

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

ISLAMIC FEMINISM AND
DECOLONIAL FUTURES:
EPISTEMOLOGY, ETHICS AND
PRAXIS

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SAROJINI NAIDU CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES
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Two-days International conference on
Islamic Feminism and Decolonial Futures:
Epistemology, Ethics and Praxis
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Keynote Address

Professor miriam cooke



Professor miriam cooke is Braxton Craven Professor emerita of Arab Cultures at Duke University. She has been a visiting professor in Tunisia, Romania, Indonesia, Qatar and Alliance of Civilizations Institute in Istanbul. She serves on several international advisory boards, including academic journals and institutions.

Her writings have focused on the intersection of gender and war in modern Arabic literature, Arab women writers' constructions of Islamic feminism and Arab cultural studies with a concentration on the Arabian Gulf and Syria. She has published fifteen books and is currently working on a novel about World War II Palestine.

Three of her books (Women Claim Islam; Women and the War Story and The Anatomy of an Egyptian Intellectual: Yahya Haqqi) were named Choice Outstanding Academic Books. Several books have been translated into Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, French and German.

Islamic Feminism Across Time and Space

Feminism as awareness of gender injustice, its rejection and a project to fight for women's rights is neither new nor region-specific nor limited to women. Looking at the history of women's rights in Islam, miriam cooke traces a line of continuity that stretches from 7th century Arabia through centuries of legal and exegetical distortions to modernist reformers.

Contemporary writers have called the Prophet Muhammad a feminist revolutionary who demanded gender justice. Even while misogynist religious authorities were eroding this message, women remained aware of injustice practiced in the name of a poorly understood Islam and sought redress. For over a millennium, the names of most fighters for women's rights were not recorded, but since the 19th century subaltern historians have been recovering some of their voices from the spaces between the lines of History books.

Debates about what women should and should not do and say and wear have waxed and waned during the 20th and 21st centuries. The more freedom from religious coercion (ikrah) women have gained, the more fundamentalists have pushed back and women's rights activists have responded. The hijab and gender segregation are notable examples of how the terms of the debate change across time and space according to local contexts.

The roots of the modern Islamic feminist movement are in 1920s Lebanon with Nazira Zeineddine mobilizing her deep knowledge of scripture to contest shaykhs' exegetical distortions to strengthen patriarchy. The outrage was such that her works were suppressed and it was not until the late 1970s until today that women's rights activists like the Egyptian Nawal El Saadawi, the Moroccan Fatima Mernissi, the Algerian Assia Djebar, the American amina wadud and the Iranian Ziba Mir-Hosseini seized the baton but unfortunately without acknowledgment of the pioneer. The Islamic Revolution in Iran, the introduction of hudud laws in Pakistan, the emergence of Salafi movements including Al Qaeda and ISIS have put gender justice front and center.

The keynote concludes with a discussion of the hijabi movement that during the past 25 years has spread from India to the United States and beyond.

Plenary Speaker

Professor Roja Fazaeli



Professor Roja Fazaeli is Established Professor of Law and Islamic Studies at the Irish Centre for Human Rights, University of Galway. Professor Fazaeli has published widely on the subjects of women's rights in Iran, the relationship between human rights and religion, women religious authorities, and Islamic feminisms. As recipient of a European Research Council Consolidator Grant she is the principal investigator of a five-year project (2023-2028) on Building Conceptual and Methodological Expertise for the Study of Gender, Agency, and Authority in Islam (BILQIS). Professor Fazaeli is a member of a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions funded project investigating the nature of hate in society (NETHATE). She additionally serves as the chairperson of the board of directors of the Immigrant Council of Ireland. Roja is also member of board of directors for Front Line Defenders, Scholars at Risk Europe, and Iran Academia, as well as being a member of the editorial board of Religion and Human Rights.

Defining “Muslim Woman”: Notes from the Field on Iranian Women’s Identities in the Diaspora

This paper will examine how Iranian women in the diaspora are negotiating intersectional identities in the aftermath of the 2022 Woman, Life, Freedom movement. Drawing on emerging insights from the ERC project Building Conceptual and Methodological Expertise for the Study of Gender, Agency and Authority in Islam (BILQIS), for which I serve as Principal Investigator, the paper explores how Iranian women in Europe, and comparatively in Iran, have experienced forms of inclusion and rejection built upon national, religious, and gendered lines. This focused study takes place within broader observations and inquires around Muslim women’s agency and authority in Europe.

BILQIS addresses historical and contemporary questions of Muslim women’s access to justice in Europe, and includes comparative research across Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Sweden, Norway, and Ireland. Project fieldwork in Sweden and Norway has been carried out primarily in Persian and English by Dr Tiba Bonyad, and has focused on migrant communities from Iran and Afghanistan, as well as participants with family or generational links to the Persianate world.

One of the early methodological challenges encountered by BILQIS researchers has involved prospective Iranian participants from Muslim socio-ethnic backgrounds who have declined to be interviewed by the project on the basis that the research was not relevant to them, primarily because they did not identify as Muslim. The strength and immediacy of such refusals has revealed a tension around the politics of who counts as a Muslim woman. As a result this paper attempts to critically interrogate a method of identification that might lend additional analytical precision to how the boundaries of “Muslim woman” are drawn, both in personal terms, but also in terms of state-based, and non-governmental processes where access to justice may be mediated by national, religious, and gendered categories. In doing so, the paper reflects on how the intersections of religion, identity, and belonging are being redefined by Iranian women in transnational contexts.

Plenary Speaker

Professor Asma Afsaruddin



Prof. Asma Afsaruddin is the Class of 1950 Herman B Wells Endowed Professor and Professor of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures in the Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies at Indiana University, Bloomington. In addition to over ninety journal articles and book chapters, she is the author or editor of nine books, including *Jihad: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford University Press, 2022); *Contemporary Issues in Islam* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015), the award-winning *Striving in the Path of God: Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought* (Oxford University Press, 2013) which has been translated into Indonesian, and the popular textbook *The First Muslims: History and Memory* (Oneworld Publications, 2008), which has been translated into Turkish, Bahasa Malay, and Bosnian. Her edited volume *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Women* was published by Oxford University Press in 2023 and is currently being

translated into Arabic. Professor Afsaruddin is a past member of the Board of Directors of the American Academy of Religion and was previously the Kraemer Middle East Distinguished Scholar-in Residence at the College of William and Mary (2012), and a visiting scholar at the Centre for Islamic Studies at the London School of Oriental and African Studies (2003). Her research has been funded, among others, by the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, the American Research Institute in Turkey, and the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which named her a Carnegie Scholar in 2005. She was inducted into the Johns Hopkins Society of Scholars in 2019 in recognition of her academic and professional accomplishments.

Rereading the Qur'an through a Muslim Feminist Lens

The lecture will explore the tension between patriarchal and egalitarian readings of critical verses in the Qur'an that have to do with women and gender. It provides an overview of classical male exegeses and modern Muslim women scholars' (re)readings of these verses through a feminist hermeneutic lens. The discussion involves the methodologies employed by modern gender scholars and their critique of the androcentric views expressed by prominent premodern male exegetes, such as al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), and Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373). The more rigorous hermeneutics of the Qur'an adopted by feminist and other scholars today point to more interpretive possibilities than were imaginable in the past. In this exegetical process, they are resorting to compelling new readings of scripture that they take great pains to show do not violate the fundamental spirit and intent of the Qur'an. Instead they seek to demonstrate that such readings in fact represent a greater faithfulness to the Qur'an's core message of equality and justice.

Valedictory Address

Professor Kecia Ali



Professor Kecia Ali is a scholar of religion, gender, and ethics. She writes about the Muslim tradition, including premodern law and prophetic biography and modern intersections of Muslim and Western discourses about women and sexuality. Her recent projects focus on academic sexism within Islamic studies and, more broadly, in religious studies. Outside of her specialization, she also studies popular fiction, looking at human flourishing and ethical challenges in romance novels and police procedurals by authors including Suzanne Brockmann, Nora Roberts/J.D. Robb, and Nalini Singh.

She has been a faculty member at Boston University's Department of Religion since 2006. Before that, she held research and teaching fellowships at Brandeis University and Harvard Divinity School. She teaches undergraduates and graduate students.

She earned her MA and PhD in Religion from Duke University. She attended Stanford University as an undergraduate, finishing with a BA in History and honors in Feminist Studies. She has held a number of service and leadership roles in the American Academy of Religion, including Status Committee Director. She is a past president of the Society for the Study of Muslim Ethics.

She is originally from the Boston area. Outside of her professional activities, She has been involved with_Oxfam America since 2010 and have served on its Leadership Council since 2013. In 2018, She co-founded Believers Bail Out, an initiative to free needy Muslims from pre-trial detention using zakat and to educate about money bail and mass incarceration.

Islamic Feminism and Struggle for Justice Today

Over the last half century, projects for gender justice explicitly grounded in Islamic scripture and tradition have reshaped the contours of Muslim thought, even for those who consider themselves traditionalists. Among scholars and activists working in Qur'anic interpretation, legal reform, and social movements, some have explicitly claimed the term feminist, while others have shied away from or rejected it; few, however, have ignored it. This lecture will consider the flourishing and contentious arena of Muslim and Islamic feminisms and gender-focused efforts for social and spiritual transformation, considering its history, present, and future possibilities.

Opening Panel

Muslim Women in India



Agency, Selfhood and Memory in Literary Culture: Reading Women's Poetry in Colonial India

Professor Farhat Hasan, Department of History, University of Delhi

Prof. Farhat Hasan is a Professor in Medieval and Modern South Asian History in the Department of History at the University of Delhi.

He has worked extensively on the political culture and literary trends in the Mughal Empire. His monographs include *Paper, Performance, and State: Social Change and Political Culture in Mughal India* (Cambridge University Press, 2021) and *State and Locality in Mughal India: Power Relations in Western India, c. 1572-1730* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).



Rethinking Gender and Agency : Educational Journeys of Muslim Girls in a Madrasa

Dr. Hem Borker, Asst. Prof., Department of Social Work, Jamia Millia Islamia

Hem Borker is Assistant Professor at the Department of Social Work, Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi. Her research spans education, gender, minorities, social exclusion, and adolescents and youth, with a particular focus on India. Dr. Borker is the author of the book *"Madrasas and the Making of Islamic Womanhood"* (Oxford University Press, 2018), and has published several research papers on topics such as pandemic precarity, the role of madrasas in shaping gender identities, and social exclusion.



Faith, Gender, and Power: Rethinking Muslim Women's Political Presence in South Asia

Professor Azra Abidi, Department of Sociology, Jamia Millia Islamia

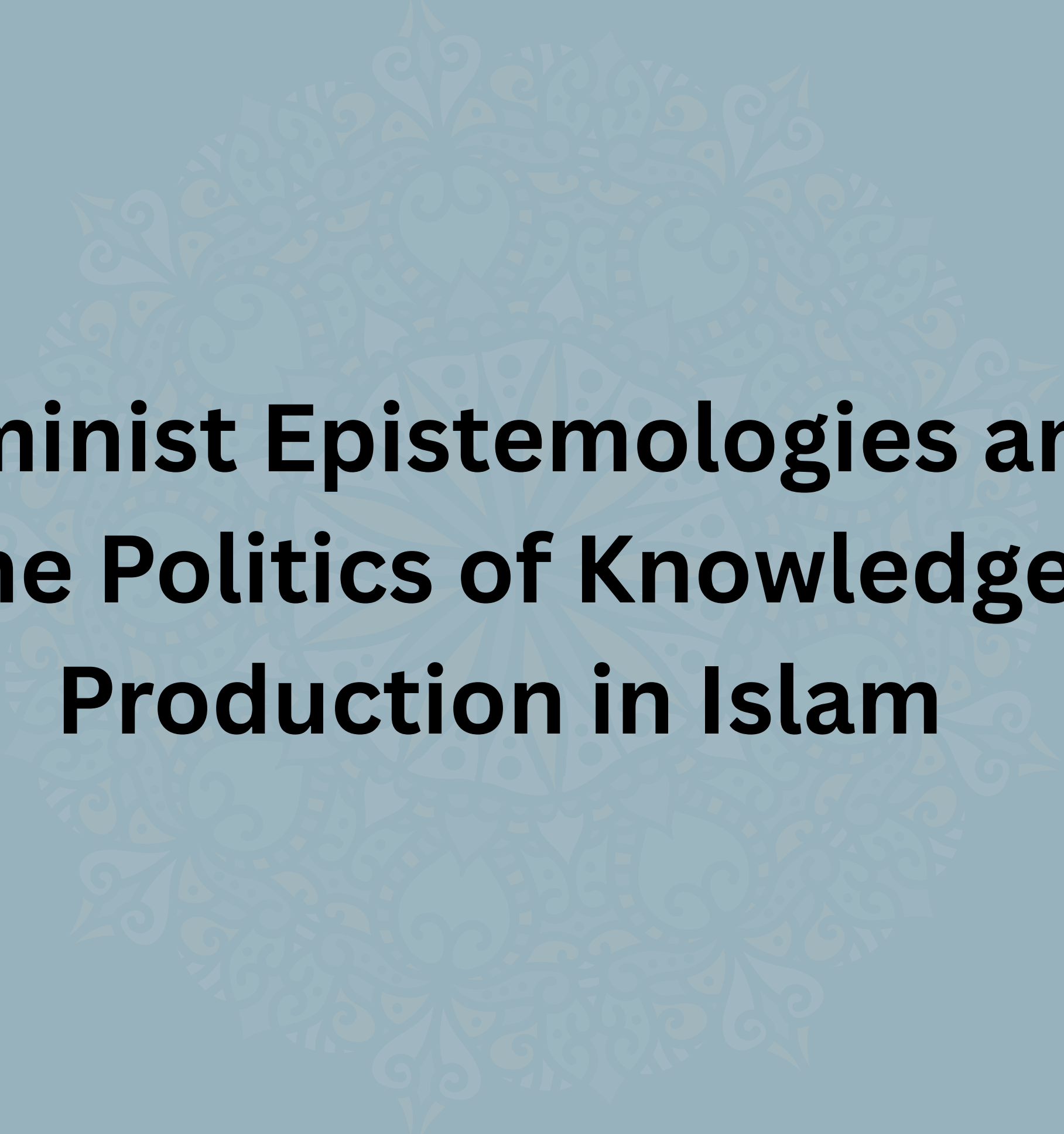
Professor Azra Abidi is a Professor at the Department of Sociology at Jamia Millia Islamia. Her fields of interest include gender and society, interfaith dialogue, religion, women's empowerment, and the sociology of South Asia and Muslim communities. Professor Abidi has led major research projects, including a recent ICSSR-funded project on "Education, State and Democracy: A Case Study of Valley of Kashmir."



Wailing the Veil, and Veiling the Wail: Gendered Spaces, Sartorial Imaginations, and 'Malayala Islam' in Colonial Malabar

Dr. P.K. Yasser Arafath, Associate Prof., Department of History, University of Delhi

Dr. P.K. Yasser Arafath is Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of Delhi and a historian of medieval and early modern India. He was L.M. Singhi Visiting Fellow at the University of Cambridge in 2017. He has co-edited *Sultana's Sisters: Genre, Gender, and Genealogy in South Asian Muslim Women's Fiction* (Routledge, 2021) and *The Hijab: Islam, Women and the Politics of Clothing* (Simon & Schuster, 2022).



