

CHAPTER - ONE
INTRODUCTION

Napoleon the great, who shook the whole of Europe by his military might and lightning conquests, is reported to have remarked that "four hostile newspapers were more to be feared than a thousand bayonets."¹ Writing about the role of newspapers in the American Revolution, David Ramsay made the significant observation that "the pen and press had a merit equal to that of the sword"² in establishing American Independence. From the 18th century onwards the newspapers exerted a vital influence on the course of events in Europe, one such momentous event being the French Revolution Lord Macaulay, described the press as the "Fourth Estate of the realm."³ Understood in its spirit rather than in its letter

1. Quoted in Hemendra Prasad Ghosh, *the News Paper in India* (Calcutta, 1952), P. 86.

2. Quoted in Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Prelude to Independence: The Newspaper war on Britain, 1764-1776* (New York: 1958), P. VII.

3. C.J. Nirmal, "The Lajapatrai Centenary Lectures, 1970-1971", *Journal of the Madras University*, XLII, 182, Jan-July, 1970, P. 51.

the familiar saying, 'the pen is mightier than the sword', proves profoundly meaningful indeed.

In the modern world the press has become not only a very powerful medium of mass communication but also an influential political and social institution. A responsible press has become the very bastion of freedom of thought and expression without which there cannot be open and democratic societies. The journalists pen enjoys such power and prestige that it has led to the saying, "If Shakespear were alive today he would be a journalist." This could not have been achieved in a single day. In his book *Journalism in India* R. Parthasarathy quotes the considered opinion of an American writer on what a newspaper today is: "The newspaper is historian, reporter, analyst, communicator, statesman and advocate. Information is the staple of any good newspaer. But most hope to influence their readers as well as inform them. Newspapers influence through their total presentations and their image in the community and not through their advocacies alone."⁴ Among the several functions performed by a responsible press have to be specially mentioned, apart from communication of authentic information about the affairs of the world and analysis and commentary on the happenings of the day, fearless exposure

4. R. Parthasarathy, *Journalism in India* (New Delhi, 1989), P. 21.

of abuse of power, exploitation, influence and corruption, just criticism of the unhelpful policies of the powers that be, dissemination of worthy principles, ideas, and good causes and thus creating and moulding sound public opinion by which a society, a nation, lives and moves.

The present undertaking is concerned with studying in some detail the part played by the Telugu periodicals and newspapers in India's nation-wide and protracted struggle for freedom from British colonial rule, which forms a momentous phase of her recent history. It was a struggle in which the Indian press in general, including periodicals and newspapers in all the major Indian languages and English, actively participated in all its phases. Therefore the evolution of the press in India is of special importance in the study of modern Indian history in general and the national struggle for freedom from foreign yoke in particular. The history of newspapers in general reveals that it is intricately and inseparably tangled with political history. In India the press from very humble, fitful, and unsuspecting beginnings in the late eighteenth century, became gradually a major political weapon in the nationalist movement for freedom and independence. In rousing national consciousness among the people, in disseminating social and political ideas, and ideas of social and religious reform among them, and in building and

developing the spirit of nationalism in them the role played by the Indian press was of very great consequence. It was largely through the medium of newspapers and periodicals that the Indian nationalists spread far and wide in the country ideas of representative government, self-rule, liberty, democracy and democratic institutions, Swadeshi, Home Rule, and Independence. While on one hand they regularly and relentlessly criticised the autocratic and oppressive measures of the British administration in India, on the other, they also educated the people in understanding the pressing political problems facing them, and imbued them "with patriotic fervour, indomitable courage and heroic self-sacrifice to an extraordinary degree"⁵ to win freedom for India. To this historic endeavour, the Telugu press made its impressive contribution.

It is indeed one of the ironies of history that the Indian press which played an outstanding part in the undoing of the British Indian empire should owe its origin to the English themselves, who were ruling India. It is certainly one of the unintended benefits of British rule. Its emergence was a consequence of "the impact of the ways

5. R.C. Majumdar, **Struggle for Freedom**, Vol. XI, (Bombay, 1969). P. 1016.

and ideas of the British in India"⁶. Herbert Passion has rightly observed that "the rise of journalism in the underdeveloped countries of the world is almost exclusively the result of Western influence."⁷ He also has remarked that in all transitional societies journalism develops almost simultaneously with the new awareness of the outside world and a new nationalist self-consciousness."⁸ India is a case in point.

THE ORIGIN OF INDIAN PRESS

The newspaper press in India was, in a sense "a by-product of the first printing presses set up in this country."⁹ The credit of introducing them in India goes to the Portugese who imported two printing machines in 1550. "The early Portugese settlers, followed by a number of Jesuits, needed quick means of communication"¹⁰ for missionary activity, religious conversion, and printing religious books. The first books to be printed naturally

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6. L.S.S. O'Malley, *Modern India and the West* (London, 1941), P. 188.
 7. Herbert Passion, "Writer and Journalist in the Transitional Society", in Lucian W. Pye (Ed) *Communications and Political Development*, (Princeton, 1963), P. 27.
 8. *Ibid.*, P. 98.
 9. C.J. Nirmal, *Op. Cit.*, P. 42.
 10. M. Chalapathi Rao, *The press* (New Delhi, 1982), P. 9.

were religious. Printing presses were established in the south for similar purpose. In the 17th century Bhimji Parekh, a Kapor Bania, set up a press in Bombay. The East India Company first installed a press in Bombay in 1674, and set up its presses in Madras, Calcutta, Hoogly, and a few up-country places in the 18th century¹¹. Having realised the usefulness of the printing machine private individuals and missionary societies started their own presses in which books, pamphlets and the like came to be printed. But it took more than two centuries since the printing press was introduced in India before it could be used for printing newspapers.

