

## Kashmir in media: An overview

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### Abstract

Kashmir has been a victim of Indian media's "hateful journalism". Misrepresentation of Kashmir by both the "hyper-nationalists" and "liberal press" of India, has resulted in the emergence of Kashmir press as a powerful social institution in the state. Closely associated with the lives of the people in the valley, Kashmir press has been playing an important role in creating the civil societies and development of the state at large. The study has been designed to gauge the functioning, growth, freedom, history and current scenario of the Kashmir press. The study also aimed to analyse portrayal of Kashmir by Indian national, and international media. The study helps to chart out a comparative analysis of the different media in covering Kashmir.

**Keywords:** Kashmir, media, misrepresentation, international media, development

### 1. Introduction

The valley is said to have lost its freedom with the arrest of Yousuf Shah Chak by Mughal ruler, Akbar (Peer, 2010) [39]. Adding fuel to the fire, Dogra autocracy further added to the miseries of the people of the valley (Wani, 2015) [51]. Falling from frying pan into the fire, Partition seems to have taken the state to its worst. Since then, Kashmir has been going through a very tough phase.

Equivalently, the press in Kashmir has been through various ups and downs at different points in time, sometimes being victimised while sometimes emerging as a victor (Bukhari, 2012) [12].

The press assumes a greater significance in this conflict ridden state, Kashmir. Being the primary vehicle of political and social change, it shoulders the huge responsibility of playing its part in restoring peace in the region. Having played a cardinal role in creating civil societies and resolving critical issues, the press in the valley still has a long way to go.

### 2. Significance of the study

The study spells out the role played by local, national and international media in covering Kashmir. With the help of literature, the role played by the Indian national, Pakistani and other western media in portraying Kashmir can be gauged. The current study will help to chart out a comparative analysis of the different media in covering Kashmir. The studies and articles related to the history and functioning of press in the state of Jammu and Kashmir would be analysed to assess the current scenario of the local press. The research would reveal various dimensions of the growth of journalism in Kashmir. The research also aims to highlight the restrictions imposed on local press by the authorities.

### 3. Objectives of the study

- To gauge the functioning, growth and freedom of local press
- To analyse the role of Indian national press and

international media in portraying Kashmir.

### 4. Kashmir Press: A historical perspective

Muhammad (2016) argues that Kashmir has been a victim of journalistic apartheid. He further rues that even though brutal killings of people on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1931 attracted a lot of criticism in Lahore press and British press against Maharaja's autocratic rule, the Jalandhar press and papers owned by Sikh Organization like "Akali", official organ of Akali Dal, rebuked Muslim agitation and underpinned Maharaja. Papers like *Inqalab*, *Zamindar* and papers owned and edited by Kashmiris like Muhammad Din Fauq lambasted the ruler. The writer further states that surprisingly, even Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah failed to become dearest to the Indian press. Initially, Abdullah had some followers in the leftist press but later the aforementioned press also criticised him as a "American stooge".

Pointing out another important side of the history of press in Kashmir, Mohi Ud Din (2012) [32] found a surge in the publication of the newspapers in the state over the period of time. He is of the opinion that this surge is testimony to the fact that media is becoming vibrant in a place where vernacular dailies were the only viable form of media available to people. The masses expect from the fourth estate to communicate their grievances to the corridors of power. The fact that new local dailies are hitting the stands every now and then indicates there is more space for media to expand. He also concludes that right from the birth of the first newspaper *Ranbir* (Although different scholars have a contrary view on the issue of the first newspaper of the state, but most of the scholars consider *Ranbir* the first newspaper of the State of Jammu & Kashmir) up to the birth of first regular daily English newspaper *Greater Kashmir* in 1989 and onwards, it has provided people with a sense of center from the times when Kashmiris stood against the Dogra autocratic rule to the entire post 1947 political agitations. During the course of research, the researcher found that press in Kashmir has

