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A HISTORY OF INDIAN JOURNALISM

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MOHIT MOITRA

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All the civil wars, invasions, revolutions, conquests, famines, strangely complex, rapid and destructive as the successive action in Hindustan may appear, did not go deeper than its surface. England has broken down the entire framework of Indian Society, without any symptoms of re-constitution, yet appearing. The loss of his old world, with no gain of a new one, imparts a particular kind of melancholy to the present misery of the Hindu and separates Hindustan, ruled by Britain, from all its ancient traditions, and from the whole of its past history.

Karl Marx
Historical Writings, Vol. 1

History is the presentation in chronological order of successive changes in the means and relations of production.

D. D. Kosambi

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Mohit Moitra had been working on a history of journalism in India for sometime when we came to get his approval to publish the same. His life, devoted to political activities and journalism, took away most of his time and the writing of the book was unduly delayed. Then came his illness which proved to be fatal. We made him agree to part with the earlier chapters of the book while he was lying ill in the hospital so that we could start printing it. A few days before he died he handed over the MS from which the present volume has been prepared. It will be seen that the period covered by the present volume ends with the early eighties of the last century. The author had planned the book in two parts. Unfortunately, there is no trace of the latter part. Obviously, the present work requires a good deal of editing which the author alone could do. In the days before he died all his time was practically taken up in exhaustive political activities and his responsibilities as the editor of the weekly, Desh-hitaishi hardly left him any time to delve into source materials. Nevertheless we have ventured to publish it in the hope that the reader may be acquainted with the work of this outstanding journalist, and historians of Indian journalism would accept this significant contribution as a guide in future studies.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER :	1.	India's "Fourth Estate" ?	1
„	2.	In Role of Opposition	23
„	3.	The First Phase (1780-1818) ..	31
„	4.	Rammohan and Bengal 'renaissance'	49
„	5.	A Press in Transition (1818-1835)	64
„	6.	Aeropagitica of India	72
„	7.	Wave of New Enthusiasm ..	85
„	8.	Liberation of the Press	98
„	9.	Economic and Social Reform ..	107
„	10.	India's War of Independence ..	123
„	11.	Hindoo Patriot : India's First National Newspaper	134
„	12.	Moderates and Anglo-Indian Press ..	147
„	13.	Law of Sedition	162
„	14.	Suren Banerjea's Trial	171
		Appendix	178

CHAPTER I.

INDIA'S "FOURTH ESTATE" ?

When armed hostilities broke out between Nawab Sirajuddoula's army and the English troops stationed at their Fort at 'Tank Square' and Calcutta was besieged and captured by the Nawab no press correspondent was found anywhere near the field of action to collect news about such a sensational but major event of great historic importance. Nor any excitement was visible among the common folks living around though the incident had a real "news value".

Closely following this, when in 1757, the Battle of Plassey was fought and proclaimed to be won, creating the first opportunity for the East India Company to lay the foundation of British empire in India there was no newspaper in the country to report such a big "news-brake" and to tell the people actually it was not a 'battle' but a "transaction" to sell the throne of Bengal to a foreign Company.

In the absence of any newspaper and any socially significant technique of disseminating news the people could neither know nor realise the real significance of such a major event, bringing about a melancholy change in their life. When the so-called battle was being fought in the field of Plassey the peasants, who within a few years after this had to lead a number of revolts in the country to fight against inhuman tyranny and economic exploitation of foreigners, were probably engaged in their usual work of ploughing their lands and toiling men and women of villages came out to do their usual jobs. Had there been a news sheet in the country it could have certainly warned the people beforehand that misery and ruin would follow the triumph of a foreign capitalist company.

Though there were no newspapers people certainly had a hankering to know what had been happening every day round them. Their curiosity was, to a very limited extent,

satisfied when, following the usual practice, the village singers carried to them the woeful story of the 'Battle' in the shape of a ballad describing the 'weeping and lamentation of Mohonlal's sister'. At that time and long afterwards, ballads provided, on such occasions, news for common men but their real import could not be interpreted. Following their primitive technique the 'waquiah-nawises' (recorder of events) collected and wrote the news in their usual leisurely way and distributed them to their regular subscribers among the trading and ruling classes in different parts of the country during the Moghul period and pro bably pretty long after the Battle of Plassey had been fought. The news letters even did neither interpret such a major 'news brake' nor comment on its historic significance. Such comments at that period of time were out of question as the 'waquiah-nawises' had to take into account the whims, likes and dislikes of feudal chiefs for whom those letters were meant. They could ill afford to irritate them.

The pattern of work that the 'waquiah-nawis' did, had its defects and shortcomings, specially because the time taken for transmission of news and views was almost sure to effect some changes. On important occasions interested individuals or parties had to employ special messengers or agencies for transmission of news. But on some emergent occasions the arrangement hopelessly failed also. Grant Duff's History of the Marhattas tells us how the great Peshwa Bajee Row lay in camp on the bank of the Nerbudda, waiting anxiously for the news of his army which he had sent to Paneepath to conquer North India and drive out the Afghans. He did hear nothing until his scouts brought in a runner they had stopped, who had undertaken to run in nine days across India from beyond Delhi to Aurangabad in the Deccan, with a cipher message to some bankers from their correspondent in the north that the Marhatta army had been completely routed with vast slaughter on the plains of the Paneepath by Ahmed Shah Adbali's hordes. Had there been a newspaper, it would have certainly pointed out that the defeat of the Marhattas

in the Third Battle of Paneepath, in 1761, was a turning point in the history of India because it shattered the ambition of the Marhattas to pieces to capture the central power in India and thus paved the way for the British adventurers to build their empire in this country.

All our histories of journalism in India commence with James Augustus Hicky's *'Bengal Gazette'* which was published about 23 years after the Battle of Plassey had been fought, to be precise, on the 29th January, 1780. Hicky was a British-born subject who came out to India, like many others of his countrymen of that time, to try his luck here and make a fortune but success did not smile on him. Being unsuccessful in other fields he, at last, took to the trade of printing and publishing a newspaper. The "two sheets" that he published every week as a 'newspaper' having a size of 12 inches by 8 inches with three columns in each side were fashioned after the pattern of British newspapers and chiefly meant for the British residents in the Settlements. It took no account of the children of the soil and did not care to publish any news about them. Even the accounts of fights waged by revolting peasants did not find any place in his paper. But Hicky is still remembered in India as the "Papa of the Press" who fought an uncompromising and ceaseless fight for the liberty of the Press and died of great poverty but with his head erect.

Since then newspapers began to be multiplied, though slowly, due to arbitrary official restrictions and deportation of editors. They poured invectives with vehemence and vengeance against the administrators as well as the editor's adversaries. "Scurrility and servility, indeed, long seemed the only two notes known to Calcutta journalism," said Sir William Hunter, the editor of Imperial Gazetteer.

Journalism of an improved type began in our country from the second and third decades of the nineteenth century specially when all categories of officials of the Company were, on December 30, 1825, prohibited from having any connection with newspapers. Trained Europeans and responsible Indians entered the field of journalism. Having great admiration for the "regenerating

role of British capitalist rule in India" the new Indian bourgeoisie had their limitations in organising struggles for liberation of the country through newspapers and oppressions, racial discrimination and planned onslaughts against its liberty. But the Indian Press, having accepted the ideal of establishing the Rule of Law and democracy in India under British rule generally took up the role of liberal opposition. Repression by foreign bureaucracy increased its influence and popularity. In spite of its slow growth the Indian Press gradually became a power and generally maintained its tradition of opposition till the last day of British rule in India.

During the nineteenth century, besides the First War of Independence of 1857, there were innumerable revolts against exploitation, oppressions and injustice, specially by peasants, toiling masses, Adivasis, Santals, Chuars, etc. almost all over the country. But the Indian newspapers, except on two or three occasions, did, in spite of their role of opposition, neither sympathise with the fighting peasants and toiling masses nor did they boldly advocate the abolition of permanent settlement and unjust exploitation. The bourgeois influence on them was responsible for this, for they were the products of the new regime.

Karl Marx, however, observes, "The free press introduced for the first time into Asiatic society and managed principally by the common offspring of Hindus (Indian) and Europeans is a new and powerful agent of reconstruction."

This reminds us of a memorable occasion when pointing his fingers out towards the Press Gallery of the House of Commons the immortal Burke said: "Yonder sits the Fourth Estate."

When Burke characterised the press as the 'Fourth Estate' of the realm new democratic social forces had appeared in the field after the Industrial Revolution and the rising middle class and industrialists, constituting the national bourgeoisie, were successful in their bid to oust feudalism and capture State power. In this situation, created after this historic emancipation of the middle class and growth of capitalism, the two other 'Estates' gradually

lost their power, glamour and importance. Burke with his remarkable foresight visualised the growing influence of the press in the new situation that was fast developing. It really became a powerful weapon in the struggles of the rising national bourgeoisie.

When Burke died in 1797 the three other Estates in Great Britain were : the Lords Spiritual, the Lords Temporal and the Commons. Looking across the period of more than a century and a half we find today that the Lords Spiritual have practically receded to the background due to corruption in churches and their dependence on monarchy as well as with people's growing preference for secular states and development of socialist ideas among them. They no longer command general acceptance while Lords Temporal, the remnants of feudal aristocracy, have almost faded away, being shorn of their power and dignity and many of them had preferred to merge in the capitalist class. As the common toiling men marched forward, with determination and vigour towards the goal of socialism and democracy and the people's age gradually emerged the remaining two Estates, the Press and the Parliament, gained more and more power and influence day by day.

During the age of social upheavals in Great Britain, covering the periods of ruin of feudalism and the spectacular rise of the middle class (bourgeoisie), a financial oligarchy of merchants and rich industrialists, the East India Company was formed with the object of carrying on a monopoly trade in the East, specially in India. It got its first Charter in 1600 A.D. and might be described as "a typical monopolist creation of the oligrachy which fixed its grip in England with the Whig Revolution". In the year 1708 "different societies claiming the monopoly of the East India trade united together in one single company" and after the Battle of Plassey in 1757 it began its "direct colossal plunder" of India's wealth. (R. P. Dutt : India Today).

The officials of the East India Company "broke up the Indian hand-loom and destroyed the spinning wheel", "uprooted the union between agricultural and manufacturing industry" and plundered the country not only for

the Company but for their own individual gains also. Thus a robber-state, based on cruel exploitation of people, was formed. In such a situation it was but natural that the looters would fall out among themselves in dividing their shares of the spoils. Indignation and discontent began thus to grow among the disappointed adventurers who came so far away from their home-land to make fortunes.

Taking a superficial view of this Margarita Barns says: "The Indian Press was created by those who for various reasons were dissatisfied with the Company's administration and monopoly". (The Indian Press).

As we will proceed on we will see that this may be partially correct but it is not the whole truth. The then administrators never granted any licence to start a press to those who had any grievance against the Company's administration. In 1768 William Bolts was not permitted to start a printing press and a newspaper. From this it can be surmised that J. A. Hicky, "the Papa of Indian Press", must have been friendly to the administration when he secured the permission to start a printing press and his newspaper. Afterwards, his changed attitude towards the Company's administrators brought in his ruin. But certainly he had no reason to be "dissatisfied" when he started his paper.

A careful study of contemporary events shows that there were more important underlying factors behind this attempt at launching a newspaper.

The period after the Battle of Plassey was the most crucial time when the old mediaeval social structure in India with its feudal village-centred agrarian economy began to crumble, yielding place to modern age with its superior capitalist economy, which the foreign rulers brought here, operated from Great Britain and forced upon the helpless vanquished people, to serve the Britishers' own needs and interests. Due to the imposition of commercial economy a new India aristocracy (bourgeoisie, middle class), based on wealth earned through the patronage of the British, was thus created having loyalty to foreigners. The "Sunset law' of Cornwallis ruined most of

the old landed aristocracy, created after the Plassey conspiracy, as well as Moghul rule, which ruled the rural society and safeguarded its agrarian economy. The newly created aristocracy, headed by Raja Rammohon Roy, purchased the estates and other landed property and invested their money in Company's securities. They thus became new zemindars, but most of them were not recognised as leaders of society.

Thus the use made of the conquest of this land by the British had dangerous economic consequences for the Indian people. In the past India was invaded frequently and conquered by numerous tribes and hordes from the north. All these invaders who subsequently settled in India as rulers, belonged, before they came to India, to a society which was economically more backward than the Indian. None of them had any new mode of production which was superior to the feudal agrarian mode on which Indian economy was based. So the economic structure of pre-British society stubbornly survived all conquests. (Dr. A. R. Desai : Social Background of Indian Nationalism).

Karl Marx observed : "Arabs, Turks, Tartars, Moghuls, who had successively overrun India, soon became Hinduised (Indianised), the barbarian conquerors being, by an eternal law of history, conquered themselves by the superior civilisation of their subject". (Also refer Rabindra Nath's 'Bharat Tirtha').

But the new social change, introduced by British rulers, was determined, in nature and extent, primarily by the requirements of British trading interests and did not therefore follow any indigenous or independent line. So the birth pangs of a new age were there but not its consequential benefits. Naturally India's wealth was drained off and her indigenous industries killed, resulting in the ruin and impoverishment of her artisan class and peasantry. The land was visited by the great devastating famine of 1770 and subsequent famines. From 1762 onwards peasants rose in revolt in many places to drive out the foreigners to save them from inhuman exploitation. The rural society got a tremen-

dous blow and one-third of Bengal turned into jungles. The landless people became homeless pariahs and came to new centres of business and commercial towns to earn a living by manual labour. Thus commenced the wreckage of Indian economic structure and conversion of India into an economic colony of Britain.

Besides these in the chief coastal trading centres of India following the establishment of European commercial houses, "a powerful Indian capitalist class", having close ties with foreign merchants grew up. Their trade with foreign merchants gave them huge profits and in return they exerted their influence even on Moghul Governors to extract concessions from them for the Company.

"The emergence of this powerful class whose economic interests were bound up with those of the foreign merchants and who had an inherited hatred of Muslim rule was a factor of fundamental importance to the history of India and of Asia". (K. M. Panikkar : Asia and Western Dominance. p. 99).

In spite of all these calamities the new situation introduced rudiments of modernism and speed in the leisurely life of the new middle class, created under British patronage, consisting of banyans, mutsuddis, dewans, gomastas, etc. to serve the foreigner's own interests and brought about a significant social change. History began to stir. They required speedy and uptodate informations about the market, business, transactions, shipping, decisions of the administration, etc. The primitive and leisurely technique in which the 'waquiah-nawis' (news writers) collected the news and disseminated them through their news letters with the help of 'hircarrahs' could not meet the challenge of the time.

James Augustus Hicky did not, probably at that moment, realise the full and real significance of these new social changes but it is apparent that he unconsciously felt it. He gave a hint of this in the 'Prospectus' he had issued announcing the publication of India's first newspaper, 'Bengal Gazette'. Said Hicky in the 'Prospectus' :

"The chief intention of a *newspaper*, being to effect the

more easy circulation of such informations as are either useful or entertaining and tending to promote the trading concerns of industrious individuals. This paper is set on foot with that design and to bring into one *focus*, or immediate point of view, the numerous notices, advertisements, etc. now handed by Hircarrahs and Manuscript...."

The 'Prospectus' further announced that Hicky considered the practice of distributing informations through 'Hircarrahs' in a growing and prosperous commercial city like Calcutta as a "nuisance" and "disgrace". He assured his reading public that his paper would positively remove this "nuisance".

Hicky was undoubtedly a disappointed adventurer, who never in his life, succeeded in any work he had taken up. In his new venture, too, fortune did not favour him. Yet he took the task seriously and soon coming under the influence of Philip Francis, fearlessly exposed in his paper the misdeeds of the John Company's administration as well as corruptions of the contemporary English society in the settlements. He paid a heavy price for that but did never budge an inch from his courageous stand. With all his faults he is still respected as an editor who fought for an ideal.

Gossips about British residents in Calcutta formed an interesting feature of newspapers of those days. Besides a poet's corner, commercial notices, advertisements and correspondence from local and distant writers, they mainly published "scurrilous attacks even on the private lives of the servants of the Company" whom they described as 'Nabobs' and the head of the settlement as 'Great Moghul'. Another reason for this vulgar tone of contemporary English newspapers might be that they were then published principally for the European residents in the settlement and usually they must conform to the taste of the society they served. A newspaper is but a mirror of society.

During this period the European society in India was generally composed of extremely unscrupulous men and women who had no regard for character, honesty, decency

and decorum. The number of women was comparatively much smaller than that of men. The heads of the society were then men like Clive and Warren Hastings. History tells us that Clive "felt no conscientious scruple to forge the name of a colleague on a document which laid the foundation of British power in India. He amassed fabulous wealth by wrongful means and could only escape the bitings of his conscience by committing suicide." Warren Hastings lived in open adultery with the wife of a Russian painter, Imhoff. He also managed to get a "political murder" committed on Maharaja Nanda Kumar in order to escape exposure about his cruel plunders, illegal monetary transactions and heavy bribes. "Drunkenness, gambling and profane swearing were almost universally practised ; Europeans of all ranks ordinarily made Christian festivities a plea for absolute drunkenness and obscenity of conversations". In such a situation the tone of newspapers could not but be very low as Hunter had pointed out. This state of affairs more or less continued so long as the "Government servants freely contributed to the newspapers and sometimes became both editors as well as proprietors".

"Bengal Gazette" was India's first newspaper, born on the 29th January, 1780 to serve the needs of the changing situation as well as to expose the scandals of such a corrupt administration and society. James Augustus Hicky, its founder who described himself as the 'first and late printer to the Hon. Company', was a disappointed adventurer and man of eccentric temperament having an average education. He lost his all in shipping trade and suffered imprisonment for breach of contract before starting his printing press and newspaper. But the "two clumsy sheets" he published from his printing press unmasked Warren Hastings (the 'Great Moghul') and the Company's ruling clique (the 'Nabobs'). The exposures unnerved them because at that moment, the rising industrial capitalist class in England was waging a relentless war against the right of monopoly of trade in India enjoyed by the East India Company. It was determined to introduce the policy "to make India the

agricultural colony of British capitalism, supplying raw materials and buying manufactured goods". The East India Company often came under fire in the House of Commons and Hicky's Gazette and other newspapers, subsequently published by Britishers in India, supplied materials for such attacks. That was one of the reasons why officers of the Company were opposed to the publication of newspapers. They were undoubtedly intolerant of criticisms but they were more afraid of those criticisms reaching the hands of Directors of the Company and their hostile critics in England. That was why Hastings and his colleagues became nervous after publication of Hicky's Gazette, which set up a tradition of opposition for newspapers, though in a vulgar way.

Hicky himself wrote about his newspaper venture in the following sentences: "I have no particular passion for printing of newspapers, I have no propensity: I was not bred to a slavish life of hard work. Yet I take a pleasure in enslaving my body in order to purchase freedom for my mind and soul."

It is difficult to say how far his journalistic work gave him "freedom" for his "mind and soul" because it had neither a moral standard nor it took up the cause of the people. But he fought relentlessly against the corrupt administration of the time and outlined the ideal of his paper as follows : "Mr. Hicky considers the Liberty of the Press to be essential to the very existence of an Englishman and a free G-t. The subject should have full liberty to declare his principles and opinions, and every act which tends to coerce that liberty is tyrannical and injurious to the COMMUNITY".

All efforts to buy Hicky up having failed, well-planned steps were taken to crush him and Hastings succeeded in ruining him. In spite of his weakness and eccentricities James Augustus Hicky will ever be remembered as the founder of the Press in India, whom threats and punishments could neither bend nor break. He refused all offers of bribes, open or secret, and fearlessly did what he believed to be his duty. He died of poverty, valiantly fighting for

the freedom of the press to his last breath but did never surrender.

By the Charter of 1813 the East India Company's right of monopoly trade in India was taken away and British agency houses and commercial undertakings sprang up. Among them were Palmer & Co., Alexander & Co., Colins Brett & Co., Barretto & Co., Cockerell & Delisle, Lambert & Ross, Paxton, etc. (The Bengal Calender and Register, 1790). They then helped financially in starting newspapers to support their cause.

During the second decade of the nineteenth century James Silk Buckingham, a British citizen, came to India and started the publication of *Calcutta Journal* with financial assistance from Palmer & Co. He was not an adventurer but a man of varied experience and later on became a fearless friend of India. He set up an ideal for well founded criticisms, changed the tone and raised the standard of newspapers. According to the Rev. Dr. Marshman Buckingham's *Calcutta Journal* "was the ablest newspaper which had ever appeared in India and gave a higher tone and deeper interest in Journalism". In fact he introduced honesty and decency in contemporary English journalism in India. His criticisms were forceful and full of arguments and sarcasm.

During this period educated Indians from among the newly created middle class, some of whom came under the influence and impact of Western culture, also began to start newspapers which, from the very outset, were noted for their sobriety, serious thinking and a sense of responsibility. Raja Rammohun Roy, who was the inaugurator of modern age in India and pioneer of critical enquiry, took the lead and played a significant role in the development of as well as the fight for freedom of the Indian Press. But he believed that British rule was a "blessing" for India and the papers also subscribed to that view.

The social conditions obtaining in India being different from those in Britain, the Press in India did never become a "Fourth Estate" as the other three estates were absent. But it generally stood by the middle class during the nine-

teenth century in their struggles for social and political reforms, justice and progress and establishment of the Rule of Law. In the absence of any democratic institution the Indian Press took up the role of liberal opposition, which was an essential factor for the growth of a resurgent outlook and democratic ideal, by its efforts to put a check on the autocratic powers of a foreign bureaucracy.

As chairman of the reception committee of the Indian National Congress, while welcoming the delegates in its Calcutta session in 1886, the great scholar, Raja Rajendra Lal Mitra said: "It has been the dream of my life that the scattered units of my race may some day coalesce and come together ; that instead of living merely as individuals, we may some day so combine as to be able to live as a nation."

India has almost always possessed an ideal fundamental unity. Vincent A. Smith writes in his book, 'The Oxford History of India (1919)': "India beyond all doubt possesses a deep underlying fundamental unity, far more profound than that produced either by geographical isolation or by political suzerainty. The Unity transcends the innumerable diversities of blood, colour, language, dress, manners and sect." Probably by his statement the Raja meant the unity of struggles by the people of India against British Imperialism to shape their own future political destiny as a nation.

In India in bondage, specially after the War of 1857, it became the mission of the Indian section of the Press to preach the message of patriotism, nationalism and unity. So, it came in perpetual conflict with its foreign rulers. It had to pay a heavy price for this courageous stand. In spite of its limitations it continued to do its duties and did seldom yield to any pressure The pioneers of Indian journalism, being inspired with this high spirit, practised it as a profession and not as a trade to earn a profit for them. The British-owned newspapers in this country were, however, run as commercial ventures from the very outset.

The agony of the Press in India was specially due to the autocracy of the British administrators, both in India and in England. "The people ! The people ! What have the

people to do with the laws except to obey them?"—they cried. They believed that they had conquered the country by the sword and they were destined by divine right to rule this land eternally. So they obstinately clung to this view. The Indian Press, on the other hand, fought relentlessly against this attitude, side by side with the people, to extort some democratic rights. Its principle was: "A Government against which a claim of liberty is tantamount to high treason, is a government to which submission is equivalent to slavery". (Burke).

Thus the Press founded by English adventurers found in India a fertile soil in which to take root. Even Sir William Hunter, the reactionary historian of British India, said: "Who could have foreseen that those cat-callings of bugle boys, practising their prentice wind-pipes in some out-of-way angles of the ramparts were destined to grow into clear trumpet notes which should arouse sleeping camps to great constitutional struggles and sound the charge of political parties in battle?"

As moulders of public opinion a study of the evolution of the Indian Press is a study of different phases of the growth, crystallization and enlargement of public opinion, of the reaction due to "its application to scrutinise administrative measures introduced by foreign rulers" and its inspiring urge to encourage struggle for political rights. It is thus "an absorbing story of the changing life of the educated people of India" during a period of more than a century and a half.

Though the newspaper press was steadily expanding in India the rate of its growth was slow. Mass illiteracy, great poverty and repressive Press Laws were regarded as handicaps to its expansion. A number of Press Acts, requiring security from the press, throwing editors and printers of newspapers into prisons and placing other handicaps on its free functioning, constituted a formidable obstacle in the way of the swift growth of the Indian Press.

As the Press in spite of its bourgeois weaknesses adopted nationalism as its mission, Indian nationalism, from its very inception, recognized the value of the press in rousing the

people to national consciousness and put up a formidable resistance to all attempts to curtail its liberty. The history of the struggle for the freedom of the press had, therefore, been an integral part of the nationalist struggle. The freedom of the press was one of the basic democratic liberties which Indian nationalism, in all its stages of evolution, cherished and fought for.

The fact that India was governed by a foreign nation made the freedom of the Indian Press a controversial question among the British rulers themselves. During the nineteenth century, while Wellesley, Shore, Minto, Adam, Lytton and Landsdowne put drastic restrictions on the freedom of the press, Hastings, Metcalfe, Macaulay and Ripon, argued in favour of a more or less liberal press in India.

On the ground that a foreign nation ruled and exploited an economically backward people with the help of mainly the Indian Army and that a free press would seriously damage the loyalty and discipline of the army, even liberal British rulers like Sir Thomas Munro and Lord Elphinstone favoured strong restrictions to be placed on the Indian Press. Sir Thomas Munro wrote: "A free Press and the domination of strangers are things which are quite incompatible and which cannot long exist together." (Refer Margarita Barns: The Indian Press.).

The history of the Indian Press shows that though Metcalfe liberated the Press the reactionary bureaucracy always followed a policy of curtailing its liberty, whenever required. In the proportion India's struggle for freedom gained momentum the freedom of the press suffered a proportional curtailment.

The press was a formidable weapon in the hands of the European peoples in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in integrating themselves as nations, in organising struggles against the feudal nobility and in establishing the modern national state, society and culture.

In France, the intelligentsia, the protagonists of a new social order and its advanced social conceptions, fully utilised the press in popularising revolutionary social ideas among the people and in kindling indignation among them

against the religious superstition and social oppression under which they lived. They stormed against serfdom and summoned serfs through the press to rise in revolt against the feudal nobility and its State. (Dr. A. R. Desai: Social Background of Indian Nationalism).

A similar role was played by the press in England, Germany, Italy and other modern European countries. The progressive section of the population imbued with democratic ideas could spread them among the vast multitude of the people through the press.

In Russia, too, Lenin's famous journal, *'The Spark'* created a new inspiration among the working people and with the help of 'Pravda' and 'Izvestia' helped in mobilising them in organising the Great October Revolution, the first socialist revolution which sounded the death knell of bourgeois-democratic capitalist society and established the first workers' state in the world, based on socialist economy.

In India in bondage the press played its distinctive role as the crusading agent for the "political emancipation" of the country. But in free India a major section of the Press belongs, for all practical purposes, to the proprietary private sectors controlled in many cases by big industrialists. They have converted the newspapers into prosperous industries and made them hand-maidens of vested interests. By creating a smoke-screen for their readers with planned publicity they influence them in such a manner that people begin to think in the line their newspapers want them to think. It is a unique technique of controlling the opinions as well as attitude of the people. It hampers the march of true democracy but it is unfortunately a fact in India today.

In this connection it will be proper here to consider what the Report of the Press Commission set up by the Government of India in 1952, says: "Formerly, most of the Indian Press had only one objective and that was political emancipation of the country. Most of the journalists of that era were actuated by fervent patriotism and a feeling that they had a mission to perform and a message to convey. Political independence having been achieved, the emphasis has shift-

ed, and the newspapers are no longer run as a mission, but have become commercial ventures." (P. 482).

The result has been that on crucial occasions the Indian newspapers have been found to be either silent or reluctant to give any lead to public opinion. Moreover, because most of the largely circulated newspapers have substantial business interests to look after, very often they have to play for safety or conform to the explicit and implicit wishes of the powers that be.

Consequently, the Report of the Press Commission pointed out certain more weaknesses in modern Indian newspapers. They are: "Some of them are partisan in the presentation of news in respect of the financial interests with which they are allied ; there is a certain timidity to expose courageously the shortcomings of those who are in a position of power and authority ; there is a tendency to suppress facts which are unfavourable to their own interests or to the financial interests with which they are associated."

To adjust itself to the demands of the new situation, thus created, the Indian Press has now arranged larger and brighter coverage of news. Also popular features and special articles have been introduced to relieve the monotony of the editorial page. Since stereotyped leading articles singing praise of the powers that be, do no longer have any considerable pull with the reading public, many daily papers have been encouraging columnists to present more flexible and less committed points of view on topics of public interest. But all these cannot save the papers from being dull. People expect the newspaper to stand against corruption and injustice but it hardly shows any enthusiasm "to put the cat amongst the pigeons."

Bernard Shaw wrote some shrewd truths upon journalism which must be of interest in the present phase of journalism in India. He wrote : "What people cannot endure is the pompous oracle with nothing to say, the noodle's oration, the twaddler's pulpit platitudes and the ranter's tirade. They prefer snippets because the snippets are usually much better. But let any one come along who

can supply the real thing, and the public cannot have enough of it."

What is "the real thing ?" Not circulation by which the success of a newspaper is judged today. Evidently that which people feel to be vital, something that affects their lives and bears out or extends their experience and knowledge. To "come along with the real thing" is the true business of editors. But according to Bernard Shaw, "Capable editors are very rare". He wrote : "Note also, as to daily papers, that their offices are prisons in which the cleverest editor will soon lose touch with the world, being cut off as he is from political meetings, scientific lectures, concerts and even dinners by the hours during which he was to work."

In India it is much more oppressive. The conversion of newspapers into commercial ventures has made the position of the manager much more important and the status of the editor has comparatively deteriorated. Further, now-a-days intricate problems have cropped up about the editor. The owners feel that editors should either confine themselves as prisoners in their office or should attend such meetings or political parleys only as they prefer. It has become dangerous for editors to take any risk. If the Ministers do not like an editor the obliging proprietors come forward to remove him. Delane, the renowned editor of 'The Times' of London, must have moved in his grave when he heard this, if he could hear.

The commercialisation of the Press attracted big industrialists like Birla, Goenka, Dalmia, etc. to acquire interests in newspaper industry. It opened up for them new fields of profits from this adventure. But it gradually helped the development of concentration of ownership in the newspaper industry and brought profound alterations in the character of the national Press.

In most cases the newspapers in this country were founded by leaders of socio-religious and political movements. Revolt against foreign bureaucracy was the breath of their lives. They gave a powerful voice to the new forces of public opinion.

Now the press generally no more thinks of itself as an instrument of opposition than "as part of the mechanism of Government". The philosophy of revolt upon which it had been nurtured has accordingly disappeared. This new attitude was well illustrated by the blunt remark of the late Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to the late Sadanand (of Free Press Journal) : "We are interested in newspapers which will support us wholeheartedly. To say you will support us when we are right is meaningless. For why should any one oppose us then ?" (S. Natarajan : A History of the Press in India. p. 313).

As time passes on the concentration of ownership in the newspaper industry steadily continues to increase. The Press Commission commented adversely on this phenomenon in 1954 and since then the working journalists and political parties (except the Congress) have been warning the authorities about the harmful effects of the monopoly trends in the press.

Besides Sri Krishna Menon's description of India's monopoly press as the "Jute Press", the Mahalanobis Committee has, also, in its report, castigated big newspapers in trenchant language for the role they had played in helping the process of concentration of national income in a few hands.

In the section of its report sub-titled "Danger of Further Concentration", the Press Commission stated in the following unambiguous language : "There can, therefore, be no denying the fact that there already exists in the Indian newspaper industry a considerable degree of concentration. We feel that there is a danger that this tendency might further develop in the future. We are of the opinion that it would not be desirable in the interest of freedom of choice that this tendency should be accentuated". The Commission was so much perturbed over "the practices indulged in the big chain and monopoly newspapers" that it strongly advocated "the enactment of legislation to regulate the industry" which should provide, among other things, for "the definition and punishment of practices which are restrictive and unfair".

Five years after the publication of the Press Commission's report the Wage Committee for working journalists reported that "quite a large number of medium and small sized papers, particularly those published from places easily accessible by rail and air transport from metropolitan centres, have remained stagnant as they have not been able to compete with the papers published from metropolitan centres". The small and medium newspapers have thus, for all practical purposes been suppressed and throttled and they can really make good progress if it is ensured "that the competition from the large metropolitan papers does not become too overwhelming".

The "Express" chain of Goenka, the "Times of India" chain of Dalmia-Jain, "Hindusthan Times" group and other units of Birla, "Amrita Bazar Patrika" and "Ananda Bazar Patrika" groups, "Hindu" group of Kasturi & Sons, "Statesman" chain, "Viswamitra" chain of Agarwalas and Maharastra Newspapers Ltd. control among themselves 70% of the total circulation of newspapers in India. It means that only a few Press Barons decide what 70 per cent of newspaper-reading public in India should be told every morning.

Besides this, these big chains and groups control the news agencies, the Press Trust of India and the United News of India, which implies that these few persons control even the contents of news which should be supplied to all the newspapers in India for their consumption.

Now there is the vexed question of having the final say as regards the policy of a paper. "It is the ambition of most journalists to become editors because the title of editor is still surrounded by the glamour which once attached to the man who was able to lay down the policy of a great journal and to tell its readers what they ought to think." But Mr. Wickham Steed, who wrote this, knows fully well that after conversion of newspapers into industries the outstanding feature has been "the gradual transfer of the balance of power, in the matter of control from the editorial to the business side." When docile editors are not available difficulties arise. So the owners themselves

are now gradually taking up the duties of editors so that there may not be any snag in controlling the policy though they may not have the skill and education to perform editorial functions. "But the speed and complexity of modern journalism have made autocratic editorship an anachronism." (Wickham Steed : The Press. p. 44).

There are some people who say that the future is not with the newspaper but the wireless. It has been said that "broadcasting has a range of appeal far wider than that of the Press. Newspaper readers must be able to read whereas a broadcaster can speak to the illiterate. It is really an advantage. But mental response to impressions received through the ear is not exactly the same as the response to impressions received through the eye. Partly because the habit of reading has rendered modern minds more responsive to things read than to things heard and partly because readers can take their own time to grasp a printed passage whereas listeners have to keep pace with the words and the thoughts of broadcasters, the appeal of the spoken word differs from that of the printed word. Many people feel that the eye, which can pause while the mind ponders, is likely to be a safer guide than the ear which has hardly conveyed one impression before it conveys others in rapid succession. Things heard are not fully believed until they can be read in cold print."

Being a Government organ, Radio is used for official propaganda. As the voice on the ether cannot be easily contradicted it does incalculable mischief. In broadcasts during the Second Global War truth became the chief casualty.

"The issue between broadcasting and the Press seems thus to be urgent and far reaching. To judge it rightly, or even to lay down the principles upon which it should be judged, is by no means easy. Narrowly regarded, it is a contest between a State-owned monopoly, in possession of the public ear, and number of private undertakings which their owners describe as an 'industry'—in possession of the public eye. But the true question lies much deeper than this. It is the question of safeguarding public free-

dom to know, to discuss and to criticise everything that bears upon the proper conduct of public affairs." (Wickham Steed : The Press. p. 221).

The freedom of getting uncoloured information and the freedom of forming independent opinion have been endangered today by both the Press and the All-India Radio. What is wanted is a mobilisation of strong public opinion to counteract this menace.

CHAPTER II

IN ROLE OF OPPOSITION

Just after the so-called Battle of Plassey had been won Clive and his marauders placed the puppet Nawab Mir Jafar on the throne of Murshidabad and began to exploit and plunder not only the Nawab's Treasury but also the people of Bengal. The peasants and weavers of the land were the worst sufferers and they were robbed of not only for the Company but for its servants also, both European and Indian.

The exploiters' tyranny and plunder brought the oppressed peasants, weavers and toiling people together, within a few years of the Battle of Plassey, against the foreign East India Company, to save themselves. If nationalism means attempts to free oneself from foreign rule then it blossomed forth even before the great famine of 1770 had broken out because open struggles against foreign rule commenced before that. Absence of a united leadership to organise the stray revolting people together could not give them victory over the foreign rulers. But the efforts to free themselves from foreign rule continued from that time.

The British imperialists such as Cecil Rhodes, etc. were of opinion that spread of English education among the conquered people, would keep them in subservience and help in strengthening the empire. In India the new middle-class bourgeoisie, created under the patronage of the foreign company to serve its own interests and needs, hailed the British capitalist rule as a "blessing" and, therefore, could not side with the struggles of peasants, weavers and other toiling people to oust the foreign rule.

The Britishers and some of the protagonists of 'Bengal Renaissance', on the other hand claim that English, being a literature of freedom, it was English education, which inspired people of India with a spirit of nationalism and free-

dom. But, as has been discussed at the outset, if nationalism means a challenge to the right of a foreign nation to rule over and exploit the people of another land, then the fighting peasants and weavers of Bengal and also of other places in India started it long before the idea of starting an English school or a newspaper grew here among the new Indian bourgeoisie.

The newspapers, started by the Indian educated middle class, instead of urging for freedom and encouraging the struggling masses, began to deal with socio-religious reforms, literary developments and establishment of the rule of law and democracy under British rule. They thus developed as institutions of opposition.

With the gradual decline and break-up of the Moghul Empire confusion prevailed in the country. The rulers of *Subhas* (provinces) not only declared themselves independent of central power but began to fight among themselves. The Mahrattas had practically established an empire and were anxious to capture the central power. The East India Company seized the opportunity created by this confusing and critical situation and, after the so-called Battle of Plassey in 1757, established its domination over the areas of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Assam. Gradually it expanded its territories over the whole of India. While consolidating its possessions the Company was forced from 1813 to give up its old job of making a profit "by securing a monopoly trade in the goods and products of an overseas country", its idea of imperialism, i.e., administration-cum-exploitation and plunder of the people of the country, developed. By 1818 it established itself as the paramount power in India.

As has been stated earlier from the beginning of this period the officers of the Company, in the name of carrying on trade, began to plunder not only for the Company but also for themselves. By May 1762, the Nawab of Bengal submitted a memorandum to the English Governor of Fort William which states: "They forcibly take away the goods and commodities of the ryots (peasants), merchants, etc., for a fourth part of their value; and by ways of violence

and oppression they oblige the ryots, etc., to give five rupees for goods which are worth but one rupee."

A Dutch merchant, William Bolts, who served under the East India Company, was deported from India in 1768 for seeking permission to start a printing press to publish a journal. In 1772 he published his book, "*Consideration on Indian Affairs*" in which he described the process as follows :

"The English with their Banyans and black Gomastahs, arbitrarily decide what quantities of goods each manufacturer shall deliver and the prices he shall receive for them .....The assent of the poor weaver is in general not deemed necessary ; for the Gomastahs, when employed on the Company's investment, frequently make them sign what they please ; and upon the weavers refusing to take the money offered, it has been known that they have been tied in their girdles, and they have been sent away with a flogging.....A number of these weavers are generally also registered in the books of the Company's Gomastahs, and not permitted to work for any others, being transferred from one to another as so many slaves.....The roguery practised in this department is beyond imagination ; but all terminates in the defrauding of the poor weaver ; for the prices, which the Company's Gomastahs and in confederacy with them the Jachendars (examiners of fabrics) fix upon the goods, are in all places 15 per cent and some even 40 per cent less than the goods so manufactured would sell in the public bazaar or market upon free sale." (P. 191-4).

