



ANTI IMPERIALIST ROLE OF DAILY ZAMINDAR IN PUNJAB

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ABSTRACT

The Daily Zamindar was the first Urdu newspaper to give a modern touch to the display of news to publish editorial comments on national and international events and to introduce a regular humorous column. Since the Daily Zamindar reflected Muslim emotions and sentiments, it soon acquired unprecedented popularity among the masses. Daily Zamindar played a vital role during the Balkan and Tripoli Wars and the Khilafat Movement. He also waged a constant war against repressive Press laws. Daily Zamindar had to pay dearly for its activities in the shape of conviction; imprisonment and forfeiture of securities. There are many ways to examine the role of anti-imperialist discourse in India, like the left-wing politics, Khalifat Movement (1919-1924), Radical Press and Anti-Imperialist role of Muslim press in India. The enquiry chooses editorializing of the Daily Zamindar during the period 1903-1947 as vantage to examine the role of Daily Zamindar, newspaper played in the rise of anti-imperialist consciousness in Punjab. As it only not mirrored the anti-imperialist feelings but also created political awakening. The study seeks to gauge the rise of anti-imperialist ideas in Punjab through vantage of editorials of the Daily Zamindar.

Key words: *Daily Zamindar, Moulana Zafar Ali Khan, Muslim Press, Freedom Movement, Anti-Imperialist.*

Introduction:

The publication of weekly 'Daily Zamindar' was started by *Maulvi Siraj ud Din Ahmad* (father of *Moulana Zafar Ali Khan*) in June, 1903 (Zulifiqar, 1994, p-20). In the beginning, it played an important role in protecting the rights of the cultivators of the British Punjab (1849-1947) and was least interested in political issues of British India. However, when *Moulana Zafar Ali Khan* (1873-1956) became its editor, he took keen interest in political affairs of the Muslims and he was present in the foundation session of the *All India Muslim League* held on December 30, 1906 at Dacca (Riaz, 1967, p-41). It was the time that *Moulana Zafar Ali Khan* had taken over *Daily Zamindar* after the death of his father on 6th December 1909. According to *Rauf Parekh*, in his article in *Daily Dawn*, *Daily Zamindar*, a newspaper edited by *Zafar Ali Khan*, was the platform he used to launch his ideas and mould the opinions of the masses. *Daily Zamindar* was indeed one of the most important and influential newspapers of the pre-independence India and had the power to mobilize the masses on any political or religious issue through its editorials, news items and opinions. It did create great political problems for the then colonial administration of the British India (Iqbal, 2011, 6th Nov). When *Zafar Ali Khan* took over the *Daily Zamindar*, its publication was only limited to about six hundred weekly. This paper was published from *Karamabad* on first, eight, sixteenth and twenty fourth of each month on large size twelve (12) pages and translated verse of *Quran* appeared on its front page.



“Allah does not change the condition of any nation unless the nation itself does not make an effort to”

Its publication was started in *Lahore* in May 1911, instead of Wazirabad. Under the leadership of *Zafar Ali Khan*, a new spirit was infused in the paper and within a short time. it was transformed into a first rate daily newspaper. At that time, it was the most important newspaper of the Punjab. *Rauf Parekh*, in his article, described that *Daily Zamindar* was by and large considered to be an agricultural newspaper back then. But after the death of *Maulvi Siraj ud Din Ahmed* in 1909, *Zafar Ali Khan* brought it back to Lahore and it began its publication from there on May 1, 1911, with a different stance. Now it was a proponent of the cause of the Muslims. Soon its editorials, news and views caught the fancy of readers and with a wider circulation it became a biweekly (Iqbal, 2011, 6th Nov). From 1st February 1911 the above mentioned *Quranic* verse was translated in Urdu language. The *Daily Zamindar* was exponent of welfare and economic condition of the peasant. Beyond the news items some essays and articles were published in it and also some of these items were published in a poetry form. *Daily Zamindar* came out as flag bearer of Islamic unity. *Zafar ali khan* was desirer of unity and progress of Muslim nation. This newspaper gave a strong base to the effort of independence of the Indian sub-continent and Muslim unity. *Zafar Ali Khan* shifted to Lahore on 16th April, 1911 as advised by his father’s friend named as *Chaundary Shahab ul Din*. The next issue of *Daily Zamindar* was published on 1st May, 1911 from Lahore. *Zafar Ali Khan* took up his residence in house of *Katree Amir chand* inside *Taxali Gate Heera Minda Lahore*. The office of the *Daily Zamindar* was established in the adjoining house. The circulation of *Daily Zamindar* increased to twelve thousand from six hundred on its shift to Lahore. The attention of *Zafar Ali khan* shifted from *Punjab Review* to the *Daily Zamindar* which became a representative of the emotions and feelings of general public. Besides the economic improvement of the Muslims, it also published articles about inter-religious harmony. Press reporters were appointed by *Daily Zamindar* in various cities and also news was obtained from the Reuter Agency. The *Daily Zamindar* criticized all other contemporary papers including *Civil and Military Gazette*, *Hindustan Tribune*, *Parkash*, *Punjabi Paper*, *Watan* and *Paisa* newspaper. These controversies with other papers increased the circulation of *Daily Zamindar* to about two thousand daily in a few months. The *Daily Zamindar* wrote critical reports about the political and social problems and due to this *Daily Zamindar* ‘s finances came into depression. This paper was banned by some Indian states.

