



Role of the Press and Literature in the Indian National Movement (1885–1947)

Prof. Ravi Prakash

HOD, Department of History

Chaudhary Bansi Lal University, Bhiwani, Haryana

Corresponding Author: profraviprakash74@gmail.com

Abstract

Between 1885 and 1947, the Indian national movement was profoundly shaped by the press and literary production, which together functioned as powerful instruments of political awakening and social mobilization. The expansion of print culture, supported by advances in printing technology and the growth of vernacular languages, enabled the circulation of nationalist ideas across diverse regions and social groups. Newspapers, journals, pamphlets, and literary works created a vibrant public sphere in which colonial authority was questioned and alternative visions of nationhood were articulated. Writers, editors, and journalists employed prose, poetry, fiction, and editorials to foster political consciousness, critique imperial policies, and inspire collective action. Literature in Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, and other regional languages played a crucial role in linking cultural identity with political resistance, while the press translated elite nationalist debates into accessible public discourse. Despite censorship, sedition laws, and state repression, print media sustained dialogue, shaped public opinion, and connected local grievances to national aspirations. The interaction between press and literature thus contributed decisively to the formation of nationalist consciousness and strengthened the ideological foundations of India's struggle for independence.

Keywords: Indian National Movement; Press; Literature; Nationalism; Public Sphere; Colonial India; Political Consciousness.

1. Introduction

The period of Indian national movement between 1885 and 1947 encompasses several important public movements aimed at independence from colonial rule. The role of the press and literature in India became especially pronounced as political self-consciousness started to mature among the leadership and the populace of the Indian National Congress. The emergence of a public sphere in late 19th century India based on new techniques of printing, transmission of political ideas through newspapers and journals, and the growth of regional languages made possible the circulation of the nation-wide movements. Some central themes of national awakening were the role of education, socio-religious awakening, and the search for a national identity. The intention of this paper is to analyze the role of press and literature in the Indian National Movement between 1885 and 1947 in greater detail.

Austrian sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas traces the transformation of modern society from feudalism to capitalism and the emergence of a bourgeois public in his book entitled *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Using the backdrop of the western world, he sketches the origin of the public sphere and the nature of public discourse and debate. During the late Victorian era, the understanding of the public sphere took a fresh turn in India. The introduction of steam power in printing and the establishment of the railway system helped enlarge the circulation of literature and journals. The major languages of India for literary production in the late 19th century were Urdu, Bengali, English and Hindi (Singh, 2018).

A progressive analysis of violence committed on women in Punjab between February and August 1919 indicates that the discharge of arms began at some point in February to the massive anti-government demonstration on 10 April, 1919, which subsequently turned into a riot. Censorship during this period followed non-military guidelines. Periodicals became more self-regulatory because they expected closure anyhow. Even then, criticisms appeared subtly in various forms about the activities and interrogation of the state. The behaviour of the government in 1919 brusquely transformed the public and social opinion regarding the Indian state as well as picture of the society of the colonial government. The perception of the colonial government and society diminished greatly and the education and employment changes took sufficient proportion to give rise to nationalist opinion regarding India, press and periodicals then took larger shape as the medium of generating thoughts and views (Chapman & Allison, 2011).

2. The Press in Late 19th Century India

The Indian press began to develop in the 19th century. During this period, nationalist and reforming opinions started articulating prominent social and political issues of the time. Little prior to 1857, the English language press chiefly disseminated European news to the expatriate community, and the first Indian newspaper was established only in 1816. The reemergence of Indian literary activity later focused on contemporary concerns yet remained infused with a discourse of cultural and civilizational pride. At the same time, the growth in indigenous education and interest in vernacular printing made possible the emergence of a sizeable Indic press. Early 19th-century printing centered upon the culturally and politically influential languages of Persian, Bengali, and Urdu. By the end of the century, the vernacular of new political activity had also shifted northwards to Hindi, which with Sanskrit was coalescing into a new vehicle of, among others, nationalistic discourse. Social reform and anti-caste activity found expression similarly first in Bengali and then in a range of early British-educated vernaculars like Urdu and Marathi. Literature in the several other vernaculars had by the 1940s attained various fluencies; and influential writers conversant in English also contributed similarly. Those early over-night journeys from book to living ear were carried out largely of necessity within the enclosure of a pre-existent and pleasurable home (Gupta, 1977). Personal, intimate, and literary—though without loss therefore of the conceptual, social or, as in the case of poverty, the national—they would progressively fill but later, and increasingly, in two senses: the epistolary form of news letters and over the syllabic through the vehicle of editorials. Direct, current, live, and amongst other audiences men: the political, the commercial; the capitalist and the worried; when cheaply bought could travel hundred, thousand, even million places.

