

UNIT

1

*Pre and Post Independence
Journalism in India*

PRE AND POST INDEPENDENCE JOURNALISM IN INDIA

STRUCTURE

- James Augustus Hickey & Early newspapers of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay; Growth of Indian language press—Bangla, Marathi, Hindi and Urdu-prominent newspapers and their editors.
- Role of newspapers in India's freedom struggle, British curbs on Indian Press.
- Print media scenario during initial years of freedom- From 1947 onwards.

• LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Understand about history of Indian press
- Learn about James Augustus Hickey & Early newspapers of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay
- Get an understanding about growth of Indian language press
- Know about role of newspapers in India's freedom
- And learn about print media scenario during initial days of freedom

• JAMES AUGUSTUS HICKEY & EARLY NEWSPAPERS OF CALCUTTA, MADRAS AND BOMBAY

On January 29, 1780, India's first newspaper was born in Calcutta. The newspaper had two titles. The first title, as given on top of the front page in big capital letters, was Hicky's Bengal Gazette. Beneath it was the second title - Calcutta General Advertiser.

Interestingly, the second title was introduced with the words "Or the original". It is not clear why the owner wanted the readers to know that the paper was the original Calcutta General Advertiser. But the two names have become a part of India's newspaper history.

When teachers refer to India's first newspaper, either they call it Hicky's Bengal Gazette or Calcutta General Advertiser.



But more than the two names it is the vision of the owner, James Augustus Hicky, that makes India's first newspaper unique. In a telling statement, Hicky described his newspaper as *"A weekly political and commercial paper open to all parties but influenced by none."*

The newspaper was made up of two sheets, whose dimensions were 12 inches by eight inches. Each page was divided in three columns, and most of the content comprised of advertisements.

The editorial content was made up of :

- Extracts taken from British newspapers
- Hicky's articles that addressed issues of the day including moral ones
- Political and social gossip
- Correspondence of local and distant writers
- Reports on London fashions and local splendour
- Poet's Corner.

The newspaper in its heyday sold 200 copies. But its influence was much more. It was read as well as talked about in both political and social circles.

In the initial months, Hicky kept his promise. His paper avoided direct attacks on East Indian Company and its officials. But this neutrality gave to undisguised malice when a rival newspaper India Gazette made its appearance in November 1780.

Hicky believed that India Gazette had the blessings of the then Governor General Warren Hastings and his wife. He was particularly upset at the denial of postal rights to his newspaper, and launched a malicious attack on the Governor

General and his key officials. The result of this issue was that Hicky was jailed and his paper shut down in 1782.

Calcutta saw a rash of newspapers during the last two decades of the eighteenth century. However, most of them were short-lived.

The second Indian city to get a newspaper was Madras. Its first newspaper, Madras Courier, started publication in 1785. As expected, the presidency town of Bombay became the third Indian city to get a newspaper with the launch of Bombay Herald in 1789.

The first newspapers in India had several things in common. They were invariably started by Britishers; they published parliamentary debates, commented upon social events, carried extracts about happenings in England and Europe and made veiled or malicious attacks on East India Company officials.

It is not a surprise that most of these newspapers did not last long. Here's a list of early newspapers published from the three presidency towns:

- Calcutta
 - 1780: Hicky's Bengal Gazette; India Gazette
 - 1784: Calcutta Gazette
 - 1785: The Bengal journal; Orinetal Magazine or Calcutta Amusement
 - 1786: Calcutta Chronicle
- Madras
 - 1785: Madras Courier
 - 1793: Hurkaru
 - 1795: Madras Gazette
- Bombay
 - 1789: Bombay Herald
 - 1791: Courier; Bombay Gazette

- **GROWTH OF INDIAN LANGUAGE PRESS—
BANGLA, MARATHI, HINDI AND URDU—
PROMINENT NEWSPAPERS AND THEIR
EDITORS**

Digdarshan was the first Indian language newspaper in Bengali. It started in April 1818 by the Serampur missionaries William Carey, Joshua Marshman & William Ward. They soon started another journal in June of the same year & named

boost to their circulation. Newspapers from other parts soon copied this. Newspapers started covering issues that were concerned with the ordinary people. The rural people found that there is a medium to express their grievances and aspirations. Starting of multiple editions was another factor that resulted in the growth of the language press.

