

ROLE OF URDU JOURNALISM IN FREEDOM STRUGGLE OF INDIA

(From 1857 to 1947- An analytical study)

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Statement of the Problem

The small island-Kingdom of British created one of the largest empires in India. The adventure that the mercantile enterprises, the *East India Company*, had started in the beginning of the seventeenth century culminated in the extensive political domination and economic power by the middle of the nineteenth century. The rise of the purely mercantile Company to be a permanent political entity in India had three phases. In the First phase the activities of the *East India Company* were confined to trade; in the second phase the company eliminated the European rivals through armed conflict and succeeded in establishing its trade monopoly and political influences in India; and in the third phase, the company combined commerce with conquest and achieved unparalleled success in building up a vast empire in the sub-continent. However, during its activities spanning over a century, The British rule in India had created chaos and unrest among the Indian people, which led them to revolt against the British government, culminating in the war of independence of 1857.

Moreover, one must not forget the fact that this War was not an immediate result of a mass movement rather it was a revolt of the soldiers serving in the Indian army. Truly speaking this War was not only an overt expression of dissent against foreign rule, but at the same time this was also a clash of different economic, financial, administrative, legal, educational and, warfare

systems. There were multiple causes of this revolt other than the one that is often stated as the major cause, the case of the new Enfield rifles.

Though this war of independence was a total failure and Indians could not resist this powerful tyrant rule, the people of different cast, class, creed, religion and deferent section of the society still kept their hopes alive and stood up against this rule and tried their best to get the country freedom from the clutches of this colonial government using all the possible means. Urdu journalism was one of those means which played an outstanding role in infusing the spirit of freedom among the people and making their opinion against the suppressive government.

The role of Urdu press during the War of Independence is still needed further exploration and analysis by the researchers and historians of today. The main focus of this research is to analyze the role of Urdu newspapers in the War of Independence in qualitative and quantitative terms through content analysis, so that a link may be established between the war and the role of Urdu newspapers. This research would also focus on the British attitude and actions against the 'Native Press' during and after the War, as one of the indicators of the impact and strength of this press. The reflections of the contents and extract of some important newspapers of that time would also be included to help in analyzing the role of press.

This dimension of the War seems even more significant when it is combined with the fact that Urdu press was completely wiped out from Delhi and Lucknow after the War of 1857. Urdu Journalists and editors had scarified their lives through their pen and paper; they fought against the mighty British rule. But, due to number of reasons Urdu has lost its place as language in

modern India and thus the contributions and achievements of this language have vanished from the core research activities. Therefore, examination of the contribution of Urdu journalism will not only help in identifying the contributions of forgotten heroes but also role of journalism in freedom struggle, how Urdu journalists made sacrifices and how they had fought against the mighty British will also be revealed.

Further, the researcher will also make an attempt to re-visit the secular tones of freedom movements through an in-depth analysis of the secondary sources, so as to provide an unbiased reality of the facts, which, with the passage of time, has lost its sheen, due more to ever increasing communal shades getting deep rooted in the Indian mindset.

Some steps have been taken in this direction which is incomplete due to insufficient attention and courtesy. Some scholars have put their best efforts to cast out the role of Urdu journalism in freedom struggle, but due to inaccessibility to necessary documents, records and scattered data they could not achieve their objective. Especially in English language no considerable work has been done on this subject.

Aims and objectives of the study

- To study the origin, growth and development of the Urdu journalism in India.
- To assess the role of press in the freedom movement in India.
- Identify the relationship between Urdu Press and freedom Movement.

The Research Methodology

The nature of the proposed study is historical; therefore the historical methodology had been adopted for the study. On the basis of Primary and Secondary information various historical events, birth of the Urdu newspaper has been highlighted. The role of Urdu Press in freedom struggle also assessed and evaluated, considering socio-economic and political paradigm.

The proposed study is based on the secondary sources. The previous studies, chronological compilation, reports, gazettes, archival collections etc. had been the main source of data collection and analysis. Therefore it can say that the library data was very important for this study.

After collecting the facts from recognised secondary sources and through examination of less known data, the topic had been analysed and the findings of the study had been drawn. The pro-government and anti-government nature of the Urdu press have been examined with the help of comments, research and archival material and exploratory tools such as collection of secondary facts, observation by researcher and qualitative analysis have been done.

The sources available relating to the subject may be classified as under:

- 1. Sources on the Decline of the Mughal Empire gradually in India.***
- 2. Sources on the advent of British in India.***
- 3. Sources on the decentralization of power of Bahadur Shah Zafar.***
- 4. Sources on the freedom movement against British Rule in India.***

Such sources can be divided into further three categories as mentioned below:

1. Library-oriented sources.

2. Archival Sources.

3. Journalistic Sources.

Library oriented sources are available in two forms including published and unpublished ones. Research on the topic relating to the discipline of history virtually depends on ‘Basic Documents.’ Research aims to ‘re-conclude the conclusions’ or to ‘restructure the existing historical structures.’ To give a new dimension to the existing conclusion requires support of the relevant library sources.