There are several accounts of the form and means by which news and ideas were communicated in India throughout the ages before the advent of the printed newspaper.¹² It is also said that "written newspapers of a kind were in circulation in the days of the Mughal Empire."¹³ But it was with few English periodicals run by English men late in the 18th century, a century and a half after the English had been in the country, that journalism proper could be said to

11. Tarachand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. II, (New Delhi, 1974), P. 212.

12. B.N. Ahuja, *History of Indian press: Growth of News Papers in India*. (New Delhi : 1988), for a random instance.

13. L.S.S. O'Malley, *Op. Cit.*, P. 188.

begin in India. A few more decades had to pass before the press in the Indian languages could make a beginning early in the 19th century. The first English newspapers were started by English men "who had grievances against the East India Company and resigned from its service to express them."¹⁴ Thus James Augustus Hicky made history by launching Bengal Gazette or Calcutta General Advertiser, an English weekly, the first issue of which appeared on 29th January, 1780. As Hicky was its owner, editor and publisher popularly it came to be known as Hicky's Gazette. A few years before Hicky, William Bolts, who too had resigned from the company's service, made in 1776 a premature and abortive attempt to start a newspaper. As he made it known that he had 'in manuscript many things to communicate which most intimately concerned every individual', "there was alarm and resentment in official quarter and Bolts was directed to go back to Europe."¹⁵

Hicky's two-sheet weekly was intended to be a 'political and commercial paper open to all parties but influenced by none'. While he printed items taken from newspapers sent from England and received in India several months after publication, he also published items of gossip

14. M. Chalapathi Rao, Op. Cit., P. 10.

15. Ibid.

and scandalous interest to the European community living in India.¹⁶ He took delight in the exposure of the private lives of the Company officials and in making scurrilous attacks on individuals including such highly placed persons as Warren Hastings, the Governor-General, Elijah Impey, the Chief Justice, and the Swedish missionary, John Zachariah Kiernander. His comments on the English community of Calcutta contained malice and ridicule, and often they were in bad taste. Legal action which had to be taken against him for defamation and the consequent fine and imprisonment would not deter Hicky from his defiant attitude. However he could not sustain his news paper for long and had to close it down in March 1782, barely two years after launching it, as the types for printing the paper were seized.

To say that Hicky was a scurrilous journalist is to labour the obvious. But he was, with all his faults, a pioneer of journalism in India. Chalapathi Rao, the distinguished journalist has said that Hicky and those who followed him in his kind of journalism were, paradoxically, "pioneers of scurrilous writing and they were pioneers of the freedom of the press."¹⁷ Despite the displeasure and

16. R. Parthasarathy, *Op. Cit.*, P. 23.

17. M. Chalapathi Rao, *Op. Cit.*, P. 14.

indignation of those in power, they persisted in exposing what they regarded as their wrong doings and tried to assert their freedom of expression. It would seem then that in the history of the press in general, and the Indian press in particular, there is a recurring conflict between government and the press over freedom of expression. O'Malley has observed that "the early history of the press in India shows a perpetual tug between the two principles, freedom and control."¹⁸ If the newspapers in India in the 19th century and early 20th century had not asserted from time to time their freedom to express their thoughts and ideas and to advocate the cause dear to their heart, even at the risk of displeasing the powerful alien British rulers, they could not have made their tremendous impact on the national struggle for freedom.

Hicky's Bengal Gazette became the harbinger of some more periodicals which appeared in Calcutta, the birth place of journalism in India. By 1786 there were four weeklies and a monthly: The India Gazette, started by B. Messink and Peter Reed in the same year as Hicky's venture, the Calcutta Gazette (1784) which enjoyed the patronage of the government, The Bengal Journal (1785), The oriental Magazine of Calcutta Amusement (1785, a monthly), and The Calcutta

18. L.S.S. O'Malley, Op. Cit., P. 190

Chronicle (1786). There is nothing distinguished about these periodicals except that they were cautious and would not provoke the government. They did not survive for long. In contrast to Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, the other two presidency cities, did not have many papers. Between these two cities, Madras was the first to have a newspaper. In 1785, five years after Hicky's paper, the Madras Courier, a weekly, was founded by Richard Johnson in Madras. Johnson was the government printer, and his paper "was officially recognised as the Government medium."¹⁹ In 1791 appeared the Harkaru started by one Boyd who was editing the Madras courier. When Boyd died the next year, his paper too died. In 1795 the Madras Gazette was begun by R. Williams, and few months later appeared an 'unauthorised newspaper' called the Indian Herald. In the words of Parthasarathy, this short-lived periodical "was notable for its editor, Humphreys, being punished for printing without permission and for 'gross libels' against the government and the princes."²⁰ On the whole the few papers Madras had seem to have been successful. Their success, particular that of the Madras Courier which printed mainly military news, news of the arrival of ships from England and the like which invariably

19. S. Natarajan, A History of the press in India, (Bombay, 1962), P. 19.

20. Ibid.

interested the servants of the company, seems to have attracted attention outside" so that "the Bombay Government supplied regularly with copies of the Madras Courier."²¹

The press came to Bombay only in 1789 when the first English weekly Bombay Herald was started. A year after appeared the Bombay Courier which interestingly carried advertisements in Gujarati, obviously to promote trading interests. The Bombay Gazette, which started in 1791 and with which the Bombay Herald was merged in 1792, "became the government paper"²² like the Madras Courier. These papers naturally published matters of interest to Englishmen. They seem to have been anxious to avoid conflict with the government, and win if possible official recognition and favour, and thus survive.

