

CHAPTER - II

INDIAN JOURNALISM – ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT AND PROBLEMS

Indian journalism has only 230 years old. The history of modern Indian journalism is much older than a century. Two things helped the growth of journalism in India indirectly- missionary work and the freedom struggle.

The first newspaper called the 'Calcutta General Advertiser' or Hickey's Gazette started publication from Calcutta on January 29, 1780. It was a one-man-show. Its founder, editor, printer and promoter was an Englishman called James Augustus Hicky. That was why it was known as Hicky's Gazette. It was a two page (12 x 18 inches) single sheet newspaper. It was published as a weekly. The main purpose was to criticise the officers of the East-India Company. The British officials tried to stop this because it became a headache to them. Hicky was arrested. Rs.80,000 was imported for bail. He was imprisoned for four months. In March 1872 this paper was banned. Hicky was subjected to all sorts of persecutions thereafter.

During the Mugal period written newspapers called 'Athbar' are known to have been in circulation.¹ Peter Reed and B Mascik started a weekly Indian Gazette in November 1780 in Calcutta.

The first Indian, attributed to have played a role in journalism was Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who started a Bengali weekly titled 'Samvad Kaumudi'. Its objective was a crusade against the 'Sati' system, then widely practised by the caste Hindus in particular.

The first daily newspaper was started in 1854, from Calcutta, named 'Samachar Sudha Varshan'. It was edited by Shyam Sunder

Sen under the ownership of Mahendra Nath. It was a bilingual newspaper (Bengali and Hindi). It was closed down in 1873.²

From Lucknow, an English daily Pioneer (1865) was initiated. In 1868 Amrit Bazar Patrika was launched from Calcutta. It was an English newspaper. Anand Bazar Patrika a Bengali newspaper, was also published during that period. The British wished to restrain the national movement using the Vernacular Press Act. Amrit Bazar Patrika changed to English over night to bypass the Vernacular Press Act. It was an important event in the history of Indian journalism. Other contemporary newspapers included 'The States man (1875) from Calcutta, The Hindu (1878) from Madras and a Marathi daily Kesari (1881) along with Marathi (1881) Maharashtra also played a significant role in bringing about a social change. In northern India, an English daily – 'The Tribune' – was also started in 1882.

We can easily find that the nineteenth century was a century which marked a remarkable growth of newspapers in India. It was a time of struggle against the colonial rule. It was also a time of technological advancement and scientific inventions. New economic and political theories were evolved. It was reflected in the social, political, literary, economic and media fields in India.

Gandhiji launched 'Indian Opinion' in four languages on June 4, 1903. It was published from Durban. Its editors were Mansukhlal Najar and Madanjeet. They were later replaced by Herbert Kitchel, Hentry S.L. Polak, Joseph Dock, etc. A single page bulletin named 'Satyagraha' was started from Bombay in 1971 in Hindi and English by Gandhiji.

Navajivan was launched by Gandhi in 1919. Gandhiji was arrested in 1919 and released in 1924. He re-started the publication of paper in 1924. In the Harijan, started by Gandhiji, he was assisted

by Mahadev Bhai, Pyararelalji Viyogi Hari and Kaka Kalelkar. We shall discuss Gandhiji's role in Indian journalism in detail in the fourth chapter.

Article 1. Mass Media in India – Its Role and Development

Ours is an age of information. Mass based knowledge is called information. Information is becoming all powerful in modern society. The modern man got habituated, rather addicted to this constant continuous dissemination of information. Using Malinowski's Cryptic expression, one can safely say that if there is anything functionally indispensable in the modern world, then it is the information and the system that process and propagates it.³

With the growing power and influence of the mass media in modern society it becomes almost imperative for every transitional society undergoing modernisation like India to give special emphasis on the mass media. Certain cogent expressions that are being used extensively today, shows the importance of information – information is power; modern age is the age of information, information technology, information revolution, etc.

The simple definition of communication is the transmission of knowledge or idea from one person to another. It is a continuous process. The communication process is an inevitable part of human life today. When the information technology boosted up the methods of communication, the media achieved tremendous growth. Any effective communication has four ingredients – source, receiver, message and feed back. The media comes between the source and the receiver. The role of the media is to contain the message and then successfully transform it to the receiver. Any message given by a reliable and trustable source must be used as the stimulus to work towards change in a better direction. This is the role of a good media.

Any media have its own characteristics. On the basis of these characteristics the media are classified into two groups: the hot media and the cold media. In the hot media, the receiver could get the message without his participation. But in the cold media the effective participation of the receiver is essential. Film and radio are examples of hot media and newspapers and television are cold media.

We can only get messages (news) from a newspaper only when we read it. Then our participation is there. We must try to know the news. Also while watching television there is our effort to see it. This type of media is called cold media because there is the active participation of the reader (Receiver) to receive the message. So this kind of media is cold media.

But if we are hearing the radio news there is no function to our effort. We are just hearing it. We can hear it even when doing any other job. This type of media is called hot media. Both the kinds of media are have their importance in social change and in national development. Either of them can be replaced by the other media.

“India is not Calcutta and Bombay. India lives in her seven hundred thousand villages.” – Mahatma Gandhi said.⁴ Even today it is a fact. 79.6 % of Indian people are living not in the urban centres but in the rural huts. These villages are still most undeveloped and underdeveloped areas. This pathetic situation must be changed. The economic dissimilarities, false beliefs, bad customs, malnutrition, unemployment, under employment, ill-health and, above all, poverty are the burning problems of these villages. This is the problem of Mother India and so each and every citizen of India should be committed to work for bettering the condition of the village folk.

As a developing country, we cannot afford to ignore the capacity of communication facilities to work out social change and

development. Any developmental programme should reach the people at best means of carrying these ideas to the common people is the mass media.

Among mass media, the importance of radio is crucial in the context of the Indian realities. Television programmes and newspapers are only available to a small section of the people. Both these media concentrate on towns and cities. But there is not a single village in India which has no access to the AIR transmission. Only the educated minority can use the newspapers fruitfully. But the poor farmer of Rajasthan and the fisherman of Goa can easily use his transistor radio for information and entertainment.

The development of the Press today helps the people to participate in Nation building process. "The development of the community press even in remote areas in every Asian country to enable every segment of the population to participate in what we hoped would be a two-way communication between the administration and the general public, between the urban centres and countryside."⁵ Suppose a man depends on newspapers to get news and views about his surroundings. He has certain advantages. These advantages are the characteristics of that media. We can use the newspaper whenever we like. We can use it at night after completing all our work or use it early morning. The news will wait for us. We get different views and aspects of news about any particular thing or incident.

T.V. Programmes are prepared and selected for the mass. We can not select from them according to our personal interest unlike those in newspapers. Our personal interest is ignored. Here there is no possibility to know more about any particular news or incident. What we get is limited information about many things. Then we are forced to hear and watch whatever we get in our television set.

In the history of communication we can see that man did not avoid any step of communication while taking further steps. Each and every means of communication is allowed to exist even when new methods of communication step in. For example, even now we use gestures or sounds for communication. These are primitive methods of communication. But we use it in this age which is an advanced age of satellite communication. In every man there is a craving for communication. This urge for communication helps him to develop new technologies, devices and media which enrich in the field of communication by making it more effective and enduring.

(i) Role and Objectives of Print Media

Print media give the reader not only news but also 'news behind news'. So every day people eagerly wait for the newspaper. T.V. is only an appetiser in the case of news. In print media, we have the right to choose the news or feature or article which we want to read. In other media we have no choice to make. Moreover, we get a clearer picture and account of the incident from the newspaper. We can know news in detail. At the same time print media is one of the cheapest methods of communication. If we have to see a particular programme or news bulletin in television, we must get in front of the T.V. set at that particular time. Print media doesn't have this restraint.

All the same newspapers too have certain limitations. We cannot see the incident as in the television. So there is a chance to be misled. Besides, we get only the reporter's or the newspaper management's angle about the incident. The whole picture was not in front of us. Further more, the newspaper can only give the report after the incident occurs. Live transmission as in T.V. is impossible. This delay in time is important. Because late news is not news; it is only history.

After receiving the message from the media, the receiver produces his feed back. In any mass media, there is a feed back from the receiver to the source or the mediator. The development of communication changed the world into a global village. But even at this stage, we do not give enough importance to the feedback. Feedback is a major ingredient of communication and so it has its own importance and influence both in the mediator and in the receiver. Letters to the editor in the newspapers are the feedback. But in many newspapers enough space is not set apart for this.

In short, the media field is growing day by day. We can not live without the help of communicators in the present world. Communication devices are advancing very fast technologically and psychologically now. If we can put this development to best use we can achieve several national goals. At the same time it will be beneficial to the entire society.

Reinforcing one's values and opinion is another role of print media. Thus the media have a changing role in the society. According to Wilber Sehramme the media could help in national development mainly in agricultural and industrial development. But we cannot say that our print media is fulfilling this role successfully. "Indian newspapers to a great extent have a tendency to neglect developmental reporting which is the crying need in a developing country. If sometimes, some space is given to development report then the attention is more on that aspect which highlights the development issues and less on that aspect which leads to development." ⁶

In a democratic country like India, while framing policies, the needs of the last and least privileged man should also be taken into consideration. Explaining to the people why a decision was taken is equally important as taking a decision. If we use the print media

successfully and effectively we can attain this two-way communication. Government and many other organizations become irrelevant and authoritarian because the main agency that should create and establish the two way communication possible – The Media – has not lived up to the goals. There are occasions where they have acted according to the demand of the times even at the cost of their own interests. But instances are many that tell tales of utter irresponsibility on the part of this media.

