

MEDIA ETHICS: A SELF PERSPECTIVE ON THE MEDIA ETHICS OF JOURNALISM IN INDIA

D.Narayana Rao

In-charge of Journalism and Mass Communication Department

St.Joseph's College for Women (Autonomous)

Visakhapatnam

mjmcnarayana@gmail.com

Abstract

Ethics are usually moral rules of conduct that guides one's decision. It involves what is fair, right, unbiased, impartial, just and responsible. Every subject has its own guidelines and ethics to be followed in the similar manner even media has its own set of guidelines called media ethics. Media usually helps one to be informed with the happenings around but to an extent.

India is a country known for its values and traditions but unfortunately in such country the values and ethics of media are going down. It's high time to wake up and shake people out of unethical practices and guide them in right path to follow ethical guidelines of media for a better future of the country.

This paper attempts to study media ethics of Mass Media in India and how they have been declined in the present day. This paper is a complete self-perspective research and mainly focuses on the degrading ethics of media in the present era

Keywords: Media, Mass Media, Media Ethics, Ethics.

INTRODUCTION:

Media is considered to be the Fourth Estate and has the utmost responsibility of informing the people about the happenings around them and keeping them in safe hands. Media acts like the mirror of the society and reflects the truth with the same accuracy and clearness.

Ethics are the most essential thing in Journalism because it sets guidelines for journalist for presenting the people with the absolute truth. It also develops a sense of responsibility among the journalists towards the society. Apart from developing social responsibility a journalists also develops a sense of respect towards the person's emotions, identity and privacy while publishing his piece of work.

Unfortunately in the past few years the media ethics and standards of journalism have been declining. Social media has made everyone an amateur person giving them liberty to post anything regarding any matter in order to misutilize their freedom of speech provided to them by the Indian Constitution.

The Society of Professional Journalists code states that people practicing media should follow four essential ethics:

1. Seek truth and Report it
2. Minimize Harm
3. Act Independently
4. Be accountable and Transparent

But unfortunately these days it has become more this way:

1. Seek truth but report what is profitable.
2. Not care much about harm
3. Act according to benefits
4. Non accountability and Non Transparency

This papers aim to deal with the Ethics of media in the field of Journalism in India, how the ethics have declined and how to try implementing them for a better future of the nation.

LITERARY REVIEW:

The formulation of code of ethics for journalism traces back to early 1920's. [1]The MacBride Report states that all journalists have responsibilities to their own convictions, but equally important are their responsibilities to the public. The report spells out journalists' responsibilities:

- (1) Contractual responsibility in relation to their media and their internal organization.
- (2) A social responsibility entailing obligations towards public opinion and society as a whole.
- (3) Responsibility or liability deriving from the obligation to comply with the law.
- (4) Responsibility towards the international community, relating to respect for human values.[1]

In India attempts to develop code of ethics for journalist was made. In 1966, The Press Council however passed certain guidelines but the Code of Ethics for Journalists and New Papers was drafted by a committee of 17 Editors and was presented to Rajya Sabha on 8th January, 1976. It states

[2] In pursuance of the social responsibility, the following code of ethics would be applicable:

- (1) In the discharge of their duties, journalists shall hold good faith and fair play in news reports and comments as essential professional obligations.
- (2) Journalists and newspapers shall highlight the activities of the State and public, promote national unity, solidarity, integrity and economic and social progress.
- (3) Journalists and newspapers shall avoid reports and comments which tend to promote tensions likely to lead or leading to civil disorder, mutiny or rebellion. Violence must be condemned unequivocally.
- (4) Journalists and newspapers shall ensure that information disseminated is factual. No fact shall be distorted nor shall information known to be false or not believed to be true be published.
- (5) No sensational or tendentious report of a speculative nature shall be published. Any report or comments found to be in accurate shall be rectified by prominent publication.
- (6) Confidence shall always be respected. Professional secrecy shall be preserved.
- (7) Journalists shall not exploit their status for non- journalistic purposes or inquires and shall not allow personal interest to influence professional conduct.
- (8) There is nothing so unworthy as the acceptance or demand of a bribe or inducement for the exercise by a journalist of his power to give or deny publicity to news or comments.
- (9) Journalists and newspapers shall not indulge in personal controversies in which no public interest is involved.
- (10) Journalists and newspapers shall not give currency to public rumors or gossip or even verifiable news affecting the private life of individuals.
- (11) Newspapers shall refrain from publishing matter (including advertisements) which is obscene or is likely to encourage vice, crime and unlawful activities.
- (12) Journalists and newspapers shall promote and project the national objectives of democracy, socialism and secularism.
- (13) Journalists and newspapers shall refrain from giving tendentious treatment to news of disturbances, involving caste, community, class, religion, region or language groupings and shall not publish details of numbers, identity of groups involved in such disturbances except as officially authorized.
- (14) Journalists and newspapers shall not publish information and comments detrimental to the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State and friendly relationships between foreign countries. (Newspapers include journals, magazines and periodicals)[2]

Each and every person in the field of Journalism has to follow the mentioned ethics throughout his professional career.

The Press Council of India was established with an objective to [2] 'preserve the freedom of press and to maintain and improve the standards of newspapers and news agencies'. [2] In October 1992, the council published a code of ethics which was later revised in 1995 and it includes:

Besides these acts imposed there are many other laws that try to balance the ethics in Journalism in India like the Indian Penal Codes (1860), Official Secrets Act (1923) etc.

NEED FOR STUDY

Looking at the media scenario today, with a lot of media channels, newspapers and social media popping up educated journalists are forgetting their basic ethics and morals and are following the path of "I KNOW WHAT IS RIGHT FOR THE COUNTRY". Medias have become the agenda setters and are telecasting and publishing news for the sake of raising their publicity standards. In past years media used to be reflection of society but unfortunately these days it has become shadow of few personalities.

