

CHAPTER - IX

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FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The 21st century makes not only a turn from one millenium to another but ushers an era when the basic requisite of the survival of human beings centres round the concept of human rights. Right to information, right to know and the right to dissemination of information to others are gradually being recognised as basic human rights all over the world. Right to information is being encouraged and exercised through mass education and mass literature. A number of methods of spreading mass education have been devised of which newspaper reading; newspaper writing and commenting on news with a critical or dispassionate views are some of the important aspects.

Again, right to information and right to education through media not only create the public opinion upon which the government functions and policies are being made but have become the life blood of democracy.

In this context, the importance of press cannot be undermined. Rightly speaking, the Press has proved itself to be the fourth power of the nation by keeping people informed honestly placing before them different viewpoints, posing and discussing the burning topics of the day and by mobilizing them for participation in the political process of the country.

The present study deals with the role of press, not in all its ramifications but in the political affairs only, particularly during the time of elections. The scope of study has been limited geographically to Orissa, a State of Indian Union and periodically to the 13th Lok Sabha Elections, 1999. The study has been made by retrieving data from secondary sources

as well as from primary sources. Historical, analytical and empirical methods were adopted to make the study a comprehensive and scientific one.

Historically speaking, wall posters, which first appeared in the 16th century in Europe, were the fore runners of the present day newspapers. In the 20th century, the newspaper publication became very wide containing various features like imperialism, colonialism, news about two world wars, the Great Depression and the emergence of new Nation States.

In India, the press media with modern technology, was a contribution of the British. But as the country has no independence, the autonomy of the newspapers was very restricted. However, during the pre-independence period, the role of newspapers was very significant through their objectives to educate Indian people on the one hand, to sensitize them about the National issues and to create the National feelings amongst them on the other. The contribution of the press during the National Movement in India cannot be ignored at any time.

Coming to Orissa, it is found that newspapers developed in regional language came much later compared to that in West Bengal because, the State of Orissa had its own identity only in 1936, when it became a separate province. Like the newspapers of other provinces of India during the pre-independence period, Oriya newspapers created national consciousness among the people to join the National Movement for independence of the country. Apart from this, during this period, the role of newspapers was noteworthy in creating Oriya Nationalism and Orissa as a separate province.

In post-independence period, the newspapers face challenges from several fronts, the most important of which is the government. The struggle of press for its survival and autonomy continues even today in free India.

There are various general laws enacted by the government of free India which curtails the autonomy of the press and thereby restricts the functioning of the newspaper in the country. However, autonomy of the press is a matter of expediency and there is no general criteria to assess the validity of legislation affecting the press.

Participation of citizens in elections is a basic requirement of democracy and such participation is influenced greatly by the voter's exposure to newspaper. But exposition of newspaper depends upon the socio-economic status of the people. In the present study, it is found that there is a relationship between the level of education and reading of daily newspapers. It is evident that most of the urban and highly educated people prefer to read newspaper daily to have fresh information of day to day events. Hence, the null hypothesis, "Exposure to press media may not likely be related to the socio-economic status of the people" is disproved. It is also found that gender is a factor in reading of the daily newspaper. Male constitutes major portion of the newspaper reader respondents than the female for devoting 15 to 20 minutes. time everyday to read the daily newspaper. However, there is no relationship between the level of education and the devotion of time to read the newspaper. As the level of education increases, the time for reading newspaper does not necessarily increase.

It has already been stated above that democracy functions well, when people actively participate in the political affairs of the State. One form of political participation is the participation in elections which make a government, give direction to function and indicate the policies to be made. The newspapers have significant role in making people participate in elections by creating electoral awareness in them and by inducing them to be involved in elections. Newspapers are intended to be the prime agents of socialization

as they shape the political orientation of the people through imparting political values to them.

In the present study, it is found that in Orissa, people have not developed so much interest in political events published in newspapers. This may be due to the reason of the backwardness of the State and less disturbances and upheavals in Orissa politics compared to that of politics of Bihar or the North Eastern States. But those respondents who preferred to read political news in the newspapers were mostly highly educated and belonged to higher income group. Hence the hypothesis, "Education and preference to read political news in daily newspapers may likely be related", proved to be significant one. People with high level of education proved themselves to be politically better informed, more active and efficacious than the people with limited or having no education at all.

