

The Contribution of Journalism and Communication towards the Attainment of Indian Independence – A Critical Review

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Abstract: The attainment of Independence for any country largely owes to diverse factors such as social, political and economic nature as well as multiple philosophies. Journalism and communication are twin factors that have contributed towards the attainment of Indian independence over a long period of 200 years resulting a marathon struggle against the British Empire, During the British rule the Chief problem was lack of communication among the people of India whose relentless fight for freedom paid limited or no dividends. In order to fill up this void, Journalism as a unique study under the umbrella of communication started playing a vital role in guiding the Indians in their struggle for freedom. Another important problem that Indians faced was illiteracy as a result of which they were unable to read and write all important information communicated by the leaders through their writings. During the freedom struggle journalism through press and print media has served the purpose of arousing the emotions and intense feelings of Nationalism and patriotism among the Indians to support the cause of freedom. The leaders used the newspapers and magazines to propagate their ideas and motivate them to take an active part in India's struggle for freedom. During the days of freedom struggle the leaders faced yet another problem, the problem of imposing censorship and diverse restrictions. The British Government evolved draconian laws like vernacular press act and gagging act. The freedom fighters and the Journalists fought against these acts. The author of this paper seeks to analyse the contribution made by Journalists towards the attainment of Indian independence and by playing a crucial role in educating their countrymen.

Keywords: Journalism, Journalist, Communication, Freedom Struggle, Indian independence, Censorship, Draconian laws, Print media, Press.

1. INTRODUCTION

Before going deep into the issue let us examine the core importance of the three words namely journalism, journalist and communication that are closely associated with the movement of Indian independence.

Journalism may be defined as a study of writing news for the purpose of contributing to newspapers and magazines or preparing news to be published, broadcast or telecast.

Journalist is a person who writes for newspapers or magazines or prepares news meant for broadcasting or telecasting.

Communication may be defined as an act of communicating something like news, information, letter, message, mail through a device like mobile, computer, electronic mail, laptop, internet, whatsapp etc.

The history of movement for Indian independence is the history of Indian Journalism in as much as the great national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Bala Gangadhar Tilak, Sisir Kumar Ghosh, Bipin Chandrapal, Rabindranath Tagore, Subramaniam Iyer, Rajagopalachari, Prakasam Pantulu whose untiring and fearless efforts through their writings published in various News Papers and Magazines led to tremendous success touching the hearts of millions of Indians to join the movement for Indian independence

2. DEVELOPMENT

Journalism in Indian has strongly taken its roots during the days of freedom struggle and it can be conveniently divided into three important stages.

Stage – I (1780 – 1826)

During the first stage between 1780 and 1826 the growth of Journalism in India began. An English man, James Augustus Hickey by name started publishing a Gazette known as Bengal Gaette. It was also known as Hickey Gazette. He published it first on 29th January 178. Thus he became the first person to start a newspaper in India in Pre independence days. His journalistic contribution mainly lies in his strong attitude to take revenge against East Indian Company.

At the same time it is interesting to note that in 1818, another English man James Silk Buckingham by name, assumed the role of hard core Journalist by becoming an Editor for a newspaper called “Calcutta Chronicle” as he was called upon by some business tycoons to promote their philosophy and ideas. Little later he started publishing another newspaper called “Calcutta Herald” through which he started focusing the issues and problems concerning socio economic and political in nature. He also secured support from Raja Ram Mohan Roy the father of Indian Journalism. The publications of Raja Ram Mohan Roy like Sambad Kaumudi published in Bengali in 182 and Mirat-Ul Akbar published in Persia in 1822 threw more light on nationalist and democratic orientation.

During the first stage the East India Company started imposing various restrictions on Press and freedom of speech like the censorship of press and the diverse draconian acts such as the censorship of Press Act 799, Press Ordinance Act 1823 intended to bring all the newspapers under the scrutiny of the British Government. Raja Ram Mohan Roy strongly stood for the freedom of Press. He was the first person to challenge the British Administration. When the press ordinance act was imposed, he took the support of great stalwarts like Dwaramanath Tagore, Chandra Kumar Tagore, Prasanna Kumar Tagore and Harchandra Ghose and submitted a memorandum to the Supreme Court strongly defending the freedom of Press in India. The fight against the British Government for the freedom of Press was an integral part of the national movement in India during the first stage we can also see a steady rise of vernacular press in India. Pandit Jugul Kishore Shukla was the first person to publish a newspaper in Hindi, “Udant Martand” in 1826. “Indian Mirror” was another popular newspaper published in Hindi.

Stage – II (1851 – 1900)

The period from 1851 to 1900 is the second stage of the growth of Indian Journalism. The most important factor of the second stage is that it witnessed the steep rise of Indian nationalism among the people of India through the Indian Press. The national movement rose to greater heights owing to the awareness created by the press among the people whether it was social or political in nature. Thus they could use the press as a strong tool for communication between the people and the government. It was in the second stage that various newspapers came into vogue from various parts of the Country like “The Hindu” in 1878 by G. Subramaniam Iyer, “Amruta Bazaar Patrika” in 1868 by Ghosh Brothers, “The Times of India” in 1861 and “Statesman” in 1875 by Robert Knight, “The Tribune” in 188 by Sardar Dayal Singh Majithia. During this stage the Indian Press had to suffer at the hands of the British Government due to onslaughts heaped upon by it to suppress the Vernacular Press as a result of which “the Ananda Bazaar Patrika” turned overnight to “Amrita Bazaar Patrika” with English edition. It was at this time the Indian National Congress was founded in 1885. The establishment of congress also strengthened the nationalist aspirations of the people of India. Prominent Personalities of Indian National Congress Party were also eminent Journalists and editors of the Newspapers that include like Dadabhai Nowroji, Ranade and Narendranath Sen.

