



Women in Pakistan as Subjects of Reform to ‘Reformists’: A Feminist Historical Analysis of Al-Huda International

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In partial fulfillment for the Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree in
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Main supervisor: Dr Nadia Jones-Gailani (Central European University)
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Signed: Saima Noreen, September 9th 2019

Abstract

Al-Huda, a transnational Muslim piety movement, is bringing socio-cultural transformation in the urban educated class of Pakistan and creating new identities of 'disobediently pious women' and 'rebellious religious women' in the political and social context where women have been subjected to reform. The history of making Pakistani women subject to reform can be traced back from the British colonizers, through colonial feminism and in contemporary Pakistan, through religion-based interventions from the social, political and state actors. This thesis presents a feminist historical analysis of Al-Huda International, an organization founded by Dr Farhat Hashmi in 1994 and a source of transformation in the socio-cultural landscape of Pakistani urban educated communities. This study draws upon the political, social and religious context which paved the way for Al-Huda to get accepted and embraced at public and state levels. The thesis further analyzes the inception of Al-Huda as the first-ever Pakistani women-centric and women-proliferated reformist movement focusing on women's spiritual individualism despite their conservative approach. A substantial part of the analysis engages with the political and organizational strategies which are adopted by Al-Huda to gain unprecedented popularity and to grow into a transnational movement from a *dars*-based elite women's gathering. The theoretical and methodological approach of this research is informed by anthropological scholarships of Meryem Zaman, Sadaf Ahmad, Aneela Babar and Riffat Hassan. Furthermore, this thesis employs the archival data of Al-Huda, available online in the form of official websites, annual reports, newsletters and YouTube channels.

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Glossary

Abayas	Traditionally refers to as long gown which covered from shoulders to toe. Abayas comes in pair with Hijab/Scarf.
Bid'at	Innovation in religion, referred for an occurring which was not part early Islam and added in religion later in new times.
Chaddar	A loose piece of cloth which women used to cover their bodies and hairs in South Asian cultures.
Chaliswa	The gathering of friends and family members of the dead after 40 days
Dars	Informal get to gather to share religious knowledge
Dars-e-Nizami	Dars-e-Nizami is a course of religious studies, initiated in the 18 th century in South Asia and evolving over the period. A course is also taught in some parts of the United States, UK, Canada, and South Africa.
Dawah	Literally meaning “making an invitation”, referred to as inviting people towards religion
Eid-Milad-Nabwi	The birthday celebration of Prohert Muhammat (PBUH)
Fitna	A dangerous phenomenon, which can create distress in society
Hijab	A piece of cloth which covers, hairs and face and comes till shoulder.
Madrasas	The formal schools for Islamic religious education
Mayo and Mehndi	Pre-wedding events of South Asian traditional weddings.
Mulvi/Mullahs	A person who is appointed of the mosque to led and call for prayers five times in a day.
Ullemas	Islamic religious leaders, who have formal education of Dars-e-Nizami

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Introduction

While I was volunteering with Aalam Bibi School in the summer of 2015, one of my volunteer fellows, a graduate of a distinguished university in the USA, and a member of a well-known elite Pakistani family asked me about my preparation for the upcoming Ramzan. This friend was preparing to attend Dr Farhat Hashmi special Ramzan Quran course. She was surprised by my lack of interest in these *Dars*, and she told me so very clearly. I grew up in the social and cultural period when "Al-Huda Phenomena" was rising and expanding in Pakistan. Since the early 2000s, I observed the Al-Huda Phenomena as part of the interconnected daily life narratives of women in urban Karachi and Lahore. However, this small conversation with my friend helped to develop my academic interest in the Farhat Hashmi and 'Al-Huda phenomena'. My personal and academic engagements with the questions how do Farhat Hashmi get unprecedented popularity into the socio-economic class who was never been involved in *dars* earlier, frame this research work.

This dissertation explores the social and political conditions under which the 'Al-Huda Phenomena' developed and expanded in Pakistan (and beyond) from the early 1990s to contemporary times. The "Al-Huda Phenomena"¹ is a term used by progressive Pakistani scholars to refer to the situations in which Al-Huda has been involved in the society. Without a clear definition from the existing scholarship, I propose an operational definition of the 'Al-Huda Phenomenon' by borrowing Emile Durkheim's concept of "Religious Phenomenon" defined as: "beliefs and rites, the beliefs are states of opinion and consist of representation; the second are particular modes of action".² I define the 'Al-Huda Phenomena' as a reference point for discussing the teaching and actions of staff and followers of the Al-Huda community, and Al-Huda's impact on society through its ideologies and outreach activities.

¹ Afiya Shehribano Zia, "The Reinvention of Feminism in Pakistan," *Feminist Review* 91, no. 1 (2009): 34; Aneela Babar, "New 'Social Imaginaries': The Al-Huda Phenomenon," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 31, no. 2 (August 2008): 348–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856400802192945>; Saigol Rubina, "Feminism and the Women Movement in Pakistan," 33, accessed August 2, 2019, <https://www.fes-asia.org/news/feminism-and-the-women-movement-in-pakistan/>.

² Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen Fields (Illinois: The Free Press, 1995), 34.

Al-Huda International is a religious education center founded in 1994 in Pakistan with the vision of "*Quran for All, In every Hand in every Heart*" and the mission of "*to serve humanity by imparting knowledge of Quran and Sunnah; this is the way to attain peace in this world and success in the hereafter*".³ Al-Huda gained unprecedented popularity within urban educated middle and upper-middle-class women within two and half decades. Currently, Al-Huda has millions of followers all over Pakistan and throughout the diaspora. Al-Huda is transnational piety/reformist movement, aims to bring Islamic reforms in light of the teachings of the Quran and Hadith. It reaches out through numbers of 'dawah' activities which are based on *dars* means religious education classes within the informal settings of houses, college, universities or hotels. In these *dars*, focus is on personal piety and adopting the "true" Islamic practices without cultural influences.

Al-Huda is founded and led by a woman, Dr Farhat Hashmi, who is the first Pakistani woman to lead a reformist movement exclusively for women, that is also directed by a woman and disseminating and proliferated by the women. The history of Islamic revivalism in Pakistan can be traced back in the colonial period of British India. All the previously existing piety movements in South Asia, i.e. Jamaat-e-Islami and Tablighi Jamaat, were male-directed and male-centric although they have women's branches, they were subsections and "accessories to male activities".⁴ Additionally, Pakistani women from urban educated background hardly recruited in these movements. On the other hand, since the inception of Al-Huda in the early 1990s, urban educated Pakistani women are highly mobilized by Al-Huda activities and denounced publicly and academically as "*disobediently pious women*" and "*rebellious religious women*".⁵

The 'Al-Huda phenomena' is a movement that seeks to bring about socio-cultural transformation in the society of Pakistan and throughout diaspora in a very subtle way within last

³ "Al Huda International," accessed September 7, 2019, <https://alhudapk.com/component/content/article/2-uncategorised/174-about-al-huda-international.html>.

⁴ Meryem Fatima Zaman, "The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam: Women, Space, and Stories in Pakistan's Islamic Movements" (Michigan State University, 2014), 4, 2004&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:dissertation&res_dat=xri:pqm&rft_dat=xri:pqdiss:3631026.

⁵ Meryem Zaman, "The Problem of the Rebellious Religious Women: Pakistan, Gender, and the Islamic Revival," *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 0, no. 0 (2019): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxz001>.

two and half decades. From colonialism, Pakistani women have been the subject of religious reform through social, state and political actors. It is first time ever in Pakistani history that women are being directed and reformed by a woman-led movement. Thereby, it is very important to explore the ‘Al-Huda Phenomena’ within its broader historical context, as I do in this thesis. In this part of the history of Pakistan specifically, and in the history of the Islamic world generally, no other women-centric reformist movement has received such popularity on either a transnational and national level. It is also very important to find out how the novelty of Al-Huda made and continues to make elite women join this religious movement and give it their financial and moral support.

For this research, I analyze the historical context of socio-politico-religious actors which paved the way of Al-Huda's beginnings and progression in a country like Pakistan, in which women have always been the subject of religious reforms. My research questions not only construct the narrative on the contextual background of Al-Huda but also – importantly - how women are being subjected to religious reform within the country. Additionally, I investigate what political and organizational strategies Al-Huda employed to bring about a social transformation in Pakistan and diaspora.

The significance of my research is multi-layered. My thesis will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by presenting the historical analysis of gendered phenomena of religious observance and education in Pakistani society. This gender phenomenon which brought ideological transformation and created new identities in urban educated elite/middle-class women and subsequently changed the social and cultural landscape of the society in Pakistan and diaspora. Thereby, the significance of this study is not only limited to analysis on the changing social and cultural elements of Pakistani society but also will contribute into the feminist debates nexuses on gender and religion in a transnational world. On the other hand, this research is significant due to its methodological approach to deal with phenomena. Al-Huda due to unprecedented popularity and being "talk of the town" in the urban educated class of Pakistan and beyond, instigate the academicians and scholars to investigate this novel occurring. In this research, I will synthesize the academic discourse which is produced since Al-Huda started. My research will connect to the previously conducted research in order to understand the many ways

in which Al-Huda has shaped and continues to shape women's lives and ideas in Pakistan and its diaspora.

1.1. Analytical framework and Historiography

I believe that Al-Huda settings are different from any other revivalist movement of Islamic world, for example, those in Egypt, Iran and Malaysia. These movements tended to begin in the mosque and developed according to a similar hierarchical structure as the male-dominated leadership within Islamic societies. Al-Huda gatherings and *dars* take place in the homes, school, colleges, or other private spaces focused on improving women's functioning in the gender-confined roles of mothers, wives and daughters-in-laws.⁶ Thereby, my analytical framework is informed by specific studies of specifically women in Muslim reformist movements that have developed in and around Pakistan.

In building the analytical framework, I draw on Meryem Zaman's purposed framework to study Pakistani revivalist movements. By synthesizing the streams on women's participation in revivalists' movements into two categories, Zaman develops her own framework based on her ethnographical research on Pakistani revivalists' movements. According to her, the first category "focuses on transactional interactions in which women gain hidden benefits from their participation" and the second category which based on synthesizing Saba Mahmood work stated that "women engaging in agentive attempts to fashion themselves as pious subjects despite the potential harm to themselves". Zaman proposes a third analytical framework; "*I argue that women's subjectification within Islamic movements leads to new, previously unavailable ways of imagining themselves as agents, and transforms their engagement with the everyday Pakistani patriarchy*".⁷ Furthermore, my theoretical framework is based upon Sadaf Ahmad's book "Transforming Faith: A Story of Al-Huda and Islamic Revivalism among Urban Pakistani Women" (2009) and, Riffat Hassan's scholarly contribution "Islam and human rights in Pakistan:

⁶ Meryem Zaman, "Segregated from the City: Women's Spaces in Islamic Movements in Pakistan," *City & Society* 31, no. 1 (2019): 55–76, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ciso.12194>.

⁷ Zaman, "The Problem of the Rebellious Religious Women," 2–3.

A critical analysis of the positions of three contemporary women”(2002)⁸ and Afiya Zia’s work of “The reinvention of feminism in Pakistan”(2009).⁹

Through Al-Huda, an Islamic reformist movement, the cultural landscape started to change for women in Pakistan, and new identities and ideologies emerged within Pakistan and diaspora. Over the past half-century, Pakistani women's inclination towards spirituality and spiritual education have developed and increased. Al-Huda is preceded by other notable religious movements that focused on elite urban women in Pakistan. Jamaat-e-Islami and Tablighi-e-Jamaat are two transnational piety movements working in Pakistan since the period of British colonialism. Unlike Al-Huda, these movements are male-centric and have not typically been focused on the urban educated classes. The success of Al-Huda is manifested by the transformation of ideology, behavior, and lifestyle of women move generally across Pakistan and throughout the diaspora.¹⁰ To date, very little work has been produced on the Al-Huda movement or its related ideological perspective. However, in this section, I will draw upon the changes and transformation in ideology and lifestyle developed within Pakistan relating to women’s piety and religious observance, explored by academicians and researchers as I map the historiography in this thesis. Additionally, I will draw upon how these works inform my analysis in this MA thesis.

The first scholarly work published on ‘Al-Huda phenomenon’ is written by Riffat Hassan (2002) “Islam and human rights in Pakistan: A critical analysis of the positions of three contemporary women”. Hassan positions Farhat Hashmi as “*ultra-conservatism Muslim woman*” and generate a critical analysis of Al-Huda and Hashmi’s gender narrative and its impact on young Pakistani women. Riffat Hassan is a well-known Pakistani theologian and Islamic feminist, who completed her PhD from Durham University in 1968. She has been working with the Government of Pakistan and immigrated to USA in 1972.

In her scholarly work, Hassan has generated two extremist categories of scholars, working in Pakistan by positioning herself in the middle or moderate. The first extreme was

⁸ Riffat Hassan, “Islam and Human Rights in Pakistan: A Critical Analysis of the Positions of Three Contemporary Women,” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): 131–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/11926422.2002.9673311>.

⁹ Zia, “The Reinvention of Feminism in Pakistan.”

¹⁰ Sadaf Ahmad, *Transforming Faith: The Story of Al-Huda and Islamic Revivalism Among Urban Pakistani Women* (Syracuse University Press, 2009); Babar, “New ‘Social Imaginaries.’”

represented by Asma Jahangir, who positioned herself as “guardian of Human Rights” by distance herself from religion especially Islam. The second extreme is the ultra-conservative religious scholars, represented by ideologues like Farhat Hashmi who think herself as “custodian of Islam”. The third category is the one in which Hassan positions herself and that is of moderate Muslim scholars who construct “a paradigm of human rights within the framework of normative Islam”.¹¹ Part of my analysis of critique on Al-Huda by modernist and progressive transnational scholars is informed by Hassan’s analysis.

One of the pioneer comprehensive studies is conducted by Sadaf Ahmad and Faiza Mushtaq which have laid the foundation of the academic discourse on emerging women-led revivalist movements. Their works serve as a primary source which has been done right after the first decade of Al-Huda.

As I alluded to previously, the pioneer extensive work on Al-Huda is conducted by Sadaf Ahmad. Sadaf Ahmad is a cultural anthropologist, completed her PhD dissertation in 2006 from Syracuse University which later publishes as a book in 2009 titled as “Transforming Faith: A Story of Al-Huda and Islamic Revivalism among Urban Pakistani Women”. Currently, Ahmad is an associate professor in LUMS-Pakistan. She is the program director of Anthropology-Sociology major in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences of LUMS. Ahmad’s book lies on the core themes of Why and How Pakistani urban women got engaged with the religious discourse of revivalist’s movements and draw on the narrative and “transformed” lives of educated middle- and upper-class women through participant observations and interviews. Along Al-Huda International, this book looks into the religious study circles organized by other organizations including Jamaat-e-Islami and Tehrik-e-Islami.¹²

Part of the scholarship on the topic of women’s religious ideologies and education that I am bringing to my research focuses on how does Al-Huda’s ideology manifest in the religious performance and ideas of the women. Ahmad wrote in 2013 on the visible and public changes that could be mapped across Pakistan relating to women’s attire. Traditionally, women used to wear a *cheddar* and *dupatta* for covering themselves in public. Ahmad argues that the Al-Huda

¹¹ Hassan, “Islam and Human Rights in Pakistan,” 153.

¹² “Khanum Review,” accessed August 22, 2019, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/380322/pdf>.

Phenomena replaced these traditional covering with *abayas* and *hijab*, and women start taking up public space to observe in mixed gendered gatherings.¹³

Another change observed by Ahmad is in the interior of homes. Traditionally, the drawing rooms and living rooms of the upper classes were decorated with the different paintings and crystal decoration pieces depicting the human and animals' figures. Transforming Muslim ideologies under Al-Huda influences, meant that animals and human depicted painting were replaced with pieces of calligraphy and paintings of landscapes.¹⁴

Additionally, one of the primary ways in which cultural anthropologists such as Ahmad have examined ideological changes and their influence on women's lives is through tangible and everyday materials and behaviors. For example, women limited their participation in traditionally organized wedding ceremonies, especially in the events of Mayo and Mehndi. Both events are celebrated by dancing and singing folk and traditional songs. Dancing and signings are not "culturally appropriate" for women in Pakistan but it is "allowed" on weddings. Therefore, Mayo and Mehndi are one of the most popular wedding events among young women. After linking with the "Al-Huda phenomena" women stop participating as according to Al-Huda the "act of dancing is prostitution" and women bodies became the focus of attention and the male gaze in such events.¹⁵

Ahmad has also noted how religious rituals are considered illegitimate according to Al-Huda's ideology. For instance, *Chaliswa*, or the gathering of friends and family members of the dead after 40 days has been erased as an ill-legitimate form of observance. Another example is "Eid-Milad-Nabwi" or the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which is observed on the third month of the Islamic calendar and celebrated on the national level. According to Al-Huda

¹³ Sadaf Ahmad, "Al-Huda and Women's Religious Authority in Urban Pakistan," *The Muslim World* 103, no. 3 (2013): 363–74, <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12019>.

¹⁴ Ahmad, *Transforming Faith*.

¹⁵ Sadaf Ahmad, "Identity Matters, Culture Wars: An Account of Al-Huda (Re)Defining Identity and Reconfiguring Culture in Pakistan," *Culture and Religion* 9, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 75–76, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610801963236>.

ideology, both events are "*Biddat*" and an "innovation in religion", meaning that it has been added after the life of the prophet was recorded.¹⁶

Ahmad also tried to trace out a couple of factors why do urban educated Pakistani women transformed their identities. For instances, the state actors of Pakistan, government missionary and military, strengthened the Muslim identity as a national identity by the propagation of religion-national narrative with the formation and development of Pakistan.¹⁷ I will draw on this factor in detail in chapter 1 of this study. Ahmad continued her arguments that this discourse of religion-national narrative is internalizing by the urban middle-class and by doing this, they disown the sub-continent history before Muslim conquest to sub-continent and non-Muslim heroes and rulers and all the cultural values and traditions which are "un-Islamic". All this discourse paved the way to bring together the "Muslim identity movements". This already existing narrative make the urban middle class to accept internalize and live Al-Huda ideologies and Islamic identity discourse.¹⁸

Faiza Mushtaq continued the discussion of Al-Huda generated by in her PhD dissertation. Along the questions of Why, and How women joined Al-Huda and what impacts Al-Huda brought in the society, Mushtaq also has broken the ground by accumulating the critique from liberals and *Ullemas*. Faiza Mushtaq completed her PhD in 2010 from the Northwestern University, titled "New claimants to religious authority: A movement for women's Islamic education".¹⁹ Currently, she is the program director of the bachelor's programs of social sciences and liberal arts in Institute of Business Administration, Karachi, Pakistan. Along publishing her anthropological observations on Al-Huda, she has been delivering lectures on 'Al-Huda Phenomenon' in Pakistan and beyond. Especially her recent talk in LUMS, "Performing religious authority as a woman: resources, constraints and cultural entrepreneurship" (April 2019)²⁰ open new avenues of exploring Al-Huda model. One of her most popular research

¹⁶ Ahmad, "Al-Huda and Women's Religious Authority in Urban Pakistan," 2013, 366.

¹⁷ Ahmad, "Identity Matters, Culture Wars."

¹⁸ Ahmad, *Transforming Faith*.

¹⁹ Faiza Mushtaq, *New Claimants to Religious Authority: A Movement for Women's Islamic Education, Moral Reform and Innovative Traditionalism* (USA: BiblioBazaar, 2011).

²⁰ "(1) Performing Religious Authority as a Woman Resources, Constraints, and Cultural Entrepreneurship - YouTube," accessed September 8, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8wNXhXr4WQ&t=54s>.

publications is “A controversial role model for Pakistani Women”²¹ serves as basic guidelines about Al-Huda, Farhat Hashmi, and critiques from *Ullemas* and liberals on them.

However, Faiza Mushtaq and Sadaf Ahmad were not the only ones to add to the literature on transnational and international narratives of Al-Huda, since this topic is being developed also by Khanum Shaikh and Aneela Zeb Babar. Shaikh completed her PhD dissertation titled as “New expressions of religiosity: a transnational study of al-Huda International”²² from the University of California in 2009. Currently, she is an associate professor at California State University, Northridge. I did not get access to her doctoral thesis but find her research article, “Gender, Religious Agency, and the Subject of *Al-Huda* International (2011)”,²³ in which she presented Al-Huda as a transnational organization. Further, Khanum scrutinized the apprehensions and concerns that crystallize around the Al-Huda Phenomena in Pakistan and Canadian Communities. Her article helped me to get the perspective of “prominent progressives Canadian Muslims” on Al-Huda and Farhat Hashmi. Aneela Zeb Babar is a development consultant and international researcher working on gender, Islam, popular culture and Migration. Currently, she published the book “We are All Revolutionaries Here: Militarisms, Political Islam and Gender in Pakistan”²⁴. Her research article “New ‘social imaginaries’: The Al-Huda phenomenon”²⁵ published in 2008 and draw upon the Al-Huda popularity on Pakistani and Australian diaspora.

Anita Weiss’s work defines the narrative of Al-Huda and categorizes as an “Orthodox Islamist movement”. In her book “Interpreting, Islam, modernity and Women’s rights in Pakistan” (2014), Weiss, a professor in University of Oregon who completed her PhD from the University of California in 1983, focuses reinterpreting women’s rights in Pakistan. After reinterpreting women’s rights from the perspective of the state, she divides the public opinion

²¹ Faiza Mushtaq, “A Controversial Role Model for Pakistani Women,” *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, no. 4 (December 8, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.4000/samaj.3030>.

²² Khanum Shaikh, “New Expressions of Religiosity: A Transnational Study of Al-Huda International” (University of California, 2009).

²³ Khanum Shaikh, “Gender, Religious Agency, and the Subject of Al-Huda International,” *Meridians* 11, no. 2 (2011): 62–90, <https://doi.org/10.2979/meridians.11.2.62>.

