

Print Media

Journalism in India — Past and Present

The growth and development of journalism in India has had a chequered history. In India, journalism has been a product of struggle against the continuing repressive measures of the British rulers over a long period of time, right from the beginnings in 1780, when James Hicky, who published *Bengal Gazette*, the first newspaper in the country, was deported from India, till the final phases of the freedom movement—the Quit India Movement, when some of the leading papers had got their printing machines confiscated and hefty security deposits forfeited, repeatedly for defying the repressive laws against the press.

Journalism in India was nurtured by some of the greatest men that this country has produced—freedom fighters, social reformers, intellectuals and men of letters who gave their best to its development and growth. The tallest stalwarts of the freedom movement—Mahatma Gandhi, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the social reformers and liberal thinkers Raja Rammohun Roy, Surendranath Bannerji and Gopal Krishan Gokhle were themselves either editors or pioneers in establishing well known newspapers. The history of journalism has, therefore, been inextricably linked with the growth of national consciousness and the progress of freedom movement. In fact the press journalism nurtured the national consciousness and freedom movement in the country and was in turn nurtured by it.

Pioneers of Indian Journalism

Modern journalism in India, which began towards the end of the eighteenth century, attracted government attention since its very

inception. The first attempt to start a newspaper in Calcutta was made by William Bolts in 1776. Bolts had resigned from the service of East India Company after a court stricture for private trade under the Company's authority. He thought of exploiting the untouched field of newspapers publishing for ventilating his grievances against the Company. His efforts to publish a newspaper were not approved by the Company and he was asked to go back to Europe. This way the first cherished efforts to publish a newspaper came to a naught.

Beginning of Press in India

James Augustus Hicky made history by starting the *Bengal Gazette* on *Calcutta General Advertiser*, the first newspaper published from India on January 29, 1780. In the first issue, he introduced himself as the first and late printer to the Honourable Company though he did not seem to have enjoyed a high reputation. About his venture he said, "I have no particular passion for printing of newspapers; I have no propensity! I was not bred to a slavish life of hard work, yet I take a pleasure in enslaving my body in order to purchase freedom for my mind and soul." The journal described itself as, "A weekly political and commercial paper open to all parties but influenced by none".

It was the sheet paper with a size of 12" × 8" having three columns on each side. It published extracts from English newspapers at home, letters from local and mofussil readers and items of gossip and scandal of interest to the European community. The items were divided by rules or stars. The issue had more advertisement than reading matter. The news were mostly related to private lives of individuals. Hicky had a column to himself through which he used to talk to his readers directly. It was described as a 'witty and scurrilous' paper and very soon earned the enmity of Warren Hastings, the Governor General and Chief Justice Elijah Impey and generally the administration. Hicky's Gazette gained popularity within weeks. The individuals he attacked were not happy but others were. In fact they looked forward to reading the issue. Its readership was among the traders and merchants and non-officials European class community. In Hicky's Gazette there were regular columns-'poet's corner', 'Bon-ton', 'a women column' where new fashions and modes were discussed. News varied from political, individual, and local stories to weather or the arrival of some pretty women from England. Besides carrying a belated account of the debates in the British Parliament, Hicky's Gazette had editorials on the army and on the reported plans of individual rulers, letters to the editor also found a

space.

Hicky knew his reading public. Spicy news about individual lives interested his European readers most. He had his "informal sources" and his own kind of investigative reporting.

Hicky's fortunes began to decline when a rival paper '*Indian Gazette*' appeared in the same year. It was a much better newspaper with four pages, each 16 inches long with three columns and well printed. It was published by Messink and Reed who followed Hicky and benefited from his experiences. When Hicky found that his customers were deserting him, he launched attacks against its proprietors, Peter Read, a salt agent, and B. Messink, a theatrical producer, John Z. Kiernander, whom he suspected of supplying types to his rival and Droze who did publicity for this journal. What aggravated his feelings was the grant of postal facilities to the *India Gazette* and their denial to him. He bitterly complained his readers that undue pressure had been brought to bear of Hastings through his wife to withhold postal facilities to him. It was suggested that he should seek Mrs. Hastings intervention in the matter but he rejected it, saying, "There is something so sneaking and treacherous in going clandestinely to fawn and take advantage of a good-natured woman to draw her into a promise to getting that done which I knew would be highly improper to ask her husband, though his unbounded love for his life would induce him to comply with.

There was no love lost between Hicky and Warren Hastings, nor was he popular with officials and many merchants and businessmen. The publicity which he gave to the social life of the European community in Calcutta was touched by malice and ridicule. While announcing marriages and engagements he also published news of engagements anticipated and he utilised this to hit people he disliked.

In June 1781 Hastings patience was at an end. The Chief Justice of India sent an army of 400 people to arrest Hicky at his house and to seize his printing types. He put up resistance and did not allow them to take away his types. He was arrested and was granted bail in the sum of Rs. 80,000. Since he could not pay that amount, he was tried and was sentenced to a year's imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 2000. Even from prison he continued to edit his papers which was allowed because there were no prelaws at that time to bar him. So the attacks continued. Although some of the writings were scandalous yet the journal exposed many malpractices.

In March 1782, Warren Hastings instituted four fresh actions and an order was procured to seize Hicky's printing press. A number of pleas made by Hicky were of no use. He was due to get some money from

the Government for printing jobs done earlier. Even this payment was delayed and when it came, it was much smaller than what he expected. In the grip of poverty he set his plight in one of his letters to the Governor General.

"It would be painful to you to read a long and particular account of the distress of myself and my children, let it suffice that everything which I had has been sold and mortgaged for my unhappy family, and none but God and ourselves knew the keenness of our distress."

Hicky was treacherous, colourful, irresponsible, irrepressible, impetuous, inventive, plucky, and unlucky. He was a fighter who went down. He was not interested in money. He had the courage to face the consequences of his writings and actions. His defence of the freedom of press in the following words was the manifesto of a fighter.

"Mr. Hicky considered the liberty of the press to be essential to the very existence of an Englishman and a free government. The subjects should have full liberty to declare their principles and opinions, and every act which tends to coerce that liberty is tyrannical and injurious to community."

James Silk Buckingham was another pioneer born in England in 1786 and was recognised as a man of principles by all in Calcutta, including the Governor-General and the Bishop. Jawahar Lal Nehru has described him as among the earliest champions of the freedom of the press in India as one 'who is still remembered' in this country. He came to India in 1818 as the editor of the '*Calcutta Chronicle*' which was started by some Calcutta merchants to propagate their views and protect their interests. He indicated that it would be a chronicle of political, commercial and literary news and views. And it bore the impress of a versatile editor. He brought a breath of fresh air to an atmosphere polluted by the intrigue, scandal mongering, flippancy and easy going life of the European community. He had travelled widely in Arab countries. Buckingham was a scholar whose studies included anthropology and literature and he was interested in steam navigation, horseless carriages and air filled balloons for quick transport. He was a keen observer of the customs and habits of the people among whom he lived. He introduced to his readers Byron and Walter Scott and Washington Irving.

'*Calcutta Journal*' was started by him in October 1818. It was a bi-weekly paper consisting of eight pages. The editor's functions were

described as admonishing, "Governors of their duties to warn them furiously of their faults and to tell disagreeable truths." The correspondence columns were open to all who had a grievance. This set a new standard in Calcutta journalism. There were local reports as well as letters from correspondents. These letters revealed the changes that had taken place in the Calcutta society since the days of Hicky. His criticism was instructive. In this respect Buckingham was a contrast to Hicky. Buckingham's paper was interested in discussing the acts and policies of Bengal government, the postal service, the police, the military establishment and government's attitude to various matters of public interest. Buckingham criticised the policy of *sati* and denounced the government's failure to put an end to this system. Buckingham laid emphasis on news of local conditions rather than fashions. The life of the people rather than the social round and criticism rather than invective. He gave prominence to news and views in Bengali and Persian journals and published a summary in his paper. He was a friend of the native (Indian) press and defended its right to exist and voice the opinion of the Indian people.

It will not be an exaggeration to claim that Buckingham was the inspiration behind the growth of Indian journalism. He was truly the father of Indian journalism just as Allen Octavian Hume, the founder of the Indian National Congress, was the father of Indian nationalism. It was with the advent of Buckingham that the press really began to discuss public questions and for the short period he was active in Indian journalism. He concentrated on the public conduct of bureaucrats and state functionaries and educated public opinion.

Buckingham considered a well conducted press essential to promote knowledge and dispel ignorance. He wrote "if knowledge is a blessing and ignorance a curse, a well conducted press that dispels the latter and promotes the former must be as deserving of our support as the schools and other public institutions established for the same purpose since they are only different branches of the same tree; and as the influence of the press may be made to extend much wider than that of the seminaries if each be well regulated and directed to equally worthy ends, the former will be the more effectual engine of the two. The union of both is perhaps the greatest advantage that any nation can possess to excite a taste for reading and a spirit of enquiry among the community generally and to gratify that taste must, therefore, be a task of merit."

