



“I’ve searched all the parks in all the cities and found no statues of committees.”

—Gilbert K. Chesterton



# Tribal identity, colonial conspiracies and the Sanatan continuum of India

■ RAJNANDANI

When British traders arrived in a declining Mughal Bharat, spreading their intricate web of control, Calcutta became their base. From there, they were scripting Bharat’s future with the ink of oppression. At that very time, a small flame of hope was lit — fragile yet meaningful, like the glow of a firefly. That flame took the form of the first Hindi newspaper, *Udant Martand*. The historic day was May 30, 1826, when it first emerged in print.

It is not known from whom Yugalakshore Shukla sought advice or inspiration for naming the paper. In a sense, Calcutta witnessed a “firefly” being published under the name “*Martand*” (the Sun), a brilliance whose radiance would fade within two years.

After establishing their control over Bengal, the British made Calcutta their principal centre. People from Northern Bharat began migrating there in search of trade and employment. Shukla, too, spent his early years working as a clerk in the Sadar Court of Calcutta before becoming a lawyer. But fate had planned something else for him.

## Genesis Of the Newspaper

Why did the idea of publishing *Udant Martand* arise in his mind, particularly when it was not a profitable venture? This was especially true when its purpose was aligned with “the welfare of Bharat and Bharatiyas.” In the very first issue, the objective was clearly stated: “for the benefit of Hindustanis.” In contemporary terms, this single line set the narrative for the future course of Bharatiya

journalism.

Every issue of *Udant Martand*, published for the benefit of ordinary Bharatiyas, carried a note at the end: It was printed every Tuesday at the *Martand Press* located in Kolhutola, Amratala Lane, house number 37, in Calcutta. Those wishing to receive it may send their names to the press, and copies would be delivered to them. The subscription price was two rupees per month. The newspaper, measuring approximately 30×20 cm and consisting of eight pages, reflected the spoken Hindi of the common people in Calcutta at that time.

Last year, Makhnallal Chaturvedi, National University of Journalism and Communication organised an exhibition in its Bhopal campus titled “*Sadi Sakshi Hai*” (A Century as Witness), showcasing front-page coverage of significant events in Bharat’s history. Many newspapers displayed there had ceased publication decades ago, while others had grown into large media houses over time.

*Udant Martand* was displayed separately, with special respect. A journalist visiting the exhibition attempted to read its title. He managed to decipher “*Udant*” with effort, but despite repeated attempts, could not read “*Martand*.” When informed that this was the first seed of Bharatiya journalism, on the strength of which today’s large, multi-edition, full-colour newspapers with vast circulation and expansive media empires have grown, he became deeply emotional. He stood there for a long time, gazing at every word of the print.

A gap of two hundred years is not small. The language of Calcutta in 1826 presented a challenge at every sentence, slowing the reader down repeatedly. Yet, he found this experience very interesting as to how lan-

guages evolve over time. Like rivers, languages flow continuously, merging with other streams along the way, altering their course and character. When viewed across a long span, these transformations become clearly visible. Just as we are unable to fully comprehend inscriptions unearthed from two thousand years ago, they still remain records of a glorious past.

## And The Lamp Was Extinguished

After one year and seven months of publication, the lamp of *Udant Martand* was extinguished. The reason was the inability to secure financial support from the Government, traders, and readers. At that time, the British administration provided financial assistance to newspapers in Bengali, Urdu, and Persian, but not to Hindi publications. Even a monthly price of two rupees may have been beyond the means of Hindi-speaking readers in Calcutta.

Even today, newspapers in Bharat remain a unique product, often sold at prices significantly lower than their production cost. Media groups compensate for this gap through market revenues, ensuring that journalism continues. Only a few publications have sustained themselves without compromising their values, and they are the true inheritors of the tradition established by *Udant Martand*.

In such a situation, expecting newspapers to uphold high moral standards appears contradictory. They are expected to challenge governments, preserve the purity of language, expose corruption, maintain ethical conduct, and protect Dharma and Sanskriti. At the same time, society edu-

cates its children in English-medium institutions, seeks high-paying corporate careers, avoids personal sacrifice, and still expects newspapers to be nearly free, often accompanied by promotional schemes. One is left to wonder what kind of headline Yugalakshore Shukla might have written about this duality of expectations.

On December 19, 1827, in its 79th issue, he expressed his helplessness in these words: “Till today this *Martand* has risen; now it moves towards the setting horizon, its day nearing its end.” These words appeared like a final verse.

After *Udant Martand*, Bharat witnessed major historical upheavals—the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the Partition of Bengal 1905, the transfer of the British capital from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911, the fanatic Direct Action Day and the tragic events leading up to the partition of Bharat in 1947, marked by inhumane massacre, mass displacement, and tragic loss of life.

Episodes of Kalapani, imprisonment, executions, movements, satyagrahas, and resistance became part of a prolonged struggle, in which countless patriots sacrificed their lives. The small flame of *Udant Martand* continued to ignite similar flames across the country in the form of newspapers and journals. Gradually, it transformed into a powerful wave that ultimately contributed to the end of British rule.

This wave did not remain confined to the freedom struggle alone. It extended into various domains such as Hindi language, literature, history, archaeology, culture, and knowledge traditions. Its in-

fluence continued to grow, reaching significant milestones such as the outstanding contributions of the Nagari Pracharini Patrika in 1893.