In the name of trade the Company was thus carrving on plunder. New avenues for plunder and oppression were opened when the Company was granted 'Diwani' or charge of civil administration. The resolution of 1784 of the House of Commons clearly stated : "The result of the Parliamentary enquiries has been that the East India Company was found totally corrupted and totally perverted from the purposes of its institution, whether political or commercial ; that the powers of war and peace given by the charter had been abused by kindling hostilities in

every quarter for the purposes of rapine ; that almost all the treaties of peace they have made have only given cause to so many breaches of public faith ; that countries once the most flourishing are reduced to a state of impotence, decay and depopulation."

About economic exploitation, through which India was bled white, Dean W. R. Inge writes in his *Outspoken Essays* : "The industrial revolution came upon us (i.e., the British) suddenly : it changed the whole face of the country and the character of the people.....The first impetus was given by the plunder of Bengal which, after the victories of Clive, flowed into the country in a broad stream for about thirty years. This ill-gotten wealth played the same part in stimulating England's industries as the 'five milliards' extracted from France did for Germany after 1870." (For these quotations see H. P. Ghose : 'The Newspaper in India'. Calcutta University).

Mr. Martin, another Englishman, measured in 1938 this dangerous huge drain in the following words :

"The annual drain of £3,000,000 on British India, has amounted in thirty years, at 12 per cent (the usual Indian rate) compound interest, to the enormous sum of £923,997,971 sterling or at so low a rate as £200,000 for 50 years to £8,400,000,000 sterling."

The great Press Baron of England, Lord Rothermere, assessed in 1930, the lasting benefit to England of this exploitation in the following words : "At least 4 shillings in the pound of the income of every man and woman in Britain is drawn, directly or indirectly, from the connection which England has with India."

William Digby, Ramesh Chandra Dutt, Mahadeo Govind Ranade and other eminent Indians held this exploitation mainly responsible for the poverty of India. Ranade wrote in *Indu Prakash* : "The political domination of one country by another attracts far more attention than the more formidable though unfelt domination which the capital, enterprise and skill of one country exercise over the trade and manufacture of another. This latter domination has an insidious influence which paralyzes the

springs of all the varied activities which together make up the life of a nation."

Lenin said later on : "There is no end to the violence and plunder which is called British rule in India." (Selected Works, Vol. IV, 1943 edition, p. 297).

India was thus bled white and its inhabitants were always ill-treated by the Europeans. Political domination terrorised and demoralised the people. What Warren Hastings said at that time is a proof of this. The great British satrap boasted : "The Englishman is quite a different character in India ; the name of an Englishman is both his protection and a sanction for offences which he would not dare commit at home."

Besides economic exploitation, the following extracts from a "Report on Native Papers", collected and published by Digby in *Calcutta Review* (1877), show how heaps of insults were deliberately poured on children of the soil and racial discrimination stood in the way of getting any redress from law courts, presided over by English judges and magistrates. Digby collected these informations from a batch of newspapers, "covering a consecutive period of a few weeks". In their anxiety to establish the rule of law newspapers of that period published generally these stories of insults and tyranny.

The following particulars occurred in the (Bengalee) papers of the same date

(1) "*The Barahanagar Patrika Samachar* is exceedingly grieved to hear that Inspector Buckley of the Barrackpore Station while in a state of intoxication, entered the shop of an old man named Khetra Nath Ghose of Rajabundipore and dealt him a blow which knocked the old man down. On his rising and attempting to escape he was again knocked down. By this time a number of people gathered on the spot and the Inspector turned upon them. Acts of oppression like this have become as it were an ornament of the Police.

"Inspector Smith of Dum Dum Station tore off the beard of a carter for refusing him the use of a cart which had been already bespoken by another party. The authorities ought to take notice of his conduct."

(2) "A Correspondent of the *Bishwa Doot*, writing from Berhampore without date, states that whilst the judge, the clergyman, a silk manufacturer and Colonel (name illegible) were engaged in playing at cricket in the field facing the barracks, Babu Bankim Chatterjee, the Deputy Magistrate, happened to be passing in his palanquin along a by-path across the same ; whereupon the Colonel, speaking in the Hindi language, prevented the bearers from proceeding ; this led Bankim Babu to remonstrate saying that as he was in the habit of passing by that way every day, he would do so on this occasion also ; but on the Colonel further using threats, the Babu cited the judge as a witness to this proceeding and on his going to do the same to the clergyman, the Colonel in a loud voice said, 'Go hence' and suiting the action to the words, laid hold of his hand and pushed him away. On a charge being brought against the Colonel, and the facts proved by evidence and the judge finding himself in a dilemma, and being cited as a witness by the Colonel, he wrote to the Babu, saying that the Colonel wished to be forgiven, as no one at the time knew him to be Bankim Babu ; but the latter insisted upon an apology being given as publicly as the insult was offered, which was at last done by the Colonel ; and so the matter dropped. Be that as it may, the Bengalis have for a long time been subjected to insults ; what wonder is it then that they should be exempt in the estimation of the mofussil authorities."

Racial discrimination polluted even the British judges and magistrates and partial treatment was always practised. Sir Henry Cotton in his 'Indian and Home Memoirs' made the following candid admission : "A case occurred in which there was a dispute between the ryots of the large village of Joyrampore and the neighbouring (indigo) factory of Lokenathpore, of which Mr. Glascott was the manager.....The fact remains that I decided this dispute in favour of the factory, and that when the case came before the Government, as it did on a petition from the villagers, I was censured for partiality and I remember that the Indian newspapers of the time—the *Amrita Bazar*

Patrika, then published as a bigot in Jessore, and the *Hindoo Patriot,* then an English weekly in Calcutta, got hold of the Government letter and rubbed in the P's and Q's with characteristic emphasis."

Subedar Jai Singh of the 18th Garhwal Rifles gave expression to the insulting treatment accorded to Indian soldiers in the following significant words after the 1930 movement in Peshwar when the Garhwal Regiment refused to fire on unarmed people during the Civil Disobedience rising :

"We have no *Izzat.* When Hindusthan gets 'Swaraj' we would be sweepers. If the city people were armed we would be ready to fire but we are not ready to kill children and beggars. The Indian Army is low paid and has no *Izzat.* The Indian Army is to fight for India and not fire on the unarmed crowd."

In spite of repression and "tempting offers of bribe in some form or other" the Indian Press later on courageously exposed the stories of oppression and misdeeds of bureaucracy and strongly commented against the economic exploitation and racial discrimination of foreign rulers. In the absence of any representative legislature the Press successfully played a significant role as that of the opposition. Sir Charles C. Stevens, I.C.S., one of the prominent members of British bureaucracy, very lucidly pointed this out in the following passage : "The position of the Native Press must necessarily be peculiar. It must, from the nature of things, be always in opposition. If we find a Native Paper constantly expatiating on the blessings of British rule, on the unmixed advantages of Western civilisation, and on the administrative and private virtues of English officials, we think, we should not respect the editor or his staff the more for it ; we should think him a hypocrite who was playing what he considered to be a paying game.....We must, therefore, look to Native writers for criticism of Government measures and of Government servants." (Report of Select Committee of Bill of 1898 to amend Indian Sedition Act).

Gopal Krishna Gokhale, President of Indian National

Congress in 1905, who was respected for his erudition, service and sacrifice for the people by all alike, said: "The vigilance of the Press is the only check that operates from outside, feebly, it is true, but continuously upon the conduct of the Government which is subject to no popular control."

The Press thus gradually became the mouthpiece of suffering people. In its role of opposition it was not cowed down by repression or threats and did not succumb to the subtle influence of temptation in some form or other, open or secret.

From 1905 Bepin Chandra Pal's *New India*, Aurobindo's *Bande-Mataram*, Upadhyaya's *Sandhya*, *Jugantar* and Tilak's *Kesari*, advocated 'autonomy free from British control' and since then the newspapers began to take a bold outlook.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST PHASE (1780 - 1818)

When, in 1690, Job Charnock purchased the three villages of Sutanooty, Kalikata and Govindapur on the bank of the river Hooghly to establish a factory for the East India Company he had not possibly the faintest idea that he was unconsciously paving the way to acquire the "brightest jewel in Britain's imperial diadem". Calcutta gradually grew in importance and became the centre of vile conspiratorial activities to bleed the people white as well as the seat for the spread of western education and culture.

The growing weakness of the central Moghul Power gave rise to frequent conflicts between rival provincial satraps. The death of a nawab almost invariably brought in inheritance tangles among rival claimants to the throne. The foreign Company first seized these opportunities for selling their services to the warring chiefs in lieu of profits and then of direct intervention to suit its own advantage. Gradually it claimed and began to enjoy "extra-territorial rights on India's soil" neglecting the lawful but puppet rulers of the land.

With the Battle of Plassey the new commercial capitalist economy, operated from Britain in her own interest, was forcibly imposed on the people of this land and the age of plunder and exploitation began. The new situation increased the importance of Calcutta as a centre of political and commercial activities. Gradually it developed as the seat of all conspiratorial, diplomatic, educational, cultural and commercial activities. It was but natural that India's first newspaper should also be published from this new city.

The publication of a newspaper and growth of journalism depends upon the installation of a printing press and its subsequent development. After the discovery of sea-route to India by Vasco da Gama the Portuguese brought

the first printing press to India in 1557 to print religious books for preaching Christianity in the East. Subsequently they also introduced printing in Tamil and Malayalam languages. The great Moghul Emperor Akbar had then been reigning in Delhi.

History says that the Chinese first manufactured paper and invented printing first from relief blocks, made of wood, clay, etc. Printing by page block was slow and laborious. They also started the first newspaper in the shape of Court Gazette. The Chinese gradually felt the necessity of single letter blocks which could be moved i.e., movable types, and manufactured them. A movable type could thus be used for a long time. From China it then spread to the West along the caravan routes.

A French engineer, while working in a field got a slab of stone in which he found carved characters inscribed on the rough side of it. This is the Rosetta stone which is still preserved in the British Museum. It dates back to B.C. 196 and is claimed by Europeans as the foundation of all recorded thoughts. But it was not printing as copies could not be duplicated and the Brahmi and Kharosti scripts were much older than this Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Printing, as we see today, was unknown till 1450. Scholars, however, still differ as to who really invented printing in Europe. It is generally believed that Johann Gutenberg, a goldsmith of Mainz, Germany, discovered, between 1450 and 1454, that moving metal types could be cast in a mould. Gutenberg brought out the first printed work in 1454 on Roman Catholic religion.

The Hollanders (Dutch), however, claim the honour for Laureno Janszoon Coster and erected a statue to his memory in Haarlem.

In 1474 William Caxton, a British goldsmith, first brought printing in England with the sort of types used in Germany and Holland. He started a press in Westminster Abbey. The people were under the misconception that printing was a witchcraft but that idea soon vanished. 'History of the Trojans' was the first printed work by William Caxton.

The East India Company first installed a printing press in Bombay in 1674 with a "generous supply of types and paper". Madras had the privilege of having the next press in 1772 and "an official printing press" was installed in Calcutta in 1779. Meanwhile the Baptist Missionaries started a printing press in Serampore, then a Dutch possession. They were refused by Lord Wellesley to instal a press in Calcutta. They took the lead in casting Bengali moving types. With the help of an artisan, Panchanan Karmakar, who introduced punch-cutting in Bengali, types were manufactured from designs made by Jatindra Kumar Roy. The first Bengali book, Halhead's Grammar was printed in 1773 and in 1818 the first Bengali weekly newspaper, 'Vangal Gazette' was published.

But the Company's administrators took precaution to ensure that any of these presses in its settlements was not used for printing any account of their activities in this country. They were afraid of these being despatched to London and reaching the hands of their critics. So, efforts to start a printing press or a news-sheet were vehemently suppressed by the bureaucrats of the East India Company.

In September, 1768 (according to the Report of the Press Commission, Part II, the date was 1776) Mr. William Bolts, an ex-servant of the East India Company notified :

"Mr. Bolts takes this method of informing the public that the want of a printing press in this city being of a great disadvantage in business and making extremely difficult to communicate such intelligence to the community, as is of importance to every British subject, he is ready to give the best encouragement to any person or persons who are versed in the business of printing, to manage a press, the types and utensils of which he can produce In the meantime he begs leave to inform the public that having in manuscript things to communicate, which must intimately concern every individual, any person who may be induced by curiosity or other more laudable motives, will be permitted at Mr. Bolt's house to read or take copies of the same. A person will give due attendance at the hours from ten to twelve any morning."

Mr. Bolt's notification came like a thunderbolt ; it alarmed the administrators. So, the Select Committee of the Council at Fort William directed him "to quit Bengal and proceed to Madras on the first ship that shall sail from that Presidency in order to take his passage from thence to Europe."

As we have seen earlier it was not till the 29th January, 1780 that the first newspaper in India could actually be published. In that year Mr. James Augustus Hicky set up a press of his own and published the "Bengal Gazette or the Calcutta General Advertiser—a weekly political and commercial paper open to all parties but influenced by none." It remains still a mystery as to how Hicky succeeded in securing permission to start a press and a newspaper when administrators were afraid of newspapers.

About Hicky's Gazette British historian Hunter has remarked: "For a full century after Charnock founded Calcutta, the power of the Press was unknown in Bengal. Nor, indeed, did that power at first prove for good. The earliest Calcutta newspaper, Hicky's Bengal Gazette (1780) was proscribed, not unjustly within its first ten months, after which no copy might pass through the Post office. Its later numbers, nauseous mixtures of dullness and indecency were written and edited in jail. During fifty years its successors uttered their feeble voices in peril of deportation and under menace of the censor's rod. Scurrility and servility, indeed, long seemed the only two notes known to Calcutta journalism."

The newspaper is the mirror of the age. Hicky's Gazette was published mainly for the British residents of the settlement who were corrupt to the core. The following advertisement of a house for sale by the auctioneers, Faria Williams and Hohler, in 1803, would show how low the morality was at that time : "A garden house and ground situated at Taltolah Bazar, which to any gentleman about to leave India, who may be solicitous to provide for an Hindoostanee female friend, will be found a most desirable purchase."

Hicky's Gazette also contained among others the following two advertisements, which speak for themselves:

(1) "Wanted by a gentleman, now in Calcutta, two very handsome African ladies of the true sable hue, by the vulgar commonly called Coffrees. They must not be younger than 14 years each, nor older than 20 to 25. They must be well-grown girls of their age straight limed and straight eyed and have rational use of all faculties—the better of (if) a little squeamish. But beware of spot or blemish. They will be joined in the Holy Banns of Wedlock to two gentlemen of their own colour, caste and country. A dowery is not expected with them. As the master of these African gentlemen would not wish to have been disappointed, he hopes no ladies will apply but those who are really and truly spinsters."

(2) "Wanted two Coffrees who can play well on the French horn and otherwise hardy and useful about a house relative to the business of consumce (Khansama) or that of a cook, they must not be fond of liquor. Any person or persons having such to dispose of will be treated with by applying to the printer, Hicky's Gazette".

For a newspaper, meant for such a society, personal libel and slander and attack on private lives of British residents were appreciated and enjoyed and became almost regular features. It has already been said that the head of the Anglo-Indian society, Warren Hastings lived in open adultery with the wife of Mr. Imhoff. He became furious when Hicky's Gazette published "the strictly private arrangement by which Mrs. Imhoff became the wife of the first Governor-General in India".

It has been said that Hicky had a secret collaborator in Phillip Francis, sometimes indentified with the writer of the 'Letters of Junius' of Great Britain. Though a member of the Governor-General's Council he was a bitter enemy of Warren Hastings. It has been said that without the help of such a man it would not have been possible for a Hicky's education to run a newspaper. Further, while Hicky's Gazette became much too critical about activities of such powerful men as Warren Hastings and Sir Elijah Impey,

the fact did not escape notice that it blacked out the sensational news of a duel, fought between Hastings and Francis on the 17th August, 1780. After sometime it published a garbled version of an imaginary duel, probably to save the reputation of his friend, Phillip Francis. (The first newspaper was, therefore, not impartial in selecting news for publication, though it took special care in exposing the misdeeds of the administration.)

Warren Hastings was determined to crush Hicky but he did not take any steps till Phillip Francis had decided to leave India. Meanwhile he secretly encouraged the starting of a rival paper, "India Gazette" and readers of Hicky's Gazette were approached to patronise the new paper which was going to be started. Postal facilities, denied to Hicky, were granted to this new paper and the types for the press were secured through the efforts of John Zachariah Kierander, a Swedish missionary. The wrath of Hicky, therefore, fell on all these persons and his virulent attacks on them in his paper landed him in trouble.

The Governor-General, within ten months of the first appearance of the Gazette, promulgated the following order:

"Fort William, 14th November, 1780. Public notice is given that a weekly newspaper called the 'Bengal Gazette or Calcutta General Advertiser", printed by J. A. Hicky, has lately been found to contain several improper paragraphs tending to vilify private characters and to disturb the peace of the settlement, it is no longer permitted to be circulated through the channel of the General Post Office."

Undaunted, Hicky declared that he would hazard his liberty and his life for the paper, which he was determined "to make a scourge of all schemers and leading tyrants". This order, though it hampered the circulation of the paper, could not crush it. It was circulated in Calcutta and Hicky had it delivered through peons in neighbouring areas. But Warren Hastings was determined to crush the paper as well as its editor.

Instructions were issued to arrest Hicky in June, 1781 after cases had been filed against him in Supreme Court by the Governor-General as well as Rev. J. Kierander. Under

orders of the Chief Justice and instructions of the Governor-General "an armed band of some 400 persons led by Europeans raided Hicky's press in order to effect his arrest" but Hicky claimed that he had beaten them back and they could not arrest him.

This might have been possible because later on, writing about the Supreme Court, Macaulay stated: "This strange tribunal had collected round itself an army of the worst type of the native population, informers and false witnesses, and barrators, and above all a banditti of bailiff's followers, compared to him the retainers of the worst English sponging-houses in the worst times might be considered as upright and tender-hearted."

It is believed that to repulse such a horde might not have been difficult for Hicky. But soon after this heroic feat he himself appeared before the Supreme Court on the next day and was arrested and put into prison because he failed to furnish the bail of Rs. 80,000/- allowed him.

It may be mentioned here that in the absence of any press law at that period of time Hicky was not forbidden to edit his paper from jail and so imprisonment could not deter him from using highly abusive language in criticising his adversaries.

Hicky was sentenced to two years imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 2000|-. On another count he was ordered to pay Hastings Rs. 5000|- as damages for libel. Bail of Rs. 80,000|- was demanded of him on two counts during the trial. Protesting against the demand of such a heavy amount for bail Hicky wrote a very reasonable letter to the Clerk of the Crown, extracts from which are reproduced below:

"The measures pursued against me are so singularly harassing and oppressive that it seems reserved for this country to heat down the senses which the Laws of England has placed to guard the subjects' liberty, in order to ruin a poor British subject and his *helpless family*, far removed from his King, his country and his friends, by overwhelming him with numberless indictments, and for misdemeanours only demanding bail of 40,000 rupees for his appearance to each of them,. and this to settle and deter-

mine, without giving him an opportunity of making his legal objections to it.....

"Now, Sir, I hope you will be convinced that I am treated illegally, and cruelly, all that know me in this Settlement, also know that I am a very poor man, not worth a Rupee Thro' Unforeseen and Unavoidable losses and Misfortunes; and they also know that I am indefatigably industrious in my poor In(?) sant Family; and taking all these together whether even 2,000 Rupees would not be excessive Bail for me; but if 5,000 Rupees will be accepted, I believe I can obtain it, and thereby have time to prepare for my defence, if not the Consciousness I have of my own innocence and Integrity as such; and the horrors of a Prison so dreadful that if my offer of reasonable Bail be not accepted, I shall prepare for my defence and Trial as well as my present Unhappy situation will permit, by having a week's time allowed me for that purpose; after being acquainted with your determination on the subject so as to make it convenient to the Court and my Prosecutors. Waiting the favour of an answer remains Sir,

Calcutta Jail
19th June, 1781.

Your Most Obedient
Servant
J. A. Hicky"

This letter was published in *Bengali Gazette* during the week June 16-23, 1781. But his prayer was not granted.

Eccentric but indomitable Hicky continued to edit and publish his paper from jail and in March 1782, the following appeared in his journal:

"Mr. Hicky addresses his citizens and fellow subjects with heart-felt joy, and tells them that on the 7th March (1782) the King's Judges inclined to admit him to plead in *forma pauperis* in defending four fresh actions brought against him this term by Warren Hastings, Esqr., and that Mr. Counsellor Davis (for plaintiff) did make a motion and plea in bar of Mr. Hicky's types being exempted from seizure, setting forth that the said printing types did constitute and

form a great part of Mr. Hicky's property and hoped their Lordships would not protect the said types from being seized upon should judgment be obtained against him. This motion the honourable the King's Judges strongly opposed as repugnant to the British Legislature and Constitution and treated it with the contempt it so very justly merited. Thus by protecting the types they have protected the liberty of the subject and the liberty of the Press."

If Hicky was indomitable, Hastings was equally, if not more, revengeful. With the aid of his friend, Sir Eliza Impey, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, he resolved to kill the paper. He instituted suit after suit against Hicky and at last succeeded in crushing both the paper and its editor. Being unable to pay the fine imposed on him Hicky's press was sold out and the end of India's first newspaper came in 1782. After over two years in jail Hicky spent the rest of his life in poverty. But he will be ever remembered as a man who valiantly fought for the freedom of the Press.

But Calcutta during this period was not without a newspaper. In 1780, within a short period of publication of India's first newspaper *India Gazette* was published by Messrs. B. Messink and Peter Reed "who benefited from Hicky's bitter experience" and assured the authorities that they would abide by the instructions and regulations issued by them.

Four years later *Calcutta Gazette* came into existence under official patronage and it still continues as an official publication.

Meanwhile, *Madras Courier* the first newspaper in Madras and Bombay's first newspaper, *Bombay Herald* came into existence in 1785 and 1789, respectively. But great enthusiasm was evinced in Calcutta where within six months of Hicky's maiden effort four weekly newspapers and one monthly magazine were published. The following is the list of newspapers published in the period between 1780 and 1800 :

CALCUTTA

1780—Hicky's Gazette and India Gazette

1784—Calcutta Gazette

1785—Bengal Journal: It offered to publish Govt. advertisements free of charge. A new venture, a monthly, 'Oriental Magazine of Calcutta Amusement' was for the first time published this year.

1786—Calcutta Chronicle

1794—Indian World

1798—Bengal Harkaru

BOMBAY

1789—Bombay Herald

1790—The Courier: It carried advertisements in Gujrati

1791—Bombay Gazette

1792—Bombay Herald and Bombay Gazette merged together and became one paper

MADRAS

1785—Madras Courier: founded by Richard Johnson, the Govt. printer

1791—Boyd, Editor of Madras Courier, resigned and started *Hurkaru* but with his death a year later the paper also ceased publication.

1795—*Madras Gazette* by R. Williams. Within a few months of the publication of Madras Gazette, Humphreys, a British citizen started *India Herald*. It was published "without authority" for which Humphreys was arrested but he "escaped from the ship on which he was to be deported to England."

Though the editors of these journals agreed to be somewhat docile, the authorities wanted them to be more subservient. In 1795, censorship was first introduced in Madras and free postage facilities were withdrawn and on

both the existing newspapers protesting it was decided to impose the existing levy at the delivery end. Orders were also passed on *Madras Gazette* "to submit all general orders of the Govt. for scrutiny by Military Secretary before their publication". The editors agreed to abide by the orders.

In Bombay the editor of *Bombay Gazette* commented on the conduct of the police and thus incurred the wrath of the authorities. At the time of starting the paper he gave an undertaking to respect every order. But after this lapse Mr. Farr, the editor, was deported and his successor readily agreed to submit proof-sheets to the Secretary for inspection before publication. He later sought to obtain the exclusive patronage of Government on the ground that he had incurred heavy losses as a result of making the paper "subservient to the purposes of Govt".

But in Bengal the case was different. In spite of punishments the editors raised their voices against bureaucratic autocracy. In 1791, William Duane, the editor of *Bengal Journal* published a news of "the rumoured death of Lord Cornwallis while campaigning in the Mahratta War". Through the intervention of the French Agent, M. Fumeron, Duane was this time saved from deportation but could not continue as the editor of the *Bengal Journal.* Nevertheless energetic Duane started another paper, *Indian World* in 1794.

By this time Duane became a marked man and his house was twice raided. Duane became wiser and decided to sell his paper and arranged to hand it over to its new proprietor on the 1st January, 1795. "But on December 27th, 1794, he was requested by the private secretary of Sir John Shore, Captain Collins, to call at the Govt. House where he was unceremoniously arrested by the soldiers, dragged to Fort William, kept there under strict guard for three days and then taken on board Indiaman and conveyed to England where he was set free without a single word of information and explanation. His property in India, of which he received not a pice (nor any

compensation) was worth about fifty thousand dollars. (H. P. Ghose : The Newspaper in India, pp. 11-12).

In support of Duane's deportation the Governor-General, Sir John Shore wrote that newspapers in Calcutta had assumed "a licentiousness too dangerous to be permitted in this country".

Between 1791 and 1798 editors of different newspapers were pulled up for various lapses and they apologised to avoid stringent punishment. Meanwhile Lord Wellesley was determined to expand British possessions in India and establish an empire. He entered into a war with Tipoo Sultan of Mysore. In this period Dr. Charles Maclean, who started *Bengal Harkaru* but was not its editor, came in conflict with the Government for some comments in his paper. The editor tendered his apology but Maclean refused to do so. He was immediately arrested, brutally manhandled and ultimately deported to England. But Maclean continued his fight in his own country, which eventually led to the resignation of Lord Wellesley in 1805. Dr. Maclean subsequently earned a good reputation for his researches in Turkey in respect of causes of plague and in Spain concerning the yellow fever.

It was Lord Wellesley who in his anxiety to control the whole "tribe of editors", introduced for the first time censorship in Bengal. In 1799 he promulgated the following rules :

1. Every printer of a newspaper to print his name at the bottom of the paper.
2. Every editor and proprietor of a paper to deliver in his name and place of abode to the Secretary to the Government.
3. No paper to be published on Sunday.
4. No newspaper to be published at all until it shall have been previously inspected by the Secretary to the Govt. or by a person authorised by him for that purpose.
5. The penalty for offending against any of the above regulations to be immediate embarkation for Europe.

Lord Wellesley did not allow Baptist Missionaries to start a press in Calcutta. He proposed to publish a newspaper by Government itself but his proposal was turned down by the court of Directors.

The first two decades of the nineteenth century did not bring about any change in the Government's attitude of exercising rigid control over newspapers. There was some relaxation in this policy during the regimes of Lord Hastings and Lord William Bentinck only but vigilance continued and "undesirable" editors were deported during the first two decades and a half.

As the Government continued to regard newspapers with great suspicion they were always ready to strike stunning blows on them on flimsy grounds. The conductors of the Press, who were, during this period, all Europeans, residing in India under a licence, for the time being, could be deported out of the country at the sweet will of the authorities. But they were always on the alert and eager to avoid the blows, and very often submitted even to unjust orders of the Government.

The attitude of the Government towards the Press would be evident from the following opinion, recorded in a minute by Mr. Elliot, Governor of Madras: "The principal objects of those who desire the freedom of the Press are to disseminate the worst political doctrines of the times, to bring the constitutional authorities in Europe and Asia into contempt and to provide profits for the lawyers from prosecutions of libels in courts of Justice."

Not only rigid control over the Press was exercised but in 1807 public meetings were banned. No meeting was to be held without first obtaining sanction of the Government and also getting the subjects to be discussed there approved. All these led to publication of a large number of pamphlets which bore neither the names of the authors nor those of the printers who printed them. So, in 1811, Lord Minto, who had succeeded Lord Wellesley as Governor-General, directed the proprietors of all the presses in Calcutta and its dependencies "to cause the names of the printers to be affixed to all papers, etc. printed or published by them".

Meanwhile Dr. James Bryce, the first Presbyterian Minister in India, acquired the *Asiatic Mirror* in 1814 and became its editor. Soon he came to a bitter conflict with Mr. John Adam, the Chief Secretary, who was also the censor. In 1817, Dr. Bryce complained against Mr. Adam for having "overstepped the powers of his office" as censor, in striking out of the proof-sheets a critique on a historical, political and metaphysical work. Mr. Adam held that he considered the article "to be written in a tone of sarcasm and bantering, likely to produce irritation and to have occasioned an angry discussion in the newspapers".

Lord Hastings, the next Governor-General, was personally averse to the manner in which the Government tried to thwart the legitimate activities of the Press. Dr. Bryce made repeated representations to the Governor-General against the censor. But as Lord Hastings did not like Dr. Bryce personally and his activities, he did not entertain his complaints.

Meanwhile another incident happened. Heatley was the proprietor-editor of *Morning Post*, a newspaper of Calcutta. His father was a European but his mother was an Indian. When he was advised by the censor to exclude certain passages from an article, written for his paper and submitted for pre-censorship, he refused to do so. When Heatley was threatened with action he submitted that no action could be taken against him as he was a native of India. The Press Censor represented to the Governor-General that he was "powerless in dealing with an editor who was Indian born".

Dr. Bryce's repeated representations against the censor and Heatley's bold stand had their effect on Lord Hastings, who wanted to follow a somewhat liberal policy towards the Press. He wanted to throw the responsibility of selecting matters for publication in their papers on editors themselves. His Lordship, therefore, abolished the post of censor but formulated the following regulations prohibiting editors from publishing any matter coming under the following heads :

I. Animadversions on the measures and proceedings of court of Directors or other public authorities in England connected with the Government of India, or disquisitions on political transactions of the local administration or offensive remarks levelled at the public conduct of the members of the Council, of the judges of the Supreme Court or of the Lord Bishop of Calcutta.

II. Discussions having a tendency to create alarm or suspicion among the native population of any intended interference with their religious opinions or observances.

III. The republication from English or other newspapers of passages coming under any of the above heads otherwise calculated to affect the British power or reputation in India.

IV. Private scandal and personal remarks on individuals to excite dissension in society.

Thus though the censorship was abolished vigilance over the Press was not relaxed.

Meanwhile the dawn of a new era in Indian journalism was heralded when Ganga Kishore Bhattacharjya, a teacher, having progressive reformist ideas, started the first Bengali weekly paper *Vangal Gazette*. He was assisted in his efforts by Hara Chandra Roy a close associate and member of Raja Rammohan's *Atmiya Sabha*. The first weekly paper in Bengali language thus represented the progressive views of the day. "Rammohan's first Bengali tract on *Sati* was printed in the pages of the *Vangal Gazette*". (Sophia Dobson Collect: The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohan Roy. Published by Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, p. 205).

There is a controversy about the date of publication of the first Bengali weekly magazine. In his History of Indian Journalism (Press Commission's Report, Part II) J. Natarajan does not say anything about the date of its publication but simply says that it lived for one year only. In 'A History of the Press in India' S. Natarajan says:

"The most significant development in public life was the launching of the first Indian newspaper in English, the weekly *Bengal Gazette* in English, by Gangadhar Bhattacharya, a teacher, who was greatly influenced by Raja Rammohon Roy" (p. 26).

But both these facts are incorrect because according to "Raja Ram Mohun Roy and Progressive Movements in India" by J. K. Mazumdar, the weekly continued till 1820. It was published in Bengali language but sometimes it published articles in English and Hindi also.

The *Friend of India,* the English mouthpiece of Serampore Baptist Mission, claimed *Samachar Darpan* to be the first weekly paper in Bengali language. But Bhowani Charan Banerji, editor of *Sangbad Chandrika* and Iswar Chandra Gupta, editor of *Sangbad Pravakar* claimed that honour for *Vangal Gazette. Oriental Star* of May 16, 1818 supports this view. (Supplementary Notes in Collet's Life and Letters of Raja Ram Mohun Roy, pp. 204-205).

Being unsuccessful to obtain permission to start a press in Calcutta the Baptist Missionaries installed a press at Serampore, which was then under Dutch possession. They were anxious to publish books and magazines to preach Christianity.

After sometime, in April 1818, the Baptist Missionaries published for the first time from Serampore, a monthly journal in Bengali language, *Dig Darshan* by name with a view, to quote Dr. J. C. Marshman, to "feel the official pulse" in Calcutta in its reaction to a possible Bengali newspaper.

"The magazine contained historical and other notices as well as some items of political intelligence. Two numbers were published and as no objection appeared to be forthcoming from Government circles, the missionaries proceeded with their preparations for their weekly paper in Bengalee to be called the *"Samachar Darpan"*. (Margarita Barns : The Indian Press, p. 88).

The '*Samachar Darpan*' was published on May 23, 1818, at least a week after the *Vangal Gazette.* The *Dig Darshan*

was, however, the first monthly magazine in Bengali language.

Although Lord Minto did not like the attacks made by these Christian missionaries on Hindu and Muslim religious beliefs and social practices, his successors, Lord Hastings and Lord Amherst later "extended facilities and privileges to the Serampore publications for the valuable information they carried".

It should be mentioned here that the authorities always liked to help a subservient as well as a reactionary press. They could not tolerate criticisms of their activities. Though Lord Hastings abolished censorship he had no support from the members of his Council for this small liberal measure. Even the Court of Directors in London intended to censure him but the Board of Control did not approve it.

The administrators, both in London and India, were anxious to strengthen their policy of exploitation and plunder. They were themselves not oblivious of their moral rottenness. When in 1800 the Court of Directors accomplished the ruin of the prosperous ship-building industry of India by prohibiting the employment of Indian ships in the trade between England and India, one of the reasons they adduced in support of their unjust decision was as follows:

"The native sailors of India are.....on their arrival here (i.e., in England) led into scenes which soon divest them of the respect and awe they had entertained in India for the European character. The contemptuous reports which they disseminate on their return cannot fail to have a very unfavourable influence upon the minds of our Asiatic subjects, whose reverence for our character which has hitherto contributed to maintain our supremacy in the East, will be gradually changed....and the effects of it may prove extremely detrimental...."

The extract, quoted above, clearly explains why even small measures of relaxation of control and vigilance over the press were resented by British bureaucrats.

In more than one sense the year 1818, the date of pub-

lication of *Vangal Gazette, Dig Darshan* and *Samachar Darpan* marks the beginning of the next phase of journalism in India. During this period the middle class grew in Bengal under the patronage of British merchants. They supported the Indian newspapers and the newspapers began to support them. "The benefits that will be derived from this new class require no explanation"—said *Banga Doot* in 1829. The period that followed 1818 heralded a new age of reason when conflicts broke out among different sections of this new middle class on social, religious and administrative problems which were reflected in newspapers of the new phase. Free discussions on socio-religious controversies in newspapers helped in the formation of public opinion.

An aspect of journalism in India during the first phase was that it contained materials exclusively of interest to and relating to the activities of the European population in India :

"Apart from parliamentary reports, there were editorials on subjects of interest to the resident Birtons ; on events in England, on the Army, on the reported plans of Indian rulers. In addition to this type of information we find news letters and reports from Paris, Stockholm, Vienna, Madrid, China, Rio de Janeiro and other centres of interest....There are letters to the editor, Govt. notices, special news, 'poet's corners', advts. and even fashion notes". (Margarita Barns : The Indian Press).

But the situation now changed.

CHAPTER IV

RAMMOHAN AND BENGAL 'RENAISSANCE'

It may sound paradoxical but it was a fact that the first half of the nineteenth century was a queer combination of an age of plunder and exploitation of the children of the soil on the one hand and an era of intellectual upsurge and enlightenment on the other. The dawn of the century saw the ruin of prosperous village industries due to Company's new economic policy followed by devastation of many flourishing villages. But at the same time it heralded the advent of a new cultural resurgence which has afterwards been designated by many savants as Bengal Renaissance. Bengal was the first province to come under British rule. So it was but natural that the new movement saw its light in Bengal.

Historians, of course, now differ in opinion as to whether it was really Renaissance or merely an impact of the West on Indian culture. A section of them says that it is fallacious to compare it with Renaissance of Italy of the 16th and 17th centuries. That great upsurge was a synthesis of Roman thoughts and Christian ideas with Greek culture. It ushered in a new regeneration and orientation of life and replaced religious bias with a secular outlook. It was by no means a revivalism. It brought about a revolution in all spheres of the life of the people of Europe as well as in all branches of science, art and knowledge.

But in India no such synthesis between the old culture and traditions of the land and western ideas and culture took place. There was a further difficulty because the Muslims claimed that their culture differed from that of the Hindus. So, they kept themselves aloof from the movement. The new Indian bourgeoisie that was growing in Calcutta and its suburbs under British patronage could not be compared with the bourgeoisie of the West whose socio-economic structure has been built in their own indigenous lines and who had passed through Luther's baptism of fire and Calvin's crusade to establish Protestantism. The new

Bengali middle class who earned money, mostly by unjust and illegitimate means, by serving under British rulers and merchants, invested their money mainly in land and Company's securities. Prestige on the basis of wealth replaced prestige of birth and learning. So, money could purchase for them social status and honour and a lift in caste-levels. This new middle class formed the elite and aristocracy of Calcutta but were hardly found beyond its limits. Their culture encouraged drinking, keeping of concubines, nightingale-fights, indecent *Kabi* songs and *Tarjas* while in mofussil villages this new type of bourgeois middle class being still absent the influence of poet Bharat Chandra held its sway.

So, Bengal Renaissance did not create any revolutionary philosophy in the country nor did it bring about any far-reaching upheaval in the life of the common people. It did not create in India a Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Rousseau, Voltaire, Bentham or Leonardo da Vinci. Rather the small group of citizens who received western education lost all contact with the vast majority of illiterate masses living in villages. Some of them embraced Christianity while a microscopic few revolted against irrational social customs and superstitious religious beliefs, led lives of egoism and followed mechanically western culture.

