CHAPTER II

THE JOURNALIST
Newspapers are a source of information for the public about the others. Democracy requires that the public should have the information about political ideas and events for the rational judgements on politicians, the Government in time. Newspapers exist for being read. If they fail in that, their failure is absolute, whatever other merits they may abundantly possess. Moreover newspapers are, by their nature, made at least as much by those who read them as by those who edit and write them. They are as good or as bad as their publics allow, for the greatest newspaper in the world has no future if it can not get and hold a public. It lives by and for the day. The present, not the future, is its judge. The tastes of the moment, not those of tomorrow, are its support.
2.1. The Press as agent of political development:

Democratic government rests upon and requires the exercise of a well informed and rational opinion by the great bulk of the citizens. But if the press fails to supply the requisite material for the purpose, the formation of an alert and intelligent public opinion, which is so essential for the successful working of a democratic government, will become an impossibility. The press possesses the potential for strengthening the foundation of democracy which believes in continuance of the governors on the seat of power as long as those governed by them desire it. As one viewing things on their behalf, the press analyses the pros and cons of all the problems: political, social and economic, and provides its well considered opinion through the newspapers. On matters
of national interest, the press recruits the support of the masses, gets them thoroughly committed and involved, and thereby ultimately a climate of participation comes up. The masses become active and the democracy becomes participant. It should not, however, suggest that all newspapers need view things from one perspective or support one another on each problem. The consensus of the journalists should be on the basic values of democracy, national interest and public opinion. The press can make and unmake democracy. If the newspapers are honest and unsparing with regard to the exposure of weaknesses as also unhealthy features of administration, without sensationalising them, then it would be doing a great service to the cause of democracy. For, in a democracy, it is the duty of the press to point out when "the emperor has no clothes". If the press does not do it, nobody else will. The emperor will continue to delude himself that he is
dressed in all the regalia. It might prove too bad for himself and for the welfare of his subjects. The press discharges a vital duty in democracy by serving the government as the mirror of public opinion, so that the government could see how they look like in the public eye and adjust their face, actions and policies, in time, accordingly.

1. As a story goes, an emperor, in good old days, had to move naked on the street because a "wonderful robe" said to have been put on by him really did not exist. None dared point out to the emperor that he was naked. This offended the King and all others in the society. Had there been a free press, it could have prevented such happenings. The role of the press in democracy is to point out the lacunae with the governors.
The principles of journalism are interlinked with what a newspaper should be and what it is expected to do. Its main job is to discover and report what is happening, mostly to people, what people know, what they think of and how they react. This job implies responsibilities, and it should be the responsibility of the editor to guard zealously the interest of the public as newspaper is a public institution. As the formulator of the newspaper's policy, the editor should satisfy himself of the propriety of the publicity he gives to things and issues, apart from justifying his audience of his own statements and reports.

In reporting faithfully, the newspaper bears in mind its independence, responsibility, sincerity, truthfulness, impartiality, and fair play. Journalists are influential and get to know leading personalities including important officials. In the truthful performance of their duties, they should not use influence
with them for purposes other than gathering news. The official version can ignore the other side of an issue. Therefore, all materials given by officials cannot be accepted at face-value. A hard-working journalist tends to get down to these events/versions and tries to unearth the sub-surface dynamics of the problem.

2.3. The Editor and Advertisement:

However, the editor, in the interest of the survival of the newspaper, may require some advertisement and thus strengthen the financial position of the paper. He should strike a balance between the public interest and the interest of the press. Any failure to evolve a sound balance may cause a degeneration. The advertisements should not eat into space which is normally devoted to news and other editorial matters. Here the editor's role is to see that interference with the news is uncalled for in the interest of the public.

2.4. Editor of the neutral channel:

The editor has to make up his mind that he is not to be shaken from the very root. In so far as
the editor does not care for what use readers make of the information he gives them, it can be said that his newspaper is simply a 'neutral' channel of communication, feeding news of events and reports of people's opinions to its readers.

