

Social Awakening on the Rights of Muslim Women in Early Twentieth Century with Special Reference to Women's Urdu journals of North India

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Abstract

In the last decade of the nineteenth century the deplorable and oppressive condition of women in general and Muslim women in particular was an issue of concern among the social reformers of the time. Various social evils and practices such as polygamy, sati, child-marriage, purdah etc prevailed among women. Thus, some ashraf families (noble families) in North India came forward to take up the cause of these challenging issues which were the main obstacles in the progress of women segments of society. This article seeks to examine the reformist writings with reference to women's Urdu journals of North India which persuaded the necessity to make women aware about their social rights and the Muslim social reformers gave their opinions in the light of Islamic perspective.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century the deplorable and oppressive condition of women, which was due to their narrow mindedness and conservatism of Indian women in general and Muslim in particular was an issue of concern among the social reformers of the time. Various social evils and practices such as Polygamy, Sati, Child-marriage, *Purdah* etc were prevailed among women. Thus, some *ashraf* families (noble families) in North India came forward to take up the cause of these challenging issues which were the main obstacles in the progress of women segments in society. This article seeks to examine the reformist writings with reference to women's Urdu journals of North India which persuaded the necessity to aware women about their social rights and the Muslim social reformers gave their opinions in the light of Islamic perspectives.

During the period under review, an early advocate of women's rights was Syed Mumtaz Ali who personally concerned for the status of women. From his childhood he had to observe many women in his own family who led their lives miserably and faced social discriminations. Although he was a well-educated Muslim but married to an uneducated woman whom he taught the primary level of education. However, she died by leaving two children.

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Thus, his personal loss and observations turned his attention to do something for women and finally he succeeded in it by publishing the journal *Tahzib-un-Niswan* with the help of his second wife Muhammadi Begum who was an educated lady¹. Abu Athar Hafiz Jalandhar, one of the contributors of *Tahzib-un-Niswan* wrote an article on *Maulvi Mumtaz Ali* which originally published in *Makhzan*² in 1927 and later on reprinted in *Tahzib-un-Niswan*. He asserted that Mumtaz Ali also wrote *Huquq-un-Niswan*(Rights of women) which was unique in the sense as it gave the references of *Quran* (Holy book of Muslim) and *Hadith* (Sayings of Prophet Muhammad) commentary with his logical arguments³. It highlighted Mumtaz Ali's approach towards women's rights and his involvement in religious debate early in his life. This pioneer work discussed various reasons about the superiority of men over women and the logical views of Mumtaz Ali. It also stated the equality of men and women on most of legal matters according to which the daughters were given the rights of inheritance and *mehr*, the question of polygamy was rejected unless the wife permit it, widows were allowed to remarry and child marriage was considered as illegal but only allowed in certain circumstances mentioned in *Quran*⁴. In short, this work describes the rights of women and their role in Muslim family life.

At that time, Rashidul Khairi, editor of '*Ismat* said about the miserable condition of women through his novels such as *Hayat-i-Saleha*(Saleha's life), *Subh-i-Zindagi*(Morning of life), *Sham-i-Zindagi*(Evening of life) and *Shab-i-Zindagi*(Night time of life) and also gave his statements on polygamy, rights of inheritance, divorce and *Khulā*⁵. He depicted the pathetic story of a married women in article *Aisi Biyahi se Kunwari Bhali*(Better unmarried woman to have bad marriage) which showed that how an inappropriate marriages ended the lives of women⁶. The misery of a married life was also shown from a poem in his journal which stated the complaint of a married girl who oppressed by her in-laws⁷. He also cited an addition *Tamaddun*(civilization)⁸ for men in '*Ismat* whose chief purpose was to bring changes in men's behavior towards women. Rashidul Khairi in an article *Sharia ka*

¹ *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, ed. Mumtaz Ali, Syed, vol-21,no-27, (6 July,1918),pp-425.

² Urdu journal published from Lahore in 1901 by Hafiz Jalandhari.

³ *Tahzib-un-Niswan*,vol-38,no-49, (6 July,1935),p-617.

⁴ Minault, Gail, *Syed Mumtaz Ali and Huquq-un-Niswan: An Advocate of Women's Rights in Islam in the Late Nineteenth Century*, South Asian Studies, vol-24,no-1, (1990), p-151.

⁵ '*Ismat*,vol-24,no-1,(July,1908),p-43.

Also cited, *Haram*, ed. Abdul Gafoor, Begum, vol-1,no-1, (April,1926),pp-20-22.

⁶ '*Ismat*, vol-62,no-4,(April,1939),pp-250-52.

⁷ *Ibid*, vol-78,no-1, (January,1947), p-32.

⁸ *Tamaddun* was a journal of RashidulKhairi published in 1911.

Khoon(Murder of Islamic Law) included a letter of cruel husband who after hearing the birth of daughter wrote to his wife that the news of girl's birth was worse than hundred punishments⁹. Thus, his writings persuaded the necessity to aware women about their social rights.

Another social activist Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah also articulated his ideas on women's rights. Being a legal practitioner himself, he greatly emphasised all the legal rights of Muslim women which granted in Islamic law and *Hadith*. However, the women were unaware due to the lack of their Islamic knowledge. Thus, he stated the need of women's responsiveness toward their rights. He highlighted all the world religions and asserted that Islam is unique in the sense to acquire knowledge and *Masawat* (egalitarian approach) in the matter of women's rights¹⁰. He stressed the fact that Islam is the first among all religions which treated woman as a legal personality by granting her rights of inheritance and property. Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah informed that women did not have any significant role in ancient Rome, Egypt, Iran and in Hinduism they were deprived of their rights as it evident from *Manusmriti* (Hindu Law book). He also informed about the culturally advanced Europe and America where women enjoyed no legal rights. Later on laws were passed there in favour of women and the British Parliament passed the Married Women's Property Act in 1882. Consequently, women occupied a respectable position in west under the influence of Islamic *Shari'at* Laws¹¹. Thus, all these instances showed the impact of Islam on various rights of women.

We find that most of the Urdu journals of women in early twentieth century discussed the matter of women's rights and duties to aware them as the women were socially exploited due to lack of knowledge of their legal rights. The magazine *Tahzib-un-Niswan* included a debate *Aurat Ghulam Nahi*¹² (woman not a slave) which asserted the fact that women should know about their rights on which many prominent personalities likes Khawar Durrani, Riffat Husain, Salima Begum, Jamila Begum¹³ and Sultana Kazia gave their statements. Thus, it provided a platform through which the women became able to understand their rights. Sultana Kazia wrote about ignorance of women in article *Zehniyyat* (Mentality) which stated

⁹ *Ismat*, vol-10, no-4, (April, 1911), pp-23.

¹⁰ Muhammad Abdullah, Shaikh, *Islam mein Aurat ka darja*, Aligarh, Khidmat Press, n.d, pp-1-3. Also cited, Muhammad Abdullah, Shaikh, *Mushahidat wa Taasurat*, Female Education Association, Aligarh, 1969, pp-208- 210.

¹¹ *Khatoon*, ed. Muhammad Abdullah, Shaikh, vol-5, no-1, (January, 1908), p-43.

¹² *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol-48, no-9, (2 March, 1939), pp-129-31. Also cited, Ibid, vol-48, no-8, (24 February, 1945), pp-114-17.

Ibid, vol-48, no-8, (5 February, 1945), pp-65-69.

¹³ Feminist writer from Calcutta.

the inferior position of Indian Muslim women as compared to the ladies of other Muslim countries because they did not know the social rights which given to them in Islam¹⁴. Thus, the foremost duty of women was to know their legal rights.

