Volume 16 2023
Journal of the Department of English
Vidyasagar University Midnapore-721102 WB

Muslim Women at the Crossroads between Tradition and Modernity in Colonial India: A Study of Zeenuth Futehally's *Zohra*

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Abstract

In colonial India, the tradition–modernity debate and the rise of nationalism were integrally connected to the women's question, and the idea of womanhood underwent significant changes during this period in the country. However, it is difficult to track down how the concept of womanhood was perceived in the Muslim community in colonial India for more than one reason. First, Muslim women were excluded from the rhetoric of colonial modernity that was brought in by the upper-caste Hindu nationalists. Secondly, the emergence of religion-based nationalism, the Pakistan movement, and the sectarian politics around it complicated the issues of modernity vis-à-vis the Muslim women question. My article will explore how the idea of womanhood was formed in Muslim society against the backdrop of the rise of modernity in colonial India and how the emergence of nationalism and the tradition–modernity divide affected Muslim women's condition through a critical reading of Zeenuth Futehally's novel *Zohra* (1951). It will look into the position of Muslim women in the debate over the issue of modernisation and emancipation of women among traditionalists, modernists, nationalists, separatists, and colonialists in colonial India individually with particular reference to the select novel.

Keywords: tradition, modernity, nationalism, colonial India, Muslim, women

Introduction

The concept of modernity was introduced in India by the British colonial system in the first half of the nineteenth century. The process of reforming and modernising the country started with the advent of Western thoughts and liberal ideas along with Western cultural practices. However, soon after its arrival, the idea of modernity took a different form in India from that in the West. In India, it was appropriated by the revivalist-nationalists in their own way in order to assert the distinctiveness of their culture. They added some native religio-cultural elements and indigenous traditions to the foreign idea of modernity. Consequently, the concept of modernity was nativised, and in the project of nationalising and Indianising the idea of modernity, it was women who had to bear the responsibility of preserving Indian traditions. In colonial India, issues of modernity and

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tradition and the rise of nationalism were thus integrally connected to the women's question, and the idea of womanhood underwent significant changes during this period.

With the arrival of Western modernity in India, the process of modernising women and reforming their conditions was initiated by the English-educated native social reformers. On the other hand, the beginning of the nationalist movement motivated the Indian revivalist-nationalists "to defend everything traditional and all attempts to change customs and lifestyles began to be seen as the aping of Western manners and were thereby regarded with suspicion" (Chatterjee 116). At this juncture, the nationalists decided to modernise both the country and its women through the assertion of Indian traditions and "national" culture. Indian women thus became the site where the two contrasting ideas, tradition and modernity, coexisted and often clashed with each other. This cohabitation of and conflict between tradition and modernity were notably visible in the feminised Goddess-centric or the mother-centric nationalist rhetoric in colonial India. In this nationalistic imagining, India was personified as the *Bharatmata* or mother Goddess[1], "the most recent and most sacred deity in Hindu pantheon" (T. Sarkar 251). After the feminisation of nationalist discourse, the emancipation of women and their liberation from *Andarmahal* (inner courtyard) can be observed. At this point, the concept of "new woman" or "ideal Indian woman" also emerged by which the process of modernising the tradition or traditionalising modernity got a fresh momentum.

However, the concept of colonial modernity in India and the newly emerged Goddess-centric nationalism did not include Muslim women (and also domestic servants and lower-class women). It is because of this politics of exclusion that it was difficult to locate Muslim women in the modernist-nationalist discourse in colonial India. This is the reason that Muslim community of colonial India couldn't identify themselves with the newly introduced idea of modernity which was mainly constructed by the upper-caste Hindu intellectual nationalists. Again, so far as Indian nationalism and the religion question implied in it are concerned, the Muslim intellectuals did not speak unanimously on it. Differences and disparities were very much there in the Muslim community in regard to their ideological strands and political positions during the nationalist movement. The rise of the Pakistan Movement and the sectarian politics around was one of the reasons behind ideological disparities in the Muslim community. Whereas one group of Muslim people stood for a secular unified India, the other demanded a separate state for the Muslims. In addition to this, some Muslims were "narrow-minded traditionalists", some "enchanted modernists", "liberals", "secular humanists" and some took the path in between (M. Sarkar 98). Each one of them had their own opinion on womanhood, tradition, and modernity.

