



**Topic: Development and significant of Press in colonial India and Attitude of East India Company towards the Indians press.**

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**Abstract:**

In this article attempt to evaluate the development of Press in India was an important event in the history of the nation. The growth of Press in India was a slow process. The history of the development of press and journalism in India was introduced by James Hickey who published the first newspaper called the "Bengal Gazette" in 1780. The growth of press in India gradually resulted in becoming a medium where the British government and its policies could be criticized. This entire process actually showed the importance and role of media in a democracy.

The press became a medium of communication for the Indian freedom fighters who wanted to spread nationalist and patriotic sentiments among the Indian people. It showed how the media and journalism could play a significant role in spreading the required message and information among the people. It had the power to generate a mass uprising and even initiate revolts and protests.

The press and literature played a significant role in molding and shaping Indians' national consciousness. From around 1870 to 1918, the early phase of the nationalist movement focused more on political propaganda and education, as well as the formation and propagation of nationalist ideology. The press proved to be a valuable tool in the hands of nationalists for this purpose.

To prevent the growth and development of the press in India, the British government decided to pass certain acts and regulations. The intention behind these acts was to stop the spread of specifically nationalist views and sentiments through these newspapers.

Key word: Indian Press, Bengal Gazette, Communication, Literature, British rule, Acts and regulations.

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**Introduction:**

The advent of the printing press and journalism is considered as the most important invention of modern human civilization. The printing press developed in Europe in the 16th century and in 1605 the "Relation" the first newspaper in the world was published in Germany. Although printing presses were developed in Europe in the 16th century, On the other hand, late 18th century the media was established in Indian subcontinent. James Augustus Hickey, an employee of the British East India Company, published the first newspaper in Calcutta in 1780 called the Bengal Gazette .Thus the history of the development of press in India started with the creation of a newspaper called "The Bengal Gazette" which was published in 1780. This was the first newspapers in India. The paper was also known as the Calcutta General Advertiser. The credit for the origin of the Indian press in the colonial period, therefore, goes to James Hicky for sowing the seed of journalism in India.

**OBJECTIVES OF MY STUDY:**

The main objective of my studies are as follows:

1. To highlight the Indian press.

2. To study the Indian Press acts.
3. To highlight of Attitude of East India Company towards Indian Press.
4. To know about the legacy of our Indian Press and Literature.

The Bengal Gazette or Calcutta was published on 29 January 1780 by James Augustus Hickey, an employee of the East India Company. The Calcutta General Advertiser marked the beginning of journalism in India. Their primary goal appears to have been to assume the readers, which they achieved more often than not by publishing scandals and scurrilous personal attacks against men in high positions, as well as abuse of government. The newspaper had to be closed down within two years due to its aggressive opposition to the colonial authorities. In 1784, Francis Gladwin, another officer of the East India Company, They started to published another newspaper entitled the "Calcutta Gazette". In the following year, two newspapers, the "Madras Courier" and the "Bengal Journal", were launched from the cities of Madras and Bengal. The Madras Courier was edited by Hugh Boyd and printed under the ownership of Richard Johnston.

The Bengal Journal was jointly published by Thomas Jones and William Duane. However, the Bengal Journal for its false report of the death of Lord Cornwallis in the Anglo- Maratha War was sued and resulting in the termination of publication of the paper.

"The Indian World (1794)" by William Duane and "Madras Gazette"(1795) and the Calcutta Journal (1818) by James Silk Buckingham were notable periodicals of this period. Buckingham is considered to be one of the greatest creators of Indian journalism. He paid special attention to the social problems of the Indians and was a staunch supporter of Raja Rammohan Roy. However, Buckingham reported on the disorder of the East India Company. He faced the wrath of then Governor General John Adam for publishing it. The publication of the paper was consequently banned, and Buckingham was exiled .

The contribution of the colonial administration and European missionaries to the development of media and publishing in India was immense. Missionaries were the first to make extensive use of print in various parts of India to spread Christianity. They published not only in English but also in local languages. In some cases, they also changed the Indian languages as needed. The missionaries created the first interlingual dictionaries and grammars and books from one language to another began translated. So we can say that the Europeans pioneered the development of journalism in India. Whatever the motives and how beneficial they were to the public, it would be difficult to ascertain, yet the role of printers, publishers and editors had a lasting impact on the Indian media and its people. In the latter part of the eighteenth century there was a rapid rise of Indian newspapers. In the late nineteenth century, several Indian newspapers was publications begin to meet the reading needs of the public.

