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Description

Women and Urdu Periodical Literature/Urdu Journalism (1900-1950)

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Abstract:

Urdu women's periodicals commenced publication towards the last decade of the nineteenth century. Unlike men's journals which spanned various streams of political, nationalist and/or sociological thought, Urdu women's journals like the other language women's journals aimed primarily at women's reform and education; they encouraged introspection; held up a mirror and served as windows to the world. As the struggle for independence began to gain momentum and notions of national consciousness began to take shape; ideas about the impact that women could have in contributing towards moulding modern, progressive thought within the private sphere of the family also grew. Ostensibly no concerted, sweeping movement brought women together in emancipating themselves, contributing towards framing national ideologies or playing seminal roles in nation building in the larger public spheres, yet, it began to be deemed essential for women to participate actively in ensuring socio-political and cultural change at least within private spaces of familial habitation. In the current, rapidly changing political environment, new roles were perceived for them, with a view to modernizing the family and by way of the family, society at large. New role models also came into being. Urdu women's magazines and periodicals contributed largely in bringing about these changes. They also provided a much needed platform for women to publish their writings. Several women's magazines were edited by men, some jointly by men and women and still others expressly by women. In Hyderabad, in 1886 or 1887, Muhibb Husain founded the first Urdu journal for women, the *Mu'allim-e Nisv?ñ*. He worked and wrote tirelessly for the restoration of rights granted to women in Islam by the Quran and the Had?s so that they would be treated at par with men. The journal was popular among women readers and contributors. It published poems short stories and plays, articles about women who could serve as role models, educative essays, essays that described women's movements in the past and articles that encouraged women to take up professional study. It denounced social evils like women's oppression, ill-treatment of widows, purdah and polygamy by means of discursive essays and debates. *Akhbar-un Nisa*, (1887; Delhi) edited by Syed Ahmed Dehlvi was apparently the first, exclusively women's journal to come out of North India. *Tehz?b-e Nisw?ñ* (1898; Lahore) was edited jointly by Syed Mumtaz Ali and his wife Mohammadi Begum.

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