



## **BREAKING THE SILENCE: SOUTH ASIAN MUSLIM WOMEN BEGIN TO WRITE IN THE LATE 19<sup>th</sup> AND THE EARLY 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY**

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### **Abstract**

Women have been seen, understood, and defined through men writing about them since centuries. Texts authored by men not only defined women's roles to fit the frame designed by men but they also shaped women's dreams and aspirations according to men's perspectives about women. Also, these male writings muted women by usurping their right to speak for themselves. Thus, the attempt to know the women of the past as independent individuals with their own visions and identities is a challenging task. This paper aims at exploring how women viewed and defined themselves. Such an exercise allows us to form a comprehensive picture. To paint this picture of women's self-perception and reflection, inevitably we need to rely on women's writings, although they may be fewer in number compared to those of men. Some critics might even raise doubts about the quality or the originality of their works. This paper examines writings of women who wrote in the Urdu language at a time when reading and writing by women was highly dichotomic issue among the Muslim male elite, the majority of whom looked at women's education as a threat to their cultural norms and values.

### **Keywords**

Women's writings, Muslim women writers, colonial milieu & South Asian women, women challenging patriarchy