

CHAPTER VI

The Role of the Press

The Press played a great role in moulding public opinion towards the achievement of freedom in Hyderabad. Though the odds were heavily against them **they strived** to achieve the purpose for which they came into existence.

There were many obstacles for the growth of Press in Hyderabad State. The impact that education had in Andhra as a part of Madras Presidency was lacking in Hyderabad, which was ruled by the Nizam. This was an important reason for the delayed awakening in Telangana. Another important impediment was the discouragement given to the language of the majority, Telugu. Urdu, the official language, was spoken by a small sector and the majority, that was 86% of the population, spoke mainly Telugu in addition to Marathi and Kannada. The Nizam was keen on evolving an educational policy, which was directed at supplanting the local languages by Urdu. The state-aided education was given only through Urdu or English. The Osmania University was lavishly financed by the state and its primary objective was to attract only Muslim scholars who could effectively influence the young educated Muslims.

The government did not allow even the private institutions to impart education in the language of the people. The people of the state were denied the most elementary rights of citizenship. Though the Nizam announced the formation of the Executive and Legislative Council on 17th November 1919 with Sir Ali Imam as its President, the people did not enjoy any civil liberties .

It was the gross and deliberate neglect of the Telugu language by the Nizam's government, which led to the origin of struggle in Telangana which later snowballed

' M.Fathu Ilah Khan "*A History of Administrative Reforms in Hyderabad State*, 1965 Hyderabad P.p. 91-95.

into the freedom movement. "Sri Krishna Devaraya Andhra Basha Nilayam" set up in 1901 by **Komaraju** Lakshmana Rao was the first library in Telangana. It was followed by "Sri Raja Raja Narendra Andhra Basha Nilayam" at Hanumakonda in 1904, Andhra Samvardhini at Secunderabad in 1905 and Vignana Chandrika Grandha Mandali at Hyderabad in 1906².

The Andhra Jana Sangham, which was formed in 1922, aimed at the social, economic and cultural revival of people of Telangana. They made great efforts to open Telugu schools, libraries, publish Telugu books and promote historical research.

In spite of all the impediments, among the people of Hyderabad city a small group of English educated people could not remain untouched by the social and political developments of British India. But all efforts were made by the Nizam to squash their zeal.

The latter half of the 19th Century was characterized by vigorous journalistic activity though the climate was not conducive to its growth. A number of newspapers and journals in Urdu, Persian, Telugu, Maratha and English came into being. Some of them were started only to celebrate the accession of Mir Mehboob Ali Khan and ceased publication soon after. It is estimated that about 22 papers and periodicals existed in the 1890s. The early price was quite low from what it is today. The press dispatches in English papers were in the form of long stories laced with comments and observations of the their correspondents. Compared to the papers in Bombay and Madras who wrote boldly, those published within the state showed considerable circumspection and their tone was respectful towards the Nizam, the nobility and officialdom.

² V.Hanumantha Rao(ed), *A.P Year Book, Hyderabad*, 1984. p 42

The Urdu press which was dominant had no correspondents. Even local news would take a week to get into print. There was no advertisement in the papers and so subscription was the only source of the income. The amount of subscription varied according to the status of the subscriber. Thus the Nizam's Government paid one rate, and the resident's office another.

The papers had to carry something to tickle the ego of the nobles. Above the masthead was a declaration of loyalty to the Nizam. Most papers carried the *firman*s of the Nizam. If the Nizam sent a poem of his, it had to be published on the front page. It had to be printed as it came, not even a comma could be changed.

No policy was followed for granting permission to start a paper. Depending upon the territorial jurisdiction it was solely a matter of the will of the Kotwal or Resident to grant the permission or not.

During the Osman Ali Khan period, the editor and publisher of the paper had to fulfill three conditions. 1) He had to be educated 2) He had to have adequate finances 3) He had to be married. The last condition was put to ensure good behaviour on the part of the Journalist- probably an ingenious way of ensuring a docile person. But there were journalist who risked even their marital happiness and financial security to publish what they felt was right.

As early as the 19th century there were a number of restrictions on the Press by the Nizam. Some of the restrictions were

They were not to write against the British or the Nizam.

- There should be no debate or discussion on religion.
- They should not create any fear or tension among the people.
- There should be no anonymous writings.
- No false opinion should be created in the people.

The editors were expected under this circular not to publish anything that might

"threaten an injury to a Government servant or tend to prejudice the mind of the people against His Highness the Nizam's Government or any of its Officers".

This action of the Government was severely criticized in the press of the day. The Urdu paper *Shoukat-ul-Islam* refused to sign the agreement and commented upon it in very strong language with the result that it was suppressed. The following remarks show the reaction which the circular had produced in Hyderabad at the time: -

"The circular issued by the Home Secretary to the Native papers in Hyderabad, which you copied from *The Deccan Times* some days back, defines very clearly the character of the despotism that guides the destinies of over ten millions of His Highness's subjects. To expect any Editor to discharge the duty he owes to himself no less than to the public after binding himself not to publish anything that may "threaten an injury to a Government servant or "Tend to prejudice the mind of the people against His Highness the Nizam's Government or any of its officers is to expect him to accomplish what is impossible; and to think that any man with a modicum of self-respect will subscribe to such a ridiculous "agreement", is to count too much upon the hectoring or terrorizing policy the Home Secretary has hitherto pursued. If this circular has been called for -I mean if the officials cannot afford to stand a moment without the "thick -coating" that mercenary writers can invest them with for a consideration, if their doings are such

as cannot bear the light of day—what becomes of the tall talk that all that people in power do is fair, that there are data for each document issued, and good reasons for each step taken. The Nawab Mehdi Hassan evidently mistook his vocation and the master he would have to serve when he entered the service of His Highness the Nizam—a prince who has "so much" to do with an enlightened people like the English and a liberal Government like theirs. What an acquisition he might have been as a censor of the Press under the Czar of all the Russia. But then I forget that in Russia people do not rise by flattery and wield power without intelligence."³

In Addition to the difficulties under which the Press in those days was labouring, it was difficult even to get permission to start a news paper. According to the editor of an Irdu daily , when he explained his intention of starting a news paper, Mr. Crawford, the first Assistant Resident retorted quickly.

