

# *The Emergence of Reformist Literature about Indian Muslim Women in Urdu Language (1857-1910)*

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The nineteenth century Indian Muslim reformers responded to western ideas and values without actually bringing about fundamental changes in the structure of their society. With regard to the position of women, for instance, it was considered more important to emancipate men from conservatism and backwardness rather than focus their efforts directly on Muslim women. Early Muslim educational institutions for women were established mainly to mitigate the effects of Christian missionary schools and Hindu revivalist activities.<sup>1</sup> Thus early efforts on behalf of women were less because women's emancipation was thought to be good cause in itself than to improve the image of Muslim community in the eyes of the outside world.<sup>2</sup> Rudimentary education at home was considered sufficient for women given the practice of early marriage and the seclusion of women belonging to the well-to-do classes. The main emphasis was on religious education, household management and awareness of the maternal role. Early Muslim social reformers advocated the strategy of educating men first as it was anticipated that women would learn automatically from their male-kin such as fathers, brothers and husbands.

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1. Ayesha Jalal, "The Convenience of Subsistence: Women and the state of the Pakistan", in Deniz Kandiyoti, (ed.), *Women Islam and state*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1919), 77-109.
2. Shahida Lateef, *Muslim Women in India: Political and Private Realities*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1991), 34.

