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#### **Abstract**

The last phase of freedom movement witnessed press as key stakeholder in changing public opinions. Every political party of colonial India sponsored or owned a press to propagate its manifesto and objectives. All India Muslim League also focused on press and propaganda after its re-organization to spread its message to the Muslims. Jinnah launched “create press campaign” with League owned newspapers while the Muslim notables launched their newspapers with meagre resources to support League and its demand of Pakistan. The Muslim owned press with scarce resources played pivotal role before and after Lahore Resolution 1940. But it became a propeller of League’s political tactics during election campaign of 1945-46 and actively played pivotal role in civil disobedience movements through its impactful editorial and news coverage policies. The research aims to explore formation of press and its editorial policies to promote scheme of Pakistan and political agitations in Punjab and NWFP against rival ministries.

**Key words:** Muslim Press, Editorial Policy, Civil Disobedience Movement, Public Opinion

#### **Introduction**

Print media has always been playing a pivotal role in shaping public opinions and perceptions for political and social transformations. “The power of news media to set a nation’s agenda, to focus public attention on a few key public issues, is an immense and well documented influence. Not only do people require factual information about public affairs from the news media, readers, listeners and viewers also learn how much importance to attach to a topic on the basis of the emphasis placed on it in the news” (McCombs, 2008). During 1940’s, press was the only authentic firsthand source of information for the general public that not only captured public minds but also influenced their opinions and perceptions about changing political paradigms (Chiragh, 1983). Press was the most popular source for dissemination of news and keeping people aware about the world affairs at that time. It played two-dimensional role: first, it influenced public opinion and reshaped their thinking patterns through propaganda by frequent publications of particular news items which naturally changed public opinions (Encyclopedia Americana Vol.16, 1986). Secondly, it became a major component to speak their opinion and support their rights, liberties, and political activities by propagating issues and problems through news and articles for public and policy makers (Encyclopedia Americana Vol.16, 1986). Besides its news function, the press also played significant role in educating people during last phase of colonial rule. The articles discussed politics, political economy, literature, scientific discoveries and social issues which enabled people to think futuristic (Hasan, 2011). The education and training oriented journalism made press a pivotal stakeholder in social fabric of the British India.

### State of the Muslim Press in 1930's

The British Indian press can be categorized into three major categories; the Hindu press, the Muslim press, and Anglo-Indian press. The Muslim and the Hindu press circulated newspapers with politically supportive editorial policies for benefit of their respective communities. The Hindu press was immensely resourceful due to its wide readership which boosted its income and hefty donations from the Hindu business community to their favorite newspapers to keep them in circulation (Afzal, 2015). The Anglo-Indian press was bit neutral in its editorial policy and enjoyed a different position amongst public. While the Muslim press had meagre resources and lesser circulation due to its circulation range and lower donations or funding from the business community to survive. The decade of 1930's witnessed exuberant reliance on the press for political propagation of the parties in context of elections. All India Muslim League could not launch impressive press propaganda campaign for 1936 elections which led to its failure to capture vote bank and attention of the voters. In the post-election scenario, League was re-organized by Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah after Lucknow Session (1937) which required a good press and propaganda machinery to promote League's cause. Moreover, Indian National Congress's Mass Contact Movement also triggered alarm bells for the Muslim leadership to launch counter propaganda to save their political identity and existence (Becker, 2013).

Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah realized importance and dire need of proactive and dynamic press after All India Muslim League's annual session at Lahore in 1940. The Hindu press launched propaganda campaign over the Lahore Resolution which proposed creation of autonomous states within Indian Union to safeguard the Muslim political rights. Indian National Congress was funding many newspapers with huge sums in shape of donations from its mighty resource base (Rajput, 1948). The League, as compared to INC, had fewer resources to fund or launch large scale newspapers. Previously, most of the pro-League newspapers had no funding or political patronage to enhance their circulation with lowered prices. A good number of newspapers were running their business with marginal profits which was not commensurate to their expenses. The League was expanding since its re-organization and fresh campaign to establish its branches all over India from grassroots to provincial and national level. The newly amended constitution of League had obligatory clauses for the applicants of affiliations to deposit minimum 10% of their annual income to the central party office to spend on propagation and administrative campaign (Khan, 1943). Though, the provincial Leagues started deposits on annual basis but that amount was not enough to fund to spend on wide scale publicity campaign.

