

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

Fatima Rizvi

The ninety years between the 1857 Uprising and the definitive securing of independence in 1947 were witness to some of the most momentous changes that transformed the political, communal and social history of the sub-continent in a most abiding manner. India was formally colonized; many imperialist laws and policies implemented divisiveness between Hindus and Muslims; indigenous political parties were formed and there was increasing influence of overseas political and philosophical ideologies and policies on the Indian populace. As the struggle for independence gathered momentum, communal discord became a serious malaise, culminating in the demand for and the achievement of Pakistan. Several post-1857 colonial policies centring political, legal and civic systems constituted a renaissance of sorts, spurring reform on social and educational fronts and compelling people to introspect and relook at moribund religious customs and practices. While scepticisms with regard to hegemonic colonial regulations ran high, the Indian populace was not without a desire for cautious change. Modernity, in the shape of individualism, rationale, an interrogative scientific spirit gradually replaced traditionalisms. Several colonial policies surrounding employment and

education threatened marginalization of the Muslim community.¹ Contact with the west and an awareness of their altered status spurred rethinking or reimagining day to day existence among Muslim intelligentsia, leading them to relook at retrograde social and familial ideals, at morals, systems or codes of social and moral conduct, customs and traditions and employ instead, emancipatory strategies, verging on new lifestyles. Several social transitions with a view to assimilate with the dominant/mainstream culture(s) verging on Westernization began to alter perceptions within the community. Gradually, modernity, in the shape of western patterns of formal education, ethical codes and social practices began to be preferred replacing conventional Indo-Muslim ones. Processes were fractured and misgivings often ruled but practices once set in motion slowly became part and parcel of up-to-date ways of life. The middle-class assumed substantial proportions. Definitive roles were perceived for women in familial emancipation and/or domestic reform and hence their education and modernization became imperative. While colonialism was steadily and surely altering the socio-cultural, educational and economic fabric of the country, Indian intelligentsia responded by bringing out journals, magazines periodicals pamphlets and even leaflets to help the ordinary reading public come to terms with or deal with the changes. Journalistic writings served as a platform to air people's views, to educate people, generate awareness on various political, sociological, literary, cultural and economic issues. Men's journals served as discursive and educative platforms even before the Mutiny of 1857. It was essentially in the last quarter of the nineteenth century that women's journals began publication with a view to educating and emancipating women. Among factors that contributed towards the growth of women's journalism, early in the 20th century, were the need for reform, education and

¹ Thomas Metcalf, Alfred Lyall and C.A. Bayley observe that the British perceived 1857 as a Muslim uprising and altered their stance towards the community. Shackle makes the same observation (8-9).

modernization, within limits of Indian and Indo-Muslim philosophical and theological ideologies or the ‘spiritual’² aspects influencing the freedom struggle. By the early twentieth century a fairly large number of women’s journals and periodicals were in wide circulation, their popularity only increasing. This paper conducts a brief survey of Urdu language journals and deliberates over the attempts of select Urdu women’s journals in their attempts to educate, reform, modernize and engender political, socio-cultural and economic consciousness among consumers of the literature during the first half of the twentieth century.³

The 1857 uprising was a defining moment between two phases in Urdu journalism. On the one hand, the exigencies of the uprising caused several Urdu periodicals, like the *Delhi Urdu Akhbar* and most papers in the North West Provinces to cease publication, while on the other, as an aftermath of the Uprising, several new ones began publication and circulation among the Urdu speaking and Urdu reading intelligentsia in 1958-59. These periodicals and journals owed their existence to the editorial, economic and ingenious resourcefulness of an educated class of citizens, who felt a pressing need to generate awareness among the larger populace. The prime objective of the new periodical literature was to inform, generate awareness or educate about the reigning political, socio-cultural and economic climate of the country. These new periodicals and journals addressed demands of modernization. Despite drawing upon the

² Partha Chatterjee employs this expression to distinguish between ‘material’ colonial influences involving science, technology etc. in which the West was deemed superior and the ‘spiritual’ aspects in which the East was deemed superior to the West, in his discussion of adoption/ rejection of Western trends and resources by the Indians, in their process of modernization (237-38).

