Vidura

Professor Vibhuti Patel
The challenge of multiple transitions in India

"We are never contemporary with our present. History advances in disguise. It appears on stage wearing the mask of the preceding scene...." So the French philosopher, Regis Debray tells us in Revolution in the Revolution. It is not uncommon to fall behind contemporary reality, let alone become prisoners of the past. This obscures ground truths and prevents timely engagement with emerging situations, thus entailing a heavy opportunity cost of delay. India is in danger of falling prey to the insidious disease of Nostalgia.

The country is undergoing multiple transitions. Despite these many revolutions within the revolution, we sometimes seem reluctant, even afraid, to confront change, and seek comfort in a familiar, even if unsatisfactory, past. Sixty-six years after Independence, India is not the country it was in 1947. Our geography has remained more or less static since Partition, but our demography has changed drastically, altering all ratios such as mouths to feed, jobs to be created, housing needs, and natural resources to share, especially land and water. Nothing is the same. Yet we all too often hear nostalgic references to the past, especially with reference to the environment.

The exponential growth of numbers has not merely been quantitative but qualitative. At the commencement of the First Five Plan in 1950, may be no more than 50 million elite lived in a modernising, industrialising and largely urban India while the vast majority of 300 million others resided in the traditional and largely agrarian recesses of Bharat. With education, communications, development and social change, maybe 500 million live in ‘India’ today while over 700 million inhabit ‘Bharat’. Millions graduate from Bharat to India every year, but especially at general elections that are greatly empowering political and social mega-convocations.

There is, however, another qualitative difference to be discerned. The country’s enormous diversity lends it astonishing richness and hybrid vigour. This has gradually telescoped into a larger sense of Indianness without necessarily affecting pride in ancient identities and heritage. But divergent starting points (Continued on page 3)
Onus is on us to move forward, this is not the India of 1947

Two recent lectures in Chennai addressed a whole range of issues confronting India in the second decade of what was a few years earlier referred to as the New Millennium - B.G. Verghese’s special address at the Triplicane Cultural Academy on July 13 on the occasion of its diamond jubilee celebrations, and C. P. Chandrasekhar’s Lawrence Dana Pinkham Memorial Lecture on May 2 at the 13th Convocation of the Asian College of Journalism.

Verghese was kind and sent me the transcript of his speech after returning to Delhi. When I later sent the text to our illustrator, Arun Ramkumar, he took his time but sent three illustrations, an elephant in one, a snake in the second and a computer in the third. As they appear in this issue, you will see how symbolic they are. Of how, despite all the promise India showed after the midnight hour and its tryst with destiny, we still remain shackled in various ways and are unable to progress the way we should.

Referring to the agitation by teachers at the Delhi University as it moves to broaden its curriculum and the knowledge base of its alumni by moving to a superior four-year degree course, Verghese points to how for many Indians status quo is safe and change unsettling. That is not the best outlook for a nation that wants to progress, he says, adding that today’s group of people who are milling into India’s towns and cities in search of employment are “a disparate and impatient lot having spent generations in servitude to caste and poverty, awaiting empowerment and an investment of dignity”. And, of course, nobody is willing to wait any longer, unlike in those heady days of post-Independence. They have, like Verghese says, stood in the queue for decades only to see progress falter and the corrupt and privileged siphon away the gains.

Also, projects are signed and foundations stones are laid but many hardly take off, caught as they are in bureaucratic red tape, never-arriving approvals or clearances, litigation, violent protests, reviews and what have you. When corporate houses enter the scene they are looked upon as having some ulterior motive. People in rural India especially do not see them as offering solutions for a better life. So, somewhere, Indians will have to let go if we as a nation are to develop. As Verghese so often cautions, beware the perils of Nostalgia; we cannot grasp the future if we remain trapped in the past. And media surely has a role to change this conservative mindset.