Despite financial challenges, Jinnah launched "Create Muslim Press Campaign" to establish League owned and sponsored press. The first newspaper was launched by League in 1942 titled "Dawn", that was daily English newspaper published from Delhi (Ahmad, 1998). Jinnah was one of the trustees of this newspaper while Nawabzada Liaqat Ali Khan was given position of its secretary to look after its day-to-day affairs. Another Urdu newspaper was launched from Delhi by Jinnah to target Urdu reading Muslim population of India (pirzada, 1995). It was "*Manshoor*" which was edited by Syed Hasan Riaz. Although this newspaper could not survive long due to shortage of funds and some other issues yet it played middle range role

in public awakening to support League's message and policy. There were many other Urdu language newspapers which survived and created their impression on the minds of public to support League's idea of Pakistan. Delhi based Urdu newspapers "Jang" and "Anjam" not only played pivotal in expansion of League's footprint among masses but also gained popularity in early years which eased their financial constraints and eased their survival in the coming turbulent years. The front pages, banners, editorials, and columns of these newspapers were always full of the stories of League's corner meetings, messages, Jinnah's speeches and statements (Khursheed, 1993).

There was another English newspaper "The Eastern Times" appeared from Lahore which was initially edited by Allama Abdullah Yusufi while later on F.K. Khan, a book writer on the Muslim politics, took charge as editor. This was pro-League newspaper sponsored by Ferozsons, a private business company, which lacked in equipment and resources. But, despite meagre resources, its significant contribution in spreading awareness and League's viewpoint among the masses of the Punjab was remarkable (Afzal, 2015). Malik Barkat Ali, a prominent old Leaguer from Lahore launched "New Times" weekly as mouthpiece of Muslim League. The outlook and circumstances of this newspaper were not different from The Eastern Times as it lacked in resources to expand at large scale. Even then it was a prominent newspaper which turned public opinion in favor of Muslim League and Jinnah during hostile years of the British-Unionist nexus against Jinnah (Afzal, Malik Barkat Ali: His Life and Writings, 1969).

Bengal based press contributed marvelous services to the cause of Muslim League. *Star of India* was the most prominent newspapers among all which project Jinnah from the very beginning. It was owned by Khawaja Shahab ud Din and edited by Pothan Joseph and Lawrence P. Atkison in later years. The newspaper witnessed financial crunches in initial phase which were covered by donations from M.A.H. Ispahani and Khawaja Nazimuddin as major donors while 42 other donors helped it to remain in circulation by collecting Rs. 25000 to cover up its losses (Zaidi, 1976). Another newspaper "Morning News" appeared from Calcutta which was owned by Khan Nurrudin and Mr. Abdur Rehman Siddiqui. The paper was overt in its editorial policy with visible tilt towards Muslim League and the Muslim political rights. It published most of the activities of Bengal Provincial Muslim League and All India Muslim League in detail with excerpts from the speeches and statement of Jinnah and other Muslim League leaders. The office of Morning News was shifted to Dacca after partition and it continued its publication from Karachi also till its take over by National Press Trust in 1963 (Parthasarthy, 1991).

Some other weeklies were started in Muslim minority provinces during same period. Aziz Beg started "Star" from Bombay to promote League's cause and contributed weekly round ups in the paper. Similarly, Sir Shifaat Ahmad Khan launched "Deccan Times" from Madras which became another important source of information regarding Muslim League activities. From Karachi, Pir Ali Muhammad Rashidi launched "Muslim Voice" with obvious Editorial Policy that advocated the Muslim political struggle for minority rights. Though, the "Statesman" and "Civil and Military Gazette both initiated special features to project Muslim politics but their editorial policies focused more on other issues. "Pakistan Times" was launched in last phase of freedom movement from Lahore under Mian Iftikharuddin as major

shareholder. Its first editor was Desmond Young who was replaced Faiz Ahmad Faiz in later month. In terms of equipment and resources, this newspaper matched Civil and Military Gazette and played pivotal role in League's civil disobedience movement (Parthasarthy, 1991). Urdu press was more vigorous and vivid in support of Muslim League view point during last phase of freedom movement. Most of the newspapers were either patronized by Leaguers or their owners were supporters of League. Moulana Murtaza Ahmad Khan Maikash and Chiragh Hasan Hasrat edited "Ehsan" from Lahore. The newspaper appeared as mouthpiece of League and promoted its slogan of sole representative of the Indian Muslims rigorously. It was equipped with modern teleprinting technology which became a prominent factor in its popularity in short span of time. Both of these editors launched daily "Shahbaz" from Lahore which was even better than "Ehsan" (Khursheed, Journalism in Pakistan, 1986).

