

# The Impact of Abū 'l-A'lā Maudūdī and *Jamā'at-i Islāmī* on the Intellectual Career of Maryam Jameelah

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## Abstract

*Maryam Jameelah (1934–2012) was a Jew by birth, but she embraced Islam as her final religion. In 1962, on the invitation of Abū 'l-A'lā Maudūdī (1903–1979), she migrated to Pakistan. The literature shows that she was influenced by the works of Maudūdī and supported his politico-religious movement, Jamā'at-i Islāmī. The present study, however, argues—based on the analysis of her published and unpublished works—that her writing career can be divided into two phases. In the first phase (roughly from 1962 to 1969), she supported Maudūdī and his mission while in the second phase (1969–2012), she started controverting his ideas and criticized his certain views, considering him an advocate of modernism. Thus, on the one hand, she regarded him as a mujaddid of his time, but on the other hand, she considered him a supporter of evolutionism and progressivism, who had contempt for the tradition. This paper further highlights that though her writings appear to support Jamā'at-i Islāmī, but she never became a formal member of it or any other movement during her stay in Pakistan.*

## Keywords

Maryam Jameelah, Islam, Abū 'l-A'lā Maudūdī, *Jamā'at-i Islāmī*.

## Introduction

Maryam Jameelah (1934–2012) was an American. Her ancestors were followers of the reform movement (*Haskalah*)<sup>1</sup> of a German-Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> *Haskalah* or the Jewish Enlightenment was an intellectual movement that originated in the eighteenth-century Germany. Moses Mendelssohn was one of the leaders of this movement.

philosopher, Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786). However, she was not content with the works of Mendelssohn and believed that his reform movement played a pivotal role in distancing German Jewry from their ancestral religion.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, breaking her ties with Reform Judaism, she embraced Orthodoxy<sup>3</sup> and ultimately converted to Islam. In 1962, she migrated to Pakistan on the invitation of the renowned revivalist Abū 'l-A'ālā Maudūdī (1903–1979).<sup>4</sup> She was first introduced to Maudūdī through the work<sup>5</sup> of a Pakistani modernist scholar Mazheruddin Siddiqi. She noticed that Siddiqi made derogatory remarks about Maudūdī and felt sympathy with the latter's cause.<sup>6</sup> However, she did not contact him at that time. Later, looking for answers to her queries about eschatology,<sup>7</sup> she came across his article "Life after Death," appeared in *The Muslim Digest* published from Durban, South Africa. By that time, she had read several studies on the subject, but this article significantly informed her concept of the hereafter. In fact, it was "the best and most convincing writing," she had ever read on the subject,<sup>8</sup> and urged her to contact its author, Maudūdī. However, it was not her first correspondence with a Muslim scholar. Since her youth, she had a habit of making pen friends. Initially, she contacted her peers but soon realized that many of them were not convinced of her views.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, she started writing to prominent Muslim scholars.<sup>10</sup> Maudūdī replied to her letters with the

<sup>2</sup> Maryam Jameelah, review of *Militant Islam*, by Godfrey H. Jansen, *Muslim World Book Review* 1, no. 2 (1981): 19.

<sup>3</sup> Maryam Jameelah, *Memories of Childhood in America: The Story of One Western Convert's Quest for the Truth* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1989), 31.

<sup>4</sup> For Jameelah's brief biography, see Zohaib Ahmad, "Aspects of Maryam Jameelah's Post-Conversion Understanding of Islam," *Islamic Studies* 58, no. 1 (2019): 33–36.

<sup>5</sup> That is, Mazheruddin Siddiqi, "Muslim Culture in Pakistan and India" in *Islam the Straight Path: Islam as Interpreted by Muslims*, ed. Kenneth W. Morgan (New York: Ronald Press, 1958).

<sup>6</sup> Margaret Marcus (Maryam Jameelah) to Maulana Maudoodi, New York, 5 December 1960, in *Correspondence between Maulana Maudoodi and Maryam Jameelah* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1969), 1.

<sup>7</sup> The concept of life after death and the purpose of life were important issues, which influenced and shaped her conversion to Islam. Therefore, she had a great interest in studying these matters. For details, see Zohaib Ahmad, "A Voyage in Search of the 'True Religion': A Study of Maryam Jameelah's Conversion to Islam and Her Critique of Western Civilization" (PhD diss., International Islamic University, Islamabad, 2018), 55–56.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Maryam Jameelah, preface to *Correspondence between Maulana Maudoodi and Maryam Jameelah* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1969), i.

<sup>10</sup> Some prominent Muslim scholars whom she contacted include Fadhil Jamali (1903–1997), Mahmud Hoballah (1903–1974), Muhammad Hamidullah (1909–2002), and Said

zeal and zest of a missionary (*dā'ī*) that made her consider him her most faithful correspondent.<sup>11</sup> Thus, she started corresponding with him on a regular basis. Later, she published this correspondence under the title of *Correspondence Between Maulana Maudoodi and Maryam Jameelah*.

