

Sarbjeet kaur (2026). *Journalistic Activities in Colonial Punjab Rise, Role, Growth and Challenges*. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews*, 5(2), 43-50.



## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH & REVIEWS

journal homepage: [www.ijmrr.online/index.php/home](http://www.ijmrr.online/index.php/home)

# JOURNALISTIC ACTIVITIES IN COLONIAL PUNJAB RISE, ROLE, GROWTH AND CHALLENGES

**Sarbjeet kaur**

Assistant Professor in history, Guru Nanak College, Ferozepur, India.

**How to Cite the Article:** Sarbjeet kaur (2026). *Journalistic Activities in Colonial Punjab Rise, Role, Growth and Challenges*. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews*, 5(2), 43-50.



<https://doi.org/10.56815/ijmrr.v5i2.2026.43-50>

<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Abstract</b>
<i>Punjabi Journalism, Social, Religious, Political Events, Journalistic Activities, And Colonial Punjab.</i>	<p>This study focuses on the elements that contributed to the development, expansion, and evolution of Punjabi journalism throughout the fight for independence. Punjabi journalism, as used here, refers to the printed content in various formats, including newspapers, journals, periodicals, brochures, bills, and more. In Gurmukhi. This era was thought to be a pivotal one due to the social, religious, and political changes. It attempts to depict how Punjabi journalism has brought about a complete awakening of the nation's socio-religious and political environment, bringing it closer to the door of freedom—something that would not have been possible without it. The function and significance of journalism in colonial Punjab are discussed in this piece. I also call attention to the hardships the press faced during the battle for freedom.</p>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The religious and reformist movements in pre-partition Punjab are the source of Punjabi journalism. The actions of Christian missionaries elicited strong reactions, and numerous religious groups opposed them. Similar to the attempts of Christian missions to promote education, some societies of Indian religions also came into existence. They increased their foothold in Punjab. The religious and reformist movements contributed to the beginning of Punjabi journalism before the end of the 19th century. The Indian press is just twice as old as Punjabi journalism, which is over a century old. On January 21, 1780, the Bengal Gazette, India's first newspaper, began printing in Calcutta, but it was in Gurmukhi Akhbar (Natarajan ,1955).The first newspaper published in



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Punjabi was a weekly that began in Lahore on November 10, 1880. It was edited by Bhai Gurmukh Singh, a lecturer at Lahore's Oriental College, and printed on a litho press. In 1883, the singh sabha amritsar took over this publication because it backed the singh sabha movement (Singh, 1979).The newspapers published primarily articles on idol worship, superstitions, and Sikh traditions at that time. It also published articles pertaining to the deterioration of religious and moral standards, the Sikh faith, women's education, various religious groups, and diverse political ideologies.

## **2. THE RISE OF JOURNALISM**

Print journalism has a long history. A newspaper is a publication, typically published daily, weekly, or at other regular intervals, that includes news, opinions, features, and other material of general interest, as well as advertising. The "Acta Diurna" (Daily Acts) of ancient Rome—published notices and manuscripts of political or social events—were the precursor to modern newspapers. In the late middle ages, several international traders circulated 'newsletters'. From the year 59 BC until at least 222 AD, the representatives of the government put out handwritten news-sheets known as the "Acta Diurna" in the public markets. It published information about executions, trials, scandals, politics, and military operations. During the "Han Dynasty" (202 BC – 220 BC) in China, early government-produced news sheets known as "Tipao" were distributed among court officials. The Chinese created the first printed newspaper in human history, "Tipao," by using carved wooden blocks to print during the "Tang Dynasty" (618–907) (Briggs & Burke, 2009).

In 1450, Europe created a printing press that used movable types, and soon after, European authorities started using it to disseminate news. In the 16th century, Venice, Italy, saw the debut of newspapers with the same name that were published on a regular basis. Weekly, from as early as 1566, handwritten newspapers known as "Avisi" or "Gazette" were published. They relayed information that visiting merchants had brought to Venice. Venetian gazette created a journalism style that was the easiest to print.

Newspapers included brief sets of news pieces that were identified by the name of the city from where they originated and the day they were sent. Newspapers soon became widespread across Europe. Among the first English newspapers in the world, those that began publishing in the UK in 1621 used wood acts to illustrate stories and headlines to entice readers. In addition, they established a source of income by hiring newsboys or, more frequently, newsgirls to sell newspapers on the streets.

