

## **Voices Veiled, Stories Unveiled: Inferred from Muslim Women writers in Hindi Literature during colonial India**

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### **Abstract**

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This paper, titled ‘Voices Veiled, Stories Unveiled: Inferred from Muslim Women Writers in Hindi Literature during Colonial India’, examines the intricate gender dynamics expressed in the literary works of Muslim women writers in Hindi during colonial India. It foregrounds the intersection of gender, religion, and socio-political transformation within the larger context of colonialism, nationalism, and reform movements in India. The study aims to explore how Muslim women, often marginalized both by their gender and community in the public sphere of literary production, navigated and articulated their identities in a period marked by social upheaval and reformist ideologies. In colonial India, women’s participation in literary production, especially from Muslim backgrounds, was constrained by patriarchal structures, religious orthodoxy, and cultural expectations. While much of the existing scholarship has concentrated on Muslim women’s writing in Urdu and regional languages, the contributions of Muslim women in Hindi literature have remained relatively understudied. This paper seeks to fill this gap by highlighting their voices, emphasizing how their literary works present nuanced understandings of gender roles, societal expectations, and personal agency.

**Keywords:** Women Writers, Hindi Stories, Muslim Women, Public Sphere, Magazine

### **Introduction**

The colonial period in India, particularly during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, was a time of significant socio-political and cultural transformation. Within this context, the emergence of Muslim women writers in Hindi literature marked a critical yet often overlooked chapter in literary history. These writers navigated the complexities of colonial modernity, patriarchy, and community identity, using their

works to express their unique perspectives and experiences. Muslim women in colonial India faced multiple layers of marginalization by gender, community, and colonial power structures. They lived in a world where traditional norms often confined them to the domestic sphere, limiting their access to education and public discourse. However, the reform movements of the time, particularly within Muslim communities, sought to address these constraints, advocating for women's education and participation in public life. In this dynamic milieu, Muslim women writers began to articulate their thoughts, hopes, and struggles, offering a nuanced critique of societal norms and power hierarchies. Through their writings in Hindi, a language widely understood across North India, these women accessed a broader audience. Their works included poetry, essays, and autobiographies, which provided a window into their lives and thoughts. These literary pieces unveiled stories of resistance, resilience, and agency, challenging the dominant narratives imposed by both colonial rulers and patriarchal societies. They also reflected the tensions between tradition and modernity, highlighting the evolving identities of Muslim women during this transformative period.

This body of literature is significant for several reasons. First, it provides an alternative perspective on the colonial encounter, one that foregrounds the experiences and voices of Muslim women. Second, it enriches our understanding of Hindi literature, which has often been seen as dominated by Hindu male writers. Finally, it underscores the importance of intersectionality in historical and literary studies, showing how gender, religion, and language intersected in complex ways in colonial India. Muslim women writers of this period often wrote within the confines of *purdah* (veiling), a practice symbolizing both physical and metaphorical seclusion. However, the metaphor of veiling can also be understood in a broader context—representing the multilayered silencing of women's voices in both public and private spaces. Through literary expressions, these women subverted these restrictions, using the written word to “unveil” their stories, opinions, and critiques of the patriarchal order. The literature produced by these women often reflects a dual consciousness: the lived reality of gender-based oppression and the desire for agency and self-expression.

This study examines a selection of works—poetry, short stories, and essays—by Muslim women writers, analyzing their portrayal of women's experiences in domestic spaces, their roles within the family, and their engagement with the public sphere. In doing so, it sheds light on the subtle critiques these writers made of both Islamic orthodoxy and colonial modernity. Muslim women writers often used metaphors, allegories, and narrative structures to critique patriarchal norms without directly confronting them, thus avoiding social censure while making their feminist concerns visible. Additionally, the paper investigates how these writers negotiated the colonial discourse of modernity and the simultaneous rise of nationalist sentiments. Their works reflect the tension between traditional gender roles and the emerging discourse of women's rights, education, and emancipation. For instance, they advocated for women's education as a means of empowerment, challenging

the notion that education would lead to moral degradation or rebellion against traditional family structures. By writing in Hindi, a language that was increasingly associated with nationalistic and reformist movements, these Muslim women also positioned themselves within broader discourses of Indian identity and modernity.