In any one place none of these inputs entail loss: questions surrounding but yet without question rest with the concern of dead prints, notwithstanding the long pregnant delay. The simultaneous presence of several identical instances of what perforce must remain bygone and voiceless could still engender unease. Amongst those political among yet another onset—these contracted in space,—that the rapid clustering about a newspaper the widely scattered rural people proved still. Given that text arrives within the lives of those concerned: difference. Press met with streams of wide-ranging, drawn-driven, and brotherly concerns: at times along ingenious roads. Those little books still attracted were in no little measure thanks themselves to those now thereby carried far beyond Calcutta; were thus responsible for co-operating in none other and still distinguishing by their very lightness.—allegation of blackness which recognition spread hazily towards the delicacy of pink; care of botheration with a sprinkled of lead up (Natarajan, 1962).

In the transitional 1870s a multitude of pivotal, mobilizational political events, some ingeniously formal, were given news share: the municipal election; the several public associations; the National Congress; the invitation to the elder Jonathan Hutchinson: at times transportation not of matters public but of items propertied far broader than the. Vital reconnaissance introduces—and it was this: Hindi, earlier than English, acquired the currency of a government-relied language; of register (Sonwalkar, 2016).

2.1. Public Sphere and Political Discourse

The emergence of the political discourse in India from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century coincided with the dissemination of periodicals inaugurated by the advent of the printing press in the late 1830s. By the year 1885 when the Indian National Congress was founded, there existed a plethora of journals in different languages that catered to heterogeneous readership spread across the subcontinent and played a significant role in political mobilization. The early editors and journalists wrote predominantly in vernacular languages, while Urdu and Hindi were widely spoken languages throughout the entire north Indian region. With the independence of vernacular newspapers from missionary and Afghani influences a diverse and vibrant public sphere emerged (Chapman & Allison, 2011). The periodicals of the early phase were very few in number and subscribed mainly by elite persons and scholars; however, they gradually reached the homes of the common bhadraloks and began their spread amongst the religious leaders, women, and urban and rural youth. The availability of vernacular literature in the 1870s and 1880s facilitated the outreach campaigns of the Indian National Congress and the making of a political public (Dhital, 2019).

Colonial India witnessed a rapid spread of the newspaper press after its introduction in the early nineteenth century. Hicky's Bengal Gazette, the first newspaper in India commenced in 1780 and was followed by several vernacular periodicals published in Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, and other regional languages, some of which were undoubtedly of high literary merit. The government of the day was quite conscious of the power of the printed word and thus almost immediately began to impose restrictions on the press (Narayanrao, 2012).

2.2. Print Technologies, Literacy, and Accessibility

The advent of print technologies greatly increased the accessibility of information throughout India. By the late 19th century, identified channels enabled the dissemination of ideas in vernacular languages and the widespread circulation of national discourse across regions. This connectivity supported the emergence of an integrated public sphere in which newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, and books established political dialogue and nurtured a nascent national consciousness.

Technological developments in lithography and offset printing complemented the introduction of mechanized typesetting and advances in typography. These changes allowed the production of larger print runs without compromising quality and shaped the network of regional agencies supplying printed materials (Singh, 2018).