All the Urdu journals provide us detailed information about women segment of society particularly Muslim middle class in early twentieth century and it also reflected the gradual changes in their social status and privileged position in society during the first half of twentieth century.

About the various women's rights in Islam like *Khiyar* (Mutual agreements in Muslim marriage), *Nikah* (marriage), polygamy, *Wirā'sat* (inheritance), child-marriage, *Talaq* (divorce), *Khulà* (separation from women's side), *Mehr* (dower money given to the bride), *Purdah*, household duties, the journals gave examples of women in early days of Islam and their social status¹⁵. The magazine *Anis-i-Niswan*¹⁶ said about the rights of women with reference of Quranic interpretations. It gives extensive information about the condition of women before coming of Islam and how their position has changed after the reveal of the *Surah Al-Nisa* (related to women) under the title of *Surah Al-Nisa Ke Mutabiq*¹⁷.

In order to understand the status of women, first it is necessary to know about the condition of women in pre-Islamic period (age of *Jahiliyah*) where the women were regarded as a piece of property and treated as chattels. They enjoyed no rights and their social status was low. The man could marry as many wives as he liked and could divorce according to his wishes. It showed that the practices of polygamy and polyandry were prevalent in Arab. The women were also deprived from the right of inheritance. When a man died his elder son or other relatives had the right to possess his widow and married her if they pleased, without setting a dowry on them or marrying them to others or prohibiting them from marriage. Not only this, the women also lost their lives. When a father was informed about the birth of a daughter, he buried her alive. Thus, the mother tried to escape from this painful destiny dig hole herself to throw the girl or to strangle the daughter after their birth¹⁸.

Maulana Abdus Salam Nadvi in his article *Huquq-un-Niswan aur Islam* (Women's rights and Islam) says,

¹⁴ *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol-48, no-24, (16 June, 1945), p-385.

¹⁵ *Muslima*, ed. Abbas, Abdul Haq, vol-2, no-1, (January, 1938), pp-6-8.

¹⁶ Edited by Shaikh Muhammad Ikram and his wife Mrs. Ikram.

¹⁷ *Anis-i-Niswan*, vol-1, no-5, (May, 1939), p-3.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, vol-1, no-1, (January, 1939), pp-37-38.

To Quote:

”ترجمہ: اور جب کسی کو لڑکی کے تولد کا مشرہ سُنا یا جاتا تھا تو اُس کا چہرہ سیاہ ہو جاتا تھا اور وہ غصہ میں پیچ و تاب کھاتا تھا۔ لیکن یہ چہرہ کا سیاہ داغ اس وقت تک نہیں مٹ سکتا تھا جب تک اُس نو وار دمہمان کی زندگی کا خاتمہ نہ کر دیا جائے۔ اس بنا پر اُن کو کبھی زندہ دفن کر دیا جاتا تھا۔ کبھی پہاڑ کی چوٹیوں سے گرا دی جاتی تھیں۔ کبھی ڈبودی جاتی تھیں۔ کبھی ذبح کر کے اُن کے خون سے یہ دھبہ دھویا جاتا تھا۔ یہی معصوم لڑکیاں ہیں جن کو موؤدہ کہتے ہیں۔

عورتوں کے متعلق عرب کا یہ وہ طرز عمل تھا جس کی وجہ سے وہ حقوق زندگی سے محروم تھیں۔ لیکن جو لڑکیاں اس ظالمانہ رسم سے نجات پا کر بچ جاتی تھیں اُن کو تمدنی حقوق سے بالکل مایوس کر دیا جاتا تھا۔“

¹⁹ This un-Islamic and illegal practice to bury the girls or to kill them is quoted also by Maulana Shibli Nomani in an article *Aurat aur Islam* (Women and Islam) in the journal *Purdah-Nashin* in the following words:

”عرب میں عورتوں کے ساتھ یہ سلوک ہوتا تھا کہ ”اذا بشرا حدہم بلا نسی اظل وجہہ مسودا دھو کظیم“۔ جس وقت ان میں سے کسی کو لڑکی کے پیدا ہونے کی خبر دی جاتی تو اُس کا چہرہ بوجہ غم کے سیاہ پڑ جاتا تھا اور وہ دل میں پیچ و تاب کھاتا تھا۔ لیکن اسلام نے مرد و عورت کے درمیانی مساوات قائم کی اور حکم دیا کہ ”دلہن مثل الذی علیہن“ (ان کی وہی حقوق ہیں جو ان پر ہیں) اور ”لسر جمال نصیب صما اکتسبو او للنساء نصیب صما اکتسبین“ (جو مرد کمائیں وہ ان (مردوں) کا ہے۔ اور جو عورتیں کمائیں وہ ان (عورتوں) کا ہے۔“

²⁰ One of the contributors in *Anis-i-Niswan* gives knowledgeable information about the status of women before the rise of Islam. He traced the position of women from Roman civilization where the women also completely depended on men. Thus, the position of women was raised with respect and dignity after the coming of Islam²¹.

¹⁹ *Sada-i-Niswan*, ed. Ummat-ul-Karim, vol-1, no-4, (August, 1935), p-19.

²⁰ *Purdah Nashin*, ed. Mrs. Khamosh, vol-6, no-7, (December, 1911), pp-6-7.

²¹ *Anis-i-Niswan*, vol-1, no-1, (January, 1939), pp-37-41.

Also cited, *Niswani Duniya*, ed. Hasan Nizami, Khwaja, vol-1, no-1, (January, 1930), pp-2-5.

The journal *Anis-i-Niswan* made aware the women about their social rights of marriage laws²² (verse 4, ayat 3:22:24), relation between husband and wife²³, how to deal with children and orphans (verse 4, ayat 6:11:12), legal practices of inheritance²⁴ (verse 4, ayat 11:12:176) and divorce²⁵ (verse 4, ayat 20:35) with especial references of *Surah Al-Nisa* and *Al-Baqara*.

The magazine *Noor Jahan* cited an important tract entitled *Islam main Aurat ki Haisiyat* (position of women in Islam) by Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum of Bhopal. She informed that women were given more rights in Islam than any other religion. She stated that Islam treated the women with kindness and banned the abuses such as polygamy, female infanticide which prevalent in pre-Islamic period. Thus, she emphasised the honourable position of women in Islam. Her vision for women's right and duties was also shown from her work *Muslim Home-A Guide to Muslim Married Couple*²⁶.

As a matter of fact, the Urdu journals widely discussed the problems of marriage, inheritance and divorce of Muslim community to spread social awareness among women. On the problems of marriage the editor Mumtaz Ali said about the peculiar experience of men and women in Muslim society where the men got the opportunity to receive western education and the women were deprived of it. Mumtaz Ali argued that though the Muslim girls were illiterate but it did not mean that marriage with the European ladies were a right decision. Actually, this marriage was against social norms which troubled the family set up as they were unable to adjust with their Indian in-laws. As a result of this, the couples become separated in extended family²⁷. It is mentioned that in society the only criteria to select the boys was his education, employment and no one cared for other qualities, while for girls her beauty and complexion was given more consideration. Though, the other qualities of girls such as their manner, attitudes and duties towards their in-laws were also need special attention. Thus, the ideal Islamic path should be followed in which the mutual agreement of

²² *Anis-i-Niswan*, vol-1, no-4, (April, 1939), pp-2-4.

Also cited, *Ibid*, vol-1, no-10, (October, 1939), pp-2-5.

Sharif Bibi, ed. Begum, Fatima, vol-3, no-7, (July, 1912), pp-32-37.

²³ *Anis-i-Niswan*, vol-3, no-7, (July, 1940), pp-2-5.

