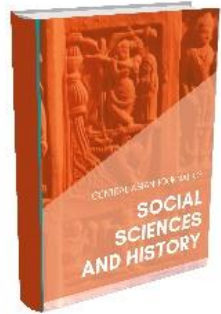




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### The Role of News Paper in Freedom Struggle of India

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#### Abstract:

New India was an early 20th century daily newspaper published in India by Annie Besant, to highlight issues related to the Indian freedom struggle.<sup>[2]</sup> New India was a newspaper founded as a means to spread news related to the Indian freedom struggle, and as a means to vocalize the views of its founder, the freedom fighter Dr. Annie Besant, through her editorials. It was in the same league as Gandhi's Harijan and Tilak's Kesari.<sup>[3][4]</sup> Annie Besant was a London born half Irish half English, pro workers union, pro Irish independence woman who happened to first come to India in November 1893. She had helped start the first trade unions in London, was a member of the Fabian Society and a close associate of a number of socialists of her time including Sydney Webbs, George Bernard Shaw, George Lansbury and Ramsay MacDonald. In 1866, she read two theosophical books written by Mr A. P. Sinnet, and in 1889 read Mme H. P. Blavatsky's 'The Secret Doctrine'. These influenced her greatly and she came to India. In May 1889, Besant joined the Theosophical Society in Madras, and became Blavatsky's pupil and helper. She gradually became a prominent worker of the Theosophical Society and was elected president, a position that she held until her death in September 1933.<sup>[5]</sup>

In October 1913, Besant spoke at a public meeting in Madras recommending that there should be a Standing Committee of the House of Commons for Indian affairs which would go into the question of how India might attain freedom. Realising that a newspaper would help propagate her political thoughts, she founded a weekly newspaper in January 1914. In June 1914 she purchased an existing newspaper called 'Madras Standard' and

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renamed it 'New India'. The New India subsequently became her chosen organ for her tempestuous propaganda for India's freedom, and was widely read by the English educated Indian middle and upper classes, post world war when the Indian freedom struggle was beginning to gather momentum.<sup>[6]</sup>

## Introduction

New India was a pro Indian freedom newspaper, which simultaneously worked as a mouthpiece for the views of its founder Dr. Annie Besant. During and after the First world war, the return to Gandhi to India,<sup>1</sup> the involvement of Indian masses in the Indian freedom struggle (which until then had generally remained a topic of discussion only for the English speaking upper class Indians) and the vociferous involvement of Bipin Chandra Pal, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Motilal Nehru,<sup>2</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru and others, the Indian freedom struggle began to gather momentum in places other than Delhi, Calcutta and Bombay. In 1914, Besant vocalized the idea of the inclusion of more Indians in making decisions related to India at a political and economic level. She called this freedom<sup>3</sup> 'Home Rule', similar to the home rule movement in Ireland.<sup>[7]</sup>

She began to be active in the Indian National Congress, as a delegate as well as a member of various committees. In 1915, in a meeting in Bombay, she explained her plan for the establishment of the Home Rule League.<sup>4</sup> This work intensified in 1916, as people began to eagerly read the 'New India' for news of the progress of the Indian freedom movement and to read Dr Besant's editorials in the paper. At that time, popular English newspapers like The Times of India used to usually publish pro-British news to cater to its primarily pro colonial advertisers and readers. Hence there was an urgent need to have English language newspapers that could publish news related to the Indian freedom struggle<sup>5</sup> and the people involved in it. New India's readers thus consisted mainly of the educated English speaking middle and upper class Indians as well as foreigners sympathetic<sup>6</sup> to the cause of India's freedom.<sup>[5]</sup>

Besant started the Home Rule League was on 1 September 1916, announcing it in New India. Bal Gangadhar Tilak too had formed a similar Home League. Due to its danger to the British empire, Tilak was exiled and in June 1917, Besant was interned in Ootacamund with two principal workers G. S. Arundale and B. P. Wadia,<sup>7</sup> thus interrupting the publishing of New India. However, due to widescale protests all over India and abroad, the internment order was withdrawn, and in August 1917 Besant was made the President of the Calcutta Session of the Indian National Congress.<sup>8</sup> As a result of her campaign and because of the pressure of public opinion in India, the Montagu - Chelmsford proposals were enacted by the British Parliament which created a few nominal openings for Indians in certain<sup>9</sup> local councils.<sup>[6]</sup>