The contents of the book show that she found Maudūdī's arguments appealing her intellect and, therefore, accepted them wholeheartedly. For example, when he explained his views about the prohibition of pictures in Islam to her,<sup>12</sup> she abandoned her practice of art altogether and later donated her previous artworks to the New York Public Library.<sup>13</sup> Drawing was one of her favourite hobbies and it was very difficult for her to stop it. However, respecting the advice of Maudūdī, she discontinued it for a while.<sup>14</sup> Maudūdī also noticed resemblance between their ideas<sup>15</sup> and commented, "When I was reading your articles, I felt as if I were reading my own ideas. . . . This mutual sympathy and unanimity in thought has resulted directly from the fact that both of us have derived our inspiration from one and the same source."<sup>16</sup> This indicates that they shared similar ideas prior to knowing each other. The reason for it was their inspiration from the same source, most probably the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet (peace be on him).

### Impact of Maudūdī on Jameelah's Conversion to Islam

Jameelah was grateful to Maudūdī for inviting her to stay in Pakistan. However, she emphasized that he did not play any significant role in her

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Ramadan (1926–1995).

<sup>11</sup> Jameelah, *Memories of Childhood in America*, 167.

<sup>12</sup> Maulana Maudoodi to Maryam Jameelah, Lahore, 16 December 1961, in *Correspondence between Maulana Maudoodi and Maryam Jameelah* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1969), 56.

<sup>13</sup> She was a great lover of art and used to draw pictures and sketches to express her feelings about various issues. She wrote that her emotional attachment to these pictures was so strong that she could not destroy them as suggested by Maudūdī. Therefore, she requested the authorities of the New York Public Library to accept these pictures. For details, see Jameelah, *Memories of Childhood in America*, 211–12.

<sup>14</sup> Later, her views regarding art changed and she once again inclined towards art. For details, see Ahmad, "Aspects of Maryam Jameelah's Post-Conversion Understanding of Islam," 42–43. In her book reviews, she supported those who wrote in favour of Islamic art. See Maryam Jameelah, review of *The Vision of Islam*, by Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *Iqbal Review* 38, no. 1 (1997): 154; Jameelah, review of *Islamic Art and Spirituality*, by Syed Hossein Nasr, *Iqbal Review* 28, no. 3 (1987): 120.

<sup>15</sup> For example, see Jameelah, *Memories of Childhood in America*, 167; Maryam Jameelah, *Correspondence Between Maulana Maudoodi and Maryam Jameelah* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1969), 21, 29, 56, 57.

<sup>16</sup> Maulana Maudoodi to Maryam Jameelah, Lahore, 21 January 1961, in *Correspondence between Maulana Maudoodi and Maryam Jameelah* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1969), 5.

conversion to Islam. She wrote, “Maulana Maudoodi had no need to persuade me to adopt Islam as I was already on the threshold of conversion and would have taken the final step even without his knowledge.”<sup>17</sup> Although she did not acknowledge any significant impact of Maudūdī on her acceptance of Islam, the importance of his role in accelerating the process of her conversion cannot be overemphasized. With his very first letter, he started convincing her that she was a Muslim in all but her name. Therefore, she must formally embrace Islam and change her name.<sup>18</sup> In fact, he opened his letter saying, “*Assalaam alaikum*” (literally peace be on you), the peculiar Muslim way of greeting. Encouraging her to embrace Islam, he emphasized that her belief in *tawhīd*, the finality of the Prophet (peace be on him), the Qur’ān, and the hereafter had already made her a “genuine Muslim.” In her fifth letter, she finally informed him about her conversion and the new name.

It should be taken into account that she published this work in 1969, when she had started differing with his views. In the preface of this work, she made it clear that writings of Maudūdī did not play any significant role in her conversion to Islam, which, nonetheless, was a popular notion among the Pakistani Muslims of that time, and the echoes of which still can be heard among the circles of *Jamā‘at-i Islāmī*. However, she admitted in the same work that Maudūdī’s article “Life after Death” strengthened her belief in the hereafter, which once occupied her mind, distanced her from her former religion, persuaded her to study world religions, and motivated her to embrace Islam. It seems that she preferred not to highlight the role of Maudūdī in her conversion to Islam. However, there is another interpretation, which relates her notion of the hereafter. Although she was a Jew by birth, she did not have any significant formal religious training. Being a Jew, she knew the concept of the afterlife but had doubts about it. Her study of both the Old and New Testaments failed to dispel her doubts. Her upbringing at home and education at school and college also made her consider the notion of the hereafter mere superstition.<sup>19</sup> Her view of the hereafter, however, changed mainly after studying the Qur’ān and taking the classes of Abraham Isaac Katsh (1908–1998), under whom she studied at the New York University. Consequently, she made her mind to convert to Islam. Thus, though Maudūdī’s article “Life after Death” proved to be “the best and most convincing” writing for her on the subject, but it did not make any fundamental development in her concept of the hereafter. Moreover, the

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<sup>17</sup> Jameelah, preface to *Correspondence*, ii.

