



*Pabitra Kumar
Mukherji*

আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকা

Ananda Bazar Patrika

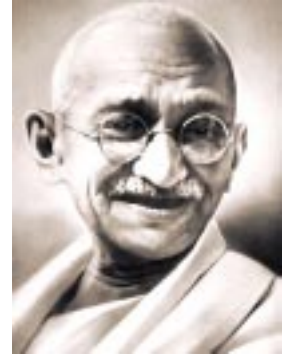
Uniqueness : red ink printing

ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA GROUP OF PUBLICATIONS is now the most modern and fastest growing publication house of Eastern and North Eastern India with its head office at 6, Prafulla Street, Kolkata – 700001. **It's main publication, Ananda Bazar Patrika, 'A' class Bengali daily, printed from about ten different centers of West Bengal with a circulation of 10 lakhs per day on an average, is the largest circulated daily of any regional language.**

The other publications of the House are – ‘The Telegraph’, 1 English daily of Eastern & North Eastern India; ‘Desh’, a Bengali literary magazine; ‘Anandalok’, a Bengali theatre & cultural magazine; ‘Anandamela’, a Bengali Children’s magazine; ‘Sananda’, a Bengali women’s magazine and ‘Unish Kuri’, a Bengali magazine for the youth.

Ananda Bazar Patrika was first printed on 13th March of 1922, on the day of ‘Dol Purnima’ or Holi, the festival of colours. At that time, India was under

the British, whose oppression was gradually increasing and in the midst of this, Gandhiji’s non-violence movement was gaining momentum. The first issue of Ananda Bazar Patrika was a 4-page issue printed on a light red paper by red printing ink to commemorate the ideology of the paper to initiate revolt against the British rule with the motto; “fight for freedom and inspire the masses of Bengal against British atrocities.” The first and last page of the issue mainly contained advertisements from local businessmen and the public, the second page printed a big photograph of Mahatma Gandhi and the third page contained the editorial, etc. The then ‘Englishman’, almost a mouthpiece of the British Government, warned the Government that the start of a newspaper using red ink was a danger signal.



The start of the paper was very humble. The office room of ‘Shree Gourango Press’ contained about 8 chairs, 2 tables and one wooden almirah. The staff, i.e. the office workers, bearers, news writers, reporters were all freedom fighters who had been jailed by the Government at one time or the other.

Both Bengali & English dailies started writing in bold languages against British activities like imposing several Rules & Acts preventing Indians from writing against the administration, jailing Indian freedom fighters, punishing the Indian press by suspending publications and fining them. The Editor, the Printer & the Publisher of the paper were jailed for a total of nineteen times until 1947.

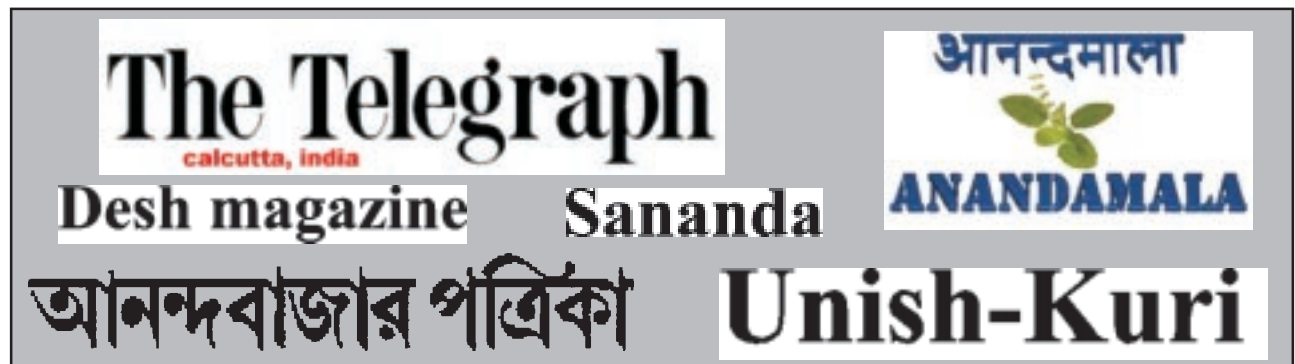
Freedom-fighters as staff members

Ananda Bazar Patrika started from a press named 'Shree Gourango Press', at one time, the most successful commercial press of India. They started with a total of 20 people including the founder proprietor, Late Suresh Chandra Majumdar and the Editor, Late Prafulla Kumar Sarkar. Shri Majumdar was a freedom fighter, MP in independent India and Managing Director of the newspaper. Shri Sarkar was also a freedom fighter.

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see much financial success. In the year 1935, Late Shri Majumdar, with his technical skill and aptitude, transformed the English matrices of the Linotype machine for casting metal types into Bengali matrices. The Bengali Linotype was the first mechanical composing machine in India.

In 1937, Late Shri Majumdar started another daily in the English language, '*Hindusthan Standard*', with the idea of permeating the ideology of the publishing house to non-Bengali readers of Bengal. Both Bengali & English dailies started writing in bold languages against British activities like imposing several Rules & Acts preventing Indians from writing against the administration, jailing Indian freedom fighters, punishing the Indian press by suspending publications and fining them. The Editor, the Printer & the Publisher of the paper were jailed for a total of



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So, *Ananda Bazar Patrika's* role in the pre-independence era and the post-independence era is quite different.

Varied positions



Late Ashok Kumar Sarkar Incidentally for the knowledge of readers, I should mention that the Late Shri Ashok Kumar Sarkar, a stalwart in Indian journalism, was the Editor of *Ananda Bazar Patrika* from 1958 until his death in 1983. He was also the Chairman of INS, PTI, UNI, Bharat Chamber of Commerce, Indian Chamber of Commerce, etc. He was the only son of Late Shri Prafulla Kumar Sarkar, the first Editor of *Ananda Bazar Patrika*. Since March 1983 till date, Shri Aveek Sarkar, the eldest son of Late Shri Ashok Kumar Sarkar, is the Editor of *Ananda Bazar Patrika*.