"We don't want such a paper, and that is the reason why you will not get permission to start it. Is not the reason clear enough?"⁴

Many of the news paper including *The Deccan Times* had notified to its staff that the paper will stop publication soon. They felt that they could not work under the new restrictions laid down by the government. Every editor was made to sign an agreement which stated that he and his successors will not commit the following acts.

³ N. Ramesan, ed *History of Freedom Movement in Hyderabad*, Hyderabad 1976 p41.

⁴ *Ibid* p. 44

"To print or publish any words or sketches or hints which might incite disloyalty towards the British Govt, or the Government of H.H. the Nizam or result in discord among the members of various races, nationalities, religions or communities, irrespective of whether these communities live within British territory or the territory of H.H. the Nizam."

"To intimidate or cause pain to any person or instigate anyone to offer money or something else in lieu of money or any other thing signed or sealed which might serve in lieu of money to another person or—give illegal gratification to him".

"To threaten with injury a Government Servant or such other person as is supposed to be connected with a Government servant and by that means to induce the Government servant to do a particular act in the discharge of his duties or fail in the discharge of duties or delay the discharge of his duties".

"To print or publish any anonymous writings in their paper".

"Any such news about the Government, His Highness or any officer of the State which might adversely affect public opinion and about the authenticity of which full proof has not been obtained."

"If I, or my representatives or successor disregard any of the above conditions the Government will be entitled to forbid the publication of my paper, in which case myself, my representative or successors shall not be entitled to any compensation or damages. These responsibilities will be in addition to the responsibilities which are imposed upon me,

my representatives or successors under the ordinary laws in force at the time."⁵

One of the earliest newspapers, '*Hyderabad Record*' condemned the high-handedness of the British Residents in Hyderabad and they could not continue for long and had to stop publication by 1892. Those journalists who continued to write boldly were either forced to leave the city or they were taken into police custody⁶. The '*Hyderabad Record*' championed the cause of the Nationalist movement and downtrodden people. It vigorously espoused the cause by giving free publicity to its activities. The paper was quite critical about the activities of the residents of Hyderabad and says in one place

"As soon as they cross the Red Sea they leave their conscience behind with one noble and single exception and that in the person of Mr. W.B. Jones".

In view of these facts the Residency Officials looked down upon the paper and as time passed on they would not tolerate its bitter attacks upon the residency. So they stopped subscribing for it. The '*Hyderabad Record*' could continue only for 5 years.

In spite of all the restrictions made by the Nizam's government, the Telugu newspapers strived to spread the ideas of nationalism. They were simple in style, soul stirring, had an emotional appeal and created a real political movement. The number of Telugu works increased after 1920. But most of them were either banned or forfeited under some pretext or other by the government. Some editors were warned, while others were prosecuted. In spite of all the efforts made to emphasize on the importance

⁵ *Ibid* P.p 50 -52

⁶ Rudra, a popular barrister of Hyderabad and correspondent of "The Pioneer" was forced to leave the city as he criticized the government, see for details P.R.Rao , *History of Modern Andhra Pradesh*, Delhi, 1991. P 134

of Telugu language and popularize it, the Nizam's government came down heavily on it. Y.M.Kale who presided over the second Hyderabad Political Conference at Bombay in 1926 said:

"The dominant languages are thus Telugu and Marathi; Urdu being the language of only 1/10⁴ of the population and mostly restricted to big cities. It is common knowledge that both Telugu and Marathi are cultured languages having plenty of literary merit and will stand comparison to any of the spoken languages of India".⁷

He also added the

"Freedom of Press within the dominions is unknown. Inside the dominion, no free speech is allowed and if external help is offered it is stigmatized as outside interference and as such disallowed. Thus there is a systematic and well-planned tyranny that is practiced. The people are always terrified and demoralized and are afraid of speaking even privately".⁸

The first Telugu journal was started in 1912 by Srinivas Sharma from Mahboobnagar. It was called '*Hitabodhini*'⁹. He also started a printing press '*Sarajini Vilas*' and the paper had nearly 500 subscribers. But he sustained a great loss and the paper could not flourish and it was closed in two years. In 1917, Swami Venkat Rao of the Divine Life Society started a monthly journal called '*Andhra Math*' from Secunderabad but it did not survive beyond eight months. A series of Telugu publications began after 1920 but none of them could survive for long due to

N.Ramesan ed. *The Freedom Struggle in Hyderabad*, Vol.IV, (1921-47) Hyderabad; 1966, p. 59.

⁸ Ibid, p. 61.