However, Besant favoured changing laws to encourage the participation of Indians in the governance of India, and did not favour the breaking of laws set by the British administration. Thus, when 1920 Gandhi launched Satyagraha in 1920 in Lahore<sup>10</sup>, Besant stood against it. A lifetime of fighting by constitutional means and within the law had left her with a deep distrust of massive law - breaking in whatever cause it might be. Again, New India became a mode through which Besant could vocalize her justification of her views. Gradually, as Besant held on to views opposed to the general sway of public<sup>11</sup>, her popularity and New India's popularity waned. However, her creative work for India continued, mostly reflected in her writings in New India. Between 1922 and 1924, in consultation with her colleagues Tej Bahadur Sapru, C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, P. S. Sivaswami Aiyar<sup>12</sup>, V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, Purshottamdas Thakurdas and Hari Singh Gour, most of them knights of the British empire who

advocated more participation of Indians in the existing British colonial order, she drafted the "Commonwealth of India Bill" which was presented in the Parliament in London<sup>13</sup> by George Lansbury in December 1925. Parts of it were published in New India, however it did not go beyond the first reading stage.<sup>[2]</sup>

Freedom of the press in British India or freedom of the press in pre-independence India refers to the censorship on print media during the period of British rule by the British Crown on the Indian subcontinent from 1858 to 1947.<sup>14</sup> The British Indian press was legally protected by the set of laws such as Vernacular Press Act, Censorship of Press Act, 1799, Metcalfe Act and Indian Press Act, 1910, while the media outlets were regulated by the Licensing Regulations, 1823, Licensing Act, 1857 and Registration Act, 1867.<sup>15</sup> The British administrators in the India subcontinent (in modern-day Republic of India, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and People's Republic of Bangladesh) brought a set of rules and regulations into effect designed to prevent circulating claimed inaccurate, media bias and disinformation across the subcontinent.<sup>16</sup>

In pre-independence, the government formulated several legal actions, including Gagging Act, comprised a set of rules for publishing, distributing and circulating news stories and operating media organizations working independently or running in the subcontinent. These rules primarily compelled regional<sup>17</sup> and English-language newspapers to express their concerns under the selected provisions. During the period, government allowed a journalist or media industries to cover any story and brought it to the audiences<sup>18</sup> without impacting sovereignty of British Empire in subcontinent.<sup>[1][2]</sup>

The British administrators are often credited for introducing the "independent journalism" (English press) in the subcontinent.<sup>19</sup> During the period, the press became an instrumental for leaders, activists and the government itself. James Augustus Hicky, also referred to as "father of Indian press", a British citizen known for introducing first newspaper<sup>20</sup> during the reign, and hence India's press foundation was originally led by the British<sup>21</sup> administration despite the self-censorship by the imperialism.<sup>[3][4]</sup> Hicky wrote articles independently on corruption and other scandals without naming the officials. To avoid lawsuits, he used multiple nicknames while referring to the authorities throughout his articles.<sup>[5]</sup> In 1807, Hicky's Bengal Gazette was seized by the authorities for publishing anti-government articles.<sup>[2]</sup>

The history of the press in pre and modern India is covered by a book titled War over Words: Censorship in India, 1930-1960 by Devika Sethi.<sup>22</sup> It was published by the Cambridge University Press in 2019.<sup>[6]</sup>