Feminist Epistemologies and the Politics of Knowledge Production in Islam

Beyond the Text: Feminist Hermeneutics of the Qur'ān and the Question of Reception in Muslim Societies

-Yashfee Sadiqa Zaidi & Umarat Firdous (Scholars, Jamia Millia Islamia)

Feminist hermeneutics of the Qur'an have challenged patriarchal readings by emphasizing justice, reciprocity and equality as core Islamic principles. Scholars such as Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas have reinterpreted contested verses, particularly those on women's roles in family and society, offering alternatives to male dominated exegesis. Yet a key gap persists. While reinterpretations circulate widely in academic and activist spaces, little is known about their reception among broader Muslim communities and religious institutions. This paper explores that gap through a close textual and discourse analysis. First, it traces how classical tafseer and male dominated jurisprudence historically framed women's roles as confined to domestic and subordinate spheres. Second, it highlights feminist readings of the same verses to demonstrate interpretive alternatives rooted within the Qur'an itself. Third, it examines the secondary literature, NGO publications, and mediadebates in South Asia and the Middle East to assess how these feminist hermeneutics are received, resisted or sidelined. By situating the debate within decolonial feminist theory, the paper argues that the marginalization of feminist tafseer is not merely theological but institutional which reflects structures of male authority and epistemic injustice. The study concludes that addressing reception requires not only producing feminist interpretations but also interrogating the power relations that determine whose voices are heard and legitimized in Islamic discourse. In doing so, the paper contributes to ongoing conversations about gender justice, interpretive authority and the politics of knowledge in contemporary Muslim societies.

Contextualising Feminist Epistemologies: The Politics of Knowledge Production in Islam

-Alisha Chaudhary (Asst. Prof., University of Delhi)

Women in Islam have either been negatively characterized or excluded from the mainstream knowledge production of both religious and modern education. This paper addresses the question of how knowledge was produced and who the knowers are. Is knowledge gender-specific? Or does it serve the equal and just social system?. Firstly, the paper outlines the major theories in feminist epistemology, which are standpoint theory, situated knowledge, and epistemic injustice. Secondly, it caters to how these frameworks apply to Muslim women's context. And thirdly, the paper reflects on the politics of knowledge production in Islam: the control of misogynistic interpretations, which change the entire structure of Quranic understanding, and the practical development of women's voices in the Islamic and non-Islamic states. The paper will also imply that conventional Islamic epistemic frameworks marginalized women and also explore that Islamic scholars are progressing in resisting the epistemic structures by rereading the sacred texts and reclaiming women's voices. These discourses set the ground for feminist exegesis of the Quran. This paper will further cater to the question of why there is a need for women to understand the sacred text with their personal reflections, experiences, and diverse knowledge and how to dismantle the current existing traditional tafsirs, which are largely written by men. It will also address how the Muslim fundamentalists have made such a situation wherein the ordinary Muslim women accept that women are not allowed to be the knowers, and they have to accept the misogynistic understanding of the Quran.

Gender Equality in Islam: The Ethical Dimension of Islamic Feminism

-Md. Asif Shekh (Research Scholar, Jangipur College)

The issue of gender equality is still one of the most far-reaching and contested issues in modern Islamic thought and practice. While religious text interpretations based on patriarchy have traditionally dominated gender relations among Muslim populations, Islamic feminism attempts

to provide a counternarrative that works to reclaim and bring to the forefront the ethical values of justice, compassion, and equality inherent in Islam itself. This essay centers on the ethical aspect of Islamic feminism, maintaining that ethics offers a critical pivot between scriptural interpretation, everyday realities, and decolonial horizons. Basing its analysis on Qur'anic hermeneutics, the study analyzes critical verses that confirm principles of *adl* (justice), *rahma* (compassion), and *karama* (dignity), and discusses how feminist scholars reinterpret these virtues in order to counter male-dominated interpretations. Instead of viewing gender equality as a contemporary, foreign, or Western value, Islamic feminism illustrates how such equality is rooted in Islam's moral vision. The ethical vision hence resists colonial knowledge systems that tend to reject religion as oppressive, and patriarchal practices that limit women's roles. The article also points out the ways in which the ethical turn of Islamic feminism is part of global feminist struggles in the Global South. By locating the rights of women in a religiously sound moral framework, it enables Muslim women to make claims for equality without disconnection from their religion. Additionally, this ethical foundation solidifies decolonial futures by placing indigenous knowledge systems at its core and subverting epistemic hegemony of Western secular feminism. Lastly, the research highlights the applied significance of ethical thinking in informing law, education, and activism. Ranging from argumentation over family law reform to online feminist activism, ethics becomes an empowering driver of theory-praxis translations. Thus, the ethical aspect of Islamic feminism is not only a theoretical interest but a redemptive force that seeks to imagine inclusive futures where gender justice is embodied as both moral and sacred responsibility.

How Islamic is the Concept of Islamic Feminism? An Afterthought

-Dr. Pinky Isha (Asst. Prof., Rabindra Bharati University)

Despite the variously nuanced representation of feminist movements and feminist activism across the middle eastern countries, the topic sparks a debatable and nebulous territory of interpretation among scholars and litterateurs alike. The movements to assert Islamic feminine autonomy within the family and at the level of society, and women's wider acceptance as independent individuals without the domination of a husband and father figure, has long been in the agenda of feminist thought and politics, even while, nothing divergent from the sharia has been able to make inroads in popular liberalist Muslim circles and groups. Whether for politically ascending liberalist democracies or for reasons of secular western education, women in countries of Iran, Turkey and Egypt, with other countries following their stance, have had only a handful of female leaders who intended and worked for bringing a change in women's lives. Like the various waves of western feminism in the US and UK from the 1960s onwards, women in the middle eastern and African countries have had several female reformers who have at least cleared the ground for establishing the bedrock of a solid foundational feminist discourse based on women's rights and her importance in the religious community at par with men. This was not easy especially when looking at the feudal or later the joint family unit, where women were valued solely as domestic care givers for children, the elderly, the husband and her sole identity centred on the mother- wife dynamics which was inextricably labelled to her agency, even if she were educated or could be a bread earner for a family. Further her role as a bread earner was given primacy only when her husband had died or was absent. The footfalls were many, starting right from the idea of women as inferior/unsuitable for certain actions when compared to men, and this was literally established when she was refused admittance in a place of worship as important as a mosque, because she was considered impure. This paper attempts to look at a few female reformists and female leaders who have gone against the grain by asserting the importance of female education, autonomy and rights largely present in Islam but restricted in scope by a patriarchal society. This study also focuses on whether the nomenclature of Islamic feminism actually applies in the wider framework of Islamic movements that bubbled in countries of the middle East as they struggled to have followers and leaders to keep the activism going. If then we look at it from the spectrum of reformist women's movements, would it serve a larger and more acceptable sharia mandate? All these and the nature of Islamic stereotypes with regard to women will be discussed in the paper, with reference to few major writers, reformers, thinkers or feminist leaders.

Reclaiming epistemic authority: feminist hermeneutics from the Prophet's household to contemporary Islamic thought

-Iqra Sultan (Scholar, Jamia Hamdard)

Islamic feminism is both a spiritual and intellectual movement that reclaims Muslim women's right to interpret their faith. This paper explores how feminist scholars and reformers have challenged patriarchal readings of Islam and re-centred women as active producers of religious knowledge. From the earliest days of Islam, women such as Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, Aisha bint Abi Bakr, and Fatimah al-Zahra embodied intellectual and moral authority. Their legacies affirm that women's agency and scholarship are deeply rooted in Islamic tradition, not modern invention.

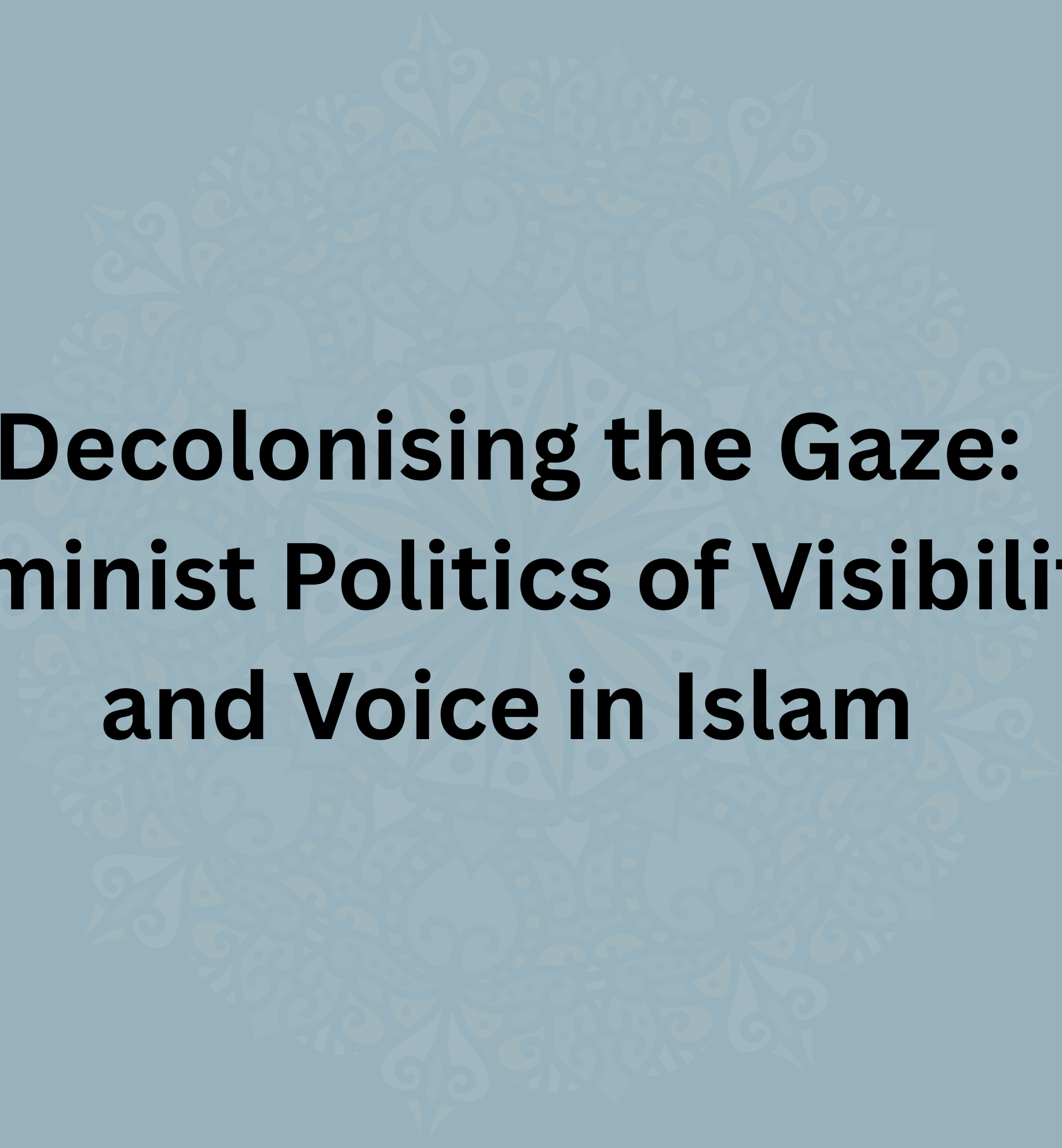
Building upon these foundations, contemporary thinkers including Amina Wadud, Asma Barlas, Fatema Mernissi, and Saba Mahmood have expanded feminist hermeneutics through critical reinterpretations of Qur'an and Hadith. They argue that divine revelation is perfect but its human readings are historically shaped and thus open to renewal through *ijtihad* (independent reasoning).

This paper situates Islamic feminism within a decolonial framework, showing how it resists both Western secular definitions of liberation and internal patriarchal control. Today, Muslim women extend this legacy through "digital *ijtihad*" via podcasts, online lectures, and social media that democratise knowledge and reclaim interpretive space. Ultimately, feminist hermeneutics in Islam is not a break from tradition but a return to its essence—a faith rooted in justice, equality, and compassion.

Reclaiming Qur'anic Authority: Amina Wadud's Feminist Hermeneutics and Decolonial Futures of Islamic Knowledge

-Mehedi Ahasan (Scholar, Darul Huda Islamic University)

Within the larger context of Islamic hermeneutics, Qur'anic authority has tended to be dominated by patriarchal interpretations and colonial knowledge, with scarce room being left for women's interpretive agency and decolonial futures of knowledge. This study bridges this gap by examining how Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutics of justice reconfigures Qur'anic interpretation as an inclusive and justice-oriented practice. It traces how her interpretive methods, linguistic accuracy, contextual historicization, and *maqāṣid*-centered ethics subverts inherited hierarchies and recovers interpretive legitimacy to subordinated voices in Islam. The research uses a hybrid approach that integrates textual analysis of Wadud's work with critical exploration of digital feminist counterpublics to illustrate how sacred authority is actively renegotiated both in scholarly and digital forums independently of the use of interviews or ethnography. This study structures its inquiry around the title "Reclaiming Qur'anic Authority: Amina Wadud's Feminist Hermeneutics and Decolonial Futures of Islamic Knowledge," revealing how feminist interpretation not only acts as a correction over patriarchal exegesis but also as an epistemological route to decolonial futures. It also illuminates the moral richness of Wadud's work, demonstrating the way feminist hermeneutics influence curricular reform, re-interpret family law controversies, and maintain digital pedagogies that multiply women's voices in Islamic scholarship. The research showcases how authority, previously monopolised by colonial-patriarchal systems, is re-allocated through hybrid knowledge practices, coupling textual fidelity with modern feminist praxis. In this way, it also assists in further insight into how Qur'anic authority can be reclaimed as an intellectual intervention and a moral necessity, such that Wadud's vision remains at the heart of rethinking Islamic knowledge in decolonial futures.



Decolonising the Gaze: Feminist Politics of Visibility and Voice in Islam

Between Islamophobia and Islamisation

-Swaliha & Vania Syed (Scholars, Ambedkar University)

This academic research aims to understand how Indian Muslim women’s agency and free will are controlled and objectified the Hindutva’s ‘messiah’ politics, Islamic radicalization and modern ‘neopatriarchy’. With the rise of Hindutva phenomenon since 1980s, Muslim women’s concerns became a tool to propagate ‘gendered Islamophobia’, where Muslim women, ‘the damsel in distress’ under Islamic barbarism, must need redemption. This redemption of Hindutva is highlighted under the issues of Triple talaq, halala, over procreation or high pregnancy among Muslim women. This research takes ‘high procreation’ as an example to examine how Hindutva ideology objectifies Muslim women’s body to claim their ‘messiah’ framework in Indian socio- political sphere. Likely to this, while countering this ‘messiah’ propaganda and salvation from ‘fitna’, radicalized Muslim patriarchs, uses ‘Muslim women’ to resurrect Islamic traditions in form of hijab, conjugal devotion etc. Here, this academic paper analysis the manipulated or paternalistic conjugal and pregnancy rights of Muslim women. It questions the ‘ manipulated narrative’ regarding compulsory conjugal duties and forbidden abortion rights of Muslim women. Along with these the paper also attempts to explore and critically analyses the narratives of modern ‘neopatriarchy’ which are influenced by both Hindutva and radicalized Islamic ideology. The paper tries to examine oscillating situation of Muslim women and how their individual, body rights are subjugated under Islamophobic and Islamization process.

