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JOURNALISM, ETHICS AND SOCIETY IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

Symposia Document

“The sole aim of journalism should be service. The newspaper press is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges the whole country-side and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy. If the control is from without, it proves more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within.”

- **MAHATAMA GANDHI** -

The two-day International Symposia held at New Delhi, India, by the Press Council of India on the occasion of the National Press Day and its 40th anniversary, focused on globalization, media and ethics and role of self-regulatory bodies of the media. Discussion followed two clear streams – the first was about the globalization, its history, nature and implications for media worldwide and India. The symposia felt that globalization was not merely an economic phenomenon, being an off-shoot market-dominated corporate capitalism, but also a very powerful cultural content, shaped by the marriage between advertising and television. The second was the role of the media in terms of ethics in the context of globalization. The second stream as a natural corollary deliberated the issue of regulating media conduct and the role of regulatory authorities. The media laws and the role of the Press Councils/Media Council in encouraging the media to follow ethics specific to respective countries, the nature of their regulatory functions and their success were also discussed. The general consensus was that while it was important to maintain ethical standards, compulsion could well be counter productive. The Press Councils rely on the strength of their moral authority, expressing

it in extreme cases in the form of censure of the errant media to ensure conformity with the values and moral code of an ethical democracy. In the process, they took cognizance of both reportage and comments by media, as well as, in the case of India, infringement of media freedom by authority which made it difficult for media units to discharge their responsibilities. The host Council stressed on its dual role comprising the maintenance of ethical values and protection of journalistic freedom and encouraged other countries to devise mechanism whereby the Councils would play an active role in promoting freedom of the press.

The Symposia appreciated the guidance of H.E. The President of India, Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam in setting out the following eight- point action plan for the media: -

1. A media movement for development.
2. Media becoming a development partner in the programme of PURA (Providing Urban amenities in Rural Area) – connectivity being the focus.
3. Celebrating every aspect of the success of the people of the State and the Nation particularly in rural areas.
4. Evolution of corruption free country.
5. Promoting an enlightened society, which means education with value system, transforming religion into a spiritual force and building economic prosperity of the nations based on their core competence. For this mission, a unique world body is essential.
6. Print media and electronic media contribution in bringing honour to the womanhood.
7. Scanning and digitizing all old issues of the print media since its establishment and store in a digital library to preserve national heritage and make it available for research.
8. Evolving a media code of conduct among themselves for ensuring that all reporting is analysed, evaluated, and researched prior to publication. This is essential for peace, prosperity and safety of the nation.

Based upon the deliberations, the conclusions and recommendations of the Symposia were drawn up.

CONCLUSIONS

1. While media should play a participatory role in national development, it should take a lead in highlighting the core competencies rather than only highlighting sensationalism. The core competencies of the common man and their role in development should figure prominently in the media.
2. While the need for constant introspection of the functioning of media by journalists themselves cannot be underestimated, the importance of an independent regulatory mechanism of media and for the media with due public participation is an accepted perception in all countries.
3. In media scenario, by and large, entertainment has become sovereign and serious issues are trivialized.
4. Media is shifting gradually out of a government hands into private hands and conglomeration is taking roots, resulting into citizen centric to consumer centric media.
5. Advertisements are important constituent in impacting societal attitudes and opinions
6. Irresponsible advertising in electronic media has done away with socially responsible marketing in the environment of globalization and instead racism, sex, violence and superstitions are being encouraged.
7. It is not sufficient only to criticize the publication of vulgar and consumeristic advertisements but also to create awareness against them to empower the people.
8. Organisation of orientation workshops for owners and managers of the media companies for enlightening them on relevance of socially responsible marketing are the need of the hour. This could be done through assistance from Academic Institutions and NGOs, which would also enable media companies to evolve their own code of conduct. Press Councils can play a facilitating role.
9. Citizens' participation and participation of other citizens' interest protection institutions are essential to fortify the efforts of the Press Councils.
10. Entry of inexperienced and untrained young journalists in ever expanding world of media at low salaries has resulted in the deterioration of quality of journalism, thereby affecting its ethics. Therefore, it is essential to monitor the quality of training being imparted to young journalists at the threshold of their careers. For this, a core curriculum needs to be drawn up and the instructions imparted should be monitored and regulated to ensure uniform quality of education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The basic values of journalism which are accepted and respected all over the world must be followed in all countries.
2. The globalization warrants that an effective code of ethics be evolved, followed and observed by the media internationally for presentation of news, views and advertisements.
3. In the fast changing scenario of media reporting in the context of globalization, it is imperative that there be proper training of the media persons, which should focus on creating an appreciation of ethical conduct of journalists and to give effect to this, the quality of media teaching and training need to be improved, monitored and regulated under the guidance of Press/Media Councils.
4. The Press Councils and similar bodies may take steps to facilitate research on the societal impacts of media globalization.
5. Without underestimating the importance of self-introspection, there is need for self-regulatory bodies, either voluntary or statutory, to provide a supportive role to promote the independence of the media and also prompt and encourage them towards responsible journalistic practices.
6. For the wholesome improvement of media conduct, the regulatory bodies should have jurisdiction in respect of all media.
7. Closer and regular interaction is imperative amongst the media regulatory bodies operating in different countries so as to draw on each others experience to evolve more effective mechanism for the regulation of the media without intervention of any vested interest.

The Symposia at its close:

Recorded its appreciation of the efforts and hospitality offered by the Press Council of India in facilitating exchange of views and information amongst media persons, academicians, Press/Media Councils of different countries;

Noted its appreciation of the inspiring guidance received from the President of India, Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam, while inaugurating the Symposia;

Expressed confidence that similar meets in future will provide a platform for promotion of self-regulation in the media; and

Reaffirmed adherence to the concept of free and responsible media world over.