He was a stout champion of the freedom of the press and he held views which could be called revolutionary in the background of the

prevailing nations about the press. He wrote, "If all remedies proposed for checking evils inseparable from authority exercising almost absolute power, there is none that can be compared with a free press."

The *Calcutta Journal* under Buckingham was acknowledged to be the best produced newspaper and the best in content and presentation. The financial success of the enterprise enabled a new building to be erected and a new improved press to be imported from England. In 1822, the estimated value of the enterprise was placed at £ 40,000 three-fourth of it belonging to the editor and one-fourth being owned by the shareholders. Buckingham's yearly income was about £ 8,000. Buckingham managed to run his paper successfully without getting into any serious problem. Upto this time he had the protection of the trading community and had the support of the Hindu intellectuals. He also had the political tolerance of Lord Hastings.

Buckingham's first encounter with the authorities came when he criticised the suppression of Col. Rubison of the 20th regiment of the East India Company. Objections were raised to the publication and prosecution was started against him. In this case, however, no action was taken against him but Col. Rubison was asked to leave India within 24 hours because it was presumed that the cause of the whole trouble was Col. Rubison.

Hastings followed a liberal policy. He stood in the way of the deportation of Buckingham who had many encounters with the government. John Adam inspired a criminal libel suit against Buckingham for writing that if grievances brought to the notice of the government through the press were not to be given a hearing only those who enjoyed the favour of secretaries and public officers would secure redress. Buckingham was acquitted but it cost him Rs. 600. In spite of Adam's campaign against Buckingham, Hastings did not give up his liberal attitude. When Buckingham criticised the appointment of Dr. Jameson as Superintendent of the Medical School for Indians as he already held three other appointments, Dr. Jameson was angry and Adam wanted Buckingham to be deported.

Buckingham's crime was that he came too close to topics that touched the very roots of the administration. His repeated disclosures of official malpractices and his success in securing redressal of grievances proved a danger to the East India Company and its reputation.

Buckingham's example of courage set a tradition and was met with the government's alternate policy of repression and liberalism. This duality was to continue throughout British rule.

In England, Buckingham started the '*Oriental Herald*' in which he continued to expose the administration in India. He even filed a suit in the House of Commons for the compensation of damages.

Buckingham also advocated an elected Indian legislature composed of an equal number of Indians and Englishmen, and recruitment to the Indian Civil Service by open competition instead of by nomination. He was vigorous dominating and persistent and though he had the airs of an adventurer, he had vision and was ahead of his times.

The significant contribution by Buckingham to Indian journalism has been expressed as under : He made the newspaper the mirror of the people. He manifested at its keenest and most persistent, the spirit of enquiry and criticism. And he imparted to the press the quality of leadership. The bureaucracy wanted, by deporting him, to make him a warning to others but it could not put out the spark he had kindled. Buckingham was one of those journalists who are born rather than made.

Raja Rammohun Roy, whom Nehru considered as founder of the Indian Press, was a linguist, scholar-statesman, social reformer and liberal thinker. He was a champion of freedom of the press. In pursuit of his mission of politico-religious and social reforms he recognised the power of print media as a vehicle for propagating his liberal ideas. As a social reformer, he launched a campaign against *sati* and encouraged the efforts of Lord William Bentinck to abolish it by law. He used his powerful pen to eradicate social evils like caste system, idol worship, animal sacrifice from the Hindu society. He published *Brahmanical Magazine* in English (1821), *Sambad Kaumudi* in Bengali (1821) and *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* in Persian (1822). *Brahmanical Magazine* ceased to exist after the publication of a few issues only. *Sambad Kaumudi*, a news weekly dealt with political, literary, religious, and social subjects. This magazine espoused liberal outlook and became a great champion of civil liberty and rule of law. It stood against the racial discrimination and arrogance on the part of Englishmen. The paper was of the view that education was for social betterment and awakening and favoured spread of western medical science, technical and women education. *Sambad Kaumudi* became biweekly in January 1830 and continued for 33 years.

Rammohun Roy started publishing a weekly *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* in Persian with the objective of laying before public such articles of intelligence as may increase their experience and tend towards their social improvement. However, Roy relinquished the publication of the newspaper in order to register his protest against the introduction of

Press Ordinance of 1823 and injustice done to Buckingham, the editor of *Calcutta Journal*.

It would be pertinent to recall what had been said about freedom of press. Every good ruler must be conscious of great liability to err in managing the affairs of a vast empire and therefore he will be anxious to afford to every individual the readiest means of bringing to his notice whatever may require his interference. To secure this important objective, the unrestrained liberty of publication is the only effective means that can be employed.

He also protested against the introduction of Press Ordinance by Governor General John Adam. The Ordinance required that a licence from the Governor General-in-Council would be mandatory to publish any newspaper. The Ordinance evoked strong protest all-over Bengal. Roy submitted petition against the Ordinance which was signed by a number of politically conscious leaders including Dwarkanath Tagore. This remarkable document, drafted by Roy, has been called as the *Areopagitica of Indian History*.

Bengal was the birth place of journalism in India as well as of the language press. The first periodical in an Indian language was *Dig Darshan* in Bengali, a monthly magazine issued in April 1818. It published a range of subjects concerning politics, history, science, trade, economics, etc. The weekly *Samachar Darpan* also in Bengali (later on began to appear both in English and Bengali) started publication in 1818 and survived till 1890. Both these newspapers, although were part of the effort of the Baptist Mission at Calcutta for religious propaganda, also advocated women's education and became quite popular.

Subsequently several newspapers came into existence in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. During this period, Bombay was emerging as a busy commercial centre of India with foreign and coastal ships engaged in commercial transactions and transport of goods. The Indian merchants in Bombay were mainly from Gujarat who were eager for news about the rates of commodities and shipping intelligence. In response to this need, the English newspapers started publishing advertisements in Gujarati from 1797. In 1822, Marzban started a Gujarati weekly, *Bombay Samachar*, with news of commercial interest. It is considered to be the oldest living Indian language newspaper of India.

Thus, the birth of Indian journalism could be traced to the second and third decades of the 19th century. These journals were started in Bengali and Gujarati. While the aim of Rammohun Roy was to educate

the people about Hinduism and propagate social reform, that of Marzban was to serve commercial interests. Thus, social reform and commercial interests were the prime motives to start journalism in India languages. Another characteristic of Indian journalism in the first decade of 19th century was the co-existence of the British owned press and the Indian owned press operating in two water-tight compartments. However, both fought for the freedom of press (*Communication and Social Development in India*, pp. 135-36).

Struggle against Repressive Measures

The early years of nineteenth century saw Indian press struggling against the regulations meant to restrict its freedom. The first such threat emanated on 13 May 1799 when Wellesley issued guidelines for the papers published in Calcutta which required every printer to print his name at the bottom of the paper and pre-censorship of the papers. The penalty for infringement of the law was to be immediate deportation. The censor was instructed to prevent publication of matter relating to subjects like "Public Credit." Comprehensive regulations were issued in 1823 by John Adam, the acting Governor General which made the restrictions on the press more stringent. These regulations provided for obtaining a licence before printing or publishing anything. Adam looked upon the freedom of the press as threat to country's rule. The regulations also provided that a licence could be recalled and unlicensed printing presses could be attached by government and disposed of in the case of offending newspapers. The regulations, especially the clause regarding pre-publication licensing were greatly resented but they continued to hold the field till Sir Charles Metcalfe revised the press laws of the country.

Notwithstanding this restriction, the press in India continued to proliferate but the fact remains that there was no journalistic freedom. The government servants were prohibited to have any connection with the press.

Sir Charles Metcalfe's name is also deserved to be remembered in the history of journalism in India as it was he who even in those authoritarian days, had the foresight to realize the need and importance of a reasonably unrestricted press fulfilling the functions of providing information as also subjecting the government to healthy criticism. Metcalfe was not a politician. He was a whole time servant of the East India Company. He came to India at the age of 19 with General Lake during his Maratha campaign. After a brilliant career in diverse posts,

he became a member of the Governor-General's Council in 1827 and acted as Governor-General for some time. It can be said that he freed the press in India and made English the official language. He stood for the freedom of the press and was instrumental in shaping the views of Lord Bentinck, Governor-General on this question. Hence, Bentinck not only followed a policy of tolerance towards the press but also actively assisted it. When leaders of the Indian and European press in Calcutta submitted to him a petition in 1835 seeking the repeal of the restrictions on the press, he assured them a system would be evolved which, while it gave security to every person engaged in the fair discussion of public measures, would effectively secure the government against sedition and individuals against calumny. He told them that the government had no intention of restricting the liberty which they already enjoyed.

