Munshi Newal Kishore Press and a New Heritage for

Islamic Literature during the colonial Period

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Abstract

The self-understanding of new social formations, were to some extent, influenced by European interaction, both in urban centres and in the qasbahs, as well as in other semi-urban regions where their base had been built on a long cultural and intellectual tradition. Most of these formations were informed by the idea of the privileged position of Muslims. In an act of self-reflection, of an inward perspective so to speak, these new Muslim communities based their discourses on recent knowledge and experiences, particularly in the wake of the great upheaval of 1857, which had shattered Muslim rule and established colonial powers, producing a serious crisis. They negotiated the new situation through a variety of forms and institutional patterns, which gradually became important vehicles of communication, be it for traditional Islamic learning and discourse, for treatise, pamphlets, newspapers, novels or even paintings. Their movements varied from "traditionalist" to "modernist" thereby expanding the semantics of Sharif, the notion of noble as part of a (Mughal/Nawwabi) social group was enriched by the idea of nobility as a moral quality, thus establishing distinction and distance from Mughal/Nawwabi concepts. Appealing to changing ashraf clientele association (anjumans) and assemblies (of believers), press and publishing houses in Calcutta, Bombay, Kanpur, Madras or the famous Newal Kishore Press in Lucknow became instrumental in establishing Muslim visibility in the public sphere. This paper highlights the significant role of Newal Kishore Press and its contribution for the publication of Islamic literature books.

Introduction

Every society goes through the pages of reform and change. But the leaders of society, representing the status quo, strongly resist any movement for reform and change since it deprives them of their leadership. Any establishment has its own leaders who would do everything to resist change, either in the name of religion or in the name of age old traditions. Those who advocate change are denounced as heretics, unbeliever and innovators and violators of religious sanctity. The real issues involved are sought to be drowned in the sea of such accusations.[1]

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Like the great Indian publisher Munshi Nawal Kishore, who demonstrated the centrality of printing for colonized communities of a loss of sovereignty economic change and new social pressures. He was key knowledge brokers who drove forward intellectual debate, enabled critical reflection on the past and present and defined new horizons of cultural possibility. This great son of India opened a new era of the Indian printing press not only for Hindus but also for Muslims. [2] Munshi Nawal Kishore started a printing press and unearthed rare books of Hindu and Islamic philosophers, Islamic literature, religion, in Urdu, Arabic, Persian, Hindi and Sanskrit and got them printed. [3]The opening of his printing press in November 1858 marked a turning point in the history of printing in Lucknow (Now, Lucknow is the capital city of the state of Uttar Pradesh, India). As the first Indian to open a press in post – mutiny, Lucknow, he heralded a new era of the mass-produced book. Nawal Kishore reshaped local print culture and has been highlighted. [4]

Condition of India during the Colonial period:

State in giving impetus to the construction of collective discourse whether Hindu, Muslim or Indian, is an undeniable one Queen Victoria's proclamation of August 1858 promising benevolent rule and non- interference in the domain of religion and by implication, culture was a major landmark in the architecture ushering new strategies of political survival by dispossessed ruling elites and an army of retainers, both Muslim and Hindu. Along with the stringent curbs on political activity following the quashing of the rebellion, the proclamation was a sleight of hand by which the colonial masters chose to tolerate some debate and dissent as long as these related to the religious and cultural concerns of Indians This apparent attempt at denuding religion and culture of politics was fraught with consequences for an Indian society experiencing unprecedented changes. The British colonial state aimed at reconsolidating its authority and placing the networks of social collaboration and control on a firmer footing. The thinking which guided the policy marking the transition from company to crown raj amounted to creating a wholly artificial separation between a "political" public and a "religious" and "culturally" informed private sphere. In practice this did not preclude the colonial state from adopting, indirectly, if not always directly, the cultural lifestyles and religious practices of a subject population. Nor did it prevent the overlapping of the two spheres in so far as the expression of religious and cultural concerns were deemed permissible in an otherwise carefully monitored public arena. [5] But after 1857,

however, it was a major change. This change was manifest in the printing press, which was gradually popularized throughout India[6].

