

MUSLIM MAGAZINES – ITS CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY – WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO VELLORE DISTRICT: A BRIEF HISTORICAL STUDY

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Political disintegration coupled with economic distress during the 18th century enabled the East India Company to subjugate India. The British rulers introduced a series of agrarian, industrial and trade reforms and thereby brought about transitional changes in political, and socio– economic fields, resulting in total collapse of existing traditional economy and converting India into a colony. But by the time we reach mid 19th century, India’s contact with the Western world grew forcing Indians to realize how they were robbed politically and how their age-old socio – economic system was broken by the British.

The introduction of English languages, literature and Western cultural ideas proved to be a boon in disguise. Educated Indians, who could now learn through English language and literature the ideas of nationalism, liberty, equality and the importance of science and technology in production, became conscious of British intentions generating anti-British feelings among the people. Although the anti-British momentum initially was slow and scattered, nevertheless the people started criticizing British policies through exchanging and communicating issues in their private writings, newspapers and other available media.

The press and other media activities were in fact limited and disjointed, yet the fact remains that for widely spread anti-British War of 1857, particularly the northern India and other adjoining provinces, the newspapers and other medial played a very significant role. The major part of northern India was Urdu-speaking and, therefore, Urdu newspapers and journals became popular means for educating the people against the British, “The newspaper”, says Bipin Chandra, “not only became the political educator, reading or discussing it became a form of political participation.

Before 1859, about 75 dailies and periodicals published in Urdu were in circulation. By 1900, the number of dailies and journals became more than hundred. In these dailies and journals, educated people wrote editorials and articles meant for creating consciousness and awakening against the misdeeds of the British government on the one hand, and social and cultural evils on the other. Politically people were given to understand the noble ideas of nationalism, liberty and equality before law. Socially, too, people were exposed to their social evils and backwardness. They were asked not to look upon themselves as inferior while the slogan of racial superiority by the British was criticized. It was generally held among the Muslims that learning of science and technology was anti-religious, but Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and many others following him through their writings told the people that science and technology was never against religion, they were given to understand that in order to keep pat world it was essential to learn science and technology. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan went to the extent that he opened many schools for the purpose. The role of Urdu Journalism for creating socio- political consciousness and awakening among was immense. Those who could not afford English education could at le through Urdu press what actually was going on in India and outside India. Urdu journalism, thus, played a regenerating role by strengthening the socio-politic while also helping the national movement to grow.

Journalism in India is regarded as an offshoot of English journalism and most remarkable byproducts of British rule and, also, as it turned out to be one of its most powerful grave diggers. It was the printing press which helped journalism grows, and its invention revolutionized the propagation of information. Be cradle of Indian Journalism. The first definite and concrete step to bring out was actually taken by William Bolts in 1776. But he failed to do so. However, it was left to James Augustus Hicky, who published the first newspaper popularly Afterwards a large number of newspapers in vernacular languages began to be published. The beginning of Urdu journalism dates back to 1822. There is a great deal of controversy regarding the first Urdu newspaper. Out of available information, it is agreed that the Akhbarjam-e-Jahan Numa was the first Urdu newspaper in India. Its editor was one Munshi Sada Sukh Rai. Jam-e-Jahan Numa was first published on 28th March 1822.

Due to the comparative illiteracy and lack of resources among Muslims the Urdu daily newspapers had a limited circulation in contrast to the English dailies. The efforts of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, rapid strides were made in the field journalism. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan brought out the Aligarh Institute Gaztte, most vocal organ through which he popularized modern education among Muslims. It had a great impact on the Muslims in north India. With the help of the Tahzibul- Akhlaq, Sir Syed sought to bring about social and religious reforms in the Muslim society. The task of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was to educate and guide t community so that they could come out from decadence. He emphasized in writings the importance of education, which could help the Muslims. He guided the Muslims their most dismal hour without harming other communities. Sir Syed also convinces the

Muslims to do away with the social evils, which had crept into fabric. He condemned the system of piri-muridi. He attacked the institution of slavery and described it as un-Islamic. His progressive social ideas were mostly through the Tahzib-ul- Akhlaq and the Aligarh Institute Gazette.

