CHAPTER-I
PRINT MEDIA AND THE HISTORY OF URDU JOURNALISM IN NORTH INDIA

In order to discuss the role played by women's journals/magazines in Northern India in the first half of the twentieth century, first it is necessary to know about the history of Urdu journalism1 and the social scenario of its development in India.

After the decline of Mughal Empire, Urdu language flourished and many Urdu poets like Wali, Shiraz, Sauda, Mir Dard, Mir Soze, Mir Taqi Mir, Mir Hasan, Syed Insha, Mushafi, Momin, Ghalib, Jur’at, Ātish and Zauq belonged to this age. With the establishment of British Rule in India, Urdu became the language of elite among the Muslim of North India. At that time, Delhi, Lucknow, Rampur, Agra etc were the prominent centres of Urdu literature2.

The history of journalism in India is related to printing Press. Journalism started in India at first by the European venture and under the patronage of the British East India Company. In 1767 an Englishman named Bolts made an attempt to start a newspaper, but he failed because the Government deported the author of the enterprise. Then, on 29th January, 1780, James Augustus Hicky started a weekly paper from Bengal called Bengal Gazette or Calcutta General Advertiser which was the first newspaper to be published in India. The initiator of this newspaper was also known as the father of Indian Press in India3. Apart from Bengal, the other newspapers such as Bombay Herald and Madras Courier were also published from Bombay and Madras4.

During the earlier time, Journalism was confined to English language only. The Periodicals in Vernacular did not appear before 1818 A.D and the second half of

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3 Ibid, p-223.
the nineteenth century marked the beginning of the Vernacular Press in India. At first the Christian Missionaries and the Bengali Hindus brought out these newspapers. The Baptist Missionary of Serampur took the initiative for the publication of newspaper and it brought out five Bengali papers apart from one Persian and Hindi paper from 1816-30. These Baptist Missionary also motivated the Bengali Hindus who entered into the field of journalism. The most significant among them were Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Hari Dutt and Bal Ganga Dhar Tilak. At that time the Bengali Muslim kept themselves far away from the Press due to the consequences of the battle of Plassey and Buxar. The only newspaper which brought out by a Muslim was *Samachar Sabhara Jandra* by Shaikh Aleemuddin from Calcutta in 1831.

Thus, the period of Vernacular Press in India can be divided into two phases, before the war of 1857 and after that. Before the war, the tone of Vernacular Press was less political and more social in character but after that it was more political and radical. At that time many political associations were formed by educated Indians from Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. With the elevation of political ties, many Indian owned newspapers in different Vernacular languages came and also in English languages published. Thus the Vernacular newspaper of Indian languages reflected the popular opinions.

Later on the breaking of war, new Press law was implemented. The Governor General Lord Canning promulgated a new Press regulation which was known as *Gagging Act*. According to this Act, a license was required for the printing of newspapers. It was operated for one year only and applicable to all papers, Indians and Anglo-Indians.

About the British Government policies towards Press we find that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Advisory council of Governor General issued directives towards the conduct of newspapers. An order was issued on 22nd May 1901, through which all the newspapers owner and editors were warned to check their

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   Also cited, Krishna Murthy, Nadig, p-219.
7 *Khāōōn*, ed. Muhammad Abdullah, Shaikh, vol-5, no-6, (June, 1908), pp-201-203.
8 Majumdar, R.C, p-239.
newspapers by the Chief Secretary before the publication of newspaper⁹. During earlier times the growth of Press became slow due to the strict control of Press and new restriction was imposed on Press.

In 1823 an order was passed by John Adam, the acting Governor General in India. According to which a license was mandatory for the publication of newspapers, books and printing Press. It was mainly enforced in Bengal Presidency. The main purpose for the promulgation of this law was to curtail the freedom of Press. Though one of the social reformers of that time, Raja Rammohan Roy opposed this act and appealed to Supreme Court but his appeal was not accepted. However it did not last long¹⁰. In 1835 Charles Metcalfe became the Governor General who gave liberty to the Vernacular Press and in 1836 Urdu as a Vernacular language was officially recognized¹¹. The decline of Persian as an official language paved way to Urdu to gain prominence and after English and Bengali, Urdu was the third language newspaper in India.

