



EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION POLICY

Aalekh – Where Words Take Flight

A fair, ethical and professionally managed framework for writers, editors, reviewers and readers.

About Aalekh

Aalekh is a writers-and-readers platform that supports manuscript refinement, editorial review, publishing assistance, writing workshops, peer-review circles, author showcases and literary community development. This policy is drafted for publication on the Aalekh website. It is inspired by the values of integrity, impartiality, accountability, confidentiality, courtesy and avoidance of conflicts of interest reflected in the Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964, but is adapted for a literary and publishing platform and does not replace any applicable law or government service rules.

www.aalekh.in

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1. Aim and Scope

1.1 Aim

The aim of Aalekh is to provide a fair, ethical, inclusive and professionally managed platform where writers can develop, submit, review, publish and promote their literary and intellectual work.

Aalekh seeks to:

- Encourage creative writing, literary expression and responsible authorship.
- Provide constructive editorial and peer feedback.
- Promote high standards of originality, clarity, accuracy and presentation.
- Give writers a supportive environment to improve manuscripts and reach readers.
- Facilitate interaction among authors, editors, reviewers, readers, publishers and literary professionals.
- Maintain transparency, confidentiality, impartiality and accountability in editorial decisions.
- Support writers from diverse languages, regions, backgrounds, genres and levels of experience.
- Protect the dignity, privacy, intellectual property and professional interests of authors and contributors.

1.2 Scope

- Members of the Aalekh editorial board.
- Editors, associate editors and guest editors.
- Peer reviewers and manuscript evaluators.
- Authors, registered writers and contributors.
- Workshop mentors, literary consultants and volunteers.
- Publishing, marketing, design and distribution partners working with Aalekh.
- All manuscripts, articles, poems, stories, essays, reviews, interviews, educational materials, artwork and other content submitted to or published through Aalekh.
- Content appearing on the Aalekh website, digital publications, social-media channels, newsletters, author profiles, workshops and associated events.

All persons associated with Aalekh shall act with honesty, fairness, courtesy, professional restraint and respect for intellectual freedom. Personal, political, commercial or institutional interests must not improperly influence editorial decisions.

2. Editorial Values

Integrity	All editorial decisions, reviews, author communications and publication records shall be handled honestly and professionally.
Impartiality	Submissions shall be evaluated on literary, intellectual, technical and editorial merit, without discrimination.
Accountability	Editorial board members, reviewers and staff shall maintain appropriate records of submissions, reviews, revisions and decisions.
Confidentiality	Unpublished manuscripts, reviewer reports, author details and editorial discussions shall not be disclosed to unauthorized persons.
Courtesy and professionalism	Communication shall be prompt, respectful and free from harassment, intimidation, discrimination or abusive language.
Independence	Editorial decisions shall not be influenced by personal relationships, financial benefits, external pressure, popularity, social-media influence or commercial interests.
Public responsibility	Aalekh shall not knowingly publish content promoting violence, hatred, discrimination, exploitation, harassment, fraud or unlawful activity.

3. Peer Review and Publication Policies

3.1 Submission requirements

- Authors shall submit original work through the prescribed Aalekh submission channel.
- Each submission should include the title, author's name and contact details, description or synopsis where applicable, genre, language, approximate word count and originality/publication-status declaration.
- Details of co-authors, collaborators, translators or rights holders must be provided where applicable.
- Necessary permissions must be obtained for copyrighted material, illustrations, photographs, quotations, lyrics, tables or other third-party content.
- Aalekh may reject incomplete submissions or request additional information before editorial evaluation.

3.2 Originality and authorship

- The submitted work must be original, or the author must possess necessary publication rights.
- Copied, plagiarized or falsely attributed work is prohibited.
- Substantial creative or intellectual contributions must be appropriately acknowledged.
- No person may be listed as an author without their consent and contribution.
- AI or other digital tools must not be used to misrepresent authorship or originality. Substantial AI-assisted writing, translation, image generation, research or editing shall be disclosed when requested by Aalekh.
- Aalekh may use plagiarism-detection, language-checking or authenticity-assessment tools; the final editorial decision shall not be based solely on an automated tool.

3.3 Editorial screening

Every submission may undergo initial screening for relevance, originality, basic quality, completeness, readability, legal and ethical concerns, potential plagiarism or fabrication, respectful content and suitability for the selected publication, workshop or service. Aalekh may decline a submission without external peer review; where practicable, the author shall be informed of the broad reason.

3.4 Nature of peer review

Peer review provides constructive and informed feedback. It is not a guarantee of publication, commercial success or acceptance of every suggestion. Aalekh may use editorial, single-blind, double-blind, open, community/workshop-based or specialist review. The applicable method may be communicated to the author or stated in the relevant call for submissions.

3.5 Reviewer selection

- Reviewers should have relevant expertise, provide fair and timely comments, maintain confidentiality, have no material conflict and be familiar with the language and genre.
- A reviewer should decline work outside their competence, where time is insufficient or where a personal, professional, financial or competitive relationship could affect—or appear to affect—judgment.