In India, the first attempt to establish newspapers occurred in 1766, but nearly a century before that, Aurangzeb, the last of the great Moguls, understood the necessity to have news reports from different districts and provinces brought home. To accomplish this, he established a network of news writers, known as "Waka-i-nawis," who were responsible for collecting information about significant events. The inaccurate information supplied by his news writers contributed in part to Aurangzeb's failure in Duccan, even if he found the news reports helpful in expanding the borders of the huge Mogul empire. On the other hand, S.C. Sanial, a well-known expert on Mogul-era



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journalism, disagrees with this assertion. He noted that Aurangzeb trusted the press reports' integrity and accuracy. Sir William Sleeman said that the king of Oudh used 660 journalists to gather social and political data about his country. Their monthly pay was between Rs. 4 and Rs. 5. News writers were also employed by the East India Company to get crucial data. The first effort to start a newspaper in India was brought about by political corruption and coercion during the time of the political decline and fall of the Moguls and the military and economic rise of the East India Company. After resigning from the East India Company in 1766, Williams Bolts, an employee of the company, promptly announced his intention to start a newspaper by putting an advertisement on the door of a commercial establishment in Calcutta and elsewhere. That company didn't allow Bolts to publish newspapers in India, which came as no surprise. Bolts was instructed to leave Bengal on April 18, 1767, and travel to Madras in order to get aboard a ship bound for Europe. No effort was made to launch a newspaper in India for the following 12 years ( Chatterjee, 1989).

James Augustus Hickey, a printer by trade, has the distinction of starting India's first newspaper. In Calcutta, on January 29, 1780, he published his 12x8, two-sheet weekly, known as "Bengal Gazette" alias "Calcutta General Advertiser", but more popularly called "Hickey's Gazette". It described itself as a "weekly political and commercial paper open to all parties but influenced by none."

### **3. ROLE AND GROWTH OF JOURNALISTIC ACTIVITIES IN COLONIAL PUNJAB**

From Amritsar, the biweekly newspaper Akhbar shri Darbar Sahib sri Amritsar jee, edited by munshi Hari Narayan and Firaya Lal, was founded in 1867 (Kamal,1981).The Kuka movement became popular throughout this time, but not a single tale was written about it. It published court notices and government advertising. The growth of the Punjabi language paper has been significantly aided by the chief Khalsa Dewan and several Singh Sabha's. Bhai Partap Singh Giani released Akali Parkash from Lahore in June 1876, bringing out its true meaning (Grewal, 1990). In the area of Punjabi journalism, this was the first publication written in unadulterated Punjabi. Under the direction of Lahora Singh of the Khalsa Mitra Press in Amritsar, a fascinating weekly magazine called Punjabi Darpan was published in July 1885. On October 19, 1885, Punjabi Darpan Singh marked the first time in the history of Punjabi journalism. This document advocated for the Singh Sabha. The founding of The Khalsa Akhbar in 1886 by Bhai Gurmukh Singh, a prominent figure in the Singh Sabha movement, was one of the most notable accomplishments in the history of the Punjabi press(Singh, 2005). The Singh Sabha movement, which arose in the latter part of the nineteenth century, aimed to change Sikh religious practices, support the Punjabi language and culture, and counteract the impact of Christian missionaries and Hindu revivalist movements. The Khalsa Akhbar grew to be a potent voice for the Sikh community, campaigning for social change, education, and the maintenance of Sikh identity. The newspaper was instrumental in bringing the Sikh population together and promoting a feeling of solidarity and pride.



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Diwan Buta Singh launched a journal called Khalsa Parkash, which was published weekly in Gurmukhi, in 1891. Considering the degree of literacy and aptitude for journalism, this newspaper had a fair circulation. Under the auspices of the Lahore Shuddhi Sabha, the monthly Shuddhi Patra was produced in Lahore in many 1896 from the Anglo-Sanskrit press(Grewal, 1998). The goal of these articles in Punjabi language was to spread Sikhism, challenge Arya Samaj, and advance the language. At first, these Punjabi language newspapers relied on the kindness of the British administration to protect and advance the community's interests. They thought that the British were civilized, devoted to democratic governance, justice, and the welfare of their citizens.

