

TWO

EMERGENCE OF THE GUJARATI PRESS.

THE PRESS (meaning journals of different periodicities) emerged in India in the wake of British rule and its consolidation. It was started for the first time by the Westerners and in the English language. It exhibited before the Indians, a novel method of communication which was unknown so far in India. This new method of communication, that is the press, was adopted in this country at different places by different groups as and when factors facilitating such an adoption -- materialised. Furthermore, such factors influenced the nature of the press as well as helped its growth. Presently it will be seen as to how initially the English language press came into existence in India. Then, as we propose to study the Gujarati language press,¹ its emergence in relation to certain factors will be delineated.

Since the early eighteenth century some Westerners -- including the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, and the -- British were struggling to establish themselves in India. Of these, the British through the East India Company could -- consolidate power in parts of Bengal, the Madras Presidency

¹ In subsequent references, 'Gujarati Press' will stand for 'Gujarati language press'.

and Western India towards the latter half of the eighteenth century. They were able to restore stability in these parts and particularly in the cities like Calcutta, Madras and Bombay.²

Now, along with the restoration of law and order and with the expansion of power of the East India Company, the number of Englishmen coming and settling in these cities was also increasing. The majority of these Englishmen were -- either the covenanted servants of the Company or were connected with it in some other ways as 'surgeons, lawyers and -- professional men of various kinds'. And, quite a few of them were trading with distant ports in Europe and China.³ These Englishmen who had come to this foreign land had, evidently, an identity of interests. These interests having minimised the differences of opinion et cetera^e, the relations among them began to grow. In a way, the Englishmen began to live in -- this alien country like a community.

People forming such a community needed activities which could help them to maintain contacts among themselves as also to create an atmosphere of their common culture which they shared in their country. They needed agencies, besides, to keep themselves in touch with the affairs of their motherland

² Administration of the East India Company ^{London} (1853) pp. 57f.

³ Vide, Kincaid Dennis, British Social Life in India (^{London}) (1931).

which they had left behind. They required moreover, channels which could be useful in maintaining their contacts with the administration under whose aegis they were living : under -- whose patronage they were trading : five thousand miles away from their homes.

For the fulfillment of such needs, these British settlers used to arrange 'dinner parties -- Burra-Khana -- the Grand Feed, dancing parties, picnics, hunting expeditions and occasionally theatricals'.⁴ And, conversant as they were -- with the press in their country, they could satisfy their -- interest in the European events by procuring, obviously very stale, newspapers from England.⁵

Still, however, they felt the need for 'something' -- which could help them in communicating personal and commercial intelligence, keeping in contact with one another and with the administration. And, now that their numbers were increasing and activities expanding,⁶ communication by word of mouth was far too inadequate to meet the need. 'Something' more extensive was needed to fill in the lacuna in the life of a community which had started building up its commercial and political future in this foreign land.

Indicative of this widely felt need was an announcement affixed on the gates of the Council House in Calcutta in

⁴ Ibid., p.45.

⁵ Barns Margareta, *London* The Indian Press (1940), p.45.

⁶ Kincaid Dennis, *London* op.cit., p.59.

the year 1766. The announcement, whose author was one Mr. Bolts, read :

To the Public :

Mr. Bolts takes this method of informing the public that the need of a printing press in this city -- being of great disadvantage in business and making extremely difficult to communicate such intelligence to the community, as is of utmost importance to -- every British subject, he is ready to give the best encouragement to any person or persons who are versed in the business of printing to manage a press, the types and utensils of which he can produce. In the meantime, he begs to inform the public that having in manuscript many things to communicate, which most intimately concern every individual, any person who may be induced by curiosity or other more laudable motives, will be permitted at Mr Bolts' house to read or to take copies of the same. A person -- will give due attendance at the house from ten to twelve any morning.⁷

Now, printing was not known in India before. It was introduced here for the first time by the Portuguese in the year 1556 for publishing Biblical literature.⁸ That was in

⁷ Barns Margareta, op.cit., p.46.

⁸ Priolkar A.K., Printing Press in India, pp.2f. *Bombay 1958*

Goa. While, in the British Indian territories efforts to set up the first printing press were made by Bhimji Parekh, a -- native of Western India. Bhimji Parekh had asked the Court of Directors of the East India Company to send a printer from England as 'he hath curiosity and earnest inclination to have some of the Brahmini writings in print'.⁹ Even then Mr Bolts' announcement remained unresponded to till the year 1780 when James August Hicky could set up a printing press in Calcutta for the specific purpose of bringing out a newspaper---the -- 'Bengal Gazette or Calcutta Advertiser' in the English language, the first newspaper ever to be published in India.¹⁰ That was followed by the 'India Gazette' in the same year. Published in English, this journal too was edited by two Englishmen, B. Messink and Peter Read.¹¹ Then came into being the 'Calcutta Gazette' in 1784.¹² Within a couple of years of Hicky's -- pioneering attempt, five journals were founded in Bengal, -- while, Madras saw the birth of its first newspaper, the 'Madras Courier', in October 1785 to be followed by the 'Madras -- Harakuru' in 1791.¹³

The contents of all these journals which were published

⁹ Ibid., pp.30f.