The Urdu press gave due attention to the social problem of the country. It exposed social evils such as casteism, child marriage, gender inequality, widow's plight, alcoholism etc. Urdu journalism tried to evaluate critically the moral ideas and customs, habits, rituals, etc. among the people during the 19th century. The press discussed the problems faced by masses and offered solutions too. The evils of the society were uncovered before the masses for discussion and put pressure upon the government to take action against those evil and corrupt practices. Urdu journalism reflected the fast growing political changes in the 20th century with special reference to the emergence of Muslim politics in India. The Revolt of 1857 rendered Muslims helpless and dejected. They were the worst sufferers; had lost their political power and prestige; their aristocracy decimated and their self-reliance emaciated. Coincidentally, their economic condition deteriorated to an alarming pace.

The disintegration of the Mughal Empire and consolidation of the British rule in India decided the future course of politics in India. With the establishment of the British rule, the Muslim had to face new problems. They were held mainly responsible for the Revolt of 1857. Therefore they deliberately adopted a policy hostile to them and aimed at undermining their influence. In these circumstances, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and his companions came forward to rescue their community, from its unfortunate predicament. Sir Syed and his contemporaries took up the task of regenerating Muslims. For this he not only introduced modern education but tried to convince Muslims that, it was only through English education they could compete with their countrymen.

The Muslims, however, could not remain completely unaffected by political situation country. With the spread of English education, their interest in politics increased. Muslim awakening during this period was symbolized by the Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College Aligarh, and by the Central National Mohammadan Association, the first Muslim organization. The rapid emergence of Muslim leaders and political Nations was a remarkable phenomenon of this period. During this period the Muslims began their apprenticeship in political organization and propaganda. With cal activism, Urdu journalism got impetus and the circulation of Urdu newspapers tremendously increased. The Muslims began to raise their voice for education, employment and representation. The then struggle to secure these rights culminated rejection of the Indian National Congress in the beginning, and later they put the demand to separate representation. The language controversy and pan-Islamism were the main reasons to bring about a wider participation of Muslim into politics.

The 19th century marked the consolidation of the British power in India. The economic policies of the British were widely resented which gave impetus and encouragement to the Indian national movement and Indian public awakening. Consciousness among public of its deplorable condition under foreign domination were the main issues during this period as this was mainly due to the social, political and religious movements publicized in the press. The Western education, created a class intelligentsia, under whose guidance India fought her battle of Independence It opened the floodgate of liberal European thought and fostered the spirit of renaissance in India, consequently, giving birth to socio-religious movements. Colonial rule itself rated a sense of unity by unifying the country with roadways and railways, uniform m of administration etc.

With the effort of Vernacular press, a large number of social organizations came to the fore, which resulted in the foundation of the Indian National Congress. This is what B.B. Misra calls political and nationalist identification middle class. The Indian national Congress put forth the demand of representative institutions, Indianization of services, share in governance, reform in fiscal policies, removal of poverty etc. The fundamental objective of Indian National Congress was the promotion of Indian nationalism, to foster unity and integrity of the country. The vernacular press became the mouthpiece of the Indians and created awareness the people.

The role played by Urdu journalism in nation building was of vital significance. The press kept people informed about the happenings around them. Major political and economic issues were elaborately discussed through the press. Regarding the role of nationalist press, Lord Dufferin pointed out in March 1886, "day after day hundreds of sharp witted babes pour for their indignation against the English oppressions in very pungent and effective diatribe". Again in May he stated that "in this way there can be no doubt that a spirit is generated in the minds of those who read these papers with sincere conviction that we are all the enemies of mankind in general and I in particular." Its role became important for shaping and molding the public the press was responsible for diffusion of knowledge and, thus became a symbol progress. By bringing the people of far away regions closer to each other, journalism fostered the spirit of national integration.

The role of the press, especially towards molding the destiny of the nation the 19th and 20th centuries was noteworthy. The problems like maladministration radicalism, educational policies, discrimination and the activities of Christian missionary's exploitative economic policies of the British were brought out in the columns of press. The vernacular press posed a great threat to the well-entrenched colonial and it took up the role of an oppositional force to the British government. The organized public opinion was the manifestation of the development of the press. It stimulated public spirit and set high standards of public duty. With the growth' of national movement the press in India became vocal and critical of British policies. There administration made its earnest effort to arrest its growth by enacting various leg Editors were persecuted and many were threatened of dire consequences. In Britain, a free press was regarded as the cornerstone of national liberty and its lack the I of tyranny.

