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Women, islam, and the state in Pakistan

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Vassar College

Women, Islam, and the State in Pakistan

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of
Arts in Women's Studies

by

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Introduction

Introduction

Research Question and Methodologies

There are telling discrepancies between Jamaat-e-Islami (J.I.) women's rhetoric on women's status in Islam and the negotiations of their responsibilities as citizens of the modern Islamic nation-state of Pakistan. Drawing from Pakistani feminists, I critique the exclusionary nature of Jamaat women's understanding of proper Muslim womanhood and their subordination to the androcentric Islamic theology of Maududi and the J.I. male elite. Instead, I advocate for the necessity of alternative understandings of womanhood and Islam, because I think that Jamaat women paradoxically advocate for educated women while preventing them from achieving the full equality that an emancipated understand of Islam and modern nationalism would facilitate for both men and women.

Drawing from the works of Pakistani feminists Farida Shaheed, Afiya Shehribano Zia, and Shahnaz Rouse, I argue that Jamaat women force a monopoly over the meaning of proper Muslim womanhood and women's 'proper' roles in the modern Islamic nation-state of Pakistan. This very contentious understanding of womanhood and female membership in Pakistan has been conceptualized by the male elite of the J.I. party from the beginning. In order to better understand how Jamaat women navigate various responsibilities, including politics, domestic work, and education, I examine Amina Jamal's interviews from *Jamaat-e-Islami Women in Pakistan* and Niloufer Siddiqui's "Gender-Ideology and Jamaat-e-Islami." Finally, I employ a close reading methodology in order to highlight the necessity of alternative understandings of womanhood and Islam as theorized by Pakistani diasporic theologians Riffat Hassan, Asma Barlas, and Aysha A. Hidayatullah in order to overcome the paradox between wanting and

proclaiming to be modern feminists on the one hand, and continuing to entertain the narrow male-centered interpretations of Islam and women's place in it.

Where and How I Enter

My choice of topic comes from my own experiences combined with my coursework at Vassar. My father's side is Indian and Muslim, and my paternal step-grandfather whom I have known longer than my biological grandfather is Pakistani and Muslim. My mother, on the other hand, is Norwegian and Christian. But, I have lived with my father and grandparents since my parent's divorce, their Indian Muslim background has arguably influenced me the most. What I find significant, however, is the way in which my family practices Islam, and how it conflicts with the way I desire to practice it.

Growing up, I have heard several stories that I can now identify as myths. For example, my grandparents would tell me that queerness is a sin; Eve came from Adam's Rib; the Quran has a very specific dress code — that is, nothing above mid-calf, no tank-tops, nothing too form-fitting, etc.; that menstruation is taboo; and that Muslim women should not marry outside of the faith. In particular, they emphasized that these rules are mandated by the Quran. If I followed these rules, I would be a good Muslim woman. However, I did not want my sexuality, clothing, or anything else to be conflated with my character; I simply wanted to be judged on my behavior, just like men are.

Soon enough, my identification with Islam came at odds with my womanhood and my sexuality. I did not want to give up my religion, but I became tired of trying to reconcile the two. It was not until I read other women's texts, feminist and non-feminist alike (including authors like Amina Wadud) and took courses in Religion, Women's Studies, and Africana Studies at

Vassar, that I discovered how ambiguous the Quran is on women's dress. Then, I felt ready to revisit the patriarchal, sexist norms I grew up with and the liberatory potential of feminism and Islam.

For example, Shahnaz Rouse explains the continuums of patriarchy and sexism in "The Outsiders Within: Sovereignty and Citizenship in Pakistan." Rather than focusing on Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization campaign as uniquely patriarchal, Rouse traces the oppression of women and other minorities from the State and nation-formation to the home:

Without glossing over the differences, she writes, "I have attempted to demonstrate the continuity in the manner in which the state (pre-Zia, during Zia's time, and since) has sought to control and define women in ways that permitted its agenda to move forward ... Women's bodies and identities have been, and continue to be, a key site of contestation and definition of self and other in the Pakistani context. (Rouse 69)

Rouse moves beyond women's movements in Pakistan, interrogating citizenship, permissible womanhood, and sexuality themselves. As Rouse describes, Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization only amplifies the violence that has already existed for women and other minorities, whose bodies are the site of political contestation and appropriation from both the government and the J.I. party.

Jamaat women seek to stake a claim to modernity in the Islamic nation-state without forfeiting the political authority of male-centered discourses of Islamic nationalism or radically altering the party's preference for men as the primary providers and national leaders of the Muslim national community. By seeking a balanced position between Pakistani feminist discourses and male-prescribed discourses, Jamaat women create a space where they can deviate from the party's prescribed gender roles without losing their authority as respectable Muslim leaders. My thesis questions the practical applicability and its intellectual consistency as well as the political effectiveness of Jamaat women's self-positioning. First, what are the limits of a

platform that is empowering for some and exclusionary for others? Second, in Aysha A. Hidayatullah in her book *Feminist Edges of the Qur'an*, prompts us to ask: what can we take from the Quran — and where might we have to look elsewhere? Asking these questions enables us to challenge the impasses of both feminist and theologians' debates and discuss the ways in which one can be a Muslim woman without the hindrance of patriarchy or the State.

Jamaat-e-Islami Women's Wing

In 1941, Maulana Maududi founded the Jamaat-e-Islami (J.I.) party, adding the Women's Wing seven years later (Siddiqui 2). Maududi envisioned J.I. as the leaders of a virtuous Muslim society in opposition to British colonialism and Hindu nationalism. Ultimately, Maududi's vision manifested into the desire to create and lead a modern Islamic nation-state (*Jamaat-e-Islami Women of Pakistan* 3). Maududi was one of the most prolific Islamist writers, and his works still influence the party today in regards to women, Islam, and the State. However, as I argue in chapters one and two, the party's approach to women's national political participation keeps changing, as Jamaat women negotiate the party stance on different women-related issues and grievances.

For example, Humiera Iqtidar notes the contradictions between the party's stance on gender roles and Jamaat women's rhetoric at a women's-only meeting in Lahore. Iqtidar writes:

Soon she [the speaker at the meeting] had worked to a highly charged list of all the problems that Muslims were facing in the world today. Foremost on her list was the cultural imposition of an alien, non-Muslim way of being. Other problems, such as wars and international persecution, were seen to be tied to this particular impulse to subjugate Muslims. Now, softening her voice, she asked her audience: "And you, what will you do in the face of this catastrophe? When you die, what are you going to tell your Allah? That you were too busy cooking? That you spent your life cleaning and washing clothes? ... These are our duties, no doubt, but we have to also answer to God, not just the men. We have our belief (iman) as well. (Iqtidar 149)

As opposed to approaching Jamaat women as adjuncts of the male council, Iqtidar discusses Jamaat women's complex engagement with their gender and religious identities and duties. Whereas both the party's rhetoric and the Women's Wing emphasize women's social work and familial obligations, Iqtidar demonstrates how Jamaat women become involved in political obligations and education so that they can navigate the party's prescribed gender roles without completely uprooting it. As Jamaat women negotiate their authority to lead other Muslim women in opposition to Western domination, their religious goals of creating a virtuous Muslim society are entangled with the decidedly modern projects of the State and feminist discourses, none of which can be categorized into a strictly religious or secular framework. At the same time, as Pakistani feminists note, Jamaat women are unwilling to interrogate the consequences of their collusion with the State at the expense of other women.

Pakistani Feminists

Pakistani feminists have critiqued Jamaat women's model of women's empowerment, demonstrating how it empowers only the women who share the party's patriarchal vision of society, or those willing to make compromises with it in order to gain some agency. In *Jamaat-e-Islami Women of Pakistan* (2013), Amina Jamal summarizes the critiques of many Pakistani feminists by describing Jamaat women's approach towards creating a virtuous Muslim community based on the so-called model of the modern Islamic nation-state of Pakistan. "This process, in turn, may fashion new forms of the individual-community relationship that may appear oppressive (for feminists, other women, non-Muslims citizens, minority sects, gays, the transgendered, and the rural and urban poor) when fused with inherently violent practices of state formation or the brutality of community construction" (249). What Pakistani feminists

demonstrate is that, as Jamaat women designate themselves as the leaders of a new Muslim society, they suppress Muslims and non-Muslim alike who do not adhere to their principles of virtue. This critique appears throughout the works of Pakistani feminists, such as Farida Shaheed, Afiya Shehribano Zia, and Nighat Said Khan.

In one of Shaheed's first works with co-author Khawar Mumtaz, *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?* (1987), Mumtaz and Shaheed trace continuums of women's oppression from the State to the home. Mumtaz and Shaheed begin by describing rural vs. urban women pre-partition, move through Islamization, and end at the mainstream women's movement. Likewise, Zia-ul-Haq offers a similar perspective. In "Faith-Based Politics, Enlightened Moderation and the Pakistani Women's Movement," Zia argues that, "Feminist politics is a price such a project [advocating for the autonomy of Jamaat women] is willing to sacrifice if it does not fit the cultural, spiritual or political requirements of an increasingly conservative and anti-women agenda of the religio-political forces in Pakistan" (243). In fact, as Zia argues, Jamaat women are willing to downplay the consequences of gendered violence in order to maintain their position of authority within the modern Islamic State.

For instance, Zia discusses the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) incident, where the government threatened to demolish the Lal Masjid Mosque in Islamabad after suspecting it as a terrorist site ("Faith-Based Politics" 246). Jamaat women remained relatively silent when the Jamia Hafsa students of Islamabad kidnapped a woman suspected of prostitution and forced her to repent as a part of a campaign against "unIslamic" practices (246-7). Yet, although representative Saima Qazi criticized the government's violent response in "Operation Silence," no other J.I. members have spoken out against the Jamia Hafsa's women's actions" (236). In fact, to support a vigilante

group like Jamia Hafsa would compromise J.I.'s credibility as a political party, not to mention its principles of saving others from vice and promoting virtue through the structures and mechanisms of the nation-state. However, as Zia asserts, one woman's empowerment should not preclude another's.

Asma Barlas, Riffat Hassan, and Aysha A. Hidayatullah's Mediations on Women, Islam, and the State in Pakistan

Like Pakistani feminists, Pakistani women theologians such as Riffat Hassan and Asma Barlas contest the narrow constructions of Islam and women in the J.I.'s vision of the virtuous society. Pakistani women theologians are interested in reinterpreting patriarchal interpretations of the Quran in order to locate antipatriarchal ideas and gender equality within the scriptures and primary sources of the Islamic faith, most notably the Quran (Hidayatullah 39, 43).

One of the most outspoken Pakistani women theologians is Riffat Hassan. Hassan was born in Lahore to an upper-class, educated family ("God-given rights"). Growing up, Hassan struggled with her parents' conflicting views on how a Muslim woman should act and what a Muslim woman should do ("God-given rights"). Soon, Hassan left for England at the age of seventeen, receiving her Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and Philosophy and her PhD in philosophy ("God-given rights"). In 1972, Hassan emigrated to the U.S., where she began teaching at the University of Oklahoma and researching women in Islam (Hidayatullah 11). The more that Hassan studied the Quran, the more she realized how it had been used by male scholars, government officials, and relatives to justify treating women as inferior. Hassan reiterates, "However, often when a young man returns from the West he is considered "modernized", but when a young woman returns she is considered 'Westernized' " ("God-Given

rights). Clearly, patriarchal interpretations of the Quran justify treating women as sources of religious and cultural contamination, justifying why they need to be closely regulated both as members of the faith and as second-class citizens in the modern Islamic nation-state.

Hassan is particularly interested in investigating whether claims of gender equality, despite biological difference, could be made based on the Quran (“God-Given rights”). Upon reinterpreting passages related to women, Hassan realized that patriarchal interpretations aside, the Quran is conducive to gender equality and women’s rights (“God-Given rights”). For instance, one of Hassan’s most influential concepts is that of egalitarian human creation.