Metcalfe when succeeded Bentinck for a short period, got an opportunity of revising the press laws in response to a memorandum received from the profession. The most significant aspect of Metcalfe's revision was a repeal of the most criticised provision of the Adam's regulations regarding pre-publication licensing and its substitution by registration under which an individual was free to print without permission but was liable for punishment if he printed seditious and calumny. So, Metcalfe was the first Britisher who as Governor-General repealed all the press restrictions existence i.e. of 1823, 1825 and 1827. For this act, he has been bestowed with the title of Liberator of Indian Press. He referred the question of revising the press laws to the law counsellor, John Macaulay for changing licensing into registration. Macaulay favoured a uniform law for all the company's territories which leave the journalist free to print without permission but still render him liable for punishment for printing seditious and defamatory material. A law on these lines was passed by Metcalfe and he earned the gratitude of the press. Metcalfe said :

1. There is no use of having strict laws on the statute book which was never consulted.
2. He favoured the diffusion of knowledge than the perpetuation of ignorance. He said, "Do what we can, we cannot stop spread of knowledge. It is our duty to promote it whatever be the consequences."
3. He spurned the advice of his counsellors for special vigilance over the Indian language press and said there would not be any discrimination, as between Indian and English newspapers.

4. He held that an administration which depended on attempt to suppress public opinion could not be lasting both because "such a tenure must be rotten and because such attempts must fail." In this way, he admitted a considerable latitude of discussion.
5. He said that press sought to be free provided it be not dangerous to the stability of an Indian Empire.
6. He always advocated the liberty of the press, believing its benefits to outweigh its mischiefs.
7. Admitting that the liberty of the press like the other liberties of the subject, may be suspended when the safety of the press requires such a sacrifice. "I cannot, as a consequence, acknowledge that the present instance ought to be made an exception to the usual practice of the Government, for if there were dangers to the state, either way, there would be more. I should think, in suppressing the publication of opinions than in keeping the valve open by which bad rumours might evaporate".
8. To prevent men from thinking and feeling is impossible, and I believe it to be wiser to let them give vent to their temporary anger, in anonymous letters in the newspapers, the writers of which letters remain unknown, then to make that anger permanent by forcing them to smother it within their own breasts, ever ready to burst out. The government which interferes at its pleasure becomes responsible for all that it permits to be published.
9. He said, "It is better to have steady operation of the censorship, or any fixed rule, to the occasional interference of the government by its arbitrary will".

By promulgating the law relaxing the restrictions of the press which continued to be in force till 1856, Metcalfe earned the disapproval of the Board of Directors at home who charged him with going back on past directives. But Metcalfe would not relent and thereby he lost the chance of being the Governor-General permanently. He was demoted as Governor of north-west provinces and then of Madras. He sacrificed his career but launched the Indian journalism on its long and eventful journey.

He gave five regulations of the press which are as follows :

1. He said that the printer and publisher should make a declaration about the name and the place of their residence and

- of the printing press.
2. Fresh declaration needed to be filed in case of change of address and names.
 3. The punishment of Rs. 5000 plus two years' imprisonment was constituted against the non-filing of the declaration.
 4. Anyone could close his or her press by making simple declaration.
 5. As far as the prohibition on the company servants was concerned, Charles Metcalfe limited the restrictions only on the commissioned servants and not otherwise. The Government of India made it clear that the prohibition referred only to the covenanted and commissionial servants of the company and not uncovenanted servants employed by the government and liable to be removed without reference to the Court of Directors.

The Court of Directors was angry with Metcalfe for having substituted the new law for the old without a reference to them. They said, "We are compelled to observe that this proceeding must be considered the most unjustifiable in as much as it has been adopted by a government only provisionally and also when a commission for framing a code of laws for three Presidencies was about to commence its important hearings."

The Court of Directors did not stop reminding Metcalfe that his conduct had not been forgotten or forgiven. As a result, due to liberating of the press from previous restrictions, there was considerable increase in the circulation and the number of newspapers in Indian and English languages grew rapidly from 11 in 1824 to 68 by the end of 1830 and it went up about 104 newspapers by the year 1856. Hence, Charles Metcalfe was the champion of the freedom of the press and surpassed all the previous advocates of freedom of press including Raja Rammohun Roy and James Silk Buckingham. He never bothered about his welfare while seeking redemption of the Indian press from the shackles of so many tough and rigid restrictions imposed by previous rulers. Charles Metcalfe was thus as a British Governor-General, a pioneer in the direction of improvement of the structure of the Indian press in India.

In the wake of first war of independence of 1857, the Governor-General Lord Canning, promulgated 1857 Act, which is also called 'Gagging Act'. This Act reintroduced the Adam's regulations of 1823 and required the printing presses to obtain a license to function or to print a newspaper or book. The government was empowered to ban the publication or circulation of any newspaper, book or printed matter.

These rules were applied to English as well as language press. The Act operated for one year. Many newspapers were prosecuted. However, before the Gagging Act could do much harm to the structure of press, the law became defunct on June 13, 1858 and the Indian administration passed into the hands of Queen Victoria on November 1, 1858.

Thus, the period from 1776 when the first attempt was made to start a newspaper in Calcutta by William Bolts till 1857, when the great leader Azimullah Khan started *Payam-e-Azadi*, which forcefully and boldly wrote against the British regime and gave impetus to the national movement, leaving the British government with no alternative except to muzzle the voice of this newspaper. Journalism in India proved not only eventful but also significant period.

The failure of the War of Independence, brought the administration of East India Company to a close, with the Crown taking over the country promising religious toleration and the freedom of the press.

Political journalism in India is traced to 1861, when the Indian Council Act empowered the government to nominate distinguished Indians to the legislature. Many of the great Indian newspapers which flourish even today were established during this period. *The Times of India* was established in 1861, the *Pioneer* in 1861, the *Statesman* in 1875 and the *Hindu* in 1878. This period also witnessed a boom in the Indian language press in the country. Several newspapers in almost all major Indian languages made their appearance.

At about the same time, the government promulgated the Vernacular Press Act in 1878 to stringently control the press. The Act required the printers and the Indian publishers of language newspapers to execute a bond that they would not publish anything that would excite the feelings of disaffection against the government. Under these regulations, any district magistrate or police commissioner was empowered to force the printer and publisher of a newspaper to agree not to publish certain kind of material, to demand security and to confiscate any printed matter it deemed to be objectionable. The Vernacular Press Act of 1878 was the greatest blow to the freedom of the Press in India and the Indian language newspapers suffered most heavily because of this law.

FREEDOM MOVEMENT AND THE INDIAN PRESS

The role of the Indian Press in strengthening and espousing the cause of freedom movement is one of the glorious chapters in the growth and

development of the Indian Press. The establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 further strengthened the nationalist aspirations of the Indian people. Most prominent members of the Congress were eminent journalists and editors of newspapers. These included such towering personalities as Dadabhai Naoroji, Ranade, Narendranath Sen, etc. The Indian language Press was particularly strong in expressing its views against the government. The Press also took up the cause of social reform.

A number of India's greatmen, social reformers, leaders and crusaders in the struggle of freedom movement used Press for furthering their philosophy and the causes they espoused. Some of these—Aurobindo Ghosh, Annie Besant, Lajpat Rai, Surendra Nath Banerjee, Lokmanya Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi were eminent journalists in their own right.

Tilak carried on struggle for national liberation through journalism. He used the Marathi weekly *Kesari* and the English weekly *Maratha* for writing on social, political and economic subjects for the education and enlightenment of the people. Tilak used journalism for "popular education and public agitation."

Gandhi—The Great Communicator and Journalist

The emergence of Gandhiji at the helm of freedom movement changed the course of Indian history. He shaped national movement and influenced public opinion on various issues.

According to Chalapathi Rau : Gandhi was probably the greatest journalist of all time, and the weeklies he ran and edited were probably the greatest weeklies the world has known. He published no advertisement; at the same time he did not want his newspapers to run at a loss. He had gained considerable experience in South Africa, where he had taken over in 1904 the editorship of the *Indian Opinion* and published it in English, Tamil and Gujarati, sometimes running the press himself. *Young India* and *Harjan* became powerful vehicles of his views on all subjects. He wrote simply and clearly but forcefully, with passion and burning indignation. One of the objects of a newspaper, he said, is to understand the popular feeling and give expression to it; another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments, and the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects.

Gandhiji's papers published no advertisements. They enjoyed wide circulation. His approach to journalism was totally devoid of ambitions. To him it was not a vocation to earn his livelihood; it was a means to serve the public. Writing in the *Young India* of 2 July 1925 he wrote : I

have taken up journalism not for its sake but merely as an aid to what I have conceived to be my mission in life. My mission is to teach by example and present under severe restraint the use of the matchless weapon of *satyagraha* which is a direct corollary of non-violence. To be true to faith, therefore, I may not write in anger or malice. I may not write merely to excite passion.

Gandhiji looked upon journalism as a means to serve the people. He said in his autobiography:

"The sole aim of journalism should be service. The newspaper is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole countrysides and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy. If the control is from without, it proves more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within. If this line of reasoning is correct, how many journals of the world would stand the test? But who would stop those that are useless? And who should be the judge? The useful and the useless must, like good and evil, go on together, and man must make his choice."