“Voices Veiled, Stories Unveiled” brings to the forefront the complex ways in which Muslim women writers in colonial India used Hindi literature as a platform to navigate and articulate their gendered experiences. Despite the veiling of their voices in public discourse, these women “unveiled” their narratives through literature, offering critical insights into the intersections of gender, religion, and societal change. Their contributions challenge the monolithic representation of Muslim women as passive victims of tradition, highlighting their agency in shaping discourses on gender and reform in colonial India. The rise of women writers in Hindi literature is a remarkable incident which stands as a milestone of social change and progress. The women writers, with their writings, introduced an independent and self-dependent basis in all forms of Hindi literature and thereby established their own identity. The best part of the credit goes to those women writers who surpassed all types of obstacles to express their resentment and revolt.

The recognition of womanhood became the root of all struggles and protest became their weapon. The writings of women tried to give a viewpoint regarding humanity and put forward an alternative as regards feelings and experiences. These writings brought about a new probability regarding a woman keeping full faith in decorum and values of womanhood. These women writers tried to safeguard their existence which had been tortured for centuries and tried to express all the aspects of a woman's life. Women established their identity in a revolutionary manner and proved that they were not dependent on others.

Writers like Qurratulain Hyder, Razia Sajjad Zaheer, Ismat Chughtai, Salma Siddiqui, Zaheera Khatoon and others depicted the woman consciousness in its various stages. In the last decades of the twentieth century, women began to stand in the front line in this regard like those in other spheres. The women writers gave the idea of emancipation of women a fruitful direction by giving a sensitive expression of women's sufferings and the idea of women's freedom. Among the initial writers, there had been a keen desire to fight against their male counterparts. A woman can be called successful only when her place has been fully secured. She should enjoy her freedom only by remaining as a woman. This tendency has been seen in the writing of women writers. The struggle which they depicted in their writings is also found in real life. There does not need to be women's consciousness or sense of liberation in the writings of all the women writers, but real woman life should be reflected in them. The tragedy of oppression and exploitation of women can only be realized by a woman suffering.

Female entertainers were not included in accounts of education in colonial surveys and gazettes. For example, in Shahabad, one of the districts in Bihar, Buchanan gives a very bleak picture of the educational status of women. He does not include

the courtesans in it. If Buchanan had investigated and reported on the courtesans' skills in reading and writing, his narrative would not have been so depressing.<sup>1</sup> Few studies are trying to unsettle such stereotypical construction. Studies on Muslim women like Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, who played a pioneering role in empowering Muslim women through education, highlights the 'emergence' of new Muslim women in nineteenth-century colonial Bengal. Considered to be a pioneer of female emancipation, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's writings expressed the evils of segregation, illiteracy, religious fanaticism, and above all the domination of men over women.<sup>2</sup>

The empowerment of Muslim women in colonial India was a multifaceted process, influenced by societal reforms, education, and literary expression. Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain was not alone in her efforts; other reformers, both men and women, advocated for change within the community.<sup>3</sup> Despite societal resistance, education became a critical tool in transforming the lives of Muslim women. Schools established by Rokeya and her contemporaries provided a foundation for young girls to step into public and intellectual spheres. These schools, though few, became sites of resistance against oppressive norms and a space where future generations of Muslim women could learn to assert their individuality and rights.

### Historical overview

Women's literature is making its presence felt in the literary world with its creative and thoughtful writings. No matter where a woman comes from, her problems, exploitation and feelings are the same everywhere. If we look at the history of women's writing, it will be clear that due to changes in circumstances and environment, there has been a change in relationships, sensibilities etc. It was a woman who wrote the first story in Hindi and became known as Bang Mahila in the world of stories. Women's writing appeared in serial form after independence.