The decade before 1900 saw the opening of several hundred regional-language newspapers, a tenfold increase since the 1870s. Print runs also multiplied; even mass-oriented publications rarely reached 1000 copies before the mid-1880s, but figures of 5000 to 20,000 became common by 1900. Indic typographical systems evolved significantly; early works in Devanagari, Gurumukhi, and Bengali remained hard to read, but about one-third of Indian languages had acquired reasonably functional typefaces by 1900, and the first Gujarati type was in wide use. Many leading periodicals, novels, and poetry collections were now accessible in one or more regional forms, and some national journals printed text in four to eight languages (Narayanrao, 2012).

3. Literature as a Driver of National Consciousness

Although the freedom movement is commonly portrayed as a linear trajectory of anticolonial nationalism, the term “anti-colonial” can be understood only if definitions of “India” and “colonial” are explored further. While Bankim Chandra’s writings exerted an enormous influence over social and cultural nationalist movements, they lack the overtly political dimension typically associated with the anti-colonial movement.

Three motifs are common: (1) a glorious past; (2) foreign political dominance; and (3) an awakened consciousness and unity among countrymen. Since nineteenth-century Urdu prose writers and poets began promoting national ideas and articulating a notion of “anticolonial” liberation in the domestic domain, nationalists used literature to forge the idea of a country, a consciousness of a “nation,” and a spirited desire among countrymen to liberate themselves from foreign rule (Pandith, 2014).

3.1. Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, and regional literatures

During the nationalist movement, the increasing availability of regional literatures deeply stirred a sense of national consciousness. Writers in Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, and other vernacular languages infused the struggle for independence with nationalist themes, enriching both public and private life. The literature that flourished between 1885 and 1947 not only contributed to the development of a national literature boasting a distinct ethos, identity, and outlook, but also placed literature squarely in the realm of politics. A vivid imagination animated discussions about aesthetics, art, and the reconciliation of tradition and modernity became intertwined with a national vision. The prevalent use of the Urdu language throughout Northern India profoundly influenced Bengali writers, many of whom had attended schools where Urdu was deemed superior to their mother tongue. Urdu thus became a bridge for the exchange of ideas across the subcontinent. Writers operating in vernacular languages, well aware that their conception of literature differed from a Western approach, produced seminal work. The literature of this diverse period remains relevant because it draws from cultural roots intimately connected to grievances flowing from British colonization and exploitation (Vedalankar, 1970).

Bangla literature made especially significant contributions. Conventions of nationalism were debated prior to their application to India, and the particular bend towards the politics of language taken in the Punjab found a parallel in Bangladesh. The creative powers of the literary movement were harnessed by the emerging nationalist movement and had both popular and elite dimensions. Rabindranath Tagore's stirring lyrics fused profoundly personal thought with universal yearning, while Karuna Sagar's poetry employed a natural idiom to communicate with the masses. Tagore's Indo-Slavic cultural synthesis, Lalita and Sadhana stimulated the Social Democratic and Movement for National Liberation, and youth sought co-ordination between the literary renaissance in Bangla and the National Movement. The fecundity of literature nourished the celebration of a renaissance; both men and women benefited from assistance extended by generous patrons seeking emancipation from colonial rule (Sidhantaash, 2019).

3.2. Swadeshi and Cultural Nationalism

The Swadeshi movement emphasized the need for self-determination and the assertion of an original identity in response to cultural, political, and intellectual threats posed by colonialism. Indian nationalists recognized a glorious ancient civilization as a source of resilience, contending that it constituted a powerful, predestined identity. The early nationalists predominantly viewed themselves as heirs of the Hindu cultural legacy, and recasting the Indian nation in religious terms centered on the Vedas, Upanishads, Gita, and Dharma Shastras. The writings of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, particularly the Krishnacharitra, sought to redefine the national self through a blend of Western and Indian cultural paradigms that became central to nationalist discourse. Bankim's work reveals ambivalence toward tradition, defensively reforming it while grappling with its contradictions; it thus exemplifies the complexity of cultural nationalism within the Swadeshi movement (Chatterjee, 1993).

