Introduction
Separating Fatima from Her Brother

Muhammad Ali and Fatima at home in Delhi, 1947 (Photo by Jack Wilkes/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images)

Pakistan is festooned with the name and likeness of Fatima Jinnah. Universities and hospitals, parks and roads the length and breadth of the country bear witness to her life. This honor stems from her role as *Khatun-i Pakistan* (First Lady of Pakistan) from the birth of the state in 1947 to the death in 1948 of her brother, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the *Qa'id-i 'Azam* (Great Leader) and first governor-general. Although the

title remained hers long after, the honorific most closely associated with her, at least from 1948 to the present, is even loftier: *Madar-i Millat*, the "Mother of the Nation."

The latter sign of respect was not conferred on Fatima by the state. She was raised to such exalted heights by the generation that supported the ideals of the All-India Muslim League (f. 1906), the political party that eventually led the charge for Pakistan in the late period of British colonial rule over South Asia. This, in and of itself, is quite a feat for a woman born in the late nineteenth century to a minor merchant family from the less-than-aristocratic Khoja community of Gujarat – a community that does not even belong to the majority Sunni sect of South Asia's Muslims. It did not hurt that she was the younger sister of the Muslim League's esteemed president. However, such relations are not the only reason for Fatima's distinction. After all, she was the youngest of four sisters and none of the others were so lauded. No less important than family ties is the fact that Fatima alone among her sisters embodied the ideals of womanhood upon which Pakistan was founded. She was English educated, a professional dentist and an unveiled social worker even before the word Pakistan was coined in the 1930s. And once the cause of Muslim nationalism became the official plank of the Muslim League, she was at the center of women's activism in its favor – a public personality even before the state's independence in 1947. Nor did Pakistan's creation dull the people's enthusiasm for this woman. In fact, it propelled her further into their consciousness, not as a political office holder, but as an advocate of citizens' rights to education, welfare and political participation. Her voice of conscience, in fact, was largely resented by the political elite whose own agendas more often than not conflicted with the interests of those they ruled. Her last public act, therefore, was to actually enter the political fray as the leader of a disparate coalition of opposition parties seeking to establish representative government in an environment choked by military-bureaucratic rule. She ran for president in 1964–5 – a time when men from east to west balked at the idea of women heads of state. She lost, as she herself predicted, but this final gesture of a woman then in her seventies only reaffirmed her standing in the eyes of Pakistanis. It also underlines her importance to the history of British colonialism in South Asia and the early decades of Pakistan.

That history is meticulously documented, but thoroughly debated by mainstream academics, as well as Pakistani and Indian nationalists. Of course, these categories are sometimes as hopelessly overlapping as they are intractably at odds with one another. From the perspective of this work, two aspects of the narrative appear self-evident, irrespective of scholarly or ideological orientation. One is the well-established fact that

the loss of Muslim political power to British colonial rule played an important, if not pivotal, part in prompting the movement for Pakistan. The other is the critical point raised by women's historians that the role of women and gender in the movement for Pakistan's creation and early state formation is dramatically absent in mainstream accounts. Fatima's background, her works, her associates and their collective and individual motivations, therefore, are central to any study seeking to augment the gendering of Pakistan's history.

That is not to say that Fatima does not appear in the narrative. Authored by Pakistani scholars, three short biographies were published in Pakistan before her death: Ibrahim Jalees' English *Fatima Jinnah* (1951), Khalid Mahmud's Urdu *Madar-i-Millat* (1964) and Abdul Mannan's Bengali *Madar-i Millat* (1965). These have been followed after her death, in 1967, by Manzar Bashir's *Madar-i-Millat: Raushni aur Umid ki Shua* in 1968, Kavish Rizvi's *Fatima Jinnah: Samraj aur Inqilab* in 1970, Agha Husain Hamdani's *Fatima Jinnah: Hayat aur Khidmat* in 1978, Saira Hashmi's *Ek Tassur Do Shakhsiyaten* in 1995 and Agha Ashraf's *Madar-i-Millat Fatima Jinnah* in 2000. Her own uncompleted biography of Muhammad Ali, *My Brother*, and a couple of collections of her speeches and writings were also published between the 1950s and 1990s. However, it was not until the state declared 2003 the "Year of Fatima Jinnah" that publications on her life took Pakistan by storm. In that year alone, no less than thirty books related to Fatima, including biographies and collections of her speeches and writings, were published in English, Urdu, Punjabi and Brahui, with Riaz Ahmed of Quaid-i-Azam University (Islamabad) making the greatest contribution. At least ten more have appeared since, and short pieces or documentaries are a staple of Pakistani media, print and broadcast.[1]

