UNIT 1 THE INDIAN PRESS

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit seeks to explain what is meant by “Press”, and what are its various constituents. Here we shall discuss how the Indian press originated, how it developed over the years and what its shape is today. By the time you have read through this unit, you should be able to:

- describe how and when the press originated in India, and identify various stages of its development;
- comment on the role of the Indian Press in the nationalist movement;
- describe the state of the press at the time of World Wars I & II; and
- describe how the Indian press has changed after Independence.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Block 2 concentrated on the characteristics of mass media. In the concluding unit of that Block, we took a good look at the characteristics of messages. Now, in Block 3, as we have already noted, our concern will be with the origin and development of the various mass media. The oldest among them is the press and in this unit, we shall trace the origin of the Indian press, more than 200 years ago and see how it has developed over the years... during the British rule and after the country’s independence in 1947. Finally, we shall briefly examine the status of the Indian Press today. In the following unit, that is Unit 2, we shall be ready to consider the birth and growth of other mass media... radio, television and cinema.
1.2 WHAT IS "PRESS"?

In common parlance, by "press", we mean "printing press". But in journalistic and mass communication terminology, by "press" we mean print media — newspapers, journals, magazines, periodicals, pamphlets, leaflets, books, or any other printed material like handbills, documents, etc. Even news agencies, press syndicates and feature agencies form part of the umbrella term "press". More often "press" refers to newspapers and magazines, particularly in the expressions like "freedom of the press", "privileges of the press".

A newspaper means "any printed periodical work containing public news or comment on public news". It gives not only facts, but also interpretation of facts and statements of opinions through editorials, news analysis and in a number of other ways. Thus, a newspaper on the one hand is a medium of information and on the other hand it serves as a means of reflecting public opinion and of moulding public opinion. It is a vehicle of expression, education and enlightenment. It is a source of entertainment. It also serves as a medium of advertising and publication. Thus, in newspapers we find information, opinion, publicity and propaganda.

Check Your Progress 1

Note:  
i) Use the space given below for your answers.
   ii) Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of this unit.

1) What do you mean by the term "Press"?

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1.3 ORIGIN OF THE PRESS IN INDIA

The “press”, in a sense, is as old as the human race itself. Human beings’ instinctive curiosity to know about what is happening around has always been there. The writings on the walls and on stones dating back to several centuries before Christ were the first signs of the origin of the press in India. Emperor Ashoka’s edicts renouncing violence after the Kalinga war are available to this day on stone. Later, paper and writing materials were invented, state records in the form of messages from spies were maintained in a rudimentary form. According to J. Natarajan, “newsletters” were the earliest though rough form of a “newspaper”. The newsletters were regularly issued during the Mughal period. These “manuscript newspapers” were the only source of information about the developments taking place in various parts of the empires of kings, down the ages. The practice seems to have been continued until the East India Company acquired began ruling over India. It is the dissemination of these newsletters which perhaps inspired James Augustus Hickey to start his newspaper Bengal Gazette in 1780.

1.3.1 Hickey’s Bengal Gazette

The first printing press was established in Bombay in 1674, the second in Madras in 1772 and the third in Calcutta in 1779. Although, the British were responsible for bringing the printing press in India, they were most allergic to the emergence of a newspaper in this country. Dr. R. Das Gupta, former Director, National Library, Calcutta, writes: “About 14 years before the establishment of the Bengal Gazette, one William Bolts, a merchant of Dutch origin, pasted a notice on the door of the council House in Calcutta to inform the public that the want of a Printing press in this city is a great disadvantage. On 17 April, 1767, the council at Fort William asked Bolts to quit Bengal and proceed to Madras... in order to take his passage from there to Europe. The history of the Indian press begins with the deportation of a person who wanted to found a newspaper. Hicky’s initiative to publish his gazette was therefore an adventure...”