Stage – III (1900 – 1947)

The period from 1900 to 1947 is the third stage in the growth of Indian Journalism. It was in this stage that the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon in 1905, the Swadeshi Movement, the Surat session of Indian National Congress took place that steered the path to total freedom for India. This stage also witnessed the differentiation in the role of the Indian Press that ushered into moderate and radical tendencies leading to political tactics and accurate strategies of the freedom movement. This stage also observed the struggle between the nationalistic and Pro-British Press. Mahatma Gandhi also understands the power of Press and he has used the Press as a powerful weapon against the British rule. Through his writings he strongly motivated people to participate in various movements against the British Government. In 1922 when Gandhi underwent trial for charges of sedition, the entire

Indian Nation had witnessed a heroic response. The Newspapers like “The Indian Express” and “The Hindusthan Times” were recognized as nationalistic newspapers that continuously progressed in terms of their reach and influence among the people of India. This stage also witnessed the significant development of press with the advent of news agencies, news services and also the expansion of coverage of foreign news in India.

3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

There were numerous freedom fighters in the forefront of India’s freedom struggle whose contribution as Journalists and Editors who paved a way to inspire the masses to participate in the movement for Indian independence. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Lokamanya Bala Gangadhar Tilak, Sisil Kumar Ghosh and Subramaniam Iyer were few names that assumed the role of committed Journalists to guide the Indian masses to play an active role in the Indian struggle for freedom.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, born in Orthodox Brahmin family in the Village of Radha Nagar, West Bengal acquired a very strong command and proficiency over various languages like Hindi, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and Bengali, his mother tongue. Nehru called him the founder of the Indian Press. His contribution to Indian Journalism mainly lies in his fight against the British Raj for free Press. He published and edited various Journals. He founded a Journal “Sambad Kaumudi”, “Moon of Intelligence”, in 1821 in Calcutta he fought against the attacks on Vedanta Philosophy by the Christian Missionaries. He also started a newspaper in Persian language, “Mirat UL Akbar”, Mirror of News” in 1822, but closed down in 1823 as a mark of protest against the Press Regulations Act 1823. It was an official News Paper of the Mughal Empire published on every Friday. This weekly gave proper space and more coverage to different events of national and international importance. He also brought out a religious periodical, a Brahminical Magazine to counter act the religious propaganda of Christianity. “The Inquirer”, and the Gyan Auneshin”, which were closely connected with Ram Mohan Roy, represented the school of progressive Hindu Journalism dominated the field in Bengal till 1891. He founded ‘Braho Samaj’ in Calcutta in 1828. As a social reformer he also led campaigns against the social evils like ‘Sati’, polygamy and child marriage. He also raised his voice against the injustice to the rights of women for property. He also stood for the cause of freedom of press and believed that the free press could act as a bridge between the government and society.

Loka Manya Bala Gangadhar Tilk, the father of Indian freedom, was a social reformer and freedom fighter. He was the first to advocate Swaraj, complete independence for India. He gave a clarion call to his fellow Indians to fight against the British rulers till they achieved total independence. He declared “Swaraj is my birth right and I shall have it”. It served as a fuel to all the revolutionaries struggling for freedom. In order to spread nationalism among his fellow Indians Tilak published two newspapers “Kesari” in Marathi and “Maratha” in Marathi. Tilak fearlessly explained the nature of Kesari in strongly criticizing the increasing nature of people to satisfy the British Government in the Country. He also ensured that the articles published in “Kesari” should be synonymous with the name Kesary, lion. He also campaigned anti British content using simple and direct language. In the year 1893 Tilak started Ganesh festivals on a large scale and Shivaji festivals to stimulate nationalism among young Maharastrians. He was sentenced to 18 months rigorous imprisonment for his alleged support to Chapekar brothers in their killing of Rand the official-in-charge of plague operations in Pune. During the days of famine and plague epidemic, Tialk fear-lessly reported the irresponsible attitude of the government. For this Tilak was sentenced 6 years imprisonment in Mandalay, Burma. Tilak always believed that Journalism could be used as a tool for creating public opinion. When the British Government leveled the charges of treason against him, he argued his case for 21 hours and 10 minutes in the court. He made it clear that the newspapers have a positive role to play to create public opinion.

Sisir Kumar Ghosh was yet another name whose Journalistic contribution shook the foundations of the might of the British Raj. He was sharp, wise and strongly courageous to go up against the British rulers. Despite the fact that the media was still in limbo in the 18th Century. Sisir started Amrita Bazaar Patrika, named after his mother, Amrita, on 20th February 1868. The main reason for starting a newspaper was to stand up and fight for the cause of peasants who were exploited by Indigo merchants. Amrita Bazar Newspaper was shifted to Calcutta owing to sudden outbreak of Plague and started functioning as bilingual weekly publishing news and views in two languages, i.e. English and

Bengali. As Ghosh was a fearless Journalist, many situations were created whereby the Patrika was accused of sedition and fined repeatedly.

4. CONCLUSION

It was in the days of movement of Indian independence that the main aim of the Press was not to make profit but to create awareness among the people of India over the values of freedom, nationalism and patriotism. During the pre-independence days, the press became nationalistic and it had a wider reach and broader horizon among the people. It also stimulated the renowned library movement in the Country. The library movement was not only restricted to Cities and towns and also to some remote villages where every citizen had a chance to read a news content editorials, articles and various other columns and discussed them thoroughly. It helped the Citizens of India to have some political consciousness which later turning into their political participation in the movement of India's independence.

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Citation: Dr Atiya Naheed. "The Contribution of Journalism and Communication towards the Attainment of Indian Independence – A Critical Review" *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, vol 6, no.1 2, 2018, pp. 49-52. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20431/2347-3134.0612006>.

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