The thesis has been divided in to six chapters; here the glimpses of all six chapters are being presented.

First Chapter

Frame work of the study

First Chapter starts with the frame work of the study. In this chapter statement of the problem, need and importance of the study, the research methodology, aims and objectives of the study and outline of the thesis have been discussed in detail. Researcher has tried to validate the study by briefing about the resources used, and approaches followed.

Second Chapter

Review of Literature

Second Chapter focuses on the detailed analysis and review of available literature in different libraries. In this chapter review of 38 relevant and remarkable books has been done.

Literature is the art of written work and manipulation. Review of literature is an essential part of any research. It is also important for shaping idea and reaching insight of the subject, with the help of this, a researcher gets an overview about the topic. Review of the topic demonstrates that the researcher knows the field which means more than reporting, what one have read and understood. Instead need to read it critically and write in such a way that shows researcher have a feel for the subject and know what the most important issues are and there relevance to the work.

Some of the books which researcher have referred for the preparation of the thesis are; They too fought for India's Freedom struggle a piece of exceptional work by Asghar Ali Engineer, then an astounding book by Mr. Gurbachan Chandan 'Urdu Shafat Ki Ibtida', followed by an incredible 'History of Indian Journalism' by Mr J.Natrajan, The press in India (perspective and relevance) an unimaginable work from Mr. K.S. Padhy and R.N Sahu, Urdu Journalism and freedom struggle of 1857 an incredible book by Mr. Masum Muradabadi, Mr. B.N. Ahuja's very famous book History of Indian Press and growth of Newspaper in India, Indian regional Journalism by P.K Rabindranath, An Overview on Urdu Journalism by G.D. Chandan, Hindustani Akhbar Navesi company ke Ahad me a very famous book on Urdu Journalism by Ateeq Siddique, Urdu Sahafat and Jang-e- Azadi by Sami Ahmad etc. At the end I comprehended that not one or two but all of these are real time milestones.

While going through these books researcher failed to imagine the kind of emotions every word conveys, every statements speaks loud the agony and pain the people have faced and suffered for such long span of time. Researcher

believes that he could have understood only 5% of intensity of what the writer must have written it with. Every book in itself is a magnum opus. Researcher feels privileged to have been able to read these books, rather researcher should say it should not be reading but experiencing these books. Researcher has shared a brief account of all these books mentioned above.

Third Chapter

Origin and development of Urdu Journalism in India

Third Chapter is about the origin and development of Journalism in India. A brief account has been given about the communication system in India before and in the early phase of East India Company. The different modes of communication have been dealt with in this chapter. The modernization and up gradation of technologies have been mentioned along with its implementation. It's evident in this chapter that how communication has evolved with times and ages. The communication system from every era that is from the times of Mughal's where new writers were appointed to write the news and information officers were hired for circulation of news and information to the time of printing press, where newspapers and pamphlets were printed has been conferred in this chapter.

The setting up of printing press in India and its journey of establishment has also been discussed in detail. The contributions of Christian missionaries, William Bolt and other variables responsible have also been mentioned. **Hicky's Gazette** the first ever newspaper, **India Gazette** the second Indian newspaper and **Calcutta Gazette, Bengal Journal and Oriental Magazine or Calcutta amusement** the third, fourth and fifth newspapers respectively

have been precisely discussed. These papers would remain a milestone for the world of journalism.

The different period has been dealt separately; the birth of Indian language journals was a remarkable point in the history. Later the Urdu journalism with reference to several big names like *Dehli Urdu Akhbar*, *Sadiq-ul-Akhbar*, *Tilism Lucknow*, *Sahar-e Samri*, *Umdat-ul- Akhbar*, *Akhbar-e-Murtazai*, *Peshawar*, *Aftab-e-Hind*, *Varanasi*, *Chashma-e-Faiz*, *Lahore*, *Payam-E-Azadi*, *Riyaz-e-Noor*, *Multan*, *Kooh-e-Noor*, *Lahore*, *Awadh Akhbar*, *Tareekh Baghawat-e-Hind*, *Awadh Punch*, *Qasim-ul-Akhbar*, *Akmal-ul-Akhbar*, *Paisa Akhbar*, *Wakil*, *Amritsar*, *Al-Hilal*, *Al-Balagh*, *Urdu-e-Mualla*, *Daily Milap*, *Madina*, *Bijnore*. etc. have been discussed in detail with all important information. Along with Urdu newspapers I have also named few others including *Boodi Prakash (Hindi)*, *Kashi-Varta-Prakashika (Bengali)*, and information regarding their content has also be stated.