Hicky’s newspaper known as Bengal Gazette or Calcutta General Advertiser was born on 29 January, 1780 and described itself as “A weekly Political and Commercial Paper Open to All Parties but Influenced by None”. The newspaper was mostly devoted to gossip, rumour, and juicy and sob stories about doings and misdoings of the East Indian Company staff where he himself was employed as a clerk. His exposure of private lives of people at high places led to his imprisonment and banning of his paper for some time. In this regard, Hicky wrote: “I have no particular passion for printing a newspaper. I have no propensity: I was not bred to slavish life of hard work, yet I take a pleasure in enslaving my body in order to purchase freedom for my mind and soul”. His paper, however, languished as he suffered heavy losses. The closure of the paper came about in March, 1782 when an order was issued for the seizure of the printing types.

1.3.2 Censorship and Regulations

Thereafter, several newspapers came into existence in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras in quick succession but they had a short life. The East India Company had now started taking a serious view of the contents of newspapers and imposed ruthless restrictions on the printing presses and editors. Censorship was introduced in Madras
in 1795 when a newspaper entitled The Madras Gazette was required to submit for scrutiny all the material meant for publication. Similarly, in Bengal, several papers such as the Bengal Journal, Indian World and Bengal Harkaru had incurred the displeasure of the East Indian Company's authorities in one form or the other. A number of legal restrictions were imposed on the press soon after.

As J. Natrajan says, "the first two decades of the 19th century saw the imposition of a rigid control of the press by Lords Wellesley and Warren Hastings. The May, 1799 regulations required the newspapers to carry the names of the printer, editor, and proprietor in every issue and to submit for scrutiny all material meant for publication. The censorship rules, however, were not strictly followed and also not so severely enforced. A lot of important developments took place between 1813 and 1818, and consequently, among others, a number of missionaries started publishing weekly and monthly newspapers in Bengal such as Dig Darshan, Samachar Darpan, and the Friend of India, the precursor of The Statesman of today.

A number of regulations known as the Adams regulations of 1818 were issued. These gave enough freedom to the editors but a strict watch was kept on the contents of their papers. Around this time, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and James Silk Buckingham raised a voice for freedom of the press. Though pre-censorship was withdrawn, a number of rules continued to be in force to strictly deal with the press. Ram Mohan Roy's weeklies, Sambad Kaumdi in Bengali and Miraat-ul-Akhbar in Persian, and Bombay's noted paper, Mumbai Samachar, (which exists even today) started publication.

At this point of time, the press came out with some criticism of the administration. Therefore, the first press ordinance was issued in 1823. It laid down stringent regulations for the editors and heavy penalties and fines were prescribed for infringement. The East India Company staff was prohibited from having any relations with the newspapers. While political writings were forbidden, social and religious news, particularly those by missionaries, was encouraged. However, things changed when William Bentick became the Governor-General of India. He and Raja Ram Mohan Roy were instrumental in improving the social climate in the country and a somewhat liberal attitude was meted out to the press by the authorities. The press was allowed a measure of freedom. In 1835 when Charles Metcafe became the Governor-General, he relaxed several restrictions previously imposed on the press.

The first Indian-owned newspaper, according to N. Krishna Murthy, was the Bengal Gazette started by Gangadhar Battacharya. The press in several Indian languages had started making rapid strides. Urdu and Persian papers in north-west India won over many readers. Also, the Marathi and Gujarati press had started to make their presence felt. Besides, newspapers in Hindi, Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil, Oriya, Assamese and Punjabi appeared around 1850 or later.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.
          ii) Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of this unit.

