

EXCEPTIONAL ROLE OF NEWSPAPERS IN DEVELOPMENT

K.R. Narayanan

KOCHERIL RAMAN NARAYANAN (1921 -2005), the tenth President of India, was the first Dalit to hold this august office. On many occasions, he used his discretionary powers as President and deviated from convention and precedent. A man of vast experience, he worked as London Correspondent of the Social Welfare Weekly published by K.M. Munshi, taught at Delhi School of Economics and served as the Vice-Chancellor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. He also served as ambassador to Japan, the United Kingdom, Thailand, Turkey, People's Republic of China, and the United States of America. The speech 'Exceptional Role of Newspapers in Development', taken from President K. R. Narayanan Selected speech volume - I, was delivered at the inauguration of the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of Indian Newspaper society on 8 April 1999. The speech is important for raising fundamental questions about the role of media.



- A. Work in small groups and answer the following questions:**
1. Name the newspaper which is read at your home.
 2. What section of the newspaper do you like most? Why?
 3. At what age did you start reading newspaper?
 4. If you are asked to stop reading newspaper, will you stop it? If not, give reasons.

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1. I am very happy to inaugurate the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of the Indian Newspaper Society. I thought the occasion is much too important for it to go without at least a few words from me, not that they are going to be of any special significance.
2. The Indian Newspaper Society was born out of the exigencies of war, fighting for newsprint. But, it has become a champion of the freedom of the

Press in India. The Indian Press has had a very glorious beginning and career. I recall that Raja Rammohun Roy, Father of the Indian Renaissance, had once said, "The Press is the vehicle of intelligence". Today it spreads intelligence among the masses. In the **classified** sense of intelligence also, it has been often leaking out enough intelligence!

3. The print media today is **competing** with the electronic media. I believe that in spite of the electronic **gadgets**, the written word, the printed word, will have its supremacy in the next millennium also. There is a close **communion** between the human being and the printed word. It is a matter of universal experience that when you read something, your whole being reacts to it, unlike in a video or an oral **exposition**. The printed word is really a **soul-stirring** instrument. That is why India has gone through the experience of a gradual multiplication of the print media.

B.1. Answer the following question briefly:

1. Who is delivering the speech and in what mood? What is the occasion?
2. How did the Indian Newspaper Society come into existence?
3. Who is called the Father of Indian Renaissance? Why?
4. What are the threats before the print Media?
5. What is the matter of universal experience?
6. "The printed word is really a soul-stirring instrument". What does Narayanan mean by this statement?
7. What did Raja Rammohun Roy say about the Press?

4. Somebody has posed a question to answer: What has been the greatest invention of the last two **millennia**? The thoughtful people of the world have responded by the selecting the printing press as the greatest invention of the last two millennia. In America, I think an audit was taken of the large **metropolitan** newspapers and it was noticed that there is a tendency of the circulation of newspapers to go down. But in India, our experience has been just contrary. There has been an explosion of newspapers and periodicals in our country. The role that these newspapers have played in the freedom movement and in the development of India has been exceptional. Mr. Mammen

Mathew mentioned the experience of his own paper, Malayala Manorama which conducted a crusade for the freedom of the press. Its victory was an exciting experience in Kerala. Today his paper has one of the largest circulation in India. It is a remarkable feature that the language newspapers in India have come to their own and indeed their circulation has even exceeded that of the national newspapers.

5. I would like to say that while competing with the electronic media, newspapers tend sometimes to **trivialise** and commercialise events. I recall two recent events and two miss out on the actual news. I went to Khajuraho to inaugurate the Khajuraho Festival which was a colourful and meaningful festival. At the same time, a fashion show for cats took place in New York. Some of our newspapers highlighted a cat with a



- new crop-cut hair and dressed for the fashion show. But they did not give the same importance to the Khajuraho Festival. This is what I call the tendency to trivialisation in the Press. It is an **irresistible** tendency. But, it has to be **resisted** for what Mr. Mammen Mathew described as the preservation of the identity of our culture.
6. Indian newspapers not only are large in size and circulation but they have also become the **staple** diet of the people. One cannot think of a day starting without a newspaper. Thus it has become part and parcel of our life.
7. I wish the Indian Newspapers Society and the newspapers of which it is composed even greater success and glory in the future. Being **part and parcel** of the lives of the people, I am sure, newspapers will act with responsibility to **cultivate** values and pass on the culture of our country to the people.
8. May I wish the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations every success.

B.2. Answer the following question briefly:

1. What has been the greatest invention of the last two millennia?
2. In what ways is the response of Indian people towards print media different from American People?
3. What was the experience of Mr. Mammen Mathew?
4. Sometimes print media also trivialises and commercialises events. What does Narayanan mean by 'trivialises' and 'commercialises'?
5. What did K. R. Narayanan visit Khajuraho for?
6. What does Narayanan mean by 'an irresistible tendency'? Why do we need to resist it?
7. How have newspapers become part and parcel of our life?

GLOSSARY AND NOTES.

celebrations (n): festivities.

significance (n): importance

Renaissance (n): new beginning

communion (n): close association

soul-stirring (adj): very inspiring

exposition (n): account, description

periodicals (n): journals

crusade (n): campaign

trivialise (v): play down, make light of

staple diet: essential or basic as food is

part and parcel (idm): an essential part

cultivate (v): promote

C.1. LONG ANSWERS QUESTIONS:

1. In what way is the Press 'the vehicle of intelligence'?
2. Describe, after Narayanan, the importance of newspapers in our life.
3. Why is freedom of press essential?
4. Discuss the hope of K. R. Narayanan regarding the future of the Indian Newspaper Society.
5. Discuss the distinctive features of Indian Newspaper.

C. 2. GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss in small **groups** or **pairs**:

- a. The relevance of newspapers in the 21st century
- b. Growing commercialism in the newspapers

C .3. COMPOSITION

Write an article in 150 - 200 words on the **Role of Media**. Include in your article the competition between Print media and electronic media in discharging their duties.

D. WORD STUDY

Ex.1. Make sentences from the words given in Glossary and Notes.

E. ACTIVITY

Do a **Project Work** on the newspapers during the Movement of Indian Independence. Make a list of newspapers and periodicals which were published during our freedom struggle. Also, include the names of their editors and the languages they were published in.