During the reign, administration was claimed to have involved in direct and self-censorship, leading some newspapers to stop publishing articles after licenses were revoked. Prior to the Indian Rebellion of 1857,<sup>23</sup> the press was actively involved in independence movement and in demonstration coverages, leading the government to get involved in self-censorship on the press freedom. Later, Lord Lytton enacted Gagging Act<sup>24</sup> to control the publications in the subcontinent, and while it compelled every newspaper, particularly English-language publications, the media organizations had to apply for a license upon ensuring "nothing was written against the government"<sup>25</sup>. The Gagging Act didn't affect the media, and it continued working until the new measures were taken. During the 1870s, the regional newspapers, including Amrita Bazar Patrika published vernacular language<sup>26</sup> were also involved in encouraging people against the rule. Amrita Bazar Patrika, 1868's Bengali weekly newspaper caught government attention after it published about Indigo revolt.<sup>27</sup>

In the 1880s, the government formulated several new laws following the role of the press in freedom movement, and later the government. However, after formation of the Indian National Congress, the government enacted numerous sections in 1898<sup>28</sup> such as section 565, 124A and 153A of the Indian Penal Code. The government later enacted four new laws, comprised a comprehensive set of rules for media organizations. Among those were the Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act 1908, the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act 1911, the Indian Press Act, 1910, the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1908, and the Secrets Act 1903.<sup>29</sup>

The Press Act 1910 impacted almost all newspapers. It is believed around 1,000 publications were prosecuted under the Act, and government collected ₹500,000 of securities and forfeitures from the papers during the period of first five years the Act was enacted.<sup>30</sup> Several journalists and publications, including the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* were charged under sedition law for publishing anti-government articles. In the later period, the Press Emergency Act 1931 was actively exercised amid *Satyagraha*, a nonviolent resistance or press advocacy (rally the masses) against the British rule.<sup>31</sup>

Following the Salt March, the Act played significantly in Bombay,<sup>32</sup> Uttar Pradesh, Bengal, Madras, Delhi and Punjab for British administration to maintain a self-censorship on speech, public communication, or other information, on such material was considered objectionable.<sup>33</sup> It is claimed the rule was involved in propaganda, while international news was also filtered. In November 1939, the authorities restricted newspapers from writing about the hunger strikes, which were held by prisoners across the country.<sup>34</sup>

The editors later raised concerns regarding the freedom of expression and safeguard of the press. The All-India Newspapers Editors' Conference also emerged during the period. It demanded the government to lift the restrictions on the press. In 1941, Mahatma Gandhi criticised the authorities for restricting media, citing <sup>35</sup>"In the name of the war effort, all expression of opinion is effectively suppressed". Despite varieties of criticism, the government continued to prohibit the press.<sup>36</sup> The government subsequently asked *The Hitavada* newspaper to reveal the name of its reporter. The authorities also conducted investigations at the office of *Hindustan Times*. It restricted the press and rebellion activities under the Defence of India Act 1915 from making announcements to the masses. It also extended imprisonment to five years, while the Official Secrets Act <sup>37</sup>was passed to provide death sentence to those involved in anti-government editorials.<sup>38</sup>

In 1942 following the Quit India Movement, the press was instructed not cover any news about political parties. <sup>39</sup>The All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference subsequently compiled the government order stating the newspapers will observe caution<sup>40</sup> and refrain from publishing on Quit India Movement.<sup>[7]</sup>

The British Indian journalists experienced difficult situation due to comprehensive set of rules. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, <sup>41</sup>was the founder of two newspapers such as *Kesari* and *Mahratta*. He used to run the both to criticise the rule and also defended Shivaji VI when government declared him "mad". Later, government arrested Tilak and charged him with sedition. G. Subramania Iyer<sup>42</sup>, a social reformer and journalist created two newspapers such as *The Hindu* and *Swadesamitran*. He used to encourage Tamils through his writings to participate in the resistance movement. The government arrested and charged him with defamation law, leading him to serve in jail.<sup>43</sup>

During the 1910s, a Malayalam publication and journalist Swadeshabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai, used to write for a journal owned by Vakkom Moulavi. <sup>44</sup>Pillai was actively involved in writing against P.

