

Role of Print Media in The Indian National Movement

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Abstract

Therefore, the years 1858–1919 saw both the emergence and the active adolescence of Indian nationalism. The initiation of organized socio-religious reform movements was greatly aided by the press. Furthermore, the political awakening pioneers who eventually led to the rise of nationalism and the national movement were members of this very class. In this sense, the press, being the most efficient mass media, played a vital role in the establishment and advancement of political groups. The first channels of communication and espionage are where the press got its start. Prior to the development of paper and ink, the significance of news was well recognized. Since news gathering was crucial for the administration and a way for the populace to get information, the ancient rulers were interested in it. Without a doubt, the Indian press served as a medium for the spread of radical ideologies, contributed to the development of a growing corpus of reformist and nationalist ideas, and sustained a discourse on topics such as female infanticide, widowhood, the costly system of child marriage, prostitution, untouchability, superstition, officials' extravagant spending, taxes, the racial arrogance of the British government and the European community, the Indianization of services, and Indian representation in the legislature. Numerous periodicals, newspapers, and journals appeared. The rise of socio-religious, political-economic, and intellectual activity throughout the nation—particularly in Bengal and Tamil Nadu—made the 18th and 19th centuries notable. The idea of economic awakening, which eventually became a challenge to the nation's colonial rule, was introduced through the press. In order to unite people from various provinces for the national cause, Indian nationalists, especially the nation's youth, used the press as a powerful weapon at one point.

Keywords

Indian nationalism, Reform movements, Political awakening, Political organizations etc.

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Introduction:

Hence, the years 1858–1919 saw not only the beginning of Indian nationalism but also its active adolescence. In their liberation program, the commercial and emerging industrial bourgeoisie duly supported the awakened Indian intelligentsia. When it came to the structured start of socio-religious reform movements, the press was crucial. Furthermore, this class was the first to experience political awakening, which ultimately led to the rise of nationalism and the national movement. The political awakening that emerged from this sector quickly gained both power and numbers. Their use of the press became more and more effective. The Indian press became increasingly politicized during this time. Initially, it was only certain newspapers that contributed a substantial part of their space to political issues.

Press as a Mass Media:

Since news gathering was crucial for the administration and a way for the populace to get information, the ancient rulers were interested in it. For the goal of gathering and disseminating news for the state, the early Hindu monarchs maintained a sophisticated espionage organization. They were utilized to gather data from neighboring kingdoms as well as within the kingdom itself for administrative and political purposes. In this sense, the press, being the most efficient mass media, played a vital role in the establishment and advancement of political groups. Two main reasons for this were that political organizations and societies relied on the media to spread their shared beliefs and ideologies, and that none of the original political organizations or societies had the unwavering support of a sizable portion of the population in various regions of the nation. The first channels of communication and espionage are where the press got its start. Prior to the development of paper and ink, the significance of news was well recognized. Through the influence of Christian missionaries, the enlightened Indians were interested in the publication of newspapers in their native tongues.

Press as a Vehicle of Propaganda:

Without a doubt, the Indian press served as a medium for the spread of radical ideologies, contributed to the development of a growing corpus of reformist and nationalist ideas, and sustained a discourse on topics such as female infanticide, widowhood, the costly system of child marriage, prostitution, untouchability, superstition, officials' extravagant spending, taxes, the racial arrogance of the British government and the European community, the Indianization of services, and Indian representation in the legislature. Furthermore, the majority of the pieces focused mostly on local issues. But eventually, there was a noticeable change in their focus and strategy toward more significant political issues. There started to be a lot of

agreement on common concerns as a result of their conversation, especially in the vernacular press. The press in Tamil Nadu and India was still in its infancy in the first half of the 1800s. Numerous periodicals, newspapers, and journals appeared. Many of them lived brief lives. Then came the 1857 incident. It revealed the shortcomings of the rule of the East India Company. It emphasized the annoyance of both the ruled and the ruler. The administration of the company was terminated by this incident. As a result, in 1858, the Queen issued a Magna Cart, which ceded the Government of India to the British Crown. As a result, the public's confidence was restored. Journalism and the press had experienced a little setback. With renewed confidence and intensity, it sprung to life once more. In order to consolidate British imperialism, the government became more vigilant and involved in several spheres of life. This sparked a number of important shifts in Tamil Nadu society, Indian society, and the country's development as a whole. Both internal and external factors contributed to the public's awakening.