Apart from being a national leader and social reformer, Gandhiji was also a great communicator. More than any one else, he recognized that communication is the most effective tool to shape opinion and mobilise popular support. He was successful because he had a latent skill in communication that surfaced in South Africa where he had gone initially to set up practice as a lawyer. The practice of communication started by him in South Africa gave him the clue to rally millions of his countrymen when he returned to India.

Gandhiji was associated with six journals, for two of which he was the editor. His first paper, *Indian Opinion* was started in South Africa. In order to ventilate the grievances of Indians and mobilise public opinion in their favour, Gandhiji started writing and giving interviews to newspapers. He focussed on Open Letters and letters to the Editor, but soon realized that occasional writings and the hospitality of newspapers were inadequate for the political campaign he had launched. He needed a mouthpiece to reach out to the people; so in June 1903 he launched *Indian Opinion*. It served the purpose of a weekly newsletter which disseminated the news of the week among the Indian community. It became an important instrument of education. Through the columns of the newspaper Gandhiji tried to educate the readers about sanitation, self-discipline and good citizenship.

Gandhiji launched satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act and the massacre in Jallianwala Bagh. He had learnt in South Africa how important the press and public opinion could be in politics and had taught himself how to use the written word most effectively.

The two journals *Young India* and *Navajivan* were used by him to ventilate his views and to educate the public on satyagraha. In 1933, Gandhiji started *Harijan*, *Harijanbandhu* and *Harijansevak* in English, Gujarati and Hindi, respectively. These newspapers were the vehicles of his crusade against untouchability and poverty in rural areas. These papers published no advertisements even then they enjoyed wide circulation. His note of defiance and sacrifice gave a new stimulus to the evolution of Press as a weapon of satyagraha.

Today, when there is widespread concern over the growing influence of market forces on media, and regret over journalism being no longer a social service, Gandhiji said : It is often observed that newspapers publish any matter that they have, just to fill in space. The reason is that most newspapers have their eyes on profits.... There are newspapers in the west which are so full of trash that it will be a sin even to touch them. At times, they produce bitterness and strife even between different families and communities. Thus, newspapers cannot escape criticism merely because they serve the people.

The Second World War brought about a change in the attitude of the government towards newspapers. For the first time the government agreed to self regulation by the organisations of the newspapers themselves, thereby avoiding much of the bitterness caused by the government control. The two important newspaper organisations formed were : The Indian and Eastern Newspapers Society (IENS) and the All India Newspaper Editor's Conference (AINEC). A Press Advisory Committee was formed with the assistance of AINEC. The result was that whatever restrictions that were to continue during the subsequent years were administered by the press bodies themselves or by independent authorities other than the government.

With the approval of Independence Act in August 1947 the role of Press changed. It had to shoulder the new responsibilities of national reconstruction. India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru was the champion of the liberty of press. About the contribution of Nehru in strengthening the Indian Press Chalapathi Rau says : In the period after independence, Nehru played a large part in shaping all thinking about the Press, as Gandhiji had done before independence. He was opposed by powerful sections of the Press, but he could carry on easily because

he was a product of adult suffrage, had mass appeal and vast majorities, while newspapers still represented a small segment of opinion. But he stood for tolerance and accepted that a vigorous critical Press was a vital part of democracy. He was a passionate defender of press freedom as of all other freedoms. The traditions which grew in his time are becoming deep-rooted.

The print media in India in recent years has made rapid strides and can now be compared with the best in the world. The freedom of the press being a fundamental right, as guaranteed by the Constitution under article 19(1)(a), the people have made abundant use of this right. The print media has played a very significant role in the democratic process. The mainstream press in India has been the front runner in the issue-based investigative, interpretative and development reporting.

A detailed account of language, number and circulation of dailies and other newspapers taken together in 1998 is as under :

Table 3. Number of Newspapers in 1999 (Language and Periodicity wise)

Languages	Dailies	Tri/Bi weeklylies	Weeklies	Fort-nightlies	Monthlies	Quarterlies	Bi-monthlies	Annals	Total
							Halfyearlies		
English	371	30	881	671	2,734	1,210	731	162	6,830
Hindi	2,305	125	9,609	2,878	3,180	589	185	33	18,903
Assamese	15	3	75	38	59	12	10	1	213
Bengali	99	14	594	494	681	458	169	17	2,526
Gujarati	118	11	776	182	492	58	47	14	1,698
Kannada	314	6	354	231	589	44	19	4	1,561
Kashmiri	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Konkani	1	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	6
Malayalam	213	6	174	156	732	57	27	8	1,373
Manipuri	14	0	6	5	10	6	3	0	44
Marathi	346	20	1,108	189	504	110	41	113	2,431
Nepali	3	2	20	6	8	16	5	0	60
Oriya	71	2	142	83	267	88	23	4	680
Punjabi	107	15	350	89	237	32	18	1	849
Sanskrit	3	0	8	4	16	15	6	0	52
Sindhi	11	0	38	11	35	8	2	0	105
Tamil	352	43	93	227	786	32	22	8	1,863
Telugu	151	3	245	187	480	26	12	2	1,106
Urdu	519	20	1,317	361	506	60	17	3	2,803
Bilingual	73	19	593	334	1,148	336	142	34	2,679
Multilingual	17	4	103	63	208	67	34	12	508
Others	54	14	83	30	123	49	11	0	364
Total	5,157	337	16,872	6,240	12,796	3,273	1,564	416	46,655

Source : India 2001.

LANGUAGE PRESS AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The growth of the language press in India during the closing decades of the twentieth century truly reflects the diversity and plurality of rich linguistic and cultural heritage of the century. Apart from the 19 official recognised languages in the Indian Constitution, the 1971 census is an expression of India's cultural richness and diversity. In the modern mass media, as well as in traditional communication, the use of variety of languages is an advantage, bringing a large segment of user population on to equal terms of comprehension with other linguistic groups.

Interestingly, the Report of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, *Many Voices One World*, lists 16 languages which are spoken by more than 50 million people; out of which there are five languages in which newspapers are published in India. These languages are Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, Telugu and Tamil.

Small newspapers coming out from district centres and having grass-root contacts, mostly in Hindi and Indian languages, constitute another important segments of the Indian Press. These papers articulate the aspiration-demands, difficulties and problems of their readers and have been able to establish strong emotional affinity with them.

The Indian language press has played a historic and memorable role not only in the growth and development of journalism in the country, but also in the struggle for freedom movement. In the early nineteenth century, it also concerned itself with the social reforms and religious issues of the period. With the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi on the Indian political scene and his non-cooperation movement, language papers extended the moral strength to the movement.

In his book, *Journalism in India*, Rangaswami Parthasarathy recapitulates the glorious contribution of the language press as under:

"Ill-equipped and with poor resources they managed to survive the onslaught and persecution of the alien rulers for over three decades and many of them fell on the wayside after writing a glorious chapter in the history of the freedom struggle during their brief existence. Many were the acts of courage and patriotism and sacrifice by the men who conducted these papers and their staff. They were dedicated to a cause and nothing could stop them from completing their mission. They endured privation and penury and even suffered imprisonment and when not there to enjoy the fruits of a hard-won battle but their spirits must have hovered over the

battlements where they fought and sacrificed their lives to shed tears of joy. The contribution of Hindi and Urdu journalism to the struggle for freedom and the political awakening of the masses is immense.

"The establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 further strengthened the nationalist aspirations of the Indian people. Most prominent members of the Congress were eminent towering personalities as Dadabhai Naoroji, Ranade, Narendranath Sen, etc. The Indian language press was particularly strong in expressing its views against the government.

"A number of India's greatmen, social reformers, leaders and crusaders in the struggle of freedom movement used press for furthering their philosophy and the causes they espoused. Some of these—Aurbindo Ghosh, Annie Besant, Lajpat Rai, Surendra Nath Banerji, Lokmanya Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi were eminent journalists in their own right. Tilak carried on struggle for national liberation through journalism. He used the Marathi weekly *Kesari* and the English weekly *Maratha* for writing on social, political and economic subjects for the education and enlightenment of the people. Tilak used journalism for "popular education and public agitation."

A unique feature of the language press in the East and North-East Bengali, Assamese and Oriya is the vibrant practice of bringing special numbers and literary supplements on festive occasions of Rangoli Bihu and Durga Puja. These special issues are brought out in large numbers and contain short stories, poems, creative writings and novels in full or serialised. Buying a Puja number is a part of the traditional festival shopping. Thus, these newspapers meet the higher literary and cultural aesthetics of the people and help mould their tastes. Elaborating the contribution of the language press in Orissa, Bhatt says :

In Orissa's march ahead and particularly its cultural revival journalism has played no mean part. The press took literature to the people instead of allowing it to remain the preserve of the elite, the result is there for all to see the recognition that Oriya literature has earned by way of the Jnanapeeth awards for its poetry and other forms of literature. The Prajatantra group brings out an English weekly, *the Eastern Times*, its *Jhankar* monthly has a high standing in Orissa for the quality of its literary material and for the awards it gives to writers which are prized.