Muslim women were also bringing out women's journals and writing articles, short stories, poems, autobiographies, and travel accounts in the nineteenth century. They were journalists and editors of different Urdu magazines, published from Lahore, Delhi, Aligarh, and other places. Their writings dispel the misplaced perceptions and showcase a range of concerns and tones characterizing Muslim women's lives. The writings compel one to think, rethink, and question the understanding and popular notions about Muslim women. Muslim women celebrated, questioned, and critiqued all that happened around them. They were questioning some of the unreasonable customs and traditions which undermine the status of women. Their voices were vocalizing and confronting political, social, and cultural concerns. Whether it was religion or the norms of society, Muslim women did not hesitate to challenge them. Thus, Muslim women could not be seen

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<sup>1</sup> Saba Dewan, *Tawaifnama*, (Chennai: Context/Westland, 2019), 39.

<sup>2</sup> Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, *Motichur: Sultana's Dream and Other Writings of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), 32.

<sup>3</sup> Hossain, *Motichur*, 32.

merely as a passive symbol of the backwardness of the religion and community but were also voicing their concerns, feelings, and emotions.<sup>4</sup> Music and dance were just one part of the intensive education of courtesans. Proficiency in languages was equally important for singing ghazals<sup>5</sup> for the right understanding and feeling.<sup>6</sup>

Sentimentalism in early women novelists Her influence was more, but the writers after her had left the romantic and emotional world and came into the world of reality. The role of the Urdu-Hindi dispute cannot be ignored in the creation of the Hindi public area and Urdu public area, which started before the colonial government declared Hindi as the official language in place of Urdu in the United Province in 1873 and Bihar in 1881. Started taking root. In 1837, Persian was replaced by Urdu as the language of court and business, and in 1900, Hindi and Urdu were given equal status<sup>7</sup>. These language policies had a great impact on society. The dispute over the study of Persian and the use of the Devanagari script also created boundaries in many places. If one looks at the writings of Urdu, which had remained marginalized for a very long time, the history of the education of women would be problematized. It was not the elite women but those like courtesans who can be considered among the first generation of literate women in history. An attempt was made by them to acquire a place within the masculine Urdu literary tradition. For example, there was a difference in attendance due to Persian not being taught in Tehsildari schools. In the process of Islamization, the preference for Urdu instead of Persian increased, in the Muslims of South India.<sup>8</sup>

After independence, when the suppressed, non-existent women suddenly became conscious on the ideological level, along with the male writers, the works of many women writers also came to light. Women who became aware of their existence understood the importance of education and after getting educated, they became financially self-reliant, standing shoulder to shoulder with men. The writers who entered the field of writing presented every aspect/dimension of women's lives through their writings. These writers expressed the tragedy of women's lives based on the authenticity of their experiences. There was a coordination of ideals and sentimentality among the early women novelists, but they also reflected a yearning to break free from traditional values. Gradually, these women novelists minutely understood the mentality of their time and gave it the form of reality in their writings. These writers played a leading role in starting the women's discussion. He broke the traditional narrative conventions and understood the reality minutely and deeply and expressed the changed conditions, inconsistencies

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<sup>4</sup>Huma Khan, *Kalam-e-Niswan — Anthology of Muslim Women's writings*, (Nirantar Publication: Delhi, 2013), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Lyrical forms of Urdu poetry.

<sup>6</sup> Saba Dewan, *Tawaifnama*, (Chennai: Context/Westland, 2019), 88

<sup>7</sup> Huma Khan, *Kalam-e-Niswan — Anthology of Muslim Women's writings*, (Nirantar Publication, Delhi, 2013), 4.

<sup>8</sup> Khan, "Kalam-e-Niswan", 4.

and corruption of the country through his writings.

