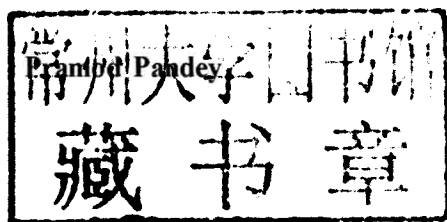


Modern



Pramod Pandey

Modern Journalism: At a Glance



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Modern Journalism : At a Glance

Preface

As we all know that journalism is one of the most important topics in today's world. Several books have been written in this topic. This modest effort is another pearl in the sequence. This book has been designed in mind the mentality of the general reader's language which is easy to understandable.

In modern world, journalism is one discipline, which attracts people like anything, but, it is equally challenging and drastic in case. Particularly, under the new world order and in current global scenario, its value has increased manifold. Apart from being a glorious profession, journalism, today is full-fledged subject, mastery of which leads one to a successful career and an all powerful status in society.

This book's aims at enriching knowledge about the key issues related to sustainable development of our modern journalism systems. Our goal is to provide a realistic view point touching deeply the core issues and suggest solutions in different perspectives. This book would certainly help create knowledge and inculcate wisdom at all levels of society.

We hope that the discussion made in this book will help the readers to understand and learnt about the different aspects of "Art of Modern Journalism" in a most comprehensive way to face the present and future challenges which are occurred in this field.

While compiling research material for this book, we surf many websites, blogs, print media and electronic media for ensuring the authenticity of the matter and for checking facts and figures. We are sincerely grateful to all these resources as without this the publication of this book wouldn't have been possible. Our main aim is to spread the light of knowledge to the readers, so that the darkness of ignorance dispels away.

I also take this opportunity to express my thanks to Mr. A.K. Jain of M/s Sublime Publications, Jaipur for their promptness in bringing out this book in so short a time.

Pramod Pandey

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Journalism After Post-Independence India

India's experience over the post-independence years has demonstrated the need, if a free press is to flourish, not only for a constitutional guarantee of press freedom but, equally, for those in authority to honour the spirit of the constitution and not merely go by its letter. The importance of the second requirement is illustrated by the difference in the fortunes of the press during the prime ministership of Jawaharlal Nehru and of some of his successors.

Golden Period

Though the Indian constitution does not expressly guarantee freedom of the Press, the Supreme Court has held in successive judgements that freedom of the press is covered by, and is an essential part of, freedom of expression which is guaranteed by Article 19. This occurs in Part III of the constitution which enumerates the citizens' Fundamental Rights that are enforceable by appeal to the High Courts and the Supreme Court. A controversial amendment of this Article, relating to freedom of expression, was effected by the first amendment of the Constitution, in 1951, in Jawaharlal Nehru's time.

The provisions relating to freedom of expression had initially read as follows in the Constitution of republican India that came into force on 26th January 1950: It initially read as follows:

- (1) All citizens shall have the right
 - (a) to freedom of speech and expression;

(2) Nothing in sub clause (a) of clause (1) shall affect the operation of any existing law in so far as it relates to, or prevent the state from making any law relating to libel, slander, defamation, contempt of court or any matter which offends against decency or morality or which undermines the security of, or tends to overthrow, the State.

In the light of this, many laws which sought to abridge the right to freedom of the press in the interests of public order came to be challenged before various High Courts. In one such case a special bench of the Patna High Court held by a majority that "if a person were to go on inciting to murder or other cognisable offences either through the press or by word of mouth, he would be free to do so with impunity". The possible consequences of this court decision were so serious that the government thought it necessary to amend Article 19 (2). But the actual amendment went beyond providing for the protection of public order. The clause as amended by parliament in 1951 read:

"Nothing in sub clause (a) of clause (1) shall affect the operation of any existing law, or prevent the state from making any law, in so far as such law imposes reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub clause in the interests of the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence."

It will be seen that three grounds were added: public order, incitement to an offence, and friendly relations with foreign States. On the other hand, the requirement that restrictions imposed should be 'reasonable' made any restrictive laws justiciable.

