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*Whom can a Muslim Woman Represent? Begum Jahanara Shah Nawaz and the politics of party building in late colonial India**

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Abstract

This article argues that gendered ideas about political representation were pivotal to the All-India Muslim League's new self-imagination as the exclusive representative of Indian Muslims after the Pakistan Resolution of March 1940. I offer a gendered reading of League politics during the crucial decade of the 1940s by examining the historical implications of Begum Jahanara Shah Nawaz's expulsion from the party in 1941 for accepting a post on the National Defense Council. When she claimed that she was appointed to the Council as a representative of all Indian women and Punjab, the League leadership condemned her for disobeying the party's resolution to remain aloof from British India's wartime administration. With an unusual intensity, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the League's president, censured her for endangering Indian Muslims' fragile unity and asserted that League members could either represent Muslims—or no one. Her arguments functioned as an effective foil against which the League solidified its homogenizing narrative of an Indian Muslim identity and its universalizing project of Pakistan. As the demand for Pakistan increasingly dominated the League's rhetoric, alternative models of representation that drew upon cross-religious, gender-based, or regional solidarities became progressively untenable for female Muslim League politicians. Shah Nawaz's expulsion, and the discourse on representation it generated, demonstrated that gender issues were central to League politics at both the provincial and the all-India level.

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Introduction

On 12 September 1941, Muhammad Ali Jinnah (d. 1948), president of the All-India Muslim League (established 1906), acting on the authority of the League's Working Committee, banned Begum Jahanara Shah Nawaz (1896–1979) from the party and its provincial branches for five years.[1] Shah Nawaz was a prominent politician from Punjab who had had a long association with the League. She had been a member of the League's Council since the early 1930s, was a founding member of the League's Women's Sub-Committee (established 1938), and in 1941 was part of the Working Committee of the Punjab Provincial Muslim League and a parliamentary secretary in the provincial government led by Sir Sikander Hayat Khan (1892–1942). Jinnah's decision concluded a dramatic public controversy which peaked during the summer of 1941 when Shah Nawaz, along with other League leaders, accepted wartime appointments in the expanded Viceroy's Executive Council, British India's topmost executive body, and the newly constituted National Defense Council (hereafter NDC).[2] In contravention of a League resolution of June 1940 which prohibited its members from cooperating with the Government of India's war efforts, the nominated League leaders accepted these positions without conferring with the party's central leadership.[3]

Jinnah and the League leadership considered this an inexcusable slight to the party. Ever since the League had articulated its demand for an autonomous Muslim nation-state in the Lahore Resolution of March

[1] *The Tribune* (Lahore), 13 September 1941, p. 1; India Office Records, British Library (hereafter IOR) NEG 10768/10, File No. 97.

[2] Other nominated League members were: the premier of Punjab, Sir Sikander Hayat Khan; the premier of Assam, Saiyid Muhammad Saadullah; the premier of Bengal, A. K. Fazl al-Huq; the Nawab of Chhatari; and Sir Sultan Ahmad. See *The Tribune*, 22 July 1941, p. 1. By the end of August 1941, Khan, Saadullah, and Chhatari had resigned under pressure from the League. Fazl al-Huq, after criticizing Jinnah for his high-handed approach to the issue, resigned early in September 1941 from the NDC as well as the League. This event marred Huq's personal relationship with Jinnah thereafter. *The Tribune* of July–September 1941 covered the entire controversy extensively. Sporadic coverage also appeared in *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi) and *The Times of India* (New Delhi) from August–September 1941.

[3] Resolution of the Working Committee of the All-India Muslim League dated 27 May 1940, IOR NEG 10797/1, File No. 834.

1940, party leaders had insisted that it was the sole legitimate representative of all Indian Muslims. Now the League condemned these provincial leaders for making independent decisions against party guidelines. In response, the premiers of Punjab, Assam, and Bengal—prominent League members at the centre of this controversy—argued that they were appointed as representatives of their respective provinces, not as Indian Muslims.[4] After many recriminations, during which the League dismissed these arguments and decried its errant members' indiscipline, the provincial premiers resigned from their posts.[5]

Begum Shah Nawaz counteracted calls for her dismissal from the League by foregrounding her position as the only woman appointee to the NDC. She asserted that as the sole representative of Indian women, and a representative of Punjab, she could not ignore her duty to bring these voices to India's wartime administration. Quick to punish this disobedience, the League expelled her. Jinnah scathingly remarked that she could not 'cut herself up into different [representative] capacities'.[6] With this decision, the League left no doubt that it would enforce 'discipline within its ranks, irrespective of the position that a person may hold'[7] and abide no disruption of its ongoing attempts to reshape British Indian Muslims into a unified political community.

[4] The premiers relied on Secretary of State Amery's statements in which he argued that these League members had been appointed to the expanded Council and the NDC in their official capacity as provincial premiers. See *The Tribune*, 2 August 1941; *The Hindustan Times*, 18, 19, and 25 August 1941; and *The Times of India*, 21 August 1941.

[5] Public embarrassment, orchestrated by Jinnah, contributed to the resignations of the Muslim premiers. After Amery had issued statements reiterating that the premiers were appointed to the NDC in their official capacity, Jinnah released his private correspondence with the viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, conducted through the governor of Bombay. In these private letters, the viceroy freely admitted that the Muslim premiers were appointed as Muslim representatives and not exclusively as provincial representatives. Such contradictory statements from top-ranking Government of India officials left the provincial premiers with no leg to stand on in their exchanges with the League. Sikander Hayat Khan resigned from the NDC—a move that was widely interpreted in the English press as Jinnah's outfoxing of Sikander and the Unionist Party, the League's primary rival in Punjab. See *The Tribune*, 29 August 1941, p. 7, and *The Times of India*, 27 August 1941, p. 6.

[6] *The Tribune*, 13 September 1941, p. 1. Also reproduced in Waheed Ahmad (ed.), *The Nation's Voice, United We Win: Annotated Speeches and Statements, April 1940–April 1942*, Vol. II (Karachi: Quaid-e-Azam Academy, 1996), p. 297.

[7] *The Tribune*, 4 September 1941, p. 4. Similar sentiments about enforcing party discipline, regardless of a leader's position, appeared in an editorial in *The Hindustan Times*, 25 August 1941.

In this article, I argue that gendered ideas about representative politics were pivotal to the Muslim League's new self-imagination in the aftermath of the Lahore Resolution of March 1940 (later known as the Pakistan Resolution). During the early 1940s, the League posited itself as the only authentic representative of an idealized Indian Muslim community that was united—despite much regional heterogeneity—by its shared faith and commitment to the establishment of Pakistan, a sovereign Muslim nation-state.[8] I interpret Shah Nawaz's expulsion as an ideologically 'creative event'[9] that demonstrates the formative significance of gendered ideas for a party newly oriented towards the objective of Pakistan. At a time when Pakistan was still a nebulous concept, arguing with her forced Jinnah to publicly articulate what the ideal League and League leaders of his conceptualization ought to look like. In addition to her self-identification as a female Muslim League politician, her arguments about her representational potential were threatening to the post-1940 League. Jinnah's pithy dismissal of the possibility that Shah Nawaz might represent all Indian women revealed the constraints that the League's new ideological self-positioning placed on its female leaders. Although League leaders adopted the vocabulary of party discipline to speak about this controversy, the exchange between Shah Nawaz and Jinnah produced a powerful political moment in which the League's president defined the kind of political representation that was ideologically acceptable to it as a party in pursuit of Pakistan. In adopting this interpretive approach, I offer a gendered reading of League politics as the party went from demanding Pakistan to achieving it during the turbulent decade of the 1940s.[10]

Shah Nawaz's expulsion revealed the importance of gendered ideas about representative politics to the post-1940 Muslim League in two crucial ways. First, at the provincial level within Punjab, her dismissal illuminated the formative place of Muslim women's rights, as shaped by colonial understandings of Punjabi kinship and inheritance law, in the

[8] Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League, and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[9] Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 4–5. While Sinha centres her discussion on the regulation of women's sexuality, my focus in this article is on contemporary debates about Muslim women's inheritance rights, and the ways in which this issue was put to work to articulate competing visions of Muslim politics in late colonial India.

[10] Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, rev. edn).

rivalry between the League and the Unionist Party (established 1923). More importantly, this event demonstrated that Muslim women were at the heart of the ideological conflict between the Unionists' primarily class-based, landed elite-led politics of collaboration, on the one hand, and the new League's faith-based, urban elite-led politics of Muslim nationalism, on the other. As this article will show, the question of Punjabi Muslim women's inheritance rights was the one issue on which Jinnah's reformist Islamic credentials were just as feeble as, if not worse than, the Unionists. It was a testament to the critical importance of this issue in Punjabi politics that Shah Nawaz justified her decision to stay on the NDC, partly by invoking Jinnah's complicity in the passage of the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act of 1937 (hereafter Shariat Act of 1937) which had failed to secure Quranic inheritance rights for Punjabi Muslim women.[11] By bringing up this controversial subject, she publicly questioned Jinnah's legitimacy as a leader of Indian Muslims.

Second, at the all-India level, Begum Shah Nawaz's dismissal highlighted competing conceptualizations of whom female Muslim League members could legitimately represent in the party's post-1940 representational paradigm. Did female Muslim League leaders represent Muslim women as a sub-set of the faith-based constituency of Indian Muslims? Or could they represent Muslim women as a sub-set of the gender-based, cross-religious constituency of Indian women? Equally significantly, could female Muslim League leaders represent Muslim men *and* women? Once the premiers of Punjab, Assam, and Bengal had given up their posts, Shah Nawaz's claim to represent all Indian women and Punjab became a threat to the League's idealized portrayal of Indian Muslims as an exclusive faith-based, monolithic, unanimous political constituency. Her arguments raised the possibility that instead of grounding their politics in shared faith, female Muslim League politicians could potentially represent, or be represented as component parts of, the cross-religious, gender-based category of Indian women or the regional category of Punjabis (men and women).[12] By dismissing

[11] David Gilmartin, 'Kinship, Women, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Punjab', in *The Extended Family: Women and Political Participation in India and Pakistan*, (ed.) Gail Minault (Columbia, MO: South Asia Books, 1981).

[12] Of course, by this time, many Muslim women were active in women's organizations that remained politically unaffiliated to the Muslim League. For instance, Begum Sharifa Hamid Ali, a member of All-India Women's Conference (AIWC, established 1927) and Begum Shah Nawaz's contemporary, opposed separate electorates for women on the

her claims as an untenable case of divided loyalties, Jinnah solidified the party's new singularizing narrative of Muslim politics and broadened its ideological implications. Moving beyond the idea that the League alone could represent Indian Muslims, he could now assert that League members (men and women) could either represent Muslims—or no one. Gendered ideas about representative politics—specifically, who it was that Muslim women could or could not represent—were determinative components of the League's new self-image in late colonial India.

Although Shah Nawaz was one of only two individuals expelled from the party in September 1941,[13] the broader controversy over NDC appointments worked simultaneously as catalyst and symbol of a fundamental transition in the nature of the Muslim League as a political party. Since its establishment, the League had been composed of a group of elite, affluent, English-educated Muslim men, many of whom considered separate electorates an irreproachable solution to the problem of Muslim representation in British India.[14] During the early

grounds that it would reinforce religious identities as the basis of legal personhood and preclude reform of religious personal law. During the late 1940s and 1950s, Begum Anis Kidwai worked with AIWC leaders like Mridula Sarabhai to rehabilitate women affected by the 1947 partition. The novelist Ismat Chughtai was affiliated with the Progressive Writers Movement. Without denying or understating the ideological diversity of Muslim women's political participation in late colonial India, I want to emphasize the threat that accepting, or leaving unrefuted, Shah Nawaz's ideas presented to a League that had recently articulated its demand for Pakistan.

[13] The other was Sir Sultan Ahmad, a Shia lawyer from Bihar, who was appointed as law member in the viceroy's Executive Council. In response to charges of indiscipline by the League leadership, Ahmad pointed out that the law member's post pre-dated the Second World War and was, therefore, outside the purview of the League resolution of June 1940 that asked party members to boycott British India's wartime administration. Jinnah rejected his argument as an irrelevant technicality. Although Ahmad was also expelled at the same time as Shah Nawaz, it is crucial to note that his arguments did not challenge Jinnah's leadership nor the singularizing politics of the post-1940 League. Similarly, when Begum Hamida Momin, a member of the Bengal Legislative Council, was dismissed from the League for joining a war committee sometime before 1941, her expulsion too did not generate a conversation about the representational potential of female Muslim League politicians, even though it showed that the controversies surrounding League members joining war committees had existed since at least 1940. See Khan Bahadur M. A. Momin to Jinnah dated 24 July 1941, IOR NEG 10814/2, File No. 1099.

