CONCLUSION

The above survey of the Women’s Urdu journals and its analytical study in the first half of the 20th century highlighted the significant role of the Indian women in various spheres of life like educational, religious, political, social and cultural etc.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century the deplorable and oppressive condition of Indian women which was due to their narrow mindedness and conservatism of Indian women in general and Muslim women in particular was a challenging issue of the time.

Though the Christian Missionaries took interest in the education of girls and a girls’ school was started for the first time at Bombay in 1824 A.D. The Hunter Commission too emphasized the need for female education in 1881. The Calcutta, Bombay and Madras Universities did not permit admission to women upto 1875. After 1882, girls were allowed to go for higher education, but the condition of North Indian women was quite different.

However, the speeches, discourses and the role of Print media and the organization of exhibitions, formation of anjuman and ladies participation in conferences played a constructive role in changing their marginalised condition which was due to ignorance of education and strict Purdah system (veiling). These were the two pressing issues of the early twentieth century.

Initially, women’s interest and participation in various activities was motivated by organizing exhibitions at different places such as Bombay, Lucknow, Aligarh, Amritsar, Allahabad, Nagpur etc. In 1904, the Female Educational Section of Muhammadan Educational Conference decided to organize ladies exhibitions annually to show the creativity of women by displaying various handicrafts.

Further in order to create awareness about their rights and duties, various social and educational reform associations (Anjuman) were formed at many places in North India such as Shahjahanpur, Bareilly, Kanpur, Roorkee, Lahore, Punjab etc and many women related issues like their education, plan for starting the girls’ schools, fund raising activities etc were discussed. Later on the formation of anjuman in various places of North India influenced the women and they began to participate in
Tahrik Darul Khawateen which was organized at many places like Roorkee, Bareilly, Aligarh, Bhopal, Agra and Meerut etc. It gave a momentum to female education movement.

The ladies Conference of Anjuman-i-Khawateen-i-Islam (AKI) founded by Sultan Jahan Begum of Bhopal at Aligarh in 1914. The other sessions of this conference were organized at Delhi, Meerut, Lahore, Bhopal, Calcutta, Agra, Malkapur, Subah Berar, Pune and Hyderabad. The main purpose behind the formation of AKI was to promote women’s education and their rights.

In 1928, Anjuman-i-Khawateen-i-Hind (AKH) was formed and held its session at Delhi. In this session, Lady Arun strongly advocated the need of women’s education for their empowerment in society and Begum of Bhopal particularly supported the Sarda Bill in legislature to raise the legal age of marriage for the girls and the matter of Purdah. The Lahore session meeting of AKH was held in 1931 under the Chairperson of lady Abdul Qadir. This session emphasized the need to improve the system of women’s education in schools, training colleges and universities.

However, in 1931 the Khawateen Asia ki Conference (KAC) was held at on a large scale in which women delegates from outside India such as Iran, China, Japan, Afghanistan and Ceylon attended the conference. The main resolution passed in this conference were regarding equal status for women through equal opportunities, equal education, rights of property, divorce, adult franchise, slavery of women and children, labour problems etc.

During the last decade of nineteenth century some ashrāf families (noble families) in North India came forward and took up the cause of the above two challenging issues which were the main obstacles in the progress of women segment of society.

The gifted visionary Sir Syed Ahmad Khan through his newspaper Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq and Aligarh Institute Gazette had created a favourable platform for men’s education. According to him, at first the priority should be given to male members, after that the ground will be automatically prepared for female education. It is a wrong impression that Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of M.A.O College was against female education.
Among the most prominent personalities of North India who took up this agenda were Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah of Aligarh, Maulvi Syed Karamat Husain of Lucknow, Syed Mumtaz Ali of Lahore, Abdul Haq Abbas of Jalandhar, Maulvi Mahboob Alam of Lahore, Mian Shah Din and Begum Muhammad Shafi of Lahore etc. Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum Bhopal gave whole-hearted support in this difficult task. Their untiring efforts to solve the problem of illiteracy are worth mentioning. Initially, they started education at their homes through lady tutoresses then the small girls' schools were opened and the girls used to come to schools in palanquins due to Purdah system. The next step was the opening of boarding houses where all the arrangements were made by the women of ashrāf families. Begum Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah better known as 'Āla Bi herself looked after the functioning of the school and boarding house at Aligarh. In this way the first seeds of girls' education were sown in North India with the establishment of a girls' school at Aligarh which progressed in due course and elevated as a Women's College in 1936.