Meaning of the Print Press:

The term 'print culture' denotes the particular set of cultural processes involved in the use of printing press technology, processes that have a unique type of impact on the producers and consumers of printed information. Print culture can be thought of as encompassing two related components; print artifacts are the physical products of the printing press: books, periodicals, series, advertisement posters, ephemera and so on. As artifacts, they are invaluable as sources of information on their material construction, publication information, and internal references to other printed works, editorial structure, page layout, character set and other related factors. They are the material evidence of the publishing enterprise and sometimes also give clues regarding the reading habits as in the case of marginalia. The second component, the social processes of print, refer to the people and institutions involved in the writing, editing, publishing, printing, distributing, and the reading of print artifacts. As print technologies impose certain material, capital and skill requirements on their use, they help initiate the formation of social organizations such as publishing houses, printer's guilds and bookstores. These organizations are important as they represent new types of social structures brought about by print technology, as well as conduits through which people's involvements with print can have a reflexive impact on their own identity, composition and relationship to others. Print technology, thus not only gives rise to new types of media artifacts, but also new types of social and institutional structures, creating opportunities and challenges for those who engaged with or were engaged by new forms of print culture.[7]

The print culture had spread to almost every part of the Indian subcontinent with an elaborate network of production and distribution in place. The rise of public libraries and reading rooms created new spaces for the consumption of print. The gradual increase in literacy and the formation of new interpretative communities created new tastes and reading habits, as embodied most visibly in the phenomenal rise of the Indian novel. The rise of this genre was perhaps the most decisive indication of the extent to which print had penetrated and modified the literacy protocols of Indian languages.[8]

Publishing Press

In the changing environments and operational constraints described above, the publishers who survive in developing countries are the ones who bring a high degree of commitment to what they are doing. They are the pathfinders and pioneers, seeking solutions and alternatives that suit their particular national context. To fulfill this role, publishers must have a clear vision and sense of direction concerning both the books they want to publish and also their role in society. This in turn means developing an understanding of the changing moods and concerns of their particular societies. A good publisher always has an ear to the ground and is quick to discern new trends in literary tastes, scholarly debates, and the national agenda even as they are emerging. The ultimate aim of or publisher must be to ensure that the word 'quality' is invariably associated with the books he or she publishes. This involves two major elements-beings careful in selecting what to publish and then handling the books accepted in a professional way in terms of editing, production, and marketing through trained professionals, particularly copy editors. To develop a quality list, it is important that the publisher walk a careful line between profitable publishing and protecting the academic literary or artistic worth of what is published. So, the real job of a publisher is to make those books available on the widest possible scale. It is here that publishers in developing countries have an advantage (at least potentially) compared to their counterparts in developed nations. Because living standards and educational opportunities and therefore rising literacy, the potential audience for books in developing countries is increasing at a fairly rapid pace.[9]

This paper examines that Nawal Kishore was changing the environment of India by his great publishing press. He provides the kind of fascinating success story that enlivens the history of the books. It is a story imbued with the spirit of modernization and pioneering entrepreneurship, so eminently characteristic of indigenous agency in the early phases of Indian industrialization. It sketches the process by which the firm developed from humble beginnings into an industrial enterprise of unprecedented proportions. Seeking to outline the dimensions of industrial book production and the mechanisms underlying it, the first four sections address aspects of the Nawal Kishore Press's internal organization, technology, marketing strategies, and distribution networks. The final section will turn to author-publisher relations, an under researched aspect of Indian literary and literate culture.[10]

There is a slight difference of opinion about Naval Kishore's (Hindu) date of birth. Some scholars have mentioned that he was born in Bistoi, Aligarh district, in December 1836 while some others believe that he was born on January 3, 1836, in a village named Rerha in Mathura district. But all agree that he was truly a great benefactor of eastern learning. His 'Naval Kishore Press' was not merely a press or a publishing house. It was rather a great institution that was instrumental in preserving the endangered cultural heritage of 19th century India. Ghalib, while paying tributes to Naval Kishore Press, said "Divan of whosoever Naval Kishore published, his name and fame reached the sky." Ameer Hasan Noorani in his book 'Munshi Naval Kishore Haalaat aur Khidmaat' (1982) wrote that "as soon as one mentions the words 'Naval Kishore Press', the pleasing and awe-inspiring thought of thousands of books fills one's heart." Aziz Ahmed, Urdu's well-known fiction writer-turned-scholar once remarked "Had it not been for Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Munshi Naval Kishore after the failed 1857 War of Independence, the general awakening of India to a different environ and the preservation of our cultural heritage would not have been possible. ... If Naval Kishore had not rediscovered our invaluable cultural treasure through printing and publishing, it would have been lost forever after the calamity of 1857. It would have been a kind of cultural loss repair to which would have not been possible."[11]

