WOMEN'S URDU JOURNALS: A VANGUARD OF SOCIAL AWARENESS IN NORTHERN INDIA DURING FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The study of the present thesis entitled ‘Women’s Urdu Journals: a vanguard of social awareness in Northern India during first half of the twentieth century’ is an important source of information to know about their early deplorable condition, transitional phase and the efforts of the ashrāf (noble) families which subsequently changed their social status and created in them a feeling to realize the importance of education in the day to day life.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the great social reformer Sir Syed Ahmad Khan took up the issue of male education through Print media and he started the newspaper Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq and Aligarh Institute Gazette. However, the subject of female education had not received the same attention. At that time, the condition of women in general and Muslim in particular was marginalised due to their ignorance of education and backwardness in society. The Purdah system (veiling) was the main obstacle in the path of women’s emancipation in society.

The Vernacular journals played the most challenging role to spread educational awakening and social consciousness among women. In late 19th century, the emergence of Indian Vernaculars such as the Bengali journals, Antahpur and Bamabodhini Patrika led the way. However, in North India the reception of women’s Urdu journals among the Sharif (noble) Muslim families played the most pivotal role to spread education and social awareness among women.

The first women’s Urdu journal Akhbar-un-Nisa (started in 1887) by Syed Ahmad Dehlavi inspired the women to enter in the field of journalism and the women began to participate in this journalistic venture in early twentieth century. Thus, journals became the media through which the women conveyed their ideas behind the veils and faced the new challenges of their life.

In the Present thesis, I have come across mainly two different types of journals:
a) Women’s journals which were started by women editors and

b) Journals which were started by men and highlighted women related issues.

The following women’s Urdu journals of North India which are available have been consulted such as *Tahzib-un-Niswan* (Lahore), *Khatoon* (Aligarh), *Purdah-Nashin* (Agra), *Ismat* (Delhi), *Ustani* (Delhi), *Sharif-Bibi* (Lahore), *Payam-i-Ummid* (Allahabad), *Sahehi* (Amritsar/Lahore), *Sar Taj* (Lahore), *Noor Jahan* (Amritsar, Lahore), *Haram* (Peelibhit), *Khatun-i-Mashriq* (Meerut), *Niswani Duniya* (Delhi), *Hareem* (Lucknow), *Muslima* (Jalandhar), *Masturat* (Kanpur), *Rahbar-i-Niswan* (Delhi), *Zeb-un-Nisa* (Lahore), *Sada-i-Niswan* (Delhi), *Awaz-i-Niswan* (Delhi), *Anis-i-Niswan* (Delhi), *Hayat* (Lucknow), *Sohag* (Lahore) and *Naheed* (Rampur).

All these journals discussed the multi-dimensional approaches of women’s life such as women’s education, Purdah system, formation of women’s anjuman and ladies participation in conferences, their rights and duties in Islamic framework, condition of women in foreign countries.

Besides this, the journals also gives practical information about health, childcare, dress and costumes, embroidery patterns, recipes, house-keeping information, manners and etiquette etc. It also highlights the social customs and celebrations which were prevalent at that time.

The Present thesis comprises the following seven chapters, the first chapter deals with the history of Urdu journalism and its social scenario which prepared the ground for women’s entry in this field.

Second chapter highlights the marginalised condition of women which began to change through the efforts of Sharif Muslim families of North India.

The third chapter discusses the struggle and the early efforts of pioneer Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah and his supporters.

Fourth chapter gives an idea of various anjuman which were formed at many places.

Fifth chapter is based on women’s participation in conferences which were held at different parts of North India.

Sixth chapter comprises the efforts of the noble families like Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, Syed Mumtaz Ali, Justice Syed Karamat Husain and other supporters like Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum of Bhopal etc who gave their wholehearted support to women in creating educational awakening through opening girls’ schools at different places like Aligarh, Lucknow, Jalandhar, Allahabad etc.
The seventh and last chapter fulfills the aims and objectives of women’s Urdu journals in creating social awareness in different walks of life, social, religious, political, educational and empowered them for future progress.

To conclude, it can be said that these women’s Urdu journals are not only important but gives us interesting and valuable informations about various issues of women’s life like education, Purdah etc in private and public life. Due to educational awakening and social awareness, they became empowered in society and played a leading role in politics also.