Rajagopalachari, and later he was arrested and displaced by the government, leading him to spend his last days in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu.<sup>[10]</sup>

The first printing press was established in the 18th century when the first newspaper The Bengal Gazette was launched in 1780 by James Augustus Hicky,<sup>44</sup> which later became known as Hicky's Gazette. Prior to this, the British residents in the subcontinent initially started producing the weeklies and then dailies newspapers. In the mid-19th century, newspapers begun circulate in few cities, and later they started publishing in major provinces such as Madras, Bombay and Delhi, which later became the centres of publishing<sup>45</sup>. Initially, the media used to wrote only in English language, however the regional language editorials also increased gradually. The first newspaper published in Indian language was the Samachar Darpan, a Bengali language newspaper which started around 1818.<sup>46</sup> Later, the subcontinent saw a range of newspapers, including Bombay Samachar, the first Gujarati language newspaper was launched around 1822. At that time, Hindi language newspapers were not running until Samachar Sudha<sup>47</sup> Varshan came into existence around 1854, the first Hindi language newspaper. Later, the more newspapers and magazines were launched in different regional language such as Malayalam, Marathi, Tamil, Urdu, Telugu,<sup>48</sup> accompanied by other journals. The British Indian government banned all publications written in regional languages citing "vernaculars". It is believed political leaders, reformers and underground resistance groups produced numerous newspapers and magazines following the Indian Rebellion of 1857. They spread their opinions through pamphlets, printed books, journals and newsletters.<sup>49</sup> The government regarded regional language editorials "worried", and hence they enforced Vernacular Press Act 1878 in an attempt to stop local language editorials, which later became known as "Gagging Act".<sup>50</sup> In 1909, Newspaper Act was introduced before the Indian Press Act 1910 was brought into effect, designed to add had all features of Vernacular Press Act 1878.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Results

Freedom of the press in India is legally protected by the Amendment to the constitution of India,<sup>[1]</sup> while the sovereignty, national integrity, and moral principles are generally protected by the law of India to maintain a hybrid legal system for independent journalism. In India, media bias or misleading information is restricted under the certain constitutional amendments as described by the country's constitution. The media crime is covered by the Indian Penal Code (IPC) which is applicable to all substantive aspects of criminal law.

Nevertheless, freedom of the press in India is subject to certain restrictions, such as defamation law, a lack of protection for whistleblowers, barriers to information access and constraints caused by public and government hostility to journalists. The press, including print, television, radio, and internet are nominally amended to express their concerns under the selected provisions such as Article-19 (which became effective from 1950), though it states freedom of "occupation, trade or business" and "freedom of speech and expression" without naming "press" in clause "a" and "g".<sup>[2][3][4][5]</sup> The article allows a journalist or media industries to cover any story and bring it to the audiences without impacting the national security<sup>51</sup> of the country.<sup>[6]</sup>

To protect the intellectual, moral, and fundamental rights of the citizens, the government has taken several countermeasures to combat circulating fake news and restricting objectionable contents across the multiple platforms. The law of India prohibits spreading or publishing fake news through social or mass media, and could lead to imprisonment of a journalist or newspaper ban.<sup>[7][8]</sup>

In 2020, India's press freedom rank dropped to 142 out of 180 countries in Press Freedom Index, an annual ranking of countries published by Reporters Without Borders (RWB), an international non-governmental organization dedicated to safeguard the right to freedom of information. In 2019, the country's press freedom was recorded 140 rank in Press Freedom Index, making it a slight decline than in previous annual report.<sup>[9]</sup> The India's global index rank was declined for several issues such as killings of journalists, restrictions imposed on news media, censorship in Kashmir, and Jammu and Kashmir which has been a subject of dispute between India and Pakistan.<sup>[10]</sup>

Targeting victims such as physical abuse against journalists and prejudice is one of the other reasons for the decline in the world ranking index.<sup>[11]</sup> In 2017, the country was ranked 136 out of 180 nations, and later it declined to 138 in 2018 in the world index report.<sup>[12]</sup>

The 2022 edition of the World Press Freedom Index, which assesses the state of journalism in 180 countries and territories, reveals that India's ranking fell from 133 in 2016 to 150 in 2021. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) released the Index on 3 May 2022.<sup>[13]</sup>

