

# Indian Press: New Trends in New Millennium

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## Dr. A. S. Balasubramanya

Emeritus Fellow, Department of Electronic Media, Bangalore University, Jnanabharathi  
Bangalore, India.

### Abstract

In the new millennium, the Indian press continues to maintain its dynamic growth unlike its counterparts in most of the developed countries. Its dynamic growth is manifest both in the number of publications and circulation. In relation to the English press, the growth is more vibrant across regional language newspapers. Leading the growth chart are the Hindi newspapers which are concentrated in the northern regions of India followed by newspapers in south Indian languages, namely, Telugu, Kannada, Tamil and Malayalam. The growth of press in other major languages such as Marathi, Punjabi and Bengali has been of a low order. The first prerequisite of increase in literacy along with other essential factors such as improvement in purchasing power, political awareness and advancements in print media technologies excited to be harnessed by the print media. Capitalising on these factors, several language newspaper publishers adopted innovative-research based marketing models and entered smaller cities and towns to emerge as the lead players of the Indian press industry. Multi editions rich in hyper local and national news along with content on topics such as sports, entertainment, and lifestyle presented in attractive and colourful pages have attracted millions of readers. Now, the Indian press has a challenge to retain the existing readers and attract the young generation so as to stay resurgent in the coming decades of the millennium.

Key words: Growth Rate of Indian Press, New Technologies; Innovative Research Approach, Niche Magazines.

### Introduction

Diversity, a distinctive feature of the Indian press, has multiplied several folds since India's independence in 1947. From 330 dailies, 1,189 weeklies, and 1,733 publications of other periodicity at the end of 1952, the Indian press has grown steadily in response to the changing times. That as on March 31, 2016, there were 1, 10,851 registered publications comprising of 16,136 dailies and 94,715 periodicals (Registrar of Newspapers for India, 2016, p.15) stands testimony to its diversity and steady growth. Yet another facet of its diversity is that registered publications are being brought out not only in 22 languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, but also in scores of minor languages and dialects.

In the post-independence decades, Indian press embarked itself on the path of growth by consolidating and expanding the readership base during 1947 –1975; launching a variety of magazine by making full use of colour printing technologies between 1975 – 1990; bringing

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**Correspondence:** E mail: [balasubramanya52@gmail.com](mailto:balasubramanya52@gmail.com)

about changes in the presentation of content following the growing popularity of TV from 1990 onwards; adapting digital technologies to cater to the changing media needs of the readers from 2000 onwards.

The first landmark in the first phase (1947-1975) was the appointment of the First Press Commission (FPC) in 1952 by the Government of India. The FPC submitted its report in 1954 and the Government accepted and implemented some of its recommendations which set-off a series of welcome changes. Some of those being: the setting up the office of the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI) to maintain the records relating to newspapers; the appointment of a Wage Board for journalists to ensure minimum wages and good working conditions; and the appointment of Press Council of India (PCI) as the watchdog of the press.

Further, this period witnessed the consolidation and expansion of the Indian press. The leading newspapers expanded their reach by moving into new regions and launched new magazines. For instance, the leading English daily *The Times of India* launched its Delhi edition in 1950 and soon brought out magazines such as *Film fare* in 1952, *Femina* in 1959, *The Economic Times* in 1961, and a Marathi daily *The Maharashtra Times* in 1962. Likewise, *The Indian Express* expanded by moving into Madurai in 1957, Bangalore in 1965 and Ahmedabad in 1968. Similarly, the Chennai-based *The Hindu* moved into several parts of south India. The growth of language press, though slow, was steady during this phase and a few dailies such as the *Dainik Jagran* expanded by launching editions at Rewa in 1953, Bhopal in 1956, and Gorakhpur in 1975. Quite a few Hindi dailies made their debut during this phase. For instance, Hindi daily *Rajasthan Patrika*, which made its debut in 1956 in Jaipur began to publish from eight states. Hindi daily *Dainik Bhasker* which made its debut in Bhopal in 1958 is being published from 14 states. The growth of the language publications continued with much vigour in the subsequent time periods.