### **Muslim women and public sphere**

In the 18th century in India, printing presses started functioning in many states and a lot of written material started coming into the public domain. Rapid changes in the means of grooming and print culture allowed new methods of communication to emerge and played an important role in the creation of the public sphere. Apart from religious books, books like *Krisa-Dastaan*, *Barhamasa*, drama, songs etc. started being printed in the lithography press. It has been analyzed by Francesco Orsini based on in-depth research of the popular literature of colonial North India. It played an active role in shaping the entire public sphere and worked to educate people through informal means. In this respect, the 19th century is also important.<sup>9</sup>

The concept of the public sphere is modern. The public sphere began to take shape in the 18th century, to achieve a balance between an individual's private life and public life. They define it this way, "the public sphere is a social biography or situation in whose determination the necessity of social communication, the nature of public discussion and the number of citizen participation plays an important role. It is a combination of man's internal life (private) and external system (Public).<sup>10</sup> Keep in mind that Habermas explains this in the context of liberal democracy and the rise of the bourgeoisie in Europe. Researcher Dhawal Jaiswal concludes that "in fact, the concept of the public sphere refers to all those activities, newspapers, magazines, literary societies and public meetings, where people reach a democratic conclusion through the process of debate-dialogue on a topic of public interest. The public sphere is the area between self-sovereignty and state power where public power is active."<sup>11</sup>

### **Intellectual Courtesans and cross-cultural exchanges**

Maha Laqa Bai (1768-1824), the famous courtesan of Hyderabad, is considered the first female poet of India. She was influenced by the work of Siraj Allahabadi, a famous court poet of that time. While growing up, she had access to a well-endowed library and was exposed to the vibrant culture of Hyderabad. Her first language was Urdu, but she was also fluent in Arabic, Persian, and Bhojpuri. She was the first poetess of the region to participate and present her poetries in a *mushaira*.<sup>12</sup> Her collection of poetry, *Gulzar-e-Mahlaga* was published. The

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<sup>9</sup> Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere, 1920–1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 17.

<sup>10</sup> Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere, 1920–1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 18.

<sup>11</sup> Dhawal Jaiswal, 'The Concept of Public Sphere in the Essays of Bharatand', M.Phil. Dissertation, (Delhi: Delhi University, 2010), 34.

<sup>12</sup> Vikram Sampath, *My Name is Gauhar Jaan: The Life and Times of a Musician*, (N. Delhi: Rupa, 2012), 37-39.

*Diwan-e-Chanda*, a collection of Maha Laqa Bai's 125 *ghazals*<sup>13</sup>, was compiled and calligraphed by her in 1798. She signed this manuscript and gifted it to Captain Malcolm, a British soldier, administrator and diplomat, on 18 October 1799, during a dance performance at the residence of Mir Alam, the Prime Minister of the Hyderabad state. She sponsored and supervised the publications of *Mahnama*, a historical book on Hyderabad state. Maha Laqa Bai's library had manuscripts and books on poetry, alongside arts and science collections. Her literary contributions provide insight into linguistic transformations in southern India. Abdul Halim Sharar (1860-1926), an Urdu writer and novelist, presented Maha Laqa Bai as a well-informed lady in his novel, *Husan Kay Dakoo*, who benefits from the modern educational system.<sup>14</sup>

Malka Jaan, who belonged to the nineteenth century, was also a knowledgeable poet. She composed verses in Urdu. Her poetry conformed to all the techniques and norms of Urdu poetry and was indicative of her command over the Urdu language. She published a collection of her poetry entitled *Makhzan-e-ulfat-e-Malka* (the 'Treasure of Malka's Love'). She was sought out by eminent poets of the time because of the success of her book. The noted Urdu poet, Dagh Dehlvi, is said to have called on Malka Jaan to express his deep admiration for her poetic excellence. Eminent poet Allahabadi was her contemporary and held her in high esteem. Malka Jaan took great care to educate her daughter, Gauhar Jaan. Besides, appointing a teacher to teach Gauhar Jaan English, she taught her Urdu and Persian. Gauhar Jaan was able to read, write, and sing in several languages including Hindustani, Bengali, English, Arabic, Persian, and Urdu and could speak English and French as well.<sup>15</sup>

Malika Pukhraj (1912-2004), who was the court singer in the kingdom of Jammu and Kashmir, was also given very rigorous training. Her mother wanted her to master all the skills and become famous. From the age of three she was taught Urdu and Persian by eminent teacher Gulzar Hussain and by the age of five or six, she was able to read books in Urdu. She had also become an expert in poetry. When her mother shifted to Delhi from Lahore, she had another teacher, a professor at a well-known college, to teach her Urdu and Arabic.<sup>16</sup> The novel *Nashtar*<sup>17</sup> the first autobiographical novel in Hinduized Farsi-written by Hasan Shah of Kanpur in 1790, also highlights the literary traditions of courtesans. Qurratulain Hyder

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<sup>13</sup> Sampath, "My Name is Gauhar Jaan", 38.