¹⁰ Barns Margareta, op.cit.,

¹¹ Joshi V.K. and Lele R.K., Vrittapatrancha Itihas (1951), pp. 90-91. Bombay

¹² Ibid.,

¹³ Ibid., p.92.

in the English language and which were edited by Englishmen were meant mainly to cater to the needs of the British -- community living in India. As such, they contained 'parliamentary reports, editorials on subjects of interest to the resident Britons, on events in England, on army, and, at -- times on the reported plans of the native rulers'. In addition to this type of information, the early English newspapers contained news-letters and reports from Paris, Stockholm, Vienna, Madrid, China, Rio Janeiro and other countries of interest. The social news columns included lists of -- arrivals and departures in the British community and announcements of births, deaths, and engagements'.¹⁴ They contained at times attacks on the administration and at times lengthy laudatory notes on the 'deeds of some British enthusiasts -- which could go a long way in improving the lots of the -- natives'.¹⁵

II

Turning to conditions in the West of India, Bombay -- during those days was emerging as a busy commercial centre. The total clearings at the Bombay harbour were nearly seventy-five foreign and an equal number of coastal ships with a -- total tonnage of nearly sixty thousand amounting to an --

¹⁴ Ibid. and Barns Margareta op.cit.,

¹⁵ Ibid.,

aggregate of Rs.81 lakh.¹⁶ As the Gazetteers describe it, 'Bombay being the only perfectly secure spot in that quarter of India, it had drawn to it in the course of years many of the native inhabitants together with much of the wealth of the adjacent countries'.¹⁷ They add, 'each year brought -- fresh and more wealthy settlers and every sea breeze wafted into the crowded harbour of Bombay, ships of every port from China to Peru'.¹⁸

And, it was indeed so. Bombay was attracting many Parsi, Hindu (including Bania, Bhatia and Lohana) and -- Mohammedan (including Kucchhi Memon, Khoja and Bohra) businessmen from Western India. The number of these inhabitants was increasing every year.¹⁹ When the population of Bombay was estimated at nearly one lakh in 1780, those from Western -- India among them were about 6000. These included 3087 Parsis, 1637 Banias, 266 Bhatias and several hundred Lohanas and -- Mohammedans.²⁰ Almost the whole trade of the Island was in

¹⁶ The Gazetteers of the Bombay City and Island (1909), Vol. I, pp. 510-514.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp.159. Also, Edwards S.M., The Rise of Bombay-A Retrospect (1902) pp.120-123 and 210-213. (A reprint from Census Reports 1901.)

¹⁸ Ibid.,

¹⁹ Ibid., p.220.

²⁰ Ibid., and Edwards S.M., The Population of the City of Bombay in Indian Antiquary, December, 1926, p.236. cf. 'The Parsis continued to arrive in a steady stream attracted by the prospect of trade and many well-known Parsi families of today trace their descent from men who settled here between 1703 and 1745'.

the hands of these Western Indians who had opened their -- business firms, both in Bombay and in stations far flung in the other parts of Western India, according to the Gazetteers²¹ and the author of 'Mumbaino Bahar'.²²

These traders who had set up trade connections between Bombay and their branches in Western India, used to exchange* letters for communicating commercial information. Though we have not been able to lay our hand on any letter thus exchanged, references thereto have been found in the old account books of one Bombay businessman who had to pay 'emergency -- charges for transmitting one letter to Surat'. Such letters have been alluded to, also, in Mirat e Ahmadi (1760)²³ and in the transactions of the Parsi Panchayat of Bombay.²⁴ These letters were carried by couriers or messengers known locally as the 'Kasads' and 'Khepias'.²⁵ The 'Kasads' and 'Khepias' were working under the supervision and protection of a -- divisional head known as 'Madadho'. A 'Madadho' lived in -- each of the big commercial places such as Broach, Surat, -- Nadiad, Kapadvanaj and Ahmedabad.²⁶ In addition to these --

²¹ Ibid.,

²² Wacchha Ratanji Framji, Mumbaino Bahar Vol.I, (1874), (Bombay) pp. 48-50.

* It appears from the Gazetteers that the exchange of messages was carried on in those days through couriers and runners plying between different centres through country ships and jungle tracts.

²³ Ali Syed Nawab, The Supplement to the Miret-i-Ahmedi (G.D.S. Baroda) (1924), pp. 170-172.

²⁴ Modi J.J., Mumbaini Parsi Panchaet ni Tawarikh, Daftar II. (Bombay 1909.)

²⁵ Ibid.,

²⁶ Derasari D., Sathina Sahitya nu Digdarshah (1909), (Ahmedabad). It will be interesting to note here that a lane in Baroda is named as 'Pratap Madadha ni Pole'.

'Kasads' and 'Khepias' who mostly carried letters, there were 'Angadias' who used to deliver costly commodities and even -- letters from one place to another. The letters thus exchanged between the traders in the different commercial centres in Western India contained commodity prices and stock positions and were helpful, thus, in carrying on trade between the -- different places such as Bombay, Surat, Broach, Kheda, Nadiad, Kapadvanaj, Dholka, Ahmedabad, Ghogha and Verawal.²⁷ The -- agents or traders used to describe in their letters the local climatic conditions as also some local events. They used to write about the local economic and political conditions, moreover, with a view to explaining the price fluctuations in -- their respective regions. It is claimed by the authority which has given this account of the contents of the letters that the news about Nadirshah's sack of Delhi was known in Western -- India through such letters.²⁸

While information used to be spread in different commercial places through this method of exchanging letters, local information in such places was disseminated in a different -- way. There used to be criers and drum-beaters known locally as the 'Pokarchi',²⁹ and the 'Dandiyo',³⁰ respectively. They

²⁷ Ibid., and Marazban K.B., Fardunji Marazbanji (1896). *Bombay*

²⁸ Joshi V.K. and Lele R.K. op.cit., p.21.