²⁴ Aneela Babar, *We Are All Revolutionaries Here: Militarisms, Political Islam and Gender in Pakistan*, 1st ed. (SAGE, 2017), <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/we-are-all-revolutionaries-here/book258444>.

²⁵ Babar, “New ‘Social Imaginaries.’”

about women's rights and women's bodies into the traditional and popular narrative. Further, Weiss categories the interpretation of civil society into three sections. The first one is progressive women's organizations, which is represented by Shirkat Gah and Aurat Foundation and the second category is Swat Taliban. The above section has sought to place Al-Huda and Farhat Hashmi within the context of Pakistan as an orthodox Islamist organization.²⁶

The journey of investigation of the 'Al-Huda phenomena' has continued with the doctoral research work conducted on Islamic revivalist movements of Pakistan by Nadia Z. Hasan. She completed her doctoral work from the University of York, Toronto with titled "Unscripted Piety: Muslim Women, Pakistani Nationalism, and Islamic Feminism (2015)". This thesis employs the discourses of Islamic feminism and nationalism in order to investigate "how women comprehend and inhibit their piety in through the spiritual, social and political milieu of their everyday lives".²⁷ She selected her participants from the organizations of Al-Huda and Jamaat-e-Islami based in Karachi, Islamabad, and Mississauga. My own work is informed by these same ideas of Islamic feminism and seeks to bring about a balanced approach to understanding religious reformist Muslim women.

Another significant work is done by James Dorsey, he is a senior fellow and journalist currently, co-director of the University of Würzburg, Germany. His research interest revolves around middle east, Islamic world and social movements. He conducted interviews with many stakeholders of Al-Huda for his research purpose. His research article "Pakistan's Lurch Towards Ultra-Conservatism Abetted by Saudi-Inspired Pyramid Scheme" (2018)²⁸ defines Al-Huda as ultra-conservative organization and present a critical analysis on the relationship between Saudi kingdom and Al-Huda.

The above-mentioned academics conducted researches by engaging in physical settings of Al-Huda. Sanyal and Esma's researches are novel as they deal with the virtual settings and focus on the use of modern technology for Al-Huda's dawah activities. Usha Sanyal is adjunct

²⁶ Anita Weiss, *Interpreting Islam, Modernity, and Women's Rights in Pakistan* (India: Orient Blackswam, 2014).

²⁷ Nadia Z Hasan, "Unscripting Piety: Muslim Women, Pakistani Nationalism, and Islamic Feminism" (York University, Toronto, 2015), 11.

²⁸ James M. Dorsey, "Pakistan's Lurch Towards Ultra-Conservatism Abetted by Saudi-Inspired Pyramid Scheme," *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies* 12, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 66–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/25765949.2018.1439618>.

faculty of Queens University Charlotte and an American historian with a research interest in Islamic theology. She enrolled herself in an online one-year diploma of Al-Huda. In 2015, she penned down her lived experience of Al-Huda virtual classrooms. Her study "Al-Huda International: (How) Muslim Women Empower Themselves through Online Study of the Quran" is an in-depth analysis of virtual classrooms of Al-Huda. These classrooms are comprised of students and faculty from all over the world.²⁹ Sanyal's work also helped me to imagine the internal hierarchal and organizational structure of Al-Huda. Saima Esmā is a PhD scholar in Mass communication department of Punjab University, Lahore, Pakistan. Her work "Use of Media as an Indicator of Modern Trend of Female Pakistani Dawah Groups" published in 2015. Her research is based on analysis of Al-Huda's modern trends of technology for dawah activities.³⁰ The quantitative analysis of this study helps to understand the magnitude and outreach of the movements achieved by modern technology.

I am deeply indebted to in my work to Meryem Zaman. Currently, she is leading the debate on Al-Huda and other revivalists' movements. Her work draws upon the Al-Huda phenomena with a parallel analysis of Tablighi Jamaat and informs the contemporary situation of revivalist's movement in Pakistan and beyond. Throughout her various pieces of academic works from 2014 to 2019, she gives a parallel narrative of both revivalist's movements on her selected themes of i.e. semiotics, Sharia laws, reformist ideologies, knowledge production and meaning-making within movements. Zaman is also a social-cultural anthropologist who completed her research work in 2014 with the title of "*The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam: Women, Space and Stories in Pakistan's Islamic Movements*" from Michigan State University.³¹ Currently, she is an Assistant Professor at the City University of New York. In her doctoral dissertation, she conducted participant observations and in-depth interviews and presented a comparison between the Tablighi Jamaat and Al-Huda International in Pakistani urban communities. Her analytical themes in the dissertation have helped me understand the discourses and debate of gendered

²⁹ Usha Sanyal, "Al-Huda International: (How) Muslim Women Empower Themselves through Online Study of the Quran," *HAWWA: Journal of Women of the Middle East and the Islamic World*, no. 13 (2015): 440–60.

³⁰ Saima Esmā, "Use of Media as an Indicator of Modern Trend of Female Pakistani Dakwah Groups," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 8, no. 1 (December 2015): 80–94.

³¹ Zaman, "The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam."

piety within the discursive setting of urban Pakistan community and exploration of meaning-making and knowledge production in both revivalist movements.³²

Zaman has expanded her work on multicoated transnational piety movement's ideology in Pakistani diaspora of New York.³³ In 2016, she published a chapter "Imagining the Muslim Woman: Religious Movements and Constructions of Gender in the Sub-Continent".³⁴ This scholarly work helped me to develop my argument on 'women as a subject of reform from the British colonial history to contemporary era'. In her work "Islamic Movements, Women, and Social Reform: Who Speaks of the Sharia in Pakistan" (2017),³⁵ Zaman focused on investigating the relation of sharia and gender according to practices Al-Huda and Tablighi-jamaat in Pakistan. This article throws light how "Sharia" word is politically avoided and how do women have stronger position and "essential partners" in both piety movements unlike political Islamic movement, who thinks women as "undesirable necessity". Her publication "Segregated from the City: Women's Spaces in Islamic Movements in Pakistan" (2019) draws on the Michel De Certeau ideology to investigate the various ways in which women followers of Tablighi Jamaat and Al-Huda restructure and alter the spaces and reshaped the "women's movement-defined roles".³⁶ Further, she argued that women followers ultimately combine the movement leaders' visions according to their own understanding and generate new roles within movements in urban Pakistan.

In 2019, Zaman published "The Problem of the Rebellious Religious Women: Pakistan, Gender, and the Islamic Revival". Throughout her previously mentioned works and especially in this one, Zaman referred to the transformation of ideologies in Al-Huda's followers and used the terms of "*disobediently pious women*" and "*rebellious religious women*" for them. According to her research, changed ideologies can be manifested in changing the family structure in Pakistan.

³² Michigan State University, "Dissertation Defense: Meryem Zaman," *MSU Department of Anthropology* (blog), April 15, 2014, <http://anthropology.msu.edu/event/dissertation-defense-meryem-zaman/>.

³³ Timothy P. Daniels, ed., *Sharia Dynamics: Islamic Law and Sociopolitical Processes* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-45692-8>.

³⁴ Meryem Zaman, "Imagining the 'Muslim' Woman: Religious Movements and Constructions of Gender in the Sub-Continent," in *The Postcolonial World* (London & New York: Taylor & Francis, 2016), 206–24.

³⁵ Meryem Zaman, "Islamic Movements, Women, and Social Reform: Who Speaks of the Sharia in Pakistan?," in *Sharia Dynamics: Islamic Law and Sociopolitical Processes* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 223–50.

³⁶ Zaman, "Segregated from the City."

Al-Huda believes in women's individuality by prioritizing spirituality from all the other matters of lives. Al-Huda is laughingly referred to as *Al-Juda*, which means separation because it creates separation between husband and wives (or within families).³⁷

The ideological transformation of Pakistani women which denounced them as rebellious religious women and disobediently pious women can be traced from their following Zaman's observations during her anthropological work. It is common practice in Pakistan that wife/daughters-in-law will shift to the in-law's family right after marriage. An ideal household is considered a home of the elderly married couple, who lived in a house with their son, daughter in law, unmarried daughters and grandchildren. After marriage, daughter-in-law would take the responsibility of managing household which includes the responsibility of cooking, cleaning, laundry etc.³⁸ Women increasing interest in spiritual activities hinder domestic life. Ideals of Pakistani domestic life are based on women's submissiveness and self-sacrifice. Therefore, women's priorities to focus on their piety performance and rejection of traditional responsibilities disturb domestic life. Al-Huda followers demand separate home from their in-laws only with their husband and children. Additionally, women start observing veil/Purdha and refuse to participate in family events due to mixed-gender gatherings, even if their husbands and family condemn them for this, all these reasons cause conflicts within families. Many elderly followers got their children married in Mosque and held a dinner at their homes for immediate family members, rather than the celebration of series of marriage events and inviting hundreds which were a traditional practice in Pakistan.³⁹

The participation of women in the reformist movement is not a novel phenomenon in Pakistan. Women have been participating in reformist movements. However, few revivalists' scholars argue that women participation in spiritual performances increased in the 1970s and some associate it with the era of 1990s.⁴⁰ However, the two major revivalist movements are Jamaat-e-Islami and Tablighi Jamaat. I investigate the role and positionality of women in this organization.

³⁷ Zaman, "The Problem of the Rebellious Religious Women," 15.

³⁸ Zaman, 4.

³⁹ Zaman, "The Problem of the Rebellious Religious Women."

⁴⁰ Zaman, "The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam."

My analysis of the oldest revivalist movements Tablighi Jamaat is informed by many revivalist scholars but I heavily relied on the scholarly works of Metcalf and Sijapati. Barbara D. Metcalf is a distinguished American historian currently serving as a Professor Emeritus of History at the University of California. She has expertise in the history of Islamic revivalism in South Asia since 1974 when she completed her doctoral on Muslim religious scholars of India. She is one of the pioneers' scholars who opened the discourse of reformist movements of South Asia and presented their story and perspective to the world. Her scholarly works which I employed in my dissertation are "Women and Men in a Contemporary Pietist Movement: The Case of the Tablighi Jamaat (1998),⁴¹ "Islam and Women: The Case of the Tablighi Jama'at," (1996),⁴² "Perfecting Women: Maulana Ashraf Thanawi's Bihishti Zewar; A partial translation with commentary" (1991). Megan Adamson Sijapati is a Nepali USA based scholar of religion with focused interest on Islam and Muslim culture in South Asia and the Himalayas. Currently, she is associated with Gettysburg college. Her work informed my historical analysis on the emergence of Islamic revivalist moments in South Asia during colonialism in relation to women bodies as a political subject.

Jamaat-e-Islami, the biggest and oldest religiopolitical reformist party, has come under increased scrutiny by those who are working at the nexus of Gender, Politics and Islamic revivalism in the Pakistani context. The first scholar is Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr. Nasr is an Iranian-American scholar, his writings address the Islamic activism and politics in Muslim countries of South Asia and the Middle east. His writings shaped my thoughts on the history of Jamaat-e-Islami, especially his Book "The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan" (1994) in which he explored the "historical development and political strategies" of growing into the largest Islamic political party within the diverse sociopolitical situations of Islamic revivalism in society.

Tahmina Rashid is a Pakistani scholar based in Australia. She is currently an associate professor of international studies in the university of Canberra, Australia. Rashid is interested in

⁴¹ Barbara D. Metcalf, "Women and Men in a Contemporary Pietist Movement: The Case of the Tablighi Jamaat," in *Appropriating Gender: Women's Activism and Politicized Religion in South Asia* (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 107–22.

⁴² Barbara D. Metcalf, "Islam and Women: The Case of the Tablighi Jamaat," *SEHR: Contested Politics* 5, no. 1: 1996.

feminist moments in South Asia and Islamic revivalist movements. Her research work "Radical Islamic Movements: Gender Construction in Jamaat-i-Islami and Tablighi- Jamaat in Pakistan"(2006) helped me to understand the gender perspective of Islamic revivalism movements in Pakistan. This debate followed by the groundbreaking work of "Jamaat-e-Islami Women in Pakistan: Vanguard of a New Modernity" (2013) by Amina Jamal.⁴³ She is an associate professor of sociology in University of Toronto, Ontario. This book is framed on her ethnographical work based on extensive interviews and case studies of Jamaat-e-Islam's women from 2002 to 2008. This book draws my attention not only to the feminist scholarship within political Islam but also enriched me on themes of women's positionality and leadership in the state and Jamaat-e-Islami. Another significant scholastic work on Jamaat-e-Islami is done by Nilofer Siddiqui. Currently, she is an assistant professor of political science at the Albany-State University of New York and has been interested in politics of religion. Her work "Gender Ideology and the Jamaat-e-Islami" is a comprehensive essay on the historical and contemporary narrative of Gender ideology of Maududi and jamaat-e-Islami.⁴⁴

After British colonialism making women the subject of reform became a priority and for scholarship on this topic I heavily relied on the work of Ayesha Jalal. Jalal is a USA based well-known Pakistani Historian. She is awarded the highest civil award from Pakistan on her contribution to South Asian History. Currently, she is Professor of History at Tufts University. Her scholarly work of "The Convenience of Subservience: Women and the State of Pakistan, (1991)⁴⁵ helped me to develop my analysis on the paradoxical relationship of British colonizers and Pakistani state with women-based reforms.

After the period of British colonialism, the Pakistani state's role in the reforming women has been studied by many secular and progressive scholars especially after the political period of Zia-Ul-Haq. I extracted the historiography of women's subjectivity from Pakistani state and establishment by the narratives of Rubina Saigol, Khawar Mumtaz, Farida Shaheed and Afiya

⁴³ Amina Jamal, *Jamaat-e-Islami Women in Pakistan: Vanguard of a New Modernity?* (Syracuse University Press, 2013).

⁴⁴ Niloufer Siddiqui, "Gender Ideology and the Jamaat-e-Islami," *CURRENT TRENDS IN ISLAMIST IDEOLOGY* 10 (2010): 173–93.

⁴⁵ Ayesha Jalal, "The Convenience of Subservience: Women and the State of Pakistan," in *Women, Islam and the State*, ed. Deniz Kandiyoti (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1991), 77–114, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-21178-4_4.

Shehribano Zia. All of these scholars are progressive pioneer activists of the women's movement in Pakistan and have a critical view on state sectioned religion-based women-centric reforms. The work which impressed me immensely since its publication in 2016, is the work of Rubina Saigol "Feminism and the Women's Movement in Pakistan: Actors, Debates and Strategies". It is based on the critical historical narrative of women's movement and the state, non-state actors and 'civil society' with nexus of religion and secular debates since British India to contemporary Pakistan.⁴⁶ Rubina Saigol is completed her PhD in educational development from the University of Rochester, New York. Currently, she is an independent researcher and human rights and gender equality activist based in Lahore. The next book which shaped my thoughts are "Women of Pakistan Two Steps Forward, One Step Back" (1987). This book has received the "Prime Minister's Award" in Pakistan on its compressive debate on women's movement development and its relationship with state and society.

The scholarly contribution of Afiya Shehribano Zia helped me to form my thoughts into the comprehensive narration of women's positionality in the relation of state actors. Afiya Shehribano Zia is an associate professor at Habib University, Karachi, Pakistan. She completed her PhD in Gender and Women's studies from the University of Toronto, Canada. She published the book "Faith, and Feminism in Pakistan: Religious Agency and Secular Autonomy?"⁴⁷ along describing the secular and working women activism, this book throw light on the piety and potential of Muslim women "in the pursuit for secular autonomy and liberal freedom". By positioning herself as a secular feminist, she has written on the "post 9/11" women's struggle in Pakistan. In this study, I employed her articles "The Reinvention of Feminism in Pakistan,"(2009)⁴⁸ and Faith-based Politics, Enlightened Moderation and the Pakistani Women's Movement (2009).⁴⁹ The first one helped me to understand the overall history of women's subjectivity in Pakistan and later helped me to the understand the nexus of religion, state and women-based reforms in the era of General Pervaiz Musharraf.

⁴⁶ Rubina Saigol, "Feminism and the Women's Movement in Pakistan: Actors, Debates and Strategies" (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung ASIA, 2016).

⁴⁷ Afiya Shehribano Zia, *Faith and Feminism in Pakistan: Religious Agency or Secular Autonomy?* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2018).

⁴⁸ Zia, "The Reinvention of Feminism in Pakistan."

⁴⁹ Afiya Shehribano Zia, "Faith-Based Politics, Enlightened Moderation and the Pakistani Women's Movement" 11 (2009): 22.

Most of the anthropologists and historians listed above who shaped the historiography have some commonalities. Based on them I can position themselves as “halfie researchers”. I draw from the definition mentioned by Subedi, “the term ‘halfie’ is useful to describe the identities and experiences of researchers whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, and parentage”.⁵⁰ Especially, most of the academics who worked on Al-Huda are female and have Muslim Pakistani origin and position themselves as member of the educated urban class of Pakistani communities and diaspora. This makes them “*native informants*”⁵¹ of their ethnographical work as their class, culture, ethnicity and gender are the same as Al-Huda followers. Anita Weiss is exceptional who is not Pakistani origin but here continued extensive anthropological work on Pakistani communities within the Pakistani settings since the 1980s, positions her as ‘halfie researcher’. However, my informants all are ‘transnational academics’ as either they migrated to western countries especially the USA or earned their educational degrees from western universities. Although, their studies are based on the participant observation and in-depth interviews within the physical settings of urban educated communities of Pakistan, yet, they employed and reflect on their transnational experiences with ‘Al-Huda phenomena’. These transnational perspectives from the “native informants” are requisite to have a view of the progression of Al-Huda which has been a transnational movement since its inception. These transnational perspectives they give me perspective on comparative studies of the movement that allow me to make assumptions about the location and history of a place in order to understand why the place and time matter in terms of the movement’s development.

1.2. Methodology

My research is informed by the principles of feminist historical research, where I address the intersecting nature of the class, gender and religion in the lives and ideas of women involved with the Al-Huda movement. For the purpose of the thesis, I have collected primary data from the online archives of the Al-Huda international as well as lectures and talks of Farhat Hashmi on

⁵⁰ Binaya Subedi, “Theorizing a ‘Halfie’ Researcher’s Identity in Transnational Fieldwork,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 19, no. 5 (September 1, 2006): 573, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390600886353>.

⁵¹ Sukalpa Bhattacharjee, “Towards a Theory of Native Informant,” ed. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Economic and Political Weekly* 36, no. 14/15 (2001): 1194–98.

the official YouTube channels of Hashmi and Al-Huda. I also analyze the newsletter of Al-Huda which are being issued tri-annually since January 2016. For the collection of primary material, I also borrowed from interviews and participant observations of Sadaf Ahmed, Meryem Zaman, Khanum Shaikh, Anita Weiss, Usha Sanyal and Aneela Babar.

As a gender historian, we must be equipped with the ability to indicate “biasness, “idiosyncrasies” and positionality of the authors in the sources. Biases and prejudice in written sources are always present, whereas it is the task of the historian to establish what can be learnt by examining inconsistencies, silences, or gaps in the record. The gaps between information and silences of the source are important to find out for the building blocks of information to construct a complete picture of truth.⁵² Throughout my research, I have been attentive to the positionality and power dynamics of my scholars’ during their interviews and participant observations. All of them were Pakistani origin and belongs to the upper/middle educated class except Anita Weiss. However, Anita Weiss started her anthropological work in Pakistan 1980s, thereby she is well familiar with the dynamics of Pakistani culture. Furthermore, all of them has indicated their positionality within the research that I critically analyze to understand the power relations in the socio-cultural context of Pakistani educated urban communities.

Historians must also be conscious about the purpose and limitation of archival documents and what is or is not available as part of the collection. Sources do not provide a complete picture with every aspect of the event, historians have to guess and interpret or further continuation of story or unanswered question by guessing based on previous information by bridging up the information. The job of historians is not only reporting the information gathered from archives but to indicate gaps and silences and elision because sources are not self-evident truth but a subject of study, explore and interpret.⁵³ It was difficult for me to choose between the scholars when they have the same argument. However, I did not find any significant contradiction in the sources. They all verify each other arguments with their own central themes and strands of analysis. Additionally, my aim to exploring this movement is not the analysis of the narrative of Al-Huda or to find out how much it is conservative and patriarchal or on which version of Islam

⁵² John H. Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction* (OUP Oxford, 2000), 67.

⁵³ Arnold, *History*.

it is based on. This research study does not analysis the narrative Farhat Hashmi, rather, build on the narratives and scholarly work which has done previously.

1.3. Overview of the Thesis Chapters

The second chapter draws light on the political, state and social actors from the colonial times to the contemporary era. This chapter discusses the historical actors which pave the grounds of ushering in the Al-Huda Phenomena. This chapter also discusses how power dichotomies worked with gender, class and religion to control society by imposing "social reforms" on women. A strand of analysis is ongoing in this chapter which examines in detail how women have been a political subject to reform in the social-cultural context. The first section argues that colonializers introduced the "women-centric reforms" in society to serve their political purpose in British India. These reforms make the male south Asian control and counter-reform their women to preserve their culture and identity. The second section of the study focuses on women's positionality in the transnational revivalist movements, Jamaat-e-Islami and Tablighi-e-Jamaat which have become potent forces of post-colonial pressure to preserve and create new Muslim identities within South Asia and have significant power on the people of Pakistan from the independence to contemporary times. This section also highlighted the existing culture of Pakistani people in participating in the revivalist movements. In the end, the chapter extends its analysis to the role of state machinery to support the religion-based reforms in the society in which women is the central subject to reform. This section also emphasized on support system by state machinery for religious agencies, which also supported Al-Huda to develop and grow and produce the politico-cultural environment which was conducive for AL-Huda to produce and nourisher.