<sup>14</sup> Scott Kugle, *When Sun Meets Moon: Gender, Eros and Ecstasy in Urdu Poetry*, (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2016), 57. Scott Kugle, "Maha Laqa Bai and Gender: The Language, Poetry and Performance of a Courtesan in Hyderabad", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 30, no. 3, (2010), 365-385.

<sup>15</sup> Vikram Sampath, *My Name is Gauhar Jaan: The Life and Times of a Musician*, (N. Delhi: Rupa, 2012), 37-39.

<sup>16</sup> The Lounge space.

<sup>17</sup> Pallabi Chakravorty, *Bells of Change-Kathak Dance*, (Women and Modernity in India, Calcutta: Seagull, 2008), 52.

considered this as the first known modern Indian novel. A courtesan, Khanum Jan, was the heroine of this novel. Khanum Jan was a part of a troupe of *Deredar*<sup>18</sup> courtesans. This troupe moved to the Kanpur, Varanasi, and Lucknow.

### Women Magazine and Periodicals

In 1822, Raja Rammohan Roy started publishing *Miratul Akhbar*<sup>19</sup> in Persian. In this, while reviewing a Bengali book, the rights of women in ancient India were discussed, which is proof that there was a discussion going on about the status of women in the public sphere. Most of the writers on women's topics were men, but female voices had also entered. In Bengali, *Bamabodhini*<sup>20</sup> magazine (1863) and *Anayini* (1875), *Paricharika* (1878) etc. had started journalism keeping women at the centre. In the last decades of this century, information is available about *Mahila Darpan* published from Saran in Hindi that it was focused on women and Mrs. Sharda Devi was its publisher-editor. *Grihalakshmi*<sup>21</sup> in Hindi, (1909, Allahabad, Editor Mrs. Gopal Devi. Women's magazines like *Stree Darpan* (1909, Allahabad, editor Rameshwari Nehru)<sup>22</sup> and *Band* (1922, Allahabad, editor Ramrakh Singh Sehgal) came into existence in the twentieth century. As far as the issue of Urdu journalism is concerned, looking at the participation of women in it should be an important topic of future research.<sup>23</sup>

Mrinal Chatterjee, who writes on the history of Urdu journalism, informs that in the city of Calcutta, the land of renaissance in Bengal,<sup>24</sup> Harihar Dutt published the first Urdu newspaper *Jamen Jahanuma'* in 1822<sup>25</sup>, Munshi Harsukh Rai published the first Urdu weekly *Kohinoor* in 1850 and *Manabir* in 1858.<sup>26</sup> Kabiruddin started the first Urdu daily *Urdu Guide*. In the same year, *Roznamaye Punjab* was started from Lahore, and *Awadh Akhbar* was started from Naval Kishore Press of Lucknow. Ramchandra, who published *Fawadul Nazin* from Delhi in 1852, started

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<sup>18</sup> Pallabi Chakravorty, *Bells of Change-Kathak Dance, Women and Modernity in India*, Calcutta: Seagull, 2008. 51.

<sup>19</sup> *Miratul Akhbar*, Calcutta: 1822–1823. Edited by Raja Rammohan Roy. This was one of the first Persian-language newspapers in India, focusing on social reform and critique of British policies.

<sup>20</sup> *Bamabodhini Sabha*, 1863–1922. Edited by Umeshchandra Datta and others. A monthly journal advocating women's education and addressing social issues of women in Bengal during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

<sup>21</sup> *Grihalakshmi* (Grihalakshmi). Selected issues, 1913-17. Sudarshan Acharya and Gopaldevi (eds.). Allahabad: Sudarshan Press.