The Punjabi language newspapers received a significant boost from the Singh Sabha movement, and in its latter stages, there were over a dozen publications in the language. Women's education and the Sikh faith were promoted in these publications. A significant publication by Bir was published in 1908. Monthly at first, it eventually became fortnightly, weekly, and then daily over the course of several months. Due to a number of political and national movements in Punjab, notably the Akali movement, the true evolution of Punjabi journalism may be considered to have occurred between 1900 and 1930. The government began to perpetrate excessive atrocities on newspapers as well, while their voice grew increasingly anti-establishment as a result of Gandhi's non-cooperation campaign. The first Punjabi daily shaheed began publishing on December 4, 1914, with the S. S Charan singh 'shaheed' as its editor. In a humorous and satirical style, it highlighted political and social issues as well as atrocities. In 1917, the two publications Sikh Sipahi and Sant Sipahi supported enlistment in the English army. The Sikh Recruiting Committee, under the editorship of Tek Singh, brought out Sikh Sipahi from Ferozepur. The 'Crown, Country, and Community' were the focus of this publication. Because it was released soon after World War I, it featured news and poems about patriotism as well as essays about Punjabi troops and martial valor. It was also partly published in Urdu. In 1920, this paper ceased to exist. Bhai Takhat Singh of Ferozepur released Sant Sipahi. It became weekly after a year (Grewal, 1990).

The fervor to free the Gurdwaras and the Jallianwala Massacre gave Punjabi journalism a new lease on life. The first real daily Akali was established in 1920 amidst all of this. one of the goals of this essay was to raise public and political consciousness among Sikhs and urge them to join the fight for independence. Under the influence of the akali movement, around thirty papers were published. In the 1920 competition with Akali, comrade Sohan Singh josh brought out Daily ranjit. In 1922, the Akali movement reached its zenith (Kaur, 2004). The release of an unheard-of quantity of books occurred this year. People's lives had become routine day after day. Master Tara Singh released Pardesi Khalsa in February 1922. The Sikhs living abroad gave this essay a lot of money because it represented the voice of Khalsa. An additional daily Kuka was published from Lahore to support Kuka movement on August 17, 1922 ( Singh, 1978). The establishment of Desh Sewak in 1923 was yet another significant event in the history of Punjabi journalism since it approached religion and politics from a fresh perspective. Its editors liked it. Its editors were Dr. Bhag Singh and Master Mota Singh, who were revolutionary thinkers. Its essays supported the



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cause of independence and were educational. Regrettably, all of its authors have been behind bars. It shut down in 1926. In 1923, this journal was published weekly before switching to bi-weekly publication the following year. The Khalsa National Press in Jalandhar produced it. The Canadian-American Press Punjabi, which was headquartered in Vancouver in 1922, funded and released it. 29 In 1924, Giani Hira Singh Dard launched Phulwari, another highly significant publication, at this point. It wasn't a political journal right away. It was literary in nature. Due to Giani Dard's imprisonment, it remained suspended from 1942 to 1946. It was well-liked by literary, political, and religious groups. Giani Dard was a skilled reporter who took part in the nation's social, religious, and political movements. His goal was freedom. He pursued a career in journalism in order to accomplish this goal. He left his position during martial law and became a member of the Akal editorial staff (Josh, 1974).

The paper Malwa gazette was founded by Panch Khalsa Deewan on December 15, 1929. This article sought to advance the social, political, religious, and economic well-being of the Sikhs in the Malwa area. The third paper parbhat of kirti kisan lehar was released from Amritsar in 1935. Prem Sandesh was first released by Bawa Harnam Singh from Lahore in 1937 before being moved to Amritsar. Pritam Singh Panchhi served as its editor, and it was a modern (communist) publication. Daler Khalsa was established by Master Sunder Singh Lyalpuri, the founder of Akali, in 1938. It persisted up until the nation's independence (Singh, 2004).

