

IF YOU CAN'T SEE IT, YOU CAN'T BE IT



**SEVEN QUEENS
OF SINDH**



06

FATIMA JINNAH



09

NOOR JEHAN



10

BANO QUDSIA



13

RUTH PFAU



14

ANITA GHULAM ALI



17

SHUKRIA KHANUM



18

MAJIDA RIZVI



21

BAPSI SIDHWA



22

SHAMIM ARA



25

1940

Masses of women mobilized to participate in political events in the Pakistan Movement. Women arrested for political action.

KISHWAR NAHEED



26

YASMEEN LARI



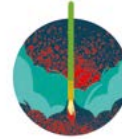
29

ZUBEIDA MUSTAFA



30

SALIMA HASHMI



33

1943

Women's National Guard, formed which morphed into the Girl Guides Association at independence.

1946

Women from the Muslim League participated in the elections.

AMEENA SAIYID



34

**MAJOR GENERAL
SHAHIDA MALIK**



37

1947

Participation in the nationalist struggle for Pakistan led to women's right to education, to vote and to mobilize.

BILQUIS EDHI



38

RESHMA



41

1948

A law passed to recognize women's right to inherit property. Female legislators took a stand against male colleagues to claim this fledgling legal victory.

OURATULAIN BAKHTIARI



42

1949

All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA) formed to advance the welfare of women, with an initial focus on the refugee population.

SHABINA MUSTAFA



45

1950

Democratic Women's Association formed to demand equal pay for equal work.

SHEEMA KERMANI



46

ASMA JEHANGIR



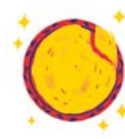
49

MALEEHA LODHI



50

PARVEEN SAEED



53

PARVEEN SHAKIR



54

BENAZIR BHUTTO



57

NILOFER SAEED



58

1954

Karachi Business and Professional Women's Club formed to promote women in business





1956

Reserved seats for women in the assembly accepted in the 1956 Constitution

PERWEEN REHMAN



61

1961

Law passed to protect women's rights with regard to marriage, divorce and custody of children

DR. SEEMIN JAMALI



62

WOMEN'S ACTION FORUM (WAF)



86

1981

Pakistan Women Lawyers Association and Legal Aid Cell (PAWLA) founded to provide free legal aid to women

NIGHAT DAD



89

1983

Women march against discriminatory laws, baton-charged and tear-gassed by police. This day is commemorated as Pakistan's National Women's Day

SHAMIM AKHTAR



65

1962

Issuance of law that allowed women to inherit all forms of property

NABILA MAQSOOD



66

NAZIA HASSAN



69

1984

Qisas & Diyat Ordinance and the Law of Evidence privatized murder, enabling perpetrators of 'honour killings' to go free and reduced the value of women's testimony in a court of law to half that of men

SANA MIR



90

1986

Aurat Foundation founded to promote women's rights

1988

Benazir Bhutto becomes the first female prime minister of Pakistan

NERGIS MAVALVALA



70

SYEDA GHULAM FATIMA



73

SHAZIA SIKANDER



74

1973

Constitution gives women more rights and freedoms, declaring there would be no discrimination on the basis of race, religion, caste or sex

FATIMA ALI



93

1989

The first commercial financial institution for women, First Women Bank Limited, chartered to meet the special needs of women

MARIA TOORPAKAI WAZIR



94

QANDEEL BALOCH



97

MUKHTARAN MAI



77

SABEEN MAHMUD



78

NAMIRA SALIM



81

1976

New act restricts value of dowry and bridal gifts, fixes ceiling on marriage expenditures and penalizes excess

ZENITH IRFAN



98

1996

Pakistan ratifies CEDAW and participates in the Beijing Conference

1997

Saima Waheed wins landmark case allowing her marriage without the consent of her guardian

MALALA YOUSUFZAI



101

MAHEEN RAHMAN



82

SHARMEEN OBAID-CHINYOY



85

1979

Hudood Ordinance passed, which conflated adultery with rape, making it near impossible to prove the latter

1980

The radical Sindhi Tehreek launched as a grassroots initiative to fight discrimination against women, abuse of bonded labour and unequal wages for rural women

2011

Several pro-women laws promulgated that criminalized anti-women practices such as acid crimes and also provided legal and financial assistance to women in prison

LYARI BOXING GIRLS FORMED



102

GIRLS AT DHABAS LAUNCHED



105

2018

Aurat March initiated as an annual protest on International Women's Day—organized across Pakistan by a collective of feminist activists and rights organizations





THE SEVEN QUEENS OF SINDH

16th & 17th CENTURY | SINDH

The seven queens, or the *sut soor mayon*, are inspirational women from history and legend who feature in *Shah Jo Risalo*, penned by the Sufi poet, Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai. These women, although not royalty in real life, are referred to as queens due to their denunciation of regressive, patriarchal norms and for choosing free will and love above all other things.

