

## AHMADIYYA PRESS: SHAPING KASHMIR'S JOURNEY TOWARDS FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Shabir Ahmad GANAIE \*

Received: July 1th, 2025

Accepted for publication: August 15th, 2024

**Abstract:** This write-up delves into the history and pivotal role of the Ahmadiyya press in awakening political consciousness among the masses in Kashmir. It examines how the community's publications effectively brought global attention to the plight and suffering of the Kashmiri people, both within British India and beyond. The work also sheds light on the contributions of various Ahmadiyya newspapers and the influential figures associated with them, who played a crucial role in amplifying the grievances of Kashmiris. Furthermore, it explores how the Ahmadiyya press courageously exposed the oppressive doctrines of the Dogra regime and skillfully shaped public opinion in favor of Kashmiri Muslims on the international stage.

**Keywords:** Ahmadiyya; Al-fazal; Dogra; Freedom; Kashmir; Press

---

### Introduction

In early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the political landscape of Jammu and Kashmir was marked by authoritarian rule, where the Muslim population endured systematic oppression under the Maharaja's administration. The state imposed draconian laws that curtailed civil liberties, leaving the Muslim community without any legal recourse to voice their grievances or challenge the prevailing injustices. Any form of political dissent or criticism of the government was met with severe repercussions. A particularly poignant example of this repression occurred during the 1930s when Khawaja Sad-ud-Din Shawl of Srinagar, in an act of great audacity, personally petitioned the Viceroy of India to intercede on behalf of Kashmiri Muslims. His plea for justice, however, was met with swift retaliation—he was exiled from the valley, condemned to spend years in enforced separation from his homeland. Later it was only by the efforts of khawaja kamal-ud-din (Ahmadiyya missionary in charge London) who won the British favour for him and convened *Maharaja* to allow him to return Kashmir<sup>1</sup>.

---

\* University of Kashmir, India [shabeerhistory18@gmail.com](mailto:shabeerhistory18@gmail.com)

<sup>1</sup> Naseer-ud-din Munshi, *Tarikh-i-jang-i-azadi kashmir*, Kashmir Book Depo, Srinagar, Kashmir, Pp.38-39

This systematic suppression of free expression extended to the press. Until 1924, the state of Jammu and Kashmir lacked any indigenous newspapers, leaving the public bereft of a platform to articulate their socio-political concerns.<sup>2</sup> The earliest newspapers, *Amar* and *Ranbir*, were state-controlled publications that functioned as instruments of government propaganda, extolling the Maharaja's policies while deliberately abstaining from any form of critique. Even beyond the borders of Kashmir, newspapers such as *Milap* and *Pratap*, published in Punjab, operated under the Maharaja's patronage, ensuring that Kashmir's political realities remained obscured from wider public discourse. Prominent Muslim newspapers in British India, including *Zamindar*, *Inqilab*, and *Siyasat* from Punjab, as well as *Kashmiri Magazine* by Muhammad-Din Fauq of Lahore, were similarly constrained by British colonial censorship, reducing them to passive witnesses of Kashmir's plight.

Against this backdrop of institutionalized censorship, the Ahmadiyya community played a pivotal role in breaking the silence surrounding the Kashmiri Muslim predicament.<sup>3</sup> Sacrificing its own official press, the community provided an essential counter-narrative to state-sponsored misinformation. Newspapers such as *Al-Fazal*, *The Sunrise*, *Islah*, *Akbbar-i-Farooq*, *Paigham-i-Sulah*, *Noor*, and *Musleh* emerged as crucial vehicles for dissent, shedding light on the dire conditions prevailing in Kashmir.<sup>4</sup> These publications transcended the restrictive censorship of the time, documenting the socio-political marginalization of Kashmiri Muslims and bringing their grievances to national and international attention. In doing so, they not only challenged the entrenched hegemony of the Maharaja's regime but also laid the groundwork for broader political mobilization in Kashmir.<sup>5</sup> So it is in this context that we will briefly highlight the contributions of a few publications in the subsequent discussion.

---

<sup>2</sup> Bazaz P.N, *Inside Kashmir*, pp-353-54

<sup>3</sup> The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was founded in 1889 by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in Qadian. It stands as a fastest growing & dynamic revivalist movement within Islam. Ahmad claimed to be the Foretold Promised Messiah and Mahdi who sought to revitalize faith through reason, Rationality and spiritual Enlightenment. Renowned for its global missionary work, humanitarian efforts, brotherhood, and commitment to education, the community remains at the centre of theological and political discourse due to its distinct stance on the finality of the prophet hood. Despite enduring persecution, Ahmadiyya Muslims continue to advocate, Love, peace, interfaith harmony and nonviolence, shaping modern Islamic thought with their progressive vision....For detail go through the official website of the Ahmadiyya community ([www.alislam.org](http://www.alislam.org)).

