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GENDER AND THE POLITICS OF SPACE: THE MOVEMENT FOR WOMEN'S REFORM IN MUSLIM INDIA, 1857-1900

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Introduction

Late nineteenth century Muslim India (or rather élite Muslim north India) witnessed the emergence of a powerful new movement concerned with the reform of women's conditions. The reformers concentrated on female education (the basics of which were literacy, home economics, and 'orthodox' practices) as a means of both improving the lot of Muslim women and of the community in general. Thus in 1869 Nazir Ahmad published his first novel promoting women's education titled the *Mirat al-arus*; in 1874 Altaf Husayn Hali produced the *Majalisunissa*, a didactic work on the benefits of female education; in 1896 a women's section was created at the Muhammadan Educational Conference; in 1898 Mumtaz Ali began publishing a women's magazine called *Tahzib-e Niswan*; in 1904 Shaykh Abdullah began another women's journal, *Khatun*; in 1905 was published Ashraf Ali Thanawi's monumental female curriculum, the *Bahishtizewar*; and in 1906 the Aligarh Zenana Madrasa was opened. These actions, of course, did not pass without comment or opposition — both from within and without the ranks of the reformers. Soon, however, opposition to the idea of female education as such was stilled, and the arguments that now raged had to do with the degree of education that was to be imparted to them. Given that educated women were better able to raise children, manage their homes, improve their language, morals, and religion (and so perhaps their marital prospects as well), provide intelligent company for their husbands (keeping them away from courtesans), and advance their community in the world, would not too much learning, going to school, and perhaps associating with male teachers and students lead to disobedience, immorality, and a rejection of domesticity? Competing versions of restricted curricula, girls schools, and home learning provided answers to these doubts.

Now given that the reformist school might have been in some cases a British-derived institution, what did reformist 'education' (*talim*) mean

as a concept? Was it too a colonial notion? A European idea of 'female' education? Perhaps we can find out by comparing a few model curricula: Ashraf Ali Thanawi's *Bahishti Zewar*, first published in 1905, embodies an entire female curriculum in itself, from the alphabet to modes of letter writing, polite conversation, recipes, medicines, managing household accounts, sewing, and, of course, the rules of religion. These latter are so extensive and detailed, that mastering them, declared the author, would make women equal to an ordinary *alim* or cleric. Nazir Ahmad similarly instructed women in household affairs but did not emphasize religion to such an extent. He did include in his curriculum, however, subjects such as geography, of which Thanawi disapproved. Shaykh Abdullah's Aligarh Zenana Madrasa taught Urdu, mathematics, *Quran*, embroidery, cooking, games, Indian history and geography, and, after 1914, English.¹ That part of Hali's model curriculum which does not include domestic management is described by the fictive Zubayda Khatun in the *Majalisunissa*:

By the time I was thirteen, I had studied the *Gulistan* and *Bostan*, *Akhlaq-e-Muhsini*, and *Iyar-e-Danish* in Persian, and in Arabic the necessary beginning grammar, in arithmetic the common factors and decimal factors and the two parts of Euclid's geometry. I had also studied the geography and history of India, and had practiced both *naskh* and *nasta'liq* calligraphy and could copy couplets in a good hand. At that point, my father began to teach me two lessons a day. In the morning we read *Rimiya-e-Sa'adat* and in the evening *Kalila wa Dimna* in Arabic.²

Apart from their natural emphasis on domestic duties and Shaykh Abdullah's later inclusion of English, what is striking about these curricula is that they faithfully reflect the somewhat differing ideals of traditional men's education. Women, in other words, were in all cases being included in the previously masculine (or courtesan) audience of *adab* (morality and etiquette) instruction and literature. Thanawi's curriculum sets out the *adab* of the religiously inclined person or minor cleric, Nazir Ahmad's and Hali's curricula describe the education of any worldly, well-to-do man, and Shaykh Abdullah's curriculum, with its inclusion of English, prescribes for women the 'conservative' education of a modern man. In fact all these courses of study were meant to do for women what they did for men: promote civilization and Islamization; in short, conversion.

