered. It wasn't until the pervasive success of the half-Armenian Kim Kardashian that the norm of beauty began to change away from the European supermodel look that forced Alya to cram herself into awkward jeans that simply didn't suit. In the color and type, she was born in, Kim and her sisters encouraged her to discover elegance.

On top of this, Alya not only felt upset with her skin for most of her childhood, but she was also still unfamiliar with her sexuality. Next, we will learn how this frustration caused her to make some poor decisions.

Chapter 3 - In both Cairo and London, Alya hit puberty, accommodating her to the peculiar inconsistencies that young Arab women experience.

Alya was saddened when her family relocated back to Cairo for a year when she was 13. She was obligated to abandon the friendships it took her so long to build. However, she felt accepted on the first day of her new school. Many children were representatives of her immediate family or had relatives who knew her grandparents, which made her feel like she was part of a group.

There is a protective cage of everyone who knows everybody as she discovered at school in Cairo after the first day. But that is also the reason, particularly for women, Arab cultures can be so restricting.

Nothing in Middle Eastern society is more policy-based than the sexuality of a woman. Conduct is governed by rumors, and the jury is everyone. In Cairo, without being cat-called, a female cannot walk down the lane, no matter how old she is or what she is sporting. The responsibility of refraining from sexuality is put squarely on the shoulders of girls while appearing attractive at all times.

The social control of sex suggests that normal passing rites are surreptitious and fast, making them feel sleazy. In a dirty lift, Alya's first kiss was that she and her partner rode up and down, trying to gather the bravery. It was the only way they were free to be alone.

When Alya's parents immigrated back to the UK, she took back with her the ingrained Middle Eastern Culture jury. She started misbehaving at home, fighting against her parents' reasonably tight rules, particularly her 9 pm weekend curfew. She went out late, consumed Bacardi Breezers, smoked joints, and was always lying to her family. She experienced problems a lot, even though they didn't believe her stories.

Sex continued to eat up an extremely significant part of her emotional resources in addition to these habits, as it does with many teens. For one thing right around her, casual sex was occurring. In London, the house parties were very distinct from the ones in Cairo. There she would step into a room to see a couple making out, only then to see the girl refute it, whilst in London, amid a busy dance floor, she would see a couple engaging in passionate foreplay.

Her two cultural origins came into conflict when she and her peers began questioning their sexual orientations. Sex is bad and despicable for Arab women, she was told. But for Western girls, sleeping with someone you want is not a huge deal.

With her immensely powerful unseen jury, where did that place, Alya?

Chapter 4 - Over years of painful sexual encounters, the stigma that Alya had embodied around sex set her up.

It was in what Alya identifies as "extremely shitty conditions" when she had sex for the first time. She had been instructed at all times to be aware, and embarrassed, of her body. Shame was for her, inseparable from sexuality.

She met a man she called Satan when she was 15. They were sharing numbers, and he had begun to leave her lengthy, corny voicemails. The problem was he had been the boyfriend of her friend. Alya felt bad but figured that when you like somebody, this is how you are meant to feel.

It was under terms of uncertain consent that she first had intercourse with him. But since he had made her vow not to tell anyone about their partnership, she did not express her worry with anyone about the dubious conditions. Also, she had been raised to believe that all sex was false, not just the type that they had.

Ultimately, news of their connection came out and the kids at school switched on her in reaction, shouting her in the halls a "whore." And worst, her mother has figured out. When it came to the relationship with her family at the time, a common occurrence with her, Alya lied as her existence depended on it. Reluctantly, however, her mother trusted her.

When news about this comes out several women are killed by their families; as many as 5,000 globally each year. Luckily, the response from Alya's mother was to offer her a "sex talk." Less happily, however, not only was it too far for them to have this discussion for over a year but it also totally overlooked the function of the interest of women in sexual activity.

Her mother acknowledges, with retrospect, that this strategy was not effective. Her mum, after all, is just as open to the unseen jury as she is to Alya, and she was just referring to what her mother had taught her.

The females in her community were surely not the only ones experiencing the unreasonable demands of Arab society. In one case, Alya remembers her fiancé dumping the sister of one of her friends for not being a virgin - after she lost her virginity to him!

Alya, and other people she knew in her culture, after years of being told that it was disgusting and inappropriate, had to discover how to embrace casual sex. Ultimately, by hypnotherapy, she achieved the freedom she wanted.

