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## **NEWSPAPERS- AN INTRODUCTION**

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### **LESSON STRUCTURE:**

This lesson shall provide an introduction to newspapers. We shall start with the general features of newspapers. Then we shall discuss about the various aspects of newspapers. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Presentation of Content
  - 1.2.1 Newspapers- An Overview
  - 1.2.2 Newspaper as a Medium of Advertising
  - 1.2.3 Criticism of Newspaper Journalism
  - 1.2.4 Organizational Structure of Newspapers
  - 1.2.5 The Future of Newspapers
- 1.3 Summary
- 1.4 Key Words
- 1.5 Self-Assessment-Questions (SAQs)
- 1.6 References/Suggested Reading

### **1.0 OBJECTIVES:**

A newspaper is a publication containing news, information and advertising. It is usually printed on low-cost paper called newsprint. It may be general or special interest, most often published daily, and sometimes published weekly.

The first printed newspaper was published in 1605. And ever since, newspaper has thrived in the face of competition from newer media such as magazines, radio, television, and the Internet, etc.

Recent developments on the Internet are posing major challenges to newspapers. Circulation of newspapers is declining in most countries. Advertising revenue, which makes up the bulk of a newspaper's income, is shifting from print to the Internet and other media. This has resulted in a general decline in newspaper profits.

We shall discuss about these and other related aspects of newspapers. The objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- *To have an Overview of Newspapers*
- *To Know About the Newspaper as a Medium of Advertising*
- *To Know About the Criticism of Newspaper Journalism*
- *To Know About Organizational Structure of Newspapers*
- *To Know About the Future of Newspapers*

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION:**

Most of the newspapers are of general-interest as these are meant for the general public. Only a few newspapers are of special interest. The general-interest newspapers usually carry current news covering political events, crime, business, culture, sports, and opinions (editorials, columns, etc). Newspapers use photographs to illustrate stories, they also use other illustrations and cartoons. Other specific features newspapers are: editorial opinions, sports columns or a sports section, weather news and forecasts, advice columns, reviews of movies, plays, restaurants, etc. Newspapers also include gossip columns, comic strips and other entertainment related material such as crosswords, Sudoku and horoscopes, humor section, food section, etc.

In this lesson, we shall discuss about the various aspects of newspapers.

## **1.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:**

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- Newspapers- An Overview
- Newspaper as a Medium of Advertising
- Criticism of Newspaper Journalism
- Organizational Structure of Newspapers
- The Future of Newspapers

### **1.2.1 NEWSPAPERS- AN OVERVIEW:**

To be well informed is to be well placed in life, for which every citizen aspires. The citizens of a country can make the right choices only if they are well informed i.e. if there is a free flow of information. Hence, newspapers and other media are pivotal to a civilized society embarking on an information revolution.

To be well informed, in addition to reading newspapers, one also needs quality magazines, which provide special insight. While, television and radio break news within hours (sometimes within minutes, as illustrated on numerous occasions) after the event, one has to wait for the newspaper and magazines to get the details and analyses.

In a larger sense, the electronic media, which comprises television and radio, is complementary to the print media, which comprises of newspapers and magazines. The term 'media' also includes advertising, publishing and film production, and denotes a channel between the masses and the communicator.

Content-wise, newspapers could be classified as political newspapers and economic newspapers. Almost all general newspapers are obsessed with politics, which forms their staple diet. Crime comes a close second after politics. It is followed by sports and business and commerce.

Economic newspapers give greater coverage to business and financial news to cater to the managerial or entrepreneurial class of readership.

Region-wise, the newspapers could be classified as national newspapers and city newspapers. With the coming of television, many national newspapers in the US began to focus on one city covering it extensively to capture the market. And the result was each city has one major newspaper and a competitor and just a couple of newspapers that could be called national.

It is happening in India, too. Many newspapers have got dozens and dozens of editions. Some Hindi newspapers and other regional language papers like *Eenadu* in Andhra Pradesh have started editions at even small cities and towns.

Quality-wise, newspapers are classified as popular newspapers and quality newspapers; the former cater to the mass of middle class, tailor-made for their education and aspirations, while the latter are cater to higher standards and are status symbols of the upper and upper middle class.

Based on the time of release, the newspapers are classified as morning newspapers, afternoon newspapers and evening newspapers. In India, the concept of an evening newspaper is not popular and in the afternoon, we have the tabloids, denoting the size of the newspaper which is half that of the regular newspapers. The normal newspaper size is technically called a broadsheet. Most modern newspapers are in two sizes:

- *Broadsheets: 600 mm by 380 mm (23½ by 15 inches), generally associated with more intellectual newspapers, although a trend towards “compact” newspapers is changing this.*
- *Tabloids: half the size of broadsheets at 380 mm by 300 mm (15 by 11¾ inches) and often perceived as sensationalist in contrast to broadsheets.*

To compete with the big newspapers and sell more, the tabloids indulge in sensational journalism and sometimes display semi-nude pictures, which is not in keeping with good newspaper practices.

The functions of the newspapers like other media are fourfold: to inform, to educate, to entertain and to enlighten. Media also perform as vehicles of persuasion. And above all, the media is the watchdog of the freedom of the society so that the hard-won freedom of the people is not imperiled by autocratic, dictatorial or fanatical regimes.

A daily newspaper is issued every day, often with the exception of some national holidays. On Saturdays and Sundays, editions of daily newspapers are larger, include more specialized sections and advertising, and cost more.

Most nations have a few newspapers that circulate throughout the whole country. These are called national newspapers, as contrasted with a local newspaper serving a city or region. In India there is not even one newspaper that can be called national. In the United States and Canada, there are few truly national newspapers. The Wall Street Journal and USA Today in the US and The Globe and Mail and The National Post in Canada are national newspapers.

The owner of the newspaper is the publisher. The person responsible for content is the editor. In certain cases the editor is called the editor-in-chief, or executive editor.

Zoning or localization occurs when advertising and editorial content change to reflect the area to which the product is delivered. The editorial content often may change merely to reflect changes in advertising, the quantity and layout of which affects the space available for editorial, or may contain region-specific news. In rare instances, the advertising may not change from one zone to another, but there will be different region-specific editorial content. As the content can vary widely, zonal or regional editions are often produced in parallel.

Newspapers are usually printed on inexpensive, off-white paper known as newsprint. Since the 1980s, the newspaper industry has largely moved away from lower-quality letterpress printing to higher-quality, four-color process, called offset printing. In addition, desktop computers, word processing software, graphics software, digital cameras and digital pre-press technologies and typesetting technologies have revolutionized the newspaper production process. These technologies have enabled newspapers to publish color photographs and graphics, as well as innovative layouts and better design.

To help their titles stand out on newsstands, some newspapers are printed on coloured newsprint. For example, the Financial Times is printed on a distinctive salmon pink paper. Circulation and readership The number of copies distributed, either on an average day or on particular days, is called the newspaper's circulation and is one of the principal factors used to set advertising rates. Circulation is not necessarily the same as copies sold, since some copies or newspapers are distributed without cost. Readership figures are higher than circulation figures because more than one person reads newspaper copies.

In India, The Times of India is the largest English newspaper, with 2.14 million copies daily. According to the 2006 National Readership Study, the Dainik Jagran is the most-read, local-language (Hindi) newspaper, with 21.2 million readers.

### **1.2.2 NEWSPAPERS AS A MEDIUM OF ADVERTISING:**

Most newspapers make nearly all their money from advertising; the income from the customer's payment at the newsstand is small in comparison. For that reason, newspapers are inexpensive to buy, and some are free. The portion of the newspaper that is not advertising is called editorial content, editorial matter.

In recent years, the Advortorials have emerged as a major option. Advortorials are most commonly recognized as opinion-editorials or advertising related message disguised as editorial

content, which third parties pay a fee to have included in the paper. Advortorials commonly advertise new products or techniques, such as a new design for golf equipment, a new form of laser surgery, or weight-loss drugs. The tone is usually closer to that of a press release than of an objective news story.

Publishers of commercial newspapers strive for higher circulation, so that advertising in their newspaper becomes more effective, allowing the newspaper to attract more advertisers and to charge more for the service. But some advertising sales also market demographics: some newspapers might sacrifice higher circulation numbers in favor of an audience with a higher income.

Some newspapers provide some or all of their content on the Internet, either at no cost or for a fee. In some cases, free access is available only for a matter of days or weeks, after which readers must register and provide personal data. In other cases, free archives are provided.

**ECONOMICS OF NEWSPAPERS:** Running a newspaper involves a lot of expenses. The major expense is *newsprint*. It is the biggest cost. Wages of employees form the second largest cost. The sources of revenue are from the following sources:

*Subscriptions: 20%*

*Classified ads: 60%*

*Display ads: 20%*

So advertising plays an important role here. A newspaper can accommodate more advertising, in ways that radio and TV cannot. And newspapers must focus on advertisers who need to get to its particular readership. Credibility is the key here- a credible paper can sell itself at a high price, and charge more for its advertising.

A question arises here: What makes an newspaper profitable? *Lower the price, increase circulation, kill competitors, capture their advertising, then bring the price back up.*

### **1.2.3 CRITICISM OF NEWSPAPER JOURNALISM:**

Since newspapers began as a journal (record of current events), the profession involved in the making of newspapers began to be called journalism. Much emphasis has been placed upon the accuracy and fairness of the journalists. In the yellow journalism era of the 19th century many newspapers in the United States relied on sensational stories that were meant to anger or

excite the public, rather than to inform. The more restrained style of reporting that relies on fact checking and accuracy regained popularity around World War II.

Criticism of journalism is varied and sometimes vehement. Credibility is questioned because of anonymous sources; errors in facts, spelling, and grammar; real or perceived bias; and scandals involving plagiarism and fabrication.

Some ways newspapers have tried to improve their credibility are: appointing ombudsmen, developing ethics policies and training, using more stringent corrections policies, and asking sources to review articles after publication.

#### **1.2.4 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF NEWSPAPERS:**

A print media organizational structure specifies its division of work activities and shows how different activities are linked. It also indicates the distribution of work activities according to specialization and refers to the hierarchy, authority, structure and relationships in the print media organization.

Since time immemorial, a newspaper organization has been defined as three-legged table, i.e., it has got three departments:

- *Editorial Department,*
- *Advertising Department, and*
- *Circulation Department.*

But today, it is much more than three-legged table. Though the above three departments are the core departments, yet many other important departments have also emerged like:

- Printing Department,
- Administrative Department,
- Accounting Department,
- Personnel Department,
- Legal Department, and
- Public Relations Department.

**EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT:** This department is headed by Chief Editor or Editor-in-Chief or Editor and is divided into several sections like News Section, Views Section, Photo Section, Computer Section, etc. The News Section is further divided into News Room and Reporter's Room. News Editor heads the News Room and it consists of many other staff like Deputy News Editors, Chief

Sub Editors, Senior Sub Editors and Sub Editors. They are all mainly responsible for editing news under the leadership of News Editor.

The Reporter's Room is further divided into Reporting Wing and Bureau Wing. The Reporting Wing is headed by Chief Reporter and it consists of staff like Senior Reporter, Sports Reporter, City Reporter, Principal Correspondent, Senior Correspondents and Correspondents. On the other hand, Chief of the Bureau heads the Bureau Wing and it also consists of Special Correspondents. The job of all of them is collection of news.

The Views Section is further divided into Editorial Wing, Article Wing, Feature Wing and Review Wing. Here the performers are, Editor, Resident Editor, Executive Editor, Associate Editors (or Deputy Editors), and Assistant Editors.

Chief Photographer heads the Photo Section and there are many other photographers and a few photo editors also. Computer In-charge heads the Computer Section and there are several other computer operators to support him.

**ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT:** The department is the most important source of revenue on which the economy of the newspaper falls back on. Hence, this department looks after the collection and publication of advertisements. There can be several sections in this department. One to look after local advertising, one for classified ads, one for general/national advertising, one for legal advertising, yet another one for preparing copy and so on.

**CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT:** The main job of Circulation Department is to raise the circulation and readership of the newspaper, timely delivery of the newspapers to the readers and collection from them.

**PRINTING DEPARTMENT:** This department is responsible for good and attractive printing including installation of machines, plant layout, composing, processing, loading, scheduling, maintenance of old machines and hiring of latest printing technologies.

**ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENT:** The main task of this department is to administer the different types of work relating to training, promotion, distribution, liaison with government departments and all those activities, which facilitate the working of other departments.

**ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT:** The primary job of this department is to monitor the accounting work like maintaining books of accounts, preparing balance sheet and other financial statements, payment, receipt, preparation of budget, financial management, etc.

**PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT:** This department takes care of all personnel functions from hiring to firing like selection, training, promotion, compensation, employee welfare, performance appraisal, retirement, etc.

**LEGAL DEPARTMENT:** In small and medium newspapers, generally the legal issues are looked after by the Administrative Department. But mostly a separate Legal Department exists in a full-fledged big newspaper.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT:** Like separate Legal Department this department is found mostly in big newspapers. This department looks after maintaining harmonious internal and external relations.

### **1.2.5 FUTURE OF NEWSPAPERS:**

The future of newspapers seems cloudy, with overall readership slowly declining in most developed countries due to increasing competition from television and the Internet. The 59th annual World Newspaper Congress, held in June 2006, reported circulation increases in only 30 of 210 countries studied. Most of the increases came in developing countries, notably China.

A report at the gathering indicated that China tops total newspaper circulation, with more than 95 million copies of papers sold every day, followed by India with 80 million—China and India are the two most populous countries in the world—followed by Japan with 70 million and the United States with 55 million.

Another growth area is a high-quality tabloid, particularly in the UK, where several of the major broadsheets are experimenting with the format. These smaller and easier to hold broadsheets practice serious journalism. And they appear to have drawn some younger readers who are otherwise abandoning newspapers.

Newspapers also face increased competition from Internet sites.

However, many believe that the Internet can itself be used to newspapers' advantage. For instance, it allows newspapers to effectively compete with broadcast journalism in presenting breaking news online in a timelier manner than printing allows. The credibility and strong brand recognition of well-established newspapers, and the close relationships they have with advertisers helps newspapers strengthening their chances of survival. The movement away from the printing process can also help decrease costs.

Some newspapers have attempted to integrate the internet into every aspect of their operations, for example with reporters writing stories for both print and online, and classified advertisements appearing in both media; others operate websites that are more distinct from the printed newspaper. Many in both camps believe that newspapers will increasingly leave breaking news to online and broadcast media, with print publications focused on comment and analysis.

Here are some important aspects with regard to the future of newspapers:

**CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS OF READERS:** Newspapers are going after younger people with graphics and entertainment news. But at the same time they must try to keep the serious readers by NOT including the popular stuff.

**COMPETITION FROM RADIO, TELEVISION, AND THE INTERNET:** Newspaper people didn't understand what was going on with television, but today they seem quite aware of what's going on with the Internet.

**IS PRINTED NEWS MORE CREDIBLE THAN NEWS ON RADIO OR TV?** Not necessarily -- nothing is more credible than seeing and hearing the person say it. But in print is more permanent, and there's more of it. The link between the newspaper and the Internet will become stronger and stronger. The Internet will take news created by the newspapers and distribute it in a new way. But if it's on the web, people want it to be updated by the minute.

**THE CUSTOMIZED NEWSPAPER:** This means a reader gets to choose the type of news and other content as also the format in which he or she wants the newspaper. A good quality IT enabled system connected to the database of a newspaper give the option to choose any kind of news, etc. and the format. Then the system prints a customized newspaper. This can be a dangerous trend -- you will read only what you already know. You will not educate yourself on the larger issues.

### **1.3 SUMMARY:**

- A newspaper is a publication containing news, information and advertising. It is usually printed on low-cost paper called newsprint. It may be general or special interest, most often published daily, and sometimes published weekly. Newspapers have thrived even in the face of competition from technologies such as radio, television, and the Internet. Circulation of newspapers is declining in most countries.
- Content-wise, newspapers could be classified as political newspapers and economic newspapers. Almost all general newspapers are obsessed with politics, which forms their staple diet. Crime comes a close second after politics. It is followed by sports and business and commerce. Economic newspapers give greater coverage to business and financial news to cater to the managerial or entrepreneurial class of readership.
- The normal newspaper size is technically called a broadsheet. Most modern newspapers are in two sizes: Broadsheets: 600 mm by 380 mm (23½ by 15 inches), generally associated

with more intellectual newspapers, although a trend towards “compact” newspapers is changing this; and *Tabloids: half the size of broadsheets at 380 mm by 300 mm (15 by 11¾ inches) and often perceived as sensationalist in contrast to broadsheets.*

- Credibility of newspapers is questioned because of anonymous sources; errors in facts, spelling, and grammar; real or perceived bias; and scandals involving plagiarism and fabrication.
- The future of newspapers seems cloudy, with overall readership slowly declining in most developed countries due to increasing competition from television and the Internet.
- Any newspaper has the following three departments: Editorial Department, Advertising Department, and Circulation Department. In addition, there are other important departments like: Printing Department, Administrative Department, Accounting Department, Personnel Department, Legal Department, and Public Relations Department.

#### 1.4 KEY WORDS:

**Newspapers:** A newspaper is a periodic publication containing news, information and advertising. It is usually printed on low-cost paper called newsprint. It may be general or special interest, most often published daily, and sometimes published weekly. The first printed newspaper was published in 1605, and newspaper has thrived even in the face of competition from technologies such as radio, television, and the Internet.

**Broadsheets:** The normal newspaper size is technically called a broadsheet. Broadsheets are 600 mm by 380 mm (23½ by 15 inches), generally associated with more intellectual newspapers, although a trend towards “compact” newspapers is changing this.

**Tabloids:** Tabloids are half the size of broadsheets at 380 mm by 300 mm (15 by 11¾ inches) and often perceived as sensationalist in contrast to broadsheets. To compete with the big newspapers and sell more, the tabloids indulge in sensational journalism and sometimes display semi-nude pictures, which is not in keeping with good newspaper practices.

**Economics of Newspapers:** Running a newspaper involves a lot of expenses. The major expense is *newsprint*. It is the biggest cost. Wages of employees form the second largest cost. The sources of revenue are from the following sources: Subscriptions- 20%; Classified ads- 60%; and Display ads- 20%.

**Editorial Department:** This department is headed by Chief Editor or Editor-in-Chief or Editor and is divided into several sections like News Section, Views Section, Photo Section, Computer Section, etc. The News Section is further divided into News Room and Reporter’s Room. News

Editor heads the News Room and it consists of many other staff like Deputy News Editors, Senior Sub Editors and Sub Editors.

**Advertising Department:** The department is the most important source of revenue on which the economy of the newspaper falls back on. This department looks after the collection and publication of advertisements.

**Circulation Department:** The main job of Circulation Department is to raise the circulation and readership of the newspaper, timely delivery of the newspapers to the readers and collection from them.

**Printing Department:** This department is responsible for good and attractive printing including installation of machines, plant layout, composing, processing, loading, scheduling, maintenance of old machines and hiring of latest printing technologies.

### 1.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. Discuss about the media scene in India in detail.
2. Write a detailed note on the newspaper scene today.
3. Discuss the recent changes in the newspaper world with examples.
4. Write a detailed note on the organizational structure of newspapers.
5. Write a note on the future of newspapers.

### 1.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

- *Reporting* by Charnley
- *Active Reporter* by James Lewis
- *Professional Journalist* by John Hohenberg
- *Professional Journalism* by Patanjali Sethi
- *Professional Journalism* by M.V. Kamath
- *News Writing* by George Hough

**INTRODUCTION  
TO  
NEWS AND JOURNALISM**

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**LESSON STRUCTURE:**

This lesson shall provide an introduction to news. We shall start with the news values. Then we shall discuss about the various *Characteristics of Good News Writing*. We shall also discuss about feature writing, editing, etc. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Presentation of Content
  - 2.2.1 News- An Overview
  - 2.2.2 News Values
  - 2.2.3 Characteristics of Good News Writing
  - 2.2.4 News Writing
  - 2.2.5 Feature Writing
  - 2.2.6 Editing
  - 2.2.7 Photo Editing
  - 2.2.8 Interviewing
- 2.3 Summary
- 2.4 Key Words
- 2.5 Self-Assessment-Questions (SAQs)
- 2.6 References/Suggested Reading

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES:**

The objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- *To Have an Overview of News*
- *To Know About the News Values*
- *To Know About the Characteristics of Good News Writing*
- *To Learn About News Writing*
- *To Know About Feature Writing*
- *To Know About Editing*
- *To Know About Photo Editing*
- *To Know About Interviewing*

## **2.1 INTRODUCTION:**

Newspapers are a printed mass medium. Newspapers use words as their major tool. A newspaper is a collection of many news stories, features, articles, editorials, etc. But they also use visuals including photographs, graphs, charts, computer graphics, drawings, etc. All these elements, words and visuals, are combined in the shape of a complete newspaper.

Newspapers educate. Newspapers entertain. They are a very powerful and effective medium of persuasion. Still the basic function of newspapers is to *inform*. Thus the major component of newspapers is *news*.

In this lesson we shall discuss about news and some important aspects related to news journalism. We shall start with the news values and the *characteristics of news writing*. We shall also discuss about features, editing, etc.

## **2.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:**

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *News- An Overview*
- *News Values*
- *Characteristics of Good News Writing*
- *News Writing*
- *Feature Writing*
- *Editing*
- *Photo Editing*

- *Interviewing*

### **2.2.1 NEWS- AN OVERVIEW:**

News is what something that we did not know before. News is something that interests people, a large number of people, even a nation or the world at large. It is what happened in North, South, East, and West, in short NSWE, which an imaginative editor rearranged to NEWS.

A beginner's definition could be: News is something that interests, excites or concerns people. News not only interests but also at times excites and at times concerns because it may be a mishap or a tragedy. John B. Bogart of the New York Sun defines News thus: *When a dog bites a man, that is not news; but when a man bites a dog, that is News.* The crux or gist of this definition is anything *unusual* is News.

Joseph Pulitzer of Pulitzer Prize fame and the publisher of the New York World defined News as: *original, distinctive, dramatic, romantic, thrilling, unique, curious, quaint, humorous, odd and apt-to-be-talked about.*

News may be broadly divided into hard news and soft news. News that has a great importance and impact on the life of a nation or people or news that has great significance or affects life of many people is termed hard news. And news that interests people but without great significance is called soft news. Every newspaper carries a mix of hard news and soft news daily.

The swearing-in of a President or Prime Minister, the presentation of the national budget, the passing of an important Bill in Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha, the assassination of a Prime Minister or a President, a major earthquake, plane crash, etc. are examples of hard news. On the other hand, the wedding of a film actor, the birthday party of a celebrity, a rock show, a beauty contest, or a campus festival are examples of soft news.

### **2.2.2 NEWS VALUES:**

There are seven news determinants or attributes upon which news is judged and selected for publication. They are Impact, Unusualness, and Prominence, which form the primary criteria and conflict, proximity, timeliness and currency, which form the secondary criteria.

The impact a news story could create on society is a good measure for including it on the front page, and when you have two such items of equal importance, you need another criterion to decide which of the two should get precedence over the other, and the unusual comes in

handy. Add to that, you have prominence, which is all about celebrities or people who matter. So your decision now is sharper in view of the three criteria at your disposal.

Conflict has an element of drama that gets attention and hence serves as a criterion for news selection. What happens in and around your city interests you more than what happened in a far-flung region. Therefore, newspapers allocate greater space for local news coverage because of the proximity factor.

Timeliness is the essence of news and is understandably a criteria for news selection. Currency is the people's viewpoint or what they talk about on a major issue, which is an important feedback for governments and media writers.