⁹ According to J.Nataraja in *History of Indian Journalism* New Delhi, 1954, The *Satyadoota* started in Bellary in 1835 by missionaries is mentioned as the first Telugu newspaper by some scholars. p.64

Some of the important publications in Telugu in the 19th century in the Andhra region were *Vivekavardhini* of Veerasalingam (monthly) in 1874, *Andhra Prakashika* in 1885 by Partha Sarathi Naidu, *Sasilekha* in 1894 by G.Seshcharyulu. 'Telugu Press' by **Subramanyam** in *History of Modern Deccan*, (1720/24 - 1948) Hyderabad 2000 p.252

government harassment, especially those who raised a voice of protest against the autocratic rule of the then government or demanded more freedom of speech and of association. Some of the weeklies and journals started were

1. In 1920 - V. Seetaramachander Rao started a Telugu weekly called *Telugu Patrika*.
2. S. Narashima Rao started a weekly in 1920 called *Neelagiri* from Nalagonda.
3. In 1920 - a paper called *Andhra bhyudhayam*.
4. In 1923 - *Saiva Pracharini* from Warangal.
5. In 1925 - Sri Bhaskar started a biweekly from Secunderabad called *Nedu*.
6. In 1925 - Bhagya Reddy started a fortnightly called *Bhagyanagar Patrika*.
7. In 1925 - *Golkonda Patrika* was started by Suravaram Pratapa Reddy.
8. In 1927 - P. N. Sharma started *Sujatha*.
9. In 1934 - D. Sharma started a monthly from Secunderabad called *Deccan Kesari*.
10. Smt. R. Satyavati Devi started a monthly from Secunderabad called *Telugu Talli*.
11. Veerabhadra Sharma started another monthly from Secunderabad called the *Vibhuti*.
12. D. Ramanuja Rao started a monthly called *Shobha* from Warangal. This was stopped during the Razakkar movement and it was revived in 1950¹⁰.

The government passed different orders banning and forfeiting the various Telugu publications that had begun under different groups. Under the category of

¹⁰ The Telugu Press played two important roles, one of a warrior by criticizing the anti-Indian policies of the British government and secondly the role of a priest in preaching patriotism to the people. K.Subramanyam *op.cit* p 260.

Proscribed or Forfeited works was '*Bharatha Gitamulu*¹¹'. Another casualty in this group was *Maharani Jhansi Lakshmibhai Natakamu*¹².

Another category was banned under the heading, Dramatic Performances. Two examples of this were *Navayuga rambam*¹³ and *Swarajya Rathamu*¹⁴.

There was another group was 'Warned Works' under Press and Registration of Books Act. Under this Act, warning was given so that if the individuals continued publishing their works action would be taken. The printers of Maneli Press Bezwada were warned under Press and Registration of Books Act¹⁵.

There were certain editors who faced greater trial for their endeavors. The editor and correspondent of '*Ryot Patrika*' was prosecuted under section 124 A and 153 A of the Indian Penal Code¹⁶. In still other cases, criminal proceedings were initiated for offences under Section 124 A and 153 A of the Indian Penal Code. The charge against them was that they attempted to promote feelings of enmity between different classes of His Majesty's subjects.

The year 1925 marks the beginning of a new era in the political life of Telangana, inasmuch as, it was in that year that the Andhra Mahasabha came into existence and also in the same year the *Golkonda Patrika* was started by Suravaram Pratapa Reddy as a bi-weekly. The birth of the *Golkonda Patrika* also saw the death of

¹¹ G. O. Ms. No. 212, Publication Department, dated 12/4/1921

¹² G. O. Ms. No. 643-4, Publication Department, 8/6/1931

¹³ G. O. Ms. No.520, Publication Department, 17/8/1921

¹⁴ G. O. Ms. No. 83, Publication Department, 28/1/1922

¹⁵ G. O. Ms. No. 234, Publication Department, 22/4/1921

¹⁶ G. O. Ms. No. 258, Publication Dept, 28/4/1921.

the *Telugu Patrika* and *Neelagiri*. The services of the *Golkonda Patrika* are too well known to require further recounting. Suffice to say that Suravaram Pratap Reddy was one of the pioneers of the political movement in the State who braved all storms for the cause which he had willingly espoused.

Qazi Abdul Gaffar, the eminent man of letters and the editor of the *Payam* started a Telugu daily called *Sandeshamu* in 1945 which had hardly a life of six months.

1945 also saw the birth of two Telugu Dailies namely the *Telangana* and the *Meezan*. The *Telangana* was financed by Rajagopal Mudaliar and *Meezan* by Calcuttawala. The *Telangana* was edited by a very talented journalist B.R. Chari and *Meezan* by a well-known man of letters, Adavi Bapi Raju. The *Telangana* tried to support the nationalist movement but had to close down within a couple of years. The *Meezan* was essentially a daily of feudal outlook and supported the activities of the Government. Shri Adavi Bapi Raju had to quit *Meezan* when the financier asked him to attack the Congress in indecent language. The *Meezan* continued its publication till the Police Action in 1948. The *Nizam Vijay* was founded in December 1920 under the joint patronage of Vaman Naik and Keshav Rao. Laxman Rao was its editor and proprietor. Laxman Rao Phatak was member of the Hindu Political Association, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Social Service League. He was a friend of Raghvendra Rao Sharma. The editorials were based on news items supplied from districts and coloured by imagination. The paper was suspended in August 1929 but the editor secured permission for two other papers *Lokashikshan* and the *Nagarik*. The Director of Public Instruction found fault with the *Nagarik* and it was stopped. The *Nizam Vijay* was revived in January 1930 and again it published objectionable news.

The *Golkonda Patrika* was edited by Balakrishna Reddy and published by Jayaram Krishna Reddy. But the paper was practically in the hands of persons like Madapati Hanumantha Rao and S. Pratapa Reddy. The former editors of this paper included personalities such as M. Narsinga Rao, and B. Ramakrishna Rao. These politicians were well-known. The *Patrika*, as an organ of the Central Andhra Association with pro-Congress policy, was financed and supported by the Hyderabad Reddy community. It had successfully achieved its object in spreading the Andhra Movement in the Telangana districts. It generally dealt with matters related to Sanghams and Begar. The *Patrika* was equally enthusiastic regarding educational advancement. It also condemned the activities of the Urdu papers.