Earlier newspapers were confined to state capital cities only. But as more and more potential readers emerged from other areas, newspaper owners started editions from even district centers. Thus multiple editions of newspapers were brought out. The boom in advertising also helped in the growth of the language press. The rural mass turned out to be the biggest market for any product. For attracting them, advertisers were forced to give advertisements in local papers. This in turn resulted in an increase of revenue for the language press.

The Major Indian Language Newspaper

Digdarshan was the first Indian language newspaper. It started in April 1818 by the Serampur missionaries William Carcy, Joshua Marshman & William Ward. They soon started another journal in June of the same year & named it Samachar Darpan.

The famous Raja Ram Mohan Roy also brought out periodicals in English, Bengali & Persian. Some of Roy's papers were Sambad Kaumadi, Brahmical Magazine, Mirat-ul-Akhbar, and Bangadoota & Bengal Herald.

Assamese

Amnodaya, a distinguished journal in the Assamese language was started in 1846 under the editorship of the Reverend Oliver. T. Cutter.

Gujarati

The newspaper with the greatest longevity in India, Mumbai Samachar was also the first Gujarati Newspaper. It was established in 1822 by Farduvji Marzaban as a weekly & then became a daily in 1832.

Hindi

The first Hindi daily was Samachar Sudha Varshan (Calcutta, 1854). Later Samayadant Martand, Banaras Akhbar, Shimila Akbar & Malwa Akhbar came out.

Calcutta was the birth place not only of English, Bengali & Hindi journalism. The first Urdu newspaper was published by Urdu Akhbar in the second decade of the 19th century.

Kannada

Kannada Samachar was the earliest Kannada journal, according to many scholars. But others think that the first Kannada journal was Mangalooru Samachar.

Later Subudhi Prakasha, Kannada Vaatika, Amnodaya, Mahilaasakhi & Sarvamitra came out during the 18th century.

Malayalam

Mathrubhumi, Malayala Manorama, Kerala Kanmudi are the main newspapers of Kerala. The other daily newspapers are Desabhimani, Mangalam, Madhyamam, Chandrika, Deepika etc.

Marathi

Darpan was the first Marathi newspaper started on 6 January 1832. Kesari & Sudarak were other papers of the 18th century. Induprakash was an Anglo-Marathi daily established in 1862.

Oriya

The first Oriya magazine Junaruna was published by the Orissa Mission Press in 1849 under the editorship of Charles Lacey. Then came another publication from the same press 'Prabhatchandrika', under the editorship of William Lacey. Utkal Sahitya, Bodhadayini, Baleshwar Sambad Balika etc. started in the 18th century.

Punjabi

Maharaja Ranjit Singh encouraged the development of Punjabi journalism. The earliest Punjabi newspaper was a missionary newspaper. The first printing press in Punjab was established in Ludhiana in 1809.

Tamil

The first periodical 'Tamil Patrika' a monthly was brought out in 1831 by the Religious Tract Society in Madras; it lasted till 1833. The next periodical weekly was the Dina Vartamani published in Madras from 1856 by the Dravidian press & edited by the Reverend P. Percival. Later Swadeshamitran, Deshabaktan etc. were other papers.

