Name

Instructor Name

Subject

Date

My Journey to College

**Introduction**

Human is a social animal and lives in groups and societies. Each society is comprised of many individuals, and each society pertains to its specific socio-cultural norms. The behavior of every individual somehow depends upon these socio-cultural norms of the specific society. On the other hand, each individual has an impact on society. Each individual's behavior affects the overall culture of the society. There is a two-way cause and effect relationship between the individual and the society. Society plays its role in determining the behavior of an individual and vice versa.

There exist two border perspectives for studying this two-way relationship between individuals and society. **Functionalism** is a sociological perspective that studied human behavior on the macro level. According to the theories of functionalism, there are numerous and different parts of a society that depend upon each other for the smooth functioning of society. For example, judiciary maintain law and order in the society, industrialist provides individuals with the necessities of life and farmers provide edibles for society. These all segments of the society work together and fulfill the needs of each other. In contrast with functionalism, **Interactionism** is the sociological perspective that attempts to explain human behavior on a micro level. According to interactionism, each individual interacts with many individuals while living in a society, and these short interactions between the individuals define an individual's behavior.

In this essay, I will explain the sociological reasons in the perspective of functionalism and interactionism that made me the girl who I am.

**I with My Migrated Parents and American Society**

I am a Muslim-American girl. My father migrated from South-Asia to America in the early 1990s to seek opportunities for better livelihood. He worked as a cab-driver in the early years of his stay in America. After the struggle of some years, he succeeded in establishing his departmental store, and he married my mother, who was also a cousin of him. I was the third and last child of my parents. I had two elder brothers. I was born in America, and I am a citizen of America. Now, I will explain how **Interactionism** and **Functionalism** defined my entire life and make me the girl who I am.

It was a day of Eid-ul-Adha in America. I was 9 years old at that time. We had taken 4-day leave from the schools because there were no public holidays in the school. There was a huge crowd at my home on that day. All of our relatives and family friends were invited for this Eid Party. My mom dressed me in Shalwar Qameez and a scarf on my head. There were dozens of colorful bangles in my both arms. That was the day of joy. I never saw my parents so excited and full of life except for the day like Eid-ul-Adha when they had a get-together with other Muslim and South-Asian families. My father was speaking more than usual, and I could feel a significant glow on his face and shine in his eyes. My mother’s feet were moving faster to serve the guests, with a smile on her face. Both were looking more assertive and confident. I could not understand at that time the reasons behind the energetic behavior of my parents. Was that the happiness of Eid that could be seen on their faces? Was this the presence of my uncles that gave my parents confidence at an exceptional level? Or was it the satisfaction of performing a sacred religious obligation that was glowing on their faces? I was confused.

I was at the age of 14 when my parents decided to visit their native country in South-Asia. My mother started the preparation even 4 weeks before the visit. She was visiting markets on daily bases to shop gifts and prizes for her family and her in-laws. Again, I could feel a great level of energy in my parents. Both were excited and used to plan each and everything for the upcoming visit of their native town. The month before the visit was all characterized by the planning and preparations of the visit. My mother was counting days and the whole day she was discussing things as we would go there, we would give them this gift, we would spend 1 week here and 2 days there, etc. The day came, and we landed in the native town of my parents. There was a huge crowd of uncles and aunties who came to receive us at the airport. I was surprised by the enthusiastic behavior of my uncles and aunties. All were hugging each other and were giving kisses on each other's hands and heads. That was the 2nd visit that I made to my parent's native town. We had come there one time before, and I could not remember anything about that visit. Our current tour was for 5 weeks and was going on awesomely. There were get-together parties on daily bases in honor of us. There was an exchange of gifts; eyes were teary with emotions and promised were being made for the future. It was all amazing to live and to absorb. It was 2nd last nite of our stay when my mother told me with a gigantic smile on her face, "after your graduation, I will arrange your marriage with one of my nephews." She further told me that marriage should be done with the person whom you know the best and your groom must belong to our family and country.

