

***“GENESIS & NASCENCY OF PRESS AND JOURNALISM  
IN ODISHA DURING THE PRE-INDPENDENCE ERA.”***

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**Abstract**

In the words of Vilamilam, “ Mass communication is just an embryo in the womb of contemporary human history”. Human communication is as old as humanity itself. It is not certain when human beings started to follow a particular device or system of exchanging messages. But it is normally understood that the oldest form of human communication is non-verbal. With the rapid growth of science & technology, several forms communication system began to develop. One of the most remarkable results of the industrial revolution was the emergence of mass communication and the twentieth century can be appropriately considered as the real age of development of news, media.<sup>1</sup> The growth of the press and journalism the state’s modern history. Christian missionaries, who have made significant contributions in this field, took the initiative. They began, the story of press and journalism in Odisha with the establishment of a printing press. In due course, Odisha developed a vernacular press. Additionally, it paved the way for the development of journalism. The development of the press and journalism in Odisha resulted in the development of socio- political consciousness among the Odia people.<sup>2</sup>

Baptist missionaries were instrumental in establishing the first printing press in Odisha. They began by printing religious texts in Odia for the purpose of spreading Christian ideas. They established a press in Cuttack in 1837, dubbed the ‘ Cuttack Printing Press’ and began publishing the earlier Odia journals. They, established press in 1866, Odisha’s second printing press, the Cuttack printing company, was established. Only two years later, in 1868, Fakir Mohan Senapati established the third printing press in Balasore with the assistance of the local zamindar and populace. After five years, Fakir Mohan established another press in Balasore in 1873. Between 1873 and 1899, press establishment in Odisha- accelerated.<sup>3</sup>

The established of the press was a watershed moment in Odisha's journalism history. As previously stated, the missionaries established a press in 1837. The same year, a monk named Sadhu Sundar Das published the first Odia newspaper, Kujabara Patrika. The missionaries then established the journal Jnanaruna in 1849 for the purpose of disseminating their religious ideas. Additionally, they published two additional journals, Prabodha Chandrika and Arundoya. In 1866, Bichitrnanda Das, inspired by T.E. Ravenshaw, the Commissioner of Odisha, established the Cuttack printing press. Utkala Dipika, edited by Gauri Shankar Ray, was published by that press. He was the journal's editor until his death in 19917. Fakir Mohan Senapati, dubbed the "Father of Odia Prose", established a press in Balasore and, with the encouragement of John Beams, the collector of Balasore, published two monthly journals, Bodhadayini and Balasore Sambad Vahika.<sup>4</sup>

Sambad Vahika later valued into a weekly journal. In the final quarter of the nineteenth century, this journal remained an influential publication in Odisha. Sevak and Samskaraka are two periodicals published by Cuttack Mission press. The Sevak was a monthly publication, while the Samkaraka was a weekly publication. Under the patronage of King Sudhaladev, Sambad Hitaisini was published in 1889. It reported on the news and expressed the opinions of the people of Western Odisha. Nilamani Vidhyaratna edited it. It was instrumental in igniting the language agitation in Sambalpur. Similarly, under the editorship of Vidhyaratna and with the royal patronage of Harihar Mardaraj of Khallikote Prajabandhu, a book was published with the royal patronage of Harihara Mardaraj of Khallikote Prajabandhu. It was intended to check the Telugus' dominance. In 1873, Raja Baikuntha Nath De of Balasore established another press and published the journal Utkala Darpana. Other journals and newspapers included Utkala Madhupa, Utkala Darpana. Other journals and newspapers included Utkala Putra, Kohinur Utkala Sahitya, Dainika Asha & Samaj. Thus press and journals increased people's awareness of daily events. They could learn about a variety of programmes and information about a variety of subjects from these newspapers and journals.<sup>5</sup>

**Key Words:**

*Communication, Messages, Missionaries, Consciousness, Journalism, Printing, Watershed, Dissemination, Encouragement, Expression, Patronage, Dominance, Information, Programmes.*

**Introduction :**

The Press and the Newspapers, as ventilators of news and views, came to play their role in Odisha in the wake of western civilization. The history of press and journalism in Odisha owed a lot to the Christian missionaries who were pioneers in this field. With the establishment of printing press by them began the story of press in Odisha. In due course of time vernacular press emerged in Odisha. It also prepared the way to the growth of journalism. The growth of press and journalism in Odisha led to the rise and spread of nationalism in this soil. As early as 1837, the missionaries took initiative for the establishment of printing press in Odisha. But unfortunately, journalism started by them could not meet the need of the people for they were predominately religious and meant for proselytizing activities. Therefore, to enlighten the public about the real difficulties and problems of the Odias, the educated native people thought it necessary to establish printing presses and publish journals, magazines, periodicals in Odisha. The efforts made by this class helped the growth of an informative and healthy journalism in Odisha. Therefore, in the post-famine period, remarkable changes took place in the field of press and journalism.<sup>6</sup>