This is not the place to enter into a controversy about the importance and character of Bengal Renaissance. Tradition has recognised it as Renaissance, but it is now being rightly challenged. If it was Renaissance, it was of a very weak and limited type. Though it did not touch the life of the fighting common man it brought about a change in the environments of cities among higher and middle classes. Further it must be realised here that British capitalism which was forcibly imposed on the country also brought certain changes in the life of the people. The newly created Indian middle class also imbibed some features of British bourgeois society but this class did not practically extend beyond the limits of Calcutta. "A capitalist nation has a high sense of patriotism and nationalism since it is socially, economically and politically highly integrated. That is why

throughout the whole history of British conquest of India one hardly comes across Britons who betrayed the interests of their own country in India in contrast to hundreds of Indians, princes, generals or merchants who went over to the British and assisted them to dominate India. Exploitation under a super-imposed capitalist economic structure developed patriotic feelings and a sense of discipline among the new Indian middle class." (A. R. Desai : Social Background of Indian Nationalism)

The Whig liberal ideas reinforced by rationalism, utilitarianism and humanism, propagated by Milton, Gibbon, Bacon, Bentham, Spencer, Mill, etc. inspired a section of the newly created Hindu middle class and filled them with new ideas. They "greedily imbibed all the learning and science of Europe and developed some features of the British bourgeoisie. They were further electrified by humanism of Renaissance, triple message of 'Equality', 'Fraternity' and 'Liberty' of the French Revolution as well as the lessons of American War of Independence. All these had a cumulative effect of broadening their outlook on abstract liberty and human rights. They began to interpret the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita, etc. in a new light but could not produce a treatise of equal merit with a synthesis of eastern and western culture. They took to reformism but could not dream of a revolution in any sphere of life. The messages being contradictory to class interests, contradictions prevailed among them from the outset.

At the beginning of this period, Raja Rammohan Roy, as Rabindra Nath said afterwards, "inaugurated the Modern Age in India". He was a self-taught genius, self-made man and real representative of this new age. In his youth he incurred the displeasure of his parents and relatives for his independent views on religion, left home, mastered several languages including English and read Vedanta and Hindu Scriptures in Benares. Afterwards he served under Digby, the Collector of Rangpur, acquired property and zemindary in Maniktolla, Chowringhee, Simla, Sukea Street and Burdwan district with his share of money he got from his father as well as his own earnings. In Calcutta he made

money by speculating in purchase and sale of Company's securities, received the title of 'Raja' from the puppet Moghul Emperor of Delhi and went to England to plead before the Court of Directors and Parliament for increase of the pension and privileges of the Badsha.

The Raja, for all practical purposes, was the leader of the new bourgeois middle class that was gradually rising under British patronage due to imposition of the new economic and social order. With the powerful intellect that he had he could welcome and assimilate new progressive ideas. He applied logic and rationalism to Hindu religious practices, believed in the truth of the Vedas, accepted the tenets of the 'Vedanta' and had respect for reasonable ideas of Christianity as well as other religions. He defended Hinduism against vile attacks of Christian missionaries. But he was the first advocate of synthesis between the eastern and western culture, which later on manifested itself in Brahmoism.

He introduced democratic consciousness in the life of the people. His '*Atmiya Sabha*' (1815) settled interpretation of complicated socio-religious questions of the Hindu scriptures by open discussion among its members and not by decisions dictated by priesthood from above. He published translations of the 'Vedanta' with explanations in Bengali language so that people belonging to lower castes even could read those sacred books by defying the age-old traditions and the monopoly of the brahmins. It was an act of extraordinary courage during that period to venture to use vernacular language as a vehicle for explaining the 'Vedanta' but Rammohan did it. He did not hesitate to come in open conflict with this father and relatives as well as other orthodox Hindus to establish his advanced religious views.

The inspiring message of the French Revolution made a deep impression on Raja Rammohan Roy. Humanism and rationalism had a great appeal for him. He believed in abstract rights of man and developed utopian urge for freedom. For his broad international outlook he was regarded as "the first citizen of the world". When the news of liberation of Latin America from the clutches of Spain

reached Calcutta he arranged a dinner party at the Town Hall to celebrate the occasion. There the Raja said: "What ought I to be insensible to the suffering of my fellow creatures wherever they are or however unconnected by interests, religion or language ?"

But Rammohan Roy had such an implicit faith in the liberalism and integrity of the British nation that he firmly believed that they would have to grant the Indians freedom as soon as the weaknesses could be removed from their social life and character through spread of education. Said he: "Among other objects in our solemn devotion, we frequently offer up our humble thanks to God, for the blessings of British Rule in India and sincerely pray that it may continue in its beneficent operation for centuries to come" (J. C. Ghose: English works of Rammohan Roy. Vol. I, p. 230).

Not only the Raja but other leaders of the newly created bourgeoisie thought in the same line. Prosunno Coomer Tagore said: "If we were to be asked, what Government we would prefer, English or any other, we would one and all reply, English by all means, nay, even in preference to Hindu Government." (India Gazette, July 4, 1831).

'Prince' Dwarka Nath Tagore, another leader of the age and grandfather of poet Rabindra Nath, went to England and very enthusiastically said there: "It was England who sent out Clive and Cornwallis to benefit India by their counsels and arms. It was England that sent out to that distant nation the great man who had succeeded in establishing peace in the world, and who was the first who introduced a proper and permanent order of things in the East." (Kishori Chand Mitra: Memoir of Dwarka Nath Tagore, p. 94).

In spite of his faith in British justice the Raja initiated the struggle for the establishment of the rule of law, democracy and the freedom of the Press and sowed the seeds of constitutional agitation in the country. He stood for a rational and utilitarian approach to religion based on western logic. The Brahmo Samaj, which he founded, could not claim the glories of struggles fought by Protestantism. But it

launched an offensive against the caste system, 'Suttee', infanticide, child marriage, etc. It stood for widow re-marriage and equal rights of man of the time embodied in them rudiments of what is meant by western nationalism. They aimed to democratise social institutions and remodel old religious outlooks to suit the new social needs, specially created by foreign exploitation.

Sister Nivedita writes: "We had a long talk on Rammohan Roy in which he (Vivekananda) pointed out three things as the dominant notes of his teacher's message—his acceptance of the Vedanta, his preaching of patriotism and the love that embraced the Mussalman equally with the Hindu. For all these things he claimed himself to have taken up the task the breadth and foresight of Rammohan Roy had mapped out." (Notes on some wanderings with Swami Vivekananda, p. 19).

After all that has been said or written about Rammohan it remains a fact that he did never suggest a struggle for national liberation from foreign yoke. Rather, he was enamoured of the benefits of British rule. Perhaps it was too premature during that time ; but for a man of his foresight, intellect and energy who always thought far in advance of his age it appeared to be confusing. In later years he was criticised for this by Bepin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh and M. K. Gandhi. Aurobindo wrote in his '*Bande Mataram*': "Political freedom is the life-breath of a nation ; to atttempt social reform, educational reform, industrial expansion, the moral improvement of the race without aiming first and foremost at political freedom, is the very height of ignorance and futility".

Calvin's agitation for Protestantism heralded the advent of bourgeois revolution in Europe. But in India Brahmoism and such other progressive socio-religious reforms, which began early in the nineteenth century and continued upto the Swadeshi movement of 1905, were confined among the urban elites only and did not touch the lives of "Plebians and Yeomanry" living in innumerable villages of this country.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, to be precise, in 1785, Sir William Jones, Wilford Wilkins, Colebrook, Hutton, Wilson, etc., founded the Asiatic Society with the purpose of taking up the study of Indology. Their researches were embodied in twenty volumes bearing the title "Asiatic Researches" which unearthed many new facts about Indian and Eastern civilisation which the Indian scholars themselves did not hitherto know. India's past glories were unfolded to the newly educated class which created a national pride in them.

The foundation of the Fort William College in 1800 to train up British officers in Bengali language was a definite landmark in the cultural life of the people. The Rev. Carey, who was appointed a teacher of the college, encouraged evolution and development of Bengali prose and publication of Bengali books.

The attitude of Englishmen, in earlier days, about education had been described as follows by one of them: "It was our policy in those days to keep the natives of India in the profoundest possible state of barbarism and darkness, and every attempt to diffuse the light of knowledge among the people either of our own or the Independent States, was vehemently opposed and resented" (Quoted in "The Newspaper in India", by H. P. Ghose).

Pursuing this policy Warren Hastings remained satisfied by establishing a 'Madrassa' in Calcutta and a 'Chatuspathi' at Benares. But things had been moving rapidly and unexpectedly in India. The Company felt the necessity of creating a "vast clerkly class" to help the British rulers in running the administration. So, by the Charter Act of 1813 the Company, for the first time, assumed state responsibility for education but, in a reluctant and miserly way, provided only "a sum of not less than a lac rupees in each year" for educational purposes.

A section among the Britishers, known as orientalists, staunchly advocated the encouragement of Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit literature. Rammohan came to reside permanently in Calcutta in 1814 and he began to insist for introduction of western education supported by David Hare

and his progressive group of friends. Government also required clerks having knowledge in English to run the administration. But the Raja's efforts to make English as the medium of instruction, has still remained a problem even in independent India.

In their zeal to preach Christianity and to convert Indians into their religion in order to "civilize" them the Christian missionaries also set up schools with arrangement for preaching their faith. They denounced the social habits and customs followed in India and made furious assaults on the religious beliefs of the people. "If they were curious about the civilisation of India and explored it persistently, it was only with the desire to Christianize the country." (A Brief History of the 'Statesman').

After crossing many a hurdle the first institution to impart English education in Calcutta, the Anglo-Indian College (better known as Hindu College) was formally opened on January 20, 1817, following elaborate discussions, continuing from the 14th May 1814. On February 25, 1824, the foundation-stone of the College building was laid "amidst the acclamations of all ranks of the native population" of Calcutta. Though the Raja was not taken in the Committee of the Hindu College to please the orthodox section of Hindus, he was joined in his efforts to spread western education by David Hare and other prominent progressive Hindu citizens and through their efforts a few non-official schools were started.

Meanwhile DeRozio, a brilliant Anglo-Indian youth of Calcutta, joined the Hindu College as a teacher. He electrified the students, during his short but memorable stay, with his teachings based on rationalism and revolutionised their ideas. He encouraged free thinking and urged on his students to remove all obstacles that lay in the way of freedom to pursue the truth and to evolve a way of life proved by the test of reason. He had, within a short time, to leave the college as the orthodox opinion demanded his blood. He was dismissed from his service and died a premature death but the impression he left in the minds of his

students created an upsurge among them which helped in starting a new atmosphere in bourgeois society.

DeRozio's band of students were later known as 'Young Bengal' but they took pride in styling themselves as 'De-Rozians'. Prominent among them were Ramgopal Ghose ('edu-raj'), Russick Krishna Mullick, Tarachand Chakra-barti, Dakshina Ranjan Mukherjee, Pyari Chand Mitra, Hara Chandra Ghosh, Sibchandra Dev, Ramtanu Lahiri, Radhanath Sikdar, etc. During the whole period of 'Bengal Renaissance' they were the only men who developed a secu-lar outlook, free of any religious bias. Materialistic philosophy, Bentham's teachings and Thomas Paine's 'Age of Reason' created a deep impression in them. Dr. Alexander Duff said that at that time one shipment alone brought one thousand copies of 'Age of Reason' to Calcutta. They were first sold at one rupee per copy but its price went up as its demand increased. Within a short period cheap editions of all the writings of Thomas Paine were published. (Promode Sen Gupta: Bharatiya Maha-Bidroha, p. 47).

It is a fact that many of them revolted against orthodox and superstitious Hindu religious practices and indulged in taking wine and prohibited food openly. It has been said that Rammohan Roy and the Young Bengal, both tried to carve out a new life for the people and a bright future for the land they lived in. But Rammohan had a sound grounding in Hindu philosophy and Hindu traditions which produced a balanced synthesis in them, while the DeRozians were a wonderful combination of revolutionary radicalism, humanism, rationalism and also scepticism. They, therefore, broke away from the old moorings and moved between two worlds, one dead and the other full of dazzling possibilities. Their critics further say that they were confused between the fundamentals and externals and so some of them indulged in excesses and embraced Christianity also. But the criticisms do not appear to be either impartial or well founded. The DeRozians may be termed as 'Radicals' while Rammohan's disciples were

'Moderates'. But both had great faith in the "benefits" of British rule.

If Renaissance was something that gave regeneration, these stalwarts of 'Young Bengal' fought courageously to regenerate the society as well as the prevailing stale ideas. They believed that unless old traditions and beliefs could be pulled down new ideas could not be built up. They, therefore, invoked new ways of life and had the courage to follow them with determination and vigour. There might have been excesses and deviations but the revolutionary struggle that they waged against the old superstitious socio-religious beliefs and practices had no parallel in contemporary history. They should, therefore, be regarded as high priests of the social upsurge that came over urban Bengal.

In order to popularise their ideas many of them started newspapers. Prominent among them were Kasi Prasad Ghose, who started the '*Hindu Intelligencer*', a weekly paper, in 1846, but discontinued it in 1857 as a protest on the passing of Lord Canning's 'Gagging Act'.

Ram Gopal Ghose and Russick Krishna Mullick edited the '*Gyananeshan*', which wrote against slave trade in Africa, despatch of Coolies to Mauritius and tyranny of zeminders over ryots.

Ram Gopal Ghose waged a crusade in 1849-50 against "Certain Draft Acts, commonly called Black Acts" through his newspaper and pamphlets and inspired political agitation in the country. His writings, specially "A few Remarks on certain Draft Acts commonly called Black Acts" disillusioned the people first about the myth of the benefits of British rule. It is now a proved fact that barring Iswar Gupta's four poems his articles about "Black Acts" helped, for the first time, in giving a concrete shape to ideas of patriotism. Though a DeRozian, he was the prophet of Indian nationalism. The English residents of Calcutta became so much angry with him that they removed him from the Vice-Chairmanship of Agri-Horticultural Society.

Krishna Mohon Banerjee embraced Christianity, published the '*Enquirer*' and became a great Sanskrit scholar.

Pyari Chand Mitra edited the '*Bengal Spectator*' and wrote an illuminating article on 'The Zemindar and the Ryot' in the *Calcutta Review* exposing for the first time the tyranny of landlords. Kishori Chand Mitter edited the '*Indian Field*'.

Among other giants of the Hindu College of a later period was Michael Madhusudan Dutta, who, in his ambition to acquire Greek and Roman fame, embraced Christianity, introduced blank verse in Bengali literature and new technique in Bengali dramas and revolutionised old stereotyped ideas about them.

Rajnarayan Bose strengthened the ideas of nationalism and inspired Nabagopal Mitra and young Tagores to organise Hindu Mela, which became a national institute to encourage patriotic sentiments and exhibition of indigenous goods.

They were the torch-bearers of Bengal's middle class awakening and prophets of patriotism.

While the Hindu College was going on in full swing Raja Rammohan Roy addressed, in 1823, a letter to Lord Amherst, the then Governor-General of India. In that letter he strongly advocated the introduction of western education with English as medium of instruction. He suggested the employment of "European gentlemen of talents and education to instruct the natives of India in Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful sciences which the natives of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection that has raised them above the inhabitants of other parts of the world." He opposed the establishment of the Sanskrit College on the ground that "Sanskrit education would be the best to keep the people in ignorance. It can only be expected to load the minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practical use to the possessors or to society". He himself was a great Sanskrit scholar but he wanted something useful to the society and practical and scientific knowledge appeared to him to be

useful things at the moment. His letter was, therefore, actuated by the needs of the hour.

In 1830, Dr. Alexander Duff started his College (now Scottish Churches College) to impart English education as well as to preach Christianity.

The Government had already set up the Hindu College to impart English education. This move was supported by a section of British statesmen. "These enlightened Britishers were convinced that British culture was the best and the most liberal in the world and that if India, South Africa, and later on, the entire world were 'anglicized' culturally it would have the way for the social and political unification of the world. The British were inspired by an almost missionary zeal for spreading British education and culture. Macaulay belonged to this group of British statesmen headed by Cecil Rhodes." (A. R. Desai: Social Background of Indian Nationalism).

Macaulay came to India as Law Member of the Governor-General's Council. His opinion was: "We know that India cannot have a free government. But she may have the next best thing a firm impartial despotism." He was an advocate of "a programme of 'anglicizing' the world and thereby achieving the empire and world political and social unity of peoples under the guidance and leadership of Britain." (Hans Kohn).

Macaulay announced the Government's policy in his famous minute of 1835, which for all practical purposes substituted 'western culture for Indian'. The minute declared the aim of education in India as the creation of a loyal class of citizens who would be "Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinion, in morals and in intellect." It further laid down the principles of making English the medium of instruction.

Macaulay's minute of 1835 runs thus: "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern....a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the Vernacular dialects

with terms of science, borrowed from the western nomenclature and to render them, by degree, fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population."

This was followed by the Resolution of the Governor-General-in-Council, which stated that "the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India, and that all funds appropriated for the purpose would be best employed on English education alone" and further that "all the funds be henceforth employed in imparting to the native population a knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of English language." (Selections from Educational Records, Vol. I, pp. 130-31).

Raja Rammohan Roy was now dead. But the policy adopted by the Government fulfilled the demand raised by him and his followers. It was undoubtedly a triumph for them. But, unfortunately, from the very outset, this policy, which is known in history as the 'Downward Filtration Theory' failed to take any notice of mass education and consequently could not establish any contact with the people. Its aim was to create a handful of loyal educated class through whom education would percolate to the masses. But the idea completely failed as the educated class kept themselves away from villages where the nation lived and the gap created between them gradually widened. Subsequently men like Vidyasagar realised this drawback and tried to draw the illiterate social have-nots towards the intelligentsia. As early as 1868, at a meeting of the British Indian Association, retorting to Kishori Chand Mitra, the Rev. Lal Behari Dev pointed out: "The theory of downward filtration of education, however flattering to the pride of the higher classes, has never been verified in history." (Quoted from H. A. Start: Vernacular Education in Bengal, p. 89).

The Raja was later vehemently criticised by the extremist section of Congress leaders for advocating this policy. What was more surprising was the fact that British imperialists at a later stage, bewildered the people by

claiming that Indian nationalism was the product of English education. "The politically minded portion of the people of India....are intellectually our children. They have imbibed ideas which we ourselves have set before them, and we ought to reckon it to their credit. The present intellectual and moral stir in India is no reproach but rather a tribute to our work." (Montagu-Chelmsford Report, 1918, p. 115).

Almost all struggles in Britain ended in a compromise between the monarch and the Parliament announcing some new reforms. "Anglicised" education imparted to a few thousands of Indians "taught liberties" they said but at the same time die-hard British imperialists like Joynson-Hicks continually dinned into their ears that "We did not conquer India for the benefit of the Indians. I know that it is said at missionary meetings that we have conquered India to raise the level of the Indians. That is cant. We conquered India by the sword, and by the sword we shall hold it. We hold it as the finest outlet for British goods." Such views were shared by Lord Rothermere, Lord Curzon, Macaulay and others. Even during the Second World War Churchill declared that he did not become the Prime Minister to liquidate the British Empire.

The inspiring messages of the French Revolution and the American War of Independence, debates on Corn Law, Reform Bills, etc. in British Parliament and continuous breach of promises by British rulers about equal treatment of Englishmen and Indians brought about national awakening. The clash of interests between British capitalism and the new national bourgeoisie (middle class) created under British patronage in the new economic structure of exploitation developed nationalism while the victory of Japan in Russo-Japanese war in 1905, Swadeshi revolutionary movements in India and the great October Socialist Revolution of 1917 consolidated it.

"The Indian national movement arose from social conditions, from the conditions of imperialism and its system of exploitation, and from the social and economic forces generated within Indian society under the condi-

tions of that exploitation ; the rise of the Indian bourgeoisie and its growing competition against the domination of the British bourgeoisie were inevitable, whatever the system of education ; and if the Indian bourgeoisie had been educated only in the Sanskrit Vedas, in monastic seclusion from every other current of thought, they would have assuredly found in the Sanskrit Vedas the inspiring principles and slogans of their struggle. When Macaulay, on behalf of imperialism, imposed the system of Anglicized education, and defeated the orientalists, his object was not to create Indian national consciousness but to destroy it down to the very deepest roots of its being." (R. P. Dutt : India Today, p. 251).

CHAPTER V

A PRESS IN TRANSITION (1818-1835)

With the public appearance of 'Vangal Gazette', 'Dig-Darshan' and 'Samachar Darpan' in 1818 commended a new chapter in the annals of journalism. Though published by the Baptist Missionaries of Serampore, mainly to carry on onslaughts against the prevailing religious faiths in India in order to popularise Christian ideas they were the first journals published in Bengali language which literate Bengalis could read.

'Samachar Darpan' avoided comments on contemporary political issues but had arrangements for securing and printing elaborate social and other news from about 60 stations in the districts of Bengal. So, 'Samachar Darpan' was allowed concession in postal rates by Lord Hastings. "His successor, Lord Amherst, subscribed for a hundred copies which were distributed to Government offices. It was widely patronised by the leading functionaries of the Government and the chief civilians of the mofussil who subscribed to it for the valuable information it carried about their districts, informations which could not be obtained through official channels. Indians who contributed to the journal did so because of its official circulation" (Press Commission's Report, Part II, p. 12).

The editor of 'Samachar Darpan', the Rev. Dr. Marshman, was granted further help in 1826. But an Indian, Joogul Kishore Sookal, who applied for help for his Hindi paper, '*Oodunt Martund*' on a par with 'Samachar Darpan' was refused any concession. 'Darpan's concessions were later on withdrawn and it ceased publication in 1840. 'Dig-Darsan' stopped publication much earlier in 1827. With the beginning of the formation of public opinion and its expression through newspapers Government tried to control it by paying subsidy to docile journals.

Two eminent personalities appeared in the field of journalism in Calcutta, almost simultaneously during this

period who not only fought energetically against any bureaucratic encroachment on freedom of the Press and suffered for it but left the impress of their vision and character on contemporary journalism. They were James Silk Buckingham and Raja Rammohan Roy who improved the tone of newspapers and raised the standard of journalism. Ties of friendship and mutual admiration brought them closer and closer and they waged relentless fights for the rights of the Press simultaneously in England and in India.

After coming to India Buckingham decided to start a newspaper in order to impress on the citizens the service a free Press could render by stout resistance to arbitrary actions of the administrators and well reasoned criticisms of the policies of the Government. On September 22, 1818 Buckingham published a "prospectus of a new newspaper" to be entitled "The Calcutta Journal or Political, Commercial or Literary Gazette."

The prospectus announced: "The state of the Press has been a subject of surprise, of disappointment, and of regret to all strangers on their first arrival in India; and the impression of its imperfections gradually loses its force after a long residence in the country, yet some of its ablest apologists and most zealous supporters acknowledge its reform to be desideratum."

Pointing his pungent finger to the nine public papers which then circulated in the City of Calcutta Buckingham said "that though each of them offered itself as the organ of public sentiments, each of them professed to have the earliest intelligence of great events and each of them promised their portion of original disquisition, these journals with the exception of two or three at most are found, however, to have no sentiment, either of public or of their own." (Quotation by Mukul Gupta in his article "A Fearless Friend of India" in Amrita Bazar Patrika, February 3, 1963).

The *Calcutta Journal,* he declared, would bound its claim on public patronage on an exemption from these defects, and as a guarantee that it would be able to dis-

charge its obligations the publishers announced: "The management has been placed in the hands of a gentleman who possesses a general knowledge of the duties of an Editor and a particular acquaintance with some of the branches of information proposed to be treated in their columns, besides considerable experience of most of the subjects which compose the essence of our Public Prints."

The *Calcutta Journal* was published as a bi-weekly paper with 8 pages on October 2, 1818. It was converted into a daily from May 1, 1819. The first issue published a quotation from Bacon in bold letters, which was declared to be the motto of the paper. It stated: "A forward retention of custom is as turbulent a thing as innovation and they that reverence too much old times are but a scorn to the new." Buckingham described the editor's function as a sacred right "to admonish Governors of their duties, to warn them furiously of their faults and to tell disagreeable truths." Buckingham faced danger but he followed the motto scrupulously and performed his duties faithfully and fearlessly. From the very first issue his paper showed promises and character and became a real success.

Besides the opinion already quoted elsewhere, the Rev. Dr. Marshman further said about the paper: "A knot of youngmen of the public services, of brilliant talents, headed by Mr. Henry Meredith Parker, ranged themselves round the paper and contributed by their poignant articles to its extraordinary success and popularity. The editor..... commented on public measures with great boldness. But the great offence of the *Journal* consisted in the freedom of its remarks on some of the leading members of the Government. They had been nursed in the lap of despotism and their feelings of official complacency were rudely disturbed by the sarcasms inflicted upon them. Madras, as a rule, had been unfortunate in its Governors; no fewer than six of them had been re-called, one of them unjustly, and with the exception of three or four, the rest had been second rate men. One of these, Mr. Hugh Elliot, then filled the Chair, to the regret of the public; and

(Buckingham's) *Journal* affirmed that he had obtained an extension of his term of office, which was announced to the community in a circular with a black border."

Buckingham's impartial but forceful comments and introduction of innovations made the *Calcutta Journal* very attractive to the readers. The Government and the papers which he criticised in his 'Prospectus' now joined hands together to crush him. While converting his bi-weekly paper into the first daily of Calcutta Buckingham referred to this in the following words: "A reference to the manner in which this Journal has been hitherto conducted under all the disadvantages of a combined opposition, over which it has ultimately triumphed, and the dependence on the casual supplies of friends for information, now attainable through direct and regular channels, will give the most accurate idea of what may be hoped from it, when such obstacles are removed."

The main opposition came from *'John Bull in the East'* which was in fact started in 1821 through official encouragement by some employees of the Government "with the object of upholding the principles of civil and social order. It was obviously intended as an answer to the *Calcutta Journal* and Buckingham's old adversary, the Rev. Samuel James Bryce, was appointed editor." (Part II of Press Commission's Report, p. 16).

John Bull's vilifications proved too weak to break Buckingham's unchallengeable facts which he exposed with his powerful pen. The trouble arose when he "criticised the appointment of Dr. Jameson as Superintendent of the Medical School for Indians on the ground that as he already held three other appointments he could not discharge the duties of all the four posts." The Government took exception to the comment, which, in its opinion, "substantially charges the Supreme Government with a violation of its duty and reflects upon its proceedings in a manner neither consistent with decency nor truth." The bureaucrats, headed by John Adam, demanded his immediate deportation but the Governor-General, Lord Hastings, "politely" turned it down.

But Buckingham could not save himself from Jameson's fury. Both of them "fought a duel with pistols at the Race Course on July 6, 1822, to decide on the point of honour" but both came out unhurt. Buckingham also criticised the Lord Bishop of Calcutta for not holding "divine service and other religious observances in Calcutta during the Christmas season because the Chaplains were away on matrimonial requisitions." When asked by the Government to divulge the source of the information he courageously followed the journalistic etiquette by refusing to do so. He was, therefore, warned that in future his licence to reside in India would be cancelled for such comments.

But the warning could not terrorize Buckingham. He was anxious to become the mouthpiece of the people among whom he dwelt. He commented that "if grievances brought to the notice of the Government through the Press were not to be given a hearing then only those who enjoyed the favour of the Secretaries and Public officers would secure redress of their grievances." The situation complained of by Buckingham at that time still persists in Independent India. But the Government of the time "inspired a criminal libel suit" but the prosecution failed as Buckingham spent about £600 to contest the case and finally triumphed.

After Lord Hastings had left India, John Adam was appointed to officiate as Governor-General and one of the earliest things he did was to appoint his friend and supporter, the Rev. Dr. Samuel James Bryce, "who was a zealous partisan of Government", to the well-paid office of the Clerk to Stationery Department. Buckingham strongly criticised this in the following words in spite of the warning of deportation.

"The Rev. Gentleman, named below, who, we perceive, by the index of that useful publication, the Annual Directory, is a Doctor of Divinity, and the Moderator of the Kirk Session and who, by the favour of higher powers, now combines the office of person, and clerk in the same person has, no doubt, been selected for the arduous duties of this new place from the purest of motives, and strictest possible

attention to the public interest. Such a clerk, as is here required to inspect and reject whatever articles may appear objectionable to him, sound-board, a competent judge of the several sorts of paste-board, sealing wax, ink-stand, sand, lead, gum, ounce, tape and leather; and one would imagine that nothing short of regular apprentice-ship at Stationer's Hall would qualify a candidate for such a situation. All this information, however, the Rev. Gentleman, no doubt, possesses in a more eminent degree than any other person who could be found to do the duties of such an officer, and though, at first sight, such informa-tion may seem incompatible with a theological education, yet we know that the country abounds with surprising instances of that kind of genius which fits a man in a moment for any post to which he may be appointed."

Whipping sarcasm was a speciality of Buckingham. He seized on "the green coats worn by the Secretaries of Departments and dubbed the wearers as 'Gangrene of the State'."

The comments appeared in the *Calcutta Journal* of the 8th February, 1823, and on the 12th February an order was served on Buckingham cancelling his licence to reside in India "from and after the 15th day of April next." The death-knell of *Calcutta Journal* was sounded when another notice was served on Buckingham almost simultaneously revoking the licence to print and publish '*The Calcutta Journal of Politics and General Literature*' and of a supple-ment thereto issued on Sundays entitled and called '*New Weekly Register and General Advertiser*'. The paper then commanded a circulation of 1,000 copies and fetched an annual income of £8,000 for Buckingham.

Within a fortnight of Buckingham's departure from India Adam promulgated his notorious Ordinance, subse-quently known as "Adam's Gag" to "regulate the future publication of newspapers." The foreign bureaucracy were alert to throttle public opinion in India even at this initial stage of its formation. They could not tolerate the free-dom of public knowledge that helped the formation of sound judgment. So, they took steps to muzzle the

vehicles of formation of public opinion from the very beginning.

In England it was felt that gross injustice had been done to Buckingham and eventually the East India Company granted him a pension of £500 a year. He published a journal, *Oriental Herald* in England in which he ruthlessly exposed the misdeeds of the Company's administration in India. He also published a pamphlet in England under the title : "Brief History of Banishment of Mr. Buckingham" from which "Few Remarks" to his "readers" are quoted below :

"I contend that it (the power of deportation) ought not to be used against any one, unless an urgent case of danger to the State could be made out ; and even then not without a hearing and a defence granted to the accused, instead of his being subject to a caprice which makes a Governor at once accuser, witness, judge, jury and even executioner. Such a subjection to the arbitrary will of the best man that ever breathed is monstrous and every Englishman in India ought to raise his voice in reprobation of it, from principle as well as self-preservation." Now it is evident from all these that Lord Hastings, who framed rules to encourage the Press to develop a sense of responsibility and not to force it into an attitude of relentless hostility to the administration, did not approve the attitude of the members of his Council of taking any action against Buckingham. The moment he left India John Adam, who had to officiate in his place, lost no time in deporting him. He justified his action by recording "his objection to the assumption by an editor of a newspaper of the privilege of sitting in judgment on the acts of Government and bringing public measures and the conduct of publicmen as well as the conduct of private individuals before the bar of what Mr. Buckingham and his associates miscall public opinion." It is thus clear from what Mr. Adam had recorded that he denied even the European community's claim of the right to criticise the actions of the Government. At the same time his Ordinance became a menace to the newly started Indian newspapers. A despotic rule always tries to kill

freedom to know, to speak and to criticise and this freedom which is the main basis of formation of public opinion is the "bugbear of tyrants".

Closely following Buckingham's deportation Arnot of the *Calcutta Journal* was ordered to leave India on the 23rd September, 1823 while on the 10th November, 1823 his paper was suppressed for having reprinted Leicester Stanhope's pamphlet—'The sketch of the history and influence of the press in India'.

Bombay also did not lag behind in penalising newspapers. C. J. Fair, editor of the Bombay Gazette, was ordered to furnish a security of Rs. 20,000 with two sureties of Rs. 10,000 each for his comments on the Supreme Court. As Fair failed to deposit the security he was immediately deported in July, 1824.

But Fair was not the last editor to be deported from India. About a hundred years later a brilliant editor, B. G. Horniman, of Bombay Chronicle, was deported because he raised his voice against the inhuman oppression of British Govt. during the Martial Law Regime in the Punjab in 1919.

In 1826, Lord Amherst issued a circular prohibiting the servants of the Company from having any connection with the public press in any way. And the next year the *Calcutta Chronicle* was suppressed.

CHAPTER VI

AEROPAGITICA OF INDIA

With the year 1818 commenced the second phase of journalism in India. So long the British residents here published newspapers. From this period commenced the publication of newspapers in Indian languages by Indians themselves, containing some accounts of activities of the children of the soil.

The year is also an important landmark in the history of India. The Charter Act of 1813 "made a clear assertion of the sovereignty of the British crown in India". By the year 1818 paramount authority was completely established and a framework of an all-India administration was chalked out. The victory in the Third Mahratta War and also over Napoleon in Europe instilled a new confidence in the strength of foreign rulers and colonial imperialism in its naked form began during this period. Following this imperialist policy coinage of money with Moghul Emperors' effigy was stopped by Lord Hastings. The replacement of commercial capitalism by industrial capitalism further destroyed India's industries. But the Indian newspapers then took no notice of them.

The socio-religious reforms, advocated by the newly created bourgeoisie, reorganised the urban Hindu society to fit in gradually with the challenge of modern age. The Bengal Renaissance, though incomplete, and the activities of DeRozians, with a secular outlook, encouraged a spirit of enquiry among the educated middle class.

The foreign imperialist domination radically changed the economic structure of society, resulting in the emergence of new social forces, which, though loyal to foreign rulers, came gradually into conflict with British vested interests as well as administration. The vernacular newspapers of this period in Bengal divided among themselves to support either the progressives or the conservatives in respect of their agitations for reforms.

In Bombay also the British missionaries took the initiative in cutting Gujrati types as early as 1797. In 1812, Fardoonji Murzeban, an enterprising Parsi youth, started the first Gujrati printing press. In Madras also the missionaries were the pioneers in starting Tamil and Malayalam press and newspapers. The first attempt at Kannada journalism was also made by missionaries.

During this period Buckingham's efforts set up a high standard of journalism and changed the tone of newspapers. He showed how a journal, if run efficiently, could make its influence felt on administration as well as the reading public. Raja Rammohan Roy was impressed that a well-edited newspaper was the best instrument to educate people and to propagate new ideas.

After the publication of *Samachar Darpan* by Serampore missionaries the Raja launched *Sangbad Kaumudi*, a Bengali weekly paper, in 1821 and *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, a Persian weekly, in 1822 to inspire the people to fight against socio-religious malpractices, to be acquainted with the lessons of western culture and to inform both the ruling class and their subjects the "real situation" obtaining in the country. He also started *Brahmanical Magazine* or *Brahman Sebadhi*, a bi-lingual monthly journal, in 1821, under the pen-name of Sivaprosad Sharma, to resist the onslaughts made by Christian missionaries on Hinduism.

Samachar Darpan was the first Bengali newspaper but it was started by British missionaries. *Sangbad Kaumudi* was the first Bengali journal, launched and owned by the Bengalees themselves. Besides reports of local events and public grievances these papers contained criticisms of administration, tirade against superstitious religious customs and beliefs and learned discussions on western culture and political developments in Europe. In the words of Harish Chandra Mukherjee, the editor of *Hindoo Patriot*, with the publication of these journals "the war between Brahminism and Brahmoism, between principle and prejudice, between prescription and progress commenced". (The *Hindoo Patriot*, June 21, 1858).

There is, however, a controversy about the actual date

of publication of '*Sangbad Kaumudi*'. The Rev. J. Long in his note on : "The Past Condition and Future Prospects of the Vernacular Press in Bengal" stated that Rammohan Roy started the paper in 1819 with Bhowani Charan Bonerjee as its editor. Another reliable source says that the Bengali weekly was founded, in 1819, by Tarachand Dutta and edited by Bhowani Charan Bonerjee. The Raja at first contributed articles to this paper but subsequently took it over while Margarita Barns recorded that the paper was founded in December, 1820.

Government records show that the actual date of publication of '*Kaumudi*' was 4th December, 1821. The Raja's friend Buckingham, supporting the venture, wrote : "The pleasure with which we regarded the effusions of the native Press does not arise from the intrinsic value of these productions but as an earnest of what it may produce when it had attained majority."

But '*Kaumudi*' had not a smooth sailing at the beginning as its editor, Bhowani Charan Bonerjee suddenly left it after thirteen issues of the paper had been published. From its very first issue the paper had been supporting the progressive views of Raja Rammohan Roy in respect of socio-religious reforms. The editor was strongly advocating the need for immediate stoppage of 'Sati' and other superstitious practices. But Bhowani Charan Bonerjee soon changed his opinion, differed with the Raja and decided to defend orthodox Hindu rites including the practice of 'Sati' instead of supporting the progressive views of the liberal group. So, he severed all connections with '*Kaumudi*'.

Rammohan Roy was the guiding spirit behind *Kaumudi*. So, Bhowani Charan Bonerjee had nothing to do with the enunciation of the policy of the paper. Even the story of his editing thirteen issues of the paper had been in 1822 challenged by Hurree Hur Dutt, who was also associated with *Sangbad Kaumudi* and afterwards published the Persian weekly, *Jame-Jenan-Numa*. He stated that he had also helped in editing a few issues of the *Kaumudi*. Bhowani Charan Bonerjee's claim of editing thirteen issues

of *Kaumudi* was "a wicked and malicious fabrication of falsehood....he was no more than the real Editor's assistant and as such he was introduced to the notice of the gentlemen under whose immediate and sole patronage and support the paper has been launched." (Quoted by S. Natarajan's History of the Press in India, p. 60).

It is difficult to ascertain now whether Bhowani Charan was the "real" editor of the paper or not. But after his resignation the conservative section of the Hindus broke away from the Raja's progressive group and started *Dharma Sabha,* as a rival organisation to the Raja's *Atmiya Sabha* to counteract his activities and to defend the orthodox customs of Hinduism including the practice of *Sati.* Bhowani Charan Bonerjee, who left *'Kaumudi'*, applied on April 11, 1823 for a licence to print a weekly paper in Bengali, entitled *'Samachar-Chandrika'*. The Rev. J. Long wrote in his Report of 1855: "The editor of the *'Chandrika'* for 25 years was Bhowani Bonerji, an able Sanskrit and Bengali scholar, the leader of the *Dharma Sabha* of which *Chandrika* was the organ. The Chandrika occasionally barks now but it is toothless; the body of Hindu reformers is too strong for it."

Sudden resignation of Bhowani Charan Bonerjee from the post of editor of the *Kaumudi* put the Raja in great difficulties for the time being. The publication of the paper had to be temporarily stopped. Buckingham made the following comments on the incident in his *Calcutta Journal*: "The paper which was considered so fraught with danger, and likely to explode over all India like a spark thrown into a barrel of gunpowder, has long since fallen to the ground for want of support; chiefly we understand because it offended the native community, by opposing some of their customs, and particularly the burning of Hindoo widows. The innocent *Sangbad Cowmuddy,* the object of so much unnecessary alarm, was originally established in the month of December, 1821 and relinquished by the original proprietor for want of encouragement in May, 1822, after which it was kept alive by another native till the September following, when about the commence-

ment of the Doorga Puja holidays, it first was suspended and then fell to rise no more."

But whatever Buckingham might have written the paper was revived by the Raja after a short interval which prepared the ground for the abolition of the *Sati*. On April 18, 1823 an application was made by Govinda Chunder Coaur and Annundo Gopal Mookerjee to publish *Sangbad Kaumudi*. According to Rev. J. Long it "lasted to see the abolition of *Sati* by Lord Bentinck, the actual carrying out of which was in no small degree owing to the *Kaumudi* and similar papers preparing the native mind for the abolition."