While the same scholars are to be applauded for their efforts to bring Fatima into the general narrative, it is also apparent that they most frequently attend to no more than her affiliation with and service to her brother. A representative case in point is Rizwan Malik and Samina Awan's *Women's Emancipation in South Asia: A Case Study of Fatima Jinnah* – a work more thoroughly focused on the independent thought and action of the subject than most. Yet, the authors only praise Fatima for the companionship and care she provided her ailing brother, arguing that the reason she was "apolitical" during Muhammad Ali's lifetime is

[1] All major Pakistani publications are listed in Riaz Ahmad, "The Works on Madar-i-Millat Fatima Jinnah: An Evaluation," *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture* 27:2 (2006): 155–8.

"that her first priority was her brother's person."[2] She is also extoled for her post-Partition refugee relief work as she "shared all his social and political concerns."[3] When writing of her life after his death, she is noted for the promotion of women's education and welfare as "her allegiance to her brother's mission demanded that she should come forward and, instead of remaining in mourning, to actively contribute to the process of nation-building."[4] And last but not least, her foray into politics during the 1960s is implicitly presented as an attempt to re-inject her brother's democratic spirit into a state then trampled under a general's boot for the first (though not the last) time in its history. In fact, it is principally as the keeper of Muhammad Ali's house, his companion, his nurse and, in his wake, the torchbearer of his politics that Pakistani authors laud the woman.

In so framing the life of Fatima, these authors are not exactly venturing beyond Hamdani's 1978 biography. Collectively, the body of Pakistani publications outline the when and where of her life quite adequately, but few consider her motivations, most are hagiographic in tone and none explores the theoretical and historiographical implications. Importantly, none critically appraises Fatima in the light of broader developments in the study of gender and nationalism. Although there is little doubt that colonialism created the structural conditions under which Indian and Pakistani nationalisms arose, the question of how to place South Asian nationalisms into the history of the modern world is hotly contested. Reflecting the earliest scholastic line of reasoning, Burton Stein considers Indian nationalism a reflection of "modern" European "secular" nationalism, while the Pakistani version is a throwback to "traditional" Asian "communalism."[5] Aspects of this approach are also reflected in Francis Robinson's and Farzana Shaikh's consideration of Muslim nationalism as harking to deep-seated notions of Islamic thought and institutions in response to colonial political needs.[6] Anita Inder Singh and Paul Brass, however, consider the roots of the movement to extend no deeper than the elite politics of British expediency and Muslim manipulation of religious symbols, while Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal build on this argument to suggest that majority–minority

[2] Rizwan Malik and Samina Awan, *Women's Emancipation in South Asia: A Case Study of Fatima Jinnah* (Lahore: University of Punjab, 2003), p. 41.
[3] Ibid., p. 40. [4] Ibid., p. 43.
[5] Burton Stein, *A History of India* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 284–6.
[6] Francis Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974); and, Farzana Shaikh, *Community and Consensus in Islam: Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860–1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

politics and provincial–center relations, more than a supra-communal identification, explains Pakistan.[7] Such considerations, though enlightening, do not adequately incorporate Benedict Anderson's astute observation that nations, beginning with those of Europe, are "imagined communities," born of the rise of "print-capitalism," among other specifically modern conditions.[8] According to Anderson, these conditions and the imaginings that accompany them play a pivotal role in all nationalisms and, though originating in Europe, are transmitted across the globe by colonialism. Furthermore, Partha Chatterjee has critiqued even Anderson's approach as too shallow when dealing with non-European nationalisms. In his *The Nation and Its Fragments*, Chatterjee asks the monumental question: If this is the manner in which nationalism in general is approached, what is left for the colonized to imagine?[9] As he explains:

> History, it would seem, has decreed that that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anti-colonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imaginations must forever remain colonized.[10]

Anticolonial movements in Asia and Africa, meanwhile, give Chatterjee pause to think otherwise. For they, including Indian and Pakistani nationalism, are at their core based on "difference with the 'modular' form of national society propagated by the modern West."[11] This difference, according to Chatterjee, is produced in an "Inner" domain of sovereignty created well before the political battle begun by the Indian National Congress (f. 1885) and Muslim League. And the Inner domain's contribution to the imagining of the nation is rooted in the sociocultural reform movements resisting colonial hegemony. "If the nation is an imagined community," Chatterjee asserts, "then this is where it is brought into being."[12]

[7] See Anita Inder Singh, *The Origins of the Partition of India, 1936–1947* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987); Paul Brass, "Elite Groups, Symbol Manipulation and Ethnic Identity among the Muslims of South Asia," in *Political Identity in South Asia*, D. Taylor and M. Yapp, eds. (London: Curzon Press, 1979), pp. 35–77; and, Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 1999).

