

## ***Patriarchal Education and Print Journalism: Their Emancipating Impact on Muslim Women of India During 1869-1908***

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### **Abstract**

*The four decades (1869-1908) in the history of the Muslim community of the Indian Subcontinent were crucial not only in general political awakening but also in stimulating awakening of the Muslim women, who had been under patriarchal restrictions and were denied access to formal means of education. This paper looks into this process of uplift and emancipation of Muslim women in these decades. The paper holds that key factors in this regard included the modernist/reformers, educators, print journalism of the day, and associational activity. The paper evaluates the contents of the feminine literature produced during 1869-1908, and looks into its feministic impact in the context of social dynamics of the time. The paper argues that women's education was deliberately planned to be 'education without enlightenment', enhancing only instrumental value of women for the family's and the husband's standard of life. But the journalism was the prime force to deliver emancipating message to women and providing them with tools to express their concerns. Empowerment and consciousness of rights came to women through the bold writings of both men and women, and then that awareness*

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*led women to a more elaborate role in public sphere in the following decades.*

### **Introduction**

The Muslim community of the post-1857 India was caught up in a serious dilemma which can be explained with the help of two concepts of *izzat* (honour, respect), and *zillat* (utter humiliation). These concepts had close connection with the position of women, since the patriarchal ideology had been governing women's lives. This was true for the Muslim aristocracy who faced the shock of *zillat* and the challenge to maintain its lost honour (*izzat*),<sup>1</sup> a condition which demanded a careful revision of the position of women. The colonial onslaught had posed great challenges to the traditional cultural norms and customs, and social and gender dynamics.

This paper identifies four major factors impacting the situation of Muslim women in post-1857 India. These included the general modernization movement led by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, female education, Urdu journalism and literature, and the associational activity. The paper argues that these factors had a variable effect on the overall social transformation process and in particular on the emancipation through self-expression of Muslim women of India, but the role of Urdu journals is found to be the most crucial and catalyzing in women's emancipation, one major reason being the highly patriarchal nature of female education, so avidly pursued to modernize the womenfolk. Some more reasons are outlined in this paper. A review of published material of these decades is also presented to reveal the paradox that despite the objectives of giving education to women and 'modernizing' them, the patriarchal forces were all too alert to contain the process of emancipation of women. These forces tried to make the awareness drive completely subservient to the traditional patriarchal philosophy and ensured that 'value addition' of women was merely for the benefit of the patriarchal system. Education was not taken as a right but was

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1 S. Akbar Zaidi highlights this dilemma and approaches based on the notions of *izzat* and *zillat* among the Muslim community at length, in "Contested Identities and the Muslim Qaum in Northern India: c. 1860-1900" (Ph.D. Diss., Faculty of History, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, 2009).

planned to be a tool to enhance women's capacity to serve the male-dominated family and the community at large. The paradigm of *izzat* was extensively used for this purpose.

This paper is an attempt to evaluate the contents of the feminine literature produced during 1869-1908 as to its feminist tone, comparing females' and males' writings, and looking into the social dynamics of the time which was meaningful for women's uplift and emancipation. Women's right to education, in fact, heralds a series of rights; for understanding them the temporal context is crucial. Regarding women's right to education, some of the questions, to be answered in this paper include: who was defining these rights, what the response was, and what ways and efforts were launched to realize these rights, during the forty years under study.

This paper begins with discussing the socio-cultural context of the mid-nineteenth century India, which helps understand the challenges faced by reformers of women in the domains of culture, education, and the family. Then is outlined the response of Muslim community by highlighting the efforts of modernists and the educators. It is followed by a detailed section on role of the print media in taking up the challenge of women's uplift and education in a commendable way. Since feminism was germinating in India around 1900, this paper touches upon the associational activity in general and for women, as to its implications for the emancipating efforts in those days, as well as its relevance today, a century later.

### **Literature review**

The Muslims had ruled over a great empire in India for about eight centuries. The revolt of 1857 was joined by almost all major religious groups of India, but the Muslim underwent serious privation after losing this war for their being the former rulers. The challenges unleashed from this domination, were many. These are discussed by scholars at length. Since this paper is related to Muslim women's position, only the studies related to this topic are mentioned here.

The status of women has been negotiated by religious, cultural and temporal dimensions of their being in a complex way. The influence of interpretations of scriptural sources of Islam on the

status of women has been crucial. Since mostly Islamic sources of social laws have been interpreted with patriarchal framework the proponents of female subordination in Muslim societies seek justification from the Quran, as Francis Robinson points out.<sup>2</sup> He refers to some of the verses of Quran which endorse practice of confining women to harems or observing *purdah*. However, he accepts that spiritual equality of women is stressed at many places in the Quran. He also adds that the modernization process under the Western influence has encouraged women to be free, engage in roles outside their homes, and let utilize their energies for the development programs of their governments. His assertions are made in a language which is definitely biased, sarcastic and derogatory. He laments that growing influence of educated women has not led to total rejection of Islamic values. What he expects and sees, is that modernization and Islam are antithetical, as he says, 'The tremendous fact is that, whether Islamically inspired or not, women now play a substantial part in public affairs, which is the greatest contemporary challenge to the pattern of Muslim life established over 1400 years ago.'<sup>3</sup>

Interestingly, some views expressed by Robinson reflect the concept of the British colonial rulers who declared the Indians as uncivilized because of the lamentable conditions of Indian women in the nineteenth century. No doubt, the state of social degradation and anarchy, prevailing in the nineteenth century, had affected men and women of all communities invariably. The Muslim *ulama* (clergy) of the day were trying their best to keep women in particular under tight control in order to safeguard the old social order which was crumbling due to lost political power. It was a patriarchal order which felt threatened under the emerging socio-political conditions when the colonial regime tried to introduce its 'civilizing' and 'modernizing' measures. Azra Asghar Ali<sup>4</sup> asserts that the Muslim reformers adopted a strategy to uplift women, not according to the standards of the West, but what they deemed

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<sup>2</sup> Francis Robinson, *Atlas of the Islamic World since 1500* (New York: Facts on File Inc., 1982), p.222.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Azra Asghar Ali, *The Emergence of Feminism among Indian Muslim Women 1920-1947* (Karachi: OUP, 2000).

suitable within the Indian cultural framework. Ali focuses the emergence of feminism among Indian Muslim women during 1920-1947. As a background to this study, she asserts that the efforts of reform in the Indian Subcontinent and the Middle East followed similar pattern with little variance.

The British rule in India started a debate on the state of Indian women who were largely steeped in deleterious customs. The defense strategies of the subjugated communities under the colonial rule had caused the communities to struggle for and preserve their status, which Muslim thought to be indicted by women, who were taken as a sign of 'izzat' for the whole community. Institutions were made to this end and particular emphasis was given upon constructing a *sharif* (noble, pious) culture which the aristocracy had generally practiced during the days when it enjoyed power. The religious reformist approach in the religious field was epitomized by writing *Bahishti Zewar*, a book of instruction which imposed extreme restriction on the Muslim women in order to socialize them as pious daughters, and wives. The modernist reformers turned towards creative writing for educating women at the first stage. Gradually, when the twentieth century dawned, the 'enlightened' Muslim women were expected to have two roles in private and public spheres. The private role was based on their 'dignity and status' in the family, and the public role meant their not being limited to traditional household roles, but to reconstruct a 'virtuous woman' who has social awareness and a national role. Such roles became important in the communalization and identity politics of the 1930s and 1940s. This paper is limited to the phase of 1869-1908, when such transformation was in its initial stages.

Ali confirms that there remains a gap in understanding the chain of developments which opened up spaces for Muslim women in the twentieth century. This paper provides some details in the formative phase of such ideas and the movement which were later identified as feminism. Ali refers to 'various kinds of 'spaces' in which Muslim women were increasingly able to participate in the public space'. This paper indicates how such spaces were initially created and identified. Ali finds a series of issues discussed in the press relating to women. The material is classified by her as

follows: (a) works, mostly as textbooks, published by the government to improve conditions of the Indians; (b) works produced by Indian elite totally following the pattern of education in the Western fashion; (c) works by reformist lama showing resistance to colonial influence; and, (d) works by Muslim social reformers to strike a balance between the indigenous and Western values. She also points out that the reformers mostly concentrated on promoting women's education, domesticity, religious training and social consciousness. The government was also supportive. Ali also presents a review of literature, classifies it into its degree of enlightening message, compares male and female writers, and discusses impact of different categories of writings.

Another relevant work is produced by Metcalf<sup>5</sup> who holds that women were the central theme in the cultural reforms programs of Muslim writers in the British India, as was expressed through the newly introduced medium of print. She agrees that in the colonial context, women were pre-eminent symbols of Islam. Metcalf calls Syed Mumtaz Ali and the Aligarh reformers as colonial collaborators – ‘people who internalized the orientalist argument that Indic traditions had fallen into decay and stagnation, and argued that they could, perhaps, regain vitality through education and reform’.<sup>6</sup> Metcalf also calls social reforms action focused upon women as a role ‘characteristic of an aristocratic (*sharif*) life’, which fostered a distinct life style of women of its class in contrast with the life of majority of the population. She compares the writing of men and women writers of the phase under study, and finds that the respectable middle class was projected as a (potential) model of correct behaviour. Metcalf asserts that in the colonial period, though the Indians engaged themselves in articulating their cultural values, and emphasized ‘ethnic’ – a move which profoundly impacted gender – these changes were interpreted as social and religious, but these were fundamentally political. Devji explains the process of reforms during 1857-1900 as not dealing much with the nature of women but aimed at

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5 Barbara D. Metcalf, ed., ‘Reading and Writing about Muslim Women in British India’, in Zoya Hasan *Forging Identities: Community, State and Muslim Women* (Karachi: OUP, 1996), p.11.