The main objectives of the media are to inform, to interpret, to evaluate, to educate, to conscientise, to entertain, to inspire, to create opinions, to create desirable attitudes, to lead, to help in planning, to give balanced and effective criticism/feedback and to give various other value – added services.

Media plays a vital role in public relations, advertisement and campaign among people. Carrying the information back to the policy makers is another objective of the media especially print media. Psychological studies have proved that media could attain desirable behavioral changes in the society. Any behavioral change is based on habits, beliefs and attitudes. The mental ingredients of behavioral change are: Perception, Attitudes, Opinions, Beliefs, Interest, Learning, Motivation, Attention and Memory. Development is the net result of social and behavioral change. It is not only the increase of per capita income. E.M. Rogers defines as follows: ‘Development is a type of social change in which new ideas are introduced into a social system in order to produce higher percapita income and levels of living through more modern production methods and improved social organization. The behavioral change of people is also important.’⁷

The media in India have lived up to the expectations during certain periods. The role of Media in the freedom struggle is an

example. Media have helped in creating a feeling of nationality and a sense of purpose. In course of time, media chose to promote certain objectives discarding some others so much so the objectives of media and the interests of the society differed on many issues. The present trend seems that the function is limited to be imparting information and providing entertainment discarding many other traditional objectives.

Sad to say, the print media seems to have failed to perform its avowed duties and to achieve its objectives fully. The media has neither conducted a deep opinion-research, nor has it taken all the needs of the society into consideration. Further, it has not bothered to take public opinion into account nor has it aired public opinion in full. Objectives, very often are not set by people, but by media owners themselves. This trend does not appear to be helpful for a healthy society and democracy.

The growth of communication is going along and side by side with growth of the society. “In the process of development the mass media are both cause and effect.”⁸ “Economic development and communication development are closely inter related and mutually reinforce each other – Dr. Kuppuswamy rightly observed.⁹

(ii) Press Laws and Limitations of the Press

Generally speaking, in India the newspapers and journalists have the right environment to work with freedom and responsibility. Newspapers don't have unlimited freedom but they enough of it to express their views fearlessly. There is no special law in India for press freedom as in England. The journalists have the freedom of speech and expression as all other Indian citizens have. Article 19(1) of the Indian constitution ensures the freedom of speech and expression. 19(1) A gives the freedom to publish news and views

without prior permission. But the matter publishing with this right, must not be defaming any person or institution. Journalists have the duty to fulfill the right to know of the society.

Any newspaper should get it registered before the Registrar of Newspapers, Government of India, before starting publication. Every year they should publish a declaration about its ownership. The name of editor, printer and publisher should be given in each printed copy of the newspaper. If any news is defaming a person, the publisher will be prosecuted. There is a provision to take legal action against the publisher on both civil and criminal grounds.

The newspapers have no right to criticise court verdicts. The in camera proceedings of the court must not be published. The matters which lead to contempt of court must not be published. The press has no right to violate the official secrets act. Anti national approach must be strictly punished. The media must not encourage religious disharmony or communalism. Such irresponsible journalism from the part of the fourth estate will be considered serious.

The Press Council of India extends moral support to the newspapers. It is the statutory body which considers the petitions of the journalists and those against the journals and journalists. There are 28 members in the Indian press council. This body gives the guidelines to the journalists and media institutions. Though in our country there is no pre-censorship of news papers, the guidelines of the press council help the journalistic field positively. It does not restrict the freedom of the Press. Though newspaper is a means of expression, a journalist has no right to violate the basic rules of privacy, morality and law of the land.

In 1977 the Janata Government repealed many laws which curtailed the press freedom in India. This government gave more

freedom to the press. It is not easy to bring in hard and fast rules in the field of journalism. Changing time, social situations and taste of the people will influence the duties of the press. This will change the values of the media. Technological advancement is another thing to be considered.¹⁰

Basically, journalism is considered as a double-edged sword. It is a weapon which fight against evils and atrocities. It can lead us to the creation of a healthy society. It can expose corruption and anti-social activities wherever they are found. If then the government or the judiciary decide to punish the newspapers, it will have a reverse effect. Then the notion of a free press will become a myth. Here is the importance of some self-imposed ethical codes. Each and every profession has its code of conduct. But in the field of journalism we cannot insist on an ethical code, which is suitable for all situations. It is because the journalists face different circumstances each day. But there must be some moral principles and practices which are acceptable to all. Ethical journalism will surely increase the integrity of the journalist and the newspaper.

‘The collection of news and reporting must be truthful. The reporter must write only what is true to his knowledge and belief. If he finds any news item incorrect, he should correct it in the next issue of the paper. Baseless criticism must be avoided. We should obey the basic rules of copy right. ‘Obey the rules of the country and consider the welfare of the society’ – These are the main directions, given to journalists by the International Federation of Journalists (I.F.J) ¹¹

Journalists must give voice to the voiceless. The media have a leader-like role in the society. Realising this and ardently stand by this is the main task of today’s media men. They must exercise diligence and care in collecting information and interpreting them.

Ours is an age of globalisation. The values of the society and tendencies in the media field are changing at a tremendous pace.. Everything is decided according to the need of (or the greed of) the market. The Press also is changing with the speed of the society. Even then some laws and restrictions must be unavoidable.

As a media, the press has certain limitations. Generally the language of newspapers is rather cold and rigid in nature. There is no time or occasion for clearance of doubts. Clarification of any point is not possible at the time of communication. The effectiveness of written matter depends largely on whether it can attract the attention of the people. While preparing news items, it is possible to forget or ignore the real needs of the reader. Feedback of communication in print takes time. There are certain corrective measures to make the print media dependable. Clarity of thought and accuracy in writing is essential. Generalisations and assumptions must be given wherever necessary. Writing with command of knowledge, confidence and with full information is inevitable. If the writer has the right kind of attitudes and feelings towards one's self, his subject and receiver, communication becomes easy. He has to project himself to the receiver's position. Proof reading and pre-testing of the message will ensure correctness and completeness.

(iii) Technology and Present Working Practices

As Dr. McFarland says communication is a process of meaningful interaction among human beings. It is a process which use different technologies by which meanings are perceived and understanding are reached among human beings. This is an age of

advanced technologies like DTP (Desk Top Publishing) and PTP (Paper to Plate Printing method) which changed the news room beyond imagination. In this computer age, a reporter could write and send his stories from his house or far away from his office. Gradually printing papers are giving road to web-portals and internet editions. Many important papers have on line editions along with print editions.

According to the changing situations of the news room, the working practices of journalists are also changing. Thirty or forty years ago we could not dream of working place or practice like this. Today, almost all major dailies consider their journalists as trained professionals. Today's journalists are better educated and better paid than ever before. But at the same time the credibility of the news papers has not increased. Rone F. Smith explains this phenomenon thus: 'today's media persons are more popular than the past; but the media is away from the mass'.

This is an age of news manufacturing. Different media plant news items and artificially make value-added news items due to the competition in the field.¹² News concepts are changing partly because people's habits are changing. So we cannot fully say that this kind of news making is absolutely false. Today more and more people are using news websites in the internet. So news papers must have to modify their conventional approaches.

Technology is changing and so are the working practices. Now pictures are moving from video tape to computers. In an advanced news room, journalists write and edit pictures simultaneously. This is an example of technological advancement.

'Too much news' is another problem which a newspaper editor faces today. The danger is that a massive increase in news means that there is a glut of the stuff. Consumer demand is only one of the

reasons why companies produce news. News is changed as one of many items which can be produced in a factory. Editionising news, mainly local news is another tendency of our time. This is increasing the circulation of the news papers.

Article 2. History of Journalism in Kerala

Malayalam journalism is only 163 years old. 'Rajya samacharam' started in June 1847 was the first published journal from Kerala. This was a publication of the Christian missionaries. In 1864 'Paschima Tharaka' (Western star) started from Kochi. In the last decades of 19th century so many Malayalam dailies were started – Keralan (1866), Sandishtavadi (1867), Travancore Herald (1867), Keralopakari (1874), Sathyanada Kahalam (1876) Malayala Mithram (1878), Travancore Abhimani (1878), Kerala Deepakam (1878), Kerala Chandrika (1879), Kerala Mithram (1881), Kerala Pathrika (1884), Nazarani Deepika (1887), Malayala Manorama (1890) etc. ¹³ In our early dailies, literary items are included with importance.

In 1865 Devji Bhimiji started 'Kerala Mithram Press' at Kochi.. On January 1, 1881 a newspaper called 'Kerala Mithram' was started.. The first editor of the paper was Kandathil Varghese Mappillai. In 1884, Chengulath Kunjirama Menon Started 'Kerala Pathrika from Malabar. He gave great importance to 'Hard news' in his paper, mainly those related to international events, politics and national developments. Another important journal of that time was 'Kerala Sanchari' which went into circulation on 3rd October, 1888. The Editor of this weekly was Vengayil Kunjiraman Nayanar. An organization called Malayalee Social Reform was started at Thiruvananthapuram. It's organ 'Malayalee was started in 1886. Pettayil Raman Pillai Ashan was its first editor.

