

## **Development of Bengali Newspapers in Tripura**

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Tripura is a border State of India. The financial resource of this State is very meagre. But Tripura has her own culture and tradition which is worth mentioning. Through ups and downs of history, the culture of Bengal and Tripura became almost same.

The culture of undivided Bengal created a great sensation in the royal family once. Gradually it reached the common people. While discussing about the development of Newspaper in Tripura the above matters must be kept in mind and the present attempt has been made to find a history of Newspapers in Tripura.

Till the end of 19th century the news of Tripura were generally printed in the papers published from Comilla, Dacca and Calcutta. In 1821 several news items from Tripura appeared in "Samachar Darpan" of Calcutta. Amongst these were the marriage and coronation of Maharaja Ramganga Manikya. In 1876, a paper entitled "Barsiki" was published under the patronage of Maharaja Radhakishore Manikya. In 1903 two papers were published from Tripura State known as "Dhumketu" and "Bangabhasa". 'Dhumketu' mainly discussed about the high officials of the State.

The literary paper "Bangabhasa" was published from Agartala. Maharaj Kumar Surendra Mohan Deb Barman was the editor of this paper. The paper aimed at the development of Bengali language. On 14th April, 1905, a fortnightly paper known as "Arun" was published from Agartala under the editorship of Chandrodoy Vidyavinode. The price of this paper was one paisa per copy. The main role of "Arun" was to point out the needs and complaints of the people. It was discontinued after two years. In 1912, three hand written papers were published. They were "Matha Thanda", "Siksha" and "Sadhana".

In 1924, "Rabi" was published as the organ of 'Kishore Sahitya Samaj'. "Rabi" created a tradition of that age. All the luminaries of Bengali literature of the time including Rabindranath Tagore used to write regularly in this paper. It continued for 6 years. In 1932, a weekly paper entitled "Tripura" was published.

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In 1934, a monthly magazine known as "Pubali" was published. In 1937, a hand written monthly paper known as "Alo" was published from Tripura. In 1938, three papers namely "Dhumketu", "Tarun" and "Abhijan" were published. Two other papers "Kalyani" and "Namaskar" came out in 1939. In 1942, Anil Chandra Bhattacharjee published a monthly paper, "Tripur Bandhab". Between 1942 and 1947 the spirit of publication decreased. Nevertheless, a few papers like "Chatri", "Chhatrakatha", "Academy", "Whip", "Nabajagaran" and "Abhyudoy" appeared during this period.

After the partition in 1947, a considerable change took place in the cultural life of Tripura. At that time the paper "Abhyudoy" took prominent role. In 1947, fourteen papers were published from Tripura. The important amongst them was "Aragati". The publication year of "Tripurar Katha" was also 1947. This was previously a spokesman of "Tripura Janasiksha Samity". In the same year, a weekly paper namely "Sarathi" was published as the mouth piece of "Tripura Kristi Sangsad". A monthly called "Sanskar" was also published. On April 14, 1947, the weekly "Tripura" was started under the joint editorship of Rajen Dey and Renu Datta.

In 1948, "Sikha", a monthly, and another known as "Chiniha" were published. In 1952, the publication of "Samiksha" started. Stories, poems and essays discussed in "Sahitya Basar", a famous cultural organisation of that time, were regularly published in this paper.

On March 15, 1953 the "Sevak" began to be published as a weekly newspaper. It was started as a fortnightly and from its seventh issue it was turned into a weekly. The "Samachar" was started on August 15, 1953 from Agartala as a weekly. It is still in circulation. In the same year was published the weekly paper "Samaj". This weekly carried news of Tripura Government and articles on tribal life, their dance and music.

On September 5, 1954, the Journalists' Association of Tripura held its first conference. It was presided over by the noted journalist Sri Vevekananda Mukhapadhyay. Their second conference was held on the 4th and 5th May, 1960. Through these conferences the journalists gave expression to their rights and they paid their attention to the varied task of raising the standard of journalism, safeguarding their interest, mutual co-operation and to dedicate themselves to uphold the real interest of Tripura. As a result

of the second conference, the then Chief Commissioner Sri Nagari Mohan Patnaik introduced the system of meeting the journalists after every three months. Another noteworthy step in the field of journalism in Tripura was the publication of the first newspaper in Kak Borok- the language of the Tripuris, the major tribal group of Tripura. It was named "Katal Kathma". The script was Bengali and it was edited by Sudhanya Deb Barma.

In the year 1955 the State Re-organisation Committee proposed to integrate Tripura with the State of Assam. A successful Bandh was called in and around Agartala in protest. A committee was formed to protest against the designed annexation of Tripura with any of the Indian States and was named "Swatantra Tripura". A single issue of newspaper of the same name was brought out in that year. The weekly "Abhijan" was also brought out in 1955.

In the year 1956, a newspaper named "Panchayet" came out as the mouth piece of Panchayet. This did not last long. Monthly "Kak Borok" (Bengali script) was brought out by Bansi Thakur in the same year. Its objects were to popularise the native language, Tripuri.

In 1958 five more newspapers were brought out. The most remarkable of them is the "Nagarik". The other notable periodicals of this year is "Gumati", a literary magazine. A local Labour Union brought out its organ - "Sangram"-to give vent to their struggle for survival.

The year 1959 saw seven new organs. Out of them there was the reckonable weekly the "Rudraveena". The library service of Tripura brought out their literary organ "The Granthalok".