The digital revolution is fundamentally transforming news as business. There is no doubt about that. The newspaper still retains its romance in India, but when somebody like Tina Brown, former editor-in-chief of Newsweek, says print is not the right medium any more to produce journalism, you sit upright and begin to wonder. So, what could be the nature of the news business of the future? Nobody has any clear answer. Then there are the aspects of self-regulation and corporate control of the media. No clear pathways have been charted here either. Does the media need to be regulated and should there be a statutory underpinning to it, as suggested by the Leveson Report? There are some who want a regulatory mechanism in place. Edara Gopi Chand of MediaWatch-India, for example, says the establishment of an independent authority to regulate various aspects of the broadcast media is still an elusive dream. One thing is clear though: corporate control could affect the independence of the press. The challenge, as Chandrasekhar points out, is daunting – news business must both regulate itself and address its own challenges including that faced by the newspaper industry in the age of the Internet.

In many ways, the media today finds itself in a state of stupor, the shock administered by the Internet, Facebook and Twitter also having a part to play. Chandrasekhar says the crisis is imminent but yet to arrive. A scary thought indeed.

We remember the invaluable contributions made by Ruth Prawer Jhabwala, Veena Mazumdar, Rituparno Ghosh and Sharmila Rege. Ghosh and Rege died in their prime. We salute them all. The death of such young people who had so much to give is yet another huge loss for a country trying desperately to move forward.

Finally, how does a 100-year-old bakery in Mumbai called The Sassanian find place here? Well, nostalgia is good sometimes, especially when it is about giving people their daily bread.

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(Continued from page 1)

and varied trajectories continue to project a complex social mosaic that is by no means uniform in pattern or texture. Thus, it is difficult to define emerging India in simple categories despite visible convergences in language, dress, food habits, marriage partnerships, manners and customs. Globalisation has added a further dimension to domestic standards and values.

This upwelling from below of newly empowered cohorts has necessarily resulted in new political formations giving rise to coalitions as the alternative to former single-party dominance.

This is a natural progression and the fact that intelligent persons should baulk at the rise of local and regional parties betrays a deplorable lack of understanding of the nation’s social dynamics. This phenomenon will may be take 20 to 30 years to spend itself before a natural process of social aggregation lays the basis for the rise once more of a few dominant political parties.

Nonetheless, India is no longer an agrarian society though a slight majority still lives in the countryside. Manufactures contribute more to GDP than farming, with services accounting for the largest share. Agriculture can no longer absorb growing numbers as farm holdings shrink under population pressure. Greater agricultural production has to come from increased productivity and better land and water management. In another 20 years, India will be a predominantly urban society, which it already is in some regions. All children should be in school by then. But there will be no demographic dividend unless jobs and skills multiply.

Yet, witness the agitation by teachers at Delhi University as it moves to broaden its curriculum and the knowledge base of its alumni by moving to a superior four-year degree course. The status quo is safe, change unsettling.
That is not the best outlook for a nation that wants to progress. But then Hindi has the same words both for today and tomorrow as for yesterday and the day before!

The urban configuration will change. Mega-city peripheries will cease to be noisome shanty towns sheltering Malthusian refugees. Instead, rural growth centres will multiply as hubs of small and tiny enterprises servicing the countryside and supplying the cities. Urban India will also spawn satellite towns, green cities along radial axes with rapid connectivity. This is already happening. The east-west railway corridor, with planned industrial hubs alongside from Punjab to Mumbai via Delhi and Ahmedabad is the first manifestation of this new ribbon architecture. A national grid of super-highways will perform a similar role. Here is a huge new challenge for well planned urbanisation, with sanitation as a central concern.

All this will happen within a democratic framework. India uniquely among post-colonial nations deliberately determined that it would make full-fledged parliamentary democracy the instrument of economic and social transformation and poverty alleviation rather than its end product. The world, and even some in India, scoffed and wondered about what would be the result of this brash experiment, standing history on its head. They have remained to marvel. The Indian elections are a wonder of the world with a vibrant electorate larger and more diverse than that of all of Europe, including Russia, and North America combined.