In 1858, he reached Lucknow. He felt that the environment at Lucknow, once a jewel in the Indian crown and a centre of oriental learning, was conducive to his ambitious plans. Here he bought some litho hand presses and began business in a small rented house. He had but a small capital and could not afford any whimsical ideas so he began with printing some textbooks and some religious volumes as they, just like those days, would not take long to sell. Soon the press was doing a roaring business and printing orders from government were pouring in. Naval Kishore was quick to switch over to bigger and better printing machines. His services for Islam are unprecedented. His unprejudiced disposition ensured that alongside Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavad -Gita, the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth as well are published . For the purpose he especially hired some Muslim scholars and workers. The Qur'ān, Ḥadīth and other religious publications for Muslims were well received and in fact satisfied the needs of a huge segment of the society. And all that happened in just a span of 47 years; on February 19, 1895, at the age of 59, Munshi Naval Kishore died all of a sudden. But the legacy that he left behind is simply unforgettable and cannot be squandered[12].

Historical Background of Munshi Nawal Kishore Press

The key century during which print was made, had a long delayed impact upon the South Asian population. This coincides with the development of Religious revivals, Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist and cultural renaissances throughout the subcontinent partly, at least directly, stimulated by the intrusiveness of colonial rule and the activities of Christian missionaries in particular. The Presses of English, Scottish, American and other missionary societies produced a welter of publications, biblical editions and scriptural tracts-n one decade alone, 1852-63, for instance, a total of nearly nine and a half million volumes. Missionaries often misread the eagerness with which these books were received by local communities. It was not the word of God that was the attraction, but the free source of paper, a valuable commodity widely used for instance, for wrapping up spices and medicines in the bazaar. Large single sheets containing, the Ten Commandments were used by boys to make kites[13].

What had taken Europe three centuries to achieve, the emergence of a full-fledged book culture in South Asia achieved in less than one hundred years. At the beginning of the century all presses were still European- owned, so publishing even in the regional languages was under foreign direction. Only a few typefaces had been developed for the regional scripts (Bengali and Tamil are being notable exceptions), which is another facet of lithography's importance in South Asia. It aided the "democratization" of print by extending the possibility of publication in any script and any language. The only prerequisite was trained scribes, of whom there was never any dearth. That is why lithography entered the mainstream of publishing in South Asia, unlike Europe, where it remained a marginal technology. By 1850, probably a thousand editions had been published in South Asia using this technology. Lucknow–Kanpur emerged as the lithographic capital of the sub-continent and the Nawal Kishore Press in Lucknow became the premier commercial publisher in the region. Perhaps, most importantly, the relaxation of the press Laws in 1835 paved the way for the widespread ownership and operation of presses by South Asians as well as Europeans[14].

British patronage was one of the main factors accounting for the Nawal Kishore Press's rapid growth and expansion. Without wanting to downplay Munshi Nawal Kishore's own achievement as an entrepreneur, it is hardly overstating the case to say that colonial patronage significantly distinguished the history of the Nawal Kishore Press from that of

other Indian publishers. The business relationship between the Nawal Kishore Press and the colonial authorities, along with the circumstances attending colonial patronage, should be analyzed in greater detail. The picture that emerges illustrates the complex transnational relations between Indian private entrepreneurship and state authority, depicting at once an intense and extremely successful business collaboration and a sustained dispute over market shares and profits, as well as agency and control in the publishing market.[15]

The patronage by individual British officials, however, also needs to be situated within the context of government policy towards the Indian-language press and print media in the wake of the 1857 uprising. Undoubtedly, the events of 1857 had greatly enhanced British suspicion of the "native" press and demonstrated the urgency of bringing it under closer scrutiny. At the same time, there was an acute need to establish closer relations with the vernacular press so that in future more effective use could be made of this indispensable means of gaining access to the public. A powerful medium in disseminating information and generating public opinion, the press had to be carefully encouraged. The transfer of power from Company to Crown in 1858 brought with it an attempt to restore public confidence, first signaled in Queen Victoria's proclamation of non-interference in 'native' customs and beliefs. The renewed emphasis on caution and conciliation translated into a selective application of liberal principles, it was reflected in press legislation. Governor General Lord Canning initiated a policy of simultaneous control and encouragement in which surveillance and patronage were carefully weighed against each other. Official patronage, especially on the part of the Education Department, came to serve as a potent means of rewarding and controlling editors and publishers.[16]

