

Book Review

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Gail Minault. *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform*. Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, 359. Rs. Indian 810.00

Professor Gail Minault has joined the ranks of the select western historians like Peter Hardy, David Leliveld and Francis Robinson, to name a few, who have produced definitive works on the Muslims of British India. There was, however, a gap left by the absence of any discussion about Muslim women in these studies. Professor Minault has been doing research on Muslim women of British India, particularly northern India, and has published extensively on the subject. Her book *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform* is a culmination of these articles.

The book focuses on Muslim reformers of the nineteenth and twentieth century who were concerned with the condition of Muslim women in society. Professor Minault shows a great deal of sensitivity and understanding of the *shurafa'* Muslim culture of nineteenth century India. She discusses the reformers response in the face of the challenges they faced in the post-1857 India from the Christian missionaries and Hindu reform movements, like the Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj. Much of the criticism of Christian missionaries was directed at the position of Muslim women, and the severity of their confinement. Professor Minault discusses those Muslim reformers who regarded the emancipation of Muslim women as imperative for the regeneration of the Muslims of India.

Their main thrust of criticism was on the lack of education of Muslim women. She argues that in the pre-1857 period it was only in few

