

G. Subramaniya Iyer: The First Editor And Founder Of 'The Hindu' - Through The Eyes Of The Indian Intelligentsia

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Abstract:

The Hindu was founded on September 20, 1878, by six young nationalists. In the first editorial titled "Ourselves", published on September 20, 1878, the founders flagged two guiding principles. During its initial years, the paper was printed at Srinidhi Press, Mint Street, Black Town, and Madras. G. Subramaniam Iyer was a pioneer in the field of independence of the country, in social reforms, and in entering the field of journalism and introducing large-scale newspapers. Bipan Chandra praised Tamil Nadu's political, economic, and social liberation fighter, G. Subramania Iyer, in his famous book "The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India" with compelling evidence. G. Subramania Iyer was extremely focused on social reforms. He was interested in child marriage issues, widowhood, and caste unity. He worked tirelessly to increase the age of marriage, for widow marriages, to give equal status to oppressed people in society, and to prevent child marriages.

Key Words: G.S ubramania Iyer-Journalism-The Hindu-National Movement-Economic Thought.

Introduction

Journalism also plays an important role in the Indian freedom struggle. When India became free, there was no longer any antagonism between the government and the people, and the press was free to play a completely new role. The Indian press catalysing India's development measures, national integration, and the fight for justice in independent India. Newspaper publishing started in Chennai with the launch of a weekly, The Madras Courier, in 1785.¹ The Spectator, founded in 1836, was the first English newspaper in Chennai to be owned by an Indian and became the city's first daily newspaper in 1853.²

The Hindu was founded on September 20, 1878, by six young nationalists led by radical social reformer and school teacher G. Subramania Aiyer of Tiruvaiyar near Thanjavur. The others were: his school teacher friend M. Veeraraghavachariar of Chengalpattu and law students T.T. Rangachariar, P.V.

Rangachariar, D. Kesava Rao Pant, and N. Subba Rau Pantulu. The 'Triplicane Six', as they were called, were angry that the Anglo-Indian press - newspapers owned and edited by the British - had panned the appointment of T. Muthuswami Aiyer, as a Judge of the Madras High Court, the first Indian to be so appointed. They borrowed one rupee and 12 annas and started The Hindu as a weekly - published every Wednesday - to counter the campaign against Muthuswami Aiyer's appointment.

In the first editorial titled "Ourselves", published on September 20, 1878, the founders flagged two guiding principles: fairness and justice. The editorial starts with these lines;

"In accordance with the long-standing etiquette obtaining among the journalistic community, we, seeking admission into it as a new member, herald our first appearance before the public by a leader rather ostentatiously styled "Ourselves", in which we will presently set forth the circumstances that justify the

appearance of a new paper, its professed intentions and aims, the line of policy it proposes to pursue and the principles by which it is to be guided. It is with great diffidence that we usher this paper into existence presuming that the indulgent public will give us a warm reception by supporting and encouraging us despite our shortcomings.”³

From October 1, 1883, The Hindu became a tri-weekly - published on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday - to provide a timely discussion of topics of current interest. It became an evening daily from April 1, 1889. From November 11, 1940, it became a morning paper, dictated by the coverage demands of the Second World War and the difference in time zones.

Initial Years

During its initial years, the paper was printed at Srinidhi Press, Mint Street, Black Town, and Madras. Soon the students, who became lawyers, parted ways with SubramaniaAiyer and Veeraraghavachariar, the Managing Editor. Later, the two former school teachers had differences over the issue of social reform. Writing in the special supplement issued along with The Hindu on September 13 to mark the 125th anniversary, Historian S.Muthiah said:

“The Hindu was SubramaniaAiyer's vehicle for social reform crusades. In a conservative society, it was inevitable that such zeal would encounter a hostile backlash. Veeraraghavachariar, in charge of the business side, found the repercussions squeezing the paper's finances... There was an inevitable parting of ways and the partnership was dissolved in October 1898... Within days of the break, SubramaniaAiyer took over full-time the editorship of the Swadesamitran while Veeraraghavachariar took over the entire business of the struggling newspaper.”⁴

Kasturiranga Iyengar could be termed The Hindu's first moderniser. According to Muthiah, between 1921 and 1923 he installed “the first rotary printing press in south India and modern linotype composing machines, setting the trend the paper follows to this day of being first with modern newspaper technology in India”. When he died in December 1923, the paper had stabilised with a

circulation of 17,000 copies and considerable advertising revenue.