The Indian press industry was marked by magazine boom in the second phase, 1975-1990. The year 1975 in itself saw the emergence of several new magazine, namely, English magazine *India Today* of the Living Media group; *Sunday*, a political weekly, and *Anandamela*, a children's periodical of the Anand Bazar Patrika group; Malayalam magazine *Kalakaumudi* of Kalakaumudi publications; and women's magazine *Vanitha* of Malayala Manorama group. Other prominent magazine that made their debut during the magazine boom period were: *Anandalok*, a Bengali film magazine, in 1976; Malayalam magazine *Grehalakshmi* of Mathrubhumi group in 1979; Hindi magazine *Grihshobha* of the Delhi Press group in 1979; *Cricket Samrat* of Dewan Publications in 1980, Malayala Manorama group's English weekly *The Week* in 1982; and *Meri Saheli* of Pioneer Book Company Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, in 1987.

From the 1990s onwards, Indian newspapers had a facelift in order to move parallel with the magazine boom and the growing popularity of television, a major contestant for advertising revenues. Political coverage was scaled down and colourful features on lifestyles, business, and entertainment were added. Technological developments gradually began to metamorphose the print industry. The offset printing technology entered print rooms. The age-old hand composing as well as the monotype and linotype composing methods were gradually replaced by computer-based word processing systems both in English and Indian languages. The page-design and layout software and photo offset printing gave a totally new look to print publications. This helped advertisers to showcase their products extremely well.

The entry of 24x7 news channels in 1990s had a significant bearing on newspapers. News was no more the monopoly of newspapers. The visual presentation of events on TV had a

considerable impact on dailies. They became more colourful with attractive info-graphics and other stylish visual aids. By 2000, web based technologies triggered another revolution in the Indian newspaper industry. Adopting these new technologies, newspapers and magazines extended their reach through the Internet. User-friendly electronic versions of the newspapers and magazines made their appearances on their websites. The entry of smart phones opened a new avenue for the media industry which developed various types of Apps to reach out to the users of mobiles, iPods, tablets, notebooks, and desktop computers. As remarked by Dwivedi (2015, para 2), newspaper had not underwent so many changes in the past 400 years as they did in the last 20 years. The present study aims to examine the developments in the Indian press in general and the language press in particular during the period 2000 to 2015.

### Review of literature

Studies on the various facets of the Indian press are not sparse. Comprehensive accounts of the Indian press by eminent scholars such as Natarajan (1954), Krishnamurthy (1966), Parthasarathy (1989), and Jeffrey (2000) pertain to the period prior to 2000. The developments in the new millennium have been analysed and commented upon by scores of media analysts. Most of the narratives are about the language newspapers which in the late 1970s had over taken the circulation of English dailies (Ram, 2000; p.255).

What were the factors that spurred the growth of Indian language newspapers? The key factors identified by noted political scientist Robin Jeffrey in his book *India's Newspapers Revolution; Capitalism, politics and Indian Language Press* (2000) are improved technology. Steady expanding literacy, better purchasing power, aggressive publishing, and political excitement.

Similar factors have been identified by t (2007) in respect of the growth of Hindi dailies: "increase in literacy and communications, rising rural incomes, as well as the aggressive marketing strategies adopted by Hindi publishers helped them expand their penetration in the Hindi belt" (p.15). However, "The advent of market penetration and localisation of news and advertising as a strategy by the big boys of the Hindi belt was sounding the death knell of those who had been local to begin with, and the winners would soon become the big boys of the national scene too, ready to challenge the English-language giants of the Indian newspaper world" (Ninan 2007, p.109).

From 1990s onwards, Hindi press underwent transformation. As Ninan (2007, p.287) has observed "Hindi readership numbers grew exponentially, and as Hindi emerged as the foremost medium of political discourse. The relationship between press and politicians in this region was calibrated by the needs of both. Some strong regional newspapers had identifiable political affiliations which they did not bother to deny. Nationally, this period was one of striking change and growth."

In that growth process, some publications faced a setback. As Bhanawat (2007) has pointed out that the launch of *Dainik Bhaskar* in Jaipur followed by aggressive expansion *Rajasthan Patrika* and *Dainik Bhaskar* proved detrimental to dailies being published from divisional and district headquarters. While several small newspapers ceased publication, a few of them struggled to survive with the support of state government advertisements.

Neyazi (2009), who conducted a study of the developments in Hindi newspapers from 1977-2007 observed that "the penetration of Hindi newspapers into the hinterland has definitely empowered the marginalized groups who were ignored by both English newspapers as well as television. By getting access to information, people in rural areas and small towns, are

increasingly getting mobilized and have articulated their demands in the public arena” (p.340).

