

## **SYED FAZLUL HASAN MAULANA HASRAT MOHANI AS A JOURANLIST**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

*Maulana Hasrat Mohani had multi-facet personality. He had been as a poet, freedom fighter, politician, educationalist and a journalist. As a journalist he launched Urdu-i-Mu`alla which was a mouthpiece of his literary and political services. Literary, it incorporated the poetry of the popular poets including Ghalib and himself. Politically, it advocated the idea of 'complete independence' in India. The present paper highlights the services of Hasrat Mohani in terms of poetry, as a freedom fighter, political and journalistic services of Hasrat Mohani vis-a-vis his periodicals including Urdu-i-Mu`alla, Takira Shoara and Mustaqil.*

**Keywords:** *Hasrat Mohani, Urdu-I-Mu`Alla, Takira Shoara, Mustaqil, Literary Service, Political Service, Muslims Rights, Muslim League, Congress*

### **Introduction**

After the failure of War of Independence of 1857, the British targeted not only the Muslims but the Muslim press as well. The Muslim Press was targeted due to the aggressive policy of the Muslims' journalists towards the British. As a result, the Muslim press was almost completely dissolved in 1858. According to J. Natarajan, there were only 12 newspaper in 1858 in which only one newspaper was owned by Muslims (Natarajan, 1955, 54).

The Muslim press, after its dissolution, was revived by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan with new policy. Since he believed in cooperation with the British, therefore, he put forwarded the soft policy of journalism in the subcontinent. He criticized the government policies in a balanced way, based on arguments and not passions. This policy provided a landmark to the Muslims' journalists in the subcontinent.

Many contemporary newspapers such as *Rafiq-e-Hind*, *Paisa Akhbar*, *Muhazzab* and *Wakeel* followed the soft policy of journalism of Sir Syed (Naseem, 1980, 17-52).

With the beginning of twentieth century, a new era of Muslims' journalism is introduced in subcontinent. In this era soft of policy of journalism is replaced by aggressive one. The Muslims' journalist who followed the aggressive policy of journalism in this period were Maulana Mohammad Ali Johar, Maulana Abul Kalaam Azad, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan and Maulana Hasrat Mohani (Yousaf, 2008, 80).

Hasrat was born at Mohan town, District Unnao, Lucknow, (United Province) in 1878. His father name was Syed Azhar Hasan who was mainly associated with farming. His mother name was Sheher Bano who was a learnt woman at that time, knowing Persian, Urdu and Arabic. That is why her mother took keen interest in educating her children. His elder brother name was Rohul Hassan and his younger brother name was Mobeen ul Hassan. Hasrat Mohani had two sisters. His forefathers had migrated from Nishapur and settled in Mohan town. His family traced back to Hazrat Ali (R.A.). The original name of Hasrat Mohani was Fazal ul Hassan. Hasrat was his nick-name. However, he was popularly called as Hasrat Mohani. By faith, he was a Hanafi Muslim (Begum, 1990, 10-18).

He received his early education from local madrassa where he learnt not only the Holy Quran but also Persian and Arabic. His mother also assisted him in learning Arabic and Persian. In 1894, he stood first in middle examination in the whole UP state. As a result he was awarded scholarship. Subsequently, he moved from Mohan to Fatehpur. He completed his high school education from Fatehpur in 1899. After this, he joined Aligarh College for higher studies which was his great desire (Begum, 1990, 21-33). In 1903, he passed B.A. from Aligarh College. In this college, he came under the supervision of Nawab Mohsin ul Mulk, Dr. Sir Ziauddin Ahmad, Professor J.C. Chikarwanti, Sahibzada Aftab Ahmad Khan and Nawab Haji Ishaq Khan (Mehdi Hasan, 2007, 27).

In 1903, he got married with the daughter of his paternal uncle, Nishatun-Nisa Begum who was an educated woman. She was a courageous lady who strongly supported her husband on every occasion (Begum, 1990, 33-34).