However, in this conundrum, Muslim women found themselves in a very difficult situation because it was not easy for them to decide who speak on their behalf and what version of womanhood and modernity they should follow. Given this situation, it would be interesting to look into how their womanhood was shaped in colonial India and how the dichotomy between tradition and modernity was reflected in their lives. Zeenuth Futehally fictionally represents all these issues and concerns in her novel *Zohra* (1951). This article explores how the idea of womanhood in the Muslim community in colonial India was constructed against the backdrop of modernity in undivided India and how the rise of nationalism and the tradition/modernity divide shaped Muslim women's lives through a critical reading of the said novel. It looks into the position of Muslim

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women in the conflicts among traditionalists, modernists, nationalists, separatists, and colonialists in colonial India.

Zeenuth Futehally's anglophone fiction *Zohra*[2] is about a girl named Zohra who is brought up within the folds of *Purdah* and behind *Zenana* in an upper-class aristocratic Muslim household in the early 20th century Hyderabad. This novel, though published in independent India in 1951, is set in the 1930s and 40s of colonial India. It is written with the purpose of showing the Muslim women's confined lives behind the *Zenana* and *Purdah* and their gradual awakening to modernity. The first part of the novel represents the condition of Muslim women like Zohra in extreme segregation and in the "world of dignity and decorum, scents and sherbets, Nawabs and nautch girls"[3]. The later part of the novel explores the condition of Muslim women at a time when the idea of modern India was emerging, and the nationalist movement simultaneously with the Pakistan movement was at its peak. In its portrayal of the tradition-modernity interface in the context of rising nationalism through the characters like Hamid, Bashir, Sofia, Siraj, and Zohra the novel shows how the Muslim women were at the crossroads between tradition and modernity in colonial India.

Project of Modernisation and Complexities Faced by Muslim Women

While discussing the woman question in nineteenth-century India, Forbes observes that "how women can be modernized" was the most important question in the period (Forbes 12). As it has already been mentioned, the process of modernising women in colonial India was mainly carried out by the English-educated native intelligentsia or the *Bhadralok*[4]. The gradual emancipation of the "second sex" and its growing recognition in Victorian England[5] influenced the new intellectuals in India to think about reforming women's condition. As a part of the reformation, they started the process of educating women and of annihilating age-old "barbaric" customs imposed upon women in the name of religion. Now, if we focus on the formation of the revivalist-reformist or the *Bhadralok* class in the Muslim world, it can be observed that the Muslim community was quite reluctant to accept English education and Western modernity because of their memory related to crusade and their fear of conversion to Christianity. They showed an indignant attitude towards the new learning process and the concept of "progress". As a consequence, the Muslim community remained outside the revivalist-reformist class[6]. Now the question arises: who would think about the emancipation of Muslim women if there were no English-educated revivalists in the Muslim community in colonial India? Actually, in the late nineteenth century, a small part of the Muslim community started to respond to English education to become a part of the *Bhadralok* community[7]. Later these newly emerged English-educated *Nabya-Musolman* (New Muslims) started to think about the deliverance and amelioration of the status of women in their community[8]. In Futehally's novel, an embodiment of English-educated intellectuals, who thought about transforming women's situation, can be identified in the character of Zohra's husband Bashir, a professor with a Ph.D. in Physics from a foreign university, and in her brother-in-law, Hamid, a freedom fighter engaged in Gandhian movements. Bashir was against the customs of gender segregation, veiling women behind *Purdah* and barring women from education. Hamid was the face of liberal, secular, and modern India.

With the rise of the class of *Nabya-Musolman* in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, the issues of women's emancipation and education started to be contested in the Muslim community, particularly among the educated members of the community. By