The Telugu newspapers did yeomen service in criticizing and highlighting the violation of civil liberties in the Nizam state. The *Andhra Patrika* and the *Krishna Patrika* took the lead. The news of the prohibition of library annual meetings at Tipparti in Nalagonda district in 1928 was published in *Andhra Patrika* on 3rd October 1928. In the same year, on 10th October the paper criticized the government restriction even on non-political meetings and said that it only created unrest among the people. The *Krishna Patrika* stated in its paper on 27th May 1922

"The subjects of native states are doubly immersed in slavery. They have no freedom of speech at all".¹⁷

With the Indian National movement gaining momentum in British India, its effect could be felt in native states as well. The Nizam, who was honored by the British even during the 1857 revolt for suppressing the flames of revolt in South India, swung into action again. He brought a number of restrictions on the political activities in the state. If any meeting was to be held, the objective of the meeting, the list of speakers and

K.Subramanyam *op cit* p.86

invitees should be given in advance to the police authorities and no meeting could be held without their permission. The *Congress* another bold newspaper gave a fitting reply to these restrictions. It stated:

"Such highhandedness will serve to awaken the people. Ideas of Independence have a tendency to go up higher and higher like a rubber ball, the more they put down."¹⁸

The *Andhra Patrika* in its paper on 12th January 1924, published an instance of Nizam oppression against an official for participation in Congress activities and the paper strongly criticized it. The newspapers of this time condemned the prohibition of entry of national leaders, stopping peaceful processions and lathi charge of police on volunteers¹⁹.

The Press had a dual role to play. It not only highlighted the evils prevailing in the line but also sort to purge by bringing an awakening among the people. This was highlighted in *The Hindu*:

"The ruler is despotic. The Press is by no means free. There is no codified law. The administration of the law of repression is more severe than in the neighboring British districts."²⁰

In the year 1923, *The Hindu* published a series of articles by the famous journalist, Nihal Singh under the caption, 'Hyderabad Today'. Even while praising the Nizam for his efforts at social reform and educational progress, he blamed him for personal rule.

¹⁸ *The Congress* 24th December 1929. p.1

¹⁹ The *Deccan Chronicle* was banned for 16 months (from September 1939) because the government found many of the articles in the paper objectionable. For three weeks the paper was published from Vijayawada and brought in, but even this was denied entry into the state subsequently. Permission was given for publishing the paper from Hyderabad from December 1st 1940 - "*Deccan Chronicle*", 15th May 1997 under the caption "Breaking History", p.2.

²⁰ *Hindu* 2nd August 1922 p. 2

This greatly enraged the Nizam and he banned the circulation of the paper for two years. But the matter published in this paper was made use of by the Telugu journals like *Krishna Patrika*. They touched on various topics like economic problems, highlighting the heavy taxation system and also pointed to the communal character engulfing the Nizam government, which led to the gross neglect of Hindus. Nihal Singh in one of his articles stated,

"The government posts are altogether, especially the higher posts are held by Muslims who constitute but a small minority."²¹

He also stated that the poor representation of Hindus in services was not an accident but the result of anti-Hindu policy.

The *New India*, another English daily published the proceedings of Hyderabad state conference held in 1926 in its newspaper under the heading of 'Misrule of Nizam'. It was published on 1st December 1926. They listed the misdeeds of the Nizam Mir Osman Ali Khan. Some of the allegations made were 1) Removal of Hindus from important positions of the government. 2) Making of Osmania University, a sectarian University and giving of prominence to Urdu and neglecting the other local languages.

The English papers like the *Hyderabad Bulletin*, the *Deccan Chronicle* and the *Daily News* had an appeal to the enlightened section of the educated community and therefore they were uniformly balanced in their views. These papers always resorted to a middle course between timidity and aggressiveness. The policy of the Nizam's Government was such that the local papers were allowed to criticise the affairs relating to the Government of India in a very frank manner. But anything that criticized a

²¹ *The Hindu*, 11th August 1923 p.4

Hyderabad official or the Head of a Department was interpreted as either communal or political.

The story of the *Marathwada*, a weekly published from Aurangabad by Anand Rao Waghmare, was very unique. The paper was always virulent and aggressive in criticising the policies of the Hyderabad Government. Later it shifted its headquarters to Sholapur in the Bombay State where the Congress Ministry was in power. Thursday was the day in the week on which this paper was published. Its articles were always unpalatable to the Government. Friday was a weekly holiday in the State and the paper would achieve its object of injecting unpleasant ideas into the minds of the readers when the Government would take a decision either on Saturday or Sunday to ban the entry of the paper into the State. But the editor was clever enough to secure permission of the Bombay Government immediately for publishing another paper to issue on Thursday and get it circulated in Hyderabad under a different name. This trick continued and about dozen names were changed by the paper, when the Political Department and the Press Commissioner of the Hyderabad Government became fully aware of and issued a list of papers in all languages which alone were allowed to enter the State. Such an inclusive list could not become comprehensive and exhaustive to welcome all innocent and good papers and hence the Information Bureau had to add the names of several good papers which stood banned for no fault of theirs.

A small book titled 'Publicity Campaign Against The People In The Hyderabad State' as bulletin No.8 of the 'Hyderabad People's Condition' was brought out in 1938. The series very forcefully described the publicity campaign unleashed against national leaders and their activities for securing democracy.

While highlighting the financial condition in the state, the Press exposed the yawning gap between the privileged and unprivileged. While explaining the abject poverty of poor masses, they highlighted the extravagance of the ruling class and its coterie. The *Krishna Patrika* in an editorial on 1st October 1927 wrote that the native kings were spending not less than 13 crores of rupees annually on prostitutes, drinks, foreign goods and foreign trips. Another paper *Satyagrahi* wrote as to how the nobles spent money at the cost of the poor. On 31st August 1925 wrote,

"Every pie spent by the Rajahs on their extravagant pleasure was a loss to the common man who did not have even a single meal a day."²²

The *Krishna Patrika* in a feature 'Letters from Hell' satirically attacked the Zamindars.