Hassan’s reading disrupts the common narrative, which claims that Eve is made from Adam’s rib and, thus, represents a less than perfect form of creation than Adam. Instead, Hassan highlights the parts of the Quran emphasizing that men and women are made from the same material, or *nafs* (Hidayatullah 11). What distinguishes Hassan from Asma Barlas, another Pakistani diasporic theologian, however, is her identification as a Muslim feminist. By contrast, Asma Barlas does not associate herself with the term “feminist.” Nevertheless, she is invested in deconstructing patriarchal interpretations of the Quran.

Asma Barlas is well-known for her book titled *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Quran*. Barlas studied philosophy, literature, and journalism at the University of Pakistan in 1982, and she received her doctorate in international studies from the University of Denver in 1990 (Hidayatullah 14). Soon, Barlas began studying the Quran, publishing *Believing Women in Islam* in 2002. *Believing Women in Islam* both draws from and builds upon previous scholarship from antipatriarchal exegetes, including Amina Wadud, a Black Muslim theologian based in the U.S. Using Wadud’s highly-referenced analysis that the Qur’an

does not masculinize or feminize God's attributes, Barlas reaffirms that the Quran is an antipatriarchal text.

One of Barlas's main claims is that, although the Quran refers to two different genders, it does not create a hierarchy between them, whether based on biological difference or morality (Barlas 102). Barlas uses methods of historical contextualization and textual polysemy (i.e. starting from the assumption that texts allow for a variety of interpretations) to Barlas reinterprets passages on gender in an antipatriarchal manner. Furthermore, Barlas shows how the restrictions on women's education, employment, and mobility on the basis of biological differences have little basis in the Quran. While the Quran does associate men with protection, Barlas argues that it neither associates biological difference with superiority nor restricts women's independence (Barlas 186-7). In fact, Barlas describes how the Quran's overarching messages of gender equality presents men and woman as *awlyiya*, or mutual protectors (Barlas 186).

Summary of Chapters

In chapter one, I compare the perspectives of Jamaat women and Pakistani feminists regarding the State. I demonstrate the disparity between the party's gender ideology and Jamaat women's attempts to balance their expected domestic role with their own aspirations for political and social involvement in the public sphere. For Jamaat women, an Islamic state is an important part of being a modern, active, rights-bearing citizen. As they see it, the Islamic State serves as a framework for building a virtuous Muslim community and saving others from vice. However, I argue that Jamaat women's exclusionary politics in conjunction with the State require to be

examined and critiqued in order to present alternative models of womanhood and Islam, which are informed by Pakistani feminists' analyses of oppression from both the home and State.

In chapter two, I provide a telling case of paradoxical rhetoric that J.I. women often exact in an attempt to reconcile feminist and modernist discourses with their faith-based political and social activism. By examining Jamaat women's and Pakistani feminists' perspectives on education, I illustrate how how Jamaat women are entrapped in a rhetoric that refuses to address patriarchal oppression head on and how they conclude an unfair "patriarchal bargain" (an arrangement that prioritizes one woman's authority over another without challenging the patriarchal system itself) at the expense of women. For instance, while Pakistani feminists generally use a human rights framework and perceive education as a path to financial independence, Jamaat women negotiate their responsibilities within the framework of husbands as the primary provider. However, Jamaat women's singular understanding of the participation of educated women in the public sphere is fundamentally patriarchal and exclusionary.

In chapter three, I discuss the limits and possibilities of Pakistani diasporic theologians' Quranic exegesis as it pertains to women, Islam, and the State and as it enables a more pluralistic yet personal understanding of the religion that dominates Pakistani discourses on citizenship and the State. In particular, I examine the works of Riffat Hassan, Asma Barlas, and Aysha A. Hidayatullah. On the one hand, I emphasize the liberatory potential of Quranic exegesis for women. On the other hand, I echo Hidayatullah, who argues that the Quran does not necessarily offer as clear a picture of gender equality as we had hoped for in certain instances. In comparing the perspectives of these theologians, I highlight the necessity of bringing in our own

perspectives, even if they do not perfectly align with the Quran, in order to create personal understandings of womanhood and Islam in the context of women, Islam, and the State.

Chapter 1:
The Perspectives of Jamaat-e-Islami Women and
Pakistani Feminists on the State

Chapter 1: The Perspectives of Jamaat-e-Islami Women and Pakistani Feminists on the State

I. Introduction

For Jamaat women, the modern Islamic nation-state is an integral part of being involved Muslim citizens, building (and leading) a virtuous community, and saving from vice. Jamaat women advocate for women's rights through the framework of the modern Islamic nation-state with the expectation that the husband is the primary provider and political authority. However, I argue that there is a discrepancy between Jamaat women's rhetoric on gender and their negotiations of political and domestic responsibilities. In conjunction with the State, Jamaat women utilize their authority as members of a political-religious party to enforce their ideals of a good Muslim woman, avoiding to address how their ideology is harmful for those who do not conform to it. In order to demonstrate how Jamaat women preserve the patriarchal, social, and religious status quo, I draw from the ideas of Pakistani feminists, who critique the State's treatment of women as second-class citizens and challenge oppression from both the home and the State.

II. Defining the Nation-State

Like Maududi, Jamaat women advocate for the State as long as it does not completely dismantle the status quo of husbands as primary providers and heads of the family unit. Before describing Jamaat women's relationship to the modern Islamic nation-state, however, it is useful to define the nation-state. In "The Nation and the Origins of National Consciousness," Anderson defines the nation-state an "imagined community" with shared values and finite boundaries (57-8). It is imagined community because, although all of the members of the nation may not interact with one another, it is assumed that are in community with one another and share similar

values. The state, on the other hand, encompasses various apparatuses of the nation, such as citizenship, voting, and the military. What Anderson does not account for, however, is anti-colonial nationalisms or the gendered nature of nationalism.

Anne McClintock and Saadia Toor elaborate on gendered and anti-colonial nationalisms. For example, in “‘No Longer a Future Heaven’: Women and Nationalism in South Africa,” McClintock discusses how Black women, who were treated as second-class citizens under both Afrikaner nationalism and African nationalism, fought for political representation within the African National Congress beyond symbolic representation (115). Likewise, Saadia Toor elaborates on the gendered nature of nationalism. In “The Political Economy of Moral Regulation in Pakistan: Religion, Gender, and Class in a Postcolonial Context,” Toor argues, “The modern nation-state uses the family or kinship unit to further its own policies on population, development, health, and when it comes to regulating sexuality it functions as the *parens patri*” (139). Indeed, women’s bodies remain a key site of contestation for the nation-state, and the sort of modern Islamic nation-state that Maududi and the J.I. party envision is no different. The J.I. party envisions a modern Islamic nation-state in which Jamaat men and women are the designated leaders in promoting virtue and forbidding vice.

III. Jamaat-e-Islami Women’s Perspective on the State

In *Jamaat-e-Islami Women in Pakistan*, Amina Jamal interviews Fatima, a middle-class woman with a Bachelor’s of Science and a public-relations officer for the Jamaat-e-Islami (J.I.) women’s wing in Karachi. Fatima says, “When I started reading for these classes, I experienced a great change in my life. I realized that Allah has not created us to be completely free but to be his appointees (*naib*) on earth ... and it became evident to me that Islam is not just a religion. It is a

din (faith), a system of life” (159). Therefore, Jamaat women support a “system of life,” or a modern interpretation of religion linking Islam and the State. They employ the discourse of women’s rights and strive to emulate God’s word while striving to reconcile their rigid views of women’s roles in Islamic society with the discourses of feminism and women’s rights as human rights, as developed in the non-Muslim West and in predominately democratic, post-industrial, and socially liberal societies.

However, Jamaat women do not vocalize women’s national political participation or economic independence from men as much as Pakistani feminists, despite that they mitigate their party’s stance on women’s political participation and work. Samina, a leader in the J.I. women’s wing, hints at such negotiations. Jamal asks Samina about the paradox of Jamaat women filling seats at the local, provincial, and national levels during Pervez Musharraf’s former presidency (1999-2008). Samina responds, “However, we believe, and this is evident in Allama Iqbal’s *Istar-e-Khudi* and *Javidnama* [monumental philosophical works], that if women venture out of the homes they will neglect their creative [reproductive] role” (87). Samina holds a political leadership position in the local and national ranks of the party. Therefore, her quote does not reflect a complete aversion to women’s involvement in politics outside of the home but a wariness towards permanently changing the gendered division of labor. Rather than radically eliminating the gendered division of labor, Jamaat women aim to appropriate modernity in such a way that is advantageous to them; yet, it does not displace the patriarchal interpretations of Islam that designate men as the primary providers and national leaders.

In order to better understand how Samina mitigates the party’s stance, it is helpful to revisit Maududi’s perspective on women’s political participation in the modern State. In *Purdah*

and the Status of Women in Islam, Maududi writes, “They [the West] think the women’s role in national life consists of doing social work, attending municipal councils, participating in conferences and congresses, and devoting her time to tackle political, cultural, and social problems ... In short, she should do everything outside of the home” (50-51). In *Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam*, Maududi contends that women’s primary role in the modern State is not in the domain of public politics. His concern about women increasingly working outside of the home reinforces a gendered division of labor, where women are primarily responsible for domestic labor. Samina also mentions this principle when she conveys her concern of women neglecting the reproductive role should they “venture out of the home.” Nevertheless, she is an active leader of the J.I. women’s wing, which is a highly public political engagement. Similarly, a member of J.I. and the Karachi City Council, Farida, negotiates her domestic and political obligations. Farida balances her domestic obligations as the primary caretaker with her political obligations to save others from vice. Jamal explains, “Farida emphasizes that this was a part of the vision of the Jamaat that prioritized women’s family responsibilities ... At the same time, women party members are also offered training workshops to enhance their public and domestic roles” (*Jamaat-e-Islami Women* 98). Farida did not necessarily reduce her hours, but rather, switched them to better fit her and her children’s schedules. Thus, theorizing Jamaat women’s role in terms of Maududi or the party alone obscures women’s actual political engagement, whether that is marching, distributing informational materials, leading within the party, or hosting workshops on how to raise children. Thus, Jamaat women situate themselves at the intersections of competing discourses on women and the State in order to acquire legitimacy during key political moments while also maintaining the party’s principles in theory.

Despite the party's stance, Jamaat women are in conversation with competing feminist discourses of women and the State. Jamal notes that they consider themselves to be "ideally situated, being educated middle-class professional women and also 'true' believers," which allows them "to offer a balanced solution to the Islam-versus-modernity predicament" (136). Jamaat women's references to men as the head of the party and the home, then, might be reinterpreted as signs of a paradox and/or pragmatism in J.I. women's own views of their role in Islam and the modern State. While Jamaat women's campaigns do not challenge men to the same degree as Pakistani feminists, Jamaat women reimagine modernity in order to promote women's rights without diminishing the importance of being virtuous Muslims — or fully adhering to the party's stance on women's political participation.

Moreover, Maududi and the J.I. party itself demonstrate a history of encouraging and discouraging Jamaat women's political engagement, further highlighting the inconsistency of Jamaat women's stance. For example, after Khan passed the Family Law Ordinance in 1961, Maududi aligned J.I. with the Combined Opposition Party (COP), despite the fact that its leader, Fatima Jinnah, was an unmarried and unveiled woman (11). Today, J.I. rarely revisits this arrangement, despite that it was a deliberate effort to supersede Khan and gain a political platform. Notwithstanding the ongoing regulation of women's bodies in the home, Khan increased the number of women's seats on the assembly; encouraged women to seek employment (mainly in the fields of service, civil services, and journalism); and encouraged women to obtain an education, with the understanding that these are the markers of a modernist, liberal society (*Women of Pakistan* 57). In response, Maududi framed Khan's leadership as corrupting Islam by threatening what he framed as religiously-sanctioned gender roles. Today,

Jamaat women continue to hold both local and national positions, although the Women's Wing is mainly engaged in social work. Had Jamaat women and the party adhered to Maududi's restrictions on women, they would not have been able to be as active in politics and the public sphere.