Indicate by ticking (✓) whether the statements are correct or incorrect.

a) William Bolts, a Dutch national, was asked to leave Calcutta by the British authorities for pasting a notice.
( ) Correct ( ) Incorrect

b) Bengal Gazette was published first in 1780 by Raja Ram Mohan Roy.
( ) Correct ( ) Incorrect

c) Since its first appearance in 1780, the Bengal Gazette is still being published regularly.
( ) Correct ( ) Incorrect
1.3.3 The War of Independence

When the 1857 war of independence broke out, the growth of the press received a setback. The press freedom, consequently, was curtailed drastically. After the failure of the war of independence, the governance of India changed hands from the East Indian Company to the crown in England. In 1859, when Lord Canning became the Viceroy of India, the India Penal Code (IPC) was adopted in 1860. A number of newspapers from Bengal, such as Nil Darpan, The Hindu, Patriot, Shome Prakash, Indian Mirror, Bengalee and several others influenced the Indian public opinion a great deal. With the appearance of the Amrita Bazar Patrika, first in Bengali and then dramatically changing over to the English language, the complexion of journalism in India transformed suddenly and radically.

It needs to be recorded here that around this time a number of noted English language newspapers were established. The Times of India came into being with the amalgamation of four papers — The Bombay Times, The Courier, The Standard and The Telegraph. Besides, the three other noted English newspapers — The Pioneer, Civil and Military Gazette and The Statesman — were born. In Madras, The Mail (an evening) and The Hindu, the largest circulated paper at present, also came into existence soon after.

This period witnessed a boom in the Indian language press in the country. Several newspapers in almost all major Indian languages appeared on the horizon. The Bengali language press was of course on the forefront followed by the press in Hindi, Marathi, Urdu, Tamil, Gujarati, Malayalam, Kannada, Punjabi, and other languages.

1.3.4 Famous Leaders, Journalists and Newspapers

A number of India’s great men, intellectuals, political leaders, thinkers and
journalists came to be associated with the press in English and other Indian languages. Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai, Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, Surendra Nath Banerjee, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Bal-Gangadhar Tilak, Motilal Ghosh, Syed Abdulla Breivi, Aurobindo Ghose, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and many others made their remarkable contributions in the development of the press in the country. Most of the eminent journalists were also eminent freedom fighters and vice-versa.

Several famous newspapers such as Bande Matram (Hindi), Kesari and Maratha (Marathi), Swadesamitran (Tamil), Amrita Bazar Patrika, National Herald, The Civil and Military Gazette, Free Press Journal, Bombay Chronicle, The Leader, The Tribune, Madras Standard, The Hitavada, and a large number of other papers in English came to be set up. There were a lot of problems that these newspapers had to confront. Kaleidoscopic restrictions on news-gathering, printing and display were imposed. Vernacular Press Act, Official Secrets Act, Newspaper (Incitement to Offences) Act, the newly introduced sections of the Indian Penal Code such 124-A, 153-A and 505, Defence of Indian Rules, Post Office Act, Press and Registration of Books Act, the Sea Customs Act and a large number of ordinances throttled the growth and development of the press in India in all respects from the very beginning.

Yet the fact remains that the plethora of ruthless laws could not effectively suppress the growth and development of the press in the country. The support that the Indian press got from the people at large was remarkable indeed. Gandhiji once said fittingly: “One of the objectives of a newspaper is to understand the popular feelings and give expression to it; another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments; and the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects.”

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.
   ii) Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of this unit.

1) In 1857, after the war of Independence failed, suddenly there was a boom of newspaper publications. What could be the reasons for such a boom?

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2) Mahatma Gandhi has articulated three main reasons for the existence of newspapers during the movement for the Independence period. What are those?

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1.4 NATIONALISM AND THE INDIAN PRESS

As stated earlier, while the growth and development of the press in India was profusely facilitated by the nationalist movement for freedom, the press also lent a tremendous boost and served as an effective instrument of the nationalist struggle against the British. It frequently took up cudgels with the authorities and transmitted the message of freedom to the masses of India and raised the public conscience against the repressive British regime, and its atrocities in India. The rules and regulations promulgated during 1857, when the first of war of independence was waged against the British regime in India, were aimed at curbing the press. One of these laws was later known as the “Ganging Act” No. XV of 1857. This act revived numerous merciless measures against the press in the country.