The Cosmology of the Salon: Hair, Veiling, and Sufi-Feminist Ethics in Pasha’s Girls

-Dr Amany Alsiefy (Humboldt University, Germany)

This paper examines Nora Nagi’s Pasha’s Girls (2017) through a dual unveiling, mobilizing the Sufi concept of kashf—the lifting of veils that obscure divine truth—to enact a feminist critique of the social and political constraints on Egyptian women. Through close textual analysis, the study moves beyond the reductive oppression/resistance binary often associated with the hijab. It demonstrates how sartorial practices—particularly the management of hair and veils—serve as sites of complex negotiation involving agency, faith, and cultural critique. Framed by Sa’diyya Shaikh’s Sufi ethics of love alongside postcolonial feminist theory, this analysis foregrounds social justice to interrogate the intersections of religious identity, gendered embodiment, and postcolonial subjectivity. In doing so, the paper offers a decolonial feminist reading that privileges local epistemologies while challenging universalist assumptions.

The Decolonial Muslim Principle of Iffa (إففا) as an Ethical Politics of Self-Governance

-Ibtisam Mohammad Abujad (Asst. Prof. Harper College Illinois, United States)

This paper venture to work through iffa starting from the Qur’anic text and then thinking through the definition and consequences, at times weaving a limited number of Arabic and English language texts that I have found on the concept of “political iffa” (namely by a couple of lawyers), to search for and develop a comprehensive theory of iffa as a decolonial political ethical principle of governance that helps us answer the questions: Why do Muslims focus on body governance, and how does this relate to ideas about the ummah as expansive but governed by principles that resist intervention and exploitation of the community (by colonial forces and in relation to language, for example)? Why is there a politics of visibility (boundaries to the eye and the ear) for Muslim individually, within the home, and for the ummah? I say this noting that Muslim domestic spaces have historical shifted as public and private spaces in temporal and other ways so that they do not function according to Eurocentric theories about the separation of spheres. Also, the private space is also a significantly mobile space for Muslims, different from the situated spatiality of the home-base in Eurocentric thought that informs ethnocentric nationalism. How does iffa function as an individual and communal principle, and how is it social, economic, and political? My underlying aim is to center Muslim thought and practice as a source of liberationist knowledge and practice during a time when it is vilified, degraded, silenced, and privatized globally (also made exclusive and not for an-nas kaffa, or all people). This is a work-in-

progress. In the past, I have ventured into examining iffa using decolonial theories that have not fully helped me in doing so. Therefore, if you would tolerate this presentation as shifts into a journey of thinking and discovery and not a final destination, I would appreciate the opportunity to present at the conference.

The Hijab: Historical Background, Symbolism and Feminist Reinterpretations

-Dr. Maleeha Gul & Dr Ambreen Wani (Asst. Prof., University of Kashmir)

Through classical, postmodern, and lived perspectives, this paper examines the changing meanings and practices of the hijab, placing the discussion within larger discussions of gender, identity, and religion. The historical background of women's position in pre-Islamic Arabia and the revolutionary gender ethics brought about by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are covered first. The study then looks at the Qur'anic verses on modesty, especially those from Surah al-Nur (24:30–31) and Surah al-Ahzab (33:53, 33:59), along with how classical scholars like al-Tabari, Ibn Kathir, and al-Qurtubi interpreted them. Modern feminist and reformist interpretations by scholars like Fatima Mernissi, Asma Barlas, and Javed Ahmad Ghamidi are then compared to these. In order to capture how faith, culture, and individual agency intersect in their lived experiences, the paper incorporates semi-structured interviews with Muslim men and women who wear or consider the hijab through a qualitative lens. The paper's also considers how modern Muslim societies' reinterpretations of the hijab represent larger compromises between gendered self-expression, tradition, and modernity.

Veiled, Threat: The Politics of Muslim Women's Visibility

-Dr. Aateka Khan & Dr Safia Amir (Associate Prof., University of Delhi)

My paper seeks to understand the reasons why there is such differential treatment between women who reveal and those who cover. I will interrogate the ecosystem of female behaviour which finds revealing the body acceptable and a cause to fight for women's rights whereas covering is disregarded as unworthy of attention. Tied to this problem is the denial of agency to the female body that practices veiling in any form. In this paper I try to delve into the dynamics at work that lead to such double standards regarding women's issues when Islamic culture is concerned. Islamic feminist postcolonial critiques of secularism by Fatema Mernissi (1991) and Leila Ahmed (1992) will serve to interpret Eurocentric perceptions of veiling as subjugation which are reflected in colonial discourses. This perspective will help to examine the western modernist belief in the right of the woman to reveal as the only valid form of liberation while the act of covering is delegitimized as the result of a false consciousness.

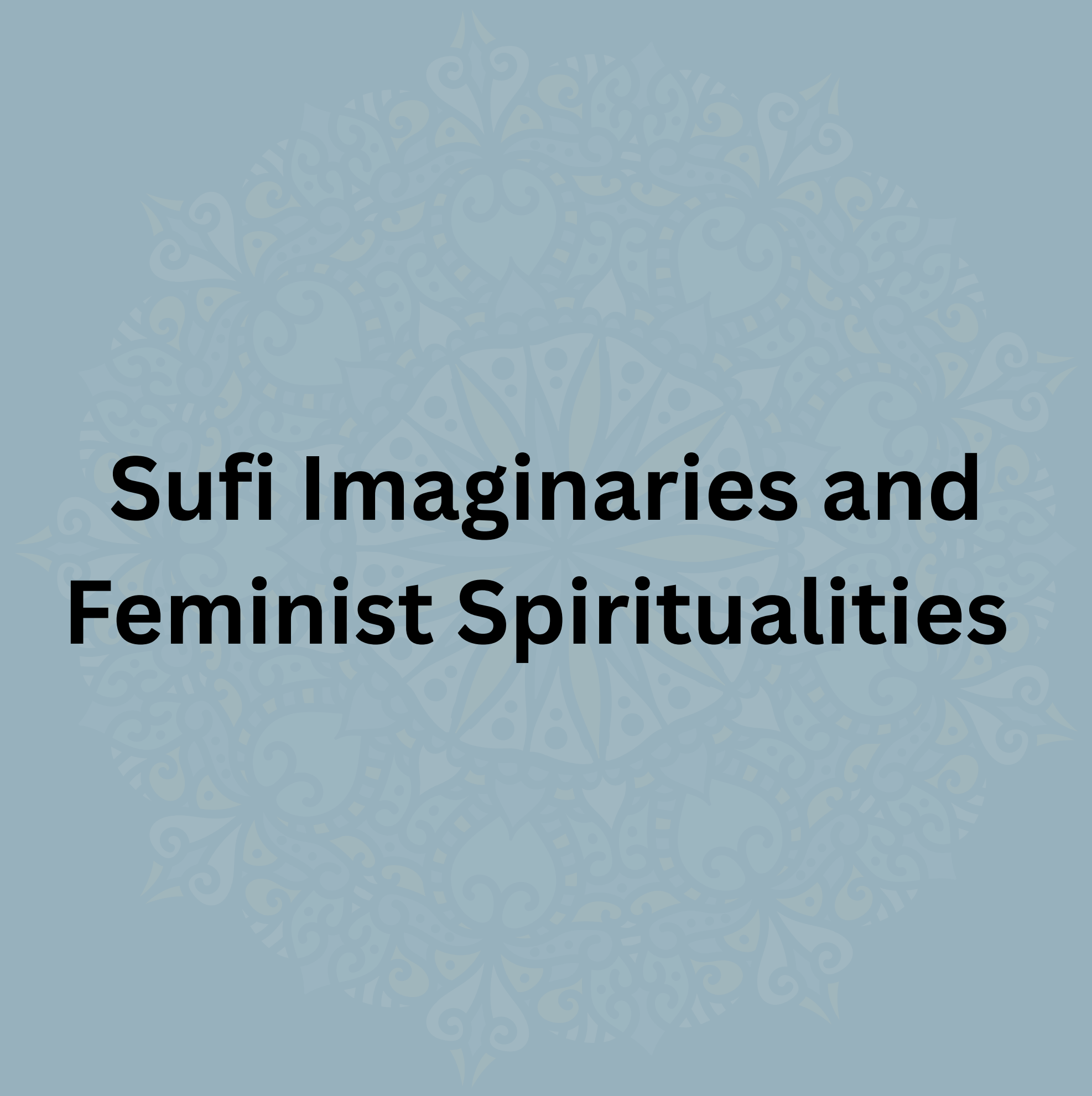
My contention is the passive denial of the recognition of the woman's right by the silence around the hijab incident further marginalizes such women. The selective outrage points to a lack of solidarity for certain women's struggles which is tantamount to erasing them. In highlighting this asymmetry, the paper calls for a decolonial feminist praxis that takes seriously Muslim women's choices—whether to veil or unveil—as equally valid articulations of dignity, embodiment, and freedom.

Veil, Voice, and Violence: Islamic Feminism through the Lens of Narges Mohammadi

-Mohammed Aflah pp & Anas (Scholars, Darul Huda Islamic University)

This paper looks at the complex relationship between veil, voice, and violence in the context of Islamic feminism. It focuses on the life and activism of Narges Mohammadi, a well-known Iranian human rights advocate and Nobel Peace Prize winner. Mohammadi's work shows how Islamic feminism in Iran goes beyond theory. It represents a strong, lived resistance against forced veiling, gender oppression, and violence supported by the state. These systems aim to maintain what she calls "gender apartheid," where women's rights are consistently denied through laws, social norms, and institutional practices.

Her book *White Torture* documents the painful experiences of female political prisoners in Iran. It highlights the power of storytelling and testimony in breaking the silence imposed by authoritarian regimes. By reclaiming their voices, Mohammadi and other activists challenge the invisibility created by enforced veiling and repression, turning personal stories into collective resistance.



Sufi Imaginaries and Feminist Spiritualities

From Rābi‘a to the Present: Women’s Sufi Spiritualities as Everyday Feminist Resistance

-Muhammed Fayiz (Scholar, Darul Huda Islamic University)

Most scholarship on Islamic feminism centers on Qur’anic exegesis, ḥadīth analysis, and legal reform (fiqh), frequently overlooking the rich spiritual resources of Sufi traditions. This paper corrects this oversight by exploring how Sufi teachings and narratives offer a powerful, distinct framework for understanding women, equality, and spirituality in Islam, placing lived experience at the core of the analysis.

My study traces a continuous spiritual lineage, beginning with early women mystics like Rābi‘a al-Baṣrī and Bībī Fāṭima al-Naysābūrī. Classical masters, including Ibn ‘Arabī and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, further articulated a metaphysical vision rooted in ‘ishq (divine love), fanā’ (annihilation of self), and waṣl (union), which fundamentally emphasizes spiritual equality. When re-read through a feminist hermeneutic, these mystical concepts become potent tools for resisting domination and affirming women’s inherent dignity.

Finally, the paper connects this historical and metaphysical legacy to the present. Many Muslim women today actively draw strength from Sufi practices—be it in dhikr circles, shrine gatherings, or through digital expressions of spirituality. These practices constitute crucial forms of everyday feminist resistance, as women claim spiritual space, assert leadership, and foster communal healing.

Piety Between Empires: Female Patronage, Sacred Space and the Fate of Imperial Mosques in Shahjahanabad (1630–1870s)

-Dr. Sadia Aziz (Asst. Prof., University of Delhi)

This paper explores the intersection of gender, piety, and imperial power through the architectural patronage of Mughal royal women in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Delhi, and the subsequent transformation of these sacred spaces under British colonial rule. Focusing on Shahjahanabad—the last great Mughal capital founded by Emperor Shahjahan in 1648—it examines how imperial begums such as Jahanara, Akbarabadi, Fatehpuri, and Zinat-un-Nisa redefined female piety by commissioning mosques and other charitable endowments within the city’s sacred and civic landscape. Their constructions—most notably the Fatehpuri Masjid, Akbarabadi Masjid, and Zinat-ul-Masjid—functioned as both acts of devotion and assertions of authority, situating women as significant agents in the articulation of imperial and spiritual identity. The study situates these acts of female patronage within the larger Mughal tradition of monumental expression and the politics of urban space, emphasizing how religious architecture became an instrument of piety, legitimacy, and commemoration.

The second half of the paper investigates the dramatic reconfiguration of these mosques during and after the Revolt of 1857, when British colonial authorities, perceiving Delhi’s Muslim population and its religious leaders as primary instigators of rebellion, implemented policies of confiscation, demolition, and surveillance. Mosques such as Akbarabadi were destroyed for their proximity to the Red Fort, while others, including Fatehpuri and Zinat-ul-Masjid, were seized and repurposed for administrative or military use—converted into warehouses or bakeries. The subsequent petitions for their restoration, culminating in the return of several mosques to Muslim custodians in 1877, reveal the contestation between imperial domination and local religious resilience.

Rabi‘a al-‘Adawiyya to Umami Raehanun: Continuity of Female Saints in Sufi Tradition

-Muhammed Salih (Research Scholar, Darul Huda Islamic University)

This paper examines the historical and spiritual continuity of female sainthood in the Sufi tradition by comparing two figures separated by more than a millennium yet united by the same devotional essence—Rabi‘a al-‘Adawiyya of Basra (d. 801) and Umami Siti Raehanun of Lombok (b. 20th century). Rabi‘a, celebrated as a saint of divine love (mahabbah), established an enduring model of female piety grounded in Qur’anic ideals that true nobility rests on taqwa (piety) rather than gender or social standing (Qur’an 49:13). Her life, recorded in classical works such as ‘Attar’s Tadhkirat al-Awliyā’, shaped the archetype of the female mystic as a teacher and exemplar of divine intimacy. In modern

times, Umami Raehanun continues this spiritual lineage as a Murshida within the Nahdlatul Wathan Sufi order, guiding both male and female disciples through inherited baraka and ethical discipline. Through a comparative hermeneutic lens, this study highlights how both figures embody the inclusivity of Islamic spirituality, where sainthood is rooted in sincerity, service, and closeness to God rather than in hierarchical or gendered authority. Their continuity underscores a timeless Sufi affirmation: that divine proximity transcends all distinctions, revealing the enduring role of women as bearers of spiritual authority in the Islamic tradition.

Situating Hazrat Rabi’a Basri (r.a.) in the Contemporary Debate of Islamic Feminism

-Dr. M.A. Afzal Farooq (Asst. Prof., Central University of Jammu)

Feminists argue that early Islam represented more egalitarian ideals, while conservatives put forward a counter argument that gender asymmetries are “divinely ordained”. This paper therefore, necessitates a qualitative approach for a thorough critical understanding of primary (Quran and Hadith) and secondary sources (research papers, critical treatises, journals and web- based materials). It is premised upon an in depth understanding and critical interpretation of women’s life in Islam within the Hadith and the Quranic framework with particular reference to Rabi’a Basri (r.a.). Sufism as a philosophical and spiritual concept in Islam emphasizes the unity of human existence — both male and female partake equally in humanity and the divine potential. Ibn ‘Arabī, a major Sufi thinker, wrote that maleness and femaleness are contingencies in human essence , not essential differences. The present research gauges the historical context of feminism in Islam and demonstrates the explicit and implicit ways feminism manifests itself in Islamic life style. It situates Hazarat Rabi’a Basri (r.a.) in the contemporary debate of feminism and illustrates the claim of the paper that women’s rights and privileges were by no means oversighted in Islam and in no way contributed to women’s subordination. The investigation also highlights the teachings of equality in Islam, interrogating patriarchal interpretations while strongly arguing for understanding the layered and metaphorical meanings of the Quran.