<sup>18</sup> Maudoodi to Jameelah, Lahore, 21 January 1961, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Jameelah, *Memories of Childhood in America*, 95.

concept of the hereafter was not the only factor that made her embrace Islam; there were many others.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, one may argue that Maudūdī's article just enhanced her understanding of one of the factors, which led her to embrace Islam. His works perhaps did not influence her overall understanding of Islam, at least prior to her conversion to Islam. His first letter to her also supports this view. Moreover, the present author could not find any writing of Maudūdī in which he claimed to play any significant role in her conversion.

### Impact of Maudūdī on Jameelah's Migration to Pakistan

Maudūdī being an active *dā'ī* (preacher of Islam) was well aware of the problems of the converts. He realized the proactive nature of Jameelah and her strong will to convert to Islam. Therefore, in his very first letter, he invited her to visit Pakistan and live with his family.<sup>21</sup> He thought that it would be beneficial for her to be a part of a Muslim society either in the United States or in a Muslim country. She accepted his invitation two years later in 1962. Besides the invitation of Maudūdī, many other reasons might have motivated her to migrate to Pakistan. For example, she was a great admirer of oriental literature. At that time, various books, written in the English language, on Islam were being published from Lahore. Later, still living in the United States, she preferred to publish her first book, *Islam versus the West*, from Lahore.<sup>22</sup> Hence, she might have thought to find an academic milieu, in Pakistan, that would help in her academic career. It is also evident from the fact that during her fifty years of stay in Pakistan, she never engaged herself in any job other than writing for the Islamic cause. Moreover, Pakistan had recently got its independence. It was believed to be the first country founded on religious grounds.<sup>23</sup> The newly established Muslim state attracted many converts, including Muhammad Asad (1900–1992), Fatima Grimm (1934–2013),<sup>24</sup> and Maryam Jameelah.

It is also evident that Jameelah was inspired by the works of Asad. His *The Road to Mecca* left a deep mark on her personality. She spent days

<sup>20</sup> For example, concept of God, status of the Hebrew prophets, and universality of Islam were among the other major factors that caused her conversion to Islam. For details, see Ahmad, "Voyage in Search of the 'True Religion,'" 74.

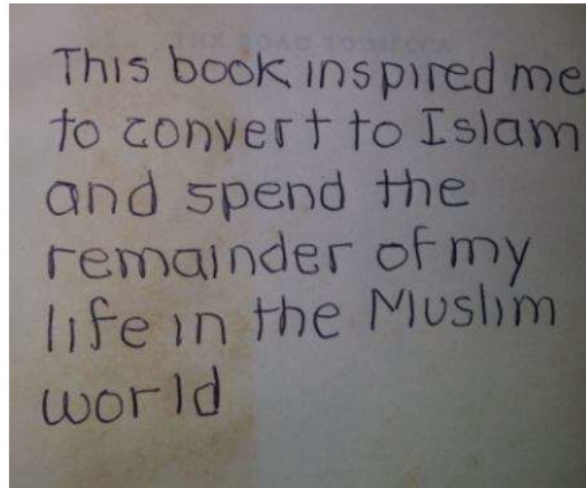
<sup>21</sup> Maudoodi to Jameelah, Lahore, 21 January 1961, 6.

<sup>22</sup> Jameelah, *Memories of Childhood in America*, 211.

<sup>23</sup> Alyssa Ayres, *Speaking Like a State: Language and Nationalism in Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 13.

<sup>24</sup> Grimm was a Christian convert to Islam. She was among the best pen friends of Jameelah. For details, see the correspondence between Fatima Grimm and Maryam Jameelah available in her personal library in Lahore.

and nights reading it again and again. Her love for this book was so great that she could not help writing her remarks on her personal copy of this work, which is still available in her personal library (see figure 1). She clarified that this book persuaded her to embrace Islam and encouraged her to spend the rest of her life in a Muslim country. Asad was a citizen of Pakistan, so it was more alluring for her to settle there.