Nevertheless, regarding Jamaat women becoming involved in building a modern Muslim society, Maududi's writings on modernity plays an ever-changing, albeit significant, role. First, Maududi established the need for a strong Islamic religious and cultural identity. Put in the context of British colonization and the expansion of Hindu nationalism, Maududi aimed to distance Muslims from Westernization and Hindu nationalism, and bring them closer to the creation of towards a modern Islamic nation-state (*Jamaat-e-Islami Women* 239). Maududi believed Muslims were becoming lax in their practice, so he urged them to live by a specific set of principles — to be enforced the nation-state — or risk being corrupted by the West. In *Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam*, Maududi implores, "If we have to solve our social, economic and political problems as Muslims, we shall have to think hard and find out the Islamic ways ... But we should not, in any way, go beyond the limits prescribed by Islam" (142). For Maududi, religious renewal goes hand in hand with political ascendance. Together, moral, economic, and social advancement are the central components of Maududi's vision of a modern Islamic nation-state. Jamal reiterates, "Against the backdrop of colonial South Asia, where Muslims were a religious and political minority, Maududi also reframed the question of who was to lead the performance of forbidding wrong and building a moral collectivity" (*Jamaat-e-Islami Women* 233). Fatima's quote above reflects Maududi's perspective as well, emphasizing the importance of recognizing Islam as "a system of life" in which the State is significantly involved.

Fatima suggests that joining J.I. has made her a better Muslim, stressing the importance of the J.I. as the disciplinary authority that monitors and regulates the public sphere of the State but not the private morality of its citizens. Hence, Jamaat women center individual piety in their public political discourse in order to maintain a high religious standard and increase other women's chances of reaching *Jannah* (heaven, in Islam). Shahida, one member of the Jamaat Women's Commission, echoes Fatima's perspective by reciting an Islamic parable. In this parable, the third Caliph in Islam, Othman, hears loud music and decides to arrest men and women dancing and drinking alcohol. In response, the homeowner says, "While it is true that I have committed one offense, you have committed three un-Islamic acts — you have spied on me, you trespassed, and invaded my privacy" (*Jamaat-e-Islami Women* 241). Shahida concurs, "So, if a person does any sin in their home, then they will not be caught by spying on them. This is part of our history — we respect that" (241). Based on Shahida's parable and commentary, no one possesses the authority to discipline the sinner if the sin occurs in the private sphere, not even the State. Why, then, is Shahida a member of the J.I. Women's Commission, a disciplinary authority and religious-political party?

Like other interviewees, Shahida supports the principle of having a select group of preferably middle-class individuals act as the appropriate disciplinary authority, contributing to the creation of a modern, virtuous, and cohesive Muslim State. In order to understand Shahida's perspective, I consider Jamal's interview where she asks Shahida to describe the apparent contradiction between the Third Caliph Othman and J.I.:

Shahida: This should not be seen as a coercion — there is no ambiguity among Muslims about the obligation to pray. Therefore, the enforcement of prayers in our society, an

Islamic society, cannot be considered as oppression. And it only applies to those who identify as Muslims.

Jamal: Is it not compulsion to enforce prayers on Muslims?

Shahida: Let us be clear, there is no compulsion to join the *din* (faith) - but once you enter the *din*, then it becomes an obligation to obey all rules, just like any other organization. You are not compelled to join, but once you do you have to obey its rules. (243)

Shahida extends the Islamic parable to the modern State, blurring the lines between religion and politics.

One of the main concerns of Pakistani feminists and human rights groups is precisely the State's regulation and violation of private individual citizenship rights, such as the right to one's own privacy. Jamaat women offer a particular response at the intersections of both State encroachment on private morality and individual surrender (read acceptance and internalization of State 'ideology'). Jamaat women collapse the individual, the collective, the private, and the public in such a way that cannot be articulated through a private versus public dichotomy. Under the state, a private sin becomes a public act because it is a violation of the party's moral salvation. Jamal sums up this bind as follows, "Islamists subscribe to a set of what they consider divinely obligated responsibilities aimed at the salvation of the individual and the group ... they also see themselves as belonging to a public realm that deems them to be individuals who are contractually related to other individuals through the laws" (244). Thus, Jamaat women are part of a distinctly modern project of individual and collective religious revitalization through the State. Hence, Shahida's interpretation of Caliph Othman's encounter with sinners who protested his invasion of privacy dramatizes the great paradox Jamaat women have to overcome in order to

reconcile a Muslim's right to private morality and State regulation, when private morality is found to be contravening the legal codes of morality set by the State.

IV. Pakistani Feminists and the State

As opposed to Jamaat women, Pakistani feminists mobilize against the State, Islamization, and nationalism. Pakistani women have been involved in a variety of actions against the State before and after partition, both at the national and local levels. In 1948, Pakistani women led one of the first demonstrations against the State. According to Mumtaz and Shaheed in *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?*, "Thousands of women marched towards the Assembly Chamber after the House removed the Muslim Personal Law of Shariat, which recognized a woman's right to inheritance" (55). As a result, the law passed the House. While the law is not entirely relevant to local customs, which still deny women of their inheritance rights, contrary to the Quranic teachings, the efforts of thousands of advocates for the right of women to inherit should not be overlooked. In 1949, the wife of the first prime minister, Ra'ana Liaquat Ali, formed the All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA). Although APWA began primarily as a social welfare organization supported by the government, it pushed for all women's empowerment economically, socially, and politically, by advocating for the Family Law Ordinance of 1961, which aimed to protect women in marriage (*Women of Pakistan* 53). However, APWA's leadership constituted of mostly urban upper-middle class women. In 1969, the Anjuman Jamhooriyat Pasand Khawateen, an organization focused on working-class women, established its core branch in Karachi (61). Like APWA, the Anjuman's leaders were mainly upper-middle class. Alternatively, lower-middle class students at the University of Punjab created and led the Women's Front in 1974.

The Women's Front mobilized working-class women, although university students predominately led the organization. Khawar Mumtaz and Farida Shaheed explain, "They built links among factory workers and working women and actively supported the female employees of Shifa Medicos, a pharmaceutical firm in Lahore. They led a procession on 8 March 1975 in Rawalpindi on the occasion of International Women's Day and were *lathi*-charged [baton-charged] by the police" (65-6). The Front went on to win women's seats in the Union and spread to Sargodha, Multan, and Lahore (66). What is most pertinent to this section on Pakistani feminism, however, is the Front's radical agenda. Mumtaz and Shaheed write, "It highlighted and condemned the feudal tradition of viewing women as private property and violence committed against women in this system ... The Women's Front, while talking of women's self-awareness, viewed women's emancipation as attainable with a radical change in the social and economic system" (66). Before the Women Action Front's first campaign in 1981, the Front provided systemic critique of violence against within the State and within the home. Although the Women's Front dissipated within a few years due to a lack of structure, the Women's Front was one of the first women's organizations in Pakistan to offer a systemic critique of the State — in this case, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government. In 1979, the General Zia-ul-Haq government passed the Hudood Ordinances, catalyzing the *Khawateen Mahaz-e-Amal*/Women's Action Front (WAF) to begin organizing.

While previous women's organizations engaged in social welfare, the WAF, like the Women's Front, mobilized against the State. Farida Shaheed, one of the founders of the WAF, is still involved with other women's organizations today, including Women Living Under Muslim Laws. What is also notable about the WAF is that was one of the first women's organizations in

Pakistan with a distinctly feminist consciousness. WAF's predecessor, *Shirkat Gah* (Women's Resource Center) consisted of middle and upper-class, educated Pakistani women who had studied the women's movement at Western institutions, and who incorporated a liberation and feminist lens into their goals for women's rights. *Shirkat Gah* aimed for "the advancement of the status and role of women in economic and social life, education and cultural activities" (*Women of Pakistan* 61). Its radical views on liberation paved the way for the WAF. When the case Fehmida and Fehmida and Allah Bux vs. the State (1981) came to light under the Hudood Ordinances, *Shirkat Gah* members became WAF members in order to mobilize against the State.

Fehmida and Allah Bux were charged with adultery for delaying their *nikah* (marriage) registration until after sexual intercourse ("Social Status" 35). The ruling foreshadowed Zia-ul-Haq's *Zina* Ordinance. *Zina* (adultery) failed to distinguish between premarital sex and rape, categorizing all premarital sex, even if rape or prostitution, as a crime. Mumtaz and Shaheed explain, "The Ordinance covers adultery, fornication, rape and prostitution, bearing false testimony (*qazf*), theft, and drinking alcoholic beverages" (75) Mumtaz and Shaheed add that Zia-ul-Haq established the *Zina* ordinance to regulate the sexual activity and sexual offenses perpetuated against poor and working-class women, making them especially vulnerable to imprisonment and police brutality. Mumtaz and Shaheed clarify, "Imprisonment and floggings have not been felt in the upper classes at all, but amongst the poor rural and urban lower-middle and working classes" (75). Poor women and working-class women have the least access to legal resources and, thus, are the most easily surveilled. Conversely, educated, upper-middle class women are otherwise immune to such State regulation.

Shaheed describes Pakistani feminist activists' difficulty in organizing across class.

Shaheed elaborates, “Upper-middle class women activists recognized . . . that their own activism needed to be much more visible because they were better positioned to take the risk — but this did not translate into strategies for addressing differences among women” (“The Other Side of the Discourse” 156). Women’s contributions to women’s liberation in Pakistan are heterogenous and do not necessarily operate in the framework of a national movement. Yet, as Shaheed observes, the mainstream Pakistani women’s movement struggles to organize around class differences between women, and to reframe women’s activism beyond national legislation reform. In “The Convenience of Subservience: Women and the State of Pakistan,” Ayesha Jalal explains the ongoing obstacles preventing Pakistani feminists from creating broader movements. Jalal notes, “For a woman who has struggled courageously to the apex of political power, social accommodations enhancing the political inheritance that had already come with daughterhood may be a small price to pay, but for the more typical woman . . . accommodations with existing social norms amount to abject physical and mental subservience” (Jalal 108). In other words, it is easier to become complacent with small gains than to see the larger picture when a feminist belongs to the privileged classes of society. Jalal suggests that, unless Pakistani feminists grapple with these class contradictions, Pakistani women’s leadership will continue to be predominately upper-middle class. Although further tracing the heterogeneity and professionalization of the women’s movement is out of the scope of this chapter, Pakistani feminists continue working towards systemic change, offering salient critiques of the State.

For instance, in response to ongoing violence against Pakistani women, Pakistani feminists are interested in mobilizing against violence towards women. In “Up Against the State: The Women’s Movement in Pakistan and its Implications for the Global Women’s Movement, “

Pakistani feminist Nighat Said Khan argues, “Women in the lower and poorer class, however, are still fighting for their rights. Honor killings continue, forced marriages are the norm, very few women get even the inheritance determined in the Quran, the educational system, the laws, religion, and fundamentalism imposed on women are interpreted by whomever she [a woman] ‘belongs’ to” (98). Said Khan traces the continuum of oppression between the State and the home, highlighting the inadequacy of both for women’s liberation. Alternatively, many Pakistani feminists, including Nighat Said Khan, Farida Shaheed, and Shahnaz Rouse propose a human rights framework. According to Rouse in “Women’s Movement in Pakistan: State, Class, and Gender,” “The point is not to reject Islam but to clearly state that the issue of women’s rights is a secular issue of human rights” (7). Rouse highlights the need for the women’s movement to have a clear agenda so as to counteract violence from both the home and the State. Rouse suggests that, if Pakistani women do not formulate a clear agenda for their own liberation, then they are more liable to State cooptation, limiting the reach of their work to all the women of Pakistan.

V Comparison

On one hand, Pakistani feminists such as Mumtaz and Shaheed suggest that Jamaat women are “ignorant” and “bigoted,” whereas Jamaat women call Pakistani feminists “Westernized.” In “The Rise of the Religious Right and its Impact On Women,” Mumtaz and Shaheed state, “This brand of Islam has gained ground and, despite its bigoted attitudes towards women, has succeeded in winning over a vocal lobby amongst woman” (9). However, neither Pakistani feminists’ nor Jamaat women’s accusations are accurate. Jamaat women, albeit fundamentalist, appropriate discourses of modernity and women’s rights, and Pakistani feminists are not mere products of the West.