Since then she has been able to develop a fulfilling, lifelong friendship with "friends with benefits." Often, however, with her newly found sexual freedom, it would overshadow the reality that she could hook up with someone. Sex is a simple part of choosing someone deserving to share the moment with the challenge is.

Chapter 5 - Another messy situation of restricting standards for women is marriage in the Arab world.

Arab women face unreasonable standards when it comes to marriage, which utterly contradicts whatever their desires may be. Not only are they supposed to get married in the first place, but women still need to marry as young adults, marry the right partner, and carry the responsibility for the remainder of their life to support the union.

This perspective continues to include, for example, circumstances such as where a man has extra-marital relations. It is commonly observed in such situations as the wife's failure for trying to hold his focus. For separation, the same applies. Divorced women were commonly criticized for failing to keep their spouses satisfied in a poll of over two thousand participants around the Arab world.

For most Arab societies, the hope is that young people will marry those who hold the same values as someone who looks like them.

The pair experienced a significant amount of racism when Alya was dating her ex-boyfriend, who is black. Her friends were gossiping about their partnership with each other and even her mother stated, "You know he is black, right?" the first time she saw his photograph. A member of the family confessed after they ended things that she had secretly hoped for the partnership to end.

It is also a traditional social attitude to marry someone of the same faith. This expectation is supported by legislation in several Arab countries that do not accept interfaith partnerships. If

Alya were in principle, to marry a non-Muslim and have kids with him, their union in Egypt would not be recognized. This means that her kids would not be able to get Egyptian identity documents, and she would not be able to share her husband's hotel room lawfully.

Alya now knows, after much soul-searching, that she's most happy when she is alone. This represents a rising trend in England, where the median bride's age is now 35, which is three years away for Alya at the moment of writing.

It's the opposite in the Middle East. One in five girls in the MENA (the Middle East and North Africa) area is married by the time they are 18, according to UNICEF.

Furthermore, Arab girls and women are required to conform to their husbands' specifications, even though they do not yet have one. She finds as she grows older that her family and friends have started to see her as a pathetic case. Now she is also advised that she should be less vocal if she wishes to find a husband.

It took her several years and a lot of heartbreaks, but eventually, Alya learned that the longest relationship she will ever have is with herself. So the commitment to make it a decent one is worth bringing in.

Chapter 6 - Alya tried to discover her location, trapped between growing Islamophobia in Britain and her Muslim cultural heritage.

Alya will tell people for years that she was "theoretically" a Muslim. She did this because, in her British culture, the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent Islamophobia made her want to de-emphasize her Muslim identity.

The judgment of practicing Muslims, however, is much scarier than this. She is continually living in the threat of being branded a "terrible Muslim."

She noticed, however, that the desire for identification as a mild Muslim is special to the Arab immigrant community. She found that many immigrant community Arabs felt the need to qualify their Muslim identities as "mild" after surveying their Instagram stories because they live in Western countries as minorities. Religious identification is much more complex for Muslims in the Middle East, however.

Assuming that everybody from the Middle East is a devout Muslim is the same as believing that everybody is devotedly Christian in America or Europe. It's not reality-based. Oppressive philosophies are often as isolating to Muslims as to non-Muslims. Six out of the ten most-watched YouTube channels, for instance, notably religious Saudi Arabia, are humorous shows created by laidback young people. Religion is, as with anything else, what and person brings to it.

Indeed the prejudice of Muslims and its related Islamophobia, along with the assassination of many innocent civilians, has had horrific repercussions. There was a 500 percent rise in Islamophobic incidents in the United Kingdom alone in the time following the explosion of the Manchester Arena, in which a man of Libyan origin triggered a bomb, murdering 23 people.

Even Alya is prone to Islamophobic fear herself. She worried once on a plane from Cairo to London when a group of men she felt looked like jihadists embarked on her aircraft. She felt shocked as the flight touched down, that she had resorted to a poor, racial generalization.

The question, again, is the absence of diversity. In popular society, so-called "moderate Muslims" are not common, so when people see someone who is Muslim, it is believed that they are an extremist. There is no traditional, common definition of what a "secular Muslim" looks like.

For both Muslims and non-Muslims, the simplistic prism by which Islam is presently perceived is dangerous. Non-Muslims are left to mistrust a whole community of individuals, and cultural Muslims like Alya are ashamed to describe themselves as Muslims at all.