³ The primary source for this essay is *Kalam-e Niswan* a selection of essays from several Urdu women’s journals transliterated in dēvnāgri script, comprehensively annotated, compiled and edited by feminist activist Purva Bharadwaj, Nirantar Trust.

earlier periodicals, the new ones created their own niche. In conjunction with their utilitarian purpose, they mirrored society, critiqued it, included humorous essays and drawings and can be enjoyed as store-houses of the socio-cultural flavours and sights and sounds of 19th and 20th century India. They also published academic and/or pieces and serialized long and short fictions which served to shape the literary climate of the day. The most popular periodicals were *Avadh Akhbār* (1859), a weekly published by the Naval Kishore Press, Lucknow and edited by Pandit Ratan Nath 'Sarshar' and the *Avadh Panch* (1877), edited by Munshi Sajjad Husain from Lucknow. The *Aligarh Institute Gazette* (1866) and *Tehzīb-ul Akhlaq* (1870 -77) were among the Urdu journals brought out by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan from Aligarh. These periodicals among many others provided a platform for socio-political prose and realistic fiction. Most of them published a wide range of articles and debates on socio-cultural, educational, political issues. They also provided a platform for budding writers and poets to publish their works. The concise, humorous, satirical, articles and their realistic subjects served the twin purposes of modernizing people as well as narrative styles. A vibrant, modern prose style that was direct, pithy, utilitarian, engaging, purposeful and combined twin commitments to reform and entertainment came into being. These journals were home to "intellectual-cultural-literary encounters" between east and West that paved the way for "broader colonial transactions" (Asaduddin 82). These Urdu periodicals were in essence androcentric, publishing articles mostly by men and a few women and by and large, targeting male readership as writing and publishing for circulation were deemed to be masculine exercises. Women seldom contributed to these periodicals, though they may have been consumers of articles published therein.

Over time and with the turn of the century, several periodicals came to be recognized as influencing particular ideologies and streams of thought. For example: Maulana Azad's *Al Hilāl* was an organ of

political and reformatory expression and *Zamīndar* (1903, Lahore) voiced strong nationalist sentiment. Besides, several journals like *Jām-e Jam*, published from Sukkur, *Khayyām* and *Sāqi* were essentially literary in flavour and provided a platform to budding men and women writers and poets to publish their texts. After the formation of the *Anjuman Tarraqi Pasand Mussannifin-e Hind* or All India Progressive Writers' Association in 1936, several journals voicing progressive, communist ideology began circulation in undivided India. Munshi Premchand's literary-political monthly, *Hans* (1930; Hindi), which in fact, preceded the formation of the Association, first published the Progressive manifesto in 1935. *Naya Adab* (1939; Urdu) may be designated the status of the official organ of the Association. Among others were *Chiñgāri*, edited by Rasheed Jahan and Mahmud-uz Zafar while they lived in Mussourie; *Congress Socialist* and Sajjad Zaheer's *Hayāt* and *Qaumi Jung* also propagated Marxist and communist ideology. Over time, more journals like *Adab-e Latīf*, *Shahrāh*, *Adabi Duniya*, *Imroz*, *Savera* and *Naqoosh* voiced Progressive sentiment, in British India and later, in Pakistan. *Mussawwir* and *Caravan* were associated with films.

Regular and sustained opportunities for formal education were not popularly available for girls and women in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries – hence a comparative dearth of women readers and an even greater scarcity of women writers. However, traditional, informal master-pupil educational patterns and reading habits inculcated through personal interest, ensured that a limited number of women were consumers of available print material. Occasionally women centric articles concerning the current socio-economic and familial status were published in English, Urdu, Bengali and Hindi, primarily for reformatory and emancipatory purposes by male writers. With the passage of time, in the last quarter of the 19th century and by the 20th century, several periodicals began to be published for women. Alongside a comparatively larger number of androcentric publications these magazines and journals were meant essentially for gynocentric