played an important role in educating people of the state. Discussing the growth of print media in the state, Bukhari (2012)<sup>[12]</sup> writes that Srinagar had no daily newspaper until 1989. The writer asserts that “bringing out a newspaper from Srinagar is a very risky job.” The press in Kashmir has gone through tremendous pressures in the years. Arrival of “armed rebellion” on the political turf of Kashmir made Srinagar virtually the hub for the news around the world. He asserts that *Greater Kashmir*, became an English daily, only after three years of the armed movement for “freedom”. Currently the largest English daily of the state, the newspaper was only a weekly till then. On the other side, according to him, Jammu and Kashmir State has, however, over 800 registered newspapers, and in Srinagar alone more than 10 English newspapers are published daily. The founder of English daily *Rising Kashmir*, Bukhari also writes that exploitation of journalists has been an old story in Kashmir. Journalists had to put up with meager salaries and not so good working conditions in past. He further writes unfortunately, journalism has not been allowed to flourish as a full-fledged institution in Kashmir. Despite the existence of ample newspapers, journalism here has always been treated as a “part time” profession which can be pursued alongside a government job. Quoting the writings of Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, Muhammad (2010)<sup>[34]</sup> writes, to uplift the Muslims in the state, some members of the Kashmir Association in Lahore had started publication of newspapers. Sheikh Jan Muhammad started publishing a weekly newspaper *Kashmir Gazette* from Lahore. To highlight the Kashmir cause, Munshi Mohammad Din Fauq under the patronage of Allama Iqbal launched one after another newspaper and magazines. For launching first newspaper, *Panja Foulad*, followed by monthly *Kashmiri Gazette* in 1900, Fauq earned great admiration from Iqbal. An article by Shamboo Nath Gurkha ‘My years in Journalism’ reprinted by *Kashmir Sentinel* on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2016 confirms that there was mushroom growth of Urdu newspaper in late 1960s. Papers like *Daily Chinar* (edited by Peer Giyasdin), *Daily Aftab* (edited by Khwaja Sonallah), *Srinagar Times* (edited by Sofi Ghulam Mohd.), *Naya Sansar* (edited by Gh. Rasool Urfani), *Navjivan* were launched. Ahmad (2016)<sup>[1]</sup> writes that except vernacular press, journalism in Kashmir remained a monopoly of Kashmiri pandits till 1990. The Indian national and international media organisation had hardly any Muslim reporter in Srinagar. Before Yusuf Jameel joined the *Telegraph*, Calcutta in 1983, Mohammad Sayeed Malik, in early 1970s, was the first local Muslim correspondent of an Indian newspaper, the *Patriot*. He further writes that Kashmir’s experience with “partial journalism” is rooted in history. In 1904, Munshi Muhammad Din Fauq sought permission to start a newspaper from Srinagar. Maharaja Pratap Singh was not pleased. He asked his Prime Minister to frame rules that would disallow even consideration of such requests in future. For about three decades nobody made another attempt until 1932 when a Kashmiri Pandit, Prem Nath Bazaz was permitted to publish the first newspaper, *Vitasta*, from Kashmir. The valley had no newspapers to report the ground situation in 1931’s mass movement. On the basis of the owners’ faith and community affiliation, Lahore newspapers were then categorised into ‘Hindu Press’ and ‘Muslim Press’. Newspapers taking up the

case of disempowered Kashmiris formed the ‘Muslim Press’. These newspapers included *Zamindar*, *Inquilab*, *Siyasat*, *Alfaaz* and *Lahore Chronicle*. At one point, these periodicals were banned from the territory of Jammu & Kashmir although some copies would reach Srinagar clandestinely. The newspapers supporting Maharaja, comprising ‘Hindu Press’ included *Tribune*, *Pratap*, *Milap*, *Amar* and *Guru Ghantaal*. The newspapers also published special ‘Kashmir Numbers’ carrying “biased” reports and articles demeaning Muslim peasants and their leaders. He also writes that the ‘Hindu Press’ of Lahore worked as the “forerunner of today’s Indian ‘nationalist’ media and treated protesting Kashmiri Muslims with as much, if not more, despise.” The writer quoting different prominent journalist concludes that the Indian press “never lagged behind in branding Kashmiri Muslims as anti-India and pro-Pakistan community.” Ahmad further writes that GM Sadiq, was not the only Chief Minister to lament on ‘partial’ reporting by the Indian press, from Syed Mir Qasim, to Sheikh Abdullah, to Farooq Abdullah, all had to bear the burnt of this ‘partial’ reporting. Discussing at large about the coverage of Kashmir by the post-partition “hyper-nationalist” journalists, he concludes that “Indian press has inherited anti-Kashmir slant from its Lahore predecessor.”

In an interview published by *Kashmir Life*, of one of the most senior journalists and founder of *Kashmir Times* newspaper, Ved Bhasin was quoted as saying that during Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah’s years of governance between 1947 and 1952, he crushed the freedom of press. He further was quoted as saying that press (Indian press) was totally supportive of the Government of India. Under the influence of Indian home ministry, Indian press represented the big business that time. So in a way they created problems for Abdullah. When Abdullah was arrested after 1953, Indian media supported Government of India and Bakshi initially. Replying to a question that despite the presence of many newspapers that time why there is very little material available on the communal riots of Jammu and Kashmir, Bhasin had said that actually nobody wrote about it to that effect. He calls *Ranbir*, founded in 1924 by Lala Mulk Raj Sahaf, the first newspaper in Jammu and Kashmir state. Bhasin also started his first newspaper, an Urdu weekly named *Naya Samaj* in 1952 in addition to *The Kashmir Times*. This was the first political weekly in Jammu.

Arshad (2011)<sup>[5]</sup> states that despite a burgeoning market with over 400 dailies, there was not a single newspaper in Kashmiri language before the launch of *Sangarmal* in February 2006. Another Kashmiri newspaper, *Kehwat*, followed suit two days later. The newspapers were launched with a main aim to promote the mother tongue and keep it alive. Recounting the history of Kashmiri newspapers, the writer asserts that Ghulam Ahmed Mehjoor was the first to start a Kashmiri weekly *Ghash* (light) in 1940s. Two more language newspaper *Wattan* and *Kashur Akhbar* were launched in 1965 and 1973 respectively. *Samut* was started by a group of Kashmir university students in 1980 followed by *Meeras* in 1998. All the newspapers couldn’t even sustain for a year except the *Meeras* which lasted for two years.