However, one thing she has discovered is that her voice is still valid. Only if she and those like her take their seats at the table would things improve.

Chapter 7 - The acceptance of feminism by Alya derives from disturbing encounters she had in the West as well as in the Middle East.

Alya has not been known as a feminist for several years. In the gendered assumptions, she thought of men as calm and women as nuts. She felt that her sex was an anomaly because she did not care about cosmetics. After all, she loved sports.

Finally, however, she saw that all about us is sexism, and we accept those frameworks. Research, for instance, challenged respondents to observe a start-up pitch and determine if the venture warranted funding. When a male voiced the idea, 68 percent felt the start-up should get money, but just 32 percent said the same when a woman made the very same proposal.

Alya was constantly insulted by the way men treated her, as she became an adult. She spoke to an artist once at a club in Miami who kept forgetting her name. He replied when she called him out by claiming that it did not make a difference. There were so many women there who were physically accessible that he did not have to make many attempts to get to know her. As she described it, she felt like a "reusable vagina".

It is not that strange, Alya noticed, from the way girls and women in the Middle East are held out of reach by their families for concern they will make men crazy with lust. Both techniques limit women to the number of their body parts.

In the West, misogyny is a concern, but in the Middle East, it's especially severe. Six of the ten worst nations for gender disparity were in the Arab zone in the 2017 Global Gender Gap Survey.

It is tempting to invoke Islam in the West as an explanation for the Middle East's gender inequality. But the attitudes of Islam against women are more complex than that. In reality, in several respects, Islam enhanced freedom for women that it took Western countries years to catch up with. Islamic nations, for instance, were the first to encourage women to earn a legacy.

The three main sects of monotheism are creations of their days. The Bible, the Torah, and the Quran all state that during the menstrual cycle, women are impure. They serve and have solidified the unacknowledged patriarchy of their day in ours.

In the end, Alya suggests, gender equality means that women regulate their own lives. That would also mean keeping social security systems in place in the Middle East to support women who make decisions of their own.

Chapter 8 - As a refugee, building a house is all about the experience, Alya has discovered.

Alya Mooroo is Arab as well as British. Even, neither is she. Worldwide, immigrants and their children are an overwhelmingly vast group, often referred to as third culture children. For instance, in London, 37 percent of inhabitants were not born in the UK.

Alya recognizes that she and several of her friends respond to the demands set on them in their diverse settings. English-ness is done in Cairo. But she is working hard in London to look like she is not one of those Arabs parking their Lamborghini on the pavement and buying luxurious chain stores.

Immigrants like her have an unconscious conviction that, regardless of their legal status, a prerequisite for living in their new world is positive behavior. When the UK canceled the nationality of Shamima Begum, a teen who moved to Syria to join ISIS, this solidified for Alya. In Bangladesh, where her parents were born but she was never herself, the British Home Secretary said she might apply for citizenship. It was like suggesting that she was less British than any other person.

Governments should promote cohesion rather than making these differences between persons that are British-British and British-something else. With supportive family reunification programs

and incentives, Canada is a perfect illustration of how to create social stability and enable foreign students to make a living there.

Brexit, on the other hand, has made life more complicated for non-white people in the UK. In the UK, where offensive rhetoric against non-white people is frequently expressed amid pro-Brexit thoughts, Alya claims it has validated bigotry. One Sikh physician, for example, was questioned by a patient "Shouldn't you be on a flight back to Pakistan? We have voted you down."

Despite this, most people nevertheless accept that contemporary Britain has been improved by immigration: only 23 percent of those surveyed in a 2018 poll claim immigration has damaged British national culture.

For Alya, she found that as well as the comfort of maintaining a schedule, it is the individuals around her who make her feel right at home.

The Greater Freedom: Life as a Middle Eastern Woman Outside the Stereotypes by Alya Mooro Book Review

It is not simple for everyone to build a home for themselves but it is particularly hard for Arab girls growing up in the West. Stuck between two very different societies and sets of aspirations, through self-reflection, Alya Mooro finally developed her personality, speaking to other Arab immigrant community women, and discovering resilience in her distinctly mixed history.

<https://goodbooksummary.com/the-greater-freedom-by-alya-mooro-book-summary-review/>