The editorial is the original output of the editor's mental process. He chooses a subject, analyses it from his point of view and presents it to the audience that looks to him for views and guidance. Even if he is unconcerned with how the people view him as also his views, his choice of the editorial may injure or promote the prospects of some individual or institutions. An honest editor, however, does not direct it to the achievement of particular selfish or sectarian objective. His very existence is for promoting the freedom of thought and expression. He must, in minimum, make statements based on facts and assert views in his newspaper. The statements he makes must be substantiated by him. The views he asserts must be objectively held. Before he asserts his views, he should give adequate scope and latitude to dissenting opinions in his newspaper in form of
articles, letter to the editor, etc. The basic duty of the editor is to report matters straight. At times, due to exigencies of matter of fact to be reported to the public, he adopts an angle reporting. So as to bring to the limelight the real events that may have been concealed from the public eye, there arises the necessity for angle reporting. As a matter of fact, the editor should not involve himself in such matters nor indulge in such matters while reporting for the sake of the public. In other words, he should act, think and behave like an editor. Degeneration from this not only earns him bad reputation but also sounds a death-knell for his paper. He gives lead to main events of the day and takes care to serve them properly to the public so that while making a good opening he may stir the public sentiments on matters reported in the paper.

2. For greater details on this point, please see Polagobinda Shastry's An Introduction to Mass Communication, Orissa State Bureau of Text Book Preparation and Production, Bhubaneswar, 1977.
2.5. **The editor is an uncompromising one:**

The editor should not believe in any policy of appeasement. Rather, he should report matters of "news" as "news". As a disseminator of views, the daily newspaper has to carry out its functions, and the editor being the uncrowned king of the Fourth Estate, has to run along the line with zeal, enthusiasm and good will for the public.

2.6. **The editor's ceaseless search:**

The editor is concerned with a ceaseless search for news. His paper is, as Taylor describes, a three-ring circus, daily presenting to its patrons the greatest show on earth, his vocation that of scavenging the world for turns that will give the customers a thrill: here a murder, there a political quarrel; on this page a film star in process of falling

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out of love, on that a rumour of war; in this column a man who has lost them; a simple tale of youthful idealism headlined here, a dash of brutality and passion there.

2.7. Sanctity of Source:

A free press is the society's major strength. The right to protect the source of information is essential for an editor or reporter to meet his full responsibilities towards the public. In case his right to protect the source is encroached upon, he may not prove effective in collecting news on persons placed in important power-positions, since the informer may in all probability, face prosecution for his act. The informer provides the initial clue to the editor who builds the super-structure on this small clue.

2.8. **Ingredients of the editor's independence:**

The government, should, through legislation, assure him of the security of his tenure. It should also be the business of the Press council to see to it that the editorial independence is not interfered with. Consequently, the editor of a newspaper should have the right to gather the news, select them for inclusion in the newspaper, print the news so selected and, then, comment on these news. Being a conscience-keeper of the public, he should not fail the public. Nor should he allow his integrity to be tossed while discharging duties of the conscience-keeper of the public. The public, more often, look up to him for guidance and for safeguarding their interest at the cost of his personal safety or of his personal inconveniences or both at times.

If a newspaper is a building, the editor is its architect. The reporter may be the supplier of building materials whereas the sub-editor becomes the building contractor. On the materials supplied
depends the ultimate strength and durability of the structure\(^5\). Thus, the reporter has the most careful work to do, he is to be objective in his reports. He should separate the news from his views.

2.9. Journalist and his self-image:

An ideal journalist is not affiliated to any political party or group, as in that case, there might be a possibility of the news items from his pen being influenced by his partisan considerations. He acts as the public conscience-keeper and enjoys the status of great importance. More pertinent is the freedom he enjoys. He is alert that his freedom may be in danger in various ways. The journalist often obtains vital information on a pledge of secrecy. He refuses to reveal his source for, otherwise he will be a spineless agent. His business becomes more tough in the time of doing some investigative\(^6\) and interpretative reporting.