Republishing the earlier reports, Bakaya and Bhatti (n.d.) wrote that a “fierce propaganda campaign was initiated against the Maharajah’s rule from Lahore in 1931, in

neighboring Punjab, by the Muslim press.” In contrary to the majority of the reports cited in current study, the researchers wrote that “leaflets and journals spoke of the deliberate suppression of the Muslims and instigated the people to rise against the Maharajah.” Further citing Dasgupta that there was a growth of press and television coverage, researchers pointed out that freedom of speech in the valley was flourishing in 1980s.

### 5. Kashmir Press: Current Scenario

To study the scenario of newspapers and other periodicals in Jammu & Kashmir, Pandita (2013) [38] on the basis of findings of his study states that there is no threat to the print media in Jammu & Kashmir as there has been a continuous increase in the registration of new titles with Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI). He also concludes that among all the 22 districts, Jammu leads in publishing maximum number of newspapers followed by Srinagar. The study reveals that Dogri and Hindi periodicals remain confined to Jammu province while Kashmiri language periodicals to only Kashmir province respectively. Findings further conclude that with an exception of Kargil and Kulgam, the periodicals are published from each and every district of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Researcher reveals that out of the three official languages of the state, Urdu language enjoys more popularity among all. Periodicals are published in 10 different languages across the 22 districts of the state. The researcher found that with the advent of technology, most of the newspapers have adapted the hybrid publishing only to uphold the interest of their readers and not to lose their patronage.

Quoting Jammu and Kashmir government’s information department, Motta (2011) [33] writes in addition to 200 weekly newspapers and 150 fortnightly and monthly publications, around 150 newspapers in different languages hit the stands every morning in Srinagar and Jammu. He further writes that before the eruption of anti-India insurgency in the state in 1989, unlike two small newspapers in Jammu, there was not a single English newspaper in the valley. Crediting significant increase in the literacy rate across the state for the growth of newspapers, the writer states that out of a total of 500 publications, 325 stand approved for government advertisement. He further asserts that unlike the past, the scene is different today as around 30 big and small English dailies are published from Srinagar and Jammu cities.

According to the media reports, Jammu and Kashmir’s summer capital (Srinagar) could well have the largest of daily newspapers in India given its population of 1.4 million. A report published on 28th April 2016 by *The New Indian Express* - IANS being the original source of news report - reveals that there were more than some 265 newspapers published both in English and local language from Srinagar alone. The fact of the matter is that most of these newspapers don’t even hit news stands any where in the valley. Experts further quoted in report believe that these newspapers are published only to get government advertisements. With no mention about the number of copies the newspaper should publish daily; state government norms till 2010 stipulated uninterrupted publication of one year for a daily newspaper to become eligible for government advertisements. The news story further reads that majority of these newspapers have no

offices and are published from unknown places. Naming it a media ‘malaria’, the report concludes that some of the most intriguing publishing practices and their funniest names have helped many newspapers to sustain in Kashmir, irrespective of whether they have a readership or not.

Stating that 69 newspapers have almost negligible circulation, Hassan (2012) [27] quoting Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in Kashmir in a news story published in *Greater Kashmir*, states that 69 valley based newspapers have either no or little circulation and are ‘supported by dubious funding from secret sources.’ The report further reads that there are eight English newspapers in the list which have virtually no circulation, while 16 Urdu newspapers have no circulation.

The list provided in the report also includes 45 English and Urdu newspapers which have circulation of up to 200 copies and between 200 and 500 copies. Quoting the MHA report, the article further reads that no national paper had started a local edition of their papers in the valley as “there is absence of a level-playing field in the local media industry coupled with all the uncertainties of operating in a conflict situation.”

To examine the degree of social media technologies adoption by online newspapers of Kashmir, Gul and Islam (2013) [18] found that only 21 (32.6%) newspapers of Kashmir are available online. They further found that most of these newspapers have adopted social media technologies to some extent. Despite the fact that local language newspapers seem to be quite at the stages of infancy in implementing these technologies, newspapers of Kashmir have begun to embrace new social media concepts on their sites. They found that out of 10 English dailies, 9 (90 per cent) have adopted social media on their respective websites. On the other side, only 3 (2.27 per cent) Urdu newspapers have adopted social media while one Kashmiri newspaper (*Kashur Akhbar*) is yet to introduce social media tools.

