



The Contribution of the Press in the Freedom Struggle of India

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Abstract

During the freedom struggle, the press in India played a stalwart role in setting afire the demand for self-rule and freedom from British tyrannical rule and colonialism. This essay is a descriptive, historical study of the journey of the press during the freedom struggle through different parts of India, highlighting the contribution of varied stalwart journalists and freedom fighters whose newspapers were sources of demands for justice, human rights, freedom struggle and an awareness of the British hegemony and enslavement of the people of India. While journalism and its roots have traces in ancient India as a whole, this essay only enlists the press and its contribution to the freedom struggle.

Keywords: Indian Press during freedom struggle, Press during Freedom Struggle of India, Contribution of the Press to the Indian Freedom Struggle, History of the Indian press during freedom struggle.

Introduction

The pen grew mightier than the sword during the freedom struggle and the Britishers tried with all their might to douse the fire of the freedom struggle which was set aflame by the Indian press. Journalists from all corners of India sacrificed not just their time and energy, but also their secure careers and their lives in order to reach out with the message of ‘freedom’ to the people of India. The press was ablaze with the demand for freedom as rightly expressed in the words of Naskar (2022)- “You think I am the torch? I am not! I am just a matchstick. Grab my hand- I will set you ablaze”. This essay entails a brief look at the



role of the press, especially newspapers, weeklies, and journals that set ablaze the clarion call for the demand for freedom from the slavery of the British Empire.

The Rise of Newspapers- Initial stage

By the end of the 18th century, the Mughal empire was actually on a gradual decline as the East India Company, led by Britishers started emerging. The Mughals whose political and military prowess had waned, handed over many places to the British for the collection of the local taxes and revenues. The concept of journalism as it exists today can be thus traced to the expansion of British rule in India (Sonwalkar, 2015).

The concept of a newspaper was not known in India. The press machinery was only installed in India as far as 1674, in Bombay; 1772 in Madras, and 1779 in Kolkata (J. Natrajan, 1955). Historically, the concept of the newspaper which contained news, advertisements, and other literary articles was brought by the Britishers to India. The existing nationalist idea didn't entail learning a foreign language. 'English' which had a derogatory term of reference in the Indian context known as Mlechchha's language- a Sanskrit term used to indicate the uncivilised and unconceivable speech of foreigners and their unfamiliar mannerisms and style of living (A. Bhattacharya, 2003; Oxford Lexico). However, the growth of the British Empire brought in Britishers who further brought in trends, and newspaper reading was one among them. The initial English papers did not have Indian content. They began with gossip of officials, poetry, and some snippets related to Britain and Europe.

The first venture of a newspaper was by William Bolts who tried to initiate the first newspaper, in 1776, but could not sustain himself. He was an ex-employee of East India Company who had the ambition of privately pursuing business and trading under the same company. However, he was forbidden (J. Natrajan, 1955). Meanwhile, rumours about his intention for publishing a paper already implicated him in the eyes of the East India Company officials, which further led to mistrust and he was asked to leave Bengal. After this failed attempt, on January 29, 1780, another individual, James Augustus Hicky, an Irishman, started another newspaper called the 'Bengal Gazette' or the 'Calcutta General Advertiser', which is today considered the first English Newspaper in India (J. Natarajan, 1955).



Self-proclaimed as “A weekly political and commercial paper open to all parties but influenced by none”, the paper by Hicky included news snippets from England, letters from local and rural readers, scandalous gossip, a poet’s column, and space for Hicky to communicate with his readers. The slanderous gossip about the private lives of Britishers, including the then Governor-General, Warren Hastings, and Chief Justice- Elijah Impey earned Hicky an enmity among his own (J. Natarajan, 1955). He often used nicknames for particular British officials and notable personalities in his newspaper. However, another reason for the downfall of Hicky was also his cantankerous stand on the freedom of the press as well as his coverage of a calamitous fire in March 1780 that destroyed houses and left many starving in the area covering BowBazar to Colinga as well as the Polilur war between Hyder Ali and the British (Wangchuk, 2020). The East India Company retaliated at the barbs darted by Hicky and placed him with fines and imprisonment multiple times, to a point where he was compelled to declare himself as a Pauper, bringing to an end the venture in March 1782 (Sonwalkar, 2015).

Many newspapers were then initiated in different parts of India, but most would toe the line fearing a backlash. In most cases, foreigners who published papers but fell into the wrong books of the East India Company had to face deportation. Some other papers had to submit a copy for verification before their publication or pay huge fines.

The East India Company were suspicious of all journalists and newspapers as they feared criticism. However, this was just the beginning of people finding the pen as a tool for ‘their voice’. The slow rise in the conscientisation of Indians to fight for freedom saw many freedom fighters using the press to write about it both in English and in vernacular language. This further miffed the East India Company. Thus, journalism paved the way in the conscientisation and the bringing together of the Indians for an India freed from the rule of the British. It is amidst such hostility that the press catering to Indian freedom managed to find a stand.