6 *Ibid.*

specifying a place or space for women, in moral, intellectual and physical sense.<sup>7</sup>

Jalal<sup>8</sup> posits that the Muslim press of the North Western provinces in India and the Punjab served as a channel to air educated Muslims' views on as to how far they could go to accept the western cultural influx and technology given their cultural framework shaped by Islam. *Tahzib-ul-Ikhlaq* revealed their possibility of self-promotion. Modernity at that time was a contested idea because there were many subtle shades between modern and traditional. The stark resistance offered to Sir Syed's moves of re-interpreting Islam, promoting independent reasoning and Western knowledge, indicated rejection of Englishness. Regarding women, both the ulama and the Aligarh group, shared almost the same position. In Jalal's words:

Women in the eyes of these men were not only unequal but, depending on their class status, dispensable in the construction of a Muslim communitarian identity. Concerned with projecting and preserving their distinctive religiously informed cultural identity, salaried and professional Muslim men were anxious to protect their women from the 'evil' influences of colonial modernity. Women may have been central to the redefinition of a Muslim middle and upper class identity, but more as silenced partners than active agents.<sup>9</sup>

Jalal also points out that the writers of *ashraf* (nobility) wanted moral uplift of women but to keep *ashraf* women separate from *ajlaf* (commoners) women. She affirms that the indigenous patriarchy, taking women as symbol of distinctive Islamic identity, glorified women as mothers and wives, thus wanted to save them from immorality of public space – schools, etc. These men wanted the state to restrain from making women a public commodity, and control immorality in general. The Muslim men were trying to interpret the colonial modernity with their patriarchal point of views.

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7 Faisal Fatehali Devji, 'Gender and Politics of Space: the Movement for Women's Reform, 1857-1900', in Hasan, *Forging Identities*, p.22.

8 Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2001).

9 *Ibid.*, p.69.

Minault,<sup>10</sup> in her landmark work on the issue of women's education and uplift in the post-1857 phase, analyses its important dimensions including: literature and journals produced for women; government and private schools; and reform efforts both by religious and educational reformers. She appreciates the efforts of reformers who worked with dedication, courage and competence as well as risked their own livelihood for their mission. She finds that women authors and editors, engaged in reform and uplift in the early decades of the twentieth century did not challenge the basic ideology based on patriarchal Islamic framework. This was so because they could gain nothing from asserting their individuality but only from enhancing their position within the household and by maintaining the status and honour of male relatives. She elaborates the debate over contents of education as to which curriculum was most suitable for girls' education. Her work provides extensive details on the processes of educating, reforming, and giving confidence to women at large. In the epilogue she declares her research as 'a story of the ideas and actions of men as they sought to create ideal women who would be wives and mothers qualified to meet the challenges of life in a rapidly changing world.' Latif<sup>11</sup> explains that historically there existed prejudice against women's education, assertiveness, and only a few roles were assigned to them; all others were taken as deviation from the ideal. The Muslim thinkers, who were concerned with explaining the loss of political power and devising strategies to regain power had earlier resorted to appeal to tradition, based on pure Islam. Later they abandoned this approach and sought reconciliation with the new power for which they had to compete with other groups having similar pursuits. Muslim women had rights, but never exercised them. The Muslim community in the nineteenth century India was disparate, following diverse local customs hence their attitude towards role and status of women was not based on any consensus.

A brief review of the above mentioned works shows that the issue of women's education was crucial for the Muslim community, and the efforts to this end confronted with resisting as

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10 Gail Minault, *Secluded Scholars* (New Delhi: Oxford, 1999).

11 Shahida Latif, *Muslim Women in India: Political and Private Realities 1890s-1980s* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1990).

well as certain facilitating factors. The role of journalism has been highlighted by Minault at length, while others have mentioned it briefly. This paper is an attempt, not made so far, to show the role of journalism in comparison with other modernizing and emancipating factors. The above mentioned authors are found agreeing, in general, with the assertions made in this paper regarding the issue of women's emancipation and uplift.

### **The context**

According to *The New Cambridge History of India*,<sup>12</sup> the Indian society has not seen any significant change for centuries till the onset of colonial rule, which gradually spread its tentacles. Bayly asserts 'to see the late pre-colonial and early colonial periods as a critical era in the formation of the social order of modern India, and one in which indigenous forces of change continued to flow strongly ....' The revolt of 1857 proved to be a point of departure from archaic social and political order to give way to a totally different one. By 1860, the imperial subordination was firmly established. As a result of Western rationalist and positivist thoughts, well-developed movements of reform and practical reconstitution of religious organisations were started.<sup>13</sup>

Under the influence and criticism of British, the awareness started growing among the modern educated Indians, that the inferior status of women in the society was a reason for overall degradation of social conditions. Thus the social reform movements, like Brahma Samaj, were started in early nineteenth century. The Muslim community, however, did not come to any such realization and action till middle of the nineteenth century. The conservatives in both Hindu and Muslim communities thought promotion of modern education and eradication of practices like sati, polygamy, *purdah*, and child marriage, as interference in their religion; thus they resisted it strongly. Apart from the religious community, a group of social reformers including Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, elite community, and a few poets and writers as well, offered resistance to women's education. Sir Syed thought secular

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12 C. A. Bayly, *The New Cambridge History of India, Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.203.

13 *Ibid.*, p.155.

education totally useless for women, and he insisted upon their becoming perfect housewives. Then the religious section was largely promoting an extremely rigid form of female subordination, which relegated women to total submission and confinement in homes.

The educational system introduced by the British authorities promoted English ways of citizenship, and ideology of Western democracy. Large number of Indians being educated in England, USA and other Western centres were bringing home the ideas of liberalism. New means of communication and transportation, industrialization, mining, printing press were introduced. Voluntary associations, political parties, and trade unions began to emerge. The composite impact of such factors was multifaceted. The centuries-old caste system started breaking, allowing the entry of lower caste Indians into factories, trains, prestigious professions and power circles. Political consciousness started growing among all the classes and castes, and control of aristocracy felt a setback. Stranglehold of discrimination against all weaker sections was loosening and hereditary occupations were no more restricting. This was not an outcome of few decades but the process had started by the advent of British colonization in the eighteenth century. The social fabric of Muslim society and community had, however, remained intact to a great extent but it was torn apart by the events of 1857. It was definitely a beginning of new era of rapid changes in all spheres of life for all the religious communities, heralding an epoch of revolt from traditions and mutiny against stranglehold of customs of the feudal era. The Muslims were the most affected, as 1857 had downgraded them from the rulers to the subjects of a foreign nation, which had a different religion and culture, too, often perceived as contradictory to the basic tenets of Islam.

The impact of modernization of the educational, legal, administrative, and political system could be discerned clearly in the first decade of the twentieth century, when the nationalist and feminist movements were gaining significance. As the domains of culture, traditions and religion had been safeguarded heavily, they were exposed only at the last stage when the position of the Muslim community was very weak, and challenge to it was at its

zenith. This was post-1857 phase, when the shock of degradation was most severe and the courage to face it was most shattered. Ultimately the weakest sections were suffering the most and they needed help to muster up courage and respond. They had been for long time the most protected sections of the society, such as women in the nineteenth century India, but then even the women had to adjust, act and react. Later on, the feminist spirit was superseded by the nationalist movement heading for Pakistan as a separate state in the 1940s. Women's participation in great number in this movement was in fact ensured by awakening of women initiated during the nineteenth century through various factors, discussed in this paper.

### **The Challenge**

With the colonization came new technology – rail, telegraph, printing press – and postal system, too. Other scientific inventions were also introduced gradually and the conflict of modern-conservative like wise became obvious. The change of rulers snatched the source of power and affluence from a large number of government functionaries. New laws were introduced suiting the rulers' interests. New technology had made artisans unemployed. The political turmoil created a great shock and feeling of insecurity among all the classes. The cultural edifice and medieval systems of learning were uprooted. The problems are described under four headings as follows.

#### **a: The Domain of Culture**

The culture was the first to suffer at the hands of colonization forces. With the wind of change Western thought, literature, and cultural values were creeping in. Rousseau, Pain, John Stuart Mills, and Marx were now translated and known in India, supporting the forces of equality, patriotism, and female emancipation.

The Christian missionaries had been coming to India since 1542. These missionaries were active among middle class Muslim women alluring them through education and health facilities, to convert to Christianity. The British Indian government had been supporting such missionary efforts which, when resulted in large

scale conversion, were taken as a threat for the Indians.<sup>14</sup> The missionaries had, however, pioneered modern education and health system. For response to both the colonial onslaught and missionaries, the Hindu community launched its reform efforts long before Muslims, and their focus upon female education had resulted in opening many schools for this purpose.

When the Muslims were faced by new threats from reform movement of the Hindus and the missionary activities, there was impending danger of economic exploitation and subjugation by the Hindus. Widespread poverty was aggravated by exhibitionism, which was taken as a show of aristocratic status, while the Muslims had lost political control and their sources of economic prosperity had gone to the colonial power. The events of 1857 had left most of the Muslim families in economic ruin and had created serious shocks in the form of social degradation, something from which it was hard to recover even after many years. Bad customs and practices, which continued to prevail, included: engagement and marriage of children, odd marriage, spurious customs of marriage, superstitions, lavish spending, debt, prejudices, and unskillfulness.

Amidst this chaos, the only good thing that emerged was readiness to listen to revolutionary messages, perhaps due to the felt need of responding to change. Otherwise in a decadent society, at a time when great challenges were knocking at the door, refined language and sophistication in manners and life style were considered as matters of prime concern. The realization that only a dynamic culture can grapple with the challenge, was, however, growing stronger. 'In the state [of Hyderabad and other princely states] old cultural traditions were still continued while in the areas under British Indian rule a deliberate effort was launched to erase such traditions'.<sup>15</sup> In both parts of India, there were forces that were ready to change, first by comprehending the nature of change and then by devising an appropriate policy of reforms.

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14 At least 140,000 Indians became Christian till 1864 and another 28,000 were willing to convert in 900 local churches. Miskeen Ali Hijazi, *Punjab Main Urdu Sahafat* (Lahore: Maghrabi Pakistan Urdu Academy, 1995), pp.28-53.