Stating with regards to Kashmir issue, both the Pakistani and Indian media have always been used by their respective governments to project official stances, Tahir (2016) [48] asserts that Indian media’s approach is “biased and negative” towards portraying the issue. Pointing out that Kashmir conflict, affecting the peace of South Asian region, “is not treated as an international issue by the Indian press.” He further claims that the coverage remains “negative” and does not present any peaceful resolution of the conflict. However, Pakistani media focuses on “Indian brutalities and different statements of Pakistani politicians and others.” The focus on Kashmiris and a pathway towards conflict resolution is generally missing in the coverage.

### 6. Role of Kashmir press

Mehmood-ur-Rashid (2012) [29] asserts that Kashmir press has emerged as a powerful social institution. It has played an important role in setting the social trends, breaking some myths, establishing some others, and also opening up the mind of people to larger issues. The rich content flowed through the newspapers into the social pool over the period of time has helped to shape the society as its best. He further writes that Kashmir press has been closely associated with the lives of people. This press has played an important role in all walks of life of our society. Apart from unsparingly bolstering our sense of culture, and cultural territories, Kashmir press has

played an unmatched role for the introduction of changes, emergence of political, religious and social leadership in our society. He further discusses the role played by the newspapers like *Hamdard* and *Zamindar* for becoming the potent voices of the Kashmiri society against the Dogra autocratic rule. The writer concludes that Kashmir press has been as vibrant and as contributive as any other press in the history of journalism.

Bali (2015)<sup>[9]</sup> conducted a survey to study the role of media in causing changes in the lifestyle of rural Kashmir. Through the findings of the study, he concluded that media has played a significant role in development of rural areas. Media was found to have brought change in the lifestyle of the villagers by providing them exposure. The study also found that newspapers and television are among the top sources used for education and information purposes.

Apart from other uses, according to the findings of his study, 70% respondents of rural Kashmir use media for religious, education and information purposes. The researcher found that alike urban society, the rural Kashmir also embraced media. Literacy rate among rural population especially women folk is soaring due to the influence of media. People have started entering into various professions other than the family or traditional occupations and are also attaining global knowledge through media. It was also found that media has played a tremendous role in the promotion of the Urdu language. Researcher concluded that with the advent of media in rural Kashmir, unlike earlier, Urdu became the most spoken language in the rural areas.

To critically analyse the level of objectivity and subjectivity while reporting events in conflict torn state of Kashmir, Bali (2014)<sup>[8]</sup> found that there is a difference among the newspapers of the two provinces. He concluded that journalism in the two provinces of Jammu and Kashmir state is “divided, biased, subjective and business oriented.” Researcher also found that both the reporters of Jammu as well as Kashmir province are subjective while covering Kashmir. Further discussing the divide between the reporters of the two regions, he found that reporters of Kashmir retort to “subjectivity while covering Indian Army.” On the other side, Jammu based newspapers “exaggerate the reports concerning security forces.” He also concluded that senior journalists admit that the print media in Jammu and Kashmir is serving their commercial interest and cater to society as per their wishes to increase circulation.

Interlocutors on Kashmir - Dileep Padgaonkar, Radha Kumar and M M Ansari - in their 176-page report submitted in October 2011 to the then Home Minister of India, P. Chidambaram have criticised the role of media and journalists in the state for “inventing events for political game”. Republishing a part of the report on media by *Kashmir Watch* (2012)<sup>[24]</sup>, the report reads that the “local media, by contrast, have given far more attention to peace process developments but—as occurs routinely in conflict situations—there are some amongst them who are selective in what they report and biased in favour of one or another political position.” The report confirms that “barring a small handful of anchors and reporters, the national media have underreported conflict areas and tends to focus on moments of violence or recrimination.” Arakotaram (n.d.) states that Sheikh Abdullah and other

Kashmiri nationalists spread the idea of Kashmiriyat through a combination of newspaper articles, political rallies and others. Bali (n.d.) concludes that Kashmir print media portrays Indian Army as “despotic, tyrant, and human right violators.” Newspaper use highly “provocative” language. Even though the researcher has reached to an ambiguous conclusion by quoting an anonymous senior journalist in Srinagar, the study found that “social welfare activities” of the army in Kashmir have been accorded very less space by the local print media.

Rai (2000)<sup>[41]</sup> states that being the opinion makers for the local public, “vernacular press in Srinagar is considered more important than all other media.” In contrary to the majority’s opinion noted down in the chapter, the researcher quoting Major General Rai states that Indian national media, excluding All Indian Radio and Doordarshan, has played a “mature and fairly responsible role in Kashmir.” Criticising local media, he states that Urdu journalists lack professionalism in the valley. He further states that “apart from becoming a militant in Kashmir, one of the easiest profession to pick up is to work for a local rag.” He concludes that western media lacks depth and fairness in reporting Kashmir.

Defying the widespread feeling outside Kashmir that local press was on the side of the militants, Narayan Committee (n.d.) in its report concluded that this notion regarding the Kashmir press was “uncharitable.” The report concludes that quite a few papers did publish statements and advertisements of militant outfits, but they did it under duress.