bourgeois readership with a view to the advancement of women and girl's education and emancipation. Most women's periodicals given entirely to addressing women's issues began publication in the last few decades of the nineteenth century. Among the earliest was the Bengali *Bamabodhini Patrika* (1863) started by Umeshchandra Dutta with the intent of educating Bengali women and housewives. It was followed by *Anāthini* (1875), the first Bengali journal to be edited by a woman Thakomoni Debi. Thereafter came *Paricharika* (1878) and *Bharti* (1884 -94), often recognized as a Tagore family magazine and a landmark in women's writing and editing. Women's Hindi journals include *Bala Bodhini* (1874-77) published from Benaras and edited by Harishchandra. *Grihlakshmi* (1909), *Stri Darpan* (1909 -28), and *Chand* (1922) were published from Allahabad and exclusively addressed women's issues. Premchand's novel *Nirmala* was serialized in *Chand* from 1925-26 (Dalmia 54). As women's education gained popularity and reading and writing were rapidly on their way to becoming prevalent, readership increased and so did the number of women's periodicals. A number of monthlies, fortnightlies and weeklies began publication and circulation, making inroads in an increasingly large reading community, through a cross-section of urban, middle-class or bourgeois homes. As the urban Muslim intelligentsia became conscious of the need to change in accordance with the changing times greater attention was given to women's participation and contribution within households; attitudes of male family members became more inclusive.

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 Nisvāñ*. He worked and wrote tirelessly for the restoration of rights granted to women in Islam by the Quran and the Hadīs 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. *Tehzīb-e Niswāñ* (1898; Lahore) was edited jointly by Syed Mumtaz Ali⁴ and his wife Mohammadi Begum. Syed Mumtaz

⁴ Syed Mumtaz Ali who also wrote *Huquq-e Niswāñ* (Rights of Women), a logical and carefully organized work debating the status of women in Islam and arguing for their rights and privileges in keeping with interpretations of the Quran and the Hadis was seriously concerned with emancipation of

Ali pioneered women's journalism through *Tehzīb*. The journal was committed to social reform and contributing towards uplift of Muslim women. *Tehzīb-e Niswāñ* published articles ranging from household management and child-rearing to etiquette and creative writing. Maintaining regular contact between the editor and the readers was one of the major reasons for its longstanding popularity and dynamism. It continued publication under the editorship of Hijab Imtiaz Ali and her husband, Imtiaz Ali Taj till 1950. *Khatoon* (1904 -1914) was an Urdu monthly started by Sheikh Abdullah and his wife, Wahid Jahan Begum on the lines of *Tehzīb-e Niswāñ*. Edited by Sheikh Abdullah, it was the journal of the Women's Education Section of the Aligarh College. Aimed at promoting women's education, it encouraged women to write correct and simple Urdu and published prose and poetry by men and women writers. It ceased publication after the establishment of the girls' school at Aligarh. Enrolment at this school provided young women including Ismat Chughtai with opportunities for writing the matriculation examination and for classroom education. Another popular Urdu periodical was *Ismat* (founded 1908), brought out from Delhi, and edited by Rashid-ul-Khairi; *An-Nisa* was published from Hyderabad, and edited by Sughra Humayun Mirza; *Zebu'n Nisa* brought out from Lahore was also edited by Sughra Humayun Mirza; *Ustani* from Delhi was edited by Khwaja Bano; *Payām-e Ummīd*, from Sitapur, *Bināt* and *Khatūn-e Mashriq* were published from Patna. *Zillus Sultān* (founded 1913) was the women's magazine brought out by Nawab Sultan Begum of Bhopal. Its prime intent was to educate and reform women. *Hareem* (founded 1928) was brought out by Naseem Book Depot, Lucknow and edited by the novelist Naseem Inhonvi. It enjoyed popularity until the mid-1980s when Inhonvi's son Fahim Inhonvi was forced to close down publication after a fire gutted the publishing house. *Shama* (1939-1999) a monthly women's digest,

women in accordance with Islamic thought. *Huquq-e Niswāñ* was far advanced in spirit by comparison with his Deobandi spiritual mentors or Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's views (*Gender* 36).

brought out by Yusuf Dehlvi from Delhi, published women's literature, articles on domestic requirements and films, and *Bano* a slim magazine that could be slipped through a wedge in the door for letters, was edited by Sadia Dehlvi and brought out by the house of *Shama*. Apart from these women's journals children's periodicals, encouraged reading habits among the young.

These periodicals and magazines played a significant role in providing opportunities for learning and reform for Urdu speaking/reading women who may or may not have had the opportunity for formal education. With an essentially feminine target readership, these magazines, newspapers and periodicals also provided a platform to women to publish their works. They can thus be credited with having created the then novel model of women writing for women within domestic spheres. They were meant for domestic circulation, and aimed at women's uplift. They "stressed enlightened domesticity with a mixture of topics that could be described as a naturalized Indian version of the Ladies Home Journal"⁵(*Secluded Scholars* 106-107). For want of substantial funds, in regard to general appearance, texture, quality of paper, and print the Urdu women's magazines published in India seemed like the poor cousins of their counterparts in Britain or America.⁶ Most often, as Gail Minault points out these magazines and

⁵ The Ladies' Home Journal began publication in 1883 in America and went on to become one of the most popular women's magazines. It has ceased publication but can be accessed online. *Woman and Home* (1926) and *Women's Weekly* (1911) were similar magazines brought out in Britain. Both are available in print versions.