The founder of Akali, Master Sunder Singh Lyalpuri, released Daler Khalsa in 1938. It lasted until the nation gained independence. Prof. Mohan Singh owned and edited the excellent literary journal Panj Dariya, which was first published in 1939 (Grewal, 1998). All Punjabi writers were honored to have their name linked to this journal. However, all the credit for its success is due solely to Prof. Mohan Singh. In addition to Punjabi journalism, it established a new trend in Punjabi literature, offering new paths and objectives for Punjabi writers. The Punjabi daily newspaper was split into two groups of Sikhs for the two decades leading up to the independence of the nation. Two of the leading daily newspapers during that time were Akali and Akali Patrika. Partap Singh Kairon edited Akali Patrika, while Giani Gurmukh Singh Musafir edited Akali. As a result, Punjabi journalism also produced political figures. These documents paid close attention to the Vidhan Sabha elections and made a small contribution to the battle for freedom in Punjab. The anti-British communists switched sides and supported the government when Germany invaded Russia. They began to characterize this conflict as fascist rather than a struggle for freedom. They published Jang-e-Azadi from Lahore in 1943 in order to motivate people to enlist in the army. It backed Russia and its allies throughout the War. It featured articles that supported Britain. In 1943 (Natarajan, 1955). Another newspaper jang-azadi in Lahore was published to encourage readers to enlist in the military. The Patiala Samachar from Patiala and Nawani Chanan from Moga were also launched in 1944. The Sikh community gave it a lot of reverence (Grewal, 1990). Following independence, the Punjabi press was instrumental in popularizing the Punjabi language and culture, notably during the Punjabi Suba movement of the 1950s and 1960s. The desire for



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linguistic and cultural recognition spurred the movement, which aimed to establish a distinct Punjabi-speaking state. Newspapers like Ajit and The Punjabi Tribune emerged as crucial forums for supporting the Punjabi language and culture. The Punjabi Suba movement eventually prevailed in 1966, leading to the split of Punjab and the establishment of the states of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh (Grewal, 1998).

#### **4. CHALLENGES FACED BY THE PUNJABI JOURNALISM**

**There is no decent system in place:** The way that news was adorned or columns were divided was different from how it is now. The headlines were only available in one or two columns. There was no plan at all. On one corner of a column, there may be an editorial poem, while on the other, there may be an advertisement for antimony or marriage information.

**Posting a paper was not a lucrative endeavour;** publishing a piece at that time was not a financially viable undertaking. Several factors restricted the paper's circulation, including the area where a given language was used and the fact that its clientele belonged to a lower economic stratum.

**Restricted financial resources:** All Punjabi language publications had one thing in common: they were all financially strapped and lacked any means of support. They received very little promotion and were sustained solely by a love for the well-being of the Sikh community. Even if they insisted on upfront memberships, the readers received them at no charge.

**Problems locating a printing press:** Punjab's journalism industry had to endure numerous challenges. Occasionally, they couldn't locate a printer. The owner of the printing press would occasionally refuse to print because of his connection to the other party.

**Issue with language:** The issue of language was also a challenge for Punjabi journalism at the time. The language used in various locations varied. Their readership was quite small. Censorship: There were obstacles to the development of the media in Punjab. The British colonial authorities, mindful of the media's ability to foment insurrection and erode their power, enacted stringent censorship regulations to restrict the dissemination of news. One such action, aimed at Indian-language newspapers, was the Vernacular Press Act of 1878, which attempted to restrict the power of the media and silence opposition (Darnton, 2002). The legislation gave the colonial government the authority to seize printing presses and punish publishers who were found to be disseminating "seditious" content.

Even with these limitations, Punjabi reporters and editors continued to produce newspapers and booklets, frequently at considerable personal peril. To avoid censorship, several newspapers used coded language or functioned underground. Punjabi journalists' resilience and resolve during this time were crucial in maintaining the spirit of resistance and ensuring that the voices of opposition were heard.



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## **5. CONCLUSION**

As a result, during the fight for independence in Punjab, Punjabi journalism played a crucial role. Despite the numerous difficulties it had to overcome, it continuously offered excellent help to the people of Punjab by raising the nation's socio-religious and political environment, which would not have been possible without journalistic efforts, leading it to the entrance of freedom. The press continues to be an essential institution in Punjab, mirroring the hopes and anxieties of its populace as it faces the challenges of globalization and modernity. The history of the Punjabi press is not merely a record of newspapers and printing presses; it is a narrative of the lasting tenacity of a people who have used the written word to influence their fate.

## **6. AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION**

The writers affirm that they have no connections to, or engagement with, any group or body that provides financial or non-financial assistance for the topics or resources covered in this manuscript.

## **7. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## **8. PLAGIARISM POLICY**

All authors declare that any kind of violation of plagiarism, copyright and ethical matters will take care by all authors. Journal and editors are not liable for aforesaid matters.

## **9. SOURCES OF FUNDING**

The authors received no financial aid to support for the research.

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