

Women's Magazines in Urdu as Sources for Muslim Social History

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The **educative power** of the printed word has been causatively linked to the emergence of the Renaissance and the Reformation in Europe (Davis 1975; Eisenstein 1979) and to the creation of national identities all over the world (Anderson 1983). In India in the 19th and 20th centuries, the printing press similarly changed the nature of social discourses. While oral performance and word-of-mouth communication remained of paramount importance in a society where the vast majority were illiterate, print broke the monopoly of access to knowledge enjoyed by the priestly, scribal, and commercial castes and classes. Cheap printed books made knowledge more available to all who could read, and made the ability to read an increasing necessity for those who would raise their socio-economic status. Print of all sorts—not only books, but newspapers, magazines, leaflets, handbills—permitted individuals to gain information for themselves and to communicate with others concerning daily actuality, new scientific and technical knowledge, religious polemics, social reform programmes, political platforms, and to express new forms of creativity in short stories and novels (Jones 1992; Metcalf 1982; Robinson 1993; Russell 1970).

The role of the periodical press for women is just beginning to be appreciated by scholars of social and educational change in India. Magazines for women began to appear in various Indian languages in the mid-to-late 19th century, with Bengali leading the way. Such periodicals as *Antahpur* and *Bamabodhini Patrika* are fundamental sources for the study of social and religious reform in Bengal and for the lifestyles of the Bengali middle class (Borthwick 1984; Karlekar 1991). Similarly, for the study of the lives of middle class Muslim women in *purdah*¹ and movements for their social and educational reform, women's magazines in Urdu are essential. The earliest of these Urdu periodicals, from the end of the 19th century, were founded by men, some with the collaboration of their wives or other female relations. Women's magazines became increasingly numerous and informative in the early 20th century as a renewable and inexpensive way to convey ideas to secluded women, and as a medium for those

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women to express their own views beyond the confines of their homes. As such, they are often the only windows available upon the otherwise hidden lives of Muslim women (Minault 1988).

It is however not easy to find these journals. Major libraries and collections, while they saved newspapers and literary journals, seldom saved women's magazines. Families who subscribed threw them out or sold them to the *paper-wallas*² after a time. The standard histories of Urdu literature and journalism (Sabri 1953; Sadiq 1984; Suhrawardy 1945) rarely mention them. Social reform organisations sometimes have archives that contain their own journals and proceedings, and some university and women's college libraries contain runs of the better known, or more literary, of the women's journals. The descendants of the founding editors of some journals have been helpful in informing where they could be found, as have private collectors. One purpose of this article is to issue a plea to all with access to files of old women's magazines in any Indian language to preserve them. They are invaluable sources for social movements, ideas, lifestyles, and creative writings of women, and for trends in the social history of their time. Like etiquette books, cookbooks, and various types of 'how-to' manuals, they constitute a vision of everyday reality that is hard to duplicate in other literary forms.

Women's magazines were usually classified as either educational or literary, but most were a mixture of: (a) practical information about health, child care, and nutrition, along with recipes and embroidery patterns; (b) news about schools for girls, women's associations, and women in other countries; and (c) creative writing such as short stories, serialised novels, and poetry on themes deemed 'suitable' for female readers. Other types of articles might include arguments for or against certain social and educational reforms, discussion of customs that reformers regarded as useless and wasteful, of women's rights in Islamic law, or communications from readers offering opinions and asking for information or advice.

Emerging women's magazines in Urdu stressed enlightened domesticity and respectability, but also practical knowledge to cope with the changing times. Unlike similar publications in the West, however, these Indian women's magazines neither stressed consumption of new products and household conveniences, nor made fashion much of an issue. There were heated discussions on *pardah*, questioning its necessity, various degrees of its observance, etc., and as the nationalist movement spread, discussions on simplified dress, spinning, and *swadeshi*,³ but fashion sketches appeared rarely, if at all. Some of the journals, mentioned here, contained photographs, but most—in the interests of economy—did not. The covers featured line drawings in addition to calligraphy, and most illustrations were also hand-drawn.