Globalization does not necessarily mean the subordination of local aspirations over western values and culture. In this context, Neyazi (2009) has noted that “despite the ongoing process of globalization which started in 1991 in India, Hindi newspapers have maintained their relative autonomy by not succumbing to the pressure of global forces and providing content in tune with the cultural specificities of the local society”(p.342).

Localization of news brought more readers to Hindi newspapers and this indirectly attracted advertisers. The economic aspect of newspapers considerably got improved. Thus, the Hindi publications had a makeover of their image as stable publishing houses. In this direction, Neyazi (2009) has noted that Hindi newspapers are now professionally organized with modern outlook. Working in Hindi newspapers is no longer an unattractive proposition. A number of journalists have shifted from English to Hindi newspapers which was unimaginable until the late 1990s. “Similarly, politicians are now willing to give exclusive interviews to Hindi newspapers. This clearly shows that Hindi newspapers are no longer subordinate to English newspapers and have become an important channel to raise grievances and shape public opinion. Such a change in the image of Hindi newspapers has also helped them to attain, if not a superior, but an equivalent space in the public arena, along with English newspapers” (Neyazi, p.343).

Innovations in design, printing and content are no longer restricted to established newspapers. For instance, *Sakshi*, a Telugu daily owned by a politician, was launched in 2008 with several ‘firsts’ to its credit: first regional newspaper to be designed by the world-renowned newspaper designer, Mario Garcia; first daily to be launched with 23 editions – 19 editions in Andhra Pradesh and one edition each in metropolitan cities of Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai and Bangalore; and first daily to have colour pages in all editions. Documenting such an unthinkable publishing venture in a regional scenario in India Rathore (2009) quoted the Marketing Director of the daily, K. R. P Reddy that "after the launch of *Sakshi*, other Telugu dailies made prominent changes in their content. Prior to *Sakshi*, sports coverage was restricted to half page reports in Telugu dailies but with *Sakshi* dedicating two pages to beat, others also started following suit. The broad sheet has also recently experimented with a four page business news pull-out. The newspaper also started the trend of having navigational tools on the front page... The success of *Sakshi* can be attributed to the group entering the market with aggressive plans and from day one, (para 6).

Jeffrey (2010) who has researched into various aspects of the Indian press asserts that “India in the 21st century is lucky: newspapers have a future, they reach into the countryside in remarkable ways, and they are still family-owned. All this is probably good for journalism and the public interest, and it is certainly good for entertainment.... In India, it will be media owners who decide how the grand ideal of free press is translated into black and white” (para 4-5).

However many media analysts are apprehensive of their future. Ninan (2011) has noted that “there is too much media around, including new media. No economy can sustain so many newspapers, magazines, television channels and websites. Much of today’s media, therefore, has no realistic hope of financial viability. The resultant pressure on publications has forced many among them to breach the Chinese wall between editorial and advertising in a desperate effort to raise more revenue” (p.5).

Concerned with the growing monopolistic trends in Indian media, Vasanti and Rao (2011) noted that “thirty years ago, about 30 media enterprises dominated most (75 per cent) of the

media in the country. Today, less than 15 media houses have that share. This is not coming under active legal and regulatory provisions that apply to other corporate bodies” (p.7).

Many marketing experts argue that Indian media market is yet to be tapped to its full potential. Kiran (2012) in his study noted the factors affecting the circulation of six newspapers (*Dainik Bhaskar*, *Dainik Jagran*, *Punjab Kesari*, *Dainik Tribune*, *Hari Bhoomi* and *Amar Ujala*) in Haryana during 2004-08, and remarked that a large market was opened up by outside newspapers with effective marketing strategies. The outside newspapers were successful in creating new readers without affecting the circulation of existing newspapers. The researcher identified six key factors which contributed for the success of new entrants. The six factors were: i) systematic marketing survey; ii) promotional schemes; iii) pull-outs; iv) competitive pricing; v) local printing facilities; vi) magazines and feature pages (p.245-248).

According to Ninan and Chattarji (2013), several factors “influenced the publishers to expand their operations across the country. Technology, support from financial institutions, a healthy growth of economy, substantial growth of middle class, coalition governments which created more curiosity in political developments and increase in literacy have fuelled the growth of newspaper markets beyond traditional major publication centres. The Hindi region witnessed, a healthy growth of newspaper penetration” (p.182).