²⁹ Modi J.J. op.cit., p.610. The corpse-bearers known as the Nase-Salars were doing this work of criers—'Pokarchis'.

³⁰ Vide Bharuch Shaher no Itihas (History of Broach) and Desai J.J.(ed.), Surat Sonani Murat. *Surat 1958*

were moving from street to street with a bronze gong or a drum. After attracting the attention they shouted loudly to communicate to the people whatever information had to be spread. Sometimes warnings of imminent floods in the low-lying areas were proclaimed through the 'Dandiyo' *; Sometimes the announcements regarding local gatherings were made through these -- criers. **

The trading communities in Bombay in particular, needed information about the arrivals and departures of ships as the latter carried different commodities and even passengers from the coastal ports. That need was fulfilled by some enter- -- prising merchants and ship-owners who were mostly Parsis, ³¹ by engaging criers,

'Who went round the native town, halting at centres where businessmen and women congregated. There were a couple of 'criers' with lungs of brass and stentorian voices. Each took his turn. The 'crier' would stand at one of the recognised business centres in

* Such areas are known, even to-day, as 'Dandiya' Bazzars in Broach and Baroda.

** Even twenty years back local announcements regarding precautions to be taken against floods or epidemics were being made through the Dandiyo in Baroda, Broach and Surat. What is more, during 1936-1940, many of us have shouted announcements after beating a thali, (a brass plate), about public meetings, movie shows and dramatic performances to be held in the streets of Baroda.

³¹ Waccha R.F., op.cit.

the native part of the fort, while all and sundry gathered round him. He then proclaimed the date on which the vessel would start, the name of the 'bundar' (port) from which the start would be made, the names of the ports at which it would anchor to embark and disembark passengers. The programme of the departure of the vessel would be repeated in different market places like stereotyped recitation'.³²

In this way, the indigenous methods of communication employed in Western India towards the end of the eighteenth century included 'Kasads', 'Khepias' and 'Angadias' who were the vehicles of inter-centre communication and that too -- between different commercial firms; they included, moreover, 'Criers', drum-beaters and 'Dandiyo' for mass-communication. All these indigenous methods could effect communication, but, rather partially. They were not speedy, nor always reliable and above, all, they were rather costly. The charges of -- carrying information varied from courier to courier and -- according to the distance traversed and the urgency of the matter to be communicated.³³ The common feature of these

³² Wacha Sir D.E., *Shells from the Sands of Bombay— Being My Recollections and Reminiscences* (1920), pp.15-17. *Bombay*.

³³ Modi J.J. op.cit., and, *Early days of Postal administration in India*, quoted in O'Malley, *Modern India and the West*, pp.236-237. (*London 1941*)

indigenous methods of communication was that they were mostly 'oral' and whenever they were written, they covered just a few persons and were limited, hence.

However, communication in 'written' rather than 'oral' words would be needed by the trading community in Bombay. The traders in that city had to keep themselves in touch with the details of the schedules of the incoming and outgoing ships. They had to keep in touch with their variegated cargo. They had to keep pace with the prices which were current in the -- market so as to cover and sell commodities from time to time.³⁴ That is, the increasing trade and commerce in the city of -- Bombay needed extensive, rapid and cheaper communication which would be relatively enduring than the oral one. But the -- 'written' communication was just meagre, it being 'hand-written' only. The alternative to manuscript communication would have been printed matter. But the printing technique was not in vogue in Bombay during those days. Though the printing -- technique was made use of by about 1780.in Bombay by a Parsi gentleman, Rustom Carsaspjee, who had brought out a 'Calender for the Year of the Lord 1780,'³⁵ it was not harnessed for communication purposes even by Westerners in Bombay. Though they were conversant with both, the printing technique as well as with its use for communication purposes, they carried on without it for some time. In the latter case they used to

³⁴ Vide, Vachha R.F., op.cit. and Gazetteers op.cit.

³⁵ Priyolkar A.K., op.cit., p.72.

procure English newspapers from Calcutta³⁶ till an Englishman set up a printing press and started in 1789 an English weekly journal, the 'Bombay Herald'.³⁷ No issues of the -- 'Bombay Herald' are traceable, however, the Bombay City -- Gazetteers and other authorities state that it was the first journal ever to be printed in and published from Bombay.³⁸ The journals to appear next to that in Bombay were the 'Bombay Courier' and the 'Bombay Gazette' both in English and started by Englishmen. The earlier issues of these two journals are not traceable, but, judging from their subsequent issues it appears that they were started in the years 1790 and 1791 -- respectively and that the 'Bombay Herald' had merged with the 'Bombay Courier' in 1791.³⁹

III

We have seen so far how for the first time the technique of printing was introduced in India by Westerners. We saw -- then how that technique was made use of for communication --

³⁶ Natrajan J., History of Indian Journalism, being Part II of the Report of the Press Commission, (1956), p.9. (Delhi)

³⁷ Ibid., and Barns Margareta op.cit.

³⁸ The Gazetteers op.cit. (Vol.III), p.140 and Joshi V.K. and Lele K.R., op.cit., p.93.