In contrast to western women's magazines, the accent in Indian magazines for women was upon breaking down women's mental isolation rather than glorifying their separate sphere. The interdependence of the home

and the world was emphasised, particularly as the 20th century brought new challenges, the spread of education, the development of nationalist politics, and the emergence of debates over legal rights and suffrage. At the turn of the century, in the earliest of these magazines, the relationship between domestic and public issues might have been reflected in discussions of the link between the nutrition and health of children and the future health of the community and nation, or between the simplification or elimination of household rituals and the future economic viability of the middle class. Such linkages to public issues were seen as extensions of women's household roles, and hence acceptable. So too, somewhat later, were notices highlighting women's social and educational services to other women—especially those less fortunate. After the collapse of the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement⁴ in the 1920s that had seen unprecedented women's involvement in non-violent nationalist demonstrations, discussions of women's rights in Islam became an issue that mirrored, or was a surrogate for, concerns about Muslim rights in the emerging Indian polity. Women's magazines focused on the domestic lives of women, but they indirectly reflected the social and public concerns of men.

The Big Three: *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, *Khatun*, and *Ismat*

The pioneers in Urdu journalism for women were men: Mumtaz Ali, who founded the first Urdu newspaper for women, *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, in Lahore in 1898 in partnership with his wife, Muhammadi Begam; Shaikh Abdullah who established the monthly educational journal, *Khatun*, in Aligarh in 1904, also with the participation of his wife, Wahid Jahan, and Rashidul Khairi, a prolific novelist who founded the literary monthly, *Ismat*, in Delhi in 1908. These three were the major early women's periodicals in Urdu, two of them lasting until after independence. They were joined by many others as the years went by, in Bhopal, Hyderabad, Lahore, Lucknow, and elsewhere—many of them edited by women. The contribution of the 'big three' will be summarised here, and then their content will be compared to that of a number of later journals, analysing shifts in content and style as their readership grew in number and sophistication, and as women increasingly contributed their views.

Sayyid Mumtaz Ali (1860–1935) came from a family of scholars and minor government officials and had been educated both at the Deoband *madrassa*⁵ and at English-medium schools. He developed his clear and incisive Urdu prose style in religious debates with Christian missionaries and *Arya Samaj*⁶ activists in the streets and squares of Lahore. He eventually started his own publishing firm that printed not only religious works and textbooks, but also works of creative literature: social novels, short stories, and his best-known venture, the weekly newspaper for women *Tahzib-un-Niswan* (hereafter referred to as *Tahzib*) (Minault 1990, 1992).

Its editor was Muhammadi Begam (1878?–1908), who had been educated at home, learned to read the Quran, to read and write Urdu, and to keep household accounts, in addition to the arts of cooking and sewing. She wrote prolifically—articles, housekeeping manuals, cookbooks, a guide to etiquette, poetry, and novels—in a down-to-earth style that appealed to a newly literate readership. Her articles in *Tahzib* discussed education, housekeeping, and child care, gave recipes, advice to the young daughter-in-law on how to get along with her mother-in-law, and tips on etiquette (how to offer hospitality at such ‘modern’ functions as tea parties). A constant refrain was the need to reform and simplify custom by eliminating wasteful expenditure on rituals and ornaments, a theme stressed by many social reformers, including her husband.

As a newspaper, *Tahzib* carried short articles and notices, news of women’s meetings and fund-raising drives for schools. One such item was an appeal for the ‘*Tahzibi Fund*’, designed to raise money for prizes to be offered to students of a Lahore girls’ school as a way of encouraging the students to continue their education. A number of women wrote in, sending small donations as a way of offering thanks for the birth of a child or the recovery of a loved one from illness. This was a new twist to an older form of gift: instead of an offering to a religious shrine or *pir*,⁷ these women gave thanks by donating for a social and educational purpose (*Tahzib* 10, 5 January 1907: 13). Print had brought the cause to their attention, and they also expressed their support via print, in a way that demonstrated both continuity with, and a significant change in, older styles of gift-giving.