## 7. Restriction on Kashmir Press

Withdrawing the order of one-day ban on *NDTV India*, Saha (2016)<sup>[43]</sup> asserts that on the other side, continuing ban on the *Kashmir Reader* have raised questions about government’s “double standards”. Criticising the government order, the writer further notes that the newspaper has been banned after citing the reason that content of the newspaper “tends to incite acts of violence and disturb public peace and tranquility” but did not detail which specific report or article did so. Further quoting justice Hasnain Masoodi, former judge of the state high court and senior advocate at the Supreme Court, the report says, an issue of newspaper or book can be banned for carrying the particular content. “An order banning a newspaper saying that it may publish some incitement in the future carries no weight.”

Questioning the “double-standards” of the government, editor of the banned newspaper *Kashmir Reader*, Mir (2016), in an article published by *The Hoot* writes the charges against the two media outlets – *NDTV* and *Kashmir Reader* - casts them in two entirely different frameworks: “*Kashmir Reader* becomes the evil, anti-national newspaper while *NDTV India* is being careless.” Hitting out at the majority of Indian media for “biased” coverage on Kashmir, he writes “Kashmiri local media and majority of the media in India report two entirely different worlds when they report Kashmir.” He concludes that for broadcasting “lies” from news studios in New Delhi, Kashmiri journalists were being beaten up by angry protesters. Indian media’s such reportage was actually inciting people to violence in Kashmir.

Naik (2016)<sup>[36]</sup> in an article published by *TwoCircles.net* comparing the ban on *NDTV* and *Kashmir Reader* newspaper points out a ‘step-motherly’ treatment with a local daily. The

writer states that “the biggest problem with Kashmiri people and its media is that no body sides with them when they are at the receiving end.” He further asserts that journalists in the valley in the last few months in 2016 have been “abused and thrashed” by security forces as well as protestors. So as to stop the media from writings against the interest of the state, he further writes that the “new trend of imposing ban is being set as an example.”

Fahad Shah in a blog published by Dawn.com criticises the barring of press from working freely in the valley. He writes that in Kashmir, “many journalists have lost their lives while on duty since the armed rebellion began.” He further states that it has become an easy tool to create barricades for journalist in the valley. Despite the reality of the valley known to the whole world, journalists in Kashmir consider the region as “most unreported”.

### 8. Kashmir in non-local media

Sreedharan (2009) <sup>[47]</sup> did a comprehensive analysis of media content in order to profile the nature of the news coverage accorded to the Kashmir conflict by Indian and Pakistani newspapers. With the help of findings of the study, he concluded that the coverage was ‘vigorously government-led’ and intensely ‘negative’. As the coverage on both sides of the border was strikingly negative, the portion of anti-peace news was displayed more prominently than pro-peace news. He further noted that the coverage on both sides was “ethnocentric: journalists mostly relied on governmental sources and promoted official stances, with inadequate exploration of alternative perspectives.”

Stating that out of misguided patriotism, Tavleen Singh (1996) in her book titled ‘*A Tragedy of Errors*’ writes that Indian national media has always chosen to tell the national public less than the whole truth about Kashmir. Describing national media as one of the reasons for prolonging of the Kashmir conflict, she had made this observation with respect to the print media coverage of Kashmir conflict in 1990s.

Zia and Syedah (2015) <sup>[53]</sup> state that in the past, even before Kashmir conflict emerged between India and Pakistan after the partition, Kashmir has been a victim of “communally biased media.” To analyse the print media coverage of Kashmir dispute, they conducted a research only to find that coverage of the issue is “negatively framed and invariably centered on violence, violent events and failed to highlight peaceful alternatives, which anticipated further violence.” After studying the major English dailies of India, Pakistan and US, the researchers concluded that print media “did not perform any pivotal role for peaceful resolution of Kashmir conflict.” Apart from the Indian and Pakistani media, Kashmir was not highlighted with “positive approach” even by international media (US media). With “negatively structured” or neutral coverage most of the time, Kashmir issue resolution has received coverage mostly in the form of “anecdotal or normative discussion.” The researchers also found that most of the news (75%) in *The New York Times* regarding Kashmir were “negatively” framed. They concluded that Kashmir issue intermittently appears in international media and rarely in research journals. The fact of the matter is that while covering Kashmir conflict, print media of each of the three countries have set frames according to their socio-political context and

covered the issue accordingly and highlighted “violence and militancy, nationalism and patriotism, biasness towards some parties” etc. As the coverage of the conflict was found to have been dominated by war journalism, print media of both the countries continues to adopt an imprudent, unreflective type of coverage of conflict. They concluded that whenever *The New York Times* covered the issue, mainly it favoured “India’s viewpoint regarding Kashmir dispute instead of publishing an independent, unbiased and impartial opinion.”

