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PROFILE OF NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY IN KERALA
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CHAPTER-III

PROFILE OF NEWS PAPER INDUSTRY IN KERALA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The history of journalism in Malayalam goes back to slightly more than a century and a quarter. Missionaries, in most cases with the purpose of propagating religion, first started journals and periodicals in Malayalam. Their contribution to the development of Malayalam prose and the promotion of journalism, however, has been considerable and should be remembered with gratitude.

In June 1847 Malayalees witnessed the primordial birth pangs of Malayalam journalism, as eight cyclostyled sheets in demy octavo size were churned out from a Press at Illikkunnu near Talassery. The mast-head proudly announced the new-comer's name as Rajyasamacharam. Reading materials spread across the pages with neither columns nor cross-heads to break the monotony.

Neither the mast-head nor the print-line of the Rajyasamacharam featured its editor's name nor was the publication priced. The credit for this pioneering venture goes to Dr. Herman Gundart, the renowned western scholar who was
the author of the first Malayalam Dictionary. Dr. Gundart was then the motivating spirit behind the German Based Mission Society. As an opening statement in the first issue emphasized, the reading matter was exclusively devoted to matters religious. By the time it ceased publication at the fag end of 1850, forty-two issues had seen the light of day.

In October 1847 Gundart started another publication called Paschimodayam. Like its predecessor the Paschimodayam, too, was cyclostyled but it carried articles on Geography, History, Natural Science and even Astrology. It had a formal editor in F. Muller. The annual subscription was one rupee. There was even a change in size and format - the Paschimodayam appeared in Royal Octavo Garb. It would seem to have ceased publication around mid-1851.

The scene now shifts to central Travancore from where early in 1848 the first printed magazine in the Malayalam language - the Jnananikshepam - hit the newsstands. This eight-page magazine was printed at the C.M.S. Press operating from Kottayam way back in 1821. Arch Deacon Koshy and the Reverend George Mathen were behind this new publication which served alike the cause of propagation of religion and the dissemination of knowledge. Obviously as a result of this diversification of the reading fare it was well circulated among the Christian, Hindu and Muslim communities.
Another periodical, Kottayam-based, made its appearance around this time. It was the Vidyasamgraham brought out under the auspices of the Kottayam College. This magazine started publication in 1864 and went on till 1867. Attempts were underway in the meantime to start a "newspaper". Ironically, the first of this genre to be published from Kerala was in the English language. A pioneering foursome embarked upon a publication entitled the Western Star from Cochin in 1860. Charles Lawson, who had left England after completing his studies, took over as the paper's editor. This was Lawson's maiden essay into journalism. The assignment obviously stood him in good stead when he migrated to Madras to launch the Madras Mail in later years.

Four years later in 1864 a Malayalam edition of the Western Star started publication from Cochin under the banner Paschimataraka. T.J. Paily edited the new paper in the first instance and later by Kalloor Oommen Philippose Asan.

Yet another paper, the Keralapataka, made its appearance from Cochin in 1870. In course of time these two publications merged to form the Paschimataraka-Keralapataka. Under the able stewardship of Oommen Phillippose Asan this merged publication mounted attacks on the peccadilloes of the bureaucracy of the day and is seen to have survived right up to 1886.
The Western Star continued to be published from Cochin for a long time. In due course there was a change in the ownership of the paper. This was followed by a change in location. The publication base was shifted to Trivandrum. Thereafter its appearance was irregular. In 1867 two papers were started from Kottayam. One was in Malayalam and was titled Santishtavadi; the other the Travancore Herald, was in English both were printed from the C.M.S. Press. The Santishtavadi was outspoken in its criticism of the powers that be, and soon fell foul of the Travancore Government, which ordered its closure. Thus, quite unwittingly, the Santishtavadi created history in Malayalam journalism by becoming the first martyr to the cause of freedom of the press.

The next in the line of Malayalam papers was the Satyanadakahalam, which started publication modestly as a fortnightly from Kunammapu in October 1876. It was published under the auspices of the Italian Carmelite Mission, with the Rev. Fr. Candidus designated as its first editor. This 16 page fortnightly featured a wide range of topics in its columns, from international affairs to local news and from Government pronouncements and court proceedings to mission news.

Successive changes in the Satyanadom's periodicity followed. From 1900 it was issued thrice a month. Four years later it was converted into a weekly. In
1926 a change in format was introduced and the Satyanadom joined the early ranks of 'illustrated weeklies'. The fortunes of Kerala's oldest existing newspaper underwent a change characteristic of the times in 1970 when it merged with the Kerala Times and started issuing as the latter's Sunday edition. During the course of its independent existence over slightly less than a century the Satyanadom had made notable contributions to Malayalam literature and in the socio-political fields.