¹ G. Minault, 'Shaikh Abdullah, Begam Abdullah, and Sharif education for girls at Aligarh', in Imtiaz Ahmad (ed.), *Modernization and Social Change Among Muslims in India* (New Delhi, Manohar, 1983), p.229.

² Altaf Hussain Hali (trans. & ed. G. Minault), *Voices of Silence. English Translations of Majalisun-Nissa and Chupki Dad* (Delhi, Chanakya Publications, 1986), p.81.

But before inquiring into the historical meaning of women's Islamization, let us try to contextualize it somewhat. Two points come to mind in this regard: one, that the movement for women's reform was not autonomous but part of a more general Islamic 'revivalism' or 'scripturalism'; and two, that it was not universal but confined largely to a group of professionals (the 'service-gentry', as C. A. Bayly would have it) called the shurafa. Instead of seeing in revivalism simply a *sharif* reaction to colonialism, however, I conceive of it as a radical shift in an inter-Muslim dialogue — a shift we can identify with the consolidation of the north Indian shurafa as a polity distinguishing itself against both aristocrat and plebe on the basis of 'true' or 'orthodox' Islam. The shurafa, in other words, who did not exist as a community prior to the nineteenth century, created themselves in and through the colonial order as a distinct 'Islamic' or 'revivalist' polity — a self-creation in which their movement of women's reform necessarily participated. And given that their discourse of reform dealt not so much with the nature of women but with the place or space they were supposed to occupy (morally, intellectually, and physically) *vis-a-vis* 'outsiders', I shall examine it in terms of a larger *sharif* struggle over and shift in notions of Muslim space. Let me begin, then, by describing the two major discourses on social and sexual space that were reformed or displaced by the new *sharif* orthodoxy.

The Legal Discourse

The legal (*shariat*) culture of Islam separated society into public-discursive (*am, suhbat, or jalwat*) and private-nondiscursive (*khas* or *khalwat*) realms, privileging the former as the arena of Islam *par excellence*. The word 'public' here referred neither to a physical space nor to a popular place, but to located action — to a sort of stage composed of the mosque, courts, schools, and market, on which certain élite male actors only were allowed to perform strictly regulated scenes in front of a largely non-participant and non-élite audience.

But the relationship between 'public' men or actions and their 'non-public' audience was not one of state and subject. In the first place, the dialogue conducted by public men was technically one involving individuals and not institutions or 'the state'. For *shariat*, as is well known, did not recognize the legal status or agency of abstract groups. Secondly, the actors of the public sphere did not dictate to an audience, they represented it — not politically, to be sure, but as a moral collectivity. Thus in legal culture the *faraiz* or obligations incumbent upon all Muslims are divided under two heads: the *farz al-ayn* and the *farz al-kifaya*. The former comprises 'private' or individual duties due from every Muslim, and the latter more 'public' duties (such as

congregational prayer, *jihad*, choosing or nominating a ruler, adjudging disputes, etc.) which could be fulfilled on behalf of *Muslims as builders of a community*, by a few people. By such representation, or even embodiment of the non-public, then, public actors constituted or even created the whole moral community — or, to be more precise, the moral city (whose philosophical archetype is Farabi's *al-Madinat al-Fazilah*). This is why collections of prophetic tradition (*ahadith*) invariably attach great importance to the exclusively moral and regulated character of public action and publicity:

Narrated Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri: The Prophet said, 'Beware! Avoid sitting on the roads (ways)'. The people said, 'There is no way out of it as these are our sitting places where we have talks'. The Prophet said, 'If you must sit there, then observe the rights of the way'. They asked, 'What are the rights of the way?' He said, 'They are the lowering of your gaze (on seeing what is illegal to look at), refraining from harming people, returning greetings, advocating good and forbidding evil'.³