The Voice of the Voiceless- Indian Newspaper initiation

Indian Journalism gradually donned the garment of the freedom struggle as a weapon to fight the British. While the English press stoked the fire given the rising politically



conscious Indians, it was the vernacular press that actually hit the Britishers hard as it raised the slogan of the Indian freedoms in the minds of the simple people across India (Jagannathan, 1999).

In around 1818, the first Indian paper that was published was the 'Bengal Gazetti' by Gangadhar Bhattacharjee. However, the paper succumbed in just a year and not much is known about its whereabouts. However, at a later stage, Gangadhar Bhattacharjee worked with Raja Ram Mohan Roy in another newspaper venture (R. Kumar, 2017).

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the popular social reformist and the father of the Indian Renaissance, who was known for his intellectual skills and his strong opinion against social evils like Sati, brought out a newspaper himself and is often considered the initiator of the Indian Press. Roy wrote many articles opposing the practice of Sati (a ritual that permits the burning of the widow alive on the dead husband's pyre) and other social evils that had ingrained themselves in Hindu culture. His journalism included the Brahmanical Magazine (English), the Sambad Kaumudi (Bengali), and Mirat-ul-Akhbar in Persian (J. Natarajan, 1955; Sonwalkar, 2015).

Roy's paper, Sambad Kaumudi was vociferous about 'Sati' and its abolition and saw its birth in and around 1819-1820 with Bhowani Charan Banerjee as editor. However, due to the 'anti-Sati' stand of Roy in the paper, the editor quit the Paper and started his rival weekly called the Samachar Chandrika which defended 'Sati' and its practices. Sambad Kaumudi had a life span of around 33 years (J. Natarajan, 1955). Another paper of Roy that pointed out social evils and the administrative prejudices of the British authorities in India and Ireland in a constructively critical language was the Persian paper, Mirat-ul-Akhbar. This paper incurred the heavy wrath of William Butterworth Bayley and the British Government. Despite fighting his case out in court in defence of his paper, Roy's appeal was rejected and in fury, instead of bowing down to pressure, he ceased the publication of the Mirat-ul-Akhbar (J. Natarajan, 1955).



Meanwhile, another Britisher, James Silk Buckingham became the editor of the 'Calcutta Chronicle'. He was a highly regarded man because of his stand against the ferrying of slaves from Madagascar and his opposition to the planned colonization, as well as the acts of the East India Company (J. Klingberg, 1936). He proceeded to start a new venture called the 'Calcutta Journal' wherein, he began focusing his attention on socio-political and economic issues concerning the country and was amply supported by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in his endeavour (Shaik M.S., 2021). However, this bi-weekly had a short lifespan from 1818-1821. Buckingham was vociferous in his outbursts against Governors who failed in their duties and he was therefore expelled from India in 1823 (J. Klingberg, 1936).

Roy also published 'Bangadoot' in 1829 in four languages. Namely, English, Bangla, French, and Nagree (Hindi dialect) in Bengal which also highlighted all social issues. His editor, a school teacher named, Gangadhar Bhattacharjee, supported him amply. For unknown reasons, Raja Ram Mohan Roy worked behind the scenes. He wrote against the orthodox ideas that perpetrated social evils in religion. He was also not in favour of the Serampore missionaries who were promoting Christianity (J. Natarajan, 1955).

Other papers that were part of the reformation during the same period were the Sunday weekly 'Banga Dut' by Nilratan Haidar and another newspaper 'Gyananeshan' by Ram Gopal Ghose and Russick Krishna Mullick who penned against social evils, fake native doctors, incompetent officers, and the slave trade (Bhatnagar 1941; J. Natarajan, 1955). They further highlighted the importance of agricultural and vernacular education.

Thus was the initiation of the Indian press in Bengal. This was followed by presses in Madras, Mumbai, and other places. Meanwhile, the British authorities often tried their best to bring the Indian press initiative under their direct ambit by imposing laws and regulations of licensing and acts of censorship.

Press and the rising call for freedom in India from 1830- 1900

Abdul Qadir's Persian newspaper, 'Siraj-ul-Akhbar' began its journey in 1835. Post-1857, Siraj-ul-Akhbar along with 'Samachar Sudhavarshan' and 'Doorbeen' was brought to trial in the name of sedition for their stand against the British policies. (The annals of the Indian Administration, 1858).