[8] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

[9] See Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[10] Ibid., p. 5. [11] Ibid., p. 5. [12] Ibid., p. 6.

When illustrating his point, Chatterjee devotes a great deal of his discussion to the issue of gender. In fact, he best reveals the Inner domain of sovereignty, where the nation was purportedly imagined into being, by focusing on the manner in which the articulation of gender norms and the nation arise hand in hand. Building upon the pioneering works of Geraldine Forbes, Gail Minault, Hanna Papanek and others, Chatterjee argues that the drive to articulate the Indian was accompanied by the endeavor to formulate the ideal Indian woman, particularly stimulated by the self-interested critiques of South Asia launched by Victorian colonists and Christian missionaries on their "civilizing mission" – Britons who often focused on gender as evidence of the region's lack of civility and need for their rule.[13] For example, the caste-based and selectively practiced custom of *sati* (widow immolation) was essentialized as the epitome of "Hindu" tenets, while the similarly class-based and often trans-faith practice of *purdah* (veiling/segregation/seclusion) was elevated to represent the "Islamic" norm.[14] South Asian men and women were thus driven to formulate a standard, no matter how unattainable or undesirable, of the proper Indian woman. Ironically, according to Chatterjee, the ideal that emerged bore the imprint of her European critics and South Asian apologists; that is, Victorian ideals and Hindu or Muslim socioreligious movements initiated under colonial rule, all emphasizing "domesticity" based on the assumption of an inherently spiritual and nurturing womanhood. Thus, she was to be sufficiently educated to run the household, provide companionship and support to her man, while raising children instructed in an indigenous tradition for which she was cast as the primary upholder. Her economic independence reflected a belief in the innately feminine instinct to nurture, making her the ideal nurse or teacher. And her political enfranchisement was not to be questioned, so far as she did not transgress the bounds of public–private domains defined by the men of her

[13] See Partha Chatterjee, "Colonialism, Nationalism and Colonialized Women: The Contest in India," *American Ethnologist* 16:4 (1989): 622–33, and, "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question," in *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History*, Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, eds. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), pp. 233–53.

[14] For *sati* and colonialism, see Lata Mani, "Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India," *Recasting Women*, pp. 88–126. For a definitional discussion of *purdah* in South Asia, including the fact that its precolonial practice was greatly varied dependent on ethnicity, class, etc., and extended beyond Hindu–Muslim divides in given localities, see Hanna Papanek, "Purdah: Separate Worlds and Symbolic Shelter," in *Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia*, Hanna Papanek and Gail Minault, eds. (Columbia: South Asia Books, 1982), pp. 3–53. For the European colonial perspective on women and Islam, see Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 144–55.

community.[15] Chatterjee's most significant insight, therefore, is that "the story of nationalist emancipation is necessarily a story of betrayal. Because it could confer freedom only by imposing at the same time a whole set of new controls, it could define a cultural identity for the nation only by excluding many from its fold."[16] The relevance of such insights in the assessment of the life of a woman known as "Mother of the Nation" is self-evident, particularly as Chatterjee's framework, but not necessarily Fatima's example, has already appeared in writings more specifically concerned with gender and Pakistan.

A case in point is Shahnaz Rouse's "Gender, Nationalisms and Cultural Identity: Discursive Strategies and Exclusivities," which applies Chatterjee's approach to the relationship between Islamic reform and Pakistan, recognizing two reformist strains informing the Muslim "new woman."[17] Both are worth reiterating in further detail for those unfamiliar with the South Asian experience. One is well represented by the cleric Ashraf Ali Thanvi's (d. 1943) *Behishti Zewar* (Heavenly Ornaments), first published in Urdu in the late nineteenth century.[18] This scholar was one of the leading lights of the Deoband Movement – a clerical reformist group centered on a *madrasa* founded in 1867 outside Delhi. The Deobandi's version of Islam drew primary inspiration from the work of Shah Wali Allah (d. 1762) and his sons, the former a leading reformer of the eighteenth century. The patriarch had witnessed the eighteenth-century collapse of the Mughal Sultanate (1526–1858), while his sons saw the rise of British authority. They attributed this decline in Muslim political fortunes to lack of unity underwritten by the acceptance in Islamic thought of multiple perspectives, thus allowing for various sects and schools of mysticism, theology and law, as well as the legitimation of

[15] Yet, Gail Minault is justified to criticize Chatterjee's emphasis on the "positive" values ascribed to the "new woman," paying little heed to the fact that "for many reformers, Hindu and Muslim, women were temptresses as much as goddesses, the locus of sexual danger as much as spiritual purity, the cause of disorder and backwardness as much as – if not more than – peace and enlightenment." See Gail Minault, *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 7.