There were times when, in the face of cannons, voices arose declaring the resolve to publish newspapers. There were also instances of individuals appearing with a gun in one hand and a pen in the other, embodying both resistance and expression. This journey of words suggests that Bharat’s struggle for independence began with noble aspirations, progressed through collective sacrifice and hardship, and eventually culminated in abhorrent negotiations for power.

Even today, beyond the gleaming, technologically advanced newsrooms of modern media houses, journalism remains fraught with uncertainties. In many ways, it is not very different from what it was two centuries ago in Kolhutola, in the narrow Amratala Lane of Calcutta. It was the stairs of haveli number 37, that *Udant Martand* took its first step. Economic hardship compelled the premature end of the first lamp of Hindi journalism. Even now, the editorial workforce in newspapers—despite their historic contributions to Bharat’s freedom struggle and nation-building—often has to traverse multiple layers of struggle to achieve dignity and recognition.

The essence of the brief life of *Udant Martand* lies in its struggle for truth—like flickering fireflies of hope, illuminating an endless sky/ORGANISER.ORG

# Restoring Lahore’s old names won’t hide Pakistan’s minority persecution

■ RAVI MISHRA

A recent news report has surely surprised everyone, saying that Pakistan has restored the pre-Partition names of Lahore streets. Islampura is once again Krishan Nagar. Babri Masjid Chowk has been reverted to Jain Mandir Chowk. Sunnat Nagar is now Sant Nagar. Mustafabad has become Dharampura. So, the question arises: has Pakistan really changed? The truth is that Pakistan and minorities cannot co-exist. A country which came into existence in the name of religion can never tolerate the existence of another faith. We all know that Pakistan has been committing genocide against Hindus, Christian and other minorities. In Pakistan, Hindus are persecuted, and Dalit Hindu women are forcibly converted and raped. Also, Christians are burnt alive in the name of blasphemy.

According to a UN analysis, about 75 per cent of women and girls subjected to forced conversion through marriage in Pakistan are Hindu. The data does not lie. When Pakistan was created in 1947, Hindus constituted about 15 per cent of the population of West Pakistan, who are now limited to 1.6 per cent. According to the data, the Hindu population in Karachi has gone from nearly 50 per cent to just 1.12 per cent in 82 years. The same has happened across the region in Pakistan with the minority population.

Therefore, Pakistan cannot fool the world. Since when did Pakistan suddenly become a lover of minorities? It is difficult for anyone to even imagine that. As long as Pakistan exists in its present form, “Pakistan” and “minority inclusiveness” cannot coexist.

You may remember that before the Pahal-gam incident last year in April, Pakistan army chief Asim Munir, while addressing Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) parade in Khyber-

Pakhtunkhwa province, said, “The two-nation theory was based on the fundamental belief that Muslims and Hindus are two separate nations, not one. Muslims are distinct from Hin-

taught their children history in such a distorted manner that even rational-minded Pakistani youth have started questioning what their real history actually is. Pakistani youth who try to

Turkish ancestry, while at other times, other leaders speak of Arab or Saudi ancestry. These are all done to claim Pakistan’s history.

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**Though, here it is important to mention that all the establishment in Pakistan have taught their children history in such a distorted manner that even rational-minded Pakistani youth have started questioning what their real history actually is. Pakistani youth who try to take an interest in their history. They find themselves lost in the world. One question always arises in their mind. Are they truly an Islamic nation? Because their ancestors themselves were not originally Muslim. Even the political and military establishment, whoever comes to power, tries to give a different ancestry during their tenure. Imran Khan claims Turkish ancestry, while at other times, other leaders speak of Arab or Saudi ancestry. These are all done to claim Pakistan’s history. The Dawn, which is a Pakistani newspaper, in its article titled, “What is the most blatant lie taught through Pakistani Textbooks?” published on August 15, 2014, writes, “The most blatant lie in textbook accounts of Pakistan’s history is by virtue of omission, which is in effect the denial of our multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious past. It is a common complaint that Pakistan’s history is taught as if it began with the conquest of Sindh by the Umayyad army, led by the young General Muhammad bin Qasim in 711 AD. Most textbooks in Sindh at least mention Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus Valley civilisation, but they do not discuss them meaningfully, nor do they address their extent and culture. Important periods and events during subsequent centuries are also skimmed over, like the Aryan civilisation, which introduced its powerful social system and epic poetry (the Mahabharata, in which Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa play important roles), the Brahmin religion, a thousand years of Buddhism with its universities and the Gandharan civilisation, which was spread throughout present-day Pakistan.”**

dus in all aspects of life – religion, customs, traditions, thinking and aspirations. Our forefathers made immense sacrifices for the creation of Pakistan. We know how to defend it”. The point is that this decision is merely Pakistan’s political posturing.

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The fact is that the Islamisation of Pakistan started under General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, who instituted a program of Islamisation of the country. He designed a policy in 1979. According to that policy, the highest priority was given to revising the curriculum to reorganise the entire content around Islamic thought.

Having said this, the idea of Pakistan and its Hindu past, whose evidence can be clearly found across the region, cannot coexist together. On one hand, Pakistan is trying to mislead the world by restoring the pre-Partition Hindu names of its streets; on the other hand, it has been glorifying invaders like Muhammad ibn Qasim, Mahmud Ghaznavi, Muhammad Ghor, Babur, Abdali, Aurangzeb and Tipu, who are known for their brutality against Hindus. Also, now that religious bigot General Asim Munir is at the helm in Pakistan, who is controlling the country while appointing puppet Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, it would be utterly foolish to assume any change in Pakistani’s psyche towards religious minority in the country/ORGANISER.ORG