To study the portrayal of strikes in Kashmir by Indian media, Gadda (2014) <sup>[17]</sup> through the content analysis of the major English dailies of India concluded that India media has “ignored the voice of dissent from Kashmir.” The study further found that Indian media has “downplayed the strikes in Kashmir valley either by not publishing the news stories about strikes; by portraying the strikes as sponsored programmes of resistance leaders, crippling or halting the normal life; or by diluting the details about strikes.” Indian media was mostly found to have been favouring the official narrative. Further comparing the Indian national media with the local media, he found that both the players have been covering “Kashmir conflict from different angles.” The local media has been providing a “predominant coverage” to the local issues, precisely those with “links to the politics of the state.” According to him, local media was also the “most prominent source of information” even during 90s.

In an article published by Janta Ka Reporter (2016) <sup>[22]</sup>, prominent Indian journalist, Rajdeep Sardesai was quoted as questioning the “patriotic/nationalistic” credentials of Indian journalists particularly during the coverage of Bhuran Wani’s killing and the subsequent protests in Kashmir. In his blog republished by the news portal, he further writes in “Kashmir too, we need to tell truth to power: the truth of disaffected youth with limited opportunities for growth, of failed, corrupted politics, of an unshaken ‘azaadi’ sentiment, of army excesses...”

Comparing the current situation of Kashmir with one in 1994, Devdas (2016) <sup>[14]</sup> rues over the radical changes taken place in the valley. He criticises the misrepresentation of the Kashmir by both “hyper-nationalists” and “liberal press.” Both local newspapers and Indian national media “don’t present a complete story of things.” The coverage of both has often been “one-sided – either exaggerated or muted.” He further writes, “this one-sided good-versus-evil narrative on either side presents unprovoked aggression or victimhood without reason or context.” Kashmir has been given a minimal news coverage by “national” television channels. Discussing about the case of the press in Jammu and Kashmir, he asserts that the “gap between the media houses operating from Jammu and Srinagar has become a deep chasm since 2008.” The difference in representation can be gauged as the versions of the news in the outlets owned by the same company had been different. Apart from the “us-versus-them” narratives, some “hyper-nationalist” television channels have adopted a “black-and-white, good-versus-evil discourse.”

Zia (2007) <sup>[52]</sup> states that the sufferings and struggles of common people in the state have been reduced to mere number. Indian national media’s Kashmir coverage is “sensational, nationalistic and jingoistic.” The struggle of

Kashmiris has been “misinterpreted” by Indian national media.

Naik (2016) <sup>[36]</sup> reports that local journalists from Kashmir have often alleged “biased reporting of mainstream Indian media” as the main reason for frequent attacks on them by the locals. Further arguing that “Press TV has always been objective in its reporting on Kashmir,” report also highlights the protest of people in Gurez area of Kashmir against the alleged misrepresentation of people of area by *Zee News*. Further quoting a statement by the united separatist amalgam of Hurriyat (G), Hurriyat (M) and Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front, the report further reads separatist asked the people to boycott *Times Now*, *News X* and *Zee News* as these channels are “aggressive and bigoted, by design, in their reportage of Kashmir.” The news channels “mislead and poison the Indian public opinion regarding the events in Kashmir and the Kashmir issue.” Quoting *Press TV* camera man Aijaz Khan, the report also reads, “biased reporting of Indian media is creating problems for all those journalists who report reality without any hidden agenda or propaganda.”

Puri (1993) <sup>[40]</sup> states that human rights abuse by the government hardly finds any mention in the news covered by the Indian national press.

Tarfe (2016) <sup>[49]</sup> through a study finds that Indian press has rigorously covered Jammu and Kashmir. The study further finds that *The Indian Express* newspaper has opted a “state centric approach” in covering the state. Findings of the study reveal that Indian officials and military have been quoted in 78% of the news stories studied. Among the whole coverage accorded to Jammu and Kashmir by *The Indian Express*, the newspaper was found to have provided 70% of the coverage to Defence and politics related news.

Anjum and Varma (2010) <sup>[3]</sup> discussing the 2010 Kashmir uprising assert that although the non-local journalists have been given unobtrusive access to volatile areas, the “curfew passes of local journalists have not been honoured.” They have been assaulted and arrested under special security legislation etc. The valley witnessed intensive restrictions on media and communication.

According to the report of Committee for Initiative in Kashmir (1993) <sup>[13]</sup>, Indian national media follows ‘dual’ standards in covering the situation in the valley. “Press has adopted an attitude them and us” regarding the people of the valley, strengthening national integration. The committee revealed that despite being the only source of information about Kashmir for the society outside, Indian media has followed the official line regarding the situation within Kashmir. The committee noted that besides creating a stereotype image that Kashmiri Muslims want to secede Pakistan, the misrepresentation of the the valley’s situation has only reinforced the Kashmir’s “sense of alienation.”

Labelling particular Indian news channels as “mirror-houses of hateful journalism” Faesal (2016) <sup>[16]</sup> states that “every hour of prime time TV news aggression pushes Kashmir a mile westward from India.” He further asserts that “a section of the national media has been misrepresenting the idea of India in Kashmir.” It has also been projecting “lies about Kashmir to rest of the country.” It happened in 2008, in 2010, and in 2014. Calling print media balanced, the writer says that “almost all the programmes on Kashmir right now are aimed

to provoke people, the coverage is selective, and intention appears to be to compound the problems for the state government.”