Started by Englishmen and intended for British readers living in India, these newspapers of the first two decades of the emergence of the press, had a limited area of communication. Many of them were digests and reprints of British newspapers received in India long after their publication. Some of them were of course critical of the

21. C.J. Nirmal, Op. Cit., P. 46.

22. D. Vasant Rao, "The beginning and Growth of the Marathi Press" in S.P.Sen (Ed), The Indian Press (Calcutta, 1967) P. 53.

government's policies and measures and therefore offended those in power. Particularly publication of news concerning the army was "considered indiscreet and contrary to the interests of the administration"²³ and as a result some had to face the wrath of the government. William Duane of the Bengal Journal was accused in 1791 of publishing a false report of the death of Lord Cornwallis in the Maratha war. He was not foreign even though his innocence was established, and he was successfully deported in 1794. One more instance may be cited to indicate the attitude of those in power towards newspaper men. Charles K. Bruve's article in Asiatic Mirror in which he wrote of the relative strengths of the English and Indian population when the governor was busy fighting Tipu Sultan, provoked the then Governor-General Marquess of Wellesley to instruct the Commander-in-Chief "to suppress by force such editors ---- and send them off to Europe"²⁴. He promised his commander that he would soon lay down 'rules for the conduct of the whole tribe of editors.'

As good as his word, Wellesley issued in May 1799 certain press regulations applicable all over the country. Every newspaper had to carry the names of the printer,

23. Tarachand, Op. Cit., Vol. II, P. 213.

24. M. Chalapathi Rao, Op. Cit., P. 15.

editor and proprietor who were to declare themselves to the secretary to the government and submit to his prior scrutiny all material to be published in it. The secretary was the censor. The newspapers were required to exclude information about the movement of ships and troops and all speculation relations between the company and the Indian rulers. Comments likely to excite disturbance within the Company's territories, comments on the revenues and finances of the Company, and on the conduct of government officers, private scandals and libellous writings on individuals etc., were to be excluded.²⁵ These restrictions of Wellesley continued into the first decades of the 19th century, and became stringent. Even then it would appear, many newspapers did go against then inspite of the risk involved in such violation.

In the early years of the emergence of the press in India, Nirmal says, "it would be premature to speak of a press 'policy' on the part of the government. It was largely in the face of hostile administrations that the Indian news paper originated and developed."²⁶ There were no press laws as such except censorship operated by the Secretary's office. The government, in general, looked at the newspapers

25. M. Chalapathi Rao, Op. Cit., P. 16.

26. C.J. Nirmal, Op. Cit., P. 47.

with suspicion. At best the press was viewed "as a tolerated nuisance" as in Bombay, and at worse regarded with contempt. It is certainly something for the press to have survived in the midst of such hostility and make the government to reckon with it.

The number of newspapers run by Englishmen steadily increased in the early decades of the 19th century, in spite of the stern restrictions imposed on the press by Wellesley. Though from time to time the Governor-Generals changed, matters as regards the stifling restrictions on the press remained the same until Lord Hastings took over from Lord Minto in 1813. Hastings was friendly to the press and he abolished the department of 'Censors of News Papers' in 1818. Instead he issued fairly comprehensive press regulations for the journalists to abide by. He knew well that the Court of Directors would not approve of the total withdrawal of control on the press. But he was convinced of "the importance of fostering in the administration a responsible attitude towards public opinion."²⁷ It is likely that Hastings's generous attitude to the press made the success of the Calcutta Journal (also known as Calcutta Chronicle) and its founder and editor James Silk Buckingham. Before moving on to an account of the emergence of the press

27. Tarachand, Op. Cit. Vol. II, P. 213.

in Indian languages, Buckingham's contribution to Indian journalism deserves to be noted.

Buckingham founded his newspaper in 1818 as a bi-weekly and within three years, by virtue of its popularity, became a daily, "the first daily paper of Calcutta"²⁸. He was active in Indian journalism for a short period, as he was made to leave the country in 1823. He is regarded as the first real, outstanding journalist in India in the early years of the 19th century. He is also one of the first stout champions of the freedom of the press. In the midst of threats, censures and warnings held out by the officials, he upheld the dignity and freedom of the press. A widely travelled and enlightened man and a scholar he viewed the newspaper not merely as a purveyor of information but as a medium of education which would "promote knowledge and dispel ignorance."²⁹ As a versatile editor he made his *Chronicle* a paper of political, commercial, and literary views. He fearlessly exposed the commissions and omissions of the government. He was equally critical of the Indian customs such as the *sati*. But in either case it was "criticism rather than invective."³⁰ He laid emphasis on

28. M. Chalapathi Rao, *Op. Cit.*, P. 23.

29. R. Parthasarathy, *Op. Cit.*, P. 29.

30. *Ibid.*, P. 28.

news of local conditions, the life of the people rather on fashion personalities and gossip. "It is with him that the press began to discuss public questions."³¹ Therefore it is not surprising that Buckingham's paper "became popular not only in the European community, but also among Indians."³² What must have been of special interest to the Indians of the day was that he "gave prominence to news and views in Bengali and Persian journals", which had made a beginning, "and published a summary in his paper."³³ He reproduced in English translation of Ram Mohan Roy's editorials in his Persian weekly *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*. What must have been even more endearing to the Indians was that he was a friend of the native Indian press which was treated with contempt by the English. He wrote: 'The pleasure with which we regard the criticisms of the native press does not arise from the intrinsic value of these productions or its infancy but as an earnest of what it may produce when it has attained maturity.'³⁴ That Buckingham's words proved prophetic may be seen in the history of the native Indian press in English as well as the Indian languages, in the 19th and 20th centuries.