Women of different ages: A Critical Study of Islamic Feminism with special focus on Five Featured Women

-Dr. Mustabshira Siddiqui (Asst. Prof., Taibah University, Saudi Arabia)

Women are among the world’s most profound, emotional, and resilient beings. Their journey begins with Eve, the mother of all humanity. Throughout history, women have been revered as goddesses, faced oppression as slaves, and been confined to roles as virgins or nuns. Amidst this turmoil, few have recognized women as natural human beings deserving of nurture, love, and protection. As a Muslim woman, I am honored to spotlight the daughter of Eve, Hawwa, in this article. To enlighten us, I will define a woman according to the Holy Quran: "O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him (Adam) He created his wife (Hawwa), and from them both He created many men and women..." (Quran 4:1). I will celebrate five remarkable women in Islam, elevated by the Almighty Allah and cherished in the Quran. First is Mariam Bint Imran, the daughter of Imran and the mother of Jesus (Isa, peace be upon him). She is the only woman in Islam known to have given birth without a father, overcoming unfounded turmoil until Isa (Peace be Upon him) spoke from the cradle to affirm her purity. The others are Khadijah Bint Khuwaylid, Fatima Bint Mohammed (peace be upon him), Aasiyah Bint Muzahim, and Ayesha Bint Abu Bakr. All the above women are the timeless examples of Islamic feminism, who stood against all the odds of society and proved that women are no lesser human beings in their times.



Revisiting Islamic Jurisprudence: Gender Justice and Family Law Reform

Beyond Patriarchy: Women as Central Actors in the Objectives of Shariah

-Muhammed Mishal (Research Scholar, Darul Huda Islamic University)

. Cinema, as both a cultural mirror and a site of social intervention, plays a crucial role in mediating these narratives. The subtheme “Cinematic Re-framings of Muslim Womanhood in Indian Films” explores how Indian filmmakers, through narrative strategies, visual symbolism, and character development, challenge stereotypical portrayals and foreground nuanced, empowered representations of Muslim women. Historically, Indian cinema has often depicted Muslim women through limited tropes—the submissive, veiled figure, the tragic victim of tradition, or the exoticized “Other.” Such representations not only reinforce patriarchal assumptions but also obscure the rich diversity of Muslim women’s lived experiences. Islamic feminist critiques of these cinematic tropes emphasize the ethical and spiritual dimensions of womanhood inherent in Islamic teachings, highlighting principles of justice, dignity, and intellectual agency. In this light, cinema becomes a tool for both reflection and resistance, offering alternative narratives that center women’s voices, agency, and moral reasoning.

Integrating Gender Justice and Islamic Family Law: A Comparative Study of Social Traditions and Judicial Transformation in Contemporary Morocco and Indonesia

-Muhammed Arif K (Scholar, Darul Huda Islamic University)

This study investigates the reform of the Islamic law in Indonesia and Morocco, with particular attention to how their respective frameworks interpret and integrate gender-inclusive values within socio-legal contexts. The central theme of this study is the dynamic interaction between Islamic jurisprudence and socio-cultural norms in shaping the construction of gender relations. By adopting a qualitative methodology and literature analysis, the research paper utilizes a systematic review and analysis of textual evidences, specially focusing on the Indonesian Marriage Law No. 1 of 1974 and the Moroccan Family Code of 2004 (Mudawwanah al-Usrah). Comparative textual analysis used to trace key concepts of understanding the similarities and divergences in the recognition and application of gender-equitable norms across both jurisdictions. This comparative analysis highlights that legal reform in Muslim societies is not a uniform process but rather a negotiated balance between religious tradition and contemporary values of gender equality. This paper is an attempt to shed light through adaptability of Sharia-based legal systems in promoting equity and justice in diverse cultural settings in Indonesia and Morocco.

Islamic or Muslim Law(s)?: Feminist Interventions

-Dr. Seema Kazi (Associate Professor, Centre for Women's Development Studies)

This article uses the Shaheen Bagh protest to addresses the question of Muslim difference -especially with regard to Muslim women - in modern India that I argue, has been relatively unexamined during the post-colonial period. Shaheen Bagh, I suggest, is a metaphor for the uneasy and unresolved tension between Muslim difference and secular liberalism that has coloured feminist perception and approaches with regard to the fact of Muslim women’s cultural/ethnic difference. In the first half of the paper, I use an intersectional, interdisciplinary (gender studies; critical history; politics; cultural studies) (Gail Minault 1998; Shahida Lateef 1990; Barbara Metcalfe 2004; Saba Mahmood 2005; Lila Abu-Lughod 2002; Leila Ahmed 2011; Adorno and Horkheimer 1997; Aamir Mufti 2007) frame to problematise Muslim women in modern India. Here I argue that that the post-colonial formal, universal liberal-legal, ahistorical construct of ‘equality’ is inadequate to bring about structural change with regard to Muslim women. Indeed, in the age of neo-liberal pluralism as Puar (2018) notes, such constructs facilitate rather than impede the consumption of otherness. The second section of the paper focuses on Muslim women of Shaheen Bagh, whose collective, embodied protests elicited admiration and applause from secular liberals for whom the protests represented affirmation of Indian secularism, constitutionalism and democracy. Such representations, I argue, remain oblivious their own persistent othering of Muslim women as unmodern, and by extension what in the secular-liberal standpoint was immutably misogynist Muslim culture in modern India In conclusion, I suggest a shift away from the ahistoricism, individualism and appropriation of Muslim women’s voices towards a systemic, historically grounded frame of analysis rooted in the material conditions of Muslim women’s that offer a deeper, sharper understanding of Muslim women’s lives and challenges in contemporary India.

Reclaiming the Sacred: Faith-Based Feminism and Legal Reform in Shi‘i Iran

-Dr. Samaneh Oladi (Virginia Commonwealth University)

This study examines the efforts of Iranian women to reshape legal norms through religious activism, focusing on the Shi‘i women's coalition Itilaf-i Islami-yi Zanan (IIZ). It investigates how women activists use Islamic jurisprudence and interpretive tools to advocate for gender equity without abandoning their faith commitments. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, case studies, and textual analysis, the research highlights how IIZ challenges hierarchical interpretations within Shi‘i legal tradition by employing faith-based activism as a vehicle for reform.

The project critiques prevailing academic narratives that frame Muslim female agency in dichotomous terms, either as passive adherents to orthodoxy or as secular opponents to religion. It rejects the assumption that religious faith and women’s empowerment are inherently incompatible. By positioning IIZ activism within broader theoretical discussions on Islamic feminism and indigenous reform, the research reveals how women’s religious engagement disrupts linear conceptions of liberation and subjugation.

Central questions include how Shi‘i doctrines conceptualize gender and justice, what structural limits and possibilities exist for reform within this framework, and how women exert legal agency within Islamic discourse. The analysis argues that women’s religious authority and activism not only affirms their roles as interpreters of sacred texts but also redefines jurisprudential boundaries in ways often neglected by scholarship.

Using a cross-disciplinary approach encompassing religious studies, legal theory, anthropology, and gender studies, the research shows how IIZ members work from within tradition to create new space for women’s rights. Their activism demonstrates how Islamic law can serve as a dynamic medium for negotiating gender justice, grounded in both scriptural fidelity and feminist aspiration.

What-If Jurisprudence: Narrative Ijtihād and the Felt Life of Egalitarian Ethics in Muslim Women’s YA Fantasy

-Dr Mario Valori (University of Pisa, Italy)

This project contends that recent YA fantasy by Muslim women undertakes a form of narrative ijtihād: interpretive reasoning staged through speculative world-building. Rather than competing with tafsīr, these novels model egalitarian hermeneutics within their story-worlds by designing and testing rules—contracts, councils, rites, and healing protocols—that redistribute authority beyond gendered lineage. I read three globally circulating Anglophone works—S. A. Chakraborty’s *Daevabad* trilogy, Hafsah Faizal’s *We Hunt the Flame/We Free the Stars*, and Roseanne A. Brown’s *A Song of Wraiths and Ruin/A Psalm of Storms and Silence*—to show how juridical design becomes legible, and indeed palpable, in YA through pacing and focalisation. Bringing narratology into conversation with legal theory (law as design; authority, consent, due process) and affect studies, I demonstrate how these texts render egalitarian ethics both imaginable and desirable for youth publics, while remaining attentive to Islamicate aesthetics and decolonial frames. I treat narrative ijtihād as an analytic for fiction, not a theological intervention, and I foreground limits: selective close reading over reception. The payoff is a vocabulary for how popular YA fiction can function as jurisprudential thought experiment, and how it can circulate feminist hermeneutics beyond specialist discourse.



Lived Experiences of Muslim Women and Grassroots Activism

Embodying Faith in Munambam: Gender, Devotional Practices, and the Making of Sacred Space in Coastal Kerala

-Athila Hussain (Research Scholar) & Dr Abdul Sakir P M (Amal College of Advanced Studies)

This study examines the devotional text Qudrath Mala as a performative spiritual expression within the coastal Muslim community of Munambam in Kerala. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, oral histories, and observation, it explores how women engage with sacred space, ritual practice, and collective memory in Munambam's coastal landscape. These practices reveal the relationships between geography, religion, and gendered identity in shaping spiritual life. This paper asks two key questions: first, how do gendered bodies and spiritual texts shape sacred space in coastal Muslim contexts? Second, how do these devotional practices sustain memory and identity within changing landscapes? By examining the intersections of gender, spirituality, and place, this study shows how sacred landscapes function as archives that connect tradition, community, and contemporary Muslim life in Kerala.

Muslim Women's Empowerment Through Self-Help Groups in Anantnag, Kashmir: A Study of Social, Financial, and Capacity-Building Impacts

-Humaira Nabi, Anurag Singh & Yusra Siddiqui (Research Scholars, Jamia Millia Islamia)

This study investigates the role of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in advancing the empowerment of Muslim women in Anantnag district, Kashmir, with a focus on their social, financial, and capacity-building outcomes. Drawing upon feminist theory and the framework of agency and autonomy proposed by Naila Kabeer (1999), the research examines how SHGs function as transformative spaces that enable women to negotiate power within families, communities, and local economies. Using a mixed-methods approach combining survey data, case studies, and document analysis, the study engaged 33 SHG members across five groups in both rural and semi-urban areas of Anantnag. Findings reveal that participation in SHGs has significantly enhanced women's financial independence, confidence, and community participation. Nearly 90% of respondents reported improved family financial conditions due to access to micro credit and collective savings. Skill-building activities such as tailoring, Tilla embroidery, and dairy entrepreneurship, fostered not only income generation but also personal confidence and decision-making capacity. The narratives of women entrepreneurs illustrate how small loans, institutional support from the Jammu and Kashmir Rural Livelihood Mission (UMEED), and collective solidarity translate into sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance. However, the study also highlights persistent structural barriers including limited market access, inadequate training opportunities, and gendered mobility restrictions. These constraints reveal the intersection of patriarchy, religion, and regional marginality in shaping empowerment outcomes.

Muslim Women in India: Identity, Agency and Sisterhood

-Dr Suraiya Tabassum (Asst. Prof., Jamia Millia Islamia)

The socio-economic isolation of the Muslim community, its low education levels, and patriarchal attitudes of the community leadership has affected the ability of Muslim women in India to be represented in mainstream public and political life. India has sustained impressive economic growth over the past few years. Yet more than 300 million Indians live on less than a dollar a day, and 700 million live on less than two dollars a day. The picture is even starker for India's Muslim community. Eighty-four per cent of Muslims live on less than fifty cents a day (Report on Conditions of Work and Promotion of Livelihoods in the Unorganized Sector, August 2007). Within this impoverished community, Muslim women are at the bottom rung of the ladder. Their plight is often overlooked as the world's spotlight shines on India's remarkable economic growth. Beyond economics, when international attention focuses on dis empowerment or repression of women in Muslim communities, India is often not included, particularly because of its status as a secular democracy with a flourishing economy (Mohan and Tabassum, 2016). Inclusion of minorities in any governance system is a much debated issue and needs to be deliberated upon to ensure corrective policy steps to ensure inclusive

development, responsiveness, accountability and democratic legitimacy. In the Indian context, which is multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-ethnic, the issue of placement of minorities within the complex system of exclusion and inclusive development is no less than a challenge. The need is to monitor proper implementation of minority safeguards, find the reasons why inequality exists in spite of big promises made and work towards solutions for ensuring equitable and inclusive development. This paper looks into all the above mentioned issues and introduce an inclusive intervention programming and a way forward.

Resilience and Spirituality among War-Affected Women in Palestine: A Narrative Analysis

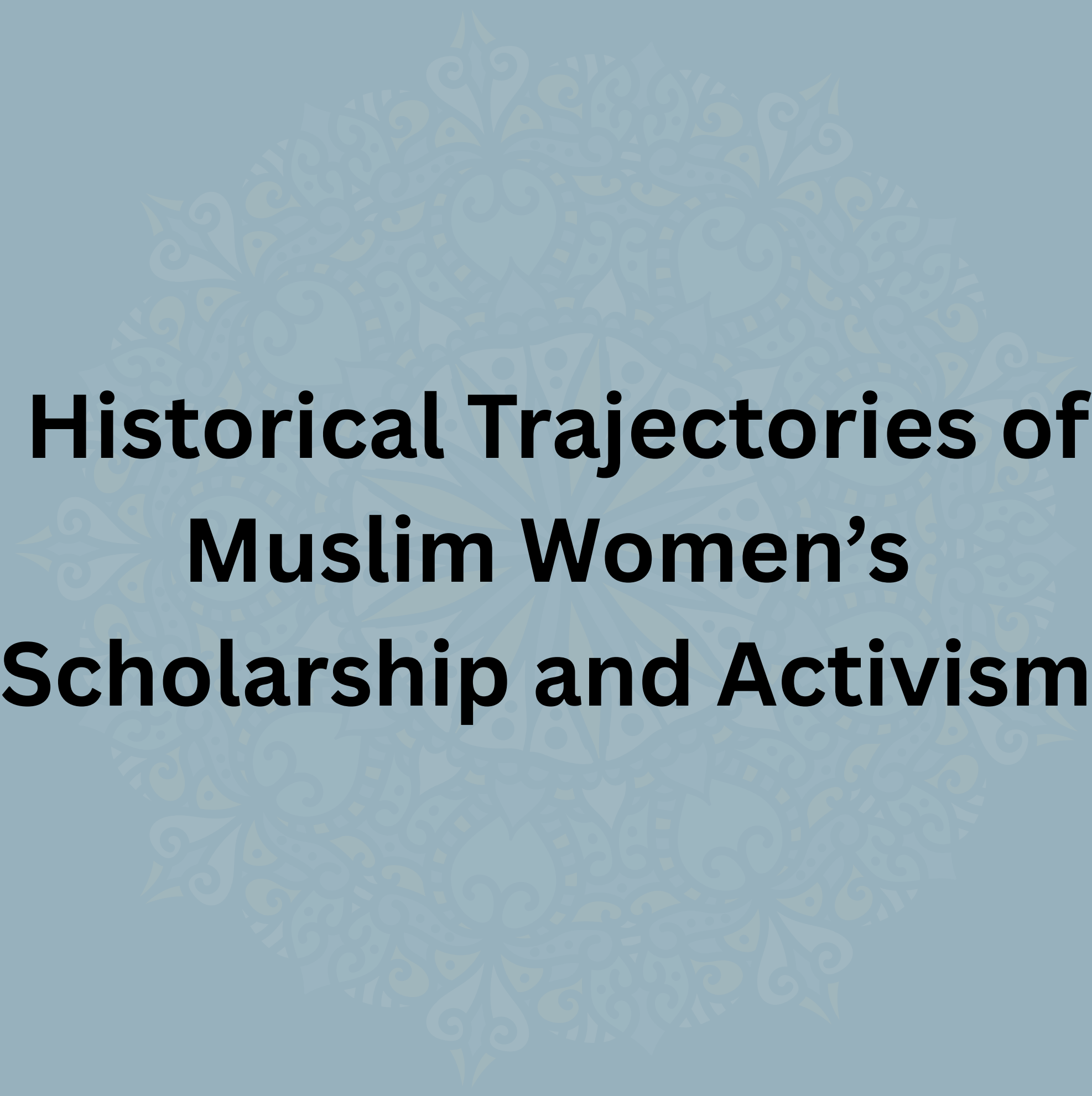
-Aushique Ali (Asst. Prof., Alshifa College of Arts and Science)