### **2.2.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD NEWS WRITING:**

Characteristics of Good News Writing (also called news values) are:

\*

Accuracy,

- \* Attribution,
- \* Balance and Fairness,
- \* Brevity,
- \* Clarity,
- \* Readability,
- \* Human interest, and
- \* Sharp observation.

The newsman should be obsessed with accuracy because one mistake can destroy the reputation of a newspaper or magazine, and it takes just fraction of a second to make one. Checking and crosschecking names, figures, and verifying facts are of utmost importance. Always attribute the news to the source so that readers can judge its credibility. “ A highly placed Defense Personnel, Finance Ministry Sources”, etc. are attributions that help readers to arrive at their own conclusions, while steering clear of the suspicion that the reporter is giving his own version of the story.

Balance and fairness form the foundation of good journalism. Balance is giving both sides of the picture, while fairness is not taking sides. It also means not providing support to political parties, institutions, communities or individuals, etc. through the columns of the newspaper. It is the attribute of a professional reporter and the duty of a sub editor to implement it.

Brevity is a great virtue in journalism appreciated by readers and editors alike. It is telling a story, as it should be, without beating around the bush. It saves time and space and wins applause when consummated to perfection.

Clarity is the ability to think clearly and translate it into paper - a quality that can take one to the higher echelons of media hierarchy. Readability has a bearing on sentence length and simple and forthright manner of expression.

The average length of a sentence should not exceed 18 words, which is standard. It is not easy to read a sentence with more than 18 words. Beyond 25 words the sentence would be very difficult to read, though some accomplished authors have far exceeded the standard and yet remained readable because of their craftsmanship.

But beginners are advised to stay out of long-winding and complicated sentence constructions. The best way is to write news stories using simple words, short and simple sentences.

Writing in a style that arouses human interest is what the craft of writing is all about. Newsmen should see the events from the readers' point of view and write the news stories keeping the reader ever in mind along with his hopes, fears and aspirations. The news writer should identify himself with the proverbial common man who does not exist but represents the silent majority whom the journalist is duty-bound to defend and protect.

Sharp observation is the hallmark of an ace communicator, particularly in the field of journalism. It recreates reality, imparts dynamism to reporting, heightens the reading pleasure and fine-tunes readers' perception.

#### **2.2.4 NEWS WRITING:**

Every new story has to have a focus, which could be a person or an event. The story emerges sharper when the focus is clear and blurred when the focus is not clear. A news story is built on a central idea (theme), sometimes on two or three central ideas. So we call it a single element story or a two-element story or a three-element story depending on the number of themes it has.

Writing the lead or the introduction is the most challenging job of a news writer. Leads are divided into two kinds: direct lead and delayed lead. Hard news stories take a direct lead while soft news and features take a delayed lead.

Direct lead answers Who, What, When, Where, Why and How (the five W's and an H) in the first two paragraphs, whereas delayed lead delays it to raise the curiosity of the reader. Direct lead is written within a word limit of 35 words, whereas Delayed Lead has no such limit.

Consider the following examples:

**Example: 1**

Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee was sworn in Prime Minister at 5.30 pm. in Rashtrapati Bhawan today. He becomes the 13th Prime Minister since Independence.

*Who: Atal Bihari Vajpayee*

*What: was sworn in as the 13th Prime Minister*

**When: at 5.30 today**

*Where: in Rashtrapati Bhawan*

*Why: (implied)*

*How: (not given)*

**Focus: Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Direct Lead/Single-element**

**Example: 2**

Congress President Sonia Gandhi has promised the people that her party would work for communal harmony and better relations with the country's neighbours, if her party is elected to power. She was addressing an election rally in New Delhi's Boat Club lawns today.

Focus: Sonia Gandhi, Direct Lead/Two-element story: (i) promises communal harmony (ii) promises better neighbourly relations (if the story elaborates the themes)

**Example: 3**

Finance Minister Yeshwant Sinha sprang a surprise by making three novel proposals in the Union Budget presented to Parliament on Friday. Business houses generating 500 jobs a year will be granted a 50% tax rebate and business houses adopting 10 backward villages will be totally exempted from taxes.

According to new measures to be taken up soon, business houses will be allowed to purchase 50% of shares in metro rails for rapid expansion of infrastructure.

Focus: Budget (an event larger than the person). Direct Lead / A three-element story.

**Example: 4**

He looked at the watch. It's 9 am. The most hectic time of the day in his career spanning 30 years. He believed in punctuality and fixed the habitual late-comers. He believed in intelligent hard work and fired sloppy managers. He believed in the power of imagination and sidetracked those without. He admired good workmanship and amply rewarded those dedicated team members who produced wonders for the company. That was his story till yesterday.

But today, CEO *Joyota Oklahoma* is a free man. His company, *Olivettee Green*, for poor performance, has fired him. Mr. Oklahoma joins the august company of William Harry and David Balfour - the CEOs who have been sacked this week. As many as 50

CEOs have been fired by the multinationals in the last six months, making it a new corporate trend.

*Focus: Delayed Lead for a feature on corporate trends.*

### **2.2.5 FEATURE WRITING:**

Features are human-interest stories about people, places or situations. Broadly, there are two kinds of features: news features and timeless features.

News features are timely features based on something in the news recently, called the news peg. Timeless features have intrinsic human interest and do not get dated. Newspaper features are short (600-700 words) and less descriptive, whereas magazine features are long (750-1500 words), more descriptive and leisurely.

Normally, magazine features are better written than newspaper features because the magazines have more time at their disposal.

Features must be original in terms of ideas and must be descriptive. They are not written in the inverted pyramid style nor the Lead confined to 35 words. But journalistic standards of accuracy, fairness and precision are applicable to features as news reports.

Features normally have single theme; they have a beginning, middle and an end, like all literary works. The beginning has to be attention grabbing, the middle a skilful exposition of the theme, and the ending memorable.

Consummate feature-writers give a twist at the end, making it a surprise ending; they sometimes end where they have started, making it a circle technique; and at other times, they simply summarize at the end, making it a summary ending.

**TYPES OF FEATURES:** There are many types of features. The classification of features is done on the basis of the type of topic chosen. Here are a few types of features:

**Personality Features:** Success stories somehow conjure up the imagination of the readers who find vicarious fulfillment in them. A good personality feature brings fourth the traits of character; newsworthiness and veracity of truth add value to it.

**Social Features:** They deal with the problems of society, like child labour, women, urban poverty and slums, bride burning and so on. To feature a problem, study persons in the thick of it, examine their world under a magnifying glass and write about it in minute detail.

**Culture Features:** Art and Culture is an evergreen field for those looking for a topic to write a feature. Interesting developments in this field can be observed and written about. But it is always better to work under a mentor since it is highly specialized field.

**Science and Technology Features:** The lea of technology has virtually left everyone breathless, and feature possibilities are endless. Almost every lab and R and D centre can offer material for scores of features.

**Career Features:** There is a great demand for career features like Choosing the Right Career and Getting Started. So great is the demand that most magazines now have a career section.

**Health Features:** Staying healthy is the common concern of all, and features on dieting, trimming, yogic cure, common remedies, gymnastics for health, how to fight tension, eye-care, heart-care, skin-care etc. offer avenues for publication.

#### **2.2.6 EDITING:**

When inexperienced and experienced reporters, correspondents and stringers file their stories, understandably, they lack a uniformity of style and readability. Reporters often work in great hurry and under pressure.

Hence, errors are bound to creep in and it calls for a scrutiny of the copy. The success of any newspaper depends largely on the efficient and judicious selection of news stories and other editorial material. While advertisement is the backbone of the newspaper industry, people buy newspapers for its news more than its advertisements. So the divergent readership must be treated to a variety of news diet to command their loyalty. Thus giving as much news within the space allotted becomes imperative which is the main function of editing.

**WHAT IS EDITING?** The editing process begins in a newspaper with the News Editor or a Chief Subeditor sorting out the copy to eliminate reports that could not be accommodated and planning the next day's page.

Only newsworthy stories get selected and are passed on to the Subeditors who check the grammar, syntax, facts and figures and logic, polish up the language and condense for economy of space. Copy is edited to highlight the 'news sense' and to impart uniformity of style.

**NEWS ROOM:** The newsroom is the hub of the entire activity in a newspaper or news agency. Called by different names, the Editorial Desk, Editorial Department or Copy Desk or News Desk,

it is the nerve centre of the newsroom. And it is here that the newspaper is planned and made everyday.

In a news agency, however, the News Desk edits and transmits stories to the newspapers, which further tailors these agency stories.

Atop the editorial hierarchy ranks the Editor or an Editor-in-Chief who plans and directs the day-to-day operations, supported by a team of News Editors, Chief Sub editors (chief subs), Senior Sub editors and Sub editors (subs).

The News Desk usually operates in shifts and each shift is headed by a chief sub, also called a 'slot man'. Ideally, in a newspaper, it is the News Editor who plans and directs page making while the chief sub helps implement his decisions.

In a news agency, News Editors and chief subs look after the smooth functioning of the News Desk. They plan and write 'leads' (updated versions of developing stories).

**HOW TO EDIT A COPY:** Read the story once before you edit, a second time while you edit and a third time after you edit. On the first reading, if you find any ambiguity, contradiction or structural flaw, summon the reporter to demand a clarification or bring it to the notice of the News Editor or chief sub on duty. When the story has no glaring problem, it is fit to edit.

A news story is divided into two parts: the lead (the 'intro'), which introduces the story and the body, which elaborates the lead. The lead tells briefly about who, what, where, when, why and how of the story. The body of a news story elaborates, details, and explains it.

The lead is normally written in less than 35 words and should be crisp and concise.

Since World War II, the 'inverted pyramid' style of news writing has come into vogue. This technique places the most significant information at the top and then places the remaining details in the descending order of importance. Each succeeding paragraph should add an essential detail without being dependent in content or style on what follows. The inverted pyramid style has the following advantages:

- The structure of the story remains intact even when paragraphs are deleted from the bottom for space shortage.
- A busy reader could skip over many stories in a short time by just reading the lead paragraph.
- It helps the sub editor to give the headline by reading the gist of the story in the Lead.
- It is easy to change the order of paragraphs or insert a paragraph or two.

The chronological style, which is narrating the story in the sequence in which it happened, has none of these flexibilities, and often the most important part of the story may come at the end, putting the reader's patience on trial.

If the most important point in a story is buried in the fifth or sixth paragraph, rewrite and bring it to the lead. If two important points fight for prominence, choose the one, which has more readership appeal.

Make sure the second paragraph supports the lead. If it does not, rewrite to make it happen. The third paragraph should further develop the second paragraph and the lead. Ideally, each paragraph should not exceed three sentences. And direct quotes add flavour to the story.

**REWRITING:** Rewriting is done for the sake of clarity and highlighting the right news point, but taking care to avoid inadvertent tampering with the facts or the original meaning. Stories are also rewritten to add punch to the lead and enliven a human-interest story.

**HEADLINES:** Headlines catch the eye of a reader in search of something interesting in a newspaper. After scanning the headlines, a reader settles down to read the story in detail.

However well written or well edited, a story by itself cannot get the reader's attention unless given a matching headline. The headline attracts the reader to the story. The size of the headline determines the importance of a story: the larger or bolder the headlines, the most important is the news story. Other important things regarding the headlines are:

- The headline should tell the gist of the story and, if possible, educate or entertain the reader,
- The headline should tempt the reader into the story,
- The headline should be powerful and sharp to be able to convey the essence of the story,
- The headline should be active and positive,
- Headlines are normally written in the present tense to give a sense of immediacy and freshness to the news. The past tense could create an ambience of reporting history,
- Use only well-known abbreviations,
- Never split names or phrases between the lines like in the following examples:

**New CM Sushma**

**SWARAJ SWORN IN**

**Or**

**Jayalalitha dead  
against Cauvery pact**

- Use single quotation mark since it is more attractive and take less space than double quotation mark,
- Articles like a, an, and the are normally omitted, and
- Remember, common sense is the best guiding principle in writing a headline.

**LEADS:** In the journalistic parlance, the word 'lead' is used in three or four different senses. The story with the biggest headline on the front page of a newspaper is called the lead story and in the order of priority the main stories are called Lead I, Lead II, Lead III or First Lead, Second Lead, Third Lead and so on.

In the second sense, it refers to the first two or three paragraphs of a story. It is also called the 'Intro' (short for introduction).

Reporters often use the term in the sense of a clue to a story, upon which they work, probe, research and develop to make it a complete story.

News agencies use the term in the sense of a device for updating developing stories of changing the emphasis of the story in the light of unfolding events.

Examples of developing stories that need updates are political conventions, budget proposals, an air crash or a train mishap, floods or bandhs.

Early reports of the Bhopal gas tragedy put the figure of casualties at a particular number, which doubled and trebled by the hour till it crossed a thousand by the midnight hour. Early *dak* editions carried the modest figures and looked stupid the next morning. Even early city editions could not tell the magnitude of the disaster which the late city editions captured.

**LANGUAGE:** Words are the building blocks of writing. So, pay special attention to words, and the way they are constructed into a sentence. Misplacement of words could distort the meaning. Punctuation marks are meant for clarity and readability, and too many of them will clutter the story.

### **2.2.7 PHOTO EDITING:**

Photos give a face-lift to the page, but they have to be edited to match the layout, often cropping unnecessary portions. A competent photo editor does not waste space but trims the picture to highlight its message or meaning, action or the unique angle in which it is shot. The picture often adds news-value to the story and breaks the monotony of the page.

By suitably editing, the photo editor brings the centre of action into the middle of the picture, conferring a dramatic value to the page. It is job of the photo editor to select the best photograph, which tells the story on its own.

A good photographer has a strong visual sense to foresee a picture before he shoots. He instinctively sets the aperture of the camera for the lighting on the location and is ready for action.

A news event could be shot from different angles and the seasoned photographer would know the best angle to shoot from. The difference between an awards-winning photograph and a pedestrian photograph is one of the angle and composition.

The photograph illustrates an event, lending depth and meaning to the story and a message of its own. Usually, the photographer is given only an idea to work with, and is expected to create an appropriate picture, to back up the story.

**CAPTIONS:** Caption writing is the art of blending words with pictures. Captions explain the who, what, where and why of the picture. But a photograph or photographs when accompanied by a story needs no separate caption.

With the advent of computers, graphic illustrations could recreate the original sequence of a news story. Time and again, such illustrations have been used for depicting stories of space travel, mountaineering expeditions, assassinations, fire, train or air mishaps, bank robberies, etc.

**COMPUTER APPLICATION IN PHOTO EDITING:** The latest technology enables the negative to be scanned, the contrast adjusted, and the picture cropped on the computer video display terminal as required. Now days digital cameras are computer compatible and there is no need to develop or print photos. The photos can directly be taken to the computers for the necessary improvements or changes.

Then, the image is directly transferred to the page, making sure that the reproduction is of a high quality. An important aspect of this method is that picture quality in terms of tones; density and colour sharpness could be reproduced to near perfection.

### **2.2.8 INTERVIEWING PEOPLE:**

Interviewing people is a significant way of gathering news for print as well as electronic media. An interview could be used as a programme or a feature or a commentary or a source for an article or a news story.

To do a meaningful interview, you must do your homework well. It is only then that an interview would make an impact. Broadcasters often say, to speak for five minutes over radio a person must prepare at least for five hours.

Interviews could be on the record or off the record. On the record interviews are either reproduced verbatim or portions of it. The reporter can store the rest of it for future use. Off the record interviews are normally taken to write news stories where the source is not identified by the interviewer but credited as a Defence Ministry spokesman or a highly placed official at PMO. In such cases it is better to crosscheck your facts from other sources.

For personality interviews, you must know your subject as completely as possible. Read about the person, his/her family, hobbies, interests; so that you can build an instant rapport with the interviewee.

Research your subject matter pretty well so that you are fully equipped with vital information to conduct your interview successfully. To interview the Union finance minister, you must have a sound knowledge of economics, the intricacies of budget making, the fluctuating business climate and the macro-economic variables.

And should you interview a criminal lawyer, you must have enough knowledge of criminal law- in-cognizable and cognizable offences, Acts/Sections that govern the offences etc. This will help you extract the kernel of news. You must know your subject matter as well as the person you interview.

Remember, all interviews pieces are subject to editing. So no harm will be done in culling more information than you can use. On the contrary, scanty information does not make a good interview. It is a cardinal principle that a statement made in the interview is not used out of context.

The former British Prime Minister, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, once said to a well-known magazine, in which she had said, "Home is where one comes to roost," referring to her grown up children. The context was edited out and statement was published, giving an impression that she was a hardhearted career woman who had no time for family! This kind of mischief is not in keeping with good canons of Journalism.

The most important part of the preparation is to decide what you want to get out of the interview. May be the confirmation of a fact or a refutation, the interviewee's views on an issue.

Getting an interview can often be difficult especially when you are not professionally well established.

Normally, a secretary in a business or government office will try and give you the “brush-off”, although the potential interviewee may be totally unaware of it. Your first attempt should be to make the secretary your friend.

The following things need to be kept in mind by an interviewer:

- Faced with repeated failures seek the person at his home or hideout, of course, with profuse apologies.
- Sometimes, it pays to just wait patiently in his office in spite of his secretary’s “the boss has no time to see you” answer.
- Act promptly when dealing with a reluctant interviewee, make a statement like “we have information that”; this will force him to react.
- Always be courteous and arouse the interviewee’s curiosity.

**DOs and DONTs for Interviews:** The following are the do's and don'ts while doing an interview:

- Be at the venue of interview on the dot; arrive 15 minutes before time to present on time.
- Start the interview with a broad question, which help you to size up the person and collect your thoughts.
- .\* Do not interrupt the interviewee and avoid making him/her uncomfortable at the outset.
- Be inquisitive and enthusiastic about his achievements. Then the interviewee will warm up and be willing to talk on the subject you want to discuss at length.
- Stick to your subject.
- Comment occasionally to provoke him/her but let him/her do most of the talking. This makes that person feel wise.
- For print media, it is important to get the person’s name, designation, age, etc., right.

A good conversationalist generally makes a good interviewer. In a face-to-face meeting, verbal as well as body language plays an important role while in a telephonic interview; the tone and inflexion take their place.

Giving a new angle to an event or throwing new light on a discovery can add value to the interview. Reading between the lines or the ability to scan below the surface is an art, which every interviewer must develop and perfect to reach new vistas of exploration.

A sharp news sense which helps capture a glimpse of the extraordinary in the most ‘ordinary’ things and persons will be an asset of the interviewer. Hard questions asked gently

sometimes yield new information which must be pursued to its logical conclusion, even though that is not part of your original design for the interview.

You should create the right atmosphere to make your interviewee reveal material, which could be the basis for a good interview. The interviewer must remain alert to catch every word uttered during the session.

Taking notes is an essential part of interviewing. Some take down extensive notes, almost verbatim, others take down only the gist. The tape-recorder is a valuable gadget to reproduce the entire conversation, which must be selectively used to make an intelligent interview.

Above everything else, good planning contribute to the success of an interview, leaving behind happy memories for the interviewer and the interviewee.

Size up your interviewee in the first few minutes. Read the person's eyes and mannerism to get reliable clues to whether he/she is being honest or trying to hide something. When you have learnt how to ask questions instinctively you have arrived a professional interviewer.

## **REFERENCE LIBRARY:**

Reputed newspapers have reference libraries, which are, so to speak, a set of tools for the deskman. The following books and clippings are a must for any newspaper:

- *The Shorter Oxford Dictionary,*
- *The Oxford Encyclopedic Dictionary,*
- *The International Who's Who,*
- *India's Who's Who,*
- *Times Atlas,*
- *Stylebook,*
- *Roget's Thesaurus,*
- *Encyclopedia Britannica,*
- *World Yearbook,*
- *The Constitution of India,*
- *Law of the Press by D. D. Basu, and*
- *A library of clipping files*

## **2.3 SUMMARY:**

- News is something that interests, excites or concerns people. News not only interests but also at times excites and at times concerns because it may be a mishap or a tragedy. John B. Bogart of the New York Sun defines News thus: *When a dog bites a man, that is not news; but when a man bites a dog, that is News.*
- Joseph Pulitzer of Pulitzer Prize fame and the publisher of the New York World defined News as: *original, distinctive, dramatic, romantic, thrilling, unique, curious, quaint, humorous, odd and apt-to-be-talked about.*
- News may be broadly divided into hard news and soft news. News that has a great importance and impact on the life of a nation or people or news that has great significance or affects life of many people is termed hard news. And news that interests people but without great significance is called soft news. Every newspaper carries a mix of hard news and soft news daily.
- There are seven news determinants or attributes upon which news is judged and selected for publication. They are Impact, Unusualness, and Prominence, which form the primary criteria and conflict, proximity, timeliness and currency, which form the secondary criteria.
- Characteristics of good news writing are: Accuracy, Attribution, Balance and Fairness, Brevity, Clarity, Readability, Human interest, and Sharp observation.
- In the journalistic parlance, the word 'lead' is used in three or four different senses. The story with the biggest headline on the front page of a newspaper is called the lead story and in the order of priority the main stories are called Lead I, Lead II, Lead III or First Lead, Second Lead, Third Lead and so on.
- Direct lead answers Who, What, When, Where, Why and How (the five W's and an H) in the first two paragraphs, whereas delayed lead delays it to raise the curiosity of the reader. Direct lead is written within a word limit of 35 words, whereas Delayed Lead has no such limit.
- Features are human-interest stories about people, places or situations. Broadly, there are two kinds of features: news features and timeless features. News features are timely features based on something in the news recently, called the news peg. Timeless features have intrinsic human interest and do not get dated. Newspaper features are short (600-700 words) and less descriptive, whereas magazine features are long (750-1500 words), more descriptive and leisurely.

## **2.4 KEY WORDS:**

**News:** News is something that interests, excites or concerns people. News not only interests but also at times excites and at times concerns because it may be a mishap or a tragedy. John B. Bogart of the New York Sun defines News thus: *When a dog bites a man, that is not news; but when a man bites a dog, that is News.*

**Hard News:** News that has a great importance and impact on the life of a nation or people or news that has great significance or affects life of many people is termed hard news.

**Soft News:** News that interests people but without great significance is called soft news. Every newspaper carries a mix of hard news and soft news daily.

**News Values:** There are seven news determinants or attributes upon which news is judged and selected for publication. They are Impact, Unusualness, and Prominence, which form the primary criteria and conflict, proximity, timeliness and currency, which form the secondary criteria.

**Impact in News:** The impact a news story could create on society is a good measure for including it on the front page, and when you have two such items of equal importance, you need another criterion to decide which of the two should get precedence over the other, and the unusual comes in handy. Add to that, you have prominence, which is all about celebrities or people who matter. So your decision now is sharper in view of the three criteria at your disposal.

**Characteristics of Good News Writing:** Characteristics of Good News Writing are: Accuracy, Attribution, Balance and Fairness, Brevity, Clarity, Readability, Human interest, and Sharp observation.

**Lead:** In the journalistic parlance, the word 'lead' is used in three or four different senses. The story with the biggest headline on the front page of a newspaper is called the lead story and in the order of priority the main stories are called Lead I, Lead II, Lead III or First Lead, Second Lead, Third Lead and so on.

**Features:** Features are human-interest stories about people, places or situations. Broadly, there are two kinds of features: news features and timeless features. News features are timely features based on something in the news recently, called the news peg. Timeless features have intrinsic human interest and do not get dated. Newspaper features are short (600-700 words) and less descriptive, whereas magazine features are long (750-1500 words), more descriptive and leisurely.