Also cited, *Sharif Bibi*, vol-1, no-10, (April, 1910), pp-35-39..

²⁴ *Anis-i-Niswan*, vol-1, no-3 (March, 1939), pp-3-5.

²⁵ *Anis-i-Niswan*, vol-1, no-9, (September, 1939), pp-2-6 and vol-1, no-10, (October, 1939), pp-2-5.

²⁶ *Noor Jahan*, (Amritsar), ed. Sultan, Sa'adat, vol-1, no-6, (June, 1926), pp-25-26.

Also cited, *Saheli*, (Lahore), ed. Ferozuddin, Khadija, vol-21, no-4, (April, 1941), pp- 9-10.

²⁷ *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol-4, no-10, (30 March, 1901), pp-102-103.

boys and girls were obligatory for their marriage²⁸. In this matter, the journal *Khātoon* also advised the parents to take the consent of their daughters about their marriage as the unsuitable marriages would destroy the lives of daughter²⁹. The eminent writer Siddiqā Bano in journal *‘Ismat* also favoured the mutual understanding of two parties in marriages which was ideal to led a happy married life³⁰.

While discussing the rights of Muslim women regarding *Khiyar* (Mutual agreements in Muslim marriage), the journal *Saheli* gives the following version:

”خيار: نکاح کو جائز ٹھہرانے کے لئے طرفین کی رضامندی (بشرطیکہ وہ بالغ ہوں) ضروری ہے اس بنا پر اگر کسی بالغ عورت کا نکاح کوئی ولی وارث اُس کی رضامندی کے بغیر کر دے تو وہ اُس وقت تک صحیح نہ ہوگا جب تک وہ عورت اپنی رضامندی ظاہر نہ کرے۔ عام طور پر جبکہ کنواری لڑکیاں اپنی زبان سے رضامندی کے اظہار سے شرماتی ہیں اس لئے اُن کی خاموشی بھی رضامندی کے برابر سمجھی گئی ہے۔“

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Sakina Begum from Lahore wrote an article in journal *Sharif Bibi* about the legality of *Nikah* (marriage) in Islam in which she explained the word *Nikah* as a sacred social contract between bride and groom which based on mutual agreement of both parties, procedure of *Nikah*, its various conditions and other related issues like *Mehr* (dower given to the bride) etc and also gives a list of relations with whom marriage is unlawful in Islam like grand-mothers, sister, grand-daughter, sister’s daughter, brother’s daughter, aunts etc³².

In this regard magazine also included a fascinating novel *Gudar Ka Lal: Khawateen aur Ladkiyon ke liye Ek Naseehatkhez Novel* (Ruby in rags: a Novel with advice for women and Girls) which mentioned the incompatible marriage and polygamy³³.

About the practices of Polygamy, an article in *Tahzib-un-Niswan* mentioned the grief of a woman whose husband had four wives and she had looked after three children more of her husband from other wives. In spite of that, she was not well treated by her

²⁸ Ibid, vol-43, no-52, (16 March, 1940), pp-253-56.

Also cited, *Saheli* (Amritsar), ed. Ferozuddin, Khadija, vol-3, no-7, (April, 1927), pp-32-33.

²⁹ *Khātoon*, vol-6, no-6, (June, 1910), pp-278-80.

³⁰ *‘Ismat*, vol-74, no-2 (February, 1945), pp-88-89.

³¹ *Saheli* (Amritsar), vol-3, no-7, (April, 1927), p-32.

³² For details see, *Sharif Bibi*, vol-2, no-7, (July, 1912), pp-35-37.

Also cited, *Awaz-i-Niswan*, Begum Munawwar Jahan, vol-1, no-9, (September, 1938), pp-57-58.

³³ *Sharif Bibi*, vol-1, no-10, (June, 1910), pp-48-58 and vol-3, no-7, (July, 1912), pp-12-13.

husband³⁴. However, Rashidul Khairi said that no man could do justice to more than one woman in spirit of Quranic injunction. He said that the Quran permitted polygamy in certain cases otherwise monogamy³⁵.

The editorial of *Sartaj* contained a discussion about polygamy in Islamic context. In certain cases, polygamy is permissible.

To quote:

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”اگر تم کو خوف ہو کہ تم یتیم لڑکیوں کے حقوق کی کما حقہ ادائیگی نہ کر سکو گے۔ پس نکاح کرو دوسری عورتوں سے جو تم کو پسند ہوں۔ دو دو۔ تین تین۔ پس اگر پھر بھی تمہیں ڈر ہو کہ تم مابین ازواج کے عدل و انصاف کو قائم نہ رکھ سکو گے تو پس تمہارے لئے صرف ایک ہی بیوی کافی ہے۔“

Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah also criticized polygamy strongly and stated Quranic injunctions. In that regards, he noted the social legislation which passed in Turkey to end polygamy there³⁷. Rashidul Khairi in his novel *Saukan ka Jalapa* (Sorrow of Rival Wife) mentioned the helpless wife who suffered due to the remarriage of her husband. He also criticised fathers for abstained the daughters from their legal share of inheritance. For example, in *Mauda*³⁸, a father preferred to keep his whole property intact rather than to share it for the welfare of his daughter³⁹.

About the right of *Wirā'sat* (Inheritance), Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah particularly mentioned the state of Punjab and U.P Tenancy Acts which denied the Muslim women their share of agricultural property⁴⁰. He also gave reference of Baluchistan, Sindh, Gujarat and Bombay where the Muslim communities deprived daughters a share of *jaidad* (property) in their family. Thus, he suggested Muslim to follow *Quranic* injunctions strictly⁴¹.

³⁴ *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol-33, no-29, (11 October, 1930), pp-1017-1018.

³⁵ *Ismat*, vol-20, no-3, (March, 1918), p-8.

³⁶ *Sartaj*, ed. Fatima Begum, Imtiaz, vol-2, no-7, (July, 1926), p-3.

³⁷ *Khātoon*, vol-5, no-1, (January, 1908), p-43.

Also cited, *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol-29, no-35, (27 March, 1926), pp-221-225.

³⁸ place in Nagpur.

³⁹ *Ismat*, vol-2, no-5, (May, 1909), pp-38-39.

⁴⁰ *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol-32, no-22, (8 June, 1929), pp-537-40.

Also cited, *Noor Jahah*, (Amritsar), vol-1, no-7, 8, (July, August, 1926), p-47.

⁴¹ Muhammad Abdullah, Shaikh, *Islam mein Aurat ka darja*, p-4.

Also cited, *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol-27, no-10, (12 March, 1924), and vol-27, no-15, (19 April, 1924), pp-225-230.

Sartaj, vol-1, no-1 (June, 1929), pp-22-25.

In the Febuary issue of *Noor Jahan*, 1930, gives a detailed information about the Muslim law of *Haq-ul-Mirās* (inheritance).