In Maharashtra, one among the popular ‘Marathi’ language weeklies, ‘Prabhakar’ edited by Govind Vitthal Kunte, popularly called ‘Bhau Mahajan’ was published in 1841 (Māḍagavakara, 2012). Prabhakar which had a long run of 25 years was popular for its stance on ‘Swabhasha, Swadeshi and Swa-Sanskriti’, which basically meant, ‘our language, our country and our culture’. Bhau Mahajan is considered the first professional Marathi journalist and his paper catered to social reform. He extensively used his paper to highlight issues related to political and social reform. His paper carried content that vituperated the British policy of Expansionism (Ranganathan, 2009).

Bringing in reform came another paper in 1851, called the Rast Goftar published by the popular freedom fighter and social reformer, Dadabhai Nowroji in Anglo-Gujarati, who gradually reached out to all Indians through his publishing. So, did ‘The Hindu Patriot’, an English newspaper, which also played a very important role in raising the consciousness of people about the Indigo planters who oppressed the peasants and the imperial laws like the immigration bill, etc. The paper although initially published on January 6, 1853, by Madhusudan Roy under the editorship of Girish Chandra Ghosh was later purchased by Harish Chandra Mukherjee. Harish Chandra named his Brother Haran Chandra as the Proprietor to shield himself from the Military Audit General under whom he officiated (Banglapedia, 2021). Around this time, a weekly in Sanskrit ‘Shom Prakash’ by Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar amply highlighted the plight of the Indigo planters, thus contributing its mite in highlighting the atrocities of those days (Natarajan J, 1955).

In February, 1857, a paper that had an aggressive and staunch approach was launched with the name, ‘Payam-e-Azadi’ which was published in a lithograph press purchased from Europe by Azimullah Khan (Lutfullah, 1957). He was well aware of the divide and rule policy of the British and tried his best to conscientize the people about the same through his paper. Historically, 1857 also saw the mutiny revolt. There was a hue and cry in many parts already. This paper edited by Mirza Bedar Bhakt carried strong political views about the need for Hindu-Muslim unity for the freedom of India (Chattopadhyay G., 2013). ‘Payam-e-Azadi’ was a bilingual (Hindi-Urdu) paper that was extremely vociferous in its views against the British. The Marathi edition of this paper was printed by September, 1857, from



Jhansi and it became the central organ of the revolt. Azimullah Khan even printed posters and leaflets in a fiery language clandestinely posting them across the cities, exhorting people to unite and stand against the British. The British seemed to have severely persecuted all those found with a copy of the Payam-e-Azadi in those days (Lutfullah, 1957). During these days of the 1857 revolt, Shyamanandan Sen's Samachar Sudhabarsan was another bilingual newspaper that supported the revolt (Chattopadhyay G., 2013).

By 1862, 'Induprakash', a Hindi newspaper was started in Bombay by Mahadev Govind Ranade which rallied itself for the Indian freedom movement by publishing political articles (J. Natarajan, 1955). Another English paper, called 'The Bengalee' started by Girish Chandra Ghosh in 1862 also supported the freedom struggle and had good circulation. However, it is said that when it took a moderate stand on Swadeshi, the circulation was hit. This newspaper saw various phases as it was made into a morning and evening edition for urban and rural areas with the names 'The Bengalee' for the morning and 'The Calcutta Evening News' for the evening paper. However, 'The Bengalee' could not survive and was again combined into one newspaper and renamed 'The Star of India' (Dutta A, 2021).

'Amrita Bazaar Patrika' was another Bengali weekly that contributed greatly to journalism and especially to the freedom struggle in India. The paper was initially in Bengali language but gradually became bilingual and began its print in English to deal with the nuisance of the Vernacular Press Act. It was a weekly print by Moti Lal and Sisir Ghosh in Bengali and launched on February 20, 1868. It is said that both Sisir and Moti Lal vehemently opposed the economic exploitation of India and the restriction on civil liberties. The paper addressed the issue of the Indigo farmers, the Bengal famine, and the cause of the nation in no coy language (Misra, 2021; Natarajan, 1955). They were close friends of Bal Gangadhar Tilak and went into great depth at exposing the atrocities and loopholes of the British Administration in India. From a weekly that turned into a daily in 1891, it was one of the first newspapers in India to enter into the genre of Investigative journalism. Despite many attempts at trying to dissuade the nationalistic activities, including cases of sedition and imprisonment of its editors at various times, this paper stood the test and kept on promulgating the cause of India's freedom (J. Natarajan, 1955).