<sup>4</sup> Ganaie Ahmad Shabir, *Forgotten Episodes of Kashmir History: Ahmadiyyas and the freedom Movement*, International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts, Vol-9, Issue-9, September-2021, ISSN-2320-2882.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

### The Al-fazal

The role of the Ahmadiyya press in shaping political awareness in Kashmir was crucial, and among the newspapers that actively worked for the rights of Kashmiri Muslims was *Al-Fazal*. This newspaper, founded in 1913 by Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad in Qadian, Punjab, Initially started as a weekly publication<sup>6</sup>. However, with time, its frequency increased—it was published three times a week and, by 1935, became a daily newspaper. At its core, *Al-Fazal* was a platform dedicated to clarifying the position of the Promised Messiah and reinforcing the authority of the Ahmadiyya *Khilafas* (Caliphs).<sup>7</sup> It regularly featured sermons, statements, and announcements from the Ahmadiyya leadership while also engaging with pressing political, social, and moral issues. It provided its readers with updates on both Indian and international affairs and emphasized the importance of education for Indian Muslims, believing that education was the key to their collective progress.<sup>8</sup> The political engagement of the Ahmadiyya community in Kashmir reached its peak between 1931 and 1934, during the height of the Kashmir crisis.<sup>9</sup> During this time, *Al-fazal* played an instrumental role in shedding light on the plight of Kashmiri Muslims. It became a strong critic of the Maharaja's government, publishing reports on the oppressive conditions in Kashmir and the struggles faced by its Muslim population. The paper covered protests and processions organized by Ahmadis in Punjab against the state government, demonstrating solidarity with the suffering Kashmiri Muslims.<sup>10</sup> One of its most impactful articles, published on July 16, 1931, titled "*Conditions of the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir: The Duty of the Muslims*", helped create widespread awareness across India about the struggles of Kashmiri Muslims. It urged the Muslim community to come forward and support their Kashmiri brethren in their fight for justice. Another article, "*Bloodthirsty and Oppressors of the Kashmiri Muslims*," highlighted the brutal incident of July 13, 1931, when 22 innocent Kashmiri Muslims were shot dead by the Dogra state forces. In the aftermath of this tragedy, the state government imposed a communication blackout and banned newspapers from reporting the situation.<sup>11</sup>

Despite such restrictions, *Al-fazal* remained steadfast in its mission. It continued to document the oppression in Kashmir, ensuring that the voices of the suffering people reached the broader Muslim community in India. The newspaper played a vital role in mobilizing public opinion, advocating for the

---

<sup>6</sup> Spencer Lavan, *The Ahmadiyya Movement: A history and perspective*, Manohar Book Service, Delhi, 1974, p.107.

<sup>7</sup> *Al-fazal*, Qadian, 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1914.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 1913, p.13

<sup>9</sup> Spencer Lavan, *The Ahmadiyya Movement*, p.145

<sup>10</sup> *Al-fazal*, Qadian, 16<sup>th</sup> July, 1931, p.13.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 21<sup>st</sup> July, 1931, p.3

civil rights and liberty of Kashmiri Muslims, and keeping their cause alive in the national discourse. Through its fearless journalism and unwavering support for the oppressed, *Al-fazl* not only became a beacon of hope for Kashmiri Muslims but also stood as a testament to the power of the press in awakening political consciousness and inspiring movements for justice. After the July 1931 riots, Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mahmud Ahmad *Khalifa* of the Ahmadiyya community took initiative in convening a meeting of some leading muslim intellectuals at Shimla on 25 July 1931 to consider the situation. It was in this historical meeting that the *All india Kashmir Committee* was formed.<sup>12</sup> After intense deliberations, the All India Kashmir Committee was formed. Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad was unanimously appointed as its President, while Abdul Rahim Dard was entrusted with the role of Secretary.<sup>13</sup> A bold and unprecedented step was taken—the committee declared August 14, 1931, as "*Kashmir Day*," a momentous occasion aimed at drawing global attention to the suffering of Kashmiri Muslims.<sup>14</sup> The renowned newspaper *Al-fazl* spearheaded an extensive media campaign, ensuring widespread awareness and participation. When the day arrived, it was marked with unparalleled enthusiasm, especially in Qadian, where a grand procession led by chaudhry fateh mohammad siyal was held, raised donations and passed resolutions against *dogra* raj showcasing extraordinary participation from women—a testament to the movement's widespread appeal.<sup>15</sup>



