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ARTICLE

Zeb-un-Nissa's 'Between ourselves: a weekly feature for women': learning to feel in early post-independence Pakistan

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Abstract

Pioneering Pakistani female journalist Zeb-un-Nissa Hamidullah in her 'Between ourselves: a weekly feature for women' columns, which appeared in Karachi's English-language daily newspaper *Dawn* during the late 1940s and early 1950s, encouraged her readers to stretch rather than breach the boundaries in how (educated) Pakistani women—as 'good wives and wise mothers'—should fulfil their familial (and wider social) responsibilities. Her advice—which often took the form of 'home-spun' homilies—consistently flagged up the crucial role of women, whose duties included not simply overseeing their children's behaviour but teaching their offspring, through their own emotional responses, how to feel. In their capacity as mothers, women needed to exercise *sabr* (patience and perseverance) when providing all-important emotional training for future Pakistani citizens who—like the state—were still in the process of being made. Accordingly, this article discusses the spatially defined context in which 'Between ourselves' appeared—that is, *Dawn* itself and the fast-expanding city of Karachi which was rife with uncertainties—before turning to the emotional 'good practice' that Hamidullah promoted.

Keywords: Zeb-un-Nissa Hamidullah; *Dawn*; Karachi; Pakistan; emotional style; *sabr*; happiness; grief; tears; kindness

> In all of us there is a little devil. A devil of selfishness puffed up with a sense of her own importance and the rights she considers are her due … This is our greatest enemy. One to be feared and fought. One against whom we must be constantly vigilant if we would be happy.[1]

Pioneering Pakistani female journalist Zeb-un-Nissa Hamidullah[2] in her 'Between ourselves: a weekly feature for women' columns, which appeared in the Karachi-based newspaper *Dawn* in the years immediately following independence, promoted a vision of urban, educated Pakistani womanhood that blended 'modern' ideas about 'female respectability' with 'religious authenticity'. In her column she encouraged her readers to stretch rather

[1] *Dawn*, 14 January 1951.
[2] Her first name sometimes appears as Zaib-un-Nissa.

than breach the socially accepted boundaries involved in how they were expected to fulfil their duties. As 'good wives and wise mothers',[3] the primary focus of women's efforts remained the home, framed as a microcosm of the new nation. Husbands, in-laws, and servants were assumed to be key reference points in these women's lives. And so Hamidullah proffered guidance on managing them all and, in the process, advised her readers on how to cope with the everyday emotional as well as practical challenges posed by life in the new state of Pakistan.

The emotive language deployed towards women by Hamidullah in her writings was undeniable, with this emotional register arguably deliberately enhanced to promote the benefits of *sabr*—a virtue that combines patience with persistence[4]—in what were difficult post-partition times, whether this forbearance was exercised in relation to other adults or, as was often the case, vis-à-vis children. Steadfastness in the face of unexpected and sometimes unwanted outcomes was the priority and the solution to many problems. Viewed from this perspective, the advice provided by Hamidullah commanded a 'community-based or spatially defined' emotional style that was closely tied to the broader socio-cultural, or spatial, context in which she and her readers were living, namely the new state of Pakistan whose own future was still uncertain. Indeed, this notion of 'emotional style' captures effectively the content and focus of Hamidullah's writings since her columns could bundle up a range of feelings, as well as focusing on individual ones.[5]

Moreover, with children often the focus of her columns, Hamidullah's writing also offered glimpses of what was expected of young people growing up in such households, not simply in terms of their behaviour but their feelings too. Margrit Pernau has deployed the contemporary phrase 'emotional integration' when discussing children's literature designed to inculcate appropriate (here 'patriotic') emotional intelligence in Nehruvian India.[6] Viewed from this perspective, Hamidullah's 'homespun' homilies underlined more than just the importance of children wearing appropriate clothes, doing their homework, or eating up their food. Rather, mothers—by themselves demonstrating (through their own routine practices) the importance of not complaining, treating others with love and respect, and being courageous—were charged with delivering the basic emotional training of future Pakistani citizens who—like the state—had yet to be fully forged. Acknowledging women's accountability, as they drew on their 'reserves' of *sabr*, offered them one way of gaining the potential to exercise choice and agency. Thus, in her columns involving children, the responsibility of parents, and especially that of mothers, was always emphasised: as Hamidullah maintained,

> a child is much more under the influence of its mother and it is from her that he imbibes the characteristics that will be his throughout his adult life … the future

[3] Educated mothers had long been regarded as an asset when it came to bringing up children, with nineteenth-century reformists such as Deputy Nazir Ahmad Dehlvi and others writing in favour of female education for the sake of better-educated children. See, for instance, Ruby Lal, 'Gender and Sharafat: re-reading Nazir Ahmad', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 18.1 (2008), pp. 15–30; and for a broader discussion of reformist strategies deployed during and across the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Gail Minault, *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India* (New Delhi, 1998).