The theme of female protagonists in Sufi love tales, with stories being told from their point of view, was empowering for the time and allowed the women to be celebrated and revered. While Bhittai is sometimes critiqued for presenting a romanticized and orthodox view of womanhood, he immortalized these seven characters in folk narrative, giving courage to thousands of women to choose bravery and passion over tyranny and subjugation.

Marui stands for fortitude and a love for her homeland when she stands tall and impervious against the foreign ruler who would go to any lengths to make her his, including abducting and keeping her prisoner. When **Moomal** accidentally loses her father's wealth, she and her sisters use magic and illusion to dupe rich suitors for beautiful and soft-hearted Moomal's hand. Hers is a story of longing, true love and an allegory that merges divinity with the soul in the search for peace and honour.

Abandoned by her royal parents for being a bearer of misfortune, **Sassui** is raised by a poor childless couple. She and a local prince fall for each other but his disapproving family triumphs in tearing them apart. Sassui, filled with grief and manic determination, runs across a hot desert barefoot in pursuit of him. Her devotion and piety has inspired thousands over the decades,

for choosing to be swallowed by the earth instead of giving herself to another man.

Sohni, the most famous of the queens, has been immortalized in song, film and Sufi poetry for her tale of defiant love. Married against her wishes, Sohni continues to secretly meet her true love, who she was forbidden to be with because of her caste. However, in the dark of night, the lovers are exposed and drown while attempting to reunite. Sohni's tale of passion and fortitude has withstood time in its popularity.

The story of **Lilan** is not just one of pride, greed and fall but her sincere repentance and recovery. Adored yet spoilt, this queen makes many mistakes but is venerated for learning from them, growing as a person and regaining her prestige. **Sorath's** story is one of complex love, deceit and regret ending in self-immolation to attain a more exalted status. It is also the story of promises being kept at great personal cost.

Noori, a beautiful fisherwoman, becomes a victim of jealousy from courtiers when she captures the attention of the local ruler; but she prevails in her honesty and sincerity to him. When Noori died, the king built a simple white tomb as a monument to a beloved queen who is seen as one of the most romantic characters in Sindhi literature.

While each of the seven fiery queens has her own distinct backstory and personality, together they have come to signify strength, determination and loyalty.





FATIMA JINNAH

1893 – 1967 | THATTA, KARACHI



Fatima Jinnah was as devoted to her brother, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, as he was to her. He supported her dream of becoming a dental surgeon by educating her at a time when there were stark inequalities between men and women, in education and in social and economic rights. Fatima set up the first dental clinic to be managed by a Muslim woman in Calcutta in 1923.

However, after the death of his wife, it was Jinnah who needed Fatima's support as his political adviser. When the All-India Muslim League was organized to demand rights for the Muslims of the subcontinent, she was an active member of its working committee. She was present at important political events, including the signing of the Lahore Resolution in 1940, a decisive step in determining the future of Muslims in British India. During the turbulent transfer of power in 1947 and the birth of Pakistan, Fatima had an integral role in settling women migrants and addressing their issues. A skilled political worker adored by the masses, Fatima, was known as *Māder-e-Millat* (Mother of the Nation) or *Khātūn-e-Pākistān* (Lady of Pakistan). After Jinnah's demise, Fatima became less popular with the democratic and military regimes that took power. She was seen as his natural successor, and therefore, a threat to the establishment, who banned her from addressing the nation.

When she was finally allowed to speak on Radio Pakistan in 1951, the transmission mysteriously stopped—coincidentally in the exact parts she criticized the government. Her book, *My Brother*, was written in 1955 but not published until 1987 due to fear of the impact it might have. Even thirty-two years later, several pages of the original writing were left out. Despite

these hurdles, Fatima remained politically active. She was an elected Member of Parliament and ran for the presidency of Pakistan, against the military dictator Ayub Khan at the age of 71. She lost the election as it was heavily rigged in favour of the man, who ran a dirty campaign that included denouncing her as being backed by foreign agents. He even had ulema declare that women could not be head of the state. Despite his cowardly attempts, Fatima's campaign still drew thousands.

At the time of Fatima's passing, there was speculation that she had been murdered. Her funeral procession exceeded 6,00,000 people and ended in violence as the police baton-charged and tear-gassed anyone who attempted to see her body. This fueled rumours that she had visible wounds at the time of her death.