1.4.1 Vernacular Press Act

When Queen Victoria assumed the title of “Empress of India” in 1857, nationalist leaders demanded a greater role in the conduct of government affairs in India. The newspapers and journals devoted liberal space to news and comments on such events. Lord Lytton, worried over the increasing impact of the writings in the press, particularly in the language press, and enforced the Vernacular Press Act on March 1, 1878, for stringently controlling the newspapers. The law came down heavily on the press. Under these regulations, any district magistrate or a police commissioner was empowered to force the printer and publisher of a newspaper to agree not to publish certain kinds of material, to demand security, and to confiscate any printed matter it deemed to be objectionable.

According to N. Krishna Murthy, the Vernacular Press Act of 1878 was the greatest blow to the freedom of the Press in India, and the Indian languages newspapers suffered most heavily because of this law. Again, according to him, “in order to keep the press fully posted with accurate and current information, Lytton instituted the post of “Press Commissioner for India”. His main job was to liaise between the press and the government.

1.4.2 Some Great Newspapers

When the Indian National Congress was established in 1885, a number of newspapers in several languages had large readerships. The Tribune, Kesari, Spectator, Indu-Prakash, Maratha, Amrita Bazar Patrika, The Pioneer, The Bengalee, The Englishman, The Hindu and others in all parts of India enjoyed a high reputation and large circulations. Meanwhile, the periodical journalism also surfaced at this point of time. The Illustrated Weekly was brought out in Bombay and the Capital was founded in Calcutta. Besides The Hindustan Review, and Indian Review also came into being as monthly journals.

In 1889, when Lord Curzon took over as the Governor-General of India, a number of new measures such as the partition of Bengal and enactment of the India Official Secrets Act, 1889, further estranged the people from the British government in India. The press opposed these steps tooth and nail. By that time, a number of draconian laws such as the Press and Registration of Books Act, and Sections 124-A and 505 of the IPC had created tremendous difficulties for the press. Numerous nationalist leaders such as Lala Lajpat Rai, Aurobindo Ghose, B.C. Pal, Lokmanya Tilak, and several others had been arrested for their contributions in the press in diverse ways.

It should also be mentioned here that most of the great English language newspapers of Indian appeared between 1860s and early 1920s. These included modern time greats such as The Hindu, The Times of India, The Statesman, The Amrita Bazar Patrika (defunct now), The Pioneer, The Hindustan Times, and of course several others in Indian languages all over the country.
Check Your Progress 4

Note:  
i) Use the space given below for your answers.  
ii) Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of this unit.

1) How did the press play an important role in India's nationalist movement?
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2) Answer in one sentence each of the following questions.
   a) What is 'Ganging Act'?
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   b) Why was the Vernacular Press Act enforced?
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   c) When was the Indian National Congress established?
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   d) Who was responsible for enacting the 'Indian Official Secrets Act, 1889?  
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1.5 PRESS AND WORLD WAR I & II

From 1914 to 1947, the freedom struggle continued to gather momentum. The British Government was all too anxious to enlist the support of the press in its war efforts. The press was inclined to go along with the nationalists in their struggle for freedom.

1.5.1 World War I

When the First World War broke out in 1914, the British government released nationalist leaders from jail with a view to soliciting their support in the conduct of war. But several newspapers such as The Madras Standard, New India, Bombay Chronicle, and Maratha took divergent stands. As a result, some 180 newspapers were asked to play security deposits and assure support to the Government in 1914-1915. Meanwhile, the press also softened its stand vis-a-vis the British government in India. In 1918, the number of newspapers required to deposit security with government came down to only 30 from 180 in 1914.