Of the three additional grounds, the one relating to friendly relations with foreign states was patently questionable. For instance, under a law made in terms of the amended Article 19 (2) could criticism of American policy in Korea, or of totalitarian dictatorship in the Soviet Union, or of the ill treatment of the Hindu minority in Pakistan become punishable? Prime Minister Nehru said in the course of the parliamentary debate on the constitution amendment that the amended 19 (2) was only an enabling clause which empowered parliament to frame legislation in case the need arose. He gave an assurance that it was not the intention of the government

to prevent criticism of its foreign policy. While there has been no legislation in this respect so far as the press is concerned, the cinematograph Act does empower the government to deny or withdraw certification of a film for exhibition on the grounds enumerated in Article 19 (2) as amended. The Press Information Bureau of the Government of India announced in a release on 20th July 1981 that the censor certificate issued to the English film 'Midnight Express' had been withdrawn. A notification issued in this connection said that the film contained scenes of brutality and debased human values and showed the government, the people and the judicial system of Turkey in an unfavourable and tendentiously adverse light. According to the notification, the exhibition of the film was likely to affect "our friendly relations with Turkey" and thus contravened the provisions of the Cinematograph Act.

Liberty of Press

After the constitution amendment, as before, there was no lack of criticism of Jawaharlal Nehru's foreign policy in a section of the press. Kashmir was the first issue on which he was faulted, particularly for his reference of the matter to the United Nations. Among the critics was Khasa Subba Rau (1896-1961) publisher and editor of the English weekly *Swatantra* of Madras, who was as fearless as a journalist as he had been as a freedom fighter. His column 'Sidelights' and 'Sotto Voce' by Vighneswara were looked forward to week after week.

Khasa wrote in *Swatantra* of 10th September 1949: "*The folly of the rash rush to the United Nations over the Kashmir issue will be apparent if it is studied in the light of the entirely different attitude adopted by the Government of India over the Hyderabad Issue. The Government of India never swerved from the view that the settlement of the Hyderabad dispute was their own domestic concern in which outside powers would not be allowed to interfere. Pandit Nehru is now surprised at the letter to himself and the Premier of Pakistan written about Kashmir by President Truman and Mr. Attlee, which he has rightly characterised as intervention. But what is surprising is that he should be so surprised. Pandit Nehru invited the intervention which he now resents.*"

The weekly *Thought* of Delhi was prominent among critics of Jawaharlal Nehru's China policy, as of his policy towards the Soviet Union. India was among the first countries to recognise Communist

China following the 1949 revolution, though its leaders called Nehru and his colleagues 'running dogs of imperialism' Nehru was unhappy when Chinese troops invaded Tibet (though he was to recognise Tibet as 'a region of China' in April 1954). During the crisis touched off by the war between North and South Korea, India voted in favour of United Nations action against North Korea but resisted the condemnation of China as an aggressor by the General Assembly of the United Nations, in order not to enlarge the area of hostilities. It is in this context that the verbal exchange between Thought and Jawaharlal Nehru during 1951, has to be viewed.

Press Trust of India, after consulting the Indian government, decided in November 1949 not to put out a report received from its correspondent M. Sivaram, who had visited Communist China, about the massive preparations under way for Chinese entry into the Korean war. With a tight censorship in force on the Communist controlled mainland, Sivaram had necessarily to cable his story from Hongkong. Following, are extracts from Sivaram's message:

Hongkong, November 19, 1949: This is the first uncensored despatch out of Communist China from Sivaram, PTI staff correspondent who returned to Hongkong tonight after a two month assignment in Peking. Communist China has completed preparations to throw half a million crack troops into the battle for Korea 'even at the risk of a major war, PTI learned on reliable authority in Peking. The leaders of the Chinese People's Republic, according to this authority, intervened in Korea deliberately and fully prepared to face the consequences and after having secured, so it is understood, pledges from the Soviets of assistance in the event of reverses in the campaign to roll the United Nations forces down the Korean peninsula this winter.

This authority added that a secret Chinese Soviet deal to halt 'imperialist aggression' was concluded last month before the Chinese People's Liberation Army 'volunteers' crossed into Korea.