The *Kaumudi-Chandrika* duel of words. provoked by controversy on socio-religious reforms, placed both progressive as well as reactionary views before the public. Variety of voices spoke through the newspapers and encouraged public discussion of the problem from different angles. All these helped the Bengali middle class in developing its democratic consciousness and public opinion began to crystallize.

The British rulers, however, did not encourage denunciation of even the most reactionary social customs. They preferred to woo the newspapers run by orthodox reactionary Hindus and did not like journals advocating progressive views. Even when the English paper, *Friend of India*, run by the Baptist Missionaries of Serampore "had been unusually outspoken, attempts were made to induce the Danish Government to suppress the paper and expel the missionaries." (A Brief History of *The Statesman*).

Rammohan published another paper, *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, a Persian weekly, on the 12th April, 1822, to educate and inform those readers who did not know Bengali. The Prospectus the Raja issued explaining the objective of the paper stated: "My only object is that I may lay before the public such articles of intelligence as may increase their experience, and tend to their social improvement; and to that extent of my abilities I may indicate to the rulers a knowledge of the real situation of their subjects and make the subjects acquainted with the established

laws and customs of their rulers ; that the rulers may the more readily find an opportunity of granting relief to the people ; and the people may put in possession of the means of obtaining protection and redress from the rulers."

Besides dealing with social and administrative evils in the country, *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* "critically examined British policy both in India and in Ireland." The audacity to criticise administration by these Indian newspapers irritated both the British bureaucracy and European merchants but it encouraged the growth of a national outlook among the middle class. The Raja's three papers soon succeeded in bringing together both the orthodox and liberal sections of Hindus to organise a united resistance against the onslaughts on Hinduism by Christian missionaries which, by that time, became a 'national' question.

The progressive section, under the Raja's guidance, established in 1828 the Brahmo Samaj which, at that period of time, organised a crusade against privileges, conferred by birth and advocated socio-religious as well as politico-economic reforms. It thus helped to develop a constitutional agitation and aimed to democratise social institutions to fit in with the advancing modern age. Through the columns of newspapers the struggle against mediaevalism thus began though it remained confined among the new middle class in and around Calcutta. But the bureaucracy faced a difficult problem because the editors of Indian-owned papers could not be deported at their sweet will.

Buckingham's criticisms of arbitrary bureaucratic actions infuriated the members of the Governor-General's Council. The influence of the Raja's papers as well as critical writings of several other newspapers, annoyed the ruling class. William Butterworth Bayley, Chief Secretary to the Government, made a catalogue of "objectionable passages" in newspapers and submitted a lengthy minute on Oct. 10, 1822, in which he concentrated his main attack on '*Mirat-ul-Akhbar*'. About the Press in India Bayley frankly confessed : "The liberty of the Press however essential to natives of a free state, is not, in my judgment,

consistent with the character of our institutions in this country and with the extraordinary nature of their interests." These remarks make it clear that British rulers scrutinised the comments of the Press not for the purpose of purging the administration of its inequities and drawbacks but with the object of stifling public opinion so that their autocracy and domination might be stabilised.

Within a fortnight after Buckingham's departure, Adam, the acting Governor-General, on Bayley's report, promulgated the notorious ordinance known as Adam's Gag to control the Press. The Ordinance laid down : "Henceforth, no one should publish a newspaper or a periodical without having obtained a licence from the Governor-General-in-Council, signed by the Chief Secretary. The application for a licence should give the name or names of the printer and publisher, of the proprietors, their place of residence, the location of the press and the title of the newspaper, magazine, register, pamphlet or other printed book or paper." The penalty for infringement was prescribed to be fine and imprisonment.

The *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* gave the following background information regarding the issuing of the Ordinance : "The eminently learned Dr. Bryce, the head minister of the new Scotch Church, having accepted the situation of Clerk of the Stationery belonging to the Honourable Company, Mr. Buckingham, the editor of the *Calcutta Journal,* observed directly as well as indirectly that it was unbecoming of the character of the minister to accept a situation like this; upon which the Governor-General, in consideration of his disrespectful expression, passed an order that Mr. Buckingham should leave India for England within the period of two months from the date of the receipt of this order and that after the expiration of that period he is not allowed to remain a single day in India."

Before the Regulation could come into force, the law required it to be fixed up in the Supreme Court for 20 days and then, if not disallowed, it was registered. It was accordingly entered on March 15, 1823, and read in public.

On the 17th March, 1823, a petition was filed by Mr. Cutlar Fergusson (who subsequently became Advocate-General) on behalf of six citizens of Calcutta—Chandra Coomar Tagore, Dwarka Nath Tagore, Rammohan Roy, Hur Chunder Ghose, Gouree Churn Bonerjee and Prosunnu Coomar Tagore—objecting to the obnoxious rule and protesting against the attempt of the Government to assail the liberty of the Press.

In the petition the signatories submitted that the rules would preclude Indians "from making the Government readily acquainted with the errors and injustice that may be committed by its Executive Officers in the various parts of their extensive country and it will also prevent the natives from communicating frankly and honestly to their Gracious Sovereign in England and his Council, the real conditions of His Majesty's subjects in this distant part of his dominions and the treatment they experience from the local government." (The full text of this historic petition appears as Appendix).

Sir Francis MacNaughten, Judge of the Supreme Court, who heard the petition, rejected it "merely interpreting the policy of the Government in Bengal and the Court of Directors." His Lordship remarked that there was no city or town in the earth enjoying "more practical liberty". His Lordship also referred to another situation which was fast developing. Indian newspapers were being increasingly published and there was no law to deport Indian and Anglo-Indian editors. Buckingham took advantage of this situation and appointed an Anglo-Indian as his successor. These Regulations proposed to remove that lacuna. His Lordship, therefore, remarked: "As Mr. Buckingham has appointed a successor who tells us he cannot be controlled by the Supreme Authority but is superior to it, it is necessary that things should be brought to their proper level." Justice MacNaughten said in conclusion: "If we are to have a free constitution, which we have not—let a Free Press follow, not precede it." So, Adam's Rule, Ordinance and Regulations became law on the 4th April, 1823.

The Raja's friend, Buckingham, made great efforts in England to abrogate Adam's Ordinance and applied before the Privy Council to cancel the order of deportation passed on him. The decision of the Privy Council made it clear that the Ordinance was directed against vernacular newspapers. The passages in the judgment stated: "The inevitable consequences, even of rash and injudicious, though well meant, discussions, in daily and other newspapers and periodical publications, circulated (as was the case at the time the said Rule was made) not only in the English language, but in the Persian, Bengali and other native tongues, of all subjects of government and administration, civil, religious, military and political, could not fail to afford matter of irritation to the native powers, to disquiet and unsettle the minds of His Majesty's native subjects, and thereby to endanger the security of the British Establishment in India."

The judgment further related: "It was also argued that the earlier provision for deportation ceased, when it was discovered that the ostensible conduct and legal responsibility of such publications might be transferred to persons of different description, natives or others, not liable to the restraints imposed by law upon the British subjects of His Majesty in India." So, both the petitions were turned down by the Privy Council.

The rejection of the petition by the Supreme Court could not demoralise Raja Rammohan. He could realise that the Ordinance was promulgated to control the vernacular Press. But he refused to bow down before its humiliating conditions. On the very day the judgment was pronounced by the Supreme Court he decided immediately to close down his paper, *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, as a protest. In giving his reasons for this the Raja declared that it was difficult for an Indian, who "had no access to the Officials as English Editors had, to secure a licence" Further "to make an affidavit in open Court in the presence of respectable magistrates, is looked upon as very mean and censurable by those who watch the conduct of their neighbours and after incurring the disrepute of soliciting

and suffering the dishonour of making the affidavit, the constant apprehension of the licence being recalled by Government which would disgrace the person in the eyes of the world, would create such anxiety as entirely to destroy one's peace of mind".

On the last day of the publication of the paper (4th April, 1823) the Raja wrote a memorable editorial in which he quoted a Persian couplet which says: "The honour that has been purchased at the cost of a hundred drops of blood of the heart, O Sire, do not sell that honour to the door-keeper for hoping to get favour."

Buckingham's petition to abrogate the Regulations had been rejected by the Privy Council. The Raja decided to appeal before the King of England for redress of wrongs perpetrated on his Indian subjects by his British subjects. To him the King was the "Liberator of Europe" and so he addressed a further appeal to the King-in-Council against the Press Regulations. His appeal was rejected but it was a landmark in the history of the struggle for freedom of the Press in India.

Miss Sophia Collet, the biographer of the Raja, characterised this appeal as "the Aeropagitica of Indian history" after the great poet John Milton's pamphlet of that title in which, in 1644, he denounced the Ordinance passed by the British Parliament, restraining unlicensed printing. Milton said: "Give me liberty to know, to utter and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberty."

Ramesh Chandra Dutt, a President of the Indian National Congress, described it as "the beginning of that system of constitutional agitation for political rights which their countrymen have learnt to value so much in the present day."

Since then the struggle for freedom of the Press continued with unabated zeal till India achieved her independence. The courage the petitioners displayed had in later years inspired the journalists of this country with the motto: '*Nitor in adversum*', 'I struggle against adverse circumstances'. This explains why the "Indian-owned Indian language newspapers kept clear of political topics

for seven years following the Press Regulations." They could realise that though in theory there was no racial discrimination in the Regulations they were really meant to curb the liberty of the vernacular Press, specially the progressive newspapers. The *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* was, for all practical purposes, their victim. Adam's Regulations were thus a forerunner of the Vernacular Press Act of 1878.

In 1827, the licence of *Calcutta Chronicle* was revoked and its publication was stopped. The paper was penalised for its liberal views.

The repressive measures and various other mischievous manoeuvres of the bureaucracy not to allow Indian journals to function freely could not check the wave of enthusiasm that time had brought about. Newspapers were started in Bombay, Madras and North West Provinces. As usual Bengal took the lead in this matter.

Fardoonji Murzeban, who started the Gujrati printing press in 1812 in Bombay, launched after ten years *Mumbaina Samachar*, a weekly Gujrati paper, in 1822 as a commercial venture. The paper still exists as a daily and has assumed the title of *Bombay Samachar.* It is of interest to note here that the first Gujrati newspaper in Gujrat proper was started after about 27 years of the Bombay enterprise.

Besides *Mumbaina Samachar* there were two English papers in Bombay, *The Daily Gazette* and the *Courier.*

In Madras there were three English papers, the *Government Gazette* and the *Madras Courier.*

In Cawnpore the first printing press was set up in 1822 and the *Cawnpore Advertiser* was published.

In 1821 *John Bull in the East* was founded under official patronage to defend the British bureaucracy against Buckingham's tirades. Dr. Bryce was its first editor. Subsequently *John Bull* converted itself into the *Englishman* with financial help from Prince Dwarkanath Tagore.

Besides *Sangbad Kaumudi, Samachar Chandrika* and *Samachar Darpan* another Bengali weekly, *Sangbad Timir Nasak* was published in October, 1823.

Joogul Kishore Sookal launched the first Hindi paper, *Oodunt Martund* in February, 1826.

Banga-Doot, a Bengali weekly, in which Martin, Dwarkanath Tagore, Prosunno Coomar Tagore and Raja Rammohan Roy were interested, came out on May 10, 1829 and earned a great reputation as the mouthpiece of the progressive middle class.

Hurree Hur Dutt published the Parsi and Hindoostanee newspaper, *Jam-e-Jehan-Numa* with Lalla Sooke, a Moonshee as its editor. It was run with the patronage of a few Englishmen of Calcutta.

On May 6, 1823, Moothur Mohon Mitter published a Persian and Hindoostanee newspaper *Shamesul-Akhbar* with Munniram Thacoor as its printer.

Besides the above the following English journals were published during the period between 1824 and 1830 : The Scotsman in the East, Weekly Gleaner, The Columbian Press Gazette, Quarterly Oriental Magazine, Kaleidoscope, Calcutta Chronicle, Calcutta Gazette and Commercial Advertiser.

The *Friend of India* (Quarterly Series No. VII, December, 1822) recognised the importance of the growth of the Indian language newspapers. It said :

"How necessary a step this (the establishment of Native Press) was for the amelioration of the conditions of the Natives, no person can be ignorant who has traced the effects of the Press in other countries. The Natives themselves soon availed themselves of this privilege ; no less than four weekly newspapers in the native language have now been established, and there are hopes, that these efforts will contribute essentially to arouse the native mind from its long lethargy of death ; and while it excites them to inquire into what is going forward in a world, of which Asia forms so important a portion, and urge them to ascertain their own situation respecting that eternal world, which really communicates all the vigour and interest now so visible in Europeans. *Nor has this liberty been abused by them in the least degree* ; yet these vehicles of intelligence have begun to be called for, from the very extremities of

British India and the talents of the Natives themselves have not unfrequently been exerted in the production of essays, that would have done credit to our own countrymen."

Though liberty was not abused—'Adam's Gag' was manufactured to throttle the Indian language Press in its infancy.

CHAPTER VII

WAVE OF NEW ENTHUSIASM

The appointment of Lord William Bentinck as Governor-General of India, in 1828, created a mixed feeling of apprehension and anxiety in the minds of editors and conductors of "native" journals. Their fears were not groundless. At Governor of Madras, Bentinck enforced rigid measures to control the Press. They apprehended that the same policy would be followed to check the newspapers in their free expression of opinion in respect of the administration.

But as a shrewd administrator Bentinck could appreciate the significant changes that time had brought about and public opinion that was gradually developing among the new middle class, specially in Calcutta, the seat of the Government. Bentinck saw that both the progressive and orthodox Hindu Press had welcomed the British rule as a "blessing" to India. They might criticise the administration in very strong terms but they could not even dream of its downfall. The Adam's Regulations were in the Statute Book, hanging as the sword of Damocles over the heads of editors. The Press itself took precaution not to walk into the trap and avoided comments, for a period of about seven years, on political matters which might irritate bureaucracy and invite troubles.

In his report to the Court of Directors in London Bentinck says: "I need hardly mention the increasing demand which almost all who possess the means evince for various articles of convenience and luxury purely European ; it is in many cases very remarkable. Even in the celebration of their most sacred festivals, a great change is said to be perceptible in Calcutta. Much of what used in old times to be distributed among beggars and Brahmins is now in many instances devoted to the ostentatious entertainment of Europeans".

Bentinck fully exploited this situation. On the one hand he supported the scheme of "colonisation" of British citizens

in this country, while on the other he gave his seal of approval to certain progressive social reforms. As regards the Press Bentinck followed, as a matter of expediency and "in the interest of administration", a policy of relaxation. In this matter he was also somewhat influenced by his colleague in the Council, Sir Charles Metcalfe, who had an intuitive faith in the ideal of freedom of the Press. This encouraged the emergence of many new newspapers and periodicals, mostly vernacular, during his regime.

Raja Rammohan Roy had already raised his banner of revolt against priesthood which had the backing of feudal aristocracy. Now he protested against the practice of priests interpreting Hindu Law to a foreign administration and succeeded in stopping it. Through his 'Atmiya Sabha' he launched a vigorous campaign for socio-religious reforms. Free discussion of these questions roused a critical spirit of enquiry among the educated middle class.

The Dharma Sabha, started by conservative and reactionary Hindus, also encouraged free discussions among its members. Simultaneously, a powerful orthodox Press sprang up to counter the views of the Raja's progressive papers. Gaudiya Samaj, Academic Association, etc. were subsequently established where free expression of opinions on important questions was encouraged. All such free discussions on controversial questions helped the formation and enlargement of public opinion on a democratic basis.

All these helped in creating a vigorous group of public-spirited men among the new middle class who, according to S. Natarajan, "gave Bengal the leadership of India for about a hundred years". In a later period Sir Henry Cotton wrote in his book, *New India*: "The Bengalee Baboos now rule public opinion from Peshwar to Chittagong, and although the natives of North Western India are immeasurably behind those of Bengal in education and in their sense of political independence, they are gradually becoming as amenable as their brethren of the lower provinces to intellectual control and guidance." It was Raja Rammohan Roy who had the credit of initiating this progressive march.

Bentinck, after a careful review, found that a congenial

atmosphere had been created and ground prepared by the Raja for introducing legislation for social reforms. Accordingly, he enacted a measure abolishing the practice of *Sati*. It was a landmark in the history of social legislation in this country. In India the State was never allowed to interfere with social matters, they being the exclusive domain of the Rishis, pundits and priests. It was an assault on the tradition of Hindu society but it heralded the time for other courageous social reforms.

The legislation, however, widened the schism between the orthodox and liberal groups of the community. On June 14, 1830, a petition was field by orthodox Hindus before the Governor-General praying for rescinding the law to abolish 'Sati' as it was a "sacred duty" of the Hindu widows to perform it and "any interference" in this matter amounted to "an unjust and intolerant dictation in matters of conscience". The petition was supported by Shastric quotations and arguments, propounded by 123 pundits. It also warned the Government not to show any sympathy towards the progressive group, "who had apostatized from the religion of their forefathers and defiled themselves by eating and drinking forbidden things in the society of Europeans".

The Raja also did not remain silent. To counteract this petition he presented an address to the Governor-General complimenting him for the abolition of the '*Sati*'. It had its effect and no action was taken on the petition of the orthodox Hindus. Being disappointed here they took the matter to the highest tribunal of Britain and presented an appeal to the King-in-Council. It was Bentinck who advised them to file this appeal in London.

The *Samachar Chandrika* wrote in September, 1831 : "The whole population of Bengal being a timid and quiet race were wont to conjecture : 'If we send a petition the Company may be angry, and then it will be the worse for us ; or if our petition be rejected, then we shall suffer disgrace.' But His Excellency Lord William Bentinck has utterly destroyed these fears..... All the Hindoos petitioned the Governor-General Bahadur for preservation of the rite of

suttee, and he advised an appeal to England. Thus, much has been attained by acquaintance with the resort to appeal, and we are now assured that if we send a petition to England, it will be received. Henceforward, therefore, if any evil befall us, we shall not sit down in silence, but weep so loud that our cries may reach our Sovereign. And if we live in happiness we shall so tumultuously make known our gladness that the praises of our benefactors may sound throughout the whole world."

Raja Rammohan Roy, who was determined to carry on his fight against ignorance and superstition, did not allow this to go unchallenged. He persuaded the Marquess of Lansdowne to present, on June 13, 1832, a counter-petition to the House of Lords and the contents of this petition were widely circulated in Britain. The orthodox Hindus' petition was turned down by the Privy Council which set at rest this disgusting controversy. Few newspapers, which came into existence to bolster up the conservative case, "died with the controversy". It also showed that the last word about any matter did not lie with the Governor-General but might be taken to the King-in-Council, the opinion of which was the final deciding factor. This had a great effect on the growth of public opinion.

The progressive school of Rammohan hailed the rejection of the petition. But the *Ratnaboli* wrote: "The King of England is not in charge of the Government; the people make a King of their own, as in Bengal an earthen pot is put up and worshipped".

The stir that this controversy created was, however, confined to a limited section of the enlightened middle class living in Calcutta and its suburbs only. But this changed, though for a brief period, the attitude of the bureaucracy towards the progressive section of the Press.

In Bengal, the Adam's Regulations were not applied against any paper but no newspaper was permitted to comment on the Buckingham incident or publish any of his activities in England. The same attitude was taken in respect of parliamentary proceedings. The newspapers were allowed to print them but no comment was permitted.

In Madras, rigorous censorship was enforced. Bentinck also reduced postal rates in Bengal while they were very high in Madras and Bombay.

Bentinck now instituted an enquiry about the circulation of newspapers, specially of the Indian language papers. He had seen how a section of the Press had helped in preparing the ground for social reforms.. Now he wanted to size up the influence the newspapers exerted on the public. His investigation revealed that while the total circulation of all the English dailies, bi-weeklies and weeklies taken together did not exceed 1125 copies the recent socio-religious controversies had greatly increased the readers' interest for Bengali newspapers. Of the eight newspapers published in Bengali and Persian languages from Calcutta and Serampore, Bengali newspapers only "found abundant supporters from among the Hindu population of Calcutta". The total circulation of all the papers published in India taken together did not exceed 3,000.

After the First Burma War Bentinck had some difficulties with the British-owned English newspapers but he skilfully managed it. The Company felt financial stringency after the war and to meet this unusual situation the Government decided to reduce the 'bhatta' or allowances of the European army officers to half. Discontent was naturally created among them and the British-owned newspapers came to their help. They kicked up the "Half-Bhatta" agitation which at one time threatened mutiny. The two members of Bentinck's Council Sir William Butterworth Bayley and Sir Charles Metcalfe differed as regards the proposal of taking any repressive measure against newspapers to check the agitation.

Bentinck saved this intriguing situation by making a clever distinction "between discussion of a proposal and clamour against and censure of a final decision given by the supreme authority". He checked the agitation "by imposing a ban on all further discussions in the latter case in the Press".

During this time many new newspapers and periodicals were started in Calcutta and even in mofussil towns. Such

eagerness was not, however, visible either in Bombay or in Madras. Bentinck's policy of relaxation was, no doubt, to a certain extent, responsible for it but it would be wrong to accept this as the only reason for this enthusiasm. The tirade against ignorance, though confined, in a limited way, to important towns only and the socio-religious controversies increased the curiosity and desire of the new middle class for knowledge. They found in the newspapers the most convenient vehicle for transmitting knowledge. That was the main reason for this eagerness to start new newspapers and schools also.

In 1830 there were 16 language newspapers and periodicals in Bengal. There were three dailies, viz., 'Prabhakar', 'Chandrodaya', and 'Mahajan-Darpan'; one tri-weekly: 'Bhaskar'; two bi-weeklies: 'Chandrika' and 'Rasaraj'; seven weeklies: 'Jnan-Darpan', 'Banga-Doot', 'Sudharanjan', 'Jnan-Sancharini', 'Rangpur Bartabaha', 'Rasa-Mudgar' and 'Rasa-Sagar'; two fortnightlies: 'Nitya-Dharmaranjika' and 'Durpan-Daman-Maha-Naban' and one monthly: 'Tattwa-Bodhini Patrika'.

Besides the above, 19 new newspapers were started during the years 1831, 1832 and 1833. The number of English dailies and periodicals, during this period, came to 33 in Bengal only and the total number of subscribers to newspapers came to about 2,225.

On the 28th January, 1831, poet Iswar Chandra Gupta published his famous Bengali weekly, 'Sangbad Provakar' which created a place for it in the history of Bengali literature for its elegance of style and learned essays on a variety of topical and scientific subjects. The 'Provakar' secured the services of Akshoy Kumar Dutt, who helped the versatile editor in creating a virile Bengali prose.

The paper generally supported the conservative Hindu community and the 'Dharma Sabha'. It took a prominent role in opposing the proposal of spreading and popularising female education. But sometimes it supported progressive views also. For the popularity it gained it was converted into a daily on June 24, 1839 but in 1853 the 'Provakar' became a monthly journal.

The reason for this unique popularity of the paper was the vision of its editor. Literarily he gave colour to the hopes and aspirations of hundreds of the growing middle class who lived in Bengal during that period. His poetic brains readily caught the emotion that carried them at that time and gave the '*Pravakar*' those emotions and aspirations back in its columns.

The '*Pravakar*' has the unique honour of introducing patriotic poems first in Bengali literature through its columns. It published editor's four poems, 'Matribhasa', 'Swadesh', 'Bharater Abastha' and 'Bharater Bhagya-Biplab'. They did not create any stir at that time but nationalistic feelings were manifested in them. Later Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Rangalal Banerjee effected significant improvements both in their style and contents.

The year 1831 saw the birth of '*Sambad-Sudhakar*', a Bengali weekly, published by Premchand Roy on the 14th February.

On the 15th May, Krishna Mohon Banerjee, an ex-student of the Hindu College, published '*The Enquirer*', an English weekly.

On the 4th August, Doorloob Chunder Dutta published '*Neetyoprokaus*', a Bengali daily paper.

On the 11th August, Madhusudan Das published '*Sambad Ratnakar*', a Bengali weekly.

On the 3rd September, Benimadhav De published '*Sambad-Sara Sangraha*', an Anglo-Bengali (bi-lingual) weekly.

On the 15th September, Iswar Chunder Dutt published '*Sambad-Saudamini*', a Bengali weekly.

In addition to above journals, Bhuban Mohun Banerjee published 'Sambad Mayookha', a Bengali weekly ; W. Kirkpatrick published 'The Indian Register', an English weekly ; A. Moreiro 'The Hesperus', an English evening daily ; Charles Henry Disent 'The Juvenile Emulator', an English weekly ; and the 'Reformer' by Prosunno Coomar Tagore, an ex-student of Hindu College.

This enthusiasm continued in 1832 also. Moheschunder Paul published 'Sambad Rutnaboly', a Bengali weekly ;

Andrew D'Souza published 'The Bengal Journal', an English weekly ; G. A. Prinsep published 'Calcutta Gazette', an English weekly ; G. H. Hough 'The Philanthropist', an English weekly and 'Bijnan-Sebadhi', a Bengali monthly journal devoted mainly to propagate knowledge of science.

The year 1833 saw the birth of four more journals, *viz.*, 'Gyan-Aunneshan', a weekly journal, published by a group of DeRozians ; Paterson Saunders published 'The Moffusil Ukhbar Agra', an English weekly ; 'Mahalum Afrose', a Persian weekly by Wahajuddeen Mahummed ; and 'Bijnan-Sara Sangraha', a Bengali fortnightly dealing mainly with scientific subjects.

'*Sangbad Purnochandroday*', started on June 10, 1835 as a monthly journal, earned a reputation next to '*Provakar*' and continued to exist till 1908. It supported the orthodox view, "deplored the spread of English and the decline of Hinduism".

The publication of more than 2 papers from Calcutta alone heralded an era of new possibilities. Interest now not only centred round socio-religious controversies but it extended to literary and scientific fields also. Except 'Rasa-raj' which indulged in scurrilous writing and personal vilifications, the tone and standard of journalism was not only sober but very high and comments were based on well-reasoned arguments.

In Bombay, the '*Mumbaina Samachar*', the Gujrati newspaper published in 1822 and edited by Parsis was converted into a daily in 1832. The Parsis started two other newspapers, the 'Mumbai Vartaman' and the 'Jam-e-Jamshed'. The 'Jamshed' still exists and is an influential newspaper now. The march of journalism had thus a slow but steady course in Bombay.

Like the '*Sati*' controversy in Bengal the Parsis were, during this period, engaged in a lively controversy about the correctness of Parsi calendar. Dastur Mulla Firoz, after his return from Persia, announced that the followers of Parsi calendar, which supported the view of Firoz were designated as 'Kadmis' while the followers of the prevailing calendar became known as 'Shahansahis'. To pursue the contro-

versy, the 'Kadmis' started the newspaper, '*Ebtal-e-Kabiseh*' while the 'Shahansahis published '*Akhbar-e-Kabiseh*', but both the papers had a premature death.

J. H. Stocqueler, the noted journalist of that period was in Bombay. He then threw open the columns of his English paper, '*Iris*' to both the parties to propagate their respective views so that the controversy might be continued for sometime. In his 'Memoirs of a Journalist' Stocqueler writes: "A newspaper should be of as many hues as a rainbow. '*Iris*' wanted popularity and circulation and for that purpose invited sedition and encouraged discontent but all to no purpose".

Stocqueler soon closed down '*Iris*' and purchased '*Bombay Courier*' but could not make it a paying proposition in spite of securing heavy Government advertisements. So Stocqueler left Bombay and came to Calcutta in search of a fortune. In the metropolis stars favoured him. After purchasing the interests in 'John Bull' in 1830 he began to edit it. In running the paper he faced financial difficulties as '*John Bull*' had a low circulation and heavy arrears from its subscribers. Stocqueler approached 'Prince' Dwarkanath Tagore who came to his rescue and gave him sufficient money to convert the paper into '*The Englishman*', and to secure articles from famous English writers to make the paper popular. Dwarkanath also helped financially *India Gazette* and *Bengal Harkaru*.

When all these socio-religious controversies and growing clash of interests between the foreign traders and the rising Indian bourgeoisie were creating a spirit of resurgence in the country the time for renewal of the charter of the East India Company, granted in 1813 for twenty years only, approached near. A section of British industrialists and bourgeoisie launched a vigorous campaign in England against granting the Company any privilege for monopoly trade in India any longer. But the newspapers in India remained silent about the matter.

Meanwhile Raja Rammohan Roy, Prince Dwarkanath Tagore, Prosunno Coomar Tagore, etc., organised an agitation in this country to counter the effects of propaganda in

Britain and to urge on British Parliament to renew the Company's charter for a further period of twenty years. They held a meeting for this purpose on December 15, 1829, in the Town Hall of Calcutta. The '*Banga-Doot*' reported the proceedings of this meeting in its columns and also supported the work of indigo-planters as well as the scheme of colonisation of Britishers in this country.

In the meeting of the Town Hall Raja Rammohan said: "From personal experience I am impressed with the conviction that the greater our intercourse with European gentlemen, the greater will be our improvement in literary, social and political affairs, a fact which can be easily proved by comparing the conditions of those of my countrymen who have enjoyed this advantage with that of those who unfortunately have not had that opportunity ; and a fact which I could, to the best of my belief, declare on solemn oath before any assembly. As to indigo-planters, I beg to observe that I have travelled through several districts of Bengal and Bihar, and I found the natives residing in the neighbourhood of indigo-plantations evidently better-clothed and better-conditioned than those who lived at a distance from such stations. There may be some partial injury done by the indigo-planters ; but on the whole, they have performed more good to the generality of the natives of this country than any other class of Europeans whether in or out of the service". (Royal Asiatic Journal. Vol. II. New Series. May-August, 1830).

At the same meeting Prince Dwarkanath Tagore said: "I have several zamindaries in various districts and that I have found that cultivation of indigo, and residence of Europeans have considerably benefited the country and the community at large ; the zamindars becoming wealthy and prosperous, the ryots materially improved in their condition, and possessing many more comforts than the generality of my countrymen where indigo cultivation and manufacture is not carried on the value of land in the vicinity to be considerably enhanced and cultivation rapidly progressing". (Ibid).

After this meeting a petition was presented by promi-

nent Indian citizens to British Parliament requesting it to renew the Company's Charter and granting the privilege of 'colonisation' and free trade scheme. While forwarding this Lord William Bentinck supported the schemes. But the zaminders of Bengal sent another petition to England opposing colonisation scheme. In that petition they said: "In the districts where the indigo-planters and others have in a manner settled themselves, the people are more injured and distressed than in other parts of the country, in consequence of such indigo taking possession of land by force, sowing indigo by destroying rice-plant (which is the cause of diminution in the produce of rice and dearth of the articles of consumption) detaining cattle of and exporting money from poor individuals, whose frequent complaints induce the Indian Govt. to pass Regulation VI, 1823; nevertheless if they be permitted to hold any zemindary or landed property here, the native zemindars and their ryots must be unavoidably ruined.... natives of superior caste and higher rank—having no opportunity to secure public office—have no other means to subsist on than their landed property.... Under these circumstances their real estates....be allowed to be purchased by foreigners they should inevitably labour under great distress and difficulty for the necessaries of life and for the preservation of their rank and character".

Prosunno Coomar Tagore's "Reformer" supported the scheme and wrote in January, 1832: "India wants nothing but the application of European skill and enterprise to render her powerful, prosperous and happy.... The idea of the Natives of India suffering oppression from an additional member of European settlers, is equally absurd. They would be subject to the same laws and would enjoy no peculiar privileges whatever above the Natives".

Sir Charles T. Metcalfe, a member of the Governor-General's Council, write in his minute of the 19th February, 1829: "I am further convinced that our possession of India must always be precarious unless we take root by having an influential portion of the population attached to our Government by common interests and sympathies. Every measure, therefore, which is calculated to facilitate the

settlement of our countrymen in India and to remove the obstructions by which it is impeded must, I conceive, conduce to the stability of our rule".

Holt Mackenzie, giving evidence before the Parliamentary Committee, said on the 23rd February, 1832: "The European settlers in India would be very useful agents of the Police. They would be centres of information we now want, and would have great influence over those connected with them. They would be bound to us by a common feeling".

Before the same Committee, Raja Rammohan Roy, who was then in England, pleaded for renewal of the Company's Charter and colonisation scheme but urged for the separation of the judiciary and executive. Later on it was one of the main demands of the Indian National Congress but at that time none could probably conceive of this question of separation of executive and the judiciary.

About Prosunno Coomer Tagore's '*Reformer*' it has been said: "The paper assumed a tone of opposition to the Government, published articles on the abstract rights of the people of India as a member of a great polity and proposed a constitution combining Indian oligarchy with republicanism as a panacea of all ills." (L. S. S. O'Malley: Modern India and the West).

In 1833, the Company's Charter was renewed in which the schemes of colonisation and free trade were approved. Foreign exploitation and plunder took a new shape; individual British citizen or company was given the right to invest capital and settle here with a view to starting factories and plantations.

The Charter further declared that no person by reason of his birth, creed or colour, should be disqualified from holding any office in the East India Company's service. This promise, however, was never fulfilled and remained as a dead letter. But Indian leaders of thought considered it as a great constitutional milestone for a long time to come.

Fifty-three years after this, while presiding over the second session of the Indian National Congress, held in Calcutta, in 1886, Dadabhai Naoroji said: "As another proof

of the intentions of our British rulers, as far back as 53 years ago, when the natives of India did not themselves fully understand their rights, the statesmen of England ought to be towards India....the conclusion was that the policy of British rule should be a policy of justice (cheers), the policy of advancement of one-sixth of the human race (cheers) ; India was to be regarded as a trust placed by God in their hands, and in due discharge of that trust, they resolved that they would follow the 'plain path of duty' as Macaulay called it....

"This was the essence of the policy of 1833 and in the Act of that year it was laid down: 'That no native of the said territories, nor any natural born subject of His Majesty resident therein shall, by reason only of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour or any of them, be disabled from holding any place, office, or employment under the said Company.'

"We do not, we could not ask for more than this ; and all we have to press upon (Public Service) Commission and Government is, that they should now honestly grant us in practice here what Great Britain freely conceded to us 50 years ago, when we ourselves were too little enlightened even to ask for it" (Congress Presidential Address: Vol. I).

'Sangbad-Kaumudi' supported the agitation for renewal of the Charter but it painfully pointed out that due to cultivation of indigo the production of paddy had gone down. Dadabhai Naoroji might have extolled the assurance of racial equality in 1886 but only ten years ago Lord Lytton openly declared that claims and expectations about racial equality could or would never be fulfilled. But it took time for Indian political leaders to be disillusioned.

CHAPTER VIII

LIBERATION OF THE PRESS

In the study of emergence and development of public opinion in India the question of the freedom of the Press and of expression occupies a crucial position. We have seen in the previous chapter that though Bentinck did not take any rigid measure to control the Press during his regime, he was reluctant to remove the repressive weapons from the Statute Book to liberalise the Press. The reason was not far to seek.

Sir Thomas Munro, who became the Governor of Madras in 1820, tightened up censorship of the Press and he justified his stand by saying that he "cannot view the views of a free Press without feeling that the tenure with which we hold our power, never has been or never can be the liberties of the people."

Munro further wrote : "The advocates of a free Press seek, they say, the improvement of our system of Government, and of the minds and conditions of the natives ; but these desirable ends are, I am convinced, quite unattainable by the means they propose. There are two important points which should always be kept in view in our administration of affairs here. The first is, that our sovereignty should be prolonged to the remotest possible period ; the second is, that whenever we are obliged to resign it we should leave the natives so far improved from their connection with us as to be capable of maintaining a free, or at least, a regular government among themselves. If these objects can ever be accomplished it can only be under a restricted Press. A free one, so far from facilitating, would render this attainment utterly impracticable ; for by attempting to precipitate improvement it would frustrate all the benefits which might have been derived from a more cautious and temperate proceeding."

Munro continued : "The desire of independence and of governing themselves, which in every country follows the

progress of knowledge, ought to spring up and become general among the people before it reaches the army. If we for the sole benefit of a few European editors of newspapers, permit a licentious Press to undermine among the natives all respect for the European character and authority, we shall scatter the seeds of discontent among our native troops and never be secure from insurrection."

Munro then skilfully drew across the path the red herring of "the fidelity of Indian soldiers in danger." He stated: "We are trying an experiment never yet tried in the world—maintaining a foreign domination by means of a native army, and teaching that army, through a free Press, that they ought to expel us and deliver their country.....It is only as regards the natives that the Press can be viewed with apprehension, and it is only when it comes to agitate over native army that its terrible effects will be felt.....it is not impossible that circumstances may induce them to listen to the instigations of enterprising leaders and support them in mutiny and revolt."

Mount Stuart Elphinstone, who was the Governor of Bombay from 1819 to 1827, has been described as an "enlightened Governor". He was also afraid of "the possibility of creation of ill-feeling between the European Officers and the native soldiery" fomented by writings of the Press. "In other countries," said Elphinstone, "the use of the Press has gradually extended along with the improvement of the country, and the intelligence of the people; but we shall have to contend at once with the more refined theories of Europe, and with the prejudices and fanaticism of Asia, both rendered doubly formidable by the imperfect education of those to whom every appeal will be addressed. Is it possible that a foreign government, avowedly maintained by the sword, can long keep its ground in such circumstances ?"

Bishop Heber in explaining Elphinstone's views in his *Journal* (Vol. III, page 134) writes: "With regard to the free Press, I was curious to know the motives or apprehensions which induced Mr. Elphinstone to be so decidedly opposed to it in this country. In discussing the topic he

was always open and candid, acknowledged that the dangers ascribed to free Press in India had been exaggerated,—but spoke of the exceeding inconvenience and even danger which arose from disunion and dissension which political discussion produced among the European Officers at the different stations, the embarrassment occasioned to Government by the exposure and canvass of all their measures by Lentuli and Gracchi of a newspaper, and his preference was of decided and vigorous to half measures, where any restrictive measures at all were necessary. I confess that his opinion and experience are the strongest presumptions which I have yet met with in favour of censorship."

A study of history reveals that all British statesmen including Morley, Lloyd George, Curzon and Churchill were always anxious "to prolong the British sovereignty in India to the remotest possible period". Morley said in 1906 : "For as long a time as my poor imagination can pierce through, for so long a time our Government in India must partake and in no small degree of the personal and absolute element."

In his notorious Arbroath speech (October 21, 1907) Morley explained more clearly that if the British left India, they would have to hear "through the dark distances the roar and scream of confusion and carnage of India". The dictates of their 'conscience' prompted them to take up their self-imposed guardianship of Indians only to save them from "confusion and carnage". But had the British rulers any such thing as 'conscience' ?

Lloyd George's assurance, during the First World War, to apply the principle of self-determination to India was flagrantly violated while Churchill declared during the Second World War that he did not assume the Office of the Prime Minister of Great Britain "to liquidate the Empire".