3.6 Reviewer responsibilities

- Treat manuscripts as confidential and evaluate them objectively and respectfully.
- Identify strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement with clear reasoning or examples.
- Avoid personal attacks, insulting language and discriminatory comments.
- Do not use unpublished ideas, arguments, data or creative material for personal benefit.
- Do not contact authors directly unless authorized.
- Disclose suspected plagiarism, copyright violation, fabrication, serious ethical concerns or unlawful content.
- Submit reviews on time or request an extension promptly.
- Do not demand citations to the reviewer's own work or any particular publication unless genuinely relevant and editorially justified.

3.7 Editorial decisions

Decisions may be: accept; accept subject to minor revisions; revise and resubmit; refer for further review; or decline/reject. Decisions shall be based on quality, originality, suitability, coherence, ethical acceptability and publication readiness—not identity, personal relationships, social status, popularity or ability to pay for optional services. Commercial, technical or production factors shall not be misrepresented as peer-review findings.

3.8 Revisions

- Authors should address comments, explain changes, give reasons for not accepting a suggestion, submit within the specified period and identify substantial changes where requested.
- Aalekh may request additional review. A revised submission is not automatically guaranteed acceptance.

3.9 Appeals

An author may appeal within the period specified by Aalekh. The appeal should identify the manuscript and decision, explain factual or procedural error, respond to concerns and avoid personal allegations or abusive language. It may be considered by the Editor-in-Chief or an independent board member not involved in the original decision. The decision shall normally be final except where a clear procedural irregularity is established.

3.10 Corrections, withdrawal and retraction

- Aalekh may publish a correction, clarification, expression of concern or withdrawal notice when an error, omission or ethical issue is identified.
- Withdrawal/removal may occur where there is credible evidence of plagiarism, copyright infringement, fabricated/falsified/misleading content, unauthorized use of personal information or images, serious ethical/legal violation, or misrepresentation of authorship or rights.
- Authors may request withdrawal before publication subject to agreed terms. After publication, requests shall be considered on their merits and may be declined where removal would undermine the publication record.

3.11 Copyright and licensing

- Unless otherwise agreed, authors retain ownership of original copyright.
- Authors grant Aalekh limited rights to evaluate, edit, publish, display, archive, promote and distribute accepted work.
- Scope, duration, territory, format and exclusivity shall be stated in the relevant agreement.
- Authors must disclose previous publication or conflicting rights.
- Aalekh shall acknowledge authorship. Reuse, translation, adaptation or commercial licensing beyond agreed rights requires appropriate permission.

3.12 Confidentiality and data protection

Aalekh shall take reasonable measures to protect unpublished manuscripts, personal information, editorial correspondence, anonymous-review identities and payment, contractual and professional information. Information may be disclosed for editorial processing, legal compliance, safety, fraud prevention, dispute resolution or a lawful request from a competent authority.

3.13 Conflicts of interest

- Editors and reviewers must disclose close personal/family relationships, current or recent collaboration, direct competition or commercial interest, financial interest, prior dispute or institutional interest.
- The concerned person shall normally recuse themselves. Aalekh may use reassignment, independent review or additional oversight.

3.14 Ethical and prohibited content

- Content inciting violence, terrorism, hatred or discrimination.
- Content promoting sexual exploitation, abuse or trafficking.
- Defamation or malicious targeting of identifiable persons.
- Disclosure of private or sensitive personal information without consent.
- Copyright, trademark, privacy or other legal infringement.
- Fraudulent, fabricated or deliberately misleading claims.
- Exploitation of children or vulnerable persons.
- Violation of applicable law or a binding order.

Literary, historical, academic or artistic treatment of difficult subjects may be considered where the context is legitimate, responsible and appropriately presented.

3.15 Government employees and official information

- Government-employee authors, editors and reviewers remain responsible for applicable conduct rules and confidentiality obligations.
- Aalekh shall not be used to disclose confidential or unpublished official information, publish restricted records without authorization, misrepresent personal views as official views, use official position/resources for personal publication advantage or create conflict with official duties.
- Required permission, intimation or clearance must be obtained wherever required by service rules, departmental instructions or a competent authority.

The CCS (Conduct) Rules, 1964, emphasize integrity, devotion to duty, political neutrality, confidentiality, restrictions on unauthorized media communication, private employment and conflicts of interest. These principles may be used by Aalekh as an ethical reference, while applicable service rules prevail.

3.16 Fees and paid services

- Services and fees shall be communicated clearly.
- Payment shall not guarantee literary acceptance or favourable peer review.
- Optional commercial services shall be separated from editorial judgment.
- Refund, cancellation and delivery conditions shall be stated before payment.
- Authors shall not be pressured to purchase additional services for fair evaluation.
- Waivers, discounts and sponsorships shall be applied transparently.

4. Rules for Editorial Board Membership

4.1 Eligibility

- Suitable experience in creative writing/literary criticism; editing/proofreading/publishing; translation/language studies; journalism/communication/digital publishing; academic/scientific/educational/professional writing; copyright/media/ethics/publishing administration; or literary community development and author engagement.
- Members should demonstrate sound judgment, respectful communication, reliability and commitment to Aalekh's objectives.