**Figure 1: Jameelah’s note on the first page of *The Road to Mecca***

Moreover, she was a great admirer of the oriental culture and the traditional way of life. In contrast to modern American society, Pakistan could provide her with the lifestyle she was searching for. Therefore, migration to Pakistan seemed a wiser choice for her and the next few years proved her selection correct. She was sent to Pattoki, a small Pakistani town then with no modern facilities such as electricity or telecommunications, but she regarded her stay in Pattoki as the best part of her life. She wrote, “This is what I wanted—and found—in Pattoki where I lived for almost a year.”<sup>25</sup> However, along with all these factors, the invitation of Maudūdī remained a major driving force that motivated her to migrate to Pakistan. During her voyage, in Sudan, she wrote, “Yes, I am thoroughly enjoying myself here at Port Sudan, so much that were it not for Maulana Maudoodi, I would have stayed on. The ship could leave without me.”<sup>26</sup> Finally, she came and settled in Pakistan. For almost one year, she remained under the guardianship of Maudūdī. Later, in

<sup>25</sup> For details, see Maryam Jameelah, *At Home in Pakistan (1962-1989): The Tale of an American Expatriate in Her Adopted Country* (Lahore: Adbiyat, 2012), 25.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

1963, following his advice, she married Muhammad Yusuf Khan who was a full-time worker of *Jamā'at-i Islāmī*.

### Jameelah's Initial Writings on Maudūdī and *Jamā'at-i Islāmī*

After her migration to Pakistan, Jameelah devoted herself to writing for the Islamic cause. She quoted long passages from Maudūdī's works and showed her agreement with him almost on every point.<sup>27</sup> She praised him as well as his *Jamā'at* for being the harbinger of Islamic renaissance.<sup>28</sup> In her magnum opus, *Islam in Theory and Practice*, she devoted an article "Maulana Sayyid Abul Ala Maudoodi: The Great Mujaddid of the Modern Age,"<sup>29</sup> explaining her understanding of his works and completely agreed with his ideas.<sup>30</sup> Unlike many authors,<sup>31</sup> she upheld that "Nobody in Muslim India supported the Pakistan movement more enthusiastically than Maulana Maudoodi."<sup>32</sup> In the same book, she included another article "The Jama'at-e-Islami, Pakistan" in which she discussed the formation and role of the *Jamā'at* in the political and religious history of Pakistan. Writing about the goals, constitution, and membership process of *Jamā'at-i Islāmī*, she persuades the readers to join<sup>33</sup> and follow the movement saying, "Believers in every country of the world—East or West—should take the Jama'at-e-Islami for their guide and organize local Jama'ats like it wherever they may reside."<sup>34</sup> Similarly, she can be seen as a supporter of Maudūdī in her various other writings.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>27</sup> She perhaps did not differ with Maudūdī over a single issue. For example, see Maryam Jameelah, *Islam versus the West* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1984), 127; Jameelah, *Islam and Modernism* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan & Sons, 1988), 52, 81, 124, 59, 236; Jameelah, *Islam versus Ahl al-Kitab: Past and Present* (Delhi: Taj Company, 1993), 63, 334, 98, 405.

<sup>28</sup> Jameelah, *Islam and Modernism*, 236.

<sup>29</sup> This article along with some additions was also published separately as the following: Maryam Jameelah, *Who is Maudoodi?* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1973). For a critical analysis of this article, see, Wadi Z. Haddad, review of *Who is Maudoodi?*, by Maryam Jameelah, *Muslim World* 66, no. 4 (1976): 306–307.

<sup>30</sup> For details, see Maryam Jameelah, *Islam in Theory and Practice* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1978), 260–326.

<sup>31</sup> J. Gordon Melton, *Faiths Across Time: 5,000 Years of Religious History* (California: ABC-CLIO, 2014), 1722; Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella, *Islamic Reform in South Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 477; John Calvert, *Islamism: A Documentary and Reference Guide* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008), 29.

<sup>32</sup> Jameelah, *Islam in Theory and Practice*, 266.

<sup>33</sup> In addition to other Muslim organizations, she especially pointed to the branches of *Jamā'at-i Islāmī* in India, Kashmir, and Ceylon in *Ibid.*, 382.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> For example, see Jameelah, *Islam and Modernism*, 236; Jameelah, *Islam and Western Society: A Refutation of the Modern Way of Life* (Delhi: Adam Publishers & Distributors,

Her writings made her one of the important spokespersons for the movement. Consequently, her affiliation with the movement was appreciated by the officials of *Jamā'at-i Islāmī*. Besides *Jamā'at-i Islāmī Pākistān*, international wings of the movement including *Jamā'at-i Islāmī Hind*<sup>36</sup> and “Jama'at-e-Islami Jammu & Kashmir, Srinagar,”<sup>37</sup> sent her invitations to participate in various events. These invitation letters are still preserved in her personal library. Her husband, Muhammad Yusuf Khan, was a full-time worker of *Jamā'at* and later her sons joined the same. She frequently donated to *Jamā'at*. In her library, receipts of her donations to *Jamā'at* are still preserved (see figure 2), which shows that she used to donate a significant amount to the movement.