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6. A journalist can investigate and chase after facts having social or political relevance with full confidence only if he is sure that the law will not be invoked against him for performing his legitimate duties. If he is not sure of his personal safety, it is not journalism which suffers, it is the public who is the ultimate loser.
2.10. **Journalist as an investigator:**

No event occurs in solitary splendour. When a textile strike takes place, it is not just a group of workers downing tools. There is a background to the happening, the circumstances in which it took place, and the question whether there was such a strike before. All these are elements of investigative reporting which should be pursued by the journalist with a serious purpose of unearthing truths and bringing them to limelight.

2.11. **Journalist as an interpreter:**

The information is not complete unless there is an explanation offered by the journalist on the totality of the situation. Therefore, there is need to investigate, to find out the 'why' of the
situation, and to interpret to convey a definite meaning of the situation so existed, to the readers.

2.12. **Journalist as an opinion-leader:**

Opinion indicates positive taking of sides. It takes the antecedents and the primary factors into account. It implies a judgement over the event, moreover, it involves an exhortation, or it calls upon either readers or officials to avoid or take a certain course of action. It recommends definite steps. Where the formation of this opinion is objectively made, the journalist becomes a real leader, he makes a significant contribution to democracy. Editorials on this subject would come out with suggestions on how to prevent bad happenings, or where the authorities had failed. It will be noticed that the same happening can thus be

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7. Suppose the Prime Minister has decided on some one for a key-job. It is not enough just to report it. He may have been chosen because of one of a variety of possible reasons. The average reader is not aware of any of these or the actual reason. The journalist has to carry out the task of interpreting the decision for him. The interpretation is thus the objective appraisal of a given situation.
treated in some other different ways. Interpretative reporting requires unambiguous language. The journalist concerned has to specialise in a field of coverage. This alone will enable him to search for the right type of background details needed.

2.13. **Journalists' taste colours his report:**

If he is a political correspondent, he interprets political events. Similarly, others can specialise in trade unions, business, agriculture, science, or social welfare. Such work needs the willingness to work hard and do some research. He must be considered in terms of importance to the issue of writing, and serve as the means of collecting varying views in order to make an objective assessment of the situation.

2.14. **Journalist's love for truth:**

Journalism can be compared to priesthood to which men are ordained by a positive commission. One
must really dash for a real peril - a boundless curiosity and love for truth, and a special and marked facility of rapid assimilation and comprehension. A journalist, true to his profession, should love his work, and be proud of it. No matter how humble his department is, he should make the very best of it.

2.15. Feminine delicacy and masculine judgement:

For the first duty of a journalist "is to be alive, and he who does not feel does not live". One quality should be born in the journalist: instinct or intuition; flair, a keen scent both for news and other things. He should know what the public will want to read about tomorrow morning. These delicacies of perception are feminine, but require to be controlled by masculine judgement. Once a journalist, always a journalist, that is the rule and before choosing the career of a journalist, the devotion to calling should be the sole motive power. His words carry wider and farther than the priest's and he preaches the gospel
of humanity. He is not a king; but he nurtures and
trains the king, and the land is ruled by the public
opinion he evokes and shapes. There is no journalist
without experience of journalism, but there are doctors
who have no practice and chemists who have never
earned their living by chemistry. Morris Rosenberg
says people with low self-esteem are more likely than
others to retreat into a private world of daydreaming.
A journalist, who does not work properly with a spirit
of dedication to the cause and interest of the public,
fails to uphold his self-esteem in the society. While
a journalist plays a very important social role, he
does it only as long as he continues to behave like a
journalist. When he begins to imagine a different role
for himself, he does not do his job properly.