From all parts of China today the finest units of the Chinese Communist Army and the best available military equipment are being rushed to Manchuria, while the entire nation is being geared for war through an intensive propaganda campaign.

The official Chinese press is filled with lists of university students and professional men, model workers and combat heroes who have volunteered to fight in Korea.

Communist China, observers believed, was gambling on two possibilities persuading the United Nations and the world that there was no official Chinese military intervention in Korea or, alternatively, depending on the reluctance of the United Nations and of the powers fighting in Korea to expand the sphere of hostilities and thus probably precipitating a major war involving Soviet Russia as well."

A year and a half later, the above report of Sivaram's was discovered and published by Thought. It said in an editorial note: *"The Press Trust of India, losing their nerve at an Indian journalist's daring to paint a picture different from that officially prescribed by Mr. Nehru, referred the message, before releasing it, to the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee of the Cabinet. Mr. Nehru and Mr. N.G. Ayyangar, it is believed, favoured suppressing it; Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Mr. Rajagopalachari considered that it should not be Concealed from the Indian public and the world's press. The dissenting views were conveyed to the Press Trust of India, who decided on suppression. Reuters abided by this suppression, and a message sent by an Indian journalist to the Indian public was released for publication only in Australia, where it had little effect. Where Chinese Communist censorship failed, Mr. Nehru's censorship temporarily succeeded."*

On the matter being raised in the *Lok Sabha* by the leader of the opposition, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, Prime Minister Nehru denied that the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Cabinet had discussed the report sent by the PTI correspondent, but in effect confirmed that PTI suppressed the message on official advice. Nehru said: "In regard to this message. I enquired today and the Secretary General sent a note to me. What happened was this: that a representative of the, PTI went over some time to our foreign office and consulted the Secretary General there about it. I shall use his own words (it is absurd to talk of censorship): 'On receipt of this message Mr. so and so of the PTI saw me and sought my advice as to whether or not it would be helpful. I told him that I did not think it would, and he went away. It was for him to decide to publish it or not.' Then so and so advised his General Manager accordingly. He decided not to publish it. I did not know anything about this message at all. But a number of messages appeared round about this time, a little before and a little after, in the Press from the PTI correspondent about conditions in China. Some of the messages seemed to me not to be quite balanced judgment... It seemed to me particularly

unfortunate that anything that the correspondent wrote should have been written not from China itself but after coming to a place like Hong Kong which is a very peculiar place today, a hotbed of the opponents and enemies of the Chinese Government. Hon. Members may remember, long ago there was a place on the Russian border Riga from which all kinds of messages came."

Thought said in a concluding comment (8th June 1951) on the Prime Minister's statement in parliament: *"If Mr. Bajpai (the Secretary General) acted entirely on his own initiative, as the Prime Minister at one point of his speech suggested, then he was wrong in taking so grave a step without authority. But if he was carrying out the policy of the Prime Minister and the Government, he was only doing his duty, and the Prime Minister and the Government were wrong to have framed such a policy."*

V.K. Krishna Menon, close friend of Jawaharlal Nehru, was Defence Minister at the time that India's relations with China changed from the euphoria of the 'Hindi Cheeni Bhai Bhai' slogan popularised by the Indian government in the early-1950's. The acerbic Defence Minister was a target of sustained criticism by a section of the press which regarded him as a crypto Communist. Prominent among political leaders who felt that Krishna Menon was unduly soft in relation to the two Communist powers was Acharya J.B. Kripalani. He said in the course of a Foreword written in December 1959 to a compilation of writings in Thought about China: *"The nation has to congratulate itself that, at long last, it is recognised that Red China is red in tooth and claw and its aggression is a challenge to the nation. Yet it was ominous that the Defence Minister in his speech said that it was difficult to define aggression, which even the UNO had not been able to do for years. It may be difficult to define aggression even as it is difficult to define pain. But surely the man who suffers from pain does not fail to feel it simply because he cannot define it. It would appear that our Defence Minister does not feel the pain of foreign aggression as do the overwhelming majority of his countrymen... Anyway, it is all to the good that the Prime Minister, in spite of the doubts of his Defence Minister, considers Red China's excursions in our territory as aggression and as such a challenge to the nation."*

Following the humiliating reverses suffered by the Indian army, ordered by the political leadership into a war along the Himalayan border for which it was wholly unprepared, Jawaharlal Nehru was constrained to drop Krishna Menon from the Cabinet. This was after an initial downgrading of Menon, from Defence to Defence

Production, failed to satisfy angry critics within the Congress parliamentary party. During this time, Jawaharlal Nehru's critics, in the Press and in political parties including his own could have been muzzled through censorship, or physically jailed, by invoking Emergency powers. But such measures were foreign to his nature.

