

**Newspapers and Nationalism:  
Media as a Tool of Mobilisation in the  
Mysore Princely State in the Anti-Colonial Struggles  
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**ABSTRACT:**

The press played a pivotal role in shaping political consciousness and mobilising anti-colonial sentiment in colonial India. In the Mysore princely state, newspapers were not merely instruments of information but crucial platforms for civic education, public debate, and nationalist mobilisation. This study examines the contribution of newspapers to key movements, including the Non-Cooperation Movement, legal disruption campaigns such as the Shivapur Satyagraha, Vidurasvatha, and forestry protests, as well as the Quit India Movement, including the Isur tragedy and Mysore Chalo movement. Using a historical-analytical approach, the research draws on archival newspapers, government records, and secondary literature to analyse how print media connected local grievances to the broader national struggle, encouraged civic participation, and sustained underground political activism despite censorship and surveillance. Findings indicate that newspapers in Mysore effectively fostered public awareness, coordinated grassroots resistance, and amplified demands for responsible governance. The study highlights the press as both a mirror and mediator of anti-colonial activism, linking regional struggles with national movements. By examining the interplay between media, regional politics, and nationalist consciousness, this research provides a deeper understanding of the role of print culture in semi-autonomous princely states and highlights the enduring influence of newspapers in shaping the trajectory of India's freedom struggle.

**KEYWORDS:**

Vernacular press, nationalism, Non-Cooperation Movement, Quit India Movement, anti-colonial struggles.

**Introduction:**

In colonial India, the press emerged as a powerful instrument of political awareness and social mobilisation. While much of the scholarship on nationalist movements has focused on British-administered provinces, the princely states' semi-autonomous regions, like Mysore, offer a unique perspective on how local communities engaged with the broader independence struggle. Newspapers in Mysore were not merely sources of information; they functioned as platforms for civic education, political debate, and the dissemination of nationalist ideology.

The Mysore press played a pivotal role during several key phases of the Indian freedom movement, including the Non-Cooperation Movement, the legal disruption campaigns, and the Quit India Movement. Publications such as *Vruttanta Patrike*, *Mysore Samachara*, and *Prajamata* connected with local problems from oppressive taxation and forest regulations to incidents like the Shivapur Satyagraha and Vidurasvatha protests, with the larger national struggle against colonial rule. These newspapers documented acts of resistance, reported state repression, and encouraged citizens to participate in political action, often at great risk due to censorship and surveillance.

Furthermore, the press in Mysore facilitated underground political activity and grassroots mobilisation, bringing together urban intellectuals, rural peasants, and local leaders. By publicising events like the Isur tragedy, the Mysore Chalo movement, and the eventual demand for responsible government, newspapers helped cultivate a collective political consciousness among Mysoreans. Studying the Mysore press thus offers valuable insights into the interplay between regional movements, media, and nationalism, highlighting the critical role of print culture in shaping anti-colonial resistance.

**Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine the role of newspapers in Mysore in disseminating nationalist ideas and connecting local grievances with the broader anti-colonial movement.
2. To analyse the contribution of the Mysore press in mobilising public participation during key campaigns such as the Non-Cooperation Movement, Shivapur Satyagraha, Vidurasvatha, forestry protests, and the Quit India Movement.

3. To assess the influence of newspapers on political awareness, civic engagement, and the demand for responsible government in the Mysore princely state.

### **Methodology of the Study**

This study adopts a historical–analytical research design to examine the role of newspapers in mobilising nationalist sentiment in the Mysore princely state. By combining archival research with qualitative content analysis, the study seeks to understand how print media influenced political consciousness and public participation during key anti–colonial movements.

**Data Sources:** The research relies on both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include archival newspapers such as Vrittanta Patrike, Mysore Samachara, and Prajamata, along with government records, administrative reports, and correspondence related to the Shivapur Satyagraha, Vidurasvatha movement, forestry protests, the Isur tragedy, and the Mysore Chalo movement. Secondary sources consist of scholarly books, journal articles, and historical studies on the Mysore press, regional politics, and nationalist movements.

**Data Collection:** Relevant newspaper articles, editorials, and reports were systematically collected from archival repositories and libraries. Particular attention was given to publications that reported on civil disobedience, legal disruption campaigns, underground activities, and the Quit India Movement in Mysore.

