



RESEARCH ARTICLE

ROLE OF JOURNALS & MAGAZINES IN HISTORY OF MADHYA PRADESH DURING 19TH CENTURY.

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Abstract

The modern journal bears very little resemblance to the papers of the early 19th Century; a historical background gives us an insight to the origin and development of Indian Journals. The essence of my research work is to know and shed light upon how journals and magazines published by the press of State of Madhya Pradesh added a new ray to the development and uplift of the nation and the society. In this paper, we shall try to find out the origin of some remarkable journals and magazines of Madhya Pradesh. Under whose strong efforts these journals and magazines enhanced progressive thinking in various parts of Madhya Pradesh shall also be discussed in this paper. This will certainly make us understand how the desire of regular news reading was evolved in the masses of Madhya Pradesh. A great part of the culture of the state, past and present, is synonymous with what has been written and recorded in the contemporary journals and magazines. Although the period between 1800-1900 doesn't witnessed a remarkable growth of journals and magazines in Madhya Pradesh, the most important event which took place was the genesis of journalism in Madhya Pradesh in the form of 'Malwa Akhbar'. It was published after 69 years of 'Hicky's Gazette'.

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Introduction:-

In ancient period, news travelled by word of mouth through royal messengers and proclamations, folklore, fables etc. Back then, the news reporting existed in a different style. May be, that is why, the ancient enquiry rounds taken by a king in disguise is compared to the modern news coverage pattern, which not only kept the king well-informed but also brought him closer to his populace. When we talk of ancient reporters, Narada, the sage, is often mentioned as super-journalist and an ace reporter because of his enquiring skills. Mauryan period is noted for utilizing Stone and Pillar Edicts for spreading news. In this matter, gong men, wandering minstrels, town criers, Avadans, brochure of rest-houses etc. are classified as the ancestors of printed journals.

When we come across the Mughal period, we find special officials called Waqa-i-navis or news reporters who worked under a Governor or Subahdar at provincial level.

In modern India, however, the invention of printing press by European adventurers led to the rise of predominant means of communication – Journals. It helped in wide circulation of ideas.

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History:-

The first journal to be published in any language anywhere in India was Hicky's Gazette. In 1780, James Augustus Hicky started a two sheet weekly called Bengal Gazette or Calcutta General Advertiser, which described itself as "A Weekly Political and Commercial Paper Open to all Parties, but influenced by None."

More journals followed which were started by Englishmen, totally non-political in nature and catered to the needs of Englishmen. The advent of the British started a new era in journalism only in the sense that printed journal made its appearance not until after the British had come to India. The next stage is marked by the publication of journals by missionaries both in English and vernacular languages. In 1818, the first vernacular (Bengali) monthly magazine for youth Digdarsan (Indicator of Ways) & a vernacular (Bengali) weekly Samachar Darpan (Mirror of News), got published on 23 May 1818, both edited by John Clark Marshman.

Soon, Indians began publishing journals in Indian languages. On 4 December 1821, a "newspaper conducted exclusively by natives in the native (Bengali) language" was published by Raja Ram Mohan Roy as Sambad Kaumudi (Moon of Intelligence). Sambad Kaumudi was managed and supervised by Bhavani Charan Vandhopadhyaya and Tarachand Dutt when Raja Ram Mohan Roy took over as the editorial head.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was perhaps the first 'Modern Indian' and Jawaharlal Nehru has justly described him 'founder of the Indian Press'. The breakthrough came in when the first Hindi journal, Udant Martand was published by Yugal Kishore Shukl on May 30, 1826 at Calcutta. It is interesting to note that the first Hindi paper was started outside the Hindi-speaking area.

Evolution of Press in Madhya Pradesh:-

With the passage of time, lack of Hindi Press was felt in the Hindi-speaking Provinces where it has been observed that bilingual journalism was practiced to a great extent. The whole scenario got changed with the Revolt of 1857. The political evolution of the country also stirred public opinion among the masses of other states including Madhya Pradesh which was till now awaiting the rise of local or indigenous journalism. Thus, began the story of journals and magazines in Madhya Pradesh which was very first kindled in the Princely State of Holkars, Indore; and then slowly spreaded to all the native states in Central India and C.P. and Berar.

Pioneer among the journals in Madhya Pradesh – MALWA AKHBAR; was published from Indore on March 6, 1849. Shri Prem Narayan of the Holkar State was its editor. It was a bilingual weekly in Hindi and Urdu which published the affairs of neighbouring states like Gwalior, Dewas, Ujjain, Agra etc. Each page was centrally bifurcated into two columns of Hindi and Urdu, with the same news content. The Hindi used was a mixture of Hindi and Urdu.

