

History of Press in India during British rule

1780: James Augustus Hickey started 'The Bengal Gazette' also known as 'Calcutta General Advertiser'. This was the first newspaper published in India which was later stopped because it carried critical articles against the company.

1799: Governor-General Richard Wellesley enacted the Censorship of Press Act, 1799 to stop the French from publishing anything against the British. This act brought all the newspapers under Government scrutiny before their publication. This act was later extended in 1807 and covered all kinds of Press Publications newspapers, magazines, books, and Pamphlets. The rules were relaxed in 1818 when Francis Hastings (1813-1823) assumed office.

1823: Licensing Regulation ordinance was brought out by acting Governor-General John Adams. This regulation made press without a license a penal offence. The restriction was directed mainly at Indian-language newspapers or those edited by the Indians. This caused Raja Ram Mohun Roy to repeal his Persian journal 'Mirat-ul-akhbar' started in 1822.

1824: Raja Ram Mohun Roy protested against the restriction on freedom of the press.

1835: Press act or Metcalfe act, repealed the Licensing regulations of 1823. Gov.Gen. Metcalfe came to be known as the 'liberator of the press' in India. The act required a printer/publisher to give a precise account of the premises of a publication and cease functioning if required by a similar declaration. The result of a liberal press policy was the rapid growth of newspapers.

1857: Licensing act was enacted by Gov. Gen Canning (later Viceroy in 1858) after the Revolt of 1857 to impose stricter restrictions on the press. The right to stop the publication and circulation of any book, newspaper or printed matter was reserved with the Government.

1867: The registration act replaced the Metcalfe act of 1835. The act was said to introduce regulations and no restrictions on the press. The print media now was made to contain the name of the printer, publisher, and place of publication and a copy had to be submitted to the government.

1878: Vernacular Press act by Viceroy Lytton was enacted to curtail the freedom of Indian language newspapers (*this law did not apply to English language*

MANIDHANAHEYAM FREE IAS ACADEMY – TNPSC GROUP – I MAINS EXAM PAPER – II – UNIT – I – MODERN HISTORY OF INDIA AND INDIAN CULTURE papers). This was the result of the racial bitterness that has grown between the Indians and Europeans after the incidents of 1857.

1. The district magistrate was given powers to make the printer and publisher of any vernacular newspaper enter into a bond with the Government stating not to cause disaffection against the government or antipathy between persons of different religions, caste, and races through published material.
2. The printer and publisher could also be required to deposit security which could be seized if the above offences reoccurred.
3. The magistrate's action was final and no appeal could be made in a court of law.
4. A vernacular newspaper could get an exemption from the operation of the Act by submitting proof to a government censor.

1882: The pre-censorship of the Vernacular press act was repealed by Viceroy Ripon.

1908: Newspaper (incitement to offence) Act gave the magistrates power to confiscate press property that published objectionable material likely to cause incitement to murder or acts of violence. This act was triggered by the Extremist nationalist activity during and after the Swadeshi movement of 1906.

1910: Indian press act was a revision of the Vernacular Press Act that empowered the local government to demand a large amount of security at registration from the printer/publisher and forfeit/deregister of newspapers that considered anti-government, and the printer of a newspaper was required to submit two copies of each issue to local government.

1921: The acts of 1908 and 1910 were repealed on the recommendation of the Press committee chaired by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru.

1931: Indian Press (emergency powers) Act was enacted in the wake of the Civil disobedience movement. It gave powers to the provincial government to suppress propaganda writings in the support of Civil Disobedience movement.

Important journals or newspapers vs their authors:

1. Bengal gazette – J.A Hickey

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2. Maharatta (English), Kesari (Marathi) – Bal Gangadhar Tilak
3. Hitavada – Gopal Krishna Gokhale
4. Sudharak – Gopal Ganesh Agarkar
5. Voice of India, Rast Goftar – Dadabai Naororji
6. Vande Mataram, Paridasak – Bipin Chandra Pal
7. Mook Nayak, Janata, Bahishkrut bharat – Dr. B.R amberdkar
8. Prabuddha Bharata – Aiyasami, B. R. Rajam Iyer, G. G.Narasimhacharya, and B. V. Kamesvara Iyer (on behest of Swami Vivekananda)
9. Independent – Motilal Nehru
10. Punjabi – Lala Lajpat Rai
11. The leader, Hindostan, Abyudyaya, Maryada – Madan Mohan Malviya
12. New India, Commonweal – Annie Besant
13. Mirat-ul-Akhbar, Sambad kaumudi – Raja Ram Mohun Roy
14. Navajeevan, Young India, Harijan, Indian opinion (South Africa) – M.K Gandhi
15. Indian mirror – Devendra Nath Tagore
16. Som Prakash – Eshwar Chand Vidyasagar
17. The Hindu, Swadesamitram – G. Subramaniya Aiyar
18. The Bengalee – Surendra Nath Banerjee
19. Amrita Bazaar Patrika – Sisir Kumar Ghosh and Motilal Ghosh
20. Madras courier – Richard Johnson