⁶ This observation comes from my experiences of holding and reading a cross-section of Indian and British magazines to which my elder women relatives subscribed, while vacationing at my grandfather's house in Barabanki. As a young, city-bred girl during the 70s I gravitated towards *Woman and Home* and *Women's Weekly* more readily. Black and white embroidery patterns and sketches on comparatively coarse, yellowing paper of indigenous magazines appeared less interesting. It was though, intriguing to see a few small pieces in oblique, right-to left nastāliq print in rectangular columns separated from the rest of the print on the page by a border.

periodicals ended up being sold as waste paper to ‘raddiwallas’ or scrap dealers making it difficult or next to impossible to locate them now (*Secluded Scholars* 106; *Gender* 85-86). Nevertheless, they were instrumental in driving home their message of reform. These magazines were of different flavours, targeting the twin ends via diverse means. They both, mirrored the change that was taking place in society, and contributed decisively towards bringing it about. They usually addressed women’s issues and were a mixture or “masala” (*Secluded Scholars* 106) of various issues related to domesticity, including health, thrift, motherhood, childcare, hygiene, household supervision, cookery, embroidery patterns, appropriate dress, behaviour, relationship management and a host of such issues. They also sought to acquaint women with life outside their homes, in other social frame-works and in other countries. They are storehouses of deliberations, essays, reports, socio-cultural debates and travel literature, advisories, do-it-yourself guides, short stories, and longer fictions which were serialized. In tone, the essays were didactic, objective and secular. Editors and contributors sought to reform by publishing debates to modernize, often in line with Western standards despite the pull to maintain conventional Indo-Muslim ones. They informed about world affairs, especially political and socio-economic changes; provided new role models; encouraged education among both, women and children and promoted modernity and reform also in keeping with pan-Islamic ideals. They proved instrumental in the large-scale creation and circulation of high-brow and popular literature governing progress and reform. Mostly, the contributors were women, though occasionally, men too contributed. Excerpts from miscellaneous men’s writings were also published. Several essays and excerpts advocated women’s economic independence and advancement through promoting knowledge of small-scale industry.

Reading through these journals one can perceive that Abbasi Begum and Nazar Sajjad Hyder, writer and social activist, were regular contributors to *Tehzīb-e Niswāñ*. (The young Nazar Zehra contributes

as ‘Bint-Nazrul Baqar’ or ‘daughter of Nazrul Baqar’). Shaista Akhtar Suhrawardi, the first Indian Muslim to secure a PhD degree from the University of London who went on to become a diplomat in Pakistan, contributed regularly to *Tehzīb-e Niswāñ* and *Ismat*. Mohammadi Begum and Rooh Afza Haider were regular contributors to *Ismat*. Apart from women who revealed their identities there were several who merely passed off as mothers, daughters and wives of the patriarchs of their respective families; several wrote only under the initials of their names and still others preferred absolute anonymity. That essays received by journals were whetted before being published is evident from Ismat Chughtai’s experience with *Tehzīb-e Niswāñ*. Chughtai writes that her essay “Bachpan” but was refused with a letter of admonishment addressed to her father, on ground that it was an impertinent piece of writing. She adds that she later sent the same essay to *Sāqī*, which not only published it but also refused nothing, thereafter (Chughtai 39 and 109).

Contributions cover a fairly large range of women’s issues. They vocalized against retrograde customs and advised on the management of familial relationships; they highlighted the dangers involved in rash or poorly contemplated marriages; the pros and cons of marriages within and outside cultural frameworks. Inter caste and inter religious marriages that lead to debates centring customs, beliefs and language were discussed in detail. Considerable thought was given to the appropriate marriageable age for girls and polygamy was discouraged. In her essay “Dūsri Shādī kā ēk aur Ḳhatarnāk Pehlū” (“Another Dangerous Aspect of a Second Marriage”; *Ismat*; 1956) Shaista Suhrawardy blames men for this social malaise emphasising that women have always been subject to men’s resolves (97). Essays like “Bechāri Dulhan” (“The Wretched Bride”) and “Jāhil Sās” (“Uneducated Mother-in Law”; *Khatoon*, 1910 and 1911 respectively), highlight problems within marriages, moribund customs and traditions. Most journals published essays about women achievers or women active in social, educational, public or political spheres. This