Moulana Murtaza was one of the best editors in Urdu journalism after Moulana Ghulam Rasool Mehr. Bengal Provincial Muslim League's president Moulana Akram Khan launched "Azad" from Calcutta. In a few years, this newspaper became the largest circulation paper among readers of Bengal, later on East Pakistan. In North West Frontier Province, another Urdu newspaper "Millat" appeared from Peshawar under editorship of Rashid Akhtar. It was played a key role in pre and post election awakening of the Frontier Muslims. Although, Baluchistan was commissioner's province without proper political activities, yet Nasim Hijazi edited "Tanzeem" from Quetta to propagate Muslim cause among the readers. Both of these newspapers were ill equipped with limited financial resources but they played their role against Congress propaganda during freedom movement (Khursheed, Journalism in Pakistan, 1986).

Hameed Nizami and Hamid Mehmud launched "Nawa-i-Waqt" from Lahore in support of Muslim League. Perhaps this was the most prominent pro-League newspapers at that time. It was technically well-equipped fortnightly which supported Pakistan movement since its inception. Initially, it was fortnightly newspaper consisted of 6 pages on 18x22 size. Later on, in 1942 was converted into weekly with larger size of 22x29 while the number of pages increased from 6 to 8 and 12 on special editions. On July 22, 1944 it started daily publication as part of "Create Muslim Press" Campaign to propagate Muslim League in Punjab. Nawa-i-Waqt gained popularity among the pro League Muslims due to editorial policies of other Urdu language newspapers. For instance, "Shahbaz" was protagonist of the Unionist party while "Inqulab" was pro Congress in its editorial orientation. Similarly, other old newspapers such as Zamindar and Ehsan also supported the Unionist manifesto during election campaign of 1945-46. This create space for a pro League newspaper to cater needs of the Leaguers in Punjab. The use of available resources, better printing and distribution network, and dedication of Hameed Nizami made it the most popular reads of that time.

Punjab became hub of the Urdu newspapers in the last decade of freedom movement. Despite less resources and strict policies of the government for new launching of newspapers, there were around 217 Urdu newspapers were being published from Lahore, Sialkot, Rawalpindi, and Lyallpur (modern day Faisalabad). There were 16 English newspapers, 132 dailies, 95 weeklies and 90 monthly papers were in circulation at the time of independence in Punjab. In its overall outlook, the Muslim press lacked resources, financially weak, no official

support in terms of advertisements, and less professional people made it consistent striver for survival in harsh odds.

### **How did Press Reshaped Public Opinions in Favor of Muslim League?**

The Muslim press had always been struggling for awakening of the nation by propagating new ideas and by generating a soft corner among people via-a-vis Western education to enable them for market oriented qualifications. Later on, the age of Moulana Muhammad Ali Jouhar and Zafar Ali Khan witnessed era of pan-Islamic thought and sympathy towards their Muslim brethren of Turkey during first World War. Some other Muslim owned newspaper also contributed in this cause but most of these newspapers were closed down due to lack of financial resources and meagre profits from their regular circulation. Khilafat Movement was the last of the events which got wide scale popularity among the Indian Muslims via print media followed by a joint struggle in support of Turkey by Indian National Congress, Khilafat Committee and All India Muslim League.

The period from 1920 to 1935 witnessed paradigmatic change in press and editorial policies. Many new newspapers surfaced at national and provincial level while some earned profits as well. But this time, press got support from the political parties directly and in most of cases, neutral press openly showed their editorial leaning towards their supportive political party. Hindu press was financially stable than the Muslim press with its proven history of propagation of their peculiar political ideas. This policy dated back to days of Bal Ganga Dhar Tilak who launched “Kesari”, first Marathi language newspaper which openly promoted revival of Hinduism, conversion of the Muslims to Hinduism, re-starting of Hindu festivals and radical political thought among the Hindu community (Chandra, 2016). Later on, many others followed the suit and adopted their editorial policy which suits to their owned presumed political agenda. The failure of Khilafat Movement and rise of communal riots during 1920’s ushered a new era of extremist writings in shape of books, booklets, and newspaper articles. It continued to get more readership among their specific targeted reader community and remained in circulation at large scale.