15 Muhammad Anwaruddin, *Hyderabad Deccan kay Ilmi wa Adabi Rasa'il, Tahqeeqi wa Tanqeedi Jai'za* (Hyderabad: Maktaba-e-Shadab, 1997), p.35.

### **b: The domain of education**

Before 1857, there were some sporadic efforts for women's education. For instance Maulvi Karimuddin wrote some book in favour of women's education, apart from *Tazkara-tun-Nisa* (published: 1854), and a local newspaper meant especially for women.<sup>16</sup> Missionaries started in India their educational activities around 1813, but they proved more instrumental in creating aversion for education because of their religious propaganda and emphasis on Bible and Torah,<sup>17</sup> which were unacceptable to the traditional Muslims.

Zubairi<sup>18</sup> confirms that contents of education for women were mainly religious and moral, though useful arts were a part of skill training, which were not necessarily a part of scheme of studies, rather every woman had to learn basic survival skills, including production skills, child-rearing, food preparation and preservation, and also good home making. Apart from literacy, these skills were for her convenience and also to ease the economic burden of the earning members of the family, mostly men in the middle class families, because women were not allowed to go out and earn. The traditional system of education included informal training through elderly women of the family and formal learning at home schools, under some learned female teachers, who used to gather at some suitable large house and had regular system of learning, though it was not organized by any authority, but the tradition was on. Hence only traditional skills were imparted and only religious and moral lessons were considered important.<sup>19</sup> History, geography, or science was considered useless. Languages of aristocracy – Arabic and Persian – were taught to few privileged and fortunate females who had some liberal patronage in their families. The details of good quality madrassahs for girls, however, should not mislead us, as their impact was minuscule and the literacy among females was far below one per cent. Women who were poets, orators,

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16 *Ibid.*, p.68.

17 Amin Ahmed Zubairi, *Muslim Khawateen ki Taleem* (Karachi: Academy of Educational Research, All Pakistan Educational Conference, 1961), pp.64-69. This has been a comprehensive study on the education of Muslim women.

18 *Ibid.*

19 *Ibid.*, pp.51-52.

calligraphers, and well versed in various branches of knowledge mostly belonged to wealthy families, being free of household concerns, and having education as a part of luxury. In masses, female education gradually lost its priority due to historical oppressive conditions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is also highlighted by Zubairi that females were mostly taught reading, but writing was not popular, because it was thought useless.<sup>20</sup> Hence the power of expression through writing was denied, as a tactic of patriarchy, to contain women's networking and creativity, though under the garb of *purdah*, which prescribed hiding everything related to women, their visibility, their voice, their ideas, their concerns, and their opportunities for growth and asserting themselves.

The traditional formal system of education had been shattered after 1857. Under the changed priorities, the scholars were overthrown, and the seminaries drained their sources of support. Under official patronage some academic activity was going on. The government and the missionaries, the religious sections of both Hindu and Muslim communities, the reformers and the ruling/aristocratic classes were engaged in setting up schools according to their own approaches. Textbooks were also written, revised, and tested. Yet, the number of colleges in British India could not exceed 25 till the mid nineteenth centuries. No good institution was there for female education, neither good books were available to support an educational system catering needs of women, which, according to the spirit of the time, were perceived much different from those of men. Hakim Syed Ahmed Hussain Sufi, in around 1870, had set up a girls' school, wrote books for them and devised a new method of teaching and translated the Quran. His efforts showed marvelous results.<sup>21</sup> In 1871, it was estimated that there were about two thousand girl schools where about 12,000,000 females were receiving education. Female literacy rate at that time was about 0.05 per cent.<sup>22</sup>

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20 *Ibid.*, pp.49, 52, 54.

21 *Ibid.*, p.93.

22 Deebi Prashad, *Risala Taleem-un-Nisa* (Delhi: Matba Rizvi, 1883), 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1871, p.4.

### **c: The domain of female's existence – family**

Within the family, major issues of common Indian Muslim women's existence in post-1857 period were: ignorance and illiteracy; outdated and conservative ideas, beliefs, and customs; marital misfortunes; economic dependence on men; and the burden of reproduction and home management. Equally damaging were the 'pir-system, *shirk* (polytheism), extravagant spending, selfishness, violation of women's rights, physical and spiritual bondage of women, and oppression on women'.<sup>23</sup> Minault mentions extravagance, impiety, ignorance and indiscipline as the main causes of such problems.<sup>24</sup> *Purdah* was strict and age at marriage was sufficiently low to debar girls from education. For women, learning to write was not liked by some families and taboos were woven around to take it as a threat to *izzat* of the family. Private and public division was sharp and the house was divided into male and female compartments. Women used to travel only in palanquins, if inevitable.

### **The Response**

After 1857, the response of the Indian society to the challenge, outlined above, came in two main forms. The fundamentalists (both Hindu and Muslims) resorted to defend their own constituency of religion, its education and ensuring its pristine state in the face of onslaught of an alien religion of a dominant people. In 1867, the Deoband was established with an overall project of spreading religious knowledge among Muslims. The second response was from the reformers, who can be called modernist/rational/liberal, or similar connotations can be used to describe their efforts to abreast the challenge without loss of dignity, integrity and security. This was the time of germination of feminism, too, though it is rather hard to identify and locate it then, because of the strong and flourishing patriarchal culture. In the following are described four factors that affected women's lives and pushed them out of ignorance and inaction.

The first were modernist/reformers. That was a time of great clashes. Fundamentalists were too quick to respond than the

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23 Zahida Hina, *Aurat: Zindagi Ka Zindan* (Karachi: Sheharzade, 2004), p.163.

24 Gail Minault, *Secluded Scholars*, p.56.

modernists, yet some ulema of Deoband were calling for women's education, to 'purify household rituals, to increase knowledge and observance of scriptural religion as opposed to folk customs, and to improve individual piety, it was important to women to be educated in their religion'.<sup>25</sup> The ulema called for teaching religious law to women as well and making them literate, for their own sake, and for the well-being of their family.<sup>26</sup> This approach was patriarchal, conservative, retrogressive, and slightly progressive, too. But the real wave of modernization came with the reformers, led by a Muslim aristocrat, and an employee of British Indian government, Syed Ahmed Khan. He was among the pioneers of modernity in post 1857 Muslim India, who wanted to break the resistance to modern education in the society at large so that the Muslims could face the challenge of British rule and domination by the Hindu majority. To this end, he adopted four avenues for reforms: political, religious, educational and social; treated female education as of secondary importance, rather he held that female education should be proportional to men's education and evolving class structure of the society; re-interpreted Quran, and tried to rationalize enunciation of Islamic rules from other sources of religion; and advocated critical issues concerning women's status.

It is beyond any doubt that the movement launched by him created a conducive and receptive atmosphere for female education. He used journalism successfully to convey his message to his audience. *Tehzibul-akhlaque* and other magazines from Aligarh carried the debates on the issue of female education and in this way the atmosphere was created to clear the mist of opposition. Female education was not his priority, yet he admitted that rights of the Muslim women have been suppressed to a great extent due to backwardness and unscientific outlook of their men.<sup>27</sup> He did not mind the patriarchal super-ordination, and he did not

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25 *Ibid.*, pp.61-2.

26 Abdul Rashid Khan, *The All India Muslim Conference, Its Contribution to the Cultural Development of the Indian Muslims 1886-1947* (Karachi: OUP, 2001), p.120.

27 Sarfraz Hussain Mirza, *Muslim Women's Role in the Pakistan Movement* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1969), p.8.

allow a colleague, Syed Mumtaz Ali, to start a magazine for awareness among Muslim women. Nevertheless, what he forbade, was taken up by his colleagues like Hali and Nazir Ahmed. In fact, Sir Syed was more concerned about some more pressing issues undermining the integrity and dignity of the Muslims community. Perhaps he did not want to see more reasons of chaos coming up while the community was already uprooted, shattered in its confidence and facing the worst situation in political and economic domains. Since he had expressed his concern about social evils, moral training and upright character of Muslims with modern outlook, he wanted to enforce modernity gradually and not in a revolutionary style; rather he wanted to preserve the peace of the home and family environment.

Some of the contemporaries of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan contributed significantly. Nazir Ahmed tried to educate women through his very simple novels suitable for the intellectual level of most of the women. Altaf Hussain Hali through his poetry highlighted women's issues. Through *Majalun Nisa* he tried to enlist all the good things to be taught to girls as well as to boys. In this sense his approach was more balanced and holistic. Later he wrote *Chup ki Daad*, a poem describing plight of women and women's education as a solution to them. Syed Mumtaz Ali (1860-1925) was a hybrid of Deoband and Aligarh. He had some knowledge of English and was the frontline activist among the fellows of Sir Syed. Mumtaz Ali made women's education a mission of his life.<sup>28</sup> Mumtaz Ali started publishing his weekly women's magazine *Tahzib-i-Niswan* in 1898, which was a feminine counterpart of Sir Syed's *Tahzib'ul'Akhlaq*. It carried good emancipating fervor and message. His greatest book *Huquq-e-Niswan* was a first-ever complete treatise of Muslim women's rights in India. It called for perfect equality between men and women by refuting all arguments favoring men's superiority over women, enunciated from physical, psychological, historical, religious and theological facts and their interpretations. He asserted

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28 Aziz Ahmed, *Muslim Awakening in the Subcontinent: Barre Sagheer main Islami Jadeediat*, Urdu Trans. Jamil Jalibi (Lahore: Idara Saqafat-e-Islamia, 1989), p.112. The book gives a good description of modernizing efforts of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and his contemporaries.

that interpretation of the Holy Scriptures is deeply colored by the cultural corollaries. He initiated interpreting the Quran from a non-patriarchal perspective. Mumtaz Ali rejected the concept of limited education for women calling it against the logic of history rather he advocated highest possible level of education for women as an imperative of time. Before Mumtaz Ali, Charagh Ali had advocated re-interpretation of the Quran, as the cardinal source of Islam. He asserted that Islam had almost abandoned polygamy, by making it conditional to justice in spouse relations, calling it next to impossible. Mohib Hussain, a poet, journalist and writer, was declared 'The Sir Syed of the South' due to his marvelous work in southern India regarding rejecting outdated customs, and calling for female education, social reforms and political awareness. There were many more such reformers, either associated with the Aligarh movement or active in their individual capacity. Their own institutions were carrying the mission of social transformation in a modernizing direction.