In the three decades since the Rajyasamacharam made its first appearance a good number of publications followed though they were in the main characterized by a high rate of infant mortality. Besides, they were not "newspapers" in the strict sense of the term. Their emphasis was more on literary and religious topics as distinct from hard news as we understand it today. Their periodicity was yet another factor which detracted from their intrinsic relevance and importance as newspapers. The Keralam (1866), the Malayalamitram, the Tiruvithancore Abhimani, the Kerala Deepakam (all 1878) and the Keralaachandrika fall in this category of pioneering precursors. Also, the Keralopakari published from Malabar, which had the distinction of being the first printed magazine issuing from this area. Incidentally, the Keralopakari was printed from the Basel Mission Press located at Mangalore. Most of these early journals were fired with the zeal of Christian Missionaries.
It fell to a Gujarathi’s lot to launch the first systematic "newspaper" in Malayalam. Devji Bhimji started a printing press at Cochin in 1865 under the name of the Keralamitram Press. In running the press Devji Bhimji had to face heavy odds. There was the obvious disadvantage of embarking upon a hitherto uncharted course. But more discouraging was the unhelpful attitude of the authorities. In an unprovoked gesture the police authorities slapped an order on Devji Bhimji requiring him to submit all matter meant for printing for the prior scrutiny and approval of the authorities. On his preferring an appeal seeking reconsideration of this blanket order, the authorities retaliated by forcing closure of the establishment.

Devji Bhimji was not daunted. He approached the Divan on at least six occasions for a redressal of his grievances. But the Divan was averse to rescinding the censorship orders. In exasperation Devji Bhimji now turned to the British Resident, Henry Neville, for justice. His perseverance paid at last after almost a year of forced closure of the press when the British resident prevailed upon the authorities to withdraw their orders. Devji Bhimji was not a newcomer to journalism. He had co-sponsored the English Western Star in 1860 and the Malayalam Paschimataraka in 1864. At the time of starting his press Devji Bhimji had wound up his interests in these two publications. But one should assume that his experiences in this field were happy for he was already
toyed with the idea of starting a paper on his own. This blossomed into reality with the launching, on New Year's Day of 1881, of the Keralamitram.¹

In a number of respects the Keralamitram can be hailed as the first "newspaper" in the Malayalam language. In the initial stages the paper was issued thrice a month; later on it was published as a weekly. The paper provided a wide range of reading fare, which by contemporary accounts maintained an exceptionally high standard. There was a marked tilt in favour of featuring news. Due weight was also given for language and literature, criticism and articles on general topics of public welfare. The Keralamitram was fortunate in that it had as its first editor none other than Kandathil Varghese Mappilai who later founded the Malayalamanorama. With Kandathil Varghese Mappila's flair for journalism and Devji Bhimji's acumen as an entrepreneur it is no wonder that the new publication made a lasting impact on Malayalam journalism. As an aside, Devji Bhimji also tried his hand at running a Marathi magazine entitled Keralakokil from Cochin. On his death in 1894 the Keralamitram was run tolerably well for quite a number of years under the stewardship of an adopted son.

The pattern of development and growth of journalism in the Malabar area was more or less similar in nature, with the difference that journalistic ventures
were less profuse. An English weekly entitled the West Coast Spectator started publication in 1879 from Kozhikode. Vakil Poovadan Raman from the Spectator Press printed the weekly. An Englishman, Dr. Keys, edited it. In later years the weekly was rechristened the Malabar Spectator and was quite popular locally.

A significant development was the publication in 1884 of the Keralapatrika weekly from Kozhikode. Chengulathu Kunhirama Menon conceived the idea of a weekly, possibly after attending a conference of the Indian National Association held at Calcutta in 1884. Kunhirama Menon himself claimed that the Keralapatrika was the first "newspaper" in Malayalam in the Malabar district. It was printed from the Vidyavilasom Press and had the active backing of a number of prominent personalities of the day. The Keralapatrika was essentially a pace-setter in Malayalam journalism. Chengulathu Kunhirama Menon wielded a powerful pen. To him freedom of speech and expression was a sacrosanct article of faith. The press was a vehicle for educating, uplifting and cleansing the public and the administration. He scanned the corridors of power for graft, irresponsibility and callousness and came down heavily on the erring. It is recorded that the Maharaja of Travancore was so impressed by the crusading spirit of the Keralapatrika that he subscribed for 200 copies for distribution among the officials of his administration.
Chengulathu Kunhirama Menon is sometimes called the "father of Malayalam Journalism". His weekly featured news on international affairs, politics and other public occurrences. Literature and literacy criticism received their due share in the Keralapatrika's columns. An instance has been recorded where the Keralavarma Valiyakoyi Thampuran took exception to the severe criticism of some of his literary works in the columns of the weekly. The Valiyakoyi Thampuran hit back by ordering cancellation of the subscriptions for the government officials of Travancore.

Running a newspaper, especially in the regional Malayalam language, was no picnic. The elite preferred English and would ill be seen browsing through a Malayalam newspaper. Advertisement support for the press was then practically an unknown factor. Powerful patronage, especially from royalty, could ill be spurned in the desperate bid to keep the paper going. But when it came to principles the father of Malayalam journalism was not one to countenance compromise.

The management of the Keralapatrika changed hands in 1938 some time after the death of Kunhirama Menon. Among the editors of this period were Sanjayan and Koyippalli Parameswara Kurup. After independence the paper was shifted to Ernakulam. Publication was suspended after a few years. The
Spectator Press of Kozhikode came out in 1886 with a Malayalam periodical entitled the Kerala Sanchari. Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar edited it, otherwise well-known by his pen-name "Kesari". The sharp humour and witticism characteristic of the new periodical mark a turning point in our journalism. Typical was the paper’s approach to officialdom, lashing out with humorous jibes and ill-concealed wrath at the high-handed and complimenting and encouraging the just. Moorkoth Kumaran was associated with the periodical for some time in 1897 as its editor. The Kerala Sanchari later on merged with his Mitavadi published from Tellicherry.