Muhammad b. Hatib al-Jumahi reported the Prophet as saying, 'The distinction between what is lawful and what is unlawful is the song and the tambourine at a wedding'.⁴

This world of free adult men was opposed on the one hand by the ultimately nondiscursive (and so in a sense 'private') wilderness, and on the other hand by the domestic realm of the *zaif* (pl. *zuafa*) or 'weak', the space of slaves, youths, and women, where rational or responsible discourse neither occurred nor was heard. The private, in other words, was not only the preserve of a clearly defined group of people rather than the particular lair of the woman, it was also 'pagan' when compared to the 'Muslim' public, because it was represented and did not represent, because it had neither stage nor audience — which further meant, of course, that it was relatively unregulated:

If a man is away or absent from his family for a long time, then on returning home, he should not enter his house at night, lest he should find something which might arouse his suspicion as regards his family, or lest he should discover their defects.⁵

³ Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari (trans. M.M. Khan), *Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Ankara, Hilab Yayinlari, 197-), Vol. 3, p.385.

⁴ Wali al-Din al-Tibrizi (trans. J. Robson), *Mishkat Al-Masabih* (Lahore, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1963-4), Vol. 2, p.670.

⁵ Bukhari, Vol. 7, p.123.

Even when in the 'public' realm, the *zuafa* maintained their non-discursive privacy. They were supposed to walk through such spaces silently and on their margins, neither looking nor looked at. In fact the *shariat's* 'tolerant' blindness towards the private did not merely paganize its denizens by default; rather, the *zuafa* often seem to have been encouraged to participate in non-shariat forms of Islam (such as certain forms of Sufism and Shi'ism). And this was because they were deemed to pose a threat to or denial of the public Muslim patriarchy — a threat summed-up by the charged word *fitna* (social chaos or disruption). The *fitna* of the *zuafa* which necessitated their seclusion and rendered what appears to have been a rather insecure *shariat* blind, deaf, and dumb, was largely expressed in sexual terms. That is to say the chaos posed by the weak consisted in the extraordinarily potent sexual attraction they supposedly exerted — an attraction that 'un-manned' the patriarchy. So the body of the *zaif* was eroticized to such an extent that the woman, for instance, came to be commonly described as a living sexual organ (*awrat*) which had to be hidden. If a stranger knocked on her door she could not answer him (for the sweetness of her voice induced *fitna*) but had to clap. If she ventured abroad she was not allowed to move in a way which made her jewelry jingle, for this caused *fitna*. Even her scent caused chaos. Indeed the woman, while assuredly not the only inhabitant of the private (the typical erotic scenario of the *Thousand and One Nights*, for instance, introduces an unsuspecting adult freeman into a closed space where women, slaves, and youths sinfully disport), emerged as its most illustrious captive and model. Thus Al-Hasan b. Dhakwan warns, 'Don't sit with the sons of the rich, for they have features like women, and they are a worse temptation than virgins'.⁶ Similarly, we are told in Mas'ud al-Qanawi's *Kitab fath al-rahman* that 'the beardless boy is like a woman. He is even worse. It is even more criminal to look at him than to look at a strange woman'.⁷ As for the slave, he is sensualized and feminized most illustriously in the literary figures of Yusuf (who deprives Zulaykha and her friends of all self-control) and Ayaz (the beloved companion of Mahmud Ghaznavi).

Legal culture, therefore, paganized the *zaif* by privatizing, sensualizing, and feminizing them. All of which explains the law's almost obsessive concern with maintaining not only a physical, but also a sartorial and behavioral separation between male and female. Indeed it was the concept of a fundamental *similarity* or *unity* of the sexes that made gender switching or ambiguity possible and so precipitated an almost obsessive or even fetishistic concern with the sartorial and

⁶ J.A. Bellamy, 'Sex and society in Islamic popular literature', in Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot (ed.), *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam* (Malibu, Undena Publications, 1979), p.37.