All these arguments brought one fact alone to bold relief. The British must continue to rule India eternally and avenues for exploitation must always be kept open for them. So, they could not conceive of a Press in India which would be free to criticise the administration and to

encourage people to continue their struggle to win freedom for their country.

Bentinck was well aware of the attitude of the Court of Directors towards the Press in India. He might have followed a somewhat liberal policy during his regime but he was certainly not prepared to take any permanent measure to liberate the Press. In February, 1835, when the Indian and the European journalists of Calcutta presented a joint petition to the Government praying for repeal of restrictive Press regulations, Bentinck politely refused to comply with their request. On February 6, 1835, His Lordship told them that "they already enjoy the liberty they solicit nor has the Government any intention of restricting that liberty". Then followed a pious wish of a stereotyped bureaucratic nature stating that "he trusts that in no long time a system will be established which, while it gives security to every person engaged in the fair discussion of public measures, will effectually secure the Government against sedition and individuals against calumny". So, when he was giving this assurance he was anxious to stop "sedition" like Munro, Elphinstone and others.

Soon after this Bentinck fell ill and resigned. Sir Charles Metcalfe, the seniormost member of the Council, assumed temporarily the Office of the Governor General till the arrival of Bentinck's successor. Though a member of the bureaucracy since his nineteenth year he knew India and always kept his eyes open. He could realise the feelings of the people kept under bondage. He wrote: "All India is at all times looking out for our downfall. The people everywhere would rejoice or fancy they would rejoice at destruction and numbers are not wanting who would promote it by all means in their power." (Papers and Correspondence—p. 116, quoted by J. L. Morrison: Lawrence of Lucknow, p. 55).

Metcalfe had an intuitional love for the freedom of the Press. In spite of his knowledge of the contrary views of his colleagues and the Court of Directors he decided to remove all fetters of Press in India and frame a uniform

law for both the European and Indian newspapers. He was anxious to see "that in all our legislation we ought to be very careful not to make invidious distinctions between Europeans and native subjects.....I am, therefore, of opinion that any restraint on the native Press beyond what is imposed on the European would be injudicious; and any restraint on either beyond that of the laws, is not requisite.....a tenure dependent on attempts to suppress the communication of public opinion could not be lasting, both because such a tenure must be rotten and because such attempts must fail."

With the support of Macaulay, the Law Member in his Council, Metcalfe proposed to frame a uniform law for both European and Indian newspapers all over India and to repeal the harsh Press law, prescribing licensing of newspapers and providing for summary action. His proposal was opposed by H. T. Prinsep and Lt. Col. Morrison, two members of his Council as well the Governors of Bombay and Madras. But Metcalfe did not attach much importance to these objections and was determined to grant freedom to the Press. He persuaded his Council to accept the measure unanimously. In giving assent to the Act he wrote: ".....we cannot prevent the progress of knowledge, and it is undoubtedly our duty to promote it whatever be the consequences."

In an elaborate reply to an address presented to him, Metcalfe declared the repeal justifiable on general principles. At the same time he thought that it had become "almost unavoidable" for circumstances, obtaining at that time.

"The (Indian) Press," said Sir Charles, "had been practically free for many years, including the whole period of the administration of the late Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck; and although laws of restriction existed in Bengal which gave awful power to the Government, they had ceased to operate for any practical purpose. They were extremely odious, they gave to the Government arbitrary power, which British subjects in any part of the world detest. No Government could now

have carried them into effect, without setting universal opinion in defiance. After the liberty given by Lord William Bentinck's forbearance, no Government could have ventured to enforce those laws, unless it had been gifted with a most hard insensibility to ridicule and obloquy. Even supposing them to be good, they were utterly useless, and as they brought unnecessary odium on the Government it would have been absurd any longer to retain them."

The year 1835 was thus a landmark in the history of journalism in India. The fight begun in 1823 by Raja Rammohan Roy and five other respectable citizens of India, achieved a significant success in 1835. All restrictions were withdrawn and the Press was liberated, at least for the time being. After a period of over 20 years a 'Gagging Act' was passed in 1857 on the Press by Lord Canning during India's First War of Independence. Since then as struggle for liberation gained momentum fresh and handy weapons were brought out from the bureaucratic armoury to curb the liberty of the Press. The Rev. J. Long had complained that the opinion of the newspapers had generally been ignored by the administrators.

The Metcalfe Act repealed the Adam's Regulations of 1823, the Bombay Press Regulations of 1825 and 1827 and censorship in Madras was enforced over all the territories of the East India Company. It provided for a declaration by the printer and publisher of any newspaper or periodical, giving a true and precise account of the place of publication. Any change of address must be notified to the Government and the penalty for running a press without a declaration was fixed at a sum not exceeding Rs. 5000/- and an imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years. It was further required that every journal or book, printed in a press, must bear the names of the printer and publisher as well as the printing press and its address. The penalty for non-compliance was the same as that for not taking out a declaration.

The citizens of Calcutta paid a homage to Sir Charles for his magnanimous act of the liberation of the Press in

India by presenting him an address and constructing a big hadnsome hall, christened as 'Metcalfe Hall' at the junction of Hare Street and Strand Road, which stands today "to perpetuate the name of the Liberator". The Calcutta Public Library, founded earlier by local citizens by raising subscriptions from the public, was removed to the Metacalfe Hall to associate his name with efforts for spread of knowledge. This library was afterwards taken over by the Government and named as 'Imperial Library'. After the achievement of independence the library was renamed as 'National Library' and removed to Belvedere at Alipore. The Hall, erected by public subscription and dedicated to the memory of Metcalfe, is now used for official purposes.

When the news of removing all restrictions over the Press reached England, the Court of Directors became furious. Their attitude was revealed in their Dispatch dated the 1st February (No. I) 1836, the second paragraph of which stated :

"This proceeding (removal of restrictions on the Press) is in all opposition to all our previous orders, to the solemn decisions both of the Supreme Court of Calcutta and His Majesty's Privy Council delivered in both cases, after full arguments on both sides of the question, to the recorded opinions of all preceding Government of Bengal, Madras and Bombay and more especially to the carefully considered measures of Lord William Bentinck and Sir Frederick Adam for extending the Licensing Regulations to Madras."

"We are compelled to observe," the Distpatch continued, "that this proceeding must be considered the most unjustifiable inasmuch as it has been adopted by a Government only provisional ; and also when a Commission for framing a code of laws for the three presidencies was about to commence its important labours."

The concluding paragraph of the Dispatch ran thus : "We should then be prepared to avail ourselves of the power entrusted to us by Act of Parliament, and disallow your new law when passed, were we not aware that immediate repeal of such a law, however ill-advised and un-

called-for its enactment may have been, might be productive of mischievous results. We shall, therefore, wait for the deliberate advice of the Governor-General-in-Council after arrival of Lord Auckland, your present Governor-General, before we communicate to you our final decision. But you are in possession of our sentiments, and we shall not be sorry to find that by returning to the former system you have rendered our interference unnecessary."

After taking over charge Lord Auckland, being haunted by the bogey of "Russian menace", involved himself in Afghan War which put a heavy burden on Indian exchequer. He was rather anxious to win the goodwill of the Press. Neither he nor his successors showed any inclination either to repeal or revise the law promulgated by Metcalfe. But the spirit, expressed in the Dispatch, continued to be gradually followed and measures taken to curb the liberty of the Press till the last day of the British rule in India.

The speech the Duke of Wellington, brother of Lord Wellesley, who fought with Tipoo Sultan in this country and defeated Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo, delivered castigating the Press in India, was an expression of this hostile attitude. Addressing the House of things in that country (India) as one of much greater difficulty than "when I was there, because, there is now established in India what is called a free Press, but which I should make free to call a most licentious Press ; and by referring to these papers your Lordships will see that the mischievous influence of that Press is repeatedly complained of."

Metcalfe had to pay a heavy price for his love for freedom of the Press. In spite of his just claim he was not made permanent in the post of Governor-General. The Court of Directors "found another opportunity of slighting Metcalfe when, in 1836, he was passed over for the Governorship of Madras. One of the Company's Directors informed him that his freeing of the Press in India was unforgiven." (H. P. Ghose : The Newspaper in India).

As a consolation Metcalfe was appointed Governor of North West Provinces but he could realise that his fate

had been sealed in India. As a man having self-respect he sent a letter to the Court of Directors expressing his strong determination to retire and sailed for England on the 15th February, 1838. Thus ended the career of a man who had strong sympathy for the Indian Press and its freedom of expression. He is remembered today not only as a ruler having a liberal outlook but as a real friend of India. Histoy honours him as hero who did not hesitate to swim against the current.

CHAPTER IX

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REFORM

The removal of restrictions over the Press and repeal of repressive laws encouraged the educated middle class all over the country to start newspapers. Calcutta, being the seat of the Imperial Government, saw the birth of English, Bengali, Persian, Urdu and Hindi newspapers. The Christian missionaries took the initiative in casting moving types in Bengali, Gujrati, Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telegu and Malayalam languages, chiefly for printing pamphlets to preach Christianity. This helped in starting printing presses in Indian languages in different parts of India. The introduction of lithography in 1837 gave a fillip to the rapid growth of Urdu journalism in North West Province and Delhi.

Since the regime of Lord William Bentinck the Press in India remained unmolested for a period of about 28 years. The Brahmo Samaj, founded in 1828, and other socio-religious movements during this period were but expressions of national awakening. The division of Hindu society into orthodox and progressive groups continued and the newspapers also were divided over the question of social reforms. After the liberation of the Press the number of Bengali newspapers rose to 19 ; the combined circulation of which exceeded 8,000 copies. The *Sangbad Kaumudi, Banga-Doot, Gyananeshan,* etc. led the agitation for social reforms while *Samachar Chandrika, Sangbad Provakar, Purnochandrodaya, Sangbad Timir Nasak,* etc. stood by the orthodox cause. There were now seven papers to support this point of view.

Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar's dynamic efforts to legalise widow remarriage created a stir in the country. He issued several learned pamphlets to prove that widow remarriage had the sanction of Hindu Scriptures behind it. The orthodox Hindus of Bengal, Bihar & Orissa and Madras raised a storm of protest against any measure validating

widow remarriage. To counter this Vidyasagar also submitted a petition to the Government, over the signatures of more than a thousand Hindus demanding immediate legislation, and Widow Remarriage Bill was passed into law in July 1856. The progressive newspapers stood by Vidyasagar.

The question of inheritance of property by Hindus who had embraced Christianity began to be focused in the Press. Indian Christians organised an agitation for validation of inheritance of ancestral property under the guidance of the Rev. Krishna Mohon Banerjee, editor of the *Inquirer* and necessary legislation was enacted.

Samachar Chandrika vehemently criticised these measures and attacked the missionaries for introducing English education. But *Banga-Doot,* edited by Neelrutton Halder, as the mouthpiece of the educated middle class, supported these progressive reforms. *Gyananeshan* and *Bengal Spectator* also stood up against reactionary orthodoxy.

By this time attention of the educated Indians began to be diverted to political questions which helped in creating public opinion. When in 1835 English replaced Persian as Court language *Gyananeshan* recorded its protest against this step and strongly pleaded for use of Bengali language instead. It wrote : "Courts of justice are not made for the judges but for the convenience of the people. A court should be considered as a temple of justice and not a college of learning ; the masses of Bengal must be approached by the gate of their mother-tongue". This showed that the DeRozians had shaken off their dislike for the Bengali language and developed a love for the mother-tongue.

Bengal Spectator was published in April 1842, as a monthly journal by the 'Young Bengal' group with Pyarichand Mitra as its editor. In September of 1842 it was converted into a fortnightly paper and from March 1843 it began to be published as a bi-lingual weekly paper. Besides raising its voice against orthodoxy, fanaticism and social vices it discussed the helpless condition of ryots under the Permanent Settlement and led a campaign against

tyranny of zeminders over them. Pyari Chand wrote an article on 'The Zeminder and the Ryot' in the *Calcuttta Review* in 1846.

Rangpur Bartabaha, a weekly, published from Rangpur, the headquarters of a North Bengal district, propagated progressive views and in its columns local grievances as well as complaints against local officials were ventilated. It may be mentioned here that Rammohan Roy stayed here for a pretty long time when he worked under Mr. Digby, the then Collector of Rangpur.

In March 1839, Gaurisankar Bhattacharya, a learned Sanskrit scholar, started *Sangbad Bhaskar*, a tri-weekly paper, which acquired a circulation of more than 700 copies. It had subscribers in the Punjab and even in England. Gaurisankar was barely four feet and a half in height and so he was popularly known as 'Gurgure Bhatchaj'. He imbibed a spirit of liberalism which made him a staunch fighter against superstition, ignorance and reactionary Hindu orthodoxy. His paper could always be trusted to stand up for the poor and the oppressed.

One of the most influential members of the Dharma Sabha was Raja Rajnarain Roy Bahadur of Andul (Howrah). The contemporary newspapers contained numerous reports about the Raja's delinquencies. Indeed, the atrocities perpetrated by him on his poor helpless tenants were so many that one wonders how he could have remained unpublished for so long in spite of public notice having been taken of them.

While lamenting the death of Rai Kalinath Chaudhuri of Taki in its column, the *Friend of India* (December 17, 1839) made the following remarks about Rajnarain, who had shortly before this been invested with the title of Raja Bahadur: "When that ruffian Rajnarain Roy, whose only title to distinction arose from the accidental circumstances of his having presented an address of thanks to Sir Charles Metcalfe, was made a Raja, and Rai Kalinath Chaudhuri was not, the conclusion which the natives naturally drew could not be much favourable to the character of our Government."

It was near the end of December, 1839, Gaurisankar had left Calcutta for a while, entrusting the editorial duties of his paper to his assistant, Sreenath Roy. A correspondent from Andul had written a letter to the editor of the '*Bhaskar*' describing the character, the evil deeds and the tyranny of the Raja over his poor tenants. Sreenath published the letter in '*Bhaskar*' with some pungent editorial comments of his own. When this was brought to the notice of the Raja he ordered his men to seize Sreenath wherever he was to be found and bring him straight to Andul.

Sreenath Roy was returning home on an evening after the day's work when, near Sukeas Street (now Kailash Bose Street), the Raja's men fell upon him, gave him a sound beating and carried him off to Andul where further punishments awaited the poor editor. He was stripped to the skin, his naked back repeatedly struck with rods of nettles and his "right hand was pounded with a pestle for writing the offending comments". The unfortunate man was all but dead.

On hearing the incident Gaurisankar hurried to the town and lodged a Bill of Complaint in the Supreme Court which issued a writ of *habeas corpus*, calling upon the Raja "to produce without let or hindrance the body of Sreenath Roy at the Court House in Calcutta".

The '*Samachar-Darpan*' in its issue of January 18, 1840, commented: "It is not possible for a moment to tolerate this outrage, even if it be by a person holding the title of Raja. This high-handed action of the Raja in forcibly carrying off the editor of a newspaper to his own domain and there subjecting him to such cruel treating is, to say the least, thoroughly obnoxious. We refrain from making further comments as a case against the Raja on this count is pending before the Supreme Court. We feel certain that right will now be done . . . . . If the Raja Bahadur had taken no notice of the editorial notes of the *Bhaskar*, very few people would have been put wise about the misdeeds of himself and his family. But now that he has taken the foolish step, everyone will be eager to learn more about his vices".

On the appointed date the Raja did not produce the body of Sreenath Roy before the Court, but had got him transferred from Andul to the Belgachia garden-house of Chatu Babu and Latu Babu (Ashutosh and Pramathanath Dev) two other prominent members of the Dharma Sabha. The Raja was ordered to be put into Presidency Jail on a charge of contempt of Court, tried on March 19, 1840, and fined Rupees one thousand only which he paid and was subsequently released from jail.

On March 14, 1840, the '*Samachar-Darpan*' wrote: "We hear that Sreenath Roy is now free. If it be so, why do we not see him anywhere ? If he does not show himself up soon, the sympathy which the public felt for him is sure to turn into contempt".

But nothing could induce the unfortunate editor to come out of his seclusion where either he had been hiding himself or kept confined by the zeminder's men. But to the awful surprise of all the newspapers soon announced the news of the death of Sreenath Roy in October, 1840. (Refer T. M. Chatterjee: Justice, Vol. II, No. 1).

The stray battles the villagers found extending over a pretty long period against European indigo planters culminated in the historic indigo cultivators' Revolt of 1861. The growing educated middle class helped the resurgent ryots and stood by them. Their active sympathy and cooperation encouraged the peasants to continue their struggle with vigour and determination. Contact was thus established between the Indian bourgeoisie and the toiling masses of the land. Newspapers played a glorious role to inspire this great upsurge and brought about the appointment of Indigo Commission to enquire into the matter. The *Englishman,* started by Stocqueler with financial assistance of Dwarkanath Tagore, over the ruins of *John Bull,* came, during this period, under the ownership of European indigo planters and it took up their cause.

The villagers' bold resistance enkindled the fire of nationalism among the middle class. Indigo-cultivation started in this country in 1824 and under the Charter of 1833 the Europeans were granted the right to acquire landed

property for the purpose of indigo-cultivation and settling in their plantations. Being British-born subjects, they enjoyed the privilege of not coming within the jurisdiction of mofussil courts over which Indian magistrates generally presided. These gave them unrestricted opportunities to commit crimes freely and avoid punishments. Macaulay designated them as "profligate adventurers" and suggested to bring them under the jurisdiction of mofussil courts.

For this purpose Mr. Bethune prepared the draft of an Act in 1849. But it so irritated the "profligate adventurers" that they characterised this useful measure as "Black Act" and kicked up a wild agitation to nip the proposed Act in its bud. The *Englishman* provoked it and the bureaucracy sympathised with it. This frightened Mr. Bethune who groped for a compromise formula. Finally the enactment, which was made in 1857 as a compromise to pacify the British planters, completely frustrated the real purpose for which the measure was sponsored.

To counter the effects of British planters' agitation Ramgopal Ghose came forward to mobilise Indian public opinion. He boldly condemned racial discrimination practised even in courts of justice. He published a learned pamphlet entitled, "A Few Remarks on Certain Draft Acts commonly called Black Acts" to rouse Indian sentiments in support of the proposed measures. He utilised the columns of *Gyananeshan* and *Bengal Spectator* to expose the hollowness of European stand and to condemn their parade of racial supremacy.

Ramgopal Ghose's writings and speeches inspired the educated middle class to build up unity among themselves to fight for their rights. Political consciousness blossomed out of this agitation and national sentiments began to assume a concrete mould. Faith in British liberalism and their goodwill began to be shaken. Ramgopal Ghose was responsible for bringing about this change of outlook.

The United stand of European planters and Ramgopal Ghose's stirring speeches impressed upon the Indian bourgeoisie the need for a united stand and of an organisation to carry on a united struggle for its rights and privileges.

So, on the 31st October, 1851 the moribund 'Bengal Landholders' Association' founded by Dwarkanath Tagore and 'British India Society' started by George Thomson (who supported in England the agitation for abolition of slavery and who was brought to India by Dwarkanath Tagore to train the educated middle class in methods of constitutional agitation) merged together and the British Indian Association was formed. It was dominated by the zeminders, who, in spite of their patriotism, could not always rise above their class interests.

Raja Sir Radhakanta Deb was made its first President and Devendra Nath Tagore its first Secretary. Among its prominent members were Raja Kalikrishna Deb, Harakumar Tagore, Prosunno Coomar Tagore, Jaikrishna Mukherjee, Ashutosh Dev, Ramgopal Ghose, Pyarichand Mitra and Raja Digambar Mitra. But there was no Muslim in the new body.

Having a political outlook the B. I. Association developed a secular character. For the first time it created a common platform for orthodox and liberal Hindus; DeRozians and Brahmos; zemindars and commercial interests and had decided to extend its co-operation to similar organisations, if there be any, in other provinces to "secure the welfare, extend the just rights and advance the interests of all classes of our fellow-subjects". Its activities spread, beyond the field of socio-religious reforms. From now on political and economic questions began to claim greater attention of newspapers. About the same time the Bombay Association was founded with Jugganath Sankersett, V. N. Mandlik, Dadabhai Naoroji and Nowrosjee Furdunjee as its leaders.

Just after a year of its establishment, in 1852, the British Indian Association, which after its reorganisation, was still dominated by the zeminders, submitted a petition to the British Parliament stating that "they cannot but feel that they have not profited by their connection with Great Britain to the extent which they had a right to expect". The petition also catalogued their "grievances with regard to the revenue system, the discouragement of manufacturers, education and the question of admission to higher adminis-

trative services". It also demanded a Legislative Council "possessing a popular character so as in some respects to represent the sentiments of people". Political ideas took a concrete mould in the petition but it created a furore both among the die-hard British politicians and the bureaucracy in India.

After 22 years of useful service, *Samachar Darpan*, the first Bengali newspaper, ceased its publication in 1840. In 1849, Girish Chandra Ghose founded *Bengal Recorder*, which was, in 1853, rechristened as *Hindoo Patriot* under the editorship of Hurish Chunder Mukherjee. The *Patriot* was the first Indian-owned paper to acquire a national status and it created a new history for Indian journalism for its fearless stand behind popular struggles.

In 1849, Lord Dalhousie, who was considered as "a young and brilliant" man by his countrymen, was sent to India as Governor-General. But Dalhousie thought himself to be "a curious compound of the radical and the despot". India unfortunately saw in him more of a 'despot' than of a 'radical' ruler.

During Dalhousie's regime railways, telegraphic communications and cheap postal rates were introduced which brought about a significant change in the hitherto archaic methods of collection and transmission of news as well as distribution of newspapers. Gradually the British capitalists invested more and more money for starting textile and jute mills, coal mines and plantations as a result of which there was an increase in exports and imports. But these measures destroyed the work of weavers, tanners, gold and blacksmiths, etc. Many of them came to town to serve as labourers in these new factories while others fell back on land, creating pressure on agriculture.

In his zeal to establish an empire in India Dalhousie dethroned several rulers and took over their territories. But his annexation of Oudh created a consternation in the country. His policy of doctrine of lapse, refusing to recognise adopted sons as heirs, hit the inheritance rights of Indian rulers. The states of Nagpur, Satara and Jhansi were annexed to British India according to this policy.

The masses were called upon to resist this measure as a direct interference by foreign rulers on Hindu religion which recognised the rights and status of adopted sons. When the *Hindoo Patriot* began to write serially learned articles against his policy of annexation Dalhousie proposed to start an official newspaper to explain the reasons behind his policy and to get popular support for it. But his suggestion was turned down by Court of Directors.

In 1854, Radhanath Sickdhar and Pyarichand Mitra published '*Masik Patrika*', a Bengali monthly journal. Both of them belonged to the 'Young Bengal' group and they were convinced that to approach the common men and uplift them Bengali language must be the only vehicle. So, while publishing this journal they announced that it had been published for common men and specially women. Tek Chand Thakur's (Pyarichand Mitra's) *Alaler Gharer Dulal* was published serially in *Masik Patrika.*

In 1854, the Santal Rebellion in the districts of Birbhum, Midnapur and other neighbouring areas was ruthlessly suppressed. But it gave an indication of discontent that was spreading among the masses due to the loss of their ancient privileges and their exploitation in the new environments. The Santals raised the demand that the land belonged to them and they must not pay any rent for it. They rose in revolt "to kill all money-lenders and policemen, expel traders and landlords, and fight to the death all who resisted them". The *Hindoo Patriot* pointed out that British administrators, having no contact with the masses, could not measure the depth of feelings and discontent of the people.

An autocrat of autocrats, Lord Dalhousie did not attach much importance to the comments of the Indian Press. But his Government was aware of the influence the newspapers exerted over the people. The British-owned newspapers took delight in parading a sense of racial superiority while Indian-owned newspapers published in detail stories of crimes in England "to show that there are faults with the English too."

The Rev. J. Long's Report on the Indian Press would

contradict many of the accusations levelled against Indian newspapers of that period. The following are the remarks:

> "The native newspapers are humble in appearance, yet unlike the ballads of a nation they often act where the law fails and as straws on a current they show its direction. In them questions of Sati, Caste, Widow-remarriage, Kulin polygamy have been argued with great skill and acuteness on both sides. They have always opposed the foreign language being the language of the courts. The atrocities of indigo planters and the blunders of young magistrates have been laid bare and letters to the editor open out a view of native society nowhere else to be found. Now and then extracts from details of crime in England are given to show that there are faults with the English too. Moral tales are frequently published. There are a number of short pieces (inverse) on the seasons and on the varied aspects and objects of nature, many of them possessing considerable poetic merit. (Iswar Chandra Gupta, editor of *Prabhakar,* was considered the ablest poet of the time in Bengal). To each paper is attached a native acquainted with English and translation of many valuable English subjects are scattered through these papers on history, biography, natural philosophy and ethics. Some of the papers have correspondents *and at the time of the Kabul and Punjab wars accurate information was regularly given of the progress of events.*
>
> "Whether one looks at the stagnation of village life or the need for rousing the native mind from the torpor of local selfishness, the importance of the native newspaper press is very great. Let any European look through the files of these papers and he will see there the operations of Darogas and Amlahs fully exposed, the want of roads, the fantastic tricks of Young European Officials, of men in courts, of practices such as swearing on a bundle of rags which for 11 years the people had fancied was the Koran.

"If Government wish correct news to circulate in the villages they must use the vernacular press as organs for diffusing it. The enemies of the English Government are not inactive, already ideas are rapidly spreading in various districts that the English power is on the wane, that the Russians are coming to India and would govern it better than the English do.

"The number of newspapers in circulation is small compared with that of other publications. Their influence is great, extending at an average of 10 readers for each paper to 30,000 persons and conveying to numbers in the mofussil their views relating to Government measures. The editors have translated the abuse freely lavished on natives by some English editors and the publication of such matter excites in the reader a spirit antagonistic to Europeans. English newspapers in too many cases cherish the spirit of antagonism of race."

While in Calcutta, as indicated in earlier chapters, the character of the Press was changing and it was developing an independent role of opposition the Indian language Press in other parts of India, except in Bombay, was very slow in growing. In Bengal. newspapers were publishing more of local grievances, official inequities and comments on political questions. But in Delhi and North West Provinces lack of initiative in political as well as socio-religious questions and absence of public grievances in the columns of newly started journals failed to create any interest in newspapers. Government, therefore, came forward to help the running of newspapers. It used to subsidize them by subscribing one or two hundred copies of each of the few newspapers for distribution among the officials. Thus the emergence of Urdu Press in Delhi and North West Provinces had the encouragement of Government behind it.

According to C. F. Andrews, Monlir Mohammad Baquir published, under the patronage of the Moghul Court, the first Urdu newspaper in Delhi but it died shortly after its publication. Syed Mohammad Khan, elder brother of Sir

Syed Ahmed Khan, published *Sayyed-ul-Akhbar* in 1837. As there were practically no controversial problems or issues to stimulate the Press Mohammed Khan's paper engaged itself in '*Sunni*' propaganda.

Another Urdu newspaper, *Oordu Akhbar*, was probably published much earlier than these two newspapers and two or three issues of this paper might have been printed. But its proprietor later on published *Muzhur-ul-Akhbar*, a weekly, presumably to argue the *Shia* case in answer to Mohammed Khan's *Sunni* propaganda.

Of the other papers, the *Sudder-ul-Akhbar*, started in 1846, was connected with the Agra College. Subsequently, it changed its name into *Akhbar-ul-Haquayaq*. Although, being a College publication, it avoided all controversial issues, its tone was somewhat progressive and modern in character.

The Agra College paper became the target of attack from Munshi Wajid Ali Khan's *Zoobdut-ul-Akhbar*, a Persian weekly, started in 1833. He did not like the Anglicised way of life and, therefore, preached conservatism through his paper. The cost of its production was only Rs. 40/- while the paper received a regular monthly subsidy of Rs. 105/- only from five rulers and a big merchant for the sole purpose of not publishing in the journal any criticism against them so that their prestige might not be lowered before the public. The editor got another Rs. 140/- from the sale proceeds of the paper thus earning a net profit of Rs. 200/- per month.

The Delhi College, too, published three Urdu monthly magazines, mainly devoted to literary and scientific matters. It had also a weekly Urdu paper, which avoided all political issues and was pre-censored by teachers of the Arabic Department.

There was another Palace weekly in Delhi about which the remarks of Mr. John Lawrence, the Magistrate of Delhi, are of great interest. He says: "The *Siraj-ul-Akhbar*, the King's paper, is published in the palace. Only 34 copies are printed once a week (Sunday) and distributed among the King's followers for the most part but one copy

is sent to the Governor-General, one to the Lt. Governor and one to the Officer-Commanding the Palace Guards. One rupee is retrenched from the pay of each person to support the paper. It is written in elegant but inflated Persian and has little in it beyond news of the Palace and of the King in particular when he sleeps, eats, drinks, goes out, comes in and the like. It is hardly known beyond the precincts of the palace."

In North West Provinces there were 28 newspapers in 1850, having a circulation of 1,497. In 1853, the number of newspapers increased to 35 and their total circulation went up to 2,216 copies. In 1858, the number of publications came down to 12 only but the circulation increased to 3,223. During the Great Rebellion of 1857 most of the Urdu newspapers stopped publication and of the 12 newspapers that existed one only was edited by a Muslim. Official reports deplored the "lack of interest in political matters and the exclusion of public grievances from the Press" during this period. Mr. Kempson in his report states: "The public is no doubt not yet alive to the advantages of a free Press, and is not accustomed to independent expression of opinion or free comment on the acts and orders of the ruling power." In view of these reports the Rev. Long's statement that a careful scrutiny of the contents of these papers would have warned the authorities about the Rebellion" appears to be confusing. The number of newspapers decreased in 1858 but their total circulation increased. The Rebellion did not convert them overnight to fire-eating, blood-and-thunder journals nor even made them more critical of Government activities. Mr. Kempson stated that the increase in circulation was due to the fact that "rustics came a long way to have the newspapers read to them" during this period.

Speaking about the Press of North West Provinces J. Natarajan observes: "There were other factors peculiar to the Press in the North West Provinces. There were the two communities. Persian (till 1836 the Court language) and Urdu were the current languages. The Hindus were anxious to have the Devanagari script accepted and a judici-

ous agitation was carried for its adoption as an alternative script . . . . The social atmosphere seems to have been such that the mildest controversy on subjects such as comparative superiority of Delhi and Lucknow Urdu and criticism of the practice among the Hindus of not permitting widows to remarry were likely to be misunderstood. The concept of the freedom of the Press as ably propounded by Raja Rammohon Roy in Bengal in 1823 just did not exist in 1853 in North West Provinces". (Part II of the Press Commission's Report, 1954, p. 55).

In Bombay, journalism in Gujrati language was started as early as 1822 by the Parsis. Starting with *Mumbaina Samachar* seven papers were established between 1830 and 1858 but a majority of them ceased publication. The *Mumbaina Chabuk*, started in 1832, continued till 1850; while the *Doorbin*, founded in 1840, existed for about sixteen years. *Rast Gaftar* was founded by Dadabhai Naoroji with financial assistance from Khurshedji Cama to serve the small Parsi community when it felt that it did not receive adequate protection from the Government during the Parsi-Muslim riots in 1846 due to publication of the Prophet's picture in *Chitragnan Durpan*, edited by a Parsi. The paper continued till 1921. Karsondas Mulji's *Satya Prakash* (1852-1861) advocated reforms in Hindu society and fearlessly exposed the debauchery of the heads of Vallabha/Vaishnav sect. In the famous 'Maharaj Libel Case' he was sued for libel but was awarded Rs. 11,500 as costs.

The first Gujrati paper, *Vartaman*, published in Gujrat proper by Hindus, was started in 1849 at Ahmedabad with Amareswar Kubardas as its editor. In 1854, *Shamsher Bahadur* was founded but both the papers ceased to exist after some time. *Surat Samachar*, a bi-weekly paper also had a short life. Upto the time of the Rebellion the main theme of these papers was advocacy of social reforms, such as widow remarriage, education for girls, stoppage of child marriage, etc. In Bombay, all the Gujrati newspapers were owned by the Parsis and during the Rebellion they blindly supported the British rule but they vehemently

opposed racial antagonism, preached by the Anglo-Indian Press.

Bal Shastri Jambhekar, an ex-professor of Elphinstone College, inaugurated Marathi journalism in 1832. He started *Bombay Darpan* first as an Anglo-Marathi fortnightly but subsequently converted it into a weekly paper. In 1840, he started *Dig-Darsan,* a Marathi monthly magazine and helped to start *Prabhakar,* a weekly, in 1841.

Being an educationist Jambhekar was free from the influence of prevailing superstitions and preached progressive western ideas in the papers. He succeeded in training a band of journalists who continued the work very creditably. The *Prabhakar* earned "a reputation for independence and fearlessness" under its editor, Bhau Mahajan (Govind Vitthal Kunte). To defend Hinduism against the attacks by Christian missionaries Pandit Morabhat Dandekar, an ardent disciple of Jambhekar, started, in 1844, the *Upadesha Chandrika,* a Marathi monthly journal.

Duyan Prakash of Poona was founded in February 1849, under the editorship of Krishanaji Trimbak Ranade and in 1904 it was converted into a daily paper.

In January 1862, Mahadev Govinda Ranade, the leader of Prarthana Samaj (the Bombay version of Brahmo Samaj) established the Anglo-Marathi journal *Indu-Prakash* which advocated progressive social reforms but moderate political opinion. It was in the columns of this paper that Aurobindo "practised his prentice pen in journalism". The paper existed upto 1924.

In Madras the first newspapers in Tamil and Telegu were, according to Rev. J. Long, published in 1833. The next Tamil newspaper and a journal were published in 1855. The papers were run exclusively by missionaries and subsidized by the Government. Discussion of social controversies and political matters had, therefore, no place in the columns of these papers. Even English papers took precautions not to publish anything likely to offend the Government.

During the pre-Rebellion period there was no newspaper in Kannada-speaking areas. No newspapers were

also published in Punjabi, Malayalam, Oriya and Assamese languages. The Rev. Long's review shows that national consciousness, political awakening and progressive urge for socio-religious reforms did not develop simultaneously all over India and in equal degree in all her provinces.

Government's allegations that the Indian-owned newspapers instigated the revolt were not supported by facts. On the other hand the British-owned Press indulged in fomenting racial antagonism. But the bureaucracy showed weakness to control these papers. As a result the gulf between the English-owned and Indian newspapers widened and it continued to increase as the struggle for freedom gained strength.

CHAPTER X

INDIA'S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

The Indian Press was slowly maturing establishment of printing presses. Specially in principal Indian languages, growth of political consciousness due to agitations of Ram Gopal Ghosh, the emergence of British Indian Association and introduction of railways, telegraphs and uniform postal rates helped the Press to develop itself till 1857 when the First War of Independence broke out and shook the very foundation of British Rule in India. Drastic measures were taken to control the newspapers which for the time being annihilated the Urdu Press and generally interrupted the growth of the Press, though it had nothing to do in fomenting the revolt.

Referring to the Press of this period John Bruce Norton wrote : "As a whole the Press of India is conducted with singular ability ; and it is astonishing to mark the giant strides with which it has advanced within the last few years. It discusses all topics with an ability which, looking back a few years, was scarcely to be anticipated. The Press of Madras is not, I am proud to believe, last in the race. The existence of a free Press is incompatible with a despotism, however paternal" (J. B. Norton : The Rebellion in India).

There was a widespread discontent among the people of India, created by conditions of imperialism imposed by British Rule in this country. People frequently rose in revolt against these cruel oppressions. The Wahabi rising, rise of Titu Mir and farazis, the Santal Rebellion of 1855 bear testimony to these facts. They were all people's revolts. They were not sudden and so the bureaucracy had due warnings of these but they paid no heed to them. As usual the newspapers, instead of bringing about the 1857 Rebellion, warned the Government of the coming danger. In his 1859 Report the Rev. J. Long writes : "The opinions of the Native Press may often be

regarded as the safety valve which gives warning of danger ; thus had the Delhi Native newspapers of January, 1857 been consulted by the European functionaries, they would have seen in them how the Natives were ripe for revolt, and were expecting aid from Russia and Persia". But when Rebellion broke out the newspapers were blamed for it.

The Great Rebellion of 1857 was not a mere mutiny of Indian sepoys. It was the people's first gigantic effort to drive out the 'Foreign Devil' and win freedom for India. History belies the mischievous propaganda of characterising it as a move either 'to revive the Vanished Glories of the Moghul Empire' or 'to reestablish the power of the Mahratta Peshava'—it was, however, the 'first desperate bid for freedom'. In June, 1858, the *Hindoo Patriot* characterised it as 'the great revolution in India now in subsidence'. Dr. Alexander Duff also remarked : "And it is a fact that it is not a mere military revolt but a rebellion—a revolution....From the very outset, it has been gradually assuming more and more the character of a rebellion on the part of vast multitudes beyond the sepoy army against British supremacy and sovereignty". (M.A. Buch : Rise and Growth of Indian Militant Nationalism, p. 14).

Indeed, the Scindia, the Holkar, the Nawab of Murshidabad, Maharaja of Burdwan and many other princes and zeminders, tied with the paramount power under the permanent settlement as well as considerable sections of the Bengali, the parsi and the Southern bourgeoisie did not either join the insurrection or show any sympathy with it. But that did not take away its popular character. Writes the historian Dr. S. N. Sen : "Nowhere did a revolt command universal support. There was a strong party of loyalists in the United States of America....There was no lack of royalists in revolutionary France. In '15 and '45 the Stuart cause found no inconsiderable support in the British isles. So long as a substantial majority sympathises with the main object of a movement it can claim a national status though universal active support may be wanting" (Dr. S. N. Sen : 'Eighteen Fifty-Seven', p. 411).

The First shot was fired in Bengal in March 1857, where, according to Dr. Alexander Duff, 'Discontent lurks deeply in the hearts of millions'. The revolt actually broke out on May 10, 1857. Though Hurish Chunder Mukherjee, the Father of Indian Journalism, had some soft corner for the regenerating role of the British rule in India and the permanent settlement, he fearlessly criticised the cruel attitude of the British bureaucracy and the army. Within two weeks of the actual outbreak of the Revolt, to be precise on May 21, 1857, he wrote in *Hindoo Patriot*: "How slight the hold the British Government has acquired upon the affection of its Indian subjects events of the past few weeks have shown. It is no longer a mutiny but a rebellion. But the recent mutinies of the Bengal Army have one peculiar feature—they have from the beginning drawn the sympathy of the country. There is not a single native of India who does not feel the full weight of the grievances imposed upon him by the very existence of British rule in India—grievances inseparable from subjection to foreign rule".