Women are the most affected and exploited by the catastrophes of the war and the destruction. The war in Palestine has exposed the population, especially women, to chronic trauma, instability and socioeconomic crisis. The stories of women surviving from severe injuries had been reported as showing immense courage and strength in the crucial hazards. Even in the facades of death Palestinian women are observed as resisting with courage. Within the context, spiritual strength and resilience are attributed for coping and mental wellbeing. This study is an attempt to explore the existing studies and literature on the spirituality and resilience of Palestinian women in the war face. Framing in an interdisciplinary approach through sociology, psychology and gender studies, the study deciphers the spirituality cultivates the hope and collective identity, religious faith helps healing and developing courage. The study highlights the resilience being expressed as a social and collective strategy of resistance beyond the individual level. The paper synthesizes the findings within the theoretical debates related to trauma, coping and healing through different perspectives including Islamic feminist readings. Along with, the paper underscores the women survival strategies developed through the intersection of faith, religion and spirituality. By extending the reading through the cultural and social roles played by women in conditions of prolonged warfare, the study attempts to reread the themes of women in different social roles.

The Intersection of Religion and Education: Muslim Women's Educational Transformation in Kerala

-Hasna V P (Research Scholar, University of Calicut)

Education and religion often intersect, influencing and shaping individuals in profound ways. In Kerala, where diverse religious communities coexist, the intersection of religion and education is particularly significant. The history of Muslim education in Kerala reflects a dynamic trajectory marked by both exclusion and empowerment. While the broader Muslim community witnessed the emergence of educational institutions over time, Muslim women remained significantly marginalized in this domain for decades. Traditionally confined to religious instruction through informal institutions like Othupallis, Dars, and Madrasas, their access to formal education was hindered by religious conservatism and economic constraints. However, the landscape began to shift with the rise of reformist movements in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Post-1956, following the formation of the Kerala state, increased governmental support for education and the establishment of women-centric educational institutions played a crucial role in transforming the educational status of Muslim women. This paper examines the intersection of religion and education in the context of Muslim women in Kerala, tracing historical developments, curriculum transformations, and the evolving role of Islamic educational institutions.



Historical Trajectories of Muslim Women's Scholarship and Activism

Challenging Patriarchy from Within: Muslim Women's Education, Agency, and Feminist Praxis in Colonial Bengal

-Rabiul Molla & Tanmoy Saha (Research Scholars, Rabindra Bharati University)

This paper examines the intellectual and activist politics of Muslim women in colonial Bengal, situating how women like Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (Begum Rokeya), Nawab Faizunnesa Choudhurani, Azizunnesa Khatun, Latifunnesa, Khairunnesa Zoha, Sufia Kamal, and the organizations they have been affiliated with developed intellectual and activist epistemology and praxis in the face of the intersecting oppression of colonial rule, patriarchal social institutions, and marginalization by the community.

The first aim of this paper is to discuss how Muslim women were able to navigate structural inequalities to build agency in education, literature, politics, and restore dignity to the community and intellectual authority. The second is to contextualize these historical trajectories within larger arguments in Islamic feminism and decolonial discourse, which make comparisons between the activism of the early twentieth century and the contemporary debate on gender, religion, and emancipation. To achieve these aims, this paper has three objectives: (i) to analyze the critical attack on the norms of patriarchy and male dominance beyond the domestic sphere by Muslim women, who in most cases were interested in promoting the welfare of Muslim women; (ii) to trace how the key themes of Muslim women and their organizations were engaged in challenging patriarchal norms; (iii) to examine the intersection of these historical interventions with colonial politics, the discourse of nationalism, and more general social reform agendas, resulting in epistemic structures that opposed imperial and patriarchal systems.

Educating Muslim Girls: A Study of Rokeya's Contribution wrt "Sultana's Dream"

- Dr Md. Aslam Parwez (Asst. Prof., Jagjiwan College)

Art and Activism always welcomes new hope and new possibilities of change in the structure and tradition, culture and value, system and politics. In the duration of the change, one or the other remains privileged or unprivileged. In the social history of India, the feminist discourse spectacularly remained silent but it was in the nascent stage and with some writers writing in Indian English and Into-English writing. Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain was engaged in uplifting and contributing for women through their art and activism. The paper will explore the contribution of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, (1880-1932) and her literary activism to uplift the muslim women. Her act for change may be called an Islamic Feminism because she had emphasised her project to bring change to Muslim women in culture, tradition and life style. Rokeya engaged her life for social reform, writing and education having a purposeful trajectories for Muslim girls. She founded the Sakhawat Memorial Girls' in Calcutta that inculcates modern subjects, awareness of hygiene and economically independence and primarily the dissemination of education in Muslim Girls in Bengal. She addresses her readers through her short story "Sultana' Dream" (1905) in which she critiques male chauvinist system and its hypocrisy. The short story is here an art form and symbolic dissemination of her purpose for change in the status of women in general but more specifically she had an apparent purpose for Muslim girls and community progress. She had also founded Anjuman- e-Khawateen (Islamic Women's Association) for the above purpose. The paper will delve into the literary activism of Rokeya Shakhawat Hussain and her feminist discourse in inclusive development of muslim women.

Interrogative Encounters: Gendered Lives, Power Dynamics, and Legal Pluralisms in Mughal India, 1500s-1600s

-Tanya Kumar (Independent Research Scholar)

The paper intends to examine the Islamic jurisprudence, imperial customs, and the regional legal apparatuses throughout the 16th and 17th centuries under the aegis of the Mughal Empire. In examining the legal instruments, particularly those in elite and courtly positions, were active agents who engaged with legal norms, negotiated power, and contributed to the shaping of imperial governance from within the domestic sphere. By centring women's experiences and strategies, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the Mughal state as one in which gender, law,

and politics were deeply entangled. The legal document portrays that the women were inheriting, purchasing, selling, and even mortgaging the property and their disputes were taken into consideration by the court of law. Women's control of property is viewed as a silent resistance in the system of kinship. Nevertheless, women were subjected to harassment from the officials to retain control over their property. Furthermore that law as a tool delineates codes of conduct and the social mobility of women. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to the growing body of scholarship that reclaims the academic narrative of the power of gender, examining the experiences in South Asian history. It aims to illuminate the gendered dimensions of imperial governance. The limitation of the resources at the disposal of the "lower" and ostracised caste women and yet most of the surviving document on this are mostly by the "upper caste/class".

Negotiation and Collaboration: Male Islamic Scholars and Women's Reform in 19th and 20th Century India

-Mohd Siddique Khan (Asst. Prof., Dehradun University of Technology)

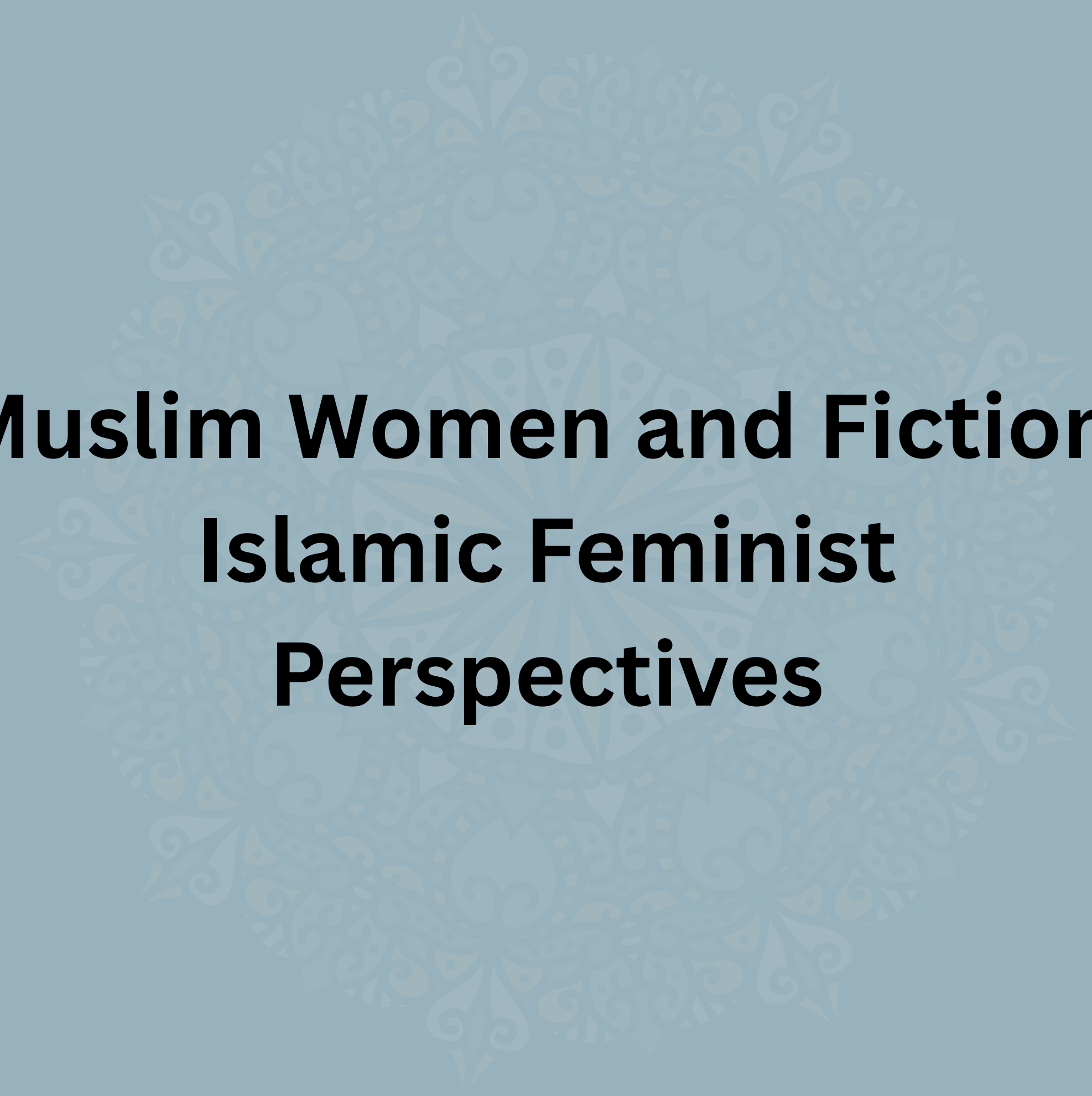
The position male Islamic scholars held in shaping the reforms for Muslim women in colonial India has been a subject of praise as well as criticism. By "Islamic", I refer to those who were either educated in Islamic theology or were propagators of a specific Islamic school of thought. The case of two men is exemplary. Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi (1863-1943), a renowned Islamic scholar, wrote *Bihishti Zewar* (Heavenly Ornaments) (1900s), a popular book of conduct that instructed Shareef Muslim families on the duties and rights of women in Islam. Another was Syed Mumtaz Ali (1860-1935), who studied at Deoband. He published *Huquq-e Niswan* (1898), a book dedicated to the upliftment of women's intellectual and domestic standards, aligning with Islamic principles. They, along with many others, wrote important texts and negotiated, to varying degrees, the condition of women, seeking changes that aligned with their understanding of legal (fiqh), doctrinal (kalam), philosophical (falsafa), or Sufi (tasawwuf) aspects of Islam. These men had to employ interpretative strategies to bolster their claims from the Quran and Hadith regarding women's education, health, intellect, and individuality. However, their arguments often seem to reinforce certain patriarchal conventions as well. Thus, their negotiation and collaboration were both welcoming and susceptible to liberation and suppression of Muslim women in the late 19th and early 20th century. The paper reads the contentious position of these religious male scholars regarding Muslim women's reform. It analyses their approach to interpreting Islamic doctrines and values in transforming women's lives

Retrieving the Archives: Forgotten Feminists from South Asia

-Dr. Huma Hasan (Asst. Prof., Aligarh Muslim University)

This paper will attempt to explore the contribution of Muslim women in the history of South Asia, by retrieving rare historical documents. Most of the scholarship of Women's Studies and feminist history in post-independent India has focused on the work of either male social reformers or on reformers belonging to the majority community, that too, mostly from Bengal and Maharashtra. This gap has often led to popular misconceptions about Muslim women thereby portraying them as passive victims of Muslim personal law and Islam.

This paper however attempts to fill in this gap by focusing on the works and lives of two Muslim women reformers from South Asia. This mother daughter duo, which this paper focuses on are Begum Khursheed Khawaja and Begum Sarbuland Jung. Begum Khursheed Khawaja and her husband Abdul Majid Khawaja was closely associated with the founding of Jamia Millia Islamia, however Begum Khawaja's role and contribution has largely been sidelined both in Jamia and in the larger feminist history of South Asia. Her mother Sarbuland Jung is another dynamic Muslim female reformer and travel writer who has been forgotten in the annals of feminist history of South Asia. Begum Jung wrote a largely unexplored travel narrative in 1909. This travel narrative was published in the 1930s and the latter. Jung's daughter Begum Khursheed Khawaja was the editor and publisher of one of the first nationalist Urdu women's newspaper of South Asia. This newspaper was named *Hind*. Begum Khawaja was also a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi and an advocate for Muslim women's education. She also established the Hameedia School for Girls at Allahabad, the school was later upgraded to a degree college by her daughter Begum Akhter Ajmal Khan. These women happen to be my grandmothers and by retrieving their lives and works this paper will attempt to trace the historical trajectory of Muslim women's scholarship and activism in South Asia.