The second group was that of the educators. There emerged an agreement that the Muslim community should have girls' schools where traditional values are fully regarded.<sup>29</sup> In a patriarchal set-up, it was not men alone who embarked upon the cause of women's awakening, but there were families of enlightened persons engaged in it. Emancipation had begun at home.

There were married couples such as Mumtaz Ali and Muhammadi Begum. Mumtaz Alim, who called for equal rights of women to education, totally dismissing the idea of social immorality to be spreading due to women's education or visibility in the public space. He criticized arranged marriages. He called for setting up temporary and permanent private schools, which he hoped, would perform better than the government institutions at initial stages of women's education. Muhammadi Begum, was the first woman editor of *Tahzib-i-Niswan*. Her literary creations followed the line of Nazir Ahmed, to enhance women's morality, knowledge, life skills, productivity, and above all their confidence. She was an equal partner and activist in efforts of Mumtaz Ali

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29 Khan, *The All India Muslim League*, p.125.

regarding women's emancipation through literary, journalistic, educational, and organizational efforts.<sup>30</sup>

Sheikh Abdullah (1874-1965) and his wife Waheed Jahan Begum opened a girls school in 1906 in Aligarh and later converted it into a teachers' training school. Begum Abdullah and her sister also worked there as teachers. It was through the devotion of Begum Abdullah that the school became a successful residential college for girls.<sup>31</sup> By that time the movement for female education had well entrenched itself. Faizi sisters were also among the pioneers who supported efforts to set up schools and enhance women's status in India.

The Punjab province was leading in female education. Other provinces and states, such as United Provinces, Awadh, Rampur, Brailly, Nagpur, had their own schools. In 1865, number of female schools was 2144, and female students were 44,554.<sup>32</sup> In 1867, Munshi Muhammad Qasim set up a Muslim female school at Banglore, and deplored Muslim leaders for not giving attention to girls' education. In Bombay, 66 schools were established during 1851-68, especially by Parsis. The government was also showing some concern for female education in the 1860s. By the year 1868, a demand was presented to the government to educate females in vernacular languages so that cultural and family values could be preserved, education was thought to be the most effective tool and it was hoped that no schism would appear in the society.<sup>33</sup> The reports collected by Muslim Educational Conference testified that in 1887, female education was the lowest priority of the government in many parts of British India.<sup>34</sup>

In Bombay, many female schools were set up in post-1886 years. Amina Khatoon in Baroda set up a school in 1895. According to the official reports, for the period 1898-1902, state of female education was dismal due to negligence of the government.

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30 For details see, Shahida Bano, *Rashid Jahan, Hayat aur Karnamay* (Lucknow: Nusrat Publishers, 1990), pp.44-46.

31 For details on their mission see, *ibid.*, pp.59-67.

32 *Ibid.*, p.71.

33 *Ibid.*, p.72.

34 *Ibid.*, p.91.

Some liberal men and women initiated the move for formal female education in the meetings of All India Muslim Educational Conference (AIMEC), which was established in 1884 for Muslims' education by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan.<sup>35</sup> It resolved in its third annual meeting in 1888,<sup>36</sup> to persuade Muslims to set up female schools (*zenana maktab*) 'strictly in conformity with the traditions and respect of the respectable and well-bred Mohammadans, and in accordance with their religious injunctions.'<sup>37</sup> Sir Syed did not approve the modern schools proposed by the Muslim Educational Conference in 1889, and again in 1891, soon after Sir Syed's demise in 1899, the Conference declared female education as its prime concern. The participants called for worldly knowledge of arithmetic, history and geography apart from religion.<sup>38</sup> It resolved that women should be educated so that the future generations may benefit from their pious training.<sup>39</sup> In 1899, the Conference passed resolution for setting up girls' schools in the capital of every province and educational centres, conforming to the traditions and respectability of Muslims, as referred earlier.<sup>40</sup> The next year they thought about preparing suitable books for Muslim females. No doubt, AIMEC was very slow<sup>41</sup> in putting female education on its agenda. However, there were countless men, women, families, organizations, and institutions, which contributed immensely

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- 35 Khan, *The All India Muslim League*, has discussed the role of All India Muslim Educational Conference at length. According to him the Conference was dominated by three groups of persons, modernists, conservatives, and liberal minded ones. The first advocated school based education ensuring traditional *sharif* culture; the second wanted home-based education for reading Holy Quran and Urdu alphabets; the liberals wanted higher education and denounced *pardah*. p.121.
- 36 Agha Hussain Hamdani, *All India Muslim Educational Conference Documents*, Vol. II (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1986), Third Conference, 1888, Resolution No. 17, p.431.
- 37 Cf. Quinquennial Reports, 1893, by Sarfraz Hussain Mirza, *op.cit.*, p.9.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p.104.
- 39 Hamdani, *All India Muslim Education Conference*, Sixth Conference 1891, Resolution No. 2, p.450.
- 40 One can find first school established by Muslim Educational Conference in 1896, twelve years after its establishment. The Conference contributed in concrete terms only after 1902 when the liberals had gained more influence in its leadership.
- 41 In 1902, Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan in his presidential address to All India Muslim Educational Conference, mentioned the causes of Muslim decline, including the prevalent *pardah* system, and belief in pre-destination (*taqdeer*).

towards female education, despite lack of resources, trained female teachers of noble repute, and suitable course books, and cultural resistance. During fund-raising drives, the aristocracy as well people of low incomes contributed, whereas support of the government remained minimal till 1913.

The Muslim community felt dire need to prepare appropriate books for Muslim females, which could guarantee the preservation of traditional teachings and also containing sufficient elements of modern learning.<sup>42</sup>

Agreeing on a particular curriculum was also difficult due to diverse opinions of the leaders. The concern was to conserve old values because of the threat felt by modern education, less so if imparted to the males, and much more if imparted to the females. Making females more useful agents of change and making them more moral for better training of children were all too obvious objectives of female education.

Some committed writers wrote books for women audience with an aim to reform their manners, expand their mental horizon, and make them better mothers, housewives and home-managers. These books were of at least four types: a) meant for formal education; b) for women's moral training and skill building; c) teaching manuals; and, d) for entertainment. Among these categories, many books were used in schools from time to time. Some were in fact written on the initiative of the educational/government authorities. Apparently, the government was not keen to free women from the clutches of patriarchy, at least in these years,<sup>43</sup> so enlightenment or emancipation was neither manifest nor intended. The Asifiya dynasty in Deccan, patronized literary and publishing activity to the extent that the number of books and journals reached to thousands.<sup>44</sup> It promoted

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42 Khan, *The All India Muslim League*, p.130.

43 According to Abida Samiuddin and R. Khanum, eds., *Muslim Feminism and Feminist Movement, South Asia*, Vol. 1 (Delhi: Global Vision, 2002) the 'woman's question' was an important part of the policy of acculturation, for Raj's own purpose of creating Indians, who were English in taste, opinions and morals.' p.43.

44 Some of the magazines of Deccan included: *Risala Makhzan-ul-Fawaid*, *Asif-ul-akhbar*, *Shafiq*, *Safeer-e-Deccan*, *Musheer-e-Deccan*, *Ilm-o-amal* (editor, Mohib Hussain), *Hazaar Dastan*, and *Shaukat-ul-Islam*.

Urdu language, women's creative writing in prose and poetry, feminist writings, and educational activities through its grants.<sup>45</sup>

### Role of feminine Urdu literature

The next major agent of change was printed material, mostly in Urdu. Other regional languages were also having their publishing output but the language of change among the Muslims of northern India was mainly Urdu.<sup>46</sup> In the following a review of literature and other publications is presented, followed by a review of the journals coming out during 1869-1908.

The literature and publications of these decades (1869-1908) can be classified as: novels/stories; and books on history of women,<sup>47</sup> advises,<sup>48</sup> information regarding health<sup>49</sup> or household skills. Some books discussed theological and social issues.<sup>50</sup> The format of stories<sup>51</sup> and letters was also used to make the message more convincing. A storybook series claimed that its stories would impart household skills and develop wisdom.<sup>52</sup> Mostly stories had

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45 For details see Naseeruddin Hashmi, *Deccan Main Urdu* (New Delhi: Tarraqi-e-Urdu Bureau, 1985).

46 A good deal of reforms was taken up by the Muslims and the Hindus in Bengal, but they opted for the medium of Bengali or other languages. It influenced the reformers of northern India by setting precedence. For details see Samiuddin and Khanum, *Muslim Feminism*, pp.34-43.

47 For example Munshi Abdur Rehman Amratsari, *Hindustan ki Shehzadian* (Lahore : Malik Din Muhammad, n.d.).

48 For instance see Shahjehan Begum, *Tehzib-i-Niswan wa Tarbiyat-ul-Insan* (Delhi: Matba Al-Ansari 1306 A.H.), and Ali Muhammad, *Hidayat-e-Niswan* (1887).

49 Such as Hakim Hafiz Fakhruddin, *Musheer-e-Niswan* (Lahore: Risala Hafiz-e-Sehat, 1883). It was translated from *Counsel to Women on the Care or Rearing of their Children*. The translator was editor of an Urdu magazine *Hafiz-e-Sehat*, Lahore. See as well, Maulvi Abdullah Khan, *Insha Mufeed-un-Nisa* (Lucknow: Matba Munshi Naul Kishore, 1877) and Muhammad Faizuddin, *Sughad Saheli* (1883), on household skills.