<sup>22</sup> *Stree Darpan*, ed. Rameshwari Nehru (Allahabad, 1909).

<sup>23</sup> Huma Khan, *Kalam-e-Niswan — Anthology of Muslim Women's Writings*, (Delhi: Nirantar Publication, 2013), 6.

<sup>24</sup> Mrinal Chatterjee, *History of Journalism in Odisha*, (Dhenkanal, Odisha: Scephali Communications, 2015), 19.

<sup>25</sup> Harihar Dutt a Bengali Brahmin Hindu, published the *Jam-e-Jahan Numa* from Calcutta on March 27, 1822. It was published under the editorship of Lala Sada Sukh Lal, a Punjabi. The printer was William Hopkins, a British national and an employee of the East India Company

<sup>26</sup> Munshi Harsukh Rai began publishing the weekly *Kohinoor* on January 14, 1850, with a circulation of 350 copies, which was unusually high at the time. He started the first daily in Urdu, the *Urdu Guide*, out of Calcutta back in 1858.

Urdu journalism. Year after year, the publication of Urdu newspapers and magazines was gaining momentum, which was not just concentrated in big cities and was writing extensively on socio-political issues.<sup>27</sup>

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan started the reformist work among the Muslim community through *Tahjibul Akhlaq* in 1870<sup>28</sup> and it was augmented by monthly magazines like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's *Nairang-e-Alam* (1899).<sup>29</sup> In 1887, *Akhbarunnisa*, published in Urdu from Delhi, came into the hands of the people. Some scholars associate the name of Syed Ahmed Dehlvi with it.<sup>30</sup> Around this time, Muhibbe Hasan started publishing *Moalime Niswan* from Hyderabad. Some of the important magazines which came forward and started vigorous debate on socio-cultural issues are Lahore's *Tahzeebe Niswan* (1898), *Sharif Bibi* (1910); *Khatoon' of Aligarh* (1904); *Ismat* (1908), *Tamahun* (1911), *Ustani* (1919), *Dai of Delhi*; *Pardanshi of Agra* (1906); *Al Hijab* (1910), *Jilous Sultan* (1913) from Bhopal; *An Nisa* (1919), *Hamjoli'* (1929) of Hyderabad; *Noorjahan* of Amritsar (1926); *Iffat* of Patna (1926); Meerut's *Khatune Mashriq* (1929) etc.<sup>31</sup>

The weekly *Tahzeebe Niswan*<sup>32</sup> was published in Lahore and on its front page it was written - the first Janana newspaper in India and Darulishaat Punjab, Lahore. Mohtarma Mohammadi Begum Sahiba, with the help of Mumtaz Ali, issued it in 1898 for the benefit of girls. It earned a lot of fame under the editorship of Mohammadi Begum, but she died in 1908. Later it started being published from Delhi and continued to be published till the 1950s. Its approach was quite open. In 1904, a monthly magazine named *Khatoon* started in Aligarh under the editorship of Sheikh Abdullah. 'All It played an important role in running the campaign of *'Talim Niswan'*<sup>33</sup> of 'India Mohammedan Educational Conference'. Played the role, but due to other commitments related to education, the people who brought out 'Khatoon' left it. Could be taken out only till 1914. In this, writing was done on women's issues and especially on their education. Women were given preference

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<sup>27</sup> "Kohinoor" on January 14, 1850.

<sup>28</sup> *Tahzibul Akhlaq* is a monthly magazine published by Aligarh Muslim University that was established in 1870 by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. The magazine is a key part of the university and is considered an image of Sir Syed's movement.

<sup>29</sup> *Nairang-e-Alam* was a poetic journal published by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad when he was 11 years old in 1899. Azad was a prolific writer and journalist who began his writing career at a young age.