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this time, these "enchanted modernists" (*Mohamugdha Adhunik*) started taking initiative for implementing institutionalised education for Muslim women and for taking them out of *Purdah* in order to raise them "to the level of achievement and progress of the advanced Hindu community" (Amin 32). But the traditionalists in Muslim Society opposed this reformation programme. Defending the Muslim community's strict adherence to the practices of *Purdah* and *Aboradh* (the actual physical confinement of women within the home), they started to regard women's liberation from these customs as a "non-religious" and blasphemous act. These conservatives or traditionalists (this is how they are addressed by scholars)[9] denounced the modernists' idea of school education for women. They were in favour of giving religious and moral education to their women in *Zenana* mode and keeping them behind the veils. Thus, the issue of women's emancipation became a matter of constant debate between these two groups. In Futehally's novel, while Zohra's in-laws belong to the Modernists group, her maternal home tried to retain the traditional orthodox values. Zohra was brought up behind the big walls of *Zenana* and *Purdah* by her conservative parents. Even her movement within the garden of *Zenana* was prohibited by her mother and her old nurse Unnie: "But in our days, girls never entered the outer garden, not even it was high-walled. What is *Zenana* courtyard for?" (2). Zohra had to listen to the *Sayari Majlish* (poetry recitation event) through the holes of walls in her home. On the contrary, women in the house of Zohra's husband were already emancipated and taken out of *Purdah*. After her marriage, she was exposed to a free life without *Purdah*, and she was allowed to interact with the *Nan-Maharam* males[10]. Zohra was also permitted to go on shopping and mingle freely with the outside world. But the traditionalists–modernists divide regarding women's reformation created a social whirlwind within the community, and caught in this debate women like Zohra became confused in the face of conflicting opinions. In this connection, it is important to quote Zohra's reaction to her exposure to a "new" world: "From a life of seclusion, I have been thrust into a world utterly new and bewildering to me" (107).

Now, let us throw some light on the condition of Muslim women in the whirlwind born out of the debate between traditionalists and modernists in detail. In that case, the first issue we should take into consideration is education, which was as Amin (1996) observes, "the first mediator linking the private and public spheres for women during that time" (207). If we take the case of Bengal in particular, it can be observed that the traditionalist periodicals like *Mohammadi*, *Al-Eslam*, *Islam Procharak* opposed the education of Muslim women in schools and their exposure to the public world beyond *Purdah* and *Zenana* (Rahaman 2014). In the 1920s when there was considerable emancipation for women in the Hindu and *Brahmo*[11] households, educated Muslim women like Fazitulnesa[12] who went to London for higher education faced backlash and humiliation at the hands of the traditionalists of her own community[13]. As we see in Futehally's novel, the mode of education Zohra was educated in is the *Antapur-Shiksha*, the *Zenana* mode of education. She was taught Urdu, Persian, and a little bit of English. The debate over the curriculum and form of women's education between the traditionalists and modernists in the then society is reflected in the conversation between her parents. While Zohra's interest in English was completely discarded by her mother, her father, being a practical person, unwillingly supported it as "English is essential these days" to find a Western-educated groom (11). Her mother and the maid of the house, Unnie continuously discouraged her habit of reading and compared that to "chewing

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steel nuggets” (2). But later when she was married to an English-educated elite, she was expected to behave like an “emancipated” woman of other communities (like Hindu and *Brahmo* women). Thus, these continuous changes and transformations due to the traditionalist/modernist divide made the lives of women like Zohra “bewildering”, and as Menon has observed, they were “crushed between the two worlds”[14]. Unnie's opening rhetorical question “What can we do with these girls today?” reflects the opposing responses of the society to women’s status in colonial India (1).

Thus, it is observed that the traditionalists and modernists in colonial India tried to define womanhood differently, and in that situation lives of Muslim women became the site of constant tensions between tradition and modernity. The rise of nationalism at that juncture complicated the situation more for Indian women, particularly for Muslim women. The next section will discuss how the process of modernisation of Muslim women was going in the context of the rise of nationalism in the country.

Nationalism, Modernity and Muslim Women

Before going into the question of Muslim women, it is important to look into how the process of modernising women, in general, was carried out in the context of rising nationalism in India. Chatterjee (1993) has rightly observed that the resolution of women’s questions in the Indian nationalist context was formulated by generating a dichotomy between the spiritual and the material and between home (*Ghar*) and the world (*Bahir*). In the nationalist discourse, India was imagined as the heterosexual “domestic genealogies” where women were placed in the “spiritual” or “inner” domain and men in the “material”, the outer world (Chatterjee 126). In this dichotomous relationship, while men were supposed to keep pace with the Western world in organizing their material lives with superior techniques borrowed from the West, women were to uphold India’s distinctive self-identity and uniqueness of their national culture. This “material/spiritual” dichotomy was introduced to make the European expansionists see how they had failed to colonise their culture and identity (Chatterjee 1993). This *Ghar–Bahir* dichotomy led to the propagation (but only in a phased manner) of the nationalist idea of the “new woman” who was to be modern, but different from the Western women as they would also have to display the signs of “national” traditions (Chatterjee 1993). It is due to this dichotomy that Indian womanhood is the site of conflict between tradition and modernity. Actually, this construction of “new woman”[15] or “ideal Indian woman” was not the dismissal of modernity but rather an attempt to make modernity consistent with the nationalist project. While commenting on Chatterjee’s concept of “new woman” or “ideal modern Indian woman”, Sinha (2000) observes that through the construction of new women (modern but traditional women) the nationalists were able to create both a subjective and objective position of women in Indian nationalist discourse (625). Chisti (2020) while commenting on Sinha’s observation adds:

> Nationalist leaders had to portray women as symbol (symbol of Indian tradition and values) as well as the activist in the national movement to negate the Britisher’s “civilizing mission”. The construction of the concept of “New Women” or “Modern Indian Women” served the purpose. (4)

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In this connection, it should be noted that the "new women" or the "modern Indian women" became the primary focus of the militant nationalist movement in colonial India, and they were presented as the epitome of ideal womanhood.

As far as the position of Muslim women in the context of rising nationalism in colonial India is concerned, Chatterjee (1993) has not considered the case in his discussion of the resolution of Muslim women's questions in colonial India. The reason behind this exclusion is perhaps implied in the hegemonic construct of "national culture" as something "necessarily built upon the privileging of an essential tradition" of the majority community where the minorities, their culture, and tradition were neglected (Chatterjee 116). Now, the question arises whether the concept of "new woman" can be applied to Muslim women. Chisti (2020) while commenting on the construction of new women in Muslim society writes:

> If the concept of "New Woman" or "Modern Indian Woman" signify those women who discard *Purdah* or veil, travel in public conveyance, join political movements and even take employments, then the answer is very much affirmative (4).

In this novel *Zohra,* we see that Zohra is educated and can read novels. She talks politics, accompanies her husband to the Western land, and sets up a bookstore for the poor. Zohra conversed about Indian heritage and culture with her brother-in-law Hamid. She has profound knowledge of Vedic culture, Sufi mysticism, the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore, verses of Ghalib, cave paintings of Ajanta, Jataka tales, and the Mahanjedaro civilisation (Ahmed 2016). Keeping all these things in mind, Zohra can be considered the epitome of the nationalist concept of "new woman".

It is important to note here that when women, inspired by the ideals of modernisation and reformation started to behave like a "new woman" by going beyond their conventional roles, the so-called nationalist-modernists did not give them a free hand. They set a limit up to which the "modern women" could exercise their freedom. They were not allowed to cross the boundaries of traditional roles prescribed for them. Any deviation from the accepted norms would spoil the honour of their family. In *Zohra* the eponymous protagonist was allowed to set up a bookstore for the poor children and teach them. But when she failed to attend to her family in the evening because of her engagement in teaching, she was reminded of her duties at home by none other than her Western-educated husband. Thus, the new woman was simultaneously enabled and disabled at the same time, and to describe the condition of Zohra we can use Futtehally's (2004) opening remark about her: "swinging heedlessly" (1). She has been seen constantly "swinging heedlessly" between traditional customs and modern values (1).

This was how the women's question and issue of modernity in the context of rising nationalism in colonial India were resolved amidst the differing opinions of the traditionalist-nationalists, modernist-nationalists, and colonialists on the issues concerned. But in the case of Muslim women, the journey did not end here. The construction of new women in the Muslim world was primarily limited to upper-class, city-based privileged Muslims, and this change did not affect the Muslim community as widely as it did in the case of the Hindu community. Again, as it has already been mentioned, the emergence of Goddess-centric nationalism and the Pakistan movement complicated the Muslim women question in colonial India further. The next section focuses on this issue.