The style of *Tahzib* was often conversational, and the weekly format made possible a good deal of interaction between the paper and its readers. After an article appeared expressing a particular opinion (for or against *pardah*, or reading novels, or some other topic of debate), responses would come in over the next few weeks. The letters to the editorial department were particularly lively, with readers asking advice, or giving it to other readers, on all sorts of topics from child-rearing to gardening. Longer pieces, such as works of fiction, might be serialised over several weeks.

After Muhammadi’s untimely death in 1908, the paper continued under Mumtaz Ali’s direction, with a woman as editor. The content reflected women’s growing levels of education and a variety of activities outside their homes. The style, still conversational, became more complex; vocabulary expanded. Speeches by women to women’s organisations and school events were reported. The journal began to print the names of women passing their B.A., M.A. and medical degrees, with congratulations, and exhortations to other readers to emulate them. As the years went by, political events were also reported, the outbreak of World War I, the non-cooperation and *swadeshi* movements, women’s efforts to raise funds for the *khilafat* and the *swaraj*⁸ movements. Foreign news appeared regularly, as did literary criticism of contemporary novels and short stories. Women sent in travel accounts of the *hajj*⁹ pilgrimage, and of sightseeing in India and

Europe. Younger women contributors began to question purdah, polygamy, and unilateral divorce, issues that Mumtaz Ali had raised in his writings on religious and social reform in the 1890s. By the 1930s, the readers of *Tahzib* had adopted these issues as their own.

Another husband and wife team active in women's education who started a journal to further that cause were Shaikh Abdullah of Aligarh (1874–1965) and Wahid Jahan Begam (1886–1939). Shaikh Abdullah was a Kashmiri convert to Islam who attended Aligarh college and after obtaining his law degree, established his practice in Aligarh in order to serve the cause of Muslim education. He married the younger sister of one of his Aligarh classmates, from a Delhi family where home education for girls was a tradition. In 1902, Shaikh Abdullah became the Secretary of the Women's Education Section of the All India Muhammadan Educational Conference, and in 1904, he founded the Urdu monthly *Khatun* as the journal of that organisation. The chief purpose of the journal, therefore, was to advocate Muslim women's education, with the emphasis on the Abdulla's project of founding a school for girls in Aligarh. They established their school in 1906, and by 1914 had raised enough money to build a hostel and transform their local primary school into a boarding school. Wahid Jahan devoted her energies to supervising the school and ensuring its survival. It eventually became the women's college of Aligarh Muslim University (Abdullah 1954, 1969; Minault 1982).

Khatun contained discussions of educational administration, fund-raising, curricula, the pros and cons of teaching English to women, students' need for fresh air and exercise (behind high walls, so that purdah could be properly observed), reports of women's educational meetings, and speeches by the Begam of Bhopal, one of the chief patrons of women's education in her own state and elsewhere, particularly in Aligarh. Women's views on education appeared in its pages, but *Khatun* was mainly addressed to the members and patrons of the Muhammadan Educational Conference, that is, the educated male elite of the Muslim community. Shaikh Abdullah wrote clearly and persuasively in Urdu, to persuade these men to give money to the cause and to send their daughters to school, but he made few concessions to the need for a simplified style to reach a female readership.

One exception to this observation was a wonderfully idiomatic article by A.W.J. Begam from Delhi, in striking contrast to most of the other educational articles in the journal:

I have heard a lot of noise about the fact that the quest for knowledge has not reached Muslim women, and that they are not interested in education in any way. People make speeches at meetings and write articles in newspapers.... But if you ask them what they have done to spread knowledge among women...the answer is simply nothing. Everyone says that our *gari* [vehicle] will reach its destination, but no one

seems to be willing to hitch it to an engine, or a horse, or even a bullock, and then everyone regrets that the cart is still sitting in one place. If this keeps up, we will never get anywhere (*Khatun* 1(2) August 1904: 41-44).