Most of the newspapers also made a strong plea for constitutional reforms in Indian states. The *Krishna Patrika* while pleading for political reforms in the states noted that people of Native states were "doubly immersed in slavery."² The Press also made constant appeals to the Native rulers not to cause any obstacle to the Indian National movement and to offer instead a helping hand to the attainment of independence by India and to reform themselves. They wrote against any efforts made to build an impenetrable wall between the people of British India and the subjects of the Indian Princes to oppose the desire for independence among the people of British India.

When India gained independence, the Nizam pompously declared that he would remain independent of the Indian Union. But the State Congress launched the 'Join

²² *Satyagrahi* 31st August 1925, p 3

²³ K. Subramanyam - "The Press in Andhra and Princely States 1920-30" in *Itihas*, Vol. XVII, Jan - June 1991

India' movement. The Press helped in great measure to highlight the political implications of the Nizam's decision and evoke a response from different sections in Hyderabad. The Zonal Officers of State Congress, located at Vijayawada, Kurnool and Chanda also did commendable work through underground activity in bringing about an awakening among the people. Congress workers in disguise sneaked into the Nizam's dominion from the border areas and carried on their activities with courage. Under the auspices of the Hyderabad State Congress, a Telugu weekly, *Saradhi* was launched from Vijaywada with Talluri Ramanuja Swamy as its editor and it strove for unification of the State in the Indian Union. Similarly the *Hyderabad weekly* edited by Dr. M. Chenna Reddy, the *Telugu Desam* weekly started by V.B. Raju made valuable contributions to the cause of unification of the State within the Indian Union and in rousing patriotic sentiments and courage among the people of the State.²⁴ V.H. Desai, a great nationalist, was arrested under Defence of Hyderabad Rules for writing in *Free Press Journal*, *The Blitz*, *The Forum*, *Samyukta Karnataka*, *National Herald*, *Tej* and several other outstation papers. He was locked up in the Chanchalguda Central Jail where top leaders of political parties including Swami Ramananda Thritha were imprisoned²⁵.

It is appropriate here to make a special mention of V.H.Desai one of the most prominent journalists of this time. He was a Hyderabad-based *Correspondent* representing, curiously enough, almost all the dailies banned by the Nizam's Government, namely, *Free Press Journal*, *The Forum*, *Blitz*, *Tej*, and *Samyukta*

²⁴ *Deccan Chronicle*, May 15th 1997 p16.

²⁵ V. H. Desai in his book *Saga of Hyderabad Freedom Struggle*, Bombay 1990 says that while in prison he hit upon the plan to produce a 12-page tabloid in order to inform and provoke. They launched a jail journal called 'The Democrat' and he became the editor. The editorial staff wrote out the pages in long hand and when the back braking job was over the issue - prized solitary copy was ready for circulation. Its theme song: 'Let Democracy grow in feudal Hyderabad and let the Nizam join the mainstream.' p.2.

Karnataka during the last phase of the Freedom Struggle in the Nizam's State of Hyderabad.

When he was hardly 16 years old, with like-minded friends such as Sitaram Pisolkar, Narahari, S. Tunga and a host of others, were itching for some kind of secret underground activity to fight the autocratic rule of the Nizam. He soon found himself in the vortex of secret political conclaves. Thus the small room housing the Mandali became the nerve-centre of their activities which consisted mostly of distribution of pamphlets, circulars, etc. issued by the State Congress from time to time.

The other facet of the activity, purely professional in character, came in for close surveillance by the Nizam's Government. His news coverage sent through mail was not affected though his telegraphic despatches were censored heavily. A family friend who served in the Intelligence Department of the Government hinted to his elder brother that he should be warned and if possible restrained. Ironically enough, his two elder brothers—one in the Nizam's Army (Ranga Rao Desai) and the other in the Nizam's Government Service (Dhanna Rao Desai) did not however discourage him in any manner.

One incident which lingered in his mind was his encounter with the Director of Information who was then known as "Nizam-e-Ittelat". The Director was Mohammed Taquiuddin, a gentle and kind looking person. One morning he was summoned to his office and received like a VIP. He politely prefaced the sermon with a brief observation that he was young with a bright future which he felt would become a reality if only he gave up my "anti-social activities" and turned over a new leaf.

He even offered him a job in his own Department because of his journalistic background. All the while, I listened to him with respect and some amusement. Then he proceeded to give a graphic picture—almost a blow by blow account - of his underground activities; to his utter surprise and shock, it was all very accurate . He was all praise for the Nizam's Intelligence Department and its lynx-eyed sleuth hounds. This interesting encounter with the "Nizam-e-Ittelat" turned out to be but a prelude to a new phase of his career, and according to him a more exciting one.

The police soon raided his house as well as the office of the Karnataka Mitra Mandali, seizing all newspapers and correspondence. He was arrested in the premises of the Mandali. He was sent to the Chanchalguda Jail,

He was lodged in the European ward of the jail, a preferential treatment: all the members of the Working Committee of the Hyderabad State Congress, leaders of the Arya Samaj and the Communist Party of India were already there. He felt proud to be in their midst and share the honour of rubbing shoulders with front-rank politicians of the day. The galaxy included Swami Ramananda Tirtha, B. Ramakrishna Rao, K.S. Vaidya, H.C. Heda, Maqdoom Moinuddin, B.S. Mahadev Singh, A.R.V. Chary, Dr. G.S. Melkote, Pandit Narendraji, Konda Venkata Ranga Reddy, Dr. M. Channa Reddy, S.Alwar Swamy, Dattatreya Awaradhi, S. Hanumantha Rao, M. Jaigopal Naidu, Sitaram Pisolkar, Krishnacharya Joshi, Bridhichand Choudhary, Dattartreya Pershad, Bojjam Narasimlu, D.V. Pangrekar and a host of others.