Before the appearance of Urdu journals, the Persian newspapers provided the reading material to the public. Some of the important Persian newspapers such as Mirat-ul-Akhbar by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Zoobdut-ul-Akhbar by Munshi Wajid Ali Khan, Sultan-ul-Akhbar by Rajab Ali Lakhnavi and Gulshan-i-Naubahar by Abdul Qadir of Bengal were the fore-runner of Urdu Press¹². In fact, Bengal was the birth place of Urdu journals. Though there were different views regarding the first newspaper in Urdu language but it seems that Jam-i-Jahan Numa was the first Urdu newspaper which laid the foundation of Urdu journalism in India. It was published from Calcutta on 27th March 1822 by Hari Har Dutt and Munshi Sada Sukh Lal. It was a Persian newspaper at first as Persian was the language of elite at that time and Urdu was the language of common people but after the dominance of Urdu language the editors of this paper were forced to switch over from Persian and in the next year an Urdu supplement was added¹³.

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¹⁰ Majumdar, R.C, p-228.
¹¹ Farooqi, K.A, p-800.
Also cited, Krishna Murthy, Nadig, pp-253-254.
We can divide the history of Urdu journalism into three phases:\(^{14}\):

- The Newspapers of early nineteenth century.
- The Urdu journals published from 1901 to 1947 (the main area of my research) and
- The Urdu journals and magazines published after Independence till 1986.

About the social scenario of the development of Urdu journalism in India, we find that it started under the patronage of East India Company in Bengal because at first its development came under their control. The British had no love for Urdu language and they wanted to achieve their expansionist designs through the use of this language. However within a few decades, the circulation of Urdu newspapers increased and the nationalist Indians spread the message of patriotism through these newspapers and created an all-India consciousness among the masses\(^{15}\). According to Tahir Masood\(^{16}\), the growth of Urdu Press increased from 1851 to 1856 and many newspapers were published from important Urdu centres such as Delhi, Agra, Lucknow, Banaras, Lahore, Madras and Bombay. He collected the nineteenth century’s Urdu newspapers from all over India before the uprising of 1857. Some of revolutionary newspapers of pre-mutiny period which were published from Delhi were *Delhi-Urdu-Akhbar* edited by Agha Muhammad Baqar in 1836 through which the Muslims were entered in the field of journalism as earlier it was dominated by non-Muslims, *Saiyid-ul-Akhbar* by Syed Muhammad in 1937, *Karim-ul-Akhbar* by Maulvi Karim-ud-din in 1845, *Fawaid-ul-Nazarain* and *Muhhib-i-Hind* by Rama Chandra in 1852, *Sadiq-ul-Akhbar* by Jamil-ud-din in 1854 etc\(^{17}\).

Besides Delhi, the other centres from North India where many Urdu newspapers came into existence were Lahore, Banaras, Agra, Lucknow, Shimla, Meerut, Bareilly and Calcutta. Among the well-circulated newspapers mention may be made of *Omdat-ul-Akhbar* started by Tregaer from Bareilly in 1847, *Shimla*
Akhbar by Shaikh Abdullah from Shimla in 1848, Kohinoor edited by Munshi Har Sukh Rai and Darya-i-Noor by Munshi Sunder Lal from Lahore in 1850, Noor-ul-Absar from Agra by Munshi Sada Sukh Lal in 1850, Aftab-i-Hind from Banaras by Babu Kashi Mithar in 1852, Tilism-i-Lucknow by Maulvi Yaqoob Ansari and Sahr-i-Samri by Pandit Baijnath from Lucknow in 1856 etc. All these newspapers spread the message of anti-British sentiments before the rebellion of 1857 and when the war started their tone became bitter against the policies of East India Company. In short, these newspapers reflected the inner unrest against the British. However, the majority of Urdu newspapers at that time was interested in political affairs and received the direct or indirect assistance from Government or private individuals for its circulation. The expenditure to conduct of these newspapers was large and sometimes the manager had to face loss. Thus, prior to the revolt, the progress of Urdu journalism was very slow.