Another exception to the heavy emphasis on education was this fashion note: in the September 1905 issue, there was a brief announcement to the effect that Begam Sa'id Ahmad had opened the *Khatun* store in Delhi. In the workshop that made clothes for her store, she trained poor girls to sew. One of their best-selling items was a new style *burqa*¹⁰ then gaining favour with women. In lieu of the 'shuttle-cock' style, this was a coat-like burqa with a liftable face veil, permitting women in purdah to move about with greater ease, and known as the 'Turkish' style or 'Khatun' burqa (*Khatun* 2(9) September 1905: inside back cover).

Khatun's purpose remained the promotion of women's education. Providing women with useful household information, tips on child-rearing, and embroidery patterns was left to publications closer in style to *Tahzib*. *Khatun* fulfilled its purpose, but in 1914, with the opening of the hostel, the Abdullaha had a great deal to do to manage the boarding school, and so *Khatun* ceased publication.

The third major Urdu periodical for women from the early 20th century was *Ismat* of Delhi, founded in 1908 by Rashidul Khairi. Khairi (1868-1936) was one of the most popular Urdu novelists of his day (Sadiq 1984: 512-14), a native of Delhi from a family noted for its religious scholarship. He received an Islamic education at home, and then studied up to matriculation at the Delhi Anglo-Arabic school, where one of his teachers was the Urdu poet, Altaf Husain 'Hali'. One of his uncles was another well-known Urdu litterateur: 'Deputy' Nazir Ahmad Dehlavi. Rashidul Khairi's earliest writings were social novels close in style and subject matter to those of his uncle. He also published a number of short stories in the Urdu literary journal *Makhzan*, before going to work for that journal. Then, in 1908, with the help of the publisher of *Makhzan*, he founded his literary journal for women.

Ismat was billed as a magazine for 'respectable Indian women' (*sharif Hindustani bibiyan*), which would contain high-minded articles concerning useful and necessary knowledge for women: intellectual, cultural, scientific, historical, and literary, but *not* political. In particular, Khairi sought to advance the cause of women's literature (*zenana literachur*), especially writings by women but also writings by men specifically addressed to women (*Ismat* 1(1) June 1908). The name of the journal, *Ismat*, is a woman's name, but it also means modesty, chastity, or honour. It is clear from its name as well as from its statement of purpose that Khairi assumed the modesty and respectability, even passivity, of his readers. Women were to be the objects of a programme of amelioration, of enlightenment brought

to them through print. If women could contribute to that effort, it would be desirable, but Rashidul Khairi and other men were ready to fill the pages of the journal with their writings until such time as women contributors came forward.

In fact, in response to such a view, an article appeared in *Khatun* about a year later. One Rabia Begam protested, citing an article in *Tahzib*, in which the male author opined that most of the articles in *Khatun* and *Ismat* were written by men, some using women's names. Even granting that some of the articles were written by a 'Mr' who signed as a 'Mrs', or that a woman had signed her name to an article written by a man, it was not justifiable to assume that every article that was well-written or that made sense was written by a man. Women do not always have to write little stories about relations with their mothers-in-law, or articles about cooking and cleaning, she retorted. She argued that if one reads an article in which the views are broad-minded, the style fluid, and even if some Persian expressions appear, one should not automatically assume that some gentleman has written it (*Khatun* 6(9) September 1909: 285-90).

As a matter of fact, Rashidul Khairi sometimes did write articles using women's pseudonyms, his son reported. The rationale for this was that a girl who read such an article would think that she too could write something, and would be inspired to contribute. The examples he gave were all mundane—a discussion between two girls about some useful household skill such as cross-stitching or cleaning utensils—and in no way challenged the assumption, derided by the woman above, that the only subjects women were capable of writing about were those connected with the universe of the household (Khairi 1936: 5-6).