³⁹ Ibid.

purposes. That is, how the English language press in particular was started by the Englishmen in India. We shall see now as to how the technique of printing in general and the -- press in particular were employed for mass-communication -- purposes, by and for the indigenous people, in Western India.

The 'Bombay Courier' referred to above was a weekly published from Bombay. It was started by Luke Ashburner. Printed in the 'Bombay Courier Printing Press' by Joseph -- Burne, it contained four pages each with four columns. On its title page appeared the emblem of the East India Company's government.⁴⁰ From the accounts given by some English -- observers who had a chance to peruse through the earlier -- issues of the 'Bombay Courier', it appears that it contained announcements about the arrivals and departures of ships from British and other ports, containing merchandise in which the native businessmen were dealing. It contained notifications issued by the local administration from time to time. A -- large space in this journal was devoted to the interests of the resident Britons, while, next to that, space was occupied by announcements pertaining to sale of local premises and -- other goods. At times the 'Courier' published literary -- comments; occasionally letters of some readers appeared -- therein, but mostly it acted as a vehicle for communicating

⁴⁰ Joshi V.K. and Lele K.R., op.cit., p.94.

notifications and advertisements issued by the Company --
Administration in Bombay.⁴¹

All the matter being published in the 'Bombay Courier' was in English and had thus a limited area of communication. The Company's Administration must have been aware of that as also of the importance of communicating in the local languages, more particularly in Gujarati because, as the Gazetteers -- describe it, 'most of the city's trade was in the hands of the Gujarati speaking people from Western India and Gujarati had consequently become the language par excellence, the -- language of the bazzars'.⁴² But, it was not possible to -- publish anything in the Gujarati language as there was no -- provision for Gujarati printing. That was so firstly because Gujarati types for printing purposes were not available then. Secondly because few among the natives could take to printing, there being a taboo on even touching the ink used for printing purposes as it was believed to contain animal fat,⁴³ and, consequently because upper-caste Gujarati Hindus who could afford to invest money in printing would not take to it just due to the taboo.

But, that taboo did not apply to some people such as

⁴¹ Ibid., and Gazetteers, op.cit.

⁴² The Gazetteers, op.cit.

⁴³ A reference to such a taboo is available in an announcement published in 1840 in the 'Digdarshan' a Marathi periodical published from Bombay : Digdarshan Vol.I, p.212 quoted in Kulkarni P.B., Nana Shankersheth Yanche Charitra (1960), p.41.

the Parsis. A Parsi gentleman, Jijibhai Beramji Chhapgar* could be engaged, therefore, by the 'Courier Printing Press' as a printer. At the instance of his employers Jijibhai Chhapgar succeeded in 1797 in 'cutting' Gujarati types for printing purposes, 'without any other help or information than what he gleaned from Chamber's Dictionary of Arts and Sciences', according to Robert Drummond, author of some -- vocabularies, who met Chhapgar in 1799.⁴⁴ The types 'cut' by Chhapgar were movable, yet there appeared an unbroken line connecting different letters at the top. The Gujarati script so 'cut' was known as the 'Mahajan' script.

The Westerners who had exhibited the use of the printing technique for communication purposes in the English -- language were to become pioneers in harnessing that technique for communication purposes in the Gujarati language as well. The Gujarati types 'cut' by Chhapgar for the 'Courier Printing Press' were made use of for the first time in the English journal the 'Bombay Courier' dated January 28th 1797. A -- Gujarati notification issued by the Company Administration appears in that journal, reiterating a previous order issued orally, prohibiting unrestricted movement of stray cattle in the fort area of the Bombay city.⁴⁵

* Chhapgar meaning Printer.

⁴⁴ Drummond Robert, Grammar of the Malabar languages (1799), preface, quoted in Priyolkar A.K., op.cit., p.74.

⁴⁵ Bombay Courier dated 28-1-1797, No.226.

The frequency of communication of information in the Gujarati language through the English journal the 'Bombay Courier' went on increasing. The contents of such information were also changing. In addition to notifications of the Company Administration, there began to appear by about 1798 advertisements addressed to the local inhabitants by private individuals and firms. Typical among them were :

1. Announcements of auction sales of commodities and premises,⁴⁶
2. Announcements about loss or misplacements of articles,⁴⁷
3. Announcements about programmes of ships passing through the Bombay harbour, and,
4. Resolutions of Company meetings.⁴⁸

The resolutions etc. were published in Gujarati in that English newspaper and their additional off-prints, as per these resolutions, were to be 'published in all principal towns and villages in Gujarat'.⁴⁹ It may be noted here that the nature of the types used in these Gujarati advertisements

⁴⁶ Ibid., dated 25-11-1797.

⁴⁷ Ibid., dated 16-12-1797.

⁴⁸ Ibid., dated 9-12-1797.

⁴⁹ Ibid.,

had also changed. The line at the top of letters was deleted in subsequent printing.

These Gujarati advertisements published in the columns of the English journal as well as the indigenous methods of communication could meet the immediate requirements of commercial communication to some extent. They could cope up with the communication needs of the limited number of people with limited commercial activities. But, the year 1800 witnessed an important event---the transfer to the Company of the whole administration and revenue of Surat which was already in -- trading connections with Bombay. And, that put Bombay in -- possession of political authority almost coextensive with -- that which the British enjoyed towards the beginning of the twentieth century, according to the Gazetteers.⁵⁰ Moreover, according to the same authority, 'the bulk of trade had -- nearly doubled that of the previous decades and circumstances were sufficient in themselves to occasion a rise of population in Bombay'.⁵¹ Captain Hall who visited Bombay in 1812 estimated that there were 1,03,786 Hindus (Gujarati and Maharashtrians), 27,811 Mohammedans, 13,156 Parsis, 14,454 native Christians and about 1,725 Europeans (resident and troops) living in Bombay at that time.⁵² Of these, he estimated, 'quite a large number

⁵⁰ Gazetteers op.cit., p.515.