Despite all hate speech around her work, Fatima's courage and determination made her one of the most fearless women Pakistan has known. Fatima was often photographed standing next to important men of the period, something unusual for the time, but her message was clear: women need to play a role in society and politics alongside men. Fatima will always be remembered as the first prominent female politician of Pakistan and indeed, some would say, the female founder of the country.



NOOR JEHAN

1926 – 2000 | KASUR, LAHORE, KARACHI

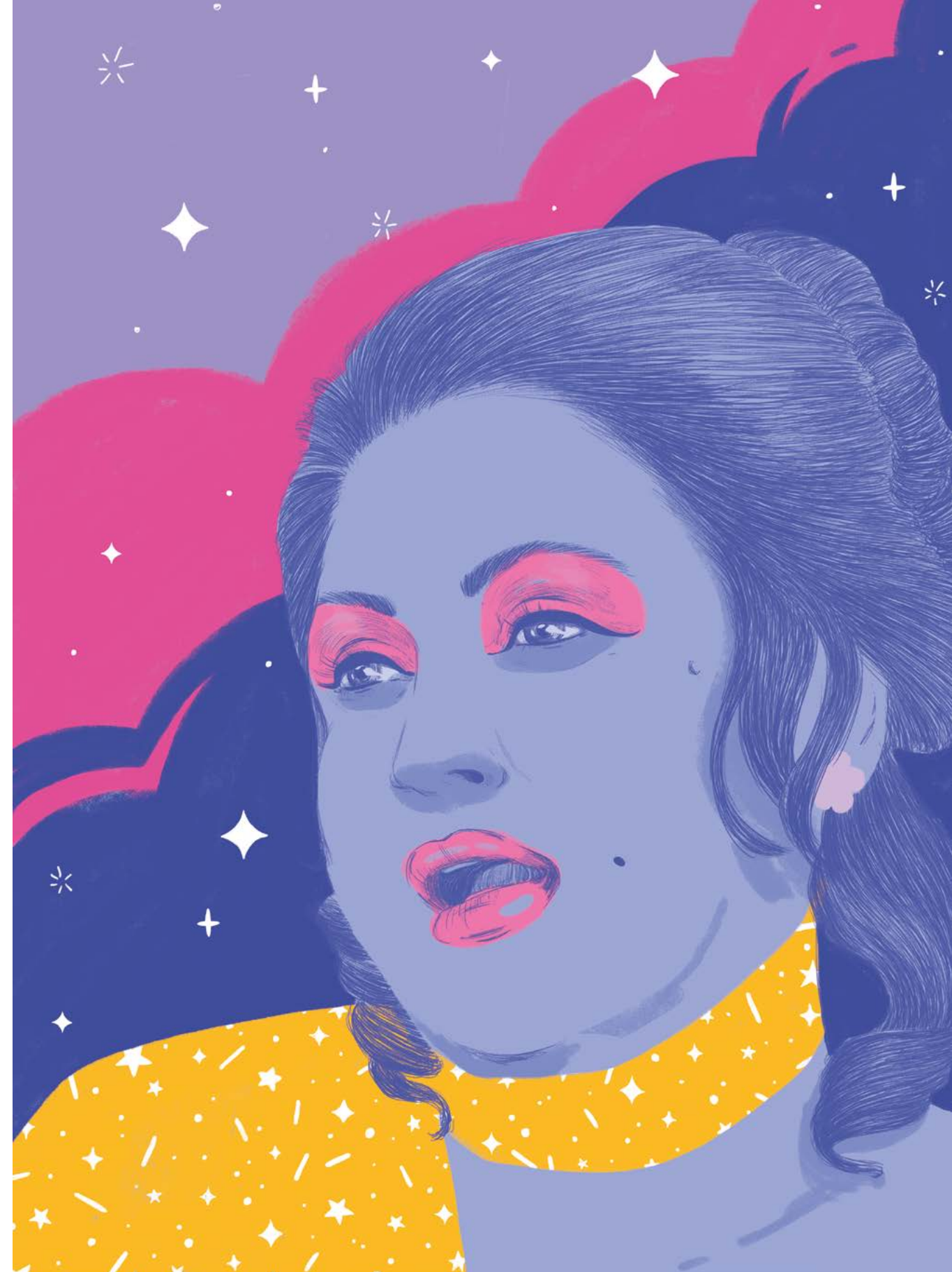
Pakistan's Queen of Melody, Noor Jehan's life is an inspiring story for all women with big dreams and a defiant spirit. The first iconic diva of Pakistan's entertainment industry rose from humble origins. Born in the small town of Kasur, Allah Rakhi Wasai was exposed to show business at a young age. She began singing at the age of six, exhibiting considerable versatility and range. Allah Rakhi launched her musical career as a child star in Calcutta under the stage name of 'Baby Noor Jehan'. She moved to Lahore in 1938, where the famed music director Ghulam Haider became her mentor and composed songs for her to sing.