The year 1886 stands out in the history of Malayalam journalism it saw the birth of the Malayali from Thiruvananthapuram. This new recruit to the ranks of periodicals was the official organ of the Malayalee Social Reforms League. In Pettayil Raman Pillai Asan the new magazine found an able editor. In due course the mantle fell on C. V. Raman Pillai, yet another literary giant. Though the sheet anchor of the Malayali was social reforms, it spear-headed the crusade for political and civil rights with equal zest.

The Malayali was especially critical of the administration in Travancore. The critical posture assumed such an alarming gradient that the sponsors of the paper feared official retaliation. In a pre-emptive move the publishing centre
was thereupon shifted to Thangasseri, near Kollam. This was a British enclave where the writ of the Travancore regime did not hold good. For a short period in 1911 the Malayali came out as a daily newspaper.

The political atmosphere had in the meanwhile become tense. The struggle for responsible government had been launched and was gaining momentum. At this critical stage the Malayali was shifted back to Thiruvananthapuram to enable the paper to play a more positive and immediate role in the struggle. M.R. Warrier took over editorial responsibility. The paper was now issued as a daily. In no time its popularity and circulation skyrocketed. Reprisal was not long in coming. Intimidation was the first weapon deployed. The editor was set upon by goondas in broad day-light and manhandled. Such sporadic instances of personal violence only helped to see the determination of those working behind the Malayali. The onslaught against the government was further escalated through its columns. A stage came when the government threw caution to the winds and prohibited publication of the paper. The press and offices were locked and sealed.

For the time being the political movement for responsible government in Travancore was deprived of a strong prop. Nevertheless the conscience of the people was roused and the movement gathered strength and inspiration from
within itself. The Malayali was forced to hibernate till independence was attained, when it re-started publication from Thiruvananthapuram as a daily. Proprietarily control of the paper then passed on to the Nair Service Society and the centre of publication was moved to Changanacherry. The Malayali ceased publication about a decade ago.⁴

The second oldest newspaper in Malayalam-the Deepika - was launched from Kottayam in 1887 under the banner Nasrani Deepika. Its periodicity underwent a number of changes over the years to emerge finally in 1938 as a full-fledged daily. This change in periodicity also coincided with an abbreviation of its name to the present Deepika.⁵

A description the Leading Malayalam News Papers in Kerala is given as under:

3.2 MALAYALA MANORAMA

The Malayalam manorama started publication from Kottayam in 1890, initially as a weekly. A joint stock company floated the paper, perhaps for the first time in India. Its first editor was Kandathil Varghese Mappilai who brought with him the rich experience of his previous association with the Keralamitram of Cochin. In the beginning, the weekly was predominantly literary. Its transition to a newspaper of general interest followed quickly. Its rise to a
formidable institution with weighty contributions to the social, economic, political and cultural life of Kerala was meteoric. The paper was converted into a daily in 1928. In many instances the Malayala Manorama actually gave the lead to mass movements of the period.

In the wake of the political movement that swept Travancore with the fury of a hurricane, the authorities were perturbed at the growing influence of the Malayala Manorama. In a dramatic move the Government confiscated the paper in September 1938. The editor was sent to jail. An unpopular regime whose base was fast eroding under the impact of the people's urge for responsible government struck at the very roots of democracy and in the process gained a pyric victory. The resurrection of the daily was phenomenal in the sense that in a short period the paper soared to lofty heights in popularity, circulation and repute.

A near namesake, the Manorama, was floated in 1891 from Kozhikode under the auspices of the Kerala Mahajana Sabha. This fortnightly was a self-styled vehicle of reforms in the socio-political field and had the backing of members of the Zamorins, family and other prominent personalities. Leading writers of the day contributed to the columns of the fortnightly, which maintained a high literary standard. After undergoing many vicissitudes
involving change of ownership and editors the Manorama finally folded in 1940 under the impact of newsprint shortage.

The last decade of the nineteenth century was uneventful for Malayalam journalism in the sense that no 'newspaper' other than those mentioned in the preceding paragraphs commenced publication during this period. But this decade, nevertheless, accounted for a memorable crop of literary magazines. One was the Sujananandini started in 1892 from Kollam. Kandathil Varghese Mappilai and others joined hands to launch the Bhashaposhini in 1897 as the official organ of the Bhashaposhini Sabha. The same year the publication of Saraswathi from Tellicherry under the able editorship of Moorkoth Kumaran.

Perhaps the one event of the pre-1914 period that deeply stirred the feelings of the people of Kerala and roused their political consciousness was the deportation of K.Ramakrishna Pillai, editor of the Swadeshabhimani published from Thiruvananthapuram. The Swadeshabhimani was started in 1905 from a suburb of the State's capital. Ramakrishna Pillai was inducted as editor of a number of other publications, including the Keraladarpanam, the Malayali, the Keralan, the Sarada and the Vidyarthi and had already made a mark as a brilliant columnist and literary critic. Within a few months Ramakrishna Pillai acquired ownership of the press and shifted his base of operations to
Thiruvananthapuram. He drew his powerful pen to expose the true nature of palace politics and the corruption and favouritism rampant in the corridors of power. Ramakrishna Pillai was singularly devoid of the craze for power, position or wealth. In order to buttress his attacks on the corrupt ramparts of power, he got himself elected to the Travancore Assembly from Neyyattinkara.