Telugu

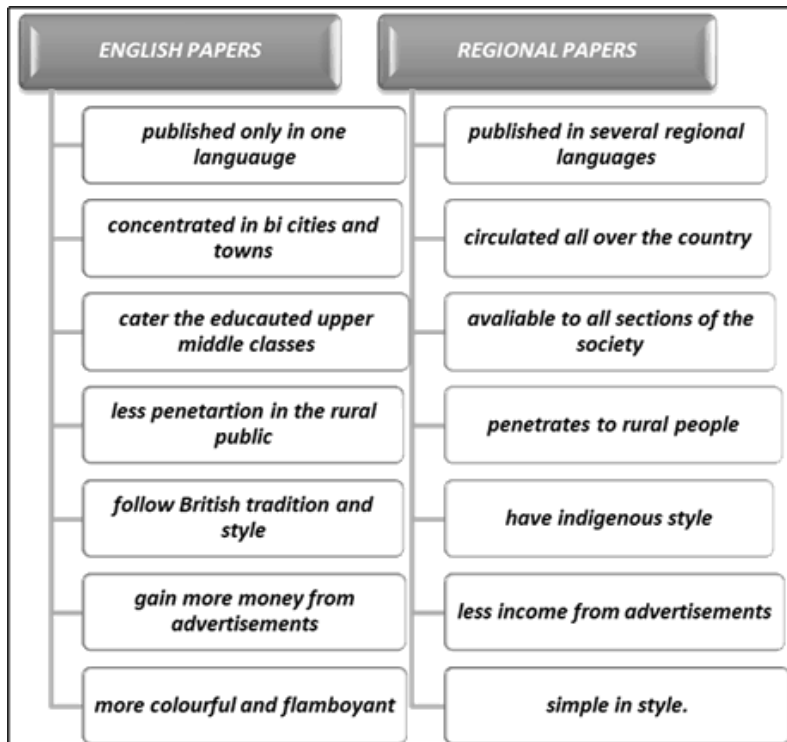
Kandukuri Veeresalingam Pantulu, known as the Father of the renaissance movement in Andhra & the founder of modern Telugu, sparked a social reform movement through his weekly Vivekavardhini. He also founded separate journals for women; Satihitabodhini.

Difference between English Newspapers and Regional Newspapers

Following are the differences between English and Regional newspapers:

- English papers are published in one language only *i.e.* English, whereas language papers are published in different languages.

- English papers are mostly concentrated in big cities and major towns. Language papers are circulated all over the country.
- English newspapers cater mainly to the well-educated, middle class, upper middle class and higher income groups. Language papers are read by even lower middle class and even those below that.
- English dailies have less penetration in the rural public whereas language dailies have more penetration in the rural areas.
- English papers follow the British tradition while the language papers have evolved their own style and methods.
- More money is generated from advertisements in English papers as they circulate amongst people with better purchasing power. Language papers do not get the same amount of revenue from advertisements.
- English papers are more colorful and flamboyant. Language papers adopt a simple style.



- **ROLE OF NEWSPAPERS IN INDIA'S FREEDOM STRUGGLE AND BRITISH CURBS ON INDIAN PRESS**

History books across India are filled with grand stories of the Indian independence struggle. Turn to any page of those books and you'll find tales of brave men and women who stood in open defiance of the British Raj even in the

face of death and those who chose a more silent path. But there is another facet of this struggle, one that is not spoken of nearly as much as it should: the Press.

The British Raj, as is known, was filled with great misery for the Indian citizen who lived under great threat and stress of being a mere colonial entity rather than their own being. Many newspapers did not take well to that reality and chose to highlight the plight of the people in hopes of creating a movement for Swaraj.

It began in 1780 with the first printed newspaper in India, the Bengal Gazette. Run by Irishman James Augustus Hicky, the paper was noted and had infamy for its satirical tone and repeated ridicule of the British Raj, something Hicky was proud of and escalated every time he was sued or otherwise impeded by its agents. Unfortunately, the paper ceased to function in 1782, but it left behind quite the legacy.

As time went on, many newspapers took note of the British Raj's strategy of using Hindu-Muslim discord as a weapon to distract people from any real attempt at revolting on a nationwide scale. In 1857, during the first war of independence, the newspaper Payam-e-Azadi took to spreading the message that the British would continue to divide and rule and that people had to stand up against it.

Alongside that, existed three newspapers : Samachar Sudhavarashan, Doorbeen and Sultan-ul-Akhbar, which were suppressed for their critical view of the British Raj.

Licensing Regulations, 1823-According to this regulation, press without license was a penal offence. The restriction was directed mainly to Indian language newspapers or those edited by the Indians.

The British, of course, never took anything that might threaten their rule lying down. The British Raj instituted a number of censorship measures from the early 1800s, at least one of which still survives to this day: the Sedition clause. But the Sedition clause was alone not enough for the British: they instituted the Vernacular Press Act in 1878, aimed squarely at suppressing non-English papers from criticizing the British Raj, for the voice against the colonial rule had risen greatly after the famine in 1876.