The Statesman, an English newspaper, started in 1875 by Robert Knight was taken up by his sons, Paul and Robert emerged from the merging of two newspapers called 'The Englishman' and 'Friend of India'. It was a paper worth acknowledgment as it opposed the decision of making Delhi the capital of India instead of Calcutta (now Kolkata). It was in this paper that Ian M. Stephens, the editor of the newspaper, who disappointed that the world was not taking note of the drastic conditions of the Bengal famine (1943- 1944) due to the deliberate clamp on the freedom of the Press, printed a group of pictures which actually put Bengal famine in the limelight much to the dismay of the Administration. (Britannica)

Vishnushastri Krushnashastri Chiplunkar was another prolific writer who wrote political articles that criticized the British Colonial rule and the Christian Missionaries in a Marathi paper called 'Shalapatrak' started by his father, Krushnashastri Chiplunkar, but had to be shut down in 1875 due to the controversies it got embroiled into for its stance on Swadeshi, Swabhasha, and Swadharm (our country, our language, and our religion) (Prabhat Vrutseva, 2020). He then started another monthly called the 'Nibhandmala' a Marathi language Magazine which meant 'a garland of essays'. The magazine had revolutionary ideas and had a run for almost 12 years with almost all the essays contributed by him. Further on, he teamed up with Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Gopal Ganesh Agarkar in 1880 for newspapers 'Kesari' in Marathi and 'Mahratta' in English. To familiarize people with the Marathi language, history, and poetry, he started another monthly in 1878 called the 'Kavyetihas Sangraha' and went on to establish two presses and a bookshop (Prabhat Vrutseva, 2020).

Bal Gangadhar Lokmanya Tilak, the popular freedom fighter started a paper in 1881 whose writings were aglow with the fire of freedom, swadeshi, and social-reforming ideas. It was called 'Kesari', He sparked political and social upheavals with his bold and impressive writings. Kesari was a huge success. He also started the 'Mahratta' in English. Kesari stoked the fire of freedom and had a very huge number of subscriptions. Tilak with his zeal and passion for Swaraj (freedom) had the knack of touching people's hearts and won them over through various initiatives like the Ganesh Mandali's (A gathering on the occasion of the festival of the deity, Ganesha) and his love and defence of Shivaji (Shaik M.S, 2021). Kesari became a powerful weapon in the fight against British rule in India.



In 1883, a bi-lingual journal in Hindi -English called 'Hindusthan' was begun by Raja Rampal Singh which was printed in London and had a subscription of Rs 10. He was the talukdar of Kalakankar. On his return to India, he purchased a press and began publishing the same in three languages, namely, English, Hindi, and Urdu. But by 1885, it had become nationalist in its views, was pro-Hindi, and was published as a Hindi daily. This daily stopped its publication by the year, 1912. Around the same time in 1883, magazines like Sanjeevani, by Dwarakanath Gangopadhyay and Krishna Kumar Mitra, which were also mouthpieces of the Brahmo Samaj, spoke for the farmers who were distraught and exposed the nefarious dealings and inhumane behaviour of the European tea planters and the 'Colonial imperialists', Furthermore, it was Sanjivani that gave the primary clarion call to boycott foreign goods during the start of the Swadeshi Movement in India (Chattopadhyay, 1989; Moloy, 2013). In 1890, 'Hindi Bangawasi', a Hindi newspaper, was launched by Pandit Amritlal Chakarvarti from Kolkata which showcased the cause of Indian freedom. (Neyazi, 2018).

There were numerous papers during this era that started but succumbed due to varied pressures. But there were others, who continued stoking aflame the spirit of freedom as India stepped into a new century with an increasing demand for freedom. The press passionately led the raconteur toward self-rule. The British raised the curbs in massive attempts at throttling the press.

The Press and the clarion call for freedom from 1900-1947

Newspapers emerged across the country raising the clarion call to join in the freedom movements and drive the colonizers out of the country. During this period too, multiple acts were brought in to suppress journalists and the press at large. These include the Newspaper – 'Incitement to offenses Act –(1908), the Indian press Act (1910), and the Press regulating Act (1942) (R.Kumar, 2017). These were initiated to confiscate press property if caught in acts that propagated extreme nationalism or incited violence among people. Journalists had to register themselves. Limitations and Censorship were strongly imposed to curb inflammatory writings that led to civil disturbances and acts against the Government (R.Kumar, 2017).



Saraswati, Abhyudaya (1900), and many other papers revolutionised the era in their times. Acharya Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi, was one such individual known for his expertise in literature, history who left a mark forever in the panels of Hindi literature. It was under his editorship that ‘Saraswati’, a newspaper in Khadi Hindi, gained huge prominence. Hitvarta launched in 1903 with its editor, Rasaram Ganesh Deshkar, a freedom fighter, was also a channel that contributed to the cause of the Indian freedom struggle (Neyazi, 2018). Zafar Ali Khan who took up his father, Sirajuddin Ahmed’s newspaper titled ‘Zameendar’ in 1903 which was initially started to highlight the plight of the farmers gradually but gradually turned vocal in resisting British rule. ‘Comrade’, an English paper by Maulana Muhammad Ali Johar and ‘Hamdard’ in Urdu were equally part of the bandwagon against the British. (Siddiqui, 2016; Parekh, 2011)