In the midst of racial discrimination, bias and ruthless suppression of Indian-owned newspapers Hurish Chunder Mukherjee maintained an exemplary balance and fearlessness in his *Hindoo Patriot* in criticising the atrocities of the Government. It is a fact that a section of the Press openly preached that 'any disaster befalling the British would hamper the national prosperity and progress'. But the fact must not be forgotten that the existence of a newspaper, during that period, depended on the support it gave to the British rulers in India. Yet in spite of the repressive laws the *Hindoo Patriot* did not hesitate to mention about the people's sympathy with the insurrection.

The discontented masses of the people, both Hindus and Mussalmans, screwed up their energy, forgot all sins of previous ommissions and commissions and joined hands together to drive out their common enemy. The 'British devil', Outram has put on record his view that the affair of the greased cartridge 'precipitated the mutiny before it had been thoroughly organised, before adequate arrange-

ments had been made for making the mutiny a first step to a popular insurrection' (quoted by Hirendra Nath Mukherjee : 'India's Struggle for Freedom, p. 54).

/The revolt was suppressed with ruthless savagery and cruelty, unparalleled in the history of any civilised nation. The Indian newspapers frequently wrote about the growing discontent and grievances of the people. But the bureaucracy paid no heed to them.) Lord Canning rather accused them of inciting the people to rise in revolt and enacted a hasty legislation, better known in history as the 'Gagging Act' of 1857 to control the Press. In introducing the measure in the Legislative Council, His Lordship said :

"I doubt whether it is fully understood or known to what audacious extent sedition has been poured into the hearts of the native population of India within the last few weeks under the guise of intelligence supplied to them by the native newspapers. It has been done sedulously, cleverly, artfully. Facts have been grossly misrepresented—so grossly that, with educated and informed minds, the very extravagance of the misrepresentation must compel discredit. In addition to perversion of facts, there are constant vilifications of the Government, false assertions of its purposes and unceasing attempts to sow discontent and hatred between it and its subjects".

In addressing the court-martial, trying Bahadur Shah, the last of the Mughal Kings, the Judge-Advocate-General accused the Mahomedan Press and attempted to paint this historic national rising with a communal colour. He said : "If we now take a retrospective view of the various circumstances which we have been able to elicit during our extended inquiries, we shall perceive how exclusively Mahomedan are all the prominent points that attach to it. A Mahomedan priest, with pretended visions and assumed miraculous powers—a Mahomedan King his dupe and his accomplice—a Mahomedan clandestine embassy to the Mahomedan powers of Persia and Turkey resulting—Mahomedan prophecies as to the downfall of our power—Mahomedan power as the successor of our own—the most cold-blooded murders by Mahomedan assasins—a religious war for Maho-

medan ascendancy—a Mahomedan Press unscrupulously abetting—and Mohamedan sepoys initiating the mutiny" (Quoted by H. P. Ghosh : 'The newspaper in India', Calcuttta University, p. 29).

The Indian Muslims had generally been hostile to the British rule since its inception. In 1843, Lord Ellenbourough, the then Governor-General, advised the authorities in London to adopt a policy of 'Divide and Rule'. He wrote : "I cannot close my eyes to the belief that race (Mahomedans) is fundamentally hostile to us and our true policy is to reconciliate the Hindus". The Judge-Advocate-General's efforts to give the Great Indian Rebellion a Muslim colour was not, therefore, surprising. A British official also stated afterwards : "During and for long after the mutiny the Mahomeddans were under a cloud. To them were attributed all the horrors and calamities of that terrible time."

History has abundant proofs that on such crucial occasions Hindus and Mahomedans united together to achieve a common goal. "Among the many lessons which the Indian Mutiny conveys to the historian and administrator none is of greater importance than the warning that it is possible to have a revolution in which Brahmin and Sudra, Mahomedan and Hindu, were united against us" (G. W. Forrest : 'Selections', quoted by S. B. Chaudhuri in his 'Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies, 1857-59', p. 282).

It was not 'a religious war for Mahomedan ascendancy' because the famous proclamation of Bahadur Shah to the people 'set forth political grievances' and 'invoked also the Muslim shariat and the Hindu shastras'. The *Hindoo Patriot* characterised this 'as an Asiatic state paper ; its merits are of a high order'. Instead of branding this as a 'religious war' the *Patriot* wrote, "The nation had been roused and thoroughly prepared for revolution' (August 25, 1857). The use of the words 'nation' and 'revolution' by a contemporary newspaper has a great historical value and pricks the bubble of false British propaganda.

The charges levelled against the Indian Press by Lord Canning have never been substantiated by facts. The

reference to Mahomedan Press is also mischievous. "The Press in North-West Provinces was subjected to the most careful scrutiny in the pre-Rebellion period" while Urdu newspapers were subsidized, "the Government purchasing as many as 200 copies of each issue for distribution". (Refer J. Natarajan : "History of Indian Journalism," forming Part II of Press Commission's Report, p. 66).

The Rev. J. Long says in his 1859 Report : "....during the Punjab War and the Rebellion, the Native Press, though viewing affairs more from an oriental than an English standpoint, has maintained, on the whole, a moderate tone." A feature of the period was that peasants and rustics "came a long way" from distant villages "to have the newspapers read to them". So, Lord Canning's charge of preaching sedition against Indian newspapers was baseless. It was concocted to justify the passing of the 'Gagging Act' as the necessity for such a handy measure was felt urgently by the bureaucracy after Syamsundar Sen, the editor of *Samachar Sudhabarsan* had been prosecuted and afterwards acquitted by the Supreme Court of the charge of sedition against his paper.

After the Rebellion had been suppressed mass murders were committed in the name of trial under Martial Law and villages were burnt by the British army. The tone of the English-owned papers were horribly malicious. They cried for blood and encouraged butchery as retribution. The Rev. J. Long wrote in his report of Calcutta Press : "The English newspapers in too many cases cherish the spirit of antagonism of race (some English editors freely lavished abuse on the Natives)".

Hurish Chunder condemned this attitude of the English Press and characterised "Martial Law as a mockery of law" in *Hindoo Patriot* of September 17, 1858. The comments are reproduced in the next Chapter.

Lord Canning, however, betrayed weakness and bias for the English Press. In the same speech, introducing the 'Gagging Act' to the Council, His Lordship said with reference to the English Press : "While I am glad to give credit to the conductors of the European Press for

the loyalty and intelligence which mark their labours, I am bound by sincerity to say that I have seen passages in some of the papers under their management, which, though perfectly innocuous so far as European readers are concerned, may, at time like the present, be turned to the most mischievous purposes in the hands of people capable of dressing them up for the native ear."

The measure was enacted on the 13th of June, 1857. It prohibited the keeping and using of printing presses without a licence from the Government which was to be given on certain conditions. The violation of any of these conditions would enable the Government to seize the types, plant and printing machine of the offender. The Government enacted such a drastic law because its legal advisers were of opinion that the materials on which cases of sedition had been started against *Durbin* and *Sultan-ul-Akhbar*, two papers in Persian language and *Samachar Sudhabarsan*, a daily bi-lingual paper in Hindi and Bengali, were not sufficient for successful prosecutions in courts. So, the measure was enacted in haste on the 13th of June, 1857. When the cases against these papers came up for hearing before the Supreme Court on the 17th June, 1857, Ahmad Ali, proprietor of *Durbin* and Muhammad Taher, the publisher of *Sultan-ul-Akhbar*, the two Persian newspapers of Calcutta, offered apologies and they were discharged.

But Syamananda Sen, editor of the bi-lingual daily *Samachar Sudhabarsan*, decided courageously to fight out the case and after a full day's hearing the Supreme Court pronounced a judgement of 'not guilty' and acquitted him. The paper was published in 1854 but after this case it probably ceased publication. But it shows that some journalists and intellectuals of Bengal showed sympathy with the Revolt. No copy of *Samachar Sudhabarsan* is available now but owing to negligence of veteran bourgeois journalists the name of Syamananda Sen, who valiantly fought for freedom of expression at a very difficult period, has almost been forgotten.

Durbin and *Sultan-ul-Akhbar* published the famous proclamation of the leaders of rebellious army of Delhi

while *Samachar Sudhabarsan* printed regularly news about the progress of Revolt and commented over the atrocities of the British army. On the 26th of May, 1857, the newspaper wrote : "Recently the British have attempted to destroy our religion. So God has become angry with them. There are indications of the British empire being liquidated. When a slave retorts against his master the annihilation of the master becomes imminent. The empire being in danger the Governor has now given many promises. But the rebellious army has no faith in his promises. They have no intention of abandoning the war. In reality the war is gaining strength and people of many regions are now joining the Sepoys". (The extract has been taken from Court papers.)

The *Samachar Sudhabarsan* published news about preparations and progress of the victorious army of sepoys and villagers in its issues of 5th, 9th and 10th June, 1857. On the 12th June, 1857, the Governor-General-in-Council decided to launch prosecution against Symananda Sen and on the 13th June the 'Gagging Act' was passed hastily. It is not, therefore, correct to say that intellectuals and journalists of Bengal were not generally in sympathy with the Revolt.

The first warning under Canning's 'Gagging Act' was issued against the *Friend of India* for its article *Century of Plassey* which was considered "dangerous and provocative".

The *Bengal Harkaru* was owned by 'Prince' Dwarkanath Tagore but was edited by S. L. Blanchard, an European, who also dictated its policy. The paper had to close down for three days for publishing a "provocative" article. It was allowed to resume its publication after a new editor had been appointed.

No step was taken against *The Englishman*, then owned by indigo-planters, for preaching racial animosity and pouring nasty invectives against Canning's so-called policy of "clemency".

Kasi Prosad Ghosh's *Hindu Intelligencer* ceased publi-

cation to avoid troubles. *Gulshan-i-Naubahar* was stopped as its printing press was seized.

The Government of Bombay took no action against Dr. George Buist, editor of *Bombay Times*, who cried for revenge and blood. But an Indian share-holder of the newspaper objected to such writings. On the editor's refusal to change his attitude he was removed from office and Robert Knight succeeded him as editor.

Though several newspapers in Bengal fell victims to Canning's 'Gagging Act' no action "of any significance" was taken against any Indian-owned newspaper outside Bengal. Like the *Hindoo Patriot* of Calcutta the Gujrati papers of Bombay, *Bombay Samachar, Jam-e-Jamshed* and *Rast Gaffar* put up a stout opposition against racial animosity preached by European-owned papers. From this time on the gulf between the two sections of the Press began to widen and continued to increase along with the progress of struggles of freedom.

– In Great Britain the industrial capitalists triumphed over the merchant capitalists. In 1858, the Crown took over the direct control of the Government of India and issued a proclamation on that occasion. The Queen's Proclamation was read out in durbars and meetings, specially held for this purpose, to invoke loyalty of the Indian people to the throne of the United Kingdom and was, for many years to come, regarded by moderate Indian political leaders, as a charter of rights for the people of India. But the toiling peasants could not be reconciled.

The Queen's Proclamation reiterated and amplified the promise made about racial equality between Indians and Europeans in the Charter of 1833. It pledged: "It is our will that, so far as may be, our subjects of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to office in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability and integrity duly to discharge."

That the above pledge was a 'political hoax' was later proved by Lord Lytton, Viceroy in 1876-80, in his "confidential" letter to the then Secretary of State for India. The letter says: "We all know that these claims and

expectations never can or will be fulfilled. We had the choice between prohibiting them and cheating them, and we have chosen the least straightforward course.....This I am writing confidentially. I do not hesitate to say that both the Government of England and of India appear to me upto the present moment unable to answer satisfactorily the charge of having taken every means in their power of breaking to the heart the words of promise they have uttered to the ear". Lord Salisbury openly characterised these British pledges to India as "political hypocrisy".

The Queen's Proclamation announced the perpetuation of feudalism and made the Indian Princes the "protected allies of British Raj". It said: "We shall respect the rights, dignity and honour of the Native Princes as our own". The real motive behind this new policy was to create a loyal band of aristocracy to check any future mass upsurge in the country. Lord Canning, India's first Viceroy, hinted this in a speech in which he said: "It was long ago said by Sir John Malcolm that if we made all India into Zillahs (or British Districts) it was not in the nature of things that our Empire should last fifty years; but that if we could keep up a number of Native States without political power, but as royal instruments, we should exist in India as long as our naval supremacy was maintained. Of the substantial truth of this opinion I have no doubt; and the recent events have made it more deserving of our attention than ever". (Lord Canning, April 30, 1860. Quoted by R. P. Dutt: "*India Today*", p. 359).

The Indian Princes, "without any political power", gradually became servile agents of their imperialist masters. Reaction was wooed and hostile attitude was adopted in respect of progressive reforms. Jawaharlal Nehru describes the effect of this in the following words: "How much of the wealth of the State flows into that palace for the personal needs and luxuries of the prince, how little goes back to the people in the form of any service.... A veil of mystery surrounds these States. Newspapers

are not encouraged there, and at the most a literary or semi-official weekly might flourish. Outside newspapers are often barred. Literacy is very low, except in some of the Southern States—Travancore, Cochin, etc.—where it is far higher than in British India. The principal news that comes from the States is of a Viceregal visit with all its pomp and ceremonial and mutual complimentary speeches, or of an extravagantly celebrated marriage or birthday of the Ruler or an agrarian rising. Special laws protect the princes from criticism, even in British India, and within the States the mildest criticism is rigorously suppressed. Public meetings are almost unknown, and even meetings for social purposes are often banned". (Autobiography, p. 531).

The new westernised middle class of India could not fully realise the real purpose behind this change of policy at that time and so they hailed the Queen's Proclamation as a Charter of Rights. This "political hypocrisy" hypnotised, for the time being, the bourgeoisie, aristocracy and barristocracy, but the toiling masses could not be reconciled.

The 'Gagging Act' of 1857 was withdrawn in 1858. But "with a few zigzags, the general policy of the Government was to increasingly curtail the freedom of the Press."

"As late as 1931, a Committee, appointed by the Congress, reported that 728.7 crores of rupees had been unjustly debited against India as 'public debt'. In that report it is seen that the 'mutiny' itself cost 50 crores, for which, like the other items, payment had to be made by the Indian people. British rule was, indeed, too costly to us, and when to cautious bourgeois calculation it seemed too heavy, the wherewithal of a national movement, less elemental and more practical-minded than the fury of 1857 also appeared". (Hirendra Nath Mukherjee : "India Struggles for Freedom", p. 79).

CHAPTER XI

HINDOO PATRIOT: *India's first National Newspaper*

Under the caption "The Atrocities and Retribution"—*Hindoo Patriot* of May 6, 1858, wrote: "History will, we conceive, take a very different view of the facts of the great Indian Revolt of 1857 from what contemporaries have taken of them. What the verdict of posterity is likely to be may in some measure be anticipated from the judgments of foreign nations and the revulsion already taking place in English feeling. At no distant date it will be found out that while the 'atrocities' were in most instances unreal creations of morbid imaginations the retributive excesses were sad realities. 'Canning's Clemency' will then prove the salvation of the English name as it has proved the salvation of many Indian lives".

At a time when the British sovereignty was being challenged by the Great Revolt and the Press was controlled by "Gagging Act" these bold lines came from the fearless pen of Hurish Chunder Mukherjee, editor of the *Hindoo Patriot*, who grew with his paper and the paper grew with him. There was no tradition of wealth behind him. But a keen sense of self-respect and responsibility combined with a desire to fight boldly for the suffering humanity made him a great editor. The keynote of his success was not his profound learning but his eagerness to become a sincere mouthpiece of the oppressed millions among whom he dwelt. He had been recognised as the prophet of nationalism and a leader of men.

Girish Chandra Ghosh founded, in 1849, *'Bengal Recorder'*, an English weekly, with which young Hurish became associated. Afterwards he acquired the interests of the paper and rechristened it as *Hindoo Patriot* in 1853. Hurish gradually made it India's first 'national newspaper'. He created a powerful and responsible vehicle of Indian public opinion, still in its formative stage. His association with the people gave a realistic colour to his fight for

justice and truth. Every Thursday morning Lord Canning used to send a messenger to bring a copy of the paper from the press at Bhowanipur for his tea table. His fearless role as an editor during the peasants' revolt against British indigo-planters earned for him the immortal title of "a terror to the bureaucracy as well as to the white colonialists and planters in Bengal".

Hurish Chunder imbibed the lessons of western education and developed the spirit of nationalism that grew after introduction of British imperialism in the country, following the nationalist ideas, born in Great Britain, France and other western European countries. According to Jawharlal Nehru "the new nationalism then grew up from above—the upper-class English-speaking intelligentsia—and this was naturally confined to the Hindus, for the Muslims were educationally very backward. This nationalism spoke in the gentlest and most abject of tones and yet it was not to the liking of the Government....." (An Autobiography, p. 460).

Though a high priest of nationalism, Hurish had an independent frame of mind and, in his anxiety to speak for the people, he did not, in the slightest degree, differentiate between the Hindus and the Muslims. He voiced forth the grievances of the tortured people in his paper and denounced the autocratic measures of the foreign bureaucracy in forcible language. The opening of Suez Canal in 1869, the foundation of universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras and establishment of railway and telegraphic communications heralded a new era of modernism in the country. But Hurish Chunder could not tolerate the despotism of Dalhousie, who claimed himself to be a 'radical', and his paper did not show the least hesitation to criticise him, whenever necessary.

When Dalhousie handed over his charge of office to his successor, the *Hindoo Patriot* wrote: "Our countrymen are willing enough to forget the evils of Lord Dalhousie's reign if they were allowed to do; but those evils have not terminated with the government which gave them existence. A disorganised civil establishment, a weakened

army, disordered finances, public faith doubted and public credit sunk, are the legacies which he has left to his successor and the people he governed." (January, 1857).

About the "opening of Railways between Howrah and Hoogly" the *Patriot* was not blind about the inconvenience of the common men. In its issue of August 17, 1854, it wrote : "The Company will certainly receive the thanks of the hotel-keepers and holiday-makers at Chandernagore but the main objects which Railways are meant to answer will yet remain for sometime unprovided for. The transit between Calcutta and Hooghly will henceforward be made in an hour and a half it is true, but considering the high rate which it has been resolved to levy from passengers, we would not be justified in anticipating any very considerable popularity for this mode of travelling although it will no doubt at a later date supersede all other mode". Any journalist of today would have felt proud to use such a forceful language in ventilating popular grievances in his paper.

But Hurish welcomed the inauguration of gas lights in the city. Under the caption : 'Calcutta lit with gas' he wrote : "The wonders of the age are travelling into the East. Our connection with Great Britain, if it has not materially improved our political condition, has, it must be confessed, sensibly altered for the better the state of intellectual and physical existence to which we were formerly accustomed." (The Hindoo Patriot, June 29, 1854).

The *Patriot* denounced in unequivocal language the inhuman cruelty with which the innocent Santhals were killed and their rebellion against government was suppressed. When the 'British-born subjects' (indigo planters) kicked up an agitation against the government's proposal of "extending jurisdiction of mofussil courts" over them the paper characterised the "claim of exemption" as a "preposterous one". The editor did not like the compromise arrived at to pacify the Europeans.

Hurish Chunder, under his able stewardship, made the *Patriot* the most powerful organ of the educated middle class He had a vision and so with a penetrating incisive-

ness he presented the people's case. It was incisive in its dealings with men and their problems as well as its battle with authorities. On the eve of the opening of the new Legislative Council the *Patriot* of May 25, 1854 deplored "the total exclusion of popular element" in it. It wrote under the caption, 'The New Legislative Council' : "The new Council differs little in constitution from the one which hitherto exercised the functions of legislation in this country. It is as exclusively official in its composition as the one it replaces . . . . . The British Indian Association, as our readers are already aware, have moved the Governor-General to take into consideration, amongst other matters connected with the formation of the new Council, the propriety of its debates being carried on with open doors and of allowing parties considering themselves likely to be injured by any proposed law, to appear at its bar in person or by agent to show reasons against the enactment of such a law. His lordship reserved these matters for the consideration of the Council itself . . . . . The chief defect in a legislature constituted like the one which is now to give laws to the people of India is its total exclusion of popular elelment. The admission of parties or their counsel to its bar will in some measure supply this defect. No amount of local knowledge which may be possessed by individual members of the Council can serve in the place of those lights which the discussions of a popular assembly alone can throw upon a subject. This want may, however, be partially met by the expositions of Counsel at the bar. The practice of allowing such expositions to be made prevails, as the Association remark, in most of the dependencies of Great Britain, having a local legislature of their own, and we can conceive of no rational objection to its adoption by the legislature of India". A month after, i.e., on June 29, 1854, the *Patriot* suggested that Prosunno Coomar Tagore should be appointed to the post of clerk Assistant to the Council which would help the members in understanding Indian viewpoints in a better way.

Hurish Chunder Mukherjee, whom G. Parameshwar

Pillai, himself a journalist of repute, described afterwards as "the first native journalist of any note in India", introduced many innovations to make his paper modern. At that period of time advertisements were meagre. The *Patriot* had about a column and a half of advertisements every week. Hurish was a clerk in the office of the Military Auditor-General, drawing a salary of Rs. 400/- a month. Out of this he contributed Rs. 100/- a month to maintain the paper.

The *Patriot* had to compete with *The Englishman*, *Bengal Harkaru*, *Phoenix* and *The Empire* of Calcutta, *Friend of India* of Serampore and the *Dacca News*, published from Dacca. They were all run by Britishers and some of them had the support of indigo-planters and British merchants behind them. The *Patriot* published comments on all foreign news received through mail. Its comments on Russian activities, Persian situation and Chinese affairs were based on arguments from an Indian angle of vision while it published a synopsis of news appearing in other English daily papers. After electric telegraphic system was introduced in the country the mails brought by ships from Europe were opened in Bombay and a summary of them came to the *Patriot* through wire. Commercial intelligence and news from 'Money Market' were also featured every week. But in his attempt to make the paper modern Hurish did not sacrifice its independence or individuality.

Hurish Chunder opposed Dalhousie's policy of annexation tooth and nail. The confiscation of Nagpur and Jhansi and annexation of Oudh were considered as 'foolish' actions of Dalhousie which created a deep discontent in the country and prepared it for the 'Great Revolt of 1857'. Under the caption: "The Confiscation of Jhansi" the *Patriot* wrote on May 18, 1854: "Lord Dalhousie is determined to shame the devil and beat even Nicholas hollow in the matter of forcible appropriation of neighbouring states without the shadow of a pretext to color his grasping policy. We have already seen by what a clumsy coup of political legerdemain the autocrat of all the Indies wrested

Nagpur from the hands of its rightful prince, and here is another instance of the enlightened British statesman flying in the face of justice, law and treaty in order to settle his talons on Jhansi. The Autocrat of Russia presumed to occupy a road of Turkish ground in the cause—as he maintains—of the religion of which Europe acknowledges the sway and the Nemesis of invaded rights roused England and France from the sleep of peace and is sending them forth to battle. But an Indian Governor-General is chartered to destroy dynasties with a scratch of his quill and the cry of the injured is smothered in the din of the roaring waters that separate him from the land of liberty. The Nagpur case was a most disgraceful one but that one of Jhansi is shocking. There is no merit in mangling a corpse but to grant life to the lifeless is an attribute of divinity."

The paper continues: "An Indian statesman virtually exercises more power than the greatest despot in Europe. He is thrust among a people whom ages of oppression have accustomed to a state of feeling of which resignation to fate and obedience to superior authority constitute the leading feature. Popular demonstration, which deluged revolutionised France with the best blood of the land and threw the governments f the continent into consternation, is an agency which seldom starts up in this country to strike aside the hand of the despot. The Governor-General gets up one fine morning and declares Nagpur shall be British; and Nagpore accordingly becomes British without a shot being fired. Next day he casts his eyes upon Jhansi and Jhansi forthwith is wrested from its queen and prince. Such arbitrary proceedings are as disgraceful to the British name as those for which Warren Hastings stood impeached before the House of Peers, for which Czar Nicholas has roused the ire of allied Europe."

"By the Hindoo Law", concludes Hurish Chunder, "the adopted child is equally privileged with the child of one's own body, and Anund Rao of Jhansi has a good right to succeed to the powers and rank of Gangadhur Rao, as Gangadhur Rao himself had to succeed to those of the

Rajah that preceded him. The treaty of 1817 is definite and explicit in its provisions and Lord Dalhousie would not have dared to tamper with it if there had at all been anything like a public opinion in India or the semblance of a balance of power. Both this case as well as that of Nagpore will certainly make two very interesting questions to moot in Parliament."

The Great Revolt of 1857 stirred the minds of the masses of Bengal. The sepoys stationed at Barrackpore, Berhampore and Chittagong revolted against British rule. The rebels came in contact with the people living in neighbouring villages, who, according to O'Malley's 'District Gazetteers' became restive. The report sent to England by the Governor-General-in-Council on August 2, 1857 clearly stated; "The peace of the lower provinces along the valley of the Ganges from Berhampur to Benares and in the neighbourhood of Grand Trunk Road south of Benares was seriously threatened and the chief sources of revenue in Bengal were also in jeopardy". (Forrest: Selections From State Papers II, p. 168).

It is a fact that the zemindars as well as a section of the educated middle class had no sympathy for the Great Revolt. Hurish belonged to the middle class but he was the spokesman of the masses also. Therefore, he was hesitant as to what "the verdict of posterity is likely to be". So, though the *Patriot* of April 30, 1857, proposed "the increase of European and reduction of native regiments" it advocated leniency in dealing with the rebels. In unequivocal language the paper denounced the inhuman oppression of the British Army.

Under the caption, 'Military Domination' the *Hindoo Patriot* wrote in its issue of September 17, 1857: " . . . . . But anything that the mutinous sepoys have done or may hereafter do, will not justify the blood feud on which the English Press in this country as well as a portion of it in England would fain embark the Government. It would be paltry justice to set fire to entire villages and massacre innocent men, women and children because during the absence of the protecting British bayonet they succumbed to

the bayonet of a rebellious soldiery and affected loyalty to men whose violence they could not resist".

Hurish Chunder concludes the editorial comment in a very forceful language. It says ; "Martial law is a mockery of law and is justifiable only under peculiar circumstances. The indiscriminate hanging of men on such evidence as military courts are capable of collecting or even understanding involves a terrible responsibility. The blood of innocent men rests upon the heads of the judges that condemn them without a fair trial and we would not be in the shoes of the judges if an empire was to be our award. If the present war be a war of revenge and extermination, then Lord Canning and the members of Council should abdicate their fucntions in favour of a committee of butchers. But if India is still looked upon as the brightest jewel in the crown of England let Themis overrule Mars and the non-military population of upper India be saved from capricious and unlimited hanging".

It has always been the ideal of a journalist not to compromise with wrong. He always fights for truth and justice. No power can either bend or break him. The editorial comments of the *Patriot* quoted above show the fearless stand of an honest editor in the midst of a dangerous situation. When a section of enlightened Bengalis stood by the Government ; when the Europeans, Anglo-Indians and Indian Christians began to run away from the metropolis by raising the cry of 'Calcutta in danger' Hurish simply laughed at them.

Under the caption, "The Panic at Calcutta" the *Hindoo Patriot* of May 28, 1857 wrote : "We seriously ask, is Calcutta really in danger ? If two thousand sepoys can loot the metropolis of British India, put every citizen to the sword and burn or pillage without let or hindrance then the metropolis of British India has no business to encroach upon the map of the country and the Bay of Bengal would perform a grateful service by washing away the doomed city into the Indian Ocean."

During the progress of the Great Revolt the English newspapers of Calcutta demanded the abolition of the

Presidency College and the Mudrussa and also the Volunteer Guards and Darogaships to be filled up by pensioned Anglo-Indian serjeants and Civil Service to be replaced by Indian Planters' Associations. Hurish condemned the demands of the English Press as "foul ideas" and ridiculed the Volunteer Guards in an article under the caption, 'How Volunteers Guard' : "There is a Bengali proverb, 'Don't put a spade into the hands of a monkey'. We believe that the putting of authority into the hands of amateur soldiers is a much more flagrant act of imprudence".

After the rebellion was suppressed and the control of the Government of India passed over to the Crown of Great Britain, the Queen's Proclamation, which had been regarded by early politicians as 'Magna Carta of India' could not invoke Hurish Chunder's faith in it. He wrote in the *Patriot* that repeated breach of promises had lowered the British Government so much in the estimation of the people that they would refuse to believe the promises in the Proclamation unless and until the proof of their honesty and integrity was produced first. Where was the guarantee that the promises, though coming out of the lips of the Queen, would be honoured ?

Thus even at the dawn of development of public opinion in this country Hurish Mukherjee changed the journalistic language of protest to one of denunciation and challenge. And this became more manifest when the revolt of Bengal peasants against foreign indigo-planters broke out. It was near about 1824 that Europeans were allowed to start indigo plantations and by charters of 1833 and 1853 the colonisation schemes for European planters were approved. Their stories of torture on helpless peasantry had no parallel in the history of any civilised nation.

With an ear ever open to the plaints of the oppressed and the wronged Hurish took up his powerful quill to reprove the crimes of the planters and save the peasants from ruin. He was conscious that his main strength lay in the editorial columns of the *Patriot* and he realised the

power that was fast developing in the nationalist Press and the future that lay before it. He fully utilised it and declared: "We have said that the system of indigo-planting as it now exists in Bengal is a system of organised fraud and oppression". (*Hindoo Patriot*, July 29, 1858).

Like Iswar Gupta's *Provakar* it did not crave for the mercy of the British monarch to stop this evil. The *Patriot's* was a language of denunciation and challenge. Its columns were thrown open to Sisir Kumar Ghosh of Jessore; Manmohon Ghose, (the first Indian practising barrister) of Krishnagore· Harınath Majumdar and Mathuranath Maitra of Kumarkhali and many others to expose the crimes and tyranny of the planters. His writings inspired the educated middle class and they came forward to show active sympathy with the peasants' struggle.

The European magistrates used to punish peasants and order compensation for their refusal to grow indigo plants in their lands. The total compensation, thus assessed and paid, exceeded the normal amounts of profit. (The *Hindoo Patriot*, March 12, 1860).

The *Hindoo Patriot* of February 25, 1860 published a letter in its column under the caption: "Americanism in Nadia" which shows that European planters lost their temper and balance due to Harish Chunder's exposure of their misdeeds and threatened him. Why the editor used the word 'Americanism' in the caption cannot, at this distant time, be explained. Probably he discovered 'American' technique in sending such a slanderous, nasty but anonymous letter in defiance of ordinary etiquette. The letter runs as follows:

"Well Nigger—I see thou art getting bolder day by day, thus to seriously slander gentlemen. Forgettest thou your position as a 'slave of the Conqueror'? Knowest not that from the day of Plassey thou art doomed to suffer? Being proud of the large circulation of thy mean journal, and of the totally undeserved praise thou elicitest from all your brother liars thou hast taken into your head to

vilify the character of our noble-body....Never think that thine flattery will do thee any good. Vile sycophant. Knowest not thou the authority of our august body? Nigger, take care how thou actest. If thou will not stop your pen, thou shalt suffer. Thy character of late has become most detestable. Nigger, reflect on your position. Don't desire what you deserve.

"P.S. If I happen to meet thee any day either in town or in the Mofussil, I am resolved to make you suffer a few good cuts of my horsewhip."

But such a slanderous letter could not in the least unnerve Hurish Chunder who took up his pen to denounce Act XI of 1860 which was enacted to terrorize the rebellious peasants. He wrote: "Here are we the weak, the oppressed of years, the producers of the country's wealth, the support of its prosperity who ought to be cherished and protected by the Government. But with a law of special severity troops are sent to make us submit to fraud and oppression. There are the planters powerful, influential, wealthy, oppressive, committing violent crimes, the patrons of ruffianry of the country, who instead of being punished and put down, are encouraged, furnished with means to extend their oppression". (*Hindoo Patriot*, April 14, 1860).

His pen did not spare the magistrates who could not import a judicial mind in cases brought by planters. The *Patriot* wrote: "Are these magistrates men to govern millions, when they cannot resist the temptation of dining with the planters and talking with their wives and dancing with them?"

Hurish Chunder's virile pen inspired a mass upsurge of peasants in Bengal and brought the educated middle class nearer to the toiling peasants. Contact with the masses, though temporary, was established. The Government was forced to appoint the Indigo Commission for taking steps to improve matters. But the hard work that he did to rouse the masses told upon his health and he breathed his last on June 14, 1861, at the age of 37 years only.

Paying glowing tributes to his memory Girish Chandra Ghosh, who founded the *Patriot* wrote in *Mukherjea's Magazine* (June, 1861) : "A thunderbolt has fallen upon native society. Hushed is every voice and fixed is every eye. The friend of the poor and the mentor of the rich, the spokesman, the patriot, the brave heart that defied danger and battled foremost in the strife of politics has been swept away like a vision from our aching eyes..... Our loss is great. We were only just pulling forth the buds and blossoms of a healthy existence. From the darkness of ages we were only faintly emerging into light, groping our way through a choking mass of prejudices and struggling fully, though earnestly, through obstruction and difficulty. We had only recently learnt the value of political liberty.....Hurish Chunder Mukherjee was the soul of this movement."

About his paper, John Bruce Norton wrote in his book, entitled *The Rebellion in India*: "Let the sceptical study the leading articles in the *Hindoo Patriot*, written by a Brahmin with a spirit, a degree of reflection and acuteness which would do honour to any journalism in the world".

But the mean revenge of the planters did not spare him even after his death. Archibald Hill, a planter, instituted a libel suit against Hurish Chunder claiming Rs. 10,000 as damages for publishing in the *Patriot* a news about a case in which Hill was charged with carrying away a village girl, Haramani by name, and keeping her confined in his room at night. After the death of Hurish Chunder, Hill made his widow a party and insisted to continue the case in Alipur Court. Failing to secure any help to conduct the case the helpless widow of Hurish made a compromise with Hill by paying him Rs. 1,000 only. Thus ended the brilliant career of a great journalist, who left a national newspaper which under his stewardship became the powerful organ of public opinion that was the expression of the spirit of the age.

The individual journalist pays the price of his success by extinction because he belongs to his time and dies with it. But the fearless stand of Hurish Chunder for the cause

of the oppressed people and ryots and his fight for their rights have made him an impressive figure in contemporary history. And truly did Michael Madhusudan Dutt wrote about him : "Of all men now living he has exercised the greatest amount of influence over the educated classes of our countrymen. His death would be a real loss....for the progress of independence of mind and thought."

The *Patriot* passed into the hands of Kali Prasanna Sinha first and subsequently to Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar in November, 1861, who invited Krishnadas Pal to take charge of editorial duties. It became the mouthpiece of British Indian Association. Krishnadas Pal continued as its editor till his death in 1884 and maintained its popularity. It wrote in 1874 : "Home Rule for India ought to be our cry, and it ought to be based upon the same constitutional basis that is recognised in the colonies".

The *Patriot* attacked the Government for deposing the Gaekwar of Baroda (Mulhar Rao) in 1874 and "exposed the vulnerable points in the prosecution."

Sir Ricard Temple wrote about him : "Kristodas Pal was, on the whole, next after Madhav Rao.....the best informed Indian whom I have ever known. He was the editor of *Hindoo Patriot* newspaper, published in English. It has a large circulation both among Europeans and natives being conducted with independence, loyalty and learning".

Gradually the *Hindoo Patriot* lost its influence but continued to exist till the second decade of this century.

CHAPTER XII

MODERATES AND ANGLO-INDIAN PRESS

The great national Revolt of 1857 to break the chains of slavery was ruthlessly suppressed. The success of the army gave the Englishmen in this country an air of racial superiority over the Indians. The Queen's Proclamation was a "political hypocrisy" and therefore, there was no inclination on the part of the alien rulers to honour the pledges given in it. Wild massacres and inhuman tyranny, perpetrated on the children of the soil to retaliate the excesses during the rebellion, destroyed the confidence the Indian bourgeoisie so long had in British integrity and liberalism. The era that followed 1857 saw the speedy development of national consciousness in the country.

Referring to this period Hirendranath Mukherjee writes in his *India's Struggle For Freedom*: "In 1858 the noted Bengali poet Rangalal Banerjee wrote his hymn to freedom:

> 'Who cares to live in the lowliness of subjection?
> 'Who will wear on his feet the shackles of slavery?
> 'It is hell, my friends, to be slaves for ages,
> 'For even a day of freedom gives taste of Heaven!'

To evade censorship this had to be spoken by a 14th century Rajput, but it was unmistakably the voice of contemporary India." (India's Struggle for Freedom, p. 63).

Closely following the rebellion the peasants of Bengal rose in revolt against European indigo-planters. The peasants in the Deccan were already in revolt while the Wahabi and Farrazi movements were gaining grounds in Bengal. All these movements drew active sympathy and cooperation from the Press as well as the middle class.

By this time new forces began to grow up in the country which helped in rousing national consciousness. Society

is always a synthetical product. It streams from the coalescing of forces. The emergence of this synthesis lies in the change of objective condition in economic structure which with every change in the modes of production creates a new class with economic power in their hands and this class becomes the main lever behind the social evolution. That new class was now growing in India.

In 1853, the Indians started in Bombay their first successful cotton mill. By 1880, the number of these mills rose to 156 where about 44,000 industrial workers were employed. In 1869, the opening of Suez Canal gave the British manufacturers more facilities to expand their market in India. Clash of interests between the new Indian industrialists and their British counterparts produced feelings of hostility. The climax was reached in 1882 when on the pressure of Lancashire manufacturers the Government of India removed all duties on cotton goods imported into India. It created a great discontent because Indian interests were deliberately sacrificed to benefit the British merchants.

The foundation of universities and High Courts in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras followed by the Indian Councils Act of 1861, which provided for the addition of six non-official members to the Viceroy's Legislative Council and thus associated Indians for the first time with the legislative work of the Government, created some enthusiasm among the educated Indians.

In 1861, Rajnarayan Bose founded a "Society for the Promotion of National Glory"—a society for stimulating national sentiments. A craze for national glory seized upon the entire country. The word "National" acquired such a charm in those days that an associate of Rajnarayan, Nabagopal Mitra, founded a national school, a national press, a national paper and a national gymnasium, till his contemporaries referred to him as 'National Nabagopal Mitra'. Along with Rajnarayan and Jyotirindranath Tagore he founded the "Patriots' Association" in 1865. But their greatest achievement was the organisation of "Hindu Mela" (a National Exhibition), founded in 1867, to cultivate national sentiment, promote the spirit of self-help and

encourage cottage industries. As a boy, Rabindranath was associated with it and its annual fair was the focal point of patriotism. Public theatres were also established during this period.

In 1860-61, the national consciousness and political activities went ahead. This was due to the tremendous agitation of indigo-cultivators which swept like a tidal wave over the country. The tyranny of the European planters provoked a real mass upsurge amongst the cultivators, which even the Royal Institute of International Affairs characterised as "a landmark in the history of nationalism". Educated Bengal responded splendidly to the mass struggle of the peasants. The *Hindoo Patriot* took up their cause and its editor Hurish Chunder Mukherjee worked day and night in giving practical advice and aid to the cultivators and their representatives who thronged at his doors. Manmohon Ghosh (the first Indian practising barrister) and Sisir Kumar Ghosh threw themselves into the agitation. *Som-Prakas* also stood by the harassed peasants.