[16] Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, p. 154.

[17] See Shahnaz Rouse, "Gender, Nationalisms and Cultural Identity: Discursive Strategies and Exclusivities," in *Embodied Violence: Commanding Women's Sexuality in South Asia*, K. Jayawardena and M. de Alwis, eds. (London: Zed Books, 1996). For the colonial context, also see Sonia Nishat Amin, *The World of Muslim Women in Colonial Bengal 1876–1939* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996). For Pakistan, see Rubina Saigol, *The Pakistan Project: A Feminist Perspective on Nation and Identity* (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2013); and, Khawar Mumtaz and Farida Shaheed, *Women of Pakistan* (London: Zed Books, 1987).

[18] See Ashraf Ali Thanvi, *Perfecting Women: Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi's Bihishti Zewar*, Barbara Daly Metcalf, trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

local customary practices. Shah Wali Allah, therefore, embarked on the grand project of synthesizing all fields of Islamic thought by returning to its textual sources, Quran and Hadith, and declaring all that he did not judge to be in keeping with the literal word of both to be *shirk* (associationism) or *bidʿa* (innovation). In other words, Wali Allah emphasized text as central to belief before the influence of colonial era Orientalists – a point often missed by nonspecialists in Islamic thought, including Chatterjee.[19] Furthermore, Wali Allah's sons and grandsons continued to favor this approach and, following their demise, their students were among those who founded the Deoband Movement.[20] Thus, like the precolonial Wali Allahis, founding Deobandi scholars declared staple aspects of the Muslim ritual to date, such as the celebration of *milad al-nabi* (the Prophet's birthday) and the '*urs* (death anniversaries) of Sufi *pir*s (saints) – let alone regional/sectarian festivals like *Shab-i Barat* or Shia *Muharram* rites – beyond the *shariʿa*. Indeed, the Shia as a whole were declared apostates by the entire scholastic line. But leading Deobandis went further than their predecessors. In his hugely influential *Bihishti Zewar*, Thanvi not only asserts the reform of Muslim worship in line with the privileging of Quran and Hadith, but generally views what is not mentioned in these texts as either wasteful, unnecessary or distracting, and thus sinful. In this light, mere participation in Hindu festivals like Diwali and Holi, singing or dancing, keeping dogs as pets, decorating one's home with pictures, playing card games or chess, flying kites and setting off fireworks are viewed as *bidʿa*.[21] According to the Deobandi version of the *shariʿa*, therefore, customs not regarded as *bidʿa* even in Wali Allahi thought, let alone that of premodern Islamic scholars, were added to the list of the un-*sharʿi*.

Regarding gender in particular, the Deobandi approach to Islam is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, in keeping with the

[19] This miss has obvious consequences for the manner in which colonial gender norms are understood, often resulting in the idea that the *entire* discourse on gender is a product of "tradition" objectified in the light of Victorian gender norms. However, all colonial era reformist Muslim movements were, in fact, extensions of agendas that began in the eighteenth century, before Victorian norms had any purchase. That is not to say, as Laila Ahmed and others have, that specific initiatives such as the emphasis on veiling were not shaped by the "Western discourse in the first place," which "determined the new meanings of the veil and gave rise to its emergence as a symbol of resistance." However, this is best read as the enhancement and/or redirection of earlier motions toward reform, rather than creations of the colonial era. See Ahmed, p. 164.

[20] For Shah Wali Allah and his sons, see J.M.S. Baljon, *Religion and Thought of Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986); S.A.A. Rizvi, *Shah Wali Allah and His Times* (Canberra: Ma'rifat Publications, 1980), and *Shah Abd al-Aziz* (Canberra: Ma'rifat Publishing, 1982).

[21] Thanvi, *Perfecting Women* (*Bihishti Zewar*), pp. 76-7, 93-6.

eighteenth-century Wali Allahi agenda, the denial of inheritance, property and divorce rights on the basis of customary practices is condemned. As well, spurred by British critiques of Islam and women, Thanvi's *Bihishti Zewar* argues that women may secure their economic independence through a number of occupations outside the household responsibilities of marriage (but not at their expense). Where more public roles are granted, these occupations fall into three classes related to artisanship, commerce and scholarship. In terms of education, literacy is obviously required to read the *Bihishti Zewar* itself, but letter writing, arithmetic and accounting are identified as the minimum requirements of women's education for the proper management of domestic responsibilities, business and property. The final option is to study Persian and Arabic "as men do" and become *mawlawi*s (preachers) providing primary education to the women of the community.[22]