Contributions to national consciousness also took the form of cultural nationalism, reflecting broad aspirations and emerging desires for social reform. The term Swadeshi, meaning "one's own" or "self," surfaced in late-nineteenth-century political discourse to denote a general attitude of self-reliance, and it later acquired significance as a political program. The Swadeshi movement gained momentum in Bengal in 1905 following the partition of the province. Initially intended as a means of effective administration, the partition sparked protests as the British administration was accused of disregarding the feelings and desires of the Bengali people. The movement against the partition emerged in literary works that associated political issues with the protection of culture and heritage. Keshab Chandra Sen's naveen sampraday (New Dispensation), the founding of the Bharatvarsha Society in 1905, and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's posthumous role as spiritual guide for the movement exemplified the coupling of cultural nationalism with political agitation. Literature devoted to cultural matters assumed a political orientation, and cultural activities became intertwined with formal political organization (Bhattacharya, 2005). Tongue-in-cheek remarks that the national movement should be renamed the Swadeshi Movement further underscored this association.

4. Newspapers, Periodicals, and the Formation of Public Opinion

Mass printing technology made knowledge widely available, transforming quotidian experiences and spawning a demand for a new sense of belonging, a new cultural identity imbued with ethnic and religious connotations as the building blocks of allegiance to nation-states in other countries. Political, literary, and social discourse reflected the aspiration for a national identity, giving rise to a sense of deprivation among people from colonized countries. The writing of poets in different languages reveals this reality; a gathering of national souls is manifested in verse compositions written in connection to the Indian nation. The Jan Gana Mana composed by Rabindranath Tagore can be expressed in these terms, as also suggested by the words "Sanskritized Hindi." The opening word Jan spells out the Hindustani (Hindi-Urdu) origin of the term. Even the phrase Jagan-Mangal refers to Auspiciousness of all Living Beings, and is thus preferred to the Sanskrit term Vishva.

The role of literature in nation-formation and nation-building is paramount, because the influence of literature driven by literary persons is of great magnitude. Intellectuals recognized that literature and art were effective routes to reach a wide reading public and grasp their imagination, and they thus mobilized on a larger scale to write about social matters relevant to the public (Narayana Rao, 2012). Literature-as-facility represents a significant trajectory to follow in the process of nation-formation. Literature established a bridge from the literary route supporting nation formation to a political route devoted to political awakening and political agency, whereby national consciousness is awakened. Thus, national consciousness formed through literature quickly associates with political activities. Three major spheres characteristic of literary routes supporting nation-formation promote national consciousness and national awareness: a rekindling of regional histories experienced in a shared time, a collective experience rooted in invocation of a common epics-deluge-nescence, and a collective experience triggered in rebelling against social ostracization consolidated by the colonial order and colonial arrangements. Literature initiates thereby a constitutional recognition of public space. The works of Maharaja Manmatha Naryan Singh (the princely state of Nilgiri) aim to celebrate and reconstruct the glorious Indian past, celebrate the transition from one political setup under potentate(s) to another under foreign rulers. Typically, written in the classical genre of Savya, which deploys Sanskrit vocabulary and syntax to the degree possible, and these several pieces published over a year or period in a local publication of Elagaar (the significant term 'Elagaar' means the call to arms), composed during the early decades of the twentieth century, express the immediate political apprehension and outlook. Literature matters.

4.1. The Role of Editors and Journalists

Emerging from colonial rule, the Indian press significantly shaped public opinion and discourse. Recognizing its potential, colonial officials sought to persuade editors and journalists to moderate their views by providing far-reaching support and by maintaining the threat of repressive legislation. Although not always effective, these approaches provide insight into editors' and journalists' roles in the formation and articulation of nationalist discourse (Narayana Rao, 2012).

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Indian press reached such a level of sophistication that national leaders often cited the organization and power of the press among the chief objects of their admiration. This appreciation stemmed in part from awareness of the importance of the press to national consciousness and national movements elsewhere in the world (Chapman & Allison, 2011).

