

Growth and Development of the Muslim Press in the Sub-Continent

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Abstract:

History of the journalism in the Sub-continent (Indo-Pak) goes back to the 11th century with Waqa-I-Navees (Newsmen) during the regime of Mahmood Ghaznavi. Waqa-I-Navees were appointed to keep the government well informed about all important happenings. Though, Sultans of Delhi were the first to establish the system on sound basis, yet it were the Mughals, who really worked hard to make it flourish. In the 19th century the Hindus were more advanced than the Muslims in almost every sphere of life. In the field of Journalism Hindus dominated the Indian press and propagated their cause. On the other hand the Muslims remained only followers to establish their press. Some Muslim Newspapers were pro Hindu. Thus there were a few Muslim newspapers that really represented the Indian Muslim's point of view. This paper will examine the efforts of the Muslims to establish their own Urdu / English press.

Modern Journalism started in the Sub-continent in early 19th century. First English newspaper in the Sub-continent was HICKEY BENGAL GAZETTE, which appeared in 1780 under the editorship of James Augustus Hickey-In 1818, James Silk followed Hickey, (1786-1855), who started publishing Calcutta journal. However its publication was ceased in 1823.⁽¹⁾

English did not become the court language till 1837. Muslims were generally against the adoption of this foreign language. This situation further violated their interest in the field of modern journalism, which was evident during the early period of the 19th century. Indian Muslims entered the journalism through Persian, Urdu and other vernacular language newspapers.

First Muslim newspaper THE DURBIN OF CALCUTTA appeared on July 14, 1849. The paper published a number of articles on the poor economic conditions of the Indian Muslims. For instance the paper wrote.

All sorts of employments are taken away from The Muhmmadans and given to the men of other races, especially to The Hindus.⁽²⁾

In the field of English Journalism, however, the name of Syed Muhammad Azeem of Lahore is worth mentioning for his THE LAHORE CHRONICLE, which was followed

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by PUNJABI, in the late 1850s. The Lahore Chronicle can hardly be regarded as Muslim newspaper, because it was under the supervision of the British officials and did not represent the Muslim point of view. Particularly the paper followed the government policies and blamed the Muslims to be responsible for the 1857 war against the British Rule. For example, the paper says; The Muhammadans, there is no shade of doubt, are at the bottom of the whole business (started the war against The British in 1857); they did not think to escape most severe punishments. They can never change their will as long as they are Mohammadans.⁽³⁾

Another influential Muslim newspaper THE ALIGARH INSTITUTE GAZETTE started in 1860 by Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898). It was not a newspaper for bringing news of everyday occurrences to its readers. It reflected Muslim sentiments and point of view on religious, social and political aspects of their lives. It was published both in, Urdu and English languages and carried news about the activities of the leaders of Aligarh Movement. The Aligarh Institute Gazette played a vital role in awakening of the Indians Muslims to demand separate electorate their separate identity according to Saleem Ahmad: The Aligarh Institute Gazette advised the Muslims of the sub-continent to boycott the forth-coming political reforms if it did not contain the principle of separate Muslim electorate.⁽⁴⁾

During the 2nd decade of the 20th century two more English newspapers supplemented the efforts of the Aligarh Institute Gazette. These newspapers were THE NEW-ERA, and THE INDIAN DAILY TELEGRAPH (IDT). The New-Era was started in 1916 from Luckhnow. Raja Ghulam Hussain (1882-1917), an old student of Aligarh Muslim College, owned it. He started his career as the Sub-editor of THE COMRADE. Ghulam Hussain was a journalist of first rank. He worked in IDT during 1915-1916. After that he started his own newspaper named THE NEW-ERA. He wrote many articles to create unity among the Muslims of Indo-Pak sub-continent. IDT was also published from Luckhnow. One of its editors was Edward Eament Long (d-1956). He had formerly worked for THE ECHO LONDON and THE DAILY EXPRESS OF LONDON. Later on, the paper became the property of Raja Muhammad-Ali-Muhammad Khan (1879-1931) of Mahmoodabad.⁽⁵⁾ The policy of the IDT was markedly different from that of the Lahore Chronicle. It was truly an Anglo Muslim newspaper when the moderate Hindu leader of the Congress Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915) began to support the Hindus agitation against the partition of Bengal and opposed Muslim demand for separate electorate, the IDT in many of its issues strongly condemned Gokhale's attitude.

In 1860, THE MUHAMMADAN OBSERVER, later on under the name The MUSLIM CHRONICLE (MC), appeared from Calcutta. However, its publication was ceased in 1905. As long as it lasted, it served the Muslim cause in a forceful way. Between 1896, and 1905, its columns were full of debates that went on among The Muslims with regard to the need of having a political party of their own. The Writers and contributors freely discussed as to what ailed the Muslims of the region in general and the Muslims of Bengal in Particular. The M.C. followed the policies of the supporter Aligarh Movement and played a distinguished role in publicizing the proceedings of

the Muslim educational conference. Although the paper was English weekly and the conference proceedings took place in Urdu, yet the M.C. published a daily supplement of the paper to disseminate information about the conference. On the death of Syed Ahmad, the M.C. observed in its issue of 15th December 1900.