**Crosscheck:** To verify a statement made by one source from other independent sources.

**Interview:** A face-to-face or telephonic conversation between a reporter wanting information on a particular issue and a person who can give it.

**Interviewee:** The person from whom information is sought by a reporter through a interview.

## **2.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):**

1. Discuss about the media scene in India in detail.
2. Discuss the concept of news and the various attributes of news.
3. Discuss the basics of news writing.
4. Discuss the basics of feature writing.
5. Discuss the basics of editing.
6. Discuss how headlines and leads are written.
7. Discuss the duties of a sub editor.
8. Discuss the major editing symbols with example.
9. Write in detail about photo editing and photo caption writing.
10. Write in detail about the responsibilities of a reporter.
11. Discuss the major qualities of a good reporter.

## **2.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:**

- ***Reporting*** by Charnley
- ***Active Reporter*** by James Lewis
- ***Professional Journalist*** by John Hohenberg
- ***Professional Journalism*** by M.V. Kamath
- ***News Writing*** by George Hough

## **TYPES OF REPORTING**

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### **LESSON STRUCTURE:**

This lesson shall provide an introduction to newspapers. We shall start with the general features of newspapers. Then we shall discuss about the various aspects of newspapers. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Presentation of Content
  - 3.2.1 Event Reporting
  - 3.2.2 Interpretative Reporting
  - 3.2.3 Investigative Reporting
  - 3.2.4 Political Reporting
  - 3.2.5 Economic Reporting
  - 3.2.6 Social Reporting
  - 3.2.7 Parliamentary Reporting
  - 3.2.8 Business Reporting
  - 3.2.9 Social Reporting
  - 3.2.10 Crime Reporting
  - 3.2.11 Legal Reporting
  - 3.2.12 Science and Technology Reporting
- 3.3 Summary
- 3.4 Key Words

3.5 Self-Assessment-Questions (SAQs)

3.6 References/Suggested Reading

### **3.0 OBJECTIVES:**

The objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- *To Know About Event Reporting*
- *To Know About Interpretative Reporting*
- *To Know About Investigative Reporting*
- *To Know About Political Reporting*
- *To Know About Economic Reporting*
- *To Know About Social Reporting*
- *To Know About Parliamentary Reporting*
- *To Know About Business Reporting*
- *To Know About Development Reporting*
- *To Know About Crime Reporting*
- *To Know About Legal Reporting*
- *To Know About Science and Technology Reporting*

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION:**

Depending on the nature of job, reporting could be classified into three groups: Event reporting, Interpretative reporting, and Investigative reporting. On the basis of subjects covered reporting can be classified as follows: Political reporting, Economic reporting, Social reporting, Parliamentary reporting, Business reporting, Development reporting, Crime reporting, Legal reporting, and Science and Technology reporting.

We shall discuss about all the above-mentioned types of reporting in this lesson.

### **3.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:**

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Event Reporting*
- *Interpretative Reporting*
- *Investigative Reporting*
- *Political Reporting*
- *Economic Reporting*

- *Social Reporting*
- *Parliamentary Reporting*
- *Business Reporting*
- *Social Reporting*
- *Crime Reporting*
- *Legal Reporting*
- *Science and Technology Reporting*

### **3.2.1 EVENT REPORTING:**

It is also called *beat reporting* and is the most common kind of reporting. Here reporters are placed at the most strategic-news-breaking points like hospitals, courtrooms, police headquarters, airports, railway stations, universities, government and corporate offices, and health and recreation centers, etc.

Unlike editorial writing, reporting is impersonal. A reporter is essentially an honest storyteller, who tries to rise above his prejudices and subjectivity. He is fair and impartial and presents all aspects of the story. Complete objectivity may be a mere ideal since human beings are not robots; but working objectivity is certainly possible.

The notorious example of an American journalist, Janet Cooke, who won the prestigious Pulitzer Prize in 1980 for a story about drugs, which was later, proved to be fictitious should serve as a warning to the beginners. Ms. Cooke committed a deliberate fraud by dramatizing a fake scene in which an eight year-old boy is injected with heroin supplied by the lover of the boy's mother.

An Indian newspaper made mountains out of mole hill when it reported "mass rape" at a student function in a Madhya Pradesh town, which on investigation turned out to be the collapsing of a portion of the shamiana and the electricity cutoff subsequently and a few students entering the women's enclosure and molesting some of the girls.

Remember the dictum facts are sacred but comment is free. Check and crosscheck your facts from different sources till you are sure of them. The primary job of a reporter is to tell the truth.

### **3.2.2 INTERPRETATIVE REPORTING:**

Interpretative reporting puts news in perspective to bring out its significance. It is a demanding discipline calling for thorough knowledge of the subject and proficiency in reporting.

The Interpretative reporter gives the reader the background of an event and explains the possible consequences. Besides his own knowledge and research, he often relies on the opinion authorities on the subject.

In his book *Interpretative Reporting* Curtis D. MacDongall writes that when the First World War broke out, most Americans were taken by surprise. They were utterly unable to explain its causes. This led to changes in the style of reporting and the result was that when in 1939 the Second World War began, an overwhelming majority of the Americans expected it or at least knew it was possible.

For an intelligent newspaper reader, there are few surprises, because the interpretative reports keeps him informed of the consequence of events.

The Interpretative reporter must be well read-his reading of history, economics, sociology, political science and other academic subjects equips him to be an intelligent interpretative reporter, aware that a news item is not an isolated incident, but a inevitable link to a chain of events. Remember that prejudices of and kind and stereotype attitudes hamper intelligent perception and professional credibility.

### **3.2.3 INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING:**

Scoffed at by some, Investigative reporting is exposing and reporting corruption. It calls for exceptional courage, a sense of justice and a commitment to the higher values of life. All news stories require some kind of investigation by the reporter; but investigative journalists dig hard and deep into the realm of the powers that be, which in itself is a dangerous enterprise.

They dig weeks and months to get one story, but that one story gets national attention because it tells how the government bungles, how ministers squander funds, promote nepotism, conspire and deny promotions to the meritorious, and, above all, suppress facts.

Power attracts a lot of vested interests and even honest people; surrounded by the corrupt, act in less worthy manner. The cloak of secrecy under which governments operate seldom promotes transparency, leaving a gold mine for potential investigative reporters to explore and become heroes- like Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of the Watergate story. In summary, the investigative journalists are the conscience-keeper of society.

In his book *Investigative Reporting*, Clark R Mollevhogg highlights three elements:

- It has to be the own work of a reporter. Under no circumstances should it be of others;
- *The subject of the reporting should be such that it is of importance for the readers to know; and*

- *There must not be any attempt made to hide the truth from the people.*

While Investigative reporting is much advanced in the US, it is still in the infancy in India. Most Indian newspapers do not allocate talent or funds necessary for a first-rate investigative job. Investigative reporting at its international best comes from the Watergate story, which led to the disgrace and downfall of the then US President Richard Nixon.

When the two young reporters of The Washington Post, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, started investigating the arrest of four men for a burglary at Watergate, the Democratic Party's national headquarters on June 17, 1972, they had no idea that their inquiry would culminate in the resignation of the President.

The remarkable thing about their investigation was that it kept to the highest standards of professional journalism. The reporters merely pursued the burglary attempt only to come up with startling facts linking the White House with it. "We did not go after the President, we went after the story," is how they explained later.

The same Washington Post got involved in the most celebrated case of journalistic fraud in modern times in Janet Cooke's story. The story got into the Post because the editors who were white do not want to appear racist because Ms. Cooke was black and failed to scrutinize the story.

Investigative reporting in India got a filip at the end of the Emergency in 1977 through the reports published in The Indian Express. Investigative reports have brought to light a number scandals like the Bhagalpur blindings by the police, Kuet oil deal, A R Antulay's private trusts, the securities scam involving Indian and foreign banks and stock brokers, etc.

An enterprising reporter once got himself arrested so that he could give a first-hand account in life in Delhi's Tihar Jail.

To set professional standards, the investigative reporter must draw a line between candid reporting and muck-racking, mudslinging, character assassination or blackmail. He should be wary of lobbies and lobbyists, political or commercial, trying to misguide him. And he should not behave like a Peeping Tom or a prosecutor.

The best kind of Investigative reporting is that which keeps the public interest in mind. It may highlight an injustice, expose corrupt practices or unmask dishonest politicians and bureaucrats. Nevertheless, without the support of the judiciary, the executive or the legislature, the investigative reporter cannot bring his reports to logical ends. The Bhagalpur blinding report

would have ended like any other report had a public interest litigation not been filed against the police.

### **3.2.4 POLITICAL REPORTING:**

An astute intelligence, instinctive perception of ground realities, good judgment of people, and a strong historic sense would make a good political reporter. Since politics is the main focus of newspapers, too many new entrants would like to be political reporters hoping that it would be a ladder to the coveted office of the editor.

Nevertheless, there is a dearth of good political reporting in India- reporting with insight, reporting that captures in flesh and blood the actors of the political play field, reporting that exposes the naked ambitions of political beings and the hypocrisy of political parties and the machinations of those in power.

Politics, undoubtedly, is a game for power, a game for supremacy, a game for personal aggrandizement, always played in the name of the people for evoking national greatness. An overwhelming majority of politicians are there because they were misfits everywhere else and are driven by a desire to make up for their past failures and frustrations.

For example, a first class medical doctor or a chartered accountant, a management wizard or an academic will not sacrifice his profession for politics. Politics is one of the few professions, which demand no particular qualifications, and it is now widely known that even criminals are joining politics enmasse.

The sad thing about Indian democracy is that it is they who guide the destiny of some 900 million people. Bereft of ideas, intelligence and character, they exploit caste, religion and language to stay in power and the country slip from crisis to crisis.

Political commentators and reporters should never glorify politicians but truthfully present their achievements and failures. Programmes of political parties should be critically evaluated and their flaws commented upon, so that the people are not carried away by their rhetoric or patriotic postures. The performance of governments need constant review and herein is the wisdom and maturity of the political commentator or reporter set on a national spectacle.

A lot of things happen behind the scene: horse-trading, dinner diplomacy, lobbying, image-building, snake-charming and hatching conspiracies. Nothing much is visible to the outside world but the tip of an iceberg. And the challenge of political reporting is in unmasking the behind-the-scene operations, which has a high curiosity and readership value. Connections and inside sources are the strength of a political commentator/reporter.

Party conferences, campaigns and rallies and press conferences are normal reporting events. But to add news value to these the reporter should have 'inside' information or exclusive stories. The best selling newspapers in any country are those with a strong political bureau, satisfying the political curiosity of the readers.

Inadequate political coverage, not judged by quantity but quality, bring down the circulation of a newspaper.

Familiarity with politicians and discerning the promising ones from the rotten ones are quintessential to the reporter's task. The honest and well-meaning politicians deserve your support and the people's support. One of the basic duties of political reporting is to bring to national focus leaders who deserve to lead the nation and to warn the nation against criminals and psychopaths in political garment. Timely warning can avert a national catastrophe and Hitler's in the making can be halted before it is too late.

The political commentator/reporter should have a sound knowledge of history and the intellectual sensitivity to understand how ideas shape history.

Your political report could be history if you have the foresight or the ability to see the chain of events before it happened and the wisdom to translate your thoughts into memorable words.

Reading latest books and reputed international magazines like Time, Newsweek, Economist and Indian magazines like Outlook, India Today, Frontline, Week and Sunday could fine-tune your perception and your style. Students are advised to keep a diary of events with their comments, which could turn out to be a gold mine if tenaciously worked upon. It could be your ready reference book, giving ideas for articles and even your future book because the longest journey must begin with a single step.

Remember a book is nothing but a collection of articles and chapters, skillfully woven by the thread of a theme, be it a strong political personality around whom events galvanize or a decade or a martyr of a century or a country and its people.

### **3.2.5 PARLIAMENTARY OR LEGISLATURE REPORTING:**

In a parliamentary democracy, parliament reporting assumes supreme significance for reasons not difficult to enumerate. The Government announces all the major policy decision in Parliament. Political news emanates from in and around the House in session and the relative strength of political parties is tested on the floor of the House.

Legislature reporting focuses on the day-to-day proceedings of Parliament as well as state legislature (Vidhan Sabha and Vidhan Parishad). Normally, seasoned special Correspondents are assigned to cover parliamentary proceedings, to ensure accuracy and maturity in reporting. Legislature reporting often involves taking copious notes of speeches made by ministers and members of the legislature, for which knowledge of shorthand is an advantage.

The exact quotes of the Prime Minister and senior Cabinet Ministers lent credibility to a news report. For security reasons, tape-recorders are banned in the press gallery.

**THE PARLIAMENT:** The Constitution Fathers have provided for a bicameral Parliament of Lok Sabha (the House of the People) and Rajya Sabha (the Council of States). The Lok Sabha, comprising members chosen directly by the people, has a strength of 547.

Of these, up to 525 members come from the states, up to 25 members from the Union territories and not more than two members of the Anglo-Indian community to be nominated by the President of India if in his opinion that community is not adequately represented in the House.

The Lok Sabha has a tenure of five years, if not dissolved by the President following political instability. Under the Emergency, this term may be extended by one year by a parliamentary legislation.

The Rajya Sabha consists of 250 members, of whom the President for their outstanding contributions to the field of literature, science, law, education, art and social service nominates 12.

The remaining seats are allocated to the states and Union territories, roughly in proportion to their population. Each state is, however, represented by at least one member. The legislative assemblies elect the members representing the states.

Parliamentary Correspondents should know the rules and procedures, which are, by and large, the same for parliament and state legislatures. He should know the rights and privileges and immunities and amenities of the members of Parliament.

Some states have with a bicameral legislature of Vidhan Sabha and Vidhan Parishad, the former equivalent of the Lok Sabha and the latter of the Rajya Sabha, while others have only the Vidhan Sabha.

**PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS:** The major features of parliamentary proceedings are:

- i) Question Hour,
- ii) The tabling of papers,
- iii) Zero Hour, and
- iv) Legislative Business.

**QUESTION HOUR:** The first hour of every legislature sitting is normally devoted to questions.

Questions are of three types:

- (1) Starred questions,
- (2) Unstarred questions, and
- (3) Short notice questions.

**Starred Questions:** They are the ones to which members seek oral answers and members can ask relevant supplementary questions. The answer to the starred question will generally be in written form with an explanatory statement wherever necessary. But supplementary questions are answered orally.

**Unstarred Questions:** They call for written answers on which no supplementary questions can be asked. The written answers are laid on the 'Table of the House' after the question hour. It is printed in the official report of the sitting of the House.

**Short Notice Questions:** They relate to the pressing problems the people face and can be asked with the consent of the Minister concerned at a shorter notice than the time set for ordinary questions.

Normally, 20 starred questions and as many 230 unstarred questions are answered in a day. The questions in Parliament help the government remain in touch with the people and their grievances. Sometimes, the questions may lead to the appointment of a Commission, a court of inquiry or even legislation. It is as if the government is put on trial during the question hour. Every minister is made answerable to the commissions and omissions of his departments.

Sometimes, proficient parliamentary correspondents find important government decisions buried in written answers, which might escape the eye of the novice. Thus came to light a few years ago the government's signing of an agreement with Britain for the purchase of the aircraft carrier Hermes at a cost of 63 million. It was a major story for any newspaper, which some missed because their men on the beat were not alert. Parliament questions may provide leads to news-breaking stories if diligently followed up.

**Tabling of Papers:** After the Question Hour, the House will take up papers to be laid on the Table. They are official documents of ministries and departments tabled by the ministers-in-charge. They could be annual reports or reports of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) from which emerged the scandalous Bofors stories.

**Zero Hour:** The Zero Hour which follows immediately after the Question Hour is slightly tricky to report because too many members simultaneously spring on their feet to draw the attention of the Chair to issues they think are important and needed immediate government response making the recapturing of the spoken word pretty difficult.

The Speaker/Chairman would try to restore order incase pandemonium (bedlam) breaks out as happened on issues like the Bofors, Ayodhya and securities scam.

**Legislative Business:** Legislative business consists of introduction, consideration and passing of government Bills, Besides, the House also deals with financial presentation, discussion and passage of the Union Budget and Railway Budget, voting on demands on grants followed by passing Appropriation and Finance Bills, motions brought forward by the government and private members, and discussion on matters of urgent public importance.

**Introduction of the Bill:** A minister in charge of the subject can introduce a bill in either House. While introducing the Bill, the minister explains the purpose and background of the Bill and when a majority of members of the House give leave to the minister for introduction, the Bill is deemed to have been introduced.

**General Discussion:** At the second stage, a general discussion takes place on the Bill as a whole. This is followed by a clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill and it is open to the House to decide to refer the Bill to a select committee then gives a clause-by-clause scrutiny and recommends amendments therein as it deems necessary.

**Voting:** After all the clauses and schedules of the Bill have been thoroughly discussed and voted upon the minister in charge moves that the Bill be passed. Generally, a Bill is passed or rejected by the majority vote of the members present.

**Constitution Amendment Bill:** A Constitution Amendment Bill to be passed requires the support of a two-thirds majority.

**THE BUDGET SESSION:** The annual financial statements are laid before both the Houses with estimated receipts and expenditure of the government for the forthcoming financial year. And the Finance Bill, which seeks to give effect to the government's taxation proposals, is called the Budget.

**BREACH OF PRIVILEGE:** No person commits any civil or criminal offence, if he publishes substantially true reports of the proceedings of a House. However, if the publication has been done with malice, the protection conferred on the journalist by Article 361-A does not apply.

The Publication of the expurgate portion of the proceedings of a House is breach of its privilege. So is the publication of proceedings held in camera?

Before 1977, the Parliamentary Proceedings (Protection of Publication) Act 1956, popularly known as Firoze Gandhi Act, was in force, which was repealed during the Emergency.

While Article 361-A covers proceedings of Parliament as well as that of the state legislature, Firoze Gandhi Act covered only the House of Parliament.

The custodian of its own privilege, the House is empowered to take action against a correspondent, if his conduct or writings are in breach of its privileges. Since the scope of parliamentary privileges has not been codified, the Correspondent has to use abundant caution in reporting the proceedings.

Deliberate distortion of speeches, aspersions cast on a member's behaviour in the House, and imputation of motives to him for his speech or behaviour in the House is serious transgressions of the privileges of the members.

Parliamentary or legislature reporting keeps the people abreast of the performance of their elected representatives, and helps them evaluate the political leadership to exercise their franchise meaningfully.

Publishing comments or any other statements which undermine the dignity of the House or the confidence of the public in the legislature are accordingly punishable by the Parliament as 'Contempt of Parliament', which is analogous to the power of a court to punish for 'Contempt of Court'.

Parliamentary Correspondents are given accreditation cards, which the Speaker can withdraw without assigning any reasons. Normally, a card is withdrawn if a journalist is found to

be “misrepresenting proceedings of the House in the press (or any other media), or publishing (or broadcasting) matters not intended for the public, or casting aspersions against the Speaker”.

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE:** Time at its disposal being short, a good deal of legislative business is transacted by Parliamentary Committees. The Indian Parliament has two kinds of committees, ad-hoc committees and Parliamentary Committees. Ad-hoc committees are appointed for a particular purpose after which they cease to exist.

The principal ad-hoc committees are: the Select Committee, and the Joint Committee on Bills.

Parliamentary committees which are permanently there but are reconstituted from time to time are: business advisory committee, committee on petitions, privileges committee, committee on welfare of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, rules committee, etc.

There are other kinds of committees as well, which function as parliament’s ‘Watch Dogs’ over the executive, like the committee on subordinate legislation, the committee on government assurances, the estimates committee, the public account committee and the committee on public undertakings.

Most of these committees exercise a check over governmental expenditure and in the general discharge of the public functions.

### **3.2.6 BUSINESS REPORTING:**

The focus of Business reporting is the state of business, depending on the country’s economic climate. The stock market, capital market, the wholesale and consumer price indices, metals and gold prices, industrial and agricultural production, consumer behaviour, inflation, money supply, foreign and Indian investments, unemployment, wages and labour disaffection, all are areas of interest to the Business Reporter.

The economy operates in a cycle of expansion and contraction known as boom and bust. The markets hit a low during bust, characterized by low demand, piling up of goods product (inventories) and at worst people are thrown out of employment.

At boom, the demand picks up, entrepreneurs invest, employment is generated, there is more cash flow and happier times return as the economy operates at its peak efficiency. After a few years, the economy goes back to bust to repeat its business cycle. The best indicator of the

country's economy is the stock market represented by Bulls and Bears, the former denoting buoyancy and the latter low economic activity.

Low unemployment speaks of the ill health of the economy and the need for optimum level of investment. The developing nations, called the Third World, need massive investments to generate employment; and they also need the latest technology to catch up with the developed world.

Both investment and technology are prohibitively expensive and many Asian countries find a short cut to speedy development through foreign investment, especially in infrastructure and hi-tech areas.

But the problem with foreign investors is that they are coming to India lured by high profit motive, because India is the second largest global market. The moment another country offers larger profit avenues, there will a capital flight from this country to that country resulting in retrenchment and layoff of employees who were once cozy and prosperous.

Besides fluctuating labour scenario, it could lead to fluctuating economic scenario, which could be more dangerous. To cope with galloping inflation, governments through its federal/Reserve Bank introduce tight-money policy raising bank and interest rates. It may be precisely then that the multinational corporations are pumping in more money, over which the governments have no control, in after rendering the federal excise futile.

Too much is in the hands of the MNCs'. This is an area that needs judicious handling and political maturity, which is the test of any government. Also care should be taken to see that MNCs do not gobble up Indian industry and market.

Business, industry and agriculture, year after year, look to the Finance Minister's presentation of the Union budget, which could change the business climate. Tax incentives to industry and agriculture can boost production, and surplus production can lead to export and prosperity.

Exporting nations like Japan, Taiwan, and Singapore in Asia enjoy a higher standard of living than many economic laggards of the continent, some of whom face miserable living conditions.

In Europe, France and Germany, Governments heavily subsidise their farmers who produce a surplus to keep the basic price level low, ushering in a rural prosperity that prevents an urban chaos because of mass migration.

The budget is a powerful instrument of transformation in the hands of an able Finance Minister, but there is nothing like a 'Rosy Budget', because people have to pay the price for national development.

Who should bear the brunt of taxation to pay for the country's development? It is a pertinent question frequently asked by economic commentators and journalists.

Any tax on industry is conveniently passed on to the consumer and the middle class end up bearing the beast of burden of the Finance Minister. The rich are smart enough to manipulate accounts to evade taxes. And it has been observed globally that higher the incidence of tax, higher the tax evasion.

So lower tax rates, easy mode of payments, and stringent punishment for tax evades would make taxation policies effective. Higher taxes are normally levied on goods whose consumption the government would like to discourage.

A business reporter should have a masterly understanding of economics at the macro and micro levels to interpret economic data and tell how they are going to affect business. He should sound an alarm when the economy is heading for a slump or recession.

And conversely, when the economic outlook is bright, he should bring cheer to industry. But he should desist from creating a panic in the stock market where people have invested their life savings. To command respect in financial and business circles, you must be knowledgeable, credible and insightful.

To do so, you must be in contact with some of the best economic brains of the country, who may be in the finance ministry, universities, research organizations, and even corporate houses. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) brings out a monthly journal giving valuable data for interpretative reporting.

Watch out for corporate newsmakers. Entrepreneurs are of two kinds, those with a broad vision and those with a tunnel vision. The former think laterally and are a creative lot, bringing new products, new designs, new models and new ideas that can transform the way people live, work and spent their leisure.

Entrepreneurs with a tunnel vision cannot look beyond moneymaking it the right way, making it the wrong way and making it both ways. While the dream landscape moves the former, the almighty Money moves the latter.