G. Subramania Iyer: The forerunner of the new awakening

G. Subramaniam Iyer was a pioneer in the field of independence of the country, in social reforms, and in entering the field of journalism and introducing large-scale newspapers. He is the only one who started the newspapers ‘The Hindu’ and ‘Swadesamithiran’ and sowed the seeds of liberation struggle and heroism in the hearts of the people in the war of independence. Above all, he is the one who showed MahakaviBhartiyar to the world. He was born in 1855 in Thiruvaiyar, Tanjore district to Ganapathy Iyer and Dharmambal. Ganapati Iyer was a lawyer in the AwurMunicipal Court. Subramaniam Iyer was born with six brothers and one sister. He completed his primary education in Thiruvaiyar and his higher education in Thanjavur and matriculated in 1869. In 1871 he passed the FA (Intermediate) examination. The same year the wedding took place. He then completed his teacher training at Saidapet. Following that he worked as a teacher in some places including Pachaiyappa's College. He served as the headmaster of Tiruvallikeni Hindu High School for ten years. He later founded and ran a school called The Aryan School.

Founding and as editor of The Hindu 1878-1898

G. Subramaniam Iyer was not only the founder of the early days of the Congress movement but also started newspapers to help the Congress movement grow in Tamil Nadu and to make local people aware of indigenous news. He established his name and fame till the All India Congress. He was a great social revolutionary who carried out social reforms not only in speech but also in his actions a hundred years ago.

He joined the then-functioning Literary Society at Tiruvallikeni, Chennai, and got in touch with some of the scholars there. It was then that Sir D. Muthusamy Iyer, an Indian, was appointed Judge of the Chennai High Court for the first time. The Anglo-Indian press at the time wrote critically about the appointment and

caste differences. G. Subramaniam Iyer and his friends realized that they needed a newspaper to condemn this. They immediately printed 80 copies of the one-and-a-half-rupee donation and published a magazine. The 'Hindu' magazine was published on September 20, 1878. 'Hindu' has been the loudest newspaper ever since. The six who started the 'Hindu' magazine along with G. Subramania Iyer were M. Veeraragavachariyar, D.D. Rangachariyar, P.V. Rangachariyar, D.K. Kesava Rao Bandh and n. Subbarao Bandulu. Among them, G. Subramania Iyer and Veeragavacharya worked as tutors in Pachaiyappa's College. The other four are law students. It was then announced that the 'Hindu' newspaper would be printed at the Srinidhi Press on Mint Street in Georgetown and would be published every Wednesday evening at a quarter price of the current Hindu newspaper, eight pages at Nalana (25 paise) prices, for the present twenty-five coins.

The launch of the Hindu newspaper was opposed by the pro-British newspapers, especially The Madras Mail, which mocked the Indians. Therefore, when the English press wrote against the appointment of Judge Muthusamy Iyer, it supported the 'Hindu' appointment and shattered the opinion of the English newspaper. The next major impact of the Hindu press was on the Chengalpattu riots in 1881. The Hindu press has strongly argued against the Governor of Chennai in connection with this case. Three years later, during the Salem riots of 1884, the Hindu press declared war on the British government. It is a case involving C. Vijayaragavachariyar, a senior Congress leader from Salem. Here is the Hindu argument about it: -

"The prosecution of the so-called Salem Rioters and their convictions were the result of a premeditated design, hastily formed and executed in a vindictive spirit, not very honourable and utterly unworthy of a civilized Government".

In 1880 the Hindu press was taken to Mylapore. 'The Hindu Press' was started by Raganada Row. It has been published three times a week since 1883. In 1897 the Hindus chanted against the arrest of Tilak. Then, on December 3, 1883, the Hindu newspaper switched to Mount Road for its own printing

press, The National Press. Norton, a well-known criminal lawyer in Chennai, ran for the Chennai Legislative Assembly; He was actively supported by the Hindu C. G.S., who vehemently opposed English imperialism. It is unknown at this time what he did to cause the fire.

This 'Thiruvallikkeni Aruvar' (The Triplicane Six) had to be separated. Law students have gone on to practice law. G. Subramaniam Iyer and Veeragavacharya were the only ones to run the newspaper. Twenty years after the publication of the Hindu newspaper in 1898, G. Subramania Iyer sold the paper to a friend. Since then, it has belonged to the Kasturi Iyengar family. The Hindu press was seven years older before the Congress party started.

He was a co-founder and a member of the Chennai Mahajana Sabha. When the Congress Party was formed in Bombay in 1885, G. Subramaniam Iyer became its early member. When Lord Curzon divided Bengal in 1906, he wrote strongly against it. He nominated a moderate leader for the presidency at the Surat Congress Conference in 1907 and later succeeded Bala Gangadhar Tilak.