After a chronological analysis of social-politico and cultural context of Pakistan, the third chapter draws upon the outset of Al-Huda phenomena in Pakistan. This chapter explores how Al-Huda is founded as a hybrid social organization by Farhat Hashmi and what was the silent features of Farhat Hashmi, which make her an influential orator of the elite educated class of urban settings in Pakistan and diaspora. The chapter not only discusses the popularity and acceptance of Al-Huda from all over the world but also discuss the backlash which Farhat Hashmi and Al-Huda have to face. The anxieties about Al-Huda Phenomenon are equally

available on the social binaries of *Ullemas* and progressive and liberals. This chapter extends the analysis on the reservations, anxieties and criticism from progressive, which accused Farhat Hashmi to disseminate the orthodox version of Islam among women, on the other hand, Ullemas consider Farhat Hashmi as illegitimate and un-Islamic and *biddat* in Islam. However, Ullemas accept this that Farhat Hashmi has mobilized women who were not involved in religious discourse before.

The fourth chapter provides a historical analysis of the progression of AL-Huda into a Transnational organization. My focus of analysis is contributing factors and strategies adopted by Al-Huda administration and leadership which make them gain such unprecedented popularity within two and half decades. On the organizational level, I examine the organizational structure of Al-Huda, which is based on well-organized vertical hierarchies. Farhat Hashmi is the charismatic leader not only on movement level but also in the organizational structure of Al-Huda. Further, I critically engage with the Al-Huda's sources of funding which linked with the ideologies and narrative Al-Huda disseminate. The most successful marketing strategies of Al-Huda is "Word of Mouth" and chooses of location Al-Huda offices and schools are contributing factors to maintain the factor of Classism for Al-Huda. Furthermore, I focus on the political strategies utilized to influences in power structures, and adaptability and social welfare projects to reach the masses. The chapter shows how curriculum and pedagogical methodologies are used by Al-Huda to cater to the need of people who are located on graphically diverse localities. The last chapter is comprised of the concluding annotations which mediate on the previous chapters.

Chapter 2:

Women as a Political Subject in Movements and the State of Pakistan

Women have always been an important subject of revivalist movements; however, their participation has been in passive and active form. There are various views on women participation in religious activities. Feminists, liberals and the left-wing consider that religious movements are led by men and women's participation is only to back their male folks even though religious men's agendas are harmful to women's interests,⁵⁴ the same situation applies in the Pakistani context where women have been the subject of reform and have a passive role in revivalist leadership. Al-Huda emerged as a first-ever woman-led revivalist movement for women in Pakistan.

In this chapter, I aim to provide a substantial historical context to facilitate the reader to imagine the political, social and religious actors as well as the cultural landscape of Pakistan in which Al-Huda emerged and evolved. Along tracing the determining and supportive factors of Al-Huda's conception and progression from the history of Pakistan, I provide an analogy of two biggest revivalist movements of Pakistan, Jamaat-e-Islami and Tablighi Jamaat, which traced back from the colonial period to contemporary epoch. I also presented a parallel historical analysis of how women have been a subject to reform within the British colonial period, male-centric revivalist movements and state actors in Pakistan. To simplify this complicated scenario which has several social, political and religious actors, movements from colonial and post-colonial times of Pakistan, I dissect this chapter into three parts.

In the first section, I will draw upon the critical analysis of the colonial period in which women were used as a tool of the colonizer to set the notion of "colonial savior". This colonial reformation move has an impact on society and set the stage for social actors to usher Islamic revivalist movements. The second part will be the continuity of historical analysis of two big

⁵⁴ Barbara D. Metcalf, "Women and Men in a Contemporary Pietist Movement: The Case of the Tablighi Jamaat," in *Appropriating Gender: Women's Activism and Politicized Religion in South Asia* (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 107–22.

revivalist movements; Tablighi Jamaat and Jamaat-e-Islami, which emerged in the colonial period and currently has followers in millions all over the world. The last section will examine the nexus of religion-based women-centric reforms by state actors of Pakistan. This analogy of two revivalist movements and state's actors will not only highlight that the objectification of women as subject of reform is not died out, it has continuity through contemporary political and religious actors in Pakistan but also set the stage in which Al-Huda emerged and evolved as transnational movement.

2.1. Women as Subjects of Reform in Colonial India

Since the British began a campaign of colonialism across the sub-continent, women have been a focus of reform measures designed to reinvent the 'subject' under their care. The British focused on transforming societies and brought legislative changes by making women the center of reform due to their Victorian ideology of women as the epicenter of moralities in homes.⁵⁵ This section will explore the colonial perspective of women's centric reform to alter society according to their ideology. This historical analysis of colonial period will not only help to understand the history of women being as subject to reform in sub-continent but also give a background how contemporary male-centric revivalist movements emerged and make women's bodies a ground of reforms.

I draw upon the "*Colonial feminism*" from Leila Ahmed book "*Women and Gender in Islam: Roots of A Modern Debate*" to explain the motives of British's women-centric reform for women in South Asia and its backlash from society, Leila Ahmed referred as

"Colonial feminism or feminism as used against other cultures in the service of colonialism was shaped into a variety of similar constructs, each tailored to fit the particular culture that was the immediate target of domination; India, the Islamic world, sub-Saharan Africa. With respect to the Islamic world, regarded as an enemy (and indeed as the enemy) since the Crusades, colonialism — as I have already suggested — had a rich vein of bigotry and misinformation to draw on".⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Meryem Fatima Zaman, "The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam: Women, Space, and Stories in Pakistan's Islamic Movements" (Michigan State University, 2014), 209

⁵⁶ Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Roots of A Modern Debate*, 151.

In South Asia, British's "colonial feminism" generated the narrative that Islam is oppressive to women, and women's segregation and confinement is a fundamental factor of conservatism in Islamic societies. Muslims societies can only be civilized if the Islamic practices will be cast off.⁵⁷ Ahmad, further, quotes a distinguished British Orientalist, Stanley Lane Poole, who argues that "the degradation of women in the East is a canker that begins its destructive work early in childhood and has eaten into the whole system of Islam".⁵⁸

This "Colonial feminism" gave British a civilizational dominance and presented them as *a saviour of Brown women from Brown men*. When the British tried to bring social reforms by liberating Muslim women, it created a backlash in the Muslim community. Ahmad has quoted a few events when in British India missionary school teachers denounced students for observing veil and persuade female students to stop observing veil even if their families are against. "For the missionaries, women were the key to converting backward Muslim societies into civilized Christian societies".⁵⁹

In the sub-continent, women have a long history of being a subject to reform by men/patriarchy. In South Asian indigenous culture, historically, women's position within families has utmost importance in societies to showcase their position and identity in the social class, nationhood and religion.⁶⁰ British reforms generate an alternate narrative of women subjectivity within the South Asian Muslim community which is essentially patriarchal and conservative.⁶¹ For instances, when the British introduced their education system in sub-continent, Muslim men joined without any restriction, but Muslim women were not allowed to take part in western education except cases when educated Muslim men needed educated Muslim women to get married to.⁶² Many Muslim leaders were against western education in general and for women in specific and recommended only religious education.⁶³

⁵⁷ Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (Yale University Press, 1992), 98.

⁵⁸ Ahmed, 152.

⁵⁹ Ahmed, 154.

⁶⁰ Zaman, "The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam," 32.

⁶¹ Saigol, "Feminism and the Women's Movement in Pakistan: Actors, Debates and Strategies."

⁶² Ayesha Jalal, "The Convenience of Subservience: Women and the State of Pakistan," in *Women, Islam and the State* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1991), 77–114, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-21178-4_4.

⁶³ Jalal.

However, when leaders realized that women's education was inevitable, they tried to control the pedagogical content so it could not diverge from issues of household functions and religious instructions. The Prosed aim of education was to make women dutiful wives and good Muslim.⁶⁴ Many texts were published to educate, reform and direct women from Muslim religious leaders, "*Bihishti Zewar*" (Heavenly Ornaments) by Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi is one of the classic examples. This book is one of the bestselling Pakistani books since its publication in 1899 and is considered as mandatory guidance for women's matrimonial life. Through this book, women are not only being controlled but also being inculcated with a perception/image of the ideal womanhood of Islam. Every small or big aspect of women's life is delineated to direct women's behavior and to control the situations where women can find her self-consciousness.⁶⁵ The content of books includes how women should dress up, speak, bathe, pray, look, walk, serve husbands and in-laws, and bring up their children. Jalal denounced on *Bihishti Zewar*, "*it is a veritable gold mine for teasing out the inner recesses of the conservative Muslim psych*".⁶⁶ Unfortunately, the narrative of the recommended lifestyle for women of this book is still part of Pakistani culture.

In short, through reforms and colonial feminism the British desires a stronger cultural and economic foothold in Muslim societies. Through women liberation from cultural symbols, they aspired to assimilate them in "their prouder European heritage",⁶⁷ which created a backlash in society and created spaces for revivalist leaders to introduce patriarchal women's centric reforms. it increased the women objectification in society at large. In the following section, my analysis will probe those revivalist's movements and positionality of women within these movements.

2.2. Women in the South Asian Revivalist Movements

In the start of the 21st century, Al-Huda emerged as a powerful revivalist movement in Pakistani urban settings and diaspora which influenced and changed the cultural landscape of

⁶⁴ Saigol, "Feminism and the Women's Movement in Pakistan: Actors, Debates and Strategies."

⁶⁵ Sarah Ansari, "Barbara Daly Metcalf: Perfecting Women: Maulana Ashraf 'AH Thanawi's Bihishti Zewar. A Partial Translation with Commentary. Xv, 436 Pp. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1991. £19.," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 55, no. 3 (October 1992): 578–79, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X0000402X>.

⁶⁶ Jalal, "The Convenience of Subservience," 1991, 81.

⁶⁷ Farah Deeba, "Rethinking Islamic Feminism" (University of Management and Technology, 2012), 79.

urban elite setting. However, Al-Huda is not the only revivalist movement of Pakistan, history of the revivalist movement and their contribution in society is so enriched and happening in the South Asia. After British's social and legal reforms in South Asian, communities of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs actively engaged in religious reforms and movements⁶⁸ to protect their identity from the influential colonizer's culture. Among Muslims, two Islamic revivalist movements; Jamaat-e-Islami and Tablighi Jamaat, emerged and received unprecedented popularity not only in the colonial period but also contemporary era due to the importance of religion in people life.

In South Asia, religion is not only a matter of faith for people, but it is also an identity, a lifestyle, code of ethics, and a prism to see life.⁶⁹ The evidences of importance of religion can be traced out from the early 20th century, when the Muslim League, a political party and representative of British Indian Muslims, adopted the *Two nation theory* which proposed that Hindus and Muslims were people with eternal, irreconcilable and irrevocable religion and lifestyle, and, hence, demanded a separate country for Muslims so that they can live their lives freely according to their religion. In 1947, this religion-based *Two nation theory* became the epicenter of the division of the sub-continent into two independently administered nations: Pakistan and India (and including a number of specially-administered territories). In the movement of formation of Pakistan, religion served as the binding force for all the ethnic identities of Muslim majority areas into one nation. The most important role was played by the *Ullemas and Mullahs*, who mobilized the masses to strive for a separate country based on religion.⁷⁰ This mobilization, further, strengthened to make religion a unifying force of national ideology and culture.⁷¹ This is an important reason that in contemporary Pakistan, "revivalists not only discard existing Pakistani cultural and religious structures but argue that they

⁶⁸ Megan Adamson Sijapati, "The Tablighi Jamaat and Gender: Women, Narrative, and the Religious Discourse of Struggle in an Indian Muslim Reform Movement," *Vikalp: Vikas Ahdhyayan Kendra*, 2004, 48–57.

⁶⁹ Farida Shaheed, "The Other Side of the Discourse: Women's Experiences of Identity, Religion, and Activism in Pakistan," in *Appropriating Gender: Women's Activism and Politicized Religion in South Asia* (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 145.

⁷⁰ Syeda Arifa, "Tracing the Roots of Religious Extremism - Dr. Arifa Syeda Zehra - YouTube," accessed August 12, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gaQTWwuqxX4>.

⁷¹ Sadaf Ahmad, *Transforming Faith: The Story of Al-Huda and Islamic Revivalism among Urban Pakistani Women* (Syracuse University Press, 2009).

themselves possess the only authentic Pakistani culture”.⁷² My further analysis will explore it in detail.

To understand the context, dynamics and influential agents of Al-Huda, it is integral to learn about Pakistan’s oldest and the largest revivalist movements; Jamaat Islami and Tablighi Jamaat. Thereby, I will push my analysis to unpack the basic ideology of these revivalist movements, and women’s positionality within these movements. It will not only help to understand the magnitude of counterparts of Al-Huda. It will also let the reader imagine the strength and influence of Al-Huda which evolved within such competitive environment. Additionally, this analysis will build a narrative on the history of women's positionality as a subject of reform in revivalist movements.

Tablighi Jamaat and Jamaat-e-Islami both are men centric and men led movements, both have women wings but these are under the supervision of males’ leaders⁷³ and mostly women from the lower-income class are member of it. Jamaat-e-Islami is a religious political party which aims to work in national state structures to bring revivalism, on the other hand, Tablighi Jamaat is apolitical, believe on "personal piety" to change individuals from within. Currently, both movements have millions of followers and formal and informal setups in more than 100 countries in the continents of America, Asia, Africa and Australia. In Pakistan, due to the political climate and their active role, both parties are highly influential and have a large number of followers.⁷⁴ All Islamic revivalist movements, Jamaat-e-Islami, Tablighi Jamaat and Al-Huda are different from each other in their ideological approach, but they are similar to each other in their pragmatic approach of *Dawah* and reaching out to the masses. Another similarity is in their narrative of women’s issues. They all take women as a fundamental component of “change” and “guardian” of culture and tradition. Though, Jamaat-e-Islami and Tablighi Jamaat believe in policing women through men, because men are considered as the head of family and society. In both parties, women are recruited, trained, and reached out to the other women to direct them in

⁷² Zaman, “Imagining the ‘Muslim’ Woman: Religious Movements and Constructions of Gender in the Sub-Continent,” 212.

⁷³ Meryem Fatima Zaman, “The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam: Women, Space, and Stories in Pakistan’s Islamic Movements” (Michigan State University, 2014).

⁷⁴ Tahmina Rashid, "Radical Islamic Movements: Gender Construction in Jamaat-i-Islami and Tablighi- Jamaat in Pakistan," *Strategic Analysis* 30, no. 2 (June 2006): 354–76.

Quranic and Hadith teachings. Zaman narrated a comparative analysis of Tablighi Jamaat, Jamaat-e-Islami and Al-Huda International on women's issues. She explained that teachings of all the organizations are the same, they all want women to cover themselves completely preferably with *abayas*, confine themselves to the home, limit their participation in social gatherings. This confinement is justified by giving logic and references from sacred text and Islamic history.⁷⁵ The following section will develop a critical analysis of these two revivalist movements in detail.

i. Tablighi Jamaat

Ideologically, Al-Huda is close to Tablighi Jamaat, Al-Huda central point is personal piety and transformation of society through transformed educated individuals.⁷⁶ The same ideology was floated in 1927 by a Deobandi Sufi Scholar, Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandhlawi (1885-1944), who formed Tablighi Jamaat in the British North India, where Muslims were heavily influenced by Hindu culture and unaware of the basic tenets of Islam. Ilyas ideology was to reform individuals to form an ideal Muslim society based on Sunnah (according to life style of Prophet Muhammad PBUH). Tablighi Jamaat's ideology is formed from the combination of *Sufi* and *Ullemas'* teachings, thereby, *the chilla*, *dhikr* (practice of travelling and reciting Quranic verses for personal piety) and individual piety are basic components of Tablighi Jamaat. The main aim of Tablighi Jamaat's dawah activities are not central to the audience but the personal experience of piety and purification of participants.⁷⁷

Tablighi Jamaat is one of the largest pieties' movements in Pakistan, millions of followers meet every year in "Ijtema" (Arabic word means gatherings) from all over the world in Pakistan and Bangladesh. After Haj, it is the largest assemblies of Muslims in the world.⁷⁸ Tablighi Jamaat network is extended through more than 100 countries of America, Europe, Africa, and Central Asia.⁷⁹ Tablighi Jamaat is considered as a non-militant movement and their

⁷⁵ Zaman, "Imagining the 'Muslim' Woman: Religious Movements and Constructions of Gender in the Sub-Continent," 212.

⁷⁶ Meryem Fatima Zaman, "The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam: Women, Space, and Stories in Pakistan's Islamic Movements" (Michigan State University, 2014)

⁷⁷ Sijapati, "The Tablighi Jamaat and Gender"; Rashid, "Radical Islamic Movements."

⁷⁸ Sijapati, "The Tablighi Jamaat and Gender"; Rashid, "Radical Islamic Movements."

⁷⁹ Metcalf, "Appropriating Gender"; Rashid, "Radical Islamic Movements."

official leaders avoid participating in public discourses as opposed to Jamaat-e-Islami who believe in political Islam. One of the Tablighi Jamaat female members drew upon in Interview with Zaman “*of course I care about the political situation but we (Tablighi) believe that once people have been changed, the world will change*”.⁸⁰

Tablighi Jamaat formed at the time of Indian colonial history when women's bodies and femininity were strategically used for the restoration of cultural authenticity by male counterparts, in so doing, one of the main purposes of reforms were to re-orient females into a purified private domain.⁸¹ Throughout the history of Tablighi Jamaat, men position themselves as the protagonists, and core workers in the movement, they go door to door, travel extensively in small groups in local transport and involved in dawah activities.⁸²

Like men, women are part of this piety movement, “*but the incorporation of women follows more classical lines, involving women as accessories to male activities*”.⁸³ Therefore, their participation has been limited to the roles of learners and teachers, and their numbers are far fewer than male counterparts. Generally, they engage in dawah of their own family members and women’s social circles. If women travel for dawah, they travel with male chaperone and their activities are confined to women, inside private spaces.⁸⁴ However, Metcalf mentions cases where Pakistani Jamaat women mentioned that they have female dawah workers from Central Asia and France.

Unlike men, women’s participation was not as free as men in Tablighi Jamaat. Tablighi’s developed some basic rules, conditions and principles for women to engage in dawah activities i.e. they should engage in dawah activities within the family as they will be sympathetic with them, married women along with their close male relatives can travel to another town for dawah

⁸⁰ Zaman, “Imagining the ‘Muslim’ Woman: Religious Movements and Constructions of Gender in the Sub-Continent,” 112.

⁸¹ Sijapati, “The Tablighi Jamaat and Gender.”

⁸² Barbara D. Metcalf, “Islam and Women: The Case of the Tablighi Jama`at,” *SEHR: Contested Politics* 5, no. 1 (1996): 115.

⁸³ Meryem Fatima Zaman, “The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam: Women, Space, and Stories in Pakistan’s Islamic Movements” (Michigan State University, 2014), 4.

⁸⁴ Barbara D. Metcalf, “Islam and Women: The Case of the Tablighi Jama`at,” *SEHR:Contested Politics* 5, no. 1 (1996).

but women must observe seclusion from men and make accompanied men schedule and arrange their meetings and presence.⁸⁵

Participation of female workers can be traced throughout the history of Tablighi Jamaat. Muhammad Ilyas, the founder of TJ movement, welcomed women to engage in his piety movement from the beginning. Metcalf (1996) narrates about a lady who was very active in TJ dawah activities and patronized by Muhammad Ilyas. She was the wife of Maulana Abdus Subhan, a teacher of Muhammad Ilyas's school Nizamuddin in New Delhi and known as "*a person of understanding (sahib-i-fahim) and judgments*". In the early days of Jamaat, under Maulana Ilyas' instructions, she not only engaged in teachings of women but also formed a women's Jamaat to go to Mewat (a faraway town), along with their close male relatives.⁸⁶

Similar to Al-Huda's piety movements, women's participation in Tablighi Jamaat brought some changes in society which were not the main purpose of dawah activities, like introducing urban culture in Mewat by setting up toilets in homes to avoid Jamaat women's night trips to fields.⁸⁷ Alike to Al-Huda, Tablighi Jamaat provided women with a social space to get to gather just like Al-Huda to meet and develop a social circle to congregate. Metcalf describes in her anthropological work, conducted in the early 1990s that Tablighi Jamaat provided a platform to women to meetup along with religious knowledge. Women who are actively engaged in the 1990s were meeting in their local areas commonly according to their schedule, and besides the religious knowledge, Tablighi provided a social space to women to congregate, although Metcalf does not mention the socio-economic classes of women which is an important phenomenon to figure out the importance and impact of these get-to-gathers. Moreover, she described her experience of attending a Tablighi jamaat Friday meeting at Maki mosque, Karachi, the biggest city of Pakistan, where hundreds of women gathered to attend to prayers and meditation by listening Quran. She found the discourse very warm, simple and gentle and it was a reminder for women of their own piety and guidance for their family.

⁸⁵ Metcalf, "Appropriating Gender," 113.

⁸⁶ Barbara D. Metcalf, "Islam and Women: The Case of the Tablighi Jama'at," *SEHR: Contested Politics* 5, no. 1 (1996).

⁸⁷ Metcalf, "Appropriating Gender," 112.

Tablighi Jamaat focus on internal and spiritual uplifting of Muslims and wanted to inculcate the virtues of simplicity, piousness, consultation, simplicity in living and non-hierarchy in general lifestyle. These virtues proved for gender balancing and favoring women within the household as simple living during Jamaat tours inculcate the sense of equality and shared family responsibility. As Metcalf mentions, the fieldwork and experienced of her participants after a jamaat tour their family life became more harmonious as they get involved in cooking, cleaning, washing and daily household life which they never experience before. One of the members said, after their jamaat tours, they do not get offended anymore if food is salty as they know how easy it is to add more salt in food by chance. Metcalf mentions in her analysis that overall "*the dominant attitude in the Tablighi Jamaat seems to emphasize on essentially shared nature and shared responsibility in both genders*".⁸⁸

In nutshell, Tablighi Jamaat ideology of personal piety and emphasize on exploring goodness from within is a narrative which does not discriminate on bases of sex. Al-Huda and Tablighi Jamaat are similar in their ideology of "personal piety" but Al-Huda is very "class conscious" movement, who ask women to stay within their homes, realize their powers and influence others. On the other hand, Tablighi Jamaat emphasizes equality and leaving the comfort of "class" by engaging in travelling for dawah activities for the exploration of oneself by leaving their comfort zones. After having a brief overview of Tablighi Jamaat, I will explore the other largest movements Jamaat-e-Islami, which is unlike to Tablighi Jamaat, is a political party and believe on the top down approach of introducing reforms.

ii. Jamaat-e-Islami

Dr Farhat Hashmi was influenced by many thinkers and revivalist leaders, the most significant is Sayyid Abu-Ala-Maududi, the founder and chairperson of Jamaat-e-Islami. In this section, my focus of analysis is Jamaat-e-Islami as a political party and movement, I will discuss the influence of Jamaat-e-Islamia and Maududi on Farhat Hashmi in next chapter along Hashmi's profile.