If Ratan Tata and Shiv Nadar symbolize the former, the latter are better left unnamed; it is the former who can give you exclusive stories, the latter can give you only statistics.

There is another breed of newsmakers, called the Corporate Raiders. These predators buy the shares of companies in bulk and try to dislodge the existing families out of their businesses. One of the open secrets of the Indian corporate world is that large business houses own only a limited percentage of shares but control the conglomerates with dexterity.

The majority of the shareholders being innocent of their rights are easily manipulated by holding meetings at sites most of them cannot reach or by deliberately delaying the intimation letters for such meetings.

Market-linked technology watch may signal the arrival of new products, impending competition and phasing out of old models. Computer and car markets are changing dramatically and will keep changing in the years ahead. Perceptible Business Journalists keep the readers well informed so that the discerning buyers can wisely choose their monies' worth. Exposing business frauds and manipulators is the high calling of business journalism, but favouring them for a pittance could tarnish the image of the profession.

Keep a tab on major stock market players, chairmen of blue chip companies and CEOs who could always spring a surprise. PROs of business houses and private secretaries of market players could be of help in getting the lead for a story; but these stories must be properly filtered for news.

Like the politician who generates political news, the corporate houses generate most of the business news. And the Finance and Commerce Ministries, the RBI, SEBI, FICCI, Assocham and Indo-American, Indo-British, Indo-German, Indo-French, and Indo-Japanese joint trade organizations keep the business journalist very busy.

Read newspapers like The Economic Times, The Business Standard, The Financial Express and magazines like Business India, Business World, Business Today and foreign publications like The Economist, The Business Week, The Fortune, The Financial Times, The Wall Street Journal to be well abreast of 'trends and events' that shape business journalism.

### **3.2.7 DEVELOPMENT REPORTING:**

Development reporting creates an awareness of the rapid transformation of the society from a poor agrarian economy to a highly developed economy by informing the people of the various programmes of development charted out by the Government and development agencies and to bring to the notice of the Government the problems some of these poorly implemented schemes create so that it can take quick remedial measures.

It is through people's participation that food production is raised, new roads, railways and houses are constructed, amenities of safe drinking water, electricity and communications are provided.

More hospitals, primary health centres, schools, colleges and universities, cinema houses, radio stations and television centres are part of development news. And the basic objective of development is to raise the income and the living standards of the people.

India has made tremendous progress since the First Five -Year Plan was launched in 1951, but the alarming rate of population growth has nullified its impact and a decent living for its majority of population still remain a distant dream.

**STYLE OF DEVELOPMENT REPORTING:** Development has disastrous consequences too: air and water pollution, soil degradation and deforestation. This led to rethinking on what constitutes development and after much deliberation; ecology too came under its preview. The most important quality to be inculcated is to have a development perspective based on ground realities and sharpened by a global vision.

A telling style that is apt to awaken a slumbering government to action and a style that also spreads awakening among the masses are expected of a development communicator.

**THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS:** The process of development is generally slow because people resist change. Since 1951, the government has spent billions of rupees on different development programmes in the different Five Year Plans.

But not much has been achieved in terms of making masses literate, providing them the basic minimum needs and increasing the per capita income.

A development reporter must translate hard-core economics into contemporary reality. The average India middle class family could afford only half an apple per person per day whereas the average Japanese middle class family could afford two apples per person per day would help the common man grasp the comparative wealth of nations.

On the other hand, a lot of damage has been done in the name of development. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) has estimated that over 75 per cent of the annual global deforestation of 17 million hectares occurs for expanding food production. Irrigation without proper drainage results in soils getting alkaline or saline. Indiscriminate use of pesticides, fungicides and herbicides causes adverse changes in biological balance and leads to an increase in the incidence of cancer.

Massive industrialization without checks on releasing effluents and smoke results in dangerous levels of toxic chemicals in air, water and soils. Thus the development process has become so complex that people are opposing many development programmes.

Here, development journalists have an important role to play. What is required is interpreting development programmes for the common people and crusading against programmes that are likely to affect or upset a large number of people.

**SUCCESS STORIES:** Reporting success stories do motivate people emulate the successes. The much written about 'Japanese economic miracle' and in India, the 'Green Revolution' of Punjab, Haryana, and Western UP neatly fit into this category. Not only success stories but failures too can teach precious lessons on how to avoid the mistake made by others.

Well-known development activists, Sunder Lal Bahuguna and Bharat Dorga, have carved a niche for themselves by taking up the cause of 30,000 families displaced because of Pongor and Tehri Dams in Himachal Pradesh and UP. Dorga's article 'Worms in Bread Basket' won him instant recognition.

The Hindustan Times adopted Village Chhatera near Delhi under the leadership of Mr. B G Verghese who wrote his famous piece 'Our Village Chhatera', depicting the condition of the village when the project was taken up. With the help of scientists from the Indian Agricultural Research Institute under Dr. M S Swaminathan, new farm technologies were introduced and journalists visited the village to report the progress of development. This was a big success story.

Development reporters should not be biased like a section of the Western media, which sees only the negative side of India's achievements. Sunder Lal Bahuguna while rejecting the construction of Tehri Dam quoted scientific studies to prove that the area of Tehri Dam is earthquake-prone and big dams will create serious human and environment problems than it will solve. Instead, he had suggested constructing small dams at different places on the same river.

There are hundreds of development stories lying buried to be discovered by a good development reporter. Enter into any lab and you will stumble upon a path-breaking development story.

Government departments and ministries dole out press releases, news letters and annual reports which could give the lead for a story. However, never solely depend on them but do your own follow-up.

The importance of attending seminars, symposia and conferences cannot be over emphasized. Keep abreast of the global trends in science and other fields of human endeavour. This could be the most rewarding source of discovering development journalism.

Wide ranging reading will strengthen your knowledge base, sharpen your style and empower your communication. And you will never run short of ideas. Even if you report only the economic and social scenes, you are doing a great job. Sound interpretation to stimulate thought, interest and action would make you a complete development reporter.

Some of the apex international organizations which could give you a wealth of information are United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Food Programme, UNICEF, World Health Organization (WHO), International Labour Organization (ILO), UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization), etc.

**CHOOSE YOUR MEDIUM:** There are more than 3,000 daily newspapers published in 18 languages in India. Several newspapers devote space for development news. Development stories make ideal features. Photo features on development projects can also be presented effectively.

With nearly 200 stations, All India Radio has a wide reach across the country, touching even far-flung regions. AIR rural programmes are quite popular and development messages can be effectively communicated through the radio.

Development programmes are meant for people who have been left out of development primarily because of illiteracy. For making a good television programme for such people a lot of commitment is required.

Unlike radio scripts, television scripts use fewer words but more visuals. You may first shoot the film according to a rough script, or you may first write a complete script and then take up shooting according to it. It works both ways. But you must involve yourself at every level of production; otherwise the programme may miss some vital point you would like to highlight.

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:** The Bruntland Report on Environment and Development titled 'Our Common Future' popularized the term 'sustainable development'. Economic-driven growth has resulted in a 20 trillion global economy but also in the decline in environmental quality. A destructive consequence of human action is the gradual conversion of the surface of the earth into wastelands and degraded lands. Globally, 15 per cent of the total earth surface has undergone human-induced soil degradation. About 24 per cent of the human-occupied territory of the earth is degraded only by human activities.

At least 66 million hectares of irrigated land is affected by salinisation. About one million hectares of it prime farmland in rain fed areas is being lost each year to urbanization.

Figures on water pollution and ground water exhaustion are frightening. The gradual diversion of forestlands has resulted in the loss of biological diversity.

The new paradigm of development places as much stress on ecological sustainability as on economic and social sustainability.

Sustainable development, therefore, represents an opportunity for humanity to correct a historical error and develop a gentler, more balanced, and stable relationship with the natural world.

This view of sustainable development also raises moral considerations such as the need in a limited world of a more equitable sharing of the world's resources.

Being a predominantly agrarian economy, the development of India depends on agricultural and rural development. Notwithstanding the Green Revolution, about 80 per cent of the new technologies from laboratory to the land are publicized through mass media.

Indian society is riddled with problems of health, nutrition, superstitions, social evils, grinding poverty, environment degradation and so on. As a development reporter, you are expected to study these problems and help find acceptable solutions.

Besides the print media, you could also use radio, and TV for which you need to develop special skills. Radio is for the ear while television for the eyes. So the former calls for developing your voice while the latter your histrionic skills.

Remember, true sustainable development demands that we recognize the reality of ecological limits to material growth and to live on the interest of our remaining ecological capital. We must transform ourselves from a society oriented to satisfy the artificial wants of a few, to one, which is committed to satisfying the basic needs of all. This is the basic duty of the development reporter.

### **3.2.8 CRIME AND ACCIDENTS REPORTING:**

Crime reporting is an important beat in all the major and medium-size newspapers. There is enormous public interest in crime stories and no newspaper can afford to ignore them without damaging its circulation and credibility.

Some American and British newspapers tried to keep crime out of their news columns but had no abandon it due to plummeting circulation. Crime is part of urban culture and it is a

newspaper's duty to inform the readers of what's going on but never to glorify it or pander morbid or sensation mongering.

Crime reporting is a highly responsible and specialized job, involving the shifting of the grain of truth from the chaff of rumours and mis-information.

Contacts with the top brass in the police and administrative machinery as well as a working knowledge of the penal codes, law on libel, etc., are necessary to be successful in this beat.

This crime reporter must never resort to gimmicks to catch the reader's attention. Nor should he suppress news of public interest to oblige people higher-up in the police or the powers that be.

Seeking to settle personal scores with anyone is lowering the dignity of the profession. And so is the intrusion into the privacy of a citizen.

Baseless allegations reported through news columns can damage the victim's reputation or that of his/her family members or community. Fictitious reports of gang rape and 'waylaid on national highway' have appeared in newspapers once considered reputed, which is a sad commentary of Indian journalism.

There are several types of crimes - murders, robberies, burglaries, fraud, blackmail, kidnapping, rape, etc. - which are manometers of law and order and good governance of a society.

The reporter must get his facts correct about the essential elements of a fire story - the number of persons killed or injured, the extent of damage to property the loss of valuables, etc. He is also duty-bound to find out if the fire brigade responded in time or was guilty of delaying the fire-fighting operations through sheer lethargy or incompetence or a lack of water supply. But he must rely on eyewitnesses to reconstruct the story in case he is not present there.

The names of the dead and the injured and the cause of the fire are substance of the fire mishap story.

Major murders warrant that the reporter rushes to the scene and gather all the relevant facts. Unfortunately, the police are our 'crime reporters' and the journalists merely reproduce the police version, which need not always be true.

A professional journalist worth the name covers the story from different angles talking to the victim's relatives, neighbours, and leading citizens of the neighbourhood who can give an insight into the murder mystery. His story could never be biased and he uses his own investigative techniques to bring out the truth even when the police version is contrary to it. His basic duty is to establish the cause of the death.

Must minor accidents are reported on the basis of police bulletins or information supplied by police spokesman. However, for major accidents like air, rail or bus mishap, or a drowning tragedy, the reporter rush to the scene and gathers the facts himself to give authenticity to his story. Accidents and natural disasters qualify themselves to the epithet, 'News Nobody Likes'.

### **3.2.9 LEGAL REPORTING:**

The dramatic success of the public interest litigations has captured media attention, and judiciary today gets better coverage than ever before. Even so, it is the Supreme Court, the High Courts and Criminal Courts that get media attention while Civil Courts are seldom covered. One reason for it is they are slow-moving with thousands of cases pending for several years.

Only the largest newspapers have full time correspondents covering legal proceedings, while the medium-size newspapers hire part-time correspondents or stringers who may be professional advocates. A trainee journalist aiming to be a future Court Reporter must at first acquire some understanding of the court jurisdiction, its procedures and its hierarchy.

Much of the reporter's success depends on his contacts and sources and his ability to gain quick access to records. For a reporter the key person in a court is the clerk who keeps the records.

Court reporting involves diligent checking of records. It is a mistaken idea that the judge who presides a trial could be a source. Nevertheless, the reporter should introduce himself to the judge. He should also have good contacts with the lawyers working on either side of the case. For a case that attracts much public attention reporters may be under pressure from rival lawyers for a more favourable coverage. But fairness is what good reporting is all about.

When assigned to cover a major trial, the first thing a reporter should make sure of is a seat in the courtroom and adequate communication links with his/her newspaper or media office. For mid-day tabloids the stories may have to be filed even while the court proceedings are on.

If a reporter misses part of the proceedings, he/she can always approach the court stenographer. To make the report lively, the reporter must quote the major questions, answers, comments and remarks during the court's sittings.

**CONTEMPT OF COURT:** The reporter must scrupulously avoid any Contempt of Court in his reporting. This offence is defined and amplified in the Contempt of Court Act, 1971. Contempt may be civil or criminal offence.

Civil Contempt means willful disobedience to any judgement, decree, direction, order or other process of a court, or willful breach of an undertaking given by a person to a court. There will be no civil contempt where there is ignorance of the order of a court leading to unintentional breach.

Criminal contempt mainly means publication of any matter or the doing of any other act, which:

- Scandalizes or lower authority of any court; or
- Prejudices or interferes with the due course of judicial proceedings.

**Scandalizing the Court:** The publication of matter, which creates doubts about the ability, or fairness of a judge of a court is prohibited. A newspaper should not impute improper motives to a judge. In the famous case of Daphtary vs. Gupta (1971) the Supreme Court decided that to express an opinion that a judge “toes the line” of another judge is contempt. So is the expression that a judge pronounces his judgement under the influence of liquor or lure of wealth.

Casting defamatory allegations against a judge or judges, with or without reference to particular cases, is contempt because it creates distrust in the people's mind and shatters confidence of the general public in the judiciary.

However, it should be made clear that the Contempt of Court Act, 1971, is basically designed to protect the judiciary from unwarranted allegations, and not to safeguard corrupt judges.

**Prejudicing Fair Trail:** It is considered a contempt (i) if a newspaper report deters a person from giving witness in a court; (ii) if the news report is threatening or is written in abusive language compelling a party to discontinue the court proceedings; and (iii) if the report discusses the merits of a case pending in court.

A case with lessons for novices is the much-quoted Sheppard Case (1966) of the US where the judgement pronounced by a court was reversed 12 years later on the ground of prejudicial publicity. Dr. Samuel Sheppard had served nearly 10 years on his 1954 conviction of a charge of murdering his wife. Later in 1966 the court held that due to virulent publicity and a “carnival like atmosphere”, a fair trial was not possible. The media persons were warned that

trials were not like elections, to be won through public meetings, radio and newspapers. The media was also asked to desist from making unfair and prejudicial comments on pending trials.

**JOURNALISTIC DEFENSE:** According to Sec. 5 of the Contempt of Court Act, 1971, a person shall not be guilty of contempt of court for publishing any “fair comment” on the merits of any case, which has been “heard and finally decided”. What then is “fair comment” and what is meant by “heard and finally decided?”

**Fair Comment:** This depends on the facts and circumstances of each case. To comment on the correctness of a judicial decision, whether on law or facts, is not contempt. Similarly, to point out inequality of sentences in two different cases of the same nature, is also not contempt.

However, while commenting on the merits of a case if improper motives are imputed to the judge, then the comment ceases to be fair. Similarly, to express that the judgement was arbitrary or the judge was incompetent is also contempt.

**Heard and Finally Decided:** A fair comment on the merits of a case can be made when it is heard and finally decided. A case cannot be said to have been finally decided until the period of limitation for filing appeal has expired. Where an appeal or revision has been filed the comments on the case should not be published until the appeal is finally decided.

**Ignorance of Pendency:** If a court story interferes with the course of justice, but its reporter has no reasonable ground to assume that the proceedings were pending, then one will not be guilty of contempt of court. Prior to the enactment of Contempt of Court Act, 1971, ignorance of pendency was not a defense or excuse.

**Fair and Accurate Report:** According to Section 4 of the Contempt of Court Act, 1971, fair and accurate report of the court proceedings is lawful. However, a report will be contemptuous if it has been prohibited by the court or is forbidden by any law.

**Truth is No Defense:** In *Perspective Publications vs State of Maharashtra* case (1971), the Supreme Court has held that though truthfulness of a statement is a good defence in an action for libel, it is no defence when it comes to Contempt of Court.

**Academic Writings:** Academic writings or a report written academically on a point of law is not a Contempt of Court; just on the ground that the law discussed is at issue in a court.

**PUNISHMENT:** The maximum punishment for Contempt of Court is simple imprisonment of six months, or fine of two thousand rupees or both. If the accused apologizes, the court without punishment may discharge the person. It is for the court to decide whether the apology is acceptable.

Generally, an apology, to be acceptable by the court, should be sincere, unconditional and without delay. An apology should be made in a manner that substantially wipes out the mischief.

**OTHER STATUTES:** Apart from the Contempt of Court Act, 1971, there are some other statutes, which prohibit publication of court proceedings, or any part thereof. For example:

- Section 228-A of the Indian Penal Code prohibits publications of names of victims of certain sexual crimes. The section also prohibits any other matter by which the identity of the victim could be known to the reader. Section 228-A was inserted in the IPC by an amendment made in 1983.
- Section 33 of the Special Marriage Act, 1954 requires that the proceedings under the Act should be held in camera if either party to the case wishes so, or if the court so directs.
- Similarly Section 22 (1) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, requires that the proceedings under the Act should be held in camera if either party to the suit wishes so, or of the court thinks fit to do so. Section 22 (2) of the Act prescribes punishment to be imposed on the person who prints or publishes proceedings without previous permission of the court.
- In the interest of the security of the State, Section 14 of the Official Secrets Act, 1923, empowers the court to hold the proceedings of a case or any part thereof in camera.
- Under the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969, the commission may hear a case or any part thereof in camera.

**LEGAL TERMINOLOGY:**

Some basic knowledge of the most frequently used legal terms is a must. The following are legal terms often used in news reports.

*Adjournment Application:* Request for more time for finding witnesses or important evidence or for other reasons.

*Attachment Order:* The court's authorization to take and hold a person's property.

*Bail Bond:* A security amount usually furnished to guarantee the appearance of an accused person in the court.

*Change of Venue:* Change of the place of trial.

*Certorari:* Writ from superior to inferior court requiring the records to be sent to the former for review.

*Commutation:* Reduction of sentence

*Concurrent Sentence:* Court's decision that a convicted person serves only the longest of several jail terms imposed on him.

*Contempt of Court:* An offence against the court, punishable by a fine, or imprisonment or both.

*Consent Decree:* Court order to which the defendant has consented.

*Decree Nisi:* Final judgement to take effect some time in the future.

*Double Jeopardy:* Plea that the defendant has already been tried for the same offence.

*Extradition:* Process of returning a prisoner from one country to another.

*Habeas Corpus:* Judicial procedure requiring production of a detained person in court to inquire into the legality of the detention.

*Mandamus:* Court's command to an inferior court, or ordering a person to perform a public or statutory duty.

*Pardon:* Action of executive relieving a criminal from sentence.

*Parole:* Release on promise of reappearance at regular intervals.

*Plaintiff:* Party who initiates litigation.

*Reprieve:* Delay in execution of a sentence.

*Proceedings held in Camera:* Proceedings held privately, i.e. not in public.

*Respondent:* Party against whom an appeal has been taken.

*Proceedings Suo Moto:* Proceedings launched by the court on its own.

Journalism requires that each technical (legal) term be briefly explained when used in a story for the first time. A legal term, not explained in the story, confuses the reader. Remember, English is the language of the higher courts in India. So, a good command of the language is expected of a legal reporter.

### **3.2.10 SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY REPORTING:**

The age of science is the age of reason, and it is by reasoning that human beings have unlocked the secrets of nature. Technology is the application of science in the day-to-day living, and it is by technology that advanced nations have made a great leap forward.

**WHAT IS SCIENCE COMMUNICATION?** The role of today's science reporter is akin to that of Archimedes who discovered the principle of buoyancy while relaxing in a bath tub. Then what did he do? He ran through the streets shouting Eureka because he was overwhelmed by the desire to through communicate his invention.

Science reporters are driven by a curiosity and governed by a scientific temper. The first step to becoming a science reporter is to develop well-grounded awareness of science by reading good popular science books and journals. Keep watching popular science programmes on foreign and Indian television channels.

**KNOW YOUR FACTS:** Half-truths, bluffs and blisters are not part of science reporting, which is based on verifiable technological facts. Verify your facts from other sources, reference books and journals before you report. Credibility and clarity are the catchwords in science reporting.

**GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND PHRASES:** Specialists speak in technical language popularly called jargons. Novices to the field of science reporting are advised to prepare a glossary of technical terms and their equivalent in common man's parlance so that the story could be better explained.

Befriend the leading scientists and engineers of your town and ask them about the latest developments in their fields - inventions, applications and research. Attend seminars and conferences regularly and write interpretative reports for the knowledge-hungry readers. Publishing interviews of eminent scientists not enhances the prestige of your newspaper/magazine but promotes science awareness in society.

**WHERE DOES THE NEWS COME FROM?** The age of computers is rapidly changing the way we live. Computers are installed in banks, railway stations, airports, operation theatres of hospitals, public health, and water supply and electricity departments and real estate agencies. Then there is Internet and a host of other new technologies.

How do people cope with new technologies and what are their relative merits and demerits? Is there any goof-up or bungling in the purchase of computers or any shady deal in government departments in the purchase? These are material that falls within the purview of science and technology reporting.

India can boast of the world's third largest reservoir of technical and scientific manpower. The Department of Science and Technology (DST) of the Government of India formulates policy planning for a chain of national laboratories, which come under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). In all 40 major research laboratories and network of multi-disciplinary extension centres operate under it.

Among the premier national laboratories are the National Physical Laboratory, New Delhi; National Chemical Laboratory, Pune; Central Drug Research Institute, Lucknow; Central Glass Research Institute, Dhanbad; Indian Institute of Oceanography, Goa; and Electrochemical Laboratory, Karaikudi. The CSIR (Rafi Marg, New Delhi - 110001) will only be too glad to help a science reporter get the information he seeks.

The Bhabha Atomic Research Centre and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, both in Bombay, and Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) near Thiruvananthapuram have done outstanding Research and Development work taking the country to the forefront of global technology.

The Department of Agriculture does a wide range of crop research through the laboratories and research stations of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) have commendable track record in diverse technological fields. The sheer vastness of the field may be daunting but the science reporter can never have a dull day in his life.

**WHO'S WHO OF SCIENTISTS:** As important as the glossary is a who's who of eminent scientist, Nobel laureate scientists or scientists of international fame, those of outstanding national stature and those distinguished Indian scientists living abroad. A science reporter must instantly be able to recall the names of the galaxy or recognize them when they are in the news.

Creating environmental awareness is one of the cardinal duties of the science reporter. There is marked environmental degradation - air and water pollution, choked traffic, spiraling slums, appalling civic amenities and so on. Crusading for a better environment is the hallmark of a dedicated science reporter.

**SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION:** On the science beat, your social perceptions will be sharpened. You will observe the holistic picture of technology-infused changes on society, especially the problems faced by the people due to poor implementation of policies. Your reports will help policy makers take corrective measures.

**LANGUAGE IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY REPORTING:** Science reporting calls for greater precision and logical progression of ideas. The popular science writers have amazing clarity of thought and expression and an irresistibly fascinating manner of presentation.

The English language retains its primacy as the global language of science and technology. People the world over are looking for reading something that concerns them directly. So interpret news in terms of what it means to the people. Exaggeration and sensationalism do not belong to science reporting which is basically an exercise in precision writing.