### Urdu-i-Mu`alla

After completing education, Hasrat Mohani started a monthly magazine *Urdu-i-Mu`alla* in July 1903 from Aligarh (Pushkalavati, 2006, 124). In the beginning it was published from the printing press of Aligarh College. Later on, due to the Hasrat aggressive policy of journalism and the fear of the government, the Aligarh College denied its publication. Later on, he established his own printing press by the name of 'Urdu Press' and started its publication. *Urdu-i-Mu`alla* draws its name from Association of *Urdu-i-Mu`alla*<sup>1</sup>. It was both literary and political in nature. In literary sphere, the poetry of Mirza Ghalib and the literary contribution of other popular poets and writers were included. Among them some were Imdad Imam Asar, Shad Azeem Abadi, Maulana Abul Kalaam Azad, Maulana Hali, Shibli Naumani, Sajjad Haidar, Habib ur Rehman Sherwani, Waheed ud Din Saleem, Ahmad Ali Shoq, Dr. Muhammad Iqbal and Akbar Ala Abadi (Kazimi, 2012, 71, 74). Hasrat Mohani also contributed his poetry to this magazine. His criticism on Urdu literature served as a nursery for budding poets. In political sphere, it covered national and international issues. Mohani adopted the policy of aggressive journalism. He advocated the policy of non-cooperation with the British through this periodical. He advocated that the Indians should not be deceived at the name of delegating representative democracy in phases but endeavour for the liberation of India from foreign yoke. He raised the slogan of 'passive resistance' for the complete independence of India (Khurshid, n.d., 175). The magazine also contributed in scientific field by contributing scientific articles.

There was no fix number of pages. Initially it had 48 pages but later it exceed to 56. Its size was 23x36/16. It was published in two types depending upon the quality of the paper. The annual subscription rate for one type was Rs. 4/- and for the second type was Rs. 2/. There was date of publication on its title page along with the editor name i.e. Syed Fazl ul Hassan Hasrat Mohani B.A. The page next to the title page was having the core aim of the magazine along with the rules necessary for an article, had been written at the page next to the title page. Its core objective was to encourage poetry and prose writing based on humorous way. It set the following rules for the publication of articles and poems. Firstly, to include

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<sup>1</sup> It was literary association established by Syed Sajjad Haider Reldaram in 1900 in Aligarh College. Hasrat Mohani was its active member. (92)

poems and articles related to biography, history, philosophy, morality, civilization and literature. Articles should be concise and precise. Secondly, articles should be of such nature that suit to the temperament of all. The articles should neither be dry nor they be so light. Thirdly, those poems will be included who have adopted a special way of description. In addition, there is no restriction regarding the modernism and traditionalism of the articles. Fourthly, great preference will be given to the language of the articles and poems. Lastly, only selected articles will be published and those which were not selected will be returned to the authors (Kazimi, 2012, 43-95).

### **Periods of *Urdu-i-Mu`alla***

#### **First Period**

This period starts from July 1903 to June 1908. In this period it was issued from Aligarh. In this period he strongly advocated the idea of complete freedom for India. In the issue of May 1907 of *Urdu-i-Mu`alla* he opined about the independence of India as,

“It is our obligation to follow the right without fear. While firmly believing on victory, we should tolerate all the odds and hardships faced in the way of right. It should be kept in mind that the wealth of independence cannot be achieved easily.”(Naz, 1980, 265)

In February/March 1908, Hasrat issued a special issue so that to give tribute to Egyptian leader, Mustafa Kamal Pasha who had died. In this special issue an article, "British Policy in Egypt", was published with no name. It had been written by one of the student of Aligarh. This article was regarded as seditious by the Government. Maulana was asked to tell the name of the author but he refused to do so. As a editor he took the responsibility himself. Consequently, he was sentenced two year imprisonment and Rs 500/- as fine. In case of non-payment of the fine, a further six months imprisonment would be given. Since he could not pay the fine, so his library was auctioned which was having many rare books and valuable manuscripts. The last issue in this period was made in April 1908 (Kazimi, 2012, 80 - 113).

**Second Period**

This period starts from October 1909 to June 1913. In July 1909 he was released from jail. This time he started again the publication of this magazine. Others printing presses Aligarh College, refused to publish the magazine. Hasrat, therefore, established his own printing press, 'Urdu Press' for its publication. During this period, his friends tried to convince them on the soft policy of journalism but he declined to do so. In October 1909, the magazine reappeared. In this period he wrote about India and Muslim Umma. In November 1909, he strongly castigated the Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909. He added that these reforms were not for delegating representative democracy but for extending the period of immoral and illegal rule. These reforms were criticized in the form of an article entitled, "Predator brings a new Net". During this period he also mentioned the inhuman treatment he faced during imprisonment. In January 1913, an article entitled, "Muslim League and the political future of the Muslims" was published. Hasrat Mohani admired the objective of 'Self Government' of the Muslim League. Some of the text of this article was termed as illegal so far as the Police Act 1910 was concerned. In May 1913, the government demanded Rs. 3000/- as a security. Hasrat could not pay the security. As a result, Hasrat decided to close the periodical and thus it was closed in June 1913 (Kazimi, 2012, 31, 81-83, 113,115).

**Third Period**

The period starts from 1917 to 1922. In 1920, he moved to Cawnpur and thus its publication started from the same place. During this period he mainly contributed literary articles (Kazimi, 2012, 46).

**Fourth Period**

This period starts from January 1925 to March 1942. In this period it was issued from Cawnpur because he had moved to Cawnpur in 1920. In February/March 1942, he issued the magazine wherein he proposed the partition plan of India. He recommended the federal form of government based on centrifugal tendencies. He proposed that India be divided into the following five states.