⁸⁸ Metcalf, 117.

Jamaat-e-Islami emerged as a movement at that time when new movements and organizations were emerging for new identity formation in colonial India. Jamaat-e-Islami was founded in 1941 by Maulana Maududi (1903-1979), who had been the ideological and administrative leader of the party for 31 years (1941 to 1972). Maududi has been one of the most persuasive contemporary revivalist thinkers who not only influenced religious discourses and politics in Pakistan but also inspired many thinkers and influential revivalist leaders.⁸⁹ Maududi was a decedent of a notable family from Delhi, who was associated with the last Mughal emperor and courts and closely witnessed the downfall of the Mughals by the British in 1858. Coming from an educated traditional Muslim family, he completed his formal religious education “Dars-i-Nizami” course under supervisions of Deobandi scholars.

Maulana Maududi founded Jamaat-e-Islami with the ideology that Islam is meant to govern the state and Islamic civilization, it cannot succeed if it has a mixture of westernization and cultural influences, thereby, Maududi focused on to repel colonial domination on Muslim and tried to distinguish Muslims from emergent Hindu nation in British India.⁹⁰ Initially, Jamaat-e-Islami was against the formation of a separate country for Muslim in British India. Later, they joined the partition movement and support the formation of Pakistan which associate nationalism with religion. Currently, Jamaat-e-Islami is an exceedingly popular transnational organization which is widespread not only in Pakistan but also in South Asia, East Asia, middle east, Europe and UK and USA.⁹¹

The ideology of Jamaat-e-Islami on gender and women issues can be traced from Maududi’s book “*Purdah and the status of women in Islam*”(1972). Maududi has written more than 120 books and pamphlets on the issues of nationalism, politics, social and economic problems through Islamic perspectives. In the above-mentioned book, Maududi has argued that effectively resolved gender issues are a key factor of the progress of society, and well define and “appropriate” gender role for women determine the success of society. Maududi concluded in the book that the ultimate role of women is to be the custodian and caretaker of the purity of Islamic

⁸⁹ Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jama’at-i Islami of Pakistan* (University of California Press, 1994).

⁹⁰ Nasr; Jalal, “The Convenience of Subservience,” 1991; Amina Jamal, *Jamaat-e-Islami Women in Pakistan: Vanguard of a New Modernity?* (Syracuse University Press, 2013).

⁹¹ Jamal, *Jamaat-e-Islami Women in Pakistan*, 2013.

tradition⁹² and to fulfil this duty, women should confine to their homes and observe purdah. Their mobility should be restricted, only exceptions are available in the extreme cases of war and dispute.

On the contrary of Maududi teachings, women have been active in the outreach of Jamaat-e-Islami. Women wing of Jamaat-e-Islami was established in the 1950s.⁹³ Colleges and universities have chapters of Jamaat-e-Islami, both female and male can join Jamaat-e-Islami. These students' wings have been served as basic training and recruitment cell for the prospective leadership and membership. Dr Farhat Hashmi was also a member of Jamaat-e-Islami during her college and university life. Nasr revealed that Maududi grasps the opportunity to get National and Provisional assembly seats for women and emphasized on the women mobilization when Jamaat-e-Islami failed on gaining seats in 1971 elections.⁹⁴ Maududi and Jamaat-e-Islami also supported Fatima Jinnah, the sister of founder of Pakistan and an active member of Pakistan Movement, for her presidential elections, although she was unveiled and unmarried woman which is opposite to the "perfect women" according to their ideology. However, support to Fatima Jinnah always been a political stunt, it did not affect the view on women in political power-sharing.

Role of relativist leaders and religion have been massive to get political acceptance and popularity throughout Pakistan history. The best example can be seen in the 1970s when Jamaat-e-Islami gained a strong position and political power during the dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq (1979-1988). Zia ul Haq gave power to the Jamaat-e-Islami leaders informally and formally by including them into his nominated parliament. His desired expectations from leaders were not only to promote war in and beyond Pakistan but also to assist him to legitimize his own political and legal measures intended to impose an orthodox version of Islam in Pakistani society. The sharing of power with a military which is one of the strongest institutions in Pakistan, and with the support of Saudi sponsorship, Jamaat-e-Islami tried to institutionalize the form of Islam

⁹² Siddiqui, "Gender Ideology and the Jamaat-e-Islami."

⁹³ Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution*.

⁹⁴ Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, "Pakistan: State, Agrarian Reform and Islamization," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 10, no. 2 (1996): 249–72.

which is Wahabi-inspired. It is an aspect to note that Wahabi-inspired Islam has minimum space for the Sufi-inspired Islam which was more prevalent in the south Asian societies.⁹⁵

Samia Raheel Qazi; leader of Jamaat-e-Islami women wing, and daughter of *Aamir* (head) Jamaat-e-Islami, in discussion with Anita Weiss in 2003 shows its orthodox views on women. Although She identified five priorities areas for women: empowerment, education, free and speedy justice, health and other social rights which are bestowed to women by Islam, but Pakistani society has not given to women. Interestingly, these areas of interest are priority areas by progressive Pakistani women rights activist as well as states, but Jamaat-e-Islam seeks a solution through sharia law rather than challenging any existing law and justice system. Further, she argues that women ideally work in a gender-segregated environment but as it's not possible thereby, women should work in Hijab and take care of her modesty only after fulfilling the family responsibilities.⁹⁶

In short, Jamaat-e-Islami is a political party who follow their vested political interest, that is why their gender ideology is unclear and changeable. But their gender ideology and interpretation of religious text have been misogynist. Women as a worker have been an important part of Jamaat-e-Islami but contribution at women at leadership position is permissible. Throughout the history of Pakistan, Jamaat-e-Islami has been a vital cord of governments and advisor of women-centric reforms. In the next section, I will discuss further the role of Jamaat-e-Islami in government, along analyzing the stakeholders of state engaging religion and religion-based reforms to strengthen their standings in power.

2.3. Women as Subject of Reform though Political Islam

Since the formation of Pakistan, religion and religious leaders have played a key role in maintaining the state level power structure. In Pakistan, the association with religion is so essential for the politicians that even secular modern politicians cannot avoid the influences and inclusion of *Ullemas* in their governments and state policies, however, these *Ullemas* and version

⁹⁵, Jamal, *Jamaat-e-Islami Women in Pakistan*, 2013.

⁹⁶ Weiss, *Interpreting Islam, Modernity, and Women's Rights in Pakistan*, 107.

of religion were progressive or orthodox from time to time, according to the vision of state head.⁹⁷

Since the partition, due to being "religion" the core component of public and personal life, revivalist leaders have power and superiority on a societal level due to being *heir of religion*. A contributing factor which makes religious leaders "heir of religion" is that Sacred text of Islam is in the Arabic language, which is a foreign language for south Asian countries, so, masses, especially uneducated and rural class have to rely on the knowledge of religious leaders for interpretation. Furthermore, Revivalist movements have a strong network in all over the country. So, it is very easy for any revivalist movements to build a narrative or public opinion on any specific issue. Especially, in the small town and villages where people are uneducated or with low literacy and rely on *Mullahs/Ullemas* for having religious knowledge. Subsequently, the religious leader has the power to build the narratives in commoner. State and political actors of Pakistan are well aware of the power of religion and religious leaders, they know that through supporting religion and religious leaders they can get masses support and secure vote bank.

Having the historical context of the importance of religion, *Ullemas* and women positionality within reforms in previous sections, this section will push the analysis further to the nexus of women-centric reforms by state, and political agents in Pakistan history. I argue that use of religion and endorsement of *Ullemas* is a tool of getting benefit and control cultural landscape, Here I will explain some chunks of history to support my argument. This history has actors of a military dictator and democratic and religious leaders. The history of military dictator and their relationship with religion to get masses support and the role of a religious leader, in all the scenario is very important to understand how Al-Huda got unprecedented popularity and get benefits from state and military & friends.

Military dictatorship started in Pakistan in early year of its foundation, Ayyub khan was the military dictator and second president of Pakistan, who enforced martial law between 1958 to 1968, he was a modernist and adopted an "anti-clergy" position. He introduced the progressive family law ordinance 1961 which involved the issues of inheritance, divorce, polygamy, child

⁹⁷ Dr Rubina Saigol, "Feminism and the Women's Movement in Pakistan," *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Pakistan Office No. 10-A, Street No. 31, F-8/1, Islamabad, Pakistan*, n.d., 60.

custody, registration of marriage in favor of women but he used *Ullemas* to do fatwa on Fatima Jinnah for presidential seat. He made Ullemas to declare that being a woman, Fatima Jinnah is not eligible for being the head of a state, and she is unfeminine, unmotherly and Indian and American agent.⁹⁸ Ayyub Khan resigned in 1968 after a massive nationwide protest against dictatorship.

Ayub Khan was succeeded by Yahya Khan, third president of Pakistan, during Yahya tenure, elections were held and won by a political party *Awami league* which was based on east Pakistan (current Bangladesh). But military and civil officials failed to transform the power and it initiated a rebellious movement in East Pakistan. A military operation started in East Pakistan and it ended into the division of East Pakistan as a separate nation Bangladesh. In West Pakistan, PPP had won the election before military operations in East Pakistan, when Bangladesh became a separate nation, PPP became a ruling party in 1972.⁹⁹

In the early 1970s, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the first elected prime minister of Pakistan, was a liberal and "anti-clergy" but he had to introduce many pro-Islamic initiatives to secure his own standing against the religious parties, and his initiatives strengthened the religious group.¹⁰⁰ Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the founder of Pakistan People Party (PPP) and, hold office in 1972. Bhutto along with Maulana Bhashani, leader of political party *National Awami*, uses term "Islamic socialism" in the late 1960s. "Bhutto's brand of Islamic socialism was an amalgam of anti-Indianism, socialism and nationalism".¹⁰¹ Bhutto was foreign qualified and liberal thereby "PPP's Islamic Socialism denounced the conservative religious parties and the clergy of being representatives of monopolist capitalists, feudal lords, military dictators, the imperialist forces of capitalism, and of being agents of backwardness and social and spiritual stagnation".¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Saigol.

⁹⁹ Saigol, "Feminism and the Women's Movement in Pakistan: Actors, Debates and Strategies."

¹⁰⁰ Khawar Mumtaz and Farida Shaheed, *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?* (UK: Zed Books, 1987).

¹⁰¹ Bidanda M. Chengappa, "Pakistan: Impact of Islamic Socialism," *Strategic Analysis* 26, no. 1 (January 2002): 27–47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700160208450024>.

¹⁰² Nadeem F. Paracha, "Islamic Socialism: A History from Left to Right," DAWN.COM, February 21, 2013.

Bhutto introduced some pro-women initiatives, women got equal status as men in the constitution and achieved higher positions in various institutes governments.¹⁰³ His other pro-Islamic initiatives included as making Friday (which is a holy day among the rest of other days of the week for Muslim) as public holiday/weekend rather than Sunday. He banned all kinds of liquor and gambling and nightclubs and order to place the Quran in all the government rest houses and first-class hotels. He made Islam the highest place in the 1973 constitution.¹⁰⁴ However, soon an anti-Bhutto alliance of nine political parties heightened the masses frustration of low socio-economic conditions. In 1977 elections were held which was won by Bhutto but he was accused of rigging the elections and later in 1979 hanged in by the military.

The trend of extensive funding of Al-Huda can be traced from the Bhutto era. Bhutto nationalized all educational institutes except *Madrasas*. Having an autonomous status, *madrasas* got linked with an external sponsor such as Sunni madrasas got funded from Saudi Arabia and Shia madras got funding from Iran. From the 1970s, a massive religious literature and money started flowing into the country through these *madrasas*.¹⁰⁵ Thereby, Al-Huda's extensive funding's, and literature were not a new phenomenon within Pakistani communities. However, In Al-Huda case, the exception was the target audience as before "Al-Huda Phenomena", madrasas education was exclusive for students from low-income classes and, still, graduates of Madrasas are considered backwards in society.

Nexus of religion, religious leader and military power and its influence on women's lives were at its peak in the Zia period. Before the 1977, the elite class considered religion as a personal matter and they wanted to appease or silence the religious voices in social and political spaces although they were not reluctant to miss the opportunity to gain any benefit by using religion¹⁰⁶ but from the Zia period, contemporary Islamic revivalism took hold in the Pakistani elite and became an essential part of the urban setting.¹⁰⁷ Period of Zia is also important to understand the social and cultural trends of supporting religion from authorities and pro-religion

¹⁰³ Saigol, "Feminism and the Women's Movement in Pakistan: Actors, Debates and Strategies," 12.

¹⁰⁴ Mumtaz and Shaheed, *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?*

¹⁰⁵ Ahmad, *Transforming Faith*.

¹⁰⁶ Shaheed, "Appropriating Gender."

¹⁰⁷ Meryem Fatima Zaman, "The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam: Women, Space, and Stories in Pakistan's Islamic Movements" (Michigan State University, 2014), 12.

attitude of the government. The elite urban class who are high officials of military and government were well channelized by Farhat Hashmi to establish Al-Huda into a transnational revivalist movement which I will discuss in detail in chapter 3.

Bhutto's Islamic Socialism was carried on by Zia-ul-Haq in intensified form of "Islamization"¹⁰⁸, his Islamization process of state revolved around women and aimed to restructure society and gender relations not only in public but also in the private sphere. The most important and perdurable aspect of his Islamization process was the slogan of *Chaddar and Chardewari* (literal means scarf and four walls of home) which is associated to the fortification of women and traditional family system, both are vital chord in the structure and identity of the middle and lower class of Pakistan.¹⁰⁹ Zaman denounced, "*Zia's legal reforms were written on the bodies of women and focused on controlling women's behavior*".¹¹⁰

Zia's Islamization agenda for Pakistan was based on Deobandi and Wahabi Islam supported by Jamaat-e-Islami and Saudi Arabian version of Islam.¹¹¹ The trajectory between "women, community identity and Islam" became more protuberant during the military dictatorship of Zia-ul-Haq who use the Islamic nationalism for mass support in his dictatorship.¹¹² Zia-ul-Haq was a self-acclaimed "devout Muslim" proclaimed that Islam and Pakistan have a divine connection and appropriated the "Nizam-e-Mustafa" (the government system of Prophet Muhammad) to steer Pakistani society back to the days of early Islam. To show off his commitment to Islam, he tricked to play women's card which proved as a "Brilliant Ploy".¹¹³

Through the process of Islamization, discrimination against women and minorities were institutionalized into the legal system. For instances, in 1979, the laws of Hudood Ordinance were introduced,¹¹⁴ this law that did not distinguish between rape and adultery and if any woman

¹⁰⁸ Saigol, "Feminism and the Women's Movement in Pakistan: Actors, Debates and Strategies."

¹⁰⁹ Jalal, "The Convenience of Subservience," 1991.

¹¹⁰ Meryem Fatima Zaman, "The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam: Women, Space, and Stories in Pakistan's Islamic Movements" (Michigan State University, 2014), 44.

¹¹¹ Saigol, "Feminism and the Women's Movement in Pakistan: Actors, Debates and Strategies."

¹¹² Zaman, "The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam."

¹¹³ Jalal, "The Convenience of Subservience," 1991, 101.

¹¹⁴ Mumtaz and Shaheed, *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?*

claiming to be raped, she had to provide three witnesses of her rape. In case, she was unable to provide witnesses, she would be charged with adultery. Similarly, Qisas and Diyat Law supported the perpetrators of *Honor killing* of women. Women's testimony was reduced to half of a man by the Law of evidence.¹¹⁵ Moreover, in 1983, the Ansari Report of the Council of Islamic Ideology suggested limiting women's participation in politics by nominating women over the age of 50.¹¹⁶ Meanwhile, Dr Israr Ahmad, a former religious leader of Jamaat-e-Islami advocated in his lectures on TV that women should exit from economy and workspaces and confined to homes.¹¹⁷

Moreover, in Islamization, women were *reformed* by bounding to wear 'Islamic' dress which was 'Shalwar Qameez' and a big shawl (a cloth cover head and curves of the body) rather than small 'Dupatta' (a small piece of cloth unable to cover body curves and head). More restrictions were coupled with the restrictions of outdoor and spectator sports and emphasized on single-sex high education institutes.¹¹⁸ Maulana Maududi, the chairperson of Jamaat-e-Islami endorsed Zia through Radio Shows.¹¹⁹

To Summaries, Zia regime is very controversial in its policies of policing women in public and private spaces. Through religion-based social and legal reforms, women were not only controlled but also became a second-class citizen. Religion-based government reforms are hard to nullifying abruptly in a country where religion has the central component of the life of masses. In later sections, I will build my analysis of how women-centric religious reforms were evolving and declining from states agents and how the presence of religion existed in decision making.

The process of Islamization ceased growing when democracy restored in 1988 after the death of Zia ul Haq in an aero plane crash. Two political parties Pakistan Muslim League (PML) and Pakistan People Party (PPP) were switching rule with each other for eight years. Benazir Bhutto, chairperson of Pakistan People's Party, daughter of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, lead parliament

¹¹⁵ Saigol, "Feminism and the Women's Movement in Pakistan: Actors, Debates and Strategies."

¹¹⁶ Saigol, "Feminism and the Women's Movement in Pakistan."

¹¹⁷ Saigol, "Feminism and the Women's Movement in Pakistan: Actors, Debates and Strategies," 14.

¹¹⁸ Saigol, "Feminism and the Women's Movement in Pakistan."

¹¹⁹ Zaman, "The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam."

from 1988-90 and 1993 to 96. Nawaz Sharif, the chairperson of Muslim League, was in the power from 1990-93 and 1997-99.

After the death of Zia-ul-Haq, when Benazir Bhutto came into power, the process of Islamization was ceased but it was not undone or reversed. Political parties and leaders do not want to lose vote and masses support to oppose Islam and Islamic laws. Benazir Bhutto was graduate of Oxford University, London and seldom appeared publicly without Dupatta covering her hairs. After holding the State office, she wore dupatta/scarf on the head all the times, which decoded her as a religious woman.¹²⁰ Benazir's being a supportive of pro-women agenda, she could not make a difference in legislative grounds.¹²¹

Nawaz Sharif, on the other hand, fashioned his party, Pakistan Muslim League (PML) as a democratic and *pro-Islamization* party. Zia highlighted his time of his political era as time to conducive for religious revivalism and political conservatism and.¹²² Few of the reforms which were recommended by the council of Islamic ideology in 1997 were the mandatory wearing of veil/Hijab, moreover, in Punjab, the government claimed that girls did not abide by the Islamic dress code, thereby, all the cultural activities were banned in girls' schools and colleges. In 1998, dance performances by women were banned by the government.¹²³ In liberals, he was known as "successor of Zia ul Haq" for promoting Islamization in publicly and politically. His pro-Islamization policies and interventions made liberals and progressives to support Military dictator General Pervez Musharraf "as a guarantor of the sate secularity".¹²⁴

The democratic government of Prime Minister Nawaz Shareef was pull down by General Pervaiz Musharraf through the military revolution in 1999. Unlike the misogynistic military dictatorship of Zia ul Haq, the political era of General Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008) was a self-acclaimed "enlightened Moderation".¹²⁵ General Pervez Musharraf from his very first public speech after holding power, distance himself from the religious reforms in the country. He aimed to rescue Pakistan from corrupt democratic governments of the 1990s with inspiration from Ata

¹²⁰ Zaman.

¹²¹ Zia, "The Reinvention of Feminism in Pakistan."

¹²² Zia.

¹²³ Rashid, "Radical Islamic Movements"; Babar, "New 'Social Imaginaries.'"

¹²⁴ Zaman, "The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam," 47.

¹²⁵ Zia, "The Reinvention of Feminism in Pakistan," 73.

Turk Model.¹²⁶ General Pervaiz Musharraf tried to promote the liberal and progressive version and perspective of the country all over the world and within Pakistan. He not only started missions under the United States "War on Terror" to curb the power and influence of radical and religious militant parties and groups within and beyond Pakistan but also promote a liberal view on women's issues and religion.

In the continuity of making "women as vital component of reform", he aimed to improve the status of women in Pakistan especially he stressed on political empowerment of women through reservation of seats in parliament and established a permanent commission on the status of women in the 2000, in result of Commission's recommendations, women protection Act was introduced by bringing down Hudood Ordinance.¹²⁷ However, despite his liberal and progressive initiatives, he had to resign¹²⁸ his presidential post in 2008.¹²⁹

General Pervez Musharraf's era is considered as progressive and liberal but at the same time, Islamic revivalism was getting popularity. Piety movements gained popularity in elite women through Al-Huda and women started observing abayas and hijabs, which was not part of Pakistani culture earlier. (p.224). Moreover, Islamist political parties also got seats in parliaments after elections.¹³⁰ Some of the revivalist's scholar observed that in contemporary revivalist movements boomed in Musharraf era in 2001.¹³¹

This chapter has mapped the intersecting historical genesis within the political and social structure of power which paved the social and cultural grounds for 'Al-Huda phenomena'. Furthermore, this historical analogy of state and religious actors provided ample context of

¹²⁶ Zia, "Faith-Based Politics, Enlightened Moderation and the Pakistani Women's Movement."

¹²⁷ Ahmad, *Transforming Faith*; Zia, "The Reinvention of Feminism in Pakistan."