⁷ A. Bouhdiba (trans. A. Sheridan), *Sexuality in Islam* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), p.119.

behavioral separation of sexuality. (In law, for instance, the woman was said even to have an inverted penis and to ejaculate). The woman, then, posed a threat to the patriarchy not because she differed from men, but because she resembled them too closely. We might even go so far as to say that the *zuafa* had to be paganized precisely in order to *deprive* them of the inherently integrative legal status and agency which they might have claimed and which an early, struggling Islam had in fact extended to them in the plenitude of its radicalism.

I must make it clear, however, that the *shariat's* sexual division of social space did not entail a devaluing of sexuality. Indeed the law always glorified licit sexuality and never dichotomized mind/soul and body or the sacral and the carnal.⁸ So in his monumental *Ihya Ulum al-Din*, Imam Ghazzali maintains that civilization itself is a result of sexual satiation.⁹ How opposed this is to the Western tradition from St. Paul to Freud, which identifies potency and creativity with sexual abstinence, repression, and sublimation! In fact the opposition does not stop here, for it was precisely the sublimated *agape* (*ishq, hubb, muhabbat*) which Christianity preferred over *eros* (*mujun, etc.*) that was opposed by *shariat*. It was love, described in the literature as an obsession, an illness which attacked one from the outside, that constituted the *fitna* of the *zuafa* because it destroyed both the free moral agent required by the public sphere and the latter's rational or regulated dialogue as well. This kind of uncontrollable love, which more often than not involved suffering and even death, both resulted from the sexual division of social space and provided its most potent justification. In effect it subordinated the free, adult man to the loved *zaif*, and was so unreservedly condemned. Thus Ibn al-Jawzi wrote a whole treatise called *Dhamm al-hawa* or The Blame of Love;¹⁰ Ghazzali, in the *Ihya*, describes love as a form of slavery and so advocates that sexual desire should not become attached sentimentally to personalities;¹¹ and Kai Kaus, in the *Qabus Nama*, advises the reader not to fall in love with his wife, but if he does, not to tell her.

The Mystic Discourse

The Sufis did not reject the legal division of space into Muslim public and pagan private, but rhetorically privileged the latter as the field of a non-discursive mystical experience (love) more true and direct than the dialectical knowledge of the rational public sphere. We might say that in denying the controlled character of the public, Sufism saw in the

⁸ F. Mernissi, *Fatima, Beyond the Veil* (New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1975), pp.1-2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.13.

¹⁰ Bellamy, 'Sex and society in Islamic popular literature', p.27.

¹¹ Mernissi, *Fatima, Beyond the Veil*, p.60.

relatively unregulated private a vision of freedom. Thus the mystics not only tended to locate their shrines and hospices on the peripheries of the moral city, but also directed their discourse towards the publicization of the previously hidden and non-discursive private. In fact the whole vocabulary of Sufism is concerned with revealing the concealed and breaching the barrier that hides it. The images employed in this respect are the unveiling of the woman, the seduction of the youth, and the breakdown of reserve between the wine-bibber and the servant who serves the wine.

The greatest Sufi violation of legal culture, I think, was its constituting the relationship between man and God as one between lover and beloved — its glorification of *agape*. Indeed the mystics tended to disapprove of *eros*, going so far as to manufacture an *hadith* claiming 'Whoever loves and remains chaste and dies, dies a martyr'.¹² Sufism, then, appropriated all the negative elements in the legal discourse and placed positive values on them. So God, for instance, was identified as an irrational, unpredictable, pagan woman (or a feminized, *zaif* man) who held drinking parties (where the wine of mystical knowledge was served) in exclusively private gatherings and behaved cruelly to her lovers. These in turn joyfully embraced a painful, obsessive, maddening love which finally killed them. This is the world of *ghazal* poetry, whose themes simultaneously refer to *ishq-e Majazi* (earthly love) and *ishq-e haqiqi* (true or divine love). In this way the *ghazal* is critical not only of *shariat* theology, but of *shariat* society as well.