To quote:

”حق المیراث پر بہت کچھ روشنی ڈالی جا چکی ہے۔ اور اس کے مدارک کے انتظام کی بنا پر بھی ڈالی جا چکی ہے۔ لڑکی کا حصہ میراث میں سے اٹھ چکا ہے۔ پنجاب و نیز اودھ میں اس رسم کو قانونی جامہ بھی پہنا دیا ہے ملک کے دیگر صوبوں میں اہل ہنود کی معاشرت اس قدر موثر ثابت ہوئی ہے کہ شریعت کے اس کھلے حکم کی حکم عدولی کی جاتی ہے۔ لڑکیاں اپنے جائز حقوق سے محروم ہیں۔ اور اس پر طرہ یہ ہے کہ اس فیج رسم کی صفائی بھی بڑی دیدہ دلیری کے ساتھ پیش کی جاتی ہے اور کہا جاتا ہے کہ لڑکی کی شادی کے اخراجات اس قدر کثیر ہوتے ہیں کہ ان میں لڑکی کے حصہ شرعی سے زائد خرچ کا کفیل ہونا پڑتا ہے۔“

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The reputed journal *Muslima* gives the following version of the law of inheritance:

”دنیا کے تمام مذاہب میں اسلام ہی سب سے پہلا مذہب ہے جس نے عورت کی حیثیت اور حقوق کا تعین کیا اور انھیں مذہب، معاشرت، سیاست اور زندگی کے ہر شعبہ میں مردوں کے دوش بدوش لاکھڑا کر دیا۔ مرد عورت کے مساوی تعلقات کو مستحکم کر دیا اور پھر اس کے بعد وراثت اور حقوق کا اس طرح تعین کیا گیا کہ عورت کو اپنی ماں کی طرف سے اپنے باپ کی طرف سے اور اپنے شوہر کی طرف سے ترکہ کا مستقل حق ملکیت دیا گیا اور اس ملکیت پر کسی قسم کے قیود عائد نہیں کئے گئے۔ افسوس ہے کہ بعض دیگر جگہ کہ مسلمانوں نے اس اسلامی قانون کو ٹھکرا دیا ہے اور عورتوں کے حقوق کو پامال کر رکھا ہے مگر مجھے امید ہے کہ وہ وقت جلد آئے گا جب کہ عورتیں اپنے ان حقوق کو کونسلوں اور اسمبلیوں میں آکر حاصل کر لیں گی۔“

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Another important social matter which deals in women's journals was early Child Marriage and various controversies related to it. Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah stated that early marriage was prevailed in India and it was not found in other countries. The Hindus

⁴² *Noor Jahan*, (Lahore), ed. Sultan, Hamida, vol-8, no-2, (Febuary, 1930), p-143.

⁴³ *Muslima*, vol-6, no-11, (May, 1938), pp-13-14.

Also cited, *Awaz-i-Niswan*, ed. Begum, Munawwar Jahan, vol-2, no-12, (December, 1939), p-43.

practiced child marriage which found in their religious text such as *Dharma Shastra, Smritis* and they performed it as their religious duty. The *Pandits* also gave interpretations on different marriage age which based on superstitious beliefs. The age of puberty gave priority of the consent of two parties at legal marriage which hardly followed among Hindus or Christian. An English critic Katherine Mayo who wrote *Mother India*, greatly criticised early marriage which prevailed among Hindus but she did not point out Muslim on that regard. Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah also wrote about the opponents who tried to manipulate Islamic Laws⁴⁴. However, Syed Mumtaz Ali cited a list in which mentioned different ages and penalties regarding the age of marriage⁴⁵.

The magazine *Noor Jahan* cited a number of articles in it which discussed the *Sarda Act* against child marriage passed by the Central legislature⁴⁶. The author Mir Aziz-ur-Rahman stated that the *Sarda Act* was passed on 28th September, 1929 which fixed the marriageable age of girls and boys as fourteen and eighteen years. The marriage before that age was prohibited according to this Act⁴⁷. About *Sarda Act*, the journal *Zeb-un-Nisa* quotes:

”اس ایکٹ کی رو سے ۱۸ سال سے کم عمر کے اور ۱۳ سال سے کم عمر کی لڑکی کی شادی ممنوع قرار دی گئی ہے۔ اور جو شخص اس ایکٹ کی خلاف ورزی کرتا ہے اس کو ۱۰ روپے جرمانہ یا ایک ماہ قید اور بصورت دیگر دونوں سزائیں دیجاتی ہیں۔“

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This Act came into effect on 1st April, 1930 which applied for both the communities. He favoured the aims of this act and also pointed out that Islam did not support the early child marriage and argued that a universal registration of birth was necessary without which it was ineffective⁴⁹. Another writer from Saharanpur, Qamar Jahan Begum also wrote about the birth certificate of children supporting this act⁵⁰.

Regarding the early child marriage, the magazine *Zeb-un-Nisa* mentioned that it adversely affects the health of girls as they became mother in too young age and unable to

⁴⁴ *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol-32, no-49, (17 December, 1929), pp-1183-1188.

Also cited, *Ismat*, vol-14, no-4, (April, 1915), pp-33-34.

⁴⁵ *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol-32, no-48, (16 November, 1929), pp-1009-1011.

⁴⁶ *Noor Jahan*, (Lahore), vol-8, no- 1, (January, 1930), pp-46-48.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, pp-56-58.

⁴⁸ *Zeb-un-Nisa*, ed. Humayun Mirza, Sughra, vol-1, no-3, (July, 1934), p-5.

⁴⁹ *Noor Jahan*, (Lahore), vol-8, no-1, (January, 1930), pp-56-58.

Also cited, *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol-32, no-48, (16 November, 1929), pp-1129-1132.

⁵⁰ *Noor Jahan*, (Lahore), vol-7, no-12, (December, 1929), pp-37-40.

bear the whole burden of family life. The child which born were also suffered from mal-nutrition due to their immature birth and the early marriages were also practiced by Lower class Muslim also⁵¹. Later on, many voices of Muslim leaders arose against this act. One of the religious association of Muslim, *Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Hind* opposed this act when it was discussed in legislative assembly. The President of this organization, Maulana Mufti Kifayatullah in his newspaper *Al-Jamiat* opposed this act. The other member Maulana Muhammad Yaqub, criticized those Muslims who tried to impose this legislation in the presence of Muslim Personal law⁵².

Coming to the question of *Talaq* (divorce), the journals included different terms and conditions of it with special reference of Quranic laws and mentioned the reasons for separation⁵³. Islam does not like *Talaq* (Divorce), though it is permissible in Islam under certain circumstances like maladjustments.

In an article on *Talaq wa Khulà* (Divorce and Separation), the editor Muhammad Ikram expressed his views that *Talaq* is permissible in Islam only in certain circumstances like maladjustment etc. It gives chance for further consideration or reconciliation between husband and wife. But if they do not find any way to continue their marital relation, they are free to separate from each other.

To quote:

”کشر بیعت اسلامی میں طلاق ایک بہت ناپسندیدہ بات ہے صرف انتہائی ناموافقیت کی صورت میں طلاق روا ہے۔ دوسری قوموں میں طلاق نہیں مگر مجبوری ان کو اسلامی قاعدے کی طرف رجوع کرنا پڑتا ہے۔ اسلام نے طلاق جائز تو رکھی ہے مگر بڑے ضائع اور احتیاط کے ساتھ اس پر بھی خاص قیود کی پابندی لازم قرار دی۔ یہاں تک کہ اگر مصالحت کی کوئی صورت نکل سکے تو طلاق کی نوبت نہ آئے اور آئے تو زن و شوہر میں کسی کی حق تلفی نہ ہو۔“

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⁵¹ *Zeb-un-Nisa*, vol-1, no-3 (July, 1934), pp-4-6.

Also cited, *Ismat*, vol-44, no-1, (January, 1930), pp-47-48.

⁵² *Noor Jahan*, (Lahore), vol-8, no-2, (February, 1930), pp-119-123.

Also cited, *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol- 32, no-48, (23 November, 1929), pp-1133-1135.

Saheli (Amritsar), vol-3, no-4, (April, 1927), pp-32-33 and , vol-3, no-8 (August, 1927), pp-19-20.

⁵³ *Muslima*, vol-6, no-11, (May, 1938), pp-14-15.