As they kept awake till 2 a.m. anyway, while behind bars, they we decided to produce daily a '*Wall Journal*' that would educate, enthuse good ideas, satirise men and

matters; and thereafter paste the journal at the main entrance of the dining hall where everyone could read it.

In Jaigopal Naidu they had a fine artist, while Hanumantha Rao could write a beautiful hand. And as a journalist, Desai could provide political themes, captions, news stories and format. All this went into the columns of the Wall Journal that came out as '*Bandal Gazette*' (Nonsense Gazette!) When the first issue of the '*Gazette*' was pasted at the main entrance of the dining hall, many eyebrows were raised, mostly in admiration and partly in consternation. The '*Gazette*' did not fail to make digs at the detained leaders, especially at their irresponsible stances. This did make an impact on them. Slowly but steadily they changed their attitude. They became more and more alive to the challenges ahead. The change of heart was exactly what especially those belonging to the younger generation desired and yearned for.

Spurred by the initial success of '*Bandal Gazette*' they decided to launch a manuscript jail journal. *The Democrat*, for the political re-education of the detenus of all shades of opinion and schools of thought. There was a need for the basic raw materials like pen, paper and ink.

The jail official (Daroga) in charge of their Ward was a Muslim from Uttar Pradesh, a nationalist at heart. Encouraged by this, they slowly broached the idea of a manuscript journal and sought his help in the procurement of paper and ink. Enthused by the idea, the official smuggled in regularly Government stationery under cover of darkness after 9 p.m. Thus was born '*The Democrat*'.

The editorial staff consisting of four political detenus, Jaigopal Naidu, Dattatreya Awaradhi, S. Hanumantha Rao and V.H.Desai went into action one night when everyone was fast asleep. They wrote in long hand the first issue of *'The Democrat'*. This nocturnal appeared every fortnight. By clapping of hands or by beating of the thali someone would announce the reading session of the jail journal. The detenus used to assemble in large numbers and listen in pin-drop silence.

The Wall Journal *'Bandal Gazette'* and *'The Democrat'* brought about a sea-change in the attitude of the inmates in the European ward. Desai was attracted the Communist Leaders and he joined their ranks. This enabled him to study closely and intimately the working of the minds of the leaders lodged in the European Ward, and thus gave him a new sensation of understanding the political overtones in the respective parties' role in the freedom struggle vis-a-vis the future of the Native States, especially the Nizam's dominions of Hyderabad.

According to him, his liaison with the detenu-leaders, more especially with Pandit Narendraji, exercised a healthy impact on him and widened his political horizons.

The Jail Superintendent eyed these dismaying developments with indignation and contempt. To restrain their activities he made the first move by shifting Swami Ramananda Tirtha from the Chanchalguda Jail to the Sangareddi Jail. Then came Desai's turn; before long, he was also shifted along with eight others.

He had spent over six months in the Chanchalguda Jail. On the eve of my transfer He left the copies of *'The Democrat'* with his friend Jaigopal Naidu. They were being shifted to the Gulbarga Jail.

Here he came into close contact with that fiery revolutionary poet, Kaloji Narayana Rao, and Babulal Verma of Kanpur. They made a splendid team on the intellectual plane. When he unfolded his plan to re-start '*The Democrat*', the response was one of universal acclaim. However, it was with great difficulty that they could smuggle in paper, ink and pen.

In the new venue, the first issue of the '*The Democrat*' was ready. '*The Democrat*' was released in an open ground in the presence of about 500 political detenus.

Swami Ramananda Tirtha was shifted to the neighbouring ward of the Camp jail of Gulbarga Central Jail from the Sangareddi Jail. Frequent messages used to be exchanged between Deasi and Swamiji specially for use in '*The Democrat*'. The paper thus became an effective communication channel. '*The Democrat*' became the organ voice of their determination. Our long ordeal was coming to an end. Four days after the historic 'Police Action' they were all released on September 22, 1948. According to him the curtain fell on a most memorable phase of his life. In the annals of Indian journalism, the jail journal *The Democrat* broke new ground, thus laying its claim to immortality. It blazed a glorious trail motivating, galvanising and rallying political detenus of many schools of thought under one banner at a crucial juncture in the Hyderabad State Liberation Struggle during 1947-48.²⁶

The jail authorities watched with alarm the growing popularity of *The Democrat* and even clamped down an artificial scarcity of writing paper and ink. The government of India watched with concern the growing defiance of the Nizam's government. It was

at this juncture that K. M. Munshi took over as India's Agent General in Hyderabad. It was during this time that the Nizam was under the influence of the Razakkars and they gave a tough time to K. M. Munshi. Though his task was not a bed of roses he was not moved by the threats made by Razakkars and gave his views boldly and exposed the situation in the state. It was during this time that Sir Kingsley wrote in *The New Statesman* and *The Nation* dated March 20 1948 about the conditions prevailing in Hyderabad under the caption, "Who Rules Hyderabad".²⁷

The situation was deteriorating with each passing day and Kasim Razvi was making inflammatory speeches to make the situation worse. Raja Bahadur Aravamudu Aiyangar, one of the leaders in Congress wrote thus to a friend in high position in New Delhi on April 14 1948,

"The situation is deteriorating day by day there has been an exodus for the third time of the Hindu population of this place...Local papers dare not give correct news. They are censored and you will have noticed that the *Deccan Chronicle* has been for the last so many weeks, until first a day or two ago, been keeping the Editorial column blank with a big question mark. The entry of papers like *Free Press Journal* of Bombay and *The Indian Express* of Madras has been banned. In regard to the papers that are not banned, the packets of papers are opened at the Airways office and if the authorities entrusted with that duty find that there is something objectionable from their point of view, they completely confiscate the whole of that days bundle of papers. If any one dares to publish a statement, he is interned".²⁸

²⁶ V.H. Desai's , " A page from Hyderabad Freedom Struggle in K.S.S.Seshan ed *Hyderabad 400 -Saga of a City*, Hyderabad 1993 pi25-132

²⁷ Ibid. p.27.