Let us examine this curious world in greater detail. The lover (*ashiq*) or mystic is disgusted by the arid hypocrisy of *shariat* society and wants to attain union with the beloved (*mashuq*) or God, who is usually described as a pagan (*kaffir*) or idol (*sanam, but*). To do this he has to endure not only the persecution of legal society, but the alternate indifference and cruelty of his beloved, who often denies him entry to her exclusive wine parties. The lover, then, spends much of his time trying to leave the public world of Islam, in which he is plagued by the ministrations of the sober comforter (*naseh*) and the harangues of the hypocritical divine (*shaykh* or *waiz*), and enter the private *mahfil*, *bazm*, or *majlis* (gathering) of pagan femininity. But the private sphere, while it is extraordinary and precious, is also insecure and emotionally or spiritually exhausts its visitors — who are not infrequently cast out of it. In effect the private cannot be endured for too long — it has to be balanced by the 'normal' public. Thus the Sufi resumes his legal personality (*baqa*) after destroying this legal agency in union with God (*fana*); thus he observed the external rites because the esoteric (*batin*)

¹² A. Schimmel, 'Eros — heavenly and not so heavenly — in Sufi literature and life', in Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot (ed.), *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam* (Malibu, Undena Publications, 1979), p.133.

cannot be maintained apart from the exoteric (*zahir*). As for those lovers and mystics who suffered to the bitter end, they were fated either to wander the wilderness in a state of love-madness (*junun*) or self-forgetfulness, or to die and gain release. Indeed Sufism is very fond of tragedies (like those of Layla and Majnun or Shirin and Farhad) because they allow one to sympathize with rebels without having to accept victories over the public order. The legal ideal, therefore, proved in the final analysis too strong for many Sufis and their poetic progeny. And in my opinion this was due not only to the fact that Sufism was partially appropriated by *shariat*, but also because the mystics, in criticizing the moral city by exalting a private sphere which existed only negatively, in opposition to the public, indirectly acknowledged and presupposed the moral city. In the end, then, mainstream Sufism's critique of *shariat* did violence to the *zuafa* through a kind of voyeurism — a situation in which the *zaif* was exposed but still remained mutely pagan.

The Orthodox Discourse

The emergent shurafa of the nineteenth century inherited a tradition in which the moral city was given, and the only dispute lay in evaluating the status of the private. In actuality, however, colonialism had crippled the moral city (a process described in Veena Oldenburg's *The Making of Colonial Lucknow*) not only by destroying or ignoring traditional structures of spatial authority (the arena of religion, for instance, was now decreed to be 'private' as opposed to the 'public' state), not only by attempting to insert a 'neutral' space (such as the market, for instance) into the Indian landscape, but also by locating the institutions of public power outside the 'native' city either in the 'civil' or 'military' lines, or in a parallel city such as New Delhi. And it was from the wreckage of this dislocation that the shurafa were able to build their own private polity or political sphere. What they did, in other words, was to abandon the idea of the moral city and abstract from it areas such as the mosque and the school (the courts and market being surrendered to the 'amoral' public sphere of colonialism), areas which were now seen as 'private', a privacy confirmed by the fact that the mosque and school as *sharif* fiefs were paired in orthodox discourse with the traditionally private areas of the Sufi hospice or shrine and of the domestic realm. We can see this novel pairing in the following couplet by the poet Ghalib Dehlavi:

Dayr nahi(n), haram nahi(n), dar nahi(n), asta(n) nahi(n)
Baithe(n) hai(n) rahguzar pe ham, ghayr hame(n) uthae(n) kyu(n)?

Neither temple nor mosque, neither door nor threshold
 It is the public road we are sitting on, why should any rival dislodge us?

