

Address

By

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Most revered and respected Rashtrapati, hon. Minister of Information and Broadcasting Shri Priya Ranjan Das Munshi, Chairman of the Press Council Hon. Justice G N Ray, other Members of the Press Council of India, delegates who have come from all parts of the globe, very distinguished journalists, ladies and gentlemen:

First of all, I thank hon. Justice Ray for inviting me on this very important occasion of the celebration of the 40 years of the Press Council of India.

Justice Ray has given a panoramic view of the world of journalism. We all look forward to the words of wisdom of our Rashtrapati and hon. Shri Priya Ranjan-ji. Therefore, I am going to speak very shortly about the perception of one, who gets impacted by journalism, like any other citizen does in India.

All that I can say is that we are living in a world, which is bombarded with information. We have information daily from several newspapers. We have television channels going round the clock for 24 hours, making news. Then we have the Internet, Website and so on. Of course, we have the wonderful mobile, which is also a means of communication.

Therefore, we are facing a great revolution, and in that revolution some wonderful things are coming out, wonderful ideas are coming up. Communication is much better, knowledge is much better. Alongside it are also some aspects, which I think we do need to have a look at. A Seminar like this, which is going to deliberate on “Journalism, Ethics and Society in the Age of Globalization”, has come at a moment when we do need to introspect, when we do need to reflect.

***Hon’ble Chief Minister, Government of NCT of Delhi on November 16, 2006 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi**

Commercialization is one aspect. Is it news or is it commercialization? That is the question mark. One begins to wonder, are we going to be able to sift whether it is purely commercial, it is purely sensational, does it have a value, which is going to impact our life in the long run and also impact our thinking processes?

The second aspect is, what are the ethics? The news that we read, is it biased? Has it been given because it is sensational or does it have a good impact? Who is it trying to impact? Who is it trying to change? Who is it trying to influence? How many people are going to read it and benefit out of it? These are the questions that arise.

Every morning when you take up the newspaper, very often, I must tell you very frankly, you take up a newspaper and you put it on the side, because you know what its stance is going to be. Is it going to be commercial stance, or is it a biased stance, political or social, or is it something, which is done just because it means that it is the sensational news of the day?

Then, coming to society, how do newspapers influence society? Even today, despite the fact that we have other means of information, that is, the television etc. the newspaper or the written journalism still remains our best hope and something which all of us believe in much more than anything else, the visual in the television screen, or the message on the mobile phone or a look at the Internet can do. When you read the written word, it leaves a lasting impact. When we are talking of the lasting impact and when we know the sanctity of the written word, then I do believe that those who do the written journalism have a much greater role and much greater responsibility, both in the development of our nation, in the preservation of our democracy and its value in our society.

So, in spite of the fact that many other competitors have come to challenge the written word, the written word still remains the unchallenged king of journalism. I am sure this would be borne in mind by all those who have come from far and wide and those who are going to be discussing where we are going in journalism.

Do we need to have ethics? Do ethics need to be imposed or they should be self-generating? How are we influencing society? Are we able to sift truth from untruth or are we just going by what a biased journalistic paper or writing may be giving? Is it news,

which is worthy of impacting, or is it just a sensational piece, which will pass by the evening or when the day is out?

So, these are the issues that you would be discussing. They are important for us because we are the ones who get influenced by all of you, the whole society can be influenced by all of you, the children can be influenced by you, the grown up can be influenced by you, the older people will get influenced by you, the decision makers and takers will be influenced by you.

Therefore, your responsibility as the fourth pillar of democracy, which has been established all over the democratic world, becomes an extraordinarily important one. In fact, many of us not only get recognition and, therefore, take our decision through your pen, but our thinking also goes the way your pen writes.

So, I wish you all the very best. I do hope that out of this will emerge a new kind of journalism, because we do feel sometimes that the veracity of the news items, even in the headline, sometimes becomes doubtful. Let that not happen where people begin to doubt whether the headlines are also just there because they are sensational, or does it contain really genuine piece of news.

Thank you very much.