Also cited, *Saheli*, (Amritsar), vol-3, no-4, (April, 1928), pp-40-41.

⁵⁴ *Anis-i-Niswan*, vol-1, no-3 (March, 1939), p-57.

The journal *Muslima* laid stress on the following condition of *Talaq* in Islam. If the couples have differences between them, they may live separately for some time but it is not a permanent solution and it may create some other problems of their characters. Therefore, Islam gives an option either for reconciliation or for *Talaq*. In the case of *Talaq*, the husband is bound to give some proof of his accusation /bad character.

To quote:

”طلاق کے لئے عورت کی بدچلنی کا ثبوت پیش کرنا ضروری ہے۔ باہمی اختلاف کی صورت میں عموماً علیحدگی حاصل کی جاتی ہے۔ اس کا مطلب یہ ہے کہ میاں بیوی الگ الگ رہیں اور ان میں سے کوئی شادی نہ کر سکے اس صورت حالات کی خرابیاں باسانی قیاس کی جاتی ہیں۔ اس کے برعکس اسلام نے محض اختلاف مزاج کے عذر کو بھی طلاق کے لئے جائز تسلیم کر لیا اور مرد و عورت دونوں کو اس کا حق دیا کہ جب آپس کی مخالفت ناقابل برداشت حد تک ہو جائے تو وہ طلاق حاصل کر سکتے ہیں۔“

⁵⁵ As the women could not get justice due to the negligence of their husbands in early twentieth century, the Ulema and the elite classes took various steps to solve this problem. Thus, various journals acted to aware the women about their social rights of *Khulà* (Separation from women's side).

To deter the women from the right of *Khulá* is against Islamic injunction as Islam gives them the right of *Khulá*. The women from places of Hyderabad, Bhopal and other provinces have availed this right. However, in Hindustan the Muslim men used to divorce their (noble) wife whenever they wished, but the oppressed women had no right to separate from their husband and they remained to live miserably. In extreme cases the oppressed women began to leave their religion. Thus, the women should raise their voice for the right of *Khulá* which given in Islam.

⁵⁵ *Muslima*, vol-6, no-11, (May, 1938), p-14.

Farooqi Begum, the Editor of *Rahbar-i-Niswan* highlighted the main aspects *Khulà* which quoted at length

عورتوں کو حق خلع سے محروم کرنا احکام اسلامی کی صریحی خلاف ورزی ہے اور ہمارے بھائی عورتوں کی اس افسوسناک حق تلفی کے خلاف آواز بلند کرتے تو حکومت ہند ہرگز مسلم خواتین کو ان کے اس جائز شرعی حق سے محروم نہ کرتی۔ عورتوں کو حق خلع اگر آج حاصل ہے تو حیدرآباد یا بھوپال وغیرہ اسلامی ریاستوں میں ورنہ برطانوی ہند میں مسلمان مرد تو بدستور اپنی شریف سے شریف بیوی کو جب چاہے طلاق دے سکتا ہے لیکن مظلوم عورت اپنے نابکار سے نابکار مرد کو بھی نہیں چھوڑ سکتی اور اگر نان نفقہ سے بھی گریز کرنے والا ظالم شوہر اسے طلاق نہ دے تو وہ بدستور اس کی بیوی کی حیثیت سے دوزخ سے بھی زیادہ پر عذاب زندگی بسر کرنے پر مجبور ہے اس کا افسوسناک نتیجہ یہ ہے کہ بڑے بڑے معزز خاندانوں کی عورتیں بھی اپنے ظالم شوہروں کے شکنجہ عذاب سے نجات حاصل کرنے کے لئے تبدیل مذہب پر مجبور ہو جاتی ہیں۔

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The journal *NoorJahan* emphasized the right of *Khulà* (*Haq-ul-Khulà*) and points out if right to divorce is the right of men, in that case, the right of *Khulà* is women's right. If the male members overcome women's right to *Khulà*, why the women cannot use the right of *Khulà* for their welfare.

To quote:

”اگر حق طلاق مردوں کا آلہ ہے تو حق خلع ہماری تلوار ہے اگر وہ اس کو موقع پر استعمال کر کے ہم کو مغلوب کر سکتے ہیں تو کیا وجہ کہ ہم ان کے نظام سے مجبور ہو کر اپنی بہبودی کے لئے اپنی زنگ خوردہ تلوار کو صاف کر کے وقت ضرورت کام میں نہ لائیں۔“

⁵⁷ The contributor Asif Ali in journal *Anis-i-Niswan* gives a list of the circumstances in which a woman could seek *Khulà* like the disappearance of husband from four year, his negligence or failure to provide the maintenance of his wife for a period of two years, if he had been sentenced to seven years imprisonment or more, if he failed to perform his martial obligations without any reasonable cause for a period of three years, if he was impotent at the time of marriage and continued be so, in the case of insanity or any other disease for a period

⁵⁶ *Rahbar-i-Niswan*, vol-2, no-5, (March, 1935), p-8.

⁵⁷ *Noor Jahan*, (Lahore), vol-8, no-2, (Febuary, 1930), p-144.

of two years, if a woman had been married off by her elders before the age of fifteen or puberty and the marriage had not been consummated, she could abandon the marriage before attaining the age of eighteen years. The other is if the husband treated his wife with cruelty, have the habit to assault her or make her life miserable and attempt to force her to lead an immoral life and to get rid of her property, to prevent her from exercising her legal rights over it and if he had more wives than one whom he not treated equally in accordance with Quranic injunctions. Thus, these were the grounds on the basis of which a Muslim woman could obtain *Khulà*⁵⁸.

A Bill was also passed according to which the women could seek a judicial *Khulà*. It was introduced in Central legislative assembly in 1936 by Qazi Muhammad Ahmad Kazmi, the member of legislative assembly, M.L.A from Meerut as well as a member of *Jamiat* and enacted in 1939⁵⁹.

However, the objection was raised by the Ulemas who were not satisfied with the proposed bill. According to which, the suits of the dissolution of marriage should be held in proper courts under the supervision of Muslim judges and if the judges was not Muslim, the suit should be passed from one place to another until it could find a Muslim official. After the decision, the suit would be referred back to the original court. If anyone appeals against the decision of trial court, then it would to the high court which decided again by a Muslim judge⁶⁰. About it one of the contributors of '*Ismat* in article *Qanun Tansikhat-e-Nikah-e-Muslimat Ka Hashar* also said that without the appointment of Muslim judges, the cases of dissolution of marriage of Muslim woman could not be conducted. Thus, the objection of *Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Hind* was continued even after the passing of this act. Later on in 1940, the Central Committee of *Jamiat* approved certain amendments in it under the Presidentship of Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani.⁶¹

The other related issue with marriage was about the fixation of *Mehr* (Dower money given to the bride). In the marriage contract, the woman is entitled for *mehr* but it should be

⁵⁸ *Anis-i-Niswan*, vol-1, no-3 (March, 1939), pp-49-51.

Also cited, *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol-43, no-32, (10 August, 1940), pp-777-79.

⁵⁹ For details see, *Masturat*, ed. Begum Bilquis, vol-5, no-11, (15 November, 1939), pp-9-16.

⁶⁰ *Anis-i-Niswan*, vol-1, no-4 (April, 1939), pp-61-63.

Also cited, *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol-43, no-33, (14, September, 1940), pp-903-4.

⁶¹ '*Ismat*, vol-76, no- 4 (April, 1946), pp-294-95.