[14] Faisal Devji, *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

1940s, however, the League was in the process of reorienting itself to the idea of a separate Muslim nation-state as a permanent resolution to British India's electoral woes. While League leaders continued to be drawn from elite Muslims, the party now conceptualized Indian Muslims as a unified, faith-based, homogeneous political constituency. The League was driven by a desire to be recognized as the exclusive political representative of this constituency and an imminent need to prove its unequivocal support for Pakistan. Within this political configuration, Indian Muslims became one constituency, League leaders their only legitimate representatives, and the establishment of Pakistan their unifying goal. By conflating religious affiliation with political expression, this ideological matrix generated a new logic of political representation for League leaders within which they could only represent Muslims.

This new logic rendered cross-religious models of representation anomalous. As League leaders popularized the idea of Pakistan during the 1940s, Muslim politicians who had relied on gender, class, or caste-based forms of association found themselves in increasingly conflicted waters. For female Muslim League members, this new reductive impetus weakened possibilities for participating in a cross-religious women's movement, such as the one led by the All-India Women's Conference (AIWC, established 1927) since the late 1920s, founded upon the idealized solidarity of Indian women living and functioning in an overwhelmingly masculinist political landscape. In rejecting Shah Nawaz's arguments in 1941, the League leadership detached Muslim women from Indian women, discursively and ideologically. By insisting that Muslim women's political representation be based solely upon their religious identity, the League effectively tied Muslim women (both as constituency and as representatives) to their religious community, and to itself as the sole putative representative of that community. As the story of Shah Nawaz's eventual return to the League will show, women's solidarity was acceptable to the new League only if the electoral power embedded in such cross-religious collective affiliations served its needs and did not challenge its universalist conception of Pakistan and Indian Muslims. What began as a feud over a handful of official appointments became an occasion for solidifying the League's new political axioms in response to a female Muslim League politician's perception of her own representational potential.

While some existing accounts of Begum Shah Nawaz's career mention this moment of rupture between her and the League, almost none examines its ideological implications for the historical trajectory of

League politics in late colonial India.[15] Emphasizing her contributions to Muslim women's organizations, the Unionist ministry of Punjab, and the Government of India during the 1930s and 1940s, some scholars posit her as one among many notable advocates of Muslim women's rights associated with the League.[16] Others see her as an elite leader of the broader Indian women's movement, highlighting her long-standing association with the AIWC and her deep involvement in the campaign for Indian women's right to vote during the 1920s and 1930s.[17] This scholarly literature either interprets her decision to stay on the NDC as proof of her tenacious commitment to Muslim women's rights or dismisses her 1941 expulsion as a momentary lapse in a career otherwise dedicated to the League and Pakistan.

[15] Azra Asghar Ali and Shahnaz Tariq, 'Begum Jahanara Shahnawaz and the Socio-Cultural Uplift of Muslim Women in British India', *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* 45, no. 2 (2008); Suman Bharti, 'Living Patriotism: The Experience of "Freedom" among the Muslim Women of Colonial Punjab', *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies: Alam-e-Niswan* 21, no. 2 (2014); Amarjit Singh, 'Foundation of Pakistan: A Study of the Women Leadership of the Punjab Provincial Muslim League', *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* 45, no. 1 (2008).

[16] Azra Asghar Ali, *The Emergence of Feminism among Indian Muslim Women, 1920–1947* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Sarfaraz Hussain Mirza, *Muslim Women's Role in the Pakistan Movement* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, University of Punjab, 1969); Dushka Saiyid, *Muslim Women of the British Punjab: From Seclusion to Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); Abida Samiuddin and Rashida Khanam, *Muslim Feminism and Feminist Movement* (Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2002); David Willmer, 'Women as Participants in the Pakistan Movement: Modernization and the Promise of a Moral State', *Modern Asian Studies* 30, no. 3 (1996). Mirza, *Muslim Women's Role in the Pakistan Movement*, pp. 56–58 and 74, mentions her expulsion from the League, but reiterates that the party was 'naturally' paramount.

[17] Shah Nawaz's contributions to the campaign for Indian women's right to vote appear in the following: Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Ayesha Jalal, 'The Convenience of Subservience: Women and the State of Pakistan', in *Women, Islam and the State*, (ed.) Deniz Kandiyoti (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991); Laura Dudley Jenkins, *Identity and Identification in India: Defining the Disadvantaged* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Sumita Mukherjee, *Indian Suffragettes: Female Identities and Transnational Networks* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018); Anupama Roy (ed.), *Gendered Citizenship: Historical and Conceptual Explorations* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackaswan, 2013); Mrinalini Sinha, 'Suffragism and Internationalism: The Enfranchisement of British and Indian Women under an Imperial State', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 36, no. 4 (1999). Also see Jana Everett, '"All the Women Were Hindu and All the Muslims Were Men": State, Identity Politics and Gender, 1917–1951', *Economic and Political Weekly* 36, no. 23 (2001).

The limited corpus of scholarly writing about Muslim women's political participation in late colonial India offers little scope for understanding the complex ebbs and flows of Shah Nawaz's career.[18] Focusing on the 1930s and 1940s, Sarfaraz Husain Mirza situates Muslim women as a largely undifferentiated group which did its bit for Pakistan by establishing the League's Women's Sub-Committee, canvassing among Muslim women voters, and participating in the anti-Unionist demonstrations of late 1946 and early 1947.[19] In a more complex iteration of this framework, David Willmer has argued that the League's spectacular electoral success during the 1940s was partly due to its appropriation of pre-existing social concerns about women and modernity—concerns that Muslim women had been articulating since the early twentieth century—into its new project of the ideal Muslim nation-state of Pakistan.[20] For Mirza, Shah Nawaz's expulsion is an ephemeral irritant in the otherwise linear and triumphalist progression of the League towards Pakistan in which Muslim women were 'natural' supporters of the party. In Willmer's framework, she exemplifies the Muslim woman leader who, concerned with women's rights for decades before Pakistan became the League's goal, joined forces with the party after 1940, assuming that Muslim women's rights would be upheld in future Pakistan.

While such arguments may explain the relatively non-controversial symbiotic relationship between the League and its Women's Sub-Committee, Shah Nawaz's uneven relationship with the party, of which the 1941 expulsion was the apogee, muddies narratives of Muslim women's wholesale ideological assimilation into the League. I do not contest her contribution to the mobilization of Punjabi Muslim women for the League or to the broader women's movement in colonial India and independent Pakistan. However, the additive and teleological impulses that drive this scholarship foreclose the possibility of unpacking the substantive historical and historiographical implications of her break with the League. At the very least, her career illuminates the central

[18] For an account of Muslim women's political participation during the 1910s and 1920s, especially in the Khilafat Movement, see Gail Minault, 'Sisterhood or Separatism? The All India Muslim Ladies Conference and the Nationalist Movement', in *The Extended Family: Women and Political Participation in India and Pakistan*, (ed.) Gail Minault (Columbia, MO: South Asia Books, 1981); G. Minault, 'Purdah Politics: The Role of Muslim Women in Indian Nationalism, 1911–1924', in *Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia*, (eds) Hanna Papanek and Gail Minault (Columbia, MO: South Asia Books, 1982).

[19] Mirza, *Muslim Women's Role in the Pakistan Movement*.

[20] Willmer, 'Women as Participants'.

place of Muslim women's rights in late colonial Punjabi politics. It shows that the political history of Punjabi Muslim women was more complex than narratives of their ideological immersion in the League would suggest.

Within scholarship on politics in late colonial Punjab, and late colonial India more generally, the complexity of Muslim women's public careers, especially those who joined the League, remains relatively unexplored. Ayesha Jalal's influential formulation situates the conflict between individual/region and community/centre at the heart of Muslim politics in late colonial India.[21] But how did gendered ideas about representation figure within this defining conflict? How did a female League leader's ideas about whom Muslim women could or could not represent shape the post-1940 League? Although Jalal illustrates the tension between individual and community by narrating the complicated political negotiations leading up to the Shariat Act of 1937,[22] her account does not reflect on the place of gendered ideas about representation in Muslim politics. The only study of Muslim women's political mobilization in colonial Punjab, while underlining Shah Nawaz's contributions to the League during the mid-1940s, does not mention her expulsion.[23] Political histories of Punjabi Muslims in particular, and Indian Muslims in general, often focus on high politics between the 1920s and 1940s, usually featuring male politicians engrossed in factional rivalries, ideological battles, and tense negotiations leading up to the 1947 partition.[24] Muslim women appear

[21] Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850* (London, New York: Routlege, 2000). Without challenging Jalal's observations about the tension between individual and community in Muslim politics, this article delves into the place of gender in League politics of the 1940s.

[22] Ibid., pp. 384–385.

[23] Saiyid, *Muslim Women of the British Punjab*.

[24] David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1988); Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*; Ian Talbot, *Provincial Politics and the Pakistan Movement: The Growth of Muslim League in North-West and North-East India, 1937–1947* (Karachi, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); I. Talbot, *Khizr Tiwana: The Punjab Unionist Party and the Partition of India* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002). Male actors also predominate in recent works of political history such as Devji, *Muslim Zion*; Venkat Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam, and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India* (Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Neeti Nair, *Changing Homelands: Hindu Politics and the Partition of India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Ali Usman Qasmi and Megan Eaton Robb (eds), *Muslims against the Muslim League: Critiques of the Idea of Pakistan* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

in some scholarly analyses that underline the importance of customary law in the colonial state's alliance with Punjabi landholders, and the consequent emergence of Punjabi Muslim women's inheritance rights as the cornerstone of League-Unionist rivalry and late nineteenth–early twentieth century debates about Indian Muslim identity.[25] Punjabi women—Hindu, Muslim, Sikh—also appear as victims of violence in women's histories of the 1947 partition.[26] Women as political actors, however, are rare in this literature.

The multifaceted scholarly interpretations of Muslim women in colonial India also leave female Muslim League leaders' public careers largely unexamined. Literature on socio-religious reform movements traces the centrality of Muslim women to historical changes in notions of *sharafat* among South Asian Muslims,[27] and deconstructs new ideas of femininity and masculinity articulated through reformist institutions and literatures.[28] Another body of scholarly work, which deals with Islamization in late twentieth-century South Asia, documents gender discriminatory aspects of post-colonial law and politics, and the role of Muslim women's organizations, such as the Women's Action Forum in Pakistan and the All India Muslim Women's Personal Law Board in India, in resisting such laws.[29] However, this literature too does not

[25] Gilmartin, 'Kinship, Women, and Politics'; D. Gilmartin, 'Biraderi and Bureaucracy: The Politics of Muslim Kinship Solidarity in Twentieth Century Punjab', *International Journal of Punjab Studies* 1, no. 1 (1994).

[26] Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

[27] I use the terms '*sharafat*' and '*sharif*' to indicate the 'new' *sharif* of the nineteenth century, defined not by noble birth alone, but also by Islamic piety and good ethical conduct. Gail Minault, *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India* (Delhi, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 2–9.

[28] Major works in this historiography include: Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); Minault, *Secluded Scholars*; Ashraf Ali Thanvi, *Perfecting Women: Maulana Ashraf 'alī Thanawi's Bihishti Zewar: A Partial Translation with Commentary*, (ed.) Barbara Daly Metcalf (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); M. Q. Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age: Religious Authority and Internal Criticism* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[29] See, for instance, Zoya Hasan, 'Minority Identity, Muslim Women Bill Campaign and the Political Process', *Economic and Political Weekly* 24, no. 1 (1989); Khawar Mumtaz and Farida Shaheed, *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?* (London; Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books, 1987); Elora Shehabuddin, 'Jamaat-i-Islami in

address the ways in which gendered ideas affected partisan discourses of political representation in late colonial India, particularly with reference to female Muslim League politicians.

In asking what Shah Nawaz's expulsion from the League meant for the political landscape in which this event unfolded, I situate a female League politician's conceptualization of her political potential at the centre of scholarship on party politics in late colonial India. At an individual level, examining the four-year interregnum in her association with the League generates a more nuanced perspective on Shah Nawaz's complex trajectory as a career politician. Acknowledging this break calls attention to other political choices she made that signalled a lack of complete conformity with the League—whether it was starting out in Mian Fazl-i-Husain's (1877–1936) Unionist Party in the mid-1930s or criticizing the provincial League ministry in post-1947 Pakistani Punjab for delaying legal reform that would enshrine Muslim women's Quranic inheritance rights into law.

Beyond the individual level, her 1941 expulsion reveals the extent to which the regulation of female Muslim politicians' political expression was key to the self-definition of a resurgent League resolutely striving for Pakistan. Muslim women were crucial to the League's vision, not only because they were ideal Muslim mothers and wives of future Pakistanis or because female party workers could canvass freely among women voters. As party members, they were vital to the maintenance of the League's new political logic in which League leaders could only represent Muslims. As Muslim women supporters of the League, they embodied the party's presumed progressive attitude towards Muslim women's rights and the unquestioned belief that Muslim women's rights would be upheld in Pakistan. Shah Nawaz's dismissal signalled that functioning outside the bounds of religious identity was becoming increasingly unsustainable for League politicians in the aftermath of the Pakistan Resolution. In other words, the League's desire to be recognized as the sole electoral and political representative of Indian Muslims would be realized, in part if not fully, by curtailing the representational capacities and political possibilities available to female Muslim League politicians like Shah Nawaz.