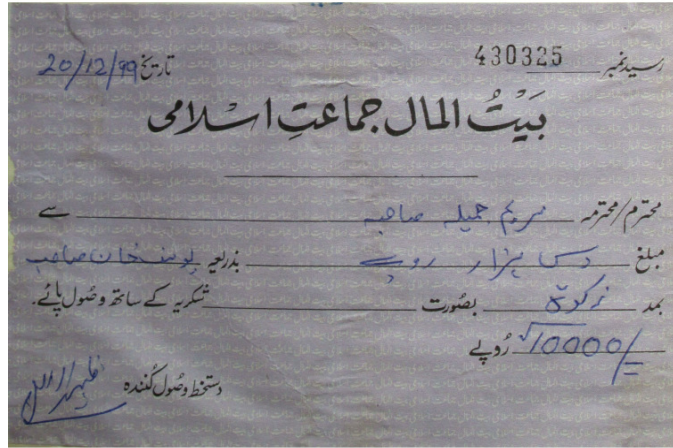


Figure 2: Receipt of donation of Maryam Jameelah for *Jamā'at-i Islāmī*

In the conferences of *Jamā'at*, scholars were encouraged to write on her views regarding Islamic and Western culture. However, when Fatimah Al-Zahra, a student of the University of Punjab, asked her regarding her views about the movement, she wrote her a letter mentioning that though she had a close relationship with Maudūdī, she never officially joined *Jamā'at-i Islāmī* or any other political or religious organization in Pakistan.

1990), 327; Jameelah, *Memories of Childhood in America*, 214–15.

<sup>36</sup> See Muhammad Yusuf to Maryam Jameelah, Delhi, 29 May 1975 (unpublished manuscript, personal library of Maryam Jameelah, Lahore).

<sup>37</sup> See, Begum Haneef to Maryam Jameelah, Srinagar, 10 August 1981 (unpublished manuscript, personal library of Maryam Jameelah, Lahore).



Despite my close relationship to Maulana Maudoodi, I never became a formal member of Jama'at-e-Islamic or any other religious/political movement. As far as

**Figure 3: Relationship of Jameelah with *Jamā'at-i Islāmī* and Maudūdī in her own handwriting<sup>38</sup>**

Her writings on Maudūdī made scholars consider her a supporter of *Jamā'at-i Islām*. For example, analyzing the conversion narratives of Muslims, Marcia Hermansen argues that Jameelah's criticism of the West and world religions is largely influenced by the works of *Jamā'at-i Islāmī*.<sup>39</sup> Patrick D. Bowen observes that after her conversion, she regularly published articles on Islam in various magazines and journals. For him, most of her writings present "very conservative Islamic view strongly influenced by Mawdudi and other conservative Muslim thinkers of the period."<sup>40</sup> Regarding her as an advocate of the ideology of *Jamā'at*, Syed Vali Reza Nasr writes that she recognized Maudūdī's "time as the Mahdi's time and, by implication, identified him as the promised Mahdi."<sup>41</sup> Similarly, her writings about Maudūdī led many other scholars to recognize her as one of his fervent disciples.<sup>42</sup>

### Impact of Maudūdī on Jameelah's Literary Career

Responding to a question about the impact of Maudūdī on the development of Jameelah's thought and ideas, Anis Ahmad commented that though there was a close resemblance between their views, it

<sup>38</sup> Fatimah Al-Zahra, "Maryam Jamīlah: Dīnī-o 'ilmī khidmāt" (master's thesis, University of the Punjab, Lahore, 2010), 134.

<sup>39</sup> Marcia Hermansen, "Roads To Mecca: Conversion Narratives of European and Euro-American Muslims," *Muslim World* 89, no. 1 (1999): 79.

<sup>40</sup> Patrick D. Bowen, *A History of Conversion to Islam in the United States, Volume 1: White American Muslims before 1975* (Boston: Brill, 2015), 342.

<sup>41</sup> Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 139.

<sup>42</sup> Lloyd V. J. Ridgeon, *Crescents on the Cross: Islamic Visions of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 11; Abdelwahab Meddeb, *The Malady of Islam* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 104.

should be noted that they were writing at a time when modern philosophies such as positivism and empiricism were emerging. Therefore, it is more appropriate to say that Maudūdī, Asad, and Jameelah criticized Western civilization in a similar fashion, because it was the demand of time.<sup>43</sup> The observations of Ahmad indicate that the resemblance between the views of Maudūdī and Jameelah does not necessarily mean that she was under his influence or was following him.