The horrible stories of tyranny and oppression of European planters were faithfully depicted in a Bengali drama, *Neel-Darpan*, written by Dinabandhu Mitra. Michael Madhusudan Dutt translated the drama in English in a single night. The Rev. Long printed the English version and distributed it among a number of European officials. Rev. Long and Manuel, the printer, were prosecuted before the Supreme Court. Both Long and Manuel were sentenced to pay a fine and Long was further sentenced to imprisonment for a month. Kaliprasanno Sinha paid the fines in court. The trial caused a sensation in the country.

In 1861, Manmohon Ghosh, who regularly sent reports to the *Hindoo Patriot about* indigo peasants' unrest, started the *Indian Mirror* as an English fortnightly paper with financial assistance from Devendranath Tagore. It received the blessings of the *Hindoo Patriot*. Later Keshab Chandra Sen, a beloved disciple of Devendra Nath, took charge of the paper and retained its possession when due to a split with Devendranath Tagore he left Adi Brahmo Samaj and

afterwards founded the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj.

In its first issue (August 1, 1861) the *Mirror* announced the object for which it had been published. It wrote: "The *Mirror* is intended for all classes and communities; it will reflect faithfully (so far as the abilities of its faculty will permit) the condition of this country in its manifold varieties; advocate political and social as well as religious and moral reforms, while its mild and catholic tone will, it is hoped, not fail to render it acceptable to all classes and communities. It will cordially support every right attempt at improvement and reformation while wrong-doers and oppressors will be openly and steadily opposed. It will favor not parties and fear not antagonists, but tell the truth and do justice to all classes of Her Majesty's subjects in India". So, from its very beginning its aim was to go beyond provincial boundaries and become a national paper.

Keshab Chandra was a forceful orator and had a dynamic personality. He electrified the younger generation and kindled new hopes in their breasts. Keshab stood for a break with the past. Soon he left for England to study "Christian life as displayed and illustrated in England." After his return to India he started *Sulav-Samachar*, a pice Bengali daily, converted *Indian Mirror* into a daily and published *Sunday Mirror*, an English weekly. He also "agitated the passage of the Civil Marriage Act of 1872, which legalised inter-marriage, prohibited bigamy and allowed remarriage of widows subject to the condition that the parties declared at the time of registration that they were not Hindus, Mohammedans, Christians, Buddhists, Jains or Parsees". He dreamt of founding a universal religion for all human race and having a strong belief in personality cult, he considered himself to be the prophet of the new religion.

The *Indian Mirror*, the only Indian-owned daily newspaper in the country and *Sulav-Samachar* became a great success. *Sulav-Samachar* had 4,000 subscribers which was considered very satisfactory at that period of time. The Bengali Press wielded a great influence over the readers.

This made the bureaucracy uneasy and it conspired to forge new weapons to curb the freedom of the Press. But Narendranath Sen edited the *Mirror* and the *Sulav-Samachar* with fearlessness.

In 1878, people were surprised to learn that Keshab Chandra proposed to give away his minor daughter in marriage to Maharaja of Cooch-Behar under orthodox rites. This drew adverse comments from the *Friend of India and Statesman* and other newspapers. The Brahmo students, among whom were Sibnath Shastri, Sitanath Tattwabhusan, Bepin Chandra Pal, Krishna Kumar Mitra, Ananda Mohon Bose, Ramananda Chatterjee, etc., sent the following memorial to Keshab Chandra Sen :

"Most reverend Sir,—We, the undersigned Brahmo students of Calcutta, have heard with deep despair, the news of the intended marriage of your daughter with His Highness the Maharaja of Cooch-Behar, a prince not yet in his sixteenth year, while your daughter has passed thirteenth year only. We need hardly say that the consequences of such a step, if taken by you, would be disastrous on the minds of the rising generation of Brahmos. It was principally through your exertions that Act III of 1872 was passed, and a higher platform gained with respect to marriageable age ; but such conduct in you would inevitably neutralize the effects of that law.

"Secondly, such a step will seriously compromise the character as a leader of social reform attained by your church through so many years of struggle and self-sacrifice.

"Thirdly, the fact of giving your daughter in marriage to a person who was never known before to be a Brahmo would lead young men to attach secondary importance to considerations of religious faith in matters of matrimony."

It was a reasonable protest from Brahmo youths but Keshab Chandra did not attach any importance to it. The proposed marriage was solemnised and long after the Rev. Pratap Chandra Majumdar, a close associate of Keshab Chandra, issued a statement explaining the position. But the Press in Bengal strongly criticised it.

On behalf of the young rebels Bepin Chandra Pal wrote: "This autocracy had grown in the Brahmo Samaj of India mainly, if not entirely, owing to the lack of a regular democratic constitution of that body. Those who broke away from Maharshi Devendranath Tagore because they could not stand his autocracy failed, however, themselves to provide against this evil in their new Samaj by giving it a regular constitution and seeing to it that this constitution is in full vigour.....We, youngmen, belonging to the small group, led by Sivanath Sastri, had already caught the larger inspiration of freedom, personal, social as well as political. We had commenced to dream dreams of the future of our country which would realise, as much in the personal purity and character of its children in their social life and insitutions and in the organisation of their state and the constitution of their government, the largest and highest ideal of freedom that moved us". (Memoirs of My Life and Time).

Referring to the Cooch-Behar marriage, the *Indian Mirror* wrote : "In the present instance we see a marriage contracted not between different subdivisions of the same caste, but between radically different clans belonging to remote parts of the country—a marriage between a vaidya and a member of the Sankoch or Rajbansi caste considered to be extremely low in social scale."

After this Keshab Chandra broke away from the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj and founded the New Dispensation Church. Although the Cooch-Behar marriage created a stir the papers, run by him, wielded a great influence. But the controversy had proved that a significant change had come among the youths who, being "moved by the largest and highest ideal of freedom", began "to dream dreams for the future of our country".

Som-Prakas was being published from a village. During this period three other papers came out from villages which took up the cause of the oppressed indigo-cultivators and helpless ryots. They were *Amrita Bazar Patrika,* published in 1868, by Sisir Kumar Ghosh and his brothers from Palua-Magura in the district of Jessore ; *Halisahar Patrika,*

published in 1870, at Halisahar, a village in the district of 24-Parganas and run by young college students of 17 to 20 years of age ; and, *Grambarta Prakasika,* published in 1863, from Kumarkhali, a village in the district of Nadia and conducted by Kangal Harinath Majumdar, a reputed social worker. These papers demanded greater rights for Indians and also criticised the administration. Thus a distinct change came over the tone of the newspapers which instead of dealing with socio-religious reforms, began now to discuss political matters seriously and regularly.

Among the four newspapers, published from villages, *Amrita Bazar Patrika* deserves special mention because within a few years it transformed itself into a national paper. The paper was run by Ghosh Brothers who were eight in number and of whom Basanta Kumar was the eldest. They designated their village Palua-Magura as Amrita Bazar to perpetuate the memory of their mother, Amritamoyee Devi.

The Ghosh Brothers decided to start a paper from their village to ventilate the grievances of the rural people, specially of the indigo-cultivators. The third brother, Sisir Kumar, acquired journalistic experience by his writings about the indigo-cultivators' revolt in his area in the columns of *Hindoo Patriot.* He stood by the harassed peasants and fought their case before the courts as well as the Indigo Commission. Sisir Kumar, therefore, went to Calcutta, purchased some types and a wooden printing machine with Rs. 32|- only and picked up some skill in composing. On his return Basanta Kumar started a fortnightly Bengali journal, *Amrita Prabahini* with the help of his brothers. The paper was not a success and died within a short time of its publication. Closely following this Basanta Kumar also breathed his last.

After overcoming the difficulties due to this unforeseen family mishap the two brothers, Hemanta Kumar and Sisir Kumar "gave up their jobs in the Income-tax Department" and engaged themselves to make arrangements for starting the paper. Soon another brother, Motilal also joined them. In 1868, Amrita Bazar Patrika, a small Bengali Weekly,

came out from Amrita Bazar through the efforts of Ghosh Brothers with some financial assistance from their close friends and a few "leading advocates". In 1869, it was made a bi-lingual paper having a few columns in English and, in 1871, Sisir Kumar rented a house at Hidaram Banerjee Lane and removed the press there with a view to publishing the paper from Calcutta. Here also it was run as a family paper.

Before coming to Calcutta the Amrita Bazar Patrika was involved in a libel case for publishing an article, written by Rajkrishna Mitra, the head clerk of the Joint Magistrate. J. Natarajan says: "A prosecution was launched against Sisir Kumar, Motilal, their uncle and printer of their paper, Chandranath Roy and Rajkrishna Mitra, who had injudiciously revealed his identity. Despite the most rigorous cross-examination of young Motilal, the identity of the editor could not be established in court and the result of eight months' proceedings was that the printer was sentenced to six months' and Rajkrishna Mitra to a year's simple imprisonment. Sisir Kumar was prosecuted again for withholding material evidence (the manuscript of Rajkrishna Mitra's article) but the prosecution failed." (Part II of Press Commission's Report, pp. 72-73).

The decision of Ghosh Brothers to remove the paper to Calcutta was a very wise one because papers published from villages had chiefly local interests and could not, therefore, attract the attention of either the general public of the province or of the Governments, Provincial as well as Imperial. Its removal to Calcutta gave it an opportunity to play a significant role in forthcoming national struggles and its unearthing of bureaucratic misdeeds and secret documents made it a redoubtable champion of the cause of the people. Dwarkanath Mitra, a Judge of the Calcutta High Court, once told Sisir Kumar: "I have subscribed to your paper. But I am afraid your writings are characterised by a virulence which may afterwards come to influence the masses and spread discontent and disaffection in the country". Sisir Kumar's reply was bold but categorical. He said that the mission of his paper was "to

awaken the people" and to kindle in them the fire of patriotism. "They are now more dead than alive", he told, "and need to be aroused from their slumber. Our language has, therefore, to be loud and penetrating."

Resourceful Sisir Kumar procured sufficient money to restart the press, purchased a machine and published the *Patrika* from Calcutta in February, 1872 as a bi-lingual weekly, having comments on political questions, news-items from city as well as rural areas and literary articles. With the increase of its circulation the office was removed to Ananda Chatterjee Lane, Baghbazar.

From the very beginning Sisir Kumar had courage of conviction and did not hesitate to swim against the current. When leading Indians and Europeans opposed the introduction of Income-tax Bill the *Patrika* supported it. In spite of its heavy loss of circulation Sisir Kumar refused to change his opinion. It put his paper into considerable difficulties but he boldly stood by what he believed to be true. Several years later Bal Gangadhar Tilak wrote about him : "I had learnt many lessons sitting at his feet. I revered him as my father and I venture again to say that he, in return, loved me as his son.....I have distinct recollections of what he told me of his experiences as a journalist with tears in his eyes and sympathy in his words. I then requested him, I remember now, to put down those incidents, at least to leave notes in writing, so that they might serve the future historian of the country or even the writer of his life.....I may further tell you that when we started our paper (*Kesari*) in vernacular we tried to follow the editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. That was a time when one had to teach the people how to criticize the bureaucracy and, at the same time, keep oneself safe, bodily at least, if not pecuniarily. That was the idea fully developed by Sisir Kumar in those days of journalism."

The *Patrika* still exists as a powerful vehicle of public opinion having *Jugantar* as its associate paper in Bengali language. Under the guidance of Sisir Kumar's son, Tushar Kanti Ghosh, the *Patrika* has now become a big industry with its own buildings, a modern printing press,

a fleet of cars and a galaxy of representatives, both business and editorial, almost all over the world. It is still a family concern as it was in the beginning but it has grown into a huge profitable commercial concern with all modern equipments.

During this period British Governments' new policy of wooing reactionary forces in the country to check mass upheaval and steps to suppress free expression of opinions in newspaper did not produce the expected results. The basic economic conflict between Indian and British interests began to deepen discontent and foment unrest in the country. The new Indian intelligentsia, trained in principles of French Revolution, teachings of Mazzini and Garibaldi and struggles for democracy in Britain, discovered to their great dismay that less qualified Britishers were considered superior to more qualified Indians. The pledge of equal treatment, made in the Queen's Proclamation, had no value. Lawyers, doctors, administrators and teachers found in British bourgeoisie a formidable obstacle to their path of progress. So, they became vocal and newspapers of this period became more articulate. The Indian language Press acquired influence and strength, specially in Bengal and Bombay, and expressed strong resentment over "instances of differentiation between Indians and Englishmen". And Surendranath Banerjee came forward to take up the leadership of the discontented Indian intelligentsia and voice forth the national claims under these new conditions.

Surendranath belonged to the second batch of Indians who passed the I. C. S. examination and joined the Indian Civil Service. For a minor technical irregularity in a judicial procedure he was unjustly removed from the "heaven-born service" because he was an Indian. He then ate dinners in England to become a barrister but he was not called to the Bar as he had been dismissed from the Indian Civil Service. He came back to India a disillusioned and disappointed man and was in search of an honourable way to earn a living. "But for Pundit Vidyasagar, who was all his life a man of sturdy independence, who never burnt incense as much to the political masters

of his country as to the idols of the market-place among his own people, Surendranath would have to live all his life a political outcaste. By appointing Surendranath to be a professor in the Metropolitan Institution (now Vidyasagar College), Pundit Vidyasagar not only found for him a congenial occupation but also opened the way to his future by bringing him into living contact with the student population of Calcutta". (Bepin Chandra Pal: Memoirs of My Life and Time).

Surendranath soon electrified the students by his lectures on 'Rise of Sikh and Mahratta Powers', 'Struggles by Rajputs', etc. He inspired the students with the revolutionary teachings of Mazzini and Garibaldi. With Ananda Mohon Bose (the first Indian Wrangler of Cambridge University and later President of Indian National Congress) as President the first Students' Association was founded in Calcutta at this time.

In imitation of Italian Carbonaries small secret societies were started in and around Calcutta and Surendranath became President of many of such societies. Bepin Chandra Pal writes: "He was the President of quite a number of secret societies, and I clearly remember how he used oftentimes to cite the great popularity of a Russian politician (whose name I cannot call to mind) by the fact that he was the President of as many as more than half a hundred secret societies in Russia. The members of one society did not know the members of the other society. Each society tried religiously to protect its own secrets from all outsiders, and yet this Russian patriot and politician was the head of so large a number of independent secret societies.....Though without any serious plan or policy of political action aiming at liberation of their people from the British yoke, these societies were not lacking in seriousness.....They were dreamers of wild dreams, but harmless dreamers so far.....About the middle of 1876 we organised under Sivanath's leadership a society of our own that differed from the political societies organised under Surendranath's inspiration in this that it combined the religious and social idealism of Brahmo

Samaj with the political idealism of Surendranath". (Memoirs of My Life and Time).

Surendranath was a great orator and himself an ardent follower of Mazzini's ideas. After organising the students he commenced his work for Indian unity and nationalism.

Not being satisfied with the activities of British Indian Association Sisir Kumar Ghosh and his brothers started, in 1875, the Indian League to carry on political agitation. In 1870, Sisir Kumar put forward a clear demand in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* for the introduction of western parliamentary institutions in India. He also agitated for popular representation in Calcutta Corporation. But being too busy with their paper they could not regularly carry on their political activities. So a hitch cropped up with the younger group with Surendranath Banerjee as its leader, who had already made his mark as the organiser of the Students' Association. He broke away from Sisir Kumar Ghosh and founded, in July 1876, the Indian Association with the cooperation of Ananda Mohan Bose, Sibnath Shastri, Dwarikanath Gangulee, etc. It took up consciously the role of organising Indian public opinion. Almost simultaneously the 'Sarvajanik Sabha' was founded in Poona with Mahadev Govind Ranade as its leading light. In Madras also the 'Native Association' came into existence which functioned very weakly and in 1884 merged with the 'Mahajan Sabha'.

Surendranath Banerjee also purchased the *Bengalee*, which was started, in 1868, by Girish Chandra Ghosh, who made it a fearless vehicle of public opinion. After the death of Girish Chandra Ghosh it changed hands owing to lack of financial stability. It was then taken over by Becharam Chatterjee from whom Surendranath Banerjee purchased it by borrowing money. He conducted it on independent lines and soon made it a popular paper.

Surendranath then undertook a tour all over India to rouse public opinion, for holding Civil Service examination simultaneously in England and India, for raising the age-limit for the examination and for organising political associations. These were then big political issues and for

the first time a campaign was started all over India to organise public opinion. Except in Madras his tour produced splendid results. Sir Henry Cotton wrote in his *New India*: "A quarter of a century ago there was no trace of this; the idea of any Bengalee influence in the Punjab would have been a conception incredible to Lord Lawrence, to a Montgomery, or a Macleod, yet it is the case that during the past year (1877) the tour of a Bengalee lecturing in English in Upper India assumed the character of a triumphal progress; and at the present moment the name of Surendranath Banerjee excites as much enthusiasm among the rising generation of Mooltan as in Dacca."

The British-owned newspapers, published in this country, introduced a definite change in their tone and policy after the Great Rebellion of 1857. The British commercial interests in different cities, backed by British bureaucracy, decided to start, as well as patronise, at least one newspaper in each centre and more, if possible, in cities like Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Lahore, Allahabad, etc. The Anglo-Indian Press, owned by British interests, flourished during the period between 1860 and 1878. They brought trained journalists from England and modern printing equipments to run their papers. They generally stood by the bureaucracy to promote British interests.

We have discussed earlier how at the initiative of Parsee shareholders of *Bombay Times* Dr. George Buist was removed from its editorship in 1858 for his refusal to change his attitude of racial antagonism and his call for Indian blood as a retaliatory measure. Robert Knight, who replaced Buist as editor, was then a youngman of versatile qualities. Under his initiative and following the new tendency of British commercial interests the *Bombay Times*, the *Standard*, the *Courier* and the *Telegraph* merged together in 1861 and took the name of *Times of India* which still exists and had been acquired after the achievement of independence, by Seth Ramkrishna Dalmia.

In Allahabad the *Pioneer* was started in 1861, which for all practical purposes, served the interests of British

bureaucracy and U. P. landed aristocracy. It created a reputation for it by publishing in advance news about Government's policies and activities. It still exists in Lucknow, serving the interests of Indian capitalists and landlords.

The *Mofussalite* of Agra (1845), the *Lahore Chronicle* (1846), the *Punjab Times* and the *Indian Public Opinion* merged together in 1872 and changed the name to *Civil and Military Gazette.* Its objective was to champion the cause of services and it had on its staff Rudyard Kipling, the English poet, who later won the Nobel Prize and preached the hymn of hatred against the East.

Madras, too, did not lag behind. The *Madras Times* was established in 1860 and in 1868 its ex-editors started the *Madras Mail* as an evening paper.

In Bombay, Robert Knight was having his difficulties. To compete with the *Times of India* the *Bombay Gazette* appointed in 1864 J. M. Maclean as its editor, who had no sympathy for Indian hopes and aspirations. He began to attack Knight for his sympathies for Indians. Later on "Knight was charged by his partner with privately selling the *Times of India* telegrams before publication to William Sims, proprietor of the *Bengal Harkaru* for Rs. 4.000." (S. Natarajan : History of the Press in India, p. 83).

By virtue of a settlement, reached out of court, Knight left both the *Times of India* and Bombay and came to Calcutta. He secured the post of Assistant Secretary in the Agricultural Department of the Government of Bengal and edited the official *Agricultural Gazette of India* and the subsidised monthly journal, *Indian Economist.*

While in Calcutta, he started the *Indian Statesman* in January, 1875 with the assistance of 24 Calcutta merchants and T. N. Chatterjee, Manager of Paikpara Raj Estate. In April, 1875, he purchased the *Friend of India* for Rs. 30,000 from the Baptist missionaries of Serampore and brought the paper to Calcutta. In 1877, the two papers amalgamated together and assumed the title of *The Statesman and Friend of India.*

From the very outset *The Statesman* fixed its price at

one anna per copy while the two other Anglo-Indian papers of Calcutta, *The Englishman* and the *Indian Daily News* charged four annas per copy as their price. The fairness with which the paper was edited and its comparatively cheap price helped *The Statesman* in soon establising itself on a sound footing. It also published a Sunday supplement.

When Stocqueler left India in 1842 *The Englishman* became the property of indigo-planters. Afterwards it was acquired by J. O'Brien Saunders who followed a conservative policy to promote British interests in this country.

The British owned Anglo-Indian Press thus flourished during this period. By 1878, three such newspapers were published from Calcutta while Bombay and Madras had two newspapers each and Allahabad and Lahore one each. All of these papers supported the British Government as well as British commercial interests in the country, though the tone of a microscopic minority of them might have been somewhat liberal. Gradually as the struggles for freedom advanced the tone of the Anglo-Indian Press also proportionately stiffened.

During this period the Press in Indian languages also grew rapidly. In a paper on 'The Native Press of India', read before the Society of Arts on March 23, 1877, Dr. Sir George Birdwood said : "At this time (1876-77) there were about 62 such papers in Bombay Presidency, Marathi, Gujrati, Hindusthani and Persian ; about 60 in North West Provinces, Oudh and Central Provinces ; some 28 in Bengal ; about 19 in Madras, Tamil, Telegu, Malayalam and Hindusthani. Their circulations were, of a necessity, restricted but they were nevertheless expanding. It was computed about this time that there were probably 100,000 readers of such papers and that the highest circulation of any paper was in the neighbourhood of 3,000."

CHAPTER XIII

LAW OF SEDITION

Lord Macaulay, Law Member of the Governor-General's Council, took the initiative of drafting the Indian Penal Code, in 1837, with the help of a Law Commission. The clause on sedition was dropped from the draft of the Code when, in 1860, it was passed into law.

It is said that the sedition section was omitted from the Indian Penal Code at the suggestion of Lord Canning, the then Viceroy, who thought that "it might be taken as an attack on the liberty of the Press." This view has been supported by the official 'History of Journalism', sponsored by the Press Commission of 1952-54, and which forms a part of its report.

But the 'Statement of Objects and Reasons' attached to the Bill of 1870 explained : "Sections 121 to 130 of the Code deal with offences against the State. But there is no mention of seditious speaking or writing. In the draft code, originally prepared by the Indian Law Commissioners, and published in 1837, appears a section resembling Section 6 of the present Bill and its omission from the Code as ultimately enacted was due to a mere oversight. Attempts to excite disaffection to the Government by words or writing are now punishable only when they can be proved to amount to abetments of the offence of waging war against the Queen, and as this proof implies the actual existence of war, and must often be a matter of extreme difficulty, it seems desirable that some such provision should become part of the law of British India".

It has subsequently been established that the omission was neither due to Lord Canning's love for liberty of the Press nor to "mere oversight". When the matter was taken up "there was a strong body of legal opinion in India which held that the intended distinction between exciting disaffection and expressing disapproval had not been properly drawn up and that the danger of excessive punish-

ment for trivial offences was inherent in the amended as well as the original version. Both Lord Canning and the Select Committee appointed to consider the Penal Code in 1860 disapproved of this section completely and it was omitted altogether from the Code". (S. Natarajan : History of the Press in India, p. 89).

After about ten years when Lord Mayo assumed the reins of administration as Governor-General the Wahabi risings in Bengal, Bihar, the Punjab and the Frontier had been causing anxiety to the bureaucracy. The report of the Press Laws Enquiry Committee, 1948, says : "With the increase in the number and influence of newspapers, the criticism of the administration naturally grew, and some at least of it was considered to be irresponsible. Among the steps contemplated to meet the situation were the possibility of the establishment of an official newspaper and amendment of the Indian Penal Code to cover seditious writing and speeches. The difficulty of Government, arising from the Wahabi conspiracy of 1869-70, led the administration to pass legislation for incorporating in the Code a section on sedition, namely 124A".

Wahabism first grew in Saudi Arabia as an anti-Turkish movement. Later it turned to be anti-foreigners, particularly anti-British. Its founder, Abdul Wahab, who died in 1787, aimed at introducing puritanism in Islam. It was based on the philosophy of *Zehad* to convert the *Dar-ul-Hab* of the Infidels into the *Dar-ul-Islam* at the cost of Infidels. An important characteristic of Wahabism was its loyal submission to the will of the Imam or head of the Mosque. Though anti-foreign and anti-British it somewhat smacked of communalism as well as the totalitarian concept of the Fuehrer cult of Hitler.

In India the Wahabi movement was organised by Sayyid Ahmed, who had become an ardent follower of Wahabism during his pilgrimage to Mecca. With its headquarters at Patna it spread all over Bengal, Bihar and Northern India. Sayyid Ahmed chose the predominant Sikh Power under Ranjit Singh of the Punjab as his first target of *Zehad*. He had some initial success and in 1827

he proclaimed himself Caliph and struck coins in his own name. In 1830, he captured Peshawar but, in 1831, he was killed in a battle by the Sikhs. After the British annexation of the Punjab the Wahabi movement was directed to oust British rule from the country.

The teachings of Maulana Shah Waliullah of Delhi introduced radicalism in the Indian Wahabi movement. Besides a call for defending Islam, the tortured people were urged to unite together and stand up against tyranny and exploitation. The peasants of Lower Bengal rose under the leadership of Titu Mir of 24-Parganas and the Farrazi movement developed as its offshoot in Faridpur and Dacca districts under the leadership of Haji Shariat Ullah and his son, Dudhu Miyan. The Wahabi movement in India was not anti-Hindu ; it stood against illegal levies even by Muslim landlords. Hunter attributed economic grievances of peasants to the Wahabi movement as it manifested itself in the activities of Titu Mir as well as of the Farrazi movement.

In 1857, Wahabis joined the Great Rebellion and fought side by side with the brave soldiers of the War of Independence. In 1863, there was a Wahabi outbreak in the Frontiers. In 1864, the Wahabi leader, Ahmad Ulla was sentenced to transportation for life. In 1868, many leaders were brought to trial on charges of waging war against the Queen and the usual punishment was transportation for life and forfeiture of property. In the same year 26 leaders were detained without trial under Regulation III of 1818 among whom was Amir Khan. His application for *Habeas Corpus* was rejected by Chief Justice Norman of Calcutta High Court. On September 20, 1871, Norman was murdered by a Wahabi. Soon after, on February 8, 1872, Lord Mayo, the Viceroy was assassinated by a Wahabi convict in Andamans when he was on an official visit to Port Blair.

Bepin Chandra Pal writes about the Wahabi movement: "The leader of the Wahabis, Amir Khan was arrested and detained under Regulation III of 1818. An application was made for a writ of *Habeas Corpus* to the Calcutta High

Court which was heard by Chief Justice Norman. The application was rejected. Mr. Amnesty of Bombay High Court was engaged on behalf of Amir Khan. Mr. Amnesty's speech in which he accused Lord Mayo for his tyranny over the helpless subjects of Her Majesty in India was published in pamphlet form, along with the proceedings of this case. These pamphlets were for many years something like the scripture of our new patriotism." (Memoirs of My Life and Time).

Being anxious to check the Wahabi movement and cripple the growing Indian Press, Lord Mayo decided to incorporate the sedition section in the Indian Penal Code. While introducing the measure in the Council Sir Fitzjames Stephen gave an assurance that "it would be used against provocative writings or speeches advocating incitement to or abetment of waging war against the Queen". But it was afterwards frequently violated. Lawyers were of opinion that the clause was "too vaguely worded and the punishments prescribed were too severe".

Macaulay drafted the sedition as follows: "Whoever by words, either spoken or intended to be read, or by signs, or by visible representations, attempts to excite feelings of disaffection to the Government established by law in the territories of the East India Company, among any class of people who live under that Government, shall be punished by banishment for life or for any term from the territories of the East India Company, to which fine may be added, or with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, to which fine may be added, or with fine.

"Explanation: Such a disapprobation of the measures of the Government, as is compatible with a disposition to render obedience to the lawful authority of the Government, and to support the lawful authority of the Government against unlawful attempts to subvert or resist that authority, is not disaffection. Therefore, the making of comments on the measures of the Government, with the intention of exciting only this species of disapprobation is not an offence within this clause."

In 1849, the clause was recast into two parts by John

Elliot Drinkwater Bethune, Law Member of Governor-General's Council, which read as follows :

"Whoever, by words spoken, written or printed, maliciously counsels the resistance by force of any law or lawful authority, is liable to transportation for life or imprisonment for seven years, and in either case, also to fine.

"Whoever by words, spoken, written or printed, or by signs or drawings, maliciously stirs up any person to disobey the law, is liable to imprisonment for three years, or to banishment, and in either case also to fine."

Finally, in 1870, the law of sedition which was inserted in the Indian Penal Code read as follows :—

"Whoever by words, either spoken or intended to be read, or by signs or by visible representation or otherwise, excites or attempts to excite feelings of disaffection to the Government established by law in British India, shall be punished with transportation for life or for any term, to which fine may be added, or with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, to which fine may be added, or with fine".

With this was added the 'Explanation' as drafted by Macaulay.

The first case under Section 124A against a newspaper was instituted in 1891 when the Proprietor, the Editor, the Manager and the Printer and Publisher of *Bangabasi*, a Bengali weekly of Calcutta, were prosecuted on a charge of sedition. *Bangabasi* was then carrying on a vehement agitation against the Age of Consent Bill in its columns. In an article *Bangabasi* wrote :

"The Governor-General has ordained that the Hindu community must do what appears to be proper to the English and must forego all that may appear opposed to what the English think proper. If in doing this your religion is destroyed let it be. If you are obstructed in observances which have descended to you from time immemorial, let it be. If you have to give up a handful of water to your belief in the Shastras, you must give it—still the mighty Ruler, the Englishman, will never let you do that which may not appear to the English to be in con-

formity with good education, good morals and civilization. If it is so, Oh, Probhu ! then declare it openly and then destroy us all ; destroy our caste, religion and society ; then we shall understand from what motives, for the accomplishment of what object, you are carrying out these measures."

The other two articles, for which prosecution had been launched, were written in the same strain. The Jury brougt in a divided verdict and the Chief Justice ordered the case to remain as *remanet* at the next Sessions Court Board. Meanwhile the accused were prevailed upon to tender an apology and the case was withdrawn.

The next case of sedition against a newspaper in India was fought out. It was instituted in 1897 against Bal Gangadhar Tilak, editor of *Kesari*, for certain articles written in that paper, resulting in Tilak being sentenced to 18 months' rigorous imprisonment. "It was in this case that the trying Judge directed the Jury that disaffection is want of affection". (H. P. Ghose : The Newspaper in India, p. 60).

With the growth of militant nationalism and outbreak of sporadic revolutionary activities in the country the bureaucracy decided to arm itself with fresh powers. In 1898, Section 124A was replaced by a new section which stiffened the already wide language of the Section to deal with sedition. An additional section (Section 153A) was inserted in the Penal Code to punish "promotion of enmity between classes" while another new section (Section 505) was incorporated to penalise "statements conducing to public mischief".

The amended sedition section reads as follows : "124A. (Sedition)—whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by signs or by visible representation or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards Her Majesty or the Government established by law in British India, shall be punished with transportation for life or any shorter terms, to which fine may be added, or with imprisonment which may extend to three years, to which

fine may be added, or with fine.

"Explanation 1 : The expression 'disaffection' includes disloyalty, and all feelings of enmity.

"Explanation 2 : Comments on the measures of the Government with a view to obtain their alteration by lawful means, without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt, or disaffection do not constitute an offence under this section.

"Explanation 3 : Comments expressing disapprobation of the administrative or other action of the Government without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection do not constitute an offence under this section".

The new Section 153A of the Indian Penal Code read : "Whoever, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representations, or otherwise, promotes or attempts to promote feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of Her Majesty's subjects shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to two years, or with fine or with both.

"Explanation : It does not amount to an offence within the meaning of this section to point out, without malicious intention and with an honest view to their removal matters which are producing or have a tendency to produce, feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of Her Majesty's subjects".

The amended Section 505 I.P.C. ran as follows : "Whoever makes, publishes or circulates any statement, rumour or report,

"(a) with intention to cause, or which is likely to cause, any officer, soldier or sailor in the army or navy of Her Majesty or in the Royal Indian Marine or in the Imperial Service Troops to mutiny or otherwise disregard or fail in his duty as such ; or

"(b) with intent to cause, or which is likely to cause, fear or alarm to the public, whereby any person may be induced to commit an offence against the State or against the public tranquillity :

or "(c) with intent to incite, or which is likely to incite,

any class or community of persons to commit any offence against any other class or community ;

"shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

"Explanation : It does not amount to an offence, within the meaning of this section, when the person making, publishing or circulating any such statement, rumour or report has reasonable grounds for believing that such statement, rumour or report is true, and makes, publishes or circulates it without any such intent as aforesaid".

The Telegraph Act had already given the Government power to intercept Press telegrams. In 1898, the Post Office Act was enacted giving the postal authorities power to detain and open letters and messages in transit which might be suspected of carrying seditious or objectionable matters. The Government was seriously alarmed of militant nationalism and revolutionary outbreak and ascribed them to the "suggestive propaganda of the Press". These repressive measures were enacted to curb the freedom of the Press in spite of country-wide agitation against them.

At a big public meeting, held at the historic Town Hall of Calcutta, Rabindranath Tagore read out his memorable article, *Kantha-Rodh* in which he sharply criticised the Government measures to throttle public opinion and muzzle the Press.

Presiding over the Amraoti Session of the Indian National Congress, in 1897, Sir Sankaran Nair protested against the Government measure to amend the law of sedition. He said : "It has brought into disagreeable prominence the unsatisfactory nature of the law of sedition.. ....We trust the Government will bear in mind that in the circumstances of this country, anything which checks freedom of public discussion is most deplorable....." (Congress Presidential Addresses : Vol. I, pp. 334-36).

It was, however, surprising that the Congress President blew hot and cold in the same breath. Sir Sankaran Nair did not encourage use of strong language in protesting against these Govt. Bills. He said : "We deprecate most strongly any intemperate language in criticising Govern-

ment measures. We are bound to assume that any objectionable measure must have been due either to ignorance or error of judgment. We have also to remember that after all our salvation lies in bringing home to the majority of the people of England our real wishes and feelings and that the persons whose actions are criticised are their own kith and kin, that the system of Government we attack was framed by men for whom they feel just respect and esteem. Any violence, therefore, will do us infinite harm, it may possibly prevent us from securing a hearing....." (Ibid. p. 337).

CHAPTER XIV

SUREN BANERJEE'S TRIAL

Closely following the repeal of the Vernacular Press Act two events happened which gave an impetus not only to the national movement but to Indian journalism. They were the introduction of the famous Ilbert Bill in the Supreme Legislative Council and the conviction of Surendranath Banerjee in the contempt of Court case, started against him as the editor of *The Bengalee*.

Mr. Justice Norris of the Calcutta High Court had earned notoriety by vilifying the people of India as 'liars' and by his open sympathy with the activities of the European and Anglo-Indian communities of Calcutta against the Ilbert Bill. *The Bengalee* and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* vehemently criticised Mr. Justice Norris.

While distributing prizes to students of Oriental Seminary Mr. Justice Norris said : "I am glad that two prizes have been awarded to two boys here for truthfulness. In my experience I have found that every day, every hour, every minute we have occasion to find that natives of this country are fond of telling lies when they are required to give evidence and of committing that offence in the Criminal Law, known as perjury". (*The Bengalee*, March 3, 1883).

After some time, while trying a case, Mr. Justice Norris, having cherished the idea that all Indians were habitually liars, ordered *Salgram Sila*, the family deity of a contesting party to be produced before him in court and after examining it he pronounced the opinion that "it could not be a hundred years old". This incident was strongly commented upon by *Bengal Public Opinion* (formerly *Brahmo Public Opinion*), an English weekly, run by Durgamohon Das and Bhuban Mohon Das, father of Deshbandhu C. R. Das. It wrote : "Mr. Justice Norris is determined to set the Hughly on fire. The last Act of *Zubberdusti* on his Lordship's part was the bringing of a *Saligram* (a stone

idol) into court for identification. There have been very many cases both in the late Supreme Court and the present High Court of Calcutta regarding the custody of Hindu idols but the presiding deity of a Hindu household had never before this, had the honour of being dragged into Court. Our Calcutta Daniel looked at the idol and said that it could not be a hundred years old. Whether the orthodox Hindus of Calcutta will tamely submit to their family idols being dragged into Court is a matter for them to decide, but it does seem to us that some public steps should be taken to put a quietus to the wild eccentricities of this young and raw Dispenser of Justice".

During that period the incident roused public indignation and comments of *Bengal Public Opinion* were, therefore, sufficiently strong. *The Bengalee* had earned considerable popularity and its editor, Surendranath Banerjee had become a power to be reckoned with. He saw that there had been no contradiction of what had appeared in *Bengal Public Opinion*, the editor of which, Bhuban Mohon Das was a practising solicitor of the High Court. So, the report was correct. On April 2, 1883, *The Bengalee* wrote the following leaderette, based on the comments of Bhuban Mohon Das' paper :

"The Judges of High Court have hitherto commanded the universal respect of the community. Of course, they have often erred, and have often grievously failed in the performance of their duties. But their errors have hardly ever been due to impulsiveness, or to the neglect of the commonest considerations of prudence or decency. We have now, however, amongst us a judge, who, if he does not actually recall to mind the days of Jeffreys and Scroggs, has certainly done enough, within the short time that he has filled the High Court Bench, to show how unworthy he is of his high office, and how by nature he is unfitted to maintain those traditions of dignity which are inseparable from the office of the judge of the highest court in the land".

Surendranath Banerjee was prosecuted on a charge of contempt of Court for this leaderette in *The Bengalee*. It

was strange that the editor of *Bengal Public Opinion,* in which the story of the incident appeared first, was not prosecuted. There was, therefore, a feeling that there was some wire-pulling behind the launching of prosecution because at that time Surendranath was regarded as a stormy petrel having a great influence over the students and youths of the country.

On May 5, 1883, the case came up for hearing before a Full Bench of the Calcutta High Court consisting of five judges of whom Romesh Chandra Mitter was the only Indian judge. In describing the trial Surendranath himself wrote: "The majority of the judges, and they were Europeans, were for sentencing me to imprisonment. Mr. Justice Romesh Chunder Mitter insisted upon a fine only. The day before, so the Report went, the Chief Justice (Sir Richard Garth) had seen him at his private residence and had talked to him and argued with him, with a view to persuading him to agree with the majority, but all in vain. At the conference the arguments were repeated with the added weight of the personal authority of the other judges. But Mr. Justice Mitter remained unconvinced, relying on the precedent created in Taylor's case, where the Chief Justice Sir Barnes Peacock, had deemed the infliction of a fine sufficient".