2.16. Proprietor and Newspaper:

The structure of newspaper ownership is
important both by the test of public interest and that
of editorial freedom. The pattern of editorial working

8. Rosenberg, Morris., in "Self-Esteem and concern
with Public Affairs", Public Opinion Quarterly,
Vol. 26 (1962) pp. 210-211.
varies according to the pattern of ownership. Where an industrialist owns a newspaper directly, it has appeared to be diminution of journalistic values and the subordination of public interest. If the publisher lives by his newspaper, he may be said to owe some responsibility to the public. According to the press Registrar's reports, the joint stock company is the predominant form of ownership. It means, usually the dominance of a few shareholders as directors. It is said that some of the newspapers were partial in the presentation of news in respect of the financial interests with which they were allied. The defects could be traced to ownership or editorial working. The trust form of ownership seemed to be the best as acceptance of the priority of public interest over private interests, though no particular form of trust could be suggested. The basic right of the proprietor to have his point of view expressed through the paper was not denied, but the concern was to avoid the transformation of the editor into a spineless man and more so a tool in the hands of the proprietor. The most sacred part of proprietorship is to entered into
a robust understanding with the editor. Still, unless ownership is diffused and broad-based, arbitrariness and self-interest become inevitable. The ownership structure is important from any point of view and, in an industry in which competition is more imperfect than in others, is bound to lead easily to concentration. It has become highly necessary to put newspaper companies on a democratic basis and for representation of employees on managements without impinging on freedom of expression. If freedom of information is to be safeguarded, every effort must be made to combat the worst consequences of concentration. In this audiovisual age, the daily paper still remains the primary means of educating the citizen. If the profession and industry are conscious of their roles they can establish cooperation in the larger interest of the public. Whatever the ownership pattern, the basic principles of sound working have to be set up through discussion and self-criticism. Then only it will be possible to maintain and raise standards of performance of the

newspaper. And it is possible to envisage future growth, and development of press industry for the sole cause and interest of the public.

Big business involvement with newspapers has certain implications which deserve consideration. The obvious one is the intrusion of values and standards obtaining in business into journalism. With regard to proprietor-editor relationship in many newspapers, editors are talked out or even turned out. More often editors fit themselves into the ownership pattern. However, there are newspapers which have lived long and established traditions of their own, imposing restrictions automatically not only on the editor but on the shareholders. When there is a change in ownership, the tradition is disturbed, and whatever might be the fortunes of the newspaper, its
personality and character suffer. The proprietor no doubt should delegate to the editor a measure of individual authority so that as it should be his ultimate responsibility to carry out the policies of the newspaper in effective manner so as to prevent the newspaper from forsaking its traditional value, otherwise it may ultimately lead to degeneration of its value as a newspaper. The proprietor's frequent interference

10. To explain it further whatever might be the fortunes of the newspaper, its personality and character suffer if traditions are not adhered to, and traditions being valuable because they perpetuate themselves and establish the climate of the newspaper, making easy the editor's relations with everyone.

Even an editor cannot scrutinise, the whole newspaper; the proprietor or anybody on his behalf cannot expect to do anything more, and this limitation is greater in respect of newspaper chains. The proprietor or the editor, while entitled to exercise preventive care, can ultimately establish control only in post-mortem work. Even the interfering proprietor has no unlimited power, for arbitrary exercise of his power would defeat its own ends and the newspaper suffers. In the publication of news, there is public interest to be served which no editor with a professional conscience can ignore and which no proprietor can temper with. The final limitation is that somebody at the end of the day has to put a newspaper together and decide what it is going to be on that day.
may be reducing it to sausages or fish and chips and he might be destroying overnight the personality of the newspaper which is a deposit of years. Ultimately, quality is the test, and the quality depends on traditions, the traditions of individual newspaper or of the profession. The problem ultimately will transcend proprietorial and editorial interests which, however delicate and intractable they might seem, will ultimately have to adjust themselves as a part of the larger public interest. Jawaharlal Nehru said he did not like press barons or barons of any kind, and he wanted editors to have the freedom necessary to function freely, to develop character, and impress their character on the newspapers they edited. The greater the freedom the greater is the responsibility.