This chapter concludes with a discussion on the effect of partition on Urdu journalism.

Fourth Chapter

Role and Contribution of Urdu Journalism in the Freedom Struggle of 1857

In fourth chapter strategic annexation of British in India has been discussed in detail, the way they entered our country with just an objective of business and then how it transformed to their desire of occupying the entire nation.

The detail study on different newspapers, their contributions, their sacrifices, and the torture the editors had to face in order to bring the realities to the masses of India. We would have remained unaware and uninformed of the actions and atrocities of the British in the absence of these newspapers. We often have heard of patriotic people but in the process of completing my thesis I have come across “The Patriotic Newspapers”.

It has also been clarified that the revolt was just not a spontaneous reaction on the greased cartridges but it was the outcome of the volcano which was present within everyone but erupted when the level of tolerance was exhausted and patience was lost. The reasons, the immediate causes, the planning, the strategies, the policies and reasons of failure of the war of 1857 have all been compiled in this chapter.

So far as the revolutionary movement is concerned, it did not begin only with guns and bombs but it started with the publication of newspapers also. The history of *Indian Freedom Struggle* spread over more than one and half centuries. The history of India's Independence will be incomplete without the mention of the role played by Urdu language and Urdu journalism. Urdu, which gave the fieriest slogan to the Freedom Struggle “*Inquilab Zinadabad*”, unparalleled in the history of any other languages played a vital role in shaping the freedom struggle movement.

The journalists at that time were deeply involved in politics and were engaged in constant war with the British rulers. ‘Politics was their passion, slogan and song’. For them, the life and politics were synonymous and the pen was

supposed to be used as ‘a crusader for freedom and not as means for creating literary artefacts.

This fact cannot be denied that Urdu language press in the Subcontinent was born in the hands of the colonial rulers, but at the same time it had rebellious sentiments in its roots right from the beginning.

The very fact that the founders of Jam-e-Jahan Numa were noble Hindu souls- Hari Har Datt and Munshi Sada Sukh Lal, while the first martyr for freedom in the history of Urdu journalism was *Molvi Mohd. Baqar*, is an indication that from the very beginning the language had a national character and was not confined to a specific religion.

Since Delhi was the Centre of all the activities of this war of Independence of 1857, the details of activities of this period mostly recorded in the newspaper of Delhi and neighboring areas (Lucknow, Agra and Lahore). Details of these newspaper are given bellow as per of their year of Publication till 1857 A.D. So that the role of Urdu newspapers in freedom struggle of 1857 A.D. may be highlighted it may also help to understand the trends of the newspaper of that time. Huge numbers of newspapers were published before 1857 A.D. obviously it is not possible to detail study and analysis all those newspapers neither all these papers played a role to pave way for the war of Independence equally. Therefore in this research only those newspapers had been discussed which openly confronted with the British rule and challenged their authority and emerged as the change agent. Sometimes expressed their grievances openly and sometimes in hidden way.

Dehli Urdu Akhbar, Sadiq-ul-Akhbar, Tilism Lucknow, Sahar-e Samri, Umdat-ul- Akhbar, Akhbar-e- Murtazai, Peshawar, Aftab-e-Hind, Varanasi, Chashma-e-Faiz, Lahore, Payam-E-Azadi, Riyaz-e-Noor, Multan, Kooh-e-Noor, Lahore, played very remarkable role of instilling the feeling of patriotism, the aggression of resistance, the spirit of revolution in the hearts of Indians. I have also mentioned how Urdu newspapers were safe and secured from the barriers of religion, caste, and creed, how newspapers spread the message of brotherhood among people of India.

Fifth Chapter

Urdu Journalism after Uprising of 1857

In fifth chapter status and the role of Urdu Journalism after the war of independence 1857 have been discussed in detail.

After the end of revolt of 1857, the scenario was completely different, the people were disheartened as a dream which was about to be realized was broken down into pieces, their hopes were shattered. At this time the motivation was a basic requirement which could again let them stand and again strengthen them to pursue their dreams. And here was the role of Urdu newspapers.

The Revolt of 1857 convinced the British the futility of interfering in the traditional socio-religious customs of India. The strong opposition to the social legislation especially coming from the orthodox elements in both the Hindu and the Muslim community put the British on the defensive. The self-confidence of the British and their plans for the rapid westernization of India through social reforms were shattered. The British, after the Revolt of 1857,

decided to concentrate in providing a sound and efficient administration rather than imposing western ideas and reform in a traditional Asian society.

After the Revolt of 1857, the British had patronized and applied the most unscrupulous policy to divide the Indians in different castes and classes.

The British tried to divide people on the basis of cast, creed and religion. The Hindus and Muslims were made to fight with each other, higher class Hindus were encouraged to fight with lower caste Hindus and vice versa. Thus, there was deterioration in social harmony of the society.