### **3.2.11 SPORTS REPORTING:**

Sports writing and reporting demands, in the first place, an exceptional interest in the field of sports and a good writing style. Sports reporters are conversant with the rules of the game and have good relations with players and coaches alike. They are also knowledgeable about the lives of top players to dish out interesting anecdotes in sports features.

Sports reporters write to appeal to a class of readers who eat, drink and sleep sports. Sports writing is as competitive as the game itself. Your focus is always on the theatre of action on the playing fields. Like all reporters, the sports reporter too works under pressure, but there is too much action in succession for him to recapitulate that it makes his job uniquely challenging.

To become a successful sports journalist, you should keep a sports diary. Renowned sports journalists have the habit of jotting down every idea or scrap of information, which they later skillfully weave into their reports and columns.

**CLIPPING LIBRARY:** Keep a clipping library of reports and articles of special interest to you, which you have come across in newspapers and magazines. This could be a ready reference library for facts and figures and back grounders. Classify under different names of games like 'cricket', 'hockey', 'athletics', etc. to make it handy.

**SEARCH FOR IDEAS:** Develop your own powers of observation and sensitivity to sights and sounds. Then you will see the world around you in a different perspective. Converse with leading sports personalities and suddenly ideas will strike you. Be on the look out for ideas and it could come to you from the least expected quarters or the least expected place.

**STYLE IN SPORTS WRITING:** In order to write well, you must develop an easy, conversational style that enables you to gain and hold the attention of the readers. You must learn to write simple sentences and use simple words instead of resorting to high-sounding words. Avoid clichés, jargons and slang. Hackneyed expressions have no place in good reports. Phrases like 'it may be recalled', 'it goes without saying', 'last but not least', etc. reduce the impact of a news story.

**NEW ANGLE:** Watch out for the turning point of the game to give a new angle to the story. Write vividly and succinctly to recapture the drama of the game. If you take the right approach, the readers will read your entire story.

**OPEN YOUR EYES AND EARS WIDELY:** Always keep your eyes and ears wide open. Even in a cocktail party, you get the lead for a sensational or exclusive story.

**DESCRIPTIVE AND ANALYTICAL:** Your report must be descriptive enough for those who have not seen the match and analytical enough for those who have seen it on television but are seeking something more to it. Develop a racy style that befits the game, recapturing the players in their best action, which is the difference between a good report and a bad report. As a writer, you must never be satisfied with your second-best but strive for excellence.

**WRITING TO SPACE:** It is often said sports journalism is precis writing. Newcomers are always advised to keep the copy short and crisp. This way both the busy reader and the editor trying to accommodate all the news that are fit to print will like you better.

A local school match may be dismissed in a paragraph or two, whereas a Cricket Test Match or a Davis Cup match or an Olympic event merits detailed coverage. Writing to space is a quintessential quality in reporting.

**HOW TO WRITE SPORTS NEWS:** Before your start, know the landmarks in the history of the game, its rules and terminology and top ranking players and their achievements. Sports news could be as wide-ranging as athletics, swimming, gymnastics, weight lifting, wrestling or the popular national and international games.

The prospects of players and team as well as a postmortem of the contest are essential ingredients of good sports reporting. Studying the background material helps assess strong and weak areas of players and team, and state in simple terms the technicalities of the game.

Factors contributing directly or indirectly can be learnt from coaches and managers. The more you study the scenario, the better equipped you are to present a good report.

Sports reporting differs from general reporting in that sports reporters enjoy greater freedom for self-expression, which includes the use of superlatives. The famous among them do enjoy special privileges in keeping with their professional status. Sport reporting provides details on the fitness of players, points of play, individual performances, tactics and strategies adopted in the contest and crowd reaction.

To be an ace sports reporter, sharpen your power of observation and descriptive and narrative skills.

Your depth of knowledge is important while commenting on star performers. Everything that you write must be in good taste.

**SPECIALIZE IN YOUR AREA:** One must know something about every sport, at least the salient features, and specialize in one or two disciplines, say a combination of any of the following: cricket, hockey, football, tennis, badminton, table tennis, athletics, diving, gymnastics or swimming. The list is no means complete. And your interest should govern your choice.

**ADVANCE COPY:** Very often you will have to depend on officials, coaches and managers for an advance copy for details. The better your relations with officials, the more information you will get from them. In the face of a defeat, an official may yet be willing to speak to you provided you have good relations with him. In winning moments, people like to be quoted but not in defeat.

Notice how important it is for your job that you maintain cordial relations with everyone around you.

Sports is not just a matter of limbs and body but as much a matter of the mind. Therefore the psychology and temperament of the players and team and their caving in under pressure are as much important as the skill and technique of the combat.

**HOW TO COVER THE GAME:** To churn out good copy, watch the match dispassionately and take notes systematically. When you write, tell the story immediately, which is the first rule in sports writing. Don't play the vocabulary snob but be reader friendly.

**SPORTS FEATURES AND COLUMNS:** Sports features written with a deep insight and biographical touch become instantly popular. Once you emerge as an authority in your own right, you will be invited to write columns, which is your view from a vantage point.

You would by then have acquired a steady loyal readership who look up to your writing wherever it appears for a mature understanding of the game.

**THE SPORTS PAGE:** In most Indian newspapers, sports reporters have to edit the copy as well. This job, better known as sub editing (subbing in the British and Indian journalistic parlance) is the art of correcting and polishing up the language and filling into the allotted space with a headline that tells and arrests the readers' attention.

Sports headlines are known for their action, vigour and punch. They also glorify the victor and trounce the vanquished as though modern-day battles are fought in the fields of sports.

The distinct character of a well laid out sports page is a blown-up picture of action in the theatre of sports. Without that attention winning photo the sports page would have lost its charm.

### **3.3 SUMMARY:**

- Event Reporting is the most common kind of reporting. It is also called *beat reporting*. Here reporters are placed at the most strategic-news-breaking points like hospitals, courtrooms, police headquarters, airports, railway stations, universities, government and corporate offices, and health, etc.
- The Interpretative reporter gives the reader the background of an event and explains the possible consequences. Besides his own knowledge and research, he often relies on the opinion authorities on the subject.
- Investigative reporting is exposing and reporting corruption. It calls for exceptional courage, a sense of justice and a commitment to the higher values of life. All news stories require some kind of investigation by the reporter; but investigative journalists dig hard and deep into the realm of the powers that be, which in itself is a dangerous enterprise.
- Business reporting deals with the state of business, depending on the country's economic climate. This also includes stock markets, capital market, the wholesale and consumer price

indices, metals and gold prices, industrial and agricultural production, consumer behaviour, etc.

### **3.4 KEY WORDS:**

**Event Reporting:** Event Reporting is also called *beat reporting* and is the most common kind of reporting. Here reporters are placed at the most strategic-news-breaking points like hospitals, courtrooms, police headquarters, airports, railway stations, universities, government and corporate offices, and health and recreation centers, etc.

**Interpretative Reporting:** The Interpretative reporter gives the reader the background of an event and explains the possible consequences. Besides his own knowledge and research, he often relies on the opinion authorities on the subject.

**Investigative Reporting:** Investigative reporting is exposing and reporting corruption. It calls for exceptional courage, a sense of justice and a commitment to the higher values of life. All news stories require some kind of investigation by the reporter; but investigative journalists dig hard and deep into the realm of corruption.

**Legislative Reporting:** Legislature reporting focuses on the day-to-day proceedings of Parliament as well as state legislature (Vidhan Sabha and Vidhan Parishad). Normally, seasoned special Correspondents are assigned to cover parliamentary proceedings, to ensure accuracy and maturity in reporting.

### **3.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):**

1. Discuss in brief the various types of reporting.
2. Write in detail about crime and accident reporting.
3. Write in detail about political reporting.
4. Write in detail about legislative reporting.
5. Write in detail about Parliamentary reporting.
6. Write in detail about business reporting.
7. Write in detail about development reporting.
8. Write in detail about legal reporting.
9. Write in detail about science and technological reporting.
10. Write in detail about sports reporting.

### **3.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:**

**Reporting** by Charnley

**Active Reporter** by James Lewis

**Professional Journalist** by John Hohenberg

**Professional Journalism** by Patanjali Sethi

**Professional Journalism** by M.V. Kamath

**News Writing** by George Hough

**ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES  
OF  
REPORTORIAL & EDITORIAL STAFF**

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**LESSON STRUCTURE:**

This lesson shall provide an introduction to roles and responsibilities of the reportorial and editorial staff of newspapers. We shall start with the roles and responsibilities of the reportorial staff of newspapers. Then we shall discuss about the qualities and responsibilities of the editorial staff of newspapers. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 4.0 *Objectives*
- 4.1 *Introduction*
- 4.2 *Presentation of Content*
  - 4.2.1 Qualities of the Reportorial Staff of Newspapers
  - 4.2.2 Responsibilities of the *Reportorial* Staff of Newspapers
  - 4.2.3 Qualities of the *Editorial* Staff of Newspapers
  - 4.2.4 Responsibilities of the *Editorial* Staff of Newspapers
- 4.3 *Summary*
- 4.4 *Key Words*
- 4.5 *Self-Assessment-Questions (SAQs)*
- 4.6 *References/Suggested Reading*

**4.0 OBJECTIVES:**

The objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- *To Know About the Qualities of the Reportorial Staff of Newspapers*
- *To Know About the Responsibilities of the Reportorial Staff of Newspapers*
- *To Know About the Qualities of the Editorial Staff of Newspapers*
- *To Know About the Responsibilities of the Editorial Staff of Newspapers*

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION:**

A journalist must possess certain basic qualities to be a successful professional. Integrity of character, commitment to the truth and the reasoning power are quintessential to building credibility. A good perception and interpersonal skills to elicit news would stand him in good stead in reporting.

Primarily, a reporter has a 3-fold responsibility: responsibility to society, responsibility to the newspaper/news organization and responsibility to his source of information.

A well-read reporter can do justice to his beat. He needs to know all aspects of his beat-laws and byelaws, functions and areas of operations and jurisdiction and so on.

He should cultivate contacts in and out of his beat to get information. A perfect talker, he should be able to handle difficult people and difficult situations. A competent reporter anticipates news rather than be taken by surprise. This ability is of great importance to face situations that arise suddenly.

#### **4.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:**

One of the major functions of newspapers is to play the role of a watchdog. The reporters basically play this role. To be the eyes and ears of the people, the reporter must be committed to the society; he must use the power of the pen for the well being of the society and resist the temptation to destroy. Nevertheless, he is neither a social worker nor a morality preacher.

More important than social and moral issues, a reporter has to do a job. This involves many roles and many responsibilities. To do the job well, a reporter has to have certain qualities. We shall discuss about these in this lesson. The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- Qualities of the Reportorial Staff of Newspapers,
- Responsibilities of the Reportorial Staff of Newspapers,
- *Qualities of the Editorial Staff of Newspapers, and*
- *Responsibilities of the Editorial Staff of Newspapers*

#### **4.2.1 QUALITIES OF REPORTERS:**

A talented reporter writes to build his own image and that of his institution. An alert mind and a sense of curiosity are important assets to him, no matter what is his beat. Besides these qualities, he must develop certain specific qualities to excel in his field. These are discussed below.

**NOSE FOR NEWS:** A reporter's primary job is discovering the new. But quite often, most of the material before a news reporter may just be publicity matter or advertisements in disguise. Therefore, a reporter must check his material and sniff the news from publicity.

The golden rule in reporting is to go by the reader's interest. Most of the time, a reporter will be covering routine matters like press conferences, which are hardly exciting. And the beginner would learn his craft by doing city reporting in the beginning before graduating into highly specialized reporting.

Reporting speeches of politicians could be less challenging but the keen-eyed reporter looks for something unusual that may be lurking under the ordinary occurrence. His sharp sense of observation may help him gather amusing sidelights of interest to his readers and report an exciting news story.

**INTERPERSONAL SKILLS:** It is generally observed that introverts make poor reporters. Reporters move about meeting people, making and winning confidence. In this era of investigative reporting, readers are keenly interested to know what is going on behind the scenes.

**DEVELOPING CONTACTS:** A friendly and affable nature helps develop sources that could provide precious information, clues, or other material for the reporter in search of a story. The ability to win the confidence and respect of the potential sources is an asset of the newsman.

People may hesitate to talk on sensitive matters, especially to a reporter on the investigative track. They may like to reveal but they are afraid of the consequences. There could be informers of the underworld. What may be at stake for them could be their jobs or their lives.

Often it may be quite difficult to win their trust, and the reporter has to assure his sources that they will remain protected and their identities kept a secret.

Beware of vested interests - be it political, business or professional -who would like to plant a story of half-truths or even lies. Crosscheck with other sources and establish the truth

before you file the story, which may deceptively appear to be the greatest story of your career. The story could turn out to be your greatest career disaster.

Do not slight or show in bad light insignificant or ordinary people because a humble clerk or a lowly peon could give you a tip for a story.

The Watergate scandal was exposed by two cub reporters acting upon the lead given by an ordinary source.

The Harshad Mehta case began with a source contacting Ms. Sucheta Dalal of The Times of India, Bombay, with an unconfirmed report about some activities in the State Bank of India. Ms. Dalal, Assistant Business Editor of the paper, followed the lead provided by the source and got the story confirmed from reliable contacts bringing to light the stock scam concerning stock broker Harshad Mehta and others involving a staggering Rs. 6000 crore.

**BEING OBJECTIVE AND FAIR:** The reporter must be a sharp observer of events, presenting the facts in a balanced and objective manner. How does one maintain balance and objectivity in reporting? The first thing to do is to write the news story properly to assure the reader that what he reads is news not the reporter's opinion or some publicity matter in disguise.

The sources must be quoted except when they want to remain anonymous. And ensure that the story is balanced, by giving adequate coverage to all the sides of the sides of the subject. Also ensure that the information one presents is true by counter checking.

Do not adopt an indifferent attitude seeing each event afresh, unconnected to any previous events or expectations or future possibilities.

**CLARITY OF EXPRESSION:** Clarity of thinking leads to clarity in writing, and however complex and specialized the subject; the reporter should have the gift for simplification, reducing it to the layman's parlance. Explain difficult terminology and simplify government press notes, notorious for burying the new points.

**TEAM SPIRIT:** News-breaking stories of dramatic dimension, sometimes, call for a team of reporters to handle them. The Bofors investigative stories had The Indian Express team working from Geneva and Stockholm besides New Delhi. The securities scam investigations by The Times of India involved Sucheta Dalal and Business correspondent, R Srinivasan who posed as an investor and went to the State Bank officers in Bombay to get confirmation about the goings

on in the bank. The Statesman investigative stories are attributed to 'The Statesman Insight Team'.

Working in a team involves pooling your talents, sources and contacts to achieve synergy.

**COPING WITH PRESSURES:** Investigative journalists thrive on exposing the bungling and misdeeds of men in power. On the other hand, men in power thrive on publicity and good press. Corrupt men at the top shudder at investigative journalists and hence try to put pressure to change the news or "kill the story".

While the government and advertisers could indirectly pressurize you through your news organization, direct pressure could also come from the government and political parties. In case you are doing stories, which could lead to harmful exposure of someone, he could take recourse to a range of legal and illegal options, including legal action, threats and violence to pressurize you.

There are three ways of coping with pressure:

- *Fighting it,*
- *Giving in, and*
- *Anticipating the pressure and taking preventive measures.*

The first one is the most noble of the three options and history is full of shining examples of this category.

During the Quit India Movement Gandhiji said, "It is better not to issue newspapers than to issue them under a feeling of suppression." Because a newspaper is a business as well as a public-service employing thousands of people, you cannot expect to become a hero throwing thousands unemployed and ruining a business. You cannot fight on your own and if your news organization does not back you, the consequences could be disastrous for you as a professional journalist.

The reporters who generally brave powerful pressures are those who have the full support of their organizations or their professional colleagues backing them in a united manner. It may be recalled that the journalists of the Punjab Kesari group of newspapers who have taken a courageous anti-terrorist stand in Punjab worked under extremely tight security. The group has lost two of its owners to terrorist bullets but has not given in to pressures.

#### **4.2.2 RESPONSIBILITIES OF REPORTERS:**

Reporters have the following responsibilities:

**RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS THE NEWS ORGANIZATION:** A reporter has to conform to the character, style and policy of the newspaper or magazine or news agency he is working for. Conservative papers shy away from investigation of scandals and when working for such a paper, you have to stick to its policy even if that cramps your style. But in a news organization with more dynamic approach to news, you must develop the skills of an investigator.

Whatever you do as a reporter will affect the newspaper and its reputation. So, you must take pains to ensure accuracy and objectivity in your stories.

**RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS THE SOURCES:** Your credibility with your sources is a matter of vital importance to your career. If they so desire, you must keep their identity a secret. There have been cases in the West where reporters have defied court order and gone to jail rather than reveal the sources. Nevertheless, the responsibility of protecting the sources need not be considered absolute.

**RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS THE READER AND SOCIETY:** “Good faith with the reader is the foundation of all good journalism worthy of the name”, says the code of ethics of the American Society of Newspapers Editors. As a news reporter, you have duty to provide accurate, unbiased and objective information to the reader.

However, publicity seekers and private businesses organize press conferences and conduct tours with attractive gifts and incentives. Private firms seek publicity since news carries greater credibility than advertisements. The two areas that need careful handling by the reporter are corporate news and communal news. With the proliferation of big companies and multinationals, their activities form a major subject of public interest.

On the one hand, the reporter risks becoming a publicity agent for corporate houses and on the other, he risks people’s investments and reputations. Utmost care must be taken since everything he writes could have its repercussions in the society.

When reporting in a communally sensitive country like India, with linguistic and social diversities, care must be taken not to favour communities or groups nor offend them. Reputed newspapers while reporting Ayodhya controversy, referred to it as the “Disputed site” or as the “controversial structure”, or simply as the “Ramjanambhoomi-Babri Masjid site”.

Extremely careful reporting was done on Punjab and Kashmir problems too without aggravating communal tensions.

#### **4.2.3 QUALITIES OF A SUB EDITOR:**

Some of the essential qualities of a good deskman (sub editor / Chief Sub editor / News Editor) are:

- *Calmness:* Never be excited or perturbed when major stories break. Your calm nerves are important in objectively assessing the news and according it the priority it deserves. Remember, you are dealing with history in the making of which assassinations; collapse of governments, natural calamities and the triumph and tragedies of people play a part.
- *Judgment:* The ability to take quick and right decisions is quintessential to producing a vibrant newspaper.
- *Fairness:* The newsmen's fairness is the credibility of the newspaper, the absence of which will affect its circulation.
- *Quick Grasp:* The mental faculty to size up the situation as events unfold and the ability to find the right words to express it is a must.
- *Knowing Your Reader:* A good newspaper has a mind of his own, even as the readership has a collective mind of its own; when the two are like-minded, a healthy relationship is established. Hence, the ability to see a story from the reader's point of view makes a great deskman.
- *Positive Skepticism:* While the gullible accept anything at the face value, an experienced deskman cultivates a healthy skepticism to spot the source of potential errors.
- *Knowledge:* A good general knowledge and familiarity with names of people, cities and capitals of the world, currencies of countries, politics global and national, business, academics, art and culture help edit copy meticulously.
- *Memory:* A sharp memory facilitates recall of the past events and puts news in perspective.

#### **4.2.4 RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUB EDITORS:**

The sub editor is the guardian of accuracy, style, balance and fairness, intelligent presentation of news and good taste. A good sub editor makes priceless contribution by making a newspaper or a magazine worth reading. Journalism textbooks describe him as:

- *A gatekeeper of the news;*
- *A image-builder of the newspaper's reputation;*
- *A surgeon who performs news surgery;*
- *A priest who conducts a happy marriage between speed and efficiency; and*

- *The tailor who cuts stories to the size*

However, he gets all the blame and seldom any credit and destined to remain anonymous.

**DUTIES OF A SUB EDITOR:** A sub editor does the following things:

- *Polishes up the language by removing rough edges from the copy and making it readable;*
- *Fine-tunes the copy to the style of the newspaper (the style is a matter of uniformity of capitalization, spelling and avoiding pitfalls in usage in conformity with the newspaper stylebook);*
- *Simplifies the language to make it reader-friendly;*
- *Tailors story length to space requirements;*
- *Corrects factual errors;*
- *Detects fraud or plant. A plant is falsehood in journalistic garment to promote somebody's interest or to discredit somebody;*
- *Ensures balance and fairness and objectivity in the stories. In case of a controversy, both sides get equal space;*
- *Guards against legal trappings like defamation, libel, sub-judice, and copyright violations. The reports or news stories should not defame a person by use of pejorative, or deal with matters under judicial consideration or use-copyrighted material without permission;*
- *Rewrites and restructures stories extensively when necessary. But normally sub editing ('subbing') involves looking for errors in spelling and grammar;*
- *Implements the editorial policy of the newspaper. A newspaper may back a political party and anything hypercritical of the party may not find a significant place in its display*
- *Maintains good taste;*
- *Shuns sensation;*
- *Deletes taints of publicity (puff); and*
- *Follows the golden rule "when in doubt cut".*

The sub editor is responsible for every word that gets printed.

#### **4.3 SUMMARY:**

- The reporters basically are the eyes and ears of the society. To play this role, the reporters must be committed to the society; he must use the power of the pen for the well being of the society. More important than social and moral issues, a reporter has to do a job. This involves many roles and many responsibilities. To do the job well, a reporter has to have

certain qualities.

- A reporter's primary job is discovering the new. The ability to find news is called nose for news. But quite often, most of the material before a news reporter may just be publicity matter or advertisements in disguise. Therefore, a reporter must check his material and swift the news from publicity.
- A friendly and affable nature helps develop sources that could provide precious information, clues, or other material for the reporter in search of a story. The ability to win the confidence and respect of the potential sources is an asset of the newsman. Often it may be quite difficult to win their trust, and the reporter has to assure his sources that they will remain protected and their identities kept a secret.
- The reporter must be a sharp observer of events, presenting the facts in a balanced and objective manner. How does one maintain balance and objectivity in reporting? The first thing to do is to write the news story properly to assure the reader that what he reads is news not the reporter's opinion or some publicity matter in disguise.
- Clarity of thinking leads to clarity in writing, and however complex and specialized the subject; the reporter should have the gift for simplification, reducing it to the layman's parlance. Explain difficult terminology and simplify government press notes, notorious for burying the new points.
- News-breaking stories of dramatic dimension, sometimes, call for a team of reporters to handle them. Working in a team involves pooling you talents, sources and contacts to achieve synergy.
- Investigative journalists thrive on exposing the bungling and misdeeds of men in power. While the government and advertisers could indirectly pressurize you through your news organization, direct pressure could also come from the government and political parties.
- The sub editor is the guardian of accuracy, style, balance and fairness, intelligent presentation of news and good taste.
- Some of the essential qualities of a good deskman (sub editor / Chief Sub editor / News Editor) are: Calmness, Judgment, Fairness, and Quick Grasp.

#### **4.4 KEY WORDS:**

**Nose for News:** A reporter's primary job is discovering the new. The ability to find news is called nose for news. But quite often, most of the material before a news reporter may just be publicity matter or advertisements in disguise.

**Interpersonal Skills:** It is generally observed that introverts make poor reporters. Reporters move about meeting people, making and winning confidence. In this era of investigative reporting, readers are keenly interested to know what is going on behind the scenes. This requires good interpersonal skills.

**Developing Contacts:** A friendly and affable nature helps develop sources that could provide precious information, clues, or other material for the reporter in search of a story. The ability to win the confidence and respect of the potential sources is an asset of the newsman.

