

cost of going down in the social ladder of the rural hierarchy, but women had no such recourse.

The concluding essay on the ‘Contradictions in Masculinities’, a reworked piece, exposes the conveniences of connivance with khap, in its extrajudicial and unconstitutional perpetuity. The hope for dissent is visible in making women members of khap to uphold a united caste *biradari* or community image, required to keep the rural economy afloat. Thus, the show of caste unity does smother any dissent especially when the written law fails to protect the victims of masculinities. An unpublished chapter on ‘Alternatives Present to the Militarized Masculinities’ in the post-independence era is most interesting as it depicts the power of individual hard work to break the futility of cultivating Haryana’s barren wasteland. While some men went away from land-based work to jobs outside Haryana, others like Hardwari Lal and his daughter challenged the existing norms. The option to strengthen the possibility of a way forward is always a choice to be made. It is thus fortuitous to record opportunities to grow, to dissent so as to nurture emerging normative behaviours.

Since the essays are placed within the historical formation of trends to record social change together case law, this book will be used by inquisitive lawyers. With its analysis of khap panchayats and practices of safeguarding honour, the book will interest social work scholars as well. Gender relations courses could use *Gender, Power and Identity: Essays on Masculinities in Rural North India* as a text to understand the emergence of a North Indian masculine discourse. All in all, a very important contribution to gender relations in a particularly reactionary segment of North Indian society.

Shivani Bhardwaj

*Founder, Sathi all for Partnerships
Convenor, Consult for Women and Land Rights
safp.sb@gmail.com*

Ghazala Jamil, *Muslim Women Speak: Of Dreams and Shackles*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications and Yoda Press, 2018, 190 pages (Hardcover), ₹595. ISBN 9789352805006.

DOI: 10.1177/0971521520939280

In the present socio-political context where Muslim women’s liberation has become a cause for widespread anxiety, Ghazala Jamil’s book is

a timely intervention. *Muslim Women Speak: Of Dreams and Shackles* is a result of a research commissioned in 2008 by the Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan (BMMA) on Muslim girls' aspirations. Research was conducted in 23 centres across 12 Indian states, through workshops where Muslim girls aged 15–25 years were invited to talk about their fears, aspirations and expectations. Based on the premise that in order to alleviate the lives of Muslim women, it is imperative to 'listen' to what they want, Jamil's workshops facilitated many young Muslim women to think about their lives. Several respondents fumbled with answers because it was the first time someone was asking them their opinion.

The book spans 10 chapters, the first section (Chapters 1–3) initially laying out neatly the conception of the book and its methodological underpinnings. Jamil also charts the trajectory of Muslim women's representation in Indian academia over the years. She demonstrates how the Muslim woman has been projected as an entity in danger and in need of protection from her own patriarchal and development-phobic community. Jamil's present work should be read as a continuation of the question Abu-Lughod (2002) asked in her essay 'Do Muslim Women Need Saving?'

A much-needed critique of the Indian women's movement challenges the mainstream Indian feminist and nationalist imagination where-in Muslim women are assumed to be lacking agency. Jamil notes that within the mainstream Indian feminist imagination, liberation of Muslim women is seen possible only by separating them from the Muslim man and Islam. Mainstream feminists have portrayed the Muslim man and Islam as an antithesis to the progress and liberation of the Muslim woman. Jamil lambasts such feminists for sidestepping questions of gendered communal discrimination and violence looming large in lives of Muslim women. Jamil points to the fact that shared experience of communal discrimination binds Muslim women closer to Muslim men, more than the shared experience of patriarchy binds Hindu and Muslim women. The tropes of 'Indian sisterhood' have smothered the concerns raised by Dalit and Muslim feminists. Previously, Dalit women have separated themselves from the mainstream Indian women's movement, alleging it of subsuming their voices (Sabharwal & Sonalkar, 2015). Jamil's work is a call to Muslim women to build their own separate movement.

In the second section (Chapters 4–7), the author reproduces 'meta-narratives' (p. xxiii) from the conversations with Muslim women in the workshops. While numerous reports and studies in India have brought

forth statistical data regarding Muslim women and poverty, Jamil's work articulates the ways in which Muslim women 'experience' poverty. This experience is not limited only to monetary aspects but also manifests itself in practices of early marriages and forced dropout from schools. The narratives give an account of the backbreaking labour poor young Muslim women are engaged in, from excruciating care work for families, attending schools/colleges to doing piecemeal work for familial subsistence. Jamil also maps terrains of difficult conversations with young Muslim women on the question of communal violence. Her respondents state that the fear and possibility of riots breaking out is ever present at the back of their minds. Issues of restrictions on mobility, surveillance by neighbours, and harassment by unemployed men are interconnected to one another. In some parts of India, restrictions on mobility limit access to the outside world and force Muslim girls to drop education after puberty. Jamil notes how in Gujarat, young women were fascinated by her freedom to travel alone. This section also discusses the aspirations and dreams of Muslim women that range from the determination to complete education, dreams of taking up jobs, getting kind husbands and in-laws to wishing for some respite from the mundane chores of daily existence. The book breaks away from the stereotypical projection of Muslim women as non-agentic, voiceless, homogenous entities.

The third section (Chapters 8–10) consists of narratives. The last chapter 'A Call for Change', which could be read as a stand-alone piece, brings forth the demands of change and development as voiced by Muslim women. It begins by discussing expectations Muslim women have from the State, civil society and the larger Muslim community. Jamil then proceeds to the expectations Muslim women have from their parents and immediate families, and finally from young Muslim women themselves. However, the narratives presented in the book are excerpts consisting of sentences spread across chapters; this format leaves the reader expecting a more grounded context of the in-depth narratives. In spite of this shortcoming, *Muslim Women Speak* is a contribution to feminist discourse from the margins, by the marginalized. The book is a must read for scholars of gender, women's movements as well as development workers, social workers and policymakers.

References

- Abu-Lughod, L. (2002). Do Muslim women really need saving? Anthropological reflections on cultural relativism and its others. *American Anthropologist*, 104(3), 783–790.

Sabharwal, N. S., & Sonalkar, W. (2015). Dalit women in India: At the crossroads of gender, class, and caste. *Global Justice: Theory Practice, Rhetoric*, 8(1), 1–30.

Prachi Patil

*Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology,
Sharda University, Noida
mailprachi.br@gmail.com*