Shekawat (2014) in a research study has noted that “with the entry of *Dainik Bhaskar* in 1996, as a key competitor to *Rajasthan Patrika*, the print media of Rajasthan took a new direction. *Rashtrdoot* and *Dainik Navjyoti* were also present, but the market was dominated by *Rajasthan Patrika* and *Dainik Bhaskar*. The increased competition, price-war and fight for survival between the two dailies proved a boon for the people of Rajasthan as the only option left for them was to gain public support and participation which could be gained by the acts of social responsibility and developmental works” (p.150).

Panneerselvan (2015) made a candid remark when he stated that “Indian media is an ironic entity. While it defies the global downward trend of traditional media and continues to grow in terms of new publications, television channels, websites and radio stations, it has failed to come up with a viable revenue stream and some unscrupulous elements — both among the owners and the editors — have embarked on a path that can only be termed blatantly unethical” (para 1).

The steady growth in circulation of print media has also been found by the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC). In July-Dec 2015 the CAGR of print media circulation of ABC member publications across various languages grew by 5.04 per cent over a period of last eight years as a result of the launch of new publications and new editions at different locations. While Hindi newspapers continued to top the circulation list, English newspapers too showed a growing trend, though not as much as the Hindi publications. The highest circulated Hindi newspaper was *Dainik Bhaskar* followed by *Dainik Jagran* and *Amar Ujala*. The top three positions among the English newspapers belonged to *The Times of India* followed by *The Hindu* and *Hindustan Times* (Exchange4media News Service, 2016).

### Study Method and Objectives

The Indian press is undergoing critical changes. With aggressive marketing tactics, newspapers are attempting to reach remote areas with latest news and analysis. Split editions along with supplements sprinkled with popular English words are trying to lure young readers and to retain the existing ones. Almost all major publications are according equal importance to both print and digital versions. Paywall is being introduced by several publications on an experimental basis. All major publications have well-designed websites.

Several publications have separate staff who exclusively contribute for their websites. When most of the western newspapers are struggling to survive, the Indian press is comfortably placed.

Against this backdrop, this study was undertaken with the following specific objectives to: I) Examine the current status of the Indian newspaper industry, and II) Identify the distinctive features of language newspapers.

Data for the study was collected from two main sources. Information on print media growth, circulation and advertising revenue was collected from the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI), a government department, and the industry agencies such as the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC), FICCI-KPMG, and WAN-IFRA. The second source of information essential for realising the study objectives was gathered from in-depth interviews with the publishers, editors, media critics and journalists representing the Indian press.

In assessing the growth and trends in Indian language press in recent years, there was a need to focus on the major languages. A thorough examination of the 22 scheduled languages revealed that in eight languages- Dogri, Konkani, Manipuri, Maithili, Nepali, Sanskrit, Santali and Sindhi - there weren't many publications. Excluding these eight languages, the researcher examined the growth of publications in 14 major languages namely, Assamese, Bengali, English, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Odiya, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu.

Here, it must be noted that the data pertaining to the number of publications and their circulation reported by RNI annually doesn't match with ABC data. Not all registered publications submit their annual statements to the RNI. Further, the circulation provided by them is 'claimed' circulation, not audited circulation. The ABC annually authenticates the circulation of publications who have are it members. But, the ABC membership remains restricted to a few of the registered publications. These limitations inherent in the circulation data of the two organisation cannot be overcome. Hence, the researcher analysed the RNI data as the 'claimed' circulation gives a broad overview of the growth trend of the Indian Press. Further, to obtain a comprehensive account of the in the Indian press during 2000-2015, the researcher interviewed senior editors of several major publications along with media critics.

Some of the salient findings along with the observations of senior editors are presented in the succeeding unit.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **1. Growth rate of Hindi publications is much higher than that of English publications**

According to the 60<sup>th</sup> annual Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India 2015-16 (2016) a total number of 15,723 dailies were being published in 23 major languages along with several bilingual and multilingual variants. The largest number of dailies were in Hindi (6755), followed by Urdu (1775), Telugu (1368) English (1304) and Marathi (1116). This data points out to the dominance of Hindi dailies. Of the top ten dailies listed by the ABC, five were in Hindi, four in the south Indian languages and one in English. The periodicals indicated to a negative growth.