31. C.J. Nirmal, *Op. Cit.*, P. 49.

32. Tarachand, *Op. Cit.* Vol. II, P. 214.

33. R. Parthasarathy, *Op. Cit.*, P. 48.

34. Quoted in R. Parthasarathy, *Op. Cit.*, P. 28.

BEGINNINGS OF THE INDIAN OWNED AND INDIAN LANGUAGE PRESS

The English newspapers owned by English men of those days had little to do with Indians, and the number of Indians who read them was very small. "Yet the idea of using the press for the education of the public was infectious"³⁵ and contact with Europeans in this respect led to the emergence of Indian owned newspapers in English as well as the Indian languages. Here again Bengal was the pioneer. Whether the Bengali Gazette started (in 1816 or 1818) by Ganga Kishore Bhattacharya (Gangadhar Bhattacharya according to some) and Harachandra Roy or Samachar Darpan started (in 1818) by the Serampore missionaries was the first newspaper in Bengali and in an Indian language, is a matter of controversy. But what is certain is that Bengali Gazette was "the first paper to be published exclusively under Bengali control and management."³⁶ This periodical lived for a shortwhile. The Baptist missioneries of Serampore took the and Samachar Darpan, a weekly, both in Bengali, and Friend of India a monthly in English. The chief objective of these missionary periodicals was the propagation of their faith. In fact with this end in view missionaries started a little

35. Tarachand, Op. Cit. Vol. II, P. 214.

36. Kalpana Bishni, "The Vernacular Newspaper press of Bengal...", in S.P. Sen (Ed) Op. Cit., (Calcutta, 1967) P. 1.

real initiative for the creation of an Indian language press, by starting in 1818 *Digdarshan*, a monthly magazine later periodicals in Tamil and Telugu, thereby making a beginning of the vernacular press in these languages. In *Samachar Darpan*, which was encouraged by Hastings the "chief feature was discussion of the Hindu and Christian religions". However articles on a variety of subjects such as Indian commerce and scientific matters, and news of European and American affairs, and biography, found a place in it and made it attractive to the readers.³⁷ It also set "a precedent for the newspapers to be involved in discussion and, as a medium by which ideas would be disseminated."³⁸ O'Malley makes the perceptive observation that while the English press in India in its early days had "made its chief purpose to amuse....and....please" its readers "by annoying the government", the Indian press from the first, "despite much weakness, had larger views and ambitions". It "regarded itself as in the higher and fullest sense an educator of the country" in the absence of universities and schools of any importance to "stimulate higher studies and keep India in touch with what was being done in other countries."³⁹ The

37. Tarachand, *Op. Cit.* Vol. II, PP. 214-215.

38. C.J. Nirmal, *Op. Cit.*, P. 49.

39. O'Malley, *Op. Cit.*, PP. 200-201.

appropriateness of this observation becomes apparent when the services rendered by Ram Mohan Roy and others to Indian journalism and national awakening are taken note of.

A significant feature of India's national awakening in the 19th century is that the process began with rigorous social and religious reform long before politics could become dominant. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, justly remembered as the 'father of modern India' was a versatile genius. He was a thinker and philosopher with a passionate love of truth, polyglot, educationist, social and religious reformer. He was a tireless and determined crusader against the evils, corrupt practices, and superstitions of the Hindu society. He would not rest until the obnoxious custom of Sati was abolished. He used his pen in the many journals with which he was associated or which he sponsored, to achieve social and cultural awakening in the Hindu society. It is not quite certain whether he founded the Bengali weekly Sambad Kaumudi. Nor is it certain when exactly this periodical was started, whether in 1819 or 1821. However he regarded journalism as a means of action and wrote regularly for Kaumudi. His articles espousing radical social and religious reforms created much uproar in the Hindu society. Bhowani Charan Banerjee, the editor of Sambad Kaumudi, who could not agree with him, left it to start another periodical called Samachar Chandrika to espouse the orthodox points of view.

As he fought against the narrow, conservative section of the community, Ram Mohan Roy also defended Hinduism against the unfair attacks of the proselytizing christian missionaries, and towards that end he started Brahman Sevadhi, a bilingual periodical. He also started two Persian newspapers, Jami-Jahan-Numa and Mirat-ul-Akhbar, in which too mainly religious questions were discussed.

The writings of Ram Mohan Roy urging radical reform provoked opposition among the orthodox. And "the exchange of argument between English missionaries and the Indian defenders of Hinduism created alarm in the minds of the rulers. W.B. Bayley, a member of the Governor-General's council, wrote in his minutes in 1822 that it was neither wisdom nor prudence to allow their Indian subjects 'unrestrained liberty of discussing and publishing in the native languages speculations or strictures on the conduct, character and the public acts of their rulers or on the comparative merits of the several religious systems...'⁴⁰ Accordingly in 1823, John Adam as officiating Governor General, who had always disapproved of Hasting's liberal attitude to the press, took the opportunity to promulgate a regulation which restricted the freedom of the press. It was ordained that no news paper, pamphlet or book, concerning

40. Margarita Barns, *The Indian Press* (London, 1940), P.106

public news and containing criticism of Government measures and proceedings, could be published without licence. Ram Mohan Roy, who was as sturdy a champion of the freedom of the press as he was an untiring advocate of reform, protested at once against the measure and submitted a memorial to the Supreme Court urging the rejection of the regulation. He pointed out that the regulation would not only obstruct diffusion of knowledge, but preclude the people of the country from making the government acquainted with the errors and injustice committed by its officers. The Supreme Court rejected the petition. So Ram Mohan Roy addressed an appeal to the King-in-Council. He drew the attention of the Council to the painful situation created by the government of India. The closely reasoned appeal too met with the same fate, the privy council refused to intervene. The appeal, nonetheless, is an interesting document.⁴¹ It reminds one of John Milton's *Areopagitica* in which the great poet makes an impassioned appeal for freedom of expression.