A sub-editor named Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi contributed his mite to ‘Saraswati’ too. At a later stage, in 1913, Vidyarthi started his own newspaper called ‘Pratap’ which gained huge popularity. He was a social reformist and often highlighted in his paper the plight of the suffering farmers of Champaran and Rae Bareilly and the trauma of the coolies due to the Indented Labour system. He actively took part in the National Civil Disobedience Movement and was considered an embodiment of National unity and integration. (Bhargava, 1988)

Bengal further saw a string of revolutionary newspapers that contributed immensely to the freedom struggle including Bengali journal, ‘Jugantar’, Bengali newsweekly, ‘Sandhya’ and the English newsweekly, ‘Vandemataram’. Jugantar Patrika (1906) founded by Barindra Kumar Ghosh, Abhinash Bhattacharya and Bhupendranath Dutt (Brother of Vivekananda) who was an active editor and extremely sharp in raising his voice, asked people to come forward to sacrifice for the cause of the country. This journal also carried numerous articles of the two prominent revolutionaries, Barindra Kumar Ghosh and Aurobindo Ghosh. The journal was so popular that it was publishing almost 20,000 copies in its heyday. Two articles written by Bhupendranath that irked the ire of the British, namely ‘Bhoy Bhanga’ (shed your fear) and ‘Lattha-Oushadhi’ (the stick is the medicine) finally led to his arrest and the shutting down of the journal in 1908. (Lohani, 2020; Johansson, 1989). Aurobindo



Ghosh' paper Vandematram also faced the heat of British rage leading to scores of Bengali journalists getting imprisoned or convicted.

The fire spread to every corner of the country and to the South as well. In Kerala, Vakkom Abdul Khader Moulavi started a weekly newspaper in 1905 called the Swadeshabhimani (the Patriot) in order to make the people around him aware of their right to freedom and their civil rights. He had as his editor, K. Ramakrishna Pillai who was equally vocal in the demand for 'Self-rule'. The bold tagline carried the words "Fear, crookedness and greed will not build a country" (Iqbal, 2021; Arikara, 2018). In the words of Dr. Jose Abraham, Swadeshabhimani turned into a medium that expressed public grievances to the ruling authority and challenged their responsibility toward the people (Iqbal, 2021). Pillai was vociferous in his opinion on social transformation, and questioned the then Dewan of Travancore, P Rajagopalachari and the massive corruption in the state (Arikara, 2018).

In Tamil Nadu, most Tamil newspapers did not have a problem with the government as there were no objectionable views. But towards the twentieth century, there was a turnaround. Papers like the Swadesmitran, The Hindu, and the Swaraj were all printed in Tamil Nadu. At this point a Tamil periodical that created waves of patriotic fervour was S. N. Thirumalachari's, 'India' which began publication on May 6, 1906. The periodical is said to be one of the first ones to publish cartoons that had political messages in the history of Indian journalism. The paper boldly carried articles and songs that were nationalistic in nature. Thus, was laid a foundation for a bold Press that supported the Indian Freedom movement in Tamil Nadu. "From the 'India' office, many pamphlets and booklets were published about the Swadeshi propaganda and speeches of the extremists. The famous speech of Tilak on the 'Tenets of the New party' at the College Square in Calcutta was translated into Tamil by Subramania Bharati and published in February, 1907. It was printed at the India Printing Works, Broadway, the same place where the 'India' periodical was printed. The Speeches of B.C. Pal (in Madras), Life of Aurobindo Ghosh, and Congress Yatra were printed and distributed from the India newspaper office press (Sakthivel R., 2015). When India's printing had to be stalled due to problems with the British Government, the printing was continued from Pondicherry which at that point in time was



not under British rule. Thus, Tamil Nadu contributed massively through vernacular journalism to inflame the fire of the demand for a free India.

The paper 'Yugantar' by Barendra Kumar Ghose (brother of Aurobindo) was a revolutionary and fiery paper that saw its emergence in 1906. The voice of Yugantar was found so threatening that it was suppressed by the 'incitement to offences act' in 1908 (Parthasarathy, 1997).

Another weekly which despite its short run created a furore with its strong, patriotic voice was 'Swarajya' published in Allahabad from 1907 to 1910, started by a patriotic association, namely the 'Bharat Mata Society or the Anjuman Muhibbane Vatnan' and was patronised Lal Rajpat Rai and others. Swarajya spared no scathing term to criticize the British Empire and called for its overthrow. It suffered a massive ordeal. Its successive editors from Shanti Narayan, Ram Das Suralia, Motilal Verma, Babu Ram Hari, Munshi Ram Sewak, Nanda Gopal Chopra, Sham Das Verma, 'Field Marshal' Ladha Ram Kapur, exclusive of the last editor, Amir Chand Bombwal were all "tried and convicted by the British in a barbarous manner. They suffered long terms of rigorous imprisonment and deportation to the Andamans" states Gautam Upadhyay (G. Chattopadhyay, 1989).