50 See Ghulam Qadir, *Mufeed-un-Nisa* (1883), and Mumtaz Ali, *Huquq-e-Niswan* (1898).

51 For instance see, Syed Ghulam Haider Khan, *Aaina-e-Aqool* (Lucknow: 1873), and Syed Ahmed Hasan Shaaki, *Tahzib-un-Nisa* (Meeruth: 1871), Deebi Prashad, *Risala Taleem-un-Nisa* (Delhi: Rizvi Press, 1871), Syed Shamsuddin, *Risala Taleem-e-Niswan* (Mumbai: 1895), and Maulvi Abdul Fakhir, *Sabar Ka Phal* (Agra: Abulalai Steam Press, n.d.) and Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Hameed, *Tohfatul-Aroos*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., (Lucknow: Munshi Naul Kishore, 1905; 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1892).

52 Munshi Ahmad Ali, *Shaukat Ka Khawb* (Agra: Abul Alaa, Steam Press, n.d.) was the fifteenth such story.

moral lessons. There were some translations as well from English.<sup>53</sup> A detailed survey of these books reveals insistence upon predominantly patriarchal and rarely enlightening messages, as follows.

1. For parents, daughters can be as brave and useful as sons.<sup>54</sup>
2. Both men and women have right to choose their marriage partners, (according to some books written after 1900).
3. Youth affairs should be handled more tactfully as they have become rude under the influence of foreign culture.<sup>55</sup>
4. Role models of women should exhibit their pious character, knowledge and skills.
5. Frugality in customs, rituals and celebrations is essential.
6. Jewelry, household items and dresses, if costly, should be avoided.
7. Decision about dowry should be made 'rationally'.
8. Women must ease economic burden on the bread-winners (i.e. men) by making handicraft.<sup>56</sup>
9. Women must show forbearance to minimize family conflicts.
10. Women should take more care of the men of the household, be a good host to their guests, and ensure maximum comfort and support in men's careers.
11. *Purdah* is essential. (However, its recommended degree of observance varied from very strict<sup>57</sup> to moderate. No one, except Mumtaz Ali, called for refuting traditional *purdah*.<sup>58</sup>

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53 See *Shua'e Noor*, by Louis Marstin, trans. As *Haneefa Begum* (Lucknow: n.p.1893). It was to preach Christianity among women in the style of a novel; it also degraded the Islamic custom of Hajj. Also see *Ma'asar-un-Nisa*, trans. By Munshi Syed Tafazzul Hussain (Agra: Matba Agra Akhbar, n.d.). The original text was *Noble Deeds of Women*.

54 See Syed Ghualm Haider Khan, *Aaina-e-Akool*, pp.204-13. Despite an overtly patriarchal tone, the book favours female education, p.287.

55 Syed Ghayasuddin, *Kitab-e-Niswan*, (Lucknow: n.p., 1905), p.260.

56 Khan, *Aaina-e-Akool*, p.51.

57 It was advised that a girl over three years of age should not go in front of men. Ghayasuddin, *Kitab-e-Niswan*, p.306.

58 See Ali, *Huquq-e-Niswan*.

Extreme form of *purdah* is indicated in the instruction that a woman's voice should not go beyond four walls of the house.<sup>59)</sup>

12. Female education is highly valuable and beneficial. (This notion was widely and forcefully projected.<sup>60)</sup>
13. Chastity must be maintained at all cost.

Some more aspects found critical in these writings are as follows:

1. Stereotypes of 'bad' and 'good' women mostly associated 'good' with the elite and 'bad' with the poor women.
2. There are quoted controversial *Hadith* (Prophet's sayings), about wife's prostrating before husband. Since it had become a part of folk theory, and little challenge was posed to it, it pervaded.<sup>61</sup>
3. The concept of women being '*naqis-ul-aql*' (intellectual dwarf) was widely held, and presented to justify females' need for education. Very few books challenged it; rather they argued that since women are not given chance to know the world around, they should not be blamed for incompetence.<sup>62</sup>
4. Other stereotypes of women, such as 'being prone to evil doing' were mentioned but not challenged.
5. Hiding girl's presence was a cultural norm, and is truly reflected in the books, at places where children are referred as 'boys', and baby girl called as 'child of *hoor*', etc.; her sex was not revealed.<sup>63</sup> It shows that even talking about females in public and intellectual spheres, was disliked.
6. Motherhood was glorified and large families were appreciated.<sup>64</sup>

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59 Ghayasuddin, *Kitab-e-Niswan*, p.261.

60 For instance see Syed Shamsuddin, *Risala Taleem-e-Niswan* (Mumbai: Matba Alavi, 1895). It is all about countering resistance to female education through references from the Quran and *Hadith*, presented in a style reflecting commitment and competence of the author, adopting story method, but he could not avoid the prevalent gender stereotyping.

61 For instance see Shahjehan Begum, *Tahzib-i-Niswan*, printed around 1890.

62 For instance see Shahjehan Begum, *Tahzib-i-Niswan*, and Ghayasuddin, *Kitab-e-Niswan*.

63 Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Hameed, *Tohfah-ul-Aroos*, p.4.

64 In Shahjehan Begum, *Tahzib-i-Niswan*.

In short, highly patriarchal gender stereotypes, obscurantism and ambivalence were promoted; *purdah* was the least challenged aspect of female existence, but sexual division of labour and public-private dichotomy was reinforced. At no point, similar contents of education for girls and boys were favored, rather different permutations were allowed.

### **Role of journalism**

Journalism had been the most supportive in coping with the pressures, and helping the community to adapt to emergent challenges. After 1857, it helped the Muslim community launch its campaigns for social reforms, modern education, political awakening, and female emancipation, to enlist a few.

It was just in around 1857 that some writings appeared about women's actual lives, when the first Urdu newspaper *Jam-e-Jahan Numa* was published from Calcutta in 1822. *Delhi Urdu Akhbar* was the first Urdu newspaper from Delhi (1836). In 1858, Muslims had lost all their newspapers except one. *Awadh Akhbar* came out in 1858, on weekly basis. *Akhbar Scientific Society* was started in 1866 by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. Sir Syed in the sixth issue of *Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq* (the leader of reform journals, started 1870), wrote about the need to reform social customs, improve girls' education, and teach them handicraft.<sup>65</sup> During the decade of 1870s, there emerged an inclination in the print culture to address women's issues along with other topics.

The challenge of educating women was very well taken up by the journals, which created a favourable atmosphere to overcome cultural, psychological and financial obstacles. Shaikh Abdullah before starting a girls' school, started a journal *Khatun*, edited by him, to mobilize the community resources for the cause of women education. It continued for about ten years (1904-14) and projected women's ideas and writings. It also tried to promote female education.<sup>66</sup> *Khatun* also published Hali's famous poem *Chup ki Dad* for the same purpose. The campaign in *Khatun* resulted in

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65 Abdussalam Khurshid, *Sahafat Pakistan-o-Hind Main* (Lahore: Maktaba-e-Karvan, 1982), p.122.

66 Surriya Hussain, *Sir Syed Aur Un Ka Ahd* (Aligarh: Educational Book House, 1993), p.260.

creating Female Education Association, in around 1911. Two years later (1913), it led to the establishment of Ladies Conference in 1913. The Female Education Association promoted girls education by setting up new schools, and supporting needy female students. All this shows how reform and educational activities were realized through journalistic and associational strategies.

As the newly available technology of printing press had given a boost to reform efforts; journalism and publishing enterprise had taken up the cause of women's education on collaborative basis. The same press and group of persons were involved in bringing out journals and books. It was a profitable business as well. Small literate audience and large number of journals created an atmosphere of competition. When female education became a hotly debated topic, journals and publishers, taking benefit of the chance, tried to offer something marketable and appealing to different sections.

These magazines became a powerful mouthpiece of the forces of change, and they enjoyed widespread influence. They carried the reformatory contents in various forms, and their articles covered subjects ranging for politics, economics, culture, and literature. The magazines were mostly literary and reformatory before 1900, like *Tahzib-ul-Akhlq* and *Moallim*, but with the turn of century new experiments were made; new forms and new themes invited involvement of the readers in current debates. In 1903, *Urdu-e- Mu'alla* was started by Hasrat Mohani, which was a literary and political magazine. Some others with similar contents were *Alnaazir*, *Zamana*, *Ma'araf*, and *Jamia. Urdu* and *Humayun* were reporting current affairs and literature side by side. Undoubtedly, the social impact of these magazines was mostly because of their knowledge-oriented articles.

The popular journalism has to cater interests of the popular readership. For the just literate women of the 1860s onwards, it was mainly fiction, but due to dearth of printing facilities, journals could not reach many women. Moreover, only a very small number of women were literate, hence the need to present creative writing was intermingled with sociopolitical issues of the day. Literary magazines then became a mirror of life – engaged in creative, educational, and reformation-oriented writings – giving impetus to

the process of consciousness-raising. First women journal was *Al-Nisa* by Maulvi Syed Muhammad. The new literature was creating a new identity of the people. Along with this social role, it also performed a historical role of awakening them. In this connection it is accepted that,

magazines create literary and cultural values, and preserve them, too. ... They articulate the concerns of their time, and give confidence to people. They formulate mental attitudes and approaches as well as invigorate emergence of new ideological formulations and propagate them.<sup>67</sup>

Thus historically, these magazines played an instrumental role in effecting major social and intellectual changes.<sup>68</sup>

### **The magazines**

Many magazines, which fully or partially focused on women audience, were started from 1869 to 1908. Some prominent of them included the following:

1. Risala Anjuman Isha't-e-Matalab-e-Mufeeda Punjab: 1865.
2. Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq: 1870. Editor Sir Syed Ahmed Khan
3. Ataleeq-e-Punjab: 1870.
4. Huma-e-Punjab: 1870.
5. Akhbar Anjuman-e-Punjab: 1871.
6. Awadh Akhbar: 1874.
7. Moallam-e-Shafiq: 1880, editor Mohib Hussain
8. Taleem-e-Niswan: Hyderabad, 1885, editor Mohib Hussain
9. Mehshar: 1887-91
10. Muhazzab: 1893
11. Moallim-e-Niswan: 1892, editor Mohib Hussain
12. Muntakhib-e-Rozgaar: 1896 A.D. (1313 A.H).
13. Dilgudaz: 1896, editor Abdul Haleem Sharar
14. Tahzib-e-Niswan: 1898, editors Muhammadi Begum and Syed Mumtaz Ali
15. Makhzan: 1901
16. Akhbar-un-Nisa: about 1901 by Maulvi Syed Muhammad

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67 Uzma Farrukh, *Karachi Kay Adabi Rasai'l* (Karachi: Pakistan Study Centre, University of Karachi, 2000), p.19.