This deliberate choice was founded in the belief that democracy alone would keep together an extraordinarily plural society of many ancient nations and cultures within a new state-nation or commonwealth of nation states. India’s democracy, with all its flaws and wrinkles, remains a beacon of light and hope, glowing stronger but for the grim interlude of the Emergency in 1975.

The ever new cohorts graduating into India from Bharat are a disparate and impatient lot having spent generations in servitude to caste and poverty, awaiting empowerment and an investment of dignity. Nehru asked Indians in 1947 to tighten their belts so as sooner to uplift the next generation. Today, none is prepared to wait any further having stood in the queue for decades only to see progress falter and the corrupt and privileged siphon away the gains. Hence, the anger and restlessness inherent in the huge mass mobilisation behind sundry causes or icons-of-the-day like Anna Hazare, or periodic social explosions.Naipaul’s million mutinies have mutated to a billion mutinies, now largely organised rather than atomised protests.

None can get away with the empty promise made to Oliver Twist of “jam tomorrow”. Yet few seem to recognise that Time is a mostprecious but wasting resource. Critics or busybodies, as many of them are, demand more time and still more time for “democratic” consultation and review in the market place instead of getting on smartly with the job through due constitutional process.

Southern and Western India have made a demographic transition. Parts of Northern India are getting there, but with a huge gender bias evident in the deplorable indices of female foeticide even as incomes rise. The Eastern region, alas, remains a laggard poverty belt marked by distress migration that has generated inter-regional tensions. The nation needs to add 10 million jobs per annum, or 100 million jobs over the next decade, just to keep pace with the annual growth in the labour force commensurate with population increase. That is a stupendous task by any yardstick, anywhere. Failure can only result in bread riots and social upheavals that will only further retard progress.

Where are these jobs to come from? National Sample Survey studies indicate dwindling numbers among mainline farmers. Marginal farmers are leasing in land where they can to make up more economic holdings or selling their land and, with the landless, migrating to the big city in search of gainful employment. Studies done around the time of the Singur-Nano controversy in Bengal suggested that the first priority from sale of land was education of the children to give them a better chance in life and, thereafter, investment in self-employment. A grave disservice has been done by freezing khadi and village industries, a brilliant Gandhian strategy, into a frozen ‘ism’. This has, with some exceptions, resulted in spawning subsidised sweat shops whereas, given an infusion of technological, managerial and marketing upgrades, they could become a thriving and productive source of off-farm rural and small town employment.

The goal of a ‘socialistic pattern of society’ aimed at ensuring public-sector control over the ‘commanding heights of the economy’. This has shown diminishing returns. Market reforms that trigger the talent and energy of entrepreneurship and innovation are the order of the day in an inevitably globalising economy, with both its promise and perils. But dead habit and fear of relaxing administrative and political control inhibits reform, even of the police and criminal justice system where patronage remains paramount at the cost of good and honest governance.

Small may certainly be beautiful, but big is not necessarily bad and, given economies of scale, is generally more efficient and competitive. There is danger in mindless gigantisms but little merit in smallness for its own sake.
Hence mergers and acquisitions need not be frowned upon.

To return to the challenge of vastly expanding employment, we argued the case for a modernising tiny and small scale industrial sector. However, this is not going to be enough to stimulate and sustain high growth and exports so essential to generate the wherewithal to invest in uplifting the poor and alleviating poverty sooner than otherwise. For this, the country needs to expand and upgrade its limited, creaking infrastructure - the Railways, highways, power plants, ports, telecommunications, irrigation systems, cities, water supply and sanitation systems, and educational and health facilities. This in turn is going to require further and more efficient exploitation of natural resources such as land, water, minerals and forests, while not ignoring the need for conservation and sustainability. The key consideration here is balance.