The Dewan, P.Rajagopalachari, sensed the inherent danger in having this opponent at such close quarters. His ingenious mind contrived a royal proclamation stipulating that legislators should permanently reside in their constituencies. Ramakrishna Pillai, resident at Thiruvananthapuram, was unseated on this technical count. The attacks on the Dewan and the regime thenceforth become move devastating. The Swadeshabhimani ran a series of articles, which further precipitated matters. The Dewan reversed his tactics, alternatively threatening and cajoling the dauntless editor, but of to avail.

A royal proclamation was issued on September 26, 1910, deporting Ramakrishna Pillai from Travancore and confiscating his press and paper—a martyrdom for a righteous journalist in the service of his countrymen. The educated and politically conscious section of the people was against at this high-handed and undemocratic measure. Ramakrishna Pillai was thenceforth known and revered by the alias "Swadeshabhimani". The deported editor selected
Kunnamkulam in Cochin State as the launching pad for his next journalistic venture. This was the Atmaposhini. The Swadeshabhimani edited this organ for two years till 1915. Incidentally, Ramakrishna Pillai was the author of a biography on Karl Marx, the first one to appear in any Indian language, and was hence a pioneering Indian to be inspired by socialist consciousness. He also authored a book on journalism, the first of its kind in Malayalam. The Swadeshabhimani died in exile at Kannur in 1928.

The appearance of the Mitavadi from Tellicherry in 1907 marks the next important milestone in the history of the press in Kerala. Moorkoth Kumaran, who had already tried his hand successfully at other journalistic ventures, occupied the editorial chair. The Mitavadi gained in stature within a short period as a formidable press organ in the Malabar area. Literature and current affairs were its main forte. Mahakavi Kumaran Asan's famous poem, Veena Poovu was first published in the Mitavadi. In 1913, C.K. Krishnan acquired ownership of the paper and started publishing it as a magazine from Kozhikode.

The Mitavadi was in the fore-front of the movement for social reforms and the uplift of the weaker sections of society. But in its approach to the national struggle for independence the magazine adopted an off-beat posture, aligning itself with the British and opposing the national movement. In the
treatment of news the magazine showed a keen awareness of the relevant and
the indispensable. The Mitavadi actually published a daily news sheet featuring
the latest news from the war front during the First World War. The curtains
were finally rung down on this memorable publication on the eve of the Second
World War.6

3.4 KERALA KAUMUDI

The origin of the “Kerala Kaumudi”, one among the leading newspapers
of present day Kerala, can be traced back to 1911. Its founder C. V. Kunhuraman was a multi-faceted personality—a poet, a brilliant prose writer, historian, and journalist, politician, all combined together. So boundless was his
energy and so all-encompassing was his ability that even while editing the
Kerala Kaumudi he contributed features to other press organs. The paper
initially started publication from Mayyanad. Later, it was shifted to Kollam and
then to Thiruvananthapuram. It was converted into a full-fledged daily in 1940.

T.K.Madhavan who rose to prominence as general secretary of the
S.N.D.P. yogam started publication of the Desabhimani in 1915. The
Desabhimani rendered yeoman service in pin-pointing the grievances, political
and social, of the Ezhava community and seeking redressal. With the emergence
of Mahatma Gandhi to a position of front-rank leadership of the Congress,
political activity in Kerala felt a new spur. This was the period when the national movement had become more broad-based with the involvement of the masses. Madhavan was drawn into the vortex of the movement and soon became an important leader of the Congress. Through the columns of the Desabhimani he waged a relentless war against injustice, inequality and untouchability and for the cause of independence. The apogee of his reputation and influence as a journalist came with the famous Satyagraha at the Vaikom temple. The Desabhimani’s contributions to the agitation for temple entry and to the non-co operation movement were considerable indeed.

K. Ayyappan was yet another social reformer who wielded a powerful pen and commanded a powerful vehicle of expression. This was the Sohodaran published from Cherayi in 1917. Ayyappan encouraged rationalist thought and the socialist doctrine. In the movement for responsible government, for temple entry and for inter-caste marriage the Sahodaran was always in the fore-front. This periodical, which made substantial contribution to the renaissance of Kerala, ceased publication in 1956.

Ayyappan took keen interest in the welfare of the working classes. Through his writings he encouraged the building up of labour movements. In fact, in 1933, he launched a publication, the Velakkaran, modeled along the
British Daily Worker and devoted in the main to the labour movement. He was also associated with two other publications—the Yuktivadi and the Sree. As a regular columnist of the Mitavadi and the Kerala Kaumudi his writings helped to create and mould enlightened public opinion. The Samadarshi, which commenced publication from Thiruvananthapuram in 1918, was a powerful and popular vehicle of public opinion. A. Balakrishna Pillai joined the paper in 1923 as editor. He revetted his attention on the corrupt and high-handed bureaucracy of Travancore. The devastating criticism in the Samadarshi went down well with the reading public who clamored for more. But the authorities were displeased and the owner of the paper was faced with difficulties. It is said that the notorious Travancore Newspaper Regulations of 1926 were an offshoot of Balakrishna Pillai’s incisive criticisms. The management of the paper was not prepared to invite official displeasure and Balakrishna Pillai had to resign in 1926. The Samadarshi went on, taking care not to rub the authorities on the wrong side and in the wake of a fast dropping circulation folded in the late forties.