Viewed against this backdrop the Nawal Kishore Press's collaboration with the colonial administration displays all the characteristics of a symbiotic relationship: at the time of setting up a business. Nawal Kishore relied heavily on British patronage in the various forms of license grant, technological and material support and printing contracts. The Avadh provincial authorities, on the other hand, had a vested interest in securing the collaboration of a loyal representative of the Indian language press in the politically sensitive post- Munity days. An editor- publisher of proven loyalty such as Nawal Kishore was an asset to be co-opted and duly instrumentalized in the process of reconsolidating power and counter- acting

anti –colonial sentiment. At the pragmatic, political and ideological level, the establishment of the Nawal Kishore Press was a welcome opportunity for the new rulers.[17]

New Era for the Muslim by the Munshi Nawal Kishore Press

After that, Munshi Nawal Kishore printing press was gradually popularized throughout the Hindu–Muslim both communities in India. That time The Muslim were identified as the principal instigators of the rebellion in a feeble attempt at reigniting the lost glory of the Mughal Empire. After that, Muslims were debarred from government services and expenditure on their education was curbed. The Dehli based Anglo-Indian Press was no less impassioned in questioning the capacity of Muslims to be loyal to a non-Muslim conspiracy to set alight the torches of insurrection.[18] 1857 proved to be cataclysmic for the Muslim community in India, which was adversely affected socially, culturally, financially, and also educationally[19]. In that condition Munshi Nawal Kishore Press opened a new era for the Muslim community and especially, the Islamic literature was saved, preserved and put in the hands of the public by a famous Munshi Nawal Kishore Press[20].

Islamic Literature and Munshi Nawal Kishore Press

The literatures of Islam are normally classified into several areas of study. The canonical literature, the interpretation of scripture and tradition, law, theology and philosophy, often, distinct gems are recognized in history and mysticism or spirituality. It is a huge task to select the most significant texts from each of these areas[21].The Islamic world contains a rich tradition of extraordinary literature that stretches back for centuries. Literature was the preeminent form of early Islam and it has retained its high status over the centuries. There are several reasons for this. One is that a solid foundation existed upon which to build Islamic literature. This foundation had been laid in Arabia, Islam's homeland, long before the birth of the religion's founder, the Prophet Muhammad. Arabs had developed a highly sophisticated oral literary tradition. As Islam spread eastward writers in India produced works not only in Arabic and Persian but also in Urdu language. Many Indian vernaculars contain almost exclusively Islamic literary subjects[22].

India's share in the development of Islamic literature at this time was especially large. In addition to the theological work written in the language of the Qur'ān, from the conquest of Sind in 711 right up to biographical literature in Arabic was also being written in the sub-continent. Persian taste predominated in the northwest of India, but in the southern provinces there were long standing commercial and cultural relationship with the Arabs and an inclination toward preserving these intact. Thus, lot of poetry in conventional Arabic style was written during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, mainly in the kingdom of *Golconda*.[23]

The main contribution of Muslim India to high literature was made in the Persian tongue. Persian had been the official language of the country for many centuries. The numerous annals and chronicles that were compiled during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as well as the court poetry, had been composed exclusively in this language even by Hindus. During the Mughal period, its importance was enhanced both by Akbar's attempt to have the main works of classical Sanskrit literature translated into Persian and by the constant influx of poets from Iran who came seeking their fortune at the lavish tables of the Indian Muslim grandees. At this time what is known as the Indian style of Persian emerged. and after that Urdu.[24]

Hence the Muslim literature was preserved by the Indian Muslim rulers, but after that when the colonial period was established, Muslims preserved their tradition through publishers of the printing press. And Munshi Nawal Kishore Press was important in the preserving Islamic literature. It was not only the largest establishment of its kind in the entire sub-continent, but also the single most important institution in the mass production of low price printed books in Islamic literature[25]. A brief list and description Lists of the Islamic literature books is mentioned here:

➢ *Muntakhab al –tavārikh* (History), translated by Javahirlal Akbarabadi in 1862
➢ *Waqi 'at-e Hind*(History), by Karimuddin in 1863
➢ *Navā-e gharib* (history/geography) by M. Mardan 'Ali Khan 'Ra 'na'in 1863
➢ *Tārīkh-e nadir al 'aṣr*(history/topography) by Nawal Kishore in 1863
➢ *Tārīkh-e Inglistān*(textbook/history) translated by Faridbakhsh in 1864
➢ *Intikhāb –e tārīkh -e pādshāhān -e Inglistān* (textbook/history)translated by Faridbakhsh in 1864