As though a tit-for-tat Indian newspapers too refused to take gag orders and threats of prison lying down. Perhaps it was the century-long arduous rule or simply because they were tired of it, the Press soldiered on, using creative means to circumvent censorship. One of the most notable examples of this is Nil Darpan, a play published in The Hindoo Patriot, which was a critical move leading to the Indigo revolt in 1859.

One of the most infamous targets of the Sedition clause was Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who was tried and convicted thrice, one of which was defended-unsuccessfully-by none other than Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

As the nationalist movement gathered steam going into the 1900s, especially after the establishment of the Indian National Congress-which had many prominent newspaper editors in its first sitting and as prominent leaders-the British Raj began a major crackdown of the Press by passing one Act after another, like the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act, Newspaper (Incitement to Offences) Act, Press Act and Criminal Law Amendment Act.

The Prevention of seditious meetings Act (1907 AD) was enacted to make better provision for the prevention of public meetings likely to promote sedition or to cause a disturbance of public tranquillity was a 1907 Act of the Imperial Legislative Council of the British Raj enabling the government to prohibit political meetings. This Act was passed when British Government intelligence discovered the presence of the Ghadr Movement which had formed for the purpose of fomenting political violence in India.

Newspaper (Incitement to Offences) Act, 1908 empowered the magistrates to confiscate press property which published objectionable material likely to cause incitement to murder / acts of violence against the Extremist nationalist activity.

The most disastrous of the Acts passed was the Press Act of 1910, which brought over 1,000 newspapers under prosecution and made the British Raj's pockets heavier by Rs. 5 lakh in form of securities and forfeitures.

The Multi-fanged Defence of Indian Rules (1915 AD) granted the Executive very wide powers of preventive detention, internment without trial, restriction of writing, speech, and of movement. It was first applied during the First Lahore Conspiracy trial in the aftermath of the failed Ghadr Conspiracy of 1915, and was instrumental in crushing the Ghadr movement in Punjab and the Anushilan Samiti in Bengal.

Rowlatt Act (1919 AD), also known as Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act of 1919, was a legislative council act passed by the Imperial Legislative Council in Delhi on 18 March 1919, indefinitely extending the emergency measures of preventive indefinite detention, incarceration without trial and judicial review enacted in the Defence of India Act 1915 during the First World War.

Near the last decades of the British Raj, when the Civil Disobedience Movement was well underway and Mahatma Gandhi had taken out the Salt March, the Press (Emergency Powers) Act was passed in 1931 and strengthened during the Second World War. The Act gave provincial governments power to suppress propaganda for the Disobedience movement and was later used as a weapon to ban all talk of the Congress.

As the War raged and Indians were drafted into the mess, the press in India formed the All-India Newspapers Editors' Conference, with the aim to fight for the freedom of the press.

Towards the end of the British Raj, though, pre-censorship continued. This was most evident during the 1943 Bengal famine, which was notably reported by the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. The British Raj went so far as to ban the press from telling the country that it was banned from talking about the famine just so it could be brushed under the rug, possibly owing to the debate that Churchill's animosity towards Indians led to him refusing to grant, or reducing food supplies to the region despite pleas by Louis Mountbatten.

The press, being the ever-clever entity it was, 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.

• **PRINT MEDIA SCENARIO DURING INITIAL YEARS OF FREEDOM- FROM 1947 ONWARDS**

At the time when India became independent, the country had only 3,533 publications. Among them 330 were daily newspapers and 3,203 were periodicals. After 50 years, there has been a 12 fold increase in the number of publications. In 1997, according to the data published by the Registrar of News Papers of India, there were 41,705 publications among which the number of newspapers was 4,719. In 2006, this has gone up to 45,600 publications, in which 5,600 are newspapers. At present, India has approximate 398 major newspapers with an overall circulation of 30,772,000 copies.

India has the world's largest newspaper market after China. While news papers are struggling in Europe and USA, in India and China there is a boom. It is interesting to note that the world's three top countries in newspaper circulation are China with 98.70 million copies, India with 88.90 million copies and Japan with 69.10 million. Growth of newspapers is calculated in two ways, one is by circulation and the other is by readership. One copy of a newspaper may be read by several people. If a family subscribes to a newspaper it is likely to be read by four of six members. So if a newspaper has a circulation of one lakh, its readership may be four or five lakhs. A close study of newspaper readership in India shows that there are more readers for language newspapers. This is mainly because English newspapers are confined to cities and towns whereas language newspapers are widely circulated in the rural areas.