At the time of the establishment of British rule in India, neither the press nor journalism linked with politics played a significant role in the development of political ideas, nor did journalism affiliated with politics achieve a high level of quality. The press and literature played a significant role in molding and shaping Indians' national consciousness. From around 1870 to 1918, the early phase of the nationalist movement focused more on political propaganda and education, as well as the formation and propagation of nationalist ideology. The press proved to be a valuable tool in the hands of nationalists for this purpose. In its early days, the Indian National Congress relied solely on the press to disseminate its resolutions and proceedings. During these years, a slew of new newspapers appeared under distinguished journalists. These newspapers were not established to make a profit, but rather to provide national and public service.

Gradually, Indians realized the power of the media. The widespread publication of religious books by European Christians and encouraged them to establish their philosophy on the world stage. In addition, factors such as the expansion of English education, libraries, newspapers, printing of books, development of communication system, etc. played an important role in the development of the Indian media. The Indian media greatly contributed to the development of local languages like Bengali, Marathi and Tamil . At the same time, a dynamic new middle class emerged. It can be seen that many scholars, Munsis, lawyers and social reformers became publishers in their own fields and encouraged the development of new literature. It is noteworthy that such publications were published for promoting anti-missionary campaigns such as rallies and protests.

Using the media, various indigenous upper and middle castes, educated middle classes and religious groups expressed their ideas and thoughts. This through the media and literature groups sought to establish their power and representation for religious and linguistic identity . In the early nineteenth century, publication was used as a tool for comparative discussion and analysis of different religions, for example, Sanatan Dharma and Arya Samaj, Christianity and Hinduism, Islam and Sufism, the difference between Islam and Hinduism, etc. The media being a means of displaying and contesting each other's viewpoints. Moreover, it became a tool through which reputations were both built and destroyed.

Social reformers also made extensive use of publication to propagate their ideas and arguments. Sati, widow remarriage of women Various issues such as education, age of consent for marriage and superstition were widely discussed through the media and print. Reformers sought to reform both 'private' and 'public' aspects. Those who opposed the reasoning of the reformers, they also resorted to publication. The publication thus paved the way for public debate. It is noteworthy that printing contributed to the creation of a new literature. Novels, songs, short stories and articles are the Indian form and style began to acquire.

In the 1870s, Indian scholars wrote historical novels mainly in Marathi and Bengali Bengali and began writing the first literary history of India, which paved the way for the outline of the Indian state. The appearance of Bharatendu "Harichandra" in Hindi literature marked the beginning of a new era. He is considered the father of modern Hindi literature. He was at once a playwright, journalist, critic and publisher. He expressed views on a variety of issues, including literature, language, and religion, which were inextricably linked to political and national identity. Chandu Menon wrote the Malayalam novel 'Indulekha' . It was a love story that reflected the true face of society and Munshi Premchand's novel 'Godan' published in 1936 which beautifully portrayed the lives of Indian farmers.

From the late nineteenth century, even middle-class women began to use the media as a weapon to express their views and anger and emotions. By the promotion of education Increased the number of women who could study in middle-class homes. In 1876, Rassundari Devi published her autobiography 'My Life' in Bengali. In the 1880s, women like Tarabai Chinde and Pandita Rambai used print to express their emotions against lives of upper caste Hindu women, especially widows . The poor, factory workers and lower castes also began to rely on print They were financially deprived and had low education rates. Therefore with this in mind, magazines were published in various cities at very affordable prices and sold in the streets, so that the poor people could buy the magazines.

In the twentieth century, Dr. B.R Ambedkar in Maharashtra and Periyar in Madras began writing strongly against caste and caste religion and their writings gained widespread popularity. Different caste organizations in different parts of India started publishing their own magazines to clarify their specific demands and build identity. In 1938, in Kanpur a mill worker Kashibaba gave 'Chhote and Chhote aur Bade ka Sawal, which showed the relationship between caste and class exploitation.

**Attitude of East India Company towards Indians and the growth of press :**

The Bengal Gazette was the first newspaper ever published, but its operations were stopped soon in 1872. The reason behind it was the aggressive condemnation of the East India Company through its articles. The role of the press in the freedom struggle was considered very important. After the Bengal Gazette was stopped from publishing, many other newspapers came into existence, such as the Calcutta Chronicle, the Bengal Journal, the Bombay Herald, and the Madras Courier. Seeing the introduction of so many newspapers, the East India Company expressed its concern regarding the news of their unfair practices in India. To prevent the information of these newspapers from reaching London, the East India Company sought to impose restrictions on the publication of all the newspapers and journals.

