

Role of Press in Indian Freedom Movement

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ABSTRACT :

The developments across the world in Print Media, however came much later in 1780, when compared to developments across the world. Further, from the beginning of the 19th century, politically conscious Indians had been attracted to modern civil rights, especially the freedom of the Press. Sighting the Importance of Press, the struggle for the freedom of the Press became an integral part of the struggle for freedom. James Augustus Hickey is considered the father of Indian Press. He started the Bengal Gazette in the year 1780.

KEYWORDS :

The Press was the chief instrument for carrying out this task, that is, for arousing, training, mobilizing and consolidating nationalist public opinion. In the period from 1870 to 1918, the national movement had not yet resorted to mass agitation through thousands of small and large Maidan meetings, nor did political work consist of the active mobilization of people in mass struggles. The main political task then, was that of politicization, political propaganda and education and formation and propagation of nationalist ideology. It was at these times, Press came into useful purpose. To accomplish the work of National Congress. During its inception, the Congress had no organization of its own for carrying on political work. Its resolutions and proceedings had to be propagated through newspapers. Gradually, the influence of the Press extended far beyond its literate subscribers. Nor was it confined to cities and large towns.

AUTHOR AFFILIATION AND MANUSCRIPT :

A newspaper would reach remote villages and would then be read by a reader to tens of others. In fact, most members of Congress were Journalists, as a result of which Powerful newspapers emerged during these years. These were the Hindu and Swadesamitran under the editorship of G. Subramaniya Iyer, Kesari and Mahratta under B.G. Tilak, Bengalee under Surendranath Banerjea, Amrita Bazar Patrika under Sisir Kumar Ghosh and Motilal Ghosh. To conduct the role of Opposition to the British Government. Nearly all the major political

controversies of the day were conducted through the Press. Almost every act and every policy of the Government was subjected to sharp criticism, in many cases with great care and vast learning backing it up. Press was meant to arouse Political consciousness At that time existed, the Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code according to Which 'whoever attempts to excite feelings of disaffection to the Government established by law in British India' was to be punished with transportation for life or for any term or with imprisonment up to three years. At such moment, Indian journalists adopted several clever strategems and evolved a distinctive style of writing to remain outside the reach of the law. Since Section 124A excluded writings of persons whose loyalty to the Government was undoubted, they invariably prefaced their vitriolic writing with effusive sentiments of loyalty to the Government and the Queen. Another strategem was to publish anti-imperialist extracts from London-based socialist and Irish newspapers or letters from radical British citizens knowing that the Indian Government could not discriminate against Indians by taking action against them without touching the offending Britishers

The press played a significant and multifaceted role in the Indian freedom movement, which ultimately led to India's independence in 1947. The press served as a powerful tool for mobilizing public opinion, spreading awareness, and fostering a sense of unity among the masses. Its impact was crucial in galvanizing the movement and influencing the course of events during this period.

Dissemination of information: The press played a crucial role in spreading information about various aspects of the freedom movement, including the actions of freedom fighters, oppressive measures by the colonial government, and the progress and setbacks of the movement, thereby keeping the populace informed and engaged.

Raising awareness and consciousness: Newspapers and magazines were instrumental in raising political and social awareness among the masses by publishing articles, editorials, and letters discussing the injustices of colonial rule and advocating for self-governance, thereby shaping the political consciousness of the people and inspiring action against British rule.

Shaping public opinion: The press wielded considerable influence in shaping public opinion by highlighting the importance of nationalism, advocating for unity among diverse communities, and encouraging active participation in the struggle for independence.

Uniting diverse communities: Despite India's diverse linguistic, cultural, and religious communities, the press acted as a unifying force by transcending regional and cultural barriers, promoting a common identity and a sense of belonging to the larger Indian nation.

Criticizing colonial policies: Fearlessly, the press criticized the exploitative policies of the British government, exposing corruption, economic exploitation, and discriminatory laws, further fueling public discontent with British rule.

Mobilizing protests and movements: The press often played a pivotal role in mobilizing protests and movements by urging people to join protests, strikes, and civil disobedience campaigns in response to incidents of injustice or oppression.