The death of Syed Ahmad Khan has particularly left Muslims without A political leader. The feelings at the present moment are that the time has come when the Muslims should form a separate political party with a constitution that will be more suitable to cope with their particular difficulties. It is not yet prepared for action and has not yet cast its device. It waits for a more complete survey of the political phenomenon around.⁽⁶⁾

M.C. advised the Indian Muslims to form their own political organization which in 1906 became a reality when The Indian Muslims decided to form a Muslim political party namely THE ALL INDIA MUSLIM LEAGUE. After the formation of All India Muslim League, a new-era of Journalism started. The pro-muslim-League Press supported the two-nation theory and other policies of the League. As the M.C. was setting down towards the early years of the 20th century there was a rise of another English newspaper which filled the gap of M.C. THE MUSSALMAN published from Calcutta under the influence of its founder A. Rasool (1872-1916), and its editor Mujeeb-ur-Rehman. During its early years THE MUSSALMAN, was pro-Congress and pro-Urdu Bengali paper. The policy of the paper was appreciated by THE HINDUSTAN REVIEW which regarded its policies very liberal and progressive.⁽⁷⁾ Later on THE MUSSALMAN became the spokesman of the Indian Muslims and the All India Muslim League. The paper advised the Indian Muslims to take active part in the activities of the All India Muslim League. The paper regarded the Muslim League, the sole representative political organization of the Indian Muslims.⁽⁸⁾

Another Muslim newspaper from Bengal was THE COMRADE, of Maulana Muhammad Ali Johar (1878-1931), which started its publication in 1911, from Calcutta. It was shifted to Delhi in 1912. However, it was closed down in 1914 on the outbreak of the World War {1st} (1914-1918) for its blunt anti British stance.

Another Muslim journal was MOSLEM PATRIOT OF MADRAS, which survived only for about a year or so between "1908-1910." Yaqoob and Hameed Hasan two brothers established the paper. Both were connected with Aligarh by virtue of having been educated there and both were already members of the All-India Muslim League as soon as it was founded in 1906.⁽⁹⁾

The newspaper under the name of PUNJABI started its life in early years of the first decade of the 20th century from Lahore. Sheikh Abdul-Qadir (1874-1951) and Abdul-Aziz edited it. The former was closely associated with the Urdu Defence Movement when it started in the united provinces in 1901, and had been founder editor of Urdu monthly MAKHZAN.⁽¹⁰⁾

ASR-E-JADID, started from Calcutta, in 1918, as an advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity but in 1933 it became the supporter of The Muslim League.

In 1922, the Muslim Outlook appeared from Delhi under the editorship of Col. Majid Malik. The paper was a true supporter of the League in 1946; the Pakistan Times was published from the same city.

The Muslim press of the sub-continent played a vital role in expressing the grievances of the Muslims and at the same time helped in bringing greater awareness and unity with regards the idea of The Muslim nation-hood. However, until the start of 1940, all their efforts on the part of Muslim English press were seen merely as individual efforts of their newspapers. THE DAWN began its publication from Delhi in October 1942, with the investment of Rs: 1.57 lak. The dream about a Muslim press turned into a reality by 1910, the need of The Muslim national press was being felt for a long time ago but more particularly after the birth of the All-India Muslim League. This seems, perhaps to be the reason that syndicate was formed to take over the paper. This was the paper that prominently displayed the activities of The Muslim League.

The annulment of the partition of Bengal (1911) disappointed the Muslims and they realised that their loyalty to The British was not appreciated. This situation developed sense of hatred against the British among the Muslims. The policy of Sir Syed was put aside and Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Muhammad Ali Johar, Hasrat Mohani and Maulana Abu-ul-Kalam Azad came on the re-birth of militant Journalism. They created new Journalism and forced Britain to accept their arguments. The British rulers, reputedly sent them behind the bars, but they would never withdraw from their mission.

Zamindar: Before 1937, the policy of “The Zamindar” was purely nationalist, and unionist. In the year of 1937, The Zamindar became the spokesman of the Muslim League. It spread the ideology of the League. It struggled successfully to change the policy of The Khaksar Movement that opposed the League. It also played a prominent role in eliminating the differences between the Muslim leaders through its columns. We can understand the causes which forced the Muslims to demand for a separate homeland.

⁽¹¹⁾ The Third Round-Table Conference of 1932 was fully covered by The Zamindar and which represented The Muslim point of view properly.