There were other papers that stoked the flame of the cause of the freedom of India. For instance, 'Free Hindustan' by Tarak Nath Das in 1907. This paper vehemently opposed British rule in India and demanded an Indian government. It also demanded the need for education of the people. The paper is also popular for Das's response to popular author Leo Tolstoy who spoke of peaceful means to get freedom. Das responded with an insistence on the fact that tyranny could never be justified (Kumar A, 2021).

Among the other prominent newspapers, were 'The Leader' from Allahabad, 'The Bombay Chronicle', 'The Hindustan Times', etc. Founded by Madan Mohan Malviya on October 24, 1909, in Allahabad, 'The Leader' had a long run till Sept. 6, 1967, and was considered to be an influential newspaper in English run by Indians due to its politically charged stance. The paper also carried numerous writings by Mahatma Gandhi. The chief editor was C. Y. Chintamani who is known for his prolific editorial skills and his brilliant writing skills with which he turned the tide for 'The Leader' and turned it into a paper of reckoning amidst the



freedom struggle and Motilal Nehru was associated with this newspaper. When threatened with prosecution for having carried an article that questioned the authorities, Motilal Nehru and his friends hired eminent British lawyers to relieve the paper (B R Nanda, 1959). However, at a later stage, he and C. Y. Chintamani had a clash which gradually led to Motilal Nehru quitting the Paper. Chintamani was fearless when it came to his stand on the freedom of the press from managerial stands (Bhargava G.S., 2005).

The Bombay Chronicle started by lawyer, Pherozeshah Mehta and Benjamin Guy Horniman saw its run from 1910 to 1959 and was also known for its raconteur and its political content, especially during the upheavals and the freedom struggles. Horniman was known to go out of his way to help people. Under the pen name 'Atropos' he wrote fiercely against the Government (Natarajan J, 1955). It is said that this paper altered its approach from a positive approach toward the British by seeking justice from them to an insistence on the demand for India's freedom from colonialism. (Bhargava G.S., 2005). Horniman was a reckoning force in the field of journalism.

An Urdu language newspaper that irked the British briefly, but massively was the 'Al-Hilal' started in 1912, Calcutta, by the young Abul Kalam Azad. Pletcher Kenneth in his article in Britannica states that this paper was "highly influential in the Muslim community for its anti-British stance, notably for its criticism of Indian Muslims who were loyal to the British" and was therefore banned by 1916 (Britannica). It is also stated that Abul grew close to Gandhiji and was an active participant in the Satyagraha campaigns, Salt marches, Quit India campaign and other Civil disobedience movements in India against the British. These were the years of massive participation in the freedom movement. 1912 was also the year of the birth of another paper titled 'Hindu' by Maharaj Lokram and Maharaj Vishnu Sharma which had three editors, namely, Jairamdas Daulatram, Dr. Choithram P. Gidwani, and Hiranand Karamchand. The three editors were gradually arrested one by one for the fierce stand in support of the nationalist movements and the cause of Civil disobedience (Natarajan J, 1955).



While we try to recall the role of the press in the freedom struggle, it is inevitable to mention the role of Indians who fought for the freedom of our country from foreign soil with the might of the press. One such movement was the Ghadar movement who started a weekly paper called 'Ghadar' which basically meant 'mutiny' under the patronage of Har Dayal. The first paper was printed in Urdu on November 1, 1913, then Gurmukhi (December 8, 1913) followed by varied languages (Suruchi, 2017; Bhaskar, 2021). In the words of Bhaskar (2021) the language used was "bitter, pungent and vitriolic" in its demand for freedom from an unjust and traumatising rule of a foreign nation over India (Suruchi, 2017). It called in for a repeat of the mutiny of 1857 in strong words. Har Dayal appointed Ram Chandra as the editor and together with Bhagwan Singh and Maulvi Barkatullah they started recruiting revolutionaries by pointing out the cruelty of the British in India. The group split at a later stage due to infights. However, this paper went nail and tongs to highlight not just the cause of the social evils but of the Bengal famine and the plague that had caused numerous deaths, primarily due to the British apathy towards the simple and poor citizens of India. (Chattopadhyay, 1989; Suruchi, 2017)