- *Ẓabṭ-e 'Ishq,* (poetry) by M. Mardan 'Ali Khan 'Ra 'na, in 1864.
- *Tārīkh-e[mumalik-e] Chin* (history) by James Corcharan 'Karkaran in 1864
- *Tārīkh-e Rūm* (history) by Muhammad Qudratullah Khan in 1865
- *Iksīr –e hidāyat* (religion /ethics) translated by Fkhruddin Ahmad Qadri in 1866
- *Tārīkh-e 'ahdnāmajāt va iqrārnāmajāt 7vols*(history/agreements and settlements) translated by Kanhaiyalal 'Ashiq in 1866
- *Hazār dāstān*(romance) translated by Totaram 'Shayan, in 1867
- *Totā Kahānī* (tales) by Haidarbaksh in 1868
- *Qiṣṣa –e- Sipāhīzāda* (tales) by Sheikh Rahman in 1868
- *Qiṣṣa –e- gul-o sonober* (tales) by Nemchand in 1868
- *Gul-e bakāvalī* (tales) by Nihalchand in 1868
- *Tuḥfat al mominin* (religion) by Kurban 'Ali in 1868
- *Miftah al jannat*(Religion) by Karamat 'Ali in 1868
- *A'īna-e mazhab-e Hunud* (religion) by Jaidayal Singh in 1868
- *Aḥkām-e ṭa'ām-e ahl-e Kitāb,* (religion) by Sayyid Ahmad Khan in 1868
- *Qisas al anbiya* (history/lives of Prophet) translated by Muhamamd Tahir in 1868
- *Futūḥ al-shām*(history) by 'Inayat Hussain in 1868
- *Laila Majnūn* (tales) by Mirza Muhammad Taqi Khan 'Hosh in 1869
- *Tārīkh-e sitāra-e Hind*(history) by Totaram 'Shayan' in 1870
- *Qiṣṣa –e māh-e ramazān* (religious tales) by Muhamamd 'Abdullah Khan in 1873
- *Jawāhir al Qur'ān mutarjim*(religion) by Imam 'Ali ibn Najaf in 1873
- *Aḥkām al –idīn* (religion) by Muhamamd Qutubuddin Khan in 1873
- *Manāhij al nubūwat* (religion/ life of the prophet) by 'Abdul Haq Dihlawi in 1873
- *Jangnāma –e Karbalā* (religion) by Muhammad Fazil in 1874
- *Khulāṣat al-maṣā'ib*(religion) by Muhammad Hadi 'Ali in 1874
- *Gulzar-e Jannat*(religion)by Muhammad Qutbuddin Khan Dehlavi in 1874
- *Miftāh al jannat (*religion) by Karamat 'Ali in 1875
- *Haqīqt al-auliyā* (history/lives of saints) by Ghulam Sarwar Lahori in 1877
- *Muntakhabāt –e Maṣnavī –e Maulvī Rūm*(sufism) translated by Ghulam Haidar in 1882
- *Qiṣṣa –e Hazrat Yūnus* (religion) by Muhammad 'Abdul Hamid Rafik in 1884
- *Kitab-e islam va Musalman*(religion) by Sayyid Muhammad Husain in 1886

- ➢ *Qiṣṣa –e da'I Halima* (religion) by shahid in 1886
- ➢ *Khudā kī raḥmat* (religion) by Muhammad Murtaza Kahn in 1886
- ➢ *Zikr al- Shahādatīn* (religion) by Ahmad Khan Sufi in 1886
- ➢ *Qiṣṣa –e jamjama* (religion) by Muhammad 'Ali in 1887

Concluding Remarks:

So this contribution of Munshi Nawal Kishore Press to Islamic Literature in very significant for the Muslim society. It argues that the 1840s to 1850s the field of cultural production in North India underwent far-reaching changes as a result of a process which has been described as the 'commercialization' of print. Based on technological advances and a variety of socio-economic and political transformations wrought by colonialism, commercialization was a major turning point, ushering in a paradigm change and a new phase in the history of print in the subcontinent. It introduced the mass-produced and inexpensive book in Persian and Urdu and for the first time provided north Indian literature audiences general access to the products of print culture in their respective modern regional languages. By altering the relationship between participants in literary production, transmission, commercial print culture affected literacy practice and the ways in which knowledge was generated, circulated and preserved. A major objective of this paper has been to trace the commodification of the books and the way it made its entry into the homes of an unprecedented number of ordinary people.[26]

Notes

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