Under the influence of Pan-Islamism, Urdu journalism became more in its tone against the British imperial designs in Turkey. The newspapers Hamdard AI-Hilal and Zamindar expressed anti-British opinion and Indian Muslims were convinced of their religion being in danger. The Urdu daily heavily condemned on the government and its policies. It brought the Muslim more closed to the Indian National Congress at that time. It was the greatest contribution of press. "The dominant currents", says R.K Trivedi, "even in the Urdu Press nationalist in spite of official encouragement to separatism since 1905. Besides, the press made valuable contribution in the cultural sphere by raising problems faced by the common man. The press then became an established institution for political propaganda and mass mobilization.

During the past, news travelled by word by Mouth. There has always been a practice of maintain some kind of communication gap between the Government and the people in the past. Man from times immemorial has been curious to know about what, why and how of events and objects in places far and near. Man tried to overcome the lack of information and communication gap in various ways and continuous striving and experimentation over a period of centuries produced the magazines.

The word "Magazine" was in usage from 1731 onwards. The term "Magazine" is derived from the Arabic word "Makazin" which means, "a particular publication containing articles by various writers, chiefly a particular publication intended for general rather than learned or professional readers consisting of a miscellany of critical and descriptive articles, essays, works of fiction, etc.,

The discovery paper by the Chinese took place during the second century A.D. But it was not known to the Europeans until the 16th Century. Similarly the printing press also discovered for the first time by the people of China. When the Muslims entered in china as a adventurers during 704 A.D., they introduced the paper to the world. When we study the foundation of Muslim newspaper in India, the first Muslim Newspaper "Jam-i-Jahan-Nama" was published in Calcutta during April 1822.

As per the census report of 1891, the total number of Muslim population in Vellore district was, 1, 91, and 937. Among them some were busy in their commercial trade, while some were engaged in agriculture and very few Muslims only concentrated in educational services, which led to founding of magazines. The reason for this could be. Islam gave much important to acquire knowledge. Seek knowledge, even if it needs that you should go to china. The acquisition of knowledge is incumbent on every Muslim.

Thus spoke the last of the profits on the important of seeking and spreading knowledge. As the mirror of voice of his followers, the Muslim Press of Vellore had a sacred duty to perform towards the enlightenment of the community. From 1860 onwards the Muslim Magazines were published and circulated in Vellore district. Those magazines were not strictly religious but they also carried some of the social, political, economical, cultural and historical articles. The Muslim publications were easily identified by their title itself.

When the British rule existed in the Madras Presidency, it intruded many Acts in order to Control the Press. Several restrictions were imposed on the publication. The Acts like the Vernacular Press Act of 1878, the Newspaper Act of 1910, the Indian Press Powers Act of 1931, the Press Act of 1951, the Newspaper Act of 1956 were introduced and sever restrictions were imposed on Press. In the Independence India, during PM Indira Gandhi's regime the brutal anti- Press measure was introduced to curb the voice of the opposition. Though several restrictions were imposed on the press during the Pre-Independence and Post-Independence period, but those acts unable to arrest the growth of Magazines.

Several Muslim magazines were published in Vellore district but many of them were stopped in the early period itself due to lack of public interest and due to financial problems. But the names of those magazines still remembered by the Muslims of Vellore district. Hence it stipulated the scholar to do research on Muslim Magazines in Vellore district. To research on Muslim Magazines in Vellore district and to reconstruct the thesis on "The History of Muslim Magazines in Vellore district" many sources were consulted. Particularly the roles of press in National Resurgence by Vinod Bhatnagar, "The Role of Press in Tamil Nadu during the Freedom Struggle" (1917-1931) by A. Ganesan and 'Tamil Islamiya Ithazgal oru Aaivu' (in Tamil) by

A.M. Samy are the main sources consulted to describe the History of Muslim magazines in Vellore district. Similarly the Ph.D. unpublished thesis like "The Muslims of Tamil Nadu (1801- 1910) by M. Abdul Rahim, "Tamil Press and the Nationalist Movement (1905-1939) by K. Mohan Ram and the unpublished thesis of Prof. Mohammed Tajud-din on "Studies in the History of Vaniyambadi" are consulted to fill up the gap and to ascertain clear detail about the Muslim Magazines.