[4] For a definition of *sabr*—a term that defies translation into a single word in English, see https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/sabr-SIM_6379?lang=de (accessed 9 May 2023).

[5] 'Emotional styles', as defined by Benno Gammerl, encompass 'the experience, fostering, and display of emotions', oscillating 'between discursive patterns and embodied practices as well as between common scripts and specific appropriations'. See B. Gammerl, 'Emotional styles—concepts and challenges', special issue of *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 16.2 (2012), pp. 161–175, p. 163.

[6] Margrit Pernau, 'Asghari's piety', in *Learning How to Feel: Children's Literature and Emotional Socialization, 1870–1970*, (eds) Ute Frevert et al. (Oxford, 2014), p. 69.

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> of our nation is assured if [mothers] instil the proper spirit of service and thought for others in their children.[7]

Accordingly, this contribution to the Festschrift in honour of Francis Robinson begins by contextualising the broader landscape in which Zeb-un-Nissa Hamidullah's early columns appeared—that is, *Dawn* itself and the fast-expanding city of Karachi that was rife with uncertainties—before offering examples of her advice on emotional 'good practice' and appropriate emotional strategies for coping with both the humdrum and the unforeseen challenges of life.

Dawn and Karachi

The history of *Dawn*—from its establishment in Delhi as the printed voice of the Muslim League in 1941 to its hurried relocation to Karachi just prior to partition—meant that it was institutionally, and emotionally, invested in the identity politics that led to Pakistan's creation in 1947 and sustained it thereafter.[8] *Dawn*'s mission throughout this uncertain period was not simply to inform its readership—rather, its purpose included inculcating emotional commitment to the cause that it propounded. By seeking to develop a shared sense of belonging—first to the 'Pakistan movement', then to Pakistan itself—it directly played on readers' emotions both before and after independence.[9]

In recent efforts to write emotion into the history of Islamicate South Asia, much of the focus has been directed towards nostalgia, linked especially to understanding how Indian Muslims came (or failed to come) to terms emotionally with the changed political and cultural (North Indian) milieu in the aftermath of 1857.[10] Following partition, however, a nostalgic approach was not appropriate as far as *Dawn*'s priorities were concerned since any yearning for the past was effectively out of the question. Having attained a separate Muslim state (an outcome that arguably took most contemporaries by surprise), it was now important to look forward, rather than back. Yet, concentrating on the 'here and now' did not rule out the past completely since pre-August 1947 developments—whether former glories or more recent sacrifices—were firmly embedded in the 'logic' underpinning Pakistan's creation, as advocated by supporters of the new state. In practice, while nostalgia did not disappear completely, the cultivation of collective pride now took precedence, whether in relation to the past, the present, or even the future.

The fact that *Dawn* was an English-language publication meant that its readership was restricted to a very small proportion of Pakistan's linguistically diverse population. But there can be no doubt that its impact was disproportionately significant thanks to the fact that—to a great extent—it was not Urdu (the state's official preference as far as

[7] *Dawn*, 11 October 1948.

[8] For a series of connected articles celebrating *Dawn*'s early (pre-1947) years, see '*Dawn* Delhi I–IV', published in 2017 to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of Pakistan's creation: (I) https://www.dawn.com/news/1354278; (II) https://www.dawn.com/news/1355781; (III) https://www.dawn.com/news/1357197; (IV) https://www.dawn.com/news/1360167 (accessed 9 May 2023).

[9] As historian of emotions Thomas Dixon has argued, it is through words, stories, images, and ideas—which together constitute a certain emotional style—that people feel and perform their own affective lives. See Thomas Dixon, 'Aylan Kurdi: a Dickensian moment', https://blog.oup.com/2015/09/aylan-kurdi-dickensian-moment/ (accessed 9 May 2023).