In an interview with the researcher, K. Subramanya, Executive Editor of *Deccan Herald* shared some of the challenges the English press is faced with. He noted that "there is a pressure on profit. Paid content, promotion, publicity has entered in a sophisticated way. Election news is also paid. There is a lot of bargain even in placing the ads. Innovation in

ads is another feature. Every newspaper is under pressure to enhance revenue. In some cases, incentives are offered to agents and *raddi* value is more than the cover price... Print media (English) in India is not in good health. Circulation is falling, unhealthy practices and abnormality exists at all levels. Eventually news is compromised. More soft news and paid contents are pitched in. The growth is not organic, but it is artificial... English paper's circulation has gone down”.

## 2. Regional players are expanding their market to the national level and beyond

For a long time, only a few publishers who had their base in four major metropolitan cities of the country were reckoned as leading publishers. English publications were considered as trend setters. Post-emergency, the Indian press scenario underwent an overhaul and new leaders emerged. For instance, the marketing approach of *Eenadu* became a national trend setter for daily publications in the country. By the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, two Hindi publishers, Bhopal-based *Dainik Bhaskar* and Kanpur-based *Dainik Jagaran* overtook most of the established national players. With ten publications in five major languages brought out from 13 states, the Dainik Jagran group dailies have 400 plus editions and sub-editions. The group has printing units at 37 locations across north India.

The Dainik Bhaskar group publishes *Dainik Bhaskar* (Hindi), *Divya Bhaskar* (Gujarati), *Divya Marathi* (Marathi), *Business Bhaskar* (a financial newspaper in Hindi) and *DNA* (English). With 64 editions and more than 55 lakh copies, the group everyday reaches to 1.84 crore readers across 13 states. It also publishes three magazines: *Aha! Zindagi* (a monthly family magazine), *Young Bhaskar* and *Bal Bhaskar* (*Kids magazines*), and *Lakshya*, a career oriented magazine (*Bhaskar Foundation*, n.d).

Another publishing group that has made its presence at the national level through its diverse periodicals is the Malayala Manorama group. Beginning in 1982 with the launch of English news magazine *The Week*, now it has several magazines in Hindi and English, besides Malayalam. It has a total of 43 publications including niche magazines. The *Manorama Year Book* is published in five major languages-Malayalam, English, Hindi, Tamil and Bengali. The English publications of the group include *Watch Time India*, *Tell Me Why*, *Read and Colour*, *National Geographic Kids*, *Magic Pot*, *The Week*, *The Man*, *Smart life* and *Living*.etc.

*Gulf Madhyamam*, India's first international newspaper published from seven Gulf countries - Dubai, Bahrain, Kuwait, Doha, Dammam, Riyadh and Jeddah – is the largest circulated newspaper in the Middle East. Several Malayalam, Tamil, Urdu and Gujarati dailies have their editions from Gulf nations and USA.

In the era of global business practices, it is but natural that a few publishers from small towns and cities are making waves at the national level.

## 3. Innovative market research by Indian language press has been a success formula

Indian language newspapers charted a new course to launch new publications and attract readers in towns and hinterlands in 1990s. In that direction, the innovative research approach of the *Dainik Bhaskar* group while entering new markets deserves to be mentioned. In a document entitled ‘Making Breakthrough Innovations’ (1996), the group explains the survey it conducted so as to feel the pulse of their readers and make solicit their subscription for the daily.

The innovative research approach was put into practice first in 1996 when it planned to enter Jaipur market. A team of 700 surveyors surveyed 200,000 households and assessed

their expectations from newspapers. Based on the survey feedback, the research team developed a prototype of the daily, presented it to potential readers and sought their subscription at a discounted price. That approach worked. It launched the Jaipur edition in Dec 1996 and became number one daily with a circulation of 172,347.

Subsequently, *Dainik Bhaskar* followed the innovative research approach while entering the markets of Chandigarh and Haryana in 2000, Ahmadabad in 2003 and in Punjab in 2006. In Chandigarh, 220,000 households were surveyed and the inputs obtained were incorporated in the design and language of the daily. The result was that *Dainik Bhaskar* emerged as the leader on day one in Chandigarh by overtaking the erstwhile leader, the English daily *The Tribune*. At Ahmadabad, the survey team comprising of 1050 surveyors, 64 supervisors, 16 zonal managers, and 4 divisional managers surveyed 12,00,000 households!. It is possibly the single biggest direct consumer contact programme in the history of Indian press industry. The survey revealed the preference for non-sensationalist, better quality paper with fewer ads and lower price (Making-Breakthrough-Innovation, 1996, pp.1-11).