Jamal provides a more detailed explanation of how Jamaat women think of modernity. Her interviews with Fatima, a public relations officer for the J.I. Women's Wing in Karachi with a Bachelor's of Science in chemistry, are particularly interesting. Fatima describes how joining J.I. made her a better Muslim whose practices of Islam as a way of life more closely adhere to God's revealed word in the Quran. Fatima says, "What is the meaning of Islam? To go forward to leave the era of *Jahiliyya* [the period of ignorance], to move forward in a positive manner. If that is so then we are more modern. We are moving forward in every sphere of life whether it is *muamalat* [human interaction with each other], *ikhlaqiat* [behavior], *muasharat* [social interaction], or *maishat* [economy]" (*Jamaat-e-Islami Women* 163). Fatima's framework of modernity is heterogenous, extending to piety, public affairs, social life, and economics. For Fatima, internal transformation of the individual soul causes an external shift, making one less self-centered and impulsive among friends, family, and community members (163). Like Maududi, what Fatima finds modern is the renewal of Islam. However, what Fatima considers as the markers of her own *Jihalat*, or her markers of being a "bad Muslim," reinforce a good versus bad Muslim dichotomy. For example, Fatima describes that her period of ignorance consisted of Indian films, *bhangra* (energetic folk dance originating from Punjab), and boys (163). Fatima's narrow view of Islam reflects Pakistani feminists' salient critiques of Jamaat women.

As other Pakistani feminists frequently point out, Jamaat women deploy accusations of "Westernization" to undermine those who do not fit their understanding of Islam. Jamaat women's rhetoric often targets Pakistani feminists, whom they accuse of having a false consciousness and being subjugated by the West, of their feminist ideas or involvement with

non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and similar work. In "The Reinvention of Feminism in Pakistan," Afiya Shehrbano Zia problematizes how Jamaat women silence Pakistani feminists:

Now the dangers come from a second generation of the revisionist school - those who try and find feminist, modernist and even secular tendencies and bents within right-wing organized political (Jamaat e Islami) and seemingly non- political (Al-Huda) forces ... In the process they render secular political feminism a marginal westernized, NGO-ized resistance or 'outside' voice on women's issues rather than a legal, economic, sociological, political and personal, alternative challenge to all forms of patriarchal expression, including religion. (44)

Although Jamaat women identify as proponents of women's rights, their accusations of Pakistani feminists as Westernized are inherently exclusionary. According to Zia, the label of "Westernization" subsumes anything that challenges the entanglement of patriarchy, poverty, and religion. Jamaat women defend themselves under the guise that they are promoting virtue and saving other women from vice, but they deliberately do not acknowledge the costs of discrediting other "Westernized" women. To do so would undermine Jamaat women's narrow model of women's empowerment, which relies a compromise between their own political authority and maintaining the patriarchal, social, and religious status quo.

The *Lal Masjid* (Red Mosque) incident is a salient example of Jamaat women's narrow model of women's empowerment. Zia provides a summary of the incident, as well as

Musharaff's violent response on July 10, 2007:

The Jamia Hafsa women students belonged to a religious school or madrassa part of the Lal Masjid mosque in the capital city of Islamabad. They illegally occupied the premises adjoining the mosque land in protest against the government's threat to demolish and reclaim it as a suspected hotbed for terrorist indoctrination. The Jamia Hafsa women students conducted a vigilante, puritanical drive against "unislamic" practices, such as the sale of music and by demanding that video shops shut down ... Eventually, a few months later, the seminary was stormed by state troops which led to the death of many in the mosque. ("Faith-Based Politics" 235-6)

The Pakistani government failed to acknowledge its murder of those at *Lal Masjid*, as well as its complicity with the U.S.'s global "war on terror" campaign. After the attack, both Pakistani feminists and Jamaat women challenged the State's use of force against Jamia Hafsa women ("Faith-Based Politics" 236). Ayesha Siddiqi of *Newsline*, a Pakistan-based magazine, expands upon the government's asymmetrical treatment of mosques in the area. "The fact is that if the seminary is razed to the ground while the elite schools are allowed to function," Siddiqi writes, "the lower and lower-middle class people spread in pockets within the sector will view this as being a discriminatory attitude towards non-elitist institutions" ("Biking in the Times of Madrassah Hafsa"). In this case, the government marginalizes lower-income people in Islamabad, reinforcing the perception that modern education is first and foremost for wealthier people. Yet, Siddiqi is also critical of local residents colluding with Jamia Hafsa women. Jamaat women spoke out against the government's use of militant force against Jamia Hafsa, but they have said little about Jamia Hafsa's students kidnapping an alleged prostitute and forcing her to repent ("Faith-Based Politics" 236). Both the Jamia Hafsa women and Jamaat women's understandings of women's roles in Islam leave little room for alternatives, making regulation by the State and home alike acceptable.

Despite Jamaat women's status as modern citizens committed to creating a virtuous Muslim community, they effectively legitimize the Jamia Hafsa women's actions against other women by remaining silent. Jamaat women's political standing enables them to silence other voices that challenge their idea of a good Muslim woman, necessitating alternative ideas of womanhood and Islam. I elaborate upon my argument in the following chapter by demonstrating the negative implications of Jamaat women's understandings of women's education.

Jamaat women are caught at an impasse between advocating for women's education and preserving the party's gender roles. Although Jamaat women are highly educated and openly advocate for women's higher-education, they hesitate to pass a certain threshold — that is, to significantly expand the Women's Wing beyond education and social work or allow more women to participate in the main, predominately male committee. As a result, they prevent women from achieving the full equality that an emancipated understand of Islam and modern nationalism would necessitate for both men and women.

Chapter 2: Education and Women's Empowerment

Chapter 2: Education and Women's Empowerment

I. Introduction

For Pakistani feminists, education is coeducational, diverse, and a human right, independent of whether men can provide. For Jamaat women, on the other hand, education is a claim to modernity and a means to save others from vice and virtue, both within the framework of men as the primary provider and political authority. It does not, however, put into question J.I.'s patriarchal, religious framework of men as the primary providers and political authority in the modern Islamic nation-state. That is why Pakistani feminists suggest that Jamaat women have become pawns of the J.I. party, obscuring nonetheless Jamaat women's complex relationship to education and women's empowerment as a whole. In practice, Jamaat women appear to be more successful in balancing the responsibilities of education with domestic responsibilities, employment, and political engagement. But, in spite of these complexities, Jamaat women's singular model of women's empowerment and modernization — resting on a compromise between educating women and keeping them subordinate to the patriarchal social and religious status quo — is exclusionary for those women who do not fit their model and their vision of society and the role of the State.

II. What Does Education Entail?

Pakistani feminists call for co-educational schooling that is not strictly limited to religious teachings. As several Pakistani feminists have argued, the Pakistani State has a history of restricting women's education. For instance, Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization set the stage for mandatory Islamic Studies, or Islamiyat, in Pakistan. Rubina Saigol, a Women's Action Forum

(WAF) member and independent researcher, describes how Zia-ul-Haq's regime of Islamization sanctioned discrimination against women in the the realm of education. In "The Shariat Bill and Its Impact on Education and Women," Saigol explains:

The Hudood Ordinance, the Law of Evidence and several other pieces of legislation had an unmistakably anti-female bias; given the strongly conservative and repressive political and legal environment created in the country, the atmosphere of fear, insecurity and oppression that resulted had a direct impact on women. Conservative thinking began to permeate all sections of society but was most visible in the mass media and education -- the two areas in which women had high visibility and were competing successfully against men. (Saigol 2)

Zia-ul-Haq's policies both codified women as second-class citizens and made Islamic education mandatory--In particular, Islamization identified women, especially lower-income rural women, as the biggest threats to Islam and enacted legislation such as the Hudood Ordinance and Law of Evidence accordingly to preserve women's lower status. In turn, although Zia-ul-Haq's regime ended in 1988, his policies set the stage for the Shariat Bill of 1990.

The Senate passed the Shariat Bill in 1990, which aimed to Islamize Pakistan in four particular areas: the economy, mass media, judicial system, and education. However, the Shariat Bill also had specific implications for women (Saigol 1-2). Indeed, one of the Shariat Bill's most negative implications for women is gender segregation. Khawar Mumtaz and Farida Shaheed interrogate the consequences of gender segregation under the Shariat Bill. In *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back*, they argue, "Cutting the budget would inevitably mean cutting down on science and technology subjects requiring expensive materials. The net-result would be a second class institution deprived of the best teachers and facilities, and bereft of many subjects essential for entry into the job market" (87). Here, Mumtaz and Shaheed draw connections between underfunding the sciences and the prioritization of men's education over women's.-Given the State and society's preference for men's education over women's, gender segregation affects funding for women's education the most. Budget cuts decrease women's

skills, narrow employment their opportunities, and lower their pay. In “The Shariat Bill and its Impact on Education and Women,” Rubina Saigol adds, “They will find themselves channelled into low-status, low-income jobs which become even more so as they become ‘feminised.’” (Saigol 5-6). Like Shaheed, Saigol emphasizes how gender segregation in schools leads to a decline in women’s educational and employment standards altogether. Given the prioritization of men’s education over women’s, gender segregation affects funding for women’s education the most. Therefore, one cannot discuss gender segregated-schools without discussing a decline in the quality of women’s education and employment. Gender segregation is inextricably linked the favoring of men’s education and, thus, lowered educational standards for women. Overall, the Shariat Bill treats education as a formality, precluding the opportunity to tackle patriarchy and women’s lower status head-on and allow women to grow substantially.

At the same time, it is important to note that not all women were affected equally by such policies. J.I.’s calls for gender-segregated universities was largely irrelevant for poor, rural women, who were already expected to work at home to supplement the family income (*Women of Pakistan* 28). Now, several years later, the effects of establishing women as second-class citizens and segregating universities are ever-present. Shaheed describes, “Rampant neglect and gender-segregated schooling means only 36% of girls and women are literate (almost half the male literacy rate of 63%) and that sparse, grossly inadequate, funds are funneled into male institutions” (“Gender, Religion and the Quest for Justice in Pakistan” 14). In response, Pakistani feminists like Shaheed continue to center coeducational, diverse education and reject obligatory Islamiat. Similarly, Jamaat women are also interested in diverse higher-education and employment, although they rhetorically return to the ideal of men as the primary providers and authority in politics.

First, education is an important part of Jamaat women's redefinition of modernity. In *Jamaat-e-Islami Women in Pakistan*, Amina Jamal explains how modernity in Pakistani has historically been defined by "the social, political, and cultural dominance of a class of so-called secular progressives, including women" (165). Jamal also adds that modernity "was entrenched in Pakistani society through the colonial system of education and administration in which English language ability and access to Western culture was the provenance of elite groups" (*Women of Pakistan* 165). Hence, according to Jamal, Pakistan's ruling elite is conversant in English and entertains Western liberal values. In response, Jamaat women stake their own claim to modernity and citizenship by acquiring an education. "Being holders of degrees and training in social sciences, technology, and natural sciences," Jamal writes, "they have reason to see themselves as modern, and therefore, equal to elite and upper-class women in education and skills and, in many cases, in economic and income levels" (166). In other words, education is an important component of Jamaat women's identification as modern and educated but not "Westernized." As Jamaat women legitimize their claims to modernity, they are situated between the discourses of feminism, nationalism, Westernization, and Islamization. Thus, education allows Jamaat women to reclaim modernity without necessarily having to call themselves feminists.

Second, education is one of the ways in which Jamaat women justify their party's high level of involvement in an Islamic "way of life." Shahnaz Rouse illustrates how Jamaat women use their educational credentials to discern who is more or less worthy of citizenship. In "The Outsider(s) Within: Sovereignty and Citizenship in Pakistan," Rouse notes, "In the Pakistani context, modernism sought to base its appeal to the populace on universalistic grounds, but was

in effect to be the privilege of the few and the means by which these newly emerging classes were to rationalize their sociopolitical domination over the remainder of the population” (55). As Rouse suggests, exclusion is inseparable from nation-state formation, and Jamaat women use their educational credentials to set themselves apart from others as the model citizens of an “imagined community” that is the modern Islamic nation-state of Pakistan. This practice leaves those on the margins, such as ethnic minorities, the poor, non-Muslims, queer folks, nonbinary folks, and women who do not adhere to Jamaat women’s politics, particularly vulnerable to local and State violence.