On 15th April, 1887 'Nazarani Deepika' came out from Mannam St. Joseph's Press. In 1938 it became a daily. Kandathil Varghese Mappillai started Malayala Manorama in 1888.

(i) Swadeshabhimani K. Ramakrishna Pillai (1878 – 1916)

Born in 1878 in Neyyattinkara near Trivandrum, he started his journalistic career during his college days. In 1900, he became the editor of 'Kerala Darpanam'. He was propagating the idea that people's representatives also should be given a voice in the affairs of the government. Vakkom Maulavi was publishing a newspaper 'Swadeshabhimani' from Vakkom in Chirayinkil Taluk near Trivandrum. RamaKrishna Pillai became its editor in 1906.

His writings, particularly his editorials were not liked by the Travancore government. His criticism of the deeds of Diwan P. Rajagopalachari infuriated the government so much so that the Maharajah ordered his banishment from the state. This happened on 26th September, 1910. The press was confiscated. Pillai was arrested and deported to Nagercoil, a bordering area of the Travancore-Madras presidency. From there he was later allowed to go to Thirunelveli. His wife Smt. B. Kalyani Amma resigned her teacher's job and accompanied her husband along with their two children. The sufferings of this family for the cause of the freedom of expression are still remembered as a legend. The reward that he got for his courageous stance against corruption and for his advocacy of democratic practices was deportation from his native state.¹⁴ Swadeshabhimani wrote 16 books including the biographies of Mahatma Gandhi and Carl Marx. The biography of Marx was the first of its kind to appear in any Indian language. It was published in 1912, five years before the October Revolution. The publication of the biography of Mohandas Gandhi well before his emergence on the

Indian Political scene was significant. This was the first book on Mahatma Gandhi in Malayalam. These publications evinced Ramakrishna Pillai's prophetic vision. He thought far ahead of his contemporaries. He never wavered from his principled stance. But these qualities made him suffer at the hands of the authorities. He died on 28th March, 1916 from the attack of T.B.

(ii) K.P. Kesava Menon (1887 – 1978)

K.P. Kesava Menon was not only a journalist but also a great humanist. His important works are 'Nam Munnottu', 'Kazhinja Kalam' and 'Rashtra Pithavu'. Kesava Menon was a father figure on the Kerala scene, who lived a ninety one year span of life, braving total blindness, and political hostility for a considerable part of his life. During the Second World War he was practising as an advocate in Malaya.

Kesava Menon was the founder editor of the Mathrubhumi, started on 17th March, 1930 from Kozhikode. It was started as a tri-weekly. Kesava Menon's memorable statement in the first issue of the Mathrubhumi runs thus: "Ever remembering that we have set our not to propagate the interests of any one section, or creed, but to promote the general welfare of the Nation, and in the firm belief that all men are equal so far as the common and general rights are concerned we shall fight without fear for the advancement of freedom and shall never falter in the endeavour".¹⁵

Kesava Menon conceived the Mathrubhumi, not merely as a medium of information, but as an instrument for educating the people. Mathrubhumi found that Gandhiji's 'Young India' was the best model to emulate.

Kesava Menon's personal life was punctuated with sad happenings and blindness came upon him at a time he was at the peak of his career. This man, born in a small village of Taroor on the first of September, 1887, near Palghat was destined to leave behind him an enviable National Heritage in Literature, Journalism, Politics and Social and Cultural activities.

(iii) Kandathil Varghese Mappillai (1858 - 1904)

Kandathil Varghese Mappillai was the founder editor of Malayala Manorama. Manorama was founded as a weekly in 1890. It became a bi-weekly in 1901 and tri-weekly in 1918. Since 1928 it has been a daily companion to thousands of readers, with an interval from 1938 to 1947.

Varghese Mappillai was born in 1858 at Niranam in Tiruvalla Taluk of Central Travancore. After his studies, he found that a journalistic career was suitable for serving literature and the country alike. He went to Cochin. In 1889 he established Malayala Manorama Company Limited. The name 'Malayala Manorama' was suggested by Kerala Varma Valiya Koil Thampuran.

One of the important contributions of Varghese Mappillai was the founding of the Literary Society, 'Bhashaposhini' Sabha. A convention of poets was convened by Varghese Mappillai and Kumara Mangalathu Neelakandan Nampoothiripad in Kottayam in 1891. Many poets and other literary stalwarts attended the meeting. It was the first all Kerala literary meet. A Magazine, 'Bashaposhini' was published from September 1896 onwards from Kottayam as the organ of the Kavisabha.

Varghese Mappillai established Mar Divanasyos Seminari, M.D. High School in Thiruvalla and Thirumoolapuram Balika Madam

School for Girls. Sri Moolam Thirunal Maharaja of Travancore presented him a ring studded with jewels and a Veera Srinkala (Bracelet) in appreciation of his services. He wrote 9 books mainly related to literature. He worked hard, neglecting his health. He died in 1904 at the age of 46. His services to Malayalam language and literature cannot be forgotten. His style of writing the editorials was unique, and he advocated script reforms to simplify the printing of Malayalam. ¹⁶

(iv) Present Journalistic Arena in Kerala

We have seen that Kerala is the birth place of great journals. Today also this most literate state in India, has quite a good number of weeklies and other periodicals to its credit. All of them are publications enjoying freedom of expression.

Malayala Manorama, Mathrubhumi, Deshabhimani, Kerala Kaumudi, Mangalam, Deepika, Madhyamam, Chandrika, Janayugam, Janmabhumi...etc., are the important newspapers published from Kerala. There are above hundred newspapers published from this small state. Indian Express, Hindu and Pioneer are the main English papers, having editions in Kerala. Besides daily papers, so many weeklies, bi-monthlies, Women's magazines, Children's Magazines Cartoon magazines etc., are also published from the state. The readership of the state is above that of any developed country. Newspapers have different editions in each districts. Some papers have editions abroad because there are served foreign countries with considerable Malayalee population.

Newspapers are a flourishing business today. Huge capital is working behind them. The owners of important dailies are the owners of other commercial ventures. Naturally the aim, policy, editorial concepts and ethics are decided by the media owner. The editor is

only a paid employee. This adversely affects the public opinion creating power of the media. “The modern press has a dual aspect; primarily it is a medium of expression and communication of information and ideas; it is also an industrial and business establishment where printing and publication is carried on for profit. Day by day, the first aspect is ignoring.”¹⁷

There are hundreds of people working behind each newspaper. Modern technological advancement has changed the media arena. These two factors need huge investments. So the newspapers are forced to accommodate a heavy flow of advertisements. The interests of the advertisers are influencing the newspapers by and large. Newspapers adopt modern management techniques in all of its related fields. This is also an important change.

Almost all Malayalam Newspapers give great importance to politics. The first press commission of 1954 pointed out this fact. The same state continues unabated. The statements of politicians and superficial political discussions take a major portion of the space in a newspaper. Scientific, technological and major political analysis are often ignored. Though the pages increase, the matter content of news and article does not increase.

The television channels changed the print media’s approach also. Basically T.V. is an entertainment media. Now newspapers also have started giving more importance to entertainment. Then also the news angle is ignored to a great extent. Film, sex, crime, beauty contest stories receive greater importance. The social responsibilities of the newspapers are not fulfilled. The media have the power of opinion creation in any society. But here we see the media advocating undesirable attitudes. Even the newspaper layout and display are influenced by the television. “The competition between television and

newspapers is aggressive today. There is a T.V. touch in each newspaper. Fair and balanced reporting is vanished.”¹⁸

Media activism is another trend which we can see in the Kerala newspaper arena. Like Judicial Activism, this can also be harmful to the progress of society. The privacy of the individual must not be ignored. The decency must be considered, each and every media activity must be based on public interest. Both the ends and means must be pure. False news must not be reported. In short, the media must obey certain norms and principles. The sense of ethics must be upheld at any cost.

Article 3. Present Journalistic Trends

(i) Sensationalism

People go to bed after seeing the last news bulletin in the television. Then what can be news to them in the morning? This is the serious problem that newspapers face in Kerala today. The search for an answer to this question has led the journalists to resort to sensationalism, one of the most undesirable trends in journalism. Writing, editing and giving pictures are made to cater to the needs of entertainment.

The sensationalism started in the developed countries mainly in the tabloids. But in Kerala, the broadsheet papers are also showing this tendency. Over the past few years in Kerala, the ‘tabloidisation’ of major newspapers is growing at a tremendous pace. They flush with photographs of glamorous personalities and are accompanied by a write-up that is a mish mash of juicy tidbits and gossip from the filmi, fashion and corporate worlds. Fortunately, it has not yet gone beyond the limit of decency. The sensationalism affects not only news but views too. The views are often prejudiced and one sided. Media

scholars like Gravin Evans (London School of Journalism) admit the truth.¹⁹

Because of the T.V. culture, everything is a breaking news now-a-days. Cricket or film star related stories gain top priority over inflation, farmer suicide, terrorist attack and other such issues concerning the common man. Wired stories and events are being reported rather than vital ones. The Role of Media as an effective tool to empower the masses against a corrupt system is ignored. Sensationalism is considered as an undisciplined media approach universally. This will cause atrocities against victims. Peeping to the private life of people is another character of sensationalised media.