After studying the coverage of Jammu and Kashmir by Indian national newspapers, Joseph (2000) <sup>[23]</sup> found that government “dominated the media narrative of the state.” Highlighting the “lack of civilian perspectives in the Indian press about Jammu and Kashmir,” the writer further concluded that the issues of “human rights, insurgency and others are mostly portrayed from a state security perspective.”

Bose (2010) <sup>[11]</sup> studied the reportage of Kashmir in Indian (*The Times of India*) and Pakistani (*Dawn*) newspapers. The researcher found that Kashmir has been covered by the newspapers of both the countries with different angles. The reports in both the newspapers have pointed out different key problems of the conflict. Study concluded that according to the stories of *Dawn* the “problem lies in the Indian occupation of Kashmir.” The key problems reported by *Dawn* newspaper include “brutality of the Indian security forces, poor economic conditions and lack of freedom in the valley”. Meanwhile, according to *The Times of India*, “killings by security forces, misleading the masses of the valley by separatists, political disturbance are the key reasons reported.”

To discover and analyse the frames used to report the Kashmir conflict by U.S. print media, (2004) <sup>[42]</sup> studied *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times*. She asserted that Kashmir conflict has been highlighted through two aspects – “religion and warfare” - by the newspapers studied. Opening new doors for further discussion, the researcher concluded that print media coverage of the Kashmir conflict was “crisis-oriented and reflected U.S. concerns in the region.” Through the findings of the study, she further revealed that “U.S. media have constructed the reality of Kashmir conflict by making selected attributes of the conflict salient and by highlighting in their context, problem definitions and casual interpretations advanced by the U.S. government.”

Shabbir *et. al.* (2014) concluded that both the Pakistani newspapers - *The News* and *The Nation* - were found to have supported Pakistan Government’s policy on Kashmir issue. *The Nation* newspaper was found to have “emphasized on the permanent solution of the Kashmir issue according to UN resolutions.”

Uncovering a new issue of fabrication of news reports by Indian media on Kashmir, an article “How Indian and Pakistani media are covering Kashmir unrest”, published by *DW.com* (2016) <sup>[15]</sup> reads that a senior journalist of a major TV channel resigned after accusing the network of “fabricating” his reports on Kashmir. Indian media's coverage of the Kashmir conflict has often been “marred by controversy,” reporter claimed that the “channel had forced him to prepare biased reports favoring the Indian Government's stance on Kashmir.” Quoting a Kolkata-based commentator on South Asian politics, Garga Chatterjee, the report further reads Indian and Pakistani media are playing a “very negative role and are basically warmongering for their respective governments”. Saying that since the beginning of conflict, for Indian media, the problem in Kashmir is “sponsored by Pakistan,” Basharat Ali, a blogger based in

Indian-administrated Kashmir, had said, “media outlets in India and its arch-rival Pakistan have always been used by their respective governments to project official stances on the Kashmir conflict.” In the same article further quoting Baba Umar, an independent Kashmiri journalist based in Dubai covering the Kashmir unrest, as saying that Indian media is being considered as “public relations machine” of New Delhi by Kashmiris. In covering the unrest, Umar said, local media in Kashmir is doing a commendable job despite being repeatedly attacked by the authorities. The report concludes that in case of Kashmir issue, media analysts see a “lack” of fact-checking on the part of both the Indian as well as Pakistani newspapers.

Mohammad (2016) <sup>[31]</sup> quoting Naseer Ahmed, a senior journalist based in Kashmir who resigned from his post at IBN7 after accusing the network of “fabricating” his reports on Kashmir, in an article published in *The Caravan* writes that “reports of all the news channels send their reports to Delhi, but people in Delhi edit reports according to their own guidelines. Sometimes we are ashamed once we see our reports on the screen.” The situation has changed a lot over the period of time. The journalist further laments, during 1990s people used to respect, greet and hug journalists, now if you got people they can “beat you to death because Kashmir is being wrongly portrayed, especially by the news channels.” It further reads that space given to ground reports on the violence in Kashmir has “decreased steadily over time in most mainstream Indian media.” People in the valley believe that those stories that have appeared have often been “inaccurate.” During 2016 uprising, through different sources the writer notes that the state government “made attempts to encourage journalists to tone down their coverage of the violence, and to toe the line followed by the national media.” Gaurav Dikshit, assistant editor of *Kashmir Reader*, says that Indian media continues to be “jingoistic and narrowly nationalist in its depiction of Kashmir.” The article further reads that “several incidents of violence in the valley at the hands of security forces have gone largely unreported in the national media.”