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The language press in the South has been particularly vibrant. Several newspapers, *Eenadu* in Andhra Pradesh and *Malayala Manorama* in Kerala have established a new genre of journalism in different ways.

The Telugu daily *Eenadu* launched in 1974, first from Visakhapatnam and a year later from Hyderabad has district editions from almost Andhra districts, with circulation crossing 4 lakhs. The success of *Eenadu* is attributed primarily to the rising public demand for information. Ramoji Rao played crucial role in the victory of N. T. Rama Rao and the *Telugu Desam Party* in 1983. The newspaper has diversified its activities by launching its own regional TV channel and supports an English daily *Newstimes* from Hyderabad.

Several other Indian language papers have also rendered valuable service in shaping different aspects of economic development, social awareness and cultural rejuvenation. This paper has attempted a short overview of the progress of the Indian Language Press in the country about which Mark Tully in his book from *Raj to Rajiv* in 1989 had said : The Indian press, on the one hand, must be most free and lively in the Third World. It does act as a watching on the government which is essential if democracy is to survive in India. There has been an explosion of papers and magazines in both English and Indian languages over the last fifteen years and journalism has become much more vigorous.

Language press constitutes one of the most important media for reaching out to the hundreds of millions of people in all parts of the country. As an important link between planners, bureaucracy and the people at the grassroot level, language press is a viable mean for the promotion of literacy, social awareness and development.

However, it may be noted with concern that in their struggle for existence, the language newspapers sometimes do not adhere to the ethics of journalism i. e. truthfulness and responsibility, objectivity and fair play. Development or literacy related news is far from their mind. Their main objective is to increase sales. The contents and presentation of such papers have a focus on the entertainment, negative news, mainly pertaining to violence, theft, political instability, scams, etc. No doubt these are required for wider dissemination. But the coverage of news of positive side of human life and society should also be there.

Problems Encountered by Language Press

The language press is not only ignored but also scorned by the elite as

well as the government. It is felt that the language press is to face more years of persistent struggle ahead before it is recognised as a significant segment of the Indian press alongwith English/National dailies.

The various other recognised problems which come in the way of reporting in case of language press because of main concern being local and to some extent state and nation and hence because of limited target population are financial problems, availability of information and authenticity thereof, infrastructural facilities, risks and threats involved keeping in view the castes, communities and groupism factors. The main challenge before the language reporting is to sensitize the elite readership towards developmental issues affecting the Indian masses, the vast majority of which is inhabiting the rural areas. The nexus of illiteracy, poverty and poor health can be broken by the language press by focusing on the developing schemes, in vogue, and promoting the role of voluntary organisations to break the bureaucratic bottlenecks in the welfare and development schemes. It has been observed that the personnel working in the language press lack adequate training required to handle their multifaceted responsibilities. It may be suggested that an appreciation course in language problems preferably by a language institute or an agricultural university would go a long way in redressing this deficiency.

Language press is promising medium for disseminating information and knowledge about nutrition, health and hygiene, improved farm practices, family planning measures and development plans to those sections of society where the information is needed most. Hence, it becomes all the more important to help in the promotion and sustenance of language press through various measures.

What is needed is to make language press relevant to the Indian situation. It has to encompass in itself the cultural ethos of the Indian life in all its aspects mainly the rural poor and unrepresented people in the press. Its subjects would include profile of an artisan, success story of a farmer, neoliterate women, literacy workers or even the failure stories for reflection, problems faced in marketing of agricultural produce, social superstitions and taboos inhibiting the economic growth and productivity. Such kind of language press shall not only mirror the true life in the Indian people, but shall also provide a different perspective and frame of reference for the planners and policy makers to improve the quality of life of people through literacy and development. The language press is required to assume the role of the information centre about various schemes, plans, projects, weather forecast reports

and facilities available like credit, seed, fertilizer besides new development projects e.g. construction of a new road or a bridge in the far flung areas.

Promoting the Language Press for Literacy and Development

Some of the important policy and remedial measures which may help in the promotion and sustenance of language press are :

- Local papers should be allowed to be printed at the Government Press on official rates.
- Provision of free bus and railway passes for the editors of language papers should be made at par with big newspapers.
- Journalists of language newspapers should be provided free insurance and legal protection. There should also be proper police protection for them.
- Paper quota for these papers should be provided on subsidised rates by the government.
- Facilities for loans under various schemes of the government should also be made available as for other cottage industries.
- The advertisements of various government departments, banks and public sector undertakings should be routed through the D.P.R.O. who should then distribute it proportionately to the local press.
- Language/Local papers should not be discouraged by the local administration but due importance must be given to their coverage. They should rather be encouraged and given positive direction by organising workshops/camps from time to time.
- It should be the endeavour of the language press to associate itself with various organisations and departments working in the Indian society.
- The language press is required to have closer association and links with the local bodies such as village panchayats and also with the opinion makers in the villages to promote the development in indigenous situation.
- Indian Languages Press Commission should be appointed to go into whole gamut of the working of language press and should come out with concrete recommendations.

- Language press should aim at the community service and development. It should be the mirror of the true life of contemporary society. It should be true source of feed-back to the government and policy makers. But at the same time, while having such expectations from the language press, the latter should also expect co-operation from the government and the public at large.

PRESS ORGANISATIONS

Press Council

The Third International Conference on Press Council was held in New Delhi a few years back. The conference decided to establish a World Association of Press Council. India and Sweden abstained from voting although they did not approve the motion. Sweden abstained from voting on the grounds that the members of the team had not been given the mandate to vote. India abstained for different reasons. The Press Council of India felt that an informal body would be preferable to a formal body. Proposals to form an International Code of Ethics were dropped, instead countries had been asked to form their own codes.

The institution of Press Council emerged for the first time in Sweden in 1916 known as the Court of Honour. Now it has been established in more than 40 countries. In all the countries, except Italy and Holland, Press Councils have been set up voluntarily. The functions of the Press Councils differ from country to country. The British Press Council came into existence in 1953. It has served as a model for many countries.

In India it is an autonomous, non-official but statutory body. The First Press Commission (1954) recommended the setting up of a statutory Press Council to look after the editorial independence, objectivity of news presentation and fairness of comments, etc. on the part of the newspapers. The council, according to the commission, was also to foster the development of press, protecting it from external pressures and regulate its conduct matters of such objectionable writing as was not legally punishable. In pursuance of this recommendation, the Press Council of India was constituted by the Govt. of India in 1966 under the Press Council Act of 1965, with Justice J. R. Mudholkar, the judge of the Supreme Court, as its Chairman, which was later amended in 1970. After the first chairman, Justice Mudholkar, the PCI was headed by Justice N. Rajagopala Ayyangar and (after its revival) by

Justice A. N. Grover, Justice A. N. Sen and Justice R. S. Sarkaria. The present Chairman of the Press Council is Justice P. B. Sawant. During the internal emergency, the Press Council was abolished on the expiry of the term on 31 December 1975. The Press Council Act was repealed. It was stated that the council was being abolished because it was not able to carry on its functions effectively to achieve the objects for which the Council was established. The Annual Report of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for 1975-76 said : The Press Council during the nine years of its existence had failed to curb the tendencies, provocative and unrestrained writings in the press. It was unable to frame a code of conduct for editors and complaints of minor character mostly engaged its attention. Accordingly the Press Council of India was abolished w.e.f. 1st January 1976.

A fresh legislation providing for the establishment of a Press Council was enacted in 1978. The Act came into force on 1st March 1979. The objectives of the revised Press Council are :

1. To preserve the freedom of press.
2. To improve standards of newspapers and news agencies in the country.

One of the main functions of the Council is to enquire into complaints received by it and building up a code of conduct for newspapers, news agencies and journalists in accordance with high professional standards.

Term

The term of the members of the Press Council is of three years. After every three years new members are appointed to the Council. The term of the present seventh Press Council will expire in 2000 under the chairmanship of Justice P. B. Sawant.

Constitution of the Press Council

Total members : 28

Chairman : 01

(Chairman is nominated by a committee consisting of a Chairman of Rajya Sabha, Speaker of Lok Sabha and one elected representative of Council members). Chairman is always a retired judge of Supreme Court.