The era of 1930 received new entrants in press with political objectives which got instant fame by highlighting controversial issues like Shaheed Ganj Mosque and Hindu-Muslim rifts. The actual press battle started after elections under The Government of India Act 1935 and post election Congress ministries. The rule of injustice and conspiracy to create a common nationality through various programs further exacerbated communal situation. Biased government policies and favoritism towards extremist activities were highlighted by the Muslim press. But the number of newspapers were limited and financial resources were meagre to enable large scale circulation (Chandra, 2016). Even then an article series in context of Pirpur and Sharif Reports title “It Shall Never Happen Again” proved ice breaker and ushered new era of journalism in India where press became mouthpiece and major component of the political parties. This article series turned public opinion in favor newly re-organized All India Muslim League under Jinnah. They highlighted how the Congress ministries banned beef slaughtering and eating? How people were treated upon complaints of music playing in front of the mosques? And how two and half year of Congress administration was an eye opener for the Indian Muslims?.

The Muslim press got some new and vibrant newspapers during that phase. Most of the newspapers were launched by members of the League to propaganda Quaid-i-Azam and League's message to their fellows. Nawa-i-Waqat was founded by Hameed Niazami who was active member of Punjab Muslim Students' Federation and young member of Punjab Provincial Muslim League. Niazami was young and daring journalist who directly pointed out Hindu press by introducing new trends and innovated writing style in journalism. In order to convince his readers, Niazami wrote argumentative passages in coherent prose which created long lasting impressions on the minds of the readers.

He defused the hateful propaganda of the Hindu press with his sharp and logical argument and revealed their fabrications to the readers. Niazami was inspired by Allama Muhammad Iqbal's philosophy and political thoughts and endeavored to spread Muslim nationalist approach to its targeted young readers. Nawa-i-Waqat kept critical watch over activities of the Unionist party and published many good articles over their hypocritic self interest based non communal approach. After Lahore Resolution 1940, Niazami supported demand for Pakistan as last resort for communal settlement of India through publication of poems, articles, and League activities to transform public opinion in favor the League. Though, Nawa-i-Waqat was not owned or financially supported by the League but it played role of League's mouthpiece to reshape Punjab's public mindset. At each and every occasion, Niazami remained supportive to League's demand for communal settlement via in shape of Pakistan. S.M. Ikram notes that "Hameed Niazami's greatest contribution to national struggle came through the newspaper Nawa-i-Waqat, which became mouthpiece of the generation struggling for the achievement of Pakistan" (Ikram, 1970).

Two other members of Punjab Muslim Students' Federation, Muhammad Shafi and T.K. Durrani made marvelous journalistic contribution through Urdu newspaper "Ehsan". It espoused caused of Muslim League through editorials, articles and front pages stories. It became more vivid after Lahore Resolution, 1940, and openly supported the demand for Pakistan. Lyallpur (Faisalabad) got another prototype of "Ehsan" and shape of Sa'adat" which was edited by Nasikh Saifi. It projected Punjab League's activities regularly and remained more vocal in propagation and projection of Pakistan Conferences of the League. Jinnah visited and attended these conferences which were covered all available press. But this newspaper published details in episodes to keep readers in touch with the League's activities and Jinnah's message for Pakistan. Like Niazami, Nasikh influenced minds of people through nationalist approach which paved way for League's candidates in the upcoming elections (Ray, 1979).