¹²⁸ One of the main reasons of Musharraf defamation in masses and resignation was to abolish Jamia Hafsa. Jamia Hafsa was a woman Madrasa adjacent to Laal Mosque, which is situated in an elite vicinity of Islamabad, Pakistan. In January 2007, students from Jamia Hafsa appeared first time in public, completely wrapped in black veil and abaya which cover them head to toe with bamboo sticks in their hands. They came out to protest against the government's threat to demolish Laal Mosque adjoining premises which government claims as state land. They also kidnapped a woman from the neighborhood whom they accused of prostitution though they set her free when she claimed to regret her "sins". Overall, they aimed to bring reforms in society by demanding the implementation of Shariah law in Pakistan, their ideology was backed up by their male Imam Maulana Abdul Aziz.

¹²⁹ Ahmad, *Transforming Faith*.

¹³⁰ Zia, "Faith-Based Politics, Enlightened Moderation and the Pakistani Women's Movement."

¹³¹ Zaman, "The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam."

influences and support system of Al-Huda International. Jamaat-e-Islami and Tablighi Jamaat were reforming movements with male centric approach. Their presence in the society created a culture of revivalist movements. However, Jamaat-e-Islami and state actors brought religious reforms on women's bodies. State supported religious narrative to get acceptance and secure vote bank from the masses. The state's attitude of religious reforms paved the way to ushering of Al-Huda. The next chapter will be staging the Onset of Al-Huda within this cultural landscape and backlash which Al-Huda and Farhat Hashmi have to encounter as a first women-led revivalist movement.

Chapter 3:

Women as ‘Reformists’: The Outset of Al-Huda International

In 1980s, during the political regime of General Zia-ul-Haq, two extremes appeared on the socio-political canvas of Pakistan. On the right-wing side, there were state-sanctioned Islamists who reinforced Islam in politics, with their conservative approach of life, they were anti-west, orthodox, and misogynist. On the left-wing, there was the secular educated upper-class with their liberal and progressive approach towards life. Particularly, the political era of General Pervaiz Musharraf (1999-2008) was suitable for the growth of both extremes. At that time, "Progressive Religion", was promoted by the state, with the favor of elite, educated urban class as an alternative of orthodoxy's religious narrative. Al-Huda came out with few characteristics of both classes at the same time, it is modern in its methodologies' and outreach and conservative in its narrative. Amazingly, both social binaries have reservations for Al-Huda and Farhat Hashmi.¹³²

The critical analysis of social, political, religious actors of religion-based gender reforms makes us understand the climate which was welcoming for Al-Huda. The main aim of this chapter is the historical analysis of the outset of 'Al-Huda phenomena'. The critical analysis revolves around the questions of How did Al-Huda emerge, who was the Protagonist of Al-Huda and who does likes and dislikes Al-Huda Phenomenon. The central argument is dissected into three sub-section. The first section draws upon the rise of Al-Huda in the context of socio-political urban settings of Pakistan. The section will be processed with the analysis of the ideology of Al-Huda and subsequently, Hashmi's choice of the target audience for religious education and the factors of women amalgamation in Al-Huda Phenomena.

The focus of the second section is to investigate the protagonist of Al-Huda which is a key figure of this "rebellious religious women's revivalist movement".¹³³ An analysis of the educational and family background of Hashmi is indispensable to understand the ideologies of Al-Huda. Here, I will highlight those aspects of Hashmi's life which shaped the ideologies and

¹³² Mushtaq, "A Controversial Role Model for Pakistani Women," December 8, 2010.

¹³³ Zaman, "The Problem of the Rebellious Religious Women."

narrative of Al-Huda and how does her cult of personality is constructed to attract target audience. Hashmi's inspirations and preferences of the religious sect will be taken into consideration to define the Al-Huda's narrative. The salient features of Hashmi's pedagogical methodology claim are to provide "the correct and authentic religious knowledge" and power dynamics attached with *dars* are being explored. In nutshell, this section provides the analysis of who is the protagonist of Al-Huda phenomena and why followers rebelliously attach with it.

After examining the protagonist of Al-Huda and reasons for her popularity, the last section continued with the critical analysis of backlash which Al-Huda and Farhat Hashmi have to faced/received. These backlashes are from two extremes of society; orthodox *Ullemas* of Pakistan and transnational community of progressive, modern activist and academic scholars. *Ullemas* declared Al-Huda and Hashmi as "*Biddat*" and "*Fitna*". The criticisms are on the educational background of Hashmi, methodological issues of Al-Huda teaching, class-consciousness of Al-Huda, and their reservation about Hashmi as a female religious leader. Transnational Progressive religious scholars and human rights activist disapprove Hashmi to inculcate the "Islamization" into women and propagating an orthodox and conservative version of Islam by reinforcing subjugation of women.

3.1. Inception of Al-Huda

Islamic religious instruction and teachings for women in Pakistan have either tended to remain local and informal or the domain of auxiliary units of larger, male-run, religious movements.¹³⁴ Both, Tablighi Jamaat and Jamaat-e-Islami, for example, were popular mostly with men of the lower socio-economic classes with participant women largely being relatives and family members of male members. Al-Huda was the first movement targeted at the urban, educated, upper-class women of Pakistan. Before Al-Huda's inception, there was a vacuum of religious education (*dars*) for this class, as elite educated class distance themselves from traditional madrassas's *Mulvi/Ullemas*.¹³⁵ The alternate narrative from Pakistani progressive Muslim feminist and scholars was also available, like Riffat Hassan, Asma Barlas, Farida Shaheed and Durre. S. Ahmad, but their work was more academic and theoretical and not for

¹³⁴ Zaman, "The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam."

¹³⁵ Hassan, "Islam and Human Rights in Pakistan."

masses or the public. Thereby, there was a space for religious education or modern *dars* for the urban educated elite class. This vacuity gets multiplied by the state and political nexus of gender religious reforms.

In the early 1990s, this gap was filled by Dr Farhat Hashmi, a lecturer from International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIU). After completing her PhD in Hadith Sciences in Scotland, she returned to Pakistan and began conducting *dars*, informal Islamic teaching study circles and get-togethers held in the drawing rooms, for elite women of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Islamabad is the capital city of Pakistan and Rawalpindi is the headquarter of Pakistan Military. Both cities are located adjacent to each other and known as twin cities. The elite of Islamabad and Rawalpindi are mostly industrialists, businesspersons, bureaucrats and high-ranking military officials. The social and political ambience was appropriate for the religious activities and families of higher officials were ready to patronize Farhat Hashmi; a highly qualified lady dressed in black *Abaya*,¹³⁶ with a big scarf which wraps not only her head but her shoulders till half waist. Hashmi without any prior involvement in politics and power structures appeared as the non-threatening and non-controversial figure for Pakistani power nexus.¹³⁷

Babar has written her personal experience of getting introduced with Farhat Hashmi

“I first heard of Farhat Hashmi in the late 1990s. Rawalpindi, home to the General Headquarters of the Pakistan Army, had a bevy of army wives who liked ‘doing good work’.¹³⁸ One of the general’s wives had decided to host Hashmi’s lectures during Ramadan at a local hotel. This was a time when the religion-military nexus in Pakistani society was strong and it seemed the ‘right thing’ to be seen at her lectures, as all the high-ranking military officers’ wives were there”.¹³⁹

Babar further narrated the reason behind the inclination of elite women towards Farhat Hashmi, “they were tired of being labelled the ‘idle rich’ of Islamabad and were seeking to *do something good*”. Another respondent of Babar divulged “that she felt guilty because she had

¹³⁶ Abaya is a loose robe, which was initially used by Saudi woman and became popular for Pakistani Muslim women to wrap themselves in during the late 80s, early 1990s. Especially in urban areas, middle-class families use it when they go into public places.

¹³⁷ Babar, “New ‘Social Imaginaries.’”

¹³⁸ Babar, 354.

¹³⁹ Babar, 354.

grown fond of watching English films on satellite television and wanted to *save her soul*".¹⁴⁰ Few women joined these *dars* "because they had heard that there was a *dars* in the neighborhood and thought it might be a *good use* of their time".¹⁴¹

Initially, the *Dars* classes appeared as an offshoot of IIU, intending to educate women about Islam. Within an extraordinarily short span of time, Farhat Hashmi became popular among the elite women of Islamabad. Meanwhile, she realized the dire need to promote a deeper understanding of Islam.¹⁴² In 1994, these informal religious get-togethers became into a "Center of Islamic Learning" (that is how Al-Huda identifies itself) and established "Al-Huda International Welfare Foundation" with the vision of "Quran for All: In every Hand, In every Heart".¹⁴³ Unlike the other global revivalist movements, including "women's mosque or piety movements which often began informally and sometimes were linked to social welfare and only later became more organized and structured",¹⁴⁴ Al-Huda International was very structured and well organized since its foundation. Soon, Al-Huda International expanded its services from delivering sermons and teaching the Quran to the social welfare of society. Currently, they actively participate in social services via various social development projects in Pakistan and diaspora.

Since Al-Huda established, along with formal and informal *dars* and lectures, various modern methods are adopted by Al-Huda to spread the words of Hashmi. Her message is carried out far and wide through audio and video cassettes, books, and pamphlets in the 1990s. In early, 2000, Hashmi started delivering *dars* on both television and radio. Via which she reached and influenced thousands, soon becoming a household name in Pakistan.¹⁴⁵ In recent times, Al Huda made the best use of technology and make Farhat Hashmi's lectures available on websites, podcasts, and smartphone applications. Since the inception of Al-Huda, her recorded lectures

¹⁴⁰ Babar, 357.

¹⁴¹ Zaman, "The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam," 176.

¹⁴² Weiss, *Interpreting Islam, Modernity, and Women's Rights in Pakistan*.

¹⁴³ "Home - Farhat Hashmi - Quran For All - In Every Heart, In Every Hand," Farhat Hashmi, accessed May 28, 2019, <https://www.farhathashmi.com/>.

¹⁴⁴ Zia, "Faith-Based Politics, Enlightened Moderation and the Pakistani Women's Movement," 232.

¹⁴⁵ Daniel S. Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan: America's Tortured Relationship with Islamabad* (Cambridge University Press, 2013). P, 54

sold like hotcakes, with women often listening to them while driving or doing household chores. She commands the undivided attention of listeners in every large or small group.¹⁴⁶

According to Farhat Hashmi, she found peace through Islamic knowledge and thought to share it with her fellow beings for their betterment. Hashmi believes that individuals construct the society, so transformed pious beings can bring social transformation at a larger scale. Her choice of upper-class, educated urban Pakistan - trendsetters and role models for the rest of society - as the target audience served this aim of bringing social transformation through individuals.¹⁴⁷

This agenda of utilizing the elites to attract masses is a significant part of pedagogical instructions, encouraging students to disseminate their knowledge to others, but also in their training to influence others by various behavioral and social techniques alongside explicit qur'anic support. For example, the verse of *Surah Nahl*: “*Invite people to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and reason with them in the most courteous way*” is quoted during lectures by Farhat Hashmi and teachers to encourage students to take the initiative to expand Dawah activities. Students are further given assignments to arrange three-day courses of religious teachings in their networks during summers under the supervision and support of their teachers.¹⁴⁸ This sort of systematic training and practical assistance are not provided by any other religious reformist party in Pakistan.

The ideology of Al-Huda international, as discussed in the previous chapter, is close to Tablighi Jamaat in terms of transforming society through transformed pious individuals. Farhat Hashmi's mission is to transform individuals into pious beings to bring social revolution. Similar to Tablighi Jamaat, Al-Huda also inquire women for their willingness about dawah activities, but their approaches are very different. For instance, Tablighi Jamaat ask women to engage in dawah, leave their homes and have toured alongside their male relatives. Contrast this with Al-Huda which “encourages women to reform their households even against the wishes of their husbands. Al-Huda women are famous across urban Pakistan for defying their husbands and in-

¹⁴⁶ Dorsey, "Pakistan's Lurch Towards Ultra-Conservatism Abetted by Saudi-inspired Pyramid Scheme."

¹⁴⁷ Ahmad, *Transforming Faith*.

¹⁴⁸ Sadaf Ahmad, *Transforming Faith: The Story of Al-Huda and Islamic Revivalism among Urban Pakistani Women* (Syracuse University Press, 2009).

laws, and for using ideas of Islam to resist limitations on their mobility and claims to their domestic service”.¹⁴⁹

Farhat Hashmi appeared as a very influential personality who has brought a social transformation with the cooperation of the Pakistani elite and middle class educated women. She is listed as one of the most influential *Ullema*¹⁵⁰ of contemporary times. The next session, essentially, will draw upon the profile of Farhat Hashmi and how Al-Huda constructed "The personality" of Farhat Hashmi. I will also investigate a few features of Farhat Hashmi's figure which inspire educated women to keep attending and following Al-Huda.

3.2. Farhat Hashmi: The Protagonist of “Al-Huda Phenomena”

Farhat Hashmi tailored herself into an orator for the elite of Islamabad since the outset of A-Huda. Teacher, students and followers of Al-Had accepted her status as a “charismatic leader”.¹⁵¹ Microscopic analysis of Al Huda's print media sources, the curriculum of formal diplomas, informal lectures and sermons revealed that Farhat Hashmi is presented as an ultimate source of “authentic Islamic knowledge”.¹⁵² Her personality is constructed as the cult of a leader in which “all members of the society are expected to subscribe, a system that is omnipresent and ubiquitous and one that is expected to persist indefinitely. It is thus, a deliberately constructed and managed mechanism, which aims at the integration of the political system around the leader's persona”.¹⁵³ Anita Weiss supported this claim by quoting Simi Kamal, a well-known human rights activist from Pakistan;

“I see many of my friends that regularly go to Al-Huda spouting Farhat Hashmi's utterance as if they were the definitive word of Islam (and also the definitive words on any other subject she chooses to speak about). I cannot accept that a single person can be

¹⁴⁹ Zaman, “The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam,” 68.

¹⁵⁰ Ulema is the word used for a person who has that level of religious education which gives him/her the right to do jurisprudence judgments in religion.

¹⁵¹ Babar, “New ‘Social Imaginaries,’” 355.

¹⁵² “Al Huda International,” accessed May 25, 2019, <https://www.alhudapk.com/component/content/article/2-uncategorised/174-about-al-huda-international.html>.

¹⁵³ E. A. Rees, “Leader Cults: Varieties, Preconditions and Functions,” in *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships: Stalin and the Eastern Bloc*, ed. Balázs Apor et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2004), 4, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230518216_1.

the repository of so much diverse knowledge, wisdom, and expertise. The Zeal and self-righteousness with which her followers conduct themselves are frightening”.¹⁵⁴

Ahmad reaffirms that Farhat Hashmi is wittingly presented as “an ideal woman” and the primary voice of Al-Huda’s movement. One who has a balanced contented spiritual life family, and professional career.¹⁵⁵ The following narration of Farhat Hashmi's official Website endorses the argument;

“a mother of four, three married daughters and a son, Dr Hashmi is a role model for women, multi-tasking her responsibilities as a mother, wife, teacher and scholar”.¹⁵⁶

To explore it in breadth, I will trace out the family and educational background of Farhat Hashmi. This profile of Farhat Hashmi also helps the reader to understand her narrative and various aspects of her life which were constructed and highlighted by Al-Huda to greatly influence followers.

Farhat Hashmi was born in 1957 in Sargodha,¹⁵⁷ Pakistan, the eldest of 12 siblings. Her father, Abdur Rehman Hashmi, a homoeopathic physician by profession,¹⁵⁸ was a local leader and active member of Jamaat-e-Islami throughout his life and was a strong influence in her childhood, shaping her faith and desire to understand the Quran; she used to ask many questions to her father. Religion had a key role in her father's home, and he would wake his children early in the morning to teach them the Quran.¹⁵⁹ Dorsey quoted Farhat Hashmi

“My father was religious but not typically religious. He was broadminded. He sent us to normal schools and universities. He let us see the world with our ideas. There was no compulsion”.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ Weiss, *Interpreting Islam, Modernity, and Women's Rights in Pakistan*, 122.

¹⁵⁵ Sadaf Ahmad, “Al-Huda and Women’s Religious Authority in Urban Pakistan,” *The Muslim World* 103, no. 3 (2013): 363–74, <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12019>.

¹⁵⁶ “Home - Farhat Hashmi - Quran For All - In Every Heart, In Every Hand.”

¹⁵⁷ Sargodha is the 12th largest city of Punjab province, considered as a comparatively smaller city of Punjab province of Pakistan.

¹⁵⁸ Dorsey, "Pakistan's Lurch Towards Ultra-Conservatism Abetted by Saudi-inspired Pyramid Scheme." Date etc??

¹⁵⁹ It is a general tradition in South Asian conservative and semi-conservative religious families, they train their children to wake up early in the morning (before sunrise) for Fajar (morning) prayer and after that recite the Quran before going to school.

¹⁶⁰ Dorsey, "Pakistan's Lurch Towards Ultra-Conservatism Abetted by Saudi-inspired Pyramid Scheme."

Hashmi completed her bachelor's degree from Government Degree College, Sargodha and gained her master's degree in Arabic from Punjab University¹⁶¹, Lahore, Pakistan. Throughout her stay in university, she was an active member of the female student wing of Islami Jammiyat Tulba (student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami).¹⁶² Lately, Hashmi left the Jamaat-e-Islami student wing as she repulsed with lack of discipline and “opportunism that underlines politics”. Farhat expressed her disapproval of Islami Jammiyat Tulba to Dorsey during the interview, “I was shocked at what was going on. I thought it is better not to be where my heart was not”.¹⁶³

Farhat Hashmi started her career as a lecturer in the same college in Sargodha from which she graduated and soon thereafter joined International Islamic University Islamabad as a faculty member. Meanwhile, she married, Idrees Zubair, a colleague and the son of religious scholar Abu Tayyab Shams Al Haqq Masood. After completing his masters in Arabic from Punjab University, Lahore, he started his career as a lecturer in the department of Usool-ud-Din of International Islamic University, Islamabad in 1983. In 1985, Farhat Hashmi and her husband received a scholarship to take up doctoral studies in "Hadith Science" from the University of Glasgow in Scotland. There they travelled together, completed their doctorates, and returned to rejoin the International Islamic University in Islamabad. Meantime, Farhat Hashmi started conducting *dars* for elite women in Islamabad and soon left her job to establish the Al-Huda International Foundation. Idrees Zubair, Farhat Hashmi's husband, continued his career of teaching in Pakistani universities and served as chairperson of Hadith Department at Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad. Zubair is also the director of Al-Huda International and head of the male-wing of Al-Huda.¹⁶⁴ Hashmi and Zubair have 5 children, and all are involved with them in their religious movement. Farhat Hashmi's children were brought up in Canada and educated in well-recognized institutes. Especially daughters of Hashmi known as “Bint-e-Huda”

¹⁶¹ Punjab University is one of the oldest universities in South Asia and Pakistan, situated into one of the most culturally diverse, historical and second-largest cities of Pakistan and it was under JI influence at the time Hashmi was studying there.

¹⁶² Ahmad, “Al-Huda and Women's Religious Authority in Urban Pakistan,” 2013. P.365)

¹⁶³ Dorsey, "Pakistan's Lurch Towards Ultra-Conservatism Abetted by Saudi-inspired Pyramid Scheme," April 18, 2017.

¹⁶⁴ “Idrees Zubair,” Idrees Zubair, accessed May 28, 2019, <http://www.idreeszubair.com/>.

(daughters of Al-Huda) and proved a helping hand in expanding the Al-Huda network internationally due to their international exposure and modern education.¹⁶⁵

In 2004, Farhat Hashmi moved to Canada with her family. In August 2001, for the first time, Farhat Hashmi and her husband Idress Zubair delivered lectures in Mississauga, Canada. Lectures were arranged by Shalimar and ISNA (Islamic Society of North America) Canada recommended by Mubeen Qureshi, a retired judge from Mississauga. Qureshi had heard recordings of Dr Farhat Hashmi's lectures provided by her sister Talat a regular attendee of Dars sessions at the Inter-Continental Hotel, Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Through her sister, Mubeen Qureshi contacted Al-Huda and spoke of the South Asian diaspora of Canada's need of an Urdu-speaking *dars* teacher. Later, through this contact, in 2004, Hashmi with her family emigrated to Canada. The entire process of shifting to Canada from Islamabad is narrated as a highly emotional and spiritual experience both by Dr Farhat Hashmi and her followers. According to them, it was a decision made by Allah which they had to accept to show their submission with heavy hearts. In Farhat Hashmi's talk on her official YouTube channel, she described it as a decision which bestowed to Farhat's heart when she and her team prayed "*Namaz-e-Istkhira*" (a prayer offered to ask for suggestion from God).¹⁶⁶

The religious sect of Farhat Hashmi and Al-Huda

Another feature which makes Al-Huda in demand and caters a wider audience is a claim to follow "Islam" rather than any particular religious sect. Farhat Hashmi repeatedly claims that she neither believes in any specific sect or religious group nor is theoretically affiliated to any scholar. In her talk on the conception and introduction of Al-Huda, she asserted

"This institute is not related to any special sector or group. Basics are Quran and Sunnah (practices of Prophet Muhammad), and later all religious scholars from the earlier and

¹⁶⁵ Humeria Iqtidar, "Post-Islamists Strands in Pakistan," in *Post-Islamism: The Many Faces of Political Islam*, by Asef Bayat (USA: Oxford University Press, 2013); Unknown, "Farhat Hashmi," accessed August 26, 2019, <https://idealmuslimah.com/personalities/womenscholars/338-farhat-hashmi.html>.

¹⁶⁶ "Dr. Farhat Hashmi Official - YouTube," accessed May 28, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/user/shahidsgd/featured>; "Home - Farhat Hashmi - Quran For All - In Every Heart, In Every Hand."

present era are respectable. I believe in openness in religion and get benefit from everyone”.¹⁶⁷

Although Farhat Hashmi denies affiliation any specific Islamic school of thought, an analysis of her exegesis elucidates that her earlier experience with Jamaat-e-Islami has shaped her understanding of “correct” belief and practices.