However, after the conclusion of the war and during the 1920s the British government took a rather stiff stand on the question of granting freedom to Indian and several noted political leaders who had started the non-cooperation programme. The press lent active support to the nationalists' agenda. Mahatma Gandhi wrote in his Young India on July 2, 1925: "I have taken up journalism not for its sake, but merely as an aid to what I have conceived to be my mission in life." Again, in 1942, Chittaranjan Das wrote: "It is better not to issue newspapers than to issue them under a feeling of suppression."
As the Indian press was passing through a most difficult period, a number of newspapers were set up by freedom fighters who functioned as proprietor-editors. Apart from Gandhiji's Young India, Motilal Ghosh was the owner-editor of Amrita Bazar Patrika, Surendranath Banerjee of the Bengalee, Kasturi Ranga Iyengar of The Hindu. There were examples galore of such papers.

1.5.2 World War II

For about two decades during 1925-1946, Gandhiji and his ideology of journalism dominated the Indian press in the development of opinion journalism with editorials overshadowing the news. The two decades also saw proliferation of newspapers in almost all Indian languages, particularly in Hindi and English. During the World War II (1939-45), the press initially supported the stand of the British government in India. However, a conflict soon arose on reporting the war news in the newspapers. Gandhiji resorted to the civil disobedience movement and several newspapers supported him to the hilt. The government later came up with a notification "prohibiting the printing and publishing of any matter calculated directly or indirectly to foment opposition to the prosecution of war ..." It was around this time that the All India Newspapers' Editors Conference (AINEC) came into being. The main objective of the AINEC at the time was "to preserve high traditions and standards of journalism; to safeguard the freedom of publication of news and comment; to represent the press in India in its relations with the public and the government."

Meanwhile, the Second World War coming to an end and the rays of freedom's dawn started creeping slowly on Indian horizons. When Mountbatten came to India, he revealed the plan to partition Indian into two independent nations. The newspapers, according to Krishna Murthy, demonstrated "a general tone of acquiescence with a satisfaction that after all freedom of the country was ultimately becoming a reality".

1.6 AFTER INDEPENDENCE

With the arrival of independence in August, 1947, a new era arrived in India in which the role of the press changed slowly. It had to shoulder new responsibilities now. After assiduously contributing to the attainment of freedom, the press by and by assumed the role of an adversary.

1.6.1 Nehru's Contribution

Jawaharial Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, was a true democrat and an instinctive champion of the liberty of the press. He bestowed a tremendous encouragement on the print media during the 17 years that he was at the helm of affairs of the country.
The late M. Chalapathi Rao, thus assessed Nehru's contribution: "In the period after Independence, Nehru played a large part in shaping all thinking about the press, as Gandhiji had done before Independence. He was opposed by powerful sections of the press, but he could carry on easily because he was a product of adult suffrage, had mass appeal and vast majorities, while newspapers still represented a small segment of opinion. But he stood for tolerance and accepted that a vigorous, critical press was a vital part of democracy, while expecting of it dignity, knowledge and high standards. He did not like press barons or barons of any kind, and he wanted editors to have the freedom necessary to function freely, to develop character, and impress their character on the newspapers they edited. The greater the freedom the greater the responsibility. It was from this point of view that he disliked new developments in the press, the passing of crucial centres of the press to a particular class of industrialists, the growth of chains, the decline in the status of staffs under proprietors interested primarily in other industries. He insisted on quality, on a sense of social responsibility and on diffusion of ownership. He was looking forward to mass circulations, though he would not allow any pandering to the mass mind... He, of course, deplored misuse of freedom, but if it came to a question of action, he preferred self-regulation. He was a passionate defender of press freedom as of all other freedoms. The traditions which grew in his time are becoming deep-rooted."

Activity 1

As pointed by the First Press Commission, it is desired that the ownership of newspapers and press should not be concentrated to a few powerful individual. Has the pattern changed in the last 40 years after the First Press Commission brought out its report?