The main aim of sensationalisation is circulation boost up. Journalism has degenerated into a profession. In the past it was a service. Communalism, hidden political agenda and adulteration of the news are the main characteristics of today's sensationalised approach. It is called yellow journalism.²⁰

Environmental issues are ignored in our media today. Even when disasters occur as it happened in Bhopal, the papers sensationalised the news with elaborate descriptions of horrible sights. Environmental destruction in the state was huge. But most of the papers were blind to that. Only 2% of the total space is given to environmental news today.²¹ "Anti social activities destroy a society. Like anti-environmental activities destroy the environment. Both this are two planes of human existence."²²

The media making even the environmental issues also sensational. For example, the mainstream journals and newspapers did not give ample space for Medha Patkar's struggle or the issues of Narmada Bachavo Andolan. But the mass attempt of Medha and her followers to suicide become sensational news item.

Famous media expert Michael Traber explained the sensational approach of media as 'the satanic era of public lies.' He was not ready to consider media as a consumer product. To him, 'mass media is a social product and sensationalism is a crime.'

Our former President, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam has condemned over sensationalisation of newspapers by saying that almost all our papers are having a negative approach. 'We are not recognising our efficiency. Ours is a great country. India is the largest milk producing country in the world. In case of remote sensing satellites we are the first. The production of rice and wheat, we are the second in the world. These types of great achievements are ignored by our media. Most of our newspapers always giving news items about diseases, terrorism and crimes sensationally. It is not desirable.'²³

After 1996, about two thousand farmers committed suicide in Ananthapur district of Andhrapadesh. The main stream papers did not give this news with enough importance. P. Sainath, the famous correspondent of The Hindu criticised this. These same dailies sensationally describing stories of beauty contests, fashion designing, food festivals, etc., with the help of specialised correspondents.²⁴

News is becoming sensational when it is against the conventional values of the society. The print media in Kerala sets apart too much space for Clinton-Monica sex scandal stories. The values of the Keralite society was not taken into account. But even then the major papers of Kerala gave undue importance to that story. It is simply a dirty trick to increase circulation. Some investigative stories are only disguised sensational stories. Fashion, fiction and other superficial stories are getting importance even in our national dailies. Today most of the papers are not reflecting the reality. They are either giving partial views or constructing the news according to

their own views. Some media doing this according to their ideological stand. The competition for sensational news led the newspapers to the violation of law of the land and even journalistic ethics.

There are no simplistic solutions to avoid sensationalism. Committed journalists should report the Truth. Only through professionalism, dedication to duty and truth, and ultimately love for the people and the country can improve things.

Genuine feelings get lost in trivial sensational news. Many areas are being neglected. Otherwise, they get coverage only when they become sensational. Though it is an age of specialisation in every field, some sectors are neglected in our newspapers. Committed journalists should change this situation. They must write for the people; not merely to please the media owner. They have to show vision, commitment to values and velocity.

(ii) Trivialisation of News

It is a common practice of the newspapers to undermine the importance of news items according to their vested interests. By giving trivialised version of an incident or fact the reader is denied a clear picture of it. Major issues must be given due weightage and seriousness. It is a basic principle of media ethics. From writing to display, news items must be treated with becoming importance. But some papers play down them or simplify them with a view to safeguard selfish motives of the media owners or to attune to journalists' interest. Some newspapers show marked prejudice in favour of some shades of opinion while selecting news and articles for their special editions or material for editorials to the interests of the society. This bias is highly detrimental.

Another cause of trivialisation is the impact of television channels. Television is basically a visual media and its main thrust is on entertainment. In the competition with the visual media the stoops to adopt such a mode, which in effect, trivialise cardinal issues, diluting them with buffoonery. Like sensationalism, trivialisation is also a curse to media ethics. It will lead to the reader to a habit of 'light' reading and peripheral thinking. Important events such as weddings, and murders are described as trivial and insignificant matters while malignant gossip is projected with minute details. The coverage given by Indian media on the wedding of Liss Harlic and Arun Nayyar is a good example of trivialisation.

This kind of trivialisation made not out of ignorance. This is done deliberately as part of the process of manipulation widely prevalent in the field. Some reporters use their creative skill to concoct stories. This is most unfortunate because the primary commitment of a good reporter is to stand by truth. Giving importance to silly things is aggrandisement or trivialisation in the reverse order. This also is untruthful approach. Today, in the field of journalism specialisation increased. Crime, fashion, politics, sports, life-style, etc., are some such specialised areas. Here also the basic principles of ethics are ignored. Sex, violence, crime, etc., are reported as sources of entertainment by most of the papers. The advertisement culture prevailing in the field also encourages trivialisation and discourages serious reading as well as thinking.

Market always tends the media to trivialisation. Health, Psychology, Sports, Entertainment, Travel, Women, Lifestyle, Fashion etc are given in a simplified and peripheral manner. A beauty context in the city get more space than an accident.

The advertisements also play a major role in deciding the nature of publications today. Some newspapers screen them strictly. Some others collect advertisements using any hook and crook method. Some others avoid advertisements. There are certain media houses which consider advertisements must not influence the content mix. They obey the editorial principles even in the case of advertisements. Advertisements pictures and texts are also supervised by the editorial team. In such a case, the trivialisation of news due to advertisement influence decrease.

Globalisation is another culprit which misleads the media to tow the path of confusion and misrepresentation. Regional news are giving readers importance than national or international news. While doing so, the beauty and felicity of a language are mercilessly butchered in order to serve the whims and caprices of greedy multinational giants. In Latin America, Spanish and Portuguese get prominence. Almost all regional languages are dead. In Kerala also, the beauty of simple Malayalam language is destroying. English become the medium of education and communication. As a result, English words and phrases are quite common in regional dailies also. Salman Rushdie, in a recent interview declared that he no longer subscribed to newspapers and magazines because they are all available online. Another cause is that, they trivialise news items. Every dead wood periodical in the world faces the danger of a young generation that has fallen out of the habit of paying for 'Content' whether it be music, films or journalism. (Outlook weekly, 20th Oct. 2008)

Trivialisation is happened due to the rise of news management from outside also. There is a real possibility to manipulate media deliberately. Selective reporting, spiking, double standards.... etc. are very commonly alleged against newspapers, and by their nature and forms of bias not easy to establish or guard against.

Almost all of the tabloid journalists are trivializing news continuously. They are often accused of sacrificing accuracy and the personal privacy of their subjects in order to boost sales. Supermarket tabloids are often focused on entertainment rather than news. A few have “news” stories that are so outrageous that they are widely read for entertainment purposes, not for information. Some tabloids do not purport to maintain common journalistic standards, but may fall far short in practice. Others make no such claims. Some publications deliberately engage in satire. This is also a kind of trivialisation.

Some newspapers are known to employ inefficient fake editors to create an impotent editorial board which will dance to the tune of the capitalist media owner, whose interests rest, by and large, on the distortion of truth. In certain papers we see the influence of ‘imported journalism’ and their editors are but showpieces. This intellectual simplification may lead to the destruction of secular democracy and the ruin of free and uninhibited journalism. The community of newspaper readers should be extremely cautious in accepting news appearing in newspapers and should exercise their power of discrimination to the fullest extent before doing so. Only then can we guard against the menace of being duped or misled by the machinations of a powerful of vested interests.

(iii) Commercialisation of Newspapers

Thomas Griffith pointed out that the trouble with the newspaper business is that it is becoming more and more just a business. Justice J.N. Ray, the Chairman of Press Council of India also said recently that the media activities in the country is deviating from values and compromising with the market forces.²⁵

Generally speaking, media is the mirror of the society. It should reflect the problems and needs of the society. Social commitment is

giving path to commercial concerns now-a-days. Globalisation and modernisation are the straw that brake the camel's back. The primary place of news is loosing. Advertisement and entertainment come to that place.

Selling is appealing to human nature rational or emotional. Today newspapers consider themselves simply as products. Then the main motive become selling the product. The crass commercialism of newspapers make them repugnant to journalistic ethics. Predatory price wars and trade competition among dailies is a market reality today.

Any civilised society considers, the newspaper as an agency of communication, capable of bringing public interest by educating its readers. The newspaper should teach the citizen to keep the public interest in mind even while pursuing their private interests.²⁶ But today, journalists and editors are very few in number; media tycoons and content creators are large and unwieldy. To them, democracy and the role of fourth estate are only in theory. In practice, News is degraded only to content in their view. Profit making is the motive of any business. News business also becoming a profit making activity. The place of news is replaced to news stories for fulfilling the desires of the common public. Many capitalists are now trying to come to the media field. This is because of two reasons - one is profit making using the media; the other is to preserve their all other business ventures using the power of the newspapers. It's a universal phenomenon. We can see such attempts in the small Kerala's media field also.

According to the world Association of Newspapers, the circulation of newspapers increased 0.46 percentage in the year 2003. The circulation of newspapers has been increasing gradually after

1997. The advertisement revenue is also increasing day by day. But the editorial content of newspapers does not present an optimistic picture. The 'economics' of the media is good but the content mix is not so good.

The corporate giants in the world are trying to establish a hold on India's 'media market'. This is not only for profit motive, but also for changing the values of Indian society according to the global scenario. Capital forces have to work irrespective of the boundaries of nations. Indian middle class are very powerful consumers in the view of multinational companies. So they regularly trying to control the media field of India and by our government and authorities. This approach is called 'Neo Liberalism'. The final result of this process is that two or three persons will control the entire media field of the country. It will finally affect the democracy and human rights of our country.