Surendranath was sentenced to an imprisonment for two months, by the majority of judges, Sir Romesh Chunder Mitter delivering his dissenting judgment. The court room was over-crowded when the sentence was pronounced and political demonstrations were organised all over the country to protest against the judgment of the High Court. Surendranath himself says: "The news of my imprisonment created a profound impression not only in Calcutta, and in my own province, but throughout India. In Calcutta on the day of imprisonment the Indian shops were closed and business was suspended in the Indian part of the town, not by order, or by an organised effort, but under a spontaneous impulse which moved the whole community. The students went into mourning. The demonstrations held in Calcutta were so large that no hall could find space

for the crowds that sought admittance : the bazzars were utilised for the purpose. Then was first started the practice of holding open-air meetings, and these were demonstrations not confined to the upper ten thousand or the educated classes : the masses joined them in their thousands".

In the report of the Indian Association Ananda Mohon Bose stated : "It has now been demonstrated by the universal outburst of grief and indignation which the event called forth, that the people of the different Indian provinces have learnt to feel for one another, and that a common bond of unity and fellow-feeling is rapidly being established among them".

An article in a newspaper provided an opportunity of national awakening and political demonstrations, held in Bengal, rapidly spread all over India and helped in developing national consciousness. Bepin Chandra Pal wrote: "Surendranath's imprisonment called forth the first real political demonstration all over Bengal. He had already become the idol of the younger generation of his countrymen. His conviction and sentence was taken up by young Bengal as an open challenge to their national honour and an attack on their love of freedom and patriotism. Crowded meetings were held not only in Calcutta but practically all over Bengal to express sympathy with him. Upon his release from prison Surendranath made an extensive tour in Bengal and upper India collecting contributions to a permanent fund called the National Fund, which was to be devoted to the new political propaganda. (The idea of this fund, so far as I remember, originated with Babu Tarapada Banerjea, who was at this time practising in the District Court at Krishnagar. He published an appeal for this fund in the columns of *The Bengalee*, when Surendranath was still in jail.) The amount collected came to about Rs. 20,000 and the subscribers at a meeting decided to make it over to the Indian Association of Calcutta for the promotion of political work". (Memoirs of My Life and Time).

The agitation over the Ilbert Bill began before the contempt of court case against *The Bengalee* had been tried

by the High Court and continued throughout the year. The Criminal Procedure Code of that time provided that in three Presidency towns of India—Calcutta, Bombay and Madras—the Indian Magistrates could try European and Indian offenders alike. But the moment they were transferred to mofussil towns they were, by provisions of this discriminatory law, deprived of this right, though they might occupy even a higher position in the mofussil. Mr. B. L. Gupta, the then Presidency Magistrate of Northern Division of Calcutta, who was also an I.C.S., pointed out the difficulties of this anomaly of Criminal Law on the eve of his transfer as District and Sessions Judge. Sir Ashley Eden, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, was also convinced of the necessity of changing this law.

During Lord Ripon's viceroyalty Sir Courtney Ilbert, the Law Member of the Council, introduced a Bill in the Legislative Council to effect this change and since then the Bill has been known as the 'Ilbert Bill'. In sponsoring the Bill Sir Courtney said: "These proposals will completely remove from the law all distinctions based on the race of the Judge.....I repeat that in so doing the only object which we have in view is to provide for the impartial and effectual administration of justice".

The *Englishman* took up a definitely hostile attitude towards the Bill as the spokesman of the European merchants and planters living in the country. The *Indian Daily News* recognised the necessity of such a change while *the Statesman* supported the Bill and wrote: "Dishonourable distinction which has so long disgraced the Criminal Law of India can no longer be allowed to remain". The British Press of other provinces opposed the Bill. Being inspired by the *Englishman* the British merchants and planters combined together and kicked up a mischievous agitation. Lord Ripon was insulted at the gate of the Government House by this community and a conspiracy was hatched, with the sympathy of European officers of the Government, to kidnap the Viceroy and send him to England by the next available ship.

The European merchants and planters held meetings

and demonstrations all over the country giving vent to wild racial animosity. The meeting at the Calcutta Town Hall, held on Wednesday, the 28th February, 1883, declared in vehement language that it was a gross insult for a superior race like the British to be tried by Indian niggers. But a feature of the meeting was that to pack up the spacious hall Armenians and Anglo-Indians, having black colours and thick lips were brought to swell the crowd. 'Feringhee' Branson, a practising barrister of the Calcutta High Court, indulged in most offensive language to castigate Indian judges and magistrates. The Indian attorneys and vakils afterwards refused to work with him. Being thus boycotted 'Feringhee' Branson expressed regret, not for making wild charges and insinuations but for the language he used on the occasion. Government House parties were also boycotted by Europeans.

The Indians also put up an agitation in support of this Bill which gave an impetus to journalism and literature of that time. The *Englishman* refused to publish a joint memorial in support of the Bill by British Indian Association, Indian Association, Mahomedan Literary Society, the National Mahomedan Association and Vakils' Association. In Parliament also pressure was put on the Liberal Government of Gladstone to withdraw the Bill.

The Government became frightened and a compromise was effected. The Bill, as passed in January, 1884, gave the district Magistrates and Sessions judges of Indian origin to try Europeans but with the help of a jury in which at least half its number must be European. Cases would have to be transferred to High Court if European jurors were not available. The framers of the law could realise that it would practically nullify the object because it would be difficult to secure so many Europeans to serve on the jury where a European Magistrate or judge was not available. Sir Griffith Evans, leader of the European community, openly declared that they "had not assented to the principle of the Bill nor to anything of the kind, but that, retaining their own view of their own privileges and rights they had assented to the passing of this Bill in order

to procure peace".

The Ilbert Bill controversy, specially the shameless role played by the British community, residing in this country, convinced the educated Indians that all promises given by the authorities even in solemn declarations about racial equality were not genuine and they could be broken at any moment whenever necessary. It further showed that the British community in this country was not prepared to surrender its privileged position and can make the Government submit before its demands.

The Indians were utterly disappointed but disillusioned. They had faith in Lord Ripon but they found how weak the Government was before the concerted agitation of the Anglo-Indian community, financed by the mercantile and the planters' interests and inspired by the Anglo-Indian Press. This intensified their national sentiments and growing feelings of unity. They felt that instead of depending on the mercy of the alien rulers they must organise themselves to fight their own battles. The technique of struggle, organised by the Anglo-Indian community, created a deep impression in the minds of the educated Indians. Ambika Charan Majumdar who later on became the President of the Indian National Congress wrote: "It was further felt that if political advancement were to be achieved, it could only be by the organisation of the national assembly wholly devoted to wide politics than hitherto pursued in the different provinces independently of each other."

The year 1883 thus saw big political demonstrations which helped in rousing national consciousness among the educated Indians. After coming out of jail, Surendranath Banerjee made an extensive tour in Northern and Western India to organise public opinion about the necessity of a national assembly. He then convened the National Conference in Calcutta on December 28, 1883. Ananda Mohon Bose called it "the first stage towards a National Parliament".

APPENDIX

A HISTORIC DOCUMENT

MEMORIAL TO THE SUPREME COURT IN DEFENCE OF FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

In March 1823, a press ordinance was passed by the Governor-General-in-Council to the following effect: "Henceforth, no one should publish a newspaper or a periodical without having obtained a licence from the Governor-General-in-Council signed by the Chief Secretary."

Raja Rammohun Roy's Persian paper Mirat-ul-Akhbar gave the following background information regarding the issuing of the Ordinance:

"The eminently learned Dr. Bryce, the head minister of the new Scotch Church, having accepted the situation of Clerk of the Stationery belonging to the Honorable Company, Mr. Buckingham the editor of the Calcutta Journal observed directly as well as indirectly that it was unbecoming of the character of the minister to accept a situation like this; upon which the Governor General in consideration of his disrespectful expression, passed an order that Mr. Buckingham should leave India for England within the period of two months from the date of the receipt of this order, and after the expiration of that period he is not allowed to remain a single day in India."

The notice expelling Mr. James Buckingham was followed up suddenly and without a notice on March 14, by the rigorous Press Ordinance mentioned already. Before this regulation could come into force, the law required it to be fixed up in the Supreme Court for 20 days, and then, if not disallowed, registered. It was accordingly entered on March 15. On the 17th, the Council moved the Court to allow the parties feeling themselves aggrieved by the new regulation to be heard. Foremost among those objectors was Rammohun Roy. He and his friends set about promoting the suggested petition, and a memorial was hastily drawn up, signed by Rammohun

and five other distinguished gentlemen and submitted to the Supreme Court. This memorial which is acknowledged to be the work of Raja Rammohun Roy, says Miss Collet, his biographer, "may be regarded as the Aeropagitica of Indian History". It is a glorious vindication of the liberty of the press against the arbitrary use of power. The Supreme Court, however, decided in favour of the Ordinance upon which Rammohun sent his famous petition to the King-in-Council later in the year.

We reproduce here the full text of the Memorial.

To The Honourable Sir Francis Macnaghten, Sole Acting Judge of the Supreme Court of Judicature at Fort William in Bengal

My Lord,

In consequence of the late Rule and Ordinance passed by His Excellency the Governor General in Council, regarding the Publication of Periodical Works, your Memorialists consider themselves called upon with due submission, to represent to you their feelings and sentiments on the subject.

Your Memorialists beg leave, in the first place, to bring to the notice of your Lordship, various proofs given by the Natives of this country of their unshaken loyalty to, and unlimited confidence in the British Government of India, which may remove from your mind any apprehension of the Government being brought into hatred and contempt ; or of the peace, harmony, and good order of society in this country, being liable to be interrupted and destroyed, as implied in the preamble of the above Rule and Ordinance.

First. Your Lordship is well aware, that the Natives of Calcutta, and its vicinity, have voluntarily entrusted Government with millions of their wealth, without indicating the least suspicion of its stability and good faith, and reposing in the sanguine hope that their property being so secured, their interests will be as permanent as the British Power itself ; while, on the contrary, their fathers were invariably compelled to conceal their treasures in the

bowels of the earth, in order to preserve them from the insatiable cupidity of their oppressive Rulers.

Secondly. Placing entire reliance on the promises made by the British Government at the time of the Perpetual Settlement of the landed property in this part of India, in 1793, the Landholders have since, by constantly improving their estates, been able to increase their produce, in general, very considerably; whereas, prior to that period, and under former Governments, their forefathers were obliged to lay waste the greater part of their estates, in order to make them appear of inferior value, that they might not excite the cupidity of Government, and thus cause their rents to be increased or themselves to be dispossessed of their lands,—a pernicious practice which often incapacitated the landholders from discharging even their stipulated revenue to Government, and reduced their families to poverty.

Thirdly. During the last wars which the British Government were obliged to undertake against neighbouring Powers, it is well known that the great body of Natives of wealth and respectability, as well as the Landholders of consequence, offered up regular prayers to the objects of their worship for the success of the British arms from a deep conviction that under the sway of that nation, their improvement, both mental and social, would be promoted, and their lives, religion and property be secured. Actuated by such feelings, even in those critical times, which are the best test of the loyalty of the subject, they voluntarily came forward with a large portion of their property to enable the British Government to carry into effect the measures necessary for its own defence, considering the cause of the British as their own, firmly believing that on its success, their own happiness and property depended.

Fourthly. It is manifest as the light of day, that the general subjects of observation and the constant and the familiar topic of discourse among the Hindu community of Bengal, are the literary and political improvements which are continually going on in the state of the country

under the present system of government, and a comparison between their present auspicious prospects and their hopeless condition under their former Rulers.

Under these circumstances, your Lordship cannot fail to be impressed with a full conviction, that whoever charges the Natives of this country with disloyalty, or insinuates aught to the prejudice of their fidelity and attachment to the British Government, must either be totally ignorant of the affairs of this country and the feelings and sentiments of its inhabitants, as above stated, or, on the contrary, be desirous of misrepresenting the people and misleading the Government, both here and in England, for unworthy purpose of his own.

Your Memorialists must confess that these feelings of loyalty and attachment, of which the most unequivocal proofs stand on record, have been produced by the wisdom and liberality displayed by the British Government in the means adopted for the gradual improvement of their social and domestic condition, by the establishment of colleges, schools, and other beneficial institutions in this city, among which the creation of a British Court of Judicature for the more effectual administration of Justice, deserves to be gratefully remembered.

A proof of the Natives of India being more and more attached to the British Rule in proportion as they experience from it the blessings of just and liberal treatment, is that the inhabitants of Calcutta, who enjoy in many respects very superior privileges to those of their fellow-subjects in other parts of the country, are known to be in like measure more warmly devoted to the existing Government; nor is it at all wonderful they should in loyalty be not at all inferior to British-born subjects, since they feel assured of the possession of the same civil and religious liberty, which is enjoyed in England, without being subjected to such heavy taxation as presses upon the people there.

Hence the population of Calcutta, as well as the value of land in this city, have rapidly increased of late years, notwithstanding the high rents of houses and dearness of

all the necessaries of life compared with other parts of the country, as well as the inhabitants being subjected to additional taxes, and also liable to the heavy costs necessarily incurred in case of suits before the Supreme Court.

Your Lordship may have learned from the works of the Christian Missionaries, and also from other sources, that ever since the art of printing has become generally known among the Natives of Calcutta, numerous publications have been circulated in the Bengalee language, which by introducing free discussion among the Natives and inducing them to reflect and inquire after knowledge, have already served greatly to improve their minds and ameliorate their condition. This desirable object has been chiefly promoted by the establishment of four Native newspapers, two in the Bengalee and two in the Persian language, publishde for the purpose of communicating to those residing in the interior of the country, accounts of whatever occurs worthy of notice at the Presidency or in the country, and also the interesting and valuable intelligence of what is passing in England and in other parts of the world, conveyed through the English newspapers or other channels.

Your Memorialists are unable to discover any disturbance of the peace, harmony, and good order of society, that has arisen from the English Press, the influence of which must necessarily be confined to that part of the community who understand the language thoroughly ; but they are quite confident that the publications in the Native languages, whether in the shape of a newspaper or any other work, have none of them been calculated to bring the Government of the country into hatred and contempt and that they have not proved, as far as can be ascertained by the strictest inquiry, in the slightest degree injurious ; which has very lately been acknowledged in one of the most respectable English Missionary works. So far from obtruding upon Government groundless representations, Native Authors and Editors have always restrained themselves from publishing even such facts respecting the judicial proceedings in the interior of the country as they thought were likely at first view to be obnoxious to

Government.

While your Memorialists were indulging the hope that Government from a conviction of the manifold advantages of being put in possession of full and impartial information regarding what is passing in all parts of the country, would encourage the establishment of newspapers in the cities and districts under the special patronage and protection of Government, that they might furnish the supreme authorities in Calcutta with an accurate account of local occurrences and reports of Judicial proceedings,—they have the misfortune to observe, that on the contrary, His Excellency the Governor-General-in-Council has lately promulgated a Rule and Ordinance imposing severe restraints on the Press and prohibiting all periodical publications even at the Presidency and the Native languages, unless sanctioned by a Licence from Government, which is to be revocable at pleasure whenever it shall appear to Government that a publication has contained anything of an unsuitable character.

Those Natives, who are in more favourable circumstances and of respectable character, have such an invincible prejudice against making a voluntary affidavit, or undergoing the solemnities of an oath, that they will never think of establishing a publication which can only be supported by a series of oaths and affidavits, abhorrent to their feelings and derogatory to their reputation amongst their countrymen.

After this Rule and Ordinance shall have been carried into execution, your Memorialists are therefore extremely sorry to observe that a complete stop will be put to the diffusion of knowledge and the consequent mental improvement now going on, either by translations into the popular dialect of this country from the learned languages of the East, or by the circulation of literary intelligence drawn from foreign publications. And the same cause will also prevent those Natives who are better versed in the laws and customs of the British nation, from communicating to their fellow-subjects a knowledge of the admirable system of government established by the British, and the

peculiar excellencies of the means they have adopted for the strict and impartial administration of justice. Another evil of equal importance in the eyes of a just Ruler, is that it will also preclude the Natives from making the Government readily acquainted with the errors and injustice that may be committed by its executive officers in the various parts of this extensive country; and it will also preclude the Natives from communicating frankly and honestly to their Gracious Sovereign in England and his Council, the real condition of His Majesty's faithful subjects in this distant part of his dominions and the treatment they experience from the local Government: since such information cannot in future be conveyed to England, as it has heretofore been, either by the translations from the Native publications inserted in the English newspapers printed here and sent to Europe, or by the English publications which the Natives themselves had in contemplation to establish, before this Rule and Ordinance was proposed.

After this sudden deprivation of one of the most precious of their rights, which has been freely allowed them since the establishment of the Britsih Power, a right which they are not, and cannot be charged with having ever abused, the inhabitants of Calcutta would be no longer justified in boasting, that they are fortunately placed by Providence under the protection of the whole British nation, or that the King of England and his Lords and Commons are their Legislators, and that they are secured in the enjoyment of the same civil and religious privileges that every Briton is entitled to in England.

Your Memorialists are persuaded that the British Government is not disposed to adopt the political maxim so often acted upon by Asiatic Princes, that the more a people are kept in darkness, their Rulers will derive the greater advantages from them; since by reference to history, it is found that this was but a short-sighted policy which did not ultimately answer the purpose of its authors. On the contrary, it rather proved disadvantageous to them; for we find that as often as an ignorant

people, when an opportunity offered, have revolted against their Rulers, all sorts of barbarous excesses and cruelties have been the consequence; whereas a people naturally disposed to peace and ease, when placed under a good Government from which they experience just and liberal treatment, must become the more attached to it, in proportion as they become enlightened and the great body of the people are taught to appreciate the value of the blessings they enjoy under its Rule.

Every good Ruler, who is convinced of the imperfection of human nature, and reverences for the Eternal Governor of the world, must be conscious of the great liability to error in managing the affairs of a vast empire; and therefore he will be anxious to afford every individual the readiest means of bringing to his notice whatever may require his interference. To secure this important object, the unrestrained Liberty of Publication, is the only effectual means that can be employed. And should it ever be abused, the established Law of the Land is very properly armed with sufficient powers to punish those who may be found guilty of misrepresenting the conduct or character of Government, which are effectually guarded by the same laws to which individuals must look for protection of their reputation and good name.

Your Memorialists conclude by humbly entreating your Lordship to take this Memorial into your gracious consideration; and that you will be pleased by not registering the above Rule and Ordinance, to permit the Natives of this country to continue in possession of the rights and privileges which they and their fathers have so long enjoyed under the auspices of the British nation, whose kindness and confidence, they are not aware of having done anything to forfeit.

Chunder Coomer Tagore,
Dwarka Nauth Tagore,
Rammohun Roy,
Hurchunder Ghose,
Gowree Churn Bonnerjee,
Prossunno Coomar Tagore.

INDEX

[*Books and Journals are italicised*]

A

A. Moreiro, 91
A. R. Desai, Dr., 7, 16, 51, 60
Abdul Wahab, 163
Agarwalas, 20
Age of Reason, 57
Agricultural Gazette of India, 160
Ahmad Ali, 129
Ahmad Ulla, 164
Ahmed Shah Abdali, 2
Akbar, 32
Akhbar-e-Kabiseh, 93
Akhbar-ul-Haquayaq, 118
Akshoy Kumar Dutt, 90
Alexander & Co., 12, 124-25
Alexander Duff, Dr., 60
All India Radio, 22
Amareswar Kubardas, 120
Ambika Charan Majumdar, 177
American War of Independence, 51, 62
Amherst, Lord, 47, 64, 71
Amir Khan, 164-65
Amrita Bazar Patrika, 20, 28, 65, 152-55, 158, 171
Amritamoyee Devi, 153
Ananda Bazar Patrika, 20
Ananda Mohan Bose, 151, 157, 174, 177
Andrew D'Souza, 92
Annundo Gopal Mookerji, 76
Archibald Hill, 145
Arnot, 71
Asia and Western Dominance, 8
Asiatic Mirror, 44
Asiatic Researches, 55
Asiatic Society, 55
Auckland, Lord, 105
Aurobindo Ghose, 30, 54

B

B. G. Horniman, 71
B. L. Gupta, 174
Bacon, 51, 66
Bahadur Shah, 126-7
Bal Gangadhar Tilak, 155, 167
Bande-Mataram, 30
Bangabasi, 166
Banga Doot, 48, 83, 90, 94, 107-8
Barahanagar Patrika Samachar, 27
Barnes Peacock, Sir, 173
Basanta Kumar Ghosh, 153
Battle of Paneepath, Third, 3
„ Plassey, 1-3, 5-7, 23-4, 31
„ Waterloo, 105
Bengal Calender and Register 1790, 12
„ *Gazette*, 3, 8, 10-11, 34-40, 46
„ *Harkaru*, 40, 42, 93, 130, 138, 160
„ *Journal*, 40-1, 92
„ *Public Opinion*, 171-3
„ *Recorder*, 114, 134
„ *Renaissance*, 23, 49-63, 72
„ *Spectator*, 59, 108, 112
Bengalee, The, 171-4
Benimadhab De, 91
Bentham, 50, 51, 57
Bepin Chandra Pal, 30, 54, 151-2, 157, 164, 174
Bharat Chandra, 50
Bharat Thirtha, 7
Bharatiya Mahabidroha, 57
Bhowani Charan Bonerjee, 46, 74-5
Bhuban Mohun Banerjee, 91

Bhuban Mohan Das, 171-2
Bijnan-Sara Sangraha, 92
Bijnan Sebadhi, 92
Birla, 18, 20
Bishop Heber, 99
Bishwa Doot, 28
Bombay Chronicle, 71
„ *Courier*, 93
„ *Darpan*, 121
„ *Gazette*, 40-1, 71, 160
„ *Herald*, 39-40
„ *Samachar*, 82, 131
„ *Times*, 131, 159
Brahman Sebadhi, 73
Brahmanical Magazine, 73
Brahmo Public Opinion, 171
Brief History of Banishment of Mr. Buckingham, 70
the Statesman, A, 56, 76

C

C. F. Andrews, 117
C. J. Fair, 71
C. R. Das, 171
Calcutta Chronicle, 71, 82-3
Calcutta Gazette, 39, 83. 92
Calcutta Journal, 12, 65-80, 178
Calcutta Review, 27, 59
Calvin, 49, 54
Canning, Lord, 58, 126-28, 130, 132, 141, 162-63
Cawnpore Advertiser, 82
Cecil Rhodes, 23, 60
Chandra Coomar Tagore, 79
Chandra Nath Roy, 154
Chandrika, 90
Chandrodaya, 90
Charles C. Stevens, Sir, 29
Charles Henry Disent, 91
Charles Maclean, Dr., 42
Charles Metcalfe, Sir, 86, 88, 95, 101-9
Charter of 1813, 12
Chitragnan Durpan, 120
Civil and Military Gazette, 160
Cockerell & Dilisle, 12
Colebrook, 55
Colins, Brett & Co., 12
Columbian Press Gazette, The 83
Commercial Advertiser, 83
Commons, The, 5
Consideration on Indian Affairs (1772), 25
Copernicus, 50
Cornwallis, Lord, 6, 41, 53
Courier, The, 82, 159
Court Gazette, 32
Courtney Ilbert, Sir, 175
Curzon, Lord, 62, 100

D

Dacca News, 138
Dadabhai Naoroji, 96-7, 113, 120
Daily Gazette, The, 82
Dakshina Ranjan Mukherjee, 57
Dalhousie, Lord, 114-15, 138
Dalmia Jain, 18, 20, 159
Dastur Mulla Firoz, 92
David Hare, 55-6
Dean W. R. Inge, 26
Delane, 18
De Rozio, 56-8, 72, 92, 108, 113
Devendra Nath Tagore, 113, 149, 152
Dig Darshan, 46-8, 64, 121
Dinabandhu Mitra, 149
Doorbin, 120, 129
Doorloob Chunder Dutta, 91
Dudhu Miyan, 164
Duke of Wellington, 105
Durga Mohan Das, 171
Durpan-Daman-Maha-Naban, 90
Duyan Prakash, 121
Dwarakanath Mitra, 154
Dwaraka Nath Tagore, 53, 79, 83, 93-4, 111, 113, 130
Dwaraka Nath Tagore, Memoir of, 53

E

East India Company, 1, 3, 5, 7, 10-2, 23-5, 31, 33, 49, 70, 95, 96, 165
Eblal-e-Kabiseh, 93
Educational Records Vol. I, Selections from, 61
Eighteen Fifty-Seven, 124
Elijah Impey, Sir, 35, 39
Elliot, Mr., 43
Elliot Drinkwater Bethune, 166
Englishman, The, 82, 93, 111-12, 130, 138, 161, 175-6
Enquirer, The, 59, 91
Empire, The, 138

F

Faria Williams and Hohler, 34
Fardoonji Murzeban, 73, 82
Farrazi Movement, 147
Fearless Friend of India, A, 65
'Feringhee' Branson, 176
First Burma War, 89
First War of Independence, 4, 13, 103, 123, 138, 140, 147
First World War, 100
Fitzjames Stephen, Sir, 165
Fourth Estate, 4, 12
Francis MacNaughten, Sir, 79, 179
Free Press Journal, 19
French Revolution, 51-2, 62
Friend of India, 46, 76, 83, 109, 130, 138, 151, 160

G

G. A. Hough, 92
G. A. Princep, 92
G. Parameswar Pillai, 137-8
G. W. Forrest, 127
Galileo, 50
Gandhi, 54
Gangadhar Bhattacharya, 46
Ganga Kishore Bhattacharya, 45
Gaurisankar Bhattacharya, 109, 110
George Bernard Shaw, 17-8
„ Birdwood, Dr. Sir, 161
„ Buist, Dr., 131
„ Thomson, 113
Gibbon, 51
Girish Chandra Ghose, 114, 134, 145, 158
Goenka, 18, 20
Gopal Krishna Gokhale, 29
Gouree Churn Bonerjee, 79
Government Gazette, 82
Govinda Chunder Coaur, 76
Govind Vitthal Kunte, 121
Grambarta Prakasika, 152
Grant Duff, 2
Great October Revolution, 16, 62
Griffith Evans, Sir, 176
Gulshan-i-Naubahar, 131
Gyananeshan, 58, 92, 107-8, 112

H

H. A. Start, 61
H. P. Ghose, 26, 42, 55, 105, 127, 167
H. T. Prinsep, 102
Haji Sharial Ullah, 164
Halhead's Grammar, 33
Halisahar Patrika, 152
Hara Chandra Roy, 45
Hara Chandra Ghose, 57, 79
Hara Kumar Tagore, 113
Harinath Majumdar 143, 153
Harish Chandra Mukherjee, 73
Heatley, Mr., 44
Hemanta Kumar Ghosh, 153
Henry Cotton, Sir., 28, 86
Henry Meredith Parker, 66
Hesperus, The, 91
Hindoo Patriot, 29, 73, 114-5, 124-8, 131, 134-46, 149, 153
Hindu, 20
Hindu Intelligencer, 58, 130

Hindusthan Times, 20
Hirendra Nath Mukherjee, 126, 133, 147
History of the Marhattas, 2
„ „ *Press in India*, 19, 45, 75, 160
„ „ *Trojans*, 32
Holt Mackenzie, 96
Hugh Elliot, 43, 66
Huree Hur Dutt, 74, 83
Hurish Chunder Mukherjee, 73, 114, 125, 128, 134-46, 149
Hutton, 55

I

Imhoff, 10, 35
Imperial Gazetter, 3
India Gazette, 36, 39, 53, 93
India Today, 5, 63, 132
Indian Daily News, 161, 175
„ *Economist*, 160
„ *Field*, 59
„ *and Home Memoirs*, 28
„ *Mirror*, 149-52
„ National Congress, 13, 29, 96
„ *Press, The*, 6, 15, 46, 48
„ *Public Opinion*, 160
„ *Register, The*, 91
„ *Statesman*, 160
„ *World*, 41
Indu Prakash, 26, 121
Inquirer, 108
Iris, 93
Iswar Chunder Dutt, 91
Iswar Chandra Gupta, 46, 90, 116, 143
Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, 61, 107-8, 146, 156
Izvestia, 16

J

J. C. Ghose, 53
J. H. Stocqueler, 93, 111, 161
J. K. Mazumdar, 46
J. L. Morrison, 101-2
J. Long, Rev., 74, 76, 103, 115, 119-23, 149
J. M. Maclean, 160
J. O'Brien Saunders, 161
Jaikrishna Mukherjee, 113
Jam-e-Jamshed, 92, 131
Jam-e-Jehan-Numa, 74, 83
James Augustus Hicky, 3, 6, 8-11, 34-40
James Silk Buckingham, 12, 65-81, 88, 178
Jameson, Dr., 67
Jatindra Kumar Roy, 33
Jawaharlal Nehru, 132, 135
Jnan-Darpan, 90
Jnan-Sancharini, 90
Job Charnock, 31
Johann Gutenberg, 32
John Adam, 15, 44, 67-71, 78-9, 82, 85, 103
„ Bruce Norton, 123, 145
„ *Bull in the East*, 67, 82, 93
„ Lawrence, 118
„ Malcolm, Sir, 132
„ Milton, 51, 81
„ Shore, Sir, 15, 41-2
„ Zachariah Kierander, Rev., 36
Joogul Kishore Sookal, 64, 83
Jugantar, 30, 155
Jugganath Sankersett, 113
Justice Norris, 171
"Jute Press", 19
Juvenile Emulator, The, 91
Jyotirindranath Tagore, 148

K

K. M. Panikkar, 8
Kaleidoscope, 83
Kaliprasanna Sinha, 146, 149
Karl Marx, 7
Karsandas Mulji, 120
Kasi Prasad Ghose, 58
Kasturi & Sons, 20
Kempson, Mr., 119

Kesari, 30, 155, 167
Keshab Chandra Sen, 149-52
Khetra Nath Ghose, 27
Khurshedji Cama, 120
Kishori Chand Mitra, 53, 59, 61
Krishanaji Trimbak Ranade, 121
Krishnadas Pal, 146
Krishna Kumar Mitra, 151
Krishna Menon, 19
Krishna Mohan Banerjee, 59, 91, 108

L

L. S. S. O'Malley, 96, 140
Lambert & Ross, 12
Lansdowne, 15
Laureno Janszoon Coster, 32
Leicester Stanhope, 71
Lenin, 27
Leonardo da Vinci, 50
Letters of Junius, 35
Lloyd George, 100
Lords Spiritual, 5
Lords Temporal, 5
Luther, 49
Lytton, Lord, 15, 131

M

M. A. Buch, 124
M. Fumeron, 41
Macaulay, 15, 37, 60, 97, 102, 162, 165-6
Madhab Rao, 146
Madhusudan Das, 91
Madras Courier, 39-40, 82
,, *Gazette*, 40-41
,, *Mail*, 160
,, *Times*, 160
Mahadeo Govinda Ranade, 26, 121, 158
Mahajan-Darpan, 90
Mahalanobis Committee, 19
Mahalum-Afrose, 92
Maharaja Nanda Kumar, 10
Maharastra Newspapers Ltd., 20
Manmohan Ghosh, 143, 149
Manuel, 149
Margarita Barns, 6, 15, 46, 48, 74
Marshman, Rev. Dr., 12, 46, 66
Martin, 83
Masik Patrika, 115
Mathuranath Maitra, 143
Maulana Shah Waliullah, 164
Mayo, Lord, 162, 165
Michael Madhusudan Dutta, 59, 91, 146, 149
Mill, 51
Minto, Lord, 15, 43 47
Mir Jafar, Nawab, 22-3
Mirat-ul-Akhbar, 73, 76-78, 80-82, 178
Modern India and the West, 96
Moffusil Ukhbar Agra, The, 92
Moffussilite, 160
Moheshchunder Paul, 91
Montagu-Chelmsford Report, 1918, 62
Montir Mohammad Baquir, 117
Moothur Mohon Mitter, 83
Morley, 100
Morning Post, 44
Motilal Ghosh, 153-4
Mount Stuart Elphinstone, Lord, 15, 99, 101
Muhammad Taher, 129
Mukherjea's Magazine, 145
Mukul Gupta, 65
Mumbai Vartaman, 92
Mumbaina Chabuk, 120
Mumbaina Samachar, 82, 92, 120
Munniram Thacoor, 83
Muzhur-ul-Akhbar, 118

N

Nabagopal Mitra, 59, 148
Natarajan, J. 45, 119, 128, 154
National Library, 104

Native Press of India, The, 161
Neelrutton Halder, 108
Nepoleon, 72, 105
New India, 86
Newspaper in India, The, 26, 42, 55, 105, 127, 167
Newton, 50
Nowrosjee Furdunjee, 113
Notes on some wanderings, with Swami Vivekananda, 54

O

Oodunt Martund, 83
Oordu Akhbar, 118
Oriental Herald, 70
Oriental Star, 46
Outspoken Essays, 26,
Oxford History of India. The 13

P

Palmer & Co., 12
Panchanon Karmakar, 33
Pandit Morabhat Dandekar, 121
"Papa of the Press", 3, 6
Paterson Saunders, 92
"Patriots' Association", 148
Paxton, 12
Peshwa Rajee Row, 2
Peter Reed, 39
Philanthropist, The, 92
Philip Francis, 9, 36
Phoenix, 138
Pioneer, 159
Pratap Chandra Majumdar, Rev., 151
Pravda, 16
Premchand Roy, 91
Press, The, 21-2
Press Trust of India, 20
Promode Sen Gupta, 57
"*Prospectus*", 8-9
Prosunnu Coomar Tagore, 79, 83, 91, 93-6, 113, 137, 185
Pyari Chand Mitra, 57, 59, 109, 113, 115
Punjab Times, The, 160

R

R. P. Dutt, 5, 63, 132
R. Williams, 40
Rabindra Nath Tagore, 7, 51, 53, 169
Radhanath Sikdar, 57, 115
Rai Kalinath Chaudhuri, 109
Raja Digambar Mitra, 113
„ Kalikrishna Deb, 113
„ Radhakanta Deb, 113
„ Rajendralal Mitra, 13
„ Rajnarain Roy Bahadur, 109
„ Rammohan Roy, 7, 12, 45-6, 49-61, 65-103, 178-9
„ *Rammohan Roy, Life and Letters of*, 45-6
„ *and the Progressive Movements in India*, 46
Rajkrishna Mitra, 154
Rajnarain Bose, 59, 148
Ramananda Chatterjee, 151
Ramesh Chandra Dutt, 26, 81
Ramgopal Ghose, 57-8, 112-13, 123
Ramtanu Lahiri, 57
Rangalal Banerjee, 91, 147
Rangpur Bartabaha, 90, 109
Rasa Mudgar, 90
Rasaraj, 90
Rasa-Sagar, 90
Rast Gaftar, 120, 131
Ratnaboli, 88
Reformer, 91, 95-6
Report on Native Papers, 27
Richard Garth, Sir, 173
Richard Temple, Sir, 146
Ripon, Lord, 15, 175, 177
Robert Clive, 10, 23, 26, 53
Robert Knight, 131, 160
Romesh Chandra Mitter, 173
Rosetta Stone, 32
Rothermere, Lord, 26, 62

Rousseau, 50
Rudyard Kipling, 160
Russick Krishna Mullick, 57-8

S

S. B. Chaudhuri, 127
S. L. Blanchard, 130
S. N. Sen, Dr., 124
S. Natarajan, 19, 45, 75, 86, 119, 128, 154, 160, 162
Sadanand, 19
Salisbury, Lord, 132
Samachar Darpan, 46, 48, 64, 73, 82, 110-11, 114
„ *Sudhabarsan* 128-30
Sambad-Mayookha, 91
„ *Ratnakar*, 91
„ *Rutnaboly*, 91
„ *Sara Sangraha*, 91
„ *Saudamini*, 91
„ *Sudhakar*, 91
Samesul-Akhbar, 83
Samuel James Bryce, Rev. Dr., 44, 67-8, 78, 82
Sandhya, 30
Sangabad Bhaskar, 90, 109-10
„ *Chandrika*, 46, 75-6, 82, 87, 107
„ *Kaumudi*, 73-6, 82, 97, 107
„ *Prabhakar*, 46, 90, 92, 107, 116, 143
„ *Purnachandroday*, 92, 107
„ *Timir Nasak*, 82, 107
Sankaran Nair, Sir., 169
Satya Prakash, 90
Sayyed-ul-Akhbar, 118
Sayyid Ahmed, 163
Scotsman in the East, The, 83
Shamsher Bahadur, 120
Shastri Jambhekar, 121
Sibcharan Dev, 57
Sibnath Shastri, 151-2, 157
Sirajuddoula, Nawab, 1
Siraj-ul-Akhbar, 118
Sisir Kumar Ghosh, 143, 149, 153-5, 158
Sister Nivedita, 54
Sitanath Tattwabhusan, 151
Social Background of Indian Nationalism, 7, 16, 51, 60
Sophia Dobson Collet, 45-6, 81
Som-Prakash, 149, 152
Spark, The, 16
Spencer, 51
Sreenath Roy, 110-11
Standard, 159
Statesman, 20, 151, 160-1
Subedar Jai Singh, 29
Sudder-ul-Akhbar, 118
Sudharanjan, 90
Sulav-Samachar, 150-1
Sultan-ul Akhbar, 129
Sunday Mirror, 150
Surat Samachar, 120
Surendranath Banerjee, 156-9, 171-7
Syamsundar Sen, 128-9
Syed Ahmed Khan, 118
Syed Mohammad Khan, 117-8

T

T. M. Chatterjee, 111
T. N. Chatterjee, 160
Tank Square, 1
Tarachand Chakrabarti, 57
„ Dutta 74,
Tarapada Banerjee, 174
Tattwa-Bodhini Patrika, 90
Tek Chand Thakur, 115
Telegraph, The, 159
Third Battle of Paneepath, 3
Third Mahratta War, 72
Thomas Munro, Sir, 15, 98, 101
Thomas Paine, 57
Times, The, 18
Times of India, 20, 159
Tippo Sultan, 105
Titu Mir, 123, 164
Tushar Kanti Ghosh, 155

V

V. N. Mandlik, 113
Vangal Gazette, 33, 45, 46, 48, 64
Vartaman, 120
Vasco da Gama, 31
Vernacular Education in Bengal, 61
Vincent A. Smith, 13
Voltaire, 50
Viswamitra, 20

W

W. Kirkpatrick, 91
Wahajudden Mahummed, 92
Wajid Ali Khan, Munshi, 118
Waquiah-nawises, 2, 8
Warren Hastings, 10, 11, 15, 27, 34-9, 55, 64, 67-8, 70, 72, 139
Weekly Gleaner, 83
Wellesly, Lord, 15, 33, 42-3, 105
Whig Revolution, 5
Wickham Steed, 20-2
Wilson, 55
William Bentinck, Lord, 43, 76, 85-9, 95, 98, 101-7
„ Bolts, 6, 25, 33-4
„ Butterword Bayley, 77-8, 88
„ Caxton, 32
„ Digby, 26-7
„ Duane, 41-2
„ Hunter, Sir, 3, 10, 14, 164
„ Jones, 55
„ Sins, 160
„ Wilkins, 55
Winston Churchill, 100

Y

Young Bengal, 57, 108, 115

Z

Zoobdut-ul-Akhbar, 118