There is the popular myth that nature is unchanging and that the original creation was ideal. Far from it. Nature is fickle. Continents have been separated; rivers have changed their course and lands have built up by seismic sedimentation or eroded or flooded by natural events. Man has felled mountains, drained swamps, cleared the jungle and cultivated and irrigated barren land. Much of the Lower Himalaya, the European and Japanese Alps, and the Appalachian Mountains are covered by regenerated, not pristine forests. If man has despoiled nature, caused species loss and paid the price of his folly, his genius has equally created new landscapes and species. True, his folly has led to polluting the land, air and water. Yet he has created better environments while poverty has been the worst polluter. So touch-me-not is not nature’s supreme axiom. Prudence and balance are.

Like all development since the beginning of time, this requires changing land use patterns through land acquisition. With colonial principles of eminent domain yielding to participative development, resident communities legitimately claim stakeholder rights apart from fair, even generous, compensation and resettlement for involuntary displacement. India has been on a learning curve in these matters and past default cannot be reason to veto on-going and future development through stubborn defiance or insistence on totally unreasonable demands.

It is routine to hear demands of land-for-land as compensation. There is less and less land available or, in some cases, none at all. Equally, people increasingly want to get off the land to better their economic and cultural lives. Yet the cry remains “land for land” which, translated, means imprisoning people in a past from which they seek escape and emancipation.

It is as sad to see project clearance all too often become a long drawn out battle with final approval taking five, six, eight or ten years to obtain after second thoughts, litigation, retrospective application of regulatory laws, delays in framing of rules, violent protests, divergent interpretation of agreements, much back and forth on safety and impacts, consequent project reviews and so forth.

The giant 12 million tonne Posco steel project, with mines, transport links and a captive port to be built with South Korean collaboration in Orissa has been pending for years on grounds of displacement, compensation, and scepticism about local employment and ancillary arrangements. Land acquisition for it has just been completed, after eight years! Costs have meanwhile multiplied and benefits postponed. Who gains? In the case of the twin Vedanta bauxite mine-cum-alumina project, continued production at the current one-million tonne alumina plant at Lanjigarh, Orissa, is threatened by delayed
clearances for bauxite supply even as the licence to mine bauxite at the nearby Niyamgiri site has been cancelled.

The controversy in this case extends to alleged violation of tribal rights, potential ecological damage and going ahead with further construction in breach of conditional approvals “in principle”. The charge is made by social and ecological activists, both official and from civil society. Vedanta contests these charges. The matter is in court. The tribal population that was hitherto the beneficiary of Vedanta’s mandated corporate social responsibility activity for the past six years is now bereft of that godsend. The tribes have been abandoned to the gods in the name of protecting their rights and sacred landscape. There is none to mourn this tangible tribal loss though Vedanta probably accomplished more tribal welfare in six years than delivered by the Orissa government in sixty. Who cares?

There has always been an anti-nuclear and nuclear power lobby in India. Following the tsunami that damaged the Fukushima power plant in Japan in 2011, local protestors, joined by ideologues, have continued their highly emotional agitation with reinforced zeal against the Kudankulam project, being built with Russian collaboration. Plant failure in tsunami-like situations, possible radiation leaks, loss of livelihoods, damage to fisheries by discharge into the ocean of return coolant water outflows at temperatures of up to seven degrees Celsius, and less than generous R&R have been variously pleaded. These fears and allegations have been carefully examined and answered and safety and monitoring regulations have been tightened. Comparisons with Fukushima have been shown to be mistaken. Yet the agitation has long continued, delaying commissioning of the first of four 1000 MW units by over a year in a power-starved state like Tamil Nadu. Fortunately, the project has moved forward and Kudankulam power will shortly feed into the grid.

Much of Uttarakhand has been declared a sacred eco-system from which further storage dams are banned. Likewise, storages above the foothills have been barred in Arunachal on grounds of seismicity and harming lower-basin hydrology. And this at a time when entire resident populations and pilgrims are imperilled and impoverished by cloudbursts, debris dam breaks and recurrent floods even as the much reviled Tehri Dam on the Bhagirathi mitigated the Uttarakhand disaster.