Indian media companies are trying to resist the incursion of the foreign media into the Indian soil. It is not because of the national consideration but out of fear of adversely affecting their own business interest. The foreign companies can give newspapers at lower rates and that may affect the sale of the indigenous journals and telecasts. Also the advertisement revenue will also be divided at the disadvantage of the native media. The present law in India limits foreign share to a maximum of 26%. Besides, the editor of the publication must be an Indian citizen. These two restrictions are effective enough to control the supremacy of the foreign media. "Foreign media owners could not fulfil the needs of India. They only see Indian culture and traditions as a tool for their business. So the foreign ownership to Indian media is dangerous" – famous editor Sir Harold Evans pointed out in his Mammen Mappillai Memorial lecture at NewDelhi in 2007.²⁷

The competition among newspapers have dual face. One is for circulation increase and the other is for space marketing ie, advertisement. The cut-throat competition now overcomes all limits. Gifts, profit-cards, insurance schemes for subscribers, scratch and win offers, games like 'Thambola' (a kind of gambling) are using to increase copies. This short cuts to circulation hike does not help the reader morally or intellectually. On the other hand it is degrading him only as a consumer of the media brand. This is a common trend in Kerala's media field, especially among big newspaper houses.

Some big companies now try to woo newspapers by making them shareholders free of cost with ulterior motives. In this way they expect to get undue favour from the media to the extent of manipulation of news. This is a kind of aggressive business tactic, known as 'private treaty' system. Fortunately this trend is not widely prevalent in Kerala though it is a stark reality in many other states. Collecting funds and fixed deposits by media houses from the public is a common phenomenon in Kerala. This fund raising is a kind of banking. Here also the media is pledging its credibility for monetary benefits. This is another face of commercialisation.

What will happen if we allow the media to function merely as a commercial venture? The final result of this will be the commercialisation of the government. Today political activities are a money making activity for many leaders. Political parties, religious institutions etc are also degraded as business organizations. Once upon a time, we consider educational institutions, publishing houses, newspapers and hospitals as service fields of sanctity. But in Keralite reality, all of them are becoming the most profitable business in the society.

Commercialised newspapers, never give importance to the problems of marginalised groups in the society. If a girl got 'world beauty queen' prize the whole world will know within seconds. What will happen, when a poor peasant committed suicide in a remote village because of debt? No commercialised news paper will report this. The transparency of democracy will be lost. We will not know what we ought to know. "In India water becoming a product to sell. Rivers are selling for years. These dangers are not new. But we know them only now. In the age of globalisation and commercialisation our media darkened all these things" – M.P. Veerendrakumar Ex. M.P. pointed out this, though he was also the managing director of The Mathrubhumi Daily in Kerala. ²⁸

Carl Marx said prophetically, the first freedom among press freedom is the freedom of the press not to become a business. After independence, the press became more and more commercialised in India. It projects politicians, religious leaders and literary men as miracle men. The moral and intellectual equanimous stand loses. Commercialised newspapers causes moral degradation with the help of the superficial rhythm of written lines and with the help of lines which are never written.

In this commercialisation the importance of the editor become lesser and lesser. In the past, important newspapers are led by the Editors. But today, the editor is only a person who was responsible legally on a printed matter under the PRB act. He is just leading a group of trained professionals. Professionalism is a by product of enlightened capitalism. Here the editors naturally lost the strength of idealism. The national feeling for integration is losing from our newspapers. The priority given by big newspapers on developmental issues are not always good for the society.

Another important problem of commercialisation is that it ignores the villages. Though the big newspapers, editionise news items newspapers are part of the establishment. They fulfil the interests of groups. But many a time, the large media houses could not know or realise the mind of the rural masses. So in like many other fields, the theory of 'small is beautiful' is relevant in the media sector also.

Though the competition is strong, its impact is felt to any considerable extent in Kerala's media field. Journalists changing their institutions for seeking better job opportunities and financial situations is a common phenomena in other parts of the country. But it is not so common in the Kerala's print sector. This is mainly due to the commercial 'understanding and cooperation' of the major newspaper houses. When the newsprint price hike happens, the newspapers resist the move jointly.

The story of newspapers starts from the letters which patiently picked up from the composing box. Then came monotype, lino type, D.T.P., online and now in cyber space..... A common subscriber considers the newspaper as his able advocate and spokesman in every genuine issue. It is not good to hurt this faith because of commercialisation.

(iv) Over Importance to Advertisements

The existence of a large scale newspaper is mainly depends on advertisements today. If a daily got more than sufficient advertisements it can easily ignore subscribers and subscription income. Free papers can be produced and distributed. In many countries such papers are a success. The cost of production is meeting only through advertisement revenue. Television news is almost free in every country. So news paper must be given freely. Such an argument is being strengthened from many corners.

In Kerala, if a newspaper company decides to avoid advertisements fully, a copy of its newspaper will have to be sold at Rs. 18 per copy. Today the price of a newspaper is just Rs. 4.00 on an average. So a refusal to entertain advertisement will not be feasible at all. In short, an advertiser is giving a subsidy to the reader! In other words advertisements help the fourth estate to survive. The number of pages is decided in major dailies according to the volume of advertisements; not according to the news columns. The 'dummy' page of a newspaper given to its editor is proportionate to the quantum of advertisements. One of the largest circulating dailies in India, confessed openly that 'readers are not our aim. Readers are only a medium to reach to advertisers'.²⁹ The circumstances of Kerala is also going in this path.

Advertisements were helping the newspapers in the past also. But then advertising was the advertiser's necessity. The editor had the right to reject any advertisement. But today immoral advertisements and even the advertisements of liquor are published in our important dailies. This tendency is neither wise nor good. "Since an advertisement is also a publication like an editorial or news story, The printer and publisher of a newspaper may be held liable for an advertisement, which is illegal, eg., because it is obscene or defamatory or relates to an article injurious to public health, even though such advertisement had been sent by a third party and the press was not in any way responsible for its authorship."³⁰

There is a strange situation that some dailies giving advertisements which are against to their editorial policy. As a large scale business the newspapers need huge amounts for its existence and development. The level of competition is also very high. In this state, some dailies insisted their reporters to collect and canvass

advertisements. How can a correspondent write against advertisers? Impossible 'Free and fearless' journalism is only a dream in such a situation.

In Kerala, Mathrubhumi the national daily reject crores of advertisement revenue by rejecting the advertisements of Co-Co cola and liquors. It is a very good step in the editorial supremacy. But at the same time this daily is collecting advertisements through its part time reporters and contract correspondents.

The competition in the media arena has assumed a dismal nature. The large scale newspapers are trying to establish a monopoly in the field. Victory is a craze in the modern world of competition especially in the business field. Once got the foremost place in this speedy race, most of the media owners trying to exploit the consumer.

The general assumption is that those who give big advertisements are different from those who run newspapers. But in reality, they both think alike. Within the limitations of such a situation what can be done is to evolve a broad approach to news and views and be consistent and true to that approach through out. Those who give big advertisements, ultimately govern the media. "He who pays the fiddler, decides the tune!" The over importance to advertisements make the media world is controlled by capitalist forces and capitalists.

Ours is a consumeristic society. Common people are swimming with the main stream of the society. In case of advertisements, the media make its readers brand conscious. The magic of advertisements helping the product manufactures to loot from the pockets of millions of readers. Here also the media is forgetting the primary duty of it – to inform accurate things. Media it self is turning as a consumer product

today. The reader becomes addicted to the language, style, layout and policies of the newspaper which he likes.

The advertisements arise the emotional place of the readers mind; not the intellectual plane. 'The advertisement business exploits the social values. It is a trap which aims at groups'.³¹

We have already discussed the nature of news and advertisements which appear in the media. Now drawing your attention to the tricks being played to misguide the reader. Sometimes advertisements appear as news itself, without mentioning that. The influence of advertisement department on editorial section is increasing even in Malayalam Dailies today. No one in the media field realises that the reader is the ultimate decision maker in everything. The unwritten code of conduct in the field is never to mislead the reader by giving paid advertisements as reliable news. The Federation of International Editors of Journals has given this guideline in the year 1981.

The overflow of advertisements decreases the space for news. The reader does not realise this in ordinary situations. The advertisements have also information value. Some newspapers describe advertisements as 'news that is of use'. But above all the reader is buying the newspaper for news; not for advertisements. A new word is coined by English newspapers as 'advertorial' ie., advertisement plus editorial. This is advertisements displayed as news. This tendency is becoming common in Kerala also.

Another tendency in our media field is that giving the advertisements of certain products which are legally restricted to give advertisement. This advertisers produce and advertise them easily. The advertisement of liquor is banned in our newspapers. But the brand name is commonly advertise as it is that of another product.

This type of cheating is common even in the Malayalam dailies and magazines. The basic thing about advertisement is it must be moral and truthful to an extent. This is violating here.

A good newspaper institution could not stand only for advertisement revenue forgetting the social commitment fully. At the same time no media can fully ignore the economic side of it by arguing for commitment to readers. Common people always visualise the media as their spokesmen. So they wish that in a democratic country, the newspapers must fulfill their duty (dharma). There are so many problems to common people. But they are creating the society. The society itself is the market of the newspaper. So the relation between ethics and economics must be complimentary; not contradictory. This we shall discuss in the next article.

Article 4. Journalistic Ethics Vs Economic Viability

Journalism was committed to service in decades ago. Now it is a commercial activity. So the attitude of people towards journalism has also changed. But even today there are some ethical principles and practices which the journalists follow. The economic considerations deviating the press from ethics.