[10] Margrit Pernau, *Emotions and Modernity in Colonial India: From Balance to Fervor* (Oxford, 2019), Chapter 9: 'Nostalgia—tears of blood for a lost world', pp. 195–218; Eve Tignol, 'The Muslims of Northern India and the Trauma of the Loss of Power, c. 1857–1930s', (unpublished PhD dissertation, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2016); Eve Tignol, 'Nostalgia and the city: Urdu *shahr ashob* poetry in the aftermath of 1857', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 27.4 (2017), pp. 559–573.

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Pakistan's national language was concerned) but familiarity with English that linked the country's new elites. Karachi—from whence *Dawn* was now published—was transformed into Pakistan's capital city, housing large numbers of North Indian refugees who had arrived from the former United Provinces, heartland of support for the League. *Dawn*, as a staunch advocate of refugee interests, certainly backed the shift to a greater use of Urdu in Pakistani life but, all the same, it remained a firmly 'English-medium' space within which the case for Pakistan's existence was rehearsed and reinforced.

Emotion coursed through *Dawn*'s pages, from what appeared in mundane news reporting to items of special interest, the subject matter of cartoons, letters to the editor, and editorials themselves. Altaf Husain, who had taken on the newspaper's editorship in 1945 (remaining in that post until 1965), had no qualms when it came to pulling on the heartstrings of *Dawn*'s readers. Collective remembering, in the sense of reminding readers about the subcontinent's Muslim heritage that was now deemed to have been inherited by Pakistan, was frequently to be found in its content, alongside (whenever possible) palpable excitement at what lay ahead. Either way, feelings ran high. As *Dawn* reported in its coverage of Independence Day celebrations in August 1948, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan assured his fellow citizens that, while 'on this day of happiness, I do not want to call anyone our enemy [...] we will shed our blood for every inch of our country', and he promised 'a martyrs' memorial for those who fell for Pakistan'.[11] *Dawn*'s ratcheting up of emotional temperatures can be seen in its coverage of a Defence Day organised by the Karachi Provincial Muslim League in July 1951. On this occasion, Liaquat famously clenched his fist as he called on the nation not to sacrifice freedom for peace.[12] A few weeks later, when Pakistanis celebrated that year's Independence Day, the symbol was duly explained:

> Fingers all closely pressed together,
> To show we mean to stand united;
> Fingertips held firm against the palm,
> To warn, our freedom shall not be slighted;
> This is the sign our Leader made,
> 'This is our sign'—the people said.
> Let tongues of malice wag as they will,
> The Clenched Fist clinches this nation's will.[13]

The death from natural causes of Jinnah in 1948, and then the assassination of Liaquat in 1951—both of which shocked Pakistanis deeply—were intensely emotional events, particularly for an editorial team that had worked so closely with both men since the early 1940s. Subsequent anniversaries provided regular opportunities to mourn their passing and reinforce messages about their legacies. Take the following example: in September 1949, *Dawn* marked the first anniversary of Jinnah's demise with what became (and remains) an annual honouring of the Quaid-i Azam's myriad political achievements and personal qualities. Under banner headlines that read 'Remembrance Day in Pakistan', readers were reminded of 'the personal loss sustained by all the people of the country' and likewise urged to 'inculcate the Quaid's values and shun the evils he warned against'.[14] A similarly emotive appeal was made in April 1950, when, in protest at the proposed appointment of a new set of *Dawn* trustees to be drawn from the Muslim League

[11] *Dawn*, 15 August 1948.
[12] 'Symbol of clenched fist', *ibid.*, 25 July 1951.
[13] 'The symbol explained', *ibid.*, 14 August 1951.
[14] 'Learn Quaid's virtues, PM urges nation', *ibid.*, 13 September 1949.