I have mentioned few remarkable newspapers like *Awadh Akhbar*, *Tareekh Baghawat-e-Hind*, *Awadh Punch*, *Qasim-ul-Akhbar*, *Akmal-ul-Akhbar*, *Paisa Akhbar*, *Wakil*, *Amritsar*, *Al-Hilal*, *Al-Balagh*, *Urdu-e-Mualla*, *Daily Milap*, *Madina*, *Bijnore*.

Above mentioned newspaper played significant and pivotal role in moulding public opinion against the foreign rule. See some examples which clearly identify the contribution of Urdu journalism after uprising of 1857.

Sixth Chapter

Findings and Conclusion

Then Researcher step into the sixth chapter. This chapter is the findings and conclusion of all the five chapters. Through this chapter I have tried to summarize entire work.

After deep study of the topic and related content analysis, the research may be summarized as under:

1. Huge number of Urdu newspapers in that period was publishing but few played an outstanding role in sowing seeds of revolt in the masses. Obviously it is not possible to detail study of all those newspapers. Therefore only those newspapers had been discussed in this thesis, which openly confronted with the British rule and challenged their authority, sometimes express their grievances openly and sometimes in hidden way.
2. This fact cannot be denied that Urdu language press in the subcontinent was born in the hands of the colonial rules but at the same time it had rebellious sentiments in its roots right from the beginning.
3. The very fact that the founders of Jam-e-Jahan Numa were noble Hindu souls; Hari Har Datt and Munshi Sada Sukh Lal, while the first martyr of Journalism in India was a Urdu Journalist Molvi Mohd Baqir. It is an indication that from the very beginning Urdu language had a national character and was not confined to a specific religion.
4. Urdu Journalism opened its eye under the patronage of East India Company. In fact they had not profound love for Urdu, their main interest in developing this language lay in using it for their own expansionist design.
5. After the content analysis of some important Urdu newspapers of the period and their approaches of covering the news of the War of independence of 1857, explains many ambiguities related to the role of Urdu journalism, before and after the War. An overview of the newspapers, clearly indicates that the freedom struggle of 1857 did not break out suddenly, but the process has already been started long back, revolt was just not a spontaneous reaction on the greased cartridges but it

was the outcome of the volcano which was present within everyone but erupted when the level of tolerance was exhausted and patience was lost, and the Urdu Journalism played an important to infuse the spirit of freedom among the people which was clearly reflected in the news coverage of this war by the Urdu newspapers of that time.

6. The Urdu papers played a vital role in sensitizing public sentiment against the British suppressive policies and in preparing ground for freedom from the British rule.
7. Newspapers and journals of the second half of the nineteenth century makes it very clear that the racial arrogance of the new masters and their exploitation of the country have antagonized the people most. The feelings, aspirations, frustration and anger of the people found full expression in the Urdu Journalism of that period.
8. Urdu Papers and journals wrote extensively on the issues of high handedness of the British officials, violation of rule of law, restrictions on the freedom of the press, discrimination in civil and military services, growing unemployment resentment against imposition of income tax etc. and helped promoting communal harmony which was pre requisite for freedom struggle.
9. Urdu Journalism always emphasized on Hindu Muslim unity for India's Freedom, without this it looks highly impossible.
10. In the beginning, the tone was mild and moderate, but later it became bitter and critical especially the partition of Bengal gave it a new and violent turn.

11. Contribution of Urdu Journalism, the immense sacrifices made by its editors and establishments has not received a deserving tribute.
12. Copies of the most of the newspapers are not available in the library records because of our acute negligence and whatever records available are like forgotten files crumbling, scattered here and there and are in the state of constant decay.
13. This rich national heritage may be lost, a heritage which would have inspired the younger generation irrespective of their cast, class, creed and religious differences.
14. The overview of the newspapers, clearly indicates that sudden break out of the War was not so sudden, rather things had started turning towards that end earlier and Urdu press was very well aware of this uprising which was clearly reflected in the tone of Urdu newspapers coming out of the areas where this War was actually fought.
15. Contributions of Non-Muslim in Urdu Journalism are unparalleled and matchless.
16. Urdu Journalist courageous and bold reporting against the British made the restless.
17. The tone and style of reporting was very provoking and patriotic, after reading the news the blood was started boiling in vein.
18. Urdu Journalism had its nationalistic viewpoint and always appeal to both community; Hindus and Muslims.

I have tried to decorate the facts with the ornaments of beautiful words and phrases.

Here I conclude by saying, words seem inadequate, expression fail to explain the beauty and charisma of THE URDU LANGUAGE., this is the language which added charm to poetry, meaning to prose and indeed LIFE to the great freedom struggle of India. It might have passed the zenith of its splendour but even today we doubtlessly remain indebted to this language in different way.