

Journalism in Andhra Pradesh

Then and Now

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The story of Indian journalism is, in essence, the story of the nationalist movement.

The freedom movement needed an effective and powerful vehicle to kindle and sustain patriotic feelings among the people through a mass campaign. Newspapers of the day fulfilled this need through a series of bold reports, fearless editorials and emotional appeals to the people to join the movement. Journalists of the day braved lathi-charges, courted imprisonment and risked closure of the newspaper to further the movement.

Only a thin line divided journalists and leaders, as both were fired by the spirit of liberation. Editors, publishers and writers defied ruthless curbs on the freedom of the press in furthering this cause even as veteran politicians used the medium to fight the colonial powers and to broaden the mass-base of the struggle.

A lot has been written about how Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Jawaharlal Nehru, Annie Besant and nearer home in the South, stalwarts like Tanguturi Prakasam, Duggirala Gopalakrishnayya, Konda Venkatappaiah, Pattabhi Sitaramayya and a host of others had effectively utilised this platform for their campaign against the British. Some of these leaders had started their own newspapers. The role played by editors like Desodharaka Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao, Mutnuri Krishna Rao,

Gadicherla Harisarvotthama Rao, Khasa Subba Rau, Kotamraju Rama Rao, GV Krupanidhi, Kunduru Iswara Dutt and others was not a whit less significant.

The fiery articles in the media had tremendous impact on the people. Andhra Patrika, started by Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao, and Mutnuri's Krishna Patrika were immensely popular, as were many other smaller newspapers of the day. At the height of the nationalist movement, the two dailies were read out for the benefit of the group gatherings. Just like today's film fan clubs, these papers had reader clubs. The British hated these newspapers so much that the Collector of Krishna in 1923 named Andhra Patrika as 'the most evil influence in the Telugu country'. Krishna Patrika also was branded as 'a pernicious influence'. It was said that 'Andhras emerged from darkness to light only after Andhra Patrika and Krishna Patrika came into existence'. One Bobba Venkata Seshaiyah of Kavutaram in Krishna district was so carried away by reports appearing in 'Desabhimani' that he was popular as 'Desabhimani' Venkata Seshayya.

"Swarajya"

Prakasam Panthulu started "Swarajya" to strengthen the nationalist movement and in order to keep it going, had lost all his wealth. The list of people who had worked with Prakasam in 'Swarajya' read like 'who is who' of Indian Journalism those days. They included Khasa , Kotamraju Rama Rao, Krupanidhi, Sardar Panikkar, Kolavennu Ramakoteswara Rao etc.

On March 26, 1908, Harisarvotthama Rao, editor of 'Swarajya', a Telugu journal from Bezawada (not to be mistaken with its namesake edited by

Prakasam panthulu), was arrested for sedition and sentenced to 3 years rigorous imprisonment. It was the first case of sedition against a journalist in Andhra region. He wrote a stinging editorial against the white rulers for the police firing in Madras in which two innocent natives were killed. While the lower court convicted him and the publisher, Bodi Narayana Rao, for sedition, an English judge of Madras High Court, Benson, raised the sentence on Harisarvotthama Rao from 6 months simple to 3 years rigorous imprisonment. The two were the first political sufferers in Andhra to be jailed during the Vandemataram movement.

Even smaller journals could arouse patriotic feelings among the people who, like some inflammable material, were waiting to be ignited. These journals provided the emotional spark. The practice of readers those days was for a number of them to gather at some spot and have the news developments read by someone intelligibly. A good journal was thus able to radiate views and news more effectively. For instance, Swarajya was known to have a modest circulation, but every copy was treated as precious by the subscribers who shared it with several others. The newspaper had such a strong bond with the people that they queued up before the office in the evenings to buy a copy and be the 'first to know'. This would cause traffic jams on the busy street in Madras!

In Telangana

Conditions were much worse in the Telangana region of the princely state of Hyderabad. The Nizam's Government was hell-bent upon suppressing and killing Telugu, the language of the people, their culture

End of Preview.

Rest of the book can be read @

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