With the passage of time, many girls' schools opened at different parts of North India like Saghir Fatima Girls' School by Saeed Ahmad Marharwi at Agra in 1918, Taleem-gah-e-Niswan by Begum Inam Habibullah at Lucknow in 1929, Hamidia Girls' Primary School by Begum Khursheed Khwaja at Allahabad in 1932, Khurshed Girls' School by Nawab Sir Raza Ali Khan at Rampur in 1932, Islamia Women's College by Fatima Begum at Lahore in 1939, Lady Hardinge Medical College by Lady Hardinge at Delhi in 1916.

The opening of girls' schools in North India not only created educational awakening among Indian women but it also raised social consciousness among them. Thus, the women became able to understand their legal social rights regarding marriage, polygamy, child-marriage, Inheritance, Mehr, divorce, Khulá etc and their role and responsibilities towards their family as dutiful mothers, wives and an individual. The new approaches of women towards health and hygiene were also noticed at that time. Some health-guide based on western pattern of treatment such as Mufid-e-Niswan, Tandurusti Hazrat Naimat by Zuhra Faizi, Sehat-un-Nisa and Muhafiz-ul-Sibyan by Azizuddin etc were published in Urdu language which make them aware about their physical fitness. It also developed among them the sense of proper dress and costumes. So, that they could maintain their modesty and dignity in society.
The challenging social scenario also increased the moral and mental level of women due to which they became conscious about their many fold rights and duties and unhealthy practices of the society which was a hinderance towards their advancement.

Some customs which were considered as financial burden on the family were practiced like Bakher (distribution of coins at the time of bride’s rukshati), Fateha Soyam or Tija (Third day of the death, chana or grain distributed among children), Mâyûn (Before marriage the girl sits in a separate room), Chauthi (the bride’s first visit to parents house and the play with fresh and dry fruits), Nath is Rasm (custom of Nose ring), Jahez (dowry) etc. There are a few other customs like Moonchhon ka koonda, Naumas, Gode Bharai, Kheer Chatai, Kaan Chhedan etc on which considerable amount was spent.

Among the social customs Sati was also prevalent at that time. About the celebration Bismillah Khwani was an important ceremony which practiced in Muslim family. The other important ceremonies were Id-ul-Fitr, Shab-e-Barat (on the night of fourteen Shaban), Eid Milad-un-Nabi (Birthday of Prophet Muhammad) etc. Apart from mourning in the month of Muharram some new practices were also introduced (details of the customs are given in chapter 7).

Some of the noble ashraf ladies took keen interest in writing editorials, speeches, discourse and proceedings of the conferences in the journals which played an inspiring role in changing their social outlook. Some of the prominent editors, writers and contributors belonged to the ashraf families like Begum Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, Muhammadi Begum, Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum of Bhopal, Abru Begum, Nafees Dulhan, Mrs. Khamosh, Fatima Begum, Khadija Ferozuddin and many others expressed their views in Urdu Journals.

The women related Urdu journals are Tahzib-un-Niswan, Khâtoon, Purdah Nashin, Ismat, Ustani, Sharif-Bibi, Payam-i-Ummid, Saheli, Sar Taj, Noor Jahan (Amritsar, Lahore), Haram, Khatun-i-Mashraq, Niswani Duniya, Hareem, Muslima, Masturat, Zeb-un-Nisa, Rahbar-i-Niswan, Sada-i-Niswan, Awaz-i-Niswan, Anis-i-Niswan, Haya, Sohag, and Naheed. All these women’s Urdu journals not only mid set the Indian women in the first half of the twentieth century but also prepared the ground for empowerment of women in different walks of life.
There were some daughters of *ashrāf* families in North India who contributed remarkably in professional field. The daughter of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, Khatun Jahan got M.A degree from England and Mumtaz Jahan received her post-graduate degree from Isabella Thoburn College of Lucknow University, became the principal of Abdullah Girls’ college at Aligarh. The eldest daughter Raheed Jahan done her Medical degree from lady Hardinge Medical college of Delhi and became a doctor. She was also a social activist.

The daughters of Abdul Haq Abbas, named Humaira and Zeenut served as the principal of *Madrasat-ul-Banat* and later she became the editor of journal ‘*Muslima*’.

However, the educated women too contributed in the field of journalism, wrote books, poetry and novels etc. Muhammadi Begum, wife of Syed Mumtaz Ali, and the editor of Urdu journals *Tahzib-un-Niswan* also wrote novels, short-stories, recipe books, manuals on house-keeping etc. Fatima Begum, the daughter of Maulvi Mahboob Alam, became the editor of women’s Urdu journal *Sharif Bibi*, Khadija Ferozuddin, the principal of Women’s College, Amritsar, got the doctorate degree from Punjab University, edited the journal *Saheli*, Begum Muhammad Ikram, the wife of Shaikh Muhammad Ikram of Delhi too involved in the editorship of journal *Anis-i-Niswan*. Another well-known lady from Lahore was Sughra Humayun Mirza, wife of renowned barrister of Bihar, editor of the journal *Zeb-un-Nisa*.