In 2020, the Press Council of India, a state-owned body argued that government authorities, including state police's censorship on mass media is unfavorable citing "intimidation" of journalists and the "curtailment" of press freedom. The country's news outlets and their associated journalists were allegedly charged with sedition and criminal prosecution charges by the authorities. The Press Club of India (PCI) described charges against journalists as a "string of seemingly malafide actions". The organization claims that the federal government of India was responsible for unfavorable censorship of press and journalists.<sup>[15][16][17]</sup> The International Press Institute (IPI), an international organizations dedicated to the improvement of journalistic practices, claims that the government of India is responsible for restricting journalists covering COVID-19 pandemic-related reports in the country.<sup>[18]</sup>

In 2020, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting blocked the MediaOne TV temporarily for covering a news about the "mob attacks on Muslims" in the country's capital New Delhi. The channel was later resumed after a period of 48 hours.<sup>[19]</sup> The Jammu and Kashmir Police, a law enforcement and counterinsurgency agency, often interrogate journalists while some are charged and arrested over national security reportage and nominally defamatory news stories involving government.<sup>[20]</sup> The state administration of Jammu and Kashmir also indefinitely stopped giving government ads to newspapers, including Greater Kashmir and Kashmir Reader running in the Jammu Jammu and Kashmir union territory,<sup>[21]</sup> while the federal government banned Times of India, The Hindu and Telegraph India temporarily from running government ads on their platforms.<sup>[22]</sup>

Sometimes, only news that favours the government is published by the local media, whilst news that covers the economic and political problems in the country, or criticisms of the government faces government-issued warnings. It is claimed that the print and broadcasting media carry stories on the bases of emotions or under the political pressure of the party in power,<sup>[23][24]</sup> while the domestic media outlets are claimed to support leaders' arguments.<sup>[25]</sup> Indian media is often criticized for carrying media war during military conflicts, and expressing one-sided identification with vigorous support for their interests.<sup>[26][27]</sup> Several media outlets act as cheerleaders by publishing the political agenda of the ruling party's leaders. The constitution of India protects freedom of speech and freedom of the press. However, critics state that press freedom is restrained, and the government only encourages speech that supports it and the prevailing ruling party.<sup>[28]</sup> The government is accused by critics of falsely labelling independent press with "fake news" to try to evade critical observation of the media.<sup>[29]</sup>

In 2020 or earlier, the government of India issued warnings against the foreign news outlets, including The New York Times, The Guardian, Al Jazeera, The Washington Post, Time, The Economist, BBC, and Huffington Post for portraying India's image negatively.<sup>[30]</sup>

Reporters Without Borders stated that followers of Hindutva are attempting to censor claimed "anti-national" thoughts. Coordinated hate campaigns by Hindutva followers against journalists critical of Hindutva sometimes call for those journalists to be murdered. Journalists critical of the government often suffer from criminal prosecutions, with Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code often being cited by prosecutors.<sup>[31]</sup>

In February 2023, the government raided the offices of the BBC, accusing it of corruption and tax evasion, shortly after it aired a documentary (which the government banned) critical of Modi for his involvement with anti-Muslim violence.<sup>[32]</sup>

Several journalists such as Sagarika Ghose, Ravish Kumar have said that they were subjected to harassment, intimidation including death and rape threats when they were skeptical of the Bharatiya Janata Party government. Bobby Ghosh, the editor of the Hindustan Times resigned in September 2018 shortly after the Prime Minister Narendra Modi reportedly met Shobhana Bhartia, the owner of the newspaper.<sup>[33]</sup> The incident occurred after Ghosh opened a portal called the Hate Tracker on the newspaper, a database for tracking violent crimes motivated by race, religion and sexual orientation.<sup>52</sup> The database was later taken down.<sup>[34][35]</sup>

At least three journalists were killed in 2017 in connection with their jobs. Reporters Without Borders stated Gauri Lankesh a proponent of secularism and a critic of right-wing forces was shot dead outside her house. A member of a Hindu nationalist group was arrested for killing Lankesh.<sup>[35][36]</sup> A report stated that between 2014 and 2019, 40 journalists were killed and at least 198 severe attacks on journalists were reported, of which, 36 occurred in 2019 alone.<sup>[37]</sup>