In the series of infamous moves plotted by the government of Travancore against the institution of a free press the newspaper regulation of 1926 deserves special mention as much for its stringency as for the opposition it generated among the reading public. The regulation was promulgated by Dewan Watts.
The intense activity in the journalistic field, sparked off in the wake of nationalist favour, political consciousness and the growing clamor for responsible government, was inexorably driving the princely regime on the defensive. It was high time the press was gagged and muzzled, so the Dewan reasoned.

The regulation was draconian measure requiring newspapers to take out licenses and deposit a security as token of their bonafides. Criticism of any member of the Travancore royal family, the Travancore government or the British king emperor would entail forfeiture of the security and cancellation of the license. A fresh license would be issued at the discretion of the authorities, but would require a further substantial sum as security. A second cancellation of the license would be fatal to the publication. Possession of copies of publications whose licenses were suspended was a punishable offence. A. Balakrishana Pillai, who had earlier been eased out of editorial responsibility of the Samadarshi, had in the meanwhile launched a new periodical entitled Prabhodakan. Within six month of its appearance, the government of Travancore banned this periodical. Balakrishna Pillai now started the Kesari, later to become famous in the annals of Malayalam journalism. Scathing criticism of the authorities was taken up with an added zeal in the columns of the new publication. With their misdeeds exposed to public gaze the Dewan and
his cohorts were put in a tight corner. The newspaper regulations of 1926 took shape against this backdrop.\textsuperscript{7}

The Kesari was short lived. But its impact on public opinion and on the development of Malayalam journalism was tremendous, and out of proportion to its longevity. To Balakrishna Pillai the press was not only a vehicle to project news; it was also a forum for educating the public by disseminating knowledge and encouraging free thought and open discussion. In keeping with this view the Kesari gave equal prominence to news and to novels, short stories, book reviews and science notes in its columns. In this respect it marked a point of departure in Malayalam journalism. With the Kesari banned, Balakrishna Pillai bid good-bye to his chosen profession.

The Malayalarajyam made a triumphant entry into Malayalam journalism in 1929, featuring in its columns API and Reuter despatches and news pictures fed by foreign photo agencies. It was published from Kollam. An organized network for the distribution of this daily was soon built up. The paper even operated a bus service of its own to keep the distribution channels well-oiled. Modern printing equipments helped to give the new daily a modern appearance in lay-out and content. In fact the Malayalarajyam was the first Malayalam daily
to go in for a rotary press. The illustrated Malayalarajyam Weekly was a prestigious publication of the times.

K.G.Sankar, who was forced to resign from the Malayali over a controversial editorial criticising the Travancore government, edited the daily. He continued his pro-nationalist stance in the Malayalarajyam. A number of leading writers of the day were persuaded to contribute regular columns. In a short span of time the Malayalarajyam became well-known and read as Kerala's leading nationalist daily. But with Sankar relinquishing control on ill-health, the daily fell on bad days. Its nationalistic posture swimming against the tide often proves fatal, and this colorful daily became defunct in the late sixties.

It was a strange alchemy where dissent and acquiescence proved equally fatal. The Kesari personified the strong voice of dissent. It stood for the freedom of the press, for the freedom of expression. It went down well with the reading public. Its popularity with the public increased in direct proportion to its outspoken views. But this very popularity alienated it from the authorities. Their antagonism increased in direct proportion to the paper's increasing popularity. In the showdown the Kesari succumbed. At the other end of the spectrum there was the Malayalarajyam, which at a certain stage of its brilliant career inspired
by nationalism, turned tables and acquiesced. In the resultant alienation from the
mainstream of public opinion, this meteor crash-landed into oblivion.

In the Malabar area the tempo of the political struggle in the early
decades of the twentieth century was quicker than socio-economic reform
movements. Political activity in this area was imparted with a new dimension
with the outbreak of the First World War and the spread of Home Rule ideas.
The All Kerala Political Conference held at Ottapalam in April 1921 marked the
beginning of the move for a united Kerala, which became a reality in terms of
law thirty-five years later. At the time of this conference the Gandhian
movement of non-co operation was in full swing and had a tremendous impact
on Kerala. The non-co operation movement was particularly strong in Malabar
where the Mappila’s were agitated over the Khilafat issue. It was the course of
the non-cooperation and Khilafat movements that Kerala witnessed what was
probably the most tragic episode in its freedom struggle, namely the Mappilai
Rebellion or, has been increasingly called, the Malabar Rebellion of 1921.8

3.5 MATHRUBHOOMI

Following the suppression of the Malabar Rebellion and until almost the
end of the thirties the purely political struggle for freedom was on a low key.
However, the spirit of the people was kept at high tide through the
organizational activities of the Congress. There was, in addition, considerable journalistic activity of a political nature. This was best illustrated by the starting of the nationalist newspaper, the Mathrubhoomi, from Kozhikode in 1923.

