

## ROLE OF PRESS IN INDIA'S STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

At the time of the first war of independence, any number of papers were in operation in the country. Many of these like **Bangadoot** of Ram Mohan Roy, **Rastiguftar** of Dadabhai Naoroji and **Gyaneneshun** advocated social reforms and thus helped arouse national awakening.

At was in 1857 itself that **Payam-e-Azadi** started publication in Hindi and Urdu, calling upon the people to fight against the British. The paper was soon confiscated and anyone found with a copy of the paper was persecuted for sedition. Again, the first Hindi daily, **Samachar Sudhavarashan**, and two newspapers in Urdu and Persian respectively, **Doorbeen** and **Sultan-ul-Akhar**, faced trial in 1957 for having published a 'Firman' by Bahadur Shah Zafar, urging the people to drive the British out if India. This was followed by the notorious Gagging Act of Lord Canning, under which restrictions were imposed on the newspapers and periodicals.

### Notable Role

In the struggle against the British, some newspapers played a very notable role. This included the **Hindi Patriot!** Established in 1853, by the author and playwright, Grish Chandra Ghosh, it became popular under the editorship of Harish Chandra Mukherjee. In 1861, the paper published a play, "**Neel Darpan**" and launched a movement against the British, urging the people to stop cultivating the crop for the white traders. This resulted in the formation of a Neel Commission. Later, the paper was taken over by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. The paper strongly opposed the Government's excesses and demanded that Indians be appointed to top government posts. The **Indian Mirror** was the other contemporary of this paper which was very popular among the reading public.

Yet another weekly, **Amrita Bazar Patrika** which was being published from Jessore, was critical of the government, with the result that its proprietors faced trial and conviction. In 1871, the Patrika moved to Calcutta and another Act was passed to suppress it and other native journals.

## Marathi Press

Mahadev Govind Ranade, a leading leader of Maharashtra, used to write in **Gyan Prakash** as well as the **Indu Prakash**. Both these journals helped awaken the con-science of the downtrodden masses. Another Marathi weekly, **Kesari** was started by Tilak from January 1, 1881. He alongwith Agarkar and Chiplunkar started another weekly journal, **Mratha** in English. The Editor of the '**Daccan Star**' Nam Joshi also joined them and his paper was incorporated with Maratha. Tilak and Agarkar were convicted for writings against the British and the Diwan of Kolhapur. Tilak's Kesari became one of the leading media to propagate the message of freedom movement. It also made the anti-partition movement of Bengal a national issue. In 1908, Tilak opposed the Sedition ordinance. He was later exiled from the country for six years. Hindi edition of Kesari was started from Nagpur and Banaras.

## Press and the First Session of Congress

The Editors commanded a very high reputation at the time of the birth of the Indian National Congress. One could measure the extent of this respect from the fact that those who occupied the frontline seats in the first ever Congress session held in Bombay in December 1885 included some of the editors of Indian newspapers. The first ever resolution at this Session was proposed by the editor

of **The Hindu**, G. Subramanya Iyer. In this resolution, it was demanded that the government should appoint a committee to enquire into the functioning of Indian administration. The second resolution was also moved by a journalist from Poona, Chiplunkar in which the Congress was urged to demand for the abolition of India Council which ruled the country from Britain. The third resolution was supported by Dadabhai Naoroji who was a noted journalist of his time. The fourth resolution was proposed by Dadabhai Naoroji.

There were many Congress Presidents who had either been the editors or had started the publication of one or the other newspapers. In this context, particular mention may be made of Ferozeshah Mehta who had started the **Bombay Chronicle** and Pandit Madan Malaviya who edited daily, **Hindustan**. He also helped the publication of leader from Allahabad. Moti Lal Nehru was the first Chairman of the Board of Directors of the leader. Lala Lajpat Rai inspired the publication of three journals, **the Punjabi**, **Bandematram** and the **People** from Lahore. During his stay in South Africa, Gandhiji has brought out Indian Opinion and after settling in India, he started the publication of **Young India**; **Navjeevan**, Harijan, Harijan Sevak and Harijan Bandhu. Subash Chandra Bose and C. R. Das were not journalists but they acquired the papers like Forward and Advance which later attained national status. Jawaharlal Nehru founded the National Herald.

### Revolutionary Movement and the Press

So far as the revolutionary movement is concerned, it did not begin with guns and bombs but it started with the publication of newspapers. The first to be mentioned in this context is **Yugantar** publication of which was started by Barindra Kumar Ghosh who edited it also.

When the Ghadar party was organized in America, Lala Hardayal started publication of the journal '**Ghadar**'. Within one year, millions of copies of this journal were published in Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, Marathi and English and sent to India and to all parts of the world where Indians were residing. In the beginning the copies of the journal were concealed in parcels of foreign cloth sent to Delhi. It was also planned to smuggle the printing press into India for this purpose. But then the war broke out and it became almost impossible to import printing machinery from abroad. Lala Hardayal was attested in America and deported to India. One of his followers Pandit Ramchandra started publishing Hindustan Ghadar in English. With the U.S. joining the war, the Ghadar party workers were arrested by the American Government. When the trail was on, one of the rivals of Pandit Ramchandra managed to obtain a gun and shoot him dead in the jail itself. The death of Ramchandra led to the closure of this paper.