The prelaunch survey of *Dainik Bhaskar* was followed by other publications. *Sakshi*, a Telugu daily, also undertook an extensive market survey prior to its launch to identify the expectations from a new daily. In 2008, as many 5,000 agents met an average of 1,200 readers every day to understand the need gap. Later, for three months (January-March), the group promoted the newspaper to prospective readers. After getting consent from 11 lakh people, the newspaper was launched with 19 editions spread across Andhra Pradesh and an edition each from the four metros (Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Chennai) and crossed the one million mark in its first audit done by the ABC (Rathore, 2009).

Such successful attempts by the Indian language dailies while pointing out to the potential of pre-launch market survey in increasing the readership base, also indicate that Indian language publications have the wherewithal to follow new approaches to contribute to their growth.

#### **4. The entry of businessmen and politicians in to the newspaper industry has threatened professionalism among journalists as they are more interested in protecting their business interests rather than serving the public interest.**

In recent years, businessmen and politicians have come to own news publications. Their unethical practices have eroded journalism of its objective of serving public interest while fulfilling their business and political interests. Such instances are not rare. Malik (2014) has noted how several Odia publications cheated the investors and readers, by showcasing a few firms as stable and reliable ventures so to attract investments. Several newspaper promoters in Odisha were questioned by the CBI for their alleged involvement in promoting certain investment companies. In August 2014, CBI had arrested *Kamyab TV* channel owner Manoj Das, *Odisha Bhaskar* owner and secretary of Press Club of Orissa Madhu Mohanty, and Bikash Swain, publisher of Odia daily *Suryaprava* for their links with the Artha Tatwa chit fund group. All of them were charge sheeted.

The Saradha chit fund scam is another instance of the involvement of media owners in unethical business ventures. As Bidwai (2013) has noted, Saradha's Promoter-Chairman Sudipta Sen "ran a range of papers and television channels in Bangla, English, Hindi and Urdu, whose main function and purpose was to promote the Trinmool Congress. Several party MLAs openly canvassed supporting in small towns and villages for Saradha's chits -- Ponzi schemes which, like 'chain letters' promise impossibly high returns to investment on the assumption that investors would indefinitely multiply at geometric rates. But the chain breaks down and the scheme collapses" (para 7). Such instances wherein media institutions



in connivance with politicians and bureaucrats were tagged into major financial scams make a mockery of fourth estate.

Some newspaper owners unabashedly flaunt their political leanings. For instance, as Shaw has (2016, para 4-5) pointed, “It was Eenadu which pioneered open political affiliation when, in the early 1980s, it professed its support for the TDP and its then leader N.T. Rama Rao, known as NTR. Eenadu is believed to have powered the TDP campaign as a non-Congress alternative and within a short time it helped NTR become chief minister of Andhra Pradesh.

This modus operandi has remained the template and aspiration, more or less, for most political entities in the Telugu states: to have a media megaphone under one’s control and to drive politics and business rigorously with its help. As for the media houses, they are enthusiastic participants in the political slugfest between the two main parties”.

Quite a few publications in Tamil Nadu, Odhisa, Maharashtra and Kerala either have political affiliations or being brought out by politicians. Many Odhisa publishers and editors are ministers or MP’s or MLA’s. In Maharashtra, the publisher of *Lokmath* was a minister representing Congress party. Malayalam daily *Chandrika* is the organ of the Muslim League. CPI (M) has publications in Bengali, Tamil and Malayalam. The publisher of *Amar Ujala*, a leading Hindi daily is a MP.

In Tamil Nadu, newspapers affiliation with political parties is a common feature. Dr. Krishna Murthy, Editor of *Dinamalar*, Chennai, in an interview with the researcher noted that in Tamil Nadu several newspapers run by political parties have destroyed the value of news. Minute things are exaggerated. Only two or three publications present honest news.

Echoing similar views, Chatterjee (2013) had stated that “newspapers across the country and languages have had political leanings, some overtly and some covertly. But an interesting feature of Tamil journalism is that it has distinct in-your-face political leanings. Several newspapers were open and vocal about their leanings.” (p. 53).