Such a view of women was, even then, highly conventional. To end the oppression of women, according to Rashidul Khairi, men had to undergo a change of heart. This view coincided with the vision of women in his novels. No matter how educated and competent his heroines might be, they are always dutiful, even to the men who oppress them. They are victims, incapable of defending themselves, because they are devoted to the overriding ideals of obedience, fidelity, and self-sacrifice. He continued to champion women's rights in his novels. In particular, he attacked polygamy as a manifestation of men's heartlessness towards women, and criticised fathers for denying daughters their fair share of inheritance. His plots were designed to bring about a change of men's behaviour, not to arouse women's protest.

Some women criticised Khairi for this aspect of his writings. In an example of the early literary criticism that appeared in *Tahzib*, a reader noted:

He captures women's idiom better than anyone. But his books, whose subjects deal with happenings that we see every day, are not very realistic... [He shows] women's weakness and inferiority, but this portrayal

gives us nothing to build on or be proud of. It shows us what should be changed without giving us any notion of how to get out of the situation. He doesn't really help anyone [by showing] women in a state of crying day and night (*Tahzib* 24(28) 9 July 1921: 433-35).

Other readers disagreed. One argued that such sorrowful situations were entirely realistic. Another noted that while some situations in Khairi's writings could be criticised as not very helpful, that could not be said of all his works (*Tahzib* 24[31] 30 July 1921: 492-93, 24[32] 6 August 1921: 508-09). One might argue that such critical responses prove that the culture of print had already produced women who were capable of defending their own points of view.

Further evidence of women's new outspokenness came as early as 1918, when the Anjuman-i-Khawatin-i-Islam (also known as the All India Muslim Ladies' Conference) meeting in Lahore passed a resolution condemning polygamy. The resolution stated that: '...the kind of polygamy practised by certain sections of the Muslims is against the spirit of the Quran and of Islam, and that it is inimicable to our progress as a community', and called upon women to exercise their influence to end the practice (*Tahzib* 21, 20 April 1918: 245-49). Rashidul Khairi, much to the shock of many loyal readers of *Ismat* who were also members of the Anjuman-i-Khawatin, attacked the resolution as unacceptable and un-Islamic. The women were astonished, because he had exposed the evils of polygamy in several of his novels and had made clear his own position that no man could do justice to more than one woman, in the spirit of the Quranic injunction. Yet, when women themselves addressed the problem and invoked the spirit of the Quran, as opposed to its letter, Rashidul Khairi fell back upon the letter, saying that since Islam permits polygamy, it would not do for Muslim women to seek its abolition (Khairi 1936: 22-23; *Ismat* 20[3] March 1918: 8; *Tahzib* 21, 20 April 1918: 245-49, 11 May 1918: 298-302; Minault 1989).

In the 1920s, Raziqul Khairi took over the editorship of his father's journal and permitted a greater variety of subject matter in the articles published. *Ismat* increasingly covered political topics that had been taboo under Rashidul Khairi's editorship, such as support for Muslim women's rights to inheritance and divorce as the Shariat Application and the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Bills which were being debated in 1937-39 (Gilmartin 1981). Women's movements in other countries, notably Egypt and Turkey, were discussed, as was the issue of suffrage in European countries, with occasional references to the Indian nationalist movement. All of this was further evidence not only of women's greater activism, but also of the fact that those involved in the production of women's journalism were following their readers' lead as much as they were leading them (Khairi 1936: 52-53; *Ismat* 46[1] January 1931: 30-35, 57[1-2] July-August 1936).