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The Emergence of Religion-based Nationalism, Modernity and Muslim Women

In late colonial India when the nationalist movement was at its peak, mother-centric or Goddess-centric nationalist discourse emerged. In this Goddess-centric (of course the Hindu Goddess) nationalist rhetoric, women were imagined as the demon slayer Durga or Kali. In order to save the nation from the claw of the "demon" British colonisers, women in colonial India came out of their *Andarmahal* and invaded the public spheres as companions of their male counterparts. Again, India was imagined as the *Bharatmata* or *Deshmata* (Motherland)[16] which was to be saved from the colonisers. The construction of the concept of "new woman", the emergence of the goddess-centric nationalist rhetoric, and Gandhi's arrival in the nationalist movement altogether embarked upon a new era when mass emancipation of women from *Andarmahal* to join the nationalist movement was observed. This is the reason that the noted scholars and social scientists[17] always linked women's liberation and awakening of feminist consciousness among women with the nationalist movement in colonial India. In the feminised nationalist discourse, we can see that religion (of course the religion of the majoritarian) and tradition are the main constituents. But Chaudhury (2012) thinks that this assertion of the tradition of the majority people in the mainstream nationalist discourse was not only to negate the Britishers' civilising mission but also to exclude the Muslims from its purview. Chaudhury (2012) writes:

> The harking back to the ancient Hindu past and the purported high status of women there of which forms a necessary trope of modern Indian historiography has to be located within this colonial state. This eulogy of a Hindu past was an assertion both against the colonial west and the Muslim other. (288)

So, we can see that it is difficult to find Muslim women in the mainstream feminised discourse of nationalism. Now, the question arises whether there was any mass women's liberation in the Muslim community of colonial India like that in the other community in the context of rising nationalism? If the construction of new women in the Muslim community was not as extensive as in other communities, can it be said that the issues like modernisation of women and the evolution of female consciousness in Muslim women were restricted among a particular section of people?

To find answers to the aforementioned questions, if we look at the Muslim world of colonial India, we can see that with the emergence of the Pakistan movement led by the Muslim League with the demand for a separate homeland, Muslim women were seen to abandon their *Purdah* and to come out of their *Zenana*. With the emergence of this two-nation theory, Muslim women in great numbers came forward to join the national movement[18]. According to Wilmer (1996), the narrative of modernization in the Muslim community was interwoven with the narrative of the Pakistan movement:

> Clearly, there were those in the League who thought that the cause could be best served by bringing women out of *Zenana* and onto the battlefield. This challenge to the existing notions of sexual territory was justified by the desperate times the community was experiencing, virtually a state of war in the eyes of many. For some Muslims in India this was a situation that called for a rapid acceleration of the process of social modernization (Wilmer 581-582).

It has to be mentioned here that during that time different forms of nationalism emerged: secular nationalism with a demand for a unified India, Hindu nationalism which insisted

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on creating India a *Hindu Rashtra* (a country for the Hindus), and the Pakistan movement with its separatist politics. Every Muslim Household was divided on the basis of their opinion on nationalism: some stood for Pakistan, but some for a unified secular India. These differences of opinion in a Muslim household are also reflected in Futehally's *Zohra*. In this novel, while Hamid, the brother-in-law of Zohra was among the supporters of secular nationalism, her husband stood in support of Pakistan. The discussion between Hamid and Bashir reflected the debate of that time over Pakistan and secular India in the Muslim community. Now the question arises of what the position of Muslim women was in this debate, discussion, and conflicting situation. In this context we can refer to Ahmed's (2016) observation on the issue: "an uneasy question takes shape around this discourse on Indian nationalism when we try to figure out the role ascribed to Zohra in it. She appears to be a mere spectator" (5**).** In this debate over nationalism, although Zohra inwardly took the side of Hamid and desired to see a unified India, she did not express her thoughts openly. Her silence is the manifestation of Muslim women's position as mute spectators in Indian nationalism. Although with the emergence of the Pakistan movement they were able to discard *Purdah* and be a part of the national movement, they did not find any freedom and agency in the true sense of the terms. As we see in the novel, Zohra was a great admirer of Gandhi, and she wanted to be a part of the Civil Disobedience Movement. But she could not gather the courage to tell her husband about her wish of joining the Civil Disobedience Movement as her husband supported the partition of India, and he was an anti-Gandhi man[19]. When Hamid left the house to join the Civil Disobedience Movement, Zohra accompanied her husband to Paris to find her liberation and mental peace far away from the land of the movement she wanted to participate.