Among twenty-eight members :

Working Journalists (6 editors of newspapers,

7 working journalists other than editors)

: 13

From management, big, medium and small
newspapers (who own or carry on the business
of management of newspapers)

: 06

News agencies

Members of Parliament nominated by Speaker
of Lok Sabha

: 1

(Three from Lok Sabha and two from Rajya Sabha)
Persons having special knowledge or practical experience
in the following fields :

(a) Education and science (nominated by UGC)

: 1

(b) Law and Literature (nominated by Bar Council)

: 1

(c) Culture (nominated by Sahitya Academy)

: 1

For the purpose of performing its functions or holding an enquiry under the Act, the Council has been clothed with powers exercisable throughout India as are vested in a civil court while trying a suit under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908. Thus, the Council can summon and enforce the attendance of persons and examine them under oath. It can require discovery and production of documents, receive evidence on affidavits, requisition public records or copies thereof from any court or office, issue commissions for the examination of persons or documents and finally for any other matter which may be prescribed. The Act, however, recognises immunity of a journalist from disclosing his source of information.

In his book, *The Journalists Handbook*, M. V. Kamath says : The Council, it is important to remember, is NOT a court of law. It is a court of honour. Its verdicts are not judicial pronouncements. Therefore, there is no question of punishment imposed on an offending journalist or newspaper. By that same token the Council cannot award damages to the aggrieved party. As Mudholkar puts it : The only weapon in its armoury is moral authority. The sole strength of the Council lies in its appeal to conscience.

Who can lodge a complaint against a newspaper or journalist to the Council? Anybody. The Council does not even have to wait for someone to make a complaint if it thinks that a case against a newspaper can be made on its own. The complainants, incidentally, need not necessarily have a personal interest in the matter complained against.

A complaint can merely be filed where the complainant has "reasons to believe that a newspaper has offended against the standards of journalistic ethics or public taste or that an editor or a working journalist has committed any professional misconduct or a breach of journalistic ethics."

Objectives and Functions of the Council

The objectives, some of which are given below, of the Council shall be to preserve the freedom of the Press and to maintain and improve the standards of newspapers and news agencies in India :

- (a) to help newspapers and news agencies to maintain their independence;
- (b) to build up a code of conduct for newspapers, news agencies and journalists in accordance with high professional standards;
- (c) to ensure on the part of newspapers, news agencies and journalists, the maintenance of high standards of public taste and foster a due sense of both the rights and responsibilities of citizenship;
- (d) To encourage the growth of the sense of responsibility and public service among all those engaged in the profession of journalism;
- (e) to keep under review any development likely to restrict the supply and dissemination of news of public interest and importance;
- (f) to keep under review cases of assistance received by any newspaper or news agency in India from any foreign source including such cases as by any individual, association of persons or any other organization;
- (g) to undertake studies of foreign newspapers, including those brought out by any embassy or other representative in India of a foreign State, their circulation and impact;
- (h) to promote a proper functional relationship among all classes of persons engaged in the production or publication of newspapers or in news agencies;
- (i) to concern itself with developments such as a concentration of, or other aspects of, ownership of, newspapers and news agencies which may affect the independence of the press; and

- (j) to undertake such studies as may be entrusted to the Council and to express its opinion in regard to any matter referred to it by the Central Government.

The Chairman, Press Council of India, Justice P. B. Sawant, in his paper-Press Council : the Conscience Keeper, has said : During the last thirty years, the Council received 8939 complaints. Out of them, 2693 were by the Press against the police, the publicity department and revenue authorities, individual politicians or bureaucrats. The rest 6246 were against the press. The complaints against the government and governmental authorities were mainly of false and malicious charges, false arrests and detentions in police custody, threats to life and property, non-cognizance of and inaction by the police on complaints filed by the journalists, the collusion of the police with the anti-social elements criticised by the press, and connivance at their violence, and threats to life, liberty and property of the journalists and owners of the newspapers, vindictive suspension and cancellation of advertisements, and non-payment or delayed payment of the advertisement bills, cancellation or suspension of accreditation passes, withholding of or reduction in newsprint quota, stoppage of electricity and water supply, attempt to demolish the premises where the newspapers were published or raids on newspaper offices, seizure of the copies of the newspapers and their destruction, etc. The complaints against the press have been mainly for publication of unverified and abusive language, printing of obscene pictures, communal and casteist writings and attempts to inflame communal passions, refusal to publish replies, encroachment on privacy, distorted and prejudiced reporting, suppression of facts, sensational and misleading headings completely at variance with the contents of the report, malicious reporting and writings, non-publication of the other side of the views expressed, mixing comments with facts, fratricidal conflicts, plagiarism, *et al.*

Since the Council has no punitive powers to punish violations of the professional ethics by the press or the encroachment on the freedom of the press by the authorities, the Council has come to be looked upon as a toothless tiger. The critics, however, forget that the Council has been designed essentially as an internal regulatory mechanism of and by the press. Consequently, disapproval, warning, admonition and censure of the newspapers, news agencies and the journalists and strong observations against the authorities are the only weapons kept in its armoury. The exercise of punitive powers by the Council will not only

destroy the character of the Council as an internal mechanism of the press, but will also embroil it in a large number of court cases defeating the very objectives for which the Council was established.

The Registrar of Newspapers for India

The Office of the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI) also commonly known as the Press Registrar was created on 1st July 1956, pursuant to a recommendation of the First Press Commission by an amendment of the Press and Registration of Books Act 1867.

Functions

It functions as a central government body responsible for the completion of a Register giving particulars like ownership and circulation of all newspapers published in India.

It oversees the allocation of titles, newsprint and certificates for the import of printing and allied machinery required by newspaper establishments and also sees to the enforcement of the provisions of the Press and Registration of Books Act, and has the authority to inspect newspaper records and documents.

The RNI carries out frequent checks to find out whether the newspapers registered with it are published regularly and also whether the circulation figures claimed by newspapers are credible.

It is the duty of the Press Registrar to register all newspapers published in the country to issue certificate of registration to them, to maintain the particular rating to them in a register and to submit to the Central Govt. an annual report containing a summary by the information obtained by him during the previous year in respect of newspapers in the country. These annual reports entitled, 'Press in India' contain valuable information and statistics relating to the press.

The Press Registrar requires information about circulation figures to ensure that :

1. the newsprint used is in proportion with the circulation figures.
2. the printing capacity is in proportion with the circulation figures,
3. the newsprint waste is normal,
4. the payment of newsprint has been made in accordance with rules, and
5. the details (paging, printing and circulation dates, etc.) pertaining to number of supplements printed in advance are correct.

Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC)

ABC is an independent, self-financing, private body, charged with the responsibility of conducting regular audit of the 'net circulation of newspapers' and issues certificates of Net Paid circulation every six months. It has a very high reputation for reliability and impartiality and is, therefore, quoted with authority.

Need

During the early 1900's, with the growth of mass advertising, some newspapers and magazine publishers began inflating the number of readers for their publications in order to atleast get more revenue from advertisers. In an effort to check this deceptive practice, advertisers and publishers joined together to form the ABC in 1914. The organization's purpose was to establish ground rules for counting circulation, to make sure that the rules were enforced, and to provide verified reports of circulation date. In India, it came into existence in 1948.

Objectives

1. To issue standardised statements of the circulation of members.
2. To verify the figures shown in these statements by auditor's examination of necessary records.
3. To disseminate circulation date for the benefit of advertisers, advertising agencies and newspaper publication.

What does ABC consider?

It considers the following :

1. Whether the changes in the supply desired by agents have been done timely or not,
2. Whether the supply is in accordance with the demand of agents or not,
3. Whether payment is received from the agents in time or not,
4. Action taken by the circulation department on the complaints of agents,
5. The timeliness of payment made to the different modes of transport used for supplying newspapers,
6. The agreements made with the dealers/agents,

7. The preparation of the newsprint used and the circulation.

Functions

The ABC functions in the following manner :

Publishers keep detailed records of circulation data. In the case of a newspaper, these records would include such information as the number of copies delivered by carriers, the number of papers sold over the counter and the number delivered by mail. Twice a year, publishers file a circulation statement with the ABC which the ABC in turn disseminates to its clients. Once every year, the ABC audits publications to verify that the figures that have been reported are accurate. An ABC representative visits the publication and is free to examine records and files that contain data on press runs, invoices for newsprint and transcripts of circulation records.

ABC report helps the advertisers as well as the newspaper. From the verified facts, the advertisers can draw their conclusion and prepare advertising plans. Newspapers are also benefited by the ABC report.

Firstly, they gain respect and confidence of advertisers. Secondly, on the basis of the report, they can peep into their own activities and programmes and make a modest review of the progress made by the newspaper. Thirdly, the report is an evidence of the newspaper's worth.

There are a number of special institutions dealing with the press.

Table 4 : Special institutions dealing with Press

Name of institution	Year of establishment
Indian and Eastern Newspapers Society	1939
All India Newspaper Editor's Conference	1940
Indian Languages Newspapers Association	1941
Advertising Agencies Association of India	1945
Press Trust of India	1948
Audit Bureau of Circulation	1948
All India Federation of Working Journalists	1951
Indian Society of Advertisers	1952
United News of India	1961
Press Council of India	1966

Published from Chennai, Coimbatore, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Madurai, Delhi, Vishakhapatnam and Thiruvananthapuram, *The Hindu* is regarded as one of the world's best newspapers. The American Newspaper Publishers' Association selected it for the World Press Achievement Award in 1968.