Displacement caused by development, especially dams, is constantly cited. Yet who knows that 30 to 40 million distress migrants, families included, tramp the country annually in search of any seasonal work they can find for lack of development. Project displaced persons benefit from planned R&R. But distress migrants get nothing. They are “nowhere people” without civic rights left to fend for themselves, human flotsam and jetsam. Who cares?

Left wing extremism, so-called, is attributed to tribal neglect and exploitation, most cruelly by corporate mining interests that plunder the land. Approximately 80 to 90 per cent of India’s mineral, forest and headwater wealth (south of the Himalaya) is located in Fifth Schedule Areas that are constitutionally empowered to provide tribal people a protective shield to develop at their own pace and in accordance with their own genius under the guardianship of Governors. The Fifth Schedule has, however, long been disregarded, even discarded, without a murmur of protest or concern at this gross violation of the human and constitutional rights of the tribal people. What has replaced it is bureaucratic and contractor raj where exploitation and indignity reign. It is in this situation that the Maoists assume the role of Robin Hoods as they murderously execute their master plan to overthrow the state...
through revolutionary violence, using hapless tribals as cannon fodder.

True, corporate bodies and even the state have been guilty of savaging the land and environment in the name of mining to extract the coal, iron ore, bauxite, and harness the water and other natural resources required to build infrastructure and ensure high growth. Many nations have experienced an age of robber barons before these same people turned philanthropists. Learning from this experience, there is increasingly in place a new framework of law and administrative safeguards, vigilant NGOs and an alert media to monitor compliance and ensure against excesses. The Supreme Court’s Samatha judgement of 1997 in an Andhra mining case laid out a scheme of corporate social responsibility for leaseholders on tribal lands that has become a benchmark today. We must build on that.

Corporate houses today are not necessarily part of the problem but must be seen as part of the solution. Though undoubtedly driven by the profit motive, they have the monetary, technological, managerial and marketing skills the State lacks to get things done. Tribal people do not wish to live in the wilderness as museum specimens but aspire to a better and more modern life. We cannot force “progress” on them, but equally, to deny them the progress to which they aspire would be the height of arrogance and social suppression.

Gandhi termed honestly earned wealth a trust. Corporate social responsibility corresponds to that ideal of Trusteeship. Let us create legal frameworks for this transition.

Can high growth and more growth continue forever? As it is, the competition for natural resources is becoming unsustainable. The answer lies in paying heed to Gandhi’s aphorism: “There is enough for everybody’s need, but not for everybody’s greed.” It is one thing to lead a life of reasonable comfort and dignity and quite another to indulge in extravagance, vulgarity and waste. Bhutan strives to maximise Gross National Happiness instead of Gross National Product. A blue-ribbon commission under Amartya Sen and Joseph Stiglitz, set up by former President Sarkozy of France after the Wall Street-led global financial meltdown in 2009-10, also suggested abandoning GDP as the ultimate measure of success. Instead it urged adoption of a new human welfare index that included yardsticks like culture, leisure, health and a pollution-free atmosphere.

Should India and China aspire to ape American living standards, the world would not be able to sustain the burden. Why then even try? The aim should be balanced growth with more public consumption than wasteful private consumption: public transport, public housing and so on. As much as 26 per cent of Delhi is under paved streets but shrinking sidewalks and unregulated private vehicular increase has clogged roads and pavements, increased traffic snarls and road rage, slowed down vehicular speeds, added to the fuel costs of idling and enhanced travel time and aggravated pollution. Free roadside parking for an SUV takes more space than given to a jhuggi (hut) dweller on exorbitant illicit rentals. Pedestrianisation, higher vehicular taxes, congestion and time of day fees and better public transport should be the aim if we are to reduce automobile pressure. This would call for new town and spatial planning models.

Panchayati raj or decentralised local governance would enhance participation and accountability and smaller states and districts would be a logical corollary making for more effective cooperative federalism.