Federal India in Mashriq	Assam and Bengal Independent Democracies
Federal India in South	Andhar, Madras, C.P., and Orrisa Independent Democracies
Federal India in Center	Behar, U.P. and Meha Rashtar Independent Democracies
Federal India in South-West	Bombay and Gujarat Independent Democracies
Federal India in West	Balochistan, Sarhad, Sindh and Punjab Democracies

The partition plan of Hasrat was so important that this plan was even adopted by Cabinet Mission Plan with little changes (Kazimi, 2012, 31, 46, 129).

### **Tazkira Shoara**

In June 1913 *Urdu-i-Mu`alla* closed. He issued *Tazkira Shoara* in July 1914. It published thrice a month (Sadaid, 1992, 52). In April 1916 it was closed due to Mohani arrest. After release in 1919, he started again this magazine. It was issued for the last time in July 1919 (Kazimi, 2012, 46).

### **Mustaqil**

Mohani issued another daily newspaper, *Mustaqil* from Cawnpur in October 1928. It mainly covered political issues. Its rare issues have been codified and published by Muhammad Hamid Ali from Utar Pardesh Academy in 1983. In April 1929, its weekly edition also started on colour page. In July-August-September 1929, it was published twice a week. In October 1929, it started its publication thrice a week. In February 1930 it became weekly. In January 1932 it became monthly. In 1936, it started its publication as a supplement of *Urdu-i-Mu`alla*. The variation in publication period was due to the lack of fund. It was the paucity of fund that the newspaper was started as a daily, then twice a week, then thrice a week, then weekly and finally monthly. This newspaper mainly covered national and international news in the form of editorials written by Hasrat himself (Kazimi, 2012, 47-48, 85-86).

**Political Career (Pre-Partition)**

Soon after graduation from Aligarh College, he joined the sphere of politics. Politically, he was of the opinion that both the Muslims and Hindus collectively liberate India from British imperialism. He advocated that Indians be liberated completely without deceiving the Indians at the name of delegating representative democracy in phases. He was so against the British that he condemned even the Congress and Muslim League for passive resistance. In politics his ideals were Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Babu Aarbandoghosh who were extremist in politics (Kazimi, 2012, 115).

Since he was a graduate of Aligarh College, so he supported Aligarh Movement for the uplift of the Muslims in the subcontinent. However, he was not in favour of the ideology of Sir Syed that the Muslims should not involve themselves in politics. Hasrat was of the opinion that Muslims should join the politics because the situation was no more of the 1857 War of Independence (Kazimi, 2012, 89).

He joined All Indian National Congress in 1904. The Congress was divided into two groups i.e. Soft group and extremist group. The extremist group was headed by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Babu Aarbandoghosh, Mohan Chandar Pal and Lala Lajpat Roy who advocated the idea of complete independence and non-cooperation with the British. The soft group was headed by Gokhley Feroz Shah Mehta, Dada Bhai Noroji, Krishan Sawami and Pandit Madan Mohan Maloya. In 1906, there arose great differences between the extremist and soft group of Congress in the session of Lucknow. Resultantly, the soft group dominated over the extremist group of Congress. The extremist group had no say in the Congress. As a result, in 1907, Mr. Tilak quit the Congress. Since in politics Tilak was his ideal so Hasrat also left the Congress. However, he continued his support for extremist group of Congress through his periodical. He was the first person who raised the slogan of passive resistance. Later on, this slogan was adopted by Gandhi and other leaders. In 1921, the annual session of both the Congress and Muslim League were held in Ahmadabad. Hasrat tried his best to pass a resolution of complete independence from the platform of Congress but he failed. However, in the same session of Muslim League Hasrat as a president succeeded in approving a resolution for complete independence for India (Azhar, 1988, 423; Islam, 1961, 234). He took active part in Non-Cooperation Movement and Khilafat Movement which reflects his pan-Islamic outlook (al-Mujahid, 1986,

87). He was the founder of *Swadeshi* Movement which was launched for the boycott of foreign goods. It is commonly believed that the founder of this movement was Gandhi but actually its founder was Hasrat Mohani (Kazimi, 2012, 111). In 1928, when Nehru Report was presented, he became disappointed and started supporting Muslim league and Jinnah (Shahid, 2007, 163).

