

# Press In Malabar Before 1947: A Historical Review

<sup>[1]</sup> Anoop.V.S

<sup>[1]</sup> Research scholar, Department of History, Scott Christian college, Nagercoil.

---

**Abstract:--** The press in Malabar has played crucial role in the shaping of modern Kerala .Admittedly it has been the most popular and powerful device of information instruction and propaganda. In recent time it has established itself after a period of struggle and fight for freedom of expression. It opened a wide window on the affairs of India as a whole and on the world at large. This paper intent to analyze role played by Mathruboomi, Deenabandu, Pachimodayam, Desabhimani and Al amen .More than all it mobilizes public opinion on socio- economic problems and focuses the attention of the government.

---

## INTRODUCTION

The press is the most powerful and effective mechanism to bring desired and progressive changes in the society. It plays crucial in the formation of the behaviour pattern of the people. History always remembers us by examples that in all major world events like revolutions, world wars, agitations, political developments, and cultural formation etc. the role of press is important. The press can change its course and results. It is a common platform for the people to discuss matters of public importance. It discusses vital issues of the masses. There is no hesitation is required to say that it has been the most popular and powerful source of information, instruction and propaganda forever. The press acted as most mighty force for the achievement of freedom and stood as a source of encouragement in the fight for human rights. It opened up a wide window on the affairs of India as well as the world. It is an agent of mobilizing public opinion on problems and prospects of humanity. It focuses the attention of the government on burning issues of the people.

## GROWTH OF PRESS IN INDIA

Like its counterpart in England the press in India had a modest beginning. It was during British rule the press in India as we know it today began to shape. Under the rule of the East India Company, some enterprising journalists set up printing presses in India to expose the misdeeds of the Company. There was no newspaper published until 1780 because the Company's establishments in India were a close preserve. The first newspapers were started by unsatisfied ex-employees of the Company. They were aided and abetted by servants of the Company who used these newspapers for furtherance of their personal rivalries and jealousies. However the credit for the introduction of the printing press in India belonged to Christian missionaries. Raja Ram Mohan Roy considered as the pioneer of Indian press movement. He started press for the purpose of social renovation.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy is also known as the father of Indian Renaissance. He took initiative to publish some

periodicals in English, Bengali and Persian. Some of Roy's papers were Sambad Kaumidi, Brahminical Magazine, Mirat-ul-Akhbar, and Bangadoota and Bengal Herald. All of them addressed wide variety subjects of common interest. It included items of local importance as well as news regarding the events of national and international importance, articles relating to religious and social reform and commercial matters etc. The awakening generated by Ram Mohan Roy in Bengal rapidly spread to other parts of India. Newspapers published in Indian languages strengthened national consciousness. Indian-owned newspapers sprang up in various parts of the country. Many of them advocated political and social reform. This awakening also resulted in the formation of citizens' associations comprising lawyers, teachers and other sections of the English educated intelligentsia and emergence of nationalist newspapers.

## GROWTH OF PRESS IN MALABAR

Like other parts of India, the Christian missionaries were the pioneers of press in Kerala. The Basel Evangelical Mission and the Church Mission Society played a leading role in the development of press in Kerala in its initial phase. In response to the activities of Christian missionaries in the field of the development of press certain Hindu and Muslim leaders started their own journals to enlighten their community. Thus most of the early newspapers in Malayalam were inspired by a zeal for socio-religious reform rather than political issues. Portuguese missionaries had established the first press in Quilon in Kerala in the middle of 16th century and next in Vipinkotta near Cochin .The primary intention of the introduction of press in India was the diffusion of knowledge relating to Christianity, among the literate people of India. Spreading their views and news were given secondary importance. Basel Mission of Tellichery headed by Dr. Herman gundart, published first paper Rajyasamacharam in Malayalam in 1847. One year later Arch Deacon Koshy and Rev. George Mathen published Jnananikshapam. It contained a number of articles denouncing the ascendancy of Roman Catholic Church in Travancore.

Malabar was a part of the British ruled Madras Presidency. It took a different pattern of development and, hence, the Press took a different character from that in Travancore. Malabar was lagging behind in social and educational developments while compared to both Travancore and Kochi. However Malabar was more exposed to the happenings elsewhere in the country than the southern part of Kerala especially Indian National freedom movement. Therefore Malabar region witnessed a rapid growth of the press than other parts of Kerala. The research scholars in the field of the history of early Journalism in Malabar have highlighted the crucial role of 'Pachimodayam' published in October 1847 from Tellicherry. It was the formative period of Malayalam journalism. It included articles on secular subject like astrology antiquity of Kerala, Natural science, Geography etc. Though Rev.F.Muller was its editor, it is widely believed that most of the articles were prepared by Guntart himself.