*Al-fazal, Qadian, 18<sup>th</sup> August.1931 A.D, [www.alislam.org](http://www.alislam.org)*

Through *Al-fazl*, the President of the Kashmir Committee issued a firm and uncompromising warning to the Maharaja of Kashmir, demanding his

---

<sup>12</sup> Ganai Muhammad Yousaf, *Kashmir, s struggle for independence (1931-39)* p.95. And *Islah*, Srinagar, 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1934.

<sup>13</sup> Abdullah Sheikh Mohammad, *Atish-e-Chinar*, Ali Mohammad and Sons, Srinagar, 1986, p.101

<sup>14</sup> *Al-fazal, Qadian*, 20<sup>th</sup> Aug.1931, p.3-4

<sup>15</sup> *Al-fazal, Qadian*, 18<sup>th</sup> August, 1931, p.1

immediate intervention to address the grievances of Kashmiri Muslims. He made it clear that if the Maharaja failed to act, stronger measures would be taken. In a decisive move, the committee also hinted that leadership of the movement could be transferred to more radical forces; escalating the pressure on the Maharaja this defining moment in history cemented the all India Kashmir committee as a powerful voice for Kashmiri Muslims, setting the stage for a prolonged and determined struggle for their rights. After the July 13, 1931 uprising in Kashmir, the Punjab press became deeply divided along communal lines. Hindu newspapers such as *Milap* and *Pratap* framed the Muslim resistance as a conspiracy against the Hindu Maharaja, justifying the state's violent suppression of Kashmiri Muslims. In contrast, *Al-fazal* strongly condemned this biased portrayal and exposed the Hindu press's distorted reporting of the Kashmir crisis. To discredit the movement, the Hindu press used sensational headlines, including: "Muslim Conspiracy Against the Hindu Maharaja" "Muslims Take Law into Their Own Hands" "Muslim Attack on Police" "Muslim Attempt to Break into the Central Jail to Free Prisoners" "Muslim Carnage and Loot in Kashmir's Cities" etc.<sup>16</sup> According to *Al-fazal*, these misleading narratives aimed to justify state-sponsored violence against Kashmiri Muslims and conceal the Maharaja's oppressive policies. In its August 6, 1931 issue, *Al-fazal* further criticized the Hindu press for falsely portraying the Kashmir agitation as a communal attack on Hindus, rather than a struggle against autocratic rule.<sup>17</sup> The paper exposed the double standards in their reporting by drawing a parallel with Indian revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh. While Hindu newspapers glorified Bhagat Singh's struggle against the British, they condemned Kashmiri Muslims for resisting oppression. This contradiction, *Al-fazal* argued, revealed the hypocrisy of the Hindu press, which supported rebellion when it suited their interests but vilified it when led by Muslims.<sup>18</sup> Through its bold stance, *Al-fazal* challenged the communal propaganda of the Hindu press and defended the legitimacy of the Kashmiri Muslim struggle. By exposing media bias, it played a vital role in shaping public awareness and resisting the suppression of truth.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Islah**

The newspaper *Islah* was launched in Srinagar on August 4<sup>th</sup> 1934 by the *Kashmir Relief Fund* Qadian.<sup>20</sup> Its editorial team included Chaudhry Abdul Wahid,

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1931, p.4

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> *Al-fazal*, Qadian, 6<sup>th</sup> August, 1931, p.1

<sup>20</sup> *Kashmir Relief Fund* was operated Within Ahmadiyya community under the supervision of Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, The Second *Khalifa* of the Ahmadiyya community. it was actually a mandatory charitable contribution requiring every earning Ahmadi to donate one pai (1/192 of a rupee) for every rupee earned per month. Every