Other Urdu Women's Magazines

The 'big three' of the women's periodical press in Urdu were all founded and managed by men, and only *Tahzib* was edited by a woman. These pioneers blazed a trail for others to follow, and in the succeeding decades, numerous women's magazines in Urdu emerged, some edited by men, but many by women. Some of them enjoyed long runs and good literary reputations; others were more ephemeral. Some were nationalist in their tone and sympathies; others maintained an apolitical stance. It is difficult to generalise about the content and style of these periodicals from random volumes found in scattered places, but the mixture described here seems to persist at least into the 1930s. Articles on education and social reform, tips on health and household management, and creative writing (short stories and poetry) make up most of these journals. Political coverage crept into their pages especially in the 1920s and 1930s, associated with emerging women's associations like the All India Women's Conference (AIWC), and with the ongoing debate over women's rights in Islamic and other civil laws. Embroidery patterns, recipes, and letters to the editor remained popular features, varying according to whether the journal was more a 'home companion' or a literary vehicle.

One of the earliest women's magazines edited by a woman was *Sharif Bibi* of Lahore that first appeared in May 1910. Its editor was Fatima Begam, daughter of Maulvi Mahbub Alam, editor of Lahore's most popular daily, *Paisa Akhbar*. An intelligent and accomplished woman, Fatima Begam went on from her beginnings as a literary journalist in the Punjab to become the superintendent of Muslim girls' schools in Bombay in the 1930s. *Sharif Bibi* exemplified the mixture of contents found in women's periodicals at the time. The novel, *Gudar ka Lal* (child brought up in poverty), 'from the pen of an honourable woman who does not want to reveal her name', was serialised over two years in monthly instalments (Suhrawardy 1945: 141-46). Articles discussed questions of women's dress (e.g., should Muslim women wear *saris*), sewing with a machine, and children's health. Others dealt with biographies of famous women and women's education in different countries. There was even a regular feature devoted to humour. The overall tone of the journal was noticeably lighter than that of its immediate competitor, Mumtaz Ali's weekly, *Tahzib-un-Niswan* (*Sharif Bibi* 1[11] May 1910, 3[1] July 1912, 3[2] August 1912).

From Bhopal appeared the monthly *Zillus Sultan*, edited by Muhammad Amin Zuberi, a mouthpiece of its patron, Sultan Jahan, the Begam of Bhopal. It contained some creative literature, but most of the articles dealt with social and educational topics, health, women's education, the reform of customs, notices about women's meetings and the founding of schools. The proceedings of the Women's Education Section of the Muhammadan Educational Conference found a place in its pages, as did speeches by various figures associated with the Aligarh movement, not

to mention those by the Begam herself. Founded in late 1913, *Zillus Sultan* seems to have taken up where Shaikh Abdullah's *Khatun* left off (*Zillus Sultan*, 1914-24, 1928, 1932).

Hyderabad was also a centre of Urdu culture and publication. Urdu was the official language in the city of the Nizam and in his multilingual state on the Deccan plateau. Many talented Muslims from the north had been recruited into the Nizam's administration and maintained links with their native places. Urdu periodicals from northern cities such as Lahore, Delhi and Lucknow circulated in Hyderabad, and Hyderabad publications likewise found subscribers in the Urdu-speaking heartland. Among the women's journals published in Hyderabad was *An-Nissa*, a monthly publication devoted to social reform and creative literature that appeared from 1919 to 1927, edited by Sughra Humayun Mirza. Mrs. Mirza, the privately-educated wife of a prosperous barrister, wrote many of the articles herself, but also encouraged other women to contribute. Indeed, most of the journal was written by women, with occasional contributions from male champions of women's causes. Articles included discussions of cleanliness, health, nursing, and advice on giving up useless customs. Mrs. Mirza and her husband travelled extensively, and her travel diaries were serialised in the journal (*An-Nissa* 1919-25; Mirza 1926, 1939).