From 1960 onwards a good number of new periodicals and newspapers were published every year. There were a few which really deserve mention. In 1960, the fortnightly "Kollol" and the daily "Ganaraj" drew attention of the people. The former devoted to a closer study of the Tribal culture of the state, while the latter became the first daily newspaper. Another paper was "Nishan" which was chiefly a mouth piece of the Co-operative movement. "Kok Tun", a Tripuri news magazine, published in Bengali script opened a new dimension in the studies in tribal culture and tribal life. In 1961, "Sanhati" and "Vivek" were published. Making its debut as a weekly "Vivek" is a new Daily newspaper of Tripura.

The year 1962 saw four additions. In 1963 the number of new arrivals rose to fourteen including two school magazines. Among them, weekly "Gana Abhijan" and "Nava Diganta" were

famous. "Nava Diganta" has stopped publication, but "Gana Abhijan" is going strong, though it has been converted into a daily named "Dainik Gana Abhijan". It has now become the largest daily newspaper of the state. Its present name is "Dainik Sambad". Besides newspaper and news magazines, there were a few literary magazines of distinction. They are "Dristikon", "Jonaki" and "Ratnalipi".

In the year 1964, eight new papers emerged which included "Arunopal", "Bharat Kalyani", "Gandhar" and "Bhaskar". In the following year there were only four new additions, of which only one namely "Kolahal" survived. But in 1966, there was again a big jump in the number of new additions. As many as thirteen new magazines were published of which "Silpa Barta", "Tribeg", "Deshar Dak", "Deshar Katha", "Kripan" and "Tripura Barta" were famous.

The year 1967 witnessed the birth of 26 new periodicals from Tripura. Among the literary ones, "Kakali", "Uditi", "Anirban" and "Dheu" deserve special mention. Again the noteworthy names of newspapers that came out in this year are "Amader Katha", "Abhyuday", "Chinikok", "Ganajog", "Yapri" etc. In this year "Amader Katha" came into the field as the organ of the Tripura Govt. Employees Association. Another newspaper known as "Ganajog" was also seen in this year.

In the year 1968, 14 news papers and journals were published. "Pralay" was one of them. In the same year came out "Bhabi Bharat" also.

Another 27 new Bengali periodicals saw the light of the day in 1969. Seven of them were literary. The only evening daily from Tripura was "Shandhya Khabar". It was a daring adventure to publish a newspaper in the evening and sell it. It was kept alive for about a year. The fortnightly "Tripura Prakash" came out for three numbers only. Another evening weekly "Tridib" also came out in this year. "Bidrohi" was born with the bold declaration to deny everything of the society.

In 1970, we find 26 newspapers and periodicals. In the world of newspapers and periodicals, something novel happened in this year. Mini-magazines like "Pounami", "Dyuti", "Kheyal", "Shoshan", "Jwala", "Bratati", "Katha" etc. were good attempts. Another new thing that came out in this year was a children's magazine, quarterly "Kakali".

Of the 19 papers that came out in 1971, six were news papers: twelve literary magazines and one school organ. The first Sans-

krit journal "Tripura Bharati" was published in this year. With the promise of fearlessness, impartiality and nationalism, came out weekly "Tripura Prabaha". While the people of Bangladesh were fighting their struggle for independence, several newspapers came out here to report mainly from the fronts. Of them "Joy Bangla", "Swadhinata" and "Dhaleswari" are worth mentioning. "Hal", "Chandana", "Shamakal" and "Rakta Palash", ushered in new trends in literature.

In 1972, forty one papers were published of which 14 were newspapers, 23 literary magazines and the rest were of schools and colleges. "Dainik Janapad", "Khudhartha", "Purbachal", "Janatar Ray", "Tripurar Mukh" and "Ganadoot", "Platform", "Uttar", "Sakal", "Jharana", "Sako" are mentionworthy. "Platform" was ornamented with the stories of the famous city writers of Tripura.

Number of the papers published in the year 1973 were forty among which twelve were newspapers and the rest literary magazines. Of them weekly "Bitirna" is still alive with its non-political character. Weekly "Tripura Katha" came into being with assurance of fearlessness and neutrality.

In 1974, twenty nine papers were published among which nine were newspapers. Of them daily "Janajog" and "Padatik" are worth mentioning. "Padatik" would expose mainly the faults and misdeeds of the Govt. officers of Tripura. "Janajog" is still continuing in the name of "Tripura Darpan". Among the literary magazines, "Machang", "Abakash", "O dikolon", "Gomoti", "Purba Megh", "Sanskrit Darpan" are still popular.

Between 1975 to 1978 new addition to the world of newspapers in Tripura was scanty. In 1979 nine papers were published of which one was in Kok Borok language (Chaba), one in Chakma language (Tallich) and two in Manipuri language (Takhel Lairang and Sarat-ki-chel). Six papers each in 1980 and 1981 were published of which "Khelarmela" and "Ajkal" are worth mentioning. Number of papers published in 1982 were eight of which mention may be made of "Chamak" and "Juva Samaj".

The year 1984 saw the publication of only 4 newspapers, of which "Pura Sambad" and "Lamjel" are worth mentioning. Lastly, during the current year 1985, three newspapers have been published. They are "Hasir Hullod", "Mahakash" and "Sankhachil".

In conclusion, I would like to say that continued progress of newspapers in Tripura can be understood from this article. It is

no wonder that the land is a treasure house of history so far unveiled. Development of newspapers is one such aspect which is to be discussed in the light of history of Tripura. Newspapers form an integral part in the development of language, literature, politics, art and culture, knowledge of contemporary events etc. The present writing traces the development of newspaper since the early period. In comparison with even some big neighbouring states the development of newspapers in this small State of Tripura is really wonderful.

[ This paper is a survey of the publication of newspapers and periodicals published from Tripura. It is based on the data collected by the author mainly from the old files of publications. ]