CHAPTER 4

HISTORY OF PRESS IN INDIA AND ASSAM- AN OVERVIEW

PRESS IN INDIA

This chapter is an attempt to discuss a brief overview of the history of Press in India. The history of Indian print media dates back to 1980. Indian Print Media is one of the largest Print Media in the world.

The two hundred year history of the Indian Press form 1780 to the present day is the history of a struggle for freedom. The evolution of the Indian media since has been fraught with developmental difficulties, illiteracy, colonial constraints and repression, poverty and apathy thwart in news and media. (Aggarwal & Gupta, 2001)

In the 16th century the Christian Missionaries brought the Printing Press in India.

James Augustus Hickey is considered as the founder of the first newspaper (Bengal Gazette) in India. James Augusts Bengal Gazette (English Weekly) published by James Augusts Hickey in 1780 from Calcutta. It was also the first newspaper in South Asian sub continent. Hickey declared his newspaper as “a weekly political and commercial paper open to all influenced by none”.

Bengal Gazette was a two-sheet paper with a size of 12”x8” having three columns on each side.

Bengal Gazette could not survive more than two year due to sharp confrontation with Warren Hastings. Peter Read, a salt agent, launched Indian Gazette as a rival to the Bengal Gazette in the same year (1780). Indian Gazette was supported by Hastings and enjoyed various benefits.

Calcutta Gazette was published in 1784 Bombay Herald weekly was launched in 1789 which was later merged into Bombay Gazette in 1791. Bombay Courier appeared in 1790.

Hurukaru (weekly) came into existence in 1793. Calcutta Chronicle and Calcutta Journal appeared in 1818 an early period the newspapers in India were run by Britishers.
Bengal is considered as the birthplace of journalism in India. The language press also originated in Bengal.

Digdarshan in Bengalis a monthly magazine launched in April 1818 was the first Periodical in Indian language. It was started by the Serampur Missionaries. Samachar Darpan (Bengali) weekly newspaper also started publication in the same year (1818).

Christian missionaries played the leading role in the growth & development of Press in India. Most of the ventures were patronized by the Christian Missionaries. (Ahuja 1998).

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the Pioneer Journalist and social reformer whom Nehru Considered as the founder of Indian Press, played pivotal role in the growth and development of press in India. He published Brahmanical Magazine (English) in 1821, Sambad Kamudi in Bengali in 1821, Mirut-Ul akhbar (Persian, 1822).

In 1823, the British Government imposed Press regulation in India to control newspapers. The regulation was used as a tool to deport James silk Buckingham editor at Calcutta chronicle. Raja Ram Mohan Roy Protested against the press ordinance of 1823 and in justice done to Buckhingham.

In 1822, the chandrika samachar was started in Bengal. In the same year Bombay Samachar was started by Ferdunji Mazban of gane emphasis on social reform and commercial news in Gujarati.

The first Hindi weekly newspaper Oodunta Martand was Published from Calcutta in 1826. It was a short-lived newspaper. It could not survive long. The first Hindi daily samachar sudha varshan (1854) appeared form Calcutta.

The first Oriya newspaper appeared in 1849 AD. Tamil Magazine the first Tamil paper appeared in 1832 AD. Kanada Samachar was the first Kanada paper. The Marathi newspaper made it appearance in 1832. (Neogi, 1977).

The growth and development of journalism in India has had a chequered history. Journalism has been a product of struggle against the continuing repressive measures of the British rulers area long period to time right from the beginnings in 1780. (Aggarwal & Gupta, 2001). Thus the birth of Indian Journalism could be traced to the
second & third decade of the 19th century. These journals were started in Bengali & Gujarati.

During those days, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Gangadhar Bhattacharjee, Bhawani Choran Bannerjee, Girish Chandra Ghose etc. were the Pioneers Indian journalists.

The Sepoy Mutiny (the first war of Indian Independence) was a turning point in the history of Indian journalism.

The British Government enacted vernacular press Act also known as Gagging Act to suppress the Indian language newspapers.

The Amrit Bazar Patrika came into existence in 1868 from Calcutta from Allahabad. The Hindu was launched in 1878 from Chennai. Keshari in Marathi and The Maratha in English were launched in 1878 from Pune by Balgangadhar Tilak.

The Hindustan Times came into existence in 1923. The Indian express was published in 1937.

In 1861 Mr. Knight merged the Bombay standard, Bombay times, Bombay telegraph and Courier and launched The Times of India.

The Pioneer was launched in 1861. The Bombay chronicle was launched in 1913. The Indian National Congress (INC) founded in 1886 was another turning point in the history of freedom movement & Journalism in India. Most prominent members of the congress were eminent journalists.

After the establishment of INC Indian Press became an important part of struggle for independence. Some of the leading newspapers that came into existence after the establishment of INC are Bengali English daily in 1900, Bande Mataram in 1901(Bangali weekly), Yuganta (Bengali daily in 1906). New India appeared in 1913. Annie Besant was the editor of New India.

Mahatma Gandhi the great freedom fighter played a pivotal role in the freedom movement. He was also a veteran journalist. He became the editor or Indian opinion in 1904 and published it in English, Tamil & Gujrati. In 1919 he published young India in 1933 he started Harijan, Harijan Bandhu and Harija senak in English, Gujarati & Hindi respectively.

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Article written by Gandhi covered most crucial issues like Hind-Muslim unity, abolition of liquor, and wine promotion of khadi and village industry renewal of untouchabilities etc (Maitra-1969)

The British rulers enacted a number of laws to suppress the freedom of press in India. Many nationalist newspapers, which were publishing nationalist views, suffered a lot (Padhy 1997).