Some of the main factors that contributed to the change in people's perspectives during the freedom movement were the growth of socio-religious movements, the occurrence of more frequent famines, the escalation of economic hardship, the spread of English education, the liberation and unification of Germany and Italy in 1870–1871, the Irish Home Rule movement, and the extension of western dominance in Africa and Asia. The press and journalism could bring about the change. The emergence of the public opinion was, in fact, causally related to it; the two not only interacted but also became sufficiently dependent on one another.

The rise of socio-religious, political, economic, and intellectual activity throughout the nation—particularly in Bengal and Tamil Nadu—made the 18th and 19th centuries notable. Numerous groups, including the Bhama Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Rama Krishna Mission, the Prathana Samaj, the Shudi Movement, the Sanatan Dharam Sabha, the Kooka Movement, the Singh Sabha Movement, the Ahmdya Movement, and several more, came into being and gained new ground during the third quarter of the 1800s. Almost all of these groups had their own documents. Numerous news organizations, leagues, debate clubs, and associations quickly emerged. Through the Anglo-Indian and vernacular press, these organizations could spread awareness of their beliefs, missions, goals, and ambitions. It is important to note that several political associations and community organizations established their own publications.

A few prominent political groups also came into being during the time under consideration, including the Indian Association, the Madras Mahajan Sabha, the Bombay Presidency Association, the Indian Union, and, of course, the Indian National Congress, which was founded on December 25, 1885. All of these associations felt

and understood the benefits and usage of the press, regardless of their personalities, goals, and aims. They oversaw their journals and publications. The connection between the Anglo-Indian Press and the Indian populace underwent the most significant change after 1857. The history of the press and journalism was particularly important between 1858 and 1885 for a number of reasons.

They were not simply drawn to intelligent and considerate people; rather, they were separated from their English equivalents by a great distance. The fact that the gathering was not utilized as a platform to make some significant concessions to the Indian populace in particular infuriated the vernacular press. The rise of the vernacular press was a noteworthy development in this regard. For the most of the second half of the 19th century, the Anglo-Indian and vernacular presses were the only ones that could create a medium of consensus. It was difficult to compare to the English press. *Som Prakash*, published by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, was competitive with a number of well-known publications.

In his secret report, the Registrar of the Bengal Secretariat praised the editor's skill and audacity. The vernacular press encountered a number of significant challenges after 1857. The editors had no academic degrees to brag about. They had to attempt a number of different sources of income before deciding to pursue a career in journalism. Nonetheless, it improved their comprehension of society and increased their receptivity to the feelings and desires of the general people. The government and native editors remained friendly. Because of their lower socioeconomic standing, the editors of the vernacular papers were subjected to harsh tactics by the police and the magistrate.

It was thought that publishing vernacular periodicals was not a lucrative endeavor. Numerous elements inhibited their circulation. For instance, the area where that specific dialect was spoken was the first factor; the second was that the consumer was from a lower socioeconomic class, which is why the subscriptions were still behind schedule. As a result, the newspapers' columns had to contain pitiful pleas to the defaulters. The concept of printing vernacular newspapers alongside English-language publications was not popular at the time, and underfunded vernacular publications could not afford to hire correspondents or subscribe to Reuters. Perforce it attempted to pry into the official secrets through the clerks and the officers were driven to frenzy by such attitude of the journals.

The Attitude of the Press:

According to the press, political agitation in India should be intensified, and Indians should put aside their animosity toward the nation's various religious communities. The nationalist English and vernacular press in the Presidency were instrumental in swaying public opinion in favor of the movements when Gandhi

started the Khilafat and non-cooperation agitations. The documents noted that in order to achieve liberty, self-respect, and self-determination, Gandhi and the Congress promoted non-cooperation. It was a movement based on ideals, and the world would mock the Indian people if they worked with the government rather than inciting such unrest. The Non-Cooperation Movement was inextricably linked to the boycott of foreign commodities, government schools, courts, and Legislative Councils. Newspapers that engaged in propaganda against the Non-Cooperation Movement included the Madras Mail, New India, Justice, and Dravidian. The Dravidian noted that “the people should obey the laws and regulations framed by the government, whether in a monarchy or a republic.” Only when these laws are upheld can there be peace in the nation. Everywhere in the nation, there will be turmoil, chaos, injustice, and horrible crimes if the laws of the land are disregarded.