Malabar region become under the control of British after the fall of Tippusulthan in 1799. Right from the early nineteenth century, defence of civil liberties, including freedom of press, had been high on nationalist agenda. Many leaders had protested against a resolution restricted the freedom of press. The early phase of nationalist movement from around 1870 to 1918 focused more on political propaganda and education, formulating and propagating of nationalist ideology and arousing, training mobilization and consolidation of public opinion, than on mass agitation or active mobilisation of mass through open meetings. For this purpose the press proved a crucial tool in the hands of nationalists. The Indian national congress in its early days relied solely on the press to propagate its resolutions and proceedings. Meanwhile some papers carried on a ceaseless struggle against the social injustice that prevailed in the caste ridden society of Kerala. T. K. Madhavan, editor of 'Desabhimani', and a brave patriot created a sense of unity and self respect among the depressed classes who were inspired to stand up and fight for their rights. Other prominent social reforms like C. Ayyapan through Sahodaran in Cochin and C. Krishnan through Mithavadi in Calicut appealed to the conscience of the high caste in their campaign against social injustices inherent in Kerala society.

Conspicuous among the Malayalam dailies, Mathruboomi published from Calicut in 1923. Among its founders were Karoor Neelakantan Nampoothiripad, K. P. Kesava Menon, P Ramunni Menon and T. V. Sundaram. In the initial stages, they made tremendous sacrifices to build up the company and put it on a sound basis. The high standard of articles published in Mathruboomi on a variety of subjects, the uncompromising spirit of independence exhibited and

the critical assessment made by it of government measures made Mathruboomi the most popular nationalist paper of Kerala. At the peak of civil disobedience movement, in April 1930, Mathruboomi started issuing as a daily. In the days of national movement, its circulation basis was gradually extended to remote villages. But close on the heels of this increase in circulation and influence came official harassment. Following a critical editorial on the imprisonment of a political worker without trial, the government swooped down on the paper demanding a security of RS 2000. The Mathruboomi furnished the security in the interest of continued publication but as a measure of silent protest left its editorial columns blank for months to come.

Later on the Madras government banned the daily altogether. A state wide agitation ensued demanding withdrawal of the punitive ban order and after a few days government withdrew the order. The Dewan of Travancore, Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer, refused entry to the paper in the princely state. The Mathruboomi had to stay out, and made a triumphant re-entry in a year later in 1947. Another significant Kozhikode based paper of this period was AL-ameen which first started publication in 1924 and Muhammed Abdul Rahiman Sahib, the Congress leader. 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 effort of Britain. The AL-ameen continues to be published to this day, but on a modest scale as an evening daily.

The Prabhatham started publication from Shornur 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 Singh's martyrdom. The license was restored later. The paper was shifted to Kozhikode in 1938, but did not survive for long.

In 1941 Deenabandu edited by V. K. Krishnan Ezhuthachan was published from Trichur as a weekly. As it echoed the sentiments of the radical nationalists with burning enthusiasm in the period of Quit India movement, the government ordered the arrest and imprisonment of its editor and staff. Subsequent to their release in 1944 its publication was resumed. But in 1945 the government froze its newsprint supply. By this time it had to face stiff opposition from the authorities of Cochin and Travancore still when it was officially banned the workers of the paper smuggled a few copies of the paper through the British enclave of

**International Journal of Science, Engineering and Management (IJSEM)**  
**Vol 2, Issue 12, December 2017**

ThanakasseryAnjengo to Travancore. In spite of all the difficulties encountered, Deena Bandu continued Publication for nearly two decades till 1962 when for want of adequate financial support it ceased to exist.

Chandrika started out in 1934 In Tellicherry as a weekly official organ of the Muslims League blossomed into a daily in 1939 and was shifted to Kozhikode. Even since ,it has been fomenting sectionalism in the interest of the Muslim community .Of late the influence of Candrika over the political life of the people of Malabar has been considerably reduced.With growth of socialist movement in Malabar ,Desabhimani the organ of the communist party published as a weekly from Kozhikode in 1942 become a popular daily in 1946. Although the government of Madras banned the paper in 1948, its publication was resumed in 1951. Like other leading papers of Kerala it launched a new edition from Cochin and has sister publication like Desabhimani weekly and Chintha weekly.

**CONCLUSION**

The decade preceding independence was the period of consolidation and growth of the press in Kerala. There appeared stiff compilation among the papers and a fierce struggle for survival incidentally journalism in Kerala becomes increasingly politically oriented. Kerala has the highest percentage of literacy in whole India .This creditable achievement can be accounted for by the growth of non-formal education carried on partly by the responsible and mature press of Malabar and partly by the voluntary agencies working in the field of education. These newspapers were not established as profit making business ventures but were seen as rendering national and public service .In fact these newspapers had a wide reach and they stimulated a library movement.

**REFERENCE**

- 1.Thomas Nossiter, Communism in Kerala: A study of political adaptation,Hurst publishers,London,1992.
- 2.Iyengar A.S ,Role of press and Indian freedom struggle( All Through The Gandhian Era) APH Publishers,New Delhi,2001.
- 3.P.K.K Menon,The history of freedom movement in kerala (1885-1938) ,Government press,Trivandrum,1972.
- 4.A. Sreedharamenon, Kerala history and its makers,D C Books, Kottayam,1990.

5.M.S.A Rao, Social change in Malabar,Popular Publishers , Bombay,1957.

6.Press In Kerala ,Dep.of Public Relation Kerala, Trivandrum,1985.

7.A.SreedharaMenon , Kerala and freedom struggle ,D C Books, Kottayam,1997.

8.Dilip. M. Menon,Caste ,Nationalism And Communism In South India – Malabar 1900-1948,New Delhi,1994.