Also cited, *Ibid*, vol-50, no-6, (June, 1933), pp-24-30.

fixed keeping in view the economic condition of the husband. It also protects the dignity of women by bonding in marriage and meant economic security of the girl.⁶²

While addressing the meeting of *Anjuman-i-Dar-ul-Khawateen*, Agra Nazr Karar asked how many women received the dower money (*HaqMehr*) from their husband? At the time of marriage, large amount of money is fixed by girl's family beyond the capacity of boy which is against Islamic injunction.

To quote:

”حق المہر: روسرا حق مہر کے متعلق ہے۔ کیا حاضرین جلسہ مجھے بتا سکتی ہیں کہ موجودہ بہنوں میں سے کتنی بہنوں نے حق مہر اپنا شوہروں سے حاصل کیا ہے۔ شادی کے وقت بڑے بڑے مہر باندھے جاتے ہیں۔ میں کم سے کم اپنے صوبہ کے متعلق کہہ سکتی ہوں کہ معمولی حیثیت کے لوگ اپنی بساط سے بدرجہ زیادہ مہر رسماً باندھتے ہیں پچاس روپیہ کی حیثیت والے لاکھ دو لاکھ باندھ کر محض ہمارے حقوق کی تضحیک ہی نہیں بلکہ شریعت کی تضحیک کرتے ہیں۔“

⁶³ Often the husband avoided prompt payment thought that the ex-wife would exempt him from payment as she being harassed for long⁶⁴. Sometimes the Muslim husbands could seek support from the *Ulema* and *Maulvis* who articulated that those wives who would give up the right of *mehr* for the sake of their husbands, they were placed in paradise. They also lessen the amount of *mehr* sometimes without any strong reason. In this way, the men tried to keep away the Muslim women from their legal rights of *mehr*⁶⁵.

The issue of *Purdah* was another important matter which raised discussion in Muslim community. The early social reformer of nineteenth century, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan favoured *purdah* for the Muslim women to protect their modesty. However, the modernist reformers of early twentieth century argued on customary (*riwaji*) *purdah* in the light of *Quranic* injunctions and *Hadith* which reflected in women's journals.

A lady from Hyderabad in *'Ismat* define the meaning of *Purdah* in Islamic context. *Purdah* is beneficial for women because it protects their chastity and honour. *Purdah* is defined

⁶² *Muslima*, vol-6, no-11, (May, 1938), pp-14-15.

Also cited, *Saheli* (Lahore), vol-6, no-5 (May, 1930), pp-13-15.

⁶³ *Noor Jahan*, (Lahore), vol-8, no-2, (February, 1930), p-143.

Also cited, *Saheli* (Amritsar), vol-4, no-9, (September, 1928), p-44.

⁶⁴ *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol-33, no-23, (5 April, 1930), pp-319-21.

Also cited, *Noor Jahan*, (Lahore) vol-8, no-2, (February, 1930), pp-142-45.

⁶⁵ *'Ismat*, vol-53, no-5, (December, 1934), p-689.

as veiling which protects the women and their voice from the free mixing of male member. Islam gives more emphasis on *Purdah* than any other religion.

To quote:

”پردہ عورتوں کے لیے نہایت مفید اور اعلیٰ درجہ کی چیز ہے اس کی پابندی عصمت اور پاک دینی کا لازمی نتیجہ پیدا کرتی ہے..... پردہ اس کو کہتے ہیں کہ عورت اپنے کو غیر مردوں کی نظر سے بچائے اور اپنی آواز کو غیر محرموں کے کان تک پہنچنے نہ دے صرف یہی نہیں بلکہ اپنی نظر کو غیر محرم کے دیکھنے سے محفوظ رکھے۔ پردہ اسلامی شعار اور اس کے خصوصیات سے ہے کسی اور مذہب میں اس کی نسبت اتنی تاکید نہیں ہے جتنی کہ مذہب اسلام میں ہے۔“

⁶⁶ Syed Mumtaz Ali, editor of *Tahzib-un-Niswan* stated that Quran did not instruct the women to be kept segregated or cover their face strictly instead it prescribed *Shari'at* based *purdah* which maintain modesty of women. According to this, the women could uncover their face and hands within veil and move freely in public places. Actually, he does not favour to abolish *purdah* but said for the reform of existing custom in which the men and women should keep modest behavior and allowed the women greater freedom to develop their status⁶⁷.

The editor of *Khātoon*, Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah also had an open-minded thought on the institution of *purdah* and his view was based on the study of Holy Quran and Islamic teaching. He did not oppose *purdah* but favoured for the complete change of the customary veiling (*rasmī purdah*) as in India it become adhered to an evil custom (*biddat*). Thus, he argued against the customary *purdah* which is evidenced from *Khātoon*⁶⁸. He stated that the *purdah* carried by women in India was in its extreme form which curtailed their freedom and socially restricted them. He said that such type of *purdah* was not prescribed in Islam and gave examples of the enlightened ladies from Prophet's families in early days of Islam where they actively participated in all fields. He also gave references of *Sharai' purdah* from outside world where the women enjoyed greater freedom. Thus, the seclusion of women in India regarded as a social status and prestige of upper classes rather than any religious identity⁶⁹. He further said about the Muslim jurists such as Abu Hanifa and Abu Yusuf who

⁶⁶ Ibid, vol-4, no-1, (January, 1915), p-7

Also cited, *Purdah-Nashin*, vol-7, no-3, (March, 1912), pp-12-17.

⁶⁷ *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol- 31, no-17, (28 April, 1928), p-401.

⁶⁸ Muhammad Abdullah, Shaikh, *Sawanith-Umri Begum Abdullah*, Kohi-noor Press, Delhi, 1954, p-16.

⁶⁹ *Khātoon*, vol-6, no-7 (July, 1910), pp-330-334.

agreed that the women could move outside their houses and exposed their face and hands and the men should lower their gaze in presence of women. In short, Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah emphasized the *Shari'at* laws which suggested modesty for both men and women⁷⁰.

Another observer of customary *purdah* was Rashidul Khairi, the editor of '*Ismat* who opined that in Muslim society a woman could perform *haj* along with men but still they remained in strict confinement because if any stranger heard her voice it was considered *haram* (sin). Not only that if a woman got a chance to go outside, they sit in a *doli* which already covered. He remarked it a double kind of *purdah* which was horrible and such type of extreme isolation was not mentioned in *Sharai' Purdah*⁷¹. Thus, the early reformers regarded customary *purdah* as the main hinderance for the progress of women and there was no religious basis for it.

About the seclusion of women, various journals gave information of its origin with reference of epics, law of Manu and also from Quran. These studies proved that women were confined in their house from ancient times onwards in every religion and the ladies from *Sharif* families observed *purdah*. Thus, *purdah* was not a religious barrier but it was a social custom which was equally practiced by both Hindu and Muslim in different social context⁷². The journal *Saheli* in article *Purdah aur Islam* (Purdah and Islam)⁷³ stated the beginning of *Purdah* in Islamic perspective and included the view of social reformer Justice Ameer Ali who said that the seclusion of women was in vogue from pre-Islamic period (age of *Jahiliya*) when the women continued to enjoy freedom in every field. Thus, it is wrong to assume that women kept in strict *purdah* in early days in Islam.

The *Purdah* which was in vogue among the Muslim was not mentioned during the period of Khalifa. The women from upper section used to come in front of men. During the 7th A.H, the Khalifa became old and the Islamic government suffered a lot under *Tataris*. At

Also cited, *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol-32, no-1, (5 January, 1929) pp-20-21.

Ibid, vol-27, no-2, (9, Febuary, 1924), pp-81-82.

⁷⁰ *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol-32, no-1 (5 January, 1929) pp-20-21 and vol-32, no-1, (12 January, 1929) pp-37-40.

