

Role of Press in Freedom Movement

The early phase of Nationalist movement from around 1870 to 1918 focussed more on political propaganda and education, formation and propagation of nationalist ideology and arousing, training, mobilisation and consolidation of public opinion, than on mass agitation or active mobilisation of masses through open meetings. For this purpose the press proved a crucial tool in the hands of the nationalists. The Indian National Congress in its early days relied solely on the press to propagate its resolutions and proceedings.

In the initial phase, the vernacular press first concentrated in rousing the social conscience among the people, as if it were the first step towards achieving national consciousness and national awakening. By the third quarter of the 19th cent. they acquired a nationalistic tone and by that time most of the English newspapers/journals were run by Indian themselves.

At the time of the first war of independence, many no. of papers were in operation in the country. Many of these like Bangadoot of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Rastignitar of Naoroji advocated social reforms and helped arouse national awakening.

It was ~~in~~ in 1857 itself that Payam-e-Azadi started publication in Hindi and Urdu, calling upon the people to fight against the British. 'Farman' by Bahadur Shah Zafar, urging the people to drive the British out of India was also published in Sultan-ul-Akbar and Doorbien newspaper.

In the struggle against the British, many newspapers emerged under distinguished and fearless journalists. These include Hindu and Swadesamitran under G.S. Aiyas, Voice of India under Dababhai Naoroji, Kesari (in Marathi) under Tilak, Sudharak under G.K. Gokhale.

Tilaki Kesari became one of the leading media to propagate the message of freedom movement. It also made the anti-faction movement of Bengal a national issue.

The Editor commanded a very high reputation at the time of the birth of the Indian National Congress. Those who occupied the frontline seats in the first ever Congress session included some of the editors of Indian newspapers like G.S. Iyer of the Hindu, Dadabhai Naoroji.

There is not a single province in India which did not produce a journal or 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 of Satyagraha and published vivid accounts of Jallianwala Bagh Massacre. Similarly Gujarati journal Saamjvartman played a very significant role in the Quit India movement in 1942.

In Bitar, the tradition of national newspaper was carried forward by Sachidanand Sinha, who had started the publication of "Searchlight" ~~and~~, Dev Brat Shastri started publication of "Nav Shakti" and "Rashtra Vani".

These newspapers were not established as profit-making business ventures but were seen as rendering national and public service. In fact, these newspapers had a wide reach and they stimulated a library movement. Their impact was not limited to cities and towns, these newspapers reached the remote villages, where each news item and editorial would be read and discussed thoroughly in the 'local libraries'. In this way these libraries served the purpose of not only political eduⁿ but also of political participation. In these newspapers, govt acts and policies were put to critical scrutiny. They acted as an institution of opposition to the govt.