Was I know everything about my cousin whom I met for the first time? What was my country? Was this America where I born and lived my entire life or this South-Asian country where my parents were born, but I know nothing about it? I was confused.

It was my last year in high school when my mother, one day, made a meeting with me. She told me, "look, we are Muslims, never date a boy. If it is necessary and you are not able to restrict yourself, then he must be a Muslim. You are a Muslim, and you should behave like a Muslim". It was not the first time that I heard such type of advice from my mother. Most of the time, she was used to giving me advice about what should I wear and how should I behave in social gatherings, in school, and at home. All sorts of dating apps were not allowed for me (“Aziz Ansari”). In her home in America, she was trying her best to develop and maintain a culture of her native town, which she considered as the best culture. It was the most famous quotation from my mother that "This was not happening in her time. Time has changed, and her time was the best". That was not an easy task for me to behave like a South-Asian girl in American society. It was hard for me to avoid all sorts of dating apps and boys when most of my friends had boyfriends. How could an American-born Muslim girl behave like a South-Asian girl? I was confused.

The scarf on my head was another thing that made me embarrassed some times. It had happened many times when one of my class-fellows tried to taunt me by saying, 'hey Muslim, go back.' Even one of my class fellow asked me to go back to your native country (“Muslim ‘Twoness’”). Was I not an American citizen? How can one citizen of America asked another citizen of America to leave the country? Even after every terrorist attack in America, Muslims of America had to face severe reactions from other communities. Was all the Muslims were terrorists? How could be all the Muslims declared as terrorists while the Messenger of Islam Prophet (PBUH) said: "one who kills one human being will consider as if one killed the whole of humanity"? How could one blame the entire religion for the actions of some imprudent individuals? Again, I was confused.

**Concluding Remarks-Solving the Confusion**

My parents are Muslims, and they migrated from an under-developed country of South-Asia. They spent substantial time in their life in their native town, and this time has strong fingerprints on them. They are American nationals, but still, they love more their native country. They love to remember the time they spent in their native country. They love their native culture and social norms so much that they always try to keep it with them. They always try to practice and promote their native culture in their homes. Their efforts to keep the native culture with them never allow them to adopt American society. Besides the native cultural norms, Islam has the strongest impact on my parents as well as on me. It’s not an easy job to practice Islam in a Non-Muslim and liberal society where most of the social norms are against Islam. So, my parents were in a continuous struggle to maintain their identity as Muslims and as a South-Asian in American society. I, as the daughter of my parents, inherit this struggle. This struggle can be observed above narrated the first three events of my life. My parents were energetic and excited about Eid-ul-Adha because, at that event, they were successfully saving their identity of being a Muslim. My mother wanted me to marry one of her nephews. In this way, she was trying to preserve Islamic and cultural norms for me. Because a Muslim and South-Asian boy would also try to protect Islamic and native cultural norms. My mother restricted me to make a boyfriend because it was against Islam. Again my mother was trying to save the Islamic and social norms of her native country. These three events represent the theory of **Interactionism** in my life. This is how people around me interacted with me, affected my thinking process and behavior, and made me the person who I am.

The last narrated event of my life was the product of **Functionalism** aspects of society. After 9/11, there was an enormous campaign in all sorts of media that tried to link terrorism with Islam and Muslims. The words of Islamophobia and Islamic terrorism was the product of these anti-Islam campaigns. There can be terrorists in every segment of society. We cannot associate terrorism with Islam only because some terrorist attacks were executed by imprudent type of Muslims who even don’t know the meaning of Islam. This institutional force of society also affects my thinking and behavior. I had to face insulting remarks from many of the people around me just because of my religious affiliations.

The above narrated four events present some chunks of my life. This is how my society, my family, and the people around me affect my thinking process. My life is an American-Muslim girl who is full of such events, expectations, and confusions. Now, I am here in this college with a huge burden of expectations and responsibilities. I have to fulfill them by preserving my Islamic identity.

**Works Cited**

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