**Objectivity and Fairness:** The reporter must be a sharp observer of events, presenting the facts in a balanced and objective manner. How does one maintain balance and objectivity in reporting? The first thing to do is to write the news story properly to assure the reader that what he reads is news not the reporter's opinion or some publicity matter in disguise.

**Clarity of Expression:** Clarity of thinking leads to clarity in writing, and however complex and specialized the subject; the reporter should have the gift for simplification, reducing it to the layman's parlance. Explain difficult terminology and simplify government press notes, notorious for burying the new points.

**Sub Editor:** The sub editor is the guardian of accuracy, style, balance and fairness, intelligent presentation of news and good taste. A good sub editor makes priceless contribution by making a newspaper or a magazine worth reading.

**Qualities of a Sub Editor:** Some of the essential qualities of a good deskman (sub editor / Chief Sub editor / News Editor) are: Calmness, Judgment, Fairness, and Quick Grasp.

#### **4.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):**

1. Write in detail about the responsibilities of a reporter.
2. Write in detail about the responsibilities of a sub editor.
3. Discuss the major qualities of a good reporter.
4. Discuss the major qualities of a good sub editor.

#### **4.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:**

- ***Reporting*** by Charnley
- ***Active Reporter*** by James Lewis
- ***Professional Journalist*** by John Hohenberg
- ***Professional Journalism*** by Patanjali Sethi
- ***Professional Journalism*** by M.V. Kamath
- ***News Writing*** by George Hough

## **M. A. Mass Communication (1<sup>st</sup> year) / PGDMC**

**PRINT MEDIA      MMC-103 / PGDMC –103 Lesson no. 6**

### **EDITING – AN INTRODUCTION**

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#### **LESSON STRUCTURE:**

This lesson shall provide an introduction to newspapers. We shall start with an overview of editing. Then we shall discuss about the responsibilities of sub editors. Finally we shall discuss about the requirements to become a good sub editor. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 6.0 *Objectives*
- 6.1 *Introduction*
- 6.2 *Presentation of Content*
  - 6.2.1 *Editing- An Overview*
  - 6.2.2 *Responsibilities of a Sub Editor*
  - 6.2.3 *Requirements to Become a Good Sub Editor*
- 6.3 *Summary*
- 6.4 *Key Words*
- 6.5 *Self-Assessment-Questions (SAQs)*
- 6.6 *References/Suggested Reading*

#### **6.0 OBJECTIVES:**

The objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- *To Get an Overview of Editing*
- *To Know About the Responsibilities of a Sub Editor*
- *To Know About the Requirements to Become a Good Sub Editor*

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION:

Editing is the soul of journalism. A reporter or correspondent conceives and writes the story. But it is the sub editor who puts 'soul' to the story. Editing to a layman is *dotting the i's and crossing the t's*. Many people think of editing as only an act of correcting the mistakes in a story. This is, however, just one aspect of editing.

Editing involves many other things such as deciding what will and what will not be published and making the selected stories palatable and presentable while shaping it to project the publication's policies and philosophies.

In this lesson we shall discuss about some broader aspects of editing, and about the responsibilities and requirements of a good sub editor.

## 6.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Editing- An Overview*
- *Responsibilities of a Sub Editor*
- *Requirements to Become a Good Sub Editor*

### 6.2.1 EDITING- AN OVERVIEW:

Editing in newspaper terminology is called *copy editing, subediting* or *subbing*. And subeditors or copy editors do the editing. The editor does not do it. The sub-editor is like the *unsung craftsmen* in a dramatic production whose skills put 'quality' into the drama that draws applause for the stars and performers.

So while reporters get all the acknowledgement (in the form of by-lines), accolades, applause, appreciation and even awards, the subeditors toil away in the newsroom. Reporters and correspondents take to the center stage while subeditors man the backstage.

The term *copy editor* is used in the U.S.A. while *subeditor* is used in the UK and many other countries including India.

Editing, or subediting, as it is popularly known, includes many activities. These are *arranging, reducing, adding, translating, selecting, checking and adapting of news and other materials for publication*.

Copy is nothing but written pieces - news stories, articles, features, etc.- coming to a newspaper's newsroom from different sources - reporters,

correspondents, stringers, freelancers, news agencies, feature agencies, assigned writers, etc. With newer technologies like *telex*, *fax*, *teletext*, *modem*, etc., more copy reaches newsrooms more easily today. These need to be screened to select the necessary stories.

In addition to processing copy, writing headlines and moving copy to the production department, subeditors are also involved with certain aspects of production like composing, layout etc. which is usually done on the computer. Automation has made the job of subeditors easier.

But computers and other machines cannot replace subeditors (proof readers and layout artists are almost extinct now). This is because of certain talents that sub-editors have including the ability to edit copy and writing headlines. These two abilities require *sound judgment, scholarliness, varied exposure and experience, memory, motivation, curiosity, imagination and skepticism*.

### **6.2.2 RESPONSIBILITIES OF A SUB EDITOR:**

The sub editor is like a diamond cutter. He uses his talents and qualities to remove the flaws and shapes the raw pieces (news stories, features, etc) by way of refining and polishing. A subeditor searches for shortcomings in the copy, meticulously scans for flaws and inaccuracies. And he or she searches for the optimal utilization of the 'words'.

He has to have *vast vocabulary, an ability to select the right words for the right situation and an ability to play with words* to be able to put life into the written pieces.

The sub editor should know when to prune (take out) the useless, the redundant, and the unnecessary cards. He or she adds life and movement to the piece by substituting active verbs for passive verbs. He highlights the specifics and underplays the generalities. A subeditor adds colour to copy by using words creatively. He maintains both *brevity* (shortness) and *simplicity* so that readers can grasp the information and ideas more easily without reading long prose.

The sub editor looks for ways and means to incorporate the canons of effective communication- *clarity, cohesiveness, completeness, conciseness, comprehensiveness, continuity*, etc., into the copy.

If the above description makes you think that subediting is boring, monotonous and is like correcting language notebooks of students, then you are

wrong. Subediting is exciting as it shapes all kinds of stories and the subeditors come to know about these stories much before others.

Often sub editing is considered to be a craft because it involves certain routine and mechanical activities like correction, rewriting, etc. While being a craft, subediting is also an art. It involves mental and intellectual capabilities of the subeditor. And it has been rightly said:

*"Because subediting is an art, the most important ingredient, after training and talent, is strong motivation. The copy editor must care. Not only should a copy editor know the job, he or she must love it. He or she should love every story, every edition, every day. No art yields for less than maximum efforts. The copy editor must be motivated by a fierce professional pride in the high quality of editing".*

As it is clear from this quote, the number one requirement to become a good subeditor is *training*. Quality number two is *talent* (which obviously can be developed by training) and the third requirement is *motivation*.

And one gets to learn and practice the art and craft of subediting at the copy desk in the newsroom. Copydesk or news desk is the place where all the copy is gathered and processed. It is called the backbone of the newspaper. And only those people who are equipped with qualities like curiosity, discretion and cynicism excel here.

The copy desk is the place where most newspaper people start their career. It is a place of great and controlled learning. It offers great scopes for growth with opportunities to rise higher to positions of responsibility and respectability. One gets continued chances to accumulate wide-ranging information from thousands of stories one reads and edits. Subeditors get opportunities to continually *probe, question, and authenticate*. While developing an unerring eye for errors, misspelled words, factual faults, one also improves the ability to discern.

The first and foremost responsibility of the subeditor is to ensure accuracy of the news stories. This is because a newspaper that is inaccurate loses both its credibility and readers. While reporters have more responsibility about accuracy of stories, subeditors also share this responsibility. Sub editors often question the reporters to check the accuracy and verify facts. From names of persons and places (checked from telephone books and City Directories, etc.), subeditors have to check a wide variety of facts.

Sub editors also have many other responsibilities. These are: *ensuring accuracy, cutting down unnecessary words, protecting and polishing the language,*

*correcting inconsistencies, making the story conform to the newspaper's style, eliminating scandalous and libelous statements, making sure the story is readable and complete.*

Often stories have strong and unnecessary adjectives and adverbs. These need to be taken out. For example, instead of using 'very interesting', we can do well with just the word 'interesting'. Again a word like 'destroyed' is sufficient and there is no need to use 'totally destroyed'. Also meaningless phrases need to be weeded out.

The sub editor has the responsibility of polishing the language. Reporters are almost always busy and in a hurry, thus they do not pay much attention to the language. Subeditors need to work on the stories and polish the language. Also a subeditor has to recognize inconsistencies and remove them.

Sub editors also need to be on the look out for scandalous and libelous elements in the story. These should be detected and removed. Otherwise, such things may lead to controversies or court cases later on.

Finally, the sub editor makes certain the story is readable. Good and readable writing has the following characteristics.

- *It is precise.*
- *It is clear.*
- *It uses transitional devices that lead the reader from one thought to the next (from one sentence to the next or from one paragraph to the next) and providing continuity.*
- *It appeals to the reader's senses.*

Preciseness or brevity is achieved by using the right, exact or appropriate words. Simple sentences and correct grammar result in clarity. The 'pace' of a story can be maintained by varying the length of the sentences. Short and snappy sentences are easy to read and make a story fast paced. Long sentences slow down the reading.

Employing these principles one can improve the story's readability and acceptability. Good editing can complement good writing. Poor editing, on the other hand, can make a story worse or may even destroy it.

A sub editor needs to have a thorough understanding of newspaper writing styles, or story formats. The most widely used news formats are Inverted pyramid approach, Narrative approach, Chronological approach, and Personalized approach.

The inverted pyramid story has three parts - i) the lead, ii) support and supplement to the lead, and iii) details in descending order of importance. The lead in this format provides answers to six questions - who, what, when, where, why, and how (5 **W**'s and one **H**).

The narrative approach has been borrowed from magazines. In such news stories information is given in the story telling format. This approach is used "to hold the reader's interest and stimulate some imagination to see, feel, and understand the news".

The personalized or first person approach is used rarely for news stories. If the reporter is there on the spot when something is happening, he can give a first person account in the news story.

The chronological approach is the second most used format after the inverted pyramid format. Instead of giving information in the descending order of importance, events are chronicled as they had happened. It usually starts with a summary lead and then moves on to list out what happened first and what happened next.

Knowledge of the story formats will help the sub editor in polishing the stories. Finally, here are five basic rules for editing which are part of the sub-editor's responsibilities. These are:

- While processing any story the sub-editor ensures the length and style laid down by the Newspaper is followed.
- To mark the copy with typesetting instructions so clearly and carefully that there is no possibility of confusion or misunderstanding in the composing room.
- To ensure that everything that needs to be checked has been checked. These include names, places, titles, dates and anything else that could possibly go wrong.
- To write a headline that fits - both the story and the space available.
- To make sure that the edited copy is intelligible, easy-to-read and interesting.

### **6.2.3 REQUIREMENTS TO BE A GOOD SUB EDITOR:**

"Any fool can write. It needs a heaven born genius to edit". This famous quote attributed to H. W. Nevins says a lot about what it takes to be a good subeditor. In fact, F. J. Mansfield once said, "A good sub-editor is a creative artist". The sub

editor is the hardest working person in a newspaper. He shoulder most of the responsibility and while he gets brickbats for his mistakes, he gets no credit for doing a good job.

Like the make-up men in the green room of a drama company, the subeditor toils in the background, away from public gaze. He *gathers* and *selects* material, *puts them into shape*, and *presents them in an attractive manner*. He *improves upon* the stories received from reporters, correspondents and other sources, *clarifies*, and *makes the stories easier to understand*. He also *adds drama and excitement* (when necessary) to make the stories more *appealing* and *meaningful*.

The sub editor can bring *artistry* and *elegance* to the pages. He is the live wire of a newspaper and *the impact of his pen or his fingers on the keyboard is felt on every word, every phrase, every headline and every inch of news that a newspaper carries*.

While being a creative artist, the sub editor is also a real craftsman. His task is to '*fashion the finished product*' every day, seven days a week and three hundred and sixty five days a year. Every single day the subeditor is involved in deft and high-speed operations involving detection and correction of all kinds of errors and imperfections and the composition of suitable headlines.

Often the sub editor has been called a butcher who cuts and mutilates stories. It has been accused, mostly by reporters, that the subeditor systematically destroys fine writing and faultless prose. This is a highly unwarranted charge and criticism. The sub editor's job is not to make stories fit in the available space. In fact, the sub editor is the 'solemn censor', and the 'news surgeon'. He is the polisher of other's writing. Often he transforms uninteresting writing into vivid and exciting prose. And the subeditor does this while facing two of his perennial enemies: time and space.

The ideal sub editor has the following qualities:

- A good sub-editor has a sharp news sense. He does not bring his own particular prejudices or interests into subediting. His news sense is related to his newspaper so that he can create exciting stories out of a mass of copy that he receives every day.
- A good sub-editor has an orderly mind and a cool head so that when he is faced with great piles of copy coming from all directions he will be able to cope with them without panicking. He has to get the facts clear and in sequence in his mind or on his copy pad. Otherwise they will not be clear and in sequence in the newspaper.

- A good sub-editor has sound general knowledge. He must know about almost every thing. Book learning is not sufficient for this, reading newspapers is essential. Reading a wide range of newspapers will not only keep him up-to-date on events but also even give him sensitivity about the people whose very names are news.
- A good sub-editor is obsessed with accuracy. Because even the smallest mistake will damage the newspaper.
- A good sub-editor must work fast when the occasion arises. Such occasions will probably be quite often. The subeditor is tied to the clock. The perfect story means nothing if it misses the edition. The sub-editor will do himself harm, not any good, if he polishes a story to the extent that is disastrously late. He has to cultivate a capacity to know how much he can do and still get the story ready on time.
- A good sub-editor should write a bright, effective headline. The sub-editor who learns to write a good heading and write it quickly is an asset to any organization.
- A good sub-editor must have some knowledge of law as it applies to newspapers. He should know what he can say without actually libeling somebody or getting the editor hauled up before Parliament or some state legislature or court. He must be particularly careful against getting his editor involved in Contempt of Court and Contempt of Parliament.
- A good sub editor will maintain a sense of excitement about change.
- A good sub-editor approaches all stories with a healthy cynicism - not only about facts but the way they are interpreted. He exercises particular care about scandalous stories and works on the premise that in most cases there is another side to the story and it is the newspaper's duty to highlight it.
- A good sub-editor preferably is a master of some topic or other. He should cultivate an area of specialization and do better on that topic than anyone else on the news desk.
- A good sub editor will write clearly, crisply and concisely. It involves coolness and orderliness.

### **6.3 SUMMARY:**

- Editing to a layman is *dotting the i's and crossing the t's*. Many people think of editing as only an act of correcting the mistakes in a story. Editing involves many other things such as deciding what will and what will not be published and making the selected stories palatable and presentable while shaping it to project the publication's policies and philosophies.
- A good sub-editor has a sharp news sense. He does not bring his own particular prejudices or interests into sub editing. His news sense is related to his newspaper so that he can create exciting stories out of a mass of copy that he receives every day.
- A good sub-editor has an orderly mind and a cool head so that when he is faced with great piles of copy coming from all directions he will be able to cope with them without panicking. He has to get the facts clear and in sequence in his mind or on his copy pad. Otherwise they will not be clear and in sequence in the newspaper.
- A good sub editor should have sound judgment, scholarliness, varied exposure and experience, memory, motivation, curiosity, imagination and skepticism.
- The sub editor adds life and movement to the piece by substituting active verbs for passive verbs. He highlights the specifics and underplays the generalities. A sub editor adds colour to copy by using words creatively. He maintains both *brevity* (shortness) and *simplicity* so that readers can grasp the information and ideas more easily without reading long prose.
- The sub editor looks for ways and means to incorporate the canons of effective communication including- *clarity, cohesiveness, completeness, conciseness, comprehensiveness, continuity*, etc., into the copy.
- Sub editors also have many other responsibilities including: *ensuring accuracy, cutting down unnecessary words, protecting and polishing the language, correcting inconsistencies, making the story conform to the newspaper's style, eliminating scandalous and libelous statements, making sure the story is readable and complete*.

#### **6.4 KEY WORDS:**

**Editing:** Many people think of editing as only an act of correcting the mistakes in a news story. Editing involves many other things such as deciding what will and what

will not be published and making the selected stories palatable and presentable while shaping it to project the publication's policies and philosophies.

**Copy:** Copy is nothing but written pieces - news stories, articles, features, etc.- coming to a newspaper's newsroom from different sources - reporters, correspondents, stringers, freelancers, news agencies, feature agencies, assigned writers, etc.

**Functions of a Good Sub Editor:** The sub editor adds life and movement to the piece by substituting active verbs for passive verbs. He highlights the specifics and underplays the generalities. A sub editor adds colour to copy by using words creatively. He maintains both *brevity* (shortness) and *simplicity*.

**Qualities of a Good Sub Editor:** The ideal sub editor has the following qualities: a good sub-editor has a sharp news sense. He does not bring his own particular prejudices or interests into sub editing. His news sense is related to his newspaper so that he can create exciting stories out of a mass of copy that he receives every day.

**Responsibilities of a Good Sub Editor:** Sub editors also have many other responsibilities. These are: ensuring accuracy, cutting down unnecessary words, protecting and polishing the language, correcting inconsistencies, making the story conform to the newspaper's style, eliminating scandalous and libelous statements, making sure the story is readable and complete.

## 6.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. Discuss the concept of editing giving suitable examples.
2. The concept of editing has changed over the last few decades. Do you agree? Discuss in detail.
3. Discuss the qualities of a good sub editor.
4. Discuss the responsibilities of a good sub editor.

## 6.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

- o *Professional Journalist* by John Hohenberg
- o *Professional Journalism* by Patanjali Sethi
- o *Professional Journalism* by M.V. Kamath
- o *Editing* by T. J. S. George

## **M. A. Mass Communication (1<sup>st</sup> year) / PGDMC**

**PRINT MEDIA      MMC-103 / PGDMC –103 Lesson no. 7**

### **EDITING PRACTICES**

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#### **LESSON STRUCTURE:**

This lesson shall provide an introduction to editing practices. We shall start with the editing process used for newspapers. Then we shall discuss about the various aspects of editing for newspapers. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 7.0 *Objectives*
- 7.1 *Introduction*
- 7.2 *Presentation of Content*
  - 7.2.1 *Editing Process*
  - 7.2.2 *Honing the Lead*
  - 7.2.3 *Correcting the Language*
  - 7.2.4 *Newspaper Styles*
  - 7.2.5 *Sub editor and the Law*
  - 7.2.6 *Editing News Agency Copies*
  - 7.2.7 *Writing Headlines*
- 7.3 *Summary*
- 7.4 *Key Words*
- 7.5 *Self-Assessment-Questions (SAQs)*
- 7.6 *References/Suggested Reading*

#### **7.0 OBJECTIVES:**

The objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- *To Know About the Editing Process*
- *To Know About the Honing the Lead*
- *To Know About the Correcting the Language*
- *To Know About the Newspaper Styles*
- *To Know About the Sub editor and the Law*
- *To Know About the Editing News Agency Copies*
- *To Learn About Writing Headlines*

## **7.1 INTRODUCTION:**

Editing is done to: *“Improve an essentially well written piece or to turn a callously written one into, at the very least, a readable and literate article, and at the very most, a beautifully shaped and effective essay which remains true to the author's intention, which realizes the intention more fully he (the author) himself was able to do.”*

It is also said that, *"the editor cares about the language, he cares about clarity of thought and of grace of expression, he cares about the traditions of discourse and of argument"*.

Editing is a process that involves many stages. We shall discuss about the various aspects of editing in this lesson.

## **7.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:**

- *Editing Process*
- *Honing the Lead*
- *Correcting the Language*
- *Newspaper Styles*
- *Sub editor and the Law*
- *Editing News Agency Copies*
- *Writing Headlines*

### **7.2.1 EDITING PROCESS:**

News stories reach the newspaper office or the news desk in particular, from different sources. Reporters, correspondents and stringers file their stories. People in the vicinity of the newspaper send their news releases directly to the newspaper

office. And a major chunk of stories come through the news agencies. News stories also come in different forms- from hand written, type written, or computer printout. News also reaches the computer terminals directly from News agencies or others.

Two methods are adopted for handling the stories received- the traditional manual method and the mechanized method of copy (story) processing. In the traditional method, sub editing is done by marking the corrections on the pages. Standard editing symbols are used for this purpose (stories are usually typed in double or triple space so that corrections can be marked. The sub editor then writes the headline of the story.

Then this copy reaches the composing room. The compositor is usually given such instructions about the types faces to be used, the size in which the headline is to be set, the number of columns the story would appear in, or whether the story is to be boxed etc.

Once the story is composed or typeset, a proof is taken. Proofreaders compare the original story from the manuscript and the proof corrections are marked using proof reading marks. These symbols are very similar to editing symbols. Now the compositor makes these corrections.

The traditional manual method is time consuming and repetitious. The story is read by so many people. But this has a benefit as more times a story is read; more errors are detected and corrected.

The mechanical method of copy processing involves such equipment as the optical character recognition (OCR) machine (also called the *optical character reader*) and the video display terminal (VDT). The OCR first came in the 1970s in the West. Reporters typed their stories on electronic typewriters on bond paper using carbon-film ribbons. These stories were then scanned by an optical character reader and directly fed into a computer.

The OCR method eliminated typing the stories a second time. It also created certain problems. Reporters were required to produce neatly typed stories. Sub-editors were not happy with OCRs, as the scanned stories were difficult to edit. This method eliminated two intermediaries - compositors and proofreaders. It was, however, not very efficient. Often mistakes remained in the stories. And when low priced video display units entered the market, OCRs became obsolete.

The video display terminal (VDT) is the most efficient mechanical device for sub editing. Here stories can directly be taken from news agencies and correspondents (through modem). Everything can be seen on the screen of the VDT. From writing, sub editing, proof reading to composing and lay out- everything can be done on the VDT screen. Highly efficient computer software have further increased the efficiency of the VDT. Now most big and small and medium sized newspapers use the VDT.

Experienced editors divide the editing process into three stages:

- (i) Read the story,
- (ii) Edit it thoroughly, and
- (iii) Read the story again.

Sub editors mostly skip the first step or just scan the story to get the gist of the news. This is a big mistake, as *intelligent editing decisions* cannot be made unless the subeditor has read the story and has understood it fully. Also he has to understand the style in which the story is written. Such understanding can be achieved only with thorough reading.

Some sub editors skip the third step. If the edited story not reread, then some mistakes may go undetected. And as we know it is only human to err. Such errors can be avoided if the story is reread. Unfortunately, the pressure of deadline forces subeditors to skip either step-one, or step-three, or both.

An alert sub editor looks out for mistakes. The most important thing is to check the facts for accuracy. In fact, good subeditors double check. Reporters always work under pressure of time and may forget to put a dateline. The subeditor inserts a dateline.

The sub editor also sees that the 'intro' or 'lead' answers the five **W**'s and One **H**; *what, when, where, who, why, and how*. He tightens some loosely written paragraphs.

He also combines smaller paragraphs or breaks longer paragraphs into smaller ones.

As the reporters are on the site of the events they are reporting, they see and hear everything. So what they write may have too much of details which would be confusing and difficult to understand for the readers.

The sub editor is always on the look out for such writing and improves upon it by clarifying everything and deleting the confusing part. Subeditors often take out offensive statements, quotes or remarks.

### **7.2.2 HONING LEADS:**

The lead or intro is the window to a story. It is the most important element of a story. Because the quality of the lead determines whether the reader would read further or skip the story. The lead should be short. So that it arouses and sustains interest.