Third, education is one of the areas in which Jamaat women articulate their stance on gender. Today, J.I., its student wing Islami Jamiat-e-Tuleba, and other right-wing members continue to advocate for gender-segregated schools (*Women of Pakistan* 86). From Jamaat women’s perspective, gender segregation is an important Islamic principle. Ayesha, a leader of J.I.’s Women’s Commission, clarifies, “We [Jamaat women] have no problems with modernity, such as education, driving, employment, etc., but we have to ensure that it fits into our ideology” (*Jamaat-e-Islami Women* 163). From Ayesha’s perspective, the crux of her debate is not whether women should participate in education and employment, unlike Maududi’s initial apprehensions with regard to women’s involvement outside of the home. Instead, Ayesha’s goal is institutionalizing education and domesticating modernity in such a way that ensures the establishment of a virtuous Muslim community, without radically altering the party’s overarching gender ideology. That being said, I will later discuss in section three how Jamaat women negotiate between education and other responsibilities.

II. For What (Or Whom) Is Education For?

For Jamaat women, education is a bid to legitimize the party's leadership in social transformation. In *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, Reza Nazr elaborates on the role of education in J.I.'s politics. Nazr explains that, "Mawdudi used education not so much to rejuvenate religious observance," Nazr writes, "as to train a cadre of dedicated and pious men who would be charged with initiating, leading, and subsequently protecting the Islamic revolutionary process" (Nazr 77). Education, then, cannot be separated from Jamaat women's involvement in this project of the Jamaat male elite to create a virtuous Islamic state and save others from vice. And, as I argue in Chapter 1, Maududi's perspective on social transformation continues to influence Jamaat women's social and political vision today.

In *Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam*, Maududi addresses social, economic, and political problems in the context of British colonization, the expansion of Hindu nationalism, and so-called Westernization. Likewise, Jamal situates education within J.I.'s project of social transformation. Education is one site of internal (individual) and external (group) transformation as Jamaat women strive to be better Muslims. For example, Jamal interviews Fatima, a J.I. public relations officer with a Bachelor's of Science in Chemistry (*Jamaat-e-Islami Women* 158-159). Fatima says, "I realized that Allah has not created us to be completely free but to be his appointees (*naib*) on earth ... and it became evident to me that Islam is not just a religion. It is a *din* (faith), a system of life" (*Jamaat-e-Islami Women* 159). Fatima echoes Maududi's high religious standard, highlighting the importance of Islam as "a system of life" promoting cultural resistance in the context of ongoing Western domination. Her idea of individual and social transformation reflects Maududi's rhetoric of so-called "lip-service" Muslims who risk being corrupted by the West if they do not follow Maududi's vision of social, economic, and political

ascendance, namely an Islamic state led by the Jamaat-e-Islami party (Maududi 55).

Consequently, education is one of the ways in which Jamaat women do their part for the State and God.

Pakistani feminists, on the other hand, believe that education is a fundamental human right. In “The Slow Yet Steady Path To Empowerment in Pakistan,” Anita Weiss demonstrates how women’s empowerment groups have historically used education towards expanding women’s rights. During the early nationalist period, the All-India Muslim Ladies Conference and the Anjuman-e-Khawateen-e-Islam emerged as strong advocates for women’s education (Weiss 132). The All-India Muslim Ladies Conference was a politically-oriented group that was formed in 1919, whereas Anjuman-e-Khawateen-e-Islam was a social-welfare group that was formed in 1916 (Weiss 132). Both groups are predecessors to current Pakistani feminists’ mobilization for women’s education. From the beginning, making women’s education more socially acceptable opened up the possibilities for other women’s rights to be negotiated. For one, Weiss demonstrates the importance of education for Pakistani women as the first step towards acquiring financial independence:

One woman from the Walled City [of Lahore] told me that the most viable survival strategy now for daughters is for them to acquire a good education, because gold and property can always be taken up by someone else. She is afraid for her daughters because she has witnessed many extended families break down and people relinquish traditional obligations. (Weiss 130-1)

Even if customs and law deny a woman’s right to inheritance, no one can take away her degree.

An education, then, is a more promising source of independence than relying on a husband, especially for poor urban women in the Walled City. Yet, even if a woman should work or attend

college, men are still apprehensive towards women's mobility, which is also complicated by class.

Hence, despite women increasingly acquiring an education and becoming the primary provider, poor women's decision-making power remains limited. "While a woman gains a strong voice in influencing important family events when she becomes the primary economic support of her household, she is still not an independent agent" (Weiss 130). Fathers, husbands, and brothers still exert control over women's mobility and decision-making in the family. Moreover, class complicates gender dynamics: men are already more tolerant towards wealthier Pakistani women acquiring more visibility in the public sphere. Weiss elaborates, "The majority [of men] from upper-class families found it to be a good thing and would prefer a highly educated wife, while most men from working-class families ... told me that there was no reason why women should occupy places in college that men could take or jobs that men needed" (Weiss 130). A woman having to seek outside work is seen as dishonorable by many poor urban and working-class families. Even elite men are threatened by the idea of a woman without inhibitions, albeit to a lesser degree. Weiss notes, "There is a discernible increase in men's fears of what uncontrolled, qualified women might do" (Weiss 128). As a result, Pakistani feminists continue to challenge men's authority in the state and the home. And, as a fundamental first step, Pakistani feminists continue to advocate for women's education as a fundamental right.

V. Comparison

As both Pakistani feminists and Jamaat women advocate for women's education, Pakistani feminists question how much autonomy Jamaat women possess. As discussed in section one above, Shaheed, Mumtaz, and Saigol consider Jamaat women's calls for gender-

segregated schooling as complicit in state-sanctioned gender discrimination. Overall, these authors critique Jamaat women's narrow approach towards education and women's empowerment as a whole. However, their critique overshadows how Jamaat women navigate the party's patriarchal biases and carve concessions and compromises in this male discourses, which may begin to empower a wider base of Pakistani women who do not necessarily possess the 'radical' feminist consciousness of the liberal feminist elite in the country.

While Shaheed critiques Jamaat women's narrow views of women's education, the conversation stops short of further discussion. Mumtaz and Shaheed begin with the dangers of gender-segregated schooling. In *Women of Pakistan*, they argue that gender-segregated schooling would result in subpar institutions, teachers, and curriculums (87). Similarly, in "Gender, Religion, and the Quest for Justice in Pakistan," Shaheed concludes her essay with a critical assessment of the current state of women's empowerment in Pakistan and a salient critique of Jamaat women's role in maintaining the status quo. She adds, "A number of women experience activism that seeks to control women as a group, as a personally empowering process" ("Gender, Religion, and the Quest for Justice in Pakistan" 38). The contradictions between the empowerment rhetoric and the lived experiences of Jamaat women reveals how they bend the party's ideology to a certain in order to carve out spaces for women's education without extending empowerment to women who do not adhere to the party's understandings of women's place. Paradoxically, Jamaat women simultaneously advocate for the empowerment of some women as they disempower others. A better explanation, then, might be that Jamaat women both reinforce and negotiate party politics.

Jamal makes a similar claim in *Jamaat-e-Islami Women in Pakistan*. Her book demonstrates the difficulties for Jamaat women to balance multiple responsibilities, and it underscores the negotiations involved. Not only are many Jamaat women degree holders, but they increasingly work outside of the home, whether out of economic necessity or not (“The Rise of the Religious Right and its Impact On Women” 15). But, rhetorically, Jamaat women envision a more gradual transformation of society. According to Jamal, “Their main focus was to create awareness among women of their rights and duties in Islam, promote women’s education, including health education, create institutions and organizations that would serve women, and above all, to save them from vice and educate them about virtue” (*Jamaat-e-Islami Women* 87). Jamaat women aim to acquire education and appropriate modernity in such a way that does not ideally eliminate the gendered division of labor. As a result, Jamaat women simultaneously challenge the idea of the male provider as they uphold it. By adhering to the status quo, however, Jamaat women stamp out critiques that fundamentally challenge the party’s gender ideology. In particular, Pakistani feminists critique how Jamaat women do not address the implications of their narrow approach towards education in the context of women’s empowerment. Jamaat women hesitate to speak on the boundaries that the party’s gender ideology places on women in order to maintain their seal of approval by the party’s male elite as the party’s outreach arm to save other women from vice and promote virtue in Pakistani society.

Niloufer Siddiqui questions the structure of the Women’s Wing in the J.I. party. The Women’s Wing in her view acts as a somewhat separate and parallel body. According to Siddiqui, “Women members are insistent that they do not consider themselves ‘beneath’ the main body, since they have their own shura, or deliberative council, and attend joint meetings with the

J.I.'s male members when necessary" (Siddiqui 7). Moreover, the secretary general of the Women's Wing participates in the main, predominately-male party's meetings (Siddiqui 7). On the one hand, the involvement of the secretary general, then, as well as the fluid history of the J.I. party encouraging or discouraging women's education and national participation, potentially complicates the critiques of Pakistani feminists that accuse the Women's Wing of being subordinate to the main committee. On the other hand, Pakistani feminist organizations like the Aurat Foundation offer broader critiques of the Women's Wing as fundamentally subordinate, regardless of the party's concessions. In a joint report with UNDP (United Nations Development Program)-Pakistan, the Aurat Foundation argues that, "The women's wing of Jamaat-e-Islami is a totally separate entity, since women have no presence or representation in the main body, other than the general secretary of the women's wing, who is ex-officio member of the central consultative committee of the main party" (qtd. on Siddiqui 7). The Aurat Foundation begins to illustrate how the Women's Wing's support of education is conditional.

Likewise, Siddiqui references the Aurat Foundation's critique in order to critique the Women's Wing and broader party's structure. Jamaat women simultaneously advocates for women's education as it creates boundaries for women's leadership within the party structure itself:

Even though women members have the right to vote and could potentially be seen as equal members in the Jamaat-e-Islami, they are nonetheless expected to act within certain boundaries, ever cognizant of their respective roles in the party's structure. Simply put, this means that the women's wing is limited to playing leadership roles only in certain facets of the J.I.'s overall program. Of these, social work is high on the list. Even a cursory look at the Halq-e-Khawateen [Women's Wing]'s publications would indicate that social work is the mainstay of the wing's role within the larger party structure. Indeed, the women's wing focuses its efforts in the fields of education (they run a number

of schools and madaris), health, legal aid, the provision of inheritance, and providing a true picture of Islam through cross-cultural dialogue. (Siddiqui 7)

The party's structure reveals the limits of a group that supports women's education but creates boundaries for women's leadership overall. On the one hand, Jamaat women are highly educated and politically active. In fact, the secretary general of the Women's Wing attends the main committee's executive meetings (Siddiqui 7). Furthermore, Jamaat women do not see the party's structure as disempowering for women because it preserves gender roles. Centering education and social work, while also balancing education, employment, and domestic responsibilities, enables Jamaat women to participate in all of the above without completely uprooting men's role as primary providers and political authority. However, what are the fundamental issues underpinning the party's structure?

The party's structure reflects an inconsistent effort on J.I.'s part to amplify women's voices. Jamaat women filter in and out of seats in the government depending on what is most expedient for the political agenda at the time, but there is no sustained effort for women's voices to be heard in the party or Pakistani government. As a result, the asymmetrical structure hampers women from expanding their leadership beyond education and social work, speaking for the interests of all Pakistani women on the behalf of few. In other words, as events continue to disrupt gender roles (such as Jamaat women increasingly seeking employment out of economic necessity), Jamaat women shy away from engaging with these contradictions between their platform and lived experiences. Instead, they dismiss others' critiques as "Westernization," offering themselves as ideal, educated, respectable leaders in Pakistan's march towards an ideal but unrealistic Islamic modernity.