The British missionaries were the pioneers of establishing printing press in Odisha. They at first printed religious texts in Odia for the propaganda of Christian ideas. For the first time in 1837, they established a press in Cuttack named the ‘Cuttack Printing Press’ and published the earlier Odia journals. They were the pioneers of Press in Odisha. In 1866, the second printing Press in Odisha was established which was named as the Cuttack Printing Company. Only after two years in 1868, the third printing press was established at Balasore by the efforts of Fakir Mohan Senapati with the help of local Zamindar and people. After five years of the establishing of that press by Fakir Mohan, another Press was established in Balasore in 1873. Between 1873 and 1899 establishment of press in Odisha became rapid.<sup>7</sup>

The establishment of the press was a landmark in the history of journalism in Odisha. As stated earlier, the missionaries had established press in 1837. In the same year the first Odia newspaper named Kujibar Patrika was published by the initiative taken by a monk named Sadhu Sunder Das. Then the missionaries published the journal named Jnanaruna in 1849 for the propagation of their religious ideas. They also published two other journals named Prabodha Chandrika and Arundoya. A milestone was established in the field of Odia journals. When Bichitrananda Das being inspired by T.E.Ravenshaw, the Commissioner of Odisha established the Cuttack Printing Press in 1866. From the press was published Utkala Dipika edited by Gauri Shankar Ray. He was the editor of the journal till his death in 1917. Fakir Mohan Senapati, the ‘Father of Odia Prose’ established a press of Balasore and buy the inspiration of John Beams, the collector of Balasore published two monthly journals named Bodhadayini and Balasore Sambad Vahika. Later on Sambad Vahika became a weakly journal. This journal remained as an influential journal of Odisha in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup>

English journals and newspapers were eventually published in Odisha, Cuttack. Argus ( 1869), Cuttack Star ( 1869), Cuttack Standard Odisha Patriot ( 1866), Government News ( 1896), and star of Utkal (1906-1912) were prominent among the leading newspapers and journals . The establishment of the printing presses primarily served the purpose of publishing periodicals, journals and printing of text books for schools. The printing presses also helped the development of Odia literature which was heading towards extinction under the dominance of the Bengali language. The printing press played the necessary role to project the desire of the scattered Odia-speaking people to be united under one administration.<sup>9</sup>

The most important newspaper in Odisha during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was Utkala Dipika which molded the public opinion and ventilated the popular feelings on all matters. Utkala Dipika ( 1868) edited by Gauri Shankar Ray, remained to be the pioneer of journalism in modern Odisha, Gauri Shankar Ray realized to be the pioneer of journalism in modern Odisha. Gauri Shankar Ray realized that there was the necessity of an Odia Movement for the unification of the Odia speaking areas and improvement of the Odia language and literature. With this idea in mind, he worked for the creation of political consciousness among the people.<sup>10</sup>

Utkala Dipika served him as a ‘ Vehicle and an instrument’. The Utkala Dipika at that time had acquired great prestige and influence in Odisha. It became the most powerful agency of public opinion having on aim to achieve socio-economic, educational and political awakening in Odisha. It vehemently protested against the proposal of substitution of Bengali in the place of Odia in courts, offices and schools and helped the spread of Odia nationalism. On the whole, it dominated the world of Odia journalism till the advent of the dailies.<sup>11</sup>

The establishment of printing press and consequent publication of journals and periodicals were two potent factors for bringing about socio-political consciousness or renaissance in Odisha.. Utkala Putra, edited by Peary Mohan Acharya , fought for the cause of education in Odisha.<sup>12</sup> Sambada Bahika defended the Odia language and pleaded for the expansion of education in Odisha. Sambalpur Hitaisini, edited by Nilamani Vidyaratna published news relating to the language agitation in Sambalpur and fought for the introduction of the Odia language in schools and offices. The other important periodicals of that period were Bodhadayini and Balasore Sambadbahika ( 1868), Utkala Hitasini (1869), Utkal Subhakari(1869), Cuttack Chronicle (1871), Utkala Darpana(1873), Utkala Putra (1873). Bidesi ( 1873), Utkala Sanskaraka ( 1874), Swadeshi ( 1878), Utkala Madhupa ( 1878), Prajabandhu ( 1882), Purusottama Partake ( 1883), Sevaka ( 1883), Sanskaraka ( 1884), Pradeepa ( 1885), Navasambada ( 1886), The Oriya (1887), Samyavadi ( 1887), Odia O’ Navasambada ( !888), Samalochana ( 1889), Sambalpur Hitaisini ( 1889), Bijuli ( 1893), Utkala Bandhu ( 1896), Ganjam News ( 1896), Utkala Sahitya ( 1897), Ganjam Odia Hitabodini ( 1899) and Alochana ( 1900). These periodicals served two purposes; they supplied assistance for the propagation of the spirit of patriotism among the masses and secondly they aimed at endowing Odia literature with the spirit of modernism.<sup>13</sup>

These journals & periodicals and newspapers diverted the attention of the people from a worn out traditional outlook to various issues of local and national interest. These papers served as the mass media to discuss the socio- political and economic problems of the Odias. The common people came to know about the political happenings around them.<sup>13</sup> They could gather knowledge about administrative changes and various measures taken up by the government through these up by the government through these papers.