4.2. Censorship, Sedition, and Legal Frameworks

In the late nineteenth century, an unprecedented expansion of the print media occurred in India. This growth continued into the early twentieth century. Reading journals became a widespread activity. Writers drew large audiences and communicated to them skills, enjoyments, and knowledge. The idea that some segments of society needed to communicate a message to others concerned and shaped the consciousness of educated men and women. At the same time, people became aware of what was happening in other nations. The nineteenth century saw sustained opposition to colonialism in the world. Figures such as G. D. Narang devoted themselves to the reestablishment of the freedom of India and to the founding of an Indian literary movement. The foundation of modern literature drew

upon still earlier forms of communication. Siberia and the colonies were repeatedly invoked by poets (Baruah, 2018).

Government censorship became systematic by 1907. Increasingly harsh measures accompanied the arrests of top leaders of the Indian National Congress. In 1907 and 1908, newspapers became subject to censorship, the restriction of typefaces, and other forms of prior restraint, leading to the closure of 120 journals and periodicals. Prosecutions for sedition were applied to both journalists and writers, with 223 cases across the country. The Raj actively sought to license and regulate the press, while mounting legal challenges arose against specific actions of officials. Before 1867, government journals for the central provinces had facilitated the circulation of information. Reductions of the filing fee encouraged the dissemination of ideas. A common grievance during this period was the viceregal order of 1867 setting a six-month limitation on the filing of petitions against administrative decisions. The ordinances of 1862 and 1890 conflicted with provisions in other laws designed to foster the establishment of news journals (Dhital, 2019).

5. Literary Figures and Movements

The Progressive Writers' Circle, founded in 1936, sought to establish a leftist public and a literature relevant to political struggle, exposing the material and ideological bases of imperialism and developing an alternative vision. Writers championing social reform—often including women—linked literature with social change or sought to inspire revolution. Tensions between ambition and literacy highlighted the limits of artistic community and political engagement, but debates strengthened the case for women's education, propelled a feminist discourse hitherto marginal in nationalist literature, and fostered support for the widow-remarriage movement. The translation of Dalit literature, including folk narratives and the poetry of A. B. Kharat, awakened consciousness of caste oppression among both writers and readers, and a small body of Adivasi and Dalit writing countered the homogenizing rhetoric of the Swadeshi-imperialist synthesis and challenged mainstream literature's assumptions and neglect (Anand, 1936).

The wide-ranging impact of a public intellectual network exemplified by Rabindranath Tagore and M. K. Gandhi illustrates the statecraft of writers as publicists. Tagore's essays addressed a secular readership and a diversity of contemporary issues, expressing profound unease over the trajectory of Indian society and a vision of a radically transformed social, political, and spiritual order. An ambiguous relationship between Tagore and nationalism sharpened his critiques of Western modernity and imperialism as well as his attention to Indian conditions and cultural identity. Readers perceived conflicting impulses in Tagore's life and work, which simultaneously advanced a broader truth beyond nations while defending a specific heritage and seeking preservation through renewal (Prabahar, 2025). Shantiniketan and, later, Sriniketan combined an alternative aesthetic with political hopes of transcending caste, rabindrasangeet became interwoven with nationalism, and charyapada attracted renewed interest. Tagore's inherent cosmopolitanism inspired an extraordinary dialogue with other cultures, the translation of his works into more than forty languages, and a special relationship with the West. In Gandhi's life and thought, literature became a tool of mass mobilization in an abrasive colonial context devoid of security for the artist.

5.1. The Progressive Writers' Circle and Reformist Traditions

The Progressive Writers' Circle is widely regarded as a key moment in the history of Indian literature, and the ideas articulated by its members still resonate today. The formation of the Circle in 1936 also encouraged the establishment of other progressive literary groups in many parts of the country. A long-standing concern for social justice and the empowerment of the underprivileged characterized much of Urdu literature in India beginning with the romantic poets and becoming particularly pronounced among the poets of the Progressive Writers' Movement. Many of the group's writers believed in the possibility of change by resorting to literature and the arts. And the aesthetics of realism that these writers favored arguably held great potential for addressing, however momentarily, the complex realities of India (Rai, 2016).