However after 1857, Urdu journalism had entered a new era of development due to the introduction of lithography. This period is considered important for the development of Urdu newspapers and periodicals. At that time, the Urdu newspapers not only discussed the public and political affairs but much emphasis was given to education especially the historical and scientific aspects. The people became interested in western knowledge, culture and the way of governance. Thus the notion of Urdu journalism and literature changed and the editors and contributors tried to meet the needs of the time.

Thus, the Sepoy mutiny of 1857 had a great impact on Urdu journalism. According to J. Natarajan, ‘as soon as the revolt broke out, many newspapers of North-West Provinces had ceased publication. In 1853 the number of Urdu newspapers was thirty five, however in 1858, their number came down to only twelve out of which six were old and six new. The editor of only one of these twelve papers was a Muslim’. At that time, many important centres of Urdu literature faced the
flame of this mutiny. One of the main centres was Delhi, where thousands of men, women and children left their home and got shelter in other places, far away from Delhi but the great poet of Urdu literature Ghalib did not get away from realities and faced the situation. The other Urdu centres such as Lucknow, Meerut and Kanpur etc also witnessed the horror of this Mutiny.

During the post-mutiny period, a large number of Urdu journals were published from important centres such as Delhi, Calcutta, Lahore, Agra, Lucknow, Aligarh, Meerut etc. Some of the important journals circulated in 1858 were *Oudh Akhbar* edited by Munshi Nawal kishore from Lucknow, *Urdu Guide* from Calcutta edited by Maulvi Kabiruddin in 1858, the *Scientific Society Magazine* by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in 1866, *Roznamah-i-Punjab* by Khwaja Ahmad Hasan from Lahore in 1875. The other were *Nusrat-ul-Akhbar* published from Delhi by Nasir Ali in 1876, *Oudh Punch* published from Lucknow by Sajjad Husain in 1877, *Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq* published from Aligarh by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in 1880, *Delhi Punch* launched by Munshi Nissar Ali Shubrat in 1880, *Shan-i-Hind* started by Maulana Shaukat Husain from Meerut in 1883, *Paisa Akhbar* from Lahore edited by Munshi Mahboob Alam in 1887 etc. These newspapers expressed the theme of patriotism which helped to understand the significance of the rebellion of 1857. Thus, there was remarkable progress of Urdu journalism from 1879 to 1900.

However, at that time only the men dominated the field of Journalism and the women kept themselves far away from this journalistic venture due to their marginalised condition in society. Thus, the first newspaper for women in Urdu was published by Maulvi Syed Ahmad Dehlavi in 1887. Later on in early twentieth century the women began to participate in this process.

The beginning of the twentieth century was the turning point in the history of Urdu journalism which came with the new revolutionary ideas. The foundation of
Congress in 1885, the Partition of Bengal in 1905, formation of Muslim league in 1906, the Kanpur Mosque incident in 1913, Hindu Mahasabha in 1915, the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre in 1919, the Swaraj and the Khilaafat Movement in 1919-1922 and Aligarh Movement etc. had great influence on Urdu journals which now turned towards nationalism. The number of publications increased which were mostly weekly, fortnightly or monthly journals. The most important among them were *Sulh-e-kul* published from Gorakhpur, *Watan* by Maulvi Sanaullah Khan from Lahore in 1902, *Urdu-i-Mualla* published from Aligarh by Hasrat Mohani and *Zamindar* started by Maulvi Siraj-ud-din Ahmad from Lahore in 1903 which later edited by his son Zafar Ali Khan, *Urdu Swarajya* by Bhatnagar from Allahabad in 1907. The other prominent newspapers which published at that time were *Hamdam* of Lucknow, *Saheefa* of Kanpur, *Madeena* of Bijnor, *Khilaafat* of Bombay, *Aina* of Meerut, *Jadu* of Jaunpur, *Koukab-e-Hind* of Agra, *Al-Aman* of Delhi and *Rozana Akhbar* of Bareilly etc.