The Indian owned press made its debut in Bombay in 1812 with Gujarati Samachar press established by Fardoonji Marzaban. In 1822, the first Gujarati newspaper Bombay Samachar, was published from this press. It became a daily in 1837. The attitude of the Bombay government towards the

41. Tarachand, Op. Cit. Vol. II, PP. 216-217.

press was unsympathetic, like that of Bengal. Particularly Elphinstone was in favour of vigorous measures of control over the press. 'The Bombay Gazette' excited the wrath of the government by publishing comments on the proceedings of the Supreme Court. So its editor C.J. Fair, was soon deported. In 1825, the regulation ordering the proprietors, editors and printers to register their names was passed.⁴² But such threats did not deter others from starting newspapers.

In 1830, Naoroji Dorabji Chandaru started a Gujarati weekly called Mumbai Vartaman. In 1831, Pestonji Maneckji Motivala brought out Jam-e-Jamshad, a weekly in Gujarati. Sometime later it became a daily. In 1851 began to be published Rast Goftar, a fortnightly newspaper under the editorship of Dadabhai Naoroji. The first Marathi newspaper was Bombay Durpan, started by Bal Shastri Jambhekar in 1832. It was bilingual, the same matter being given in English and Marathi. Jambhekar was a scholar and his objective in starting this periodical was to 'spread liberal sentiments in matters of religion and politics so that his countrymen might improve themselves.'⁴³

42. Tarachand, P. 223.

43. Ibid. PP. 223-224.

The first Marathi newspaper was conducted on strictly idealistic lines. It laid down the tradition of popular education through the columns of newspapers. The promoters never desired to make any profit out of it but spent money out of their pockets to spread learning amongst the people.⁴⁴

At Madras, as in Bengal, the first attempts at journalism in the vernaculars were made by the Christian Missionaries, mainly to propagate their faith. The first Tamil periodical known as Tamil Magazine was produced by the Christian Religious Tract Society in 1831. The earliest Tamil weekly called Dinavartamani, which was published more than two decades later in Madras, about the year 1856. This may be considered as the earliest newspaper of importance. Though both of them were largely devoted to religion, Dinavartamani provided also outstanding items of news stories.⁴⁵

Though the restrictions imposed on the press, against which Ram Mohan Roy in particular fought, remained till 1835, the growth of the Indian press remained more or less unaffected. In Bengal itself several weeklies and some

44. D. Vasant Rao, "The Beginning and Growth of the Marathi Press" in, S.P. Sen, (Ed) Op. Cit., P. 55.

45. K.K. Pillai, "The History of the Tamil press" in S.P. Sen, (Ed) Op. Cit., P. 84.

monthlies edited by Indians and Europeans alike came into existence. Interestingly, a number of newspapers in Persian, which was understood by the upper middle class, also appeared. Some of them were severely critical of the government and did not hesitate to censure persons and actions which in their view deserved it. For example, Sultanul Akhbar boldly pointed out "that in the city of Calcutta there were more murders than in the whole realm of Oudh, and that bribery was rampant in every British Court."⁴⁶ From the time of Sir William Bentinck's regime there was a change of attitude towards the press, because of his liberal inclinations. As Tarachand puts it, "In administration, there was an increase in the employment of Indians in the civil services. Social reforms like the abolition of the practice of Sati were effected. English education was rapidly spreading and the result was an unusual outburst of activity which stimulated discussion and led to the foundation of many papers."⁴⁷

Sir Charles Metcalfe, who succeeded Bentinck, went a step further than his predecessor to free the press from the imposed restrictions, risking the displeasure of the Court of Directors. This courageous step greatly stimulated the

46. Tarachand, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. II, P. 221.

47. S.C. Rayachoudhary, *Social, Cultural and Economic History of India* (Delhi, 1978), P. 174.

growth of public opinion and the Press. A large number of papers, dailies, bi-weeklies, tri-weeklies, monthlies and quarterlies, appeared between 1835 and 1857, though many of them were short-lived. Newspapers began to appear from other places under the control of the British, such as Kanpur, Meerut, Delhi, etc., and in the other Indian languages too. Gradually the influence of the press upon people's opinion began to grow and increase. In general the Indian press discussed problems which deeply affected the people's interest. Problems of religion, social customs, and education were discussed freely and with enthusiasm. News of the countries of Asia and Europe, particularly England, were also reported, which contrasted with the happenings in India and thus sharpened people's awareness of their condition. In the post-Bentinck period the Indian newspapers became more outspoken than they were before. But even then they were cautious in commenting upon the policies and actions of the government. Their impact was for greater on the society than on the ruling British who continued to be suspicious of the press. By exposing all the social evils and abuses which were eating into the vitals of the society, the press roused the conscience of the people and helped to remove many a social evil.⁴⁸ It helped to create an intense intellectual ferment in the country.