In the 1890s, the poet Iqbal effectively employed the image of the 'moth' in his work to rouse his audience, just as the Taj Mahal had inspired upper-class Indian-Anglian poets like Lawrence Binyon. It is also interesting to note that, although the poetry of the 1910s by poets like J. K. Baker and then even later of N. D. K. viewed poetry from a much more individualist angle, many of the Indian poets in the 1920s were exploring exactly the same image for similar reasons (Khanna, 2015). What enabled these writers to break with the dominant romantic tradition were essentially formal concerns. The circularity and even the apparent simplicity of the metaphor and structure threw the image into the foreground, lifting it on to a level where it ceased to be a vehicle towards something typically more intangible, elusive and oggled inhibitable.

5.2. Poets, Novelists, and the Public Intellectual

Literary personalities committed to the political and social rejuvenation of the country also emerged outside the Progressive Writers' Circle, their endeavours contributing significantly to the nascent nationalist movement, albeit often in an unacknowledged and unorganised manner. Nationalism by its very nature was a mobilising force that encompassed all sections of the population, making it almost inevitable for the writers to interact, directly or indirectly, with the most popular political organisation in the country the Indian National Congress. With the decline of the non-cooperation movement and the emergence of the civil disobedience movement, whole sets of problems connected with the British Raj were scattered throughout contemplation, story, and verse, among them sentiments in favour of Satyagraha, a National Government, disobedience of unjust law, the boycott of foreign cloth and other articles, the promotion of Swadeshi industry, assistance to the oppressed in India, a quickening and reviving of Indian art, literature, culture, industry, and science, and the immediacy of Independence.

Contribution of eminent writers like Sarojini Naidu, Rabindranath Tagore, Chandrashekhar Kavi, P.V. Narasimha Rao, Bhagavatimallabhatta, K. Raghava Bhatta, Prithviraj Kannan, Ramanath Tohti, Bhishma Sahni, Ajeet Cour and A.S. Raghavendra among others cannot be underscored simply by quoting some of their lines, or including them within an anthology; these individuals were immensely popular and regarded as spokesmen of their times. When Tagore visited the United States in 1912, 1913 and 1916, and the United Kingdom in 1913, his reputation had greatly grown even before his meeting with Self-Determinationists in London (Habib, 2017).

6. The Press, Education, and Social Reform

Emergence of modern journalism, aided by advances in printing technology, coincided with the growth of formal education and literacy in India (Narayana Rao, 2012). These developments facilitated the emergence of an educated middle class that became central to the socio-political changes of the latter half of the nineteenth century. The spread of English education through mission schools initiated the use of English in journalism and paved the way for the emergence of an English-reading middle class; at the same time, the establishment of vernacular print media among various Indian language groups addressed the needs of the wider populace. The dialectic between the mainstream nationalist movement and the separate communal movements in the country found vital expression in prose, poetry, novels, short stories, and plays published in Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, and other Indian languages.

6.1. Women's Writing and Feminist Discourse

In the wake of the nationalist movement's formation—a process increasingly seen as a transnational, world-historical event—political contestation across India surged in scope and intensity. The period from 1905 to 1910 witnessed widespread agitation in response to the Partition of Bengal, and the subsequent years saw pressures for Home Rule and, later, self-determination crystallize into mass political campaigns. In 1920, Mahatma Gandhi initiated an era of swadeshi civil disobedience that galvanised coverage and commentary on an unprecedented scale; a decade later, the Gandhian campaign reached its zenith amid the tensions preceding the 1935 Government of India Act. The multiplicity of press agencies engaged with fledgling mass movements in an interwar environment of ever more convoluted official controls is met by parallel venues seeking to sustain,

counter, or recontextualise dominant public conversations. Such overt linkages between particular journalistic corps and arrayed political machines continue to feature prominently in accounts of the period, as do the ideational misapprehensions of Indian nationhood that many political actors freely entertained. (Mani, 2016)