Due to disillusionment of Nehru Report, Mohani started supporting Muslim League and Jinnah for the rights of the Muslims in the subcontinent. When All India Muslim League was formed, Hasrat appreciated its foundation in 1906 in the sense that the Muslims had turned their attention towards politics (Kazimi, 2012, 112). However, he strongly criticized its policy of cooperation with the British. When Muslim League changed its objective of ‘cooperation with the British’ by ‘Self Government’ in its Lucknow session in 1913, Hasrat greatly appreciated it. The same year (1913) he joined Muslim League. He was elected as a president of All India Muslim League in 1923. He played a vital role in the reorganisation of the Muslim League in 1936. He moved to every village in popularizing Muslim League in masses. In 1937 Hasrat presided over the annual session of Muslim league held in Lucknow. In all annual sessions of Muslim League Hasrat Mohani actively participated because these sessions advocated the idea of complete independence and federal form of government as present in USA where provincial autonomy was ensured (Azhar, 1988, 428). After 1947, an organized plan was chalked out by Indian lobby for declaring every Muslim leader as an Indian Nationalist including Hasrat Mohani (Kazimi, 2012, 109).

### **Political Career (Post-Partition)**

After the creation of Pakistan, he preferred to stay in India so that to safeguard the rights of the Muslims in India. He did not fear from the Hindu domination in India. His courageous words to Sardar Patel in the Constituent Assembly of India will be remembered for ever. “You should not think that Muslims are orphans today. I am here to defend their rights against all odds and will fight for them till death” (Dawn, September 25, 2008).

When the Indian Constitution was proposed by the Indian Constituent Assembly on 26<sup>th</sup> November, 1949, he raised his voice of dissent regarding the rights of the Muslims in India. The then Prime Minister, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru soon replied, “Maulana, what you are doing, your only vote against the proposed

constitution will become a part of the history” (Dawn, May 20, 2010). Maulana replied very politely “That is why I raised my voice to make sure that at least one voice of dissent was made against the proposed Indian constitution which has not done justice with Indian Muslims” (Dawn, May 20, 2010).

### **His Poetry**

Mohani composed most of its poetry when he in jail. When he was released from imprisonment, he used to publish a volume of Urdu poems. Although in prison he was not supplied ink and paper, he memorized them in his mind and then published when released from imprisonment. A few of his books are Kulliyat-e-Hasrat Mohani (Collection of Hasrat Mohani's poetry), Sharh-e-Kalam-e-Ghalib (Explanation of Ghalib's poetry), Nukaat-e-Sukhan (Important aspects of poetry), Mushahidaat-e-Zindaan (Observations in Prison), etc (Usmani <http://aligarhmovement.com>).

Maulana died on 13 May, 1951 and buried in the graveyard of Anwar Bagh in Farngi Mahal Lucknow, India (Usmani). In order to give tribute to Hasrat Mohani, a Hasrat Mohani Memorial Society has been established by Maulana Nusrat Mohani in 1951. Similarly in Pakistan a Memorial Hall and Library have been established by Hasrat Mohani Memorial Society in Karachi. Every year, various programmes are held on his death anniversary (Naina, Internet source).

### **Conclusion**

Maulana Hasrat Mohani was a poet, writer, politician, freedom fighter and a journalist at the same time. As a poet he contributed his valuable poetry for the readers. He wrote most of his poetry in jail. His poetry covers all aspects including romantic, historical, political, biographical and moral. He also acted as a guide for the budding poets.

As a politician, he was following Bal Gangadhar Tilik and Babu Aarbandoghosh who had founded the extremist wing of Congress. Hasrat Mohani like them did not believe in cooperation with the British. He condemned the soft wing of Congress as well as the Muslim League for their cooperation with the British. He was not in favour of dominion status of India which the soft wing of Congress mostly demanded. He was of the opinion that federal form of government prevailed in USA, should be adopted in India. He was the person who proposed such a partition plan which was even adopted by Cabinet Mission Plan. In 1907,

Tilik left the Congress due to differences with soft wing of Congress. Hasrat in consequence also quit the Congress the same year and joined Muslim League in 1913. He was a strong supporter of Muslim League and Jinnah. After the partition, he preferred to stay in India so that to defend the rights of the Muslims against the Hindu majority. In addition, in post-partition period an organized effort was made to declare Muslim freedom fighters including Hasrat Mohani as an Indian nationalist by the India lobby but it was completely deviance from the facts.

As a freedom fighter, he raised the slogan of complete independence of India for the first time. Later on, other leaders including Gandhi adopted the same slogan. It was due to this slogan that he was imprisoned a number of times. However, he firmly stood on this demand and never compromised.

As a journalist, he introduced a monthly magazine *Urdu-i-Mu`alla* in 1903 which was the mouthpiece of his ideas. This periodical contributed in the field of literature, politics and science. He introduced *Tazkira Shoara* in 1914 which served as nursery for the budding scholars. He issued a daily newspaper, *Mustaqil* in 1928 for giving room to political ideas. Thus, Hasrat Mohani was such a leader who served in all spheres including literature, politics, freedom fighter and journalism.

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