Checks and Restrictions

In contrast, the press was to be brought under rigid censorship, and the country's news agencies subjected to extralegal arm twisting, under the emergency rule of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi during 1975-76.

Jawaharlal Nehru had entertained high hopes for his daughter and did his best to train her, beginning with the correspondence course he conducted in order to afford her and a wider reading public, glimpses of world history. The process of grooming culminated in her being chosen as Congress president in 1958. After Nehru's death in 1964, Indira Gandhi joined the Union Cabinet as Minister of Information and Broadcasting. Following the sudden death of Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri at Tashkent, she was elected as leader of the Congress parliamentary party and became Prime Minister in January 1966.

After a hesitant start during which she found that her decision to devalue the rupee, though inescapable on economic grounds, was politically unpopular, she decided to chart her course as a radical dedicated to the removal of mass poverty. She shook herself free of the provincial Congress barons, known as the Syndicate, and cultivated the Left within and outside the Congress. Communists supported her programme of bank nationalisation and abolition of the princes' privy purses. With this support she got elected as President of India an Independent candidate, V. V. Giri, defeating the Congress nominee Sanjiva Reddy whose candidature had been sponsored earlier by Indira Gandhi herself among others. The split in the Congress that ensued had profound consequences for the Indian Press.

Various newspapers with a large circulation, some of them owned by entrepreneurs who had interests in other branches of industry and trade, opposed bank nationalisation. Big newspapers therefore came to be regarded as 'bad', with the corollary that small newspapers, many of which looked to advertising and other support from the governments at Delhi and in the States were 'good'.

The initial mood of elation in the Leftist Press at the triumph of Indira Gandhi as well as its subsequent doubts are brought out in the following extract from an article by Aruna Asaf Ali, publisher of the Link magazine (from 1958) and the daily Patriot (from 1963) till January 1993: "I was thrilled when I came to know that Indira had made up her mind to challenge the conservative forces in the Congress. I went to her and said that her decision to oppose the Syndicate's bid for the Presidency was a historic step which would lead to far reaching changes in the party and in the country... Indira Gandhi became the heroine of Link House, and so she remained through the stirring years of bank nationalisation, abolition of the princes' privy purses, and the liberation of Bangladesh.

"Indira Gandhi's initiatives of the early 1970's antagonised the Rightist, communal and disruptive forces. Lawless agitations were fomented by a motley combination of political groups, encouraged by hostile foreign forces intent on toppling her and destabilising India. To arrest this dangerous trend, Indira Gandhi proclaimed a state of internal emergency. This step was supported in the initial stages by me and my colleagues of the Left. *But there* emerged a few months later some distortions of the emergency regulations. Well meaning but unimaginative and harsh measures were adopted, to promote family planning and carry out slum clearance for instance, which alienated large sections of the people."

In the wake of an adverse verdict in June 1975 by a single member bench of the Allahabad High Court, which held Prime Minister Indira Gandhi guilty of electoral malpractice in the 1971 elections to the *Lok Sabha*, Indira Gandhi persuaded the then President, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, to proclaim a state of internal emergency. The action was strictly in accord with the letter, though it was not in the spirit, of the Constitution. Article 352 read at that time as follows:

"352 (1) If the President is satisfied that a grave emergency exists whereby the security of India or of any part of the territory, thereof, is threatened, whether by war or external aggression or internal disturbance, he may, by Proclamation, make a declaration to that effect.

(3) A Proclamation of Emergency declaring that the security of India or of any part of the territory, thereof, is threatened by war or by, external aggression or by internal disturbance may be, made, before the actual occurrence of war or of any such aggression or

disturbance if the President is satisfied that there is imminent danger, thereof.”