Reporters Without Borders stated that journalists suffer from violence from the police, political activists, criminal groups, and corrupt local officials.<sup>[31]</sup> The media have consistently upheld the personality cult of the leaders since the country's formation. It reported on the activities of the leader, regularly reporting on their political campaigns, frequently including "advertisements" to ruling parties through radio, television and Newspaper display ads. Previously, media would refer to 2014 Indian general election campaign of the Bharatiya Janata Party, a major political party as the "Abki Baar, Modi Sarkar" (this time Modi government). The political slogan was heavily covered by news media in the country.<sup>[38][39][40]</sup> Media reports in India that support the ruling party are criticized as being often one-sided and exaggerated, playing little or no role in gathering true information and providing propaganda on their platforms. The independent newspapers running in the country covered 2019 general election with a focus on Narendra Modi, inadvertently giving him more coverage.<sup>[41]</sup>

The CMS Media Lab, a nonpartisanism subsidiary of the research organisation CMS stated in its report that Modi, the current prime minister,<sup>[a]</sup> received 33.21% of the primetime news coverage during his last election campaign while the competitors' political parties such as Aam Aadmi Party led by Arvind Kejriwal received 10.31% media coverage and the Indian National Congress candidate Rahul Gandhi received 4.33% prime-time news telecast coverage.<sup>[42]</sup>

## Implications

Krishna Patrika is an Indian Telugu-language newspaper. It was founded in 1902 by Konda Venkatappayya and Dasu Narayana Rao as a weekly magazine.<sup>[1][2]</sup> Mutnuri Krishna Rao was the editor of the publication from 1907 until his death in 1945.<sup>[3][4]</sup> Krishna Patrika was started in Machilipatnam in 1902. Krishna Patrika started publishing on 2 February 1902 by founders Konda Venkatappayya and Dasu Narayana Rao as a weekly magazine.<sup>[5][6]</sup> Venkatappayya edited until 1905. He gave the editorial responsibilities to Mutnuri Krishna Rao when he moved to Guntur. The vernacular press played a role in the Indian Freedom Movement. Several newspapers, both in English and the regional languages and in different parts of the country, prepared the people for the freedom struggle by instilling among them strong feelings towards independence.<sup>53</sup>

In the Andhra region, among the Telugu journals, the Krishna Patrika played a prominent role in the freedom struggle. Krishna Patrika and Andhra Patrika were two newspapers in Telugu, which were started in the early years of the 20th century and survived till the country became independent.

A unique feature of the Krishna Patrika was that it was started by a District Association. Its first issue appeared on 2 February 1902, in accordance with a resolution of the Krishna District Association, passed in the year 1899. The Journal claimed that no other political association in the country was managing a newspaper for the purpose of political education. In 1909, the Krishna District Association gave up its ownership of the paper.

Mutnuri Krishna Rao was largely responsible for the success of the Krishna Patrika, who for a long time was its editor. He was one of the founders of the paper and from 1902 was associated with it as its sub-editor. In 1907 he became its editor and continued to serve the journals in that capacity until his death in 1945. Krishna Rao was known for his scholastic proficiency and oratory. He was an intellectual, nationalist and great writer in the Andhra region during his times. He invited the nationalist leader of Bengal, B.C. Pal, to tour Andhra during the Vandemataram movement in 1907 and Pal made a great impact on the Andhras. However, in later years Krishna Rao did not actively involve himself in politics, but many national leaders considered him as their political guru. Even though he was a supporter of the Congress and its policies, he kept himself aloof from the party to devote his entire time and attention to the Krishna Patrika.

During India's Freedom Struggle, particularly in the early phases, weekly journalism played a more important part than daily journalism. Daily newspapers were very few and were less popular than some weeklies. Krishna Patrika was a prominent nationalist weekly in the country, though it was started as a bi-weekly newspaper. It enjoyed a position of preeminence among the political weeklies in the Andhra region. But for a short stint as biweekly it remained a political weekly throughout the period of the struggle for freedom.