⁵¹ Edwards S.M. The Rise of Bombay-A Retrospect (1902), pp. 210-213.

⁵² Ibid.,

were from Western India, trading in commodities, that is, exporting to and importing from intercoastal and foreign ports'.⁵³ Such an increased population as also increasing trade and commerce necessitated one more method for spreading business information. And, now that the Westerners had exhibited before them a modern method of mass-communication by utilising the printing technique, the local population of Western Indians realised how extensive, rapid, cheaper and more permanent the new method could be as compared with the local indigenous modes of spreading information both -- oral and hand-written. Some of the local groups adopted -- therefore the method of spreading information by publishing 'hand-bills' in Gujarati and distributing them gratis at -- large.⁵⁴

IV

Advertisements in the Gujarati language were printed and published, as mentioned above, in the English journals owned by Englishmen. Gujarati hand-bills as well were -- printed in the 'Courier' press owned by Englishmen. Besides,

⁵³ Ibid., and Wachha R.F., op.cit.

⁵⁴ Jame Jamshed Centenary Volume (1932), p.11. ^(Bombay) It ~~was~~ ^{was} pamphlets ~~It was~~ were printed in the Courier printing press.

English and Marathi books printed at the Sreerampur Missionary press were circulating in Bombay.⁵⁵ There was no vernacular (Gujarati or Marathi) printing press in Bombay till about 1812. It was only in that year that Fardunji Marazbanji, a Parsi gentleman, set up one.⁵⁶ Fardunji had migrated in 1808 to Bombay from Surat in search of some gainful -- occupation. He was patronised by Dastur Mulla Pheroz, a Parsi scholar, in whose library he was doing some book-binding work. He used to visit the 'Courier Printing Press' -- frequently to meet his friend Jijibhai Beramji Chhapgar, who, it may be remembered, had 'cut' the founts in Gujarati and who was looking after Gujarati printing work in the 'Courier Press'. Having seen what a printing press could do and being conversant with book-binding work, Fardunji decided to start a Gujarati printing press. He 'cut' Gujarati types himself and took the assistance of the women folk in his -- family for polishing and finishing his 'self-cut' Gujarati types and set up a printing press in 1812 naming it as the 'Shree Samachar Press'.⁵⁷ There is no explanation as regards the name that Fardunji gave to his printing press; 'Samachar' means 'news'. May be, Fardunji had visualised the possibility of bringing out a newspaper from that press in future.

⁵⁵ Priyolkar A.K., op.cit.,

⁵⁶ Khurshed Minocher, op.cit., p.25, and Marazban K.B., op.cit., p.39.

⁵⁷ Ibid.,

Be that as it may, Fardunji brought out from his --
'Samachar' printing press occasionally hand-bills etc. to
start with. He then brought out his independent publications.
The first among them was an almanac (Hindu Vikram era calendar)
published in 1814. It became very popular as soon as it was
published and was out of print in no time.⁵⁸ In 1815 Fardunji
published ~~out~~ the Gujarati versions of some religious books
for the Parsis. He also brought out from his press the Gujarati
translation of Murrey's book on English grammar and made his
printing press known among the Gujarati inhabitants of Bombay.⁵⁹

The Gujarati speaking inhabitants of Bombay who were
witnessing the use of the printing technique for publishing
books and for spreading information, had already witnessed
the task performed by the English newspapers. It is reported
by Fardunji's biographers that Fardunji was aware of this as
also of the fact that 'the local Gujaratis felt the need of
a vernacular newspaper similar to those in the English --
language'.⁶⁰

As seen above, Fardunji Marazban was running a --
Gujarati printing press, the 'Samachar' press, the very name
whereof was suggestive of 'news'. Fardunji was friendly with

⁵⁸ Marazban K.B. and Khurshed Minochar, op.cit.

⁵⁹ Ibid.,

⁶⁰ Ibid.,

Jijibhai Beramji Chhapgar, the printer in the well-established English journal, the 'Courier'. And, above all, he was running a well-organised 'Courier' service through which he used to distribute letters locally and in different centres in Western India. He had kept a number of 'Kasads' who used to carry letters ~~to~~ different centres.⁶¹ He had known thereby how dissemination of information had come to be a felt need of the Gujarati commercial sections in that part of -- India. Fardunji Marazban thus came to visualise the utility of a 'neecoozpaper' as he put it, especially in the Gujarati language.⁶²

He put that proposal before his 'agents' and 'couriers' in the different centres. He consulted also his friends and particularly his patron Dastur Mulla Pheroz who was a very influential personality in the community and in the government.⁶³ Being supported unequivocally from all quarters, Fardunji Marazban sought permission of the Bombay Government on 26-2-1822 to start the proposed newspaper which he was to print in the Gujarati language and which was to be named as the 'Shree Mumbaina Shamachar' (Bombay News).⁶⁴ The -- Bombay Government having granted permission^{on} 9-3-1822, --