68 *Ibid.*, p.21. Dr. Syed Abdullah has confirmed the notion.

17. Khatun: Aligarh : 1904, editor Shaikh Abdullah
18. Adeb: 1908
19. Ismat: 1908, editor Rashid-ul-Khairi

(For an introduction of some of the important magazines, see Appendix A.)

These magazines tried to reform values and customs and produce useful literature. It was the impact of their large scale efforts in favor of women that in 1908, *Adeb* declared women as the real source of development. It was the year when in a much favourable environment, *Ismat* took the lead in the feminist journalism by starting its publication in 1908, which made the year a turning point in the history of Indian Muslim women.

The above magazines commonly discussed social problems. In fact female existence had been the popular subject/focus of scholarly and moral debates. The tradition of publishing women biographies started in 1898. Details about women of other countries were regularly printed in many magazines. De-politicization was the policy of colonial administration, and mostly the journals quietly subscribed to it. To avoid confrontation, some even declared they would not touch upon religious issues as well. They were, therefore, left mostly with scholarly, literary and moral subjects.

### **The gender impact of print media**

In a largely illiterate and ignorant society, when Indian reformers got their hands on some effective tools of journalism and press, they tried to exploit them properly. The print media also provided the most effective tools to reach the inaccessible world of women, who were confined in their homes.

For centuries, women have been subject of romantic literature, as heroines, as things of beauty, or mere passive recipients in men's world. Position of women, as an audience and a constituency of literature, was identified in the post-1857 years, when they were taken as an agent of change and resistance to the pressure of colonization. It is true that women entered the field of fiction later than men, but women soon realized the need for solidarity with their sisters, so they tried to protect women's rights. Women writers of the early twentieth century, therefore,

challenged patriarchal norms and presented more feminist characters than men writers.<sup>69</sup> Sughra Humayun Mirza was the first to challenge this system, at least in the print media.

Since with the decline of feudal patronage the patriarchal family was all the more exposed, the literature was used to protect it. Both women and men writers were engaged in this effort. Women had taken family as their refuge and shield from the outer world risks and men had taken it as a source of continued pride, control, comfort, and privileges. Therefore 'popular topics of the late nineteenth century Urdu fiction were female education, refrain from un-Islamic customs, remarriage of widows, ban on *pardah*, upholding values of patriarchy, and saving the husband from the prostitutes (as prostitution had become an institution in the decades of decadence).<sup>70</sup>

Many journals were started with the aim of educating women.<sup>71</sup> Initially they helped preserve patriarchy by insisting upon women staying inside homes and causing least disturbance to the family set-up. Most of these writers belonged to traditional households, with traditional education, except a few, who dared to set up new trends in education and media. Later, these journals started publishing such material which was both educative and conscious-raising. Initially, there were apprehensions in people's mind that the government wanted the women to convert to Christianity, or to make them independent and out of control of their masters, and to banish *pardah*. Then there appeared writings such as that of Prashad, to refute such notions, and to tell people that formal system of schooling was not any threat to their values, rather it would enhance women's skills in house management, child raising, and also in helping men doing office work at home. It added that company of an educated woman would be more

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69 Neelam Farzana, *Urdu Adab Ki Aham Novel-Nigar Khawateen* (Aligarh: Educational Book House, 1992). She has also found women's fiction better than their poetry, and it indicates a curb on poetic expression by women.

70 It included *Mirat-ul-Aroos* (1869), *Soorat-ul-Khayal* (1876), *Fasana-e-Khurshidi* (1886), *Islaah-un-Nisa* (1881), *Majalun-Nisa*, *Badar-un-Nisa Ki Museebat* (1901), *Nadir Jahan*, *Iqbal Dulhan*, *Kissa-e-Mehr Afroze*, *Zohra*, *Akhtar-un-Nisa*, *Nai Naveli*, *Dil Fagar*, *Khawb-e-Calcutta*, *Aaina-e-Ibrat*, *Godad Ka Laal*, *Safia Begum*, *Naseem-e-Aarzo*, *Hijab-un-Nisa*, *Khursheed Jahan*, and *Kalloom*.

71 Zubairi, *Muslim Khawateen ki Taleem*, p.110.

enjoyable for men,<sup>72</sup> thus more marital adjustment would be possible. Prashad referred to the prevalent notions of women being *naqis-ul-aql* and prone to faulty beliefs and superstitions along with many other faults of them. He then suggested education as the solution to all these ills.<sup>73</sup> The benefits of education mentioned by him indicate grooming of a good personality, good morals, as well as 'civilized nature, enjoyment of life for husbands, service of the husband and in-laws, better household work according to religion.'<sup>74</sup> This style of argumentation is found in many writings of the day.

### **The Associational Activity**

The colonial invasion was not limited to polity or economy, but it infringed upon education, language, religion and social life. The family, which had been most shielded so far, was now exposed, thus the women had to respond. In an urge for modernization as well as to counter modernizing forces,<sup>75</sup> many voluntary organizations started emerging, with an eagerness to partake in political, economic and educational uplift of the masses. Organizing for a common purpose necessitated a better level of consciousness and social skills. Before 1900, women organizations were rare due to check on their mobility and appearance in public space, all in the name of *izzat*.

The concerted efforts of reformers through education, print media and associational activity brought compounded effect. Organizations promoted a tradition of publishing newspapers for projecting their objectives and information. The government and the colonizers' communities had their own newspapers. In twenty-five years (1880-1905) Brahma Samaj published 20 newspapers,<sup>76</sup> 15 newspapers were published by Islamic organizations, 30 by

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72 Deebi Prashad, *Risala Taleem-un-Nisa* (Delhi: Matba-e-Rizvi, 1883), p.9, first printed in 1871. The name *risala* (meaning journal) is used here in title of the book.

73 *Ibid.*, pp.13-16.

74 *Ibid.*, p.22. Chapter four has given detail of such benefits of education.

75 This was in fact the quality of two types of responses to colonial onslaught; one was to accept the cultural supremacy of the new masters and adopt modernization, while the other was to reject it and get back to own cultural roots. S. Akbar Zaidi discusses this at length. See Zaidi, *Crossed Identities*.

76 Hijazi, *Punjab mein Urdu Sahafat*, p.204.

Hindu organizations, and 10 by the Sikh organizations.<sup>77</sup> These newspapers established a tradition of writing on social issues, including women's issues.

Education of Muslim boys and girls were the main objective of founding Anjuman Himayat Islam, which opened five primary schools for girls in the Punjab in 1885, the number was doubled in the next year, and in 1894, the number rose to fifteen.<sup>78</sup> The Muslim community was not eager to attend such schools, to the great disappointment of the enthusiastic founders, who thought it as a defense against missionaries' efforts. They supported female teachers to play their role to extract girls out of the missionary schools. In 1885, 160 girls were enrolled in these schools.<sup>79</sup> Apart from the mental and moral training, the vocational training of girls was also made necessary. Therefore, in 1885, when the Anjuman established institutions for female education, it laid special emphasis on prescribing compulsory subjects for girls such as embroidery, tailoring, sewing, cooking, etc.

There was a lot of associational activity in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, resulting in many political, social, and multi-purpose organizations. These, with diverse objectives, were, in fact, a response to the adjustment and development challenge of the time. Since many organizations had taken up education as their priority area of action, and some took female education as well, emergence of organizations focusing women's issues only was nothing but a natural expansion and diversification of the associational process. Very interestingly, participation of women in such organizations served both practical and strategic purposes. Feminist consciousness in India, around 1900, was definitely in an embryonic stage. Getting knowledge of feminist movements around the world was limited because of limited exposure or information in media. In this connection a question can be raised 'whether women of these organizations had ever demanded education for a woman as her right as a person', while there were

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77 See N. Gerald Barrier, and Paul Wallace, *The Punjab Press 1880-1905* (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1970), quoted in *Ibid.*

78 Khawaja Mohammad Hayat, *Mukhtasir Tawarikh-i-Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam* (Urdu), Lahore, in *Ibid.*, p.17.

79 *Ibid.*, p.19.

vivid instruction for that in the Quran. The Quran was widely, but selectively, quoted by the religious lobby, who promoted a limited conception of women's rights. Unfortunately, the writer of famous *Bahishti Zewar* had perhaps damaged women's cause more than any other patriarchal device in those years.

Sir Muhammad Shafi contributed a lot to improve the status of Muslim women in the Punjab, socially and educationally. He tried to eradicate the evils, *purdah* and dowry and favored liberal education for Muslim women. At his initiative *Anjuman-i-Khawateen-i-Islam* was founded in 1908, with Lady Shafi as its president, and Fatima Begum, daughter of Maulvi Mahboob Alam, as secretary.<sup>80</sup> He also struggled to persuade landlords to give share of inheritance to girls according to Islamic law.