was evidently with a view to help women develop confidence in their own capacities in undertaking public activities. Rani Mira Bai, (*Ustāni*, 1920); Tarabai (*Tehzīb-e Niswāñ*, 1927), General Eisenhower’s wife, Mary Geneva or “Mamie” (*Ismat*, 1952), Aram Jan Begum (*Khatoon*, 1910), Laila Khwaja Bano (*Payām-e Ummīd*, 1917), Khalida Adeeb Khanum (*Ismat*, 1935) served as role models to educate essentially domesticated women on various issues ranging from political affairs to trade and commerce, judiciousness in household or familial matters, self-reliance, thrift and even politeness and etiquette. In her eponymous essay on Husn Ara Begum Mrs. Agha Mahmood Ghazi clearly states:

Agar humāri behneñ koshish kareñ to mumkin hai kī zanānē Europe sē kisi bāt meñ pīchē nahiñ reh sakeñ. Khudavand-e Karīm mardān-e Hind ko talīm-e niswāñ ki taraf jald mutawajjah kar lē. (Bharadwaj 28)

If our sisters try it is quite possible that they will become abreast with European women. May The Merciful Lord get Indian men to turn their attention towards the education of women!

Thereafter, she cites the wife of Shenshah Qibla Khan, a woman who gave advice in formulating laws and in governance, as epitomizing wisdom and good sense. It can be noticed in the essays that women who featured as new role models like Sughra Humayun Mirza, poet, writer editor, social reformer and women’s activist also contributed to the journals. This also helped boost women’s confidence in themselves.

As a Deobandi Syed Mumtaz Ali was committed to women’s education for the Deobandis believed that women’s knowledge of Islam needed improvement to combat unwanted rituals and practices that went against the spirit of Islam (*Gender* 37). His *Tehzīb* published articles that sought to uplift and emancipate women and providing them equal status with men. Apart from Islamic thought, thoughts similar to those in Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Thoughts on the Education*

of Daughters or J.S. Mill's *Essay on the Subjection of Women* are found as reformatory bases in some of the articles in Ali's journal and the other women's journals – that a family thrives when an educated woman is at the helm of affairs; that women's education is essential for the development of a community or a nation; that men, community and country cannot progress without the educated women; that women ought to be educated rather than subjugated and that objectification of women is an indicator of a backward community are only a few of the issues that are addressed. Comparisons are drawn with foreign, near and distant cultures; pan-Islamic sentiments are expressed in some of the articles; China, Egypt, Russia, Arabia and Britain provide the advanced, cultural stereotypes. The importance of women teachers along with their paucity is stressed; qualities that a "good" teacher ought to embody are clearly chalked out and parents are encouraged to send daughters to school. This clearly indicates that the Urdu periodicals keenly looked at the most reformatory aspects within and outside Islam for modernization of Muslim women.

Providing the means for formal education for girls and women was a very significant requirement that was addressed early in the twentieth century. Traditional modes of education involved the informal, one to one *ustād-shāgird* or *ustāni-shāgirda* pattern where one teacher addressed one student or a small group of students within a family for a small stipend. The new formal education system offered by the British involved, classroom study in a school to which pupils travelled; taking exams and clearing levels. In government sponsored mission schools the medium of instruction was often English, religious education was imparted but parents of both Hindu and Muslim families felt threatened about British evangelical and proselytization practices. They feared their daughters would be proselytized in the Mission schools.⁷ Boys got a chance to go to school but girls were often kept

