

URDU WOMEN JOURNALS IN COLONIAL INDIA: A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CRITIQUE

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"Editor of *Khatun* writes that women should assist us a bit and if continued to pen such articles we get ready for this [gender] jihad. They should prepare themselves for it, march ahead for it with the power of knowledge. Such women under this banner would be ready to help each other. Amongst those, I will be the first one. But, being a woman, it is difficult for me to raise the sword openly. Yes, secretly, I will pick up a sword, bow, spear, everything and such a militia which is fighting for us, will join their jihad." ¹

(Akabri Begum)

culture and women magazines

Research on Women's journals is significant as the Women's writings in these journals will show how women felt, what their ideas and conditions were, and more importantly how they addressed their own problems. Whether they shared views of their 19th century fellow male social reformers or they differed from them; if so, to what extent and in what direction, what new questions they addressed and, what justifications they gave in response. This will help us to understand the women's point of view or women's perspective, which is otherwise generally marginalized or ignored in the traditional history. Unearthing the ideas of women will help us to gain a new perspective on the history and culture of the period.

them. Using this space, Muslim middle class Urdu speaking women wrote about their ideas and exchanged them with other women and men. Participation of women in the writing world was an important change to undermine the authority of those who interpreted the things for women.² Hiding the names or using pseudo names was a strategy to undermine the authority of men who were deemed intellectually fecund.

Writing about themselves gave women immense pleasure and confidence which helped them to contest those cultural notions which deemed women intellectually weak. The new information available in women magazines enthralled women because they considered it very important for their intellectual development. The circulation of women magazines demonstrated their reachability to a wider audience and the easy communication of knowledge and information. This helped women to imagine their agencies and a sense of responsibility. All most all women magazines continuously gave coverage to the various women organizations and publishing their activities. This connected women to the public space without even crossing the threshold.

Chronology of Urdu Women's Periodicals:

Making use of women's journals as an important historical source material for writing women's history from the perspective of women is a recent phenomenon. Admirable research has begun to be undertaken on almost all Indian languages.