

The Role of Newspaper

Essay No. 01

Newspaper is a printed publication appearing daily. It contains news advertisements and articles on various subjects. Newspapers play an important role in a democracy. They take the role of spokesmen for people of all classes. They act as a bridge between the government and the governed. They help in preventing social exploitation that can threaten the existence of democracy.

Almost everybody reads the newspaper daily. One reads it with curiosity every morning. Different purposes. Young graduates scan the job advertisement pages. Lottery addicts pour over the lottery results. The school boy looks about the detailed happenings in cricket and other sports. The head of the household reads about government matters and other events. Business entrepreneurs go through the business news. Housewives look for topics like cookery, health and beauty care tips etc. Casual readers look for sensational topics like loot, murder, kidnapping etc. Other go through the daily predictions of the zodiac. There are others who are interested in the articles and the letters to the editor. Those who love the glamour world read the pages on fashion movies and film stars. India is a developing country. Most of the people are poor and illiterate with false promises. Newspapers help in forming public opinion. They keep the people aware of the activities of the government.

In a democracy there should be an efficient and fearless press. The press refers to newspapers, magazines, the news section of radio and television, and the journalists who work for them. Press is the mirror of the society. It acts as a watchdog of democracy. It is the duty of the press to watch the activities of the government. Its duty is to highlight the failure of the policies of the government and pinpoint its lapses.

The first newspaper published in India was called The Bengal Gazette. The Bombay Samachar is the oldest existing daily newspaper. It was first published in Gujarat in 1822. Anand Bazar Patrika, Punjab Kesari and The Times of India are some of other old newspapers.

Newspapers make people aware of every field of society. Once in every week every newspaper publishes vacancies in all fields. Job seekers get much benefited through this. A weekly matrimonial supplement is also published with almost every newspaper and its related news and events. Newspapers also contains the schedules of programmes on various television channels and theatres. It helps

people to plan their day accordingly. News related to sport has become very important nowadays. So almost all the newspapers publish the sports news with elaborate pictures and charts. Newspapers also carry weather forecasts and other useful data like prices of various food items in different markets.

In the present age corruption is present in all walks of life. Newspapers play an important role in highlighting the menace of corruption. The people are made aware of the corrupt practices prevalent in various department of Government and other agencies.

Newspapers act as a link between the government and the people. They make the people aware of the policies, programmes and activities of the government. This gives an opportunity to the people to raise their grievances when necessary. It helps the people to know the Government plans and policies. This is very necessary for a democracy. On the other hand newspaper also makes the government aware of the problems, faced by the people.

Information is fed to the newspapers by a number of agencies. The press Information Bureau give information to the Press on the government policies, programmes and activities. It receives feedback from the people. India has four major news agencies Press Trust of India united News of India. Samachar Bharti and Hindustan Samachar. The newspapers are published in English Hindi and other regional languages.

Some newspapers indulge in yellow journalism. The print media has to understand its power and reach. Newspapers can make a great impact on their readers. So they should concentrate on giving only the true picture of the society.

Essay No. 02

The Role of Newspapers

The newspapers, as the voice of the people, play a very important role in a democracy like India. They form an important link between the public and the government. It is through newspapers that the public comes to know about the priorities, policies and programmes of the government. Similarly, the government can keep itself well informed about grievances, aspirations, expectations, and opinions, etc., of the public through the press. Newspapers also supply news, views, and comments, etc., to its readers about national, international and local affairs. They help in formation of public opinion on matters of national and global importance. They not only mould but also reflect public opinion. The editorial and leading articles play a significant role in the matter. Then there are interviews of people and personality who actually matter. Newspapers are the real watchdogs

of a democracy and of the rights and privileges of the people. Newspapers can also be instrumental in bringing out desired social, cultural and attitudinal changes in society. They may be effectively used as an instrument of national integrity, unity, harmony and solidarity and also in removing social evils, such as superstitions, evils of untouchability, dowry, communalism and casteism.