In September, 1911 *Italy* conquered Trablus which was a territory ruled by Turkey as Suez Canal was in the occupation of British. It became difficult for Turkey to defend its territory. During the war of Trablus, Balkan’s state attacked the European part of Turkey which alerted the capital city of Turkey. The British government had considered the Muslims as their true rivals and traditional enemies as well as they already had the reasons to do so. That is why most of the



British politicians, writers and organizers blamed the Muslims for the war of independence (Hali, 1966, p-122). Therefore, most of the policies adopted by the British in India later were aimed at making the Muslims a backward nation and pushing them backwards in the political, economic and educational spheres. According to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, This was the period of misfortune that faced by the Indian Muslims from 1857 to 1858. There was no calamity which is faced by Muslims during this period and it cannot be said that Muslims did not. Goram Chand and Gamma Chand did it, no tragedy has come down from the sky which has not touched the house of a Muslim before it reaches the earth (Durand, 1913, p-68). In December 1911, the division of Bengal was cancelled due to the agitation of Hindus and this infuriated general Muslims opinion against British. During the war of Trablus and Balkan, lot of funds were collected by *Daily Zamindar* and were sent to the war effected Muslims in Turkey. *Zafar Ali Khan* through *Daily Zamindar* described the condition of India and presented the rights of the Muslims. Indian Muslims were shocked by this attack and *Daily Zamindar* also came out with its services for this cause. From 5th October 1911 the *Daily Zamindar* became a daily paper with four large size pages including war news, critical analysis, poems and essay etc. The publication of *Daily Zamindar* arose to five thousands in a few days and *Daily Zamindar* was one of the chief components of Muslims in freedom movement wherein it scarified everything for movement. All the details of freedom movement published in this paper and saved in the files of this paper. The *Daily Zamindar* was one of the national heritages but it was ignored by the state. *Daily Zamindar* continuously published the breaking news of Trablus war and Balkan's war. *Zafar Ali Khan* also published his critical analysis in the paper it became the popular newspaper at that time, which was the first success of Urdu journalism in Asia. Within a few months, its publication was increased to seventy five thousand. People keenly waited for this paper in the morning. The interest of illiterate *Punjabis* and *Pakhtuns* were so keen to get the news that they spent two paisa for purchasing the newspaper and spent four paisa for its reading by some educated person. Two poems of *Allama Muhammad Iqbal* were also published in *Daily Zamindar* named as "*Huzoor Risalat Mahab*" and "*Fatimah Bintay Abdullah*". The poems of *Allama Iqbal* and *Zafar Ali Khan* were published on front page of *Daily Zamindar*. *Iqbal* further increased the popularity of this newspaper and its publication increased day by day. The British colonial government in India suspended the declaration of the paper and demanded a guarantee of 2000 rupees to reinstate the paper. The British government took *Daily Zamindar* as an opponent to its rule. In 1912 *Sir Michel Edwire* was appointed as Governor of *Punjab* province. He had earlier opposed *Daily Zamindar* while he was posted in *Hyderabad Deccan*. *Zafar Ali Khan* feeling an alarm, left for England and Turkey where he made speeches against the "*Press Act*" of India and dubbed it as undemocratic. He urged the Indian students in *London* to take part against the British government. During his stay in London, *Zafar Ali Khan* published some