In the words of Arun Shourie, “Democratic constitutions are framed on the premise that citizens and politicians will abide by their spirit. The determined usurper thus has no difficulty in finding articles, clauses the letter \dagger to stab the spirit. The morning after the Reichstag fire Hitler goes to the aging Hindenburg and gives him a highly coloured account and persuades him to issue an Emergency Decree. The Emergency Decree is issued under Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution.”

With the Fundamental Rights suspended for the duration of the emergency and the judiciary thus put out of action, the executive ran amuck in relation to the press. Electric supply to newspaper establishments on Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, where most of the capital's dailies are located, was cut off during the night of June 25-26, 1975, so that they could not report truthfully or comment freely on the events culminating in the proclamation of emergency.

The Emergency: From 1st February 1949 when the Reuters' subsidiary API began to function as the Indian Owned Press Trust of India, it had the stimulus of competition to supplement the self motivation of its employees. But the United Press of India, closed down in 1958 because it was financially unviable.

Soon, however, a number of newspapers came together to sponsor a new agency, the United News of India. It started operations on 21st March 1961. Observers have pointed to a number of factors that might have impelled the sponsoring newspapers to take this initiative. One is the desirability, in the words of the First Press Commission in its report (1954), of there being “at least two news agencies, each competing with the other and also acting as a corrective to the other”. Another was, as an analyst put it, “the desire of the larger newspapers to have a second competing agency on which they could fall back in the event of PTI, where working journalists had begun to unionise themselves, becoming strike bound.” A third factor that has been cited is the anxiety of the then Chief Minister of West Bengal, Dr. B.C. Roy, and others to find alternative employment for the hundreds of employees who were thrown out of work when the Calcutta based UPI closed down.

The emergence of UNI, in 1961, meant the revival of competition after a three year interval during which PTI was the only English language wire news agency in the country. The desirability of competition as a stimulus to keen journalistic effort was demonstrated by each agency on a

number of occasions. The last occasion, however, was a few hours before an event which made competition in news gathering irrelevant, namely the clamping of censorship on the Press on 25th June 1975. Tarun Basu describes UNI's scope in these words:

"Staffers made a beeline for the police stations. Their efforts did not go unrewarded. Amid signs of frenetic activity at the Parliament Street police station at 2 a.m., a black Ambassador drew up with an occupant that was all too familiar. As tough looking guards tried to shield the frail figure of Jayaprakash Narayan, we made a dash for the car. Vinashakale Viparita Buddhi (madness takes hold as the end nears); these historic words of J.P. were to be on the front pages of every newspaper which managed to come out next morning.

What was done in the name of an emergency, in the 28th year of India's freedom, exceeded in coarseness anything done to the Press by alien rulers during the colonial period: from governor general Wellesley's Regulations of 1799 and the Vernacular Press Act of 1878 to the restrictions imposed during World War II. With suspension of the constitutional guarantee of Fundamental Rights, the brute force of the State (*ultima ratio regum*, title of an anti Fascist poem by Stephen Spender) took over.

Muzzled Press—The Defence and Internal Security of India Rules were invoked to clamp a censorship more rigorous than what the British rulers enforced during World War II. Truthful reporting even of the proceedings of Parliament, and of the highest courts of the land, became impossible. M.A. Jinnah, in his early phase as a liberal and a nationalist, condemned in 1936 the action taken by the British authorities, under the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act of 1931 against Abhyudaya of Aflahabad founded in the 1920's by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya for publishing a speech of Pandit K.K. Malaviya in the Central Legislative Assembly. Jinnah said: *"It is the privilege of the newspaper to have the proceedings published, and so long as they are true, fair and faithful it is not liable to action."* Of the same liberal view as the early Jinnah was Feroze Gandhi who, as a Congress back bencher, in the Lok Sabha, was a Leftist and an advocate of nationalisation much before his wife Indira was to assume that role. He introduced as a non-official Bill, and got enacted by Parliament in 1956, a law to protect newspapers from legal action on grounds of libel, etc., for the publication of truthful accounts of parliamentary proceedings.