In turn, Jamaat women support the J.I. party as the ideal, highly educated leadership against Western domination without addressing the consequences for other women. But, while Jamaat women believe that they are empowered, this does not guarantee that other women are empowered. Jamaat women are effectively establishing that women can be highly educated leaders as long they are not *too* powerful. Paradoxically, Jamaat women advocate for educated women while preventing them from achieving the full equality that an emancipated understanding of Islam and modern nationalism would necessitate for both men and women. I elaborate upon my argument in the following chapter by demonstrating the necessity of alternate understanding of womanhood and Islam.

In chapter three, I discuss the limits and possibilities of Pakistani diasporic theologians' reinterpretation of the Quran in the context of women, Islam, and the State. Drawing from the works of Riffat Hassan and Asma Barlas, I begin by affirming the the liberatory potential of anti patriarchal Quranic exegesis. However, I critique antipatriarchal exegetes' idea of an "authentic" Islam, which obscures the fact that the Quran does not offer a clear picture of gender equality. Instead, I argue that we must incorporate a variety of perspectives in order to create alternative understandings of womanhood and Islam.

Chapter 3: Islamic Possibilities

Chapter 3: Islamic Possibilities

II. Introduction/Overview

In chapter 3, I will compare Jamaat women and Pakistani feminists' understandings of women's status with Pakistani diasporic theologians. Jamaat women are skeptical of picking and choosing which parts of the Quran to follow, centering one interpretation of the Quran drawing from Maududi's interpretation. Pakistani feminists like Shahnaz Rouse and Farida Shaheed, on the other hand, are more willing to seek progressive interpretations of the Quran, although they critique theologians' concept of an "authentic," egalitarian waiting to be recovered from patriarchal interpretations.

In particular, I discuss the major concepts of Pakistani diasporic theologians Riffat Hassan and Asma Barlas. Both Hassan and Barlas seek to redefine women's status at the interpersonal and State level, maintaining that the Quran is an antipatriarchal text. However, in line with the theologian Aysha A. Hidayatullah, I propose that the Quran does not offer an entirely antipatriarchal message. Therefore, I argue that we must incorporate our own antipatriarchal perspectives to make sense of the mutuality and hierarchy in the Quran's vision of equality and create alternate understandings of womanhood and Islam.

II. Jamaat Women On Islamic Possibilities and Maududi's Interpretation

Maududi's interpretation relies on his claim that God made men superior to women, assigning the responsibilities of men and women accordingly. In *Purdah: The Status of Women in Islam*, he states, "Thus Islam, while recognizing the natural superiority of one partner over the other, has also specified that 'men are a degree above woman' " (98). Here, Maududi references

Surah 4:34, which identifies men as breadwinners and states that God has given men one degree higher of something than women, in order to justify his claim that men are naturally superior to women. Maududi's belief that God made men superior to women, then, shapes his construction of men and women's responsibilities in the modern Islamic nation-state.

Likewise, Jamaat women aim to uphold a singular interpretation of the Quran akin to Maududi's, leaving little room for further exegesis. In "Feminist 'Selves' and Feminism's 'Others': Feminist Representations of Jamaat-e-Islami Women in Pakistan," Amina Jamal interviews Musfira Jamal, a JI representative in the Karachi City Council who is hesitant to break up the Quran into pieces:

In a detailed discussion later, [Musfira] Jamal rejected the possibility of a separation between public and private in relation to Islam saying: "*Din* cannot be broken up into parts that one can pick and discard - you have to have a holistic approach to Islam'. In doing so this Jamaat activist was invoking the distinction between *din* and *madhab*, which in Urdu are generally used interchangeably to refer to "religion." Islamist scholars distinguish between *din* as a universal order based on the Divinely ordained values of life and *madhab* as a course or path to be taken and emphasize that Islam is *ad-din* not a *madhab*. According to Musfira Jamal the specificity of male and female roles and the demarcation of gendered responsibilities did not conflict with the desire for women's rights in this concept of Islam as a universal code that organizes all life according to a Divine will. (71)

Like Maududi, Musfira references an understanding of gendered responsibilities status and biological difference that instructs women to manage domestic responsibilities. Musfira also conveys a tangible fear of corruption and subsequent loss of Islam, as articulated through an ongoing suspicion towards Pakistani feminists. She is critical of theologians who reinterpret the Quran, claiming that one cannot "pick" and "choose" which parts of *din* they would like to follow. Pakistani diasporic theologian Asma Barlas elaborates on the meaning of *din*, describing it as the way in which Muslims organize moral and social relationships into an Islamic way of

life (Barlas 142). From Musfira's perspective, reinterpretation poses the risks of diluting the Quran's message.

III. Contesting the Term "Islamic Feminism"

Alternatively, Pakistani diasporic theologians Riffat Hassan and Asma Barlas are more willing to challenge existing interpretations. However, discussing Hassan and Barlas requires additional framing of the descriptive, contested term "Islamic feminism." Hassan identifies her work as Islamic feminist theology. In "Challenging the Stereotypes of Fundamentalism: An Islamic Feminist Perspective," Hassan asserts, "In my judgement, the importance of developing what the West calls 'feminist theology' in the context of the Islamic tradition is paramount ...in the contemporary Muslim world, laws instituted in the name of Islam cannot be overturned by means of political action alone, but through the use of better religious arguments" (64). For Hassan, feminist theology is crucial for offering an alternative, antipatriarchal interpretation to patriarchal laws and customs justified by Islam.

On the contrary, Barlas does not identify as a Muslim feminist. Instead, she opts for the term "antipatriarchal." "Mislabeling Muslim women in this way not only denies the specificity, autonomy, and creativity of other thought," Barlas argues, "but it also suggests, falsely, that there is no room from within Islam to contest inequality or patriarchy" (Barlas xii). Referencing Third-World women's critiques of hegemonic feminism from colonization or academia, Barlas rightfully argues that the label "Muslim feminist" risks assuming that messages of equality and women's activism are unique to the West. In the same vein, Barlas demonstrates how dominant models assume that women's empowerment is incompatible with religion, obscuring Muslim women's autonomy.

Aysha A. Hidayatullah, on the other hand, decides to use “Islamic feminism” in conversation with Hassan and Barlas. Although it is a contested term, Hidayatullah ultimately uses the term Islamic feminism in her book *Feminist Edges of the Qu’ran* to describe exegesis that challenges patriarchal interpretations. She writes, “Even so, I have resolved to use the term “feminist” to describe these works — however complicated it is by divergent views of the term and its history — in order to emphasize the modes of critical thought that they employ ... these works are feminist because they use a set of analytical tools to criticize male power and normatively” (Hidayatullah 44). Overall, Hidayatullah’s deployment of “feminist” aims to describe the general trends and commonalities of antipatriarchal interpretation. Similarly, I use “antipatriarchal” in this chapter to describe the works of Muslim feminists and Muslim exegetes who do and do not call themselves feminists.

IV. Riffat Hassan

Riffat Hassan, who identifies as a Muslim feminist, is currently based in the U.S. One of Hassan’s most well-known interpretations is that of egalitarian creation. Unlike women’s current status under the State, Hassan maintains that women and men are created from the same material (*nafs*). In *An Islamic Perspective*, Hassan states

An analysis of the Qur’an descriptions of human creation shows how the Qur’an evenhandedly uses both feminine and masculine terms and imagery to describe the creation of humanity from a single source. That God’s original creation was undifferentiated humanity and not either man or woman (who appeared simultaneously at a subsequent time) is implicit in a number of Qur’an passages. (101)

The Quran’s story of creation has significant implications for the myth of Eve, whom Muslims continue to imagine as originating from Adam’s rib. Instead of masculine or feminine terms, the Quran opts for undifferentiated terms of creation. Hassan explains, “In none of the thirty or so

passages which describe the creation of humanity (designated by generic terms such as “an-nas,” “al-insan” and “bashar”) by God in a variety of ways is there any statement which could be interpreted as asserting or suggesting that man was created prior to woman or that woman was created from man” (Hassan 101). Similarly, the usage of “Adam” in the Quran is more often used to describe humanity in general (Hassan 102). Hassan writes, “Here, it needs to be mentioned that the term ‘Adam’ is not an Arabic term but a Hebrew term meaning ‘of the soul’ (from ‘adamah’: the soil). The Hebrew term ‘Adam’ functions generally as a collective noun referring to ‘the human’ (species) rather than to a male human being” (Hassan 101). On the contrary, Muslims have come to believe that, not only were men created before women, but women came from man. Where, then, does this myth of creation come from?

Hassan traces the myth of Adam’s rib to two specific Hadiths, *Sahih Al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*. *Sahih Al-Bukhari* states, “Woman is like a rib. When you attempt to straighten it, you would break it. And if you leave her alone you would benefit by her, and crookedness will remain in her” (Hassan 102). Maududi offers the same Hadith in *Purdah*, reinforcing that women are created from a crooked rib of Adam and need to be controlled by men. Referring to the Hadith, Maududi writes, “She has been created by Allah with that nature and this is her merit, not her demerit. This trait of her character can be usefully employed in the service of humanity. But if the man tried to straighten and harden her like himself he would break her instead” (Maududi 102). Here, Maududi uses *Al-Bukhari* as justification that women are innately more emotional and nurturing than men, and thus, more suitable for acting as auxiliaries in some cases. Although Maududi claims that Muslim women should be educated, he establishes a binary in which women have a lower status in other spheres as auxiliaries for “the service of humanity”— that is,

they should not overstep men's role to provide or freedom of mobility in order to maintain a virtuous Muslim society. Similarly, Muslims and the State continue to conflate the Biblical story of Adam and Eve with the Quran's egalitarian story of creation, lowering Muslim women's status.

Alternatively, Hassan emphasizes how the Quran conveys men and women as equal under the eyes of God. Rather than create a hierarchal relationship in which men manage women's affairs, the Quran envisions a reciprocal relationship in which both partners protect each other. Hassan highlights Surah 9: *At-Taubah*: 71:72, which described reciprocity among men and women as equal believers (qtd. in Hassan 109). Still, Maududi's interpretation of other key passages on gender — particularly Surah 4:34 and Surah 2: 288 — has codified women as second-class citizens. Surah 4:34 names men *qawwamun* (breadwinners), but male scholars, politicians, and relatives alike have misinterpreted it as patriarchs. Hassan, on the other hand, questions the validity of Maududi's claims.

Unlike Maududi, Hassan treats Surah 4:34's naming of men as *qawwamun* (breadwinners) as a suggestion. Whereas Maududi reads Surah 4:34 as a Quranic injunction to manage women, Hassan links it to an ideal division of labor. Hassan clarifies, "This statement, which almost all Muslim societies have taken to be an actual description of all men, is in fact a normative statement pertain to the Islamic concept of division of labor in an ideal family or community structure" (Hassan 111). A suggestion that men should have the capability to provide (even when not all men can) has become the justification for men to prevent women from working and manage women's affairs. Hassan elaborates on why it is men who are recommended to provide. "The fact that men are 'qawwamun' does not mean that women cannot or should not

provide for themselves,” Hassan writes, “but simply that in view of the heavy burden that most women shoulder in child-bearing and rearing, they should not have the additional obligation of providing the means of living at the same time” (Hassan 111). In other words, Hassan treats Surah 4:34 as an idealized solution to the division of labor, not a rule.

Like Surah 4:34, Surah 2: 288 has also become grounds for claiming that men are inherently superior to women. Surah 2:288 also names “a degree of advantage” over women during divorce without specifying what this degree is, leaving it co-optable by men. Muslims often interpret this degree of advantage as biological difference. Hassan, on the other hand, clarifies that this “advantage” is exemption from *iddat*, a three-month waiting period before remarriage. Hassan explains, “The main reason why women are subjected to this restriction is because at the time of divorce a woman may be pregnant and this fact may not become known for some time. As men cannot become pregnant they are allowed to remarry without a waiting period” (Hassan 114). The reliance on a gender binary notwithstanding, Hassan offers alternate interpretations of two Surahs often used to justify sexism. Hassan demonstrates a higher degree of flexibility erased by the association of biological difference with male superiority.