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Parliamentary Party (Jinnah having been the newspaper's sole trustee at the time of his death), Altaf threatened to change *Dawn*'s name to 'The Herald':

> In such circumstances, a newspaper which stands for absolute freedom in expression of opinion, which seeks to uphold the interest of the nation without hesitating because of pleasure or displeasure it might thereby cause in any quarter, and last but not least which is edited by a person who has learned his lessons at the feet of his Master—Mohammad Ali Jinnah—could not continue to retain a name which might be used as an excuse by a handful of men to make it a regimented mouthpiece of their own.[15]

The emotional 'blackmail' swiftly paid off. Three days later 'The Herald' became *Dawn* again, and as Altaf proclaimed on the newspaper's front page: 'DAWN ZINDABAD. The people want DAWN. I give them back their DAWN—no one is happier than I today [...] DAWN rises again. May it dispel the gloom from people's hearts as it has dispelled the gloom from mine. DAWN was never dead. It was never intended to die. It shall never die.'[16]

'Love'—for Jinnah as well as the new country that his efforts were credited with securing—and 'sorrow' or 'grief' trigged by his death alongside the broader suffering that many of Pakistan's new citizens had so recently experienced—represented two sides of the emotional currency circulating in Karachi the late 1940s and early 1950s. The city remained an emotionally unsettled place during these years, with waves of new refugees reminding people now living there of the existential challenges that many had themselves encountered not so long before as they too crossed over from India. Expectations were high, and disappointment—when hopes were frustrated—was keenly felt. As testified by 'Letters to the Editor' in *Dawn*, adjusting to life posed many challenges—from seeking employment to finding suitable housing, to securing a reliable water supply, obtaining all-important rations, and safely navigating Karachi's chaotic bus system.[17] Newspaper reporting also highlighted the kinds of pressures under which many families lived, and the tragic consequences that could sometimes ensue. A spate of apparent suicides, for instance, found their way onto *Dawn*'s city news pages throughout these years—sometimes involving men, but mostly women, whose deaths (whether self-inflicted or not) were usually linked to domestic arrangements, such as where a husband had more than one wife but not enough space in which to accommodate them harmoniously. Occasional custody cases fought by parents now living in separate counties similarly made their way into newsprint.

Children's wellbeing more generally represented a recurring source of anxiety, with 'child-lifting' as well as others going missing for different reasons a widely recognised concern at the time, arguably triggering painful memories of partition. From time to time, letters were printed in *Dawn* in which parents who had been separated from their children during the upheavals of 1947 called on the authorities to facilitate their recovery and return: likewise, parents took out advertisements when their child had disappeared more recently. As one 1951 editorial in *Dawn* put it: 'Kidnapping of children makes children's lives insecure and that of their parents miserable.'[18] Earlier the same year, another *Dawn* editorial had made the following heartfelt plea:

> Missing children have become a permanent feature of newspaper advertisements and radio announcements. They are mostly examination failures in their teens afraid of facing

[15] Editorial: 'Why we change our name', *The Herald*, 1 April 1950.

[16] *Dawn*, 4 April 1950.

[17] Sarah Ansari, 'Everyday expectations of the state during Pakistan's early years: letters to the editor', *Dawn* (Karachi), 1950–1953', *Modern Asian Studies* 45.1 (2011), pp. 159–178.

[18] *Dawn*, 17 December 1951.

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> their parents. Naturally parents advertise their agony and beseech them to return. Almost unfailingly accompanying these appeals is the promise of forgiveness. If the anguish of separation can make parents forget their anger and bring them to their knees, it should not be unreasonable to expect from them some measure of forethought that should not let such situations arise. [...] While it is good to provide incentives for success, it is no less necessary a part of home training to teach children to face failure as well. It is a correct emphasis on the relative merits of things that can induce the necessary frame of mind. The prospect of humiliating situations makes sensitive children leave home and it should be an essential qualification of parenthood to spare them these.[19]

Parents were plainly responsible for teaching their children appropriate ways of responding emotionally to success or failure, or, more generally, to the ups and downs of life. Indeed, the tone of this editorial matched closely that of Zeb-un-Nissa Hamidullah's own contributions to *Dawn* during the same period.

'Between ourselves: a weekly feature for women'

Zeb-un-Nissa Hamidullah (1918–2000) grew up in Calcutta, with a Bengali father and English mother (though they divorced when she was quite young). She met, fell in love with, and married a Punjabi, Khalifa Muhammad (K. M.) Hamidullah, whose father was librarian of the Imperial Library in Calcutta, and moved to Lahore where her husband worked for the Bata Shoe Company. Prior to partition and relocating to Karachi, she had already published a couple of well-received books of poetry and written for the *Illustrated Weekly of India*. In many of her 'Between ourselves' columns she drew directly on a repertoire of domestic scenarios that she herself must have encountered as the mother of two young children, juggling her in-laws, and running a household staffed with servants.[20]