One good example of a short lead is:

*"Are nudes prudes?"*

The Bible has perhaps the best ever written introduction:

*"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth".*

One classic lead used during World War-II was:

*"Today the Japanese fleet submitted itself to the destinies of war - and lost".*

When hundreds of students died in an explosion in a school in Texas, one newspaper gave this lead:

*"They are burying a generation today".*

The intro or lead mostly becomes long as the reporter tries to pack everything into it. But the subeditor finds out what details can be left out while the lead still gave enough information. Using simple and short sentences in place of long and complex sentences can simplify long and cluttered intros. Also taking out minor details, which can be put in the body, can shorten lead.

A popular saying in the field of subediting is "leads should not mislead". A good lead is brief. Other than brevity it should contain some other qualities. It should inform and summarize. It must be straightforward. It sets the mood, the pace and the flavour of the story. It also guides and provides direction. The subeditor has to avoid the clichéd leads that are boring because they are used too often. For example: *Quick action by two alert policemen was credited with saving the life of a .....or Police and paramilitary forces staged a massive man hunt today for a man who had ...* The *say nothing leads* give no information.

Another type of lead is the *illogical lead*. Here is one example: *"Three small brothers died last night in a fire that burned their house while their father was at work and their mother was visiting a neighbour"*. It could be revised as follows *"Left unattended, three small brothers perished in a fire last night that burned their home. Their father was at work and their mother was visiting a neighbour."*

Sub editors often have to deal with leads that contain excessive identification. *"Former Assistant Secretary, Cultural Affairs and now Secretary, External Affairs Jamwant Mehra said today...."* Such over identification leads to confusion and clutter.

Similar problem is faced when a lead has too much statistics. *"At seven pm yesterday, 70 persons fled a three story building at 17, Nariman Point, west of Ville Parle, when a carelessly discarded cigarette caused a short-circuit and resulted a huge fire accompanied with dense smoke"*. This could be revised as: *"Seventy people escaped unhurt from a three story building in Nariman Point that caught fire last evening. The fire was caused by a carelessly discarded cigarette"*.

Other such misleading leads include ones with *over attribution* or *under attribution*. *"Notorious gangster Harbhajan Nehra, suspected to be involved in many cases of abduction, contact killing and ransom, was arrested last week after a six hour long shootout, according to Delhi Police Chief Sasank Mathur and Deputy Chief Prahlad Varma"*. Such over-attribution is unnecessary and confusing.

On the other hand a lead like *"All children under the age of five should be vaccinated"* does not provide any attribution at all. In fact, the attribution of health officials could have been the lead, as it would have lent credibility to the story. Reporters can get away with these kinds of leads. But the subeditor has to find out such leads and refine and polish them.

### **7.2.3 PROTECTING THE LANGUAGE:**

Newspapers and magazines are media of mass appeal. The printed media also have more credibility. They play a significant role in the development or deterioration of language. And the subeditor plays an important role in protecting the language against abuse.

**MISSPELLED WORDS:** The common abuses of language include spelling, grammar and usage. Many a times misspelled words are found on newspaper pages. This is because the sub editor's inability to recognize the incorrect spellings.

Here is a list of commonly misspelled English words:

accede, accommodate, admissible, accumulate, alleged, allotted, allotment, balloon, battalion, benefiting, blond (noun, adj. for male), blonde (noun for female), buses (vehicle), caliber, caress, chaperon, cigarette, clue, commitment, consensus, consul, descendant, dietitian, diphtheria, disastrous, divisive, dissension, drunkenness, embarrass, employee, feud, fraudulent, fulfill, gaiety, gaily, gauge, goodbye, grammar, guerrilla, hangar (aircraft shelter), hanger (hanging device), harass, hemorrhage, homicide, idiosyncrasy, impostor, impresario, indispensable, inauguration, Inflammable, innocuous, inoculate, irresistible, kidnapped, largess, liaison, lightning, likeable, mantel (shelf), mantle (covering), marijuana, medieval, mementos, miniature, minuscule or miniscule, missile, mold, naphtha, occasion, occurred, panicked, pantomime, papier-mâché, parallel, pastime, penicillin, percent, percentage, permissible, persistent, personnel, playwright, politicking, preceding, presumptuous, principal (main), principle (concept), privilege, procedure, prostate, publicity, quandary, queue, questionnaire, recommend, reconnaissance, restaurant, restaurateur, rock'n'roll, sacrilegious, siege, separate, sizable, skillful, soothe, soybean, specter, stationary (not movable), stationery(writing material), subpoena, supersede, swastika, syrup, theater, thrash (punish or beat), tumultuous, vacuum, veterinarian, vice versa, vilify, warranted, weird, wield, wondrous.

Good sub editors check and recheck all words about which they have doubts.

**GRAMMAR:** Grammatical problems can destroy a newspaper's credibility among its educated readers. Grammatical errors can destroy otherwise clear writing or distort the meaning of sentences. The subject of grammar is so vast that it cannot be possibly covered in this lesson.

**USAGE:** We often use words not to express but to impress. Frequently we use long phrases where a simple word would be sufficient. Examples of word-clutter include:

*Biologists who study genetics (geneticists),*

*A bolt of lightning (lightning),*

*Great number of times (often, frequently),*

*All of a sudden (suddenly),*

*Unmanageable mob (mob),*

*At which time (when),*

*As in the case of (like),*

*Basic fundamentals (basis or fundamental),*

*Called attention to the fact (reminded),*

*Combine into one (combine).*

There are thousands of such examples of cluttered words that are used frequently in newspaper. Often reporters don't use precise words or wrong words. For example, some reporters often write, "compose" when they mean, "comprise", "affect" when they want "effect". They use "credible" for "creditable".

Words are precision tools. And every time they are misspelled or misused, they lose their value. Other than use of wrong words, subeditors also face *misuse of adjectives, clichés (affixed his name for signed, in the wake of, death and destruction, racially troubled, jam-packed, confrontation, no immediate comment, cautious optimism, etc), jargons, slang, foreign words, etc.*

#### **7.2.4 NEWSPAPER STYLE:**

Newspapers adopt certain rules and practices to avoid inconsistencies in their columns. These rules and practices are called the *newspaper style*. It is usually codified in the form of stylebooks. Adherence to style makes newspaper writing clear, concise, and most importantly free from irritating inconsistencies. This way readers will not find 'good bye' in one story and 'good by' in another. Or they will not find **Shree M. R. Patra** in one story, **Sh. M. R. Patra** in another, **Mr M. R. Patra** in a third story and *M.R. Patra* in yet another.

In USA, The Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI, now defunct) jointly developed 'style rules' and most American newspapers follow these rules. Such rules are developed by most news organizations. In India, AIR, Doordarshan and major newspapers have their own stylebooks.

Style rules include guidelines about identifications, trade names, religion, death stories, disasters, disputes, financial news, percentages and numbers, sports and games, synonyms, etc. Such rules help maintain consistency in the entire story in the entire newspaper and in all issues.

**SUPERLATIVES:** The 'first', the 'best', the 'only', or the biggest. We often come across such superlatives in news stories. Superlatives rarely add to a story. Enthusiastic reporters often use superlatives to make the stories look good. But superlatives often backfire. All superlatives should be checked. If they cannot be verified, at least they can be softened. So instead of the 'only' it could be "one of the".

Historical references also need to be checked. Other things that need to be checked by the subeditor are quotations, attributions, facts about ethnic groups and religious bodies, stereotypes, etc. Racism and sexism also need to be checked. Finally, subeditors should be on guard for bad taste in stories, which might offend readers.

#### **7.2.5 SUB EDITOR AND THE LAW:**

The press enjoys a lot of freedom. Newspapers use this freedom vigorously. But when this freedom is abused, newspapers face court cases and possible punishment. We are free to start a newspaper. We need only inform the authorities about it. There is no censorship of the news that is published.

Newspapers are free to criticize governments and other agencies. But the freedom enjoyed by newspapers and the personnel working for them is not absolute. Our Constitution imposes certain 'reasonable restrictions' on newspapers about the coverage of certain sensitive issues.

A sub editor should be aware of the extent of freedom and the reasonable restrictions. Also he should be fully knowledgeable about the Acts and laws pertaining to the Press. Specific areas where subeditors should be more cautious are *carelessness in editing, libelous statements, Contempt of Parliament and Contempt of Court, right of privacy, plagiarism and copyright infringement, etc.*

#### **7.2.6 EDITING NEWS AGENCY COPIES:**

News agencies form the major source of news for any newspaper. A news agency collects news and other news related material from several sources - from its own staff reporters, feature writers, and photographers; from stringers and correspondents based in far off places; and finally through exchanges with other (foreign) agencies. News agencies provide material in two ways - through the teleprinter and directly to the computers of newspapers and other subscribers. Earlier, news agencies also used postal services and personal couriers.

In case of the teleprinter service, the stories are received on paper roles. The individual stories are separated, categorized (as local, national, international, sports, financial, etc) and sent to the respective desks.

Sub editors edit these stories using the subediting marks, write a headline, give instructions about the number of columns, type size of body text and headline and other special instructions like boxing of the story, etc. This copy is then sent for composition or type setting. The subeditor (or a proof reader) checks the proof before it is sent to the layout artist and finally for printing.

In the modern VDT method, there is no paper involved. Stories from the news agencies are directly fed into the computer. According to the desk assigned, subeditors '*call*' their stories to their terminals and do the editing on the screen. There is no need for typesetting, proof reading etc. And the subeditor can do all these things on the screen itself.

Stories from news agencies come either set in upper case letters or lowercase letters. In case of uppercase stories, the subeditor assumes that the story is in lowercase and then marks the appropriate upper case letters for capitalization. All news agency stories contain special slugs or identification marks - both above and below the story. The subeditor rounds off these marks indicating these portions need not be composed.

### **7.2.7 WRITING HEADLINES:**

The primary task of a subeditor is to correct and refine copy. This means checking copy for accuracy, clarity, conciseness, tone and consistency of style. The second most important task of the subeditor is to write a headline.

A headline should:

- i) Attract the reader's attention,*
- ii) Summarize the story,*
- iii) Depict the mood of the story,*
- iv) Helps set the tone of the newspapers, and*
- v) Provide adequate typographic relief.*

The points mentioned above are the functions of headlines. Not all headlines accomplish all these functions. But good headlines perform as many functions as possible. Good headlines attract reader's attention by focusing how the reader's can get affected. "*Income tax rate to remain unchanged*", "*Government announces extra DA*", etc. are examples of this approach.

Another approach is to highlight the magnitude of an event as in this lead: "Earthquake in Nicaragua kills 15,000". Some times headlines are clever unusual. "Thief caught eating".

Different stories require different approaches. Good subeditors develop the ability to find out the best approach. Headlines help summarize the story: "India Pakistan sign treaty", "US declares war on mafia", "CBI initiates fresh probe".

While such headlines are not always very original and creative, they serve the basic purpose of telling the reader what the story is all about. Some times headlines set the mood of stories: "The easy way to change your car's oil", or go "Bald and Beautiful", or "It is a whole nude ball game". Headlines can also set the tone of a newspaper. A newspaper with such headlines as "Police hunt for jilted lover", "Super model caught in a hotel", can only of sensational nature.

**Headline styles:** Most headlines are set in a single line or *deck*. But increasingly headlines are being set in two and even three decks. The most used headlines styles are the hanging indention, the inverted pyramid, and the pyramid.

XXXXXXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXX  
XXX

*Hanging Indention (Right aligned)*

XXXXXXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXX  
XXXXX

*Hanging Indention (Left aligned)*

XXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXX  
XXX

**Inverted Pyramid**

XXX  
XXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

**Pyramid**

Some times the headline is longer than the story. Some tabloid newspapers also use more than ten decks for the headlines.

The different types of headlines are:

- A **kicker** headline is a short line of display type, usually in half or less point size than the headline and placed above the main part of the headline. Some newspapers call the kicker as the **eyebrow** or the **tagline**.
- A **stet** headline is a standing headline which is used continuously issue after issue. "*Today in history*" is an example of a stet headline.
- A **reverse plate** headline is set in reverse i.e. the letters are printed in white on a black background.
- A **reverse kicker** is a line set in larger type sizes and placed above the main headline. It is also called a **hammer** or **barker**.
- **Banner** headlines spread across all the columns of a front page. These usually shout the news about and are used while covering very, important stories.

#### **TIPS FOR WRITING HEADLINES:**

While readers read the headline first and then read the story, sub editors do just the opposite. They read the story first and then write the headline. Writing headline involves two steps:

- Selecting which details to use, and
- Phrasing them properly within the space available.

Good headlines, like good sentences, have a subject and predicate (verb), and a direct object. For example: "Flood hits Assam".

Here is a list of suggestions about headline writing.

- *Draw your headline from information at the top of the story.*
- *If the story has a punch ending do not give it away in the headline.*
- *Build your headline around key words.*
- *Build the headlines on words used in the story.*
- *Emphasize the positive unless the story demands the negative.*
- *Use active verbs. Maintain neutrality.*
- *Follow the rules of grammar.*
- *Try to arouse the reader's interest.*
- *Make the headline easy to read.*

- *Abbreviate only when necessary.*
- *Verify the accuracy of the headline.*
- *See there is no double meaning.*
- *Use short and simple words.*
- *Avoid overused words.*
- *Make the headline specific.*
- *Never exaggerate.*
- *Make the headline complete in itself.*
- *Never start a headline with a verb.*
- *Use present tense as much as possible.*
- *Do not use "is" and "are" in headlines.*
- *Do not use common names in headlines.*
- *Do not use unnecessary words.*
- *Do not use double quotation marks in headlines.*
- *Do not write headlines after reading the story only once.*
- *Do not use slang in the headline.*
- *Do not write question headlines for news stories.*
- *Do not mislead.*
- *Do not repeat words.*
- *Do not use full stops in headlines.*

One final suggestion given to newcomers to sub editing is to enjoy the process of headline writing. It is a creative activity. *Somerset Maugham* once said, "you can not write well unless you write much". Similarly good headline writing comes after long practice. Certain practices that need be avoided while writing headlines are *overstating, commanding, editorializing, sensationalizing, stating the obvious and boring the readers.*

### **7.3 SUMMARY:**

- News is anything that is new. News is a report of an event that has just taken place. News is a detailed account that provides information or description. The event is usually recent, fresh or not known earlier.
- Legendary American editor, Joseph Pulitzer, once said that news should be: *Original, Distinctive, Romantic, Thrilling, Unique, Curious, Quaint, Humorous, Odd, and Apt-to-be talked about.*

- News has certain ingredients. The major characteristics of news are: Timelines, Proximity, Prominence, Consequence, Human interest, Unusual events like mysteries, Conflict, Tragedies, etc.
- News writing is done with a view to providing information that is correct, objective, fair, balanced, accurate, precise, and to the point. It is a skilled craft. It can be acquired by dint of hard work, dedication, understanding, sustained and prolonged practice over a period of time. It also involves asking relevant questions; checking, counter-checking, crosschecking, and double-checking information. It requires the capability of fairly and impartially analyzing and interpreting information so collected.
- Generally a news story answers the following six questions: **WHO** is or are involved? **WHEN** did the event take place? **WHERE** did the event take place? **WHY** did it take place? **WHAT** did actually take place? And **HOW** did it take place? These questions are known, as the five **W**'s and one **H**.
- The structure of writing a news story is the "inverted pyramid structure". The inverted pyramid structure of news means that the news will begin with the most important information. The structure is as follows: First paragraph: Most Important point; Second Para: The second important point; Third Para: The next important point; Fourth Para: The next important point; Fifth Para: The next important point.

#### 7.4 KEY WORDS:

**News:** News is a report of an event that has just taken place. News is a detailed account that provides information or description. A news story is a fair, accurate, concise, balanced account of a current event that is of interest to a majority of people.

**Ingredients of News:** The characteristics of news are: Timelines, Proximity, Prominence, Consequence, Human interest, Unusual events like mysteries, Conflict, and Tragedies.

**Structure of a News Story:** Most news stories follow the inverted pyramid structure. The inverted pyramid structure of news means that the news will begin with the most important information. This is known as the "lead" or "intro". The subsequent parts would be developed in logical order to support the lead. That is, the second most important fact comes next, then the third, and fourth and so on.

#### 7.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

5. Discuss the process of editing giving suitable examples.
6. The concept of lead has changed over the last few decades. Do you agree? Discuss in detail.
7. Discuss how lead is written. Discuss the various types of leads.
8. What is a style sheet? Discuss in detail.
9. Discuss how headlines are written. Discuss the various types of headlines.

## 7.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

- **Professional Journalist** by John Hohenberg
- **Professional Journalism** by Patanjali Sethi
- **Professional Journalism** by M.V. Kamath
- **Editing** by T. J. S. George

## GLOSSARY:

**ABC:** Audit Bureau of Circulation, which has the unenviable task of certifying, audited statistics on the circulation of a publication. This is a highly respected watchdog body.

**Add:** Additions of any kind to news story. If copy sent down to the printing has to be supplemented by additional material, marking the new copy with the connotation "add to..." does this

**Angle:** An approach to a story, the slant given by the reporter.

**AP:** Associated Press.

**Assignment:** Duty given to a reporter.

**Banner:** A headline stretching across all the columns on the top of the front page, not to be confused with a *binder* which is a headline across the top of an *inside page*. A banner is also known as a *streamer*.

**Beat:** The exclusive territory assigned to reporter or a series of places visited by a reporter to gather news. Police stations, courts, the Municipal Council, etc. are examples of beats.

**Body:** Part of a story that follows the lead.

**Box:** Matter enclosed in a border to make a box. Many modern boxes have only top and bottom borders.

**Black and White:** Photographs and illustrations in black or white.

**Bleed:** When an illustration of photograph runs (bleeds) into the edge of the page.

**Blurb:** Publicity material.

**Boil down:** Reduce or summarize a story to manageable proportions.

**Border:** Line rules used to form box in display.

**Break:** As in news break, when something new happens.

**Byline:** Signature on a story i.e. the name of the person who has done the story.

**Caps:** Capital letters.

**C and lc:** Capital and lower case.

**Caption:** Descriptive material accompanying pictures and photographs.

**Case room:** The area where the type cases are stored and the printers work.

**Centre spread:** The two pages in the centre fold of a newspaper.

**Chase:** Metal page form into which type is locked.

**Clipping:** Items clipped from newspapers for reference.

**Copy:** Universally known as the term for material written by journalists.

**Copy desk:** Where copy is edited, cut and headlined. Not to be confused with the proof room where typographical errors are checked in proof.

**Copy editors:** Sub-editors.

**Correspondent:** A reporter who is out of town on duty, who corresponds with his head office.

**Cover:** Covering an event, that is, reporting it in full.

**Credit line:** To name the source of a picture, illustration, photograph; giving credit to the person responsible. A credit line is to a photograph what a byline is to a story.

**Crop:** Cutting out non-essential parts of a photograph to sharpen the visual impact.

**Cross-heading:** A headline in small type within set matter to highlight what follows.

**Cub:** An untrained newsman, a beginner, usually a reporter.

**Cut:** Removing portions of copy in order to tighten it.

**Date line:** The place from which a news story is sent and the date, as in *New Delhi, August 15*.

**D/C:** Double column

**Deadline:** The last minute to ready copy for an edition. Closing time.

**Desk:** The sub-editor's desk.

**Drop:** Used to indicate that a letter should be in larger type; it is the first letter in the first paragraph of a story and is set thus for purposes of effective display.

*Dummy*: A drawing: usually freehand, outlining the position of news stories on a page, along with advertisements and illustrations.

*Ears*: Boxes on either side of the nameplate on page one of a newspaper that usually carries advertisements in India. In the West, they may carry the day's weather and the name of the edition.

*Edition*: Remake or revision of some of the pages of a newspaper, as in City Edition, Dak edition, also total run for any one issue of a paper.

*Editorial*: The editor's opinion or comment on events. It is invariably assigned a permanent position on the editorial page.

*Embargo*: Mandatory deadline for the release of a story.

*Exclusive*: A story that is not carried by any other newspaper on a particular day; a scoop.

*File*: The act of dispatching copy to or from a news centre.

*Filler*: Small items used to fill out columns where needed.

*Flush*: Set copy without paragraph indenting.

*Flash*: A rarely used message of a few words describing a momentous event. It consists mostly of the place of filing, less than half a dozen words of text, the signature of the sender and the time sent.

*Follow-up*: Further developments in a story. To do further work on the details of an earlier report.

*Feature*: A story of interest beyond and more than the news.

*Font*: Type of one size and style.

*Forme*: A page of type locked and ready for the press. See *chase*.

*Galley*: Narrow and shallow tray of metal in which set matter is put in column width.

*Galley proof*: Proof of set matter put in a galley.

*Glossy*: Shiny print (of photograph).

*Handout*: Generic term for written publicity material given by hand to journalists.

*HO*: short for Hold Over. Or Hold for release. Reference to typeset copy that could be used later.

*Human interest*: Story about human or emotional appeal, but not necessarily hard news.

*Indent*: Start matter at some distance away from the margin.

*Insert*: New matter added in body of story already sent for setting.

*Italics*: Typeface with characters slanted to the right, as contrasted to Roman, or upright, characters.

*Jump*: Continuation of a story to another page; also called *carry over*.

*Jump line*: The continuation line giving the succeeding or preceding page numbers.

*Kill*: Elimination of news material at any stage in the processing.

*Layout*: Arrangement of illustrations, page plans.

*Lead*: Beginning of a story, which may be a sentence, a paragraph or several paragraphs depending on the complications involved; also, the main story on page one. Also (pronounced 'led') thin metal strips used [to space out lines and paragraphs of set matter.

*Late news*: News that arrives too late to make the front page (or last page to go down to press) but is accommodated in the *Stop Press* column.

*Leader*: Editorial.

*Libel*: Any defamatory statement expressed in writing, printing or other visible form.

*Lower case*: Small letters.

*Make-up*: Assembling the newspaper, art of designing a page, artistically and effectively.

*Masthead*: Statement, usually on the editorial page, giving information on the newspaper's ownership, place of publication etc. Sometimes confused with the nameplate.

*Morgue*: News library, also known as reference section.

*Nameplate*: Paper's name given on top of front page.

*Obit*: Short for obituary. It is an announcement of death of a person with biographical details.

*Pica*: 12-point type, also a lineal measurement of 12 points. Also called an *em*.

*Pix*: Picture.

*Play*: The display given to a story or a picture. Most editors talk of playing a story, rather than playing it up or down.

*Point*: Basic printing measurement, roughly equivalent to one seventy second of an inch. 72-point type roughly measures an inch in height.

*Proofreader*: One who reads proofs to make corrections in setting and sends it back for revision.

*Puff*: Publicity material, usually quickly thrown into the waste paper basket.

*Retainer*: Amount paid to retain use of correspondents (stringers) who may not necessarily be filing copy all the time.

*Revise*: Redoes copy incorporating corrections.

*Run*: A reporter's beat.

*Running story*: A chronological story of an event topped by successive leads as the news changes.

*Run over*: Another name for a *Jump*.

*Round up*: A comprehensive story, which may combine reports on the same subject from several sources.

*S/c*: Single column.

*Schedule*: List of assignments.

*Scoop*: An exclusive story for a newspaper for which a reporter lives laborious life.

*Slug*: Each story has a name, which is called a slug. The slug must be included with each page number. A story on President Carter may be slugged as Carter-1 Carter-2 etc. until the last page is marked Carter-last.

*Spread*: An elaborate layout. Any story that takes a headline big enough to be used at the top of an inside page.

*Standing matter*: Matter set and ready for use, often the leftover from a previous edition.