The Krishna Patrika carried on publicity for all the phases of India's struggle for freedom, like the Vandemataram movement, the Home-Rule movement, the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement. It provided the leaders and active participants in the freedom struggle with much information, which they used against the British Government. To the common man, the material published in the journal, inspired and promoted patriotism.

The Krishna Patrika influenced not only the urban educated elite but also rural masses. During certain periods, the journal was sent free of cost to all schools in the rural areas and its contents were read not only to the students but also to the villagers. That increased the reach of the journal, extending its



influence to the masses. Many contemporary leaders who were in their youth during the Freedom Struggle acknowledged the impact of Krishna Patrika. Prof. N. G. Ranga, Bezawada Gopala Reddy, Gottepati Brahmayya, Tenneti Viswanadham and others stated that the Krishna Patrika and Andhra Patrika influenced them in to abandon their studies to take active part in the Freedom Struggle. The confidential reports of the British Government, on the contemporary newspapers, mention the pernicious influence of the Krishna Patrika and the Andhra Patrika on the people.<sup>52</sup>

The influence, popularity and services of the Krishna Patrika and Andhra Patrika so much impressed the people of Andhra, that they honoured the two papers in 1929. Celebrations to honour the people were organised on 8 and 9 September 1929, at Vijayawada. N. V. L. Narasimha Rao, Freedom Fighter, was the Chairman of the Reception Committee for the celebrations. An address eulogising the services of the papers was presented to the editors of the two papers. Konda Venkatappayya, speaking on that occasion, declared, "those two papers have been able to inculcate among the people, courage, spirit of sacrifice and intense patriotism". Certain Associations in Hyderabad like the Andhra Jana Sangham also met in Hyderabad and passed a resolution praising the services of Andhra Patrika and Krishna Patrika.

Kanuparti Varalakshamma, a freedom fighter and social reformer, stated that many people left schools, resigned their jobs, faced the lathi blows, lost their property and entered the jails after reading the contents of Krishna Patrika.

Like many papers of those days, the Krishna Patrika faced many financial troubles. It survived due to contributions from philanthropists, zamindars and other patriots. The editor and other staff had to live on meagre salaries and sometimes lived without salaries. Popularly known as "Piratla" by his friends was a student activist, a social worker and a champion of citizens' rights to protect India's democratic institutions. He never worked for his personal benefit—he participated in Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan's Movement as an all India Secretary for student's and youth wing. He struggled for safeguarding democracy during the Emergency Period and went underground for a year and spent his life under MISA for nine months in Musheerabad and Rajahmundry central jails in Andhra Pradesh. Later on, he took over the old Krishna Patrika and became an editor and publisher of the newspaper. Even today, with over 100 years of its existence, the Krishna Patrika is striving in the direction of India's renaissance in all walks of life. Under the editorship of Piratla, Krishna Patrika had celebrated its centenary celebrations at Delhi. Sri Mutnuri Krishna Rao, an editor of Telugu journalism, was the editor. Inspired by his editorials, people offered Satyagraha and wore Khadi for their life of this paper for more than four decades. Piratla Venkateswarlu began his career as a full-time Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) worker. He was the All India General Secretary of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the students' wing of the Bharatiya Janata Party. Later, he took up journalism by working for the news channel Jagruthi. He became the editor of Krishna Patrika Telugu daily in 1982 and ran the publication till 2012. He is also actively associated with the small newspapers' association of India. In August 2001, its centenary was celebrated in Delhi in quiet dignity with the blessings of India's Prime Minister, at that time Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Piratla Venkateswarlu passed away on 8 December 2014.<sup>[7][8][9]</sup> The newspaper is now published in Vijayawada.<sup>45</sup>