Morality is something that cannot be taught but comes from within but ethics are something every human being must follow being in a responsible position of a journalist or any media person but the present scenario is something that was not a part of future of journalism when it came to India.

The research study focuses on how the standards of Indian media have declined and what measures can be taken to uplift the forgotten standards.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in the paper is analytical. Secondary sources like journals, books and newspaper articles both print and online have been used for the study. The paper focuses on perspectives of media ethics at the national level and state level and at the same time the paper focuses on the development of building up the standards of media ethics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

I MEDIA DURING THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE MOVEMENT IN INDIA:

In the era of 1920's way before Independence media was a medium for exchanging information and making people aware about the happenings around the nation. Most of the freedom fighters were Journalists and they started newspapers or journals to publish the important events happening and updating people regarding those events.

Later during the same time World War was going on and the updates of the war was given through media. Mass Media though started by various people was only stuck to one cause passing unbiased information and showing people what exactly was happening without any manipulation.

II MEDIA AFTER INDEPENDENCE:

After independence of India In 1947 Media was used for the purpose of development of the nation. Radio and Television had special programs that helped farmers in updating them with weather conditions and educating them about what

to sow in which soil and till when should they leave the crop untouched what fertilizers should be used for the growth of crops and the quantity of use.

There were programs based on education which helped the children gain knowledge and information. The entertainment programs were also family based and had no obscene content even the newspapers provided with information of the important happenings in the country.

Usually the press organizations were run by those men who knew the importance of passing true and unbiased information and only published content of importance and value.

III MEDIA IN THE PRESENT ERA:

In the present era the aims and goals of media have taken a very major turn. Media instead of focusing on publishing accurate and true information it is focusing more on publicity and attention. Most of the present day journalists and media houses have forgotten the ethics of journalism and are following the path of ethics of fame and popularity

The matters of importance are not covered whereas the matters of unwanted discussions are discussed for hours together under the tag of breaking news. Unfortunately these days almost every news is tagged Breaking News. Few observations are as follows:

- **Death of Legendary Actress Sri Devi:** Postmortem report of Sri Devi said she died due to Heart Attack. She was out of nation when such unexpected incident took place and the Indian media started a debate on the death of Sri Devi which led to complications in security permissions for the clearance of dead body. Unwanted and unnecessary allegations were made and the discussions were dragged for a span of one week.

All the news channels were filled with the news of the mystery behind the death of Sri Devi whereas the hospital has already given confirmation regarding the cause of her death. For TRP Ratings each channel telecasted repeat discussions and debates on the same issue creating a whole mess out it leading to nowhere but creating false allegations and security issues.

- **Sri Reddy Event:** Sri Reddy Went and sat on road half-dressed which is obscene but a journalist shot it and presented it in media degrading the media ethics and that news was hyped on almost all local channels and the picture of her wearing half dress was telecasted over and over degrading the ethical values of journalism as well as media.

- **Jagan Mohan Reddy's Case:** Recently in Andhra Pradesh opposition leader Y Jagan Mohan Reddy S/O late Y. S Raja Shekhar Reddy was attacked in Visakhapatnam Airport by one of the workers at an airport canteen. Media houses portrayed the news and also drew conclusions in the process stating it was pre planned and also stating that the act was performed for gaining the sympathy of the public as elections are heading.

With such news articles printed and telecasted journalists have completely forgotten their purpose of profession. The main reason for these things to happen is most of the media houses are either run by business men or by political party leaders. Each media house supports its own owners and shows loyalty forgetting its responsibility towards its society and people.

Media these days has become agenda setters and decides "What is right for the country:, Journalists also in order for getting popular keep their ethics aside and publish contents that involved defaming of others or revealing their private matters.

Obscene contents are taped for hours together under the name of breaking news though images are blurred it still creates a wrong impact on the mindset of people. Media these days has less sense of responsibilities and more sense of business.

SUGGESTIONS:

The Government should establish a statutory body with objectives of punishing those who misuse the freedom of speech for hurting or defaming others and also punishing media persons for unethical media practices. The governing body should constitute the Chief Justice of India or the retired Chief justice of India and also the High Court Judges of each state along with the Press Council of India head to monitor the laws and ethics to be followed by media without creating restraints on Freedom of Speech a fundamental right of every citizen of India as stated by Indian Constitution.

CONCLUSION:

The current study tried to throw lime light on the degrading media ethics in the present scenario. Media people should never forget their ethical values as they are presenting the new to the whole country as well as the world. Different age groups watch news and the impact on them could be adverse. Few local findings state that media houses are mostly owned by private sectors especially by real estate and finance sector members and also by political parties due to which they don't consider their responsibilities towards society but consider it as a business and source of income

Government should take necessary actions to control such unethical practices by media people and also the press council should intervene when they find such unhealthy practices taking place to keep up the standards of the Fourth Estate of governance the Media.

REFERENCES:

- [1] Journalism as a profession in India, Rajendra K. Sharma
 - [2] Mass Communication in India, Keval J Kumar
 - [3] Professional Journalism, M V Kamath
- <http://presscouncil.nic.in/OldWebsite/NORMS-2010.pdf>
<https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/who-we-are/5-principles-of-journalism>
<http://www.presscouncil.nic.in/OldWebsite/speechpdf/Media%20Ethics%20at%20IIMC,%20Dhenkanal.pdf>
<https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>
<https://www.slideshare.net/daprofessa/media-ethics-24128576>
<http://www.nraismc.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/205-PRESS-LAW-MEDIA-ETHICS-backup.pdf>
<http://scrippsmediaethics.blogspot.com/2016/09/the-importance-of-ethics-in-journalism.html>
http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/9427/6/06_chapter%203.pdf