The common people became conscious of their political rights. They came to know of the ideas of representative government, liberty democratic institutions and independence. The news papers and periodicals served as effective weapons to expose the social evils and inequalities that prevailed in the society during that time. They ventilated the demand of the people for general and technical education, and for the amalgamation of all the Odia-speaking tracts. They highlighted the problems pertaining to communication, and demanded for the introduction of Railway system in Odisha.<sup>14</sup>

A new era in the journalism history of Odisha started with the publication of two newspapers, namely, “The Asha” and “The Samaj”. “The Asha” published and edited by Sashibhusan Rath made its first appearance in April 1914 from Berhampur and became very popular as newspaper for which the publisher took the attempt to make it a daily newspaper in 1928. On the 4<sup>th</sup> October 1919, the Samaj resumed its first publication from Satyabadi with the sincere efforts of the then well known freedom fighter late Gopabandhu Das. The publication of the Samaj; the popular Oriyan daily heralded a new age in the history of Orissa’s news paper and Oriya journalism to a considerable heights.<sup>14</sup>

The Samaj became extremely popular due to its contents and coverage being suited to the information needs of the people, particularly the rural mass. During that time, the freedom movements was very much on the card. The news paper became the mouth piece of freedom movement. Taking into account its popularity, the publication of the said news paper was shifted to Cuttack in 1927 and was converted into a daily news paper and since then, it has almost become as a household commodity in each and every Odia family of the state.<sup>15</sup> The publication of another Odia news paper ‘The Prajatantra’ in 1932 established and edited by late Harekrushna Mahatab had tremendously influenced the literary and social lives of Odia people. A new phase in Odia journalism started with the publication of the said news paper. After a long closure, it was again reappeared as a daily newspaper in 1947 and still continuing as a major circulated Odia daily. The subsequent publication of several other news papers from different places of Odisha as depicted and have cherished the language, literature and journalism in Odisha to a remarkable height in comparison to other contemporary states.<sup>16</sup>

Besides the above newspapers, there are a number of other small and medium newspapers published from Odisha. While some news papers have already ceased their publications mostly owing to their poor financial base and quality, few of them still could remain their continuity in publication amidst much struggle which include: Jananbhasa and Kalinga mail from Bhubaneswar, Agnisikha and Dakara from Sambalpur, Yuga Barata from Rourkela, Kurukhetra and Matrubhasa from Cuttack.<sup>17</sup> In addition to the foregoing newspapers, some of the prominent magazines that contained news, features and literary articles have also dominated, the publication scenario considerably. These magazines are either attached to the publishers of various news papers or other publishers apparently because of their sound press infrastructure.<sup>18</sup>

Another significant contribution to the field of Odia journalism is the addition of weekly issues of various magazines, usually appended to a daily news paper. These magazines contain investigate articles on burning problems of the state along with feature articles, small write-ups on science and technology, film, music, general knowledge and other entrainment notes.<sup>19</sup> These magazines are so popular that the readers used to wait eagerly for the weekend to find the magazine in their hand. However, the development of newspaper as a massive media in Odisha could not be improved both in terms of quality and quantity to an extent expected. It is due to certain factors which can be attributed to poverty, illiteracy, rural based society and absence of reading habits and less political awareness among the people in the state.<sup>20</sup>

Thus the results of such publications were numerous. First, the language agitation at Sambalpur gained momentum due to the Sambalpur Hitaisine. Other Odia journals came forward to give vent to this. Secondly, the newspapers and journals exposed the black spots of the British administration and made the people cautious.<sup>21</sup> The British Government also became cautious in dealing the public of Odisha. Thirdly, it flared nationalism. Through, these newspapers and journals, the message of nationalism was spreads. The idea of nationalism was injected into the body, mind and soul of the people of Odisha through these writings. Fourthly, the publication of news paper and journals played a vital role in the amalgamation of Odia speaking tracts. The ‘Utha Kankala’ poem of Godabarish Mohapatra was a pioneer in this direction. Fifthly, the national programmes associated with different Gandhian Movements, atrocities during the Salt

Satyagraha and Quit India Movement etc. were published in the pages of the news papers and journals.<sup>22</sup> It flared up nationalism and dragged the people of Odisha to the fold of national movement. On the otherhand, the Christian Missionaries and the Brahmo Samajists propagated their religion through the journals and news papers. These journals and news papers helped in the spread of Christianity and Brahmo Movement.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, these news papers and journals made people vigilant regarding the day-to-day happenings. They could know various programmes and informations regarding many things from these news papers and journals.<sup>24</sup> The story of Press and Journalism during the post-independence era in Odisha was quite sensational. The growth of press and publication of journals and newspapers in Odisha helped a lot for the growth of anti-British feeling among the people of Odisha.<sup>25</sup> These news papers acted as the mouth piece of the public agitation during those years. The growth of journalism, publication of periodicals and magazines coming in the wake of the establishment of printing presses aroused the political awarenesses of the people and draw their attention to local as well as national problems.

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