With the rise of the Pakistan movement, Muslim women were seen actively participating in the freedom movement: "They wrote articles, mobilised support for the All-India Muslim League, held meetings … They were baton-charged, arrested or jailed" (Malik 11). In *Zohra*, Futehally does not give any hint about what would happen if the protagonist would have supported Pakistan. She has not thrown any light on the issue of whether Zohra would gather the courage or be allowed to join the national movement if she held an opinion on Indian nationalism similar to that of her husband. But through Futehally's portrayal of Zohra as a mute spectator in the nationalist debate of the time, it is clear that "the creation of Pakistan did not guarantee the extension of principles of autonomy and liberation to them" and that Muslim women had a limited role in nationalist movement (Malik 11). But Ahmed (2016) has observed that "such a limited role does not agree with the personality of Zohra" and considers her to be a rebel but a gentle one (183-184). Though she went to Paris with her husband to pull herself out of the slough of despair, she came back home alone and established a school for poor children. Zohra, the mother of two, was so engrossed in teaching those poor children that she used to neglect her own health in doing so. She even started to miss her evening prayers. Zohra perhaps was able to understand the hollowness of promises offered by the process of social modernisation and the construction of new women. She comprehended that the whole process of modernising women or liberating them was not about giving them agency but about producing good mothers, enlightened companions, and scientific housewives. This is the reason that she became desperately involved in doing social services to attain some agency in the social system. She was so desperate to transgress social conventions that she fell in love with her brother-in-law Hamid who was the

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embodiment of all her dreams, life's desire, idealistic love and spiritual communion untainted by physical desire. Ahmed (2016) has observed that "the reference to the "romantic interest" … is the sure sign of a betrayal ingrained in the nationalist discourse and meted out to Zohra and many others" (190).

Conclusion

Thus, it is observed that Muslim women were excluded from the mainstream rhetoric of nationalism and modernity due to their religious identity in colonial India. On the other hand, they had to face multiple layers of complexities in the path of their liberation and emancipation, even within their community. Futehally foregrounds what it is to be a Muslim and a Woman simultaneously in India. She has explored the conditions of Muslim women at the interface between tradition and modernity in colonial times. But she has not provided any philosophical or pragmatic solution to this issue of double subordination of Muslim women. She concludes her narrative on a note of ultimate despair: the death of Zohra. Futehally has perhaps used the death motif because "Death allows a movement to a place elsewhere, relieved of the baggage of inequality" (Menon 1666).

Notes

All references to the novel *Zohra* have been indicated with page number in parenthesis.

[1]In the feminine nationalist discourse, India was imagined as Draupodi at Kauravas court who has to be saved by Lord Krishna, sometimes as Durga and Kali as well. In this connection, the painting of *Bharatmata* by Abanindranath Tagore can be mentioned. *Bharatmata* was painted as the pale and tearful victim who "is in the hands of foreigners" and hence needed to be saved (T. Sarkar 251).

[2]*Zohra* written by Zeenuth Futehally was first published in 1951 by *Hind Kitab*, Bombay. But in 2004 a new edition of Zohra was published by Oxford University Press and this time "Dedication", "Forward", "Preface" and "Introduction to the First Edition of the book were added to the newly published edition of the book (Hai 2013).

[3]This is taken from K.P.S. Menon's introduction to the original edition of *Zohra*. The introduction was written on 14th August, 1950.

[4]*Bhadralok* was the Bengali term for the social group of some English-speaking natives living in urban areas and often described as the "new middle class" or as the "elites" for whom education and government jobs were the defining criteria of their eliteness in the mid-nineteenth century colonial India. For more details see Bhattacharya 2005.

[5]In Victorian England with the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837, a new model of femininity held considerable sway in England. The new model of femininity gave birth to the "Perfect lady" who used to be the educated new middle-class woman, wife, mother, helpmate, companion, mistress of the private sphere, and the "angel in the house". Amin (1996) writes: "The perfect lady as an ideal or stereotype soon had to make room for a new model, the "perfect women" or the "new woman" in colonial India" (83). For more information on the condition of women in Victorian England, see Hall 1979 and Beddoe 1987.

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[6]Due to the negligence and indifference to English education Muslims severely remained excluded from the colonial administrative and technical services. In 1869, in the three grades of assistant engineers there were fourteen Hindus and not one Muslim; among the sub-engineers and supervisors of the Public Works Department, twenty-four Hindus and one Muslim; in the office of Accountants, fifty Hindus and not one Muslim; in the Upper Subordinate Department, twenty-two Hindus and not one Muslim. For more information see Hunter 2002.