Muslim Women and Fiction: Islamic Feminist Perspectives

A Study of Islamic Feminist Perspectives in Fiction With Reference to Rajaa Al-Sanea's Girls of Riyadh

-Shiva Upadhayay (Research Scholar, Central University of Rajasthan)

The paper examines the overlap of Islamic feminist literary criticism with *Girls of Riyadh* (2005), a novel, which examines the ambitions, challenges, and identities of four young Saudi women in a confining patriarchal and religious system. The literary and cultural culture of marginalizing the voice of women in Arab society is also challenged by Al-Sanea through her novel form of narrative, which is epistolary and confessional using online storytelling. The paper places *Girls of Riyadh* somewhere in the spectrum of Islamic feminist ideas, where women reconstruct the religious texts and social conventions to demonstrate their agency without having to abandon their religion. The writing therefore by Al-Sanea is a literary expression of opposition to non-Islamic patriarchal culture that has continued to be expressed in Arab literary and cultural stories. This paper by creating parallels between the Islamic feminism and the Western feminist theories brings out the similarities and differences in the paths taken by the two traditions.

Finally, the novel by Al-Sanea can add to the discussion of Islamic feminism because it demonstrates that literature can be used as a space of empowerment, self-expression, and theological reconstruction. It challenges the audience to rethink how religion and gender interfere with the narrative of Muslim women and how the changing terrain of Muslim women writing is articulated as *Girls of Riyadh* is a foundational book in the history of Islamic feminism.

Beyond Prevailing Stereotypes: Islamic Feminist Readings of Contemporary Muslim Women's Fiction

-Bushra Zaman (Research Scholar) & Prof. Jawed S. Ahmed, Aligarh Muslim University)

By turning to the Qur'an and emphasizing its messages of justice, equality, and spiritual parity, scholars like Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas demonstrate that patriarchy stems not from Islam itself but from centuries of male-centered interpretations. This perspective allows Muslim women to claim agency from within their religious tradition rather than abandoning it to fit Western liberal models of liberation. Through this framework, the paper aims to analyze four contemporary novels: Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* (2005), Randa Abdel-Fattah's *Does My Head Look Big in This?* (2005), Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (2006), and Elif Shafak's *Honor* (2012). Each text reimagines Muslim women's identities in ways that resist reductive Western stereotypes. In *Minaret*, Aboulela portrays Najwa's journey from political exile to spiritual rediscovery, showing how faith becomes a source of dignity and resilience. Shafak's *Honor* examines family, migration, and cultural clashes, complicating the image of the Muslim woman by depicting the tragic consequences of patriarchal honor codes without dismissing religion altogether. Abdel-Fattah's young adult novel challenges Islamophobic assumptions by following Amal, an Australian teenager who chooses to wear the hijab and asserts her Muslim identity with humor and confidence. Similarly, Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* portrays a Syrian-American woman negotiating between cultural conservatism, American secularism, and her evolving understanding of Islam, ultimately finding empowerment in faith on her own terms. Therefore, the present paper attempts to challenge the stereotypical Westernized notions of Islam and womanhood.

Biwi ka Mahr": Islamic Feminism in the Urdu Public Sphere and the Azad Hind Rhetoric

-Kainaat Ghazal (Research Fellow, ILSR-JU)

This paper performs a microanalysis of an editorial which appeared in *Azad Hind*, the Urdu daily published in 1985 in Kolkata. "Biwi ka Mahr", the editorial which was published in the immediate aftermath of the Shah Bano case, redefines Mahr not only as an important subset of Islamic jurisprudence but also of decolonial feminist praxis. In studying the Mahr (the obligatory bride gift in Islam), the text abides by a feminist *ijtihad* rooted in Islamic hermeneutics and scriptural references. It places the Shah Bano case as a crucial moment in Indian history which reanimated Muslim

women's rights in postcolonial India. For its reading public, the editorial offers alternative epistemologies of gender justice from within the Islamic tradition, as opposed to Eurocentric positions on feminist reform which often invalidate Islamic feminism as an oxymoron. In doing so, the editorial also exhibits the feminist consciousness of Urdu Sahafat in Kolkata and depicts Azad Hind as a decolonial knowledge producer which reconciles faith and reform. This research will build upon the works of the Indian Islamic scholar Asghar Ali Engineer, the American anthropologist Sylvia Vatuk and her research on Islamic jurisprudence and family law in India, the Muslim feminist thought specialist Lana Sirri and the distinguished scholar Asma Barlas and her works on Qur'anic hermeneutics. The paper follows an Islamic feminist perspective to unearth archival data, perform discourse analysis and re-interpret Urdu public sphere debates as feminist decolonial praxis.

Bridging the Gap Between Islamic Jurisprudence and the Quest for Gender Justice: A Postcolonial Feminist Reading of Banu Mushtaq's Selected Short Stories

-Afroz Bano (Research Scholar, University of Lucknow)

This paper focuses on the relationship between Islamic jurisprudence and gender justice, with a particular focus on the disparities between theoretical principles and their practical application in society. At the doctrinal level, Islamic teachings grant women dignity, respect, and a wide range of rights including access to education, property, inheritance, and participation in social, economic, and spiritual life. Cultural norms, traditional interpretations, and entrenched patriarchal structures frequently restrict women's access to the very rights safeguarded by Islamic law. As a result, discussions of rights and justice tend to prioritize male concerns, thereby marginalizing women and obscuring the egalitarian dimensions of Islamic jurisprudence. This study argues that such disparities are not inherent to Islamic doctrine but arise from socio-cultural and historical contexts that shape its interpretation and implementation. To illustrate these gaps, the paper employs hermeneutic analysis of literary works of Banu Mushtaq's short stories Heart Lamp and Be a Woman Once, Oh Lord. This paper integrates postcolonial feminist theory with qualitative methods to underscore the need to revisit societal and cultural frameworks in order to reclaim Islam's original principles that affirm women's rights. In essay "Can Subaltern Speak?" by Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak wrote that "The subaltern cannot speak" (Spivak), emphasize how marginalized section especially women have no place in dominant discourse similar to Muslim women's status being ignored in Islamic discourse. This paper deals with interpretive practices that align more closely with the egalitarian ideals of Islamic jurisprudence, emphasizing the importance of bridging the gap between theory and practice to achieve meaningful gender justice in contemporary societies.

Contemporary Reflections on Islamic Jurisprudence: Gender and Family Law in Transition

-Diya Fathima P (Scholar, Al Batool Islamic College For Women)

As the world continues to evolve rapidly, revolutionary transformations are taking place both intellectually and materially. Within this context, issues of gender equality and women's freedom in Islam have become central topics in contemporary socio-cultural discourse. The Islamic jurisprudence presents a comprehensive and empowering vision regarding marriage, divorce, inheritance and guardianship.

This study explores the revolutionary potential of the fiqh in shaping modern conceptions of gender justice within the Islamic tradition. By critically analyzing misconceptions and prejudiced perceptions about women, it reveals the profound representations of equality and dignity embedded in the Quranic discourse.

Drawing upon modern Islamic feminist interpretations, this study demonstrates that the Islam provides an integrated framework of women's physical autonomy and moral responsibility. By engaging with contemporary gender-neutral approaches, it strives to reinterpret the Islamic perspective on women in a more just and holistic manner. The core objective of this research is to address and correct the distorted social perceptions of Islam concerning women's freedom through the lens of Sharia thought.

Faith, Identity, and the Muslim Female Migrant in Leila Aboulela's Fiction

- Dr. Khedidja Chergui (L'Ecole Normale Supérieure de Bouzaréah, Algiers)

Literature for Leila Aboulela, the Sudanese UK-based novelist, is a way to resist misrepresentation and reclaim agency in contemporary societies. This paper looks into two narrative cases with different female characters who take similar paths on their way to assert their identities as Muslim women in the UK. The female characters and their stories are chosen from Aboulela's *Minaret* (2005) and *The Kindness of Enemies* (2015). In the two novels, the female characters' identities oscillate between "breaches" in the face of racism, estrangement, and xenophobia in British society, and the "conciliations" with their past and Islamic faith and heritage, which they implore in their attempt to survive the unknown and embrace it. The struggles of Aboulela's female characters can be seen to be reflective of the vulnerability of Muslim women in many contemporary Western societies, especially those wearing headscarves, whose stories and daily experiences are still underrepresented in literature. To resist religiously-instigated violence and biases, Aboulela's female characters resort to their faith and inner resourcefulness, without necessarily denying their sense of Britishness. Their resistance lies in their efforts to reconcile their Muslim and British identities in ways that help them overcome the challenges of integrating into contemporary British society.

Illuminating the Lamp Within: An Islamic Feminist Discourse on Banu Mushtaq's Heart Lamp

-Dr. Arshi Khan (Asst. Prof., Integral University)

This paper seeks to examine the socio-economic and political condition of Muslim women in South Asian societies, emphasizing how gendered oppression has been deliberated under the guise of religious authority. It explores the concept and evolution of Islamic Feminism—a movement that reclaims the egalitarian spirit of Islam while challenging patriarchal misreadings of the Qur'an and the Hadith. The present study highlights the ongoing identity crises, alienation, and sense of loss experienced by Muslim women who are forced to suppress their individuality and selfhood in the face of cultural acceptance. To illustrate these concerns, the paper unfolds the beautiful tales by Banu Mushtaq in her *Heart Lamp*, which is a compelling collection of short stories that exposes the emotional and moral anguish of women confined within patriarchal boundaries. Through her narratives, Mushtaq foregrounds the muted pain and resilience of women whose struggles remain unacknowledged in a male-dominated world. Ultimately, this paper argues that true Islamic Feminism does not lie in the rejection of faith but in its reclamation. It urges a return to the original, egalitarian tenets of Islam—those that recognize women as equal moral agents—while advocating for social transformation through education, awareness, and reinterpretation. Muslim women must reclaim their voices and assert their rights within both the religious and public domains, challenging the very structures that have historically silenced them.

Muslim Women in Muslim Diaspora

-Dr. Suab Ahmed (Asst. Prof., University of Delhi)

The present research paper proposes to explore the representation of Muslim women and Islam in the discourses of contemporary South Asian Diasporic Muslim women who have migrated from South Asian countries to foreign nations. It investigates the multifarious notions on the transforming cultural, social, religious and gendered identities of Muslim women after migrating from homeland to hostland. It seeks to highlight how these Muslim diasporic women are seen by their family and society; and how they see their family and society in the foreign countries. It tries to explore how these women raise the question of natural justice, equality, dignity and education. It investigates how do Muslim women create a contact zone to practice their Islamic culture while going through the process of assimilation of culture in the current foreign locations—especially in England and America since select writers have migrated to these nations from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. So, the paper investigates the emerging narratives on Muslim women and Islam in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003), Samina Ali's *Madras on Rainy Days* (2004) and Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* (2017). The select texts lay out various socio-political and cultural issues of South Asian Muslim women concerning the aspects of cultural assimilation and integration with the culture of foreign

nation. It exposes how their loyalties and faith are seen with doubt by the people of host countries. It adopts interdisciplinary research methodology to proliferate the core contour of the paper since material has been drawn from various disciplines such as sociology, psychology, cultural studies, gender studies, politics, history and literature.

Narrating Liberation: Fiction As Queer Islamic Feminist Praxis

-Mohammed Aslam M P (Scholar, Darul Huda Islamic University)

This paper examines the critical nexus of Islamic feminism and decolonial thought, focusing on contemporary fiction by Muslim women as a vital site for developing alternative epistemologies, ethics, and praxis. We argue that these literary works, particularly when analysed through an intersectional lens that includes queer perspectives, are not merely cultural products but active agents in dismantling colonial legacies and patriarchal structures. They offer profound insights into the lived realities of Muslim women, challenging both Western Islamophobia stereotypes and internal dogmatic interpretations of faith. From an epistemological standpoint, this fiction serves as a powerful counter-narrative. It generates knowledge rooted in embodied experience, subverting the colonial gaze that has historically defined and constrained Muslim femininity. Ethically, these narratives propose a framework of “textual ijtihād,” where authors reinterpret religious and cultural traditions to forge more compassionate and just ethics, a project made particularly salient through the inclusion of queer experiences. Finally, engaging with this body of fiction constitutes a form of decolonial praxis, fostering critical consciousness and solidarity. In conclusion, this paper posits that the confluence of Islamic feminism, queer theory, and literary expression forges a path toward decolonial futures by cultivating the epistemological diversity, ethical complexity, and transformative praxis necessary to build worlds free from intersecting oppressions.

Reimagining Ladyland: Decolonial Futures and Islamic Feminist Ethics in Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain’s Sultana’s Dream

-Prof. Aditi Sarkar (Adjunct Faculty, Christ University)

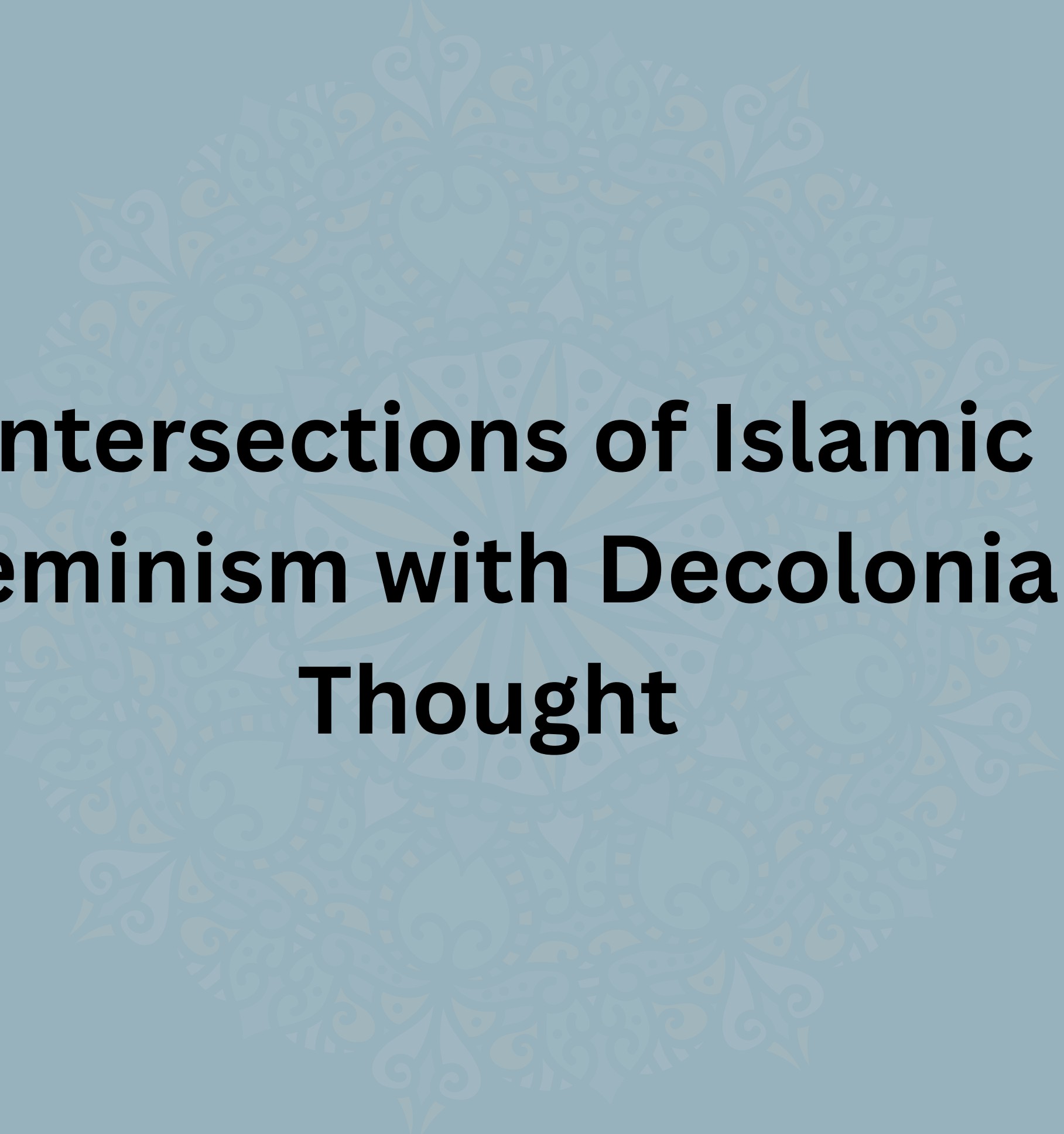
This paper argues that Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain’s 1905 novella, “Sultana’s Dream,” should be understood as a foundational text of decolonial Islamic feminist thought. Written during the height of British rule in India, the story is not a simple utopian fantasy but a powerful political and social critique. It challenges the interlocking systems of colonial power and local patriarchy that severely limited the lives of Muslim women. The novella demonstrates the core purpose of Islamic feminism, which is a movement that seeks to reclaim women’s right to interpret religious texts and traditions in order to advance gender justice from within a faith-based framework. Hossain’s work provides an early and imaginative example of this project, offering a vision of liberation that is neither a copy of Western models nor a submission to patriarchal norms. The story’s genius lies in its creation of Ladyland, a utopian society that functions as a direct alternative to the world Hossain inhabited. This paper analyzes how Hossain uses the literary device of role reversal, where men are peacefully secluded in mardanas (the male equivalent of female zenanas), to expose the arbitrary and oppressive nature of socially constructed gender roles. She argues through her narrative that gender segregation is not a religious requirement but a social construction designed to maintain male power. Furthermore, Ladyland presents a different kind of modernity. Its society is technologically advanced, powered by clean solar energy, and committed to non-violence and ecological harmony. This vision directly contrasts with the industrial, militaristic, and environmentally damaging model of the British Empire. This analysis connects the ethical framework of Ladyland to core Qur’anic principles. The society’s deep sense of social harmony reflects the concept of tawhīd (the unity of God and creation). Its responsible use of natural resources embodies the principle of khilafah (humanity’s role as stewards of the Earth). Finally, the complete gender equality that forms the basis of its political order is a powerful expression of ‘adl (divine justice). In doing so, Hossain creatively reinterprets these core Islamic values to build a blueprint for a just society. By situating Hossain’s work alongside the modern theories of scholars like Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas, this paper frames the novella as an early act of ijtihād, or independent reasoning, expressed through fiction. “Sultana’s Dream” anticipates the central arguments of today’s Islamic feminists, including