The East India Company considered the Indian lands to be its personal property, and all Englishmen in India who were not employed by the company were seen as interlopers and trespassers by the company's officials. When it came to the company, unofficial Englishmen were more likely to criticise the monopolised organisation. As a result, they were outspoken in their criticism of the government and its officials, and they took pleasure in the hatred directed at them in the periodicals. In this way, there was a tug of war between the officials, who not only despised the new paper but also held them in the highest regard and the opposition, who made it a point to annoy the government and their servants not only through fair criticism of policy and action but also by going above and beyond the pale. Early histories of the era in India, which were written and edited entirely by Englishmen, serve as a vivid illustration of this point. Bolts made an unsuccessful attempt to launch a newspaper in 1767, but the initiative was snuffed out when the government deported the individual who had initiated the venture. It wasn't until Hickey started India's first weekly newspaper, the Bengal Gazette, in 1780 that the beginning of the press in India was officially established. Soon after, Hickey found himself at odds with Warren Hastings, mostly because he was critical of Hastings' policy in general. After Hickey's arrest and imprisonment the newspapers were established in Calcutta between 1780 and 1783, with the editor of one such publication being deported by John Shore in 1783. They included India Gazette (1780), the Calcutta Gazette (1784), and Hurkaru with the latter in particular achieving some notoriety and prominence.

The media helped in the development of nationalism by making the people of India aware of the concepts of national ideals, freedom and equality. Nationalist leaders tried to create public debate and public opinion through newspapers by questioning the authority of the colonial powers. They wrote about colonial misrule and encouraged people to participate in nationalist activities. The British administration imposed various restrictions on the activities of the media. However, it should be noted that the stricter the administration

The number of Indian newspapers increased accordingly. This attempt to censor anti-administration publications also aroused militant protests. After 1857, the local media became even more vocal in their criticism of British policy. Regarding the role of the nationalist press, the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, wrote in March 1886, 'Day after day, hundreds of sharp-witted babus pour forth their indignation against their English oppressors in very pungent and effective diatribe.'

The British authorities enacted strict laws to control the freedom of the press in view of the increasing anti-government activities of the media. 1799 Governor General Lord Wellesley introduced the first regulations on the media. In 1823, acting Governor General John Adam new against the press issues rules. According to the terms, Indian media were required to obtain advance registration and compulsory licenses. however, These regulations were repealed in 1835 when Sir Charles Metcalf took office as Governor-General. As the revolt against British rule broke out in 1857, Lord Canning, the Governor-General at the time, imposed a Licensing Act “on newspapers and periodicals.

### **Acts and Regulations:**

To prevent the growth and development of the press in India, the British government decided to pass certain acts and regulations. The intention behind these acts was to stop the spread of specifically nationalist views and sentiments through these newspapers. The British Indian press was legally protected by laws such as the Vernacular Press Act, the Censorship of Press Act, 1799, the Metcalfe Act, and the Indian Press Act, 1910, while media outlets were governed by the Licensing Regulations, 1823, the Licensing Act, 1857, and the Registration Act, 1867.

The East India Company wanted to prohibit the Indians from coming together and launching a revolt against the government. Here are some important acts and regulations that were passed during British rule:-

1. Censorship of Press Act:
- 2..Licensing Regulation Ordinance
3. Press Act or the Metcalfe Act
4. Licensing Act
5. Vernacular Press Act
6. Registration Act
7. Indian Press Act
8. Newspaper Act

### **1.Censorship of Press Act 1799:**

The first act passed in the direction of imposing restrictions on the Indian press was the Censorship of Press Act in 1799. It was passed by Richard Wellesley, who was the Governor- General of India at the time. The Censorship of Press Act was passed in order to restrict the French people from spreading any news that was against the British government. It also imposed a restriction on all

the newspapers and journals that would not be published without first getting approval from the British government. All the magazines, journals, pamphlets, books, and newspapers were covered under this act after a modification in 1807. The limitations were made to be easier after Francis Hastings occupied the chair in the year 1818.

## **2.Licensing Regulation Act 1823**

The next act or ordinance passed was the Licensing Regulation Act by John Adams. This ordinance was passed in 1823 by Adams, who was the Governor-General then. This act was primarily focused on the Indian newspapers or those that were at least edited by Indians. According to the Licensing Regulation, if any newspaper were published without a license, it would be considered a serious criminal violation. All the Indian newspapers came under the radar. Raja Ram Mohan Roy decided to stop the publication of *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* which was a Persian journal. The journal was started by Roy in 1822. He also launched a revolt against the British government in 1824.