Bangladesh: Women, Democracy and the Transformation of Islamist Politics', *Modern Asian Studies* 42, no. 2–3 (2008); Sylvia Vatuk, 'Islamic Feminism in India: Indian Muslim Women Activists and the Reform of Muslim Personal Law', ibid.; Afiya Shehrbano Zia, 'The Reinvention of Feminism in Pakistan', *Feminist Review* 91, no. 1 (2009).

In the rest of this article, I reveal the ideological implications of Begum Shah Nawaz's break with the League by situating this event in its historical context. First, I lay out the significance of Muslim women's rights as a formative issue in colonial Punjab's political economy. Her location in this milieu generated ideological entry-points into provincial and all-India level organizations which she utilized throughout her career. The next two sections account for the profound impact of elite-led reformist and political activism on Shah Nawaz. A biographical overview of her life highlights the intertwined dynamics of family and social status that underlay her remarkable career. Having located Shah Nawaz within a specific historical and familial context, I then elucidate her political thought, tracing her faith in constitutionalist methods of political engagement and her long-standing commitment to women's issues. Together, these two sections make what may seem like her ideological inconsistencies legible as multiple, coexisting facets of a long public career unfolding in a rapidly changing political terrain. With her political, social, and ideological context illuminated in this fashion, I then analyse the particular discursive dynamics created by her 1941 decision to stay on the NDC. Through a close reading of her and Jinnah's statements, I demonstrate that her arguments became an opportunity for the League to solidify its universalizing framework for Muslim politics in late colonial India.

Politics in colonial Punjab

The colonial Punjab of Begum Shah Nawaz's lifetime was an ideologically tempestuous place. Since the 1870s, a formidable alliance between the colonial state and Punjabi landholders had defined the province. Two pieces of legislation—the Punjab Laws Act of 1872 and the Punjab Alienation of Land Act of 1901—entrenched this alliance in the very fabric of Punjabi society.[30] The Act of 1872, which upheld custom over

[30] The terms 'agriculturalist' and 'non-agriculturalist' concealed a complex socio-economic hierarchy based on differential access to landownership—the basis of socio-economic power and political personhood—in colonial Punjab. Each group comprised several castes. Jat, Arain, and other castes were identified as landholders and 'peasants' (zamindar) and hence 'agriculturalists'. Service-providing, artisanal, and commercial castes (kamin), such as Chamar (leather worker), Lohar (ironsmith), and others were identified as 'non-agriculturalist' and prohibited from purchasing land.

religious personal law in civil matters, excluded daughters from inheriting landed natal property, presumably to prevent the disintegration of landed estates. For Punjabi Muslim women, this Act displaced Anglo-Muhammadan law,[31] which, following norms set out in the Quran, granted daughters fixed shares in all natal property. The Act of 1901 concentrated landholding in the hands of statutorily defined 'agriculturalist' castes whose essential characteristic, other than a socio-economic proximity to agriculture, was adherence to custom. Effectively, women's inheritance, as construed by the powerful confluence of religious practice, gender, law, and identity, became foundational to agriculturalist identity and politics. Together, these laws generated a cross-religious group of landholding elites protected by colonial policies from losing their estates via sale or inheritance. In return, the colonial state depended on these elites for much-needed

These two groups mapped onto other dichotomous ethnographic categories that dominated colonial policy in Punjab: rural and urban, martial and non-martial, custom and religious law. Despite its attempt at sorting Punjabi society into two neat groups, the terms of the 1901 Act were far from final or non-controversial. In fact, the 1901 Act was frequently challenged in colonial courtrooms and in the press. Norman G. Barrier, 'The Formulation and Enactment of the Punjab Alienation of Land Bill', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 2, no. 2 (1965); N. G. Barrier, *The Punjab Alienation of Land Bill of 1900* (Durham: Duke University Program in Comparative Studies on Southern Asia, 1966). On the profound ways in which this colonial legislation reshaped caste hierarchies in Punjab, see Navyug Gill, 'Limits of Conversion: Caste, Labor, and the Question of Emancipation in Colonial Panjab', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 78, no. 1 (2019).

[31] Although there is much slippage among these terms, many reform-minded Muslim intellectuals in colonial India used the terms 'Islamic law', 'sharia', and 'Anglo-Muhammadan law' synonymously. I use the term 'Anglo-Muhammadan law' to indicate Islamic law as enumerated and codified in British India where both the colonial state and colonial subjects conflated Muhammadan law with Islamic law/sharia. Anglo-Muhammadan law or Muhammadan law, as it developed historically in colonial India, privileged a textual approach towards Islamic law and overlooked the diversity of Islamic legal thought and practice. Assuming that classical Islamic texts reflected a law code that was applicable to all Muslims equally, British jurists selected some classical Hanafi legal texts and derived their version of 'Islamic law' by interpreting, translating, and publishing them as legal digests and textbooks. These included works by William H. Macnaghten, Neil B. E. Baillie, Roland Knyvet Wilson, Dinshah Fardunji Mulla, and Syed Ameer Ali. For an insightful reading of how the colonial state homogenized and simplified Islamic law for administrative certainty, see Scott Alan Kugle, 'Framed, Blamed and Renamed: The Recasting of Islamic Jurisprudence in Colonial South Asia', *Modern Asian Studies* 35, no. 2 (2001); Michael Anderson, 'Islamic Law and the Colonial Encounter in British India', in *Institutions and Ideologies: A SOAS South Asia Reader*, (eds) David Arnold and Peter Robb (London: Curzon Press, 1993).

ideological support, political legitimacy, and military resources.[32] In 1923, Mian Fazl-i-Husain organized a group of Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim agriculturalists into the Unionist Party. For the Unionists, the 1901 Act was nothing short of a party manifesto, uniting all agriculturalists in a common cause—the protection of their economic and social power through the preservation of their alliance with the colonial state.

The bond between Punjabi landholders and the colonial state meant that the Unionists dominated provincial politics well into the 1940s, making Punjab a particularly difficult nut to crack for the Muslim League. Although a Punjab Muslim League had been established in the late 1900s, it did not secure much electoral success in the province until the mid-1940s. By the end of the First World War, Punjab had become the 'sword-arm' of the British empire, and Punjabi landholders, the state's crucial allies, not least because of the province's substantial contributions to the British Indian army.[33] In the provincial elections of 1937, the League won a meagre two seats in the Punjab Legislative Council, despite Jinnah's optimism and support from some sections of Punjabi Muslims. Partly in recognition of the League's electoral failure, Jinnah consented to a pact with the Unionists, thereafter known as the Sikander-Jinnah Pact of 1937, according to which Muslim members of the Unionist Party became members of the All-India Muslim League, but continued to work as Unionists at the provincial level. Sikander Hayat Khan assumed charge of the Punjab Muslim League and appointed other Muslim Unionists to positions within it. The Sikander-led Punjab Muslim League remained a source of prolonged consternation among those Punjabi Muslim politicians who had supported the League before the Pact. For a few turbulent years, the Pact functioned as a limited antidote to the precariousness and antagonism that increasingly characterized the relationship between the Unionists and the Muslim League.[34]

[32] Imran Ali, *The Punjab under Imperialism, 1885–1947* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988); Gilmartin, 'Kinship, Women, and Politics'; Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam*; Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty*; Talbot, *Provincial Politics*.

[33] Rajit K. Mazumder, *The Making of Punjab: Colonial Power, the Indian Army and Recruited Peasants, 1849–1939* (London: SOAS University of London, 2001); Tai Yong Tan, *The Garrison State: The Military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab 1849–1947* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005).

[34] Newal Osman, 'Dancing with the Enemy: Sikander Hayat Khan, Jinnah and the Vexed Question of "Pakistan" in a Punjabi Unionist Context', in *Muslims against the Muslim League: Critiques of the Idea of Pakistan*, (eds) Ali Usman Qasmi and Megan Eaton Robb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

It was a measure of the Unionists' political dominance that Jinnah could secure their support for the Shariat Act of 1937 only after making concessions that crippled the Act's impact on Punjabi landholders. Tabled in the Central Legislative Assembly, this bill was a Jinnah-led attempt to apply Anglo-Muhammadan law uniformly to all Muslim communities of British India—a long cherished goal of reform-minded Muslim intellectuals and politicians. Enacted unchanged, it would have ended the legal primacy of custom in Punjab. But Unionist legislators opposed the bill on the grounds that it would encourage fragmentation of estates by allowing Muslim women to inherit their Quranic share in natal landed property. Jinnah secured the passage of the Act by agreeing to exclude agricultural land from its purview—a concession that, while alleviating Unionist leaders' anxieties, denied Quranic inheritance rights to Punjabi Muslim women and left Jinnah vulnerable to subsequent challenges on this issue.[35]

Women's inheritance became the fulcrum on which late colonial Punjabi politics turned. The disinheritance of Punjabi Muslim women by the 1872 Act, and its subsequent reiteration in the 1937 Act, became a defining issue in the ideological conflict between the Unionists and the League. For the latter, deploring custom and supporting uniform application of Anglo-Muhammadan law to all Indian Muslims was a powerful way of weaving reformist Muslim objectives into the unifying promise of Pakistan. More importantly, advocating for Anglo-Muhammadan law had the additional advantage of painting the League as a champion of Muslim women's rights, unlike the Unionists whose existence as a political group was grounded in colonial laws that upheld custom and disinherited Muslim women. Muslim women's inheritance rights functioned as a rhetorical touchstone for measuring the purity of a party's Islamic-ness and its progressive attitude towards Muslim women's rights. Muslim members of the Unionist Party automatically failed this litmus test. Their reliance on colonial laws legitimized the League's critique of the Unionist Party as an atavistic, conservative, and collaborationist force which deprived Muslim women of their divinely assured rights and therefore undercut Indian Muslims' faith-based unity.

[35] *The Legislative Assembly Debates (Official Report)* (Delhi: Government of India, 1937), Vol. III, pp. 2528–2544 and Vol. V, pp. 1426–1447, 1819–1865. Also see Julia Stephens, *Governing Islam: Law, Empire, and Secularism in South Asia* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 167–172.

The Lahore Resolution of 1940 altered the stakes of the League-Unionist relationship and left the Sikander-Jinnah Pact on shakier ground than before. With the vision of a Pakistan composed of British India's Muslim-majority regions in place, the League redoubled its efforts at dismantling the Unionists' hold over Punjab. Not only was it imperative that the League assert its authority over all Indian Muslim leaders and regional communities, but it became essential that provincial parties based on cross-religious criteria, such as agriculturalist identity, be invalidated as representatives of Muslims. Alongside agriculturalist identity and Unionist politics, custom too came under fire—the League treated all three as parochial obstructions to the realization of Pakistan. Whether it was the League criticizing Muslim Unionists for their 'un-Islamic' support of custom or the Unionists claiming to represent Punjab as a province, Punjabi Muslim women's inheritance rights remained a controversial flashpoint in the League-Unionist rivalry.

The Second World War further strained the already troubled League-Unionist relationship. Soon after the War broke out in 1939, recruitment of Punjabi men into the army increased substantially. When the Government of India sought to expand executive bodies in charge of regulating its war efforts during the summer of 1940, it looked to provincial premiers and politicians known for their pro-British, constitutionalist leanings. The League had passed the Pakistan Resolution about two months earlier in March 1940,[36] and in June 1940, its Working Committee prohibited party members from participating in war committees until the Government of India confirmed that the representation of Indian Muslims would be protected in any post-War constitution for India. This boycott made Sikander Hayat Khan, then premier of Punjab, uneasy enough to request Jinnah to reconsider the prohibition—a request the latter promptly declined.[37] When in July 1941, the Government of India announced the appointment of Shah Nawaz and other League leaders to the Viceroy's Executive Council and the NDC, the League's central leadership saw this as a brazen affront to its authority. With the Unionists still in power, the League's primacy as the representative of Indian Muslims was as yet unestablished. In this environment, Punjabi

[36] Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada (ed.), *Foundations of Pakistan: All-India Muslim League Documents: 1906–1947*, Vol. II (Karachi: National Publishing House, 1970), pp. 340–344.

[37] Sikander Hayat Khan and Fazlul Huq to Jinnah dated 5 July 1940 and Jinnah to Sikander Hayat Khan and Fazlul Huq dated 11 July 1940, IOR NEG 10768/10: 1940–41, File No. 97, pp. 3–10. Also see Osman, 'Dancing with the Enemy'.