4.2 Appointment

Members shall be appointed by Aalekh's competent authority through a transparent process. Appointment letters should specify designation, role, term, duties, time commitment, reporting arrangement, confidentiality, conflicts, resignation and removal procedure. The board may include an Editor-in-Chief, Managing Editor, Associate Editors, Language Editors, Genre Editors, Review Coordinators and Advisory Members.

4.3 Duties

- Uphold policy; assess submissions fairly; assign reviewers; maintain confidentiality; communicate decisions professionally; monitor timelines; encourage improvement; report plagiarism, copyright and ethical concerns; maintain records; declare conflicts; protect Aalekh's independence and reputation; and participate in meetings and policy review.

4.4 Independence and impartiality

- No member shall favour friends, relatives, colleagues, students or business associates.
- No member shall accept/reject work due to personal hostility or benefit, accept advantages for decisions, use editorial access for unpublished ideas, yield to political/religious/commercial/institutional pressure or replace assessment with popularity or personal influence.

4.5 Recusal

- Recusal is required where the member authored/co-authored, substantially edited/developed the work, has a close relationship with the author, has financial/competitive interest, has publicly committed to a compromising position or cannot evaluate objectively. Recusal and reassignment should be recorded where appropriate.

4.6 Confidentiality

- Members shall not share manuscripts/reports, upload confidential work to unapproved platforms, discuss submissions publicly, use unpublished material for personal writing/teaching/research/promotion/commercial work or reveal reviewer identities unless permitted. Confidentiality continues after the term.

4.7 Communication standards

Members must communicate promptly, courteously and clearly, without intimidation, harassment or discriminatory language, through authorized Aalekh channels. They shall not threaten authors, promise acceptance, solicit personal benefits or make misleading statements about publication, distribution, awards, readership or commercial outcomes.

4.8 Political neutrality and official position

- Members may hold personal opinions but shall not use Aalekh to campaign for a party/candidate, present personal political views as Aalekh's position, publish confidential official information, endorse or criticize government policy on Aalekh's behalf without authorization, or use government office, designation, staff, equipment or communication channels for Aalekh activities.
- Government employees shall comply with applicable conduct rules and obtain required permission or clearance before accepting the role or undertaking paid/public-facing activities.

4.9 Gifts, hospitality and benefits

Members shall not accept gifts, hospitality, travel, commissions or benefits from persons seeking editorial advantage. Nominal customary hospitality may be accepted only when transparent and unrelated to a decision; questionable benefits must be disclosed.

4.10 Outside work and competing interests

- Members must disclose outside editorial, publishing, consulting, literary-agent, commercial or institutional activity that may conflict with Aalekh.
- They shall not divert authors/submissions for personal gain, misuse databases or contacts, promote a competitor through confidential channels, present Aalekh work as their own service/publication or use their position for private employment/business advantage.

4.11 Meetings and records

The board should periodically review submission volume and turnaround, editorial quality, complaints and appeals, conflicts, ethical/copyright concerns, policy and training needs, and diversity and inclusion. Minutes, decisions and disclosures should be securely recorded and limited to authorized access.

4.12 Harassment and workplace dignity

Aalekh shall maintain a safe environment. Sexual harassment, bullying, stalking, threats, discrimination, retaliation and abusive conduct are prohibited in correspondence, reviews, workshops, meetings, showcases, online groups, social media and any activity conducted in Aalekh's name. Complaints shall be handled confidentially, promptly and according to applicable law and the grievance mechanism.

4.13 Term, resignation and removal

- Members may resign by written notice as prescribed in appointment terms.
- Removal may occur for breach of confidentiality, undeclared conflict, plagiarism/misuse of unpublished material, harassment/discrimination/abuse, improper benefits, repeated unexplained neglect, misuse of Aalekh's name/position/data/resources, conduct damaging credibility/independence or violation of law/service rules.
- Where practicable, the member should be allowed to explain before removal, except where immediate protective action is necessary.

5. Administration and Review

This policy shall be administered by the Editor-in-Chief or Patron of Aalekh.

Aalekh may revise this policy when required by:

- Changes in publishing practice or technology.
- New legal or regulatory requirements.
- Experience gained from complaints, appeals or ethical cases.
- Changes in Aalekh's services or structure.
- Requirements relating to privacy, copyright, artificial intelligence or digital publication.

The latest approved version shall be made available to authors, reviewers, editorial board members and other stakeholders through the Aalekh website or relevant communication channel.

Suggested website note

Aalekh's editorial and publication policy is designed to promote ethical, transparent and fair literary publishing. Where a contributor is subject to government service rules, professional regulations or institutional policies, those requirements shall continue to apply independently.

Declaration

Every editorial board member should sign the following declaration:

Editorial board declaration

I agree to uphold Aalekh's principles of integrity, impartiality, confidentiality, accountability, courtesy and editorial independence. I shall disclose conflicts of interest, protect unpublished material, avoid misuse of my position and comply with applicable legal, professional and service conduct requirements. I shall not use my editorial role for personal, political, financial or institutional advantage.

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