

## DEVELOPMENT OF PRESS DURING BRITISH RULE

The evolution of Indian press during British rule was filled with difficulties like illiteracy, colonial pressure and repression. But later on, it became a prominent tool for the freedom struggle.

### **Some of the important developments are:**

- The first printing press was established by Portuguese in 1556.
- First newspaper of India was established in 1780 by **James Augustus Hickey** named Calcutta General Advertiser or The Bengal Gazette. He is considered as the 'Father of Indian press'.
- Bengal Gazette is also sometimes known as Hickey's Gazette.
- This newspaper was later seized by the government in 1782.

### **The censorship Act, 1799:**

- It was enacted by Lord Wellesley to prevent French from spreading rumours which could harm British.
- According to this, every newspaper should contain the names of the printer, editor and proprietor.
- Before printing anything, it should be submitted to the secretary of Censorship.

### **Licensing regulation, 1823:**

- It was enacted by John Adams.
- Every publisher was required to get a license from the government.
- In case of default, the penalty was Rs 400 and the press would be ceased by the government.
- Government has the right to cancel the license also.

**Note:** The restrictions were directed mainly to Indian language newspaper or those edited by the Indians like Mirat-ul-Akbar (which was published by Rammohan Roy) had to stop its publication.

### **Press Act of 1835 or Metcalfe Act:**

- Charles Metcalfe, also called Liberator of Indian press, repealed 1823 rules by John Adams.
- This continued till 1856 which led to the growth of the newspaper in India.

### **Licensing Act, 1857:**

- Due to emergency caused by the revolt of 1857, the government imposed licensing instructions on the procedure laid in the Press act of 1835.
- The government even reserved the right to stop publication and circulation of the book, newspaper or printed matter.

### **Registration Act, 1867:**

- It replaced the Press act of 1835 or Metcalfe's Act.
- It was regulatory in nature.

- Every newspaper/book should have the name of the publisher, place of the publication and the name of the printer.
- A copy of the published material was required to be submitted to the local government within a month.

### **Vernacular Press Act, 1878:**

- The vernacular press (local language press) used to criticize British rule. Therefore they came down heavily to curb vernacular press in 1878.
- It was nicknamed 'Gagging Act'.
- Lord Lytton was responsible for this act.
- According to this, Magistrates were authorized to ask any publisher of newspaper to give assurance of not publishing anything threatening peace and security in the country.
- Magistrate decision was final in any dispute.
- This law was not applicable to the English press.
- This Act empowered the government to issue search warrants, and enter newspaper premises even without court orders.

More stringent laws were enacted when the freedom movement gained momentum. Every reporting was closely monitored and comments against the government were not tolerated.

- Under this, Surendranath Banerjee was the first Indian journalist to be imprisoned for criticizing a judge of Calcutta high court in 1883.
- Balgangadhar Tilak was mostly associated with the nationalist fight for the freedom of the press.
- He was related to building up nationalist sentiment through Ganpati(1893) and Shivaji(1896) festivals and newspaper Kesari and Maratha.

### **The Gagging law was repealed in 1881 by Lord Ripon.**

### **Newspaper Act, 1908:**

- Magistrates were empowered to confiscate printing press or property connected to the newspaper, which published objectionable material like incitement to murder or acts of violence.
- Newspapers were allowed to appeal in high court within 15 days.

### **Indian Press Act, 1910:**

- This measure was put into effect in order to curtail and restrict the emerging Indian Freedom Struggle, particularly during the arrival of World War I.
- It empowered the local government to demand a security deposit of Rs. 500 to Rs. 2000 which could be forfeited and its registration cancelled owing to the printing of any objectionable material.

### **Press Committee, 1921:**

- On the recommendation of Press committee chaired by Tej Bahadur Sapru, the press act 1908 and 1910 were repealed.

### The Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act, 1931:

- Impact of Gandhian movement provoked the government to issue an ordinance in 1930.
- Provincial governments were given the power to suppress the press.
- In 1932 provisions of the act further amplified in the form of criminal amendment act.
- During the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War pre-censorship reinforced and amended under the Press emergent Act in 1931 and official secrets Act.
- Under this act, Congress and its activities were declared illegal.

### Press regulating Act, 1942:

- Registration of journalist was made compulsory.
- Messages regarding civil disturbances and news regarding acts of sabotage were restricted.
- There were limitations on headlines and space given to news on disturbances.
- The government had authority on arbitrary censorship.

### Press Enquiry Committee, 1947:

- Set up to examine the press law in the light of fundamental rights by the constituent assembly.
- It recommended the repeal of Indian Emergency Powers Act, 1931 and amendments in other acts.

**In favour of censorship:** Wellesley, Lord Minto-II, Lord Adams, Lord Canning, Lord Lytton, Lord Elphinstone, Sir Munro.

**In favour of freedom of Press:** Lord Hastings, Charles Metcalfe, Macaulay, Ripon.

### List of Newspapers:

S. No.	Name of Newspaper	Founder
1.	Sambad Kaumadi (1821) Mirat-ul-Akbar (1822)	Rajaram Mohan Roy
2.	Amrit Bazar Patrika (1868)	Shishir Kumar Ghosh and Motilal Ghosh
3.	The Hindu (1878)	G.S. Aiyer and Veeraraghavachariar
4.	Kesari and Maratha (1881)	Balgangadhar Tilak
5.	Swadeshmitram	G.S. Aiyer
6.	Vande Matram	Aurobindo Ghosh
7.	Sudharak	Gopal Krishna Gokhale
8.	Rast Goftar(1 <sup>st</sup> in Gujarati language) 1851	Dadabhai Naoroji

9.	New India (weekly)	Bipin Chandra Pal
10.	New India (daily) Commonweal	Annie Besant
11.	Yugantar (1906)	Bhupendra Nath Dutta and Barinder Kumar Ghosh
12.	Bombay Chronicle (1913)	Pherozshah Mehta
13.	Hindustan	Madan Mohan Malviya
14.	Mooknayak	B.R. Ambedkar
15.	Independent	Motilal Nehru
16.	Punjabi	Lala Lajpat Rai
17.	Indian Mirror	Devendra Nath Tagore
18.	Young India Nav Jeevan Harijan	Mahatma Gandhi
19.	National Herald (1938)	Jawaherlal Nehru
20.	Prabhadha Bharat Udbodhava	Swami Vivekanand