Muslim politicians openly flouting party directives posed too great a threat, not to mention the corrosive effect such actions had on the League's claims of being the exclusive representative of all Indian Muslims. Shah Nawaz's justification for staying on the NDC, and the broader debate about these appointments, became ideological battlegrounds on which the League could assert its superiority over the Unionists and demonstrate that it was the uncontested (ideally, though not in practice) representative of Indian Muslims.[38] The question of Muslim women's inheritance rights became vital to this battle.

As the war progressed, and Punjab's Unionist ministry continued to provide men and materials for the British Indian army, the League expanded its influence among Punjabi Muslim voters. Throughout the early 1940s, the League criticized the Unionist ministry for collaborating with an alien government in a colonial war. Hostility between the parties reached a crescendo in 1944, when Jinnah publicly denied the existence of the Sikander-Jinnah Pact and commanded all Muslim Unionists to pick a side.[39] By the time the 1946 provincial elections took place, the League had weaned elite Punjabi Muslim landholders as well as rural Sufi *pirs* away from the Unionist Party, largely through a religious rhetoric that cast Pakistan as the ideal manifestation of an 'Islamic' homeland for all Indian Muslims, free from British rule, its Unionist collaborators and their 'un-Islamic' practices, as well as potential domination by Hindus and the Indian National Congress (established 1885).[40] The League's Women's Sub-Committee (established 1938) advocated the idea that Pakistan would be the moral state in which Muslim women would be guaranteed their Quranic rights. Even though the 1937 Act remained in force, the portrayal of Pakistan as the ideal Islamic homeland of Indian Muslims undermined fears about Muslim women's inheritance rights. Through rhetoric and propaganda, the incessant rivalry between the Unionists and the League, and the question of Muslim women's inheritance rights that underlay it, came to define the political landscape of late colonial Punjab.

[38] Qasmi and Robb, *Muslims against the Muslim League*.

[39] *The Tribune*, 21 March 1944, p. 8.

[40] David Gilmartin, 'A Magnificent Gift: Muslim Nationalism and the Election Process in Colonial Punjab', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, no. 3 (1998); D. Gilmartin, 'Muslim League Appeals to the Voters of Punjab for Support of Pakistan', in *Islam in South Asia in Practice*, (ed.) Barbara Metcalf (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

Family status and women's rights

Begum Shah Nawaz was well-situated to deal with the volatile political landscape of colonial Punjab. She was born into an affluent, reform-minded, and politically active Punjabi Muslim agriculturalist family of the Arain caste, known as the Mians of Baghbanpura.[41] By the 1900s, contrary to the common perception of the Arains as small-scale farmers, men of the Mian family were reputed landholders and educated professionals, predominantly lawyers. The list of England-trained Mian lawyers included Shah Nawaz's father Mian Muhammad Shafi (1869–1932), her uncle Mian Muhammad Shah Din (1868–1918), her husband Mian Muhammad Shah Nawaz (1875–1938), and her cousin Mian Bashir Ahmad (b. 1893).[42] Members of the family

[41] Although Baghbanpura was a village located a few miles east of Lahore's walled city during much of her childhood and youth, it had become a suburb of a rapidly expanding Lahore City by the time of her death. The Mians were hereditary custodians of Lahore's famous Shalimar Gardens, built on the family's ancestral land by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan. The family was awarded two revenue-free villages in Baghbanpura and the hereditary custodianship of the Gardens in return for Ishaqpur, their ancestral village. This award was reaffirmed by post-Mughal Sikh and British sovereigns in the region. Syad Muhammad Latif, *Lahore: Its History, Architectural Remains and Antiquities, with an Account of Its Modern Institutions, Inhabitants, Their Trade, Customs & C.* (Lahore: New Imperial Press, 1892), pp. 344–345. Also see Begum Jahanara Shah Nawaz, *Father and Daughter: A Political Autobiography* (Lahore: Nigarishat, 1971), p. 1. For an analytical look at Muslim women's autobiographical voices in South Asia, see Anshu Malhotra and Siobhan Lambert-Hurley (eds), *Speaking of the Self: Gender, Performance, and Autobiography in South Asia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

[42] Her maternal and paternal grandfathers, Mian Nizam al-Din and Mian Din Muhammad respectively, were brothers and well-known landholders in the area. Mian Nizam al-Din also worked as a district judge for many years. Shafi completed primary education in Baghbanpura, attended Rang Mahal Mission High School and Forman Christian College in Lahore, and was called to the Bar from Middle Temple in 1892, earning a specialization in constitutional law. Nizam al-Din's eldest son Mian Zahur al-Din was the first Mian man to study law in England and establish a legal practice in Dera Ismail Khan. Shah Din graduated from Government College Lahore in 1887 and was called to the Bar from Middle Temple in 1890. The next generation of Mian men followed in the footsteps of their fathers and uncles. Zahur al-Din's son Muhammad Shah Nawaz and Shah Din's son Bashir Ahmad both studied law in England, with the latter, after attending Government College Lahore, being called to the Bar from Middle Temple in 1914. See Bashir Ahmad, *Justice Shah Din: His Life and Writings* (Lahore, 1962), pp. 16–20, and Shah Nawaz, *Father and Daughter*, pp. 2–5. Also see Renu Paul and Mitra Sharafi, 'South Asians at the Inns of Court, Middle Temple, 1863–1944', available at https://fdocuments.net/document/south-asians-at-the-inns-of-court-middle-temple-1863-1944.html, [accessed 11 February 2021].

were active in many Muslim associations, including the Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam (established 1884), the All-India Muhammadan Educational Conference (established 1886), and the All-India Muslim Ladies Conference (AIMLC; established 1914).[43] The Mian men also collaborated with other Arain landowners to establish the Anjuman Raiyan-i-Hind (Arain Association) in Lahore in 1915, which aimed at reforming the Arains' socio-religious practices, and during the 1920s and 1930s, attempted to regulate their electoral participation. Shafi was its first president. After his death, the post was occupied by Mian Shah Nawaz.[44]

The Mian family was notable for putting into practice the reformist ideals that many of its members urged all Indian Muslims to strive for. They underlined the importance of concrete measures for achieving reformist goals, such as establishing scholarships, teacher training schools, and suitable curricula; rejecting custom and conforming to Quranic rules of inheritance; and supporting Muslim women's voting rights. Shah Nawaz's mother Begum Amir al-Nisa Shafi was the first woman in the family to be taught English as well as Urdu at home. Shah Nawaz's father Mian Muhammad Shafi educated his daughters at home and at Lahore's Victoria Girls' School and Queen Mary's College. He convinced his dying grandfather to follow Quranic inheritance rules instead of custom in his will, thereby ensuring that his paternal aunts received a share in their natal property.[45] Shah Nawaz's husband, Mian Shah Nawaz, also rejected custom in his own will and,

[43] While Nizam al-Din was one of the Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam's founders, Shafi and Shah Din remained active members, contributing their time and money to it. In addition, Shah Din presided over the Muhammadan Educational Conference's annual sessions in 1894 and 1913, and Shafi served in the same position in 1916. Shah Din's wife, Zeb al-Nisa, presided over the AIMLC's annual session in 1915, while Amir al-Nisa, Shafi's wife, did the same in 1920. Shah Nawaz, *Father and Daughter*, pp. 7–8, 24–25, 49–50; All-India Muslim Educational Conference and Anvar Ahmad Zubairi, *Khutbat-I 'Aliyah: Ya'Ni, Al Indiya Muslim Ejukeshnal Kanfarans, 'Aligarh Ke Cahal Salah Khutbat Ka Majmu'Ah*, Vol. 2 (Aligarh: Muslim Yunivarsiti, 1927). Also see Nafis Dulhan, *Riport Ijlas Haftam Al Indiya Muslim Lediz Kanfarans* (Hyderabad, Deccan, 1920), pp. 2–20, and Nafis Dulhan, *Riport Mutalliq Ijlas Dom Al Indiya Muslim Lediz Kanfarans* (Aligarh: Aligarh Institute Press, 1915).

[44] Shah Nawaz, *Father and Daughter*, pp. 23–24, 65–66.

[45] Shafi had helped to establish Queen Mary's School, later renamed Queen Mary's College, in Lahore in 1908. Ibid., pp. 8–9, 23–24, 33, 59–60, 66, 91–92. Also see Gail Minault, 'Coming Out: Decisions to Leave Purdah', *India International Centre Quarterly* 23, no. 3/4 (Winter 1996).

as a member of the Punjab Legislative Council in 1926, supported property-based franchise for Muslim women.[46]

For Mian men, professional education and reformist activism often segued into prominent public careers encompassing numerous associations, political parties, and colonial executive and legislative bodies. Both Shafi and Shah Din were signatories to the 1906 Memorial to Lord Minto articulating Muslims' political demands, members of the Simla Deputation in 1907, and the All-India Muslim League and the Punjab Muslim League thereafter.[47] For most of his career, Shafi remained committed to constitutionalist methods and separate electorates as the best solution to Indian Muslims' anxieties about representation. His antipathy towards any political technique except gradual constitutional change created friction with other League members who, during the mid-1910s, made common cause with the Indian National Congress and participated in Gandhian non-cooperation movements. As a noted constitutionalist, he served on the Punjab Legislative Council, the Imperial Legislative Council, the Viceroy's Executive Council, the Simon Commission, and the Round Table Conferences in London in 1930–31.[48] Both Mian Shah Nawaz and Bashir Ahmad were associated with the League and served as members of Punjab's provincial legislature.[49]

Begum Shah Nawaz grew up in a family setting where commitments to reformist Islamic ideals and public service generated both social expectations and political possibilities for a young woman. While the desirability of reformist activism within the Mian family afforded spaces for self-expression, she was also expected to marry and fulfil her roles as wife and mother. Within the family home, she read the Quran and Urdu poetry alongside English literature,[50] while receiving informal instruction in the objectives and functioning of associational politics. In a women's association formed within the family to encourage reformist Islamic practices in Baghbanpura, she learned '…to keep records of proceedings, write minutes and carry on work in an organised

[46] See debate held on 7 December 1925 in *Index to Debates of the Punjab Legislative Council Official Report* (Lahore: Government Printing, 1926), pp. 1505–1507.

[47] Memorial to Lord Minto dated 1 October 1906, IOR NEG OR MIC 14143.

[48] Shafi's obituary in *The Times* (London), 8 January 1932, p. 9. Also see Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, pp. 107–138 and Mian Muhammad Shafi, *Some Important Indian Problems* (Lahore: Model Electric Press, 1930).

[49] *The Eastern Times* (Lahore), 24 February 1946, pp. 2–3.

[50] Shah Nawaz, *Father and Daughter*, p. 13.

manner'.[51] In 1911, her family arranged her marriage to Mian Shah Nawaz, who was more than 20 years her senior and had been the husband of her deceased maternal aunt. By the time she turned 20 in 1916, she had become a mother and a reformist author with publications in *Tahzib al-nisvan* and *Sharif Bibi*, two women's journals published from Lahore.[52] The 1910s also saw her attending the annual sessions of the AIMLC, along with her mother Amir al-Nisa Shafi, sister Geti Ara Begum, aunt Begum Zeb al-Nisa (Shah Din's wife), and cousin Asghari Begum (Shah Din's daughter). In addition to helping establish the AIMLC's provincial branch in Punjab, Shah Nawaz introduced her controversial anti-polygamy resolution at its 1918 session.[53]

Much of Shah Nawaz's reformist activism was enabled by her father's decision to move his wife and children to a house in Lahore City, and subsequently bring them out of *parda*[54] in the early 1920s. Living in Lahore exposed her to the wider world of reformist Muslim intellectuals, politicians, and educationists, many of whom Shah Nawaz came to treat as family members. This world included families of politicians like Nawab Muhammad Hayat Khan (Sikander Hayat Khan's father, d. 1901) and Fazl-i-Husain as well as reformist intellectuals like Sayyid Mumtaz Ali (1860–1935), his wife Muhammadi

[51] Ibid., pp. 14–15. Shah Nawaz's uncle Mian Shah Din exhorted the women of his family to 'Become worthy daughters of today and develop into women who could be the leaders of tomorrow.' Such family associations were not entirely uncommon during this time. Women of the Tyabji clan of Bombay also ran a similar ladies' association within the family during the late 1880s. Siobhan Lambert-Hurley and Sunil Sharma (eds), *Atiya's Journeys: A Muslim Woman from Colonial Bombay to Edwardian Britain* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 21.

[52] Her essay on women's education was published in *Tahzib al-Nisvan* of November 1906. Her novel, entitled *Husn Ara Begum*, first serialized in *Sharif Bibi*, was published by Paisa Akhbar Press in 1915. *Husn Ara Begum* told the story of a young woman who faced life's obstacles with dignity, and simultaneously devoted herself to social reform and the educational advancement of Muslim women. Shah Nawaz, *Father and Daughter*, pp. 9, 15, and 41.