Farhat Hashmi emphasized direct reliance on the Quran and Sunnah like the Jamaat-e-Islami and Maulana Maududi. She shared Maududi’s ideology of establishing a truly Islamic society by focusing on the Quran and removing cultural influences and traditions from religion and society.¹⁶⁸ Similar to Maududi’s ideology, she criticizes the rituals and practices performed by the Barailvi and Shi’ite Islam.¹⁶⁹ But opposite to Maududi, her movement is apolitical apparently. The ideology of Maulana Maududi was as indicated by Sadaf Ahmad in following words,

“he argued that Islam has no possibility of success as a religion or a civilization unless Muslims removed the encumbrance of cultural accretion and tradition, rigorously reconstructed the pristine faith of the prophet, and gained political power”.¹⁷⁰

In 2008, on Dawah Radio Station in an interview, Hashmi said that during her doctorate, she was guided by an Albani Salafist Scholar, Muhammad Nasiruddin Albani,¹⁷¹ as well as Muhammad Hameed Ullah.¹⁷² Although she always downplayed the role of any specific scholar and said to Dorsey in her interview in April 2017, “*There was not really one scholar. I met many people during my research. I visited Jordan, Albani was living there in 1988, We went to see him once*”.¹⁷³ In her interview with Dorsey, Hashmi explicitly denied her and al-Huda’s association with Saudi Arabia and even denied knowing much about Wahhabism claiming that,

“I don’t follow a specific sect, madhab (school of Islamic legal thought) or scholar. I had no idea about Wahhabism when people talked about it. I never went to a madrassa. I

¹⁶⁷ "Dr Farhat Hashmi Official - YouTube."

¹⁶⁸, Ahmad, “Al-Huda and Women’s Religious Authority in Urban Pakistan,” 2013. P.366

¹⁶⁹ Barailvi, Shi’ite and Deobandi are different sects of Islam.

¹⁷⁰ Ahmad, “Al-Huda and Women’s Religious Authority in Urban Pakistan,” 2013. P. 366

¹⁷¹ Pupil of Abdul Aziz Bin Baz, the grand mufti of Saudi.

¹⁷² An Indian Islamic legal scholar (1908-2002) who have double doctoral degrees from Bonn University Germany in 1932 and Sorbonne University Paris, he also helped draft Pakistan’s first constitution

¹⁷³ Dorsey, “Pakistan’s Lurch Towards Ultra-Conservatism Abetted by Saudi-Inspired Pyramid Scheme,” January 2, 2018, 70.

never met such religious people”, further she said “I don’t follow them (the Saudis). I follow the book. We both follow the Qur’an and the Sunnah (the sayings and teachings of the Prophet Mohammed) and reject shirk (idolatry or polytheism)”.¹⁷⁴

Although her professional and academic circle is comprised of scholars from Turkey, Jordan, Syria and Egypt, who have been studied from Saudi religious institutes and universities, she denied regular meetings with them, but she has a consistent connection with those religious scholars who are considered conservatives and Salafi, i.e. Dr Zakir Naik from India. Moreover, Mushtaq during her fieldwork of Al-Huda class observations noted that Al-Huda faculty cite various quotes, fatwas¹⁷⁵ and views of Saudi Wahabi scholars during their pedagogical instructions¹⁷⁶ especially Saudi Mufti Azam Abdullah bin Aziz bin Abdullah bin Baz.¹⁷⁷ According to Dorsey, all this denial of associations leads to Salafism which is inspired by the Saudi government as it is a silent feature of Salafism to deny all the existing schools of Islamic Jurisprudence. This linkage of religious sect further determines the sources of funding of Al-Huda which I will discuss in the next chapter.

Salient features of Farhat Hashmi’s teaching

Besides all the political and social factors which make Al-Huda Phenomena “a right thing to do”, Farhat Hashmi’s skills are seminal in the transformation of urban educated women to get attached with Al-Huda. In this section, I will discuss some of the salient features of Farhat’s preaching and teachings which bounded women on a personal level with Al-Huda.

Being the “heirs of postcolonial legacy”, logical reasoning, scientific and western education is seen to have great value, credibility and authority, especially among the urban, educated class of Pakistan.¹⁷⁸ A key factor of her credibility in urban educated families is her foreign qualification, unlike any traditional *Madrassa* graduate scholar of South Asia. Her doctorate and assistant professor posting at the prestigious public University of Islamabad

¹⁷⁴ Dorsey, “Pakistan’s Lurch Towards Ultra-Conservatism Abetted by Saudi-Inspired Pyramid Scheme,” April 18, 2017.

¹⁷⁵ Decision on any specific issues, which only a *Ullama* can issue in the light of Islamic knowledge.

¹⁷⁶ Faiza Mushtaq, “A Controversial Role Model for Pakistani Women,” *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, no. 4 (December 8, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.4000/samaj.3030>. P. 152

¹⁷⁷ “پاکستان کا انتہائی قدامت پرستی کی جانب جھکاؤ: الہدی جیسے ادارے پاکستانی ثقافت کے نام پہ سعودی واپی ثقافت کا پروپیگنڈا کرتے ہیں – ” *LUBP*, “آخری حصہ – مستجاب احمد” accessed March 15, 2019, <https://lubpak.net/archives/352634>.

¹⁷⁸ Ahmad, “Al-Huda and Women’s Religious Authority in Urban Pakistan,” 2013.

distinguish her from the rest of the *Ullemas* and *dars* teachers, who are considered uneducated, unaware of modern trends, extremist, and misogynist by the urban educated class¹⁷⁹ due to their *Madrassas* background.

Affiliations with well-recognized international and national universities are not only a source of her acceptability by the upper class but also add authority to her knowledge of Islam. As Ahmad mentions, Farhat Hashmi was well-aware of this fact and said once laughingly that she completed her PhD so that people would take her seriously. Ahmad's research findings prove that several respondents were referring to her foreign degree as a source of her credibility and authority in knowledge.¹⁸⁰

Another characteristic of Farhat Hashmi which inspire urban educated women to attach with Al-Huda is Hashmi's teaching methodology which helped women to connect to the Quran ("*Quran say lag gaii*").¹⁸¹ Farhat Hashmi claims to link women directly to God through the Quran, saying, "*Quran for All, in every hand, in every heart*". During her lectures, along reciting Quranic verses, she translates every word of Quran into Urdu and English from Arabic, defining Arabic grammar of each word, narrating the historical context of verses and relates it to the daily life of women. Her grasp on languages (Arabic, English, Urdu), the historical context of verses not only add weight to her authority as a "reliable communicator of correct knowledge"¹⁸² but also helped women/audience to feel attached with the Quran which one of the respondents narrated as "*Quran say Laag gaii*".¹⁸³ By teaching the Arabic language, she inculcates in the feeling that -under her guidance- they have the power to understand the Quran themselves, directly, and she is a moderator of Islamic knowledge and for "helping (them) to develop one on one relationship with the Quran".¹⁸⁴ The experiences of Hashmi's followers can be understood by these words of Hasan's respondents

"This was the first time I came to know what the Quran was saying...I think [Farhat Hashmi's] biggest contribution has been that she has given people back a sense of ownership about the Quran. This is mine. I can apply it to my life. This is not something I

¹⁷⁹ Ahmad, "Al-Huda and Women's Religious Authority in Urban Pakistan," 2013.p.369

¹⁸⁰ Ahmad. P. 368

¹⁸¹ Zaman, "The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam," 174.

¹⁸² Ahmad, *Transforming Faith*.

¹⁸³ Zaman, "The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam," 174.

¹⁸⁴ "Home - Farhat Hashmi - Quran For All - In Every Heart, In Every Hand."

just study as part of an ancient narrative...So with every verse, she connects it with how you can relate it to your life today right now...It was something very new that you relate it to your life and that is how it is supposed to be read...it was a very deep, profound experience for all of us".¹⁸⁵

Her lectures advocate, alongside Quranic teachings, the importance of modern education for women, emphasizing the value of scientific reasoning, logic, and modern technology. For instance, in her recent lecture on responsible parenting, she motivated parents to be tech-savvy and emphasized that parents should be well-versed with modern technology, knowledgeable and updated of the modern world to become a perfect role model for the next generation.¹⁸⁶

As discussed above, Hashmi's followers and students of Al-Huda have a firm belief in Hashmi's correct Islamic knowledge and accept her authority to preach and teach the knowledge of Islam and, especially, the Quran. Teachers of al-Huda, in addition to being well-versed Hashmi's religious teachings, are urban, upper-middle-class, and formally educated and therefore, they can partake in some of the same authority. Those educated by Al-Huda also share this authority in both family and social circles due to their confidence in religious knowledge and affiliation with Al-Huda and Farhat Hashmi, and knowledge of the correct performance of religious rituals. However, the religious authority of Farhat Hashmi is continuously challenged by the various social actors of different school of thoughts of Islam, secularism, and patriarchy.¹⁸⁷

3.2. The backlash on Farhat Hashmi and Al-Huda

Criticism of Farhat Hashmi grows as quickly as her popularity and can broadly be divided into two groups; religious, traditional conservative male religious scholars, and ultra-modern liberals.¹⁸⁸ Religious leaders tend to direct their criticism at Farhat Hashmi more than the Al-Huda organization, while the liberals are more inclined to criticize Al-Huda. Indeed, one way or the other, Farhat Hashmi and Al Huda are two sides of a coin and there is no difference between both as they are the by-product of each other. Here, I will discuss the criticism of Farhat

¹⁸⁵ Hasan, "Unscripting Piety: Muslim Women, Pakistani Nationalism, and Islamic Feminism," 16.

¹⁸⁶ Hafsa Ahmad, "Al-Huda Insight," *Al-Huda*, August 2016, <https://alhudapk.com/AlHudaInsight/Issue2/files/mobile/index.html#1>.

¹⁸⁷ Ahmad, "Al-Huda and Women's Religious Authority in Urban Pakistan," 2013.p,364

¹⁸⁸ Babar, "New 'Social Imaginaries.'"

Hashmi from conservative, traditional religious leaders who declared Farhat Hashmi as “*Fitna*” (evil/dangerous) and Bid’at.

i. Criticism from *Ulemas*

Ulema criticized formal education of Farhat Hashmi from a western university. It is one of the main reasons to reject and discredit Farhat Hashmi's eligibility to be an *ulama*. South Asian *Ulemas* consider a religious scholar credible only the one who have completed eight years of studies *dars-e-Nizami* by *Madrassas*. *Dars-e-Nizami* is a course of religious studies, initiated in the 18th century and evolving over the period. This course is also taught in some parts of the United States, UK, Canada, and South Africa.¹⁸⁹ In Pakistan, course of *dars-e-Nizami* is equivalent of master's degree (16 years of education).¹⁹⁰ *Ulemas* wholeheartedly endorse *dars-e-Nizami* as they developed it in centuries with the endeavor and supposed themselves the historical guardian of religious knowledge.¹⁹¹ They also consider *Dars-e-Nizami* as a professional degree of particular training and skill (just like engineering or medicine degree) which make someone eligible to be a religious scholar.¹⁹² Along with *Madrassas* which are considered authentic in term of religious knowledge, there are some other universities in the Middle East which are well-reputed in religious learning¹⁹³ i.e. Al Azhar University in Cairo, Islamic University of Medina but Farhat Hashmi had chosen a western university which is not specialized in the field of Islamic Studies. Moreover, Pakistani *Ulemas* have the view that the western world, in general, is exactly the opposite of Islam and west has a biased attitude towards Islam, therefore Hashmi's research on Islam is dubious. Farhat Hashmi completed her doctorate from Glasgow University under the supervisors of western non-Muslim scholars, and this is enough to disrepute her Islamic knowledge¹⁹⁴.

¹⁸⁹ Martin van Bruinessen and Stefano Allievi, *Producing Islamic Knowledge: Transmission and Dissemination in Western Europe* (Routledge, 2013).

¹⁹⁰ Robert W. Hefner and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education* (Princeton University Press, 2007).

¹⁹¹ Mushtaq, “A Controversial Role Model for Pakistani Women”, p.9

¹⁹² Ahmad, “Al-Huda and Women's Religious Authority in Urban Pakistan,” 2013.

¹⁹³ Dorsey, “Pakistan's Lurch Towards Ultra-Conservatism Abetted by Saudi-Inspired Pyramid Scheme,” April 18, 2017.

¹⁹⁴ Mushtaq, “A Controversial Role Model for Pakistani Women,” December 8, 2010.

There is more denunciation from ultra-conservative *Ullemas*. Hashmi as a woman leader is not acceptable for the male religious community. They have the view that Hashmi does not fulfil the criteria of a noble and pious Islamic woman, for instance, on media platforms, when she delivers sermons, men also heard her, and it is indecent when a woman makes herself listened to men. Another criticism is on Farhat Hashmi's international travelling without an appropriate male escort, which is not according to the Islamic principles. In Hashmi's interpretation and AL-Huda's practices, women can gather to perform prayers, and one of them can lead the prayer just like men performed to offer prayer in a group. *Ullemas* view that women should offer prayers alone in private spaces of their homes rather than outside in groups. The additional conflicted issue between Farhat Hashmi and other *Ullemas* is, either woman can recite Quran in the days of their mensuration cycle or not. Also, Hashmi is accused due to having her own full name rather than adding the second name of her Husband with her first name.¹⁹⁵

Ullemas have also disparaged the methodological issues of Farhat Hashmi's lectures, according to them, there is a list of technical principals for consideration to interpret Quran as Mushtaq cited Mufti Abu Safwan, "*i.e. Arabic grammar and rhetoric, Islamic theology and jurisprudence, scholarly opinion, debates and consensus developed over 1400 years of intellectual history*".¹⁹⁶ Farhat Hashmi ignores all these established rules and focuses on literal meanings and translation of the Quran which is not accurate and according to the spirit of the sacred text.

Ullemas not only criticize Farhat Hashmi but also disapprove the whole model of Al-Huda, because many chapters/schools of Al-Huda are opened by the ex-students of Al-Huda who got religious education from Al-Huda for few months or one year and now they are teaching next generation.¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, *Ullemas* blame Farhat Hashmi of being a paradox when she rejects bidat, but she practices it by empowering women with religious knowledge and tool for their Quran exegesis.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Mushtaq, "A Controversial Role Model for Pakistani Women," December 8, 2010, 8. Mushtaq, 8.

¹⁹⁷ Mushtaq, "A Controversial Role Model for Pakistani Women," December 8, 2010.

¹⁹⁸ Dorsey, "Pakistan's Lurch Towards Ultra-Conservatism Abetted by Saudi-Inspired Pyramid Scheme," April 18, 2017.p,3

As most of the followers of Al-Huda are from privileged backgrounds, mainly lectures and gatherings are arranged at expensive halls of five or four-star hotels or in drawing rooms of elite families. *Ullemas* blame that religious education is superficial activity in their meetings, and Al-Huda sermons are more for gatherings, gossips, and social networking within the fancy arrangement of Al-Huda. They continuously compare the moral and spiritual benefits of religious education in *Madrassas* and expensive ultra-modern privileged places.¹⁹⁹

Dorsey interviewed Maulana Tahir Ashrafi on 19 April 2017, a well-known clergy and chief executive of "All Pakistan Ulema Council" and council member of "Diffa-e-Pakistan Council" (defense of Pakistan Council) viewed about Dr Farhat Hashmi "She is not a follower or interpreter of Islam. It is her own interpretation. Her teachings are against Islam". Although, Hashmi rejects all these critics and alleging that religious critics "don't understand. Most of them have never studied at these (western) universities".²⁰⁰

Mushtaq quoted Maulvi Muhammad Shabbir "The ulama claims that they are carrying on the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad in guiding Muslims through their exemplary practice, while Hashmi practices *a religion of expediency, convenience and fabrications*".²⁰¹ Although religious community criticizes Hashmi for being *bid'at* and a threat of their misogynist interests and authority, but they acknowledge her influence and impact on the educated urban elite and upper-middle-class of Pakistan.²⁰²

ii. Criticism from progressive and modernist Muslims scholars, and Human Rights activist

In Pakistani and diaspora community, Al-Huda and Farhat Hashmi were being hit critically due to their "Islamization campaign",²⁰³ patriarchal, misogynist and discriminatory version of Islam which subjugates women. In this section, I draw upon the anxieties of some of

¹⁹⁹ Mushtaq, "A Controversial Role Model for Pakistani Women," December 8, 2010.

²⁰⁰ Dorsey, "Pakistan's Lurch Towards Ultra-Conservatism Abetted by Saudi-Inspired Pyramid Scheme," April 18, 2017.

²⁰¹ Mushtaq, "A Controversial Role Model for Pakistani Women," December 8, 2010. P.10

²⁰² Dorsey, "Pakistan's Lurch Towards Ultra-Conservatism Abetted by Saudi-Inspired Pyramid Scheme," April 18, 2017.p,3.

²⁰³ Hassan, "Islam and Human Rights in Pakistan," 150.

the transnational, self-identified “Progressive Muslim activists”, “Moderate Muslim scholars” and human rights activists.

Farzana Hassan is a self-identified “progressive Canadian Muslim activist”. Khanum has quoted the anxieties of Hassan about Al-Huda in following way;

“I believe that there is much damage being done. The fact that you are subjugating half of the population and then making them believe that subjugation is justified.... Nothing will deter me. I feel that if you are genuinely a feminist you will speak up about it”.²⁰⁴

A contemporary feminist filmmaker, Obaid Chinoy in her documentary on Al-Huda International interviewed a businesswoman Kasur Khan, who was frustrated with Hashmi’s preaching of “staying women at home and be submissive to their husband”, as she said that it takes a long time to Muslim women to come out for their rights of education and work. Kausar Khan further shared that Farhat Hashmi is trying to put back women again in domestic spheres and destroying their lifelong struggle of women emancipation.²⁰⁵

Hashmi was criticized by the Shaikh who has documented the responses from progressive Muslim Canadian community about Farhat Hashmi's religious stance particularly related to women in the contemporary period. Additionally, Khanum remarks that progressive creed of Canada was not happy and displayed a protest to register their agitation on Farhat Hashmi’s move to Canada, in such words, Hashmi as promoting “subservience and bigotry”, “Soft Taliban”²⁰⁶ and “turning women into mothers who are then converting their sons into extremists.”²⁰⁷ Shaikh in her elaboration mentioned a research paper by CCMW (Canadian Council of Muslim Women) on the growth of religious orthodoxies in the Muslim South Asian immigrant communities of Ontario in which identified “Al-Huda’s burgeoning influence” as one of the key factors.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Shaikh, “New Expressions of Religiosity,” 81.

²⁰⁵ Shaikh, “Gender, Religious Agency, and the Subject of Al-Huda International,” 82.

²⁰⁶ Shaikh, “New Expressions of Religiosity,” 65.

²⁰⁷ Nichlas Kohler, “Good Morning Mrs. Hashmi,” *Maclean’s | The Complete Archive*, July 24, 2006, <https://archive.macleans.ca/article/2006/7/24/good-morning-mrs-hashmi>.

²⁰⁸ Shaikh, “Gender, Religious Agency, and the Subject of Al-Huda International,” 65.

Hashmi's major claim is on "Correct and authentic Islamic knowledge". Riffat Hassan is a self-identified "modernist and Muslim feminist" comprehends that we cannot understand fully the meanings of God's words except the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Hassan aggressively criticizes the Hashmi's notion of Correct Knowledge, Hassan described that only God can have absolute knowledge, therefore, claiming such an understanding of the sacred text is an open battle with God.

"neither she nor I nor anyone else except the Prophet of Islam (PBUH.) is the recipient of God's revelation ("wahy") and the possessor of prophetic wisdom ("Hikmat") All of us who seek to understand the Word of God are fallible and limited human beings whose interpretation of the divine text cannot be regarded as final and definitive, having the seal of approval from God. Therefore, saying that any objection to Dr Hashmi's representation of what is in the Qur'an is tantamount to "a fight with God" is indefensible both from a religious and a methodological viewpoint".²⁰⁹

Liberals and progressive mainly disagree with Hashmi's claim of being "modernist, liberal and feminist" after her positionality on Muslim women agency/status. Hassan argues that "She may perhaps, in some ways, be to the left of the most conservative 'ulema in Pakistan in that she speaks with a softer voice and supports the idea of women studying Islam, but her ideological stance is still very markedly right-wing (reminiscent in some ways of Mr Bush's compassionate conservatism) and uncompromisingly committed to upholding a patriarchal system and segregated sex-roles".²¹⁰

In socio-cultural perspective, another criticism on Farhat Hashmi was to "inculcate the sense of superiority in their followers".²¹¹ Moreover, Hashmi does not challenge the status quo of elite women and help them to justify all the material bliss they have by realizing them that they are doing that for their husband's pleasure and "show them the way to attain the paradise" through it.²¹² Zaman and Ahmad highlighted the fact that Al-Huda creates a sense of superiority in their monolithic culture of women's Muslim identity and infuses particular values and

²⁰⁹ Hassan, "Islam and Human Rights in Pakistan," 143.

²¹⁰ Hassan, 144.

²¹¹ Hassan, "Islam and Human Rights in Pakistan."

²¹² Hassan, 145.

behavioral patterns which have little space for Muslims with different identities and versions of Islam.²¹³

Hashmi has been condemned to disseminate the orthodox version of Islam, chiefly focusing on the practices of veil and gender segregation. Hashmi showcased her mastery of Islam excluding textual context through the method of literalism. Hashmi in the process of interpretation of sacred text did not engage the cultural and social context of a specific historical timeframe. Hashmi has not been only criticized for her traditional pattern of understanding of the sacred text but also on her promotion of being a modern and progressive feminist icon globally.

