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System and Working of Journalism

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PREFACE

The weakest nation is that which has no or the least institutions of press. The press is the backbone of a nation. Its weakening results directly in multi-faceted chaos. Metaphorically, society gets strangled in case the press is curbed or suppressed.

Another interesting analogy is that of a mirror. Just as a mirror reflects with cent per cent accuracy what it is exposed to, similarly, the press does. It mirrors society and all that concerns it and thus called the Fourth Estate.

That is why journalism is deemed to be an honourable and serious profession with huge power. A journalist is not a layman; he or she possesses many a quality. Straightforwardness, unprejudiced outlook, faculty for comprehending and analysing the facts and power of reasoning and a nose for news, may be mentioned to name a few.

Despite all this, a journalist is a man. Profession apart, he or she is a member of society. He, too, eats, drinks, sleeps, laughs, weeps, feels and so on. He is not something ultra-mundane. He has his roots in this very earth. Owing to all these characteristics, a few shadows of biases and obsessions are bound to distract his attention. However, these need not be emphasised beyond proper limit.

The working of journalism is of a coherent and joint nature. It is not an individual's game. In search of fame and fortune, some people pine for getting entry into this magnificent arena but for lack of stamina, they soon are lost and then seen nowhere.

The book in your hands is, no doubt, a treatise on the subject. Prepared especially for those concerned and the professionals, it should prove equally beneficial for general readers, as well.

Readers' guiding suggestions are welcome.

— Author

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EVOLUTION OF JOURNALISM

In India, Press has been closely associated with the freedom struggle. In the 19th century, the press fought for the freedom of information and the right to criticise. But in the early 20th century, the freedom struggle took a new turn and it was no longer petition-making. And thus, restrictions were imposed on it. The Hindu-Muslim disunity led to the division of the Indian Press into two categories-nationalist press and the Anglo-Indian Press. In all the national movement events-Jallainwala Bagh massacre, non-cooperation movement, Cripps mission, Quit India Movement the press was a direct participant. The nationalist press underwent the same kind of suffering as the freedom fighters.

Continuous Alteration

Newspapers in India have undergone revolutionary changes. The number of publications has increased seven times and circulation by ten times as compared to that of 1950. In 1985 there were 3,000 publications, with a total circulation of over 26 million. Earlier, just 6 publications,

namely The Time of India, Indian Express, Malayalam Manorama and Anand Bazaar Patrika (dailies) and Malaya Manorama Mangalam and Kumudam (weeklies) have a combined circulation of five million, while 150 other publications have a total circulation of 25 million.

The press is widely acknowledged as a watch-dog in a democratic country. Today the press is not merely informing, illuminating, investigating and exposing but even warning and biting, particularly when acting in the public's interest.

Effects of the Press : Newspaper readers, though numerically small in India, largely constitute the intelligentsia. The press has a 'multiplier effect' its message spreads far and wide. The impact of the press can be determined only in the perspectives of current development and pace of change in the country. The power of the press is mainly seen as responsible for the major political developments in India during the 1990s. The capacity of Indian press to generate a healthy debate on public issues has been partially realised. But with increasing literacy it holds out infinite possibilities in the future.

Impact of Radio : Radio is serving as an effective medium not only to inform and educate people, but also to provide healthy entertainment. It can justifiably be called the medium for the masses. Radio has the inherent advantage to overcome three major hurdles to meaningful communication such as-mass illiteracy, lack of efficient means to reach the remote places and poverty which prevents access to mass media.

Impact of Films : In India, with its cultural and linguistic diversities and the problems of illiteracy the film is the most powerful medium of mass-communication. It gives not merely information, but creates a demand for change and modernisation. It has earned universal acclaim and is a versatile means of communication.

Impact of Television : Television is considered one of the greatest inventions of man. It is a multi-media system predominated by the visual medium. It has the power to instil desired attitudes among the masses.