⁶¹ Ibid.,

⁶² Ibid.,

⁶³ Ibid.,

⁶⁴ Ibid.,

Fardunji addressed a petition to the then Governor-in-Council on 1-4-1822. He requested the Government 'to sanction aid to the proposed venture'.⁶⁵

Mountstuart Elphinstone was the Governor of Bombay at that time. His views on the press being characteristic, are expressed in the following minute recorded in 1821,

'I look on the ~~the~~ art (of printing and publishing newspapers) as too great a blessing to be withheld without the clearest and most incontrovertible -- reasons and I see no such reasons in the case of India. That the press may in the long succession of ages cause the natives to throw off our yoke is possible and even probable; but it will in the -- first place destroy the superstitions and prejudices of the natives and remove the pressing dangers -- created by the entire marked separation between them and their conquerors and this effect is -- certain while the other is problematical'.⁶⁶

The Government of Bombay favoured the proposal of Fardunji Marazban by sanctioning promptly on 12-4-1822 Rs.1200 as subscription for fifty copies of the weekly for one year. Fardunji secured advance subscriptions from

⁶⁵ Ibid.,

⁶⁶ The Bombay Secretariat Records, G.D. Vol.II, 1821-23, p. 409, quoted in Priyolkar A.K., op.cit., p. 116.

~~⁶⁷ Numbaina Shamachar- Madhnnazar, 10-6-1822.~~

about 150 persons. These included 67 Parsis, 14 Englishmen (officials and traders), 8 Hindus and 6 Mohammedans. Some of these subscribers were residing in Bombay, Surat, Broach, Kheda and Ahmedabad—a fact which indicates that the name of a Gujarati weekly newspaper had spread despite meagre -- facilities for communicating between different commercial centres in Western India at that time.

Fardunji Marazban issued an announcement⁶⁷ on June 10th, 1822 in which he declared that he had decided to -- bring out a weekly newspaper in Gujarati, 'Shree Munabaina Shamachar', from the 1st July that year. He added, 'It will be interesting to know that among the English people there is a practice to publish newspapers while we Indians have no such vehicle for communication. Besides, the Englishmen value the newspapers so much that they preserve them for future references.-----I propose to bring out from my printing press such a newspaper---- it will not only guide us in purchasing or selling things, but will also entertain. The newspaper craves for the support of all --- it craves the blessings of God the Almighty'.⁶⁸ He issued, what he termed as, the 'Prospectus of a Weekly Guzzarattee Newspaper entitled Bombay Na Shamachar to be edited and printed by Fardunji Murazbanjee' in which he declared,⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Munabaina Shamachar—Madehnazar, 10-6-1822.

⁶⁸ Ibid.,

⁶⁹ Prospectus etc. dated June 12, 1822.

'The first number of the work will be issued from the press on Monday the 1st July and continued on every ensuing Monday. The Bombay Na Summachar will consist of,

- (i) Advertisements,
- (ii) Foreign and Domestic Intelligence,
- (iii) Occurrences from English and Indian Newspapers,
- (iv) Choice selections and moral lessons, as well as writings on rational subjects from the English and Persian books,
- (v) The ships' arrivals and departures,
- (vi) All approved communications from our correspondents,
- ALSO, (vii) Curiosities, Anecdotes, Poetry and other amusing and edifying miscellanies will occasionally appear,
- (viii) Mostly however, interesting heads of commercial matters including extensive and accurate Price Current will be given.

The proposed contents of the first Gujarati newspapers as enumerated above suggest two things, viz. 1. The forerunner of the present day Gujarati press was a prototype -- of the English newspapers which were published in India and which were procured from England. As the latter which were being published since long covered a wider variety of subjects

besides news, the Gujarati newspaper also aimed at such an extensive coverage and did actually contain such a wider variety in course of time. 2. The list of items to be included in the initial Gujarati newspaper indicates how -- susceptible the press is to the demands of certain groups in society. Though the main forte of the earlier Gujarati newspaper was trade and commerce as emphasised in item (viii) above, the former did contain seeds of further -- differentiation and specialisation into journals covering item (vii) above. In fact, such a differentiation and -- specialisation did take place and we have today several -- Gujarati journals catering to the needs and tastes of the different groups in Gujarat (refer tables in Appendix).

In a subsequent announcement Fardunji Marazban appealed to the people to patronise the journal and requested them to advertise their goods etc. in the 'new newspaper'. He -- declared, 'Shree Mumabaina Shamachar will publish information about sale and purchase of commodities in Bombay and else- -- where, provided that those desirous of getting such information published, paid the due charges thereof'. And, with a view to making the journal popular in official and non- -- official quarters, he said, 'It will include news about the Company's officials — about their arrivals, departures, their appointments; about births, deaths and engagements in their families'.⁷⁰ He paid high tributes in that announcement to the 'Dharam Raj of the Company' and wrote in --

⁷⁰ Ibid.,

eulogising terms about the Governor-in-Council, Mountstuart Elphinstone, for 'their great benevolence'.⁷¹

Fardunji acquired working knowledge of the English language. He began to keep himself abreast of all matter published in the contemporary English journals. He engaged two translators for adopting matter from the English newspapers. He thus finalised all arrangements for the publication of the proposed weekly which was going to be printed with the types that he had 'cut' and with the mechanical device of a hand-pressure-press. He made arrangements to distribute it at different centres through his own 'courier service', and fixed rupees twenty four as its annual subscription.⁷²

The first issue of the 'Shree Mumabaina Shamachar' was out, as scheduled, on the 1st July, 1822. It was printed on rather rough paper in 8" x 12" size. It contained two columns on each page, there being four pages in the initial issue. On the title page was published the official emblem of the Company Administration just as on the 'Bombay Courier'. Beneath it appeared an Urdu couplet suggesting as if the motto of the journal.* The date-line on the title page was

⁷¹ Ibid.,

⁷² Khurshed Minocher and Marazban K.B., op.cit.