At that time the most outstanding newspapers which created political and religious consciousness among the Muslim were *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh* started by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in 1912 and 1914 from Calcutta, *Hamdard* started by Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar from Delhi in 1912, *Hamdam* by Maulana Abdul Bari from Lucknow in 1915, *Pratap* by Mahashe Krishan from Lahore in 1919 and *Milap* by Mahashe Khushal Chand from Lahore in 1923, *Bande Mataram* by Lala Lajpat Rai from Lahore in 1920, *Tej* by Swami Shraddhanand from Delhi in 1923, *Inquilab* by Maulana Abdul Majeed Salik and *Siyasat* by Maulana Ghulam Rasool Meher published from Lahore in 1938 etc.

During the time of partition many periodicals awakened the Indians such as *Zamana* by Daya Narayan Nigam, *Nai Duniya* by Anis-al-Rahman, *Kaleem* by

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26 Krishna Murthy, Nadig, p-257.
Also cited, Dehlavi, Anwar Ali, pp-51-52.

27 *Awaz-i-Niswan*, vol-7, no-12, (December, 1939), p-40


Also cited, Krishna Murthy, Nadig, pp-257-258.

Josh Malihabadi, *Shayer* by Seemab Akbarabadi, *Aina* by Ibn Hasan Faqr, *Gadar-i-Hindustan* by Gadar party and *Payam-i-Watan* by Syed Hasan etc. However, Urdu journalism had a setback after 1947 and many publications of Urdu journals ceased. Thus there was a gradual decline in Urdu journalism.

In short, the history of Urdu journalism and the social scenario of the period prepared the ground for the publication of major women’s Urdu journals in Northern India which is my special field of study.

At the second half of nineteenth century, the journals for women appeared in various Vernacular languages. Thus, the growth of women literate in Vernaculars played an important role to create awareness among women and spread consciousness among them for their rights. The Bengali magazines such as *Antahpur* and *Bamabodhini Patrika* led the way. In the same way, Urdu journals played the most crucial and catalyst role at that time for projecting women’s issues and the emancipation of women among the *Sharif* (noble) Muslim families in Northern India. We find that earlier the Muslim women did not set up their mind to involve themselves in journalism.

However, in late nineteenth century the Muslim middle class from the Mughal service gentry in North India realized the need of reforms and one of the most renowned social reformer and journalist Sir Syed Ahmad Khan took up the question of male education at first through his efforts of print media such as *Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq*, *Scientific Society* and the establishment of M.A.O College which later became Aligarh Muslim University. He was quite successful in his mission of educating the male section particularly the Muslim and he did not support female education at first. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan thought that education was not necessary for women at that time and remarked, ‘to introduce female education among Muhammadan will, under the present social circumstances, prove a complete failure’.

About ‘female education’, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan stated that ‘no satisfactory education can be provided for Muhammadan females until a large number of

31 Dehlavi, Anwar Ali, p-55.
32 Krishna Murthy, Nadig, p-264
34 Khātoon, vol-2, no-2, (February, 1905), p-80.
Muhammadan males receive a sound education. The present state of education among Muhammadan females is in my opinion enough for domestic happiness, considering the present social and economic condition of the life of the Muhammadan in India. This statement is reported in 1882 before the Indian Education Commission.

It is alleged that Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was against female education but in his speech of Gurdaspur (Punjab) in 1884 and in many other addresses of Muhammadan Educational Conference (MEC), he considerably emphasised on female education. He was of the opinion that first the male members of the society should be educated then the ground will be prepared for female education automatically. It is a question of priority, first the male and then the female section would be benefitted from this and at Aligarh the question of female education was taken up by his associate Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah and other supporters.

Thus, in early twentieth century the women started to enter in the field of journalism as the concept of ‘new women’ arose and they became the editor of various journals, writers of many novels and stories etc. Apart from this, the women also came forward to start their own schools and organizations. However, the social and organizational development among the women progressed to a great extent in South India than in North India.

According to S. Natarajan, who defined the meaning of women’s journalism i.e., ‘Journalistic contents meant for women and the journalistic contents gathered, written or produced by women.’

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Also cited, Panipati, Muhammad Ismail, Syed Ahmad Khan ka Safar Nama-e-Punjab, (ed.) Ali, Maulvi Syed Iqbal, New Delhi,1979,pp-141-46.
41 Natarajan, S, p-140.