*Stet*: Used to indicate that matter originally cut should be used. Let it stay.

*Stringer*: Correspondent of a newspaper who is not on the regular payroll but is paid for copy used.

*Syndicate*: An organization that sells articles and features on behalf of many freelance writers. An agency.

*Tailpiece*: Usually paragraph with finishing touches, a joke at the end, something added on to enliven a column.

*Tip*: A small bit of information that could lead to a news story.

*Take*: A page of copy, which may contain as little as one paragraph. There could be several 'takes' to a story.

*Trim*: To cut a story down to its essentials.

*Type book*: A book showing various families of type, which a press has, for use.

*Wf*: Wrong font, or wrong face that may have accidentally crept in type set in one particular face.

*Yellow journalism*: Publication specializing in stories that are sensational or grossly exaggerated and dealing generally with sex, crime and gossip.

*Wire service*: News agency.

## M. A. Mass Communication (1<sup>st</sup> year) / PGDMC

PRINT MEDIA      MMC-103 / PGDMC –103 Lesson no. 5

### EDITORIALS, FEATURES & ARTICLES

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#### LESSON STRUCTURE:

In this lesson, we shall cover editorials, features, and articles. We shall start with the various types of editorials. Next we shall discuss about features. Finally we shall focus on articles. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 5.0 *Objectives*
- 5.1 *Introduction*
- 5.2 *Presentation of Content*
  - 5.2.1 *Editorials*
  - 5.2.2 *Features*
  - 5.2.3 *Articles*
- 5.3 *Summary*
- 5.4 *Key Words*
- 5.5 *Self-Assessment-Questions (SAQs)*
- 5.6 *References/Suggested Reading*

#### 5.0 OBJECTIVES:

Newspapers primarily provide information. But in addition to informing, they also entertain us, educate us, and they persuade us. Newspapers carry news. In addition newspapers also carry a wide variety of write-ups. These include the opinion pieces and the infotainment pieces. The opinion pieces include articles and editorials. Features are the infotainment pieces. We shall discuss about these three types of write-ups. The objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- *To Study About Editorials*
- *To Know About Features*
- *To Learn About Articles*

## **5.1 INTRODUCTION:**

Any newspaper is a collection of news stories, features, editorial(s) and articles. A news story provides hard news. It provides information in a straightforward manner. A feature appeals to the emotions. It covers all kinds of topics and provides the information in an interesting and easy-to-read manner. A feature tries to entertain while informing. Editorials provide the newspaper's point of view. Articles, on the other hand, provide the point of view of individual writers.

Like editorials, articles analyze and interpret. Articles provide arguments and counter-arguments. An article goes to the root cause of an event or happening and provides background information. Then it describes the present situation and finally peeps into the future also.

Features, at a basic level, inform us. But they do so in a highly entertaining and often informal manner. Unlike news stories, editorials, and articles, features are not serious and sober in tone. Features try to touch our hearts through informal structures and extremely readable styles.

## **5.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:**

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Editorials*
- *Features*
- *Articles*

### **5.2.1 EDITORIALS:**

It informs the reader. It analyses issues and events. Sometimes it also entertains. But most frequently it takes a stance and offers a point of view. Often it tries to persuade the readers. Its goal is to move the readers to some specific action, to get them to agree the writer, to support or denounce a cause etc. And among all types of newspaper writing it is the most difficult to write. It is the *editorial*.

Virtually every newspaper and magazine has a separate section set aside for editorial comment, which is given in the form of editorials. The editorials are important because they represent the one visible section of the publication where subjectivity reigns over objectivity. On the editorial page you can find various statements that directly and indirectly reflect the bias attributed to the publication itself. Indeed, one of the best methods for determining the bias or the leanings of a publication is to study its editorials over a brief period of time.

Reporters are assigned to write about newsworthy events as they happen, without giving their own opinions. But on the editorial page the writer is required to take a stand, to state an opinion.

At one time, the editors of the newspapers themselves wrote editorials, but this is not true today. More and more editorials are written by staffers who know a given subject or situation well. Most newspapers have an *editorial board* comprising of senior staffers including the editor. This board meets everyday and decides the topics on which the editorials are to be written. Then on the basis of expertise topics are assigned.

#### **TYPES OF EDITORIALS:**

Unfortunately, some people avoid reading editorials because they associate them only with formal statements of policy or stances. In reality, the editorial is often the most articulate statement in a publication, and it most certainly need not be boring.

Not all editorials are designed to accomplish the same purpose, and you will usually find editorials of several types appearing in the same issue of a newspaper or other periodicals. These are:

- **To Influence Opinion or Action:** This is the most important type of editorial, and it is the one which is usually presented first on the editorial page if there are more than one editorial. This editorial attempts to get the reader to adopt a particular stand or take a specific action, and it most often ends with a direct appeal for that action.
- **To Give Important Information:** This classification includes editorials designed to give readers additional information about some important issue. It may explain, in detail, what would happen if a proposed amendment were passed, or it may offer its explanation of some new facet of local or national issues. Although the purpose of this type of editorial is to give information, the reader must be aware of the overall bias of the publication in which the editorial appears.

- **To Recognize Existence of a Wrong:** Since the journalist often sees himself as a moral voice, he sometimes uses the editorial to point out the existence of a major wrong doing. This type of an editorial is structured so that it exposes the wrong, illustrates it, and then proposes one or more possible solutions. Although this type of editorial is similar to the one designed to influence opinion and urge action, it is different in that it is not an argument, but a direct statement of fact.
- **To Aid a Worthy Cause:** A publication often uses its editorial voice to urge support of a charity drive, a local clean-up campaign, fire-prevention week, or some other similarly worthy cause. The editorial, in this instance, is recognition of the cause and its importance, and a plea for support.
- **To Praise a Worthy Individual or Group:** This type of editorial recognizes an unusually worthy contribution.
- **To Amuse or Entertain:** Not all editorials are written in a serious tone. Sometimes certain aspects of certain events are entertaining, or there may be an amusing sidelight to a serious story. The editorial of this type is often written on "ever green" topics and thus is not outdated by its content. Thus it can be used as "filler" to fill the editorial page on days when sufficient material of other types is not available. The Times of India regularly published such an editorial as the third editorial.

### **WRITING THE EDITORIAL:**

If you want to write editorials, your first task is obviously to know the issue or topic about which you are writing. To know the subject extremely well, and to relate those issues properly to the editorial policy of the publication for which you work are essential requirements for editorial writing. You must be certain that you have the right facts and that you use them in a persuasive and logical manner.

Three inherent qualities of a good editorial are listed below:

**It must be written generally on a matter of interest to your readers.** Since the editorial page reflects the bias of a publication, it has special appeal to a certain type of readers. You must know what your readers are interested in and write accordingly.

Another aspect of interest in a subject is, necessarily, that of time. An out of date editorial is absolutely worthless. Try to appeal to the readers' most current interests.

**It must be brief.** If you are a typical reader who scans the editorial page, you probably admit that longer stories and articles don't attract you. You would read a short editorial instead of a long one. Or at best, you scan the longer editorials and articles. This emphasis upon brevity obviously demands careful and concise writing.

**It must be specific.** You should never write an editorial that states an opinion in which you do not believe because your wording and tone will usually betray you. You must convince your reader that you know what you are writing about and that you believe in it. The editorial must indicate a definite stance on part of the writer and, thus, of the publication.

#### **THE BEGINNING (INTRO):**

The beginning of an editorial should fulfill two functions: *announce the subject matter and capture the reader's interest*. Since the editorial is a specialized form of writing, you are not limited to the traditional journalistic leads. Here are some of the most popular types of editorial openings:

**A direct lead statement:** Although you need not be confined by its limitations, you may find that the direct statement is the best way to begin your editorial. In such a lead you state what the subject matter will be, and present your attitude in relation to it. This type of introduction appears most often in editorials that seek to induce action or sway opinion.

**A startling or striking statement:** A very striking sentence that provokes your reader's attention or appeals to his interest sometimes provides an excellent beginning. "Is *your child dumb?*". Such a lead sentence would probably attract many parents to read further about weaknesses in schools in the city. "*Murder, robbery, adultery, homosexuality - take your pick,*" might be an effective opening for an editorial criticizing current trends in movies.

When used, this kind of opening statement is usually set in a paragraph by itself so that it will stand out from the body of the editorial even more vividly.

**A question:** An effectively worded question can often arrest your reader's attention and get him to read further. "*What does Red China really want from the United*

States?” and “*Just how much does shoplifting cost your family in a year?*” are examples of questions that would probably cause the reader to continue reading.

**A narrative:** Often facts cannot be condensed and take up large amount of space. In such situations, a story is quite often an effective beginning.

*"Yesterday a 36 year old, crippled man was robbed and beaten on the outskirts of Hisar. At least nine persons, including one lawyer, witnessed the incident, but no one helped and no one called the police".*

This brief narrative beginning might well serve as the starting point for an editorial urging greater public involvement in support of law enforcement.

*A quotation:* A brief quotation is sometimes effective as a starting point in an editorial. The most effective quotations are short and generally, well known to the readers. An editorial pointing up lack of educational opportunities in a city could begin, "To be or not to be, that is the question. But at least Hamlet had a choice to make; many of our local citizens do not!"

#### **THE BODY:**

The bulk of space assigned to an editorial should, naturally, be reserved for the body of the argument or statement. It is here that you should present your evidence to support your position. A good editorial writer gives his reader the feeling that he has examined all aspects of an issue, but he devotes space for the one aspect he is supporting. It is usually not wise to waste valuable editorial space giving the reasons you rejected other aspects of an issue. Use the space, instead, to "sell" or promote your own beliefs.

The body of an editorial is the only defensible place where you present not your personal viewpoints, but those of your organization. As the writer of the editorial, you are a spokesman for others, and you are voicing the editorial policy of your publication. The editorial is used to express that collective opinion and, also to suggest to your reader that he is a part of the group, and to make him think and act in the way you are suggesting.

#### **THE CONCLUSION:**

Usually, your editorial will end with a brief paragraph in which you state precisely what action it is that you would like your reader to take. If you have offered an

opinion or made a recommendation, but have not urged a specification, the conclusion should be a tight, one-paragraph summary of your ideas. This is because editorials are usually small in size and mostly range between 300 to 400 words.

### **5.2.2 FEATURES:**

Features are usually narrative and descriptive write-ups that attempt to entertain the audience while informing them. These are written in about 800 words. Features differ from news stories in terms of scope and intention. While a news story presents facts in a direct manner, a feature can cover any aspect of an event and in a manner as to make it interesting. A news story informs while a feature appeals to the emotions of the readers. The feature story always has a subjective treatment and is rarely objective.

Newspapers and magazines regularly make use of features. Without them, the publications would be rather uninteresting and dull. Some publications use many short features, with special human-interest appeal. These are often used as fillers and are scattered throughout the issue.

Other publications use several long features that are appropriately placed in various sections of the periodical. These specialized sections of publications—sports, home decorating, entertainment, travel, life and style etc.- all contain feature stories.

### **SOURCES OF FEATURES:**

Some major publications have writers on their staffs who write nothing but features. They are highly skilled writers with a special flair for creative writing and with a keen appreciation of the basic human nature. For some publications, however, reporters write the feature story. Feature writers make efforts to be unusually observant and to look for the "*news behind the news*".

In a typical situation, the reporter is not specifically assigned to write a certain feature story. Rather, he discovers the story idea as the by-product of some other work he is doing. For example, while reporting on a political gathering and he may notice a woman in a wheelchair among the crowd. Further investigation reveals the woman to be one of the speaker's leading supporters, as the reporter discovers that she spends five hours a day on the telephone campaigning for his leader. The

reporter, then, comes away with two stories: the political speech and the human-interest feature.

As you become more and more tuned in to feature material, you will become increasingly aware of sources for features. Here are just a few of the most common sources used by successful feature writers:

**People:** The man who has been uniquely successful, the story behind the scenes; the family that has suffered undue hardship whether physical or financial, the story of their courage; the forgotten old people; children and their individual worlds of hopes, dreams, and fears.

**Events:** Public gatherings of almost any type, the hidden story; court trials, the story of the people involved; births, especially if unusual or multiple; deaths, especially if they may have been prevented; fires and accidents, the story behind the scene.

**Animals:** Lost and found; zoo, the story of an unusual animal; circus, the story of an especially well-trained animal; pet, the story of an appealing or unique pet.

**Adventures:** Faraway places; travel, the story behind going somewhere by car, train, bus, or plane; camping trips, mountain climbing trips, etc.

**Oddities:** Unusual hobbies; occult groups and their meetings; unusual inventions; any person or thing found in an unusual location or situation.

**Humour and Satire:** In almost any situation involving people there is opportunity to find humour or satire.

#### **TYPES OF FEATURES:**

All feature stories are not directed at the same type of readers and not all features are intended to achieve the same purpose. Different features are written to appeal to different people in different situations. Most features can be classified into one of the following groups:

**The Usual and the Strange:** This story is based upon an event that might normally be treated in straight-news style, but receives a feature-story treatment because of the subjective development given by the writer. Some people and some events are

so strange that they demand feature treatment. One could hardly treat the birth of twins to a fifty-year-old mother as straight news.

**The Personality:** This story focuses upon the private person behind the public image or the other way round. Stories of this type often appear in sports or entertainment magazines, but there exist, also, excellent personality stories of many persons who live in our own community, in close vicinity.

**The Opinion:** Very often, someone qualified in a special field is asked to write his opinion upon a specific topic. He is not bound by the conventional rules of the news story because he is permitted to use his own knowledge and his own creativity to develop the subject as he wishes. Many syndicated columns fall into this category of feature writing,

**The Seasonal:** Excellent feature stories can be written on drastic changes in the weather and observances of religious and secular holidays, etc. The success of these stories often depends upon the writer's finding a unique approach to these oft-repeated themes.

**The Supplement:** As noted previously, an ordinary news assignment often gives the reporter an opportunity to do a feature story. For almost every major story there exists the possibility to such a feature and, often, each serves to enhance the success of the other,

**Arts:** This broad heading actually includes stories on any of the following subjects: fashions, decorating, music, painting, sculpture, literature, movies, and drama.

**The How-to-do-it:** This feature may be aimed at the housewife - to teach her how to clean her kitchen floors effectively and in expensively; or it may teach the teen-ager how to build his own stereo for two hundred rupees.

#### **WRITING THE FEATURE:**

When you write a feature story, you must let your creativity take over- to give your imagination a free reign. You need not begin with a conventional lead, and it is not necessary that you follow the inverted pyramid or any standard structure. In fact, many feature stories are *climactic* - they build toward an ending. And this ending often is the most important part of the entire story.

The tone of your story must be personal. You cannot write a good feature unless you seem to be personally involved and appear to share whatever feelings or emotions you are trying to communicate to your reader.

For this reason, it is important that you spend time familiarizing yourself with your subject- through reading a lot about the subject, talking to others about the topic, and trying to collect all relevant material. The feature writer often spends more time researching even the minutest aspects of his story than the conventional reporter does in researching an entire story. Probing for the hidden angle helps bring out the subtle feelings that are usually unexpressed.

The way you appeal to your reader is through his senses. And the best way to do this is through a careful choice of words. Select each word so that its connotative value will make the reader sensually aware.

Your goal is to enable your reader to identify with the things or events you are writing about- to feel what it is like to be poor on Diwali day, to sense the elation of coming home after a long time, and to experience any of a thousand other events vicariously by reading about how others have experienced them.

Good writing does not necessarily mean writing that is filled with an excessive number of adjectives and adverbs. Select verbs carefully so they contribute to the mood of what you are writing. If you say, "The man walked across the street," no one knows much more than the obvious. If you say, "The man strutted across the street," you have given your reader additional information about the mood of your character. If you say, "The man staggered across the street," you give your reader additional information about the physical condition of your character.

You have to select words that lend connotative strength to your article whenever possible. Such words are called "*picture words*". For example, words like 'vehicle', 'car', 'four-wheeler', etc., create hazy pictures in our minds. But words like 'a battered Ambassador' create a definite and crystal clear picture in the minds of the readers.

When you first begin writing features, you will probably commit the most typical of all errors: *overwriting* or *over-emotionalizing*. Your objective is to make your reader feel an experience, but you must not be overly sentimental or emotional yourself. Such writing will be totally ineffective.

If you are writing a feature about an individual, use direct quotations from that person. You are seeking to expose this person to your reader, and nothing works quite so well as the individual's own thoughts expressed in his own words. Be careful that your finished story does not look like a patchwork. A feature must be something more than a string of quotations loosely tied together.

Help your reader better envision the story you are telling by using one or more brief narratives to illustrate your point and to increase the appeal of your feature. You might talk about the early home life of your subject, relate a recent experience that he had, or use any other brief story that is relevant.

A feature story always carries an interesting headline and usually, it also carries a byline (the author's name under the headline).

Appropriate photographs also enhance many features. For a major publication, there is a special staff of trained photographers to accompany reporters on such assignments. Often the reporter must take his own photographs. In such instances, you should remember that the photograph, like the story itself, must be designed to appeal to human interests, just a portrait of your subject is not enough. The picture must reflect the mood you create in the written part of the feature.

### **5.2.3 ARTICLES:**

Any newspaper is a collection of news stories, features, editorial(s) and articles. A news story provides hard news. It provides information in a straightforward manner. A feature appeals to the emotions. It covers all kinds of topics and provides the information in an interesting and easy-to-read manner. A feature tries to entertain while informing. Editorials provide the newspaper's point of view. Articles, on the other hand, provide the point of view of individual writers.

Like editorials, articles also analyze and interpret. An article provides arguments and counter-arguments. An article goes to the root cause of an event or happening and provides background information. Then it describes the present situation and finally peeps into the future also.

But it is not necessary that an article follow this past-present-future course. An article may start with a peep into the future and then cover the past and present. It may start with the present situation, go to the past and then look into the future. Also it is not necessary that an article should deal with the past or predict the future.

## **TYPES OF ARTICLES:**

Like in case of features and editorials, it is difficult to categorize articles. Articles are written on all kinds of topics and subjects- past, present and future. The nature of the topic or issue is no bar to write an article.

The various types of articles that are written in newspapers have the following purposes:

- *To analyze the present.*
- *To interpret a trend.*
- *To provide some important information.*
- *To predict the future.*
- *To present a point of view.*

## **ARTICLE WRITING:**

Articles appeal to the head. Article writers analyze and interpret things and events. They try to rationalize. There is no place for humour and such emotions in articles. Articles are sober, serious- both in content and treatment.

The basics of writing apply to article also. *Consistency, conciseness, completeness, continuity*, etc., are equally needed in an article as in a news story, feature or editorial. One element that is an absolute must for articles is *credibility*. So often only established experts write articles. In fact, such established writers write regular columns. They are free to write only one subject or a variety of subjects. Some basic guidelines about article writing are:

**Topic Selection:** The topic for an article should be selected on the basis of how much interest it can generate among readers. More readers will read high interest generating topics. The topic must be concrete. An article on an interesting topic could be boring if the details provided are sketchy. Article writers try to provide all the relevant information to make the article concrete and complete.

An article must be believable also. Relevant facts, source credibility, authentic research, original quotes are few things that make an article believable. Article writers try to cover all aspects of the topic and provide a lot of support material as proof to substantiate the points they are making or the stance they are taking.

**Structure of an Article:** An article has a definite beginning (lead or introduction), a body, and an end (conclusion). The basic formats used for articles are the *chronological format* (past-present-future), the *reverse chronological format* (future-present-past), and the *flashback format*. In the *flashback format*, the article may start in the present, go back to the past and then go to the future.

The *lead* or *intro* introduces the topic to the readers, arouses and sustains their interest. It could be a *direct lead* one where information is given in a straightforward manner. Articles can also start with a *statement* or *quotation* to provide interest. A statement or a quotation also helps in telling some thing about the topic of the article.

Some times statistics or *numerical data* are used to startle the readers. Articles can begin with a *question*. Some times writers use a number of questions also. Questions arouse curiosity in the minds of the readers and they read further to find answer to the question(s).

The body takes up about three quarters of the total space of an article. Here the writer tries to answer the question(s) put in the lead. The claims made in the lead are substantiated. The statements and quotations made are elaborated. So *explanation, description elaboration, substantiation, etc.*, are what the body of an article is all about.

Writers provide *details, statistics, claims, and counter-claims* in the body to present, project and promote their point of views. The body of an article is where claims are supported and defended while opposing viewpoints are attacked.

The conclusions portion simply closes the argument. Often it summarizes what the author has said before. The conclusion is always brief. It states the crux or gist of the article.

### **5.3 SUMMARY:**

- A news story provides hard news. It provides information in a straightforward manner. A feature appeals to the emotions. It covers all kinds of topics and provides the information in an interesting and easy-to-read manner. A feature tries to entertain while informing. Editorials provide the newspaper's point of view. Articles, on the other hand, provide the point of view of individual writers.

- It informs the reader. It analyses and interpretes issues and events. Sometimes it also entertains. But most frequently it takes a stance and offers a point of view. Often it tries to persuade the readers. Its goal is to move the readers to some specific action, to get them to agree the writer, to support or denounce a cause etc. And among all types of newspaper writing it is the most difficult to write. It is the *editorial*.
- Features are usually narrative and descriptive write-ups that attempt to entertain the audience while informing them. These are written in about 800 words. Features differ from news stories in terms of scope and intention. While a news story presents facts in a direct manner, a feature can cover any aspect of an event and in a manner as to make it interesting.
- Articles, on the other hand, provide the point of view of individual writers. Like editorials, articles also analyze and interpret. An article provides arguments and counter-arguments. An article goes to the root cause of an event or happening and provides background information. Then it describes the present situation and finally peeps into the future also.
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- The body of an article takes up about three quarters of the total space of an article. Here the writer tries to answer the question(s) put in the lead. The claims made in the lead are substantiated. The statements and quotations made are elaborated. So *explanation*, *description elaboration*, *substantiation*, etc., are what the body of an article is all about.
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#### **5.4 KEY WORDS:**

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**Intro of an Editorial:** The beginning of an editorial should fulfill two functions: *announce the subject matter and capture the reader's interest*. Since the editorial is a specialized form of writing, you are not limited to the traditional journalistic leads.

**Body of an Editorial:** The body of an editorial is the only defensible place where you present not your personal viewpoints, but those of your organization. As the writer of the editorial, you are a spokesman for others, and you are voicing the editorial policy of your publication. The editorial is used to express that collective opinion and, also to suggest to your reader that he is a part of the group, and to make him think and act in the way you are suggesting.

**Conclusion of an Editorial:** Usually, your editorial will end with a brief paragraph in which you state precisely what action it is that you would like your reader to take. If you have offered an opinion or made a recommendation, but have not urged a specification, the conclusion should be a tight, one-paragraph summary of your ideas. This is because editorials are usually small in size and mostly range between 300 to 400 words.

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**Conclusion of an Article:** The conclusions portion simply closes the arguement. Often it summarizes what the author has said before. The conclusion is always brief. It states the crux or gist of the article.

### 5.5 SELF- ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. What do you mean by an article? Discuss its various types.
2. Differentiate between an article and a feature.
3. Discuss the various types of an article?
4. What steps will you follow while writing an article?
5. What is an editorial? Discuss the purpose of writing an editorial.
6. Who writes an editorial in a newspaper? Discuss it briefly.

### 5.6 REFERENCES & SUGGESTED READINGS:

- o Kamath, M.V. (I 995) - "**Professional Journalism**" *published* by Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.,
- o George, T.J.S. (I 989) - "**Editing - A Handbook For Journalists**" *published* by the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi.