



Habib University
shaping futures

LADY FATIMA ENDOWED CHAIR

IN WOMEN AND DIVINITY

In memory of (Late) Zainab Dawood Habib
Endowed by Mr. Abbas D. Habib Family

Bibi Fatima (A.S) is quoted as saying:

“

مَنْ أَصْعَدَ إِلَى اللَّهِ خَالِصَ عِبَادَتِهِ،
أَهْبَطَ اللَّهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ لَهُ أَفْضَلَ مَصْلِحَتِهِ

Whoever ascends to the glorious and sublime Divinity in pure, unfettered adoration, the Divinity bestows on them the most exquisite and salubrious situation.

”

Habib University – Opening Pathways to Knowledge Creation

Habib University is Pakistan's first dedicated undergraduate liberal arts and sciences institution, which offers students the opportunity to gain a world-class education. We believe that the only way to build a high-quality institution of learning is through broad societal ownership. It is due to this community support that the University is able to provide generous scholarships and financial aid ensuring that students from diverse backgrounds are able to attain the knowledge and skills required to become engaged and empathetic future leaders.

A Reparative Approach to Our Curriculum

In our pedagogical mission and encompassing curricular framework, the goal of lifelong thoughtful self-cultivation is realized through a reparative approach to knowledge and its transmission. Our objectives as an institution are oriented towards analyzing and understanding, as well as healing and repairing our broken and breaking world. This understanding emerges from our guiding motto that comes from the great sage of Islam, Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (A.S): 'The worth of every human is in the measure of their thoughtful self-cultivation' (our translation of *قِيَمَةُ كُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا يُحْسِنُهُ*).

The Lady Fatima Zahra (A.S) Endowed Chair in Women and Divinity

The Lady Fatima Zahra Endowed Chair in Women and Divinity at Habib University, is the first chair in women and divinity in the world. The Chair is housed in Habib University's Comparative Humanities Program, and seeks to institutionalize in the Religious Studies component of the major, the scholarly study of the role of women, as well as the feminine aspects of divinity, in religious traditions. There is a globally recognized need for a focus on women, and it is indeed a growing field that has produced some of the best scholars and scholarship over the past few decades.

In the tradition of the Ahl-e-Bayt (the Prophet's household of which Lady Fatima Zahra is a part), the Chair will also have an interfaith dimension, addressing the relation between women and divinity in a spectrum of faiths. Women also constitute the majority of students at Habib, and through this endowed chair we will be able to amplify our efforts to increase female representation in the faculty and the curricula. The Chair will further establish the globally distinctive nature of the Comparative Humanities program, and Habib University at large.

Endowed Chair: An Intellectual Investment in Advancing Society

An endowed chair is one of the highest academic awards that the University can bestow on an academic scholar. It is both an honor to the named holder of the appointment and also an enduring tribute to the donor who establishes it. The establishment of an endowed chair benefits not only the scholarly community at the University, it also increases the depth of conversations in the wider society – locally and globally – highlighting the paradigm-setting aspect of the title awarded to the endowed chair.

The Lady Fatima Endowed Chair in Women and Divinity holds great significance as it presents an opportunity to advance research in the scholarly study of women and divinity through the example of Lady Fatima. The Lady Fatima Zahra Endowed Chair in Women & Divinity will thus play an important role in leading crucial conversations to manifest neglected aspects in the truth of religious traditions.

Gift of Reparation by Abbas D. Habib Family: Reclaiming Spirituality & the Lost Status of Women

The Lady Fatima Chair in Women and Divinity has been endowed in the memory of (Late) Zainab Dawood Habib by the Mr. Abbas D. Habib family. The establishment of endowed chairs is an invaluable gift from extraordinary and visionary donors, representing deep and lasting commitment to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge, which serves to benefit society as a whole. It takes an even greater vision to commit to a Chair dedicated to a path-breaking, paradigm-changing subject: as is the case in the Abbas D. Habib family's endowment of the Lady Fatima Chair in Women and Divinity – a global first.

“What you have here in Habib, is something very unique... How do we heal the ruptures of coloniality? No one has figured this out yet, no one. If Habib, and the project that you're doing here, can even make a few steps towards figuring this out, this will be a tremendous – tremendous! – gift and achievement, not just for people here in Pakistan, but for people all over the world. Both in the West, in the global North, and in the South.”

– Dr Oludamini Ogunnaike –

Associate Professor of African Religious
Thought and Democracy, University of Virginia

In Pakistan and the broader Islamic world, the contributions and roles of women like Sayeda Zahra and Zainab (A.S) have faded from the collective consciousness, overshadowed by a prevailing hyper-masculine narrative. This systemic removal of women from religion has limited women's rights and created a hostile environment for women all over the world. Our world today bears the weight of centuries of misperceptions and inequalities concerning the status of women, deeply entrenched in cultural, religious, and societal narratives.

The Lady Fatima Endowed Chair in Women & Divinity at Habib University marks a key advancement in the study of women's roles and stature in religious traditions and reflects a commitment to academic excellence, interfaith dialogue, and gender equality.

Inaugural Lecture

Thinking on the Tattered Planet: Ecostress, Religion, and the Gender Quarrel

Abstract of the Talk

This inaugural talk seeks to anticipate themes in the Lady Fatima Chair in Women and Divinity lecture series, by asking generally: what thinking can we aspire to cultivate on our tattered planet? Weaving together notes on extreme heat, blazing over the planet through 2024, prophetic lessons on sustainable living, and reverent memories of Hazrat Bibi Fatima (A.S), the talk revisits the themes of living tradition and life science, religion and hope, as well as the gender quarrel, ongoing under the conditions of ecostress in which we all participate.

Speaker Profile



Dr. Larisa Jasarevic works on climate ecology, climate futures, as well as in the sciences and metaphysics of the heart. She is especially keen on blending critical (eco) thinking with insights from Islamic metaphysics. Her books include *Beekeeping in the End Times* (IUP 2024) and *Health and Wealth in the Bosnian Market: Intimate Debt* (IUP 2017). Several books she authored for children and young readers are

forthcoming, among them *Habibee: Your Guide to Ecology*, and *Sultana: Your Guide to Islamic Cosmology*. Dr Jasarevic is currently working on a climate fiction book, and is post-producing the documentary *Beekeeping in the End Times* with her sister Azra. She is also an anthropologist and a beekeeper, a hobbyist photographer, and a first-time filmmaker. An independent scholar, Dr Jasarevic dwells in a mountaintop village in Bosnia. Prior to that she taught at the University of Chicago, and was a visiting scholar at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin.



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