Abdul Gaffar dar, Muhammad Amin Qureshi and Khawaja Ghulam rasool.<sup>21</sup> It was warmly received by several prominent figures, including Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, Abdul Sami Pal (Advocate, J&K High Court), and Abdul Hamid Qureshi (Editor of *Pasbaan*, Jammu). This newspaper was highly regarded and widely read among Muslim circles. It regularly published excellent scholarly articles. Its circulation was extensive at that time it was the only newspaper from Kashmir to be included in the government of India's list and boldly raises its voice for the protection of Muslim rights.<sup>22</sup> *Islah* emerged as a crucial instrument for political discourse, public education, and the articulation of public opinion within the Kashmir Valley. Unlike commercial newspapers, its primary objective was not financial gain but the service of the people, particularly the Muslim community of Kashmir. The newspaper gained significant readership, especially in Muslim-majority regions, and served as a platform to advocate for the fundamental rights and socio-economic needs of Kashmiri Muslims. It functioned as an opposition institution, critically analysing governmental policies and legal frameworks that were perceived as unjust. In response to its outspoken stance, the state authorities imposed restrictions to curb its influence.<sup>23</sup> Renowned for its in-depth analysis of contemporary socio-political issues, *Islah* published several significant editions, including: "*Needs of the Kashmiri Muslims*" (August 18, 1934) "*Muslims of Kashmir and Government Jobs*" (August 14, 1934) "*Economic Crisis in Kashmir and Its Solutions*" (September 18, 1934) "*How Is Muslim Development Possible in Kashmir?*" (September 25, 1934) "*The Only Solution to the Kashmir Cause*" (August 22, 1940). Beyond political discourse, the newspaper played a pivotal role in fostering unity and brotherhood among Kashmiri Muslims. It actively critiqued superstitions and baseless rituals that were prevalent in society, promoting instead a rational and progressive outlook.<sup>24</sup>

---

worldwide member of the community was expected to contribute, resulting in the collection of thousands of rupees as donation for the freedom of Kashmir. (Shahid Mohammad Dost, *Tarikh-i-Ahmadiyyat*, vol-5, p436, Nashro ishaat, Qadian)

<sup>21</sup> Qureshi Asadullah Muhammad, *Tarikh-i-Ahmadiyyat Kashmir*, ziyul islam press rabwa, p-131

<sup>22</sup> Fauq Mohammad-ud-din, *Tarikh-i-Aqwaam-i-Kashmir*, vol-2, p 690.

<sup>23</sup> Fauq Mohammad-ud-din, *Tarikh-i-Aqwaam-i-Kashmir*, vol-2, pp.285-86., And Shahid Mohammad Dost, *Tarikh-i-Ahmadiyyat*, vol-5, pp-667-68, Nashro ishaat, Qadian

<sup>24</sup> *Rehbar*, Deccan, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1934



(*Islah*, Kashmir, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1939, Archival section Noorudin Library Qadian)

According to Munshi Mohammad-ud-din Fauq, *Islah* provided an invaluable service to the people of Kashmir—one that he regarded as unforgettable.<sup>25</sup> Under the leadership of Khawaja Abdul Ghaffar Dar of Asnoor (Kulgam) and Chowdhury Abdul Wahid, the newspaper's reach extended to the remotest rural areas, including Ladakh. These leaders traveled on foot to document the hardships faced by marginalized communities and amplify their voices through the publication.<sup>26</sup> The *Islah* was unfortunately forcibly shut down in 1948 but its legacy remains significant in the historical narrative of Kashmir's socio-political awakening, reflecting a period when print media played a crucial role in mobilizing public consciousness and advocating for systemic reforms.

### The Sunrise

Among the most influential newspapers advocating for Kashmiri rights, *The Sunrise* a weekly English publication from Lahore—stood as a beacon of resistance and reform. Under the editorship of Malik Ghulam Farid (M.A.), it became more than just a newspaper; it was a force that shaped political discourse, challenged oppression, and amplified the Kashmiri struggle far beyond the subcontinent. The power of *The Sunrise* lay in its fearless journalism and strategic influence. Its articles were so impactful that newspapers across India frequently republished them, recognizing their depth and credibility. Unlike localized resistance efforts, *The Sunrise* carried the Kashmir issue to the global stage, exposing the brutalities of Dogra rule to European policymakers and reaching key figures in the British Parliament and

<sup>25</sup> *Alislah*, Srinagar, 12<sup>th</sup> August 1934

<sup>26</sup> Fauq Mohammad-ud-din, *Tarikh-i-Aqwaam-i-Kashmir*, vol-2, pp.285-86

the India Office in London. Its unwavering advocacy was acknowledged even by rival publications. Mr. Natrajan, editor of *The Reformer* (Bombay), remarked that *The Sunrise* defended Kashmiri Muslims with a boldness and efficiency unmatched by any other Muslim newspaper. It did not merely document injustices—it actively fought against them by shaping public opinion and influencing policy narratives.<sup>27</sup>