As a whole the Zamindar created a sense of boldness among the Muslims and made them aware of the Hindus’ intrigues.⁽¹²⁾

Ehsan: Ehsan was from the very beginning a spokesman of the League. The main role played by The Ehsan, was that, it encouraged the Muslims. It may be called as the freedom fighter of the Pakistan Movement. The Ehsan interpreted the ideology of the League before the Pakistan Resolution. It created a sense of awareness among the Muslims for a separate state.⁽¹³⁾

Inqalab: This newspaper played a special role to propagate the idea of Pakistan. Its publication began from April 4, 1927. Maulana Ghulam Rasool Mehr and Abdul Majeed Salik was its proprietor. It regularly compiled a complete history of Muslims struggle from 1927-1944 in its editorial pages.

The Editor of the Inqalab exposed the hypocrisy of the Hindus- through their editorials. They sincerely supported Sir Iqbal's philosophy of the Ideology of Pakistan. The Allahabad address of Iqbal (1930) got full coverage on its front page.

Its role from 1940 to the establishment of Pakistan is worth noting. In 1942, Raj Gopal the Hindu leader made efforts for Hindu-Muslim unity. The Inqalab supported his efforts. Then Muslim League was divided into two groups in 1924 on the issue of separate electorates. The president of this group was M. A. Jinnah and secretary General was D. M. Kuchloo, while Sir. Shafi and Sir Allama Iqbal were the president and secretary General respectively of the other. The first group was in favour of mixed electorates, while the second supported the separate electorates. The Inqalab was a supporter of the second group. It also played a significant role in their reconciliation (1938).

Nawa-i-Waqt: Mr. Hameed Nizami issued the first edition of Nawa-i-Waqt as fortnightly on March 23, 1940. This also was the day of the Pakistan Resolution. It was started by the orders of M.A Jinnah. He desired that there must be a newspaper from Lahore which should, support the League and the Movement of Pakistan in 1942. It was, then, a weekly and afterwards, was converted into a daily on March 22, 1944. It wrote a lot in favour of The Quaid and The League. "It gave reasonable answers to the propaganda of the Hindu Press. It disclosed the views of Gandhi and made the Muslims aware of the policies of the Congress."⁽¹⁴⁾

Malik Khizar Hayat, chief minister of The Punjab, did his utmost to curb the newspaper in many ways. For instance he banned the advertisements for the paper. But he couldn't get his objective because Nawa-i-Waqt continued its support to the Muslim League. It is truly said that the League succeeded in general election of 1946 with the help of Nawa-i-Waqt. Many other Newspapers also supported the League in spreading its point of view. The Jang Delhi and The Tanveer from Lucknow were also in favour of The Muslim league. After the emergence of Pakistan the Jang was transferred from Delhi to Karachi.

These newspapers not only represented the Muslims before the government. But also they spread the League's point of view. They popularised the League among the masses.

In 1919, Muhammad Ali Johar wrote an article in Urdu under the title of MUSLIM POLITICS. Later on this paper was translated into English, Tamil, Gujrati and Burmese languages. In which he tried to show that the All-India Muslim League was a national political organization of the Indian Muslims. M. Ali Johar also published a booklet under the title of MUSLIM LEAGUE AUR US KAY ASOOL. Aziz Mirza also tried to utilize the pages of IDT to propagate the cause of The Muslim League.⁽¹⁵⁾

Weekly The MANSHOOR, published from Delhi in 1938. Later on, to popularize the Muslim League's point of view, the paper became a daily. Hasan Riaz remained its editor from 1938 to 1947. After the creation of Pakistan the MANSHOOR began to be

publishing from Karachi. The editor Hasan Riaz was an influential Leaguer who was, at the same time, the member of The Muslim League council and its working committee.⁽¹⁶⁾

The official organ of the Muslim League was DAILY DAWN which published more than hundred articles on the Congress misdeeds against The Muslims “1937-1939.” These articles were subsequently published in a book, which was titled as IT SHALL NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN, with a foreword by Qazi Muhammad Ee’sa (1914-1976), a prominent member of Balochistan Muslim League.

It is evident from the foregoing pages that in the 19th century the Hindus were more advanced than The Muslim in almost every sphere of life. That is why; they dominated the Indian press and propagated their cause. On the other hand, the Muslims who were backward in every field of life also remained only followers to establish their press. The policies of some Muslim papers were also pro-Hindus. Thus, there were a few Muslim newspapers which really represented the Indian Muslim’s point of view. These pro-league newspapers played their vital role to create political awareness among Indian Muslims.⁽¹⁷⁾

Thus they accelerate the pace of freedom movement. The Muslim papers both in English and Urdu have performed their share ably, from the social reforms Tehzib-ul-Akhlaq of Sir Syed to the smallest paper or magazine.⁽¹⁸⁾

In the end, it can be concluded that “1940-1947”, the press was deputed to the politics of the sub-continent where two major political parties were fighting for the cause of freedom for their own interests. The newspapers reflected this division. There were three broad categories of press at that time. First was the Anglo-Indian press founded by The British, dedicated to the promotion of the British Raj. It lasted until the British left the sub-continent in 1947. Second was the nationalist press owned by the better-educated Hindus, to promote the political consciousness of prejudiced Hindus. The third was the Muslim Press, which supported the Muslim League and its demand for the partition to bring about an independent Islamic state.

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