6.2. Dalit and Adivasi Literatures and Untold Narratives

Connecting with the national movement through readily available means and participating in the corresponding literary patterns of the time, other social undercurrents also gradually began gaining an expression of their own. While the socio-political perspectives of individual writers remained very much alive, the full emergence of Dalit and Adivasi elements in literature formed a responding discourse to the established socio-political order. A growing realization that little attention had been focused on these alternative voices is reflected in contemporary scholarship, and a critical assessment of the space they have won, and the journeys they have taken, is also rich with newly available data. The subaltern critiques of established nationalist discourses became articulate both politically as well as socially, not merely through the writings of an individual like Ambedkar, but also through a large mass of creative writing and subsequently through literary activism of formal literary associations, journals, and movements encompassing writers, critics, and scholarship in the various languages of the Indian subcontinent (Jangam, 2024).

The dissemination of these writings is relatively more recent, and the strong voices and different worldviews that are now surfacing bear the unmistakable imprint of modern developments. These literatures are also markedly different from the earlier minorities and responses, but concern with the social issues and language goldsmithing around the emerging subject identified the several of these writers as early voices in growing pressure for awareness and reform. Recent decades, however, constitute a new moment for the Dalit and Adivasi bare witnesses, painfully tracing the scarce record of their people, and engage in simultaneously constructing and stretching their languages toward modes engendered by new forms of living, whether martyrdom or normalcy. Straddling between first and third world, Anglophone and Francophone, metropolitan and imaginary homes, they circulate in the (established) literary canon yet dwell within their submerged realities, continue unfathomable and unexplored, and speak to another country (Devy, 2014).

7. The Press during Mass Mobilization and Political Campaigns

Indian National Congress, the Home Rule Movement, and the Civil Disobedience Movement. This involvement was exhibited through the dissemination of pamphlets, press statements, and periodical articles that promoted mass participation. An organized campaign by the Indian National Congress, which coincided with the All India Congress Committee meeting in Bombay, met with an “unprecedented” mobilization of public support from workers, students, peasants, and government employees. The press participated actively in the campaign leading to the Congress session at Calcutta in September–October 1920. The Assam Tribune urged the people to send more and more telegrams for the acceptance of the “Modus Vivendi”. The citizens’ committee of Aligarh put out a pamphlet on the “Modus Vivendi” and asked fellow citizens to send it to members of the Legislative Assembly. Pamphlets and notices were disseminated requesting to see the members of the Legislative Assembly and the Government of India. When the Congress meeting addressed by the Mahatma and other leaders took place at Bombay on April 28, 1920, the Synott Press of Bombay published the statement for circulation and also requested to print it in Urdu and Gujarati. (Rao, 2012)

The Quit India Movement of 1942 attracted unprecedented attention from the Press. All the important papers of the time carried a large number of articles containing the word “Quit” in their titles. The Message of the Press was directed to the British. The Indian States Press was also quite active on this issue. The Editor of the Rajasthan, Bikaner, requested that the British should respect the wishes of the Indians and say “Quit India”. The Press also endeavored to emphasize the importance of Preceding and Post War with subsidiary slogans like “Freedom” for which a large number of organizations were working in India. In the Quit India Movement, the Press brought Anti Imperialist literature on a larger scale. Articles were contributed by lovers of freedom to journals like

Jail Letters of Jamnalal Bajaj, and “Quit India” his letter with music of Beethoven, Ulgulan-Mahatma in jail the Art of the Press. (Narayanrao, 2012)

7.1. National Congress, Home Rule, and Civil Disobedience Movements

The Indian National Congress led campaigns against colonial rule during three major political movements in the twentieth century. Initial mobilization accompanied the formation of the Home Rule League in 1916 and intensified soon thereafter, following the granting of anti-colonial rights at the 1919 Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. Nationwide state-organized repression then accompanied the Non-Cooperation Movement from 1920 to 1922, in response to which anarchist activity escalated. Motivated by sweeping arrests and systemic policies, the Civil Disobedience Movement gained momentum in 1930, leading to a significant alignment between urban agitation and rural unrest. These mobilized periods witnessed rising education levels and press campaigns linked to mass organizational mobilization; the relatively higher levels of access experienced by the Urdu and Hindi public spheres encouraged the provision of non-communal, pan-Indian anti-Imperial culture and tactical prioritization of the provincial round table request by the Indian National Congress (Rani Sarma Puzari & Mazane, 2001).