Providing a platform for leaders: Indian freedom fighters utilized newspapers and magazines as platforms to express their ideas and ideologies, with prominent leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, and others regularly contributing articles and speeches to these publications, reaching a broader audience.

Fostering nationalism: The press played a crucial role in fostering a sense of nationalism and pride among Indians by propagating nationalist slogans, songs, and symbols through newspapers and magazines, aiding in the creation of a collective identity for the movement.

Promoting non-violent resistance: The philosophy of non-violent resistance, advocated by Mahatma Gandhi, was widely disseminated through the press, which highlighted the principles of satyagraha (non-violent resistance) and its effectiveness in challenging British authority.

Overall, the press in the Indian freedom movement acted as a catalyst for change by empowering the masses, exposing colonial injustices, and providing a platform for the voices of the oppressed. Its role in shaping public opinion and rallying people behind the cause of independence was invaluable to the eventual success of the freedom struggle. Thanks for reading article on Role of Press in Indian Freedom Movement

The Press played a Crucial Role in the Freedom Struggle because they helped the general populace comprehend the colonial government's harsh policies, which sparked more unrest and acts of revolution against the British. These periodicals reached remote communities as well, where every editorial and article was attentively read and discussed in local libraries, demonstrating that this movement did not just affect cities and towns.

Press in the Freedom Struggle

James Augustus Hickey is credited with beginning printing in India. In 1780, he founded the Bengal Gazette. It was seized in 1872 though because it was critical of the British government. As the number of newspapers rose, the government assumed the responsibility and took a number of steps to restrict the press. The press's efforts significantly aided the fight for independence. They helped revolutionary ideas propagate, which stoked hostility to the British authorities. Since the press was a powerful tool for the dissemination of political ideals, freedom of the press was essential.

Role of Press in the Freedom Struggle

The public's needs were these newspapers' top priority, not making money. These periodicals still managed to reach a sizable audience and ignite the growing need for public libraries. These periodicals reached remote communities as well, proving it did not just affect cities and towns. Political engagement and education were thus made possible by libraries. Newspapers also helped spread awareness of the brutal measures the colonial government had implemented, which sparked protests and acts of rebellion against the British. In other words, despite British attempts to douse the flames of the Indian independence movement, the press kept them ablaze. Due to the Swadeshi and Boycott campaigns as well as the rise of militant nationalist ideas, several repressive legislation was passed.

The First and Second World Wars severely restricted not just political and human rights but also freedom of speech.

Reaction of the British

The British instituted a number of Censorship measures from early 1800s, at least one of which survives today – the sedition clause. One of the most infamous targets of the Sedition clause was the Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who was tried and convicted thrice. Later, they introduced the Vernacular Press Act in 1878, aimed squarely at suppressing non-English papers from criticising the Raj, as the voice against the colonial rule had risen greatly after the famine in 1876. As Nationalist movement, started gathering steam going into the 1900s, after establishment of Indian National Congress, the British began major crackdown of the Press by passing one act after another, like the Prevention of Seditious Meeting Act of 1911, Press Act of 1910, Criminal Law amendment Act of 1908.

The most disastrous of the act passed was the Press Act of 1910, which brought over 1000 newspapers under prosecution. When Civil Disobedience Movement was well underway, and Salt March was taken, the Press (Emergency Powers) Act was passed in 1931, and further strengthened during Second World War.

The act gave provincial governments power to suppress propaganda, for the Disobedience Movement and was later used as weapon to ban all talks of Congress. Pre-Censorship was still evident in 1943. The Bengal Famine was reported by the Amrita Bazar Patrika. But, the British went so far as to ban the press from telling the country, that it was banned from talking about the famine, so that it could be brushed under the rug. Despite all the opposition, the Press remained an ever-clever entity, as it continued its resistance by using underground papers, radio, art and graffiti. This continued till the British finally abdicated from India, creating the two countries – India and Pakistan.

CONCLUSION :

The Role of the Press in the Freedom Struggle is important because it helped the general populace comprehend the colonial government's harsh policies, against the British many acts of the revolution were sparked. These magazines reached remote villages as well as cities and towns, where each editorial and article was attentively read and discussed in local libraries.

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