

A Study on Historical Context and Significance of Journalism in India

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Abstract

As mentioned earlier, the first newspaper in India, the Bengal Gazette, was launched in 1780 by James Augustus Hickey. The paper was published in English and had a circulation of only 400 copies. Despite its small readership, the Bengal Gazette paved the way for the growth of the Indian press.

In the early years of Indian journalism, most newspapers were owned and operated by British colonizers. These newspapers mainly focused on the interests of the British ruling class and catered to their needs. However, as Indian nationalism grew, Indian journalists began to challenge British dominance in the media and started publishing newspapers that reflected the views and aspirations of the Indian people.

Keywords: Journalism, Focused, People, Readership, Newspapers, Mobilization

Introduction

The Indian Rebellion of 1857 marked a turning point in Indian journalism. The Indian media, which until then had been dominated by British publishers, saw a surge in the number of Indian-owned newspapers. These newspapers played a crucial role in the freedom struggle, reporting on the atrocities committed by the British and mobilizing public opinion against them.

The Emergence of Nationalist Journalism

The early 20th century saw the emergence of nationalist journalism in India. Newspapers such as The Hindu, The Indian Express, and the Amrita Bazar Patrika played a key role in promoting the ideals of Indian nationalism and independence from British rule. These newspapers also played a crucial role in shaping public opinion during the freedom struggle.

The Role of Radio and Television in Indian Journalism

The 20th century also saw the emergence of radio and television as important mediums of journalism in India. The All India Radio was established in 1936 and played a crucial role in disseminating news and information to the masses. The emergence of television in the 1950s further strengthened the role of journalism in India.

Contemporary Indian Journalism

Today, Indian journalism is a vibrant and dynamic industry. The country has over 100,000 registered newspapers, over 500 news channels, and countless online news portals. Indian journalists are playing a

crucial role in reporting on a wide range of issues, from politics and economics to social issues and entertainment.

The Digital Age

The advent of the internet and digital media has revolutionized the field of journalism in India. Today, there are numerous online news portals, blogs, and social media platforms that provide real-time news and information to millions of Indians.

The rise of digital media has also given rise to new challenges and opportunities for Indian journalism. Fake news, propaganda, and misinformation are significant threats to the credibility of the media. At the same time, the internet has made it possible for journalists to reach a global audience and tell stories that would have been impossible to tell a few decades ago.

DEVELOPMENT OF JOURNALISM IN OTHER PARTS OF INDIA

Language press in India We have seen the cultural awakening and freedom movement that led to the growth of language newspapers. Newspapers in India can broadly be History of Journalism in India School of Distance Education classified into two groups- English newspapers and language newspapers. As the name indicates, English newspapers are published in English language. They are mainly published from big cities and towns. Whereas language newspapers are published in different Indian languages. Unlike the English papers, these are available even in the interior villages of the country. Thus they have a major role in formulating public opinion across our country. Definition of Language Newspapers By language newspapers, we mean newspapers published in different languages spoken in the country. They are also called regional newspapers. In India, language papers are published in more than 100 languages. But the main papers are published in 16 principal languages. Language papers vary from English papers in their style, presentation and approach. Differences between English Newspapers and Language Newspapers a) English papers are published in one language only i.e. English, whereas language papers are published in different languages. b) English papers are mostly concentrated in big cities and major towns. Language Papers are circulated all over the country. c) 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. d) English dailies have less penetration in the rural public whereas language dailies have more penetration in the rural areas. e) English papers follow the British tradition while the language papers have evolved their own style and methods. f) 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. g) English papers are more colourful and flamboyant. Language papers adopt a simple style. Growth of Language Newspapers in India The reasons for the growth of newspapers in India that we have studied so far are equally applicable for the growth of language newspapers. But there are some other factors that helped the rise of the latter. During the early days, the language press was looked down upon as ‘vernacular dailies’ by the English press but with the rise and emergence of language media as a major force this impression has changed. Indian economy is basically a rural economy. More than 60% of our population lives in the rural areas. According to a survey by National Sample Survey Organisation, more than 16 crore households live in the rural areas. A paradigm shift has been visible in the rural population over the past 50 or 60 years. Indian farmers, who were classified as born in History of Journalism in India School of Distance Education debt, live in debt and

die in debt, have become one of the most influential consumer groups in society now. Their income levels have increased and along with that, tastes and preferences have also shown changes. This advancement of the rural mass has resulted in the growth of language newspapers. A marked change in the coverage of local news by newspapers is another reason for the growth of language newspapers. Earlier national and international news dominated the Indian press. But the experiment by some newspapers, especially in the southern states, of covering local news with prominence gave a big 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 centres. 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. Diversity of the Language press During the Independence struggle and after, the Indian newspapers had flourished and expanded, gaining wider circulation and extensive readership. Compared to many other developing countries, the growth of the Indian Press has been impressive. Apart from English language, newspapers are published in India in more than 100 languages though only 22 main languages are listed in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution. The Registrar of Newspapers for India, in their annual report on 2006, observes:- “In a democratic set-up, it is important that all the citizens have the right to information. The news regarding the happenings within and outside the country has to be disseminated to the people. In the past, the print media shouldered the responsibility of disseminating the news. But, today with the growth of information technology, audio and visual media are in the field with instant and wide coverage. We thought that the advent of information technology would affect the print media. But, it didn’t happen; statistics also shows that no technology can beat the print media, which always finds its own level. “The print media has responded to the new changes and challenges with its modernization. They have accepted the information technology, which resulted in better coverage with greater speed and affordable price. The readership of newspapers is also growing. The statistics also shows that the people prefer their regional language newspapers and that is why the regional newspapers are History of Journalism in India School of Distance Education venturing out to bring editions from other cities where there is a sizeable population of the respective language.” The publishers, under Section 19D of the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867, are required to submit annual statements to the Registrar of Newspapers for India. These annual statements are the principal source of data for compilation of this report. All publishers do not submit their annual statements. Hence, the report by the RNI cannot be taken as comprehensive. It can give only a broad overview on the general trend of the Indian press based on the number and circulation of the newspapers. 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. a) 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. b) 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. c) 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. d) 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. e) 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. f) 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. History of Journalism in India School of Distance Education g) 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. h) 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.

Conclusion

The history of journalism in India is a long and fascinating one, marked by a series of events that have had a significant impact on its evolution. From its early days as a British-dominated industry to its present-day status as a vibrant and dynamic industry, Indian journalism has come a long way. This article has provided a comprehensive overview of the history of journalism in India, tracing its roots from the early days to the present day.

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