The Hindu Group was conceived by six patriotic young men to fight the British rule, it has come along way since then. The paper was started as a weekly in 1878 by G. Subramania Aiyer and five other young men to fight its battle to rid Hinduism of its social evils. Among the reforms—for which the campaigned were widow remarriage, raising the age of marriage, abolition of caste and uplift of the touchable. Besides taking interest in social reforms, Subramania Aiyer was equally enthusiastic in participating in India's battle of freedom. He was one of editors who attended the first session of Indian National Congress held in 1885. *The Hindu* has a series of pioneering initiatives to its credit :

1. It was the first newspaper to acquire a fleet of four aircraft and operating them on its own, which was just like operating a small airline with all its problems and headaches.
2. It was again the first newspaper to have launched its facsimile editions in Coimbatore and later extended to Bangalore, Hyderabad and Madurai. It also introduced phototype setting for printing the paper. It was the second newspaper in Asia to introduce the fax system.
3. It has been a pioneer in introducing technological advances and innovations. It has been the first Indian newspaper to go on the net in 1995. Soon other newspapers, both in English and other languages followed suit as also the magazines.

Ever since its inception, *The Hindu* has espoused the cause of first rate journalism, non-partisan, independent and fair. In an editorial in 1967, it wrote what may be considered as its testament. The editorial said : We must make it clear *'that we are an independent, non-party newspaper, wedded to the national interest as we see it. We are not the mouthpiece of any party'*. We have been more often critical of the ruling party perhaps than singing its praises. We have always made a distinction between

programmes and measures on the one side and personalities and parties on the other. Our criticisms have been primarily concerned with the non-wisdom or inappropriateness of certain policies or decisions and whatever governments may come to power we shall continue to judge them not by their professions but by their performance.

The Hindu has postulated three basic principles to make

freedom of the press real. The first is that the press must keep its own house clean and exercise reasonable restraint on its

functioning. Freedom should not be allowed to degenerate into licence which would open the door to government interference. The second is the response of authority to the smooth functioning of the press by removing physical restraints and to enable it to reach as wide a readership as it would wish. The third and the most important is the attitude of society as a whole, which besides the public, includes politicians, trade unions, advertisers, etc. The press has been subjected to pressure from one or another of these sources and the less viable among the press have found it difficult to withstand it. Press freedom can come to prevail only when all sections of the body politic resolve to make it prevail by removing all impediments in the way (*Journalism in India*, Rangaswami Parthasarathy). Parthasarathy, a senior journalist with *The Hindu* for 35 years has also written *100 Years of the Hindu*.

The Hindu is known for high quality journalism and substantial output of literary, academic and scholarly discussion in terms of book reviews, features on sciences, arts and education and other subjects which several other newspapers are overlooking in favour of high society, fashion and life style features. The paper is also known for good editorials some of which have been praised as "excellently readable pieces," by an eminent editor. The newspaper also had some of the most distinguished Indians on its staff as correspondents—notable being Subhas Bose in Vienna and V. K. Krishna Menon elsewhere in Europe. *The Hindu* has branched out journalism : spectacularly into several other aspects of sports journalism—*Sportstar*, the leading sports weekly with wide coverage of Indian and international sports; magazine journalism, *Frontline*, the general interest fortnightly news magazines with first rate photographs and pictures particularly on subjects like environment, nature and wild life; and business journalism with *Business Line*, a financial daily. Its Annuals on Industry, Agriculture,

Environment and Cricket are authentic contribution in the respective areas.

There is a lot in the banner headline of its advertisement : If trust, credibility and truthfulness are old fashioned, we really haven't developed at all. *The Hindu* has not only maintained all the above attributes of a good newspaper, it has developed in all branches of journalism.

The Hindustan Times

The Hindustan Times was the first Indian daily coming out from the capital. The paper, which was established in 1923, was inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi and the first issue contained articles by Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahomed Ali. The great historian K. M. Panikkar was its first editor. Since it was the only English newspaper in the capital, it attracted wide notice right since its inception. Panikkar, with support from K. C. Roy of the Associated Press of India, was able to establish high standards of journalism in *The Hindustan Times*. The paper made its mark for being the leading paper from the capital despite severe competition from *The Times of India*, which, of late, has posed a major challenge to its supremacy. For several years after independence, *raddiwallas* (those who collect waste paper) used to say Hindustan when they meant any paper. The paper has also been known for its matrimonial columns, which have been taking more pages than before. The paper is read as much for its news content as for its matrimonials.

In the initial years, some of the leading figures of the freedom movement were associated with its management—Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, M. R. Jayakar and Lala Lajpat Rai. G. D. Birla took over the paper in 1927 and since then it has been run by the Birla group. The *Hindustan Times*, like many other nationalist papers, suffered during the independence movement for supporting the freedom struggle. The paper put up a brave fight against the restrictions imposed by the government and covered prominently, in bold type the news of *Satyagraha*. During the Quit India Movement its editor Devadas Gandhi was arrested for defying the instructions of the Chief Commissioner of Delhi and sent to a prison term.

The paper had a galaxy of distinguished journalists as its editors—Devadas Gandhi, Durga Das, J. N. Sahni, B. G. Verghese and Khushwant Singh. The paper was embroiled into controversy when the

owner of the paper G. D. Birla sacked the editor-B. G. Verghese within months of declaration of Emergency in 1975. A group of journalists working with the paper and certain others filed a complaint with the Press Council of India saying that removal of Verghese was an assault on the freedom of press. Journalists led by the Indian Federation of Working Journalists protested against this action and went on strike. The management of *The Hindustan Times* filed a writ petition before the Delhi High Court saying that the issue was purely a matter of employee-employer relationship and the question of freedom of press was not involved.

Many years later the noted writer and columnist Khushwant Singh also had to quit as the editor of *The Hindustan Times* in similar circumstances.

The Hindustan Times pioneered development journalism and the Sunday supplement of the paper carried articles on water policy and famine. The feature on Our Village Chethra, carried on for several years, is remembered as an example of first rate rural reporting.

Hindustan, the sister paper of *The Hindustan Times*, in Hindi started in 1936, is held in high esteem by the Hindi newspaper reading public. The paper launched its Patna and Lucknow editions a few years back.

The Indian Express

Established by the doyen of Indian journalism, Ramnath Goenka in Madras in 1937, the *Indian Express* is the only newspaper which has a national presence in almost all parts of the country. Its nineteen editions are published from Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Belgaum, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Chennai, Coimbatore, Hyderabad, Kochi, Kozhikode, Madurai, Mumbai, Nagpur, New Delhi, Pune Thiruvananthapuram, Vadodara, Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam.

The *Indian Express* is a fully and truly a national paper in the real sense of the term. Regarding the *national* dimensions of a newspaper, S. C. Bhatt makes an interesting comment in his book, *Indian Press since 1955* : It has been a fashion in India for the newspapers coming out from Delhi to be called national dailies following the British pattern for London newspapers to be called national and those from Manchester, Birmingham and Glasgow to be called provincial. If any newspaper could be called national in India it would only be the *Indian Express*; that too partially.

Print Media

Partially because it does not have any presence in the vast Hindi heartland-Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan.

Besides its national presence, the *Indian Express* is known for its crusading journalism; the newspaper was always found equal to the task of fighting battles—battles for the freedom of the press and against repression during the Emergency; battle against the Defamation Bill 1988 which was considered a threat to the freedom of expression and many more. The newspaper was in the forefront of the protest launched by journalists all over the country. The *Indian Express* wrote: Rather than investigate vigorously the instances of wrong doing brought out in the Fairfax, HDW, Bofors and other controversies, the government has, first by branding the disclosures as the result of a 'destabilisation' plot and then by launching a whitewash enquiry by a Parliamentary Committee strengthened the suspicion that there is a great deal to hide. If the Defamation Bill passed in a raging hurry by the Lok Sabha is meant to be a political counter-attack to stem the tide of disclosures, it is an affront to the nation, democratic conscience.

Goenka, who died in 1991, was amongst the tallest figures of the Indian newspaper publishing. He took a leading part in the negotiations with *Reuters*, the British News agency to make it give up its domination on India's news coverage through Associated Press of India resulting in the formation of PTI. After Madras and Bombay, Goenka covered

Delhi; the *Financial Express* was also started which has been lagging behind its rival, *The Economic Times*.

The tenacity and doggedness with which the *Indian Express* fought for the freedom of press during emergency elicited a warm tribute from Rangaswamy Parthasarathy : However, there has been at least one newspaper which fought grimly and with determination the assault on the press and became the special target of persecution, and vindictiveness. The *Indian Express* with its proprietor Ramnath Goenka and editor V. K. Narasimham wrote a glorious chapter in the battle for the freedom of the press and when the nightmare ended and press became free again they were hailed as heroes.