Prior to independence, *Ananda Bazar Patrika* was branded as a Congress paper. The paper used to cover detailed news on the Congress Working Committees' meetings in Shimla, Wardha, Bombay

from 1939 to 1944, with Azad, Nehru, Patel and Gandhiji on one side and the Viceroy of India and his representatives on the other. Ultimately, all talks failed and Gandhiji announced the 'Quit India' movement throughout the country. On the night of 8th August 1942, Gandhiji was arrested and put behind bars. Other Congress leaders were also jailed in order to crush the movement. However, instead of being crushed, the movements gained momentum and throughout the country, the movement became violent. Bridges were blown up, telegraph and telephone wires cut, police and post offices burnt, and employees of the Government resisting the rebels killed. This led to lakhs of people being arrested, beaten up and tortured. Because all the prominent Congress leaders were behind bars before the eruption occurred, it proved impossible for the British to connect any of them to the violence, though no effort was spared to find a link. **All the nationalist newspapers of India and *Ananda Bazar Patrika* supported the 'Quit India' movement and wrote against the British excesses while risking their own existence. *Ananda Bazar Patrika* used to write on the misdeeds and the tortures by the British and as a result, several members of its workforce were arrested.** Over 1,00,000 Indian nationalists were jailed for indefinite terms and the eruption was crushed by the end of August. In a letter to the King, Linlithgow called 'Quit India' movement "by far the most serious rebellion since that of 1857".

Even while supporting the 'Quit India' movement, *Ananda Bazar Patrika* continued to write on other events during the period, including the Second World War, the passing away of the great poet, Shri Rabindranath Tagore, the dramatic escape of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose from the house in Calcutta where he was imprisoned, all the way to Afghanistan and finally on to Germany and the Great Bengal famine of 1943 which was created by an artificial shortage of rice.

The post-Independence journalistic style took new turns with the writings becoming constructive, educative and encouraging to the younger generation in particular. The assassination of Gandhiji on 31st January 1948 was a great shock to the country. The

newspaper depends not only on the standardized wire services and news agencies, but also sends its reporters, special correspondents and cameramen to various spots for 'live' coverage. In all metropolitans and other big cities, there are special reporters for the paper. In Delhi, there are political correspondents to cover Parliament news. In all the other states and in the districts of West Bengal, there are designated reporters to cover events. In the UK, USA and other countries, there are special correspondents for the paper. *Ananda Bazar Patrika* was the first to send a special reporter to cover the Berlin Olympics in 1936 when no other paper could think of spending so much money on one person to cover sports news. Be it earthquakes in Mongair in Bihar or Latur in Gujarat, be it the Kumbh Mela, be it

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first page headline of Ananda Bazar Patrika was of the biggest type size and the editorial paid homage and respect to the Father of the Nation.

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Ananda Bazar Patrika has always had rich editorial contents and has given due importance to various events in its columns. Two editorials are published daily, one on national matters and another on other important matters. For news coverage, the

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The correspondents of the paper cover the events with élan, something that lends a unique touch to the editorial content. Similarly, its coverage of sports, science and technology and music programs have made the newspaper popular. The publishing house has designated reporters to cover hospital news, university news, corporation news, municipality news, cultural news, social welfare news, news of jails, news of old age homes and orphanages etc.

The news coverage of elections to the Lok

Sabha, Vidhan Sabha, Municipal Corporation and the Panchayat are current and reliable. Objective reporting has always been a strong point of the newspaper. There is no bias in political reporting, something that may have landed the paper in the bad books of a section of political parties. *At one point of time, the Congress party tried to dictate newspapers on their terms. Ananda Bazar Patrika maintained its neutral stance and did not bend to all the likes and dislikes of the Congress government. This landed two of its lauded journalists, Barun Sengupta and Gour Kishore Ghosh behind bars during Emergency in 1977.*

Most of the famous writers and journalists of West Bengal were at one point of time or the other associated with *Ananda Bazar Patrika* as journalists, and many of them are also literary award winners of the Government of India.

Ananda Bazar Patrika's journalists continue to report on all aspects of life including lapses and developments in road transports, railway irregularities and mishaps, airport reports, flight timings, police reports and on all sorts of social awareness programmes etc.

Should a single photograph occupy a page or should a news item be the defining piece? The trained, efficient team of *Ananda Bazar Patrika* knows the importance of layout and through a mix-and-match of photographs and written matters, cartoons, graphs, statistical tables, the newspaper has evolved a unique layout, which is popular amongst its readers. The attractive first lead; second lead and anchor are the specialties of the newspaper.

The new trend in journalism and photography has its link with the modern technological inputs in the printing of the paper. The engineers and

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The journalists are specially trained and focus on specific areas, such as writing for the children's pages, women pages with special sections on cookery and recipes, sections on agriculture, sericulture, and horticulture. Special reporters cover film, music, theater, yatra etc. Some journalists have also focused on the environment and through their columns made people aware of civic amenities or the lack of it in various regions.

technologists of *Ananda Bazar Patrika* were the first to adopt new technology by slowly replacing it with photo typesetting, photo composing pf pages, photo processing of plates, offset-rotary printing including colours, etc.

But all the journalistic efforts would have gone in vain if the newspaper had not been printed and delivered to the breakfast table of its myriad readers on time. Yes, *Ananda Bazar Patrika* is almost always printed on time, without fail. It is a giant company today with diversified activities and business units and a house of journalists of name and fame.

*The writer has spent lifetime in
Ananda Bazar Patrika Group
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