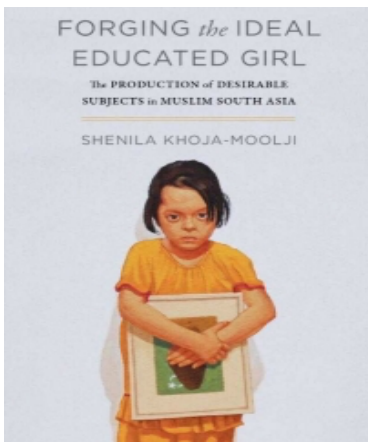


Forging the Ideal Educated Girl: The Production of Desirable Subjects in Muslim South Asia

Khoja-Moolji, S. (2018). University of California Press. ISBN: 978-0520970533

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Shenila Khoja-Moolji's (2018) *Forging the Ideal Educated Girl* explores the history of Muslim girls/women in South Asia and their difficulties in acquiring an education. This book piqued my interest because girls' education is a highly debated topic globally when it comes to the Islamic religion. Women's education happens to be a significant concern for both religious leaders and educational activists in both the colonial and post-colonial eras for Indians and Pakistanis. In attempting to depict the figure of an ideal educated girl, Khoja-

Moolji (2018) explored several texts, advertisements, television shows, political speeches, and first-person narratives. Perhaps most importantly, the author also delved into archival methods of women's writing in Urdu, which demonstrated action toward changing a narrative that had long rendered women without a voice in the campaign for educational reform.

This book is a worthwhile read for scholars seeking to learn about the history of Muslim women's education in South Asia, as well as for those who wish to understand the events through which South Asian Muslim women

acquired education from the late 1800s through today. Khoja-Moolji's (2018) work also explored class-based differences in access to education and the corresponding roles of politics, religion, and patriarchy. The author explores the efforts of political reformers, social activists, and religious figures to want to protect their women and family structure from modernity, so they created the concept of ideal Muslim girls/women through educational reforms.

Throughout the six chapters, the author provides different perspectives of the ideal educated Muslim girl/woman. The author started the book by examining what it meant to be an ideal educated girl through the religious lens, which forbids any form of women/girls' getting an education. Citing a case of Malala Yousafzai, who was attacked in Pakistan in retaliation for her activism for the education of women and children, as well as the Nigerian Chibok girls kidnapped by the Islamic terrorist group, Boko Haram, Khoja-Moolji (2018) explained that ingrained in the identity of the educated Muslim girl is an instinct to fight for herself by challenging her societal repressive and primitive culture of preventing girls getting an education.

What these girls have in common was their desire to seek a formal education, which these conservative groups strongly consider haram (forbidden). Khoja-Moolji (2018) presents an impressive review of archival information. The book details how societies dictated that Muslim women and girls were forced to act against the norms of their local culture and traditions to earn an education.

The book illustrates how despite modernization and international movement toward the empowerment of women and girls' education, the primary role of women is still being perceived as "house management" made to take care of the family. An advert by the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) in 1992 depicts an image of a pilot and air hostess with the caption "on the world's most interesting airline; our pilots have been trained for years... our hostesses for centuries" (p.61). This advertisement only affirms the societal perception and believe that an ideal woman's responsibilities lie in the traditional caregiving role.

The author asserts that Muslim girls across the world should continuously seek empowerment to gain access to formal education to reform their own oppressive cultures. The book examines the limitations of educated Muslim girls and women's education in different historical eras. Most importantly, the book illustrates how society might observe, through the rise of the educated girl, the potential for eradicating poverty, violence, and terrorism in today's world.

To conclude, it has been over 200years, and it is glaring that very little has changed from the narrative of how the colonial officers,

missionaries, and social reformers conceptualize women's education. It is apparent that the majority group of the society was and is still conservative with the desire to maintain patriarchal structure at all costs. The society dreads the thought of having an equal, liberated, and independent women, with the impression that these unconventional women is dangerous and can disrupt the stability of the home and society, hence the need to curb it under the philosophy of "an ideal Sharif woman." This book provided a tremendous insight into the varying perspectives that surrounds an ideal girl's education even though over the years, the definition of an ideal woman changed to meet both the economic and societal demand; it is still deeply rooted around the traditional belief of the role of women in society.

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Manuscript submitted: November 20, 2019

Manuscript revised: May 10, 2020

Accepted for publication: August 15, 2020