the critique of patriarchal religious laws (fiqh) and the demand for women's full and equal participation in all spheres of life. Ultimately, Hossain's story offers a timelessly relevant vision that collapses the false binaries between tradition and modernity, or faith and progress. It presents a holistic model for liberation where ecological sustainability, social justice, and spiritual values work together to create a truly free society.

Writing as Survival: Analysing Lived Realities of Muslim Women through Fadwa Tuqan's Autobiography A Mountainous Journey

-Irum Khurshid (Research Scholar) & Dr Adiba Faiyaz (Aligarh Muslim University)

This paper explores the intersection of lived experiences of a Muslim Palestinian woman in Fadwa Tuqan's autobiography *A Mountainous Journey* (1990). Tuqan's narrative foregrounds the struggles of a Muslim woman navigating the patriarchal confines of a conservative Palestinian society while simultaneously witnessing the political upheavals of occupation and displacement. Her autobiography charts her trajectory from confinement in a patriarchal household to her emergence as one of Palestine's most powerful poetic voices. She recalls the abrupt end of her education at thirteen, the subsequent behaviour of her conservative father and the resulting anxiety and disorientation caused by enforced silence and isolation. Tuqan situates these struggles alongside the broader national catastrophe of the 1948 Nakba and the continuing displacement of her people. This paper highlights how personal crisis of gendered oppression intersect with the collective suffering of a nation under occupation delving into the enforced seclusion leading to recurring doubts and psychological distress. This paper would further describe the stifling atmosphere of a typical Muslim household where women's movements and voices were tightly controlled, offering a testimony to the struggles faced by Muslim women negotiating between identity and tradition. Writing became Tuqan's lifeline, allowing her to channel the pain of isolation and patriarchal oppression into creative expression. Her text illuminates how women's lives are shaped by cultural and religious frameworks, yet also how resistance can emerge from within these structures. Building on these textual accounts, this paper will analyse how Tuqan's autobiography resonating with the principles of Islamic feminism illustrates the dual burden borne by Palestinian women in patriarchal and colonial contexts. By situating her voice within her autobiography, Tuqan exemplifies how lived experience itself becomes a radical act of resistance, bridging the personal and the political. This paper would lastly argue that *A Mountainous Journey* not only documents her individual story but also embodies a wider feminist praxis rooted in Palestinian Muslim community and culture.



Intersections of Islamic Feminism with Decolonial Thought

Decolonizing Epistemologies: Reclaiming Women's Mystical Voices in the Medieval Islamic World

-Dr. Gulrukh Khan (Asst. Prof., Aligarh Muslim University)

This paper reclaims the suppressed intellectual and spiritual contributions of women mystics in the medieval Islamic world through a decolonial and feminist epistemological lens. It challenges dominant historiographies that have rendered female mystics either invisible or apolitical by resituating them as interpreters, theorists, and reformers of spiritual and moral knowledge. The study focuses on five key figures such as Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya (8 th century Basra), ‘Ā’isha al-Bā‘ūniyya (15 th century Damascus), Bībī Fāṭima Sām (13 th century Delhi), Jahanara Begum (17 th century Mughal India), and Zeb-un-Nissa (Makhfī) (17 th century Mughal India), whose writings and practices collectively demonstrate how mystical experience became a site of epistemic sovereignty and ethical critique. Drawing on decolonial feminist theory and Miranda Fricker’s concept of epistemic injustice, the paper examines how these women’s engagement with ma‘rifa (mystical knowing) and ‘ishq (divine love) challenged the intertwined structures of patriarchal jurisprudence and colonial modernity. This intervention positions women’s mystical epistemologies as a decolonial archive of feminist thought, one that predates and transcends modern Western feminist paradigms. Through close textual reading and comparative historical analysis, the study argues that these women cultivated alternative moral and interpretive economies grounded in love, humility, and self-annihilation (fanā’), which constituted profound critiques of authority and hierarchy. Ultimately, this paper calls for a reorientation of feminist and Islamic studies toward a more inclusive epistemic framework that acknowledges the plurality of knowledge traditions.

Decolonizing Islamic Feminism: Epistemological Challenges and Ethical Possibilities

-Muhammed Aslam P (Research Scholar, Darul Huda Islamic University)

Islamic feminism has become an influential intellectual and social movement committed to reclaiming women’s agency in Islamic epistemologies and resisting the homogenizing discourses of Western feminism. The project of decolonizing Islamic feminism, however, is challenged by longstanding epistemological issues. On the one hand, colonial inheritances still dominate mainstream feminist discourses, tending to represent Muslim women as passive subjects awaiting liberation. Conversely, internal patriarchal interpretations of Islamic texts limit women’s interpretive privilege and access to ethical justice. This essay analyzes these two challenges by placing Islamic feminism at the center as a decolonial epistemology that navigates between faith-based epistemologies and present-day struggles for gender justice. Drawing on Qur’anic hermeneutics, Hadith studies, and the jurisprudential principles of ijtihad (independent reasoning) and maqasid al-shari‘ah (objectives of Islamic law), this study argues that Islamic feminism provides alternative modes of knowledge production that resist both Eurocentric universalism and cultural essentialism. Ethical possibilities emerge when feminist reinterpretations are grounded in Islamic concepts such as “adl” (justice), “rahman” (compassion), and “karamah” (dignity),, allowing praxis to move beyond resistance into constructive transformation.

Decolonizing Islamic Tradition: Islamic Feminism as Epistemic and Ethical Renewal

-Dr. Talha Rehman (Teacher, Amity Private School, Sharjah)

The paper examines how Islamic feminist thought enacts epistemic and ethical reconfiguration from within the tradition. Islamic feminism is neither monolithic nor uniform; it comprises a plurality of voices, methodologies, and interpretive strategies. This study critically assesses these diverse approaches, distinguishing arguments and methods that advance a genuinely decolonial understanding of Islam from those still constrained by colonial epistemic frameworks and inherited assumptions about gender and authority. In doing so, it argues that decolonial Islamic feminism is

not merely concerned with reforming discrete practices or addressing specific gender injustices but undertakes a radical rethinking of the interpretive and ethical foundations of the Islamic tradition itself. At the heart of this project is the recognition of the Islamic tradition as living, contingent, and historically situated. Law, theology, and ethical norms are neither fixed nor immutable; they are continuously shaped through human agency, historical processes, and ethical reflection. The paper examines the methodological strategies through which feminist scholarship enacts this transformative work. Through reinterpretation, historical contextualization, and ethical reasoning, feminist thinkers reveal the interpretive and normative possibilities latent within the tradition. By approaching the tradition as open, contested, and evolving, feminist scholarship demonstrates how Muslims can exercise critical and creative agency, shaping normative frameworks that align with ethical responsibility and contemporary moral sensibilities, and thereby contributing to a decolonial horizon for Islamic thought.

Oppana as Decolonial Praxis: Muslim Women, Affective Labour, and Islamic Feminist Ethics in Kerala's Wedding Performance

-Aiswarya Nanda V (Scholar, Banaras Hindu University)

Oppana, a traditional performance form practiced predominantly by Muslim women in Kerala's Malabar region, is most often performed during wedding ceremonies. It combines mappila pattu (a traditional song genre), rhythmic clapping, and synchronized gestures to celebrate the bride's arrival while invoking blessings, communal joy, and aesthetic pleasure. This study explores Oppana not merely as a cultural performance but as a decolonial praxis through which Muslim women articulate ethical relations, aesthetic sensibilities, and communal memory via affective labor. By analyzing both its performative and socio-cultural dimensions, the paper situates Oppana within Islamic feminist frameworks, emphasizing how the form negotiates faith, gendered labor, and resistance to patriarchal and colonial epistemologies. Drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation, it examines how Oppana is sustained and transmitted across generations without losing its cultural essence. Engaging with Islamic feminist theories (Leila Ahmed, Amina Wadud), decolonial aesthetics (Walter D. Mignolo, Rolando Vázquez), and performance studies (Diana Taylor, Dwight Conquergood), this research foregrounds women's affective and aesthetic labor as sites of creativity spirituality, and resistance.

Reclaiming Knowledge and Justice: Decolonial Dimensions of Islamic Feminism

-Dr. Farah Shahin (Research Associate, Indian Institute of Public Administration)

This paper examines Islamic feminism as a decolonial and epistemological project that challenges both internal patriarchal structures and external orientalist discourses. Through the pioneering work of Fatima Mernissi and her influence on later scholars such as Amina Wadud, Asma Barlas, Kecia Ali, and Sadiyya Shaikh, the paper traces how feminist reinterpretations of sacred texts have reshaped understandings of gender, power, and faith. Mernissi's interrogation of misogynistic hadith and her call for women's active engagement in Qur'anic interpretation mark a crucial epistemic shift toward self-authored feminist theology. The study argues that Islamic feminism's decolonial dimension lies in reclaiming Islam's own ethical and intellectual resources to articulate gender justice. Its epistemology is rooted in the idea that knowledge and faith are not mutually exclusive but interdependent sources of liberation. Ethically, it foregrounds equality, reciprocity, and moral accountability as divine imperatives. As praxis, it extends from hermeneutical reform to social activism, transforming debates on sexuality, mosque participation, and women's leadership into acts of decolonial resistance. Ultimately, Islamic feminism reclaims the right of Muslim women to define their own narratives of faith, freedom, and justice.

The Problem of Historicity: Why Islamic Feminism Fails to Decolonise the Qur'an?

-Dr. Zahra Mohagheghian (Asst. Prof., Humboldt Foundation, Germany)

Islamic feminism has emerged as a crucial project aimed at decolonizing and re-reading the Qur'an to challenge patriarchal interpretations and reclaim a tradition of gender justice. While a decolonial impulse lies at the heart of this movement, this paper argues that its current epistemological framework often falls short of its stated goals. By failing to engage with a rigorous, historically-grounded methodology, much of Islamic feminist scholarship inadvertently reproduces the very male-centered authority it seeks to dismantle. My critique centers on the project's methodological shortcomings. A truly decolonial future for Islamic thought, one that moves beyond inherited patriarchal structures, requires an honest and unflinching engagement with the historical context of its core texts. However, many Muslim feminist interpretations lack a clear understanding of the historicity of the Quran, both in terms of its external context (the cultural, social, and political milieu of seventh-century Arabia) and its internal context (the literary and rhetorical features of the text). Without this historical perspective, interpretations often impose modern egalitarian ideals on a pre-modern text. This leads to selective readings, where feminists highlight verses that align with their views while ignoring those that appear patriarchal. This approach turns the Qur'an into an ideological tool, reinforcing its male-centered nature by validating it as an ultimate, timeless authority. In essence, the text's power is not truly questioned but merely re-dressed in a new ideological outfit, ensuring its patriarchal underpinnings remain alive and well beneath a veneer of reinterpretation.

This paper's argument is two fold, relying on an analysis of two distinct groups of Qur'anic verses: The first group comprises verses that describe the gendered and historical characteristics of Allāh. Contrary to popular feminist views that present Allāh as a non-gendered being, a historical-critical reading reveals a divine figure who is distinctly masculine and exclusive. The narrative of Allāh's victory over female goddesses (such as al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt) reveals a power dynamic of conquest, not cooperation. This foundational act of divine masculinity is central to the Qur'an's theological project and is ignored by feminists.

The second group of verses includes the creation narratives and the story of Mary. I argue that the language and rhetorical devices in these narratives subtly reinforce male dominance. By analyzing these stories from the perspective of the male unconscious, I show how a narrative seemingly "about women" becomes a tool for securing male power. This literary style makes it difficult for female readers to identify with characters who have been disempowered.

Ultimately, I argue that a parallel, historical reading of these two groups of verses reveals a coherent and specific plan within the Qur'an for the subjugation of female power. For Islamic feminism to genuinely contribute to a decolonial future, it must first undergo a rigorous self-critique of its own epistemology. A truly transformative project must move beyond selective, ideologically-driven readings and embrace a methodological framework that unflinchingly engages with the Qur'an's historical reality, even if that reality reveals uncomfortable truths. Only by adopting a more intellectually honest and rigorous approach can Islamic feminism move beyond a mere reproduction of patriarchal authority and forge a path toward a truly emancipatory and just future.