## **3. Metcalfe Act or Press Act 1835**

The Press Act or the Metcalfe Act came to be known as the liberator of the press. The act revoked the License Regulations of 1823. It enabled the press to be more liberal, which contributed to the development of press in India to a great extent. The main requirement of the Metcalfe Act was that the printer of the publisher of the newspaper must provide all details regarding the place of publication. If the instructions are not followed, the newspaper shall be stopped from publishing. Sir Charles Metcalfe (1834-36) is known as the "Liberator of the Indian Press," as he repealed all restrictions on the vernacular press with the famous "Press Law."

## **4. Licensing Act 1857**

Another act was passed after the Revolt of 1857, called the Licensing Act. The act was passed by Canning, the Governor-General of India at the time. This act passed strict limitations on the press. Any new publications were supposed to be published or printed only with the permission of the Government.

## **5. Vernacular Press Act 1878**

An act was passed by Lytton, who was the then Viceroy of India. This act was passed towards controlling the vernacular press in a better way. The Vernacular Press Act was introduced to limit the freedom of newspapers published in local Indian languages. It happened as a result of the differences between the European population and the Indian population post the Revolt of 1857.

## **6.Registration Act, 1867**

The Metcalfe act of 1835 was repealed by the Registration Act of 1867. The act was said to impose regulations but no restrictions on the press. The name of the printer, publisher, and place of publication were now required to be included in the print media, and a copy was required to be submitted to the government.

## **7. Newspaper (Incitement to Offences) Act, 1908**

The Newspaper (Incitement to Offense) Act of 1908 empowered magistrates to seize press property that published objectionable material likely to incite murder or violent acts. Extremist nationalist activity during and after the Swadeshi movement of 1906 prompted this act.

### **8 . Indian Press Act, 1910:**

This act was a revision of the Vernacular Act, which empowered local governments to demand a security at registration from the printer/publisher and forfeit/deregister an offending newspaper, and the printer of a newspaper was required to submit two copies of each issue to local governments.

Since the early nineteenth century, nationalists have prioritised the protection of civil liberties, including press freedom. Raja Rammohan Roy had protested against a resolution restricting press freedom as early as 1824. From around 1870 to 1918, the early phase of the nationalist movement focused more on political propaganda and education, as well as the formation and propagation of nationalist ideology. The press proved to be a valuable tool in the hands of nationalists for this purpose. In its early days, the Indian National Congress relied solely on the press to disseminate its resolutions and proceedings. During these years, a slew of new newspapers appeared under distinguished journalists. These newspapers were not established to make a profit, but rather to provide national and public service. In fact, these newspapers had a wide readership and sparked a library movement.

Their influence was not limited to cities and towns; these newspapers reached out to remote villages, where each news item and editorial was thoroughly read and discussed in the 'local libraries' that gathered around a single newspaper. In this way, these libraries served the dual purpose of political education and political participation. Government acts and policies were scrutinised in these publications. They served as an opposition institution to the government.

### **8.During the First World War**

During the First World War, the Defence of India Rules were imposed to suppress political agitation and free public criticism. The Press Acts of 1908 and 1910 were repealed in 1921 , based on the recommendations of a Press Committee chaired by Tej Bahadur Sapru. The Indian Press (Emergency Power) Act of 1931 was passed in the aftermath of the Salt Satyagraha. During the civil disobedience movement, it granted broad powers to suppress any publication that questioned the government's authority. This Act gave provincial governments broad powers to suppress civil disobedience propaganda. It was expanded in 1932 to include all activities aimed at undermining government authority.

### **9. During the Second World War**

During the Second World War, pre-censorship was imposed under the Defense of India Rules. The penalty of imprisonment was increased to five years through amendments to the Press Emergency Act. Furthermore, the Official Secrets Act was amended to provide a maximum penalty of death or transportation for the publication of information likely to be useful to the enemy. Despite the numerous draconian laws, the Indian press remained impervious to the regulations and worked its way around to defend civil liberties and press freedom, emerging as the torch bearers of the national movement.

### **Conclusion**

During British rule, the Indian press faced challenges such as illiteracy, colonial pressure, and repression. However, it later became a prominent tool in the freedom struggle. Newspapers were critical in casting and developing national awareness among the Indian people. The development of printing papers prompted widespread participation in India's nationalist movement.

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