Big newspaper institutions becoming more and more bigger. They are killing the small papers mainly with the help of price-war. Naturally the advertisers and 'sponsors' helping the giants in the field. Today newspapers are enterprises which need huge investment of capital. The capital must ensure the profit in the market and victory over others. So the field itself is renamed as 'media industry' or 'newspaper industry'. In Kerala, also this tendency is a reality. News itself is covered to news stories. The entertainment value got importance than the news value. 'In ordinary sense, cinema, drama or sports items do not express social commitment. So newspapers also

must not show any commitment to society'. This type of an argument is also rising gradually. The only slogan is 'more readers and there by more advertisement revenue'. This concept changed the role of the Editor in the newspaper. In the past the Editor was struggling for the society. He was a lamp post and guide of the society. He was the final word of newspaper ethics and vision. But today the role is changed. This change is foreseen by K. Rama Rao before four decades. He wrote in his auto biography, 'The Pen is My Sword' published in 1965 – 'The Indian journalistic field is changing. It's body is becoming weaker. The soul of it also will be weakened. The editor will be vanished and instead of him dictators will come. They will be admiring money; not values. They will try to kill Indian Democracy which is a small Hercules. They are approaching the media only for monetary benefits. Either the newspaper field becomes a toy in their hands. Otherwise the people rise and throw them out.'³²

In the past, only papers are mainly collecting advertisements. Today, television, radio, internet and other media always searching for advertisements. The space marketing field is an arena of utmost competition. The advertiser is eager to enquire about the purchasing power of the readers of the papers. The editorial policy is deciding the readers. Naturally the policy is lenient to the upper class of the society, who have more purchasing power. Here economics wins the ethics once again. Each and every decision of the media is indirectly influencing by the monetary thread; though many media owners will not agree this. Strengthening journalism is not the primary aim of media owner in the modern society. The market share value of the media house and the net profit and turnover are getting importance.

Media culture itself, is becoming profit-oriented. Then what is the use of insisting on old principles? This is a question asked by even from media experts. Media is the weapon of globalization in the resent

age. In America, the Green peace organisation gave an advertisement about the dangers of car using. No newspapers were ready to publish that even when the organization was ready to pay the rate that which was equal to the rate given by the Ford company. In our state, the influence of advertisers is not so much. But here also the matters are going in the same path. Ben H. Bagdikian wrote: “a profitless newspaper will soon die; a losing broadcast station will fall silent or be sold. Yet, a news medium without constructive social purpose might as well be dead. The problem today is not that this tension between profit and public service exists, but that so much of corporate journalism pretends that it does not. It is considered bad taste to talk publicly about the fact that the primary source of our political and social intelligence is a set of corporations in business to make money”.³³

Everything in our society facing the erosion of values, and so the newspapers. Commercialisation is the cause of this. Politicisation and Vulgarisation of newspapers is a reality. Each and every paper have its own vested interest. Though most of our journalists are professionals today, they cannot control the problem. If the media owner has no consideration to newspaper ethics, no professional journalist could stand for this primarily; newspaper is the voice of the voiceless. It must be realised by each and every person behind this.

Media owners like Rupert Murdoch only wish to enlarge their media empire. They will not stand for the accuracy of news. The Wall Street Journal of America bought by Murdoch recently and changed the age-old values of it. The taste of people will be changed according to the capitalist culture.³⁴

Mahatma Gandhi pointed out the importance of ethical and economic approaches in the media field when he visited Kozhikode.

He came there to reveal the portrait of K. Madhavan Nair, who was one of the founders of the Mathrubhumi. Gandhi said; “Mathrubhumi is a daily which stands on its own feet. It is a rare situation. Only some newspapers in India could attain such a stand. So Mathrubhumi has a unique position among India’s newspapers. It is not only important that a person has huge capital, but also he know that how that capital can be utilised. Economic issues are secondary in importance. The policy of the paper and the service it doing for the society is important. To increase the financial strength of the paper, the employees must also work together”.³⁵

(i) Loss of Credibility

Our newspapers grow from letter press age to computer age. In that sense the growth is tremendous. But at the same time the newspapers become smaller in the case of credibility. Credibility for a paper is like oxygen to a living being. The credibility of a newspaper, in the long run, depends upon the truthfulness and lack of exaggeration or partisanship. Regrettably many newspapers deviate from absolute objectivity and are often found to exaggerate events and even to invent them largely to support certain interests - local, national and international. In this view, the media in India is often one sided although the large masses of readers are influenced by printed matter, thus leading to media popularity.

In normal case, print media is more authentic than the visual, the latter being fleeting and calculated to create prejudice. They are more advertising rather than authentic. But competitive tendencies are creeping into our Fourth Estate making the worse appear the better and creating false and ill-informed opinions. Truth is often becoming a casualty because of the monetary interests which govern the media.

Kerala is fragmented by the number of editions of newspapers. Necessarily only a small amount of news items is made available to the whole state. There is a failure to comprehend major events because of newspapers having several local editions with focus on regions and sub regions.

The credibility of a newspaper depends on what the readers expect from it. Every newspaper has its own basic philosophy. If it departs from that philosophy, which it has cultivated among its readers for long, the paper loses its credibility. If 'Malayala Manorama', at the time of elections, writes an editorial calling for the need to vote communists to power, it has lost credibility. The same goes with 'Deshabhimani' also if it writes an editorial praising American imperialists.

Correspondents reporting according to the policy of the paper. As far as the management is concerned every report edited on the basis of that policy. "The leader writer of any paper is the prisoner of the philosophy of the paper. News is now a commodity to be sold in a crowded market and therefore each seller has to devise unique methods to sell his ware," E. M. Sreedharan wrote about the losing credibility of our newspapers before a decade.³⁶

Newspapers run by political parties generally publish only their party view. This does not mean that non-party newspapers are more objective. Also credibility gets diluted or distorted during communal clashes, social-political tensions, elections etc. The discerning reader can glean through the papers and take what he/she wants. But, for a large number of readers confusion distrust in political parties/systems and a sense of helplessness do develop. For instance, newspapers in Kerala lost credibility in the case of the 'ISRO Spy' scandal. Even today we do not know the entire truth. Public memory

is short. People either due to lack of time, interest or for other reasons fail to keep track of news. Good reporting is when all sides of a question/event are given, leaving the judgement to readers.

Credibility is again the keyword, which can not be brought or built up in short time. "Credibility has to be earned the hard way and is not attainable overnight. To earn it one has to ensure that facts remain sacred and reporting is unbiased."³⁷

Newspapers today regularly run corrections to sort out misinformation that inevitably creeps into some stories. Not so common are outright retractions, which is a newspaper's way of both correcting misinformation and apologising for it. It hurts the newspapers credibility.³⁸

The publication of news items and articles which defaming others will lose the credibility of the papers. The fame of a person is his wealth. No one has the right to destroy that wealth. In many developed countries, media institutions have internal ombudsmen for the redress of public complaints. No Malayalam paper has this facility. In India, 'The Hindu' has this system.

As a custodian of public interest, the Press has a right to highlight cases of corruption and irregularities in public bodies but such material should be based on irrefutable evidence and published after due inquiries and verification from the concerned source and after obtaining the version of the person/authority being commented upon. Newspapers should refrain from barbed, stinging and pungent language and ironical/ satirical style of comment.

The media, in America is in front row in the case of investigative journalism. But they are far behind in the case of credibility. Though we are having low literacy rate in India the media have credibility. But

it is gradually losing because of many reasons. As Ron F. Smith explains, Today the media and media activists are popular to common people. But credibility of them decreases. In the past, number of media are less in number. Today we are in a world of multiplicity of media. The errors of one media is revealed by other media today. This tendency is another cause of decreasing credibility. What happened in America, may happen in Kerala in the near future.

The importance of new sources must also be considered by journalists. There is a journalistic saying that, a reporter is as good as his source. Editors will expect a reporter's story, without personal biased for they know that the readers expect as much. "Once a reporter enters a working newsroom he/she acquire access to one of society's great powers, the power to give or deny information. You are the eyes and ears of the Public. Good reporter has a passion for justice. Otherwise the credibility of the paper will loose."³⁹

(ii) Views Papers Vs Newspapers

In the last chapter we had discussed the topic of the losing credibility of our news papers. As a result of the loss of credibility, our newspapers are becoming views papers. Mainly the papers reflect the views of its owners. While competing to get more and more readers, the newspapers are trying to value addition. They are naturally discussing things in a 'news plus angle'. Then coming the overflow of views over news.

While giving spice to news, the soul of news is losing. Writing continuously on peripheral- issues, add sensationalism to investigative reports, downplay important news items, give over importance to small incidents are common trends in Malayalam journalism today. Here newspapers playing the role of 'sedatives' on its readers. Giving colour

and structure to news items according to vested interest is not good for the society.

Most of our newspapers are ready to publish the news stories which are even fabricated by journalists. They consider that what they serve will be swallowed by the readers. This is a false calculation. In short, here the media could not become the voice of the society. Some small newspapers in Kerala are giving more news items which are given by large scale papers. Also they are not fully localising the news stories.

Small papers knowing the mind of ordinary people and giving more importance to local issues. Fearless criticism, the positive approach to the problems of the society, colourless presentation of news items, simple language, commitment to the society.....etc. will give more strength to small newspapers. The tendency to split local editions district-wise does make the reader's horizon narrow.