V. Asma Barlas

Asma Barlas argues that restrictions on women have little basis in the Quran. Like Hassan, Barlas revisits Surah 4:34. Yusuf Ali’s translation of what God has given “the one more than the other” amplifies Barlas’ critique:

Men are the protectors
 And maintainers of women,
 Because God has given them
 The one more (strength)
 Than the other, and because

They support them
From their means (qtd. in Barlas 184-5).

Ali assumes that what God has given men one more of than the other is strength, associating men with strength and women with weakness, whether intentionally or not. Muhammad Asad's translation is more ambiguous: "Men shall take full care of women with the bounties which God has bestowed more abundantly on the former than on the latter, and with what they may spend out of their possessions" (qtd. in Barlas 185). What Asad's translation lacks, however, is the specificity of what "bounties" mean. Barlas, on the other hand, delinks the rigid association of *qawwamun* with male biology and ruler. Barlas draws from Amina Wadud's translation of Surah 4:34. In *Qur'an and Woman*, Wadud writes, "Men are [qawwamuna 'ala] women [on the basis] of what Allah has [preferred] (*faddala*) some of them over others, and [on the basis] of what they spend of their property (for the support of women)" (70). Like Wadud, Barlas agrees that what is given in greater quantity to men than women is the expectation to provide financially, not superiority on the basis of physical strength.

Nevertheless, Ayah 4:34 has become misinterpreted as a sanction on women's ability to earn for themselves. In response, Barlas, Wadud, and Hassan push back against Maududi's claim that men are the divinely ordained managers of women. For instance, Barlas addresses the misinterpretation of *qawwamun* as patriarch/ruler over women. Given Wadud and Hassan's reinterpretations of *qawwamun* as breadwinner, not manager, Barlas argues, "And while most Muslims believe that men are the head of their households, the Qur'an itself does not use the concept or term to speak about either husbands or fathers" (Barlas 187). Barlas reaffirms that the Quran does not designate men as a ruling class over women. In fact, Barlas notes, "However, this

exegesis [Maududi's] — which establishes the husband as a ruler over his wife or, at the very least, as the head of the household — ignores that the Qur'an appoints women and men each other's *awliya*, or mutual protectors, which it could not do if men were in fact superior to women and their managers' "(Barlas 186). Here, Barlas illuminates that protection is not unique to women. Despite that the Quran encourages men to provide financial support for women, Barlas argues that this is not equivalent manage women's affairs.

Instead, Barlas asserts that the Quran's recommendation for men to provide for women does not preclude women from providing for themselves. Barlas draws from Wadud's commentary here as well. In *Qur'an and Woman*, Wadud observes, "All men do not excel over all women in all manners. Some men excel over some women in some manners. Likewise, some women excel over some men in some manners. So, whatever Allah has preferred, it is still not absolute" (71). Like Hassan, Wadud treats the Quran's proposition as an ideal, not a rule (and certainly not based on biology). While Barlas acknowledges that the Quran suggests that men ought to have the capability to provide, she agrees that this is flexible. Referencing Hassan's interpretation of Ayah 4:34 in "An Islamic Perspective," Barlas writes, "The fact that the Qur'an charges the husband with the duty of being the breadwinner does not mean, she [Barlas] says, 'women cannot or should not provide for themselves'; it simply means that the Qur'an does not expect women to be the breadwinners" (Barlas 187). Therefore, the claim that men are inherently superior to women, and thus, that women's income, inheritance, and mobility has little basis.

As opposed to Maududi's interpretations, Barlas emphasizes how the Quran treats men and women as equals. Another verse that has frequently been interpreted as male superiority is Ali's translation of Surah 92: 1-4, which describes the creation of humanity:

By the Night as it
 Conceals (the light);
 By the Day as it
 Appears in glory;
 By (the mystery of)
 The creation of male
 And female; —
 Verily, (the ends) ye
 Strive for are diverse (qtd. in Barlas 136-7)

Most Muslims read the pairs above — night and day, men and women, light and darkness — as an oppositional relationship in which women are inferior. However, Barlas argues that, although these pairs are present, one does not trump the other. Barlas writes, “The Qur’an does not privilege day over night, light over dark/ness, or male over female; it only privileges good over evil” (Barlas 137). Barlas emphasizes that, despite the pairs given, men and women are not in opposition to one another. Instead, they are complementary to one another. Above all, Barlas suggests that men and women are judged by their faith, not their gender. Barlas notes that God ultimately privileges good over evil by distinguishing “those most unfortunate ones Who give the lie to Truth” from “those most devoted to God” in the same Surah (qtd. in Barlas 137). Despite the creation of two genders, an idealized division of labor, and other differences, Barlas emphasizes that men and women are seen as equal under God.

Barlas also highlights the all-encompassing nature of God to support her argument of gender equality. Barlas demonstrates that God’s gender (or lack thereof) is not as differentiated as Muslims think. The qualities used to describe God in the Quran seems oppositional, and many Muslims have placed these qualities in a hierarchy. Conversely, Barlas pushes back against this common misunderstanding of God’s attributes as specifically gendered, i.e. “powerful” as a masculine quality and “merciful” as a feminine one. Barlas writes, “Thus, among God’s

attributes are ones we label ‘feminine,’ like loving, creating, nourishing, forgiving, being patient, compassionate ... God is also stern in justice, powerful, and a ruler, attributes we think of as masculine. However, the Qur’an itself does not engender (masculinize or feminize) God’s attributes (Barlas 102-3). Here, Barlas complicates the strict separation between God’s seemingly oppositional qualities. Although the Quran makes an effort to designate God as both compassionate and powerful, Barlas reinforces that God’s qualities are indivisible. In particular, Barlas employs the Islamic principle of *Tawhid*. “Such views ignore that Muslims throughout the ages have understood *Tawhid* to signify multiplicity-in-unity, meaning that all principles (masculine or feminine) are interconnected in the totality of God’s Being” (Barlas 102). By Hassan’s logic, neither God’s qualities nor men and women can be placed within a hierarchy. To do so would diminish God’s incomprehensibility.

VI. Pakistani Feminists On Islamic Possibilities

Pakistani feminists have historically been ambivalent about the role of Islam in women’s activism. On the one hand, Pakistani feminist organizations such as Women’s Action Forum (WAF) and have tried to fight the patriarchal state by adopting a more progressive reading of Islam (“Reinvention of Feminism in Pakistan” 45). On the other, WAF identified itself as secular in 1991 (32). But, even when WAF decided to call itself a secular organization, the members maintained diverse religious or secular views (32).

As for whether women’s activists should use an Islamic framework, Pakistani feminists Farida Shaheed and Khawar Mumtaz agree that activists must ground their work in a broader context. Shaheed and Mumtaz state, “Women’s lack of access to economic and political power has not been effectuated by the imposition of laws so much as through an internalized code of

behavior and the resultant self-restraint practiced by its members, a prime example of which is *purdah*. In fact, the veil and the seclusion of upper-class women predate Islam” (*Women in Pakistan: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back?* 157). Shaheed and Mumtaz suggest that prior feminist strategies of garnering political and economic power alone are insufficient. In other words, if activists do not address religion in a Muslim-majority society, then they cannot mobilize across large groups of people across class and gender lines. Shaheed and Mumtaz write, “The necessity of an Islamic framework relates not to Islam as a religion but to Islam as a cultural reality and a political force capable of both mobilizing and immobilizing people” (156). Like Shaheed and Mumtaz illustrate, Islam is not only a religion but also a lived reality. Therefore, activists must be willing to challenge the multiple ways in which patriarchy operates, whether at the level of the State or in the home.

At the same time, Shaheed argues that feminists have undertheorized the role of religion in women’s lives. In 1988, Shaheed conducted a study named “Women, Religion, and Social Change” to explore women’s everyday experience with religion, family authority, and being a woman. Shaheed interviewed 400 women in Karachi and Lahore across two generations and three classes (lower, middle, and upper) (“The Other Side of the Discourse: Women’s Experiences of Identity, Religion, and Activism in Pakistan” 147). One overarching theme is male relative’s authority and the family’s disproportionate restrictions over women’s mobility and decisions, mitigated by women’s location, class, and education level (150). Interviewees commented, “I would have been able to go where I liked,” “I could have the freedom to study or do a good job and go on tours,” “I would have done great things,” “I would have been happy,” or “I could have lived like I wanted to” (151). However, Shaheed’s interviewees do not pinpoint

religion as the primary source of their oppression. Conversely, Shaheed discusses the emancipatory qualities of religion in Pakistani women's lives.

Shaheed demonstrates how women benefit from religion in their daily lives. Rather than religion, her interviewees cited societal norms and fragile masculinity as the root cause. Shaheed explains, "Women's accounts certainly suggest that religion is interwoven with cultural traditions, and colors and shapes the contours of their lives. But they attribute the avenues that are open and the barriers imposed ... to socially constructed gender identities that are imposed by men and differ according to class and ethnicity" (153-4). In this sense, Shaheed's study resembles the perspective of *Women in Pakistan* — that is, that a discussion of women and religion must be contextualized in lived experience. Other women referenced religious exemplars or women's God-given rights. A sixty-year-old urban woman commented, "Although God has made all men and women the best of living things, the woman is very oppressed. You can say she is a second-class citizen" (152). Unfortunately, the way Islam is practiced in Pakistan differs significantly from her vision. Shaheed explains:

Many women expressed a sense of communion and peace in praying that — aside from the spiritual and psychological aspects — provides a break from daily routines and chores ... Through its rituals, practices, and structure, religion provides an immediate sense of participation and belonging that is unavailable to vast numbers of women in other aspects of their lives. (152)

In this sense, the interviewees' view of religion in their daily lives resembles Muslim women theologians and feminists' practice of revisiting patriarchal interpretations of the Quran: neither groups of women attributed social restriction to God. As a result, Shaheed pushes for an approach that can recognize women's different priorities and the multiple ways in which oppression operates, not just at the national level.

- Still, other Pakistani feminists like Shahnaz Rouse express concerns about cultural authenticity. Rouse notes that this approach could establish a new hegemony. “The position runs the risk of suggesting that all women’s problems stem from the Zia era,” Rouse argues, “and that women’s status and gender location is reducible to one factor, religion, in that Pakistani case, Islam” (“The Outsider(s) Within: Sovereignty and Citizenship in Pakistan” 67). In light of efforts to recover a more progressive Islam, Rouse is concerned about the emergence of an unequivocal stance on Islam. She suggests that, once established, this stance may not be able to be renegotiated over time.

VI. The Limits of Islamic Feminism and How We May Move Forward

Like Rouse, women theologians express concerns over antipatriarchal theologians’, including Muslim feminists’, claims to authenticity — and oversight of verses that do not line up so neatly with holistic messages of gender equality in the process. Both Hassan and Barlas suggest that there is an egalitarian Quran recoverable from patriarchal interpretations. For example, Barlas writes, “On my reading, the Qur’an’s antipatriarchal epistemology can be located in the very nature of Divine Self-Disclosure, which rules out not only views of God as Father/male but also theories of father-right, as well as of sexual differentiation” (Barlas 204).

On the contrary, Aysha A. Hidayatullah’s *Feminist Edges of the Quran* complicates the notion of authenticity. Hidayatullah is concerned with feminist exegesis (including antipatriarchal exegetes who do and do not identify as Muslim feminists) inadvertently reinforcing on the Quran as the word of God. She proposes, “Since the Qur’an is the word of God, the Qur’an itself is just to women, and, according to the exegetes, their task is to uncover the egalitarian ethos of the Qur’an itself through alternative interpretation” (Hidayatullah 143).

But, by defining the Quran as objective truth, antipatriarchal exegetes claim to access the otherwise incomprehensible essence of God. To claim authenticity is to claim authority, potentially resulting in the sort of “new hegemony” that Rouse describes. Hidayatullah maintains, “Thus, the Qur’an’s revelation of God’s meaning can never be independent of its readers, and human beings must interact with the text in order to yield its meanings” (“The Outsider(s) Within” 142). Pakistani scholar Saadia Toor shares a similar perspective, adding, “‘Islam’ itself — as a basis for individual/national identity, as a religious *and* cultural system, as a set of injunctions encoded in theological and juridicial textual sources — is always/already an internally contested discourse rather than a monolithic and internally coherent *thing*” (Toor 138). Indeed, the Quran’s is not simply delivered to us: our interpretation of the text, combined with historical context, shapes its meaning. The fact that Islam changes meaning in different cultural contexts challenges the idea of a singular, authentic “Islam” or Quran.