poems and articles in *Daily Zamindar* in which he warned the Muslims that the British were trying to damage the interest of Muslim nation. According to him, they were trying to create discord between Arabs and Turks on lingual basis. In the city of Cawnpur, portion of a mosque was demolished in order to widen road. The Muslims gathered at the sport to make a protest and the crowd was fired upon and many persons were killed. A large number of people were also arrested. *Daily Zamindar* gave full detail of this event and also continuously wrote articles against the British government. This act was taken as anti-Government and on 18th September, 1913 guarantee amount of two thousand rupees was confiscation and new guarantee of ten thousand rupees was demanded. *Zafar Ali Khan* also supported the Muslim demand of separate electorate which was accepted in *Minto-Morley* Reforms of 1909. The period after 1909 was very critical for the Muslims of India. Many factors, most significantly the rejection of Muslim demand for establishment of *Muslim University Aligarh* in 1920, the annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1911, the beginning of the *Balkanization* in 1912 and the *Kanpur Mosque* Tragedy in 1913 were the most crucial concerns for the Muslims (Hussain, 1967, p-65).

On June 1914 the amount of Rs. 2000 was also seized by British along with it “*Daily Zamindar* Stream Press”, valued at fifty thousand was also taken into a possession by the government. That government took very strong steps to curb the activities of *Daily Zamindar*. On 7th October 1914 *Zafar Ali Khan* was arrested and was confined to his house for five years at Karamabad (1914-1919). The ‘*Daily Zamindar*’ was launched to struggle for the Muslim rights. It played a significant role in awakening the Muslim masses and in framing their political outlooks. It turned the Muslims from a loyalist to a critic of the British Government. Consequently, the publication of ‘*Daily Zamindar*’ was suspended. He transferred his rights of *Daily Zamindar* to his wife and stopped writing the editorials. Despite his change the British continued to harass the management of the paper. The paper started its publication in the morning and evening editions. This continuous for two months and finally this paper had to terminate its publication due to strong censorship. At the end of the First World War, ‘*Daily Zamindar*’ strongly criticized the British Policy against *Turkey*. After five years, *Daily Zamindar* again started its publication on 21st April. In 1927, *Moulana Ghulam Rasul Mehr* and *Moulana Abdul Majid Salik* served their connection with the *Daily Zamindar* and launched their own venture, the daily *Inqilab*. Due to its thoughtful editorials, illuminating articles and humorous columns, it readily captured the attention of the intelligential and gained a wide circulation. In the beginning, like the *Daily Zamindar* and other Papers of the time, it advocated Pan-Islamism. *Daily Zamindar* had to close its publication in October 1949. *Zafar Ali Khan* died on November 27, 1956. The *Daily Zamindar* was the first Urdu newspaper to give a modern touch to the display of news, to publish editorial comments on national and international events and to introduce a regular humorous column. Since the *Daily Zamindar* reflected Muslim emotions and sentiments, it soon acquired