**Data Analysis:** A qualitative content analysis approach was employed to identify recurring themes, patterns, and narratives in the newspapers. The analysis focused on (i) the representation of local and national grievances, (ii) strategies used to mobilise public participation, and (iii) the impact of press coverage on political consciousness and reform demands.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study acknowledges certain limitations, including incomplete archival records, potential bias in newspaper reporting, and restricted coverage in rural areas due to low literacy and limited distribution. Despite these constraints, the study triangulates multiple sources to ensure the accuracy and reliability of findings.

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## Newspapers and the Non-Cooperation Movement in Mysore

The Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–1922) initiated by Mahatma Gandhi marked a turning point in Mysore’s political engagement. Newspapers such as Mysore Samachara, Vrittanta Patrike, and Prajamata actively reported on Gandhian campaigns, boycotts, and civic protests. They not only informed the public about national strategies but also connected them to local administrative issues, such as taxation, land tenure, and labour exploitation.

Through editorials and serialised commentaries, newspapers inspired participation in boycotts of colonial courts, educational institutions, and foreign goods. This period saw the Mysore press cultivating a sense of civic responsibility and political awareness, laying the foundation for more radical actions in subsequent decades.

## Newspapers and Legal Disruption Movements

During the legal disruption movements, newspapers played an essential role in mobilising citizens for civil disobedience while documenting state repression. Key events included:

- **Shivapur Satyagraha:** Newspapers reported the mobilisation of local peasants against unfair taxation and land policies, amplifying their demands and publicising arrests and police violence.
- **Vidurasvatha Movement:** The Mysore press disseminated information about boycotts of colonial courts and administrative offices, encouraging citizens to participate in legal disruption campaigns.
- **Forestry Protests:** Newspapers highlighted peasant resistance to restrictive forestry laws and reported on state-sanctioned arrests, thus framing local grievances within a nationalist discourse.

Through sustained reporting, newspapers connected these localised struggles to broader national campaigns, demonstrating that Mysore’s citizens were active participants in India’s anti-colonial movement.

## Underground Activities and the Mysore Press

Some newspapers, like Inquilab in Mysore, served as clandestine platforms for underground nationalist activity. Despite censorship, publications circulated subversive material, calls for protest, and analyses of state policies. They facilitated coordination among activists and maintained morale among participants facing police action or imprisonment.

## **Newspapers and the Quit India Movement**

The Quit India Movement (1942) presented new challenges and opportunities for Mysore newspapers. Despite strict censorship, newspapers continued to report on and interpret major events:

- **Isur Tragedy:** Newspapers documented the violent suppression of protests, turning local incidents into symbols of colonial injustice.
- **Formation of Responsible Government:** Newspapers played a key role in political advocacy and debate, creating public pressure that contributed to the establishment of responsible governance within Mysore.
- The names of very important newspapers play a vital role in the Quit India movement of the Mysore princely state, namely- Thaayinaadu, Vishvakarnataka, Pouravallabha, Prajmitra, Saadhvi, Kidi, Inquilab, etc.

By publicising protests, government responses, and the demands of nationalist leaders, the Mysore press fostered solidarity and encouraged active engagement in the independence struggle.

## **The Mysore Chalo Movement**

The Mysore Chalo Movement was a movement that demanded the merger of the Mysore State with the Republic of India and the establishment of a responsible government after India gained independence. Several newspapers played an important role during this movement. Namely, the newspaper Thaynadu, under the editorship of P. B. Srinivasan and P. R. Ramaiah, was the main mouthpiece of the movement. It fearlessly reported the news of the movement, the speeches of the leaders and the repressive policies of the government. The newspaper supported the Satyagrahis by defying the government's orders.

One of the leading newspapers of the day, Prajamat, published a detailed report on the movement. It constantly gave news about the participation of the people in the movement and the government's responses.

The Pauravani newspaper was also one of the leading newspapers that raised its voice in favour of the movement. It played an important role in conveying the statements of the Mysore Congress leaders and the progress of the movement to the people.