⁷ Religious and spiritual instruction was included in the educational curriculum of government sponsored mission schools. Large sections of people felt vulnerable and experienced serious concerns and fears with regard
55 *Urdu Studies* vol 1 issue 1 2021 Approved by UGC-CARE

at home, and tutored in the traditional home-study patterns. In this regard, Hindu families were more open than Muslim ones in sending their daughters to school. Many Muslim families actually awaited the establishment of Muslim schools to send their daughters out of their homes for education. At times, girls took the matriculation examination privately. Urdu magazines played a furtive role in both, establishing schools and preparing parents to send their daughters to school. The also became the means through which young girls and mothers sought education. In her essay “Primary Tālīm” (“Primary Education”) in *Tehzīb-e Niswān* (1935) Mrs. Barlaas writes from Tokyo to stress the importance of Primary School education in laying a strong foundation for boys and girls. She outlines the importance of educating a child in hygiene and self-sufficiency since early childhood (Bharadwaj 125-126). In 1919, the magazine *Ustāni*, stresses its own role as a teacher in educating its readership, offering to play a role concomitant with its name. An essay, “Ustāni ka Ta’aruf” (An Introduction to the Lady-Teacher”) by Khwaja Bano bemoans the lack of women teachers, then offers the journal’s services in meeting this lack. The essay also allayed fears women or parents may have had with regard to educating their daughters (Bharadwaj 119-121). The journal published articles to deliberate the need for modern formal education for girls. In another article the same year, “Tālīm ke Mutālliq Chand Nuqtē” (A few Observations Regarding Education”) Sughra Humayun Mirza, stressed the need for all-round education and the need for education of mothers. “*Tālīm wohi hai jo nafs ko nash-o numa pānē aur tarraqi-e dārain hāsil karnē meñ madad dē.*” (“Appropriate education is that which helps refines the human conscience.”) And again, “*Sabsē pehlē tālīm-e iḥlāqī hāsil karnī chaiyē. Aḥlāq juzv-e ā’zam umnda tarbiyat ka hai jis ki bāg-dor wālidain ke hāthoñ meñ hotī hai. Is liyē mā ka tālīm-e afta hona amr hai.*” (“It is of foremost

to their children’s exposure to such practices. Colonial intervention in an already multi-cultural and multi-ethnic Indian society, posed problems related to acceptance or rejection of the proselytizing practices of missionary societies.

importance to acquire good conduct. Sound moral conduct is the most essential aspect of a sound upbringing and parents hold the reins to it. And so, it is imperative for the mother to be educated.”) (Bharadwaj 122) *Payām-e Ummīd* published articles highlighting the merits of formal education. “Duniya kī Sabsē Baṛī Ilmī Tālīm” by Azad Begum (1916) details aspects of the 1403 Yongle Chinese Encyclopaedia and cites it as one of the greatest repositories of information and knowledge. She concludes with the advice that one should look beyond one’s own culture and men of letters to expand one’s knowledge (Bharadwaj 112-115). Another essay from the journal, “Shanti Niketan” (1918) details the educational strategies of the institution (Bharadwaj 116-118). Similarly, Syeda Moosa Nabvia described the Women’s Education Department of the University of Egypt in *Khatoon* (1911). *Tehzīb-e Niswāñ* carried an essay “School kī Ladkiyāñ” (“School Girls”) by Zafar Jahan Begum as far back as 1927, favouring formal education for girls and ridiculing those who blamed any untoward incident upon English education (Bharadwaj 154-156). In 1935 *Ismat* published essays deriding English school education as a fashionable penchant but by 1937 it had altered its stance and published an essay to dispel some of the myths that kept parents from sending daughters to Mission schools. “Añgrezi Tālīm kē K̄hilāf bejā Ta’asub” (“Unwarranted Prejudices against English Education”) by Begum Syed Ali Rizvi (1937) takes up the cause of formal English education, and argues against prejudices preventing Muslim families from educating their daughters:

Yē khayāl kī Angrezi zubān dīn-e Masīhī kī tālīm deti hai ya is sē hāsīl hoti hai, sarāsar lāg hai. Sarkāri Angrezi skool meñ kahiñ bhī dīn-e Masīhī ka zikr nahiñ atā aur na kahiñ is ka intezām. (Bharadwaj 165).

The view that the English language preaches Christianity is a complete myth. Government English schools do not impart Christian religious education and nor do they provide for its practice.

Despite such essays which overtly dispelled suspicions, the fear of proselytization of both girls and boys was quite intimidating. Chughtai writes in half-humorous overtones that she got her father to permit her to take the matriculation examination from Aligarh, issuing the threat that she would convert to Christianity if she were held back. She also recalls her mother's qualms resulting from the threat and her father's consequent compliance (114-115). Interviews, debates and discursive essays were published in several magazines including debates involving serious and contentious issues like purdah and education. In "Purdah aur Tālīm" (1935) an essay in *Ismat* by Tehzeeb-un-Nisa, a graduate, argues logically and vocally against the practice of purdah in India calling it "ġhair Islāmi" (unIslamic) and "ġhair sharaī" or going against Islamic, Sharia law. She articulates the abolition of this primitive practice and advocates women's rights and education.