48. Tarachand, Op. Cit., Vol. II, P. 220.

After the great revolt of 1857 there was a significant growth and development in the Indian press, which grew from its infancy and boyhood towards its adulthood. Meanwhile English education began to grow in importance as attested by the increase in the number of colleges and other educational institutions.

Social and religious reforms initiated in the country brought much awareness among the educated people. The arguments between the reformists and traditionalists had roused the interest of the politically and socially awakened public. But changed attitude of the British officers, towards the natives and the deliberate exclusion of Indians from the conduct of the government, increasing economic deterioration in the rural life resulting in frequent famines, especially in Bengal, although politically it had escaped the consequences of the revolt, these and other factors combined together to make people restive and added to their increasing dissatisfaction with the British.

In addition to these, certain developments in Europe began to influence the Indian thinking. Remarkable events like the unification and liberation in Germany and Italy, struggle for Home Rule in Ireland, increasing domination of the West in Africa, occupation of Egypt and the Sudan by the British, the menace of Western imperialism marching into

China and other central, and western and south-eastern Asian countries, and other world events greatly influenced the Indian mind.⁴⁹ In this way the world wide current affairs attracted the attention of the Indian people greatly. Their strong urge for information could be satisfied only by the newspapers.

Since the inception of the press, it has suffered much from the opposition especially from the government which could not easily put up with criticism. Prior to 1857 Metcalf, and after him 'Ripon', were friends of the press. The other Governor-Generals treated the press as an enemy of the government. After the revolt of 1857 the credit of publishing the first journal in India goes to the English. The four English journals of Bombay, Standard, Telegraph, Courier, and Bombay Times were clubbed together to form one newspaper called Times of India which was established in Bombay in 1861. The first issue of it published an account of the importance of Bombay as port city, its strategic importance as capital city of the presidency and also many other informative features. The founding management of the newspaper stated that its objective was to cover important events all over the country in a unique manner and provide a comprehensive view. Therefore the name Times of India was

49. Tarachand, Op. Cit. Vol. II, P. 450.

chosen for it.⁵⁰ This paper continues even today as one of the most leading newspapers.

In 1865 Pioneer was published from Alahabad. It was to be the mouthpiece of the government and its policies, and the opinions of Anglo-Indians. The Civil and Military Gazette first started publishing from Simla in 1872 and later on it was shifted to Lahore. It was intended for the benefit of the servants both in civil and military. Later Rudyard Kipling worked as the authorised editor for both these journals, Pioneer and Civil and Military Gazette. Robert knight having bought the journal 'Friend of India' and in association with some English business men of Calcutta founded the famous journal Statesman.⁵¹

In Madras the Gantz brothers during the Governorship of Sir Charles Trevelyan started the Madras Times in 1860. In 1861, a year after the venture of Madras Times, the government conferred the title C.S.I. on the Madras publicist Gazula Lakshmi Narasu Chetty, who had been associated with the Crescent, a newspaper that crusaded for the people's rights and did not hesitate to criticise the

50. B.N. Ahuja, Op. Cit., P. 61.

51. Ibid.

administration. His patriotism and the service he had rendered the people made journalism dignified and responsible. Charles Lawson and Henry Cornish, who had left The Madras Times, started a paper of their own, The Madras Mail on December 15, 1867.⁵²

In the last quarter of the 19th century in India newspapers became a force that was gradually making itself felt in political and social circles, though many infant newspapers had to close down for want of adequate finance. But yet, in spite of the financial risks involved, there was a rapid growth of the press because of increasing political tensions, improved transport, and increasing readership.

All the journals mentioned above were founded by Englishmen. But the English language journals started by Indians owned and edited by them were to prove more significant than these. Hindu patriot (1853) was perhaps the first important among them. Its editor was Girish Chandra Ghosh for the first two years. Later in 1855 Harish Chandra Mukherjee became the editor. It won the reputation of being a very influential paper, impressing the people as well as the government. He unsparingly and boldly criticised the plantation owners for perpetrating injustice upon the native

52. C.J. Nirmal, Op. Cit., PP. 56-59.

workers in the plantations which were owned by the English. After his death in 1861, Kristo Doss Paul became its editor. He was very much an English educated Indian, and was all admiration for the British. He professed British liberalism. This journal naturally protected the interests of the middle class Zamindar of Bengal.⁵³

A welcome development in Indian journalism during these years is that a number of illustrious public men became associated with periodicals in Bengal. In 1868 Girish Chandra Ghosh started the journal Bengalee parallel to Hindu patriot, to support the rights and views of the farmers. In 1879 Surendra Nath Banerjea who was publishing his essays in it, became its rightful owner and gave it a most remarkable place among the newspapers. This paper was acknowledged as a fearless exponent of public views.⁵⁴

Another paper by name Indian Mirror under the editorship of Man Mohan Ghosh, was started in 1861. It expressed progressive views. It was financed by Debendranath Tagore. Later Keshab Chandra Sen of Brahmo Samaj joined this paper and he managed its editorship for sometime. Later

53. M. Chalapathi Rao, Op. Cit., P. 63.

54. Kalpana Bishni, "The Vernacular Newspaper press of Bengal ..." in S.P. Sen, (Ed) Op. Cit., P. 4.

Narendranath became its editor. During this period the paper became very popular.⁵⁵

Amrita Bazar Patrika was started as a Bengali weekly in March 1868 by Shishir Kumar Ghosh and his brothers from the village of Amrit Bazar in the Jessore district. This journal shifted to Calcutta in 1882. To escape from the rigid regulations of the vernacular press, it became an English paper in 1878. This journal was outspoken in its criticism of the government and its policies. "From the beginning it was strongly nationalistic in its attitude and taught the people to imbibe the spirit of fearlessness and independence."⁵⁶