[53] Minault, 'Sisterhood or Separatism', pp. 94–95. Also see Shah Nawaz, *Father and Daughter*, pp. 42, 49–50.

[54] *Parda*, literally 'curtain', is the term used to denote a variety of veiling practices in South Asia. In the nineteenth century, *parda* usually referred to spatial segregation of genders within the home, with men's quarters (*mardana*) being spaces of socialization with unrelated males, and women's quarters (*zanana*) being the space of private domesticity and interaction between women and their near male relatives. For an extensive discussion of the variety and historical evolution of *parda* practices, see Papanek and Minault (eds), *Separate Worlds*.

Begum (1878–1908?) who edited *Tahzib al-nisvan* and was a prolific Urdu novelist, and Maulvi Mahbub Alam, editor of the popular Lahore daily *Paisa Akhbar* and her father's close friend.[55] After her father's death in 1932, Fazl-i-Husain acted as her political mentor, and Sikander Hayat Khan became her colleague in the Unionist Party.[56] Mahbub Alam's daughter Fatima Begum, an accomplished Islamic scholar and editor of *Sharif Bibi*, was her friend and associate, first in the AIMLC and later in the League's Women's Sub-Committee. Attendance at AIMLC sessions also acquainted her with reform-minded Muslim women outside Punjab —notably Begum Wahid Jahan of Aligarh and Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880–1932) of Bengal—who established schools for Muslim girls, edited Urdu women's journals, and wrote reformist fiction. Rooted in this world of reformist intellectuals and family members, Shah Nawaz belonged to the generation whom Gail Minault has called 'daughters of reform'—women who were the earliest recipients of reformist education among Muslims of colonial South Asia.[57]

In subsequent decades, Shah Nawaz served in an array of elected and nominated political positions. Joining the AIWC in 1927, she served as president of its provincial branch, an elected member of its Central Standing Committee, one of its vice-presidents, and one of its two representatives to the Second Round Table Conference held in London in 1931.[58] While discussions about India's constitutional future were underway in London, the question of separate electorates excited fierce debate within the AIWC. When a majority of the AIWC leaders rejected separate electorates for Indian women,[59] Shah Nawaz placed

[55] Shah Nawaz, *Father and Daughter*, pp. 9, 11, 23–25, 35, 38. Also see Minault, *Secluded Scholars*, Chapter 3.

[56] Shah Nawaz, *Father and Daughter*, pp. 144–146, 159–161.

[57] Minault, *Secluded Scholars*, Chapters 5 and 6.

[58] Shah Nawaz, *Father and Daughter*, pp. 92–94.

[59] Separate electorates referred to a system of exclusive representation earmarked for Muslims in colonial India's representative bodies. The Government of India introduced this system in the Indian Councils Act of 1909 (Morley-Minto Reforms), shortly after a delegation of Muslim leaders articulated their anxieties to Lord Minto, India's viceroy at the time. These leaders argued that Indian Muslims' political aspirations would remain forever obstructed by India's Hindus, whose demographic majority could keep Muslims out of future representative institutions. To offset the potential electoral impact of a Hindu majority, these leaders demanded a system that could guarantee the entry of Indian Muslims into such institutions. Separate electorates used demographic distribution of Muslims to demarcate some areas as Muslim constituencies from which qualified Muslim voters elected Muslim candidates. Other constituencies—in which

the dissent of some Muslim members, including herself, on record.[60] Disappointed with her colleagues' insistence on joint electorates for Indian women, she helped reshape what used to be the Punjab branch of the AIMLC into the Punjab Muslim Women's League in Lahore in 1936.[61] During the 1930s and 1940s, her electoral career took her further away from the AIWC. She contested both the 1937 and 1946 provincial elections from a Muslim women's constituency in which Muslim women voted to choose a female Muslim representative for themselves.

Shah Nawaz's ideological break with the AIWC unfolded alongside her increasing prominence in Punjabi politics where her socio-economic background and personal familiarity with Punjabi politicians eased her forays into the difficult, male-dominated spaces of associational and partisan politics. In 1931, the Punjab government nominated her to the Lahore Municipal Committee—a post she accepted with her father's support, despite her husband's disapproval.[62] As a municipal councillor, she focused her attention on improving women's health centres and girls' schools in Lahore. She became the first female member of the Muslim League's Executive Council in the same year. After her father's death in 1932, she became vice-president of the Arain Anjuman, probably in recognition of her family's standing within the Arain community.[63] Convinced by Fazl-i-Husain that participation in the provincial government was the best way of promoting women's rights, she accepted the post of a secretary in the Unionist Party.[64] After the 1937 elections, which she contested successfully from the Arain-dominated Outer Lahore Muslim women's constituency on a Unionist ticket, Sikander Hayat Khan appointed her as a parliamentary secretary in the Department of Education, Medical and Public Health

neither candidates nor voters were limited by religious identification—were occasionally rendered as 'non-Muslim' or 'General' in colonial records. Although controversial, separate electorates remained in effect until the partition of colonial India in 1947.

[60] Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Special Franchise Committee of the N.C.W.I., the W.I.A., and A.I.W.C. held on the 25th and 26th March 1933, All India Women's Conference Papers (hereafter AIWC Papers), Instalment I, File No. 34, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. Also see Circular letter from Rani Rajwade dated 13 May 1933, AIWC Papers, Instalment I, File No. 37.

[61] Minault, *Secluded Scholars*, p. 297. Also see Sinha, 'Suffragism and Internationalism' and Mukherjee, *Indian Suffragettes*, Chapters 4 and 5.

[62] Shah Nawaz, *Father and Daughter*, pp. 135–136.

[63] Ibid., p. 154.

[64] Ibid., pp. 159–161. Also see Saiyid, *Muslim Women of the British Punjab*, p. 89.

where she worked to establish rural health centres, maternity care centres, and teacher-training schools.[65] Until the early 1940s, she worked from within the Unionist ministry, even as the Sikander-Jinnah Pact afforded her, like other Muslim Unionists, membership of the League as well. After 1938, she reorganized the Punjab Muslim Women's League into the Punjab branch of the League's All-India Women's Sub-Committee, becoming one of its founding members.[66] While she worked in the NDC, she retained her position as parliamentary secretary within the Unionist ministry of Punjab until at least early 1944.[67] Late in 1945, she returned to the League as an Arain Muslim woman politician who could ensure that Arain voters of the Outer Lahore Muslim women's constituency supported the League. The support of her caste group won her a seat in the Punjab Legislative Assembly after the 1946 elections which she contested on a League ticket.

In Pakistan, she advocated for Muslim women's inheritance rights as a member of the West Punjab Legislative Assembly and the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. She was one of the founding members of the All-Pakistan Women's Association (APWA)[68] which aimed to promote women's rights in the new nation-state. Under the aegis of the APWA, she participated in efforts to rehabilitate partition refugees from India who poured into Pakistani Punjab. In 1948, she organized protests against delays in the introduction of the West Punjab Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Bill which would give Muslim women the right to inherit paternal landed property. The protests contributed to the passage of the West Punjab Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act in 1948.[69] While a member of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly during the early 1950s, she faced opposition from *'ulama* who demanded that only burqa-wearing women over the age of 50 be allowed to work alongside men in the Assembly. She challenged them by asserting that 'Islam recognised equality in civic rights for both men

[65] Shah Nawaz, *Father and Daughter*, pp. 164–173. Outer Lahore was an urban Muslim women's constituency.

[66] Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, pp. 318–319.

[67] This is evident from Punjab Legislative Assembly debates of the period. See *Punjab Legislative Assembly Debates* (Lahore: Superintendent, Government Printing) from 1938 to 1944.

[68] Sarah Ansari, 'Pakistan, Partition and Gender: Fashioning the Shape of Pakistani Womanhood', *International Journal of Punjab Studies* 6, no. 1 (1999).

[69] *The Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 27 January 1948, p. 1 and 30 January 1948, p. 1. Also see Shah Nawaz, *Father and Daughter*, pp. 233–234.

and women'[70] which, in her opinion, removed restrictions on women's participation in Pakistan's political bodies. Disaffected with rising factionalism and repeated failed attempts at drafting a constitution for Pakistan, she retired from active politics when General Ayub Khan declared martial law in 1958.

Although Shah Nawaz's political career was exemplary within the Mian family, other elite Muslim women of her time had similarly remarkable trajectories. Two women whose lives and careers overlapped with hers stand out in this regard—Begum Qudsia Aizaz Rasul (1909–2001) and Begum Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah (1915–2000). Like Shah Nawaz, their careers were facilitated by the combination of a privileged upbringing, elite family status, and reform-minded family members who encouraged their educational and political endeavours. All three observed one or another form of *parda* in childhood but abandoned it in their youth; all three followed their fathers into politics and went on to have long political careers of their own. Aizaz Rasul's father Zulfiqar Ali Khan (d. 1933), one-time prime minister of Patiala state, president of the Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam, and member of the Imperial Legislative Council, enabled her formal education. Her husband Nawab Aizaz Rasul, a *taluqdar* of Sandila in United Provinces, supported her political career right from its beginnings in Sandila's Municipal Council.[71] She was elected to the United Provinces Legislative Assembly in 1937 and during the 1940s, she became a member of the League and served as secretary of its Women's Sub-Committee. By the mid-1940s, however, her public career began to veer towards the Congress—in 1946, she was the only Muslim woman elected to the Indian Constituent Assembly. Choosing to stay in Sandila after partition, she joined the Congress in 1950 and was a member of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly several times between the 1960s and 1980s, with a stint in the Rajya Sabha after being elected to the upper house in 1952.

Ikramullah's father Hassan Suhrawardy (d. 1946), a medical doctor and member of the Bengal Legislative Council, ignored family objections and combined her religious instruction at home with formal English education in missionary schools. She went on to become the first Muslim woman to earn a doctorate from the University of London. Her husband Muhammad Ikramullah, a civil servant descended from the royal family of Bhopal, supported her abandonment of *parda* and encouraged her

[70] Ibid., pp. 250–252.

[71] A *taluqdar* is a landholder, sometimes one responsible for revenue collection.

political ambitions. She joined the League in the early 1940s, when she helped organize the Muslim Girl Students' Federation and worked in the League's Women's Sub-Committee. She crossed paths with Shah Nawaz when both women canvassed for the party before the 1946 elections; the two would later be colleagues in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. In independent Pakistan, Ikramullah represented her country at the United Nations in 1948 and 1956, and was the Pakistani ambassador to Morocco from 1964 to 1967.[72]

To the extent that the confluence of caste, class, and gender enabled her career, Shah Nawaz was typical of the kind of elite women who joined the Muslim League from the late 1930s onwards. There were similarities between her and many members of the League's Women's Sub-Committee in terms of socio-economic background and social familiarity with politicians, even if they chose to conform to expectations of modesty in different ways. While Shah Nawaz, Begum Ikramullah, and Begum Aziz Rasul abandoned the traditional form of *parda* based on spatial segregation of genders within the home, other female League politicians adapted their veiling practices to the demands of a public career. Baji Rashida Latif, a *parda*-observing Punjabi Muslim woman politician and member of the League's Women's Sub-Committee, continued to wear a burqa throughout her career. During the late 1930s and early 1940s, she was Shah Nawaz's colleague in the Punjab Legislative Assembly where she represented the urban Lahore City Muslim women's constituency.[73] Amjadi Begum, wife of the prominent Muslim leader Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar (1878–1931), was another one of Shah Nawaz's *parda*-observing colleagues within the League's Council and Women's Sub-Committee who wore a burqa while attending League meetings. Salma Tasadduq Husain

[72] Begum Aizaz Rasul belonged to the royal family of Malerkotla on her father's side, and Loharu on her mother's. Begum Ikramullah belonged to the well-known Suhrawardy family of Midnapore and Calcutta in Bengal. Her paternal aunt Khujista Akhtar Banu Suhrawardy was a reformist author and educationist; her cousin Husain Shahid Suhrawardy was premier of Bengal in the mid-1940s and prime minister of Pakistan in 1956–57. One of her daughters, Sarvath, is married to Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan. Begam Aizaz Rasul, *From Purdah to Parliament* (Delhi: Ajanta Books International, 2001); Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah, *From Purdah to Parliament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[73] The constituencies of each member were listed in the Punjab Legislative Assembly Debates at the beginning of each session and alongside each member's name when they made a speech on the Assembly floor. See, for example, *Punjab Legislative Assembly Debates* for 1941.