Later in her active social and literary career, Sughra Humayun Mirza edited another journal, *Zebunissa*, published in Lahore from 1934 to the 1940s. This was, in reality, *An-Nissa* by another name. Sughra explained to her former Hyderabad readers and to new subscribers that in Hyderabad, she had to do all the work of editing herself, whereas in Lahore, she had the help of a joint editor and higher quality printing and publishing facilities. This journal endured longer than *An-Nissa* and was not as dependent upon Mrs. Mirza's literary output. *Zebunissa* covered meetings of the AIWC and the Women's Muslim League as they emerged in the 1930s. It contained articles on housekeeping and health, short stories and verse, Sughra's serialised travel diaries, embroidery patterns—the usual fare—but also discussions of women's education, suffrage and social problems. In general, it reported on a greater range of subjects, contained a wider spectrum of views, and had greater political content than her earlier Hyderabad publication, for several reasons: by the late 1930s, there was more political news to report, and with elections and the emergence of provincial autonomy, it became easier to discuss political issues—including women's rights—in British India than in the Nizam's dominions (*Zebunissa* 1934-43).

A much more outspoken journal from Lahore was *Niswani Dunya*, edited by Iqbal Jahan and managed by Khurshid Iqbal 'Hayya'. A 1941 issue of this journal included an article entitled 'Women's Economic Slavery' (*Auraton ki Ma'ashi Ghulami*), in which the anonymous author opined that women who think that once India gets its political freedom, all their troubles will be over, are sadly mistaken. Women cannot truly better

their position as long as they are economically dependent, she argued. Nor can women be said to be self-governing, as long as men control their means of livelihood. Pretty clothes and jewellery are only signs of their enslavement (*Niswani Duniya* 7 (1) 1941: 28-31). This is an amazing article for that time; the ideas resemble those of post-independence feminism. It is likely, however, that the author was influenced by the Urdu Progressive Writers' Movement (Ansari 1990; Russell 1992: 204-28).

Of the numerous other Urdu women's magazines published in north India, two from Delhi, *Avaz-i-Niswan* and *Anis-i-Niswan*, were sufficiently different from the norm, and from each other, to merit comment. *Avaz-i-Niswan* was favourable to Indian nationalism and rarely mentioned religion, and was thus on the progressive end of the political spectrum. One issue contained biographical sketches of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, Madame Stalin, and Kemal Ataturk, and an article about the Red Shirt movement in the North-West Frontier Province headed by the 'Frontier Gandhi', Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Another issue contained an article about Nishat Begam Hasrat Mohani, an educated woman who was her husband's partner and equal in his long career of Urdu literary journalism, nationalist poetry, and swadeshi activity (*Avaz-i-Niswan* 5 [9] September, 1938, 7[12] December 1939: 35-40, 12[1] January 1941).

Anis-i-Niswan, on the other hand, was religiously modernist, socially elite, and heavily literary. It frequently cited the poet, Sir Muhammad Iqbal, in both poetry and politics. Its editors were Shaikh Muhammad Ikram and his wife, both formerly associated with *Ismat*. Its contents represent a shift away from the usual women's magazine fare, in that there is not much household management, embroidery, and child care, but rather considerable discussion of such customs as purdah, women's rights in Islam, and Quranic interpretation. An example of the literate modernism of this journal was an article entitled 'Ghunghat' by Sheikh Abdul Qadir. He noted that *ghunghat* is a Hindi word for veiling, and that it is not primarily for going outside, but rather is observed inside the Hindu household by women who veil themselves before their elder male relatives as a sign of deference. He contrasted this with Muslim purdah, which is primarily a form of veiling vis-à-vis the outsider. Abdul Qadir's article challenged the view, then current among Indian nationalists, that the subordination of women in India, via purdah, was an artifact of Muslim rule. He argued, rather, that the mingling of the two forms of veiling produced a particularly oppressive form of the custom (*Anis-i-Niswan* 2(1) July 1939: 12-18; Vatuk 1982: 54-78). This was an articulate example of reformist boundary-drawing, with women's status as its terrain. While Hindu social reformers and Indian nationalists were inclined to condemn purdah as 'Muslim', this reformist Muslim posited the ill effects of syncretism upon women's status. Such differentiation also led Muslims to draw away from Indian nationalism and begin to demarcate

a separate political identity. Consistent with this ideology, *Anis-i-Niswan* was supportive of the Muslim League.