* The couplet was composed by Mirza Kazam Ali Jawan. It said, 'If you want to be popular, achieve perfection: an imperfect man is looked at with disrespect by God even'.

according to the Hindu (Vikram) and the Gregorian Calendars. That page contained three advertisements. One of them was pertaining to sale of premises, two of them were announcements about loss of a fountain pen and a watch. The types used for printing purposes were fixed in such a way that a dot appeared after each word. Every page being eight inches lengthwise contained a column of four inches each, each -- column in turn contained fifty lines at an average.

The newly started weekly Gujarati newspaper, the -- Bombay Samachar, evoked some interest locally. Its circulation increased by one hundred copies within only four weeks of its publication.⁷³ Besides, as it invited correspondence, a letter to the editor (called 'Charchapatra' meaning letter addressed to the editor for raising some public issue) appeared in its issue dated 29-7-1822. That was pertaining to the 'Adhik' (intercalary) month in the Hindu calendar. The letter had evoked some controversy about religious observances during that period.⁷⁴ In the next issue appeared the editorial reply to that along with some more letters on the same issues. Again, in the subsequent issues of the Bombay Samachar many more persons' letters on diverse subjects began to appear. Fardunji, the editor, had announced that he had to sort out letters suitable for publication either because of their -- libellous contents or because their authors did not disclose their full identity.⁷⁵

⁷³ The Bombay Samachar, dated 29-7-1822.

⁷⁴ Ibid.,

⁷⁵ Ibid., dated 13-8-1822.

We shall make here some observations. First, the -- earlier Gujarati newspaper invited letters from the readers and raised public controversies on several issues. That helped, not only in creating public opinion on such matters, but also in sustaining the interest of the readers and in augmenting the circulation. Second, the fact that the -- editor had to sort out such letters indicates what public interest the editor could create and what importance the -- public attached to a letter published in their name in the press.

As regards the news items, they were mostly gleaned from the existing English journals. They were supplemented, gradually, by news-letters from Broach, Navsari, Surat, -- Kheda and similar centres. Some of them described local -- climatic conditions, some again the local crop positions or events of local importance.⁷⁶

When the Bombay Samachar completed one year of its publications, the number of its subscribers had increased further. The names of these subscribers were published in the newspaper as a token of the receipt of the subscriptions. May be, it worked as an inducement to more people to be subscribers. From the addresses of the subscribers it appears that the Bombay Samachar had spread not only in Bombay but also in Daman, Navsari, Surat, Broach, Kheda,

⁷⁶ Ibid.,

Nadiad, Ahmedabad, Div and Ghogha.⁷⁷

The Bombay Samachar devoted quite a considerable -- space to the 'Price Current'. When some of the readers -- suggested the inclusion of 'useful and instructive matter' in the journal⁷⁸ the latter began to publish 'good advice for straightforward conduct', 'instructions about the manners and customs of the people',⁷⁹ and, quite frequently poems to entertain the readers, in addition to the regularly -- published 'Price Current'.⁸⁰

The local groups in Bombay began to publicise through the newspaper their appeals to their fellowmen to 'donate freely during the religious festivals and to help thereby their needy brethren'. They began to utilise the newspaper, also, for publication of the names of such donors.⁸¹ Even more. These groups began to utilise the columns of the -- journal for invoking or refuting controversies on religious matters.⁸²

⁷⁷ Ibid., dated 15-8-1823.

⁷⁸ Ibid., dated 29-7-1822.

⁷⁹ Ibid.,

⁸⁰ Ibid.,

⁸¹ Ibid., dated 12-4-1824, 20-9-1824.

⁸² Ibid., dated 14-8-1826 and 26-10-1829.

As mentioned earlier, the advertisements published in the initial issues of the Bombay Samachar were about five to ten in number. In its issue dated 2-9-1822 there appeared about twenty advertisements, some of them accompanied by -- suggestive pictures even.⁸³ While, its issue dated 30-3-1830 contained four pages full of advertisements out of a total of sixteen pages in that issue. It is worth noting here that Fardunji Marazban had imported from England newly prepared Gujarati types at a cost of Rs.11,000 and these -- types being machine-cast and smaller, the number of lines and hence the quantity of matter per column had increased.⁸⁴

An analysis of the contents of the Bombay Samachar dated 13-12-1830 given below, is typical of the variegated contents of the Gujarati press within less than a decade of its emergence :

- a. First two and a half pages of advertisements which included,
 - (i) announcements of auctions of premises etc.;
 - (ii) announcements about starting of insurance companies, banks and business firms,
 - (iii) announcements about new products sold in the market.
- b. Miscellaneous news : weather, local meetings, school activities and native rulers' programmes.

⁸³ Ibid., dated 2-9-1822.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 9-12-1830.