(b. 1908), member of the Punjab Legislative Assembly after 1946, often covered her head with a *dupatta* in public, like Shah Nawaz and many other female League politicians.[74]

Shah Nawaz belonged to a generation of elite Indian women activists and politicians for whom the collective pursuit of women's rights was compatible with individual fulfilment of traditional gender roles. Instead of proving restrictive, conformity to gender roles, interwoven with the privileges of caste and class, brought educational opportunities, social visibility among contemporary politicians, and acceptance of her unusual public career. Her *sharafat*—a complex product of her caste, class, and gender—provided pathways for building a remarkable career. Her affluent, well-connected Arain Muslim family proved politically advantageous. Marriage and motherhood fortified her position, deepening family connections, and legitimizing interactions with male politicians who were social acquaintances. Even while living as a *pardanashin* woman, her world was populated by reformist intellectuals and endeavours—a world in which, as devoted wife, mother, and activist, she both embodied and promoted the reformist image of a *sharif*, educated, Muslim woman. Simultaneously, her caste and family background smoothened transitions from one party to another. As Shafi's daughter and Shah Nawaz's wife, her career rested on, and rarely endangered, her *sharif* status. If *sharafat* hemmed her into the familiar gender roles of daughter, wife, and mother, it also functioned as a foundation for her extraordinary career—including electoral victories—that was unavailable to women who did not share her social world.

Begum Shah Nawaz, reformist Islam, women's politics

Drawn from the reformist and political activism that marked her social world, two intertwined ideas defined Shah Nawaz's politics. First, that social change was best achieved through elite-led reformist activism, individual and institutional, geared towards transforming women into agents of their own reform. Second, that enduring socio-political change could be assured only when educated women became political

[74] This is evident from the images of League's women leaders included in Husain's autobiography. See Salma Tasadduq Husain, *Azadi Ka Safar: Tehrik-I-Pakistan Aur Muslim Khawateen* (Lahore: Pakistan Study Center, Punjab University, 1987).

actors who cooperated with the state. Social activism and politics would not, however, undercut women's domestic roles. Rather, women reformers, as wives and mothers themselves, could address women's educational and political needs more effectively than men. Reformist activism and politics were, therefore, interconnected, if not concomitant, processes. Educated and politically empowered women could initiate social change through their activism, voice women's concerns in established political platforms, and ensure the institutionalization of such changes through new legislation. In her view, those who struggled for socio-political change could hope for lasting success only if they accepted the permanence of political forms that shaped their world—forms that determined what they could say, whom they could represent, and which positions they could aspire to.

Shah Nawaz's anti-polygamy resolution, passed unanimously for the first time at the 1918 session of the AIMLC, underlined the extent to which these intertwined aspirations shaped her political thought. She asserted that a Muslim man who contracted a second marriage without a good reason violated the 'true spirit' of the Quran. In a modernist reinterpretation of the Quranic verse (4:3) often used to justify polygamous marriages, she noted that the permission to marry up to four wives was contingent on a man's ability to treat them all equally—a condition which was humanly impossible to satisfy. After the resolution was passed, contemporary male Muslim reformers criticized what they called her blasphemous ideas and claimed that this resolution illustrated the corrupting influence of unsuitable education on Muslim women.[75]

Despite the criticism, at the AIMLC's annual session in 1920, Shah Nawaz held her ground. She explained that those who claimed that the Quran granted Muslim men permission to marry up to four wives were using religion to oppress Muslim women.

> The Quranic permission to marry more than one woman was given for situations of crisis or emergency. Such crises rarely befall more than one in a million…But this permission…is now treated as a routine fact which many men take full advantage of.[76]

[75] Marguerite B. Walter, 'The All India Moslem Ladies Conference', *The Moslem World* 9, no. 2 (July 1919), pp. 169–175, doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.1919.tb01764.x. Also see Minault, 'Sisterhood or Separatism', pp. 94–95, and Asiya Alam, 'Polygyny, Family and Sharafat: Discourses amongst North Indian Muslims, circa 1870–1918', *Modern Asian Studies* 45, no. 3 (2011).

[76] Dulhan, *Riport Ijlas Haftam*, p. 90. All translations from Urdu are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

She urged Conference members to pass the anti-polygamy resolution at every annual session, so that Muslim men would realize that Muslim women were 'an active group' who knew how to protect their Quranic rights.

> The start of this [anti-polygamy] movement in every city will educate women about their own conditions and through this, not only will they become aware of their rights, but a desire for protecting these rights will also take root in their hearts.[77]

Active mobilization could transform Muslim women into agentive subjects who, rather than simply passing resolutions at annual meetings, could change their own practices to match their reformist aspirations. If Muslim women recognized that polygamy violated the 'true spirit' of the Quran, then their preventive actions, no matter how seemingly inconsequential, could contribute to the eradication of such practices. In their capacity as mothers, Muslim women could thwart polygamous unions within their social circles. In a move that echoed the practice-centric approach of her family towards the promotion of reformist Islam, she narrated an incident when she convinced a neighbour in Baghbanpura not to marry her daughter to a man whose first wife was alive. Although poor and aware of the social opprobrium she would face for breaking an engagement, this woman chose not to give her daughter to a married man. Shah Nawaz exhorted the *sharif* women of the AIMLC to follow the example of this poor woman and become agents of change in the Indian Muslim community.[78]

Tied to Shah Nawaz's faith in women's ability to promote reformist practices was her belief in the transformative power of education for women. Like her contemporaries in the AIWC of the early 1930s, she believed that women, in addition to religious instruction, needed a new sort of formal education. Encapsulated within 'home economics', this curriculum included subjects like child psychology, accounting, and nutrition, alongside Urdu and English.[79] As a parliamentary secretary in the Unionist Government of Punjab, she ensured that home economics was included in the girls' educational curriculum as a

[77] Ibid., p. 92. Shah Nawaz's speech is on pp. 87–94.

[78] Ibid., p. 93.

[79] Mary Hancock, 'Gendering the Modern: Women and Home Science in British India', in *Gender, Sexualilty and Colonial Modernities*, (ed.) Antoinette Burton (Florence, KY: Routledge, 1999). Shah Nawaz herself experienced such formal instruction as a student at Lahore's Queen Mary's College.

separate subject.[80] She believed that this curriculum would produce better wives and efficient mothers, and mould women into agents of social change through their domestic roles, not in opposition to them.

But Shah Nawaz's vision for Indian women did not end at an education that reconfigured them into new kinds of social subjects. She believed that education was also critical for remaking women into well-informed, conscientious voters and legislators. Participation in organizations like the AIWC and the AIMLC could train educated women to articulate their rights in legislatures.

> …unless women entered the sphere of legislative work, it would not be possible for them to achieve economic independence and emancipation…For Muslim women, legislation to achieve the rights given to them under the Muslim Personal Law of Shariat had to be enacted, and for women of other communities new laws had to be framed to safeguard their rights and interests as wives, mothers, daughters and sisters.[81]

Women's social and legal rights could be fully secured only when educated female representatives advocated for them in legislatures. Cooperating with the political structures of their time could thus be empowering for Indian women. For Shah Nawaz, social and political change were fundamentally interlinked processes, geared not only towards producing better wives and mothers, but also female political subjects who could speak for all women in the political platforms available to them.

Shah Nawaz's faith in the empowering impact of education and electoral politics on women survived changes in her own approach towards shifting techniques of political representation available in late colonial India. Early in 1933, she distanced herself from the AIWC due to the latter's insistence on joint electorates for Indian women and a refusal to acknowledge its Muslim members' criticism. Like other Muslim members of the AIWC, she believed that joint electorates for Indian women were a method for neutralizing Muslim women's support for the League, influenced by the politics of the Indian National Congress.[82] From representing the AIWC at the Round Table Conferences in 1931, she went on to become one of the founding members of the League's Women's Sub-Committee in 1938—a move

[80] Shah Nawaz, *Father and Daughter*, pp. 170–171.
[81] Ibid., pp. 159–160.
[82] Everett, '"All the Women Were Hindu and All the Muslims Were Men"', pp. 2073–2074.

that signalled a pragmatic acceptance of separate electorates for Muslim women. The fact that she contested the elections of 1937 and 1946 from a Muslim women's constituency was consistent with this ideological shift.

However, this change did not erase her belief in the value of constitutional politics for women, Muslim or not. It also appears to have left her unconvinced about a presumed congruence between Muslim men's political goals and those of Muslim women. Even as she disagreed with the AIWC on joint electorates, she also saw virtue in maintaining the independence of what she called the 'women's sphere' of politics. Emphasizing what she believed to be a fundamental incompatibility between the political priorities of male and female politicians, she argued that the women's sphere needed to insulate itself from forces like 'separatism' that, in her view, animated male politicians.

> …Time has come when we should confine ourselves strictly to the women's sphere and abstain from passing any resolutions about the [Communal] Award and separatism…Many of our own countrymen are against women becoming voters in large numbers…Now the fight is really between our countrymen and ourselves.[83]

At one level, the women's sphere of Shah Nawaz's conceptualization needed to isolate itself from issues that divided male politicians of her day. At another level, this women's sphere could not entirely escape friction with male politicians, largely because the latter, regardless of their internal disagreements or religious differences, were sceptical of Indian women's ability to wield any political power. In either scenario, the women's sphere could function best as an independent entity, negotiating with the state on its own terms.[84] Despite her disaffection

[83] Jahanara Shah Nawaz to Rani Rajwade dated 3 March 1933, AIWC Papers, Instalment I, File No. 37. In emphasizing the need for an independent women's sphere of politics that encompassed all Indian women, regardless of caste or religion, Shah Nawaz echoed a sentiment often articulated by the AIWC during the 1920s and 1930s. See ibid., p. 2073.

[84] This suspicion of male politicians, especially when it came to representing women's needs, was typical in the Indian women's movement, many of whose leaders campaigned for increased representation of women in the administration. See Forbes, *Women in Modern India*. Also see discussion on the Primary Education Bill in *Punjab Legislative Assembly Debates, 8 January 1940 Official Report*. (Lahore: Government Printing, 1940), pp. 115–118; and the discussion on nominations to district boards in *Punjab Legislative Assembly Debates, 23 February 1945 Official Report* (Lahore: Government Printing, 1945), pp. 184–185; Rohit De, *A People's Constitution: The Everyday Life of Law in the Indian Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), p. 179.

with the AIWC's stance on joint electorates, Shah Nawaz visualized this women's sphere of politics as locked in an adversarial position with male politicians, cutting across party lines and differences of region and religion.

The coexistence of resistance to joint electorates and a desire to build an independent women's sphere of politics revealed Shah Nawaz's ambivalence towards the mechanics of political representation in general and the representation of women in particular. At the very least, this ambiguity suggested that her own views on separate electorates and political representation were far from immutable or monovalent during the early 1930s. When it came to elections, however, she chose a pragmatic route and contested from a constituency where, on account of her caste and gender, she was most likely to win. This choice reflected her faith in the power of cooperating with existing political institutions for empowering women, even if this cooperation could only be achieved, in a given historical moment, by foregrounding one social identity over another.

Gender, caste, representation

In September 1941, at the height of the controversy over NDC appointments, Shah Nawaz's public statement revealed her political astuteness. She offered three reasons for choosing to stay in the NDC, despite the League's obvious displeasure. First, similar to the Muslim premiers, she argued that the viceroy had not appointed her as a representative of the League or Indian Muslims, but as a representative of Indian women and Punjab. Even though the viceroy was aware of her position in the League's Council, the offer of appointment 'expressly excluded' any reference to her 'representative capacity of the Muslim interests or as a member of the League'.[85] Unlike the Muslim premiers, however, whom the viceroy had identified as representatives of Indian Muslims in his private correspondence with Jinnah, her membership in the League was unrelated to her position on the NDC.

Second, emphasizing the relevance of the Second World War in Punjab and India, she noted that the progression of hostilities on the Eastern front made it imperative that India 'redouble its efforts in defence of democracy

[85] *The Tribune*, 11 September 1941, p. 1. Also see *The Hindustan Times*, 11 September 1941, p. 7.

and world progress'.[86] As a parliamentary secretary in Punjab's Unionist ministry and a member of the Provincial War Board, she felt duty-bound to represent the interests of her province in British India's wartime administration. In view of all this, she 'consistently and rightly' considered that accepting her position in the NDC was 'the right course to follow from every point of view'.[87] Her references to the war's importance for Punjab were legible in the context of the expanding recruitment of Punjabi men into the British Indian army.[88]

Third, she noted that as the only representative of Indian women on the NDC, she felt a deeper obligation to accept the appointment because male politicians, regardless of party affiliation and religious identity, had failed to uphold women's rights in British India. In language reminiscent of her days in the AIMLC and the AIWC, she drove her point home regarding Punjabi Muslim women by invoking Jinnah's role in the passage of the Shariat Act of 1937. She emphasized that male Muslim politicians ignored the Quranic sanction behind Muslim women's inheritance rights with impunity, even though they aspired to build a unanimous, faith-based Indian Muslim community that would find political fulfilment in Pakistan.[89] To Shah Nawaz, the Shariat Act of 1937 was another occasion that had laid bare the duplicity of male politicians who, while relentlessly issuing calls for a reformist return to the pious socio-religious practices of the early Islamic era, chose to overlook key Quranic rules about inheritance that treated Muslim women as legitimate heirs in their own right.