Effects of TV : TV can transport the viewers to the actual scene of action to see things as they happen. Take the example of the Kargil war or the rescue of the people from under the debris due to earthquake in Gujarat on 26 Jan., 2001. But many have also come to hold TV responsible for inciting violence, corrupting the young and creating a make belief world of illusion.

Video, Cable T.V. and Satellite : Video burst on the Indian scene sometime in the mid 80s. It holds out infinite promises of entertainment and information. Its safe and easy facility for stop, go, forward, reverse viewing is invaluable for teaching and learning. But with the advent of the cable TV and satellite TV the demand for video has reduced although not lost totally. And it was due to satellite TV only that one was able to experience all the horrors of Gulf war sitting in any corner of India. Cable TV has emerged as an important medium for advertisements as well.

Impact of Mass media : Areas of Danger—Mass Media has an intense impact on the Indian society. It is claimed that this proliferation of information and the swiftness of its distribution would certainly improve the human conditions. However, with positive values it has also created areas of danger.

Manipulation : Clever uses of electronic devices can alter the meaning of recorded visual and audio material, making it appear to be what it really isn't.

Privacy : The whole question of co-relating the right to privacy with public interest has become a vexed problem for policy planners and social scientists alike.

Security : Protection of secret government information, private transactions, and institutional records in computer systems has become a matter of concern.

Democratic Process : Democracy functions best when voters are widely informed on all problems and issues. But if given power to select the information they desire with the aid of new technologies and by choosing to see and hear only what interests them most, will they be able to vote intelligently.

Isolation : Although the communication revolution has the power to draw the global community closer together, it also isolates individuals and small groups. Both adults and children sit for hours, aware only of what appears on small screens often they seem visually drugged.

Importance of Journalism

The Print Media, like others, have power, and this power must be exercised with a sense of responsibility. The printed word, as a carrier of knowledge, information and news stories was in vogue in China, Korea and Japan, a thousand years ago. In India, printing came first to Goa in 1556 and penetrated into Calcutta and inland provinces through the coastal towns.

One of the chief characteristics of print media is that they offer extensive news coverage and in-depth treatment of themes. They provide a large variety of coverage, through different kinds of writings, than any other media in India. Understandably good newspapers are described as Readers, University. The main weakness of the print media is that they can be read only by the literates. Secondly 93% of the newspapers are concentrated in Urban areas. Thirdly, the increasing rise in the price of newspapers and magazines prevent a large number of our people from purchasing them.

The Development : The two notable developments are shift towards commercialisation and introduction of new printing technologies.

Commercialisation : The national newspapers, during the British period, functioned basically with a missionary zeal and acted as the voice of the freedom fighters and stimulated the movement through advocacy journalism. But after independence, the missionary zeal of the newspapers evaporated. It soon became a publishing industry. And the theory of delinking of the press from business houses engaged in other industries was not accepted by the newspaper magnates.

New Printing Technologies : The introduction of modern printing technologies has brought about a new climate of working in the print media organisations. Printing today has become a graphic art. The newspapers are elegantly printed, bearing creative typographical and layout designs.

Small Newspapers : A large number of our newspapers belong to the category of small or medium papers with status no better than that of a cottage industry. They can not tap adequate advertising support to become financially strong. The cooperative type of management has not gained ground. The bottom line of the Indian newspaper industry remains weak. And it is well known that some of the newspapers have been censured by the press council for having succumbed to temptations of different kinds, which is a serious problem.

Professional Discipline : Professional discipline is necessary for all media. The western press has evolved codes of ethics to ensure discipline. The first press commission had empowered the Press Council of India to evolve such a code. There is a code only on the coverages of communal riots. The Press Council finds it difficult to enact an enforceable formal code and thus just lays down certain guidelines in its decisions taken from time to time.

Journalism and e-Media

Radio and T.V. are called the electronic media and are today the supreme media of mass communication. In the 1930s, the television made its bow in the west. Its true development took place after the 2nd world war. In India, the new glamour medium came in 1959.