Essays centring travel appeared in most women's periodicals. Most often these were published with a view to familiarize readers about foreign cultures and lifestyles; to apprise them of events; to provide picturesque illustrations of monuments or merely to provide means of entertainment by narrating amusing incidents. Mostly women from bourgeois families who had the means to travel and felt the urge to put their travel experiences to the better use of the larger, probably less fortunate readership that could not necessarily afford international or even domestic travel contributed these essays. In most of them the experience of travel itself as well as the exposure to new places, people, and cultures, is perceived as a means to educate and spur the reader towards modernization. These essays perceive travel as means of promoting learning and generating knowledge about both pan-Indian customs and traditions and lifestyles abroad. Apart from women's travel experiences, excerpts from men's travelogues were also published. They informed about world affairs, especially political and socio-economic changes. "Albānia kī Aurteñ" ("The Women of Albania") published anonymously in *Tehzīb-e Niswāñ* (1927)

discusses laws governing and protecting women, and illustrates customs and lifestyle of women belonging to various strata of society, their art, craft and means of livelihood (Bharadwaj 10-14). “Buckingham Palace meñ do Ghantē” (“Two Hours in Buckingham Palace”) by Rooh Afza Begum in *Ismat* (1956) describes a tourist’s visit to the palace, charting the layout of the concrete structure, the gardens and, various monarchical traditions and practices, alongside (Bharadwaj 24-26). *Khatoon* published an article by Sakina Khatoon in 1905 “Bambaī kī Numāish: Seḡh-e Sanat-e Niswāñ” (The Bombay Exhibition: The Women Artisan’s Group”) giving highlights about the recently concluded all women’s exhibition at Bombay, organized exclusively by women with sound economic backgrounds and who could exert considerable political influence. The exhibition attempted to showcase and sell, art and craft works, handmade or produced by economically marginalized women which were or had potential to become economically beneficial to others. It also provided scope and space to women artisans to display the processes of their creativity at the exhibition. Sakina Khatoon’s emphasis on the cosmopolitan organizing committee affirms faith in secularism and communal harmony. Her express intent in writing this article is evidently to showcase the talent women have despite multiple marginalizations, including education, and socio-cultural restrictions like the purdah system; it is also to provide courage to women to become economically self-sufficient; it highlights the potential women have to become prospective economic contributors to familial income (Bharadwaj 4-9).

Clothing was a significant and sensitive issue in multicultural India. With varied forms of clothing available to choose from, within the indigenous cultural framework, in North India alone, and the freedom among the bourgeois communities to choose to wear western clothing, dress and appearance had assumed debatable scope by the early twentieth century. In Hyderabad, Muhibb Husain argued for a comfortable or convenient dress code in *Mu’allim-e Nisvāñ*. However,

Margrit Pernau contends that while Husain was taking up women's causes with vigour, his reasoning may have at times, been weak. She explains that while he argued for a dress code that enabled women to move out of their homes freely, he did not see their freedom of movement as a human right but rather as a duty they had to perform in order to move out in the social sphere to recognize their faults and rectify them (44). The call for nationalism required the manifestation of the nationalist sensibility in material and spiritual aspects. Outward form depicted by clothing, particularly for women, who were being recast in significantly modern roles during the freedom struggle became important. The brahmika saree worn by the bhadramahila was seen as the most suitable manifestation of Indian nationalist sensibility (Chatterjee 248). This led to various debates particularly among the Muslim intelligentsia who preferred the traditional shalwar-kameez or churidar-kurta with the dupatta or odhni or scarf as modest and appropriate clothing. *Khatoon* carried several articles related to women's clothing. Two particularly interesting articles entitled "Zenana Libās" ("Women's Clothing") in the January and February 1905, issues project views of women on culture, dress, modesty and outward appearance. What is even more interesting is that the February "Zenana Libās" by A. W. G. Begum Dehelvi, is a response to the January "Zenana Libās" by M. F. Begum. Dehelvi is critical and runs down M. F. Begum for her rather wishy-washy stance on women's clothing, which she said ought to depend upon climactic conditions. In her final assessment, Dehelvi advocates the sari worn in Hyderabad with a kurta or an English jacket as an appropriate dress for Muslim women in preference over the Bengali style of wearing a sari with a "purāni kism ki kurti" ("old-fashioned shirt") (Bharadwaj 56). Another essay in *Khatoon* (1911), "Phat Paṛē wo Sona Jissē Tūtē Kān" ("May the Gold that hurts the Ears Snap") by Aaliya Begum argues against the practice of wearing weighty or bulky adornments in the ear lobes, describing them as ugly and barbarous (Bharadwaj 63).