By invoking the question of Punjabi Muslim women's inheritance rights in this fashion, Shah Nawaz posited Jinnah as yet another male politician fundamentally unconcerned about Muslim women's rights, despite his assertions about Muslim unity and Pakistan.

[86] *The Hindustan Times*, 11 September 1941, p. 7.

[87] *The Tribune*, 11 September 1941, p. 1.

[88] Douglas M. Peers, 'The Martial Races and the Indian Army in the Victorian Era', in *A Military History of India and South Asia*, (eds) Daniel P. Marston and Chandar S. Sundaram (Connecticut, London: Praeger Security International, 2007). As is well-established in scholarship on the British Indian Army, the Second World War proved to be a moment when the wartime need for men overpowered the Government of India's long-standing notions about the martial superiority of some Indian communities over others. This development led to an unprecedented expansion of military recruitment in India, most notably in Punjab where predominantly Sikh and Muslim men of various castes joined the army.

[89] Gilmartin, 'Kinship, Women, and Politics'.

The President of the All-India Muslim League has come forward to ask the only woman placed on the National Defence Council to resign but has he done anything to induce the Muslims to give the Muslim women their rights granted to them under the Muslim law of Shariat? Having worked with my countrymen for nearly twenty years, I am convinced that to-day in order to secure their rights, Indian women have to fight a lonely battle, and they should make use of every opportunity offered to them by the British Government to promote and safeguard their rights and interests. I feel that the very recognition of the Indian women's right to have a voice in the military affairs of their Motherland must be welcomed by every woman worker…[90]

In her view, when it came to women's rights in colonial India, male leaders were either unwilling or unable to represent women's interests. As far as Muslim women were concerned, male Muslim politicians of all political parties had proven equally ineffectual. Even those male Muslim League leaders who were advocating Pakistan as a more promising future for Indian Muslims seemed unconcerned with Muslim women's Quranic rights. Given these circumstances, Indian women, including Muslim women, could not afford to relinquish any power or recognition that the British government granted them.

At a strategically significant moment in the NDC controversy, when the Muslim premiers had already resigned, Shah Nawaz threw Jinnah's credentials as a Muslim leader and champion of Muslim women's rights into doubt by drawing attention to the Shariat Act of 1937. For a long time, a sense of disappointment with Muslim patriarchs had pervaded Punjabi Muslim women's conversations about their inheritance rights. At the 1915 session of the All-India Muslim Ladies Conference, Fatima Begum spoke passionately about the subject.

In…customary law, these Punjabi Muslims…give nothing to their daughters and sisters by way of the share allotted to them by the Sharia….Often when these property disputes reach the courts, then these respectable Muslims, in spite of… having professed their faith in God and his sacred Messenger, stand before the officials of this government and say that yes, they are Muslims, but they are bound by custom, and they do not know what Sharia is and they cannot follow it.[91]

By invoking the issue of Muslim women's inheritance rights once again, Shah Nawaz challenged a vital aspect of the League's vision of Pakistan

[90] *The Tribune*, 11 September 1941.

[91] Dulhan, *Riport Mutalliq*, pp. 74–75. Similar lamentations about Punjabi Muslims proclaiming their adherence to custom appeared during discussions on the Shariat Application Act of 1937. See *The Legislative Assembly Debates (Official Report)*, Vol. III, pp. 2528–2544.

—that of an Islamic nation-state in which Quranic ideals would prevail and the rights of Muslim men and women would be protected. In Punjab, such a line of argument could prove doubly perilous for the League. Not only did a recollection of Jinnah's failure in 1937 weaken his position vis-à-vis the Unionists, but it also undercut the promise of an ideal Islamic homeland. This invocation reminded Punjabis that when it came to Muslim women's inheritance, Jinnah was no better than Unionists like Sikander Hayat Khan. Punjabi Muslim women's inheritance rights became a weapon in the hands of a female Muslim League politician who, at least momentarily in September 1941, needed to show the League up on an ideologically and symbolically crucial question. In the process, her statement demonstrated the formative power of gender issues in the League-Unionist rivalry.

Of equal importance was the League's need to extend its hold over the electoral landscape of Punjab where the Unionist Party still held sway. In this environment, the League had to work hard not to cede any ideological terrain to Punjabi Muslim leaders like Shah Nawaz who, under the terms of the Sikander-Jinnah Pact, were affiliated to both the Unionist Party and the Muslim League in 1941. Tolerance towards Punjabi politicians who claimed to represent cross-religious constituencies would disrupt the League's claims to represent all Indian Muslims. The imperative to conflate the party (Muslim League) with its constituency (Indian Muslims) and political objective (Pakistan) delegitimized arguments like the ones forwarded by Shah Nawaz. Indeed, this trilateral conflation sought to reinforce the idea that Muslim League politicians could represent no one other than Muslims.

Shah Nawaz's arguments for staying on the NDC rested on her claim to represent two cross-religious constituencies—Indian women and Punjab—which were incommensurate with the League's view of 'Indian Muslims' as the only constituency Muslim League politicians could rightfully represent. While the categories of 'Indian women' and 'Punjab' overlapped demographically with 'Indian Muslims', the former two constituted wider entities that encompassed non-Muslims as well. Elements of her public career lent her claims some legitimacy. Her association with multiple women's associations since the late 1910s legitimized her claim to represent Indian women. Her family background, caste status, and contributions to Punjabi reformist associations and successive provincial ministries bolstered her status as a Punjabi politician.

In effect, Shah Nawaz posited that a Muslim woman's representative capacities could emerge from her multiple identities and, therefore, be

plural. Just as an educated Muslim woman could be a devoted wife as well as a motivated activist, a female Muslim League politician could represent her caste, religious community, gender, or party without compromising any of these aspects. In other words, a Muslim woman's political praxis was not a zero-sum game restricted to a single facet of her complex human self. Instead, her political subjectivity could accommodate the multiple affiliations that made up her multi-layered social being. In her own case, she could represent Arains, Punjabis, and Muslims, as well as Indian women and Muslim women—representing one did not preclude the possibility of representing another, just as being an Arain or a woman did not weaken her identity as a Punjabi or a Muslim.

The complexity of her political ideas notwithstanding, Shah Nawaz failed to stem the League's disciplinary impulse. Calling her arguments an 'untenable plea', Jinnah noted that she was 'bound in honor by her pledge of membership not to violate any decision of the League' and by choosing to stay in the NDC, she was 'clearly guilty of disloyalty to the organization to which she belongs'.[92] He proclaimed her expulsion in stinging words:

> She cannot *cut herself up into different capacities* as it has now become a fashion to try and take shelter under this capacity or that capacity. As a Leaguer she owes allegiance to the Muslim League organization and she has flouted the mandate of the League.[93] [Emphasis mine]

The violence of this statement—'cut herself up'—was exceptional even by the standards of Jinnah's characteristically stern language. When Sir Sultan Ahmad, expelled concurrently with Shah Nawaz, justified his decision by noting that the Law Member's position predated the League's boycott of the wartime administration, Jinnah dismissed his argument as 'puerile'.[94] A harsh assessment, but milder than the searing words directed at Shah Nawaz. The vehemence of Jinnah's language threw into relief the utter unacceptability of her political self-positioning to the post-1940 League. Claiming to practise a politics that encompassed non-Muslims, or reached beyond the borders of the

[92] *The Tribune*, 13 September 1941, p. 1, and *The Hindustan Times*, 13 September 1941, pp. 1 and 5. Jinnah's statement of 12 September 1941 is also in IOR NEG 10768/10, File no. 97 and in Ahmad, *The Nation's Voice*, pp. 295–298.

[93] *The Tribune*, 13 September 1941, p. 1. Also reproduced in ibid., p. 297.

[94] Ibid., p. 295.

Indian Muslim community as imagined by the League, was not a transgression Jinnah would countenance.

In rejecting her attempt to claim multiple representative capacities, Jinnah labelled the very possibility of a Muslim League leader representing any cross-religious constituency as disloyal and subversive. Conflating party membership, religious identity, and representative capacities, he simultaneously delegitimized extra-party and cross-religious politics for League leaders. His words underlined the extent to which pluralistic conceptions of representation were increasingly at odds with the League's vision of a unidimensional, masculinist, Muslim politics aimed at establishing Pakistan. The choices for League members were clear: either they represented the League and Indian Muslims—or they represented no one.

The intensity of Jinnah's words betrayed the reasons that made Shah Nawaz's arguments more dangerous for the post-1940 League than those made by the male leaders embroiled in this controversy. Sikander Hayat Khan's pleas about representing Punjab in his official capacity as premier might have endangered the League's tenuous reach in that province and undercut the plan to bring Muslim-majority provinces within its ideological ambit. Sultan Ahmad's proposition that his position predated the League's decision to boycott the wartime administration might have seemed like a dilution of the League's exclusive claim over Indian Muslims. But Shah Nawaz's ideas, if tolerated, could separate Muslim women from Muslim men, splitting the political constituency of Indian Muslims at the all-India level, and erasing the faith-based political unity the League was intent on building as the basis of a future Pakistan. Furthermore, were Muslim women to do politics as a part of the cross-religious constituency of Indian women, the League's credentials as the party that would ensure Muslim women's rights in a morally upright Muslim nation-state would be imperilled. It was no surprise, therefore, that Jinnah vehemently rejected Shah Nawaz's arguments even after the three Muslim premiers —on whom the public controversy had initially centred[95]—resigned

[95] This is evident from the disproportionate amount of coverage given to the exchanges between League leaders and Muslim premiers in the contemporary English-language press. Shah Nawaz received greater attention from the press only after it became evident that the League's disciplinary impulse would be directed towards her. See coverage of the controversy in *The Tribune*, *The Times of India*, *and The Hindustan Times* of August and September 1941.

from their posts. Reshaping the borders of Muslim women's political praxis became a crucial technique for reiterating the League's status as the exclusive and legitimate representative of every Indian Muslim.

In a development that further underlined the importance of Muslim women's political expression to League politics, members of its Women's Sub-Committee censured Shah Nawaz's actions. It passed a resolution denying her capacity to represent Muslim women, thereby muddying her claim of representing Indian women on the NDC.

> …This [Women's Sub-] Committee makes it clear that Begum Shah Nawaz is not the representative of Muslim women and does not enjoy their confidence…she has been guilty of gross breach of indiscipline [*sic*] by not resigning from the National Defence Council as demanded by the League Executive…Her accusations against the League President regarding the rights of Muslim women under Shariat Law are unjustified and wholly irrelevant to the issues involved. This Committee has implicit faith in the leadership of Qaide Azam M.A. Jinnah…The Committee wants to point out that the struggle for the emancipation of Muslim women in India is bound up with the struggle of the Muslim nation for the achievement of Pakistan.[96]

Echoing Jinnah's two-nation theory, the Sub-Committee posited Muslim women as a distinct unit whose political aspirations coincided with those of the Muslim community and the League. They insisted that Muslim women's political aspirations were embedded in their religious identity—that as political beings, Muslim women were a sub-set of Indian Muslims, not Indian women. In a telling move, the Women's Sub-Committee denied the crucial relevance of Punjabi Muslim women's inheritance rights to the NDC controversy and the deeper debate about representation that it had occasioned within the League. In doing so, they reiterated that Muslim women's rights were realizable only in a future Pakistan, regardless of Jinnah's prior record on the question of Punjabi Muslim women's property rights. In this way, the Sub-Committee embedded Muslim women within the faith-based political constituency of which the League sought to be the exclusive representative. Loyalties to religious identity, nationalist aspirations, and party eclipsed gender-based solidarity.

In dismissing Shah Nawaz's arguments, the League leadership underscored the extent to which a female Muslim League politician's

[96] Resolution passed by the All India Muslim League's Women's Sub-Committee at a meeting held in Lucknow on 30 November 1941, IOR NEG 10814/3, File No. 1099, p. 331. Sent as attachment in a letter from Begum Aizaz Rasul to Jinnah dated 1 December 1941, IOR NEG 10812, File No. 1092, pp. 145–146. Begum Aizaz Rasul was the secretary of the Women's Sub-Committee when this resolution was passed.

conceptualization of her representative capacities was a critical foil for the explication of its universalizing ideological project. Occurring a little more than a year after the Pakistan Resolution, the NDC controversy turned into an opportunity for defining the borders of the League's representational paradigm. When a female Muslim League politician separated her capacity as representative of women from her capacity as representative of Muslims, if only rhetorically, she threw the party's claim of representing all Indian Muslims into question. The idea that a female Muslim League politician could retain her ability to represent all Indian women suggested that a faith-based party affiliation might not always determine a female Muslim League politician's political expression. The disruptive potential of this claim explained the sting in Jinnah's words and the party's refusal to acknowledge Shah Nawaz as anything other than a representative of Indian Muslims and/or the League. Although she was unwilling to publicly abandon the language of being an Indian women's representative, the possibility that multiple representative capacities might inhere in a female Muslim League politician was essentially unintelligible within the League's new framework. Her arguments were legible at best as an anomaly and at worst as a farce. Conflicting notions of representation and their implications for female members of the League, then, did not recede into the background once the League articulated its universalistic goal of Pakistan. Instead, such competing ideas were pivotal to its self-fashioning as the only authentic party of Indian Muslims.