Characteristics of Radio : Radio is a sightless or a viewless medium. It is also called blind medium as the performer doesn't see his audience and the listeners can not see the performer. The main characteristics of radio are:

A Medium of Sound : It is an auditory medium, a medium of the ear. The three elements of a radio broadcast are the spoken word, music and sound effects. They are all sounds carried on the air waves to the listener. All these sounds must be pleasant and expressive for the ears of the listener.

A Medium of the Voice : Radio is the medium of the voice. The producer mixes his voice with music and sound effects. A radio listener has a highly developed ear and so the broadcaster shouldn't sound fake or untruthful. A truthful vocal expression will come only if the whole person's mind, soul, psyche and imagination and his body are all in the tune with one another.

A Link between Speaker and Listeners : Microphone is the only instrument through which a radio broadcaster speaks to his listeners. It is a hi-fi instrument that catches the softest sigh, the tiniest rustle of the paper. It exposes all vocal lies, and tell all, the truth from a lie.

An Intimate Medium : A broadcaster must imagine as if the listeners are sitting by his side and to the listeners, it should sound as if the broadcaster is speaking from within the sound box or the-transistor. The best subjects for radio broadcasts are those which intimately concern the listeners. The words and the manner of their expression must be

intimate as the condition in which broadcasts are received are very informal.

A Mass Medium : Radio is a medium of mass communication. Its broadcasts reach hundreds of thousands in one go. The task of the performer is to find out the lowest common denominator to communicate well with the largest number of listeners. It is a much cheaper medium of mass communication. Thus, it is very relevant to developing countries like India.

Simple Language : Large number of people are illiterate or semi-literate in India and other developing countries. So, the language of the radio broadcasts must be simple and should be closer to the spoken language that the common people use.

A Mobile Medium : Radio is a mobile medium, and so it is a most convenient medium for anybody. It doesn't respect units of time, place and action as prescribed by Aristotle.

A Cheap and Quick Medium : It is a medium of the 'here and now' as it can report the events almost instantly. Radio is a much cheaper and quicker medium than TV for production of programmes; thus, it can produce a wide variety of programmes.

No Shared Experience : Radio listeners are sitting alone or with one or two members of the family, and not like the stage where spectators are sitting in a crowd. Thus the psychology of reception for a radio broadcast is much more informal. The radio listener will not accept any untruth in a radio performance nor does he see any glamour personality to be impressed.

Characteristics of Television : Television is an audio-visual medium and its broadcast is uniquely telegenic. TV has both sound and sight.

An Audio-visual Medium : A TV broadcast is conceived and produced and received in audio-visual terms. Thus, it directly affects two senses simultaneously, those of hearing and seeing. It is more effective than radio broadcast as radio is a unisense medium, affecting only one sense.

Features of Other Media : TV has borrowed certain features from the other media of communication like the stage, the film and the radio. TV has integrated all these into a whole that makes TV a uniquely new medium, different from all other medium.

Wide Reach and High Credibility : TV is a supreme medium of mass communication. And with the help of satellite technology, today, it can reach all the concerns of the globe. TV has turned world into a global village. Thus, it has widened the mental horizons of man and has become the supreme educator of man.

TV is a credible, a believable medium. Seeing is believing. Things shown on TV become effectively truer than those that one reads in the print medium or listens to the radio.

A Glamourous Medium : One can watch on TV the glittering personalities and events, international conferences, sports, festivals, travel shows etc. The facility of watching almost round the clock enhances the glamour appeal still more. Because of its glamour, TV has been called the magic box. The tele-addiction has become the greatest addiction of our times. And thus, the reading habits are declining as people now get their news and information more from TV and earlier also.

A Medium of the Close-up : It is an ideal medium for expressing reaction and interaction between people for presenting an interview and a discussion etc. If something has happened or somebody has said something, the camera would show the reaction of several people, one-by-one, in a close-up.