²⁸K. M Munshi, *op.cil*, p.145

On the other hand, there were number of papers from Pakistan which were allowed free entry into Hyderabad. There were no restrictions on them. This was highlighted only when the ban was imposed on them after the Police Action in Hyderabad. According to an order notified in notification no.88 dated 7th Ardibehest, 1358F in Government Gazette No.26, dated 28th Ardibehest, 1358F(28 March 1949) it placed a ban on entry into Hyderabad the following newspapers and periodicals:

1. *Dawn*, Karachi (Eng)
2. *Jung*, Karachi (Urdu)
3. *Watan*, Karachi (Urdu)
4. *Watan*, Karachi (Gujarati)
5. *Dawn*, Karachi (Gujarati)
6. *Al Najmu*, Karachi (Urdu)
7. *Insaf*, Karachi (Urdu)
8. *Insaf*, Karachi (Gujarati)
9. *Hayat*, Karachi (Urdu)
10. *Jehad*, Karachi (Urdu)
11. *Karachi Samachar*, Karachi (Gujarati)
12. *Al Jamaat*, Karachi (Urdu)
13. *Civil and Military Gazette*, Karachi (ENGLISH)
14. *Al Islah*, Karachi (Gujarati)
15. *Pakistan*, Karachi (Urdu)
16. *Sahar*, Karachi (Urdu)
17. *Daily Nawai Waqat*, Karachi (Urdu)
18. *Al Aazal*, Karachi (Urdu)
19. *Zamindar*, Lahore (Urdu)
20. *Inquilab*, Lahore (Urdu)

21. *Musalman*, Lahore (Urdu)
22. *Jadid Nizam*, Lahore (Urdu)
23. *Anjum*, Karachi (Urdu)
24. *Nawai Pakistan*, Lahore (Urdu)
25. *Imroze*, Lahore (Urdu)
26. *Pakistan Times*, Lahore (ENGLISH)
27. *Paigam*, Karachi (Urdu)
28. *Al Aman*, Karachi (Urdu)
29. *Payam E Mashiq*, Karachi (Urdu).²⁹

There were number of Urdu papers in Hyderabad which were unbiased and nationalist in character. One of the oldest was *Musheer-i-Deccan* owned by Baji Rao. But it followed a mild policy and did not hesitate to criticize the government and it was stopped for its severe criticism regarding the railway affairs for two and a half years³⁰.

Payyam edited by Kazi Abdul Gaffar was very balanced but not liked by Ittehad. Abdul, Gaffar's father had good relations with the British and earned the title of Khan Bahadur. But Abdul Gaffar did not like the British. He worked for a few years with the British and fought with his British Superiors and resigned. He turned to journalism after he took to import and export business where he lost a lot of money. In 1931 he came to Hyderabad and after 2 years started the Urdu Daily *Payyam*. It was a progressive paper and was apposed to the communal policies of the Ittehad and the general feudal system prevalent in the State. He became an enemy of the communal elements in the State because of his writings but he stood firm. When Sir Mirza Ismail became the Prime Minister of the State in 1946, Abdul Gaffar was appointed Director

²⁹ In Gazette Ordinary dated 10th August 1950. No 15.

³⁰ ed. N. Ramesan, *The Freedom Struggle in Hyderabad*; Hyderabad 1966 p.84.

of Information. But Sir Mirza could not remain in office for long because of the reactionary elements who worked against him, as a result Abdul Gaffar was also dismissed from service. He left Hyderabad in 1947. But at the time of his departure, he sent the Nizam a letter running into twenty one foolscap pages. In this he warned him against "the dictatorship of the political charlatans" who under the guise of protecting the rights of their co-religionists were in fact trying to establish a fascist domination over the Nizam, whom they were using as a pawn in their game of Power politics. He told him about his corrupt bureaucracy which had aligned itself with communal elements and said that every thing that was happening had his alleged backing and support. He recalled that he had pleaded in vain with the Nizam for a fair and just form of government. If he favoured one community, it would lead to a civil war. Nothing less than responsible government could save Nizam's position and his refusal to do so "will always mean utter disregard of public welfare". Referring to the "Fire eating Razvi" and his threats he said that his constant provocation drenched in angry threats and dripping with humiliating ridicule and contempt has served, as nothing else could have done to rouse the complacent Hindu. It may not be accused of exaggeration if I say that apart from the outside influence, the Hindu majority of this state has been goaded into action by constant pin pricks and reckless shouting of the Majlis leaders, who encouraged by your exalted highness's support and much advertised patronage and the deplorable inactivity of the government, has gone to far to recede". He deplored the treatment meted out successfully to Sir Akbar Hydari, the Nawab of Chhatari and Sir Mirza Ismail and prophesied "That the final outcome of the negotiation with the union government is not going to be much different from what Sir Mirze envisages". He concluded by suggesting the adoption of the "Self evident maxim that no ruler can rule without the support of the public opinion representing the Majority of his subjects". By the time the letter was delivered to the Nizam Abdul

Gaffer moved out of the range of the Nizam's authority. It is obvious that Nizam paid no heed to the warnings contained in the letter and met the fate which Abdul Gaffer had predicted³¹. The *Nizam Gazette* was a semi government paper and maintained a very high standard and was generally above criticism. But there were certain papers and news agencies, one in particular called *Deccan News*, which had a particular fascination for communal and exaggerated news³².