By the time elections were announced in 1945, however, other categories had acquired precedence in the electoral politics of Punjab. In a Unionist-ruled province marked by wartime shortages, the League declared that the impending provincial elections were nothing less than an opportunity for Punjabi Muslims to demonstrate their unequivocal support for Pakistan. Grand proclamations notwithstanding, the party still needed politicians who could triumph over Unionists in upcoming elections. The urgency of the League's electoral needs invested Shah Nawaz's gender, caste, and religion with a renewed significance. Her identity as a female Arain Muslim politician who had held positions in Unionist ministries facilitated her return to the party. Whether she represented Indian women or not was no longer a pressing question. Leveraging her status in this new electoral milieu, she apologized privately to Jinnah for what she now termed the 'blunder of 1941' and assured him that she would consider it her 'proud privilege to carry out the orders of my leader to the best of my

ability and shall serve the organization wholeheartedly and faithfully'.[97] Begum Viquar al-Nisa Noon, a member of the League's Women's Sub-Committee and wife of the influential Punjabi politician Firoz Khan Noon, reminded Jinnah of her electoral value as someone who could draw Arain voters away from the League's competitors in Punjab.

> …She [Shah Nawaz] having the most powerful influence among her tribe, the Arains, is most badly needed to start work immediately. No time must be lost…because unfavorable propaganda has already started in many parts of Arain constituencies.[98]

As vice-president of the Arain Association during the 1940s, Shah Nawaz's influence over Arain voters was considerable, particularly in the Outer Lahore Muslim women's constituency where the community dominated the electorate.[99] She had successfully contested the 1937 elections from the same constituency on a Unionist ticket. Unsurprisingly, Jinnah accepted her apology and permitted her to rejoin the League a year before the term of her expulsion would have ended. The League's calculations were justified when she was victorious in the 1946 elections, becoming one of only two women members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly.

While claiming to represent cross-religious constituencies had resulted in Shah Nawaz's expulsion from the League in 1941, the altered political climate of the mid-1940s turned this same capacity into an asset. In 1941, claiming to be a representative of Indian women and Punjabis had precipitated a break with her party, but by 1945, in a context where the League was portraying the provincial elections as a referendum on Pakistan, her gender identity—as bounded by her caste and religion, and no longer encompassing non-Muslims—became valuable to the party. Her apology to Jinnah signalled that she had accepted the party's representational paradigm in which League leaders could represent Muslims alone. Further, her multiple representative capacities were now subsumed within her religious identity, and hence no longer threats to Jinnah or the League. Her caste-based influence among the Arains did

[97] Begum Shah Nawaz to Jinnah dated 6 October 1945 as reproduced in Waheed Ahmad (ed.), *Quaid-I-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah: The Punjab Story, 1940–47: The Muslim League and the Unionists Towards Partition and Pakistan* (Islamabad: National Documentation Wing, Government of Pakistan, 2009), p. 389.

[98] Viquar al-Nisa Noon to Jinnah dated 18 October 1945, Punjab Papers, Shamsul Hasan Collection, Vol. IV, Center for Historical Studies Library, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India.

[99] *The Eastern Times*, 8 January 1946, p. 1.

not challenge the League's rhetorical professions about Indian Muslims' unity, partly because the Arains were predominantly Muslims and partly because the League portrayed appropriation of caste leaders into the party as the triumph of Muslim unity over parochial loyalties of caste and kin. In this new political context, Shah Nawaz's gender, caste, and religion became important determinants of her political future or, at least, her future political home. In the process, the League leadership silenced its concerns about her earlier attempts to protect her cross-religious politics. Even though returning to the League facilitated her continued activism for Muslim women's rights in independent Pakistan, she acquired this ability only after renouncing earlier claims of representing the more expansive constituencies of Indian women and Punjabis.

Why did Shah Nawaz defy the League in 1941? A number of factors might explain her decision.[100] Reflecting on these events decades later in her autobiography, she noted that she chose to stay on the NDC after consulting with Sikander Hayat Khan, the Unionist premier of Punjab, in whose ministry she was serving as a parliamentary secretary

[100] While speculating about Shah Nawaz's personal motivations can be a fascinating exercise, discerning the reasons why she stayed on the NDC, or offering a biographical or psychological explanation of her decision, are not central concerns of this article. Ascertaining her motivations is, although interesting, ultimately of limited analytical use because historians can only speculate about such things at this distance from the historical past. Instead, I narrate a familial, social, and ideological biography of Begum Shah Nawaz in order to historicize her political choices and reveal the ways in which her disagreement with Jinnah shaped League politics. That said, it is possible that her family's circumstances may have been a factor in her decision. In the early 1940s, her natal family was still recovering from the heavy debt in which her father Mian Muhammad Shafi had left them upon his sudden death in 1932. Soon after, Begum Amir al-nisa Shafi, as the widow of a former member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, secured a loan from the Government of India to repay some of that debt and defray the expenses of her younger son's education in England. The Government accepted the family's houses in Lahore and Shimla, and their land in canal colonies of Montgomery District, as collateral for this loan. In the early 1940s, although Shah Nawaz had inherited some property from her husband after his death in 1939, the family's financial situation may not have been completely secure. It is possible that financial constraints may have been another factor in her acceptance of the NDC position, which came with a secure salary. All this, however, is my speculation. For official discussion and records on Begum Shafi's loan, see the following: Home Department files at the National Archives of India: File no. 233/33—Pub; File no. 206/33—Pub—1933; File no. 257/32—Pub—1932; File no. F. 61/32—Pub—32. Also see Collection 313/14 for discussion of Begum Shafi's eligibility for a loan in the Secretary of State's office, IOR L/F/7/1601: 1932

at the time.[101] The widespread recruitment of Punjabi men into the army and the advantages of retaining a Punjabi representative in the wartime administration may have shaped the Unionists' collective decision about the NDC.[102] Perhaps letting Sikander resign from the NDC while she stayed on was the Unionists' method of dealing with the League's increasingly vociferous claim that it alone could represent Muslims. She may have accepted this compromise so that the Unionists could placate the League without losing their voice in British India's wartime administration. Another contributing factor could have been the swiftness of Sikander's resignation after Jinnah revealed discrepancies in the Government of India's portrayal of Muslim premiers' appointments to the NDC. Sikander's claim that his appointment was as a provincial premier and not a Muslim representative was based partly on the pronouncements of Amery, secretary of state for India, on the subject. Once Jinnah had released his private correspondence with the viceroy in which the latter confirmed that the Muslim premiers had been appointed as representatives of Indian Muslims,[103] such contradictions in the Government of India's own characterization of these appointments embarrassed Sikander publicly. This, in turn, generated a perception that Jinnah had outmanoeuvred him in a key battle. Perhaps Shah Nawaz's decision to stay on the NDC was meant to offset some of this humiliation for the Unionist Party.

Potential party considerations aside, what did it mean for Shah Nawaz to claim for herself an ability to represent *Indian* women at a time when her disagreement with the AIWC over joint electorates was already almost a decade old? Since the early 1930s, her electoral journey had diverged further and further away from the AIWC. Her involvement in the League's Women's Sub-Committee and her preference for contesting elections from a Muslim women's constituency suggested a relatively clean break with the idea of Indian women as a unified political entity. But in 1941, when she needed to counter the League's representational paradigm, she reverted to a language of Indian women's rights to explain her decision. More pointedly, while a parliamentary secretary in the provincial Unionist ministry during the

[101] Shah Nawaz, *Father and Daughter*, pp. 174–175.
[102] *The Tribune*, 22 July 1941, p. 1.
[103] See coverage in *The Tribune*, 28 and 29 August 1941.

early 1940s, she continued to present herself as a representative of Indian women during debates in the Punjab Legislative Assembly.[104] This simultaneity of seemingly contradictory tendencies mirrored earlier moments of tension in her career. During the 1910s, her anti-polygamy resolution effectively pitted reform-minded Muslim women against male Muslim reformers who defended Muslim men's right to polygamous marriages—this, despite the fact that she was a product of an ideological and social world populated by male Muslim reformers. During the 1930s, she disagreed with the AIWC on joint electorates for women, while holding on to the idea of an independent, cross-religious women's sphere of politics, distinct from the male sphere, with its own set of political objectives and approach towards colonial authority. Whether merely tactical or symptomatic of deeper ideological struggles, the coexistence of seemingly discordant political ideas marked her navigation of the rapidly shifting terrain of late colonial Indian politics.

Shah Nawaz's public career was rooted in a political context which afforded some female politicians multiple spaces for political expression —spaces heavily contingent on socio-economic status and hence limited to elite women, but *multiple* spaces nonetheless. The remarkable depth and breadth of her career elucidated the extent to which a Muslim woman's *sharafat* could facilitate her access to the world of reformist activism and political participation during this period. In a world where a few elite women were hyper-visible in reformist and political circles, her ability to synchronically hold multiple positions and ideas was not entirely surprising. Perhaps her lasting faith in legislative processes for empowering women meant that, for her, a place at the policymaking table overrode religious identity and party affiliation, even when her party was increasingly committing to the idea of an exclusively faith-based politics for Indian Muslims. And, given the rapid change that defined the decades of her political activity, her navigation of this complex landscape may have engendered an urgency for retaining any available access to power. While it is difficult for historians to conclusively decipher her personal motivations, her argument with Jinnah forced the League leadership to articulate the representational logic at the heart of its universalizing political vision for Pakistan.

[104] *Punjab Legislative Assembly Debates, 21 February 1941 Official Report* (Lahore: Government Printing, 1941), pp. 1030–1031.

Conclusion

Begum Shah Nawaz's decision in 1941 triggered a series of conversations that underscored the crucial significance of gender issues in the self-imagination of the post-1940 Muslim League. The NDC controversy revealed the formative place of Muslim women's inheritance rights in Punjabi politics. Entangled in reformist, legal, and political notions about Muslim identity, women's inheritance became a symbolic issue in Punjab that resonated across the broader Indian Muslim community. While the League had long condemned the Unionists for their slavish cooperation with a colonial state that upheld custom and undermined Quranic laws, Shah Nawaz's arguments demonstrated that the League was hardly blameless when it came to Muslim women's rights. By invoking Jinnah's role in the passage of the Shariat Act of 1937, Shah Nawaz essentially placed him on the same plane as the 'un-Islamic' custom-upholding Unionists whose extra-religious loyalties fractured what the League believed should be Indian Muslims' instinctive political unity.

With regard to the All-India Muslim League, the NDC controversy turned Shah Nawaz into a focal point for the party's refutation of any representational paradigms that detracted from its homogenizing portrayal of Indian Muslims and its universalizing project of Pakistan. Contestations over the representative capacities of a female Muslim League leader became a site for the crystallization of the party's new self-imagination. Aspiring to Pakistan meant rejecting any basis for political expression other than a religious and partisan affiliation. This framework produced a trilateral conflation of party, religion, and (future) nation that left little room for cross-religious imaginations of political representation. Instead, such claims provided an effective foil for the League's self-redefinition as the only authentic representative of the idealized, unified, unanimous constituency of Indian Muslims.

The historically shifting valences of various social and political categories underlay Shah Nawaz's turbulent relationship with the League during the early 1940s. While she advocated for women's rights throughout her career, different categories became important at different moments. As a reformer, she addressed Muslim women primarily. As a member of the AIWC and the provincial government, she served the broader constituencies of Indian and Punjabi women. In the course of engaging with the League, her caste, religion, and gender were of import on different occasions. In the complicated political context of late colonial India, these categories indexed coexisting, occasionally incongruous,

aspects of her career. Perhaps such discordant notes signified her attempts to navigate a political world in which women's rights as an issue, while ideologically significant, were increasingly drowned out by clamouring idioms of religious identification and anti-colonial nationalism.

If Shah Nawaz's expulsion was a product of the League's desire to assert its authority over unruly Muslim leaders, then the reasons for her return underscored the persistent fragility of the party's position in Punjab. The anxiety that marked League-Unionist relations throughout the 1940s exacerbated the urgency with which League leaders approached the 1946 provincial elections. Their acute need for candidates who could assure the party of electoral victory necessitated the revocation of her ban. Simultaneously, the prerequisites of her return—a written apology, promise of unquestioned obedience, and a relinquishing of cross-religious constituencies—revealed the shrinking political options available to a female Muslim politician in late colonial India.