Another finding in this study is that even if people want to know about political affairs during the time of elections, the political news are not properly and adequately disseminated through the daily newspapers. When the citizens depend heavily upon the newspaper for dissemination of political information, news are not published objectively and free from partisanship. A free press can be able to bring political sensitization among the people. So, it is very much necessary that the Press must be free from the control of government and other interest and pressure groups. But it is found from the four newspapers under study that two were under the control of the political parties. The Prajatantra was under the control of BJD and the Asian Age was under the control of the Congress in Orissa. So, the election news published in these two newspapers are more of partisan and biased news and sometimes conflicting and contradictory news are being published in the newspapers. Much of distortion are observed in the publication of

news. So the hypothesis, "Election news published in the newspaper may likely be impartial", does not stand. Even more than 50% of the respondents opined that the election news published in the newspapers during the time of election were not adequate and the election awareness, information published in the daily newspaper were not satisfactory. Newspapers fail in creating proper election awareness among the voters of Orissa. So far as the newspaper's influence over the political choice of the people is concerned, it is found that the newspapers have less impact upon the political choice of the people. Newspapers also fail to channel the information to the voters on the issues of political development in the State. So, newspapers in Orissa have not yet become so effective in sensitizing, motivating and mobilizing people towards political phenomena. Hence, the two hypotheses namely, "Newspapers are expected to play their role as agents of mobilizing voters for participation in elections " and newspapers do likely influence the political choice of the voters" are only partially correct.

So far as the amount of election news published in the newspaper was the point of query in the present study, content analysis of the news published in the four newspapers under study was made. In this study, it is found that the newspapers covered all the steps of election process in Orissa namely, the notification of 13th Lok Sabha Election, code of conduct, selection of candidates, finalisation of the list of candidates, filing of nominations, campaigning, polling, exit poll and declaration of results. All these news were published in the newspapers in the form of news items, editorial notes, feature articles, slogans and election pictures. But it is found that news items, editorial notes and feature articles on the 13th Lok Sabha Elections in Orissa 1999 were published in less number, covering less space compared to the newspapers of another news and space of the newspapers

under study. Hence, the hypothesis "During the time of elections, newspapers may likely publish election news more than other news" does not hold valid particularly during the 13th Lok Sabha Elections in Orissa.

Suggestions

On the basis of observation and analysis of foregoing chapters, a number of suggestions can be made so that newspapers would play vital role in performing its expected role of sensitizing and mobilizing the citizens for their active participation in policies, particularly in elections. These suggestions are as follows:

1. The number of newspapers in regional language (in Oriya) shall be increased and there shall be increase of daily local editions of the English newspapers which are published from Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Chennai or Bangalore.
2. The literacy level of the people of the state shall be increased. In this matter the newspapers shall play the role of educator for the people so that the educated people shall be informed and be able to participate in policies by making use of newspapers.
3. The newspapers shall enjoy more autonomy in consonance with the preservation of the political system. The newspapers shall be free from governmental as well as partisan control, so that news will be more free, impartial and unbiased.
4. During the time of elections, the newspaper shall play active role in sensitizing and mobilizing the people for political participation. For that election news shall be adequate covering more news items and more space compared to other news of the newspapers. The news

shall be correct one without any distortion, so that people would get correct information as free citizens of the country.

To conclude it may be said that in Orissa the number and volume of newspapers are increasing day by day. There have been no doubt several structural changes in the newspapers. The autonomy has been extended, circulation has been widened, printing technology has become modernised, contents and features of newspapers in Orissa have perceptibly been changed from those of the pre-independence period. But the progress is not satisfactory. The number of daily newspapers published in Orissa is still less, management is not efficient and newspapers are not freeing themselves from the clutches of political parties. The English newspapers cover very less about the news of Orissa and during the time of elections, the election news relating to Orissa are inadequate. Only when the newspapers will succeed in educating, mobilizing and involving people in political affairs of the State through imparting correct, adequate and undistorted news then people would not be alienated from the political system. As a result, a participatory culture will develop and democracy would be more successful.