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Beyond His Last Trial: Reflections and Speculations on Saadat Hasan Manto's "Aṣlī Jinn"

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Abstract. A significant amount of scholarly and critical discourse engages with Manto's portrayal of sexuality and obscenity, particularly within the context of heteronormativity that shapes his narratives. While most of his controversial, obscene short stories highlight heterosexual desires, he also authored "Aṣlī Jinn" (The Real Jinn), a short story that deals with homoerotic desires between two young adult girls. Composed toward the end of his life, this short story has largely been overlooked and has not received the critical attention that other works addressing homoeroticism received during the mid-twentieth century. This essay uses Manto's provocative story, which holds the potential for censorship in conservative societies, to reflect on the author's complex legacy following his last trial before his death. It engages with the following questions: Did Manto succumb to societal pressure and stop writing after that final trial? If he did not, how did he continue to explore themes of sexuality and sexual intimacy in his work? Furthermore, why was he not subjected to further legal trials if he continued to produce provocative stories? The essay concludes with an English translation of "Aṣlī Jinn" as "The Real Jinn."

Keywords: Censorship; obscenity; homoeroticism; Urdu short story; Manto's trials

Anyone fairly acquainted with the trials and tribulations that Saadat Hasan Manto (1912 – 1955), one of the most remarkable practitioners of short stories in the canon of Urdu literature, had to undergo for some of his short stories, would probably guess the reference in the title of my essay. Some may be surprised by it, while others may raise their eyebrows. The title draws on Manto's *Paⁿchvāⁿ Muqaddama* (The Fifth Trial), an essay the author composed in two parts, sharing his experience of the legal trial of a story in Karachi. It is one of the articles he wrote to defend his stories

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against accusations and censorship. In my essay, I analyze Manto's short story "Aṣlī Jinn," written during the later years of his life, after he had experienced a series of legal trials. I use Manto's provocative story, which bears the potential for censorship in conservative societies, to reflect on the author's contentious legacy following his sixth trial, which, as several scholars have noted, was the final trial he faced before his death. These reflections and speculations serve as a prelude to my English translation of the story titled "The Real Jinn," which is presented in the concluding section of this essay. In this opening section, I contemplate a hypothetical scenario: what if another story written by Manto, composed after the controversial short stories referenced in "The Fifth Trial," were to be classified as obscene and subsequently subjected to censorship? Would he have had to endure a new trial? Would he then have to write another essay detailing a new trial? These questions stimulate a critical examination of the implications of literary censorship and the boundaries of artistic expression. I ponder these questions while engaging with stories Manto wrote in the latter phase of his life, a period marked by declining health. His numerous legal trials and criticism from contemporaries—particularly from critics and authors associated with the Progressive Writers Movement, of which he was initially a member—did not dissuade him from pursuing the expression of his beliefs through his writing. His unapologetic and unflinching attitude to what he believed in, is demonstrated in several short stories that he authored, despite facing repeated penalisation by the court. However, as he wrote in his essay, he was frustrated and angry while recalling his repeated trials. He writes:

> My first four stories to be tried were as follows: Kālī Shalvār (Black Shalwar), Dẖuvāṇ (Smoke), Bū (Smell), and Tẖanḍā Gosht (Cold Meat). The fifth one was Upar, Nīčhē aur Darmiyān (Above, Below, and Middle).
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> I was acquitted on the first three stories. I had to travel two or three times to Lahore from Delhi to be present at the hearing for Kālī Shalvār. However, Dẖuvāṇ and Bū turned out to be a real pain because I had to come all the way from Bombay.
>
> But it was the court case on Tẖanḍā Gosht that proved to be the most vexing. It really left me totally exhausted.[1]

[1] Muhammad Umar Menon's translation of Manto's essay, "*Paāṇchvāṇ Muqaddama*," published in *Scroll.in* in (2014). The translation was first published in *The Annual of Urdu Studies* in 2013. It is intriguing why Manto did not mention the trial for "Khol Do", which was banned by the Pakistan government in 1949. He was on trial for the story. See Waheed 97-98. Jalal (2013) and Waheed (2022) both mention six

The first part of Manto's essay was published in *Nuqush* in 1953, whereas the second part faced delays due to Manto's declining health and was published two years posthumously. In the essay, Manto mentions his previous trials, but specifically details his ordeal during the process of the fifth trial. It is well documented that he was brought to trial multiple times on charges of obscenity in both colonial India and Pakistan. Scholars Ayesha Jalal (2013) and Sarah Waheed Fatima (2019) note that Manto underwent legal trials on six occasions for writing stories considered controversial and obscene, which ultimately led to six separate bans. In late colonial India, the stories "Dẖuvāṇ" (Smoke), "Bū" (Odour), and "Kālī Shalvār" (Black Trousers) were banned. Following the 1947 partition of the Indian subcontinent and the author's migration to Pakistan, three more stories, "Khol Do" (Open It), "Tẖanḍā Gosht" (Cold Meat), and "Upar, Nīčhē aur Darmiyān" (Above, Below, and Between), were censored.

I reflect on Manto's legal trials, noting that references to the author and his short stories, even in the current scholarship, continue to be overshadowed by the persistent issues of obscenity and censorship. Although not every reader and critic in Manto's time opposed his writing, many prominent authors and critics expressed strong reservations regarding portraying sexuality in his short stories. In his reading of the archives of the APPWA (All Pakistan Progressive Writers Association), Kamran Asdar Ali (2011) shows how Manto's contemporaries critiqued the author's obscene narratives and deemed all such writers unproductive for society. This question of obscenity and censorship extended beyond Manto's contemporaries; even in recent discussions, the unresolved question of obscenity in his narratives continues to evoke debates. Two examples will buttress my claim: An analysis of recent notable scholarship on Manto reveals a persistent focus on issues of obscenity and censorship. Jalal (2013), Mufti (2007), and Waheed (2022), along with numerous other prominent contemporary critics, analyze Manto's writing through various theoretical frameworks; however, the issue of censorship emerges as a significant consideration in their interpretations.

This preoccupation extends beyond the realm of scholarly and critical responses to the author, permeating mass-oriented media such as cinema and theatre, where a comparable trend is evident. In addition to several biopics and television series about Manto produced in both India and Pakistan, two theatrical productions in India can be cited as examples: *Ek Mulaqāt Manto Se* (1998/ 2002 A Meeting with Manto) a production by National School of Drama and *Manto, Ismat Hāzir Haiṇ* (2019; Manto and

trials of the author. If we include the trial for "Khol Do," the trial for "Upar, Nīčhē Aur Darmiyān" was his sixth trial.

Ismat are present), a play directed by Naseeruddin Shah, a renowned theatre artist and film actor. Shah's play offers a dramatic interpretation of the court cases involving Ismat Chughtai (1915–1991) and Saadat Hasan Manto, marking the first time these legal trials were presented as theatrical performances. The former staged for the first time at the Nehru Centre, London, in 2002, attempts to bring Manto's personality to the audience through an exploration of his life and times; the latter, a more recent play is set against the backdrop of a politically and socially charged era in the early to mid-twentieth century and explores the themes of censorship, artistic freedom, and societal norms. Utilising the conventions of legal language, in which the accused are obligated to be present (*hāẓir*) in court, the play conveys the respective cases of both authors for adjudication by the audience. Both authors were accused of obscenity in their stories and had to appear before the court in Lahore. Chughtai's memoir, *Kāġẖẓī hai Pairahan* (translated into English as *A Life in Words: Memoirs* by M. Asaduddin), contains a chapter detailing her trial in the Lahore court during the late colonial period in India, wherein she also elaborates on Manto's trial and his responses in the court.

Let me return to the question of Manto's writing after his sixth trial. In the second part of "The Fifth Trial," Manto reveals that the judge overseeing his case was one of his admirers; however, he still imposed a fine of twenty-five rupees on the author. The judge, Mehdi Ali Siddiqi, later expressed his admiration for the author in his article titled "Manto aur Maiṇ," as noted by Muhammad Umar Menon. Did Manto yield to societal pressure and cease writing stories after his last trial of his life? If he did not, how did he explore themes of sexuality and sexual intimacy in his work? Why was he not summoned for legal trials again if he continued producing provocative stories? Would the court have exercised leniency if Manto were to face charges of obscenity once again?

In line with his earlier practices, Manto persisted in his storytelling and did not refrain from exploring themes of sexuality in his narratives. In the last phase of his life, Manto wrote "Aṣlī Jinn" (The Real Jinn), a story dealing with Farkhanda, a young girl and her sexual intimacy with Naseema, a girl in her neighbourhood. The narrator of the story describes their passionate encounters on the roof of their adjacent houses and behind the closed doors of their rooms. "Aṣlī Jinn" possesses a dual capacity to provoke offence among some readers, not only due to its explicit depiction of sexual intimacy but also due to its engagement with homoerotic desires.

Given that his contemporary author, Ismat Chughtai, was summoned by the court in late colonial India for "Lihāf," a story addressing similar themes, why was Manto not summoned to court for this story? How did

"Aṣlī Jinn" evade scrutiny from critics? Why was it not categorized as an obscene narrative? While it is true that Chughtai's story was written during a different period from Manto's, one must ask: if gaining independence from the colonizer was meant to ensure liberty and freedom of expression, why did Manto face trials three times in Pakistan? Simultaneously, various short stories and pieces of fiction written in the same period featured explicit descriptions of sexuality and physical intimacy, yet their authors did not face allegations of obscenity. For instance, in her memoirs, Chughtai mentions her heated arguments with M Aslam, the author of *Gunāh kī Rāteṇ* (sinful nights), a novel known for its explicit details of sexual intimacy. What accounts for the absence of these works in the current debates surrounding censorship? Was Manto being penalised for being Manto? For embodying an unapologetic spirit, remaining undaunted, and standing unflinchingly resilient even in the face of relentless trials?

A possible explanation is the delayed publication of "Aṣlī Jinn," which might even be released posthumously. The editor mentions in *Bāqiyāt-e Manto* that the stories and articles featured in this collection were not included in any books during the author's lifetime. While some of the material included was published in magazines and journals, other pieces remained unpublished for decades. The editor notes that "Aṣlī Jinn," the volume's opening text, was written on 26 May 1954. In the absence of any substantial archival support, it is difficult to explain the deferral in its publication. It could be an intentional move by Manto or his family due to his health concerns in the last years of his life. Scholars have documented how Manto grappled with a range of health issues throughout his life, particularly in the last phase. In the second part of "The Fifth Trial," Manto indicates that the completion of the second part of the essay was postponed due to his deteriorating health.

Instead of examining the factors that contributed to the delayed publication, my primary interest lies in envisioning the responses that would have emerged, had the story been published during Manto's lifetime. I wonder whether the narrative would have provoked significant criticism and reactions from the public, literary communities, and the judiciary. It won't be gainsaying to claim that Manto was not the first to explore themes of sexual intimacy or homoerotism in Urdu literature. The literary tradition is rich in history, featuring numerous authors celebrating the complexities of intimacy and desires in their works. In addition to Urdu poetry, which has historically served as a medium for poets to articulate themes of love and desire, by the time Manto wrote "Aṣlī Jinn," several narratives that engaged with homoerotic desires were already in circulation. For instance, more than a decade before Manto's story, Ismat Chughtai and Mohammad

Hasan Askari published short stories dealing with same-sex relationships.

Homoerotic Desires in Three Urdu Stories in Late Colonial India

It can be claimed with some conviction that in the literature outlining homoerotic desires in South Asia, Ismat Chughtai's "Lihāf" (1942) has attained a canonical stature. First published in *Adab-e Latīf*, a popular Urdu journal edited by Shahid Ahmad Dehlvi, the story has appeared several times in posthumous collections of the author, and has been translated multiple times into English and other Indian languages. The short story is widely acknowledged as a seminal work that has garnered significant attention from general readers and literary scholars, often surpassing the recognition afforded to other twentieth-century texts addressing homoerotic themes. It is distinguished by its audacious exploration of same-sex desire and the intricacies of female sexuality within a conservative cultural milieu. The narrative has prompted extensive discourse and critical analysis, demonstrating its impact on the literary landscape. Chughtai's innovative narrative approach, coupled with her sensitive portrayals of love and longing, challenges prevailing societal norms, thus positioning "Lihāf" as a pivotal text within the queer literature canon. As a result, it continues to serve as a significant focus for scholars examining the intersections of gender, sexuality, and literature in the context of South Asia.

A little less recognised than "Lihāf" are two short stories by Mohammad Hasan Askari (1919–1978), a writer, editor, and literary critic who was initially affiliated with the Progressive Writers' Movement. Askari's "Phislan" (Slipperiness), published in 1941, is a coming-of-age story about Jamil, while "Chāi ki P|yālī " (A Cup of Tea), released in 1942, centres on Dolly, a young Christian girl. Both narratives explore desire through homoerotic and heterosexual themes in the experiences and imaginations of their young protagonists (Farooqi 84). It would be an oversimplification to interpret all three stories exclusively through the lens of homoeroticism. Nonetheless, they exemplify the varied responses of readers, critics, and the judiciary to the representation of sexuality in literature. While writers like Ismat Chughtai and Saadat Hasan Manto faced legal trials for their works, Askari escaped similar scrutiny or criticism.

Manto's "Aṣlī Jinn"

As mentioned in the previous section of the essay, Manto wrote several stories during the last phase of his life, which, considering the censorship norms of the time, could be viewed as obscene. Written in 1954, less than a year before the author's demise, "Aṣlī Jinn" is one of Manto's last stories. Like many of his stories, which have been criticised for explicit descriptions of sexual acts, this story also includes sections that describe passionate love

and physical intimacy. The sexual intimacies portrayed in this narrative involve two young adult women, which sets it apart as potentially the only work in Manto's entire oeuvre that explicitly explores homoerotic female desires. Highlighting the complexity of female relationships and sexual desires, it also challenges societal norms by bringing to light the often-overlooked experiences of women in the context of love and desire.

Set against the backdrop of Lucknow/ Lahore,[2] the story revolves around Farkhanda, a lonely teenage girl and the only daughter of Nawab Nawazish Ali. Following her father's death, she longs for companionship and develops feelings for her new neighbour, Naseema, a Punjabi girl. Naseema's boyish features enchant Farkhanda, while Naseema is attracted to Farkhanda's beauty. Their friendship transforms into a romantic relationship, marked by passionate embraces and secret kisses. The narrator describes their intimate moments using euphemisms, often leaving both himself and the reader to ponder the details, while intentionally limiting his perspective during crucial moments of intimacy in the narrative.

The secret romantic relationship between the two girls deepens, resulting in an intense emotional and physical dependence on one another. However, Farkhanda's mother becomes increasingly aware of her daughter's declining health and disapproves of her friendship with Naseema, imposing restrictions that threaten to sever their bond. Desperate to see Naseema, Farkhanda implores her mother for permission, but her requests are refused. Farkhanda becomes hysterical. Convinced that a *jinn* is responsible for Farkhanda's condition, her mother seeks assistance from exorcists and faith healers, yet Farkhanda's health continues to deteriorate. One day, finding her mother away, Farkhanda attempts to reach out to Naseema but inadvertently contacts her younger brother instead. In the end, Farkhanda's health improves, the alleged *jinn* disappears, and she marries Naseema's brother, while Naseema does not attend the wedding.

The story draws on the figure of the *jinn* from Islamic cosmology and theology, where *jinns* are believed to exist in a world parallel to ours. According to Islamic holy scriptures, *jinns* are complex entities created from the elemental essence of smokeless fire and endowed with free will. They possess the capacity for moral decision-making, enabling them to embody various characteristics, including both virtuous and malevolent traits. However, possession by a *jinn* is also a cultural belief in different Muslim societies across the world. Manto's depiction of the *jinn* appears to align more closely with descriptions found in folk narratives rather than those in

[2] Initially, the story refers to the city as Lucknow, but later it is referred to as Lahore.

religious texts.

Although the term "Jinn" appears in the title, readers do not encounter any distinctly supernatural elements until the latter part of the narrative, when Farkhanda is perceived to be possessed by a *jinn*. The powerful *jinn* presents such a significant challenge that even exorcists, faith healers, and their associated amulets and charms are rendered ineffective. Eventually, her healing does not result from any form of magic or spells, but rather from her encounter with Naseema's brother. The narrator prompts readers to critically examine the authenticity of Farkhanda's experience. It also raises questions about the nature of reality and the characters' psychological state, inviting readers to consider the interplay between the known and the unknown within the storyline. Did a *jinn* truly possess her, or were her desires influencing her condition? The story encourages readers to interpret meaning independently, yet it simultaneously presents an unexpected element through the candid portrayal of homoerotic desires between two female characters. This explicit depiction challenges conventional boundaries within the text and invites deeper contemplation of sexuality and identity in the characters' interactions.

Despite enduring six trials, Manto's exploration of homoerotic desires in "Aṣlī Jinn" exemplifies his unwavering commitment to challenge societal norms and resist the pressures imposed by his contemporaries, critics, and the judiciary. Beyond simply confronting the stigma associated with same-sex relationships, I suggest that the story seeks to recognise the complexities of sexual desires in humans, irrespective of gender associations. The "aṣlī" or real *jinn* in the story is the *jinn* of desires that serves as a metaphorical acknowledgment of the pervasive influence of carnal desires that individuals experience, regardless of gender. In the narrative, the *jinn* serve as metaphors for the complex dimensions of human emotions and feelings, illustrating how desires can shape behaviour and compel individuals to seek fulfilment.

Like his six stories that were classified as obscene and subsequently censored, Manto's "Aṣlī Jinn" holds the potential to challenge established moral standards and push the boundaries of acceptable discourse. It is crucial to acknowledge that the reception of his writings by the public, critics, and the judiciary may have evolved over time, especially in light of increasing debates surrounding freedom of expression and artistic liberties. A present-day judge in a modern court might appreciate Manto's writing as productive and subversive, resulting in a more lenient approach. Had the story been published during his lifetime, Manto could have been subjected to yet another legal trial—his seventh trial for "Aṣlī Jinn."

"The Real Jinn"[3]

Memories of early days in Lucknow: When Nawab Nawazish Ali passed away, his daughter was around eight years old. She was quite frail, weak, delicate, and had sharp facial features—just like a doll. Her name was Farkhanda.

Her father's death deeply saddened her. However, her age was such that soon she forgot all about it. She felt the heavy burden of her sorrow when she came of age, as her mother imposed strict restrictions on her movements outside the house and required her to observe purdah. She was confined within the four walls of her house all the time. She had no siblings. Often, she cried and expressed her frustration to God, questioning why He had deprived her of a brother and taken her father away.

Her mother loved her, but having her around all the time did not comfort Farkhanda in any way. She longed to be with someone whose presence could dispel the monotony of her life.

She always seemed frustrated. She was about to turn eighteen. Her birthday was just ten or twelve days away when a Punjabi family moved into a neighbourhood house that had been vacant for some time. The family had eight sons and one daughter. Among the eight sons, two were married while the others were still studying in schools and colleges. The daughter was the eldest among the six sons. She had a strong, sturdy, and healthy build and appeared to be two and a half years older than her actual age. She had already passed her entrance exams, but her parents decided that she would not pursue any further education. The reason for this decision is unclear to me.

The girl's name was Naseema. But, unlike her name, she wasn't soft, delicate, or slow-paced. She possessed extreme swiftness and heat … that girl with a tender moustache saw Farkhanda from her rooftop when Farkhanda was trying to read a novel out of boredom.

They were on the roof together, quickly becoming acquainted by exchanging just a few sentences.

At first glance, Farkhanda did not find Naseema's face attractive, but after talking to her for a while, she liked everything about her. She had broad features, as if she were a young boy, and a damp, tender moustache. Her limbs were heavily built, and she had a broad chest that somewhat lacked bulges. Farkhanda especially liked the soft and tender hair on her upper lip. Therefore, they both became friends immediately.

[3] The translation of the story is by Haris Qadeer. The story has been translated from the original Urdu text included in *Bāqiyāt-e Manto* (2009).

Naseema looked at the book in her hand and asked: "How is this novel?"

Farkhanda replied, "It's quite horrible! It was just lying there. I was fed up with loneliness, so I thought I would read a few pages."

Naseema borrowed the novel from Farkhanda. It was truly horrible! However, she continued reading it late into the night. In the morning, she returned it to Farkhanda with help from her domestic staff. Farkhanda was still feeling lonely and had nothing to do, so she thought of going through a few pages of the novel. When she opened the book, she found a note on a piece of paper addressed to her. It was written by Naseema.

As Farkhanda read the text, she felt a shiver run through her entire body. She went to the roof immediately. Naseema told her that if she wanted to call her, she should strike the loose brick that had fallen off the parapet with another brick loudly. She would come immediately.

When Farkhanda struck the brick, Naseema arrived on the roof quickly – in a minute's time. Perhaps, she was awaiting a response to her note. As soon as she arrived, she climbed over the four-and-a-half feet high parapet in manly style and jumped down to the other side, hugged Farkhanda, and immediately planted a long kiss on her lips.

Farkhanda became very happy. They talked intimately with each other. She found Naseema to be even more beautiful. She deeply admired every action of hers that resembled that of men. Right then and there, they decided to remain friends till their last breath.

On the day of Farkhanda's birthday, she asked her mother if she could invite her neighbour, who had now become her friend. Her mother replied in her typical Lucknawi style: "There's no problem with that. You may invite her, but I don't particularly like her. I have seen her acting boisterously like boys."

Farkhanda retorted: "No, my dear mother, she is a very nice girl. Whenever we meet, she is always very courteous."

Nawab Sahib's wife responded: "Perhaps! But to me, she seems to lack the softness of a young girl. However, if you insist, you may invite her, but you must ensure that your interaction with her remains limited.

Farkhanda sat beside her mother on the bed, took the betelnut cutter from her hands, and began cutting the areca nuts. "But dear mother, we both swore to be friends for our entire lives. Human beings should never break their promises."

Begum Sahiba was a woman of principle, so she did not raise any objections. She became silent after saying, "You have to deal with it. I don't

know anything."

Naseema arrived on Farkhanda's birthday. She wore a striped, poplin kameez and a tight pair of pyjamas, in which her strong calves displayed their strength. Farkhanda found her very beautiful in this dress. She welcomed Naseema with all her feminine tenderness, along with some flirtation and coquetry. For example, when tea was served at the table, she prepared a cup and offered it to Naseema. When Naseema told her that she did not like tea, Farkhanda began to cry. She took a bite of a biscuit and insisted that Naseema eat the rest. Then, she held a samosa in her mouth and asked Naseema to take half of it with her lips.

Farkhanda and Naseema had moments when they almost quarrelled, but Farkhanda felt happy about it. She wanted to see Naseema every day. Farkhanda loved to tease and irritate her just enough to spark gentle quarrels that would create small ripples in the otherwise stagnant waters of her life. Those ripples had already started to form, and Naseema and Farkhanda were beginning to float in them. Farkhanda had received permission and began visiting Naseema's home. They closed the door of Naseema's room and sat together, talking for hours. I wonder what they discussed!

Their love grew so strong that whenever Farkhanda made a purchase, she always thought of Naseema. Her mother was against this. Since she was her only child, she didn't want to make her sad. With her ample wealth, it didn't bother her to buy fabric for two kameez instead of one. When Farkhanda purchased satin fabric for ten *shalwars* for herself, she also bought the same fabric for five *shalwars* for Naseema.

Naseema did not like satin. She was accustomed to wearing cotton. She took all these things from Farkhanda but never felt the need to thank her. Instead, she only smiled. After accepting these gifts, she embraced Farkhanda tightly with strong arms and said: "My father is poor. If he were rich, I would comb your beautiful hair daily with a golden comb. You would have sandals made of silver, and fragrant water would be available for your bath. Your arms would be around mine as we journey through all the destinations of heaven to the edge of hell.

I don't know why she wanted to go from heaven to hell! But whenever she spoke of paradise, she also referenced hell. At first, Farkhanda was intrigued by her, but as she got to know her better, she realised that there were hardly any differences between them. When someone experiences warmth after cold, it comforts them in every respect. And Farkhanda received that comfort. With each passing day, their friendship grew stronger; in other words, it became so intense that it caused pain to the wife

of the late Nawab Nawazish Ali. Often, she felt as if Naseema were her doom. But she felt, that this thought was very undignified.

Now, Farkhanda often stayed with Naseema. After waking up, she went to the roof. Naseema lifted her towards the parapet, and they engaged in some unknown conversations for hours behind the closed door.

Farkhanda had two friends who were dull and lifeless. They were from Uttar Pradesh and appeared so frail that they looked like a *dopalli topi* or a two-cornered muslin skullcap. A strong gust of wind could blow them away.

Before she met Naseema, these two were the heart and soul of Farkhanda's life. However, now she felt no affection for them. Instead, she wished they would stop visiting her, as they seemed lifeless. In comparison to Naseema, they were tiny mice that didn't even know how to nibble.

Once, she had to go to Karachi with her mother against her will for a short time. Farkhanda felt extremely sad because Naseema was not at her home. Therefore, as soon as she arrived in Karachi, she wrote a lengthy apology. Prior to this, she had already sent a telegram. In her letter, she detailed her feelings and expressed that life without Naseema was joyless, saying, "I wish you could have come with me!"

Her mother had a lot of work in Karachi, but she did not allow her to do anything. Every day, at least a hundred times, she said: "I am sad. This place isn't even a real city! The water here has upset my digestion… finish your work quickly so we can go back to Lahore."

The Begum of Nawab Nawazish Ali left all her work unfinished and agreed to return. However, Farkhanda said: "If we are going back, shall we shop? Here, clothes and other goods are quite cheap."

They went shopping. Farkhanda bought beautiful, printed fabric for ten pairs of slacks for her friend Naseema. She also purchased a pair of walking shoes and a watch that would fit Naseema's broad wrist. The fear of her daughter's anger kept the mother silent.

When they arrived in Lahore from Karachi, Farkhanda, despite feeling tired from the journey, went straight to see Naseema. Naseema had a sulky expression and was extremely angry that Farkhanda had left without meeting her. Farkhanda apologised profusely and did her best to cheer her up, but Naseema remained unconvinced. Then, Farkhanda began to weep bitterly and told Naseema that if she continued to remain angry with her, she would poison herself and die. This had an immediate effect, and Naseema embraced her tightly in her powerful arms. She began kissing her passionately.

Both friends closed the doors of the room and sat for a long time,

talking about love. After their conversation, their friendship grew stronger than before. However, Farkhanda's mother noticed that her daughter's health was gradually deteriorating with each passing day. Consequently, she imposed restrictions on Farkhanda's visits outside the home. As a result, Farkhanda began to suffer from fits of hysteria.

When Begum Sahiba discussed the matter with some women she knew, they suggested that the girl might be possessed by a *jinn*. In other words, a *jinn* had perhaps fallen in love with her and wouldn't leave her alone. Immediately, magic and spells were performed. Exorcists were called, and amulets and charms were provided, but all of these efforts proved futile.

Farkhanda's condition continued to deteriorate. No one understood the reason behind it. She became frailer day by day. Sometimes she remained silent for hours; other times, she shouted. She shed tears, reminiscing about her friend Naseema.

Her mother, who wasn't weak-faithed, believed what her acquaintance told her: that a *jinn* had fallen in love with her daughter. This, she thought, was the reason the girl often spoke of love and romance and took long, deep breaths.

Once again, an attempt was made. Magicians and exorcists were called from far-off places, and medicines were also administered. Farkhanda repeatedly requested her mother to call her friend Naseema, but she ignored her.

One day, Farkhanda's condition deteriorated significantly. There was no one else at home. Her mother, who had never ventured beyond the confines of their house, put on a burqa and went to a neighbour, asking for help. Together, they hurried to Farkhanda's room, only to discover she was not there.

The Begum of Nawab Nawazish Ali began to scream and cry, frantically shouting, "Farkhanda, my daughter! Farkhanda!" They searched every nook and cranny of the house but couldn't find her. The neighbour held her hand, but she continued to wail and weep.

Farkhanda stood on the roof, in a semi-conscious state. She picked up the brick that had fallen off the parapet and began to strike it with another brick.

Nobody came.

Once again, she struck the brick against another. A few moments later, a handsome young man, the eldest of Naseem's six unmarried brothers, who was studying for his BA examination under the porch, came outside. He noticed a frail, delicate girl standing on the other side of the parapet.

She appeared extremely tense; her hair was loose, her lips were parched, and her eyes reflected the turmoil of countless wounded waves.

He approached Farkhanda and asked, "Who are you calling?"

Farkhanda looked at that young man with great interest and said: "I was calling Naseema."

"Oh, come here then," the young man said as he lifted the lightweight Farkhanda over the parapet and carried her to the porch where he was studying for his exams.

The next day, the *jinn* disappeared. Farkhanda was absolutely fine. In the following month, she got married to the same brother of Naseema. Naseem did not attend the wedding.

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