Although in her early writings, Jameelah could be traced as an ardent supporter of Maudūdī and his *Jamā'at*, she did not include him in the list of those persons who inspired her literary career. In the preface of her *Correspondence*, she revealed that her ideas about Islam had been formulated long before she knew Maudūdī or his *Jamā'at*. However, she did not deny that this correspondence benefited her and increased her knowledge and insight about Islam.<sup>44</sup> As mentioned above, she published her *Correspondence* in 1969 and it was probably her first writing in which she made such remarks about him. Moreover, she noted that it was Muhammad Asad's *Islam at the Crossroads* that inspired her to write for the cause of Islam and criticize Western civilization.<sup>45</sup> In fact, in her several other writings, she referred repeatedly to the encouragement that she drew from his works.<sup>46</sup> She did not mention any specific reason why she was inspired by Asad. However, one may surmise that she might have seen a close resemblance between their views or his literary skills might have inspired her. Moreover, like her, Asad was also of German origin, a former Jew, a convert to Islam, an opponent of Zionism, and an inhabitant of Pakistan. In sum, there could be many reasons for drawing her inspiration from Asad. However, this did not prevent her from criticizing his certain views. After 1980, she limited her literary works to book reviews. In her book reviews, she criticized Asad labelling him as a rationalist,<sup>47</sup> a critic of madrasah education, a supporter of modernism, an anti-*taṣawwuf*, and an opponent of the '*ulamā'*'<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ahmad, interview.

<sup>44</sup> Jameelah, preface to *Correspondence*, ii.

<sup>45</sup> Jameelah, *Memories of Childhood in America*, 160.

<sup>46</sup> Jameelah, *A Great Islamic Movement in Turkey: Badee-u-Zaman Said Nursi* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1981), 3; Jameelah, review of *Islam at the Crossroads*, by Muhammad Asad, *Muslim World Book Review* 5, no. 4 (1985): 41; Jameelah, *Memories of Childhood in America*, 109, 168, 210.

<sup>47</sup> Jameelah, review of *Sahih Al-Bukhari: The Early Years of Islam*, by Muhammad Asad, *Muslim World Book Review* 3, no. 3 (1983): 3.

<sup>48</sup> Jameelah, *Islam at the Crossroads*, 40.

### Jameelah's Criticism of the Views of Maudūdī

Jameelah was a proponent of Sufism.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, she was against those who were not in favour of it.<sup>50</sup> A study of her reviews published in the *Iqbal Review* suggests that she mostly praised those scholars who advocated, in any way, a spiritual reform rather than a political or militant takeover.<sup>51</sup> A comparative study of her writings suggests that in the beginning, she recognized Maudūdī as an advocate of Sufism.<sup>52</sup> However, later she categorized him among its critics. She viewed that Maudūdī was against the entire Sufi school of thought<sup>53</sup> and criticized his views regarding the 'ulamā' saying,

The polemics of the Salafiyya against the 'Ulamā' and the Sufis, extolling science and material progress, the acceptance of the evolutionist and progressivist interpretations of history, the indifference, if not hostility, towards Islamic philosophy and Islamic art and Islam's relationship with the Jews, the Christians and the West in general even found expression in some of the writings of Maulana Sayyid Abu'l A'lā Mawdūdī (1903–1979) in his monthly *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān*.<sup>54</sup>

This quotation shows that Jameelah considered some of Maudūdī's writings having a modernist, anti-Sufism, and anti-Islamic-art approach. However, she continued supporting his ideas related to the veil (*pardah*)<sup>55</sup> and secularism.<sup>56</sup> In 1990, she published her book *At Home in*

<sup>49</sup> For details, see Ahmad, "Aspects of Maryam Jameelah's Post-Conversion Understanding of Islam," 44.

<sup>50</sup> Maryam Jameelah, review of *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*, by Syeed Hossein Nasr, *Iqbal Review* 28, no. 3 (1987): 123–25; Jameelah, review of *Islam and Other Faiths*, by Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, ed. Ataullah Siddiqui, *Iqbal Review* 41, no. 2 (2000): 210–11.

<sup>51</sup> For example, see Jameelah, review of *Islamic Art and Spirituality*; Jameelah, review of *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*; Jameelah, review of *The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, by Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al., *Iqbal Review* 45, no. 5 (2004): 163–65; Jameelah, review of *The Need for a Sacred Science*, by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Iqbal Review* 37, no. 1 (1996): 158–60; Jameelah, *Islamic Art and Spirituality*.

<sup>52</sup> Jameelah, *Memories of Childhood in America*, 215.

<sup>53</sup> Writing about the event of the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him), she remarks, "Unlike Maulana Maudoodi, Bhaijan [Ni'mat al-'Alī] does not condemn all Sufis." Jameelah, *At Home in Pakistan*, 149.

<sup>54</sup> Jameelah, review of *Through Muslim Eyes: M. Rashid Rida and the West*, by Emad Eldin Shahin, *Muslim World Book Review* 5, no. 3 (1995): 19.