India must move not merely with but ahead of the times to be contemporary with the present. With systemic and structural reform, it needs also to move more purposefully on a third front – building Fraternity. Dr Ambedkar always said that without Fraternity, Liberty and Equality would not be sustainable. Events have proven him right. Most of our current ills – caste and gender discrimination, communal stress, Maoism, language and identity differences, - stem from derogation of Fraternity, a larger idea than secularism that has usurped its place. Outdated social structures inhibit progress and change. National integration demands equal opportunity and cultural freedom and not a straitjacket framework based on political theology such as Hindutva or any other narrow particularism.

India is in transition. We cannot grasp the future if we remain trapped in the past. Beware the perils of Nostalgia.

(There is a veteran columnist and fellow, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi. Starting his career with The Times of India, he became editor of the Hindustan Times and the Indian Express. He was information advisor to the Prime Minister (1966-69) and a recipient of the Magsaysay Award in 1975. This article is based on his special address at the Triplcanie Cultural Academy, Chennai, on July 13, on the occasion of its diamond jubilee celebrations.)
Immense potential, many problems

According to the rules of freelance journalism, which apply most rigorously to newcomers, generally any piece of writing offered to a newspaper or journal cannot be sent elsewhere till its non-acceptance by the first newspaper has been confirmed. Today, perhaps in more than 70 per cent of the cases, a new writer is unlikely to get any reply to an unsolicited contribution. The writer cannot send the contribution elsewhere. A wasteful exercise that can break many a young writer’s resolve. It also stifles the contribution freelance journalists can make to the media. For the overall development of the media, senior editors must find ways of encouraging freelance journalists.

Pick up any random selection of newspapers and magazines, and you are likely to agree that freelance writers bring a great deal of welcome diversity to our media. Apart from the widely recognised work of senior writers, the contribution made by many struggling new writers is also significant.

On a personal note, I may add that starting at the age of 16, this year I completed four decades of working as a freelance journalist. Right from Day One, I can recall an endless series of problems. Despite that, I wouldn’t like to exchange this profession for any other, as the satisfaction I have derived from my work has more than compensated for all the worries. However, both as a result of my experiences and especially the difficulties experienced by younger writers, I feel strongly that a few not-too-difficult changes can lead to a significant improvement in the contribution of freelance journalism to the media.

It is often said and believed that struggling new writers get discouraged most often by rejection slips. My own experience tells me that instead they get most discouraged simply by the lack of any reply at all. According to the rules of freelance journalism (which apply most rigorously to newcomers), generally any piece of writing offered to a newspaper or journal cannot be sent elsewhere till its non-acceptance by the first newspaper has been confirmed. But the situation today is such that in perhaps more than 70 per cent of the cases, a new writer (and to a lesser extent even a relatively better-known writer) is unlikely to get any reply to an unsolicited contribution. It is this which breaks the struggling new writer. Due to the absence of a reply, the writer cannot send the contribution elsewhere too. So the entire effort is in effect wasted. It is this problem that is stifling the contribution freelance journalists can make to the media.

This was not the situation I experienced as a new writer 40 years ago, well before the age of emails. The key was to send a self addressed, stamped reply envelope with your article. As long as I followed the rule, despite being an absolute novice to the world of newspapers, I got replies to about 95 per cent of the articles I sent. With the advent of advanced

(The writer is a freelance journalist who has been associated with several social initiatives and movements. For more details about his work, log on to www.bharatdogra.in.)
technology, the situation should have improved, but actually the reverse has happened. Earlier, when most transactions were by post, the postal address was known but this is not the case with an email address. Problems have increased even more for freelance journalists in Hindi and other vernacular newspapers, as there are the additional issues of fonts (typefaces), etc while sending email contributions.

The other problem, of which I had more than my share, was the tendency of sections of prominently placed media houses to discourage certain points of view, no matter how rational or well-articulated. This can lead to sudden closures (or shall we say slamming) of doors even for those freelance journalists whose work has already been widely appreciated. So, while on the one hand there is the lack of fora for such writing, on the other hand there is the accompanying financial squeeze.