The very first piece by Hamidullah to be published in *Dawn* predated independence and was a poem in honour of Jinnah's seventieth birthday in 1946. Indeed, it was probably thanks to her subsequent close acquaintance with his sister Fatima Jinnah that she went on to write on a regular basis for the newspaper from 1948. Later, in September 1951, on the anniversary of his death, she penned a passionate reminiscence of her own first direct encounter with Jinnah back in 1946 when she and her husband—'like lovesick people who if denied sight of the beloved will be content with but a glimpse of his residence'—had travelled from Lahore to Shimla to try to catch sight of 'our beloved Quaid-i Azam' who was attending the Cabinet Mission talks there:

> The next day when we once more took up our position in front of the entrance to the Viceroy's residence, the Muslim League volunteers greeted the appearance of their beloved leader in pin drop silence. Only the flag flying so proudly in the breeze, and the perfect discipline of the group proclaimed how intensely they loved their leader and their cause. As the car drove past the Quaid leaned out of the car and rewarded his followers with a smile of appreciation ...[21]

In a similar fashion to her fellow Bengali Altaf Husain, Hamidullah's emotional association with *Dawn* was highly charged (even though her relationship with the editor himself

[19] *Ibid.*, 9 June 1951.

[20] She arguably drew on her own experiences in her short-story collection in Hamidullah, *The Young Wife and Other Stories* (Karachi, 1958), published by Mirror Press. A fourth edition was produced by Oxford University Press, Karachi, in 2008.

[21] *Dawn*, 11 September 1951. According to this article, its author had been 'a frustrated prose-writer till the inspiring words of the Quaid-i-Azam gave her courage. And all that the Quaid told her was "perseverance" ....'.

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was not an easy one thanks to his preference that she restrict her focus to 'women's issues'). So, it was not surprising that Hamidullah's 'Between ourselves' columns followed *Dawn*'s in-house emotional 'script' or style faithfully. In them (they ran from 1948 to 1951) she dispensed advice on how to respond constructively to the quotidian challenges faced by married women when juggling the demands of family or running a household. As the following examples illustrate, she rarely pulled her punches when it came to the best ways to deal with love, happiness, sadness, and grief.[22]

This love was often portrayed in patriotic terms: in 1948, marking the first anniversary of Pakistan's creation, Hamidullah argued that 'The women of Pakistan have reason to be proud of the courage with which they set about creating new homes for themselves and their families.' But she also demanded frankness, reminding her readers that

> We must be honest with ourselves and admit that there are many among us who did not rise to the occasion. Many of us grumbled and sighed over our difficulties. Instead of facing them bravely, we sat back and wept. We pitied ourselves and our plight continued to feed ourselves [sic] on self-pity until it soured our whole outlook and made us more of a liability than an asset to our state.[23]

Later on, she qualified this advice by highlighting the need for patient fortitude:

> Every wife and mother knows that there are some days when everything in the world goes wrong. If you can cope with the situation, so well and good. But do make certain that you can do so cheerfully. If not, then give up, confess yourself a failure. Stop making yourself miserable and devote all your energy to keeping cheerful. You will be surprised to find that even though the dinner you serve up is burnt black the family will enjoy it thoroughly for they will feel you enjoyed making the little that you could.[24]

All the same, love was an emotion that began at home, ideally between husband and wife, and between parents and their children. For instance, Hamidullah tackled the thorny question of where love fitted into marriage in an October 1949 column, stating very firmly that in her view 'No marriage can possibly be successful unless it is a love marriage', though it did not matter whether that love developed before or after the couple had wed. Hence, she had the following piece of advice for any young person hesitating between a love match or an arranged one: 'The most important thing is to make your marriage a marriage of love [for] if you do this you need have no fear of the future for love gives us the courage, the strength and the faith to face all the vicissitudes of life without flinching.'[25] Potentially fraught relationships between in-laws were also tackled head on. While a woman's in-laws were 'of the utmost importance to the happiness of married life', should relations sour, then blame had to be placed squarely on the husband's parents, even more so if, or when, they had 'spoiled and coddled the lad in his youth and wish [ed] to continue to do so even after he [had] attained manhood [...] Often parents are far too exacting. They demand both obedience and affection from their offspring.'[26]

[22] As William Reddy highlighted, 'emotives'—the phrases, utterances, and languages that are simultaneously actions as well—are instruments for directly changing, building, hiding, and intensifying emotions. See W. Reddy, 'Emotional liberty: politics and history in the anthropology of emotions', *Cultural Anthropology* 14 (1999), pp. 256–288.