<sup>55</sup> She herself was a staunch supporter of *pardah*. When she reviewed *Women and Islamic Law* written by Safia Iqbal, she wrote, "*Women and Islamic Law* is the best work of its kind on the subject to appear in print for many years. It supplements and brings Maulana Mawdudi's *Purdah* (1939) up-to-date. For all those who wish to ameliorate the suffering and oppression women endure today, this book is indispensable reading." See

*Pakistan*. In the preface of this work, she wrote that the impression she had of him during their correspondence was quite different from the “reality” that she found after her migration to Pakistan. Furthermore, she mentioned that “the actual ideals and goals of the Maulana’s re-interpretation of Islam were very far from the traditional orthodoxy in which I sought to live and immerse myself, I did not fully discover until long afterwards.”<sup>57</sup> She herself was a proponent of traditional orthodoxy and, therefore, criticized both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars who, in her view, preached modernism.<sup>58</sup> In her book reviews, she criticized Maudūdī for his modernist as well as *salafī* thought. For her, a modernist is a person who thinks that it is necessary to reinterpret Islam to make it compatible with the modern way of life. Therefore, for the revival of Islam, a modernist advocates independent reasoning and tries to close the doors of *taqlīd* by advocating *ijtihād*.<sup>59</sup>

Her strongest criticism of Maudūdī appeared in her six-page note “Modern Ideas and Concepts in the Works of Maulānā Sayyid Abul A’lā Mawdūdī,” in *Islamic Studies* in 2003. To show how modernism influenced his religious ideas, she quoted long passages from his works as well as those of his associates such as Khursheed Ahmad. Unfortunately, she did not provide any context of these passages, which made it difficult to fully understand her purpose of quoting these passages. However, it clearly seems that she considered Maudūdī an opponent of traditional Islamic art, which for her was an integral part of Islamic civilization.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, she claims that Maudūdī failed to appreciate the progress that the Muslim world made in science and that he deliberately painted classical Islamic civilization pitch-black. Lastly, she declares that some works of Maudūdī “expresses his faith in evolutionism and progressivism and contempt for Tradition.”<sup>61</sup> This work shows that in 2003 Jameelah not only considered Maudūdī a modernist but also thought it necessary to inform her readers about her views regarding him.

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Jameelah, review of *Women and Islamic Law*, by Safia Iqbal, *Muslim World Book Review* 9, no. 4 (1989): 44.

<sup>56</sup> See Jameelah, review of “Honour” *Crimes, Paradigms and Violence against Women*, by Lynn Welchman and Sara Hossain, *Muslim World Book Review* 28, no. 2 (2008): 69.

<sup>57</sup> Jameelah, *At Home in Pakistan*, 26.

<sup>58</sup> John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Makers of Contemporary Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 58.

<sup>59</sup> Maryam Jameelah, review of *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, by John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito, *Muslim World Book Review* 4, no. 2 (1984): 92.

<sup>60</sup> Jameelah, review of *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*, 124–25.

<sup>61</sup> Jameelah, “Modern Ideas and Concepts in the Works of Maulānā Sayyid Abul A’lā Mawdūdī,” *Islamic Studies* 42, no. 2 (2003): 352.

In 2005, in an interview, Jameelah was asked whether she thought that Maudūdī's ideas were relevant to the Muslims in the contemporary world. She replied that in 1941 he was concerned with the cultural matters of Islam and its relations with the West. However, later he overwhelmingly involved himself in political matters. She added, "Placing politics at the centre of the Islamic mission is contrary to the traditions of Islam.<sup>62</sup> However, Jamat-e-Islami deserves all the credit for restraining the worst excesses of secular military dictatorships."<sup>63</sup>

The change in Jameelah's views was also noted by some scholars. For example, during her interviews with the women wing of *Jamā'at-i Islāmī*, Amina Jamal observed that most of the female workers of the movement that she had interviewed, were "less interested in and somewhat dismissive of Maryam Jameelah."<sup>64</sup> She added that although, in the beginning, Jameelah was considered an important spokesperson for Maudūdī and his movement, in the later years, she started criticizing him as well as his ideas regarding Islamic revivalism.<sup>65</sup> When Jamal was asked regarding her views about the relationship of Jameelah with *Jamā'at*, she commented, "Maryam Jameelah's relationship with the Jamaat was ambiguous and ambivalent."<sup>66</sup> She added that because of his modernist ideas, Jameelah eventually became a critic of Maudūdī.

In her controversial book, *The Convert*,<sup>67</sup> Deborah Baker argues that when Jameelah read the translations of Maudūdī's work that appeared after his death, she started considering him a modernist.<sup>68</sup> Baker, however, ignored the fact that Jameelah criticized not only Maudūdī but

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<sup>62</sup> This is also visible from her other writings. She agrees with those who think that Muslims, in the modern age, are focusing too much on contemporary politics. See, Maryam Jameelah, review of *The Spiritual Dimensions of Islam*, by Syyed Hossein Nasr. *Iqbal Review* 29, no. 1 (1988): 255.