Jinnah got approval from the Working Committee of All India Muslim League to launch an English newspaper under auspices of the party to project party activities and its political demands. It was realization of Jinnah that "Hindu press had left not any gun unfired at the Muslims" which became propeller to launched "Dawn". M.A.H. Ispahani observed "...Dawn, which had captured, substantial Muslim readership throughout the north and the adjoining Muslim areas, began to grow stronger and stronger with the passage of each month. There was no looking back until partition compelled a shift from Daryaganj, old Delhi, to Karachi". Dawn was one at par with many international newspapers of its time. Its editorial and columns propagated demand for Pakistan in quite logical way. It published official

versions of the speeches and statement of Jinnah which are major and authentic sources of archives for the researchers over freedom movement. Till now, all the publications on Jinnah and freedom movement have used Dawn as their source of primary information. As League's newspaper, it not only published all activities of the party but also ushered an era of neutral news regarding every day affairs of the United India. Moreover, it caught attention of the Muslim intelligentsia and achieve popularity among the English language newspaper readers in very short span of time. Liaqat Ali Khan managed affairs of "Dawn" in efficient manner which kept its resource base and its earning levels up to the mark to sustain its publication (Afzal, A History of All India Muslim League (1906-1947), 2015).

### **Press and the Last phase of Freedom Movement**

The pro-League press emerged in NWFP during 1930's at that time when Jinnah was trying to revive Muslim League. In 1935, weekly *Pakistan* appeared from Abbotabad under editroship of Ghulam Hussain Kazmi. The name was derived from Chouhdry Muhammad Ali's pamphlet "Now or Never" which proposed name Pakistan as future state of the Muslims. This was unique idea and term at that moment in a province where League had thin presence. This paper could remain in circulation in Hazara region for three years (1938) only but its impact was larger than its life (Kausar, 1975). In 1938, Taj Muhammad Khan launched weekly *Nojawan-i-Sarhad* from Haripur which became daily in during WW II but again reverted to weekly edition due scarcity of resources (Malik, 1980). This paper adopted pro-League editorial policy and supported League's message along with its meagre resources and limited circulation base till 1946 elections. It played effective role in Hazara during civil disobedience movement and remained in circulation even after independence. Mian Shamsul Huda launched *Al-Jahad* from Mansehra, Hazara in 1944 in support of League and its quest for Pakistan.

The editorial policy of this newspaper refuted notion of Indian Nationalism and Congress claims to be representative of all communities (Amer, 1995). Another Urdu weekly *Turjuman-i-Sarhad* was launched by Malik Amir Alim Awan that started publication in 1933 from Peshawar. It provided regular updates of League activities at national provincial level on regular basis. Editorially, it remain League centric and published rebuttal of Congress propaganda in its regular and special editions (Malik, 1980). In 1933, Khyber Mail was launched by Mr. Sanaullah as an English weekly which was edited by Haroon-ur-Rashid from Peshawar. This newspaper targeted the educated class of the province and endeavored to convince them to support League's cause of Pakistan (Amer, 1995).

The print media's influence can be witnessed in the last phase of freedom movement. The working of Pro-League newspapers convinced people in 1945-46 elections to vote for the League and its demand for Pakistan. League won majority Muslim reserved seats at Centre and in the provinces. It worked appreciably in Punjab and NWFP where League had weaker organization due to presence of strong rivals in shape of the Unionist Party and Khudai Khidmatgars. The former was supported by the British government to keep Punjab non-communal while the later had alliance with Congress. In NWFP, League was the oldest political party but it remained dormant for decades (Ahmad R. , 2008). Jinnah toured the province before 1936 elections to organize the party offices in the province but the visit could not bring tangible outcomes (Ziaduddin, 1976). The League could not issue tickets to the

candidates due to its poor and nascent organization. But after re-organization of the League in 1937, it was able to expand branches in the province and formed an assembly party after winning by-elections. It also captured power seat by making alliances, winning elections, and some other measures but the rival parties were more resourceful than it (Ziaduddin, 1976).

In 1946 elections, League could win only 17 Muslim reserved seats while Congress led alliance won 30 out of 50 seats. Congress formed its ministry under Dr. Khan Sahib (Khan M. M., 2000). These circumstances forced League to change its policy and focus more on propaganda to win public opinions. The Pro-League press play active role at that moment and launched a campaign to publicize League's agenda of Pakistan and Two Nation Theory. NWFP was the Muslim majority province which was expected to join Pakistan in future. The print media openly propagated and published articles and news over national politics. Bihar massacre was presented to show true face of Hindu extremism and bleak future of the Muslims if they do not join Pakistan (Amer, 1995). Jinnah decided to observed "Direct Action Day" on August 16, 1946 as a show of power. The local press published articles on the purpose of this day, objective of the League and brutal face of Hindu extremism through their routine and special publications. It painted a gloomy picture of scene by printing pictures of corpses and blood stained clothes which proved a punch line to change public opinions in the province (Amer, 1995). NWFP was the only province of proposed Pakistan where League was not in position to hold majority seats. Therefore, without winning public opinion through media and other strategies, it was difficult to strike any political victory in future to get support for Pakistan (Shah, 1990).