Also cited, Shaikh, *Sawanith-Umri Begum Abdullah*, p-19.

⁷¹ '*Ismat*, vol-62, no-6, (December, 1938), pp-451-452

⁷² *Anis-i-Niswan*, vol-1, no-3 (March, 1939), pp-12-15.

Also cited, *Noor Jahan*, (Amritsar), vol-1, no-3 (March, 1926), pp-22-27.

Tahzib-un-Niswan, vol-31, no-18, (5 May, 1928) and pp-415-419,

Ibid, vol-32, no-29, (23, November, 1929), pp-1135-1137.

Purdah-Nashin, vol-6, no-7 (December, 1911), pp-30-34.

Muslima, vol-6, no-11, (May, 1938), pp-16-17.

⁷³ *Saheli*, (Amritsar), vol-3, no-6, (March, 1927), pp-49-52.

that time, there was discussion among the Ulemas that is the women opened their face, hand or not?

To quote:

”جس قسم کا پردہ آج کل مسلمانان ہند میں رائج ہے، خلفا کے زمانے میں اس کا کہیں نام و نشان نہ تھا۔ بلکہ اس کے برعکس اعلیٰ طبقے کی عورتیں بلا برقع مردوں کے سامنے آتی تھیں۔ ساتویں صدی ہجری میں جب خلفا ضعیف ہو گئے اور تاتاریوں نے اسلامی حکومت کو درہم و برہم کر دیا اُس وقت علماء میں اس پر نزاع ہوئی کہ عورتیں اپنے ہاتھ پاؤں اور مونہہ اجنبیوں کے سامنے کھول سکتی ہیں یا نہیں۔“

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Haya Meerthi in his article *Rasmi Purdah* published in *Khatun-i-Mashriq* says that in my opinion the present *rasmi Purdah* should be continued but he was against strict *Purdah*.

To quote:

”میری رائے میں موجودہ رسمی پردہ کو ضروری حد تک ہلکا کر کے ہمیں پردہ کا پابند ہی رہنا چاہئے۔“

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The other magazine *Purdah-Nashin* in support of *Purdah* cited an article of renowned Muslim scholar, Maulana Shibli Nomani who gave instances of glorious *purdah* observed ladies from Islamic period and their achievements. Thus, he viewed that *Purdah* was not a hindrance and considered it as a symbol of Islamic culture. He was not in favour to discard *purdah* (*be purdagi*) but intended moderate form of *purdah*⁷⁶.

Apart from this, the periodical *Anis-i-Niswan* mentioned an informative article *Ghoonghat*(veiling)⁷⁷. The author Shaikh Abdul Qadir wrote that *Ghunghat* is not observed for going outside, but it observed inside the Hindu household by women in front of father-in-law and all elder male relatives for respect. In this context, he differentiates Muslim *purdah* which followed inside or outside the home⁷⁸.

Besides the origin of *Purdah*, various journals cited the growing resentment which generated among the Muslim. During early twentieth century, the women from outside world such as Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Persia, Afghanistan and North Africa enjoyed the

⁷⁴ Ibid,p-49.

⁷⁵ *Khātoon-i-Mashriq*,vol- 1,no-3 ,(December,1929),p-55.

⁷⁶ *Purdah-Nashin*,vol-6,no-7, (December,1911),pp-4-8.

⁷⁷ *Ghoonghat* is a *dupatta* or head scraf worn to cover the head.

⁷⁸ *Anis-i-Niswan*,vol-2,no-1, (July,1939),pp-12-18.

liberty of movement but the Muslim women in India were deprived from it because of their strictness in *purdah*. The journal *Khatoon-i-Mashriq* cited an article *Hamara Purdah* (Our Veil) which stated the need of changes in customary *purdah* in India due to the changes in society. The writer gave references of outside world where the women left *purdah* and took participated in various activities. He said that the liberty enjoyed by women in outside world is suited to the condition prevailed there, but that was not appropriate for Indian Muslim ladies⁷⁹. He also gave example of educated Muslim women from respectable *Sharif* families of Hyderabad such as Begum Khadiv Jung, Mrs. Ameer Husain and Mrs. Sofi⁸⁰ who received education within *purdah*. Thus, *Purdah* was not an obstacle in the path of women's progress⁸¹.

Some remarked that *purdah* restricted women's freedom and deprived them from education. However, the periodical *Saheli* mentioned the satirical verses of great poet Akbar Allahabadi in support of *purdah* who was a strong supporter of cultural identity of Muslim society⁸². The journals also noted the name of modern reformist Begum of Bhopal, Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum who spoke at *Madrasah-i-Sultania* regarding the custom of *Purdah* and wrote the book *Al-Hijab or Why Purdah is necessary* in 1922⁸³. She herself visited many Islamic countries such as Turkey, Arab, Egypt and other western countries noticed that the women followed Islamic *purdah*. Thus, she advised such type of *Sharai' purdah* to the country of Hindustan and argued that *purdah* was a religious binding on every Muslim woman and suggested various ways to impart education to the women⁸⁴.

The journal *Purdah-Nashin* noticed the view of Lady Dufferin⁸⁵ about *Taalim-i-Niswan aur Purdah* (women's education and *Purdah*).

⁷⁹ *Khatoon-i-Mashriq*, vol-2,no-3(March,1930),pp-38-40.
Also cited, *Saheli*,(Lahore),vol-21, no-5,(May,1930),pp-33-34.
Awaz-i-Niswan, vol-5,no,9(September,1938),pp-77-81.
Tahzib-un-Niswan, vol-27, no-20, (17 May,1924),pp-314-316.
Sartaj,vol-1,no-9,(September,1925),pp-3-9.

⁸⁰ Obtained M.A degree from A.M.U.

⁸¹ *Khatoon-i-Mashriq*,vol-2,no-3(March,1930),pp-38-40.

⁸² *Saheli*(Amritsar),vol-4,no-1(October,1927), pp-19-20.

⁸³ *Saheli*(Lahore),vol-21,no-4,(April,1941),pp-9-10.

⁸⁴ *Ismat*,vol-4,no-5, (January, 1910),p-7.

Also cited, *Noor Jahan*,(Lahore), vol-8,no-7,(July, 1930), p-412.

Purdah-Nashin, vol-7,no-1,(February,1912), pp-21-31.

⁸⁵ Wife of Viceroy Lord Dufferin.

At the time of departure from Hindustan lady Dufferin opined, ‘those ladies who maintained their life in *Purdah* were lucky’. She said that *Purdah* which is prescribed in Quran was not a hinderance in the path of education. It is generally viewed that after gaining education, the women would become ill-mannered due to their negligence of upbringing, ill-mannered and bad company.

To quote:

تسلیم نسواں اور پردہ

لیڈی ڈفرن کے وہ قیمتی الفاظ یاد آگئے ہیں جو کہ انہوں نے ہندستان سے رخصت ہوتے وقت فرمائے تھے۔ ”خوش نصیب ہیں وہ عورتیں جو اپنی زندگی کے دن پردہ میں گذاریں۔“ میں پردہ کو نعمت مرقبہ پاتی ہوں اور یہ کہنے کو بالکل تیار ہوں کہ اصلی پردہ جس کی تعلیم قرآن کریم کے پاکیزہ الفاظ غرض البصر میں دی گئی ہے سوائے تعلیم یافتہ مذہب سے باخبر صورت کے جاہل صورت ہرگز نہیں کر سکتیں۔ تعلیم نسوان میں یہ نقص نکالا جاتا ہے کہ پڑھی لکھی عورتیں خراب ہو جاتی ہیں۔ اور وہ اپنا مافی الضمیر لکھکر سمجھا سکتی ہیں مگر انہیں یہ معلوم نہیں کہ یہ ان کی سرشت کی برائی اور تربیت کا قصور اور بُری صحبت کا نتیجہ ہے اور وہ بذریعہ پیغامِ ہی سب کچھ کر سکتی ہیں۔

⁸⁶ The various articles in *Saheli* opposed the exaggerated form of *purdah* practiced in India according to which the women were confined in their houses and faced many health problems. Thus, it favoured *Sharai' purdah* which practiced in European countries and suggested that the women should follow the injunctions of *Quran* and *Hadith* with regard to their dress and manners and maintained the modesty in *purdah*⁸⁷.

