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## Role of Print Media in India's Freedom Struggle

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### **Abstract:**

*The Indian freedom struggle was not only a political struggle against British colonialism but also an intellectual, cultural, and communication revolution that transformed the collective consciousness of the masses. In this scenario, the role of print media was one of the most crucial and indispensable elements. The press, in the form of newspapers, journals, pamphlets, and political writings, served as instruments of resistance, political education, and national integration. It highlighted colonial exploitation, voiced demands for self-rule, and rallied the masses across linguistic, regional, and social divisions. Despite the challenges of intense censorship, lack of finances, and colonial press laws, nationalist journalism proved to be a strong and powerful force. This paper will analyze the historical evolution of print media in colonial India and its role in disseminating political awareness, mobilizing mass movements, constructing national identity, and ultimately leading to the independence of India. The paper will contend that the printed word was not only a chronicler of history but also a participant in the making of history.*

**Keywords:** *Print media, Indian nationalism, freedom struggle, vernacular press, colonial censorship, national identity.*

### **Introduction:**

The history of the Indian freedom struggle is often narrated through the activities of major leaders and mass movements. However, the role of communication in the formation and maintenance of these movements cannot be ignored. In a land of diverse languages, regional variations, and social stratifications, the question arises: How did the idea of nationalism spread over such a long distance? The answer to this question largely lies in the evolution of print media.

Under British colonial rule, political utterances came under increasing surveillance, and public protests were often suppressed. In such a repressive atmosphere, newspapers and periodicals became essential channels for discussion and protest. They served as a conduit between leaders and the masses, expressed grievances against colonial policies, and created a sense of shared injustice. Editorials, articles, and news reports in the press helped to consolidate individual disgruntlements into a collective

nationalism.

### **Literature Review:**

In the study of the nationalist movement in India, the role of ideological formation in the long-term resistance has been repeatedly underlined. Bipan Chandra, in his book *\*India's Struggle for Independence\**, suggests that the nationalist movement was a result of political education and not a spontaneous uprising. The press played an important role in this process. The press explained political events and placed them in a larger narrative of colonial exploitation.

Historians of print culture have also pointed out that the development of the vernacular press helped to spread political ideas to a wider audience. These publications helped to make nationalism more accessible to a wider audience by breaking down complex ideas into local languages. Further research has also pointed out that the British colonial administration was forced to impose strict press regulations because of the growing impact of nationalist journalism. The fact that laws such as the Vernacular Press Act of 1878 existed shows how seriously the colonial administration took the power of the press.

### **Results and Discussion:**

Looking at the various discourses of history it is quite clear that print played a polyvalent role in the freedom struggle of India. Its earliest function was in shaping political consciousness. 21 Newspapers explained how policies of economic drain such as high land revenue system, collection of taxes for retaining the army, exploitation of industries etc. Were eating into the economic life of the common man. By using figures, raising issues and making comparison they made their readers aware of the drain and thus of the need for political reforms.

As political consciousness grew, the press played a significant role of encouraging mass mobilization. During the Swadeshi Movement following the Partition of Bengal (1905), for instance, the press actively denounced the policy of Divide and Rule. Newspapers called for boycott of foreign goods and nurtured indigenous industry. Propagating nationalist ideas and inducing the feeling of shame in the ruling population or highhandedness of the Government, the press camouflaged economic protest as a patriotic duty. Similarly, during the Non, Cooperation Movement, Mahatma Gandhi used papers like *Young India* for propagating the doctrine of civil disobedience and non, violent resistance. The power of the press in exemplified by the Civil Disobedience Movement as well. The coverage of the Salt March turn the local act of civil defiance into a communication network for the whole country. Reporting by the daily made the distant provinces adopt the movement as their own. Even in 1942 Quit India movement a movement that the press was censored and shut down in many places, underground press survived.

The vernacular press also needs to be given special prominence here. Indian language newspapers enabled the political awakening to be spread beyond the literate, English, proficient classes.

Local newspapers were often read out at public meetings, so that even those who could not read the words could understand the ideas. Through this process, print helped to create a mass movement by drawing more and more people into the struggle, and cementing community bonds. The movement was therefore not just an elite mobilization, but one of the entire nation.

Censorship was an obstacle. Authorities had powers to seize printing presses, demand security deposits, and arrest editors. But repression often led to a sympathising with the nationalist cause. The case of prominent British journalists being tried for sedition showed the flaws inherent in Britain's argument that it was bringing liberty and democracy to people everywhere. Instead of silencing critics, censorship in fact stimulated further opposition and increased the number of advocates for free press. Finally, the written word also played a role in the deeper, spiritual, and cultural dimensions of nation building. India was a nation of great regional diversity, so forging a common identity was a daunting prospect. But newspapers printed accounts of events in all parts of the land, and presented a common agenda of discontent that helped their readers feel part of a wider community. The repeated use of words like 'Swaraj' and 'nation' created an emotional attachment to an independent India. It was printing that helped create the Indian nation.

#### **Conclusion:**

The historical record is unambiguous in showing the crucial role played by the print press in the fight for Indian independence. It was that vital conduit of political enlightenment, the lever of mass mobilization and space for ideological debate. Nationalist journalists despite financial hardship and low levels of literacy, a colonial barrage of censorship and repression, tirelessly communicated the clamour for freedom to diverse regions and social strata.

The story of Indian independence, in 1947, cannot be understood in terms of the physical demonstrations and political negotiations alone. The true story of Indian independence took place in the relentless minds of the people, kept alive by the newspaper and journal. Local feeling became a national movement which was nourished by the printed word.

#### **Recommendations:**

In society. More focus needs to be given to the study of nationalist journalism in educational syllabi to demystify the concept of nationalism and its link with democracy. Archival archives of the first wave of nationalist newspapers need to be intensively preserved for bringing forth historians' research material. Competition and dependency of nationalism such as between USA and Japan which emerged in the Post, Second World War era needs to be researched through systematic Malaysian newspapers literature to contribute to the international body of knowledge of communication in resistance movements. Finally, today's media institution can learn from the practices of nationalist journalists in terms of ethics and the role of the media in defending freedom of expression in the cause of democracy.

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