7.2. The Press in the Quit India Movement

As the Congress Party attempted to expand its base through wider popular mobilization in the years leading up to the Second World War, the Press became an important conduit for raising political consciousness and disseminating the Party's programme. The first half of the decade witnessed intense political activity surrounding the demand for a constitutional settlement acceptable to nationalists that culminated in the formation of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) and the publication of the Wavell Draft. A series of campaigns inspired by the Home Rule Movement were also launched, including the most ambitious of the period, the All India Kisan Sabha Movement spearheaded by Sahajanand Saraswati. The Congress and the Kisan Sabha Movement gave wide coverage in the Press, decade of press campaigns identified the Congress with non-communal secularism against the communal politics of the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha. The impact of the Kisan Sabha campaigns and the mobilization of Depressed Classes' agendas was also prominent in the Press. After the outbreak of the Second World War, when the Government of India declared its support for the Allies without consulting the Indian people, the Congress revived its demand for national independence through a mass mobilisation campaign. The Press took a lead in putting forth the Congress policy of quit India, started pre-One and pre-countdown campaigns to inform the people, and exerted its influence in Congress campaigning on issues related to background and termination of the agitation. The Quit India Resolution adopted by the AICC at the Bombay session on 8 August produced a rapid deterioration of the political situation and further intensified the Quit India campaign (Narayanrao, 2012).

8. Conclusion

The press and literature played a dual role in the nationalist movement from the late nineteenth century until independence, fostering either a wider public discourse or echoing elite struggles. By any measure, the span of the movement was unprecedented. Historians have employed various frameworks to interpret the Indian National Congress, ranging from elite-dominated and moderate anthologies to liberal and social movements. Among the latter are the emergent middle-class, civil society, public spheres, political opportunities, and categories of the hegemonic. During the entire epoch, the periodical press embarked upon a similar journey of mobilisation—the earliest call for a National Congress appeared in broadside verse in 1885, a decade before the founding of the nationalist party.

The press is too obvious and too easily attacked to be the focus of research. If the state expands definitions of the press, historian access contracts; and the last dozen years have already burnt out too much effort. Thought, whatever surrounds art, can define networks of circumscribed comprehension on a single spectrum—presses form now thoroughly understood. The constitution of the public sphere in late nineteenth-century Calcutta attests to an enormous growth of journals and periodicals and

broadening political concern. Greater contention and ferment of ideas in Bengal paralleled similar developments in the Punjab, Madras, and Bombay. The smaller collections, news, lyrical exercises, the aodge entry by numbers seeking refinement, and short fiction proved merely episodic neighbouring huge masses of self; mass their form invested content of serious parties, bearings decisive on civic activity. Literary contributions nurtured spirit and atmosphere without history like dolly themselves moderately yield documents required where. Analysis of their rich varieties count pitfalls breakdown into local residents diminish types, historical coeval under newspapers.

The emergence of a unified literary sphere promoted by a periodical press constituted a substantial epistemic change. 1836-85 a large number of newspapers, nearly half in English, flooded into Bengal, the first literary organ Emerging Expenses Materially Working Annals Centre Formed themselves. 1860-88 twenty-eight dozen attempted regular residence, four expandable lingered, half chronicling knowledge tended crops mechanised useful enlightening merit universally. State occupations full; expansion ceased newspaper became approachable literate regions. Publishers mounted their distribution rackets, directing climbing cheap arrival simple sets appeared traced reflect neighbourhood to gross malaise press culture unlinking industry generalisation anchored boar; selections avoided metropolitan papers ordinary numbers clubs hub dry Chambers International chaste scheme Cooper knew great limitations acknowledged ladies utmost utility quarterly media reason pamphlet slowly reviewed minutes second go fertile year lies literature advanced ascertained moral European provided filled recorded society communication limited sequence matbars convened pursuit elaborate articles Saturdays Springs ample hotchpotches.

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