The powers and influence of the press are really unlimited. But they can be misused as well. They are like double-edged swords. In wrong hands, they may be used by vested interests and anti-social elements to further their own selfish ends at the cost of national and social interests. They may give distorted views and half-baked or false news. If confined in the hands of capitalists, they may be used to suppress and crush labour movements and anti-poverty campaigns as these pose a threat to their monopolistic ventures and business interests. In dictatorships, the press is not free and the newspapers are used only to promote the interests of a few, forming the nucleus around the dictator. Then they are not the voice of the people but the mouthpiece of the despotic ruler. It is only in a democracy that a newspaper is a common man's representative, voice and counsellor, all rolled into one. As a friend, guide, counsellor, educator, representative and voice of the people, a newspaper has to be impartial, truthful, sincere and fearless. It has to be a guardian and watchdog of the interests of the people. To perform these duties and functions, the freedom of the press is a must. Newspapers should be free to criticize or encourage government policies and activities on merit. But freedom is meaningless without fairness. There should be no biased reporting, comments or expression of views. If they do not observe decency, fairness and impartiality and indulge in false, misleading and biased reporting, they can make themselves liable to penal action. In India, newspapers enjoy a fair amount of freedom of expression. It was only during the Emergency in 1975 that their freedom was curtailed for a short period, but then the people responsible for it had to pay very dearly. It is the duty of the reporters and journalists to be fair, impartial, honest and editors, constructive in their profession. It is only the yellow journalism that indulges in blackmail, extortion of money and concessions or such other benefits. A journalist, loyal to his profession, will not colour his reporting or exaggerate and distort his news. He will not betray the readers for personal gains, gifts and advantages. Yellow journalism is as great a danger to a nation and society as are the acts of smugglers, mafias, drug-traffickers and people engaged in espionage against their own country. A journalist should never forget his mission of unbiased, frank, fearless and truthful reporting. An honest, fearless and frank newspaper is a perfect antidote for political corruption, irregularities, favouritism, nepotism, and blackmail, etc., indulged in by the people in authority and power. The government and the people that run it cannot remain indifferent to criticism, comments and opinion expressed against them in the newspapers in a democracy. Sometimes the administration may try to tame a newspaper by threatening to stop advertisements to it because they are a

must for the survival of a newspaper. But no newspaper, truly loyal to its commitment to the people and society, should succumb to such pressures. Rather, it should expose such conspiracy to suppress the freedom of the press.

Obviously, newspapers can play a vital role in the reconstruction and regeneration of a country. During our struggle for independence, the press played its important, constructive role. It reminds us of Tilak, Gandhi, Nehru and other leaders who published and edited newspapers and magazines or wrote articles, and reviews, etc., for them. These played a very positive role in quickening the process of national struggle for freedom. Their heroic, bold and missionary writings had the desired impact on the masses and, consequently, they got actively involved in the movement. Tilak was jailed and sent to Mandalay, in Burma (Myanmar), for his writings that were full of patriotic fervour and nationalism, but for the Britishers these were seditious. Similarly, Gandhiji and many other national leaders had to pay for their journalistic freedom, courage and honesty.

The history of Indian newspapers and journalism is quite old. Bengal Gazette was the first newspaper published in India in the middle of the 18th century. Raja Ram Mohan Roy published his newspaper Kaumudi, and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar Prabhakar. Indian newspapers include 41 centenarians. The Gujarati daily Bombay Sarnachar published from Mumbai is the oldest existing newspaper. It began its publication in 1822. Anand Bazar Patrika", Punjab Kesari and the Times of India are the three biggest newspapers as far as circulation is concerned. By the end of the year 2000, there were as many as 49,145 newspapers, including dailies, tri/ bi-weeklies, weeklies and other periodicals. Uttar Pradesh ranks the first, with 8,415 newspapers, including 844 dailies. The highest numbers of newspapers are published in Hindi followed by English, Urdu and Bengali. The circulation numbers of newspapers are gradually increasing appreciably with the spread of literacy and political and social awakening amidst the public. The number of newspapers owned and published by individuals is the largest. Their share in circulation is estimated at over 40%. This reflects the monopolistic position of certain individuals and business houses in the world of newspapers in India. Therefore, these people have certain advantages, but Indian journalism is now quite mature, responsible and free, which ensures that no group or business house can take liberty in the matter. Then there is the Press Council of India, established for the purpose of preserving the freedom of the press, maintaining and improving the standards and quality of newspapers, news agencies and journalism in the country. The Council is a quasi-judicial body and does not possess any punitive powers. However, it exercises a moral authority. It considers and decides complaints and grievances received both from the public against the newspaper and from the press. It may also direct an erring newspaper to publish the complainant's reply/rejoinder, with an apology in appropriate cases. On the one hand it helps newspapers and news agencies to maintain their independence, on

the other, it ensures, the maintenance of high standards of public taste and fostering a sense of rights and responsibilities of citizenship. So it is freedom with responsibility.