And if the Shurafa created themselves as a polity by fighting over and appropriating as private institutions certain formerly 'public' spaces

(these often violent disputes over ritual and educational practice in mosques and schools being categorized usually as 'theological' differences), they imagined themselves in this role primarily through print — or print-capitalism, as Benedict Anderson would have it. Print constituted in reformist discourse the space in which a Shurafa-as-readership engaged in endless discussion on their private identity. In a sense print displaced 'located action' as the great arena of discourse — a discourse that had once been characteristic of the public sphere or moral city. But print, because it 'disenchants' the word into pure medium, cannot really replace the old public as an agora or forum of discourse, for it allows of no dialogue or interaction, stressing, as orthodoxy in general, the imperative, the uniform, and the linear. And this is due not simply to the character of print, but to the *sharif* appropriation of writing as an instrument of conquest and consolidation. In a word, writing, like orthodoxy, becomes spectacular or declamatory. All of which explains, for example, the lack of calligraphy on modern Muslim architecture (except as pure decoration or historical nostalgia). Previously one 'read' a mosque, for instance, in a participatory way — where the 'meaning' of the words was determined by one's stance and the architectural support of the calligraphy. Now the word has become declamatory and the mosque spectacular: there is no need to combine the two. Indeed we shall see shortly how the spectacular nature of privatized *sharif* space (the mosque, for example, simply shouts 'Islam') has made it politically so sensitive.

Writing, however, was not the only *medium* which displaced 'located action' as a means of creating the new polity. The formal meeting, too, provided a brand new venue at which the *sharif qawm* (group-nation) was imagined as an objective and abstract entity. The meeting not only prescribed for a polity which existed apart from it, it also came to 'represent' it in this dichotomous, positivist way.

The privatization of the Shurafa, then, went further than a shift in spatial values. Not only did they stress a religion of inner belief over (but not at the expense of) one of outward observances- this attitude being a traditional Sufi and not a modern Protestant one — but they also privileged and directed their propaganda towards the country towns (*qasbas*) where lay many of their family seats and kin networks. For the first time, therefore, the city exports a cultural system to the countryside instead of constituting a cultural magnet attracting both rural emulation and immigration. This change indicates not only the strongly mobilizing character of *sharif* orthodoxy, it also tells us that the city, the symbolic and administrative centre of both the old regime and the new, was not going to provide the geographical focus of the shurafa. From now on it was the *qasba* or town that was to symbolize the arena of Islam even for the city. There is no greater proof of this than the fact that the two pre-eminent institutions of the shurafa, the Dar al-ulum seminary and the

Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental college, were established in the towns of Deoband and Aligarh respectively. And the radicality of this establishment resides not merely in its novelty, but in the fact that the power of the Shurafa was geographically and symbolically decentered as far as colonial military and administrative foci were concerned. Furthermore, this strategy resembles the old 'self marginalizing' Sufi policy too closely to be coincidental.

Once the moral city had broken down and the 'private' had come to be seen by the Shurafa as a sort of 'fortress Islam' in a sea of hostility, then, its old pagan image and denizens came to present a formidable problem to the new, orthodox privacy. We might illustrate this problem by quoting another one of Ghalib's couplets:

*Khuda ke waste parda na kabe se utha waiz
kahi(n) aysa na ho Ya(n) bhi wohi kaffar sanam nikle!*

For God's sake do not lift the Ka'aba's veil o preacher
Lest that same pagan idol appear *here* as well!

The poet here identifies the cloth covering Islam's holiest shrine with the veil of the Muslim woman, gives a triple meaning to the phrase 'the *same* pagan idol' (who is therefore not only a woman or the Divine beloved, but also one of the *same* idols which the Prophet had removed from the Ka'aba), and plays on both meanings of the word *nikle* (meaning to 'appear' and to 'leave').

