

Project Title: “O Women, reform and mend your ways”: The Gendering of Knowledge in the Muslim Reformist Discourse

My dissertation seeks to understand the ways in which knowledge was gendered within the larger discourse of Muslim reform in South Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Muslim reformers such as Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi, in response to the disruption of men's participation in public politics around the end of the nineteenth century, turned their sights to reforming the home and family by educating women in both spiritual and everyday matters. Thanwi's *Bihishti Zewar* (Heavenly Ornaments) was and continues to be a popular guide for women in religious and quotidian matters, especially amongst people who subscribe to Deobandi ideology. *Bihishti Zewar*, though being particularly notable and popular, is one amongst many guidebooks written for women by leaders of reformist movements. As the number of literate women increased in the early twentieth century, reform-minded men and women published Urdu-language women's magazines throughout South Asia- particularly in Lahore, Karachi, Delhi, Lucknow, and Hyderabad. However, in my early preliminary research there seems to exist a marked divide between topics that could be written about by women and topics about which only men could write. By spending a few months at the British Library, where there is a significant holding of Urdu-language women's periodicals and educational literature, I hope to delineate the extent to which knowledge was gendered in the reformist discourse and whether these boundaries shifted (in women's Urdu-language magazines) with the increased education of women, the changing nature of colonial rule, and proliferation of reformist materials throughout the early twentieth century.