This chapter conclude the debate on the historical analysis of inception of Al-Huda which started from informal *dars* and converted into a Center of religious education for women. Al-Huda targeted the well-off women of Pakistani society who supported Farhat Hashmi financially and emotionally to establish Al-Huda International. This immense support from followers were attracted by making Farhat Hashmi a desirable protagonist and orator of the movement. Farhat Hashmi's foreign education and novel teaching methodology and use of modern technology and education along religious education attracted urban educated woman to attend religious education settings. This chapter also presents that Farhat Hashmi and Al-Huda do not only receive popularity and followers but also have to faced backlash from *Ullemas* and religious scholars as well as progressive activist and scholars. Ullemas denounced Hashmi and Al-Huda for being less "not religious enough" and being the "Bid'at" in religion. On the other hand, progressive activist criticizes Hashmi to make women "Islamized" and to disseminate orthodox version of Islam.

²¹³ Ahmad, *Transforming Faith*; Zaman, "The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam."

Chapter 4:

Progression of Al-Huda into a Transnational Religious Network

Al-Huda's growth in the last 25 years is extraordinary. It was ushered in as an informal *dars* held in the drawing rooms of urban educated women, and it has developed to become a "brand" with branches and franchises throughout Pakistan, North America, Europe and the Middle East. The *dars* has been converted into a hybrid organization, providing services to thousands of people in the form of religious education and social welfare projects.

In this chapter, I engage critically with the strategies and adaptability approaches of Al-Huda which progressed the home-based *dars* into a Transnational religious network. I will also present a historical analysis to showcase the consistency and consciousness in their policies and strategies throughout their journey. I will generate a debate on the selection of location for *dars* with respect of target audience which facilitates Al-Huda to get economical resources, social acceptably and political power. This chapter will move forward to analysis the organizational structure of Al-Huda. The marketing strategies and funding sources of Al-Huda will be described in a more elaborated form. Moreover, I will investigate the curriculum, diplomas and courses offered by Al-Huda. The social welfare projects of Al-Huda are numerous, this chapter will also peep into these welfare projects to showcase the contribution of Al-Huda in the social life of different socioeconomics classes of Pakistan and diaspora. The funding's are one of major determine of organizational agendas. The sources of funding will be analyzed to link the discourse and version of Islam Al-Huda adopts. In last section of the chapter will draw on the social facilities which Al-Huda provides to women and social and psychological techniques employed to make Al-Huda popular in Pakistan and throughout diaspora.

4.1. Influences of Al-Huda at the state level

In the early days of the formation of Al-Huda, officials, boards and directors' meetings of Al-Huda were joined by elite professional women as well as wives of bureaucrats, politicians, industrialists, and high executive officers. Farhat Hashmi did networking with resourceful elite

women who supported her emotionally, socially, and financially in her journey. For example, Begum Abida Gurmani, a member of the Gurmani Foundation was a follower of Farhat Hashmi. The Gurmani Foundation was set up by Nawab Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani in 1980, he was the former Governor of West Pakistan. The Gurmani Foundation is one of the most elite and wealthy foundations which funded LUMS (Lahore University of Management Studies) with billions of rupees.²¹⁴ Begum Abida Gurmani not only supported Farhat Hashmi to establish Al-Huda in Lahore but also provided Gurmani House in Lahore, which has a prime and elite location, for the activities of Al-Huda.²¹⁵

Farooq Leghari was the President of Pakistan at the time of the conception and formation of Al-Huda; he was a pious man and inclined towards religion. His wife was a follower of Farhat Hashmi. She introduced Hashmi to the families of most senior government and military officials in Pakistan.²¹⁶ Since Al-Huda's formation, board members have consisted of wives of senior Pakistani officials. Up till now, Farhat Hashmi's lectures are arranged at the Ministers and governance houses, as well as elite places of cantonment/military areas all over Pakistan.²¹⁷

The influence and affiliations of Al Huda are ubiquitous in Pakistani society. All the matters which are related to government offices involve red tape and take years, especially the matters of land allocation. Unlike the situation of a commoner, Al Huda does not seem to go through the lengthy process and difficulties with government officials. Within three years of establishment of Al Huda, 2.066 acres land in H-11 Islamabad was allocated to the Al Huda free of cost by the City Development Authority of Islamabad to conduct seminars of religious education or establish a Madrasa for girls. This shows the popularity of Dr Farhat Hashmi among state authorities. Later, Al Huda International set up and constructed the building of Al Huda International School for children, a commercial private school with high monthly cost and annual

²¹⁴ "Gurmani Foundation Gives LUMS PKR One Billion Endowment," LUMS, August 29, 2014, <https://lums.edu.pk/news/general-news/gurmani-foundation-gives-lums-pkr-one-billion-endowment>.

²¹⁵ Ahmad, *Transforming Faith*.

²¹⁶ James M. Dorsey, "Pakistan's Lurch Towards Ultra-Conservatism Abetted by Saudi-Inspired Pyramid Scheme," *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies* 12, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 66–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/25765949.2018.1439618>; Sadaf Ahmad, *Transforming Faith: The Story of Al-Huda and Islamic Revivalism among Urban Pakistani Women* (Syracuse University Press, 2009).

²¹⁷ Tahira Khan, "Al-Huda Insight," *Al-Huda*, April 2018, <https://alhudapk.com/AlHudaInsight/Issue2/files/mobile/index.html#1>.

fees instead of establishing a nonprofit, free of cost Religious Madrassa for girls. In August 2018, CDA was told about this violation by Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Authority (PEIRA) with whom Al-Huda affiliate its school. CDA administration not only issued a notice to Al Huda management for non-conforming use of land but also referred the case to the CDA deputy commissioner for legal action. Soon action against Al-Huda was stopped smoothly when the Al-Huda administration denied the allegation.²¹⁸ Usually, provision of government land on lease free of cost and allegations of non-conforming use are not resolved so smoothly unless the accused party had strong influence and connection in higher authorities of government.

4.2. Selection of office locations

Farhat Hashmi intelligently chose areas and locations for her dawah activities throughout the Al-Huda journey. In the Pakistani context, the choices of locations of any activity are important to determine who would be included and excluded. It is a trend in Pakistan that people from lower areas travel to upper and elite areas for work and education purposes happily, unlike their rich counterparts who avoid travelling in lower-class areas.²¹⁹

The choice of Al-Huda centers is very class-conscious throughout the history of Al-Huda. Babar has shared her lived experience “I first heard of Farhat Hashmi in the late 1990s. Rawalpindi, home to the General Headquarters of the Pakistan Army”.²²⁰ In 2002, Dr. Riffat Hasan narrated the account of the early years of Al-Huda in Karachi, the central and main points of Al-Huda activities were in Clifton and DHA, these areas are one of the posh areas of the city where only elite families of bureaucrats, industrialists, politicians can afford to live. Apart from these areas, the *dars* classes of Al Huda were held in North Nizamabad, Gulshan-Iqbal, and Federal B Area. These areas are inhabited by educated middle class working for families in the public and private sectors.²²¹ Similarly, In 2010, Faiza Mushtaq noted the locations of Al-Huda activities in Lahore were in DHA, Model Town, Gulberg, the Cavalry ground, Johar Town and

²¹⁸ Kashif Abbasi, “Welfare Foundation Accused of Running Commercial School on Seminary Land,” DAWN.COM, January 21, 2019, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1458753>.

²¹⁹ Mushtaq, “A Controversial Role Model for Pakistani Women,” December 8, 2010.

²²⁰ Babar, “New ‘Social Imaginaries,’” 354.

²²¹ Hassan, “Islam and Human Rights in Pakistan.”

Iqbal Town.²²² The inhabitants of these localities belong to elite and upper-middle-class educated families. After one decade, the official branches of Al-Huda International are working in the same areas.

Over the years, Al-Huda not only maintained their activities in urban elite spaces but also expanded their outreach in small cities and villages, especially interior Sindh and Punjab. However, the venues of Farhat Hashmi's lectures have always been upper-class spaces, for example, in March 2018, Hashmi delivered lectures in Punjab Province. Multan, which is a big city of the Punjab, venues of her lectures were Al-Huda officers branch, Fazal House Cantonment, and Multan Institute of Health Science. All venues are situated in upper-class areas of Multan. She also delivered lectures in Mian Chunnu and Vehari (though venues were not mentioned). In April 2018, Hashmi delivered lectures in Khabar Pukhtan Khan (KPK) province. In the city Peshawar, which is capital of the province, venues were Shiraz gatherings near Bab-e-Khabar flyover and Chief Minister House, Governance House and Rehman Medical Institute. In Kohat, the lecture was delivered in Kohat Cantt.²²³ In all these lecture venue selections, the consciousness of Al-Huda in maintaining its “brand” is clear.

In big cities, Al-Huda activities are centered with *dars* and Islamic teaching, on the other hand, in small towns and villages, Al-Huda is engaged with social welfare projects. Islamic teachings and religious activities are done during Al-Huda social projects. For instances under the food project in wah-Cantt officers’ colony, poor people are not only given free-food but also trained in the Islamic manners of eating.²²⁴

4.3. Marketing and outreach of Al-Huda

In the Pakistani context, the best and most trustworthy marketing strategy is "word of mouth marketing".²²⁵ Al-Huda is well-employing this strategy. The outreach of Al Huda was rapid. A purpose-built campus was constructed in a highly aristocratic area (F/8) of Islamabad

²²² Mushtaq, “A Controversial Role Model for Pakistani Women,” December 8, 2010.

²²³ Khan, “Al-Huda Insight.”

²²⁴ Tahira Khan, “Al-Huda Insight-6,” *Al-Huda*, April 2018, <https://alhudapk.com/AlHudaInsight/Issue2/files/mobile/index.html#1>.

²²⁵ Mazandaran University et al., “Positive Word of Mouth Marketing: Explaining the Roles of Value Congruity and Brand Love,” *Journal of Competitiveness* 8, no. 1 (March 31, 2016): 19–37, <https://doi.org/10.7441/joc.2016.01.02>.

with the facility of a hostel to help women from distant localities. Although courses of Al Huda are self-paid by most of the students, financial assistance is available for needy students. Soon, the campuses in other cities were opened to impart religious education to women, Al-Huda's graduates were also encouraged to open a franchise and informal religious sittings at their homes, offices, school, colleges, and social circles to talk about religion.²²⁶ These informal gatherings contribute immensely to spread the message of Al-Huda and Hashmi and gain the trust of the masses.

Furthermore, there are a few characteristics of Al-Huda which are unique in the Pakistani context, these characteristics are presented sophisticatedly to attract educated women i.e. Al-Huda International was conceived and run by women, instead of being a branch of a male-dominated institution, it is stunningly modern and technology-friendly in its model. Its members are sophisticated in their marketing and outreach efforts, consciously seeking new ways to build Al-Huda's "Brand" in Pakistan and beyond. The hybrid identity of Al-Huda is a testament to the fact that Pakistan, similar to many other Muslim countries, in the middle of the national debate is not readily characterized as liberal versus fundamentalist or modern versus traditional.²²⁷

Al-Huda's narrative is disseminated through sisterhood for all the good reasons since its inception. Generally, friends recommends each other to join the movement and even If they did not find Hashmi's lecture useful, they do not discredit her.²²⁸ In 2014, Zaman mentioned in her observations that “Women’s recruitment narratives emphasize the social bonds they have with the women who recruited them”.²²⁹ That showcase that throughout the history of Al-Huda, women bonding, and sisterhood was well-utilize to disseminate the narrative of Al-Huda.

Additionally, according to Al-Huda teachings, it was the primary responsibility of the students to do Dawah to their family and friends especially Farhat Hashmi put the responsibility of the family's faith on the women. The intensity of the responsibility to market Al-Huda's narrative can be assessed from these emotions of Al-Huda's former student:

²²⁶ Zaman, “The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam”; Ahmad, *Transforming Faith*.

²²⁷ Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*. P.55

²²⁸ Babar, “New ‘Social Imaginaries,’” 354.

²²⁹ Zaman, “The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam,” 176.

*"I'd weep for my parents, my siblings, everyone I knew because they were going to hell and I needed to win them over to the true path. I had changed my life — now I must change theirs".*²³⁰

Furth more, students of Al-Huda re being mobilized socially for community development. For instances, they go to the hospital as an education tour and distribute written material consisted of Qur'anic verses for the treatment of wounds and illness as well as do counselling for the sick people.²³¹ All these strategies make Al-Huda visible within their community with a positive image.

4.4. Organizational Structure of Al-Huda

There are currently 200 franchises of Al-Huda working in Pakistan, offering diplomas, except the informal gatherings at homes, offices and colleges, and using educational material printed by Al-Huda and recordings of Farhat Hashmi.²³² All these franchises are centrally controlled. All the above-mentioned projects need a proper network and work structure. Farhat Hashmi is the chairperson of Al-Huda and known as *Ustaza* among all the students and staff of Al-Huda. *Ustaza* is an Arabic word, means "The teacher". Al-Huda is highly structured in its model the best example of hierarchies in Al-Huda can be understood by the observations notes of Babar's anthropological work, she sketched the sitting arrangement of her interview with Hashmi in the head office of Islamabad in which Hashmi was sitting on selective seat (Divan with pillows) which distinguish from others. High officials were seated on chairs in circle and students were sitting on the carpet".²³³

Al-Huda is based on vertical leadership and Hashmi is only willing to delegate limited authority to her trusted colleagues. This ability proved a fundamental reason for the rapid growth of Al-Huda franchises all over the world. Around herself, she made a very well-organized

²³⁰ "Institute of Islamist Zeal," December 15, 2015, <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/world/the-times/alhuda-school-is-an-institute-of-islamist-zeal/news-story/3e71ba2b82c906211b7b3b6bc9adc64d>.

²³¹ Khan, "Al-Huda Insight-6."

²³² Dorsey, "Pakistan's Lurch Towards Ultra-Conservatism Abetted by Saudi-inspired Pyramid Scheme," January 2, 2018.

²³³ Babar, "New 'Social Imaginaries,'" 355.

hierarchical structure which keeps her updated and in control of all the management and development of the foundation in every continent.²³⁴

Initially, Al-Huda expanded with the help of elite followers and supporters of Farhat Hashmi. Hashmi's four sisters were also working with Al-Huda in the initial years, later Nighat Hashmi, Farhat's younger sister, separated and established her own organization, the name is Al-Noor International, it has the same model as Al-Huda, but the magnitude of the organization is small.²³⁵ The women followers who joined al-Huda at the administrative level respected Farhat Hashmi and gave her feedback on different projects after proper homework.²³⁶ All this delegation of authority and leadership style helped Farhat Hashmi to avoid day-to-day administration and makes herself free to travel across the world for fundraising and developing networks to expand the organization.²³⁷

Al Huda International has various social media and mass communication sources as well as a highly organized system of lectures in every part of the world. All the segments, branches and aspects of the organization seem to be dealt with by highly responsible, committed, and efficient workers as every aspect of Al-Huda network is well maintained and coherent. The Al-Huda team at every level, keep an eye on bright and potential students, they recruit volunteers among the best-devoted students and then assign them various jobs. This is how the network of Al-Huda works. In every course and class, the primary source of education is Dr Farhat Hashmi's lectures. Her recorded lectures are broadcast in every franchise, and every student of Al-Huda has listened to her sermons, thereby every participant relates to Farhat Hashmi psychologically.

All the e-campuses and online courses are either informal WhatsApp groups or full time on year online diploma of Quranic education, are highly managed, well scrutinized and confined to their participants only. Sanyal expressed her experiences of the virtual classroom, her administrator used to change the password often to deny access to any unauthorized person from

²³⁴ Sanyal, "Al-Huda International."

²³⁵ "Alnoor International," accessed August 26, 2019, https://alnoorpk.com/whatisalnoor_intro.php.

²³⁶ Unknown, "Farhat Hashmi."

²³⁷ Sanyal Usha, "Al-Huda International: (How) Muslim Women Empower Themselves through Online Study of the Qur'an" 13, no. 3 (n.d.): 440–60, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15692086-12341292>.

the website.²³⁸ The WhatsApp group of qur'anic education, which I joined in February 2019, was also well administered and not open for everyone. I have to send my demographic educational details to the administration and after two weeks she added me to a WhatsApp group which comprised 211 people. Only admin can post and add new members to the group. The group was open for members to only post their attendance once a week for two months to check the regular and active members of the group.

Al-Huda is actively involved with their staff development and human resources management. In 2014, Al-Huda established their “Teachers Educational Center in Islamabad” was to train faculty and staff from all over Pakistan in human resources, academic, event management, administration. For example, a training programme held in 2017 was attended by staff from Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Attock, Wah Cantt, Mardan, Jhelum, Gujrat. Al-Huda network not only trains their staff but also provides training in the government sector. In 2017, teachers from government schools were trained by modern teaching methodologies.²³⁹

4.5. Educational and welfare projects of Al-Huda

One major reason for Al-Huda's popularity among the masses not only the “pedagogical innovations”²⁴⁰ in religious studies but also is its ability to cater to the need of every female, whether educated or uneducated, jobholders or homemaker or aged. Every woman can enrol in the course according to their choice and availability. Pakistani women do not have many opportunities to get involved outside of domestic life, in general. No other institute provides such structural and organized education or skills to women such as Al-Huda. Al-Huda courses not only serve to keep them busy but also gives them a feeling of fulfilment. By engaging in Al-Huda activities, women feel they are serving Islam getting an education and practicing it in daily life and by disseminating it in their family and society.

²³⁸ Sanyal Usha.

²³⁹ Khan, “Al-Huda Insight-6.”

²⁴⁰ Iqtidar, “Post-Islamists Strands in Pakistan,” 266.

The longest and most formal courses offered by Al-Huda are “Taleem al Quran” (Quranic education), one- and two-year full-time diplomas, taught in English and Urdu, open only to those women who have a higher secondary school.²⁴¹ In villages and small cities, very few women from lower socioeconomic classes have reached this level. Earlier, when Al-Huda started these diploma courses were open to women who have completed their graduation. These eligibility criteria were a filter to make a class of “privileged ladies”. women participation in higher education in 2017 was 9.39% and 6.31% in 2009.²⁴² However, two decades ago in 1999, higher education was a rare phenomenon. According to “Pakistan Integrated Household Survey (PIHS) 1998-1999” 5% women were enrolled for college education in Punjab, 6% were in Sindh, 4% were in KPK, and 2% women were enrolled for college education in Baluchistan. Majority of these women belongs to upper and upper-middle-class i.e. in Punjab, 12% of Rich women were enrolled in higher education, 5% of the upper-middle class, 3% of the lower middle class and 1% of poor class women were enrolled.²⁴³

AL-Huda offer four-month diploma courses in the teaching of the Quran, Hadith, and Tajweed, Qirat quarterly in a year all over Pakistan. Al-Huda offers weekly courses, Summer courses and Ramzan courses in morning and evening sessions, which are quite popular within women. All the execution of courses is so feasible to follow. The following are the themes of courses which are offered.

- Quranic Courses: word-to-word translation and study of exegesis (Tafsir) the Holy Quran, “Correct” recitation and pronunciation of Quran in Arabic language (Tajwid & Nazrah), memorization of the Quran (Hifz),
- Hadith: Biography (Sirah) of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), Study of Sahih al-Bukhari, Study of the principal of Hadith (Ulum al-Hadith), and selected chapters of Riyad al-Salihin,
- Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh-al-Ibadat),

²⁴¹ “Al Huda International.”

²⁴² “Pakistan | UNESCO UIS,” accessed July 29, 2019, <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/pk>.

²⁴³ Muhammad Sabir, “Gender and Public Spending on Education in Pakistan: A Case Study of Disaggregated Benefit Incidence,” *The Pakistan Development Review* 41, no. 4II (December 1, 2002): 483, <https://doi.org/10.30541/v41i4Ipp.477-493>.

- General Islamic education of girls with a lower level of formal education (*Roshni Ka Safar*). For uneducated women and girls, a course “Roshni ki Kiran” (a ray of hope) comprised of basic formal education and character building.
- Along with all these courses, courses related to every Islamic month are available online. Lectures on moralities and day to day life i.e. goodwill, unity, parents and children rights, marriage, mutual relations, magic, depression and anxiety, time management, the purpose of life, teamwork, health, illness, the importance of knowledge.
- Customized seminars, lectures, workshops, short courses by Farhat Hashmi and other teachers are also offered from time to time at various lectures halls and hotels.
- All these courses have various interesting names like a diploma, certificate, advanced, correspondence courses, short courses, online courses, summer courses.²⁴⁴

Another feature which distinguishes Al-Huda from other Pakistani religious movements is its use of modern audio and video recording and broadcast techniques, including Internet distribution, for dawah. Since 1999, Al-Huda has offered professionally produced audio and video versions of Farhat Hashmi's lectures helping to introduce Hashmi not only in Pakistan but also in diasporas.²⁴⁵ One of the major reasons to phenomenal growth is that Hashmi makes it possible for women to learn Tafsir and in Urdu and English rather than the recitation of the Arabic language, a language which is scarcely understood by Pakistani.²⁴⁶ Various social media channels are also used to disseminate Farhat Hashmi lectures and ideology on Islam. The first Al-Huda website was launched in 2001²⁴⁷ and since then, various websites, Facebook pages, Twitter and Instagram feeds and YouTube channels have been created under Al-Huda’s umbrella. All the social media sources have content and presentation specifically created for their target audience. For example, there are official websites on Farhat Hashmi,²⁴⁸ Dr Idress Zubair,²⁴⁹ the general website on Al-Huda International for Pakistan,²⁵⁰ the website for the Al

²⁴⁴ “Al-Huda International,” accessed May 28, 2019, <https://www.alhudapk.com/index.php>.

²⁴⁵ Esma, “Use of Media as an Indicator of Modern Trend of Female Pakistani Dakwah Groups.”

²⁴⁶ Shaikh, “Gender, Religious Agency, and the Subject of Al-Huda International.”

²⁴⁷ Esma, “Use of Media as an Indicator of Modern Trend of Female Pakistani Dakwah Groups.”

²⁴⁸ “Home - Farhat Hashmi - Quran For All - In Every Heart, In Every Hand,” Farhat Hashmi, accessed March 15, 2019, <https://www.farhathashmi.com/>.