In 1905 Shyamji Krishna Verma started publication of a journal Indian Sociologist from London. It used to publish reports of political activities taking place at the India House in London. In 1909 two printers of this journal were convicted. Shyamji Krishna Verma left England for Paris from where he started the publication of the journal. Later on, he had to leave for Geneva. He continued to bring out the journal from there for two or three years more. In Paris, Lala Hardayal, in collaboration with Madam Cama and Sardar Singhraoji Rana brought our Vandematram and Talwar.

After Yugantar, it was Vandematram that played a significant role in the freedom struggle. This journal was established by Subodha Chandra Malik, C. R. Das and Bipin Chandra Pal on August 6, 1906. its editor, Aurobindo Ghosh, the editor of Sandhya B. Upadhyay and editor of Yugantar B.N.Dutt had to face a trial for espousing the cause of freedom.

So far as the Hindi papers were concerned, they looked to government for support for some time. Bhartendu Harish Chandra was the first to start a journal Kavi Vachan Sudha in 1868. its policy was to give vent to the miseries of the people of India. When the Prince of Wales visited India, a poem was published in his honour. The British authorities were given to understand that the poem could also mean that the Prince of Wales should get a shoe-beating.

The government aid to journals like Kavi Vachan Sudha was stopped for publishing what was objectionable from the government point of view. Bhartendu Harish Chandra resigned from his post of an honorary Magistrate. His two friends, Pratap Narain Mishra and Bal Krishna started publication of two important political journals.

Two friends, Pratap Narain Mishra and Bal Krishna Bhatt started publication of two important political journals Pradeep from Allahabad, and Brahman from Kanpur. The Pradeep was ordered to be closed down in 1910 for espousing the cause of freedom.

The Bharat-Mitra was a famous Hindi journal of Calcutta which started its publication on May 17, 1878 as a fortnightly. It contributed a lot in propagating the cause of freedom movement. The journal exposed the British conspiracy to usurp Kashmir. Several other papers published from Calcutta which played an important role in freedom struggle included Ambika Prasad Vajpayee's Swantrantra, Ramanand Chatterjee's Modern Review in English, Pravasi Patra' in Bengali and Vishal Bharat in Hindi.

One of the foremost Hindi journalist who has earned a name for his patriotism was Ganesh Shanker Vidyarthi. In 1913, he brought out weekly Pratap from Kanpur. He made the supreme sacrifice in 1931 in the cause of Hindu-Muslim

unity. Krishna Dutt Paliwal brought out Sainik from Agra which became a staunch propagator of nationalism in Western U.P. The noted Congress leader, Swami Sharadhanand, started the publication of Hindi journal Vir Arjun and Urdu journal Tej. After the assassination of Swami Sharadhanand, Vidyavachaspathi and Lala Deshbandhu Gupta continued the publication of these journals. They were themselves prominent Congress leaders.

In Lahore, Mahashaya Khushal Chand brought out Milap and Mahashaya Krishna started publishing Urdu journals which helped a lot in promoting the national cause. In 1881, Sardar Dayal Singh Majitha on the advice of Surendra Nath Bannerjee brought out Tribune under the editorship of Sheetala Kant Chatterjee. Bipin Chandra Pal also edited this paper for sometime. Later in 1917, Kalinath Rai joined the paper as its editor.

There is not a single province in India which did not produce a journal of newspaper to uphold the cause of freedom struggle. A. G. Horniman made the Bombay chronicle' a powerful instrument to promote militant nationalism. He himself took part in the meetings where Satyagraha used to be planned. He published vivid accounts of Jallianwala Bagh carnage for which one correspondent of his paper, Goverdhan Das, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment by a military court. Horniman too was arrested and deported to London even though he was ill at that time. Amritlal Shet brought out the Gujarati Journal 'Janmabhumi which was an organ of the people of the princely states of Kathiawad, but it became a mouthpiece of national struggle. Similarly another Gujarati journal Saanjvartman played a prominent role under the editorship of Sanwal Das Gandhi, who played a very significant role in the Quit India Movement in 1942. It was soon after independent formed a parallel Government in Junagarh and forced the Nawab of Junagarh to leave the country. The three editors of the Sindhi journal Hindi Jairam Das Daulatram, Dr. Choithram Gidwani and Hiranand Karamchand, were arrested, their press closed and the property of the paper confiscated.

In Bihar the tradition of national newspapers was carried forward by Sachidanand Sinha, who had started the publication of Searchlight under the editorship of Murtimanohar Sinha. Dev Brat Shastri started publication of 'Nav Shakti and Rashtra Vani'. The weekly yogi and the Hunkar' also contributed very much to the general awakening.