Mohib Hussain was one of the pioneer of Journalism in Hyderabad. He edited three journals and carried on a campaign for social and educational reforms among women. He was also an opponent of the purdah system. This created a furore among the orthodox muslims and the government stepped in to close one of his journals dealing with the problems of women. He raised his voice of protest against the discrimination between the European and Indians by the police and in criminal courts, and like Mulla Abdul Qayum, criticized the two nation theory. Those who talked of Hindus and Muslim as two nations were described by him as "deadly snakes". In 1904, he suddenly turned away from active social and journalistic work and embraced mysticism and spiritualism. He spent the rest of his life as a recluse.³³

A special mention has to be made of the young journalist and editor of *Imroze*, Shoebullah Khan who fell a prey to the strategies of his enemies. He was brave and resolute in his objectives. His soft spokenness concealed the zealous champion that was in him. He first joined the weekly *Taj*, but when it was banned for attacking the Nizam and activities of *Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen*, he decided to join *Rayyat* a weekly edited by Narsinga Rao. When *Rayyat* was banned he started his own daily *Imroze* with the help of few friends like B. Ramakrishna Rao. As the editor of *Imroze*, Shoebullah wrote

³¹ flarcnder Luther, *P.p* 313 - 315

³² N.Ramesan ed.*op.cit* p.85

Narender Luther, *op.cit* p. 233

fearlessly that Hyderabad was destined to be part of Indian Union and there was no question of the Nizam remaining independent. Born on October, 17, 1920 at Subraved in Khammam district, Shoebullah Khan did his B.A. from Osmania University. As a young man he was greatly attracted to the Non Co-operation Movement. From the beginning Shoebullah Khan stood apart for the views that he held. He was a staunch opponent of communal fanaticism.

Shoeb wanted to prove that no religion had a monopoly of the truth. "If we are truthful, His wisdom comes to us". Shoeb was among those few nationalist Muslims who did not see eye to eye with the fascist rulers of his time. He was a democrat to the core. He knew that no one had the courage to tell the people the horrors of the Raj and it was left to him to speak the truth through his columns of the daily, *Imroze*.

Shoebullah fell from the grace of orthodox Muslims for his ideas of iconoclast, his break from the past, his craving for the new order of things which sounded heretical and revolting though much of the imagery in his early writings were drawn from the Islamic legends. At no time did he fail to voice the surging urges of the down trodden. Perhaps he, more than any others in Hyderabad, represented the urges and aspirations of the harassed and suppressed people of the state against the mighty power of the rulers.

On August 21st 1948, Shoeb criticized Razvi fearlessly in his editorial and was also a signatory to the statement issued by Manzur Jung and his friends against the government. Razvi gave a warning, "If hands were raised in the state they would be cut down and those hands and hands controlling them."

He met a martyr's death in the early hours of August 22nd 1948 at Hyderabad by the Razakkars. He was shot at and his hands were cut off with a sword as a retaliatory measure for his writings. According to V.H Desai in an article published in *National Herald* on August 22nd 1987, Lucknow edition, "The scene of Shoebullah's murder was gruesome, the assassins were pouncing on Shoebullah Khan who was helplessly knocking the door of his house, the door opened, his wife stood dazed on seeing him drop dead. His only witness was his brother in law and he said he saw two persons attacking Shoebullah with swords who was crying "*Mere ko math maro*". Munim Khan fired the shot at Shoebullah.

All national Muslim editors were threatened by letters and phone messages that the fate of editor of Imroze would overtake them if they supported freedom struggle launched by the State Congress.

It was Imroze again which flashed the news of his death, without being submitted to censor. Writing an obituary, Baqar Ali Mirza who was an eyewitness to the last rites of Shoeb said "... Some thought it was un-Islamic to pay last respects to such a death. As his body was being covered with earth, a thought came to me, how much communication has degraded religion and to yield to that meant death..."³⁴

The people of Hyderabad could join the mainstream of Indian Polity only after the great sacrifice made by warriors like Shoebullah Khan.

As explained in the earlier chapter, there were a number of broadminded Muslims like Fareed Mirza and Akhtar Hasan who were members of Progressive Writers Association

³⁴. V.H.Desai "Martyrdom of Shoebullah" in *National Herald*, August 22nd 1987. p 4

and editor of Urdu daily *Payam* who tried to make the Nizam see reason through their columns and appeals.³⁵ But all of them faced very difficult consequences.

Considering the many hurdles, placed on it, the work done by the press is commendable. They were used by the nationalist to voice their opinion, to bring to light the undemocratic practices and mould the public opinion. Journalists like V.H.Desai and Shoebullah Khan , were undaunted in the face of any threat. They were willing to pay any price in order to highlight the unjust situation prevailing in Hyderabad.

Thus the Press did yeomen service to highlight and even advise remedies for the decay that had set in Nizam government. It definitely had a major role to play in the Freedom movement. Though many hearts were touched and moved, the Nizam remained unmoved. Hyderabad had to pay the price in the form of Police Action.

The following Chapter deals with the Police Action and the Surrender of Hyderabad.

³⁵ In his article, "Razakkars, a blot on the history of Hyderabad" in *Deccan Chronicle*, dated August 15th 1997, p IV Akhtar Hasan, a member of the Progressive Writer's Association and editor of the Urdu daily, *Payam* says that even educated Muslims influenced by the propoganda of Razvi considered them Anti- Muslim for their opinions. **Kasim** Razvi often said whoever wrote against them would be destroyed.