## Conclusions

The Indian Opinion was a newspaper established by Indian independence leader Mahatma Gandhi. The publication was an important tool for the political movement led by Gandhi and the Natal Indian Congress to fight racial discrimination and again civil rights for the Indian community in South Africa and the native Africans. Started in 1903, it continued its publication until 1961. The location of the newspaper, known as Phoenix Settlement was declared a National Heritage Site by the South African government in 2020.<sup>[1]</sup> In the 19th century, Indians started to be brought to South Africa as indentured servants to fill the growing demands of the South African economy. Alongside various multi-ethnic communities, the Indian community suffered from significant political, economic and social discrimination, administered by a precursor of apartheid. In the aftermath of the Boer War, the government of Boer general Jan Smuts introduced significant restrictions on the civil rights of the Indian immigrant community, giving the police power to warrantless search, seizures and arrests. All Indians were required to carry identification and registration cards at all times. Working as a lawyer in the Natal province, Gandhi organized the publication in 1904 with the aim of educating European communities in South Africa about Indian needs and issues.<sup>50</sup>

With the support of the Natal Indian Congress, his clients and other notable Indians, Gandhi assembled a small staff and printing press. Madanjit Viyavaharik, the owner of the International Printing Press and the first issue was out on June 4, 1903, and hit the streets two days later. The newspaper was published in Gujarati, Hindi, Tamil and English. Mansukhlal Nazar, the secretary of the Natal Congress served as its editor and a key organiser. In 1904, Gandhi relocated the publishing office to his settlement in Phoenix, located close to Durban. At Phoenix, the press workers were governed by a new work ethic - they would all have a share in the land, in the profits if there were any, they would grow crops to sustain themselves and they would work jointly to produce Indian Opinion. The newspaper's editors included Hebert Kitchin, Henry Polak, Albert West, Manilal Gandhi, who was the paper's longest serving editor (for 36 years), and Sushila Gandhi, wife of Manilal who took over after his death.<sup>[2]</sup> All but one of its editors spent some time in jail.<sup>[3]</sup>

The Indian Opinion began by adopting a very moderate tone, reiterating its faith in common law and seeking not to provoke the hostility of the officials in Smut's administration. However, the Indian Opinion especially highlighted the poor conditions under which indentured labourers worked. Editorials tackled the discrimination and harsh conditions prevalent in the agricultural estates where indentured Indians were employed. Cases of harsh treatment by employers were publicized and the astoundingly high rate of suicide amongst Indians was pointed out. A campaign to end the system was launched and editor Henry Polak, a friend of Gandhi's, went to India to mobilise support. From 1906 onwards it became a vehicle for challenging state laws and urging defiance of these when these were clearly unjust. This tradition began during the satyagraha campaign between 1906 and 1913 which began because of attempts to impose passes on Indians in the Transvaal.

The paper also used to cover reports on discrimination against Africans by the colonial regime. In a publication of the paper from 22 October 1910, Gandhi wrote:<sup>51</sup>

"The Africans are alone are the original inhabitants of this land. We have not seized the land from them force; we live here with their goodwill. The whites, on the other hand, have occupied the country forcibly and appropriated it to themselves."<sup>[4]</sup>

The newspaper also gave prominence to the African Women's struggle in Orange Free State. It supported John Langalibalele Dube criticism of the Natives Land Act.<sup>[5]</sup>

The paper played a fundamental role in defeating the registration drive of officials. Its pages paid tribute to local resisters and Brian Gabriel, one of Natal's earliest Indian photographers, provided visual coverage.<sup>52</sup>

The Indian Opinion was a means of bringing news about Indians in the colonies before the public in India. The pages of Indian Opinion provide a valuable historical record of the disabilities that Indians suffered under. It also provides an invaluable record of the political life of the Indian community. Gandhi's experience with the publication and the political struggle in South Africa proved a major experience for him that helped him in his work for the Indian independence movement. He commented "Satyagraha would have been impossible without Indian Opinion."

The paper is also remembered for its coverage of racial discrimination faced by native Africans.

In India, Gandhi would publish *Young India*, *Harijan*, and *Navjivan*. Indian Opinion continued to publish for many decades and played a significant role in the wider civil rights struggle of South Africa. But it also suffered from not being a commercial enterprise but rather a publication committed to serving social causes.<sup>53</sup>

The location of the newspaper, known as Phoenix Settlement was restored in 2000. It was declared a National Heritage Site by the South African government in 2020.<sup>[6][1]</sup>

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