Maulvi Sayyid Karamat Husain, in the UP, printed a pamphlet on importance of female education on his return to India. He was instrumental in establishing a girls' school in Lucknow. *Anjuman-Islamia* was founded in 1876 in Jabalpur and it set up two girls' primary schools and a high school. At Nagpur, *Anjuman-i-Muslim Khawateen* was established to promote female education and women's literary activities. Similarly, there were many voluntary organizations, and many schools established by them on their own and also with the help of the government. They mobilized the philanthropists to give generously. Names of Nawab Shams Jahan Begum and Mirza Shuja't Ali Beg of Bengal were mentioned for their enthusiastic support of female education. Many other such names could be added<sup>81</sup> who were the spirit behind the drive for female education in various parts of India.

Some women associations were set up in Hyderabad. Hyderabad Ladies Social Club was established in 1901 to get the women of Indian and European origin closer and promote recreational, artistic and sports activities. In the second decade, some more associations were set up, some of them under the patronage of royal family and the aristocracy. Sughra Humayun

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80 Ahmed Saeed, *Musalmanan-e-Punjab ki Samaji aur Falahi Anjumanain* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, The University of Punjab, 2004), pp.70-85. The book provides details on 21 such organizations.

81 Sarfraz Hussain Mirza has mentioned such names. Mirza, *Muslim Women's Role in the Pakistan Movement*, pp.6-30.

Mirza has been mentioned as founder of many women associations in various cities of India, especially in Hyderabad. She held executive position in many of them for long.<sup>82</sup>

In Mysore, men and women contributed to women's education and wrote books as well, during the reign of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan (18<sup>th</sup> century). The process continued in the nineteenth century. An organization named *Mufeed-e-Niswan* strove for women's uplift, education and handicraft training. According to Zubairi, in other parts of South India, many educational institutions were established and books for women were published.<sup>83</sup> An organization named *Anjuman-e-Rafah-al-Musalmeen* was set up in the 1890s, which focused educational needs of the widows and its institution was later converted into a middle school.<sup>84</sup> In Hyderabad, at the official level, girls schools were set up in 1885; earlier home schooling and some formal schooling was in vogue. There were educated people called Maulana, Maulvi, and government titled Sir, or Nawabs of old or existing principalities, and some ordinary people with little education and very little resources, all together contributing in whatever way they could. Those who were influential were making big moves. In 1908, the movement had established itself, and was taken off by the volunteer zeal and financial support of Muslims in the subsequent years. Yet 1869-1908 was the formative phase for female education in India. One can see that 'in 1911 the number of educated Muslim women was only two per thousand, while in 1921 the number had doubled.'<sup>85</sup> There were 1,37,800 literate Muslim women in 1924, with 3,940 having modern education.<sup>86</sup>

Women leadership had begun to emerge in the meantime. Some women of liberal families were in the forefront of this development. Such as three Faizi sisters of Bhopal, ladies of Tayyabji family of Mumbai, Suhrawardy family and Ruqiya

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82 Naseeruddin Hashmi, *Hyderabad Ki Niswani Dunya* (Hyderabad: Idara Adab-e-Jadeed, 1944), p.52.

83 Zubairi, *Muslim Khawateen ki Taleem*, pp.186-96.

84 *Ibid.*, p.192.

85 See *Inqilab*, 26 May 1934, in Mirza, *Muslim Women's Role in the Pakistan Movement*, p.26.

86 See *Zamindar*, 2 February 1924, in *Ibid.*, p.27.

Sakhawat Hussain in Bengal with her *Anjuman Khawateen-i-Islam*, Sheikh Abdullah, his wife and daughters, and so on. Meena bazaars and other events were arranged for enhancing women's social interaction outside home for *purdah*-observing ladies. Later on women were seen organizing events like conferences, to get together and give impetus to the emancipation process.

It was not till 1908 that efforts to organize women at the national scale were started. This was the year when Sir Mohammad Shafi took initiative to establish a Muslim women's organization named *Anjuman-e-Khawateen-e-Islam* in Lahore. To enhance women's participatory role in the society, he allowed his family women to abolish *purdah*, and advocated revolutionary changes in women's lives. The meetings of that *Anjuman* discussed the issues of women's rights in Islam. It also worked for social and educational uplift of women.

It is argued that the struggle for equal rights for women was launched in the late nineteenth century within the existing socio-political structures – accepting gender differences – women's roles and functions, therefore, had to be different from men.<sup>87</sup> Till that time, there seemed no strategic objectives or contents in what women were receiving in education. Men were the main connection between the public domain and the women's private domain – home. The books/journals were scrutinized before entering the home, or approval for female schools. Men dominated the modernist movement of the time, while they were receiving such training from the colonizers. The sustained process of gradual awakening at large scale, however, brought about strategic results. Again some men were *de facto* in command in the public (political/government) as well as the private (household) domains. With gradual improvement in attitudes towards female education, women's better participatory role in the community was gaining acceptance by men. The barriers to women's uplift were withering first of all in the enlightened liberal families while the rest were imitating them.

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87 Muhammad Farooq, 'Feminism and Muslim Nationalism in British India: A Study in Mutual Relations', *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, Vol. 25, No.1 (2004), p.111.

The foregoing description has shown that while education was predominantly patriarchal, some feminist literature appeared. These were surely of feminine interest, but were having their focus on women's interests. Most of these writings were only serving the practical interests, as was explained in the previous sections. Very few writings had manifest or implicit intent of strengthening women's consciousness to challenge the power structures. Their obvious mission was reformatory, rather than awakening.<sup>88</sup> Both male and female writers, like Rasheeda-tun-Nisa, and male writers, like Rashid-ul-Khairi, belonged to patriarchal aristocratic families. They had awareness of the issues and debates of Muslim intelligentsia and knew the plight of Muslim woman. Rasheeda-tun-Nisa herself had suffered at the hands of patriarchy.<sup>89</sup> Rashid-ul-Khairi, the most popular writer of his time, and editor of *Ismat*, had called for giving women the Islamic rights, besides he advised women to be patient and hopeful for good results. He did not instigate women, in this sense he was a great mentor of the traditional patriarchal family. Men novelist of the time, focused upon social evils,<sup>90</sup> religious intolerance, *purdah*, and emotional problems of women. The women novelists<sup>91</sup> also wrote mostly about the domestic life of their time.

In the realm of journals, the awakening tunes of *Moallim*, *Tahzib-e-Niswan*, *Ismat* and the contemporary print media were enhancing women's confidence, yet the centuries-old robust patriarchal system could not be threatened by such inspirations,

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88 For instance see *Soorat-ul-Khayal* by Shaad Azeemabadi portraying a woman trapped in troubles, *Fasana-e-Khursheedi* by Nawab Afzaluddin focused upon remarriage of the widows, and *Islah-un-Nisa* by Rasheeda-tun-Nisa focused upon need of education and social evils common among the women folk.

89 She was the first woman novelist of Urdu. The proof is late publishing of her novel, written in 1881, printed in 1894, and her name did not appear on its title for *purdah* reasons. Her novel was at par with the prized books of the day, but she was not considered worth competition. This, however, does not diminish her concern for women, evident in the title of her novel, *Islah-un-Nisa*, meaning 'reforming women'.

90 Such as: Abdul Haleem Sharar, Sarfraz Hussain, Mirza Abbas Hussain Hosh, Afzaluddin, Maulvi Basheeruddin, Munshi Hadi Hussain Hadi, Ali Sajjad, and Syed Ahmed Delhvi.

91 Including Rashida-tun-Nisa, Sughra Humayun Mirza, Muhammadi Begum, and wife of Maulvi Tameez-uddin.

because there was little material challenging it and little organizational activity against it. There were more reformers than revolutionaries, and more guardians of patriarchy than it's ransackers. Women writers of the last quarter of the nineteenth century were not that bold as the second generation women writers proved to be.<sup>92</sup> They challenged the notion of educating women for the sake of family and society and demanded education as a right of women. There emerged women political activists as well who challenged the hegemony of the clergy and the male-oriented system. Women had gradually learned to make strategic moves.

### Discussion

To sum up, it can be argued that:

- a. The education offered by Government was aimed at maintaining the status quo. It was not against the traditional culture, as it was not empowering women mainly due to the generally held perception that 'female education does not have any utility for economic benefits.'<sup>93</sup>
- b. Patriarchy was strengthened by various strategies of women's education which reduced its contribution towards women's development.
- c. Historical, political and analytical literature was least concerned with oppressed conditions of the women.
- d. The fiction directed at female readers was full of stereotypical characters, reinforcing traditional roles and misconceptions about women. No bold, leading and daring female characters were created, though it was possible. Consequently self-image of women could not be improved.
- e. The literature written by religious ulema was equally suppressing though occasionally favoring female education under strict restrictions of *pardah*. It also confirmed that Islam conferred inferior status to women thus they were advised to be altruistic,

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92 Adeeb Sohail, in introduction to Rashida-tun-Nisa, *Islahun-Nisa* (Karachi: Roshan Khayal, 2000). The first female novelist of Urdu was not mentioned by her personal name in the first edition in 1894, but as mother of Muhammad Suleman, and daughter of Syed Waheeduddin, and sister of Maulvi Syed Imdad Imam. All titles of these male relatives were mentioned, which aggrandized only the males, and also they got the tribute for good writing of a female relative of them.

93 Prashad, *Risala Taleem-un-Nisa*, p.9.

submissive and subservient to men.<sup>94</sup> Same religious lobbies were forcefully opposing women's pursuit for education. Women were also discouraged even to read newspapers, or write in the media giving their full addresses for correspondence.<sup>95</sup> To counter the emancipating effect of modernization, the *maulvis* (literally meaning 'clerics') tried to persuade women not to challenge male dominance. The *maulvis* referred to women's rights in a limited sense, but never encouraged women to get these rights and never appreciated any sign of awareness leading to empowerment among them.

- f. The strongest factor which advocated the cause of women's empowerment and emancipation was journalism of the day. Journals printed after 1870, with writings about and for women, had real awakening information, good role models of the modern age, exposure to the developed world through reports, and a persistent effort to nullify the retrogressive and conservative influences of the society. It can be argued that it was literacy endowed by female education system that enabled women to take benefit from the print media. And then it was the emancipating role of bold writers who dauntlessly advocated women's rights. Women had joined the cause quite early but their number increased only after the start of female magazines like '*Ismat*' in 1908.<sup>96</sup>
- g. Role of the civil society organizations in women's uplift in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was not significant as there were only a few such organizations, and men dominated them. Anyhow their efforts to promote female education had just started in 1869.