The thesis consists of five chapters including the Introduction. The British Government brought several changes in various fields during the 18th Century. It also introduced Western education in India. Following this, many India got the opportunity to study western education in spite of the opposition by the Hindu and Muslims in India. They suspected that the British introduced the English education at that time; they realized the importance in India and in course of time, they realized the importance of western education. They began to criticizing the British policies through their private writings, newspapers and other available media. All those things are deplaned in the Introduction. The Second Chapter deals with the Early Muslim Settlements the Introduction.

The third chapter consists of 'the origin' and the development of Muslim Magazines in Tamil Nadu'. Most of the Muslim Magazines in Tamil Nadu were started during the 18th century. In the beginning much importance was given to preach their religious aspects. Most of the Muslim Urdu Magazines were published from Madras from 1830 onwards. Some of the magazines were published to bring political awareness among the Muslims of Madras Presidency and to highlight the principles of Islam. Similarly to promote the status of women and encourage women education many magazines were started both in Tamil and in

Urdu.

The Fourth Chapter 'History of Muslim Magazines in Vellore district' deals with the magazines which were publishers in Vaniyambadi, Ambur, Arcot, Melvisharam, Omerabad and Pernambut. In those towns most of the Urdu speaking Muslims got settled during the Nawabs of Arcot period. The Muslim Urdu and Tamil magazines which were published in Vellore district has been narrated chronologically in the Chapter.

The Fifth Chapter deals with the 'Role of the Muslim Magazines in Vellore district. The Muslim magazines brought unit among the Muslims in the field of social, economical, religious and political aspects. They also contributed very much for the development of education, political consciousness and social upliftment, community welfare, and to the growth of literature. The Muslim Magazines played a remarkable role for the development of Muslims of Vellore district in particular and the people in general have been discussed.

The Conclusion gives an overall assessment, provides the extracts of previous chapters.

The thesis helps to understand the literacy attempts of Vellore Muslims to publish magazines.

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3. AS. Khursheed, *Sahafat Pakistan-o-HindMein*, (1963 Lahore), p.212.
4. See Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, *Tahzeeb-ul-Akhlaq*, Vol. I, pp. 22-40.
5. *The Aligarh Institute Gazette* was an Urdu-English bi-Weekly paper, edited and published by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. *The Aligarh Institute Gazette* was a pro-British paper opposed to the ideology of the Indian National Congress. Though its , circulation was limited to upper middle class Muslims, it exercised considerable influence on the minds of Muslim in general.
6. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was impressed by two journals, *The Tatler* and *Spectator*, these had a great influence on the British Society. Sir Syed decided to publish a journal *The Tahzib-al-Akhlaq*, on the same model to bring socio-political and religious reforms among the Muslims. *The Tahzib-al-Akhlaq* was first published in 1870. Also see *Heyat-e-Jawed*, pp. 123-124.
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24. Bipin Chandra, *op. cit.*, p. 103
25. *The Hamdard* was an Urdu Weekly newspaper. Its editor was Mohar (first published in 1911). On the

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26. The *Al-Hilal* was an Urdu Weekly published from Calcutta. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was its editor. In one of his articles dated, 1st September 1912 he advocated the cause of liberty, equality, fraternity and unity among Hindus and Further, he supported peaceful and constitutional means for independence. The *Al Hilal* set an example for new style before the Urdu journalists.
 27. R. K. Trivedi, *op. cit.*, p. 255.
 28. The *Hamdard* was an Urdu Weekly newspaper. Its editor was Mohammad Ali, (first published in 1911). On the Turkish question, it became the soul spokesman of the Indian Muslims.
 29. The *Al-Hilal* was an Urdu Weekly published from Calcutta. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was its editor. In one of his articles dated, 1st September 1912 he advocated the cause of liberty, equality, fraternity and unity among Hindus and Muslims. Further, he supported peaceful and constitutional means for independence. The *Al Hilal* set an example for new style the Urdu journalists.
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