Find it out yourself:

- Find the major newspapers, magazines, journals published from various centres in India.
- Determine the owners of these newspapers.
- Having done this, draw a map of India in the space provided below and use colour pencils to show the network and concentration of newspapers in various parts of the country. Use separate colours for each chain.
1.6.2 The Press Commissions

For the first time a thorough inquiry into the structure and functioning of our press was made by the Press Commission during 1952-54. The Commission noted that there was a considerable degree of concentration of newspaper ownership and saw the danger of this tendency developing further. Among the many recommendations of the Commission to help the development of a healthy press, one was for the appointment of a Press Registrar. It also recommended the setting up of a Press Council for self-regulation of the press.

The Second Press Commission, in its report of 1982, strongly recommended the delinking of the press from its connections with other industries. It also called for greater diffusion of ideas in the society. The Commission clarified that it viewed journalism not merely as an industry but as a public service and profession.

One of the major recommendations of the Commission was for the setting up of a National Development Commission (NDC) to promote the growth of the entire Indian press. NDC was to set up advisory assistance specially to small and medium newspapers for the development of printing and other technologies suitable for them.

Yet another important recommendation was with regard to news to advertisement ratio. It suggested 60:40 rates for big papers, 50:50 for medium and 40:60 for small papers.

Now, we have a large and well developed press. There are some 35,000 newspapers, journals and magazines published in 92 languages and dialects. Most of them employ the latest technologies of printing and management. The press can look forward to a bright future in the 21st Century.

Check Your Progress 3

Note:

i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of this unit.

1) How did Jawaharlal Nehru help the Indian Press take a firm root after Independence?

2) What was the major observation of the First Press Commission?

3) What were the two most important recommendations of the Second Press Commission?
1.6.3 The Present Status

At the threshold of the 21st century, the Indian press today compares favourably with the top quality press anywhere in the world. The newspapers in India in almost all languages are fully modernized in every area of their operation—news reporting, editing, design-layout, production, distribution, advertising, sales management and editorial contents. The standards match the best in the world. Saturday/Sunday magazines and daily supplements in some newspapers such as The Hindu and the Eenadu (Telugu daily) offer an enormous variety of features ranging from facial make-up to quality management from religion to science. Amazing innovations mark the Indian press today in all parts of the country—from Kashmir to Kerala, from Kohima to Kutch. It is adequately equipped to meet the challenge of the communication revolution which is changing the world out of shape every hour, every day. Though the tone and tenor of the Indian press have always reflected the stresses and strains of the times, it is highly individualistic, completely independent, fully professional and thoroughly forward-looking.

Today, there are over 35,000 newspapers, journals and magazines in India published in 92 languages and dialects. While most dailies and several periodicals in all Indian languages use the most modern computer and facsimile technologies, there are still newspapers which are written in hand, typed with manual typewriters, cyclostyled and photocopied; there are others which depend on hand composition or monotype or linotype composition and employ letterpress process of printing and use traditional outdated rotaries.

The industry employs the latest techniques in all area of management. All commercial aspects of newspapers and magazines such as advertising, circulation, and sales management are efficiently and effectively organized. With an increase in literacy rates, rise in incomes, greater thirst for news, newspapers in all languages can look forward to a bright future. Multiplying circulations and swelling advertising revenues now beckon the newspaper proprietors. During the last two decades, dailies in all languages have set up editions in such remote places where people could not even dream of seeing copies of newspapers earlier. Besides, some newspapers have started sister publications in several local languages. For example the Indian Express group, besides its English daily edition published from 16 centres in the country, owns a paper each in Tamil, Gujarati, Hindi, Telugu, Kannada, and Marathi. It also owns a financial daily, a film weekly (in three languages) and a television monthly. Similarly, the Ananda Bazar Patrika group has a paper each in Bengali and English, a financial daily, a fortnightly each on cinema, sports, economics and commerce. Hindi newspapers Aaj, Jagran, Bhaskar, Nav Bharat and many others come out from more than half a dozen towns. One can safely predict a bright future for the Indian press in the 21st Century; it is bound to attain new and great heights in all aspects of newspaper production.