(*The Sunrise*, Lahore, 22<sup>nd</sup> january1938, Archival section, Noorudin Library, Qadian)

The Ahmadiyya community, through the All India Kashmir Committee, also harnessed the power of the press to advance the Kashmir cause. *The Sunrise* worked in tandem with other prominent Muslim newspapers, including *Inqilab* (Lahore), *Siyasat* (Lahore), *Munadi* (Delhi), and *Himat* (Lucknow). Together, these publications formed a powerful media front that countered state propaganda, mobilized mass support, and gave a resounding voice to Kashmiri Muslims.<sup>28</sup> The legacy of *The Sunrise* is one of defiance, intellect, and unwavering commitment to justice. It was not just a newspaper—it was a movement in itself, proving that the power of the written word could shake regimes, challenge oppression, and alter the course of history.

### Other Literary works

In 1931, Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mahmud Ahmad established *The Publicity Committee*, a dynamic initiative dedicated to championing the Kashmir cause

---

<sup>27</sup> Shahid Mohammad Dost, *Tarikh-i-Ahmadiyyat*, vol-5,p.434, Nasro-ishat, Qadian

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.35.



through the power of the press. Understanding that public awareness was key to mobilizing support, the committee set out to expose the realities of Dogra rule, enlighten the Muslims of the subcontinent, and shape opinion through compelling books, articles, and pamphlets. Its distinguished members—Sahibzada Mirza Bashir Ahmad (M.A.), Syed Zainul Abideen Waliullah Shah, and Maulvi Abdul Gani—worked tirelessly to craft a narrative that resonated across India and beyond. At the heart of its efforts were ground breaking publications that left an indelible mark on the Kashmir struggle. The *Situation in Kashmir* and *Muslims of Kashmir and Dogra Raj*, written by Mirza Bashir Ahmad, became defining texts on the issue. Recognizing their strategic importance, Malik Fazal Hussain translated them into English, ensuring their reach extended beyond Indian audiences. Published on September 30, 1931, these works became essential reading for leaders and activists. In a bold move to amplify their impact, Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mahmud Ahmad personally financed 150 copies and dispatched them to Muzaffarabad, ensuring their circulation among key Muslim leaders. Other influential works followed, including Fazal Hussain's *Kashmir Issue and Hindu Mahasabha* and *The Memorial Containing Demands of Kashmiri Muslims* (October 19, 1931). These publications, alongside a steady stream of pamphlets, handbills, and tracts, created an unrelenting media campaign that countered state propaganda and kept the Kashmir issue alive in public discourse.<sup>29</sup> The committee's efforts were not confined to the subcontinent. Maulvi Farzand Ali, the missionary-in-charge at Fazl Mosque, London, became a key figure in internationalizing the Kashmir cause. Acting on direct instructions from the *Khalifa*, he penned a twenty-page pamphlet titled *Kashmir: Past and Present*, distributing it widely in London. His outreach to major British newspapers—including *Morning Post*, *Sunday Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, and *News Chronicle*—ensured that Kashmir's struggle was no longer a regional issue but a subject of debate in Western political circles.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.497-98

<sup>30</sup> Ahmad Zahoor, *Kashmir-ki-kahani*, vol-1, Nawai Waqt Printers Limited Lahore, 1969, p.129. And *Al-fazal*, Qadian, 21st feb- 1932. And *Inqilab*, 19<sup>th</sup> nov-1931.



*Al-fazal, Qadian, 21<sup>st</sup> February.1932 A.D, [www.alislam.org](http://www.alislam.org)*

Through relentless advocacy, strategic publications, and international media engagement, the Publicity Committee changed the course of the Kashmir movement. It transformed journalism into a weapon of resistance, proving that well-crafted words, when wielded with conviction, could shake empires, awaken nations, and force the world to take notice.

### Conclusion

In the end it can be determined that the Ahmadiyya press was not just a voice in the Kashmir freedom movement—it was a revolution in itself. With the power of the written word, it ignited minds, mobilized the masses, and built an unshakable opposition against the tyranny of the Dogra regime. Fearless in its journalism and relentless in its pursuit of justice, it shattered silence, exposed oppression, and carried the plight of Kashmiri Muslims beyond borders. It did not merely report events—it shaped them, turning ideas into movements and awareness into action. More than just a press, it was a force of defiance, a beacon of truth, and a weapon against injustice. Its legacy is etched in history, proving that the power of words can shake empires, awaken nations, and change the course of destiny.