Kozhikode was then the publishing base of four Malayalam and three English periodicals. In the gloom that followed the suppression of the Malabar Rebellion and the withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement a psychosis of fear seemed to have enveloped these press organs. They were not prepared to publish any item even covertly supporting the national movement or faintly critical of the British administration. What is more, even local printing presses shied at printing statements or pamphlets by Congress leaders.

With the avenues of communication thus effectively throttled prominent Congress leaders thought of the next best alternative-to start a press and a publication of their own, whatever the consequences. This entailed the raising of capital and mobilizing a band of dedicated workers. The enthusiasm of the times was such that these initial requirements were met with ease. A limited company was floated and the Mathrubhoomi started issuing on March 18, 1923, thrice a week, with K.P.Kesava Menon as its editor.

The baptism by fire for the Mathrubhoomi came soon with the Vaikom Satyagraha. The demand was for the grant of right of passage to the
untouchables along approach roads to the temple. The moving spirit of the Satyagraha was Shri T.K. Madhavan, himself a redoubtable journalist. In the forefront of the enlightened leaders of the forward communities who actively participated in the struggle was K.P. Kesava Menon. The Mathrubhoomi too, was in the thick of the fight, as it was in every phase of the national struggle. At the peak of the civil disobedience movement, in April 1930, the Mathrubhoomi started issuing as a daily. As practically the only source of information for the people of Malabar about the developments in the national movements, its circulation base was gradually extended to the remote villages. But close on the heels of this increase in circulation and influence came official harassment. Following a critical leader on the incarceration of a political worker without trial, the government swooped down on the paper demanding a security of Rs.2000. The Mathrubhoomi furnished the security in the interests of continued publication, but as a measure of silent protest left its editorial columns blank for months to come.

An article by Sanjayan, the well-known humorist, criticized the highhandedness of British army personnel at Cochin. This provoked the Madras government and banned the daily altogether. A state-wide agitation ensued demanding withdrawal of the punitive ban order. The government had no choice but to withdraw the order. Likewise, the Dewan of Travancore, Sir
C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer, refused entry to the paper in the State. The Dewan was not one to accommodate public reaction. The Mathrubhoomi had to stay out, and made a triumphant re-entry nine years later in 1947.

Despite periodical harassment by the authorities the growth of the Mathrubhoomi as a powerful organ of the press was impressive indeed. It came out in 1932 with a weekly. In 1962 the paper branched out into a sister edition from Cochin. It had a number of stalwarts occupying the editorial chair. It ranks today as one of the fore-most dailies of the Indian press.

Another significant Kozhikode-based paper of this period was the Al-ameen, which first started publication in 1924 and began issuing as a daily in 1930. Mohammed Abdul Rahiman Sahib, the Congress leader, started the paper. The pro-nationalist stance of the paper infuriated the authorities. On more than one occasion the Al-ameen was discontinued as a result of action by the authorities. One such closure followed the publication of an editorial exhorting non-cooperation with the war efforts of Britain. The Al-ameen continues to be published to this day. The Prabhatham started publication from Shoranur with E.M.S. Namboodiripad as its editor, and was the organ of the newly-formed Congress Socialist Party. Its license was suspended following refusal to furnish security to government consequent on the publication of a poem on Bhagat
Sing's martyrdom. The license was restored later. The paper was shifted to Kozhikode in 1938, but did not survive for long.\textsuperscript{9}

The Deenabandu was yet another paper which owed its origin to the national struggle. It commenced publication as a weekly in 1941 from Thrissur. V.R.Krishnan Ezhuthachan edited the weekly. The Deenabandu was trial-blazer in the sense that it was one of the first periodicals published from Cochin State, which supported the national movement. The national sentiment was on the ascendancy. The Deenabandu made rapid strides in circulation, beating even the dailies based at Cochin. But it had to pay a heavy price for its nationalist moorings. Its editor and his staff were sent to jail within a few days of the launching of the Quit India Movement. Its publication was banned.

The Deenabandu resumed publication in 1944 on the release of its editor and other staff from jail. But its travails were by no means over. In the elections held in 1945 the Government freezes newsprint supply. The weekly went into an enforced hibernation for eighteen weeks. On resuming publication the Deenabandu was converted into a daily. That the new daily continued to displease the authorities is evidenced by the fact that following an election case the editor and one of its correspondents were stripped of franchise rights for five years.
The Deenabandu had also to face stiff opposition at the hands of the royal regime in Travancore. The paper was officially banned from this area. But the enterprising workers of the paper smuggled copies to Travancore through underground channels located in the British enclaves of Thangassery and Anchuthengu. The ban was lifted only after independence. After a splendid innings spread over 21 years the Deenabandu finally succumbed to financial difficulties and ceased publication in 1962. The nationalist phase was a fertile period for Malayalam journalism. Newspapers sprang up in quick succession, often to go under with equal speed. The Lokamanyan (from Thrissur) the Swarad (from Kollam), the Yuvabharatham (from Palakkad), the Kerala Kesari (from Thrissur) and the Bhajebharatam are some of the more prominent. Most of these publications could not survive owing to financial difficulties and in some cases following repression by the authorities.

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independence. This was a role complementary to that of educating the public. The result was a rich crop of periodicals sponsored by individuals in some cases, and by movements and organizations in others. Despite the sectional approach of most of these periodicals the fact remains that they played a decisive role in awakening the masses from conservatism and orthodoxy and pushing through social reform measures.