The two prominent women fiction writers and Urdu novelists were Nazr Sajjad Hyder and Ismat Chughtai. Another talented lady Atiya Faizi made significant contribution as an artist in Indian classical Music wrote book on Melodies entitled ‘*The Music of India*’. She was the first Indian Muslim Women who went abroad for higher education and received scholarship.

In the field of information and broadcasting, the names of Begum Jahan Ara Shahnawaz, daughter of Mian Muhammad Shafi and Begum Khursheed Jahan, daughter of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah are note worthy.

Said Ahmad Begum Dehlavi was interested in commercial enterprise and she designed the *Turkish style Burqa* and opened a ladies store at Delhi.

Side by side, the wave of female education also made progress in some distance areas of the South also like Calcutta, Bombay and Hyderabad etc. Khujista Akhtar Bano Suhrawardy of Calcutta became the first principal of the *Dhaka*
Madrasah and her niece Shaikh Akhtar Banu Suhrawardy got Ph.D degree from London University.

The social emancipation of women in early twentieth century also led them to involve in politics and now the women began to participate in National Movement.

One of the courageous lady who actively involved in Khilafat movement was Bi Amman (1852-1924), also known as Abadi Banu Begum, mother of Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali. Although she received only elementary education but showed her farsightedness in educating her children.

During the time of Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movement, she addressed many meetings, collected funds for it and gave anti-British speeches for the achievement of Swaraj. Not only that, she also encouraged her sons when they were in jail during the war period. The daughter-in-law of Bi-Amman named Amjadi Begum (1885-1947) better known as Begum Muhammad Ali, also joined hand with Bi-Amman and delivered speeches at many places.

Nishat Begum (1885-1937), the women of high calibre was the wife of famous Urdu Poet and freedom fighter Hasrat Mohani. She joined politics after the custody of her husband, conversed with him through letter writing and continued her husband’s political work despite of great financial hardships. Her role in Swadeshi Movement was remarkable. She opened Mohani Swadeshi Store at Russelgang in 1913 to promote the purchase of Swadeshi items and also travelled many places to popularize the movement. She was one of the Muslim women members of women’s Indian Association (1917) who met Montagu for the demand of women’s franchise.

The dynamic lady Atiya Faizi (1887-1967) played an important role for the emancipation of Muslim women. In the meeting of MEC in 1924, when the women’s entry was banned, she raised protest against it and went to Delhi from Bombay. At first she gave her speeches from behind the curtain but when the presiding officer forced her to speak from the podium, she came on the stage unveiled and gave her speech.

Zahida Khatun Sherwani (1894-1922), daughter of Nawab Muzammilullah Khan Sherwani of Aligarh wrote various nazm, poetry during the Balkan war of 1911-13 for raising fund to support the war victim of Turkish soldiers.
The brave Muslim ladies of Punjab who participated in Muslim League was Begum Mian Muhammad Shafi, her daughter Jahan Ara Shahnawaz (1896-1979) founded a women’s branch in Muslim league. She also represented Indian women in first and third session of Round Table Conference which held at London.

In 1920, Sultan Jahan Begum of Bhopal (1901-1926) became the first women Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University. She not only worked for the promotion of female education but also for their rights. She visited many European Countries, attended the coronation ceremonies of British officers. She raised her voice for the political rights of Indian Muslim women and claimed for women’s suffrage.

There is no doubt the thinking of the people during the last decade of the nineteenth century was so clouded by traditional, conservative and habitual values, that they forget the difference between respecting their culture values and were quite ignorant about their rights and duties. It was at this juncture that education played a very significant role in bringing changes in their social outlook. Due to educational awakening some substantial progress was made in eliminating inequalities between men and women in matter of education, employment, social, religious and political rights, industrialization, urbanization, spreading of education and social movements, were some of the important aspects of change which affected the status of women in various ways. Education has been considered as the major instrument for raising the status of women.

We can say that education has played a very important role in redefining the social status of women in our country and now a day they are not only as home makers but also as professionals who manage their homes as well as professional duties with ease.

To conclude, it can be said that these women’s Urdu journals are not only informative and inspiring but unique in the sense that it keeps the readers engaged by shifting from flashbacks of the past to present.

Thus, these Women’s Urdu Journals may be considered as ‘a vanguard of social awareness in Northern India during first half of the twentieth century’.