

The role of print media in Pakistan Movement

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The Muslim community is left at a disadvantage by not having a single daily newspaper in India, while the Hindus and other communities had a large number of daily papers in every major town. To fight political battles without a newspaper was like going to war without weapons.

(Presidential address by Maulvi Muhammad Yaqoob, 19th session of All-India Muslim League, Calcutta, December 1927).

No nation can get rid of its colonial master and achieve independence till all classes of the people participate in freedom movement. The responsibility to wage a war against the atrocities of usurpers lies not even on the shoulders of leaders and reformers, but on the masses as a whole. To cut the chains of slavery is a duty which requires the dedication and devotion of all and sundry. Broadly speaking, every sect of society is bound to play its role in eradicating the scars of humiliation, either it be peasant or pulpar, landlord or labourer, teacher or taught, lawyer or layman. In this forefront also comes the gigantic role being played by print media in shaking down the shackles of slavery, and breaking the barriers fenced by the foreign rulers.

If we go through the history of Pakistan Movement, it could be revealed upon us that newspapers, magazines, brochures, handbills, leaflets, booklets, etc. had played a prestigious part in propagating the prospects of freedom movement. These print organs of late 1930s and 1940s had made the Muslim populace of the Subcontinent acquainted with the significance of the slogan: But key Rahega Hindustan, Bun Key Rahega Pakistan. There arose the sense of attachment with All India Muslim League (AIML) amidst millions of Indian Muslims and motivated them to take part in achieving an independent land for themselves. It were these resources indeed which paved the way for our distinguished leaders in achieving an Islamic homeland for the Ummah.

In this article, I would concentrate my attention only upon those newspapers which played a significant role in stimulating the Muslims to carve a country of their own ideology and inspiration. Among them, the most reputed, well established and influential were: Zamindar (Lahore); Nawa-e-Waqt (Lahore); Dawn (Delhi); Manshoor (Delhi); Jang (Delhi); Tanwir (Lucknow); Asr-e-Jadid (Calcutta); Millat (Peshawar); Al-Islam (Quetta); Tanzim (Quetta); Hilal-e-Pakistan (Sindh), etc.

It may not be out of place to mention here that in the early phase of his struggle for uniting Indian Muslims on one platform and to make them aware of the importance of independence, the Quaid-i-Azam had to face a lot of trouble and great disadvantage because of lack of support from the press. The Muslim newspapers generally belonged to that group which supported Congress and held views opposite to AIML.

propagate the cause of League. Accordingly, he founded a number of newspapers in Delhi and took effective steps for establishing more newspapers in other parts of the Subcontinent. This very fact fully reflects the Quaid's interest in creating and developing a strong Muslim press. He had already emphasised on the significance of Muslim Press in the following way:

"Muslim India is fully alive to the necessity of having a strong and powerful press of its own, Urdu as well as English, and I need not emphasise the desirability of every Muslim doing his bit in strengthening the Muslims Press."

Now I would briefly describe about some noted newspapers which proved to be the landmark in the Movement.

—ZAMINDAR (Lahore): It was originally founded by Maulvi Siraj Din in 1903 in Wazirabad. In 1909, his son Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, the distinguished journalist and poet of repute, became its editor. He brought the paper to Lahore. From the very beginning it remained the organ of League. The paper vehemently voiced for the cause of Pakistan. Through its editorial, features, poems and regular columns, Zamindar stimulated an immense sense of patriotism in the Muslims of undivided India.

Throughout Pakistan Movement, the Zamindar of Zafar Ali Khan took most effective steps in espousing the Muslim cause and promoting the significance of new homeland i.e., Pakistan. For its bold way of writing and criticism on British Government, the Zamindar was banned and press confiscated several times. Amidst those journalists who supported the establishment of Pakistan, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan was the one who got imprisoned many a time.

—Manshoor: (Delhi) The Quaid-i-Azam himself founded this newspaper as a weekly in the beginning of 1938. It was an official organ of AIML. On December 25, 1944, it was converted into a daily. Noted journalist and historian, Syed Hasan Riaz was its editor from the very beginning. It contained eight pages out of which four were allotted to the reports of activities of AIML and its branches, the proceedings of the Working Committees and the Councils of the Central and Provincial Leagues, the statements and the speeches of the Quaid-i-Azam, the president of League.

This paper achieved a wide circulation in a short span of time. It had to give the Muslims of undivided India, their own point of view in every current matter consistent with League ideas. Moreover, it had closely followed the Quaid in its leading articles and thus enhanced the noble cause. Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was so impressed with the performances of this vernacular paper that he expressed his views in the following message sent on December 21, 1944 from Bombay:

"The services which it has rendered to the Musalmans, and particularly to the Muslim League, during the past few years of this existence, are considerable, and I hope it will continue its

redoubled vigour."

—AL-AMAN (Delhi): It was a bi-weekly Urdu paper started by a noted journalist Maulana Mazharuddin in the beginning of 1938, and immediately became popular. It was an astonishing matter that the Maulana was educated at Deoband and also served there as teacher, but he turned his back to Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani and wholeheartedly supported Muslim League through his paper. The credit also went to Maulana Mazhar to use for the first time the title for Quaid-i-Azam in Al-Aman. Then it spread all over the subcontinent and the Indian Muslims started to address Mr. Jinnah as Quaid-i-Azam.

Maulana Mazharuddin was very vocal in criticising the Ulema belonging to Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind who opposed AIML. Because of that he was assassinated on March 13, 1939 in Al-Aman's office. He was, of course, the first journalist who sacrificed his life for the cause of Pakistan.

—JANG (Delhi): In early forties when World War had engulfed the globe, a young, energetic and qualified person came forward and started publishing an Urdu paper "Jang" from capital city of India. Known as Mir Khalilur Rahman, he was destined to be the pioneer of newspapers in Pakistan. Although the "Jang" had literally a resemblance with 2nd World War, but soon it became an organ of All-India Muslim League. It candidly sided with the Quaid-i-Azam and struggled to achieve free homeland for the Muslims of undivided India. This newspaper of Delhi was anti-British to such an extent that its name was black listed by the English government. Through "Jang" Pakistan Movement got much stimulus. Once Mir Khalilur Rahman was locked up for writing editorial against the English monarch.

—DAWN (Delhi): The Muslim League Organisation suffered great hardship for want of an English medium newspaper through which it could carry its message both to the English-reading public and Government quarters. With a view to overcome this handicap, the Quaid-i-Azam decided to start an English weekly from the capital city of India. Thus the Dawn was brought out on October 19, 1941, as a weekly. It was printed at Muslim League Printing Press where most of AIML's literature was published.

It may be interesting to note that the English reading public as well as British Government were so anxious to know about the activities of AIML that they started subscribing Dawn abundantly.

Keeping in view the day to day affairs of League and to get the readers fully acquainted with them, the Quaid wished to convert the weekly Dawn into a daily. It became a full-fledged daily on October 12, 1942 with Pothan Joseph as Chief Editor.

It was on October 1, 1945 that the foremost Muslim journalist in English, Altaf Hussain resigned from government service and joined Dawn as its editor. Here, he raised personalised journalism to a national status, contributed significantly in the battle of works in the

Mass Co-ordination