The Namboodiri Yogakshema Sabha sponsored two notable publications, the Yogakshemam and the Unni Namboodiri. The Namboodiri community was steeped in conservatism and living in lofty isolation from the mainstream of life of the times. V. T. Bhatadiripad, among others, wielded his powerful pen to break this isolation and rid his community of conservatism. These two publications rendered yeoman service in the cause of social reform. The stalwarts the Namboodiri community contributed to the political movement drew their basic inspiration from these periodicals.

The Vivekodayam was the official organ of the SNDP and was edited by Mahakavi Kumaran Asan. It ceased publication after a number of years but was revived in 1967 as a magazine and published from Irinjalakkuda. The Atmavidyakahalam edited by Vagbhadananda Guru from Kozhikode in the late
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Among other notable publications: The Nair of Kainikkara Govinda Pillai, the Sujathanandini of Ryru Nambiar, the Mitabhashi of C.V.Raman Pillai, the Subhashini of C.P.Govinda Pillai, the Nair of Malloor Govinda Pillai, the Malabari of V.C.Balakrishna Paniker, the Aikya Keralam of R.M.Palat, the Ramanujam run jointly by Mahakavi Vallathol Narayana Menon and Kuttippurathu Kesavan Nair, the Rasika Ranjini co-sponsored by Kunhikuttan Thampuran and Appan Tampuran and the Kavana Kaumudi jointly edited by Pandalam Kerala Varma and P.V.Krishna Warrier. The Nair Service Society floated a magazine entitled Service in 1920. Its main concern was social reforms. At the same time the magazine carried on a sustained propaganda against anachronistic social conventions and injustices like untouchability. In 1927 the magazine was shifted to Thiruvananthapuram and began issuing as a tri-weekly. A dynamic editorial policy helped to popularize the new weekly. Besides the emphasis on social reforms, the Service lent solid support to the nurturing of the national spirit. Unfortunately, the weekly had to cease publication in 1934 following financial difficulties.
The press in Kerala may be said to have come of age as independence dawned. It was a far cry from the cyclostyled sheets of 1847 to the full fledged dailies of 1947 increasingly harnessing modern techniques of editing and production. Growth was no longer haphazard, it was deliberately planned. The aim now was to consolidate with a view to reaching out to an extended readership in a field, which was becoming highly competitive.\textsuperscript{10}

Kerala has a sober and responsible press whose comment and performance is restrained and well reasoned. Its role during the last three decades since independence has proved its maturity beyond doubt.

It has rightly been said that the press discharges a vital duty in a democracy by serving as the mirror of public opinion held up to the authorities so that they can see how they look in the public eye and adjust their actions and policies accordingly. It is essential that in discharging this duty the press is allowed all facility and freedom to reach at the sources of news.

The system of accreditation of press correspondents to government is one of the many methods, which helps to provide and ensure this accessibility to bonafide news, its investigation and interpretation. On the reverse side of the coin accreditation enjoins a sense of social and moral responsibility on the part of the correspondent. The accreditation system was in vogue in Travancore as
far back as the mid-forties. The Malayalam press was in those days just getting on its feet and only a handful of correspondents were accredited. A member of the press corps of that period recalls that the accreditation facility entitled a press correspondent access to the press room installed in a corner of the government secretariat at Thiruvananthapuram. Copies of Government orders, notifications and press notes were placed in the press room. The correspondent was expected to go through the materials and jot down whatever he thought would appeal to his paper and its readers. The enterprising, it is recalled, would successfully cajole and Head Examiner at the Government Press into showing them the early proof sheets of the Government Gazette and other notifications and come out with scoops in their papers.

The practice of feeding the papers regularly with official press releases came into being around 1952. Simultaneously press accreditation was expanded to cover more correspondents and the facilities were increased. A major step was the extension of free travel facilities in the buses operated by the Transport Department. With the advent of planning for economic growth the potential sources of developmental-oriented news had shifted to the rural areas of the State. Easy access to these rural centres of development was essential to fill a vital communication gap.
The Directorate of Public Relations now branched out into the districts, building up an information network at these centres. With the help of this new channel of news the press, especially the small newspapers, could fill up a vital void in the rural landscape. Other media communication were not fully developed with the result that literacy and political education could be sustained only through the print media, with the consequent emphasis on newspapers and periodicals essentially geared to meet rural needs.11

A significant break-through came in 1972 when accreditation was extended to correspondents and photographers at district headquarters. Hitherto this facility was available only at the State headquarters at Thiruvananthapuram. The facilities now include free travel along all routes over which the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation plays its buses. The accredited correspondents are also entitled to a concession in rail fare. Accreditation entitles a correspondent to priority in telephone connections. Government Gazettes and other Government Publications are supplied free of cost to the accredited correspondents at the State Headquarters. Press tours are sponsored for accredited correspondents to salient developmental project areas and other sources of potential developmental news. Under an interstate exchange programme press tours are also arranged periodically to other States.
Kerala has been the first State to evolve a scheme for extending financial assistance to journalists who have been compelled to retire on account of old age, ill-health or other reasons of a similar nature (or their dependants).

A committee, chaired by the minister holding the information portfolio administers the fund. The Director of Public Relations is the convener of the committee which has five other members in including three representatives of the Kerala Union of Working Journalists, one representative of big and medium newspapers and one representative of small newspapers. Eminent journalists pension scheme and general pension scheme were recently introduced.