The male also criticized *purdah* which cited in *Tahzib-un-Niswan*. It is stated that *purdah* affected domestic works. However, many unmarried girls supported it and some were tried to prove that *purdah* was not an obstacle in the way of female education and the overall degradation of women⁸⁸.

⁸⁶ *Purdah-Nashin*, vol-3, no-6, (June, 1909), pp-24-25.

⁸⁷ *Saheli* (Amritsar), vol-4, no-3, (April, 1928), pp-45-47.

Ibid, vol-3, no-5, (February, 1927), pp-18-20.

Also cited, *Haram*, vol-1, no-1, (April, 1926), pp-18-20.

⁸⁸ *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol- 4, no-8, (9 March, 1901), pp-78-79.

Ibid, vol-28, no-28, (10 May, 1919), pp-289-90.

A moderate critic of *pardah*, Shahzad Jahan Begum believed in the system itself and she opined that if someone wanted to discard it, she welcomed her. She said about those ladies who abandoned *pardah* committed many mistakes in social gatherings because they were not trained how to conduct themselves in social gathering. Thus, she suggested the male members to accompany them in the initial stages and trained them the basic of conduct⁸⁹.

In another instance, Sufia Midhat Khanum wrote that in many families where *pardah* was not observed there were vulgar jokes exchanged between the brother-in-law(*sala*) and the sister-in-law(*Sali*). Thus, such type of conduct was not favourable in Islam. She said that those ladies who courageously leave *pardah* and took training in riding, mountaineering and participated in meeting with men were criticized by other as ill-mannered. The author did not criticise it as she thought it was baseless to judge someone ill-mannered if she did not observe *pardah*. She also pointed out some families where the unmarried girls were instructed that they did not show their face to women of other families. The reason behind this was many unmarried girls were lack of proper manners thus, the elders advised them not to expose themselves to the ladies of other families as it degraded their family status. However, many educated girls did not favour this perception⁹⁰.

In *Saheli* one of the article *Purdah aur Qurani Ahqam* (Purdah and Quranic law)⁹¹ mentioned the proper way of veiling with reference of *Surah Noor* and *Surah Al-Hijab* which clarify that Quran did not put unnecessary veiling and gave the concept of *pardah* for women in a dignified way. In fact, the journals of early twentieth century favoured Islamic *Purdah* and mentioned the name of *Khimar pardah*⁹² which was in vogue in Islamic period. Thus, such types of *pardah* keep the women from bad eyes and protect their chastity. It is said that Quran did not make it obligatory for women to cover face and hand but suggested to open those portion which is necessary⁹³.

The magazine *Noor Jahan* cited an article *Purde par ek dilchasp Bahes* (An interesting discussion on *Purdah*)⁹⁴ which mentioned the opinions of many eminent

⁸⁹ *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol-39, no-50, (29 March, 1936), pp-301-302.

⁹⁰ *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol-33, no-44, (20 September, 1930), pp-934-36.

⁹¹ *Saheli*, (Amritsar), vol-3, no-8 (August, 1927), pp-31-34.

⁹² *Khimar* was long cloth (orhni) which covers from head to toe.

⁹³ *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol-31, no-27, (14 July, 1928), pp-681-684.

Ibid, vol-31, no-17, (28 April, 1928), pp-400-401.

Also cited, *Anis-i-Niswan*, vol-3, no-11, (November, 1940), pp-11-15.

⁹⁴ *Noor Jahan* (Amritsar), vol-1, 2, (February, 1926), pp-75-77.

personalities who argued on the matter of *purdah*. Pandit Nanak Chand⁹⁵ opined to discard *purdah* as he thought that it was a detrimental for women's social and educational development. Pandit Thakur Dutt⁹⁶ also said to give up *purdah* but favoured to maintain decency. Another was Maulvi Mahboob Alam who did not favour the customary *purdah* in India as it restricted women in their houses which was not in accordance of Islam. He supported Islamic *purdah* and also gave reference of her daughter Fatima Begum who got graduate degree within *purdah*.

Thus, the journals reflected that there were three groups of people who debated on the issue of *purdah*. There were some who totally opposed to *purdah*, some were demanded to lessen the strictness of *purdah* with relevant religious injunctions. The other were wished to maintain *purdah* system but believed that the changes in *purdah* were contradictory to Islamic law.

Turning to other aspects, the relationship between husband and wife and their rights and duties have also been discussed. One of the writers of *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, Tayyaba Begum wrote about the duties of women towards their husband that the women should give priority towards husband's duties. However, Mumtaz Ali stated that both have equal rights in society and they should respect the likes and dislikes of each others⁹⁷.

The relationship between husband and wife is best explained by a contributor of *Payam-i-Ummid*. The husband should treat his wife politely in every situation and the wife should show their obediency and sincerity towards her husband. On certain occasion, the wife feel tired and helpless due to the over burden of household activities, at that moment she need husband's sympathy.

To quote:

”ہر حال میں بیوی کے ساتھ شوہر کا برتاؤ ملامت کا ہونا چاہئے۔ خاص اوقات پر ایسے موقع آئے ہیں جہاں فکر اور اظہار ہمدردی کی بھی ضروری پڑتی ہے۔ بعض وقت وہ بالکل تھک جاتی ہے۔ دن بھر کے افکار سے اُس کا دماغ پریشان ہو جاتا ہے۔ گھر کے انتظام کی مشین اپنی معمولی رفتار سے سہولیت کے ساتھ نہیں چلی تھی۔ اُس کے نازک قوائے جسمانی پر ان افکار کا بہت ہی برا اثر پڑا تھا۔“

⁹⁵ Eminent educationalist of Punjab.

⁹⁶ Influential Vaid Leader.

⁹⁷ *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol- 22, no-28, (17, May, 1919), p-307.

Also cited, *Sartaj*, vol- 2, no-7, (July, 1926), p-19-20.

Niswani Duniya, vol-1, no-1, (January, 1930), p-40.

Ismat, vol-15, no-3, (April, 1915), p-51.

⁹⁸ The women were guided to carry their relationship with in-laws respectfully⁹⁹. The conflict between the mother-in-laws (*sas*) and daughter-in-laws (*bahu*), conflict between husband's sister (*nand*) and his wife (*bhabhi*) were very common which raised due to the unawareness of women towards their duties.

To conclude it can be said that Urdu journals of women in north India of early twentieth century played the most constructive role in changing the marginalized condition of women which was due to the ignorance of education and prevalent of various social practices among them. Thus, the women became unaware about their legal social rights because of which they plunged themselves in backwardness. So, the emergence of women's Urdu Journals means as a vanguard to socially aware the women about their various rights and made them to face the new challenges of their life in society.

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⁹⁸ *Payam-i-Ummid*,(Allahabad), ed. Begum, Azad, vol-4,no-31,(April,1918),pp-15-16.

⁹⁹ *Ismat*,vol-3,no-5,(May,1913),p-39.

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