As the above verse suggests, the *zuafa* now came to be seen as pagan idols lodged *within* the gates of iconoclastic Islam. Every one of the reformers viewed the woman, for example, as the agent of a sinister, debilitating corruption that attacked vulnerable Muslim men *from the inside*, paganizing them and rendering them unable to defend the faith. I submit that such a paranoid situation could only arise once the Muslim man joined the woman in the intimacy of the private; this feeling of masculine vulnerability *vis-a-vis* the marginal feminine could occur only when these men had themselves been marginalized by colonialism.

How was the threat of the *zuafa* to be neutralized? Most importantly by hegemonically incorporating the youth and the woman into the new *sharif* polity by education or Islamization. Indeed every single reformist tract justifies this incorporation by raising the spectre of a *zaif* paganization or corruption of Muslim manhood. And so just as the British were proceeding to 'reform' the character and actions of their exotic, irrational Indian subjects through education, these same Indians were engaged in an identical task with their own 'others'. But this Islamization did not necessarily 'free' the *zaif* in any sense; rather, the Muslim woman and youth now had to be secluded from the world not because they would otherwise disrupt it with *fitna*, but because *it* would

corrupt *them*. As far as the youth is concerned, this novel theme of the pagan public finds its literary *locus classicus* in Nazir Ahmad's *Tawbat un-Nasuh*.

Islamization might not have 'liberated' the *zaif*, but it did transform his or her character and function. If the Muslim woman, for instance, could no longer be represented as a source of *fitna*, the Muslim man in the colonial public sphere could. The woman, therefore, had to be secluded from this impure outside world not only to save her from it, but also to render her into a sort of guardian of orthodoxy whose task was to 'save' men from the wickedness of the public. It is only in the nineteenth century, then, that the woman is exalted as a moral influence, a force for good in the immoral city of colonialism. She often becomes, as Bouhdiba remarks in the last chapter of his book *Sexuality in Islam*, a kind of asexual or non-sexual mother-figure. In fact reformist literature replaces the aggressive sexual woman with the pathetic or suffering woman-as-mother. The image of a passive, uncomplaining, silently self-sacrificing woman, in other words, was used to justify her education — was used, indeed, as the *object* of her education, in didactic works like Hali's *Chup ki Dad* (Homage to the Silent). And while this image might very well have been used in the beginning merely as propaganda for women's reform, there is no doubt that it soon became the great feminine ideal. The masochism of *ghazal* poetry, in which the lover willingly provokes and desires the cruelty of his beloved, is transformed here into a sort of reformist sado-masochism in which men are unjust to women only to feel remorseful subsequently. In the hugely popular novels of Rashid ul-Khayri, for example, there is an endless cycle of cruelty, suffering, and remorse: the Muslim man flagellating himself on the altar of woman as the symbol of morality and tradition.

In fact once the woman has become a Muslim the (literary) urge to spoil her, to seduce her from herself, becomes almost unbearable, and literary villains (or anti-heros) from Rashid ul-Khayri onwards take a curious pleasure in deflowering or corrupting *masum* (innocent) women. As the great symbol of *sharif* Islam, then, the woman becomes a site of desecration and (temporary or ritual) iconoclasm. And need we be reminded that the seduction which accomplishes this desecration constitutes an entirely new *literary* mode of masculine violence?

Islamization, however, was not only intended to incorporate the woman and the youth into the new *sharif* polity, it was also meant to free or separate them from the menial-as-*zaif*. In his monumental *Bahishti Zewar*, for instance, Ashraf Ali Thanawi only follows well-established reformist tradition when he points out that education will release women from all dependency on menials and enable them to *dominate* over their servants. And this by no means is the only separation effected by reform — for the youth, too, is wrenched from the

feminine sphere and placed in a new discursive arena: the school. What we see here, in other words, is a program of 'divide and rule', where the discourse on youth centers about the school (for the importance of the school in *sharif* discourse see David Lelyveld's *Aligarh's First Generation*),¹³ that on women in the domestic, and that on the menial in a space that is ideologically and even physically removed from the above two. What is more, the Islamization of the *zuafa* and the destruction of their monolithic alterity seems to have resulted in the creation of a specifically Muslim individualism or individuality; that is to say the nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of an abstract Muslim self into the glare of history.