According to Jayakumar (2007, p 5-6), most Tamil newspapers thrive on sensationalism. They devote prime space for trivial issues and cinema so as to boost circulation. In Tamil Nadu, politics and newspapers go hand-in-hand as nearly all political parties have their own organs. The political parties and their publications are as follows: DMK (*Murasoli*), AIADMK (*Dr.Namaddhu MGR*), DK (*Vidhuthalai*), CPM (*Theekathir*), CPI (*Janasakti*), PMK (*Thamil Osai*) and MDMK (*Sangoli*, a weekly).

The close linkage between politicians and newspapers in Odhisha makes a very interesting study. Tracing the grip of political families on Odiya press, Mishra (2009) has observed that “the Odiya media took a U-turn in the post-independence era. Journalists associated with popular media outlets emerged as the anchor persons of Odisha politics. Radhanath Rath, the editor of *The Samaj*; Harekrishna Mahtab, the founder-editor of *The Prajatantra*; Rajendra Narayan Singhdeo, the founder of *The Swarajya*; Debendra Satpathy; Nandini Satpathy and Tathagat Satpathi of *Dharitri*; Biju Patnaik, the owner of *Kalinga*, and its editor, Surendra Mohanty, utilised their newspapers to establish themselves in electoral politics. But curiously, nobody wants to discuss how these editors have used their papers to further their political interests. Popular perception of the media, however, bears this out. The owners or the editors of all the leading newspapers in Odisha have been in politics and have occupied seats of power. The editors of *The Prajatantra* and *Dharitri* are Members of Parliament from the ruling Biju’s Janata Dal (BJD) and seeking re-election to the fifteenth Lok Sabha. While the editor of *The Sambad* continues to be a prominent office-bearer of the Congress party and contesting election with a congress ticket to get his entry into assembly.

The owner of another powerful media house running the biggest cable network and Orissa Television Ltd (OTV), Baijayant Panda, is also one of the contestants for Lok Sabha from ruling Biju Janata Dal. Lately, Pyari Mohan Mahapatra, second-in-command of BJD, has entered the media business. The owners and editors of other small and medium newspapers present the news in keeping with their political interests. The news that is published and aired by these groups is always “politically motivated” and “pro-capitalist” (para 9).

Chatterjee (2007) made a cryptic comment on the state of affairs of the Odiya press, when he stated “two interesting features of Oriya newspapers are ‘proliferation of owner-publisher-editor entity’ and politicians owning/controlling newspapers. Both have stood as stumbling blocks on the development of professionalism in Orissa... There is nothing wrong in a politician owning and /or editing a newspaper or controlling a new channel... But what is unique in Orissa is the magnitude of it” (p.6).

Venkateshwarlu (2016) who analyzed the conditions of Urdu newspapers in Telangana has noted that the Urdu newspapers are divided on their political stance. *Etemaad*, was launched by the All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul Muslimeen (AIMIM) a few years ago. While *Siasat*, *Rehnuma-e-Deccan* and *Munsif* are anti-AIMIM, *Rashtriya Sahara*, a national newspaper, neither supports nor opposes AI MIM (p.69).

It is obvious that such publications that have leanings to political ideologies would present colored news to the readers and deprive them of knowing the realities.

### **5. Liberal mixing of words from other languages is becoming a reality in the language press**

India is a multilingual country. Each language has its own identity and charm. Newspapers follow literary prose style for presentation of news. In order to attract readers and present news more effectively, they use colloquial words. Because of the popularity of English in educational institutions, language newspapers have started using English words in news, headlines and reports.

For instance, several Telugu publications like *Eenadu* and *Sakshi* liberally blend Urdu and English words with Telugu. The liberal sprinkling of English words with Hindi and Kannada has created new language variants popularly known as ‘Hinglish’ and ‘Kanglish’ respectively. Similarly, several dailies in Marathi, Gujarati and Hindi liberally mix English words to attract and retain young readers who are tech savvy. *The Nava Gujarath Samay*, Editor admits that they use ‘Gujlish’ deliberately to attract young readers. Bilingual publications are also being experimented. For instance, *Inext* is a bilingual morning daily targeted at the young adults residing in mini-metros of North India. Launched in December 2006 by Jagran Prakashan Ltd, from Kanpur, *Inext* is published from 13 cities spread across five states.

There is another dimension of this trend. Several language publications attempt to enrich their languages by coining words for new English terms and phrases. For instance in Tamil, any English words would get translated and newspapers start using them. In Odiya and Malayalam, few newspapers have made serious efforts to retain their literary purity.