What has been undertheorized by Muslims, however, is that gender equality is not entirely reconcilable within the Quran, necessitating our additional perspectives in order to make sense of the text. As Hidayatullah demonstrates, mutuality does not preclude hierarchy: both elements constitute the Quran’s perspective on gender. Hidayatullah states, “Enough of the Quran’s pronouncements connote male-female hierarchy that, if we were to follow the logic of the trajectory argument to claim that we have to move beyond the Qur’an in order to follow the Qur’an’s trajectory, we will end up having to move ‘beyond’ numerous portions of the text” (175). Unlike previous interpretations, Hidayatullah demonstrates that *both* mutuality and hierarchy coexist in the Quran’s vision of gender. Whereas exegetes employ broader messages of equality or reciprocity to reconcile any contradictions and reimagine the Quran as an

antipatriarchal text, I argue that the Qur'an is not as unambiguous on gender as we have believed.

For instance, the usage of *daraba* in Surah 4:34 is also hierarchal, offering no similar provision for men. Exegetes often interpret *daraba* "to strike," effectively treating women as subjects to be acted upon. Conversely, Hassan draws from a legal context, which *daraba*'s refers to holding in confinement (Hassan 112). Hassan interprets *daraba* as a specific response: should women collectively abandon childbearing, this would threaten the longevity of a Muslim society, requiring nonviolent discipline. Barlas offers similar interpretations, ranging from Amina Wadud's interpretation of *daraba* as "setting an example" to the Quran's story of Job, which defines *daraba* as Job hitting his wife with blades of grass (Barlas 189). Ultimately, both maintain that interpretations of Surah 4:34 as a prescription to beat one's wife or forced obedience contradicts the Quran's overarching message of gender equality — but do not question the Quran's notion of equality itself.

The Quran's notion of equality rests on fixed sexual difference, which enables societies to codify Muslim women's status. On the one hand, the Quran does not prohibit women from making a living, does not confine women to motherhood exclusively, and designates both men and women as mutual protectors of one another equal under God (Hidayatullah 157). At the same time, the Quran links financial security to men and childbearing to women on the basis of biological difference. Given that the Quran suggests equality but does not define it, Hidayatullah refers to Verse 4:34 as a "different but equal" paradigm (157). As a result, society is left to determine the meaning of men and women's roles. Even benevolent interpretations of Surah 4:34

tend to value women as anchors for their husbands and the family, as opposed to equally valuing women for the work they do.

Therefore, considering the establishment of women as both equal under God and auxiliaries in the Quran, I argue that we cannot locate an entirely antipatriarchal notion of equality in the Quran. Hidayatullah observes, “Perhaps according to the premodern social and sexual norms of Qur’an’s historical context ... being the guardians of women’s bodies would not necessarily be an affront to women’s dignity or overall worth. Love and mutuality may not have necessarily contradicted notions of female passivity and lack of sexual consent” (166). In other words, both qualities are not contradictory within the Quran’s vision of gender equality. As a result, Muslim women are often expected to perform certain roles without being acknowledged as full participants in the family and/or full citizens under the State. For example, as Shaheed notes in “The Other Side of the Discourse: Women’s Experiences of Identity, Religion, and Activism in Pakistan” fixed notions of biological difference combined with men’s role as breadwinner hinders the majority of Pakistani women’s decision-making process and mobility. Similarly, Jamaat-e-Islami’s rhetoric positions women as an auxiliary Women’s Wing, even if women negotiate the party’s restrictions on the division of labor and women’s political participation and are highly involved in the community. Maududi uses Surah 4:34 to prescribe rigid roles for women under a “different but equal” structure.

An alternative approach to equality would be one that does not rely on fixed biological difference, questioning the categories “men” and “women” themselves. An egalitarian model of gender requires not only an interdependent relationship but also a fluid notion of gender itself. Hidayatullah identifies two tools that enable a nonhierarchical model of equality:

contextualization and fluidity. First, contextualization allows us to determine whether sex is relevant within a particular context. Hidayatullah offers the examples of motherhood and breast-feeding. In the case of motherhood, infancy provides a legitimate reason to offer accommodations (190). What it does not justify, however, is lower pay or quality of work (190). Likewise, breast-feeding no longer becomes exclusively attached to women due to the emergence of the breast-pump (191). Second, fluidity removes the gendered hierarchy between “active” and “passive” roles. Fluidity disrupts the notion of women as passive subjects to be acted upon by men. Referencing Sa’diya Shaikh’s study of Ibn Arabi (a Muslim mystic, poet, and philosopher), Hidayatullah elaborates, “The performance and distribution of active and receptive roles is always shifting: ‘Men and women may each embody active or receptive modes, contingent on their particular relationships at a specific juncture’ “ (qtd. in 192). Contextualizing roles challenges the hierarchy between men and women, delinking the categories of men and women from rigid roles. In turn, this perspective would prevent women from being viewed as auxiliaries as Maududi demonstrates, and thus, restrictions on their decision-making and mobility. Where, then, does this leave us regarding the question of women’s status?

I argue that being transparent about the Quran’s messages of mutuality and hierarchy allows us to bring our own egalitarian perspectives rather than attempting to reconcile within the Quran’s messages alone. Blending the Quran’s dualistic messages with our anti patriarchal perspectives addresses the impasse of antipatriarchal and feminist exegesis, which seek to justify gender equality squarely within the Quran’s framework. Conversely, I embrace a sort of “radical uncertainty” (193). Transparency highlights how the family or State might co-opt any loopholes, and thus, how we might respond.

Moreover, I believe I can still identify as a Muslim feminist — just not in the same way that has been imagined by Hassan and Barlas, in the sense that the Quran’s overarching messages of equality preclude hierarchy. Like Hidayatullah, I do not wish to suggest that we abandon the Quran or the trajectory approach. In fact, Barlas and Hassan, as well as their feminist and fundamentalist counterparts, have always been motivated by the desire to challenge oppressive structures and catalyze systemic change in Muslims’ lives (173). But now, we must bring in our own, various perspectives, even if they do not always line up neatly with the Quran, in order to follow the Quran’s higher trajectory and apply it to our current historical moment. Women’s empowerment necessitates understanding how to be a Muslim woman in different ways, not absolutism from political parties, feminists, or the State.

Conclusion

Conclusion

Jamaat-e-Islami women are advocates for women's empowerment within a political-religious party that perceives women as adjuncts to men. The party's stance on gender comes from Maududi, who interprets Verse 3 of Surah 4 in a problematic vein. This verse describes men as the *qawwamun* ("protectors and maintainers") of women, but Maududi uses this verse as a justification for the inherent superiority of men. Likewise, the political and social model promoted by J.I. posits that men as the primary providers at the family level and the head of the government at the national level: therefore, women are charged with a subordinate role as protectors of the domestic sphere (*Jamaat-e-Islami Women 87*). If women remove transgress such boundaries, they risk neglecting their reproductive role, according to J.I. party. Nonetheless, women affiliated with J.I. are allowed to rise to political leadership. These women negotiate their domestic, political, religious, and educational commitments, usually making compromises to align their personal liberation with the approved narrative of the party in terms of women's place in society. In this thesis, I argue that both the party and its women members bend the official stance on women's role in society for political gains.

Unlike Pakistani feminists, Jamaat women do not seek to radically alter the gendered division of labor. Rather, Jamaat women seek to negotiate responsibilities in a way that does not completely uproot the husband as the primary provider and authority in the family. Drawing from Pakistani feminist critiques, including Farida Shaheed, Shahnaz Rouse, and Afiya Zia Sherbano, I argue that Jamaat women's negotiations do not necessarily lead to women's greater access to their rights citizenship or integration into the Pakistani state. Although Jamaat women position themselves as modern citizens leading a new Islamic revolution, the Women's Wing

remains an auxiliary of the party that does not influence the party's direction as much as its male counterparts occupying all but one seat on the main committee.

As I have argued throughout this thesis, Jamaat women's model of ideal womanhood and their practice of Islam are exclusionary. Drawing from arguments made by Pakistani feminists and Pakistani diasporic women theologians, I critique how Jamaat women carve out spaces of negotiation and autonomy for themselves at the expense of others who do not fit their model, i.e. women who do not adhere to their standards of dress and sexuality, women from ethnic minorities, nonbinary people, and women of other faiths. Jamaat women justify their position by proclaiming the State's right to be an authority on morality, and thus, granting political parties like J.I. the right to identify themselves as the appropriate leaders of a virtuous Muslim society (*Jamaat-e-Islami Women* 233).

In chapter one, I demonstrate how, on the one hand, Jamaat women's notion of womanhood is located at the intersections between the discourses of Islam, feminism, and modernity — and, on the other hand, how it is fundamentally exclusionary. I draw on Pakistani feminists who describe the need for alternative models of womanhood to counterbalance the J.I. party's model. As in the case of Fatima, a J.I. public relations officer discussed in chapter one of this thesis, politically-active Jamaat women's proclamation of being modern but not Westernized reinforces the limits of idealized Muslim womanhood. Initially, Fatima emphasizes the emancipatory aspect of religion for women, and, in particular, how joining J.I. increased her awareness of women's rights and obligations (*Jamaat-e-Islami Women* 159). But, as she discusses women's empowerment, Fatima begins to place restrictions on Muslim women. Fatima describes Indian films and boys as negative influences, relegating Muslim women who associate

with either of these things as bad Muslim woman (159). Although Fatima claims that J.I. makes her a better, more authentic Muslim, and enables her to carve her own space within the party and within Pakistani society, I showed how Jamaat women's party rhetoric is a source of disempowerment for many others.

In chapter two, I discuss how education is an important part of both Jamaat women and other Pakistani women's vision of empowerment. For Pakistani feminists, all women should have access to education regardless of whether or not their partners or parents can provide for them. Moreover, Pakistani feminists also believe that education should not be limited to the Quran's teachings alone. Conversely, Jamaat women simultaneously encourage women's education and espouse conservative views regarding women's work in the public sphere as necessarily an impediment to fulfilling their natural reproductive and mothering roles. In turn, I argue that educated Jamaat women are encouraged to be powerful but not *too* powerful, effectively capping women's participation in the public sphere and narrowing the avenues they have access to.

In chapter three, I draw on newly developed Quranic exegesis by diasporic Muslim women theologians to envision a more pluralistic, non-hierarchical approach towards gender and religion, two central discourses within the modern Islamic Pakistani national framework. Unlike Hassan and Barlas, however, I argue that the Quran is not a fully egalitarian or antipatriarchal text. Echoing Hidayatullah, I agree that the Quran includes both mutuality *and* hierarchy in its vision of gender. But, to me, this enables us to bring in our own perspectives of equality, as opposed to relying on the Quran and antipatriarchal exegesis alone. I maintain that looking within and beyond the Quran does not make anyone less of a Muslim if they would like to be, or

that one should feel compelled to follow a patriarchal set of rules to be completely outside the faith altogether. In fact, the Quran's lack of a clear vision of equality along the lines of gender and other identities necessitates that we widen our scope on what gender equality means within Islam and how this equality in the faith enables and informs equality in citizenship rights within the modern Islamic nation-state.

Above all, in order to address systemic inequality in Pakistan and elsewhere, I argue that we must broaden our perspectives beyond the Quran, the State, and J.I.'s form of nationalism. While Jamaat women are not necessarily adjuncts of their male counterparts, they still have to negotiate domestic, employment, and educational responsibilities at the expense of other women who do not adhere to their model of ideal Muslim womanhood. Jamaat women assume that they are the rightful leaders of a virtuous Muslim society and that the State should be the authority on what it means to be a good Muslim. Rather than reinforcing the idea of a uniform cultural authenticity, I advocate that we bring our multiple perspectives in order to move beyond the State and its narrow confines of ideal Muslim womanhood.

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