



LIVING PATRIOTISM: THE EXPERIENCE OF 'FREEDOM' AMONG THE MUSLIM WOMEN OF COLONIAL PUNJAB

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Abstract

This paper emerges from the historical neglect of documenting South Asian Muslim women's activism in the public sphere, particularly their groundbreaking role in the freedom movement of the country in the first four decades of the last century. Compared to several studies on purdah, marriage, divorce, inheritance, and similar other socio-economic roadblocks in Muslim women's onward movement, only a few studies are available on their political participation. This paper, drawing upon sources lost in archives and libraries, retrieves women's voices and actions and thus fills in gaps in the historical canon. For this study, the paper limits itself to the region of colonial Punjab where, breaching the barriers of social and cultural dogmatism, Muslim women marched in full public gaze to defy and challenge colonial hegemony to win freedom. The paper seeks to answer some queries. First, did this struggle for freedom succeed only in breaking colonial hegemony, or did it liberate women from the social shackles that had kept them under male bondage? Second, was women's political activism a onetime venture led by emotional upsurge, or did it create a lasting impression? In short, did women's political activism reshape their identity?

Keywords

Living patriotism, Muslim women, colonial Punjab, women & freedom movement, Muslim women's political activism