Janavani Under the editorship of B. N. Gupta, Janavani newspaper also adopted a nationalist stance and gave full support to the Mysore

Movement. It published many articles condemning the government's oppression during the movement.

### **Major newspapers of the Mysore State**

**Mysore Vrittanta Bodini:** This is considered to be the first newspaper of Mysore. It was started by Bhashyam. It was published in both Kannada and English.

**Karnataka Prakasika:** This was an English Kannada weekly. It was brought out by Bhashyam Tirumalacharya.

**Mysore Gazette:** This was published by the Mysore government itself. It was also a Kannada and English language newspaper.

**Vrittanta Chintamani:** This weekly newspaper was started in Mysore by M Venkata Krishnaiah, who is called the father of the Kannada newspaper industry.

**Sadhvi:** This is another important newspaper started by Venkata Krishnaiah.

**Nadegannadi:** M Srinivas Iyengar and M Ramanuja Iyengar were publishing this Kannada weekly. Motherland: Founded by P. R. Ramaiah, this newspaper first started as a weekly in Mysore and later shifted to Bangalore and became a daily. Ten or more newspapers had a significant impact on the life, governance and freedom struggle of the Mysore State.

### **Reflections on Media and Political Mobilisation**

The Mysore Press exemplifies the dynamic relationship between media and nationalism. Newspapers shaped political consciousness by interpreting events, amplifying grievances, and coordinating civic action. They bridged local and national struggles, empowered citizens to resist colonial and feudal authority, and maintained the momentum of anti-colonial movements despite state repression.

### **Major Findings:**

The study of newspapers in the Mysore princely state reveals several key insights into their role in mobilising anti-colonial sentiment and fostering political consciousness:

- 1. Catalysts of Political Awareness:** Newspapers in Mysore functioned as instruments of political education, making national events, Gandhian campaigns, and local grievances accessible to a wider audience. Publications such as Vrittanta Patrike, Mysore Samachara, and Praja-

mata successfully interpreted complex political issues, bridging the gap between urban intelligentsia and rural populations.

2. **Integration of Local and National Struggles:** Coverage of events like the Shivapur Satyagraha, Vidurasvatha movement, and forestry protests demonstrated how the press connected local acts of resistance with broader nationalist campaigns. By highlighting regional injustices, newspapers reinforced the relevance of national movements within the local context.
3. **Mobilisation during the Non-Cooperation and Quit India Movements:** Newspapers were crucial in encouraging public participation in civil disobedience, boycott movements, and marches. They played a pivotal role during the Mysore Chalo movement and documented significant incidents such as the Isur tragedy, galvanising public outrage and activism.
4. **Role in Underground and Clandestine Activities:** Despite censorship and state surveillance, some newspapers functioned as clandestine platforms for underground political organising. They disseminated information on protests, arrests, and nationalist strategies, sustaining morale and coordination among activists.
5. **Promotion of Civic Consciousness and Responsible Governance:** Coverage of administrative failures, exploitation under forestry laws, and demands for political accountability contributed to the formation of responsible government in Mysore. Newspapers not only informed citizens but also created pressure on the state to implement reforms, demonstrating their influence on political processes.
6. **Challenges and Limitations:** The press faced multiple constraints, including limited literacy rates, distribution difficulties, censorship, and punitive action from authorities. Nevertheless, strategic editorial choices, serialised reporting, and grassroots subscription networks ensured that newspapers maintained a significant impact on public opinion and political mobilisation.

Mysore Press acted as both a mirror and a mediator of the anti-colonial struggle, linking local resistance with the national movement, empowering citizens, and shaping the trajectory of political change within the princely state.

## Conclusion:

Newspapers in the Mysore princely state were central to anti-colonial mobilisation. From the Non-Cooperation Movement to underground activism and the Quit India Movement, the press informed, educated, and inspired citizens to participate in political action. Coverage of key events like the Shivapur Satyagraha, Vidurasvatha, forestry protests, the Isur tragedy, and the Mysore Chalo movement highlights the press's ability to link local struggles with the national independence movement. Studying Mysore's newspapers underscores the enduring power of print media in shaping political consciousness and facilitating collective action during India's fight for freedom.

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The Authors have no conflict of interest to declare that they are relevant to the content of this article.

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