Media activity is a psychological activity of the society. So a media person has many things to take care of. The journalists could take care of the ideas of their management. Also the reporters and editors have their own interests. These interests will reflect on the working field. Also the journalists between different institutions are in good friendship among them. Then they can easily plant news items and views in different papers at the same time.⁴⁰ Though this tendency is not wide because of the strong competition among media houses in Kerala, it should be removed for the sake of the society. The lack of a healthy media sense is among media field itself. Media persons must become good social beings. They should show the new horizons of development to the entire society. They must stand for environmental protection. Also they must give voice to the voiceless like the downtrodden people and Daridranarayanans.

Giving views to tarnish the image of some political leaders is a common tendency in the Kerala's media arena. It is only due to political ill will and lack of wisdom of journalists. 'The practitioners and proprietors of news institutions to devote themselves to high human purpose, in other words to be committed to men. The sad fact is that not all men who find themselves in important positions in the news are wise and human.'⁴¹

Article 5. Journalism and Politics

In history we can see many instances where Press and Politics go hand in hand. The Peoples Paper belonging to Earnest Jones, with whom Carl Marx shared the editorship in 1852. Launched in May 1852, it became the largest working class newspaper ever produced.

In India, Mahatma Gandhi, Balagangadhara Tilak, GopalaKrishna Gokhale, Muhammadali Jinnah, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru etc. are closely related to newspapers. Many of them organized or published their own newspapers. In Kerala also great leaders like K. Kelappan, K.P. Kesava Menon and Sahodaran Ayyappan are closely related to newspapers.

Political parties and leaders play a very important role in moulding the destiny of a nation. In a democratic polity like that of India all major decisions are political decisions, taken by our political leaders. Hence, no effort in nation building can succeed without the co-operation and support of political parties and political leaders in India. So media could not ignore the political field.

'Media, Democracy and Education are inter-related. Training, Press freedom and culture will produce good citizens. Every good political movement must be supported by the media. We should reveal the part and role of the newspapers in political decision making' – Leo

Halsyospin, the former minister of France remarked.⁴² The great media educationist Len Masterman also underlines this by saying that democracy will not sustain fruitfully without the help of media.

In Kerala political facts came to be judged on the same criteria as other events and lost their priority over non political matters. The media in General, but most distinctly the popular press, politics had to be as entertaining as cricket and football.

The depoliticisation of the press was also the result of a specific discursive policy whose objective was to diversify the content of newspapers. As a result, the range of topics touched on by newspapers expanded enormously, to the point that today journalism is a discourse which is characterised by the variety of subjects it deals with.

The relation between press and politics reversed and politics became one of the contents of journalism. Journalists began to report politics according to their own needs and interests, covering the topic from their own perspective and own professional values.

The 'Personalisation' of public life refers to the fact that political reporting concentrates on individuals rather than on the political process itself. Part of this 'peopling of the press' involves a process of 'personification' of politics, well-known personalities becoming 'Surrogates for institutions' and historical forces being anthropomorphized. Another aspect of the focus on personalities is the interest the media pay to politicians' private life.⁴³ It is a universal phenomena. The press in Kerala also giving high priority to the very Important People (VIPs) mainly in power politics. The lives of ordinary people, in particular women, children and manual labourers, are rarely reflected in the mass media, except when crime and misfortune befalls them.

As media is an education system, it should have cultural and political objectivity and neutrality. But most of the Keralite newspapers have political bias, though they admit it or not. Newspapers are filled with the statements of politicians. It is not news in the strict sense of the term. A piece of news may be defined as a discursive statement about a real event which is both recent and of presumed interest to the audience. Like any other reporting, political reporting also needs honesty. As in all things, the best policy is honesty and these probably are no other profession where most people count on a journalist to be honest. With the awesome power comes an awesome trust. Many newspapers misuse the trust of people by giving reports which are distorted from truth. Newspapers of political parties have certain limitations to give reports related to their political interests. But now-a-days papers which are politically neutral are also giving news items with political calculations.

During our freedom struggle some papers wrote against Gokhale. Gandhi resist it. He had the view that disrespectful writing must be protested. "It is our duty to protest against such writings. We should consider men like Professor Gokhale to be pillars of Home Rule. It is a bad habit that to say another man's thoughts are bad and ours only are good. Those who holding different views from our are not the enemies of the country", Gandhiji wrote in Hind Swaraj. 44 Ours is a country of political plurality. So we must be ready to accept different political views. The media should reflect different political views. Kerala is a land which formulated coalition government far before it was realized in India. We can not say that the political activities are value based. The growing dissatisfaction with the policies of the state led to various movements among tribals, dalits, minority groups and other ethnic and religious communities. Most of the major media does not give ample space for these problems.

Kerala is a consumer state. Most of the essential services are privatised. As a reflection of the dominant norm of consumerism and consumption based development there has been a steady influx of NRI capital and the creation of a number of initiatives that have helped the development of privatized services especially in the area of health care, education and the housing market. At the same time the states involvement in the provision of essential services has been cut. This has reinforced the situation of unequal access to basic human rights and necessities. The media deployment has merely aided the spread of consumerism and individualism. Media houses got more and more advertisement from the producers of consumer items.

Today, more than ever before, the unity of the Nation is in danger of being eroded through the cynical manipulation of the masses by politicians and unscrupulous power-brokers. Here also our media has a vital role to play. Information is the main input to development. The basic structural changes in the society mainly political and economic are related to the flow of information.

(i) Irresponsible Reporting

In the last article we had seen that the freedom of speech and communication must be among the constitutive components of development. Like any other social institution, the mass media are the responsibility of the public. In addition, they are moral agents of their own, accountable to the people they serve. “The mass media are more than aggregates derived from a series of ‘Professional’ judgments they are subject to both personal and corporate ethical scrutiny.”⁴⁵

A media man has a sacred duty to protect the society especially the youth from harmful influences. But for the most part, such media ethics are being ignored/sidetracked. Even pornography and violence are propagated by the media with unbecoming vehemence.

A good reporter is considered as a person of influence, a purveyor of wisdom, a mould of opinions and a shaper of society. What a reporter writes inevitably touches other people's lives and newspaper stories really can ruin lives, just as they can make celebrities and causes of the obscure and dispossessed. Consequently, no other profession, perhaps, is so obsessed with ethics, nor so roundly condemned for its transgressions. Detached, impersonal, unprejudiced reports are the necessity of our time. Unfortunately in Kerala, we can see several reports which are fabricated by journalists even in our large scale newspapers.

Responsible journalists always stick to the facts and never insert his personal opinion. He/She will be discreet in the use of adjectives and surely will avoid cheap shots. Such a reporter always remembers that he is only an observer and assesses his alliances. Listen to the guidelines of the editors is the mark of a good reporter. Like any other jury he will not convict without evidence. He knows that a legal defence against libel is provable truth.

Communication is a fundamental human need and a social necessity. It is not a product for consumption, like sugar, and not merchandise for profit. Communication needs to be redeemed and liberated from the culture of global capitalism and become, in all its multifarious traditional and modern forms a celebration of life-in-community.

By reporting and interpreting the news, the press has become a very important source of education and information. The news is selected on the basis of a certain value judgement with the widening scope of newspapers and other media, this media must assume a greater degree of social responsibility. Media are accountable not only to the public but also to other social institutions for their behaviour as

means of communication. Because of its vast readership and the consequent influence, the press needs to maintain a high standard of moral responsibility. "Good journalism should not only give the public what the public wants, but it should also give them what it thinks is good for the public. In this way the press should enjoy its freedom with responsibility and balanced reports of news and views." ⁴⁶

In Kerala, the dependence of the people on the information supplied by the newspapers has increased. With this the need for accurate reporting has also increased. The superficial inaccurate treatment of news is full of dangers. Firstly, such a shabby treatment can shake man's faith in the press and secondly, misguided and misled by the inaccurate news reports, man may become a dangerous citizen.

It is obvious that getting the facts is the key to news reporting. Since the facts are so many, therefore a good reporting is the discovery of right facts. It not only involves the discovery of as many important facts as possible, but their selection as well as their presentation in such a way so as to make a comprehensible story. The importance of accuracy can well be realized, when we know that today's newspaper reader not only reads the newspaper but also listens to the radio and watches the T.V. There are some other media also. The reader will lose his faith in the newspaper as a media of information, if he reads inaccurate reports. So the responsibility of reporters increased today than ever before.

A responsible reporter will be true to the facts and figures too. In case of an interview he will quote the interviewee accurately. In his report no important link in the story will be left out. The most interesting and the most familiar person for the public in a newspaper is the reporter. For the public the reporter is the press itself. At all

important meetings, demonstrations, national and international gatherings, and trouble spots the presence of the reporter represents the mysterious and invisible power of the press. "The newspaper today is a reflex of the day to day life and this reflex is made through the stories of responsible reporters".⁴⁷

A good reporter should strictly adhere to some professional ethics in his work. Sometimes, while engaged in his profession he may come closer to some persons and develop confidential relations with them. Some persons may also tell him their personal, private and business affairs. But a responsible reporter should never betray their confidence under any circumstances by divulging the secrets which they have told him in good faith. This quality of trustworthiness increases the popularity of the reporter and he is welcomed wherever he goes. This will also enhance his reputation in all sections of the society.

