

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY OF PRESS IN MODERN HISTORY

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INTRODUCTION

History of Indian Press accounts for the prestigious growth of Indian newspapers and its significance in Indian history as well. James Augustus Hickey is considered as the "father of Indian press" as he started the first Indian newspaper from Calcutta, the 'Bengal Gazette' or the 'Calcutta General Advertise' in January 1780. In 1789, the first newspaper from Bombay, the 'Bombay Herald' appeared, followed by the 'Bombay Courier' next year. This newspaper was later amalgamated with the Times of India in 1861. The first newspaper in an Indian language was in Bengali, named as the 'Samachar Darpan'. The first issue of this daily was published from the Serampore Mission Press on May 23, 1818. In the very same year, Ganga Kishore Bhattacharya started publishing another newspaper in Bengali, the Bengal Gazette. On July 1, 1822 the first Gujarati newspaper was published from Bombay, called the Bombay Samachar, which is still extant. The first Hindi newspaper, the Samachar Sudha Varshan began in 1854. Since then, the prominent Indian languages in which newspapers have grown over the years are Hindi, Malayalam, Marathi, Tamil, Urdu, Telugu, and Bengali.¹ The status of Indian language papers have taken over the English press according to the latest NRS survey of newspapers. The main reasons include the marketing strategy followed by the regional papers, beginning with Eenadu, a Telugu daily started by Ramoji Rao. The second reason has been the growing literacy rate. Increase in the literacy rate had a direct positive effect on the rise of circulation of the regional papers. The introduction of mother tongue in the primary education stage brought about a great change.

The people who learned their mother tongue at the least could read the regional newspapers fluently and thus became aware of the national and regional scenario. During this developmental period, sale of the regional paper in the respective state rose to a great limit. The Renaissance spread to Germany, France, England, and Spain in the late fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. In its migration northward, Renaissance culture adapted itself to conditions unknown in Italy, such as the growth of the monarchical state and the strength of lay piety. In England France, and Spain, Renaissance culture tended to be court-centered and hence anti-republican. In Germany, no monarchical state existed but a vital tradition of lay piety was present

in the Low Countries. The Brethren of the Common Life, for example, was a lay movement emphasizing education and practical piety. Intensely Christian and at the same time anticlerical (shades of what was to come), the people in such movements found in Renaissance culture the tools for sharpening their wits against the clergy not to undermine faith, but restore its ancient apostolic purity. Northern humanists were profoundly devoted to ancient learning but nothing in northern humanism compares to the paganizing trend associated with the Italian Renaissance. The northern humanists were chiefly interested in the problem of the ancient church and the question of what constituted original Christianity. Two factors operated to accelerate the spread of Renaissance culture after 1450: growing economic prosperity and the printing press. Prosperity the result of peace and the decline of famine and the plague led to the founding of schools and colleges. In these schools the sons of gentlemen and nobles would receive a humanistic education imported from Italy. The purpose of such an education was to prepare men for a career in the church or civil service.²

Sometime in the 13th century, paper money and playing cards from China reached the West. They were "block-printed," that is, characters or pictures were carved into a wooden block, inked, and then transferred to paper. Since each word, phrase or picture was on a separate block, this method of reproduction was expensive and time-consuming. The extension of literacy among laypeople and the greater reliance of governments and businesses upon written records created a demand for a less-costly method of reproducing the written word. The import of paper from the East as well as "block-books" (see above), were major steps in transforming the printing of books. However, woodcuts were not sufficiently durable as they tended to split in the press after repeated use. Furthermore, a new block had to be carved for each new impression, and the block was discarded as unusable as soon as a slightly different impression was needed.

NEWSPAPER PUBLISHING

"A community needs news," said the British author Dame Rebecca 'Vest, "for the same reason that a man needs eyes. It has to see where it is going." For William Randolph Hearst, one of America's most important newspaper publishers, news was "what someone wants to stop you (from) printing: all the rest is ads." Both idealistic and mercenary motives have contributed to the development of modern newspapers, which continue to attract millions of regular readers throughout the world despite stem competition from radio, television, and the Internet. Modern electronics, which put a television set in almost every home in the Western world, also revolutionized the newspaper printing process, allowing news articles and photographs to be transmitted and published simultaneously in many parts of the world. Newspapers can be published daily or weekly, in the morning or in the afternoon; they may be published for the few hundred inhabitants of

a small town, for a whole country, or even for an international audience. A newspaper differs from other forms of publication in its immediacy, characteristic headlines, and coverage of a miscellany of topical issues and events. According to a report in 1949 by the Royal Commission the Press in the United Kingdom, to qualify as news "an event must first be interesting to the public, and the public for this purpose means for each paper the people who read that paper." But the importance of newspapers stretches far beyond a passing human interest in events.³ In the 19th century the first independent newspapers contributed significantly to the spread of literacy and of the concepts of human rights and democratic freedoms. Newspapers continue to shape opinions in the "global village" of the 21st century, where international preoccupations are frequently of concern to the individual, and where individual tragedies are often played out on an international stage. Since it is commonly held that individuals have a right to know enough about what is happening to be able to participate in public life, the newspaper journalist is deemed to have a duty to inform. Whenever this public right to know comes under attack, a heavy responsibility falls on the journalist.

After Independence:

Press Enquiry Committee, 1947:

The Committee was set up to examine press laws in the light of fundamental rights formulated by the Constituent Assembly. It recommended repeal of Indian Emergency Powers Act, 1931, amendments in Press and Registration of Books Act, modifications in Sections 124-A and 156-A of IPC, among others.⁴

Press (Objectionable Matters) Act, 1951:

The Act was passed along with amendment to Article 19 (2) of the Constitution. The Act empowered the government to demand and forfeit security for publication of "objectionable matter". Aggrieved owners and printers were given right to demand trial by jury. It remained in force till 1956

Press Commission under Justice Rajadhyaksha:

The commission recommended in 1954 the establishing of All India Press Council, fixing the press-page schedule system for newspapers, banning crossword puzzle competitions, evolving a strict code of advertisements by newspapers, and the desirability of preventing concentration in ownership of Indian newspapers. Other Acts passed include Delivering of Books and Newspapers (Public Libraries) Act, 1954; Working Journalists (Conditions of Services) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1955; Newspaper (Price and Page) Act, 1956; and Parliamentary Proceedings (Protection of Publications) Act, 1960.⁵

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