[23] *Dawn*, 18 August 1948.

[24] *Ibid.*, 22 January 1950.

[25] *Ibid.*, 16 October 1949.

[26] *Ibid.*, 21 March 1949.

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Another equally unequivocal column called for women to be brave in all their dealings. A courageous heart was needed to navigate life's troubles and uncertainties, and so it was important to face up to worries, examine them critically, and accept them with firm courage:

> Worry is like a snake: it glides stealthily and remorselessly through your thoughts, tainting everything you do or say with gloom [...] face [your fears] bravely. See them in their darkest, most horrible aspects. Make up your mind to accept them and behold you are freed of that particular fear.[27]

Rather than block such feelings, she advised her readers to accept them so that they would pass.[28]

For Hamidullah, shedding tears could hold some positive value for women. In a February 1949 piece, for instance, she posed the following questions of her readers: 'Have you had a good cry recently? Have you sobbed and sighed in a veritable emotional orgy and discovered surprisingly enough that in the process your grief has become dissipated, and you have already begun to feel more cheerful and hopeful of the future?' Whether or not she regarded weeping as an elemental reaction that came more easily to women (and children), she claimed that

> Crying is more or less the prerogative of the fairer sex; and we must admit that we frequently take unfair advantage of the power of tears to move a masculine heart! Be that as it may it is interesting to note that recent research as to why women cry has brought to light many interesting factors, not the least being that crying is beneficial to the health, and one doctor has even gone so far as to state that women who cry frequently keep their youth longer![29]

Occasionally Hamidullah directly confronted the emotional toll that dealing with their children's behaviour imposed on parents; here again, though, any blame was reserved for those bringing them up, rather than the children themselves, and patience was the order of the day. As she explained in one of her earliest columns,

> Whenever I hear a mother complaining of the worry her child gives her, I feel like telling her that she herself is to blame, and instead of giving the child a spanking she deserves one herself. Children are very simple creatures, and it is ever so easy to keep them cheerful and happy. All that is required is a little thought and patience on the part of the mother. She should sincerely strive to make the day interesting and happy for her offspring ... If, therefore, you see to it that the child is constantly surrounded with love and affection, you will seldom have cause to complain of excessive naughtiness.[30]

[27] *Ibid.*, 2 May 1949.

[28] This advice would seem to go against the late nineteenth-century management of correct emotional behaviour involving *akhlaq* (the practice of virtue, morality, and manners) and moderation, as described by Pernau, *Emotions and Modernity*, Chapter 4 'Tahzib ul Akhlaq: the negotiation of the civilizing mission'.

[29] *Dawn*, 21 February 1949. For how such public expressions of grief could also be culturally accepted and rewarded, at least among Pashtuns, see more contemporary ethnographic studies such as Benedict Grima, *The Performance of Emotion Among Paxtun Women: The Misfortunes Which Have Befallen Me* (Austin, TX, 1992); and Amineh Ahmed, *Sorrow and Joy among Muslim Women: The Pukhtuns of Northern Pakistan* (Cambridge, 2006).

[30] *Dawn*, 24 August 1948.

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Parents needed to lead by example: real love consisted of doing so with no thought of reward since 'to know true happiness one must forget oneself as much as possible and to strive to do good deeds just for the pleasure of doing them with no thought of return'.[31] Accordingly, she took mothers to task for forgetting their own younger days and being unreasonably hard or unkind towards their children:

> Yes, you love your children, of that there is no doubt, Mrs Old-Fashioned Mother. But is that the way to show your love? By scolding and punishment? What if your daughter does love to go to the cinema? Must you nag and nag at her because she will not learn how to cook? [...] Perhaps she irritates you by imitating Heddy [sic] Lemarr? [...] If only the parents of adolescent children could be a little more tolerant, a little more understanding of growing pains.[32]

Appreciating others with a few gentle words was thus an emotional balm that, in Hamidullah's view, women were duty-bound to apply. Why, she asked, did women keep silent instead of providing encouragement when they knew how much happier doing so could make another person—kindness was a virtue that repaid itself a hundredfold:

> Too many people in this world are bitter and hurt and unkind, the world has more than enough of unhappiness and distrust. For, like a vicious circle, unkindness travels round and round, and once you have set the ball in motion you may be certain that it will come back to you some time. To be kind is just as easy, if not more so, and how much more commendable![33]

Concluding thoughts

In March 1951 Hamidullah's column complained about what she regarded as the authorities' misguided decision to prohibit children from attending the forthcoming Pakistan Day parade in Karachi:

> We are a young nation. The children of today will be the first real citizens of Pakistan for they will have been reared upon this soil and their childhood memories will have made this land as dear to them as their parents. Patriotism is not imbibed with the milk a baby drinks. It has to be nurtured and nourished so that it may flourish and flower in the heart of the child making the adult a true citizen of his state. Only a citizen who loves his land would be willing to sacrifice his life for its sake.[34]

Children represented Pakistan's future; its potential success or failure would depend on them. Shortly afterwards that year, following intense lobbying by Hamidullah, she was able to write on a wider range of topics, and 'Between ourselves' was replaced by 'Thru a woman's eyes'.[35] Though the byline still indicated her sex, this differently framed column allowed Hamidullah to address her readership in a non-gendered way as she responded to contemporary developments, political or otherwise. And now her words appeared on the main page of the newspaper, placed right next to *Dawn*'s editorial (rather than being tucked away, as during the early days of 'Between ourselves', in its magazine section).

[31] *Ibid.*, 23 May 1949.
[32] *Ibid.*, 18 February 1951.
[33] *Ibid.*, 27 July 1948.
[34] *Ibid.*, 19 March 1951.
[35] It is often incorrectly stated that Hamidullah stopped writing for *Dawn* in 1951, overlooking the fact that her new column 'Thru a woman's eyes' started precisely then and ran for several years thereafter.

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Emotion, however, remained a hallmark of her writing. This was very evident, for instance, in the piece that Hamidullah produced soon after the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan in October 1951. Describing the mourners at his Karachi home, she focused on his widow, in effect presenting Begum Rana Liaquat Ali Khan's outward stifling of the grief that was surely 'brimming over' in her 'lacerated heart' as a positive emotional response, and, in the process, pointing to the virtue of exercising *sabr* even in such extreme circumstances. As Hamidullah went on, the begum's 'red-rimmed eyes told a tragic tale of tears shed alone [...] of a woman defenceless and lonely [...] above all wounded to the very core of her being'.[36]

By this time, Hamidullah had become Pakistan's first female editor. Though described as glossy 'society' magazine ('it was a matter of prestige for practically every educated household in the country to have a copy'[37]), her new publication *The Mirror* was not averse to taking a political stance. Its scathing editorial in defence of Prime Minister H. S. Suhrawardy when the country's President Iskander Mirza required him to resign in November 1957 led the central authorities to impose a ban on the magazine for six months. Hamidullah promptly challenged the order. Instead of writing a letter of apology that might have seen the ban lifted, she went to court, with leading lawyer A. K. Brohi pleading her case. The Supreme Court set aside the government's order and awarded her costs.[38] Later it is said that she took an even more powerful opponent to task, informing Ayub Khan that she had turned his portrait—which she claimed to have previously regarded with great pride and reverence—upside down in response to his authoritarian style of rule, and *The Mirror* was duly banned again.[39]

As the advice volunteered in 'Between ourselves' repeatedly testified, we can see the signs of this boldness in Hamidullah's earlier writings in *Dawn*, most specifically perhaps in her spirited challenge to readers—female and male alike—that they acknowledge the crucial role that women, and particularly mothers, were playing in the emerging emotional wellbeing of the new state. By placing mothers, and the importance of *sabr*, at the heart of Pakistan's—and Pakistanis'—emotional development, she created valuable space wherein women's concerns could be aired (if not always heard) and their agency displayed, allowing us today to explore how emotion fitted into the rhetoric of early nation-building there.

Conflicts of interest. The author reports none.

[36] *Dawn*, 22 October 1951.

[37] Obituary, *ibid.*, 12 September 2000, https://web.archive.org/web/20020225122550/http://www.dawn.com/2000/09/12/nat10.htm (accessed 9 May 2023).

[38] *Ibid.*, 21 December 1957.

[39] https://web.archive.org/web/20010503131844/http://www.dawn.com/2000/09/18/letted.htm#13 (accessed 9 May 2023).

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