My response in such difficult situations has been two-fold. First, take up related work such as writing books and booklets, consultancy reports or organising workshops so that freelance journalism can continue without survival becoming entirely dependent on it. Second, prepare your family for the ups and downs, (likely to be more downs than ups), so that it becomes possible to survive crisis situations without getting shattered. Experience has taught me not to be flattered by any sudden ‘success’ or recognition, but rather to remain firmly rooted in the reality of ‘more downs than ups’. This way, I was content in being a ‘survivor’ rather than an ‘achiever’. I could adjust to spending a longer than expected innings in the profession with all its uncertainties.

On the plus side, the continuity I could maintain for four decades with more than 6700 articles and reports, has given me some satisfaction. What is even more satisfying is that I could meet so many good human beings as a part of my work and I could later on count on them as my friends. The fact that my work could be of some help to several such persons and organizations was the source of my greatest satisfaction.
Can we realise the true potential of radio?

For some years, the rapid spread of television and a sort of infatuation with the glamorous medium seems to have pushed radio towards the margins. Even so, radio has continued to play an important role. In recent days, with a better realisation of the many problems with television reporting, there is a growing feel about the need to pay more attention to the radio. In fact, quite a few eminent media persons have emphasised this.

It is true that All India Radio has an important presence with its vast reach; it reaches the common people even in remote areas. However, instead of just remaining smug about the potential and possibilities, we need to have a more questioning attitude about why such potential has not been adequately realised for meaningful and socially relevant change that is badly needed. Such an attitude will enable AIR to contribute more to social change and to also provide healthy entertainment.

Indeed, as far as programmes on social change are concerned, AIR should focus on what are the real causes of distress in society and what are the best means of reducing them. Clearly, this can be done in an impartial, comprehensive and truthful way only if the narrow preoccupation with promoting the government’s view point can be challenged. In fact, what the government and AIR need to realise is that any such preoccupation is actually counter-productive. If alternative perceptions of what needs to be done to reduce distress are not heard on radio, how does it help the government to correct its mistakes or improve its performance?

So what we really need is an honest approach to documenting and understanding the situations of distress, their causes and the most effective remedial action in the form of what has been done already and what can be done in future. Even if this involves challenging some basic assumptions of existing official thinking, it should be not only allowed but even encouraged as long as the criticism is constructive and is aimed at improving the existing situation.

It must be noted that not all programmes on social change need to be critical of government policies and programmes. There are many areas where the government’s basic thinking is OK, but it can benefit much from the creative inputs of independent voices, experts as well as common people. Radio can provide both in plenty through its inter-active programmes. The medium can be very useful for educational programmes and for conveying important health messages as well.

Good literature can be promoted, backed by interactive programmes. Information on new books, too. Listeners can be motivated to learn new Indian languages. The possibilities are immense.

Bharat Dogra

Vidura to continue in print

Dear Reader,

In the earlier two issues we had announced that with increasing printing costs, the Press Institute of India, a non-profit organisation, would be compelled to stop publication of the printed edition of Vidura with effect from the October-December 2013 issue and that the journal would be published only as an e-journal.

However, due to several emails and calls received, asking us to continue with the print edition, and also considering that the journal has appeared almost non-stop since 1963 when the Press Institute of India was founded, we have decided that we will, albeit with great difficulty, continue to print Vidura.

We thank you for your interest in the journal and for your support.

Director
The business of News in the age of the Internet

That the Internet has changed the way news is gathered, processed and delivered can no longer be denied. But a question that is increasingly posed is whether news as business is fundamentally threatened, as a result, or, as some argue, if print and traditional television as means to deliver news are in a state of terminal decline.

Across the world, with some exceptions like India, the steep fall in circulation figures and advertising revenues for print journalism has supported the latter surmise. The decision of Newsweek magazine to stop publishing its print edition after nearly 80 years of presence, and to go only digital on a subscription platform as of this year, seems to confirm this assessment. The words, after the closure, from Tina Brown, editor-in-chief of Newsweek and the online-only The Daily Beast, were also a form of corroboration. “When I returned to print with Newsweek, it did very quickly begin to