Several essays enlightened women about their civic and political rights and privileges or encouraged them to respond to the country's political goings-on with erudition and informed understanding. "Haq-e Rāi Dehindgi aur Aurat" (Women and Suffrage Rights) by Mrs. Syed Ahmad Machli Shehri in *Ismat* (1937) argues about the need for women to step out and fight for their rights. Her essay educates women about their status in society, within the emerging political system, post 1937, home rule and encourages them to exercise their right to vote (Bharadwaj 190-193). "Jins-e Latīf kī Sargarmiyāñ" ("Engagements of the Fairer Sex"; *Ustāni*; 1920) informs about women's movements across the world; about empowered and politically active women in India; women in the Khilafat Movement and stresses the need to empower women with literacy (Bharadwaj 184-185). The journal *Awāz-e Niswāñ* (1941) published Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru's presidential address at the All-India Women's Congress Meet⁸ at Bangalore and the editor added notes on the goals of the meeting and women's education (Bharadwaj 194-198). Sheher Bano's essay "Tehrīk-e Niswāñ aur Hindustān kī Desi Riāsateñ" ("The Princely States of Hindustan and the Women's Movement", *Ismat*, 1936) highlights the pioneering role played by the leading women of princely states in the uplift of women (Bharadwaj 188-189).

The genesis, popularity and decline of Urdu women's periodical literature roughly spans over a period of about fifty or sixty years during which women wrote, read, educated, emancipated and entertained themselves and their families by means of the literature to which they subscribed. The decades between 1900 and 1950 cover a period which marked a high point in Urdu women's journalism directed at Muslim women's readership. Most women's journals were reformative and negotiated between the current and the desired status

⁸ The All-India women's Congress was founded by Margaret Cousins in 1927 to improve women's education, contribute towards their uplift and tackle women's rights issues. It is one of the oldest women's groups in India.

of Muslim women. Since education was the primary goal, these magazines supported, promoted and propagated formal, schoolroom education by means of articles that were concise and to the point they. They urged men and women to educate their wives and their daughters by publishing articles that showcased the advantageous possibilities arising from education and practicality. These magazines were also advocating life-style changes among Muslim women. They sought to modernize, dispel misgivings and enable women to become more outgoing.

Works Cited:

Asaduddin, M. "First Urdu Novel: Contesting claims and Disclaimers," *The Annual of Urdu Studies*, Vol. 16. 2001. pp.76–97

Bharadwaj, Purva. Ed. *Kalam-e Niswan*. Nirantar Publications, 2013.

Chatterjee, Partha. "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question." *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, editors, Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid. Zubaan & Kali for Women, 2006.

Chughtai, Ismat. *A Life in Words: Memoirs*. Translated and Introduced by M. Asaduddin, Penguin Books, 2012.

Dalmia, Vasudha. "Introduction: Hindi, Nation and Community," *Nationalism in the Vernacular: Hindi, Urdu, and the Literature of Indian Freedom*; edited by Shobhna Nijhawan. Orient Blackswan Private Limited 2010. pp. 33–63.

Minault, Gail. "Ladies Home Journals: Women's Magazines in Urdu," *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India*. Oxford UP, 1998. pp 105-157.

---. "Muslim Social History from Urdu Women's Magazines." *Gender, Language and Learning: Essays in Indo-Muslim Cultural History* Permanent Black, 2009. pp. 84–100.

Pernau, Margrit. "Female Voices: Women Writers in Hyderabad at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century," *The Annual of Urdu Studies*, Vol. 17, 2002. pp. 36–54.

Shackle, Christopher. "Introduction: Hindi, Nation and Community," *Nationalism in the Vernacular: Hindi, Urdu, and the Literature of Indian Freedom*; edited v by Shobhna Nijhawan. Orient Blackswan Private Limited 2010. pp. 1–32.