Reasons for newspaper boom

India is one of the fastest growing media markets in the world. It is not only newspapers but other media forms which are also growing at a fast pace like radio, television channels and internet. Let us now look into some factors that have contributed to this boom of newspapers in India.



- **Rise in literacy rate**

There is a steady rise in the literacy rates in all the states of our country. More and more people are being initiated into the world of reading and writing. They gradually learn to read newspapers and periodicals. Robin Jeffrey who made elaborate studies about the newspaper revolution in India says that the fastest growth rates in newspaper circulation were in states which showed the strongest growth rates of literacy.

- **Expansion of the middle class**

As the Indian middle class expands, it leads to an increase in the circulation of newspapers. When a household makes economic and educational progress, they consider it as a status symbol to subscribe to a newspaper.

- **Untapped market**

India still has an estimated 350 million people who can read and write but do not buy any newspaper. So there is a vast segment that is still untapped as far as newspaper circulation is considered. More and more newspapers are trying to woo this section.

- **Education of women**

It is often said that if you educate a woman you are educating the next generation. In India women are getting more and more educated and this in turn leads to education of children. Awareness also increases along with this. It contributes a lot to the growth of readership.

- **Technological advancement**

In earlier days, starting a newspaper publication or establishment of a new edition was a costly affair. As technology has improved, it became easier for newspapers to start new editions. This has led to an expansion of newspapers even into small cities and towns.

- **Better purchasing power**

Improvement in the purchasing power of the common man is another factor which helped in the growth of newspapers. Coupled with this, newspapers also started reducing their prices. So it became affordable for the common man.

- **Aggressive marketing**

Newspapers and periodicals are adopting aggressive marketing strategies to attract more readers. They offer various schemes with gifts to attract subscribers. They also offer concessions for long term subscriptions. All these have resulted in an increase of newspaper sales.

- **Political awareness**

As people become more and more aware about political developments, they show interest in reading newspapers. In India, sections of people who had earlier not shown much interest in political activities are now realizing their rights as citizens and are becoming more vigilant about their social responsibilities.

- **SUMMARY**

- On January 29, 1780, India's first newspaper was born in Calcutta run by Irishman James Augustus Hicky. The newspaper had two titles. The first title, as given on top of the front page in big capital letters, was Hicky's Bengal Gazette. Beneath it was the second title - Calcutta General Advertiser.
- Digdarshan was the first Indian language newspaper. It started in April 1818 by the Serampur missionaries William Carey, Joshua Marshman & William Ward. They soon started another journal in June of the same year & named it Samachar Darpan.
- In the same year, Ganga Kishore Bhattacharya started publishing another newspaper in Bengali, the Bengal Gazetti.
- On July 1, 1822 the first Gujarati newspaper, the Bombay Samachar was published from Bombay, which is still extant.
- The first Hindi newspaper, the Samachar Sudha Varshan began in 1854.
- Amnodaya, a distinguished journal in the Assamese language was started in 1846 under the editorship of the Reverend Oliver. T. Cutter.
- English newspapers cater mainly to the well-educated, middle class, upper middle class and higher income groups. Language papers are read by even lower middle class and even those below that.

(c) Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act (1908 AD)

(d) Rowlatt Act (1919 AD)

11. Which of the following act of British also known as Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act of 1919?

(a) The Press Act of 1910 AD

(b) Multi-fanged Defence of Indian Rules (1915 AD)

(c) Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act (1908 AD)

(d) Rowlatt Act (1919 AD)

Answer

1. (a) 2. (b) 3. (c) 4. (b) 5. (a) 6. (a) 7. (a) 8. (a) 9. (a) 10. (b) 11. (d)

Answer in brief:

1. Explain about James Augustus Hickey & Early newspapers of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay.
2. Describe in your words about growth of Indian language press, Bangla, Marathi, Hindi and Urdu –prominent newspapers and their editors.
3. Explain briefly about role of newspapers in India's freedom struggle, British curbs on Indian Press.
4. Describe about print media scenario during initial years of freedom and in current scenario.