India achieved Independence from British rule on 15th August 1947. The independent day opened a new era in the history of press in India. The press also celebrated the independence because it was their victory too. After independence press witnessed a number of changes both in terms of freedom and role. Before independence the main aim of the press was to strengthen and support national movement for freedom it played a great role in arousing nation feeling among the people, but after independence the role of the press became much more significant as of the at time India was facing the problem of poverty, illiteracy, economic backwardness. The main task before the country was to achieve national development and national building. The nature and condition of press witnessed changes both in terms of content and make up. The scenario has completely changed in respect of publications circulation (Natarajan, 1962)

A press commission was established under the chairmanship of Justice Rajadhyaksha in September 1952. It was an important event in the history of press in India. The commission submitted its report in 1954. It recommended the establishment of press council, appointment of registered for newspaper in India etc. The press council was established by an act of parliament in 1965.

The declaration of emergency was a shocking event in the history of press in India. The declaration of emergency was a shocking blow to the freedom of press in India. The government imposed heavy censorship on newspapers. More than 30 presses were seized and over 7000 people were arrested in connection with the publication and circulation of underground literature (Kumar, 1981)

When Janata Dal government came to power in 1977, all the restrictions were removed and the Press once again breathed freedom. After emergency Indian press became more professional and started adopting modern technologies. Add – 1.
The second press commission was set up in May 1978 under the chairmanship of Justice P.K. Goswami.

Press trust of India was established in 1948. Formation of Audit Bureau of circulation was another significant development. The newspaper industry in India has started expanding its horizone.

The newspapers became better organized and were now systematically managed (Murthy, 1966).

PRESS IN ASSAM

A deep analysis of the history of press in Assam will reveal the fact that Christian Mission Played the Pioneer role in initial stage. An American Baptist Missionary brought the first printing press in Assam in 1936 and published as series of brochures to inform the public about Christianity and glorifying the biblical stories (Murthy 1966). The prime motto of the Christian Missionary was to propagate Christian religion. No doubt they brought printing press to fulfill their religions interest but it helped in the origin and growth of Press in Assam.

It was an American Missionary who played the leading role in the publication of the first Assamese Periodical ‘Arunodaya’. Arunaday made its appearance in 1946 AD and Mr. Oliver T. Cutter was its first editor. The Journal was regularly published for 36 years (Baruah, 1956).

About this Journal, Jadig Krishnamurthy, historian of Journalism writes, “learned articles from many eminent writers such as A.R.D. Phukan, Ham Chandra Baruaod G. Barua … adorned this Journal (Krisna Murthy 1966).

The first Assamese language (weekly) newspaper made its appearance in 1872. The first daily newspaper in Assamese language is Batari. It was first founded as a weekly in 1929. In 1935 it became a daily and came to be known as Dainik Batari.

In 1882 Hemchandra Baruah brought out a bi-lingual weekly newspaper. But from July 1885 this newspaper came out as a daily (Neog 1998).

The Dainik Asamiya came into existence in 1946. It is considered as the second daily newspaper in Assamese. During 1935 to 1946 many weekly newspapers appeared in
the state but they were short lived. At present Assam is having many newspapers and periodicals in different languages. The Assame Tribune, the Sentinel, the Eastern Chronicle etc are the leading English dailies. Assam Tribune is the oldest English daily. Among the Assamese dailies, Dainik Batari, Dainik Asomia, Agig Batori, Asomiya protidin, Dainik, Agradaot, Janmabhumi etc, are popular. Among the Bengali dailies Dainik Jugosankha, Samoyik Prasango, Prontojoti are the popular one.

According to Guwahati Press Club estimates, there are over 500 working journalists in Guwahati city; most of whom are associated with the Press Club (President, Guwahati Press Club).

It can be concluded that like the Indian Press the press in Assam has the original roots in the efforts of the Christian missionaries.

**PRESENT STATUS OF PRESS IN INDIA**

According to the latest of the Registrar of Newspapers in India, the total number of registered newspapers in India as on 31\textsuperscript{st} March 2012 stood up to 86754. The total number of registered newspapers stood at 11304. The total number of new publications registered during 2011-12 is 4545. The percentage of the growth of registered publication over the previous year is 5.51%. The largest number of publication registered in any language is Hindi with a figure of 34651. English had second largest publication. The total number of circulation of newspapers for the year 2011-12 stood at 373839764 copies. In daily/Bi/Tri/Weeklies category the total circulation reached at 197880317 copies per publication day. In periodical category the total circulation stood at 175959447 copies per publishing day. Hindi has the largest number of publication with a figure of 34651. English occupied second position with a figure of 11938, while Marathi occupied third position in terms of publication with a figure of 5798. As per the data the top three largest circulated dailies are, the Hindu (English, single edition (1606711 copies) Ananda Bazar Patrika (Bengali) single edition (1282942 copies). The Times of India (English) single edition (3536 copies). Nab Bharat Times was the largest circulated Hindi daily, Delhi (single edition) 1208682 copies. Among the largest circulated multi edition the Times of India occupied first position with 14 edition (4575895 copies).
As per the latest report of the Registrar of Newspapers in India, the highest numbers of newspapers are published in Hindi followed by English. In terms of circulation, Hindi newspapers continue to lead followed by English newspapers.

The print media scenario in India in the last 62 years has undergone drastic change.

Press marked its beginning in India after the advent of Christian Missionaries. The credit for introducing printing press in India goes to the Christian Missionaries. Today, the press has occupied a significant position as one of the pillars of democracy.

REFERENCES