### **6. Niche magazines are in demand**

After Indian Government allowed 100 per cent foreign ownership in the non-news and special interest categories in print media, there has been a spurt in the number of magazine brands in India. Some of the top most brand magazines are now available in the country. As Sharma (2014) has observed, “Indian print industry is the second largest in the world after

China, pegged around \$ 4.2 billion, growing at a Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 7 per cent. Despite being a fragmented market, this industry offers ample opportunities. The growing literacy rate has increased the demand for specialized content which has further encouraged the demand of magazines, especially niche publications” (para 1).

He further states that “News stand are full of niche magazines targeting men, women, kids, students, sports lovers, travel lovers, foodies and so on. Another factor which has contributed towards the growth of magazine brands is digital, which has created an entirely new ecosystem of e-magazines. E-magazines have crossed the geographical boundaries and cater to the needs of the consumers globally.... India is a multicultural and multilingual country, and considering the effect of the strong cultures, lot of regional language magazines have evolved. For instance, *Femina*, a popular publication targeting women recently launched its Bengali edition. Besides English and Bengali, the magazine is also available in Hindi and Tamil(para2-4). In an interview with the researcher, Thirumala Velan, Public Theme Editor of *Anand Vikatan group* explained how they capitalized on the changing interests of readers and set a new path by launching niche magazines for kids, auto, personal finance, organic agriculture, kitchen, and women. The group brings out 13 such publications, which very few have attempted in the country. Even from business perspective, it was a prudent move. The group has pay wall for their online publications.

Aroon Purie, the publisher of India Today group shared his thoughts about the future of niche and digital magazines with Watkins (2015). On the challenges the industry faces in India, Purie told Watkins that “the benefits of being on digital platforms are multiple and hard to ignore, including faster publishing and distribution, better knowledge of your readers and audience, measurability of advertising goals, flexibility of content, elimination of revenue loss from unsold inventory and wider reach..

“With millions of smart phone and tablet users worldwide, through digital formats magazines are able to reach a much larger audience, both domestic and international. Rich multimedia content, with features such as video embedded in stories, hyperlinks to other content, pinch-zoom and 360-degree panorama views etc., all add to the value digital magazines can provide and make the reading material much more interesting. It also helps publishers put together all the perspectives of a story. A shift of spend-to-digital is taking place from across media platforms” (para 6-7).

Purie further noted that “digital also offers easy discoverability. Frequent promotions and marketing by digital newsstands make digital magazines more discoverable through the Appstore/Playstore, thereby increasing probability of downloads....Google has launched its own digital newsstand in India now. Idea has launched its digital magazine store - e-read – which was made available exclusively for Idea subscribers from June 2015; and Reliance Jio is planning to launch a digital library towards the end of this year ( para 9).

Purie informed Watkins that most of their publications available on digital with 22 editions. “We need to create a single, unified platform that integrates content delivery across all digital channels and devices, culminating in a monetisation strategy for content and premium assets. The future is multi-platform publishing, and key drivers for revenue will be video advertising and native advertising where non-intrusive ad formats will have prominence. Mobile-first will stay, and we will need to focus on providing content tailored for these devices” (para 10).

In sum, the infusion of new technologies, corporate management style, new marketing strategies have helped Indian language newspapers to redefine their goals and transform themselves in tune with cotemporary publishing trends. However, what is required is to

maintain the trust that people have reposed in them by presenting a holistic and unbiased picture of events and issues free of sensationalism.

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**About the author:**

The author is a senior media teacher and researcher. Served in the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Karnatak University for over three decades. Earlier, he worked in few Kannada publications and at the department of Communication, Bangalore University before moving into Karnatak University. He played a key role in setting up of the Department as a leading teaching and research institution in north Karnataka. He also played a major role in establishing a state of the art multimedia educational studio. He completed two major and three minor research projects funded by UGC and ICSSR. He superannuated in 2014.

He was awarded Fulbright Internship in Communication Technologies by the USEFI and underwent training at Syracuse University, USA during 1990. He served as member of the UGC Panel on Communication for one term. He has guided 25 students for their doctoral degrees and published around 50 research articles in national and international journals.

He was awarded ‘Emeritus Fellow’ by the University Grants Commission for the period 2015-17. The author is carrying out a study under the Emeritus Fellow scheme entitled “Indian Press: Current Status and Future Trends”.