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94 The famous treatise of *Bahishti Zewar* had strengthened the conviction in divine design of women's inferiority on immensely large scale for many decades to come. No feminist work of the twentieth century could break its spell so far. It had however called for women's education as a religious duty and had highlighted the need for women's need for education. See Ashraf Ali Thanvi, *Bahishti Zewar*.

95 For such detail see Ashraf Ali Thanvi, *Islah-un-Nisa* (Lahore: Idara-e-Islamiyat, 1988).

96 There were only very few serious non-fictional books written to advocate female emancipation. The greatest one was '*Huquq-e-Niswan*' by Mumtaz Ali, though due to lack of evidence it is difficult to assess reaction of the society to the publishing of this historic document in 1898 which can very well be regarded the first charter of women's rights movement in the twentieth century.

As a result of these processes, women's integration in the political activities in the post-1919 period was not in fact planned but men were forced to take advantage of women's potential which women had acquired after about five decades of education. Very interestingly, we find that the earliest female voice in politics was that of a lady who was not educated in any formal school – Bi Amman, the mother of famous Khilafatist leaders Moulana Shoukat Ali and Moulana Johar Ali. As women of educated and politically active families joined the political caravan, they in fact stepped into another patriarchal tactic of allowing women to support men's movement. Their education still was not designed to give them courage of fighting for rights, neither personal nor of the community. Their participation in political struggle could have done that but it was overwhelmingly to oust the colonial power, hence the 'subtle' goal of emancipation of Muslim women was ignored.

### **Conclusion**

In the feudal-patriarchal social set up of Muslim India, the reform efforts of the four decades (1869-1908) could achieve their objective partially, because they had deliberately ignored women in the initial stage. When the need to reform women's world was felt, the efforts were controlled by patriarchal forces. Education could not give women any liberation from bondages, but imparted some practical skills to improve the quality of life in the household and to provide quality companionship for men. Education and awareness was given to women only to serve the patriarchal system. While the society was under the influx of modernist-liberal-rational ideas, women's right to education as humans was not recognized properly. The state, the civil society, and the religious lobby were together in enhancing instrumental value of women, and very little was heard about women's rights as complete humans. The literature had mix tendencies, reflecting the confusions of the day. The journalism, however, despite its embryonic stage, did exemplary job. It, at least, gave the women an emancipating message and provided them with tools to express their concerns. Whatever empowerment women felt in these four decades was largely due to the print media with bold writings of

both men and women, who were aware and conscientious to fight the odds and to speak for oppressed women.

This paper has attempted to highlight the insipid nature of ‘education without enlightenment’, as it was around 1908. The relevance of this finding, in Pakistan, is evident even a century after, when one finds the education system of schools and colleges still devoid of giving any concept of women’s rights. Education is still patriarchal, but the journalism has taken strides to revolutionize the society along with the associational activity which was boosted in the 1980s. The greatest impact of NGOs has been recorded in terms of women’s emancipation in the recent years.<sup>97</sup> This endorses the idea that if government fails to provide certain need, people resort to organized activity to acquire it. The freedom of press regarding women’s emancipation around the year 1900 and unlimited capacity of journalism due to information revolution of today, suggest that patriarchal forces have to struggle harder to keep hold on women who are now getting unchecked access to information. In the context of rapid social change, urge for female emancipation, and development needs of the day, a serious analysis of these processes is needed. The society is in dire need of intellectual guidance and this could only be provided by genuine intelligentsia.<sup>98</sup> To avoid dilemmas of the past, the role of the intelligentsia and the emerging channels of expression at its disposal, need to be understood and realized by providing freedom of thought and action in the larger interest of the humanity.

## ***Appendix A***

### **A Review of Some Famous Magazines**

- a. *Tahzib-ul-Akhlaaq* (started 1870): It was the pioneer in terms of its impact on the Muslim society. Its contents ranged from international situation to subjects like superstitions. Its major objectives were to safeguard political interests of the Muslim

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97 Anwar Shaheen, “Changing Cultural Patterns in Pakistan (1972-2006), with Special Reference to the Role and Perception of the Non-governmental Actors of Change” (Ph.D., diss., University of Karachi, in progress).

98 Syed Jaffar Ahmed, in preface to Uzma Farrukh, *Karachi Kay Adabi Rasail*, p.14.

community, promote good moral and cultural values, create a distinct identity of the Muslims, and to nourish their worth and inner strength. The threat of missionaries and misconceptions of some Western writers were thwarted by *Tahzib-ul-Akhlaaq*. It presented an enlightened image of Islam. It promoted the trend of incorporation of serious issues of life in literary writings by breaking away from the tradition of creative writings merely for pleasure and helping the reader fly away from the realities of life.

- b. *Moallim* (started 1881). Only a single issue of 1881 can reveal the diversity of contemporary topics covered in this magazine. These were: odd marriages, polygamy, physical exercise, women's achievements in the world, need for women's education, condemning grief on birth of a daughter, how to maintain 'sharif' (noble) posture of the future generation, *purdah* as a barrier to women's education and training, *maulvis'* wrong assertion on inferiority of women by birth, and high dependency ratio. A female writer discussed the issue of women being called *naqisul-aql*, and how to get out of this dishonour. She asserted that women had a better level of intellectual capacity than was generally accepted. A translated article on women's health mentioned that females should not marry before the age of 20. It contained instructions on all critical issues of women's health like menstruation, pregnancy, giving birth, and breast-feeding.<sup>99</sup> A sixty-three pages long article is devoted to condemn traditional *purdah* legitimized on the basis of dubious/fake religious arguments. Mohib Hussain, in this article called the customary *purdah* of the day as '*hubs-e-dawami purdah*' (eternal confinement) for the Muslim women.<sup>100</sup> This list reflects the variety, the urgency, and the bold feminist stance of *Moallim*.
- c. *Tahzib-e-Niswan* (1898): It was the magazine which heralded the era of feminist magazines; earlier there were magazines mostly with more feminine and less feminist posture, but this was surely a feminist magazine. Its messages varied. Some were bold and revolutionizing, others highlighted troubles and evils of bad customs. The issue of January 1899 carried advertisement about *Huquq-e-Niswan*, the revolutionary book on women's rights written by Syed Mumtaz Ali. In February 1899, it advertised

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99 Mohib Hussain, *Advice to a Wife by a Doctor*, in *Moallam*, Hyderabad, 1881 (months unknown). It was published in three parts.

100 Mohib Hussain, *Moallam*, Vol.10, No. 9 (Ramadhan, 1314 A.H.), pp.9-72.

magazine *Moallim-e-Niswan*, edited by Mohib Hussain as well, which was a predecessor of *Tahzib-e-Niswan*. The first year issues of *Tahzib-e-Niswan* reflect the variety, the priority and convictions of the editors and the readers who expressed them through articles and letters. Their wide ranging themes included: altogether rejecting the felt need or cultural norm of wearing jewellery by females,<sup>101</sup> favouring or questioning the validity of conventional *purdah* of Muslim women in India,<sup>102</sup> and preferring education of boys before education of girls. It was because of the expected demand by men to educate women, in order to make them better wives, thus making themselves more valued by their husbands.<sup>103</sup> The magazine carried stories of women overcoming resistance to acquire education.<sup>104</sup> The magazine also tried to refute the charge on women being unfaithful, ignorant, and *naqis-ul-aql*,<sup>105</sup> and *naqis-uddin* (inferior in religious competence).<sup>106</sup> It also favoured widow's marriage,<sup>107</sup> detested child marriage,<sup>108</sup> and emphasized utility of *mehr* (dower amount) and the ways to make *mehr* a tool for protecting women's rights in the marriage contract.<sup>109</sup> Despite the fact that these themes were protecting patriarchy as well as challenging at the same time, one can observe nascent feminism in this contradiction. There one can read, 'without education we cannot even become able to serve our *malik-e-majazi* (husband),<sup>110</sup> side by side there is protest on men's atrocities as husbands and fathers.<sup>111</sup> The magazine projected achievements in female education in *Zanana Madrassa Ahl-e-Islam*, Kolkatta, and appreciated its sponsors, mostly Muslim aristocrats.

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101 A letter by a lady whose name was abbreviated, *Tahzib-e-Niswan*, 24 March 1899, p.96.

102 *Ibid.*, 31 March 1899, p.104.

103 *Ibid.*, 17 March 1899, p.83.

104 *Ibid.*, 24 March 1899, pp.90-95, and 31 March 1899, p.97.

105 *Ibid.*, 7 April 1899, p.105 - 8.

106 *Ibid.*, 14 July 1899, p.224.

107 *Ibid.*, 21 April 1899, p.125.

108 *Ibid.*, 30 June 1899, p.204-5, and 25 August 1899, pp.270-2.

109 *Ibid.*, 14 July 1899, p.223-4.

110 *Ibid.*, 3 March 1899, p.72.

111 *Ibid.*, 7 April 1899, p.107.

- d. *Ismat* (started 1908): It became the most popular women magazine of the early twentieth century. It advocated limited freedom and feminine education for women. It carried contents of routine interest for house women,<sup>112</sup> and published women's writings to encourage their creative expressions and to provide them a space for social interaction and growth. It printed details of women's excellence in other countries, which could inspire Indian women as well to rise above their prevalent level of underdevelopment in all respects.

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112 There were articles and small pieces of writings on issues like: religion, morality, culture, history, biography, creative literature, both prose and poetry, health, childrearing, household work, cooking recipes, handicrafts for decoration of home and making utilitarian items. A large number of writers were women, though men were not debarred from writing in *Ismat*. Women writers were encouraged by prizes.