

“VALUE BASED MEDIA – the Need of Hour”

* Justice G.N. Ray

It is indeed a pleasure to inaugurate and share views with eminent media personalities on an issue that is as ancient as at is modern **“Value Based Media – the Need of the Hour.”** The Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya has gained worldwide recognition for constantly working towards promoting universal peace and happiness. Today’s seminar is one such step towards promoting the practice of ethics and values amongst media persons representing the voice of the people.

Today when the world is witnessing development in each and every field, there is a constant decline in values (Is the development real ?) When the world ‘impossible’ is somewhat losing its relevance in today’s world, when nothing seems to be beyond reach, there is still despair, discontent, conflict,

*Inagural address by Mr.Justice G.N. Ray, Chairman, Press Council of India at the Seminar on “Value Based Media – the Need of Hour” on 4th April, 2009 at PSK Auditorium, Vikas Marg, Delhi..

violence, terrorism and cultural and communal differences. The individual urge for peace and happiness is becoming stronger and stronger with each passing day. However on a collective plan one need to reconsider our aims and activities. Steady decline in the values can largely be traced the root cause of all this unrest and unhappiness in society. The sparkle of hope and any effort on our part that can bring happiness is like a candle of light in the space enveloped by darkness.

Peaceful world has been the main aim of mankind since time immemorial and I firmly believe that media being not only the mirror of the society but also as the leader, guide and somewhat moulder of the society can play this role.

The conflict between values is the source of many conflicts and problems. The conflict of values is not the unique phenomenon of our times but the common occurrence in both ancient and modern history. The traditional conflict of values occurred largely in the moral realm, and its essence and focus lay in the conflict between various requirements of the same

individual self. But this conflict was also moralized because personal life, either inner ideas or counteractions were put into the scope of moral valuation. The traditional conflict of values was in fact moral conflict between good and evil, and significance and function of morality just lay in adjusting and solving all those conflicts.

Complications and plurality of modern life has brought about the possibility for different value choices or pursuits, thus conflict of values occurs. The 21st century is a period of transition. This conflict of values is quite apparent in Journalism or Media, which is called the Fourth Estate.

The growth of the Indian press in recent times is inducing under the pressure on the core values of journalism due to fierce competition, pressures from the market forces, advertisers, managerial interests threats from fast paced satellite channels internet and so on.

Mass media today has become the platform and propagator of the change in society. Media which stood for and propagated the

value system is being advised to adapt to the new system and new values of the society. Therefore, journalism of post liberalization is entirely different compared to pre – liberalization period.

Introduction of new modes of journalism i.e. television, internet and now blogging have entirely changed the focus, approach and principles of newspaper industry. Priorities are reshaped. Today conflict is about the very basis of journalism whether journalism is a service or a profession.

In the age of globalization, media no doubt needs to give due attention to the commercial aspects of the industry but there is no reason for it to move away from social concerns. In this blind race journalism today wants to retain its credibility. While the vast majority of people are still below the poverty line, nation far behind in literacy and other grass root issues boon large majority of the media is focusing on trivial issues concerning the celebrities crime, astrology etc. Media which is supposed to highlight the drawbacks of system swayed by it.

Journalists are working on packages. Editors have somewhat become managers. Values have taken second position and competition, marketism, sensationalism have taken prominence. The time has come for those who believes journalism to be their calling to make decision

It is not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are. Traditional values of journalism may well guide new media decisions.

Ethics is a code of values, which govern our lives, and are thus very essential for moral and healthy social life.

At the core of it is essentially the self – restraint to be practiced by the journalists voluntarily, to preserve and promote the trust of the people and to maintain their own credibility.

Socially responsible, fair, accurate journalism with public service ethos based on the theory of self – restraint is only the solution in this present scenario for the journalists ethically challenged.

The need for value – based journalism is being felt and propagated particularly in the Asian Continent. The South Asian Journalists Association, in its 2007 conference stressed and advocated for self – regulation in order to uphold values in the media. These values guide us to distinguish between right and the wrong, between do’s and dont’s

In respect of journalism, a public service, such values may be considered as standards of behavior or guiding principles to be followed by journalists in providing news, views and analysis that is true and accurate, balanced and unbiased, transparent, and without fear or favor, to the civic society”.

The advise of Professor Stephen J.A. Ward, a writer and an editor of Global Journalism Ethics, an internet ethics forum and also a member of the Ethics Division of the Association of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication is “Global journalism ethics aims at developing a comprehensive set of principles and standards for the practice of journalism in an age of global news media”.

Similarly, Jeff Nygaard a writer and an activist states, “I think value – based journalism is a more honest term for what every journalist does, and must do. We all make decisions to focus on one news item and not another, or to believe one person and not another, or to put one thing on the front page and one on the back, and we all base those decisions on our values. What else would we base them on? The difference is that I don’t go around saying that I am “objective” when I do it; I just try to make my biases and my principles very obvious”.

With a view to create more awareness among masses and for a sustained campaign for restoring value – based journalism, a survey titled *VALUE BASED JOURNALISM : A Global Survey* was undertaken recently by *Professor P L Joshi*, University of Bahrain to understand the perceptions of newspaper journalists of this concept.

Highlights of Findings were that overall over 90% of the respondents stated that they adhere to “truth and accuracy” and

“verification of facts”. It is to be noted that truth and accuracy are core values in maintaining credibility. Also relevant is that Kovach and Rosentein, in their book *‘The Elements of Journalism : What Newspeople should know and The Public Should Expect’* posit that journalism’s first obligation is to the truth and also its essence is a discipline of verification.

Facts, truth and accuracy, balanced, fairness, objectivity, transparency, inquisitiveness, accountability, public interest and perhaps the editorial integrity may be the cluster of values to be adhered to by journalists. Serving the legitimate public interest is important to enhance the trust and credibility of news and views reporting. To this I firmly believe that we should all be committed.

I, envisage a world full of peace and happiness and media playing a constructive role towards helping the world achieving this goal.

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