In 1882 he started the weekly "Swadesamithiran" magazine. Since 1889 it has blossomed into a daily magazine. Bharathiyar, who was a Tamil teacher at Sethupathi High School in Madurai, was brought to Chennai and was instrumental in becoming a journalist and thereby an active politician. He was the one who introduced Mahakavi to the world.

The national movement was built around a very sophisticated ideological discourse, most of which was developed by the first generation of nationalists, erroneously called Moderates, who were towering intellectuals. Dadabhai Naoroji, R. C. Dutt, Ranade, Gokhale, and G. Subramania Iyer, were among those who grounded Indian nationalism firmly on the foundation of anti-imperialism by fashioning the world's first economic critique of colonialism, before Hobson and Lenin.⁵

He was the first to stage Tamil in the political arena

He was the first to introduce the practice of distributing leaflets in Tamil at the end of stage speeches. The names of the publications issued as mentioned above have been mentioned in the report of the British Intelligence Service.⁶

The first political campaign trip

The first political organization of the state of Chennai was formed in the city of Chennai in 1852. The 'Madras Native Association' campaigned in 1882 for the establishment of Lord Ribbon's Spatial Autonomy Project. G. to go to major cities and propagate the project. Subramanian Iyer was elected. The tour was called the first political campaign tour.

G. The following comment made by the Tamil scholar Kurumalai Sundarampillai, the assistant editor of 'Sudesamithiran' in the biographical book Subramania Iyer (1907) is noteworthy here.⁷

"Our Iyer was the first to establish the custom of public leaders to campaign for diplomatic matters in the province of Chennai, just as the clergy makes a pilgrimage to propagate their religion".

G. Subramania Iyer's Criticism on Colonialism - In the view of Prof. Bipan Chandra.

Historian, Professor Bipan Chandra has taken up many of the quotations from G.SubramaniaIyer's book, "Some Economic Aspects of India in British Rule".⁸

In his book, the professor examines the economic policies of the Indian national leadership. He selected the period 1880-1915 for the study. The book consists of fifteen chapters.

Bipan Chandra praised Tamil Nadu's political, economic, and social liberation fighter, G. Subramania Iyer, in his famous book "The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India" with compelling evidence. According to his quotes,⁹

In the chapter entitled 'Indian Economy', G. Subramania Iyer's view is that "the real crisis in the economic situation must

be identified and openly accepted".⁷ One notable feature of Bipan Chandra is that he cites a comment made by Professor G. Subramania Iyer on March 2, 1901, in the journal Swadesamithiran.

In the same chapter 'G. Subramania Iyer (in the language of Bipan Chandra) quotes the comment. The details are as follows:

"Foreign employers of the ruling class are taking advantage of political and social concessions. Will they help the industrial development of the people they rule? I do not know if this happens in ancient or modern countries. We need to educate and train our people and help them produce for themselves. I will say without hesitation that this is the only way to cultivate agricultural wealth. Foreign capital is basically an anti-national illusion. Because this foreign capital will destroy Indian capital."¹⁰

At the beginning of the fourth chapter of Foreign Trade, Bipan Chandra glorified 'G.SubramaniaIyer' by setting the following lines of G. Subramania Iyer as the crowning lines.

"To place India's role on a national basis, the basic handling, that the large and unlimited Market supply of her teeming population should be mainly received for the products to indigenous Industries and that what may remain as surplus should be exported to foreign countries in exchange for what cannot be Produced or manufactured here, to do this is the only means to everthing the disaster that threatens to work India's complete economic ruin with that feature"¹¹

Labour welfare

Bipan Chandra has mentioned in his book that G. Subramania Iyer was the first national leader to examine the labour force in the agricultural sector from a supportive perspective.¹²

"The tendency of employers to take advantage of the ignorance of workers is unsustainable. "The day is not far when the workers will rise and form a union for their political rights, wage hikes, and demands," Bipan Chandra has highlighted what

G.SubramaniaIyer said. In his book, he has written a separate chapter on “Our Labouring Classes”¹³ and also a chapter on “Agricultural Labour”¹⁴

And also, G. Subramania Iyer said that it is not enough to describe India as an agricultural country, it should be industrialized. What Biban Chandra said in 1901 has been highlighted in his book.

Biban Chandra elaborates on the views of G. Subramania Iyer in the fourth chapter entitled ‘Railways. G. Subramania Iyer has also written a separate chapter on ‘Railways’ in his book.¹⁵

Also, Bharatiyar, Subramania Siva, and others’ eulogies on G. Subramania Iyer should be selected and clarified here.