<sup>30</sup> Syed Ahmed Dehlvi, a pioneer in women's education and rights, published *Akbar-un-Nisa* in 1887 from Delhi. This ground breaking journal marked a significant milestone as the first exclusively women's publication to emerge from North India. It served as a platform for women's voices, addressing issues related to education, social reforms, and gender equality.

<sup>31</sup> "Akbar-un-Nisa" in 1887.

<sup>32</sup> *Tehzeeb-e-Niswan* was a weekly magazine and newspaper for women that was published in Urdu from 1898 to 1949. It was founded by Sayyid Mumtaz Ali and his wife Muhammadi Begum and is considered a pioneering work on women's rights in Islam. The magazine's goals were to promote education and encourage women to write.

<sup>33</sup> "Tehzeeb-e-Niswan"-1898 to 1949.

among writers.<sup>34</sup>

The publication of *Ismat*<sup>35</sup> started in 1908 in Delhi its editor was Sheikh Mohammad Ikram and deputy editor was Begum Ikram. Later it started being published in Karachi. This phrase written on its cover is enough in itself - a monthly repository of pure thoughts, knowledge literary sources and useful information for respectable Indian wives. And this information was also given to everyone *Maalumaat Ka Jammua* which is organized once every English month under the patronage of Mushire Gham Allama Rashidul Khairi Mudajjala.<sup>36</sup>

Feminist standpoint theory states that, like other oppressed groups, women's social positions are not only the source of women's knowledge of themselves but that positions are also the source of knowledge of the rest of nature and social relations. This does not at all mean that women's experiences or their lives should be abstracted or generalized.<sup>37</sup> There is diversity among them which also comes to the fore in the works of *Kalame Niswan*.<sup>38</sup> Such a point of view becomes the basis for transcending those relations and taking political or social action. Feminist thinkers took this theory forward. Linking gender with class, they said that gender is also a form of social differentiation, and it is a form of subordination and leads to marginalization. People who are marginalized within the system that means women. They may have a stronger and fuller understanding of the structures of gender.

## Conclusion

The writings of Muslim women in Hindi literature during colonial India serve as a powerful testament to their intellectual and creative agency. These texts not only challenge the stereotype of Muslim women as passive and voiceless but also reveal the intricate ways in which they negotiated their identities within the constraints of colonial and patriarchal structures. By exploring themes of education, social reform, and personal freedom, these women writers contributed to the broader discourse on gender and community in colonial India. Their works illuminate the struggles and aspirations of a marginalized group, providing valuable insights into the social and cultural dynamics of the time. Moreover, they highlight the transformative potential of literature as a medium for self-expression and social critique.

In revisiting these voices, contemporary scholars can uncover a rich and diverse

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<sup>34</sup> Huma Khan, *Kalam-e-Niswan — Anthology of Muslim Women's Writings*, (Delhi: Nirantar Publication, 2013), 14.

<sup>35</sup> Founded in Delhi in 1908 by Sheikh Muhammad Ikram and his wife, *Ismat* was a monthly Urdu magazine. It quickly established itself as a leading publication in the Urdu language, making it one of the oldest and most widely read periodicals of its kind in colonial India.

<sup>36</sup> *Ismat* (1908) by Sheikh Muhammad Ikram.

<sup>37</sup> Nirantar, *Gender and Education Reader (Second edition)*, (Delhi: Nirantar, 2011), 13.

<sup>38</sup> Huma Khan, *Kalam-e-Niswan*, 14.

literary heritage that has long been overshadowed by mainstream narratives. This exploration not only honours the contributions of Muslim women writers but also challenges us to rethink the canon of Hindi literature and the historical narratives of colonial India. In doing so, it ensures that their stories, once veiled by the dominant discourses of their time, are unveiled and given the recognition they deserve. On the completion of five decades of independence, women in Muslim communities face considerable challenges as citizens of India and as members of India's largest minority. Their poor socio-economic status reflects a lack of social opportunity which, though not a feature exclusive to Muslim women, is exacerbated by their marginal status within an overall context of social disadvantage for most Indian women but no doubt contributions of Muslim women Writers in Hindi literature is remarkable part of literature and history.

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