Annie Besant, a Britisher with Irish ancestry got massively involved in India's freedom struggle and the cause of 'Home-rule'. She was a dynamic woman who massively partook in the Indian freedom struggle and worked actively with many freedom fighters for the cause of a free India. She, therefore, started the 'New India' (1914) newspaper and a weekly 'Commonweal' (1914) with a dynamic vision of India's future and demand for home rule in India (Natarajan J, 1955). It is said of Besant that she even trained journalists to write leading articles with powerful language with such a knack so as to stay out of the ambit of the law that could grind them. (Bhargava G.S., 2005; TS Adyar)

'Swadesh Sevak' by Gurudutta Kumar, Indian Sociologist by Shyamji Keishna Verma and 'The Talwar' whose publication was supported by Madam Bhikaji Cama, a prominent Parsi women and a freedom fighter and Virendranath Chattopadhyay. The paper was so bold in its approach that it carried the tagline – 'An organ of Indian Independence'. (Chattopadhyay, 1989; Suruchi, 2017; Bhaskar, 2021)



'Vijay' launched in the year 1918 in Delhi by Pandit Indra Vidya Vachaspati was another Hindi newspaper that worked immensely for the cause of freedom. The paper was inspired by Swami Sraddhanand who contributed numerous nationalist articles inclusive of those opposing the Rowlatt Act. A lawyer by profession, Swami Sraddhanand, was meticulous in his opinion which helped the paper avert retaliation or fines by Britishers. His departure to Lahore left a vacuum that none could fill leading the paper to its halt in 1920.

The 'Daily Pratap' started by Mahashey Krishnan and his son, Virendra who were influenced by Pandit Nehru's speech was another pro-independence newspaper that supported Gandhiji's policies and was started in Lahore (then a part of India) in 1919 (Vaidya, 2021; Mirza, 2022). Being an active participant of the Quit Indian movement, Virendra thus contributed his mite to the freedom struggle using the prominent tool of the press. However, it was fined and suppressed multiple times by the British (Parthasarathy, 1997). Many stalwart leaders came forward with many newspapers and writings about the struggle during these years.

Another great journalist and intellectual who shaped Marathi Journalism and in the long run, was the primary brain-child behind the Indian Constitution was Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar. On January 31, 1920, he started his first newspaper, 'Mooknayak' (the silent actor), which only ran for three years and focussed on Dalit issues. Dr. Ambedkar also published three other newspapers – 'Bahishkrut Bharat' (1927-1929), 'Janata' (1930-56), and 'Prabuddha Bharat' (1956). He was directly involved in the editorial management of the first two newspapers, Mooknayak and Bahishkrut Bharat. From 1930 onwards, he delegated the task to his most important colleagues, such as Devrao Naik, B.R. Kadrekar, G.N. Sahastrabuddhe, R.D. Bhandare, and B.C. Kamble. Interestingly, Naik, Kadrekar and Sahastrabuddhe from this team were not Dalits (Prabodhan P, 2020).

The Paper, 'Daily Tej' had a wide circulation in Rajasthan, U.P. and Delhi and was founded by Swami Shraddhanand in 1923. Lala Deshbandhu Gupta was its editor. The paper had to face harrowing times due to its opposition to the British and often had to face confiscation of its papers (Parthasarathy, 1997; Mirza, 2022).



The Hindustan Times was involved equally in the contribution towards the cause of Freedom. It was founded by Sunder Singh of the Akali Movement in 1924 and had in its managing committee the dynamic freedom fighter, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya and Master Tara Singh. It is said that Mahatma Gandhi was himself present at the launch of this newspaper. This paper survived the Test of time and exists even today. It is said that due to Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya's dynamism, The Hindustan Times was able to launch its Hindi version called the 'Hindustan Dainik' in 1936. It contributed a great deal to the Indian freedom struggle with its journalism.

There were other papers that contributed to nationalism, freedom from the tyranny of Britishers, and Hindu- Muslim unity. These include popular newspapers like 'Viswamitra' (1916) by Mahendra Chandra Aggarwal and 'Sainik' by Krishna Dutt Paliwal in Agra. 'Arjun' sponsored by Ghanshyamdas Birla also fell into troubled waters with the imprisonment of its editor and a fine. However, it is said that the paper was restarted with another name, 'Vir Arjun'.