SubramaniaBhartiyar:

Let’s see what Bharatiyar has to say about Iyer, who recognized EttayapuramSubramaniaBhartiyar, who was working as a Tamil teacher in Sethupathi High School, Madurai, and took him as an assistant editor to his Swadeshamithran.

While writing about the emergence of the Congress in 1885 in the book “History of Bharatha Jana Sabha” (1918), Bharatiyar’s eulogy for ‘G. SubramaniaIyer is as follows:

“Tamil Nadu is penance. Because in the first meeting of the Congress Mahasabha, the privilege of bringing and passing the first resolution was Sudesamitran Sri, the President of Tamil Nadu. Subramania Iyer got it.”¹⁶

In an article titled ‘Awakening of Tamil Nadu’ by Bharatiyar under the pen name ‘Shaktidasan’ in Sudeshamithran, the famous historical role of ‘G. Subramania Iyer.’

“Ramalinga Swami, SudeshamithranSubramaniaIyer, and some other sages like them were the progenitors of the new awakening in Tamil Nadu.”¹⁷

“I have been closely acquainted with the late ‘Sudesamithran’ SubramaniaIyer. I know very well what he considered to be the

main instruments for the upliftment of Tamil Nadu. I am writing here the original dharmas from his heart as far as I can remember:

1. Tamilians should always speak and write in Tamil unless there is a special emergency. All learning arts should be learned through Tamil.

2. We should not appreciate caste differences and teach ourselves meaningless ups and downs.

3. Do not harass women. They should be given more knowledge and improved.

4. It is not fair to promote enmity among our people due to religious sects like Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and subdivisions like Vadakalai and Tenkalai. We are all sons of Hindustan. Their policy is theirs. It is the work of the ignorant to make endless disputes and riots on account of sects.

5. We should not buy foreign goods when our country's goods are available for clothing, food, etc.,

6. Always strive for Swaraj. Having completed the first part of this article, I would like to repost some of his subsequent articles. The youth of Tamil Nadu should know Mahamanithar, Mahan G. Subramania Iyer. This message should reach all the youth¹⁸

Subramania Siva:

Subramanya Siva, the third prong of the national trident (the other two prongs being Bharati, V.O.Chidambaram.) in his monthly magazine ‘Gnanabanu’, Appreciating G.SubramaniaIyer, he wrote:

“Brahma Sri G. Subramania Iyer, who was a journalist of Swadesamitran. We have immeasurable value in the Subramaniam Iyer. The fact that he has done immeasurable benefits to our Tamil nation is something that no one can deny. It is very surprising that BrahmaSri, Subramanya Iyer left the English magazine ‘The Hindu’ which he was running, and started a Tamil magazine to spread knowledge among the common people at that time when no one understood the difference between the love of language and patriotism.”¹⁹

Surendranath Banerjee:

In 1914 in Chennai Mahajan Sabha Here is part of the eulogy given by Surendranath Banerjee, National leader of Bengal, at the unveiling of G. Subramania Iyer's 60th birth anniversary portrait:

“Mr. Subramanya Iyar, let us say had been the instrument of popular political work in the widest sense of that word in south India.”²⁰

Conclusion

In 1885, G. Subramania Iyer attended the inaugural meeting of the first Congress held in Bombay as a representative of Tamil Nadu. Iyer brought the first resolution of the meeting. He was actively involved in this Congress which was started for the independence of India. His interest in politics and society may have helped in building a new India. He was extremely focused on social reforms. He was interested in child marriage issues, widowhood, and caste unity. He worked tirelessly to increase the age of marriage, for widow marriages, to give equal status to oppressed people in society, and to prevent child marriages. He made a revolution not only in words but also in deeds by setting marriage to his own daughter a widow in his family. Yes! In 1899 he married his widowed daughter Sivapiriya to Ramasamy of Mannargudi. At the end of his life, he was afflicted with a fatal skin disease. Lumps appeared all over the body and it was broken and sore and he looked like a leper. Mahatma Gandhi met him in 1915. Then the Mahatma consoled Iyer by wiping the water that had leaked from his body with his upper garment. A deadly disease took him away from this world on 15-4-1916 at the age of 61. In 1995, The foundation was laid by him results in the future. The Hindu became, in 1995, the first Indian newspaper to offer an online edition. It is the oldest surviving major newspaper of Indian nationalism, by which we mean the great socio-political movement that won freedom for India

from colonial bondage and helped consolidate the gains of independence in every sphere of national life.

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