Asserting that Indian media has not shown the “true picture of Kashmir violence,” Ahmad (2016) <sup>[1]</sup> writes that “it won’t be an exaggeration to say that the problem has been magnified manifold by the news channels.” He further says that indulged in “biased” analysis and “absurd” commentary on Kashmir, corporate media “acted merely as an extension of the government mouthpiece.” He further writes that Indian media “justified the killing of unarmed civilians in firing by troopers in the name of law and order, and national security.” Referring to the reports of *Times Now*, he states that instead of questioning the killing of civilians, “channel backed the government response.” Grievances of the Kashmiri people can be addressed through objective reporting. He further wrote, Indian media’s narrative of “lies and half-truths” about “Kashmir’s latest spell of civilian killings can take a dangerous turn unless bodies like Press Council of India and News Broadcasters Association of India draw the red line.”

South Asian Strategic Stability Institute (2008) <sup>[20]</sup> in its 20th research report titled *The role of media in national security: A case study of 1998 Nuclear Explosions by Pakistan* asserts that be it wars (1965, 1971), crisis (1990 nuclear alert), border

skirmishes (Kargil) or the low-intensity war (LIW) in Kashmir, “Pakistan’s national media has advanced the official view.”

Khalid (2016) found that reports published in the *The Times of India* and broadcast on *NDTV* in the week immediately after the Kashmir floods, revealed that “New Delhi-based media coverage was overwhelmingly in favour of the Indian government and armed forces.” He found that the efforts of the Kashmiri volunteer rescuers got unreported in both the media outlets. Further quantifying the coverage, he concluded that *The Times of India* was found to have allocated more than half (57%) of its coverage specifically to the army’s relief efforts and *NDTV* focused almost entirely (97%) on the role played by the army and the government in the crisis. Khalid concluded that Indian media coverage was notably “security-centric,” possibly to create “sympathy for the Indian army,” typically viewed as an “occupying force” in the region.

Stating that Indian national media particularly electronic is “insensitive” in its coverage of Kashmir, Wani (2016) <sup>[50]</sup> writes that Kashmir is one such place where the role of Indian media has been subject matter of debate for a long time. Narrating the role of Indian media in its coverage to Kashmir in the past, he asserts that Indian media pressed the rest in history after the arrest and dismissal of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. Further quoting Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Mehbooba Mufti as saying that electronic media is always there to “humiliate the Kashmiris and a few masked youth are portrayed as a threat to the nation”, the article reads that the “vernacular media in Kashmir is also not free from flaws while reporting about Kashmir related matters.”

Stating that Kashmir has been a focal point of Indian press for last sixty years, Ashraf (2007) <sup>[6]</sup> says that its reporting on Kashmir lacked both, the “objectivity” as well as “impartiality” in the editorship. He further says that western media was very “sympathetic” to Kashmiri cause. Despite a lot of censorship and restrictions, Kashmir’s suffering found ample space in both electronic and print media across the globe. For opposing Jinnah’s two nation theory, once the “darling of Indian press,” Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was later depicted as a Hindu “killer” and a “conspirator” by the same press. Hitting at the right mark, the writer further says this vacuum lead to the growth of Kashmiri Muslim journalists even though editorship remained to be “biased.”

Stating that the only reports in western media about Kashmir consisted of workers’ demand of payment of wages, increase in retirement age, issues of contractual employees, Scully (2016) <sup>[28]</sup> writes that there is “still little coverage of the Kashmiri Intifada in the western media.” She further concludes that the “problem of silence about Kashmir is broader than media.”

## 9. Conclusion

With the above literature, it could be well established that the press in Kashmir have gone through various tough phases over the period of time. The ‘Muslim Press’ and ‘Hindu Press’ have played opposite role during the Dogra’s rule in the state. Analysis reveals that majority of the Indian media followed the path of the ‘Hindu Press’ of the past. On the other side, the ‘Muslim Press’ came to be known as saviours of the majority

community of Muslims. After partition, there was a dire need for an alternative press to carry forward the mission of 'Muslim Press' now against a different force – Indian Press.

The literature reveals that Kashmir has mostly been portrayed in the negative frames by both Indian and Pakistani as well as other western media. Acting merely as an extension of the government mouthpiece, it could be asserted that Indian news channels report a “biased” and “absurd” commentary on Kashmir. This continuous “biased” and “absurd” commentary of Indian media opened the doors for an alternative media in Kashmir. It may be well established that local media filled that vacuum in the valley.

Studies indicate that the negative portrayal of Kashmir by different non-local media has been rooted in its history. Fulfilling the mission of raising voice for the underdeveloped majority community of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, many Kashmiris started publishing newspapers. Countering the narrative of Indian national press, this alternative press emerged into a very strong force in the form of local press.

The above literature indicates that Kashmir has been witnessing a continuous surge of local press since few decades to continuously counter the narrative of Indian national media. Apart from the centre stage occupied by conflict in the valley, many other reasons may be validated behind the cause. It was found that negative coverage by 'Hindu Press' earlier was also one of the most important reason behind the growth of local press in Kashmir.

Despite frequent gagging of the local press by the authorities, Kashmir press has been playing a cardinal role in the valley. It may be concluded that Kashmir press doesn't enjoy the freedom as enjoyed by others.

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