<sup>63</sup> Biju Abdul Qadir, "Despair and Hopelessness Forbidden, Tread the Future with Caution: Maryam Jameelah," (2005), <http://www.youngmuslimdigest.com/interview/07/2005/despair-and-hopelessness-forbidden-tread-the-future-with-caution-maryam-jameelah/>.

<sup>64</sup> Amina Jamal, *Jamaat-E-Islami Women in Pakistan: Vanguard of a New Modernity?* (New Jersey: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 121.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>66</sup> Amina Jamal, e-mail message to the author, December 12, 2017.

<sup>67</sup> The views of Baker were strongly rejected by Jameelah. Though she did not criticize Baker publicly or perhaps her death did not give her a chance to do so, she wrote on her personal copy of *The Convert*, "Maryam Jameelah's life story from a Kaffir anti-Islam American viewpoint. Haider Maududi's interview was nothing but a big pack of lies!!" This copy is available in the personal library of Jameelah.

<sup>68</sup> Deborah Baker, *The Convert: A Tale of Exile and Extremism* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2011), 118–19.

also Asad and many other writers, whose works were available to her in English and played an important role in her conversion to Islam. Moreover, many of the major writings of Maudūdī on Western and Islamic culture, history, and law were translated into English long before the 1980s. In fact, his *The Message of Jama'at-i-Islami* and *The Process of Islamic Revolution* were translated into English as early as 1955. Therefore, it seems less appropriate to say that she started criticizing Maudūdī after reading the posthumous translations of his works.

Moreover, she had a working knowledge of Urdu language for she had been living in Pakistan since 1962. In an interview with a Pakistani magazine, when she was asked about the presence of many Urdu books in her personal library, she replied, "I have a working knowledge of Urdu. The books of Maulānā [Maudūdī] are very easy. I can understand them effortlessly if someone reads them aloud to me."<sup>69</sup> Therefore, one may hold that it was not just the translations of Maudūdī's works that changed her views. Some scholars rightly understood her as a supporter of conservative Islam. However, most of them overlooked her numerous book reviews, which revealed her inclination towards what Syed Hossain Nasr considered traditional Islam<sup>70</sup> and explained why she was not content with the views of Maudūdī or Asad in the later part of her life.<sup>71</sup>

## Conclusion

This paper suggests that there are two eras of Jameelah's post-conversion writings. In the early years of her conversion, she wrote in favour of the views of Maudūdī and supported his *Jamā'at*. However, she later started criticizing him. Yet at the same time, she did not fail to give *Jamā'at* credit for its effort to bring about an Islamic renaissance. Her writings suggest that in the beginning, she identified Maudūdī as an advocate of her version of traditional Islam, but later she started considering him a supporter of modernism and evolutionism. Thus, being discontented with his revivalist approach, she criticized his certain views after his death. Her note published in *Islamic Studies*, in

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<sup>69</sup> See, Umm Kulthum, "Muḥtarmah Maryam Jamīlah: Khātūn-i Islām," *Māhnāmah Batūl* 1974, 30.

<sup>70</sup> In a footnote, Syed Hossain Nasr also suggests that through her book reviews Jameelah supported the traditional Islam. See, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World* (New York: Kegan Paul International, 1994), 23n2. Also see, Jameelah, *The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*; Jameelah, *Islamic Art and Spirituality*, 160.

<sup>71</sup> For a detailed study about her sympathetic attitude towards traditionalism and Nasr's influence on her, see Ahmad, "Aspects of Maryam Jameelah's Post-Conversion Understanding of Islam."

2003, suggests that she deemed it necessary to tell her readers about her views regarding Maudūdī at that time. It is important to note that besides her book reviews, this note was her only publication after 1980. This also explains why scholars such as Amina Jamal found *Jamā'at*'s workers less interested in and somewhat dismissive of Jameelah.

She appreciated the work of *Jamā'at-i Islāmī*, but did not become a formal member of it or any other religious or political movement during her stay in Pakistan. It is argued that although she was inspired by the works of Maudūdī, she did not admit his role in her conversion to Islam or in her literary career. Instead, she considered the writings of Muhamad Asad a source of inspiration for her.

It seems that necessary attention has not been given to her pre-conversion life that also portrayed her as a staunch supporter of orthodoxy. Even before her acceptance of Islam, she used to criticize modern reform movements. This was not limited to her views about Islam but the same was true regarding her study of world religions. Her conversion from reform Judaism to orthodoxy and her criticism of Mendelssohn's reform movement are clear examples of it. Scholars rightly held that she presented a conservative or rather fundamentalist view of religion. However, it is ignored that it was not exclusively Maudūdī or his *Jamā'at* that inspired her to do so. The chronological study of her life and works reveals that she criticized the people who suggested any sort of reform in religion and opposed 'ulamā' or Sufism.

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