On the other hand, an emphasis on domesticity is clearly represented by large portions of Thanvi's work. As a response to the British essentialization of the custom of veiling, segregation or seclusion of women, known in South Asia as *purdah*, Thanvi takes a hard line, apparently to resist British criticisms and institutions. In fact, he endorses the absolute seclusion of women in the home when possible. Although a customary practice, Thanvi nevertheless justifies the most restrictive form in terms of his school's reformist agenda, again rooted in Wali Allahi doctrine.[23] As part of his condemnation of various modes of religious gathering, a persistent theme is his dismay at the social visiting that goes on between women, whether it be in the context of weddings, births, funerals, '*ids*, *milad*s or any other of the festive occasions declared *bid'a*. One of his reasons for objecting to these occasions is the fact that, as a result, women are too prone to consort with nonhousehold men, thus breaking *purdah*. As well, all this visiting leads women to take out loans for luxuries like brocades and jewelry, and spend too much on betel nut and tobacco, all of which are judged to be un-*shar'i* in the Deobandi version of Islam. So stern is Thanvi's concept of *purdah* that even women gathering on

[22] Ibid., p. 354–7, 363–6, 374–6.

[23] That this was an extension of Wali Allahi thought/reform, rather than a case of colonial objectification, is effectively evinced by an anecdote concerning Shah Wali Allah's son, Shah Abd al-Aziz. A well-respected Sufi of Delhi, himself a renowned legal scholar, regularly instructed women in mixed company at his hospice as was the norm in the precolonial era. Shah Abd al-Aziz visited and objected. The Sufi's son, a leading adept in his own right, responded that in the eyes of his father, "these [women] are all mothers and sisters," to which Abd al-Aziz retorted, "Then how is it proper to bring mothers and sisters and seat them in the midst of a public gathering." See Muhammad Husain Azad, *Ab-e Hayat*, Frances Pritchett w/ Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, ed. and trans. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 176.

specific holy nights in the company of a *hafiz* to hear Quranic recitation is viewed as a violation.[24] Thus, a contradiction arises between Thanvi's concept of *purdah* and the space afforded women to study, run households and work. That is to say, even the ideal of domesticity he articulates implies the need for more mobility than his strictures on *purdah* seem to allow. This contradiction is taken up by a second-generation Deobandi, Sayyid Mumtaz Ali (d.1935), in his *Huquq al-Niswan* (The Rights of Women), first published in Urdu in 1898. The author clarifies that to engage the limited types of public roles afforded women by other Deobandis, including going to the market and so on, mobility is obviously afforded under the cloak of a "*burqa*"(shroud).[25] But, Mumtaz Ali goes further than other Deobandis of the day to argue that a woman's face and hands may be uncovered, as opposed to the general attitude of the school that the *burqa* should cover all bodily features. Either way, thus are revealed the underlying causes of the elevation of the veil from an incidental part of the Wali Allahi's broader reformist agenda in the eighteenth century to a virtual pillar of Islam by the Deobandis in the colonial era.

The Wali Allahis, Deobandis and others not mentioned, but following analogous reformist lines (e.g., Ahl-i Hadith, Barelvi, etc.) can collectively be termed "clerical reformers," given their educations in the *madrasa* system, itself structurally reformed in the colonial period. Although such works as the *Behishti Zewar* and *Huquq al-Niswan* were widely read and broadly influential, their doctrinal approach and definition of the "new woman" is one of two variants circulating by the late nineteenth century. The second issued from "nonclerical reformers" like those associated with the Aligarh Movement, centered on a school established in 1875, also located just outside Delhi. Unlike the *madrasa* at Deoband, at the Aligarh "college," English and Urdu/Arabic instruction was offered. Each of these movements clearly influenced each other, however, as suggested by the fact that Mumtaz Ali, Deobandi author of the *Huquq al-Niswan*, taught Islamic sciences at Aligarh. Thus, very much like an anti-custom Deobandi, the founder of the Aligarh Movement, the philosopher and educator Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) – a scholar, incidentally, no less heavily influenced than Deobandis by the Wali Allahi notion that Islamic rejuvenation must rely on a return to

[24] Thanvi, *Perfecting Women* (*Behishti Zewar*), pp. 96–161.
[25] Sayyid Mumtaz Ali, *Huquq al-Niswan* (Lahore: Dar al-Isha'at-i Punjab, 1898), pp. 102–42. Also, Gail Minault, "Sayyid Mumtaz Ali and 'Huquq un-Niswan': An Advocate of Women's Rights in Islam in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Modern Asian Studies* 24:1 (1990): 147–72.