The *Indian Express* was on the firing line once again when its offices in 12 centres across the country were raided simultaneously with the involvement of armed police present inside the office and involvement of some 600 intelligence men in September 1987. The paper had emerged as the most powerful cutting edge of the opposition to the Rajiv Gandhi government. The government had accused it of evading customs duties and violating FERA regulations, although the

Editors' Guild of India said : Whatever the reasons given to launch the raids, the government's motives are too clear to hoodwink anyone. In a cover page story, the *India Today* highlighted the background of the controversy with the profile of the newspaper and an interview with Goenka and the editor Arun Shourie.

Frank Moraes and Arun Shourie were the two most well known editors of the *Indian Express*, known for their sturdy independence. Moraes was a fearless critic of the government regardless of the personalities involved. Arun Shourie, who considered "Job of a good newspaper is to ensure accountability and to force a regime to unmask itself" became the first Indian journalist to become a nationally respected figure. He exposed emergency excesses and abuse of authority of India Gandhi; uncovered the misuse of official authority by a Chief Minister to collect funds and tackled several other issues: prison reforms, bonded labour, the plight of undertrials, human rights, etc.

The *Indian Express* group continues with the zeal of a crusader what it calls to be the "journalism of courage."

The Tribune

In its 121st year of publication, *The Tribune* has emerged as North India's premier newspaper. It is the largest circulated English daily in Northern India—Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and the Union Territory of Chandigarh.

The Tribune was started as a weekly in Lahore in 1881 by Sardar Dyal Singh Majithia, who was a highly educated nationalist and patriot. He had inherited a vast estate from his father which he wanted to utilise for awakening the people of Punjab and India. Since the *Civil and Military Gazette* expressed only the official point of view, the need for a nationalist English daily was acutely felt.

The first issue of *The Tribune* appeared on 2 February 1881. Its conductors of *The Tribune* have no pet theories to maintain, nor any personal interest to serve through the medium of this journal. They profess simply to act for the public weal and they are conscious that the public weal is more advanced by charity and moderation than by rancour and high words. Our appearance in the field of journalism is to meet a crying want of this part of India, namely, an English journal will be, as its name imports, fairly and temperately to advocate the cause

Print Media of the masses. In its columns we shall seek to represent the public opinion of India, specially of upper India.

With the advent of the Indian National Congress in 1885, *The Tribune* aligned with popular cause. *The Tribune* condemned the partition of Bengal in 1905. Since *The Tribune* condemned the atrocities committed during the martial law regime in 1919, it was asked to furnish a security of Rs. 2000. The Editor, Kalinath Ray was tried for seditious writings.

Gandhi said in 1932 : *The Tribune* is the newspaper ... Its editor's reading and analysis of events are unsurpassed. About Kalinath Ray, Gandhi said : Long live Kalinath Ray. His articles now-a-days on the communal problem and on joint electorates for Harijans bear witness to his deep knowledge and wide experience.

Kalinath Ray was a fearless writer who bravely faced the risks involved in fighting an alien government. When he was sent to rigorous imprisonment for two years in 1919, the whole of Punjab and the press, the people and the leaders rose as one man; because he had emerged as 'undisputed leader for the press in Punjab'. In the face of determined opposition, he was released after three months.

During India's long struggle for independence, *The Tribune* played a distinctive role as an exponent of public view. On the eve of independence when the partition of the country rocked Lahore, the offices of *The Tribune* were ransacked. It had to migrate to India and the Home Minister Vallabhbhai Patel assured all facilities to *The Tribune* to resume publication from the Indian soil. It moved to Simla and later on to Ambala in May 1948. It found a permanent home and habitation in Chandigarh in 1957.

The Tribune is a truly trust-managed newspaper. The policy of paper is to continue to be liberal in politics, secular in outlook, balanced and objective in reporting and temperate in language, official acts and measures may be boldly criticised, but in a fair and candid spirit and in temperate language. Subjects possessing provincial and local interest should receive prominent treatment, alongwith questions of national importance. Religious controversies shall be avoided in the columns of the paper and an attitude of strict neutrality shall be maintained in regard to all creeds and sects.

According to *The Tribune*'s code for journalists : Members of the editorial staff shall refrain from publishing matter which is obscene or tends to encourage vice, crime and unlawful activities. Also no tendentious report of speculative nature shall be published. Good faith

with the reader is the foundation of good journalism. Every effort must be made to ensure that the news content is accurate, free from bias and in context, and that all sides are represented fairly.

Members of the editorial staff should perform their duties without fear or favour, adopting an attitude of professionalism and complete objectivity and impartiality. They will not accept patronage or largesse of any type from politicians, civil servants, business houses, governmental bodies, private individuals or institutions or accept any pecuniary benefits from any quarters*.

The Tribune group launched two sister publications in Hindi and *Punjabi-Dainik Tribune* and the *Punjabi Tribune* in 1978. Both the newspapers have been a modest success, primarily because they share the glory and the prestige, as well as the heritage of the better known English counterpart, which has become a byword for good journalism. *The Tribune* has recently revamped several of its printing and editorial features with theme pages on week days and supplements on Saturdays besides Sunday Reading. Its Book Review section is quite satisfying, considering the fact that some of the better known metropolitan dailies have discontinued such important activities under the pressure of space and market forces. After all books and scholarships do not attract too much ad revenue.

The Times of India

The Times of India is the oldest English daily in India. The BBC in 1991 featured *The Times of India* among world's six great newspapers. The paper is the flagship of the Bennett, Coleman & Company Ltd. *Times* (Hindi daily), *The Economic Times* and *Femina*. BCCL is the world's tenth largest, old style publishing house with revenues of Rs. 1200 crore. The newspaper has been a trend setter in ways more than one : marketing, economic journalism and management. No other newspaper has changed the rules of the games as *The Times of India* has.

Let us have a look at the BCCL group of papers. According to the Audit Bureau of Circulation, in 1999 the paper consolidated its lead as the country's largest selling English language broad sheet with an average daily circulation of 17.34 lakh copies. It crossed the 20 lakh

Print Media

mark in March 2000 compared to *The Hindu* (7.26 lakh) and the *Indian Express* (6.86 lakh). *The Economic Times*, the country's largest business

daily claims to have crossed 4 lakh in April 2000.

The Times of India traces its heritage from *The Bombay Times* in 1838, the paper was published on Wednesday and Saturday only. In 1852, *The Bombay Standard* and *Bombay Telegraph and Courier*. In 1861, the name of the paper was changed to *The Times of India* under editor Robert Knight who gave it a national character. The Bennett, Coleman & Co.-a joint stock company was formed in 1892. The Delhi edition was launched in 1950.

The Times of India, alongwith *The Pioneer* and *The Statesman*, was one of three newspapers which represented the Anglo-Indian opinion, opposing most violently the advancement of the Indian people. The newspaper could claim high class printing and news service (it was the earliest newspaper in India to subscribe to the Reuter's news service) and made rapid progress. In his book, *Journalism in India*, Rangaswami Parthasarathy recapitulates several instances when the paper attacked the Indian citizens in a most objectionable tone.

The eminent journalist and editor, Frank Moraes, who joined the paper as junior assistant editor in 1934 stated that since the paper was British owned, it was the first supporter of the government. He later became the first Indian editor.

Apart from Frank Moraes, the paper had several distinguished journalists as its editors-Sham Lal and Giri Lal Jain. Sham Lal, who had joined *The Hindustan Times* more than sixty years ago and was named as the winner of B. D. Goenka Award for Excellence in Journalism in 1993, talking about the transformation in the field of journalism said : Commodification of news may be a fact of life but there is always a question of degree. While the process of commodification cannot be prevented, the excesses of commodification can. Take the British newspaper scene. There are many that remain committed to being serious even at the cost of low circulation. *The Sunday Times* editor once told me that his paper devotes two or three pages to book reviews even though a readership survey showed that only 11 per cent readers read the news. You see, those 11 per cent readers mattered a lot to them.

The above remarks of a former editor of the newspaper are an expression of regret over the extent to which commodification of news and impact of market forces has started influencing the policies of the newspaper. The editorial department is losing its pre-eminence to the

* The excerpts from *The Tribune's Code for Journalists* have been taken from the issue dated 21 November 1977. Focus : Media Power.

management, administration and the advertising departments of the paper. Today BCCL is entering into music software, entertainment, Radio FM broadcasting, music retailing business with Planet M and of course on line journalism—indiatimes. com.

The emphasis is on attracting the advertisement; the price war with *The Hindustan Times* in 1999 was a part of the same strategy. Says one of the BCCL directors : We believe we are not in the newspaper business but in the business of attracting advertising. By offering the advertiser a comprehensive package right through our portfolio of *The Times of India*, *The Economic Times*, Times FM and the Websites, we have the platform to bring ad revenues earlier than any other websites in the country. We are the specialists in target audience. We will give the advertisers the target audience.

The Times of India has indeed shown that rules of the game have drastically changed and journalism has no longer any social commitment; its bottom lines is *ad revenue*.