In the aftermath of the great Revolt of 1857, the British masters came down to reactionary measures and repressive policies. Meanwhile, the vernacular press of India was keen on highlighting severe famine (1876-78) in different parts of India and wastage of millions of rupees on Delhi Durbar held in January 1877 to proclaim Queen Victoria as 'Kaiser-i-Hindi' (Empress of India). Therefore, an Act was passed by Lord Lytton in 1878 as the Vernacular Press Act which empowered magistrate to call upon the printer and publisher of any vernacular journal to enter into an undertaking not to publish anything likely to create disaffection against the government. This Act was also called the 'Gagging Act', as it attacked the freedom of press.

To circumvent this Act, the 'Amrit Bazar Patrika' (Bengal), founded in 1868 as an Anglo-Bengali weekly was converted overnight into English weekly. The effect of Vernacular Press Act was also felt in Madhya Pradesh where 'Malwa Akhbar' fell prey to the repressive policy of Lord Lytton. Before implementing the Vernacular Press Act, Lord Lytton had mentioned 'Malwa Akhbar' in his speech given on April 14, 1878. The Journal had claimed re-establishment of the lost Peshwa rule by Nana Sahib with the Russian aid. It also highlighted benefits of an indigenous rule, bad times for British Empire in near future, and Hindu-Muslim equality which definitely aggravated Lord Lytton. As a result, by the order of Maharaja Holkar, the editor of 'Malwa Akhbar' was imprisoned for three months and its publication was ceased. This was proved to be a blessing in disguise in arousing national consciousness as now each educated Indian got the advantage of reading a journal which was otherwise available in a vernacular language only.

The second important journal of Madhya Pradesh; AKHBAR GWALIOR was published due to the initiative of His Highness Maharaja Jayaji Rao Sindhia under the direct government patronage, in January 1852. It was found that the journal was published as a combined form of Gazette as well and finally got published as 'THE GWALIOR GAZETTE'. However, in January 1905, the Gwalior Gazette got divided into the Gwalior State Gazette and JAYAJI PRATAP. The former was in both Hindi and English, while the later being of a literary nature was in Hindi, and had one English edition as well. Jayaji Pratap was later changed to Madhya Pradesh Sandesh which still continues as a literary magazine.

For the first time in the history of Madhya Pradesh a journal raised voice of national political consciousness, it was called BHARAT BHRATA. It was started by the Army Commander of Rewa State; Lal Baldeo Singh in 1887. It was the only journal which spoke of Indian nationalism in spite of being the mouth-piece of a native state. It kept alive the fire within the hearts of each Indian to oppose the repressive measures of the British government. The Journal was regularly published on every 1st and 15th of each month. The journal was more inclined towards the freedom struggle of India and fully supported the new-born Indian National Congress. It is a matter of pride for each Indian that an Army Commander tried to publish a journal in British India as per the demand of time. Lal Baldeo Singh aroused national consciousness by promoting each act of Indian National Congress. But it couldn't continue for long due to its blazing articles and had to stop forever in 1902.

RATNA-PRAKASH weekly was published from Ratlam in 1868. It was named after the founder of Ratlam State; Ratna Singh. It was edited by Saiyyad Nizam-ud-din and then by Maulvi Mohammed Hussain. It mainly published the news of Ratlam State and followed the pattern of Malwa Akhbar in terms of both news and size.

THE HOLKAR SIRKAR GAZETTE was first published on April 21, 1873. It got published on each Monday from Holkar Government Press. It was originally started in Marathi then got printed in Hindi and English. Various notifications, circulars along with city-district municipality orders, advertisements etc. were printed in it. It remained in circulation till 1948.

Conclusion:-

This clearly shows that Madhya Pradesh was a 'slow beginner' as far as the publication of journals and magazines was concerned. The 19th century journalism also included Gazettes which became the source of information for the common man. As seen, Gwalior Gazette was the torch-bearer in Madhya Pradesh followed by the Gazettes of other native states like Indore, Dhar, and Barwani etc. During the early period, local journalism generally concerned itself with religious, social and literary subjects as most of the journals and magazines were under the patronage of the native rulers. Therefore, it was not economically possible for them to be critical of the native states or to adopt an anti-British tone in that matter e.g. Akhbar Gwalior, Malwa Akhbar etc. People living in the Princely States or Riyasats faced more pressure than those living in British India as the Native rulers were adamant to show their loyalty and could not risk their privileges at the cost of criticism of the British Crown through any journals or magazine published from their state. Therefore, the role of Journals & Magazines of Madhya Pradesh in supporting or discouraging their populace for a cause became nominal. These could not apply great impact on people against British rule. It gives an idea about the contemporary atmosphere in which the journals and magazines of Madhya Pradesh were published.

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