Conclusion

The women's magazines discussed here provide a lot of information about middle class Muslim society in India as it existed and evolved during the first decades of the 20th century. Many changes were reflected in the pages of these Urdu journals, the growth of women's education and activities, and the parallel increase in the range of vocabulary, subject matter, and views expressed. The apparent changes in women's lives, viewpoints, and possibilities, should not, however, obscure the fact that the access to new knowledge was still an elite phenomenon, and the ideology of reform was intimately tied up with social status, relative both to other classes and communities. For this reason, continuity mingled and even predominated in arguments favouring change. The role model of educated women as omniscient managers of the domestic realm, helpmates to their husbands, and nurturers of the young was repeatedly emphasised, as was the need for women to know the scriptures, their rights and duties in Islam, and to discern useless custom and superstition from true religion. Women's education, purveyed in various forms of suitable literature—including women's journals, by improved home schooling and by the newer schools, was the key to enlightened domesticity and the pious life. These, in turn, were the keys to the spiritual reform and the worldly advancement of the Muslim middle class as it confronted the economic and political challenges of the 20th century. The home and the world were interdependent.

This vision was entirely in keeping with the ideology enunciated by male social reformers in the late 19th century, in which women were to be trained better to fulfil their traditional roles, not to undertake new ones. This ideology looked back to Muslim patterns of reform and revival in the pre-British era, just as Hindu social reformers looked back to a golden age that was, not incidentally, pre-Muslim, in order to bolster their ideology of reform. Neither Hindu nor Muslim reformers wanted to ape the West in their programmes of civilisational resuscitation, even though the changing institutional structures of their public lives and the heightened importance of the print media in conveying information and ideas were obvious by-products of the colonial encounter. Their vision of enlightened domesticity and middle class rectitude owed much to similar bourgeois values that had emerged in Victorian society, but Indian reformers naturalised their model of the ideal woman. The reformed Indian middle class woman would not be like her western counterpart because of the continuities of seclusion (albeit liberalised), of ritual (albeit purified), and of kinship, all mechanisms of control over individual idiosyncrasy.

More specifically, Muslim social reformers had plenty of precedents

from their own tradition to call upon in meeting modern challenges, not the least of which were reinterpretation of scripture, citation of prophetic precedent, and purification of individual practice. All these themes appeared in the literature of social, religious and educational reform and were repeated, with variations, in the periodical press. Women authors and editors developed their own variations on these themes but did not challenge the basic ideology. This is not surprising. Middle and upper middle class women had nothing to gain from asserting the importance of individual fulfilment. They had much to gain from the enhancement of their position in the household, while maintaining the status of their male kin. The men's programmes of social reform and political self-determination, in turn, depended upon the women symbolising what their community could be.

Notes

1. The custom of veiling and seclusion of women.
2. Vendors who buy used paper for recycling purposes.
3. Literally 'own country'; goods made in India; political movement to boycott non-Indian goods.
4. Caliphate; the successor to the Prophet Muhammad as temporal head of the Muslim community; political movement in India, 1919-24 that saw unprecedented cooperation between Muslims and the Indian National Congress against the British rule.
5. School for higher Islamic learning, 'seminary'.
6. A Hindu revivalist movement launched in India by Swami Dayanand Saraswati which gained wide acceptance in north India among the trading community. One of its main planks was the advocacy of women's education.
7. A religious guide.
8. Self-rule or self-governance. It denoted independence from colonial rule.
9. The Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca.
10. A loose garment covering the clothes, form and face of a woman in purdah, enabling her to go out of the house.

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