Rajendra Prasad, the first president of free India was a lawyer and close associate of Gandhiji in the freedom struggle. He founded 'Searchlight' an English daily in 1918, and 'Desh', a Hindi weekly in 1920 in view of the nationalist movement of the country and the demand for freedom (The Tribune, 2000; Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1990). He also penned the book 'Champaran Satyagraha' in 1917 and India Divided in 1946. (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1990)

Swatantra- a paper that was the mouthpiece of the Congress was begun by Ambikaprasad Bajpeyi on August 4, 1920 (Natarajan J, 1955). This paper became extremely popular as it carried the minutest details of Gandhiji's non-co-operation movement. The feature of this newspaper that stood out was the appointment of Women journalists to cover reportage of Women's meetings. It carried commercial news, had Market rates and also carried special features during the festival of Holi and Diwali. This paper however, did not have a long run as it succumbed to Press Ordinance act in 1930 where it was asked to deposit a security of Rs 5000/-, and it was unable to. Another paper with the same title of 'Swatantra' was started in 1939 by Puranchand Gupta and Jagdish Chandra Kulsia. This paper was gradually



launched as ‘Dainik Jagran’ which is very popular and has a huge readership today. A paper that brought in a massive revolution and popularised Hindi was ‘Aaj’ by Shiv Prasad Gupta on September 5, 1920 from Benaras with Baburao Vishnu Paradkar as its editor. The paper grew in circulation and was hailed for its stand on nationalism under the brilliant editing skills of Paradkar. When required, Paradkar did not hesitate to question even Indian leaders who erred in the cause for freedom (Natarajan J, 1955).

After his return from Africa, Gandhiji revolutionized the phase in India’s struggle for freedom by steering the Satyagraha, Dandi March, Salt Satyagraha, Non-Violence Movement, promotion of Khadi, and the use of the Press. His contribution to journalism was seen in all his newspapers like ‘Young India, Indian Opinion, Navajivan, Harijan in English, Harijan Bandu in Gujarati, and Harijan Sevak in Hindi (Natarajan J, 1955).

Around the year 1904, it is said that Gandhiji received a proposal in Johannesburg, to take over a weekly. Thus, began the venture of ‘Indian Opinion’ which was a multilingual weekly, largely financed by Gandhi. He initially began it with Mansukhlal Nazar as his editor, but due to a huge loss of over 200 pounds, was compelled to take up the editorship himself and transfer the printing to Phoenix where Rustomji Parsi helped with its finances. ‘Hitavada’ the English newspaper, launched in Nagpur by freedom fighter, Gopal Krishna Gokhale in 1911 was also a huge influence in the freedom struggle (PTI, 2011).

In India, Gandhiji also launched a Gujarati newspaper on October 7, 1919, called the ‘Navajivan’ and on October 8, 1919, he launched an English Daily called the ‘Young India’. Gandhiji had to face trial in a sedition case filed against him in 1922 for three provocative journalistic articles he penned, namely, ‘Tampering with Loyalty’, ‘The Puzzle and its Solution’ and ‘Shaking the Manes’ (Jagannathan, 1999; G. Gandhi, 2020). Navajivan- the Gujarati newspaper actually became popular and had a circulation of 12000 copies as compared to 1200 copies of Young India, which led Gandhiji to launch a Hindi version of the paper Navajivan on August 19, 1921. Although, it is said that the subscriptions of the Hindi 'Navajivan' dropped down considerably from 12000 to 1400.



Gandhi gradually started a newspaper called 'Harijan' in English February 11, 1933 from the Yerwada Jail in Pune where he was imprisoned by the Britishers. Harijan was started in order to encourage people to overcome caste discrimination. He gradually launched the Hindi edition of the same paper on February 23, 1933, from Delhi with Viyogi Hari as the editor and titled it as 'Harijan Sevak'. He drew the financial support for this paper from Ghansyamdas Birla. The Britishers were wary of Harijan and asked Gandhi to submit the paper for proof-reading before printing. Gandhi refused the same with the demand that freedom of the press was his right. The paper succumbed for this reason by its tenth issue. Jawaharlal Nehru too started a paper in 1938 called the National Herald from Lucknow and had as its editor, K Rama Rao. The National Herald was such a massive tool of the Indian freedom struggle that The British empire put a ban on it from 1942 to 1945 (Bansal, 2012). Such was the enamour and the passion of the Indian press for the cause of the freedom struggle that it perpetrated every state, nook and corner to stoke aflame the fire of liberty. However, many of them succumbed due to financial losses, fines, and cases of sedition brought against them.

Conclusion

The newspapers were a weapon that silently and non-violently stoked the fire of freedom all across India and the British Government grew wary of its reach and power. At the height of this movement, the British Government brought in the Press Act 1910, due to which within a few years over 350 printing presses were punished with penalization and almost 300 newspapers were asked for security deposits. The pressurization, penalization, and harassment led to the closure of almost 200 papers. However, this only catapulted the freedom movement as this act of penalizing and trying to shut down the voices of the locals only confirmed the mismanagement in India and the cruelty shown towards Indians by the East India Company and the Britishers. There were many pamphlets and papers printed and circulated anonymously to ignite the freedom struggle. The slogan, "the pen is mightier than the sword" proved itself true in the struggle for freedom, the demand for economic liberties and civil rights as citizens of a country, and right to freedom of speech.



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