unprecedented popularity among the masses. *Zafar Ali Khan* played a vital role during the Balkan and Tripoli Wars and the Khilafat Movement. He also waged a constant war against repressive Press laws. *Daily Zamindar* had to pay dearly for its activities in the shape of conviction, imprisonment and forfeiture of securities. During World War I, the publication of *Daily Zamindar* remained suspended almost for four years. The *Moulana Zafar Ali Khan* availed of this opportunity and started “*Sitara-i-Subh*”, which like “*Deccan Review*”, made a valuable contribution to Urdu literature. *Daily Zamindar* also provided training ground to new entrants in the field. Men like *Abdullah Imadi*, *Wajahat Hussain*, *Ghulam Rasool Mehr*, *Abdul Majeed Salik*, *Charagh Hassan Hasrat*, *Nassrullah Khan Azeez*, *Murtaza Ahmed Khan Mekash* and all owe most of their prominence in the field of journalism to the initial training that they received in *Daily Zamindar*. It also advocated Hindu-Muslim entente and therefore was equally popular among both the communities. According to ‘*Daily Zamindar*’ the British had framed the internal and external policies for their own benefits in India. ‘The *Daily Zamindar*’s’ efforts for Constitutional development were not hidden to anyone including the N.W.F.P. government which banned its editor *Moulana Zafar Ali Khan* to enter the Province. In his hands the *Daily Zamindar* became the most influential Urdu daily of Northern India and his role in politics was second only to that of the Ali Brothers and *Abul Kalam Azad* during the Khilafat movement. *Attique Saddique*, in his Urdu book, *Hindustani Akbar Nawasi*, discussed a historical track showing the history and role of newspapers in India. He also showed the initiatives of *Zafar Ali Khan* and anti-imperialist role of *Daily Zamindar*. He also described the role of newspapers, which continued criticizing the policies of the government and expressed their own point of view about the affairs of the freedom. *Daily Zamindar* only the newspaper movingly portrayed the picture of Muslim suffering under the British rule and also tried to arouse and develop political and national consciousness amongst the Muslims. His theoretical position becomes a basis for focusing closer on British policy. His historical manifestation may be appeared in indefinite ways and emphases in the history of Journalism in Colonial Period. The work of *Dr. Ghulam Hussain Zulfiqar*, *Biography of Zafar Ali Khan*, in Urdu, *Hayat, Khadimat and Asar*, is very important to understand the anti-imperialistic role of *Daily Zamindar* and life of *Zafar Ali Khan* both politically and historically in Punjab under British colonial rule. His focus on British policy and struggle for Muslim brings out the important shift in history. The work also brings forward the conflicting relation between British and Hindu Muslim communities who struggled for freedom from the imperial rule. The work, however, discusses no other way to get rid of British and highly valuable in understanding political and ideological engagement of *Zafar Ali Khan*. These work further remains focused on colonial rule, therefore, it can provide, valuable indeed, the background setting for this proposal. The work of *Francis Robinson*, *Leadership in South Asia*, provides valuable information for understanding the role of *Zafar Ali Khan* and anti-



Imperialist role of *Daily Zamindar*. In one direction, this work historicizes famous leadership prevailing British rule and provides detailed structural information of policies of *Zafar Ali Khan* (Robinson, 1993, 201). *Nazir Hussain Zaidi*, biography on *Zafar Ali Khan*, though in Urdu, can be considered an addition to *Dr. Ghulam Hussain Zalifiqar* project of life of *Zafar Ali Khan*. His emphasis upon anti British policy working towards Muslims and Hindus and its relation with freedom makes this work valuable. The title of the work also evades the details given in the book as the title creates expectations to find details of life and difficulties faced by *Zafar Ali Khan* within Punjab, and though an essay briefly describes the history and understanding of British policy and condition of Muslim yet the emphasis remains upon *Daily Zamindar* (Zaidi, 1986, p-91). In his influential work, *The Ali Garh's First Generation*, The title of the work evades the details given in the book as the title creates expectations to find details of politics of *Ali Garh* within Punjab, and though an essay briefly describes the history and understanding of British policy and forward the British ideology and policy of colonial power. The colonial rule negated the rights of Muslim (Lelveld, 1978, p-5)

Conclusion

Towards the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century the Hindu newspapers, novels and other writings were concentrating on Hindu revivalism and fanning the flames of Hindu-Muslim antagonism. These activities of Hindu press provoked the Muslims. With the advent of the Congress rule in various provinces under Government of India Act 1935, they had sustained atrocious Congress injustice, which was later catalogued in the *Pirpur Report*. The comments of the *Pirpur Report* on the congress oppression, even in more lurid and gruesome details, were published in the *Dawn* and *Manshoor* under a series of articles captioned '*It Shall Never Happen Again*'. "This described how the Muslims were forbidden from eating beef, their prayer meetings were disturbed and sometimes attacked and desecrated, and how Muslims suffered a much heavier toll of life and property in the riots that took place during the two and half years of Congress administration. There was a marked change from appeasement to resistance in the Muslim mood henceforth, which could be seen in the Muslim newspapers, Confident defiance in the attitude of Bengali Muslims was growing into an open challenge. The most important Urdu newspaper published from Lahore was the *Daily Zamindar*. in fact, was symbol of the idea of Pakistan and it waged a fierce battle against Hindu domination and British imperialism. *Daily Zamindar* strongly supported the League's demand for Pakistan and its objectives. It was considered to be a *naked sword* for the Hindu and the British. *Daily Zamindar* succeeded to bring about a revolution among the Muslim masses and motivated them to achieve their cherished goal-Pakistan. *Daily Zamindar* under the editorship of *Zafar Ali Khan* played pivotal role in the freedom movement, anti-imperialist policy and socio religious political.



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