In Madras attempts to start English paper were not successful. Crescent started by the Madras Native Association, Native Public Opinion started by such stawarts like T. Madhava Rao, and Diwan Bahdur Raghunadha Rao and Madrasee were not able to survive even for a short while.⁵⁷ The need for a medium to voice forth public opinion was felt so strongly that The Hindu in English was founded in 1878 in

55. B.N. Ahuja, Op. Cit., P. 14.

56. C.J. Nirmal, Op. Cit., P. 63.

57. Ibid.

Madras under the direction of G. Subramanya Aiyer. This won popular favour and came into prominence in a short period and became a standard newspaper. The Madras Standard started in 1877 as an English owned paper but in 1892 it passed into the hands of G. Parameswaram Pillai who ably and successfully continued it on a radical line. K. Natarajan, a social reformer, founded the Indian Social Reformer.⁵⁸

In Bombay the native business communities, Parsees and Bohras and Gujaratis, formed a trust to promote their commerce. This trust, began to publish their needs, opinions in the already established newspaper Times of India unitedly. This paper lent its support to the government for its policies. Therefore a national newspaper in English in Bombay was also attempted. Dadabhai Naoroji started the Voice of India in 1882. In course of time it was merged with another long standing paper Indian Spectator jointly published by Beharamji and M. Malabari. In 1886 Pheroze Shah Mehta tried to bring out a paper called Advocate of India - but what happened to it is still a mystery. English education in the Bombay Presidency was limited to Bombay and few other important towns. Therefore bilingual papers like Indu-Prakash, Dnyanprakash, Sudharak, Native Opinion and

58. Tarachand, Op. Cit., Vol. II, P. 452.

other which were bilingual catered to the needs of the people who lived outside these important towns.⁵⁹

In Uttar Pradesh the first nationalist newspaper in English was The Indian Herald. It was founded by Pandit Ayodhyanath in 1879 and it continued successfully for more than three years much against the more powerful English-owned paper The Pioneer. In 1890 he started The Indian Union. Sardhar Dayar Singh Majitiya started The Tribune in 1881 in Punjab.⁶⁰ Tilaks nationalist English paper Mahratta started in the same year was influential.

Before 1857, there were some newspapers in native languages especially in Urdu. During the revolt of 1857 these papers wielded considerable influence. After 1857, there were government objections and opposition to the native newspapers. In spite of them, they rapidly developed. The government naturally felt concerned about the influence of these native papers. Yet the government hesitated to take any action against them. For their sales were not great. Yet one copy was read by many. That was a true measure of their popularity. More over the readers of these native papers were not those refined by English education in schools and colleges. Therefore they at once literally and credulously

59. Ibid., PP. 452-453.

60. Tarachand, Op. Cit. Vol. II, P. 453.

believed in whatever they read in these papers, whose comments upon the events were more trenchant and powerful than those in the English newspapers of the day.

In the development of newspapers of the native languages, two stages can be noticed the first one is from the beginning of the revolt till the end of Lytton's Viceroyalty (1857-1880), while the second stage start from Ripon's assumption of viceroyalty and extends till the end of Curzon's Viceroyalty (1880-1905). During the first stage the Indian language papers published news relating to religion, society and politics too. They were loyal to the British Governor, though they did not hesitate to be harshly critical of it when called for. These papers believed that good relations between them and the British were in their interest. They had genuine admiration for the "liberal and democratic principles, which inspired British culture and the British parliamentary system."⁶¹

In the second phase of development of the news papers, politics was given more importance than reformation of society and religious matters. The relations between the general had become strained. Governmental policies were for more keenly studied and minutely criticised. People began to doubt seriously the intention of the British regarding the

61. Tarachand, Op. Cit. Vol. II, P. 454.

educated Indians, especially the Hindus, and the British in political development of the country. The wish to sever their connections with the British to become independence was perhaps not openly expressed. But the humiliation of subjection to an alien people must have been ranking in their hearts and it have found expression occasionally and covertly.

Although Lord Canning had in 1857 tried to keep the press under the control of the government by means of Press Act, he did not succeed. This act was popularly known as the Gagging Act, as Canning wanted to place a gag on all newspapers. Again an attempt was made to establish an official news agency to counter the criticism of the Indian newspapers. Even this was in vain and given up. An act to regulate all the printing presses and newspapers was brought into force in 1867.

VERNACULAR PRESS ACT 1878

The British government in India was not able to put up with the popularity gained by the press in India which was becoming increasingly critical of it. It doubted and feared the native press very much. Whenever there appeared in a newspaper serious criticism of the government, the officers and the British in India recommended to the government to treat it as an act of sedition and take severe action

against the journal. Though the editors might plead that it was only criticism and not sedition and that his loyalty to the British could not be doubted, his plea was not heeded.

To punish straight away such writers of libel and sedition without going through the formalities of prosecution Sir George Campbell (1873) who was the Lieutenant-governor of Bengal advised the government to enact a law. In 1875 Malhar Rao Gaikwad, Maharaja of Baroda was tried and consequently he was deposed. The native papers which were very much hurt reacted to it very sharply. The journal *Indu Prakash* of Bombay questioned the competence of the governor to interfere in native states. The ruling circles were very much sore at this and tried to bring pressure on the government to suppress the seditious writings of the Indian language newspapers. As it was not possible to prosecute such papers under the existing law Lord Lytton, under pressure, made his Council pass the Vernacular Press Act 14th March, 1878 although he himself was not happy about it and had doubts about its wisdom.⁶²

According to this Act, the editors of Indian papers had to give a bond not to publish articles prejudicial to the government or they should send a press copy of their paper prior to its publication to the government for its scrutiny.