²⁴⁹ “Idrees Zubair.”

²⁵⁰ “Al-Huda International.”

Huda international Canada, the website for Al Huda International US,²⁵¹ the website for children's Dawah, the website for Al-Huda Publications,²⁵² the website for Al Huda elementary school Canada,²⁵³ Website of Al Huda international school Pakistan.²⁵⁴ A Daisy, (Digital Accessible Information System) website is also working, on which the whole Quran will be available to the visually challenged. Farhat Hashmi's lectures are converted to "Talking books" to reach out to people with special needs.²⁵⁵ In 2015, only three websites of Al-Huda was working and they had "ninety thousand to 100 thousand clicks a day", it clearly shows the popularity of Al-Huda and a large number of visits of the website.²⁵⁶ This network of websites serves many purposes, it does not only provides religious education and give access to recorded lectures but also help to enroll in courses, appeals for donation, sharing the pictorial description of achievements and activities of Al-Huda. Along with the network of websites, Al Huda's mass communication department includes "e-campus" and offers distance learning opportunities. Women are enrolled in various courses all over the world and connected through virtual classrooms. Esma narrated her experience of attending a video conference session conducted by Farhat Hashmi, addressing simultaneously the participants from England and Islamabad. She described the experience as enriched and "imparts a feeling of minimizing distances between the developed world and ours, thus experiencing a sense of being part of the global community of believers".²⁵⁷

Al-Huda Mass communication department uses every modern technique to reach out to the masses. Audio cassettes, VCD, CDs of Quranic recitation, translation and explanation, Seerah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), several Duas and lectures on the day to day matters of life are distributed on different stalls and events and shops. More than 12 Al-Huda Apps are available for Android users to learn about Islam. Islamic Ring tones and podcast for smartphones are also developed by Al-Huda. Moreover, 4 telegram channels are also working on Faham-al-

²⁵¹ "Alhuda Online – Quran in Every Hands," accessed September 8, 2019, <https://www.alhudaus.com/>.

²⁵² "Al-Huda Publications," accessed September 8, 2019, <https://alhudapublications.org/>.

²⁵³ "Al Huda Elementary School | Rooted in Faith. Diverse in Knowledge. Exemplary in Action.," accessed September 8, 2019, <https://alhudaelementary.ca/>.

²⁵⁴ "AlHuda International School," AlHuda International School, accessed September 8, 2019, <https://aispk.org/>.

²⁵⁵ "Daisy: Fahm Al Quran," *Farhat Hashmi* (blog), accessed May 26, 2019, <https://www.farhathashmi.com/uncategorized/daisy-fahm-al-quran/>.

²⁵⁶ Esma, "Use of Media as an Indicator of Modern Trend of Female Pakistani Dakwah Groups."

²⁵⁷ Esma, 87.

Quran, Ramzan Insight, Saheeh Bukhari, *Hamaray Bachchay* (our children). Correspondence courses are also offered.²⁵⁸

Since 2016, Al Huda started teaching exegesis of Quran in English and Urdu through WhatsApp groups.²⁵⁹ I joined one of these groups in March 2019. These groups are closed with an intact group of members. Only admin can add new members after taking all the personal and professional bio-data of the member. Every week, members mark their attendance in the group. Al-Huda Printing and publishing house publishes books, pamphlets, and cards on Islamic knowledge in various languages. Al-Huda newsletter started in January 2016 and issued quarterly in Urdu and English language.

Al-Huda education is not only limited to women, but they also have chapters for men as well as for children. Education of the young generation is on the priority list of Farhat Hashmi. The first formal school for kids "Al Huda international School", established in 2010 in Islamabad, aimed to provide "Excellent academic education based on Islamic guidelines". This school not only works as a regular formal school for children, but also provides evening sessions and classes on Taekwondo, sports Hifz, Arabic language, Homework assistance and weekend classes are offered on STEM education, Seerah, Muslim heroes, manners and ethics, Islamic stories, cooking and stitching and crafting classes, communication skills for kids above the age of 4. Charges range from Rs.1250 (10\$) to Rs. 4000 (25\$)²⁶⁰ per course which is not affordable for a lower-middle-class family in Pakistan. Al-Huda international school Pakistan's network is in 4 main cities, Karachi, Islamabad, Faisalabad, Peshawar, with Montessori (pre-nursery), primary, secondary sessions along with evening and weekly classes for extra and co-curricular activities and summer camps with a focus on mind, body and soul.²⁶¹ An elementary school "Al-HUDA elementary school in Mississauga Canada" was opened in Canada to train the next generation of "ummah" to integrate the secular and basic Islamic studies.²⁶²

²⁵⁸ "Al Huda International."

²⁵⁹ "Al Huda International."

²⁶⁰ "Productive Evenings," *AlHuda International School* (blog), accessed May 25, 2019, <http://aispk.org/programs/productive-evenings/>.

²⁶¹ "AlHuda International School."

²⁶² "Al Huda Elementary School | Rooted in Faith. Diverse in Knowledge. Exemplary in Action."

Social welfare projects:

From early 2000, Al-Huda became involved in social welfare projects along with religious teaching. All these social welfare projects do not only facilitate the poor's and contribute to society but also gave a reliable organization to the elite to give a donation and earn “the paradise” in their afterlife. On one hand, Al-Huda teaches to serve humanity and other hands, provide the opportunity to serve the humankind.

These are a few examples of Al-Huda social welfare projects. In KPK and Baluchistan, since 2000, the project of “Farhami-e-Aab” (provision of water). Digging Well started in villages to provide clean drinking water. Since 2006, Ramzan ration project started with a distribution of food to 1400 families. In 2018, 9,198 families from all over Pakistan got food parcels in the month of Ramzan. From 2009, Vocational Centers, for women from humble backgrounds, are working to impart the income-generating skills i.e. embroidery, beadwork, and stitching. Along with vocational education, Quran classes are also conducted to give religious knowledge to women.

Since 2011, the projects of Qurbani on Eid-ul-Azha is operated since 2011. The distribution of meat in 2017 was more than seventy-four thousand, two hundred and three needy people throughout Pakistan and Azad Kashmir. Wealthy people can pay for the Qurbani and needy people are getting meat. For deserving people, they are the saviour, but for the wealthy, they are the provider of mental-spiritual peace. In 2011, a welfare centre is also located in a slum area of Karachi where children are taught Tajweed, Nazra, Namaz and Quran along with the subject of Urdu and Mathematics. Such training programs are also conducted in rural areas, faham ul Quran cassette and printed Islamic materials are also distributed free of cost. Since 2010, an OSC (out of school children) school is also working in Islamabad where basic primary education is given to students so that they can enter mainstream education.²⁶³

Free medical camps are also arranged from time to time by al-Huda since 2011. Students of Al-Huda institutes pay visits to the hospital and distribute pamphlets and books of specific prayers, which patients should recite to eradicate and lessen the pain and disease, benefits of

²⁶³ “Social Welfare,” accessed September 8, 2019, <https://www.alhudapk.com/social-welfare.html>.

milk and dates are also advocated by students especially for newly born babies. Patients were also told how various pains will be rewarded by Allah. Clinic and free dispensaries have been established free of cost in various Al-Huda campuses and branches.²⁶⁴

Al-Huda grasps every chance of social development. A project of tree plantation was conducted in 2013 with the help of the city development authority in Islamabad. Al Huda arranges the event in Islamabad and invited students from different schools and colleges. The whole drive was advertised as an “Islamic” act which would be rewarded by Allah and as a Sunnah of Holy Prophet (PBUH). At the event of the drive, a stall of Islamic books published by Al-Huda was arranged to impart Islamic knowledge to people. Special banners and pamphlets were published, full of hadith and qur’anic views about the plantation.²⁶⁵

Along with these projects, Al-Huda has been doing small projects, for example, a small mosque was built in Thakar, quilts are distributed from 2013 in KPK among needy persons during winter. Social welfare services are also provided in times of emergency, i.e relief for flood, earthquake and heatstroke victims, crisis relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction for the newly converted Muslims.²⁶⁶

There is also a prisoner support program: this program is designed to support prisoners’ food, clothing, medical facilities which are coupled with qur’anic education given by providing them *dars* cassettes, and Islamic books and Quran. The provision of facilities shows that the services are provided to the prisons which are below the poverty line. In other countries in the Canadian Prison “Wayne Moore”, prison services are also provided but only to Muslims prisoners in the form of Quran, prayer mat, morning and evening *dua* cards, *dua-e- hajat*.²⁶⁷

4.6. Sources of funding

The major source of Al-Huda funding is the donation. It is a common practice in Pakistan to give donations to the mosque or religious institutes. Since Al-Huda's inception, Farhat Hashmi

²⁶⁴ “Social Welfare.”

²⁶⁵ “Social Welfare.”

²⁶⁶ “Social Welfare.”

²⁶⁷ “Prisoner’s Support Program,” accessed September 8, 2019, <https://alhudapk.com/social-welfare/welfare-projects/prisoners-support.html>.

is calling for donations through lectures, publications, websites, and online sources. In the late 1990s, Babar narrated her experiences of attending Farhat Hashmi *dars* that it was organized by wives of high-rank military officials which were not only attended by elite women of Islamabad²⁶⁸ but also attended by the royal Saudi family, as well as the wife and mother of the president of Pakistan, Farooq Leghari.²⁶⁹ Al-Huda had branches in big cities so “this was accompanied by rumors about the source of her funding: was it the Pakistani military or the Saudis”.²⁷⁰ However, Al-Huda repeatedly denies their any sort of affiliations with the Saudi Arabia.²⁷¹

In the late 2000s, when Sadaf Ahmad was doing her ethnographic research, she investigated about sources of funding’s but none of the Al-Huda members were willing to disclose sources of funding of Al-Huda.²⁷² Al-Huda’s teachers and instructors do not receive donations directly. A donation box is placed in the lecturer hall and women can put their donation in it and the early days of Al-Huda, these donation boxes were overflowed by donation.²⁷³ If someone wants to give a large donation, they contact the administration. The donations which Al-Huda received are not in the form of money only. All the homes in which AL-Huda branches are located in big cities of Pakistan, i.e Gurmani House in Lahore, are donations.²⁷⁴

Al-Huda does not reveal its income and expenditure details in Pakistan. I contacted the main branches in Pakistan through phone, but they refuse to reveal any information related to their expenses. Only a glimpse of their income, expense and sources of funding is an audit report of the fiscal year 2014-2015 which is available on the al-Huda website. On the Al-Huda website, an audit report of fiscal year of 2014-2015 is available according to it Al-Huda’s net assets are \$9.2 million, and income is \$3.3 million. The sources of funding are mentioned as donation, student fees and sales money from books and cassettes.²⁷⁵

²⁶⁸ Babar, “New ‘Social Imaginaries.’”

²⁶⁹ Ahmad, *Transforming Faith*.

²⁷⁰ Babar, “New ‘Social Imaginaries,’” 354.

²⁷¹ Dorsey, “Pakistan’s Lurch Towards Ultra-Conservatism Abetted by Saudi-Inspired Pyramid Scheme,” January 2, 2018.

²⁷² Ahmad, *Transforming Faith*.

²⁷³ Babar, “New ‘Social Imaginaries.’”

²⁷⁴ Ahmad, *Transforming Faith*.

²⁷⁵ “Al Huda International.”

Donations are collected via the Al-Huda official websites. The Tab of “Donation” on website Al-Huda International Pakistan started with a hadith to instigate people for donating money. Hadith is as followed “*Abu Huraira (RA) reposted: Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) saying: “When a man dies, his acts come to an end, but there; recurring charity, knowledge (by which people benefit) and pious children who pray for him (for the deceased).”* Donations can be made through an online web portal in any currency. There are more than 17 categories in which one can donate. However, the desired expenses or donations already collected are not mentioned.²⁷⁶

On the other hand, on the Canadian website, different programs are mentioned in which donations can be made, the description of programs is mentioned with target expense/amounts and donations which have already been collected. For example, in July 2019, these are the following categories in which one can donate, *the scholarship stream* required \$20,000 and \$19,618 are already collected, “*Quranic education and hifdh fund*” required \$20,000 but \$23,876 are already donated for this program, “*community education*” required \$15,000 and \$12,054 are received as donation, “*the operation stream*” required \$20,000 and \$13,801 are received as donation, the technology stream required 10,000 and 9,382 are received, community iftar required 10,000 and 2,855 are received.²⁷⁷ Overall, the donation process is so convenient and donor-friendly. Donors can pay through credit cards, PayPal, offline donation and google pay.

4.7. Al-Huda acuity to utilize social factors

Undoubtedly, the model of Al-Huda provides the opportunity for women to have leadership qualities on the administrative and management level. But intellectually and academically, it is not challenging and stimulating. Dorsey mentions in his article, Hashmi herself admits that she does not have the intention to produce “religious scholars”.²⁷⁸ But in all their publications and websites, the use of words of academics, research and education system are quite visible. Al-Huda’s official name is “Al-Huda Welfare Foundation” but, “Al-Huda institute of Islamic Education for women” is also used alternatively for Al Huda on their various websites. However, I could not find a description of how and why a welfare foundation changes

²⁷⁶ “DONATE,” accessed August 26, 2019, <https://www.alhudapk.com/donate>.

²⁷⁷ “Support Al Huda,” accessed July 28, 2019, <https://www.alhudainstitute.ca/donate/>.

²⁷⁸ Dorsey, “Pakistan’s Lurch Towards Ultra-Conservatism Abetted by Saudi-Inspired Pyramid Scheme,” January 2, 2018.

into an Institute of Islamic Education (in Canada, Al-Huda official website is with the name of “Al-Huda Institute Canada”).

Interestingly, the vision of Al-Huda is the same in Pakistan and Canada, but different in the USA. Official websites of Al-Huda Pakistan and Canada have highlighted the vision as "Quran for All: In every hand, in every heart" and for the USA is "Guidance with Love and care". However, Al-Huda's official mission is the same on every website of Al-Huda, which is “to serve humanity by imparting knowledge of the *Quran and Sunnah*; the way to attain peace in this world and success in the hereafter”.²⁷⁹

Al-Huda phenomena created the setting in an urban community which compelled women to join Al-Huda. Al-Huda launched as a “brand”, “fashion statement” and a “right thing to do”. Al-Huda successfully created the environment which was unavoidable to attend their *dars* classes. The upper class was blamed to be idle or get involve in pseud social work to be busy. Iqtidar has mentioned elite women “have enough with their sleeveless blouse and coffee parties, now they are ready for religion”.²⁸⁰ This availability of elite women to *do the right thing* was being channelized by Al-Huda as it provided an opportunity to get engaged in the activity which has high social acceptability in Pakistan. Farhat Hashmi provided the opportunity to make their gatherings religiousized. Especially, in the early 1990s, right after the Zia period, discourses around religion along military Elite military nexus made these gatherings more desirable and productive to attend for social networking.

These *dars* not only provided a place for religious education but also a social space which normally lacks for women in Pakistani society, and women also see them as an escape from family issues and personal problems and “the tense atmosphere at homemade classes an attractive proposition”²⁸¹ for many women who were looking for non-controversial activities outside the home to get involved.²⁸²

²⁷⁹ “Al Huda International.”

²⁸⁰ Iqtidar, “Post-Islamists Strands in Pakistan,” 266.

²⁸¹ Zaman, “The Semiotics of Revivalist Islam,” 176.

²⁸² Babar, “New ‘Social Imaginaries.’”

In the diaspora, Hashmi forced the “identity question” in community²⁸³ and made itself as an essential part of the shared identity of the Pakistani community. Babar explained that in the early 2000s when she moved to Canberra, Australia Al-Huda was the talk of the town although Pakistani diasporic community opinion was divided into the merits of Al-Huda and Al-Huda *dars* became a symbol of “class” and networking in Pakistani Community. Undoubtedly, this Al-Huda based bound must be a try to shield them from into foreign culture and religion and “created a bridge between “home” and diasporic community”.²⁸⁴

This chapter primarily deals with the factors and organization choices adopted by Al-Huda to convert into a transnational movement. Throughout the chapter, the historical analysis is being employed to trace the time wise development of Al-Huda into a transnational organization. This chapter concludes that AL-Huda’s success and progress is dependents on the state support which Hashmi got from the wives of High officials. Hashmi make sure to arranges *dars* at the urban upper-class settings since its inception. The class consciousness of Al-Huda maintains its popularity among urban upper-class women. The followers of AL-Huda donated money as well as resources to maintain the classism in Al-Huda. Al-Huda employed their students and followers to extend their network and provided logistic support to open new franchises. The structure of Al-Huda is well-organized and equipped with the modern technology. Al-Huda keeps offering customized courses and formal diplomas for women of every age group. For the poor and lower-class communities, Al-Huda offers social welfare projects with the help of their donors. This chapter find out that along providing the religious education and social services, Al-Huda generates avenues to market itself in Pakistan and throughout diaspora. In short, Al-Huda proved itself a smart organization which is well-aware with the right move at right time.

²⁸³ Babar, 353.

²⁸⁴ Babar, 353.

Conclusion

The debate around the Al-Huda phenomena and Farhat Hashmi's narrative is one that develops over time as the movement expands and builds upon its popularity outside of Pakistan. Social media is full of jokes about followers of Farhat Hashmi who are seen as being somewhat confused modern, progressives who are in practice ideologically conservative and orthodox. In the month of August 2019, a video of Farhat Hashmi got viral on the issue of marital rape in which she refers to her conversation with one of her followers who is a graduate of Harvard Law School. Hashmi denies acknowledging the marital rape as a form of rape, since according to her teachings a woman cannot say no to sex if the husband demands it.

In Pakistan, intersecting political and social structures of power from the colonial period to contemporary times have generated supportive narratives for the 'Al-Huda phenomena'. State actors of Pakistan with the help of social actors generated the narrative of nationalism based on Islam and Muslim identity. In Pakistan, religion has been the most powerful tool to control masses and secure vote bank for political actors. Being the patriarchal society, religious reforms have been central to women's bodies either the leadership is secular or conservative. Religious actors were promoted by the state to make religious narrative stronger in society. Consequently, these religious actors support state actors to organize and mobilized masses for their political support. By supporting religious actors and organizations and introducing religious reforms, state actors got public support. This historical nexus of socio-political-religion background which is imbedded deeply in Pakistani society was one of the major reasons that state actors supported Al-Huda.

As established before, Al-Huda is apparently "apolitical", but it is in fact very political in their strategies. Al-Huda and Hashmi do not have direct authorities and resources of the community, and they have power on those persons who have authorities and resources in society. Additionally, Al-Huda does not go for argument and clash or symbolic to threatened with the powerful institutes of society.

Al-Huda International appeared in the canvases of Pakistani society with great consciousness about their surroundings. Farhat Hashmi started her *dars* among her selected

target audience; the female members of elite families of twin cities of Pakistan. These twin cities, Rawalpindi and Islamabad have the focal point for the power structure of Pakistan. Farhat Hashmi made herself “a brand” and a “fashion” that was and continued to be marketed to wealthy Pakistani women as “a right thing to do”. Her followers over time have included the close family members of the highest-ranked military and state officials who not only work as magnetic powers for the rest of the women but also support Farhat Hashmi on a technical and organizational level to establish and develop Al-Huda organization.

Al-Huda is transnational, and this transnationality if not conceived initially by Hashmi, was achievable because the Pakistani elite educated class is mobilized worldwide and have strong connections within family and friends living in the diaspora. They disseminated ‘Al-Huda phenomena’ throughout the diaspora. Furthermore, living in a foreign culture, Pakistani Muslims are more concerned with their identities as Muslims, therefore, Al-Huda has been well-come by the Pakistani diaspora in all the continents of the world.

Al-Huda's success is greatly dependent on the political use of all the opportunities they had throughout their journey. The Ideal pious women of Al-Huda are those who get knowledge of Quran and Hadith, practice it in her lives and acquaints others with religious knowledge. Al-Huda is a movement has been successful to employ their “ideal woman” as a strategy to reach out. Al-Huda provides a support system to provide training and facilities to open the franchise in different locations indicates their successful strategies. Al-Huda followers were resourceful people of their communities, based on the Al-Huda’s teaching they internalize Al-Huda’s mission which ultimately helped Al-Huda to expand their network.

Few of Al-Huda strategies are even paradoxical in nature. For instance, Al-Huda is an ultra-modern in its outreach and organizational level, but it is ultra-conservative on the narrative of women. Farhat Hashmi's superiority based on the doctoral degree which she achieved from a western country, currently, she is residing in Canada. On the other hand, Al-Huda supports the traditional religious narrative which thinks western culture is a threat to Islam. However, despite its orthodox and conservative version of Islam, it successfully created new identities including individualism, self-assertiveness and sisterhood in Pakistani women rather than self-sacrifice and being reformed and controlled by their husbands and families.

Overall, the network of Al-Huda got popularity because it was a win-win game for the ladies. Involvement in the home-based *dars* not only was the right thing to do in the political and social context. Women got good reputation to involve with religion-based activity, a space of networking, "fashion parade" and to look for the prospective bride of their boys. However, despite the critic, these *dars* provided women space to get to gather and something to do which they think as valuable. Thereby, I consider these *dars*, not the same as "*Bhathak*" (a place to meet up), which traditionally is occupied by men. Women also need to have a social platform in a society where women have fewer opportunities to have social gatherings.

The historical analysis of Al-Huda is too vast to be dealt justly with a masters'-level thesis. I have had to selectively pick the events and shreds of evidence to the narrative the story of Al-Huda. Despite the limitations and my positionality, I generated the debate about how women have been mobilized and become "the reformist" or reformers in a state in which women were always being reformed by male-centric institutes. I bring forth the diasporic perspective in which women are finding and generating new identities to associate themselves with a movement. But my methodological approach allows me to be led by primary resources which I have selected. I purpose future researchers to conduct investigation primary focused on diasporic perspective of Al-Huda, it will help to generate a comparative analysis on Al-Huda.

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