[7]Inspired by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and with the establishment of Aligarh College in 1875, Muslim community started to adopt Western English education. By the end of the nineteenth century, a considerable number of men, though it was small compared to its Hindu counterpart, were able to include themselves in the intellectual group and the class of professional gentry. By this time, one started to notice the presence of Muslim barristers, doctors, college teachers or Muslim civil servants in various sectors of British Government. Maaz writes: "The Muslim educated youths feel obliged to admire the ways of cultured, educated Hindus and imitate them. These Muslims crave to emulate Hindu "Babus" themselves" (cited in Amin 07). They were mainly known in their community as the New Muslims (*Nabya Musolman*). For some more information see Amin 1996.

[8]By the end of the nineteenth century, the newly emerged elites commenced a new movement centred on the reform of women's conditions. In 1896, a women's section was opened at the Mohammadan Educational conference. By this time various journals for Muslim women were produced such as *Tahzib-e-Nishan* by Mumtaz Ali, *Khatun* by Shaikh Abdullah. In 1906 Aligarh Zenana Madrassa was established. See Devji 2007.

[9]See Amin 1996 and M. Sarkar 2010.

[10]*Nan-Maharam* males are those whom a Muslim woman can marry.

[11]*Brahmos* were the followers of the *Brahmo Dharma*. In the place of the extremist view of Hindu religion which was mainly followed by the people in the village with age-old customs, the *Brahma Dharma* as the Unitarian interpretation of Vedantism and the pantheist liberal Ramkrishna-Vivekanda cult of Hinduism emerged as the two most acceptable religious creeds of the Bengali *Bhadralok* during the nineteenth century. See Bhattacharya 2005.

[12]Ms. Fazitulesa was the first Bengali Muslim woman who graduated from Bethune College in Mathematics.

[13]To congratulate Ms. Fazitulenesa, the chief editor of *Saugat* (a journal of a modernist group of contemporary Bengal) Md Nasiruddin arranged an inauguration ceremony. The founders and editors of the journal *Mohammadi* (journal of the orthodox group) found it an un-Islamic act because Muslim women should not discard the veil and should not study non-religious things that too in a foreign land. So, in order to stop the ceremony, the founders and editors of *Mohammadi* hatched a plan of the accident of Nasiruddin. See Rahaman 2014.

[14]See Note 3.

[15]In India the concept of "new woman" (*Bhadramahila* in another term) emerged in the nineteenth century when the process of educating women started. 'New women' were

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those women who were educated. These “new women” used to read novels, join public events, discuss politics, join political movements and even sometimes take employment. Without spoiling the feminine and spiritual virtues and inner domain, the “new woman” had to confer some changes upon the dress, food habits, religious observances, and social relations to keep pace with her materialistic, non-religious and modern husband outside the home. In order to keep her spiritual purity, she must not drink, eat, or smoke in the same way a man did. The “new woman” must observe religious rituals as men didn’t find much time for these “silly” things. She must maintain the whole household, friends, and relatives of her husband because her husband was not able to devote his time to these things. For details see Chatterjee 1993.

[16]In the nationalist discourses, India was imagined as not a piece of land, but as the mother. Sarkar (2001) comments: “It is abstracted from the people and personified as the Mother Goddess, the most recent and most sacred deity in the Hindu pantheon. The people, then, are not the “desh” itself but are the sons of the mother—detached from an imagined entity and put in a subordinate relation to it” (T. Sarkar 251).

[17]See T. Sarkar 2001.

[18]Pakistan movement was also considered a national movement because it also created resistance against the colonial force. Wilmer (1996) says, “The Pakistan movement was a peculiar case of a nationalist movement without a clearly defined nation to represent” (574).

[19]Here, it must be mentioned that there was plenty number of Muslim women who also responded to Gandhi’s call and joined the national movement with the vision of a secular and unified India. But they didn’t achieve any political position in the movement. Even the history of Muslims struggling for a unified India is systemically suppressed in India. Sarkar (2010) writes: “…a systematic marginalization of nationalist Muslims and their vision of a unified, secular India and, in time a near total obfuscation of their efforts in the struggle for independence from British colonialism” (M. Sarkar 152).

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