The Hindu and the Justice warned that the Malabar crisis was a sign of Swaraj and blamed the start of the Malabar Rebellion on Khilafat agitation in the Malabar region. According to the Justice, Gandhi’s methods were bound to result in rape, murder, and forced conversions. The idea that the outbreak was caused by the preaching of non-cooperators, however, was completely refuted by nationalist English and vernacular newspapers. The ‘unjust directives and reckless conduct of the district officials’ were explicitly cited as the cause of the conflict. They went on to say that certain individuals’ careless propaganda had fueled the Moplahs’ fervent fanaticism.

On January 13, 1922, the Prince of Wales arrived at the Madras harbor to calm the emotions of the people living in the Madras Presidency. While the Hindu, Swadesamitran, Andhra Patrika, Krishna Patrika, Hittakarni, and nationalist Urdu and Kanarese PaPers denounced the Prince of Wales’ visit, the Anglo-Indian papers, the Justice organs, the entire Malayalam papers, with a few exceptions, and the South Kanarese non-Brahmin organs welcomed it. Nonetheless, some nationalist publications gave the Prince of Wales’ engagements similar weight. The Prince of Wales boycott was successful in great part because of the press.

While pro-Congress media like the Navasakti and Ooliyan backed the Congress Working Committee’s decision, nationalist English and vernacular media like Swadesamitran, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Patrika opposed the suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement. Regardless of the opinions held by the journalists during the presidency, most of them were in agreement against the government’s oppressive actions. The Dravidian and other loyalist publications opposed the national movement and backed the government. They had them as to grind, which is the obvious and straightforward explanation.

Role of the Press:

Thus, the rise of new politics in India was causally related to the press. On the one hand, it contributed to the development of political awakening and enabled the dissemination of political consciousness. In particular, the press disseminated shared beliefs and ideologies during a period when it was the most efficient mass media accessible to the public. However, current politics has had an impact on the character of the Indian press. This contact was ongoing and reciprocal. The Indian press extensively covered every facet of the country's political landscape. Furthermore, the Indian Press reported a range of responses to these various concerns, accurately representing the diversity of Indian society. Additionally, it allowed these numerous reactions to come together into broad, crystalline categories, which would not have been possible without it. However, it might be argued that these organizations would not have been feasible without the support of the press, which gave them access to an efficient mass media. Indeed, such crystallization would hardly have been conceivable without the rise of political or quasi-political clubs and societies. Thus, there existed a causal relationship between the Indian political evolution and the local and vernacular press.

Socio-Cultural Transformation:

Not just in Tamil Nadu, but also nationally and internationally, the press brought about sociocultural and political-economic change. In modern times, it has been regarded as the fourth estate and pillar. In fact, the press played a significant role in laying the intellectual groundwork for both modern Tamil Nadu and modern India. The press, especially the vernacular, served as a powerful medium that allowed people, groups, and institutions to quickly create new phenomena in addition to exchanging ideas, ideologies, isms, and thoughts. It served as both a strong social institution that frequently mirrored people's opinions and a potent mirror of society. In addition to establishing the nation-state, the press fostered sentiments of nationalism, secularism, and support for public administration, or self-governing institutions, in India. Throughout the era under review, the press's value and significance in all spheres of life made it crucial to analyze and appraise the Tamil Nadu press's contribution to the initial stages of India's independence movement. Conferences, meetings, and congregations may occasionally be conducted with the cooperation and support of the press; disputes could be resolved, movements could be planned, institutions could be strengthened, and their programs and policies could be widely disseminated. In fact, the British educational system produced the middle and professional classes.

Conclusion:

The idea of economic awakening, which eventually became a challenge to the nation's colonial rule, was introduced through the press. Through this media, a

number of Tamil Nadu politicians, both national and provincial, began their public careers and shaped their identities not just at the province level but also at the national level. In order to unite people from various provinces for the national cause, Indian nationalists, especially the nation's youth, used the press as a powerful weapon at one point. This was a clear explanation for why Tamil Nadu's press did not stay restricted or segregated in one area. Nearly all Indian leaders, regardless of their province, believe that press freedom is crucial to the nation's general development. Furthermore, from 1885 to 1916, the press functioned as an opposition group because the political party system was still in its infancy. The repressive and exploitative practices of the colonial government in India were, in fact, strongly criticized by the press. Credit must therefore be given to the West, which recognized its significance in bringing about change in all spheres of life. She had no press of any type when British dominion over India began in the middle of the 18th century.

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