One main cause of the complaint against misrepresentation in newspapers is that certain persons in the heat of excitement say things, which they do not mean. And when reported accurately in the press, they deny having said such things. This is quite common in Keralite situations. There are some such incidents which led even to the resignation of ministers in Kerala in the past few years.

If a report published in the paper is harmful and irresponsible, one can approach press council. One can give petition against the paper and against the reporter. But in India, Press Council has no power to execute punishment. It can give regulations and timely guidelines to both newspapers and newspaper men.

(ii) Politically Biased Approach

There are very few newspapers which are objective on all issues. Most of them are politically biased, over a long period. Distorting news and wrongly interpreting views is a common phenomenon in the state. Some ordinary readers still believe that anything printed is a testimonial of truth and that otherwise it will not be printed. They can not identify which is truth or false. In fact, politically biased newspapers are misleading such groups through their distorted reporting and falsification.

Politically biased newspapers could not do justification to our great national ideals – Democracy, Secularism, Political Sovereignty, Socialism etc. The Philosophy of the market - profits at any cost- is aggressively influencing the newspapers also. The social commitment is ignored. The policy-makers of the paper, not the reporters, are to be blamed for this.

Some newspapers are organs of political parties. They have their own limitations. The intelligent readers could realize this easily. But some independent newspapers give biased reports disguised as truth. This tendency is more during the time of elections.

The newspaper, as a means of communication, can better serve the public interest by educating it's readers in political values than by acting as a mere propagandist. It is better that the newspaper perform as a teacher in the school of democracy than as a spellbinder, by adopting the technique of the demagogue or charlatan to gain fame. It must be the guardian of virtues and righteousness even at the risk of life and private interest. The role of the teacher does not prohibit the newspaper from using catch words or the language of the man in the street, but it does forbid the creation of false issues and the practice of directing non rational appeals to promote self-interest and dubious

values. “The newspaper should regard the voter as a citizen rather than as a pawn in the game of politics. The newspaper should teach the citizen to act in the public interest instead of as a self seeker, a Protestant, a Catholic, A Pole, or a farmer.”⁴⁸

No intelligently run newspaper try to take partisan approach and hence loose its credibility. There is a school of thought in journalism which considers the party organs as not newspapers. “A party newspaper ceases to be a newspaper to the extent that it is the mouth piece of the government and not an organ of public opinion”.⁴⁹ Journalism without the face of party politics is not easy today. Almost all newspapers approach political news according to the colour of the flag which involve in the issue. Some political papers collect money from the public as donations as well as from the concerned party fund. Such newspapers could not write the truth without their political bias. This is not good journalism. But there is a saying in the journalistic field that good journalism is bad business. But there is no escape from acknowledging the fact that the vested journalism can’t flourish and the truth can’t pursued where there is intolerance and the crushing of dissent. “A journalist’s responsibility is to tell the truth. That is his accountability”.⁵⁰

A fully politically partisan approach will not succeed in journalism. There are so many examples to this in history. ‘The Peoples Paper’, which was the largest working class paper ever produced is a good example. In spite of its excellent circulation figures, the funds raised were not enough to compensate for its continual loss and it ceased publication in September 1858 having only six years of age.

Then what should be the relation between press and politics. In India, especially in Kerala, main papers were growing with the freedom

struggle and other social movements. They got strength from the movements because though they are part of it, they are fully committed to truth. There is another argument that journalism is not only an invention of the market economy but that journalism is the narrative form capitalism took to become a historical force.⁵¹ Whatever may be the arguments we can see that 'truth triumphs' over politically biased approach in journalism like any other field of life.

Newspapers have the power to influence political field. But if the newspapers show political favoritism and patronage, this power will loss. The same news published in various news papers in different ways. This will create confusion in readers. News papers project political personalities today. Then the neutrality of news and natural value of political events will lose. This is also due to the commercialisation of both society and the newspapers.

In Gujarat, during the time of communal riots the main newspapers – 'Gujarat Samachar' and 'Sandesh' published reports violating all media ethics. The papers show criminal nature in reporting. Both these papers have a circulation more than 10 lakhs. Yet they join with communal forces. The Editors Guild enquires about this approach to the editors of both the papers. Their answer was common. They are giving false information to defeat their opponents. This taught us that limitless competition will destroy truthful approach. In Kerala, the situation is not so crucial. But the rate of competition is high.

Another contemporary trend in our news papers is that decreasing number of investigative stories. The period between 1977 and 1991 is a golden time of political investigative reports. 1991 was the year which started globalisation in India. In the period of free market and globalisation, newspapers are giving priority to economics

than politics. So many politically planned and planted stories are published in newspapers today. This is because of economic motives of the management.

(iii) Untrue and Anti-social Elements

Both technologically and ideologically, news papers are changing. In this globalised age newspaper is a commercialised product. For a commercial activity, profit making is important. All other things are secondary. So newspapers today do not take up issues like in the period of freedom struggle. They are pretending that they are with the people and always advocating for them. This basic approach is untrue. The great ideals and visions of journalism are ignored today.

Ed Lambeth in his classic media ethics book, 'Committed Journalism', identified the principles that good journalists stand by: truth telling, justice, freedom, humaneness and stewardship. Truth is necessary for ethical journalism. Without truth, a journalist has no credibility. The principle of justice relates to a reporter's responsibility to be fair. A story should be complete, relevant, honest and straightforward. The freedom principle means that a journalist should be independent both politically and economically.

A good journalist must be sure that the story he filed is accurate, fair and the editing and positioning of it is done with an eye toward the well being of the society or causing at least possible harm. But unfortunately now in Kerala many type of prejudices rule the media world. Some newspapers write with partially true information's and false information. The news items related to even terrorist activities are reported so. When the responsible authorities deny it, the media kept silence. A news item reported by major newspapers of Kerala about 300 Kashmir trained terrorists are in the state is denied

by authorities later. Some times the media try to misguide even courts, as general public. During the time of trial, some reporters approach the case without knowing whatever things documented in the case diary. While considering the bail application of the accused in CBI custody in the Sister Abhaya case the Honourable High Court of Kerala criticised this approach of the media.⁵²

Another tendency noticed in the Press in the state is not to report the story at all. In the name of a 'balanced' approach important news are often relegated to the back pages and confined to small columns. The treatment of the story in the paper is also important and note worthy. It is a basic principle of journalism that all are equal under the media microscope. But we can taste smacks of favoritism every where. In broad sense it is an untrue approach to the reader.

Journalists are the first to take credit for stories and pictures that provoke others to action against social travesties and ill wills. So they should not give up their social consciousness and commitment. Here also a truthful approach is an absolute necessity. The newspapers are supposed to uphold certain principles. The journalistic process has to have some kind of credibility. The prime minister of India, noted it when he was addressing a press club in Chandigarh said, "Consider the fact that even one mistake, and a resultant accident, can debar an airline pilot from even pursuing his career. Consider the case that one wrong operation leading to a life lost, and a doctor can no longer inspire the confidence of his patients. One night of sleeping on the job at a railway crossing, an avoidable train accident, and a railway man gets suspended. How many mistakes must a journalist make, how many wrong stories and how many motivated columns before professional clamps are placed? How the financial media deal with important stories about the market that have no basis on facts? Investors gain and lose, markets rise and fall,

but what happens to those reporters, analysts, editors who influence these markets by their stories? ⁵³

Basic and traditional values of Journalism have not lost their relevance today. They can even now guide media decisions quite effectively. Ethics is a code of values, which govern our lives, and are thus very essential for moral and healthy life. In the context of the press, ethics may be described as a set of moral principles of values which guide the conduct of journalism.

Socially responsible, fair accurate journalism based on the theory of self-restraint is the solution in this present scenario, where journalists find themselves caught between traditional glorious values of past and today's competition and fight to survive.

There are some anti social tendencies which are seen in our present day journalism. Among them obscenity is the most important. The prevailing rule at most newspapers in the world is: Don't use any word that would make your grandmother blush. The reasonable logic is that newspapers are designed for family consumption and some families still are shocked at the language that they would hear in most new rooms that never gets into print. The language of some evening papers in Kerala is unbearable to common readers.

Accepting gifts and cash cheques is another undesirable tendency. Ours is a country of poor millions. But many times the media men show partiality to the rich people in the society. I am sorry to say that quite a few journalists do not hesitate to take even the shares from the corporate sector.

Many of the journalists are having drinking habit today. Journalistic work is a tenuous job. No one can deny that fact. But liquor is not the remedy of that. Most of the journalists are not realise

this. Some press conferences, even in Kerala are followed by cocktail parties. This is a bad tendency because it gives tarnished image about journalists to the public. Also it's a fact that the drink evil destroys ones health, wealth and intellectual capacities gradually. Swadeshabhmani K. Ramakrishnapillai, one of the forefathers of Malayalam journalism noted this in his famous book 'Vrithantha Pathrapravarthanam' far before.

Another anti social element is found in crime reporting. Crime is news in all societies, in every culture and at all times. Crime and criminals assume a lot of importance in journalism. Malayalam press reports use crime to sell the papers and therefore commercialisation of news is the main objective of crime reporting in the state. Ethics is therefore ignored, particularly when the crimes are of a sensational nature. Reports are mixed with all sorts of views, speculations, biases, pre-conceived notions, hearsay information, etc. The ISRO espionage case may be cited as an example. Even reputed and widely circulated Malayalam dailies brought out serialised stories containing truth, half-truth and falsehood. This type of approach to crimes is detrimental to our society.

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