Lived Experiences of Muslim Women and Grassroots Activism

A Feminist Cultural Materialist reading of Marsiyas: The icon of Zaynab in the 21st century

-Madeeha Ahmad & Saim Raza (Scholars, Aligarh Muslim University)

The Marsiyas written around the tragedy of Karbala have been usually read from the perspective of male martyrs, especially Hussain ibne Ali and his companions. However, the atrocities inflicted upon the women who accompanied the men to the Karbala are often not focused upon and are very marginally discussed by the males. The females who participate in mourning ceremonies called as Majlis in Moharram, relate more with those women and use the Elegies that have been written around the character of Zaynab, the sister of Hussain, who led his movement after his martyrdom. The women relate with the loss of loved ones, inability to weep over one's loss and to lose their dignity at the hands of the enemy soldiers. The paper looks at Marsiyas written by Mir Anees, Mirza Dabeer, Mir Mounis, Payam Azmi around the character of Zaynab and how it is performed in female spaces in the Majlis mourning ceremonies. The paper will conduct this enquiry in a threefold manner: first the writings of the aforementioned writers wherein Marsiyas will be analysed for their affective narration of the struggles of Zaynab and how a male describes the problems of Zaynab who is a lady, secondly the paper will conduct a survey as to how the females in these mourning ceremonies relate to this text and how the traumatic memory becomes a postmemory and a site of resistance, and finally the paper will look at how the image or the perspective of Zaynab has evolved through time in the collective memory with the change in times and the era of female independence and modernity.

Bodies in Resistance: Muslim Women Activism and the Politics of Visibility

-Nilofar Anjum Siddiqui (Research Scholar, Jawaharlal Nehru University)

The question of Muslim women's political activism has been obscured by stereotyping of Muslims and Islam. Muslim women are often reduced to the subjects of inquiry without being allowed much control over the interpretations of their actions. As Muslim women coming in forefront and leading the protests disrupts the mainstream perception of oppressed Muslim women lacking public voice and agency. As Sara Ahmed (2021) argues “Perhaps we can more easily tell whom spaces are intended for when those for whom they were not intended turn up”. This is the reason that Muslim women decide to participate in sort of culture of resistance that can help them to navigate a space for them made for dominant section which is a reductive one that fails to encompass the totality of the Muslim women experience. They are residing within a space which was not created to store the non-normative bodies. This helps to carve out spaces that allow for the articulation of alternative experiences. ‘Protestors are space invaders’ (Routledge, 2017: 1). At the same time, protesters [re]make space because it is never static, but rather plural, multiple and subject to transformation. Muslim women were using their bodies to disrupt the fields of visibility on the streets, that is, who is seen, and when, where, and how. The presence of Muslim women changes the nature and meaning of these protest sites and led to the initiation of new discourse. This paper will try to look into the notion of political activism among Muslim women from Middle East and South Asia, and how these women begin to engage with issues and questions they had previously not considered, heralding a new era of revolution.

From Karachi to Guantánamo: The Silencing of Aafia Siddiqui and the Politics of Muslim Womanhood

-Rubaiya Nasrin (Research Scholar, Jadavpur University)

This study interrogates the transnational “rescue narrative” that has long framed Muslim women as passive victims of Islamic patriarchy awaiting emancipation through Western intervention. Drawing on literary texts such as Aafia Unheard (2019) and documentaries on Dr. Aafia Siddiqui—whose incarceration epitomizes gendered violence in the post-9/11 “War on Terror”—the paper exposes how Western media and humanitarian discourse mobilize gendered suffering to justify imperial and militarized interventions from Afghanistan to Gaza. Analyses of 3000 Nights (2015), The Feeling of Being Watched (2018), The Light in Her Eyes (2011), and Women of Islam (2004) reveal how Muslim women’s bodies are constructed as sites of surveillance, captivity, and control

under the guise of liberation. Engaging Islamic feminist scholarship by Amina Wadud, Asma Barlas, and Saba Mahmood, the paper argues for epistemic sovereignty grounded in Qur’anic egalitarianism and hermeneutic autonomy against both patriarchal and secular-liberal co-optations.

Parallely, the work of Shadiya Zubair Ummalil examines Islamic ethics, embodied practices, and gendered subjectivities among Muslim girls in Kerala, India. Using Paulo Freire’s critical consciousness framework and narrative interviews, it explores how values of modesty, obedience, and piety—often seen as oppressive—are rearticulated by young women as moral agency and subtle resistance. Together, these inquiries demonstrate that Islamic feminism operates as a decolonial praxis: it reclaims interpretive and embodied agency, challenges the weaponization of Muslim women’s identities, and articulates an alternative framework of freedom grounded in faith, dignity, and self-defined empowerment.

Gendered Subjectivities in the Educational Experiences of Muslim Girls in Kerala

-Shadiya Zubair Ummalil (Scholar, Central University of Punjab)

My research explores how class, gender, and religious norms intersect to shape the embodied experiences of girls and women in conservative Muslim communities in Kerala, India, particularly in relation to educational access and moral agency. At its core, this project investigates how Islamic ethical expectations, around modesty, obedience, silence, and piety, are inscribed onto female bodies and internalized through social and religious conditioning. I draw on Paulo Freire’s concept of critical consciousness to understand how girls and young women in these contexts either internalize or resist dominant ethical and social narratives. By integrating Islamic ethical reasoning with feminist theory, intersectionality, and theories of embodied cognition, my aim is to explore how these women exercise agency not always through overt resistance, but through subtle, embodied negotiations with religious norms. This study is especially concerned with how ethical frameworks derived from Islamic discourse shape aspirations, limit movement, and influence educational choices, and how women reinterpret these norms to forge pathways of possibility.

Where the City Ends and God Begins: Jamia Nagar as a Feminine Agentic Barzakh

-Khushi Khan & Hammadur Rahman (Research Scholar, Jamia Millia Islamia)

The paper rests within the conference’s larger focus on, ‘politics of knowledge production’, ‘lived practices of Muslim women’ and the tripartite matrix of ‘theory, faith and justice’. Drawing on this, it aims at uncoupling the analytical notion of agency from the political prescriptive project of dominant colonial, liberal-feminist, and Hindu majoritarian frameworks that often paint Muslim women as passive or oppressed.

Through the lens of Barzakh — an Islamic concept denoting a liminal, in-between space — I approach Jamia Nagar (frequently reduced to a place of civic dysfunction and communal anxiety) not just as a ghetto but as a site of liminal women ontology, where their everyday life unfolds between postmemories (Partition, communal trauma), present dilemmas (civic neglect, communal prejudice), and future hopes (education, dignity, protest). Rarely do these works center the lives of Muslim inhabitants generally and Muslim women inhabitants of these ghettos in particular, whose faith is not incidental but integral to how they inhabit, negotiate, and resist marginality. I am looking to fill up this gap by positing these two questions-

How does Islamic faith’s bodily enactment anchor Muslim women’s agency amidst marginalisation, violence, and neglect in Jamia Nagar ghetto? How has the idea of “being Muslim” evolved through and within this neighbourhood for women?

Like the ruins of Firoz Shah Kotla as Taneja elaborates in his book Jinnaeology- where letters to jinn lie folded in quiet hope- Jamia Nagar, too, becomes an archive of the unheard and God becomes a counter archivist transcending time and space.

**Digital and Cultural
Frontiers of Muslim
Feminism: Women's
Activism and
Representation in New
Media**

Digital Ijtihad: Instagram as a Site for Islamic Feminist Epistemology and Decolonial Praxis

-Abu Saad Shaikh (Scholar, Indira Gandhi National Open University)

This paper examines the transformative role of social media platforms in Islamic feminist knowledge production. It addresses a critical gap by investigating how South Asian Muslim feminist influencers on Instagram negotiate and reconfigure traditional religious epistemic authority. The central research question asks: What decolonial methodologies does this digital praxis offer for the future of Islamic feminism? Employing a qualitative digital ethnography, this study combines critical discourse analysis of prominent Instagram accounts with semi-structured interviews of the content creators. It analyses posts, Reels, and Stories engaging in Qur'anic exegesis, Hadith commentary, and ethical debates on gender and spirituality.

The paper argues that these digital actors are constructing a decolonial counter public, performing a grassroots ijtihad that democratizes religious interpretation. Through vernacular languages and interactive features, they challenge the hegemony of patriarchal religious institutions and Western secular feminism, advancing an "embodied epistemology" where lived experience becomes a valid source of Islamic knowledge. This research directly engages the conference's core themes, exploring new feminist epistemologies, digital activism, and postcolonial critiques. It demonstrates how digital mediations are shaping decolonial futures for Islamic feminism by translating ethical principles into accessible, community-driven praxis.

Dusting the Boudoir: Excavating Islam's Feminism from the Ruins of Cultural Bombardment

-Dr. Shakira Khatoon (Asst. Prof., Aligarh Muslim University)

This paper argues that Islam's feminism—the ethical and interpretive potential for gender justice within Islam—is not a modern invention but a buried intellectual and moral inheritance. It has been obscured by two intersecting forms of “cultural bombardment”: the Orientalist reconfigurations of Muslim womanhood that served colonial and imperial agendas, and the internal patriarchal appropriations that limited women's interpretive and spiritual agency within Muslim societies. Drawing upon the metaphor of dusting the boudoir, the paper conceives the recovery of Islam's feminism as a decolonial act—one that requires carefully removing layers of historical dust without disowning the room itself. Engaging the works of Leila Ahmed, Fatima Mernissi, Amina Wadud, Asma Barlas, and Saba Mahmood, it explores how Islam's feminism can be excavated from within the tradition through textual re-reading, historical recovery, and epistemic re-centering. The paper concludes that the future of feminist thought in Muslim contexts depends not on borrowing theoretical frameworks from elsewhere but on reclaiming the buried ethics of equality that lie at the heart of Islam's moral vision and reconciling the falsely created binary between Islam and Feminism.

Hardcovers and Hashtags: Transnational Feminist Archives in Neoliberal Economies

-Dr. Priyanka Das (Asst. Prof., Presidency University Kolkata)

What does it mean when Muslim women's literary voices, written as acts of resistance, become bestsellers in Western markets hungry for stories of veils and defiance? Can Islamic feminism sustain its political edge when its dissenting voices go beyond classroom syllabi and packaged into TED talks and Instagram reels curated for liberal consumption? These are the contradictions that animate this paper, which takes the works of Nawal El Saadawi, Elif Shafak, and Marjane Satrapi as case studies to explore the uneasy marriage between counter-archiving and transnational feminist marketability. Rather than treating Islamic feminism as a singular narrative of empowerment, this study reads it as a

field of contested circulation: a terrain where archives of trauma and rebellion, once articulated against patriarchal and theological control, risk becoming spectacles of liberal desire. Saadawi's furious chronicles of state violence and female oppression, for instance, have been routinely mined by Western media to reinforce an Orientalist script of "saving Muslim women," while her equally sharp critiques of imperialism are often erased. Shafak's fiction, celebrated as cosmopolitan feminism, enters the global literary circuit as a brand, her role as novelist conflated with the role of spokesperson for "modern Muslim womanhood." Satrapi's *Persepolis*, banned in Iran but canonized in French, American, and Indian classrooms, exemplifies how Muslim women's counter-archives acquire authority precisely through their estrangement from home cultures. Social media intensifies this dynamic: Goodreads reviews aestheticize trauma into "relatable reads," Instagram turns veiled rebellion into shareable aesthetics, and streaming services algorithmically curate stories of Muslim women into the global playlist of empowerment. The radical archive morphs into market spectacle, a transformation both enabling and corrosive.

The paper argues that Islamic feminism today must be understood as a doubled practice: it builds insurgent histories while navigating their commodification. To ask whether these voices are authentic or co-opted is to miss the point; their significance lies precisely in this unstable in-between, where power and desire intersect. Islamic feminism emerges as both archive and commodity, an act of defiance that is also a product on the shelf. The question is not whether one cancels the other, but how this tension itself defines the terrain of feminist struggle in the twenty-first century.

Islamic Feminist Perspectives on the Representation of Muslim Women in Tamil Cinema

-Dr. N. Nazini & Dr. A.R. Vimal Raj (Prof., Saveetha Institute Of Medical And Technical Sciences)

Cinema in India, especially in Tamil Nadu, is a powerful medium that shapes societal perceptions of community and identity, including the representation of Muslim women. Historically, Indian cinema has portrayed Muslims through a spectrum of stereotypes—ranging from exotic, traditional, and modest figures to extremists and terrorists—particularly after socio-political events such as the Indo-Pak partition, Kashmir insurgency, and the 9/11 attacks. These portrayals often marginalize Muslim women, depicting them as submissive, veiled, and confined within patriarchal and religious norms, which results in a limited, often negative public imagination of their identity. Tamil cinema, deeply rooted in local culture and politics, reflects and reinforces these stereotypes but also offers spaces for more nuanced depictions. This study analyzes selected Tamil films, including Mani Ratnam's *Nayakan* (1987), *Roja* (1992), and *Bombay* (1995), alongside other films such as *Mella Thiranthathu Kathavu* (1986) and *Pokkisham* (2009), to understand how Muslim women's identities are constructed on the screen. It employs film narratology, semiotic analysis, and Stuart Hall's theories of representation to decipher the symbolic coding, narrative structures, and ideological positions shaping these cinematic images. Findings indicate that Muslim women are often portrayed within stereotypical roles emphasizing chastity, religious piety, and domesticity, while their work, education, and career aspirations remain underexplored. The persistence of such limited portrayals reinforces socio-political prejudices and obscures the diverse realities of Muslim women. Islamic feminist perspectives challenge these reductions and advocate for authentic, empowering cinematic representations that reflect Muslim women's multifaceted identity and social participation. This work highlights cinema's influential role in cultural discourse and calls for responsible filmmaking that moves beyond clichés to foster social awareness, inclusivity, and equity in minority representation.

Representation of Muslim Female in Contemporary Bengali Language Cinema from India: Symbolic Annihilation Perspective

-Rosona Khatun (Research Scholar, Aliah University)

Cinema plays a critical role in setting the grand narrative of the society through the depiction of characters, situations, people, and communities. Post 9/11, we witnessed an outburst of Islamophobic

portrayals in films and other media across the world, including Hollywood and Bollywood (Islam, 2007; Ahmed and Matthes, 2017; Eijaz, 2018; Langha & Sengupta, 2022). Bengali language films produced in India have largely gone under the radar from academic scrutiny vis a vis their representations of Muslims. In Indian Bengali cinema, Muslim women are often represented as docile, subjugated, and oppressed by extremely conservative and patriarchal families. They are portrayed as the 'other,' and portrayed as oppressed, courtesan or tawaif. The primary objective of this study is to analyse the representation narrative of Muslim females in the Indian Bengali cinema in the symbolic annihilation aspects using the feminist theory of ambivalent sexism and applying critical discourse analysis. The study delineates the symbolic annihilation of characters portrayed by Muslim females in leading and supporting roles in contemporary Indian Bengali cinema released between 2015 and 2020, including Rajkahini (2015), Arshinagar (2015), Zulfiqar (2016), Nabab (2017), Noor Jahaan (2018), Misha (2019), Rawkto Rawhoshyo (2020), among others. The paper particularly focuses on two films Rajkahini and Misha to show how ambivalent sexism is portrayed in Muslim women's roles in Bengali language cinema from India. This paper analyses Muslim women's characters portrayed as the antagonists through Begum Jaan (Rajkahini) and Misha (Misha) characters. Rajkahini appears on an integer of symbolic points with a post-modern analysis of modifying centres. Begum Jaan's character (played by Rituparna Sengupta) shows the stereotypical prostitute of a brothel in West Bengal, who symbolises Muslim women as tawaif, oppressed by society, and 'other' from a communal perspective. Misha's character (played by Devika Sengupta) shows the sexist appearance of Muslim women with stereotypical attire of the ghost character and other Muslim women's characters portrayed in subaltern perspectives. The language used in both films about Muslim women characters manifest ambivalent sexism concepts in the textual narratives.



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