62. Tarachand, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. II, P. 458.

Public opinion was seriously offended by this Act. It also gave rise to discontent and despair among the native newspapers, especially those of Bengal, whose Lieutenant-Governor was partly responsible for this legislation. They launched a campaign against it. While they dwelt on the innocence of their intentions, they argued that the existing Penal Code were enough to handle the situation. They felt that their implicit faith in the liberalism of the English government in India had received a rude shock. Many of the native journals commenting on this Act dwelt on the evil consequences resulting from it.⁶³ Protest meetings were held to denounce it.

These journals reiterating their allegiance to government, still pleaded that this legislation was unnatural and not sensible. They again refused to obey the legislation. They sent a general petition to the British Parliament praying for the immediate repeal of the Act. Under the leadership of Gladstone, the liberals opposed this legislation. In the 1880 elections to the British Parliament the liberals won and formed the government under his leadership. With the change of the Government, Lord Ripon was made the new Governor-General. He scrutinised

63. Kalpana Bishini, "The Vernacular Newspaper Press of Bengal ..." in S.P. Sen, (Ed) Op. Cit., PP. 26-27.

the Act and found that it was ill conceived and there was little justification for it, which he described as a wretched piece of legislation in his letter to the Secretary of State. He thought that it was unfortunate that the 'Indian Official' regarded the press as necessary evil, and therefore had 'no real feelings of the benefits of free discussion'. On Ripon's advice the 'Gagging Act' was repealed on 19th January, 1882, and a new leaf was turned in the history of Indian journalism.⁶⁴

THE PRESS ON THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

With the withdrawal of Lytton's Vernacular Press Act, and the conciliatory attitude of the government the press refrained for a time from harsh comments. But soon there were fresh provocations and new issues to bring back the earlier bitterness and opposition of the press. Among the measures which caused disappointment and bitterness were the Ilbert Bill of 1883, the Age of Consent Bill of 1891, and Council Reform Act of 1892. The Hindu-Muslim riots of 1893 caused further estrangement between the government and the people. Successive famines which had been raging in the second half of the century, and the consequent huge loss of

64. Tarachand, *Op. Cit.* Vol. II, 459.

lives and the outbreak of bubonic plague in 1896 further worsened the situation. All these factors introduced a new accent, a new emphasis into the writings of the press. Interest in religion and social reform which was dominant in the periodicals yielded place to preoccupation with politics, which had enjoyed a secondary place till then. Thereafter politics increasingly began to hold the central place.

Several factors were responsible for this change and shift of emphasis in the newspapers. Firstly, those who were involved in the religious reform movements, both Hindu and Muslim, had begun to lay stress on reviving the ancient glory of the respective group or community. Therefore unobtrusively there was more glorification of one's past than discussion of social reform. Secondly movements of national resurgence in Europe made their impact on educated Indians. Thirdly there were internal strains building up in the different spheres of national life. In the absence of representative institutions the newspapers became the fora for discussion and debates on the measures and policies of the government. They brought to the notice of the government what the people thought of their acts, both legislative and executive. They did not fail to praise the governor where it deserved praise for its measures intended to promote the interests of the people.

In addition to these activities, the press took upon itself other responsibilities too. It became instrumental in gathering and strengthening public opinion on matters of national interest, in arranging regional meetings and national conventions, in organising political movements and establishing public institutions, and in discussing all controversial issues affecting the people. The press became so alert that no issue of foreign policy or internal administration escaped its watchful eyes. Every issue that jeopardised the honour of India, every issue of economic welfare was discussed threadbare in the pages of the news papers. Undeterred by the threats the government might hold out, the press pressed persistently and vigorously every legitimate political claim. "Thus, during the second phase of its history, the press became an important political institution"⁶⁵ in India. The circulation of newspapers increased appreciably and they reached even remote villages. As a result their influence became pervasive, and they became the chief means of political education for the people.

The press also became a mediating agent between the government and the public in eliciting the people's opinion on the government's policies and in making the government

65. Tarachand, Op. Cit. Vol. II, P. 460.

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know the people's need. It provided a platform of discussion for the public. The press also took the initiative in informing the government about the people's reaction and response to the policies of the government so that the legitimate interests of Indians were not sacrificed for the benefit of Britain. The press made it unambiguously clear their sense of national respect would not brook for long dependence on the British.

It was natural that the Indian press was very much an activity of those of the middle-class who had the benefit of English education. By and large the newspapers were owned, edited and managed by them. Therefore this educated section not only became influential all over India in matters social, religious, and above all political, it legitimately could claim that it represented India as whole. Understandably the British rulers would not approve of this view and therefore they strongly opposed it. But the attitude and temper of the educated middle-class and therefore of the Indian press was inevitably undergoing a significant change, and before long it took the form of a collective demand for independence from the British rule. What was a more or less a solitary voice in the 19th century Indian press became in the 20th century the general voice of the people of India, thanks to the growing influence of the press.

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The Telugu press also joined the press in the other Indian languages in this endeavour of national awakening and of raising national consciousness. It too contributed its might to the cause of the country's struggle for independence. In the foregoing pages the beginnings of Indian journalism and its development in the 19th century have been briefly traced to serve as a scaffolding to a detailed account of the origin and evolution of the Telugu Press, which forms the theme of the next chapter.