Newspapers published vivid articles in support of Pakistan and revealed true face of Congress farcical political ambitions through articles and editorials. Khyber Mail reported in these words "While everywhere else in India the Muslims are closing their ranks and achieving greater and greater harmony of aims and ideals, in this land of Pathans there is only disruption and disunity. While in other Muslim provinces the impending political changes, which promise to lead India to a new era of complete independence, have stimulated an active spirit of compromise among the various Muslim political parties, here by a queer tyranny of misfortune we are only drifting away from each other" (Khyber Mail, 1947). *Sada-i-Pakistan* started publishing a news sheet during civil disobedience movement that activities of the Leaguers and their successes in pressurizing the Congress led ministry in the province. It presented the political rift as battle between faith and infidels and related the events with Islamic history to capture maximum attention of the readers and to change their mindsets in favor League. The religious touch to the movement played more effective role in the society which was inherently emotionally attached to religious customs (Sethi, 1995).

#### **Press and Civil Disobedience Movement in Punjab**

In the British Punjab, Muslim press had consolidated its circulation base over the years. The emergence of Jang, Nawa-i-Waqat, Dawn, Star of India, Manshoor, and many other Urdu and English languages newspapers played active role in election campaign of 1946-46 and effectively propagated cause of Jinnah and Muslim League in the province. There is no second opinion over the subject that press actually did marvelous job for League to attract the Muslims and capture votes despite presence of many small scale religious-political



organizations. Jinnah decided to launch civil disobedience movement against Khizer Hayat Tiwana ministry. The pro-League press did marvelous job to promote cause of Muslim League and Pakistan. The English press "Pakistan Times" published articles with focus on electoral politics and right of the Muslims as a separate nation (Pakistan Times, 1946). League's own initiative "Dawn" adopted policy to publish each and every detail of political activities and countered policies of the Unionist Ministry through logical response in constitutional terms. It censured imposition of Safety Ordinances and banning League's mass organs as violation of political rights of a community (Dawn, 1946). Star of India had less circulation in Punjab as compared to Bengal and adjacent provinces. Despite that it propagated Punjab politics and pressures of Provincial League through its news items and editorials (Star of India, 1946). In overview of Dawn and Star of India, both provided massive coverage to Jinnah and League's activities in responsive manner. Their circulation base was educated class which could understand constitutional response rather simple criticism.

In Urdu press, Nawa-i-Waqat and Jang served as true mouthpieces of the League during election campaign and civil disobedience movement. Urdu press had advantage over the English press in terms of understanding of language among the masses. Urdu as a language was widely understood by all and sundry not only in Punjab but all in the Indian provinces it was intelligible for people. Nizami's editorial policy focused on information and propagation. Nawa-i-Waqat used to publish all details of political activities along with robust editorials which mostly focused the Muslim nationalism and impacts of elite nexus in shape of the Unionist party (Nawa-i-Waqat, 1946).

### **Conclusion**

All India Muslim League was re-organized in post 1936 elections by Jinnah from dormant state to a dynamic political organization. It required dedicated measures to publicize and propagate its policy and program through press. The Muslim press with meagre resources and least sponsorships did the job well. In post Lahore Resolution period, the emerging newspapers focused on change of public mindset and their approach towards politics and political rights of the Muslims. The editorial policies of various English and Urdu language newspapers focused on political awareness and training of the masses that realized them pitfalls of Hindu dominance and endangered future of minorities in India after the British exit. Their marvelous role in election campaign of 1945-46 and subsequent civil disobedience movements in Punjab and NWFP proves effectiveness of the Muslim press. Despite restrictions and suppression, the Muslim press was able to reshape public opinion in favor of League and its concrete impact is visible in shape of public response to Jinnah's call for votes and civil disobedience movements.

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