The *Sharif* discourse of reform therefore meant the complete destruction of what had been a relatively unregulated privacy whose very pagan-ness had given the *zuafa* a kind of protection and identity. In this way the new orthodoxy was rather modern, for it swallowed whole a space which the law had only cultivated a blindness towards, and which Sufism had merely abused voyeuristically. So, for instance, while *shariat* shut its ears to the specialized slang (*begamati zaban*) spoken by the woman-as-pagan, and while sufic literature and its progeny delighted in exposing and employing this dialect, orthodoxy made every effort to 'standardize' and destroy it. And if we are to believe the model objections to Islamization put forward by female characters in the works of the *sharif* educators only to be refuted, there did exist resistance to this sort of reform. In Altaf Husayn Hali's didactic tract *Majalisunissa* (Gatherings of Women), for example, various female characters put forward objections to reform based, ironically, on traditional legal arguments of *fitna*. They failed, of course, and yet I firmly believe that this failure constituted a victory of sorts both for Islam and for the *zaif* — for they are now potentially in a position where they can conduct a dialogue with the very orthodoxy that produced them, as full Muslims. But time is running out, for orthodoxy has not remained stationary. Today's Muslim woman is threatened not so much by the decrepit survivals of her pagan past, but by new theories of genetic inferiority or biological difference. Once the woman had become an abstract Muslim individual, in other words, she was to be distinguished from men non-culturally and non-psychologically for the first time: her uniqueness now very frequently resting on European-derived notions of absolute sexual difference. The classic text in this regard is Mawlana Mawdudi's book *Parda*.

¹³ D. Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation* (Princeton, Princeton U.P., 1978).

Conclusion

There occurs in the nineteenth century a fundamental shift in the politics of space. Whereas before the Mutiny, for example, a Westernized man like Lutfullah (pp. 338-40) could defend the position of Muslim women to Europeans using the traditional argument of public *fitna* and without once mentioning the need for reform or the importance of the private,¹⁴ some decades later Mawlana Mawdudi would not be considered odd for saying, 'The *harim* is the strongest fortress of the Islamic civilization, which was built for the reasons that, if it ever suffered a reverse, it may then take refuge in it'.¹⁵ Indeed it is very probable that such a shift was expressed architecturally by the movement of the domestic or feminine sphere from the peripheries of the main household or as one of its extensions (like the stables), to the center of the new Muslim home. But this 'privatized' or 'siege' mentality, which led to the wholesale Islamization of the denizens of the old private sphere, was not necessarily a reaction to a real or complete defeat — for it served as the basis of the creation of a new *sharif* polity. The destruction of the moral city, however, did invest the private citadels of the shurafa with great emotional power — which meant that any defiance of or threat to them by Muslim or non-Muslim, conjured up violent reactions. And in the twentieth century this 'communal' ideology of space seems to have been appropriated by the non-*sharif* as well. We see its results today not only in tussles over mosques and monuments, but also in the near-hysteria evoked by all discussions of women's issues — for the woman has become the most illustrious symbol of orthodox privacy. Like space, then, the woman has become nothing more than a spectacle (a spectacle who is curiously *not seen*). She does not speak, she just *is*. The woman as an exclamation of Islam.

¹⁴ Lutfullah, *Autobiography of Lutfullah: An Indian's Perceptions of the West* (New Delhi, International Writers' Emporium, 1985), pp.338-40.

¹⁵ Mazhar-ul-Haq Khan, *Purdah and Polygamy* (New Delhi, Harnam Publications, 1983), pp.56-7.