1.7 LET US SUM UP

After having noted what the terms “press” and “newspaper” mean, in this unit we traced the development of the press in India from the time James Augustus Hicky started the first newspaper Bengal Gazette or Calcutta General Advertiser in Calcutta on 29 January, 1780. The paper had to close down in March, 1782. Thereafter, several newspapers came into existence in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras but they all had a short life. A number of legal instructions were imposed on the press by the British rulers. As J. Natrajan says, “the first two decades of the 19th century saw the imposition of a rigid control of the press by Lords Wellesley and Warren Hastings.” Adams Regulations of 1818 ensured a strict watch on the contents of newspapers. Around this time, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and James Silk Buckingham came on the scene, raised their voice for freedom of the press and made a valuable contribution to the development of the press.

The war of Independence in 1857 saw the press freedom curtailed drastically. After the collapse of the war of Independence, the control over India changed hands from
the East India Company to the Crown of England. Many newspapers in English and Indian languages came into existence soon after. In course of time, a large number of political leaders, thinkers and journalists such as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Motilal Ghosh, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad came to be associated with the press. Most of the eminent journalists were freedom fighters and likewise many of the freedom fighters were journalists. The press received a remarkable support from the people and despite the numerous ruthless laws, it continued to grow. The press played a magnificent role in supporting the struggle for independence.

From 1914 to 1947, the freedom struggle continued to gather momentum. The British government was anxious to enlist the support of the press in its war efforts. But the press was inclined to go along with the nationalists in their struggle for freedom.

After India attained its independence, the role of the press changed. Jawaharlal Nehru, our first Prime Minister, was a strong champion of the liberty of the press. He, of course, deplored misuse of freedom but, if it came to a question of action, he preferred self regulation.

We have had two Press Commissions so far. The first Commission in 1954 and the second in 1982 made some valuable recommendations for the growth of the press along the right lines.

1.8 FURTHER READING

1) Krishna Murthy, Nadig (1966): Indian Journalism — Origin Growth and Development of Indian Journalism from Ashoka to Nehru, Prasaranga, University of Mysore.


1.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS : MODEL ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1) Generally by the term ‘Press’ we mean ‘Printing Press’. We also mean the whole gamut of print media by this term... Newspaper, Magazines, Journals etc.

2) Press specifically means print media. The television, radio, cinema, audio-video channels of mass communication are not included in the ‘press’.

Check Your Progress 2

1) a) Correct
   b) Incorrect
   c) Incorrect
   d) Correct
   e) Correct

Check Your Progress 3

1) The following could have been some of the reasons for the boom in newspaper publication after the failure of the Independence War in 1857:
   • the leadership thought of attacking the colonial power through the press,
• to bring about more awareness among the people
• to give voice to the issue of society

2) The three main reasons for the existence of the newspaper during the independence movement as articulated by Mahatma Gandhi are the following:
• to give expression to the sentiments of the people
• to understand the feeling of the people with regard to issues
• to expose the defects in the administration

Check Your Progress 4
1) The press in India during the nationalist movement disseminated the views of important leaders on various national issues. This act of the press helped the people to rise to the call of the leaders and strengthen the movement against the British.

2) a) Ganging Act No. XV of 1857 was enacted to curb the freedom of the press.

   b) Lord Lytton was alarmed by the impact of the Vernacular press on the people. Hence to curb the freedom of the Vernacular press, he enacted the Vernacular Press Act.

   c) Indian National Congress was established in 1885.

   d) Lord Curzon, when he was appointed as Governor-General in 1889.

Check Your Progress 5

1) Jawaharlal Nehru knew that a critical and highly developed press would help the democracy take a firm root in India. He was for the freedom of the press and he condemned the misuse of this freedom by the journalists.

2) The First Press Commission observed that only a handful of powerful individuals owned the newspapers chain. This, it said was not a healthy sign for Indian democracy.

3) The Second Press Commission recommended that:

   • The owners of newspapers should delink from the other industries; and
   • A National Development Commission (NDC) be set up to oversee a healthy growth and fairly diffused press in India.