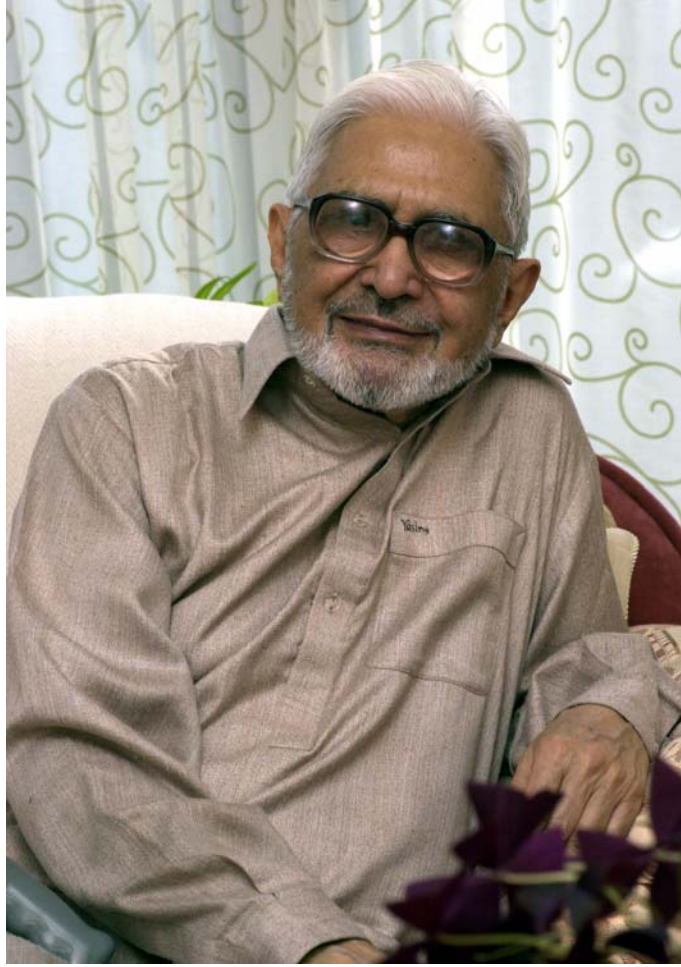


Mahmood Hashmi



Born in pre-partition Kashmir Mahmood Hashmi, known as Hashmi (*Hashmi Sahib*), graduated with a BA from Punjab University and MA LLB from Aligarh University. He then taught at the Prince of Wales and Amar Singh colleges. These Jammu and Kashmir State colleges were affiliated to the University of Punjab in Lahore. From a very early age Hashmi had begun to write essays and plays. During the period he wrote a number of short stories which were published in well known literary magazines. At the time of partition of India he was working in Srinagar. Soon after he published the classic *Kashmir Udas Hai* which was an eyewitness account of the key events which took place. This has been acclaimed as the best reportage on Kashmir.

After spending the next few years as the Chief Publicity Officer for the new Azad Kashmir government, in 1953 he came on a sabbatical visit to the UK. He undertook post-graduate qualifications in education first at Leeds University and then at Birmingham University where his dissertation was on the needs of immigrant pupils in local schools. He then taught for a few years in Birmingham.

During this period the mainly working class immigrant community from the Indian sub-continent had begun to establish its roots and gain in confidence. There was an increasing desire to maintain one's cultural and linguistic identity. As a response to this, on 7 April 1961 Hashmi launched from London *Mashriq*, the first regular Urdu

weekly newspaper in Britain or indeed anywhere in the West. For this he came to be known in the UK as the *Father of Urdu Journalism*. In those days the normal outlets for newspapers were not interested in stocking minority language papers so the Newspaper had to create its own distribution system and began to sell through the Asian Corner shops which had begun to appear in the immigrant towns and cities across the country.

The paper became a central tool of communication for the community through which people would not only discover news from their country of origin but also hear about their community's achievements in the UK in fields such as education, business and politics. As women and children began to arrive in the Urdu speaking community the newspaper began women's and education pages. The paper not only reported but also was itself a part of the history of the Pakistani and Kashmiri community in the UK.

Most people would feel that having begun Urdu journalism in the UK was enough of an achievement but not for Hashmi. He went onto edit the *Saltley News*, in Birmingham, a community newspaper which was a part of the local Community Development Project. Later, he taught Urdu in a number of schools in Peterborough. As a result of this experience he produced a most innovative three-stage Urdu teaching scheme which included *How to Teach Urdu* guidebooks. The scheme was published by Bradford Education Service in 1986.



In 1995 when the second edition of his book *Kashmir Udas Hai* was published, it included a very large section on developments, since the first edition, which included Hashmi's arrival and achievements as well as key events affecting the Urdu speaking community in the UK. Recently he has written a commentary on the historical developments in Urdu literature with an assessment of how Urdu writers from the last century are likely to be judged in the future.