- c. Government notifications.
- d. Price Current : opium and cotton prices mainly.
- e. Government House News.
- f. Foreign news.
- g. Transfers and postings of civil servants, their leave-grants.
- h. Names of Englishmen arriving in and going away from Bombay.
- i. Deaths and obsequies.
- j. News about ships :
 - (i) Those arriving in Bombay,
 - (ii) Those leaving Bombay,
 - (iii) Ports to be touched by out-going ships, names and particulars about their captains and crew.

IV

We have delineated so far the initial aspects of the Gujarati press. At the time of emergence, its essential feature was the communication of commercial information—information pertaining to the price current and about the arrivals as well as departures of ships carrying merchandise. In course of time that commercial information was supplemented by the publication of other matter as well. That matter was entertaining, instructive and 'useful' to the readers of

the newspaper. It was supplemented, moreover, by the inclusion of letters and comments exchanged between different -- controverting groups which wanted their private quarrels to attain the magnitude of public issues, now, through the -- modern medium of the press. This was a rudimentary yet -- important beginning in the direction of the press becoming a public forum for formulating opinions.

At the initial stages the Gujarati press was limited to four pages. These increased upto twenty at times. Again, increased pages included variegated matter --- advertisements occupying a major space therein. These advertisements occupied two or four columns in all, to start with. Gradually there began to appear four full pages of advertisements. The earlier advertisements were pertaining to the loss of -- some article or pertaining to the auction sale of premises or debris. That also changed in course of time. The newer advertisements were pertaining to the starting of new insurance companies, banks and trading firms in Bombay. Some -- again advertised commodities produced not only locally but also in other centres in Western India. These were accompanied by suggestive illustrations in some instances. Customers have a tendency to be attracted by visual appeal, afterall. Besides, more advertisements meant more revenue to the newspaper.

As regards the circulation, the Gujarati newspaper was confined, when it emerged, mainly to the city of Bombay. It had just a few subscribers in some places in Western India.

As time passed, circumstances were sufficient in themselves to occasion an increase in its circulation and in its spread spatially in centres far flung in Western India.

Thus, the Gujarati press emerging in 1822 had changed in its nature : its growth had been effected in course of time. And, to that, several factors had been related directly as well as indirectly — each of them jointly and -- severally effecting, not only its emergence but effecting, also, a change in its nature as well as its growth.

One of these factors, for instance, was the immigrant population from Western India to Bombay. These immigrants comprising of some trading groups were engaged in diverse commercial activities. To keep themselves in touch with -- these activities they needed some media which could facilitate their communication more extensively and rapidly than the oral and the hand-written media could. Again, these -- migrant trading groups had to keep frequently in touch with their branches in their respective areas. A need for regular communication was created by this fact as well.

These trading groups would have carried on with the existing arrangements for communication purposes but for the introduction of the printing technique by the Westerners. It may be noted here that the printing technique was not -- known in India when typography was already in use in the -- West since the fifteenth century. It had found no place in India until half a century after sea route had been discovered.

Even then it had remained the exclusive possession of the -- Europeans settling in India. But, as technological advances can hardly remain the exclusive preserve of a single group, printing technique was learnt and employed, also by enterprising groups in this country.

The Parsis belonged to such a group in Western India. They were among the migrants who had moved to Bombay in -- search of gainful occupation. They had no inhibitions, -- religious or otherwise, in taking to any pursuit -- may be indigenous or Western. Many of them had taken to trading, some to ship-building and quite a few among them were working with the local Westerners as brokers and skilled craftsmen. As such, most of them had acquired a working knowledge of the English language. That knowledge was employed by one Parsi gentleman, Beramjee Jijibhai Chhapgar, to 'cut' Gujarati types just by referring to the Chambers Dictionary of Arts and Sciences. Again, it was a Parsi gentleman who could take to printing -- Parsis having no taboo in touching the printing ink, no matter whether it contained animal fat or not. It hardly needs to be stressed, therefore, that but for this enterprising group -- the Parsis -- Gujarati printing and perhaps the Gujarati press could not have emerged at the time it did.

Next to these two factors viz., introduction by the Westerners of the printing technique and the existence in Bombay of a group to adopt it, was the existence of transport facilities -- though very meagre -- which were --

related to the Gujarati press. It was on account of these facilities that the English newspapers could be imported from Calcutta and Madras and news could be gleaned from them. It was on account of these facilities, again, that the -- Gujarati newspaper published in Bombay could be sent to -- Surat, Broach, Kheda and even to Ahmedabad nearly 300 miles away. It is just a conjecture as regards what could have been the circulation of the Gujarati newspaper had there -- been elaborate transport facilities in Western India at that time.

One more factor in this connection was the increasing trade and commerce in Bombay in particular and in Western India in general. That had facilitated the employment of the printing technique and the emergence of the Gujarati -- press for spreading commercial intelligence. That had been conducive, moreover, to its growth. The increasing quantum of Gujarati advertisements and their variegated nature as also the consequent increase in the number of pages in the newspaper are indicative of the close relation between trade and commerce and the Gujarati press.

The last, yet in no way less important factor, was the Government in relation to the Gujarati press. As seen earlier, the Government had granted permission for the -- publication of the Gujarati newspaper. It had sanctioned financial aid to it directly as well as indirectly by giving advertisements. And, it had permitted the use of its coat

of arms on the front page lending thereby a prestige to the first Gujarati newspaper.

This concludes our discussion so far, pertaining to the emergence of the Gujarati press and its relation to some factors which in turn became conducive to it. In the next chapter it will be seen how along with these factors the expansion of the Gujarati press was effected and how thereby its nature had changed.