3.6 NUMBER OF NEWSPAPERS

Today there are a total number of 1483 newspapers in our country, which can be categorized into- Dailies: 200; Weeklies 178; Fortnightlies: 174, Monthlies 762; Quarterlies: 95; others: 74. Number of Malayalam Newspapers: 1137. Circulation of Newspapers: 76, 68,000. Circulation of dailies: 22, 63,000. Circulation of monthlies: 10, 63,000. Thiruvananthapuram (263), Kochi (244), and Kottayam (193)
3.7 PRINCIPAL MALAYALAM DAILIES

3.7.1 Malayalam Manorama

Kottayam 2,23,686; Thiruvananthapuram: 1,08,692; Kochi: 1,93,351; Kozhikode: 1,18,047; Palakkad: 53,074; Kollam: 57,090; and Kannur: 63,833;

3.7.2 Mathrubhoomi

Kochi 95,801; Kozhikode (1,19,347), Thiruvananthapuram (1,15,275), Thrissur (1,17,157), Kannur (75,851) and Kottayam (65,572);

3.7.3 Kerala Kaumudi

Thiruvananthapuram (83,635), Kozhikode (25,440), Alappuzha (25,453):

3.7.4 Oldest and Existing News Papers

Satyanadam (Bilingual weekly): Kochi (1876); Deepika (Daily): Kottayam (1887). (Figures in the brackets denotes total number of circulation)

The non-co-operation movement was particularly strong in Malabar where the Mappila’s were agitated over the Khilafat issue. It was the course of the non-cooperation and Khilafat movements that Kerala witnessed what was probably the most tragic episode in its freedom struggle, namely the Mappilai Rebellion or, has been increasingly called, the Malabar Rebellion of 1921. Following the
suppression of the Malabar Rebellion and until almost the end of the thirties the purely political struggle for freedom was on a low key. However, the spirit of the people was kept at high tide through the organizational activities of the Congress. There was, in addition, considerable journalistic activity of a political nature. This was best illustrated by the starting of the nationalist newspaper, the Mathrubhoomi, from Kozhikode in 1923.

Kozhikode was then the publishing base of four Malayalam and three English periodicals. In the gloom that followed the suppression of the Malabar Rebellion and the withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement a psychosis of fear seemed to have enveloped these press organs. They were not prepared to publish any item even covertly supporting the national movement or faintly critical of the British administration. What is more, even local printing presses shied at printing statements or pamphlets by Congress leaders. With the avenues of communication thus effectively throttled prominent Congress leaders thought of the next best alternative-to start a press and a publication of their own, whatever the consequences. This entailed the raising of capital and mobilizing a band of dedicated workers. The enthusiasm of the times was such that these initial requirements were met with ease. A limited company was floated and the Mathrubhoomi started issuing on March 18, 1923, thrice a week, with K.P.Kesava Menon as its editor. The baptism by fire for the
Mathrubhoomi came soon with the Vaikom Satyagraha. The demand was for the grant of right of passage to the untouchables along approach roads to the temple. The moving spirit of the Satyagraha was Shri T.K. Madhavan, himself a redoubtable journalist.

In the forefront of the enlightened leaders of the forward communities who actively participated in the struggle was K.P. Kesava Menon. The Mathrubhoomi too, was in the thick of the fight, as it was in every phase of the national struggle.

At the peak of the civil disobedience movement, in April 1930, the Mathrubhoomi started issuing as a daily. As practically the only source of information for the people of Malabar about the developments in the national movements, its circulation base was gradually extended to the remote villages. But close on the heels of this increase in circulation and influence came official harassment. Following a critical leader on the incarceration of a political worker without trial, the government swooped down on the paper demanding a security of Rs.2000. The Mathrubhoomi furnished the security in the interests of continued publication, but as a measure of silent protest left its editorial columns blank for months to come. An article by Sanjayan, the well-known humorist, criticized the high-handedness of British army personnel at Cochin.
This provoked the Madras government and banned the daily altogether. A state­wide agitation ensued demanding withdrawal of the punitive ban order. The government had no choice but to withdraw the order. Likewise, the Dewan of Travancore, Sir C.P.Ramaswamy Iyer, refused entry to the paper in the State. The Dewan was not one to accommodate public reaction. The Mathrubhoomi had to stay out, and made a triumphant re-entry nine years later in 1947.

Despite periodical harassment by the authorities the growth of the Mathrubhoomi as a powerful organ of the press was impressive indeed. It came out in 1932 with a weekly. In 1962 the paper branched out into a sister edition from Cochin. It had a number of stalwarts occupying the editorial chair. It ranks today as one of the fore­most dailies of the Indian press.

Another significant Kozhikode-based paper of this period was the Al­ameen, which first started publication in 1924 and began issuing as a daily in 1930. Mohammed Abdul Rahiman Sahib, the Congress leader, started the paper. The pro-nationalist stance of the paper infuriated the authorities. On more than one occasion the Al­ameen was discontinued as a result of action by the authorities. One such closure followed the publication of an editorial exhorting non-cooperation with the war efforts of Britain. The Al­ameen continues to be published to this day.
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3.8 SUMMARY

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