Her career as a singer was taking off when she got her first adult acting role as the female lead in the hit film *Khandaan* in 1942. This prompted her to shift to Mumbai with director, Shaukat Hussain Rizvi, who she later married at seventeen. Post partition, she moved to Karachi and got her first big break in 1951 in the movie *Chan Wey*, opposite Santosh Kumar. She not only acted and sang in this film, but also directed it with her husband, becoming Pakistan's first female director. No mean feat for a woman of her time!

Noor Jehan's career flourished in the 1950s and it is estimated that she recorded about 10,000 songs in various languages, including Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi and Sindhi. She worked without complaint to combine a glittering career with motherhood. However, her marriage suffered and ended in divorce. This fueled gossip about multiple love affairs. But Noor did not let setbacks and scandals get in her way and ruled the Pakistani film industry, not only as a celebrated playback, but also a gifted ghazal singer. She became famous for many other things

too—her silken saris, neckties, bold eye make-up, glamorous hairstyles, sparkling diamonds and her generosity. She remarried in 1959 to a film actor who was nearly a decade younger than her and gave up acting to spend more time with her family. But her musical career continued to flourish. In 1965, she was awarded the Pride of Performance Award for her acting and singing ability and the *Sitara-e-Imtiaz* in 1996.

Hers was a mesmerizing voice, never false on pitch, and she did not waste her talent. Noor Jehan was known for her hard work and devotion to her chosen profession. Through good times and bad, this extraordinary nightingale dedicated keen attention to perfecting her genius. Even in her declining years, she remained an imposing figure and continues to influence musicians in Pakistan today. In a career spanning six decades, two marriages, five children, fourteen films and literally thousands of songs, Noor Jehan was the uncontested grand dame of the Pakistani film vocals.





BANO QUDSIA

1928 – 2017 | LAHORE



There are few in Pakistan who aren't familiar with Bano Qudsia's celebrated works. Her revolutionary writing, which focused on the plight of women and other socio-economic issues including the class and gender divide, appealed to the masses and led to critical acclaim and many awards. As a result, the talented and ambitious Bano reigned as Pakistan's literary queen and enjoyed a professional writing career that spanned over six decades! Her award-winning novel, *Raja Gidh* (The Vulture King), is considered a seminal work in Urdu literature but she is just as well known for her contributions to television and theatre drama, including the popular play, *Aadhi Baat*, which was one of Pakistani television's most celebrated productions.

Born in British India to an agriculturist Jat household, Bano's family migrated to Lahore after Partition and she began writing short stories while still in school. By the time she had completed her Masters in Urdu Literature, no small feat for a female non-native Urdu speaker at the time, Bano had already published her first short story! She met fellow wordsmith and future husband Ashfaq Ahmed at university. Their love story and the home they set up together reflected their mutual love of prose and created worlds and became known as *Dastan Sarai* or the 'Storytelling Lodge'.

Bano was a highly intelligent woman but frequently chose to hide in Ashfaq's shadow, sometimes deflecting focus off herself and on to him. Theirs was a powerful union, if an odd one. He supported her writing, but on his terms. He's famously said to have hired a maid to cook for the family so she could focus on her novel but allowed her to indulge her creative passion only

from 11.30 a.m. to 2 p.m. daily. Bano managed to complete *Raja Gidh* in under two months despite this restrictive schedule and spoke lovingly of his support after he passed, praying that other aspiring female writers find a husband like him.

It remains true that it is difficult to talk about her without including him in the discourse, but the choices Bano made were her own. She knew how to leverage opportunities to put out her message. The couple's influence went beyond traditional literary circles and impacted social and political spheres and narratives as well. They published an Urdu journal with massive outreach called *Dastaango* and patronized writers and thinkers with similar predilections and inclinations. Bano was part of a goodwill delegation sent by Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to Moscow in the 1970s to lobby for Pakistan's cause; during the Cold War, the nation's ideological alignment was changing and political associations would determine the entire future of the nation. Bano's work, with its increasingly sufi and nationalist leanings was strongly influential in the 1980s, allowing Pakistan's emerging middle class to make sense of the sociopolitical changes around them.

Bano Apa (elder sister), as she was often called, is celebrated as a mover-and-shaker in Pakistani history. Whether it was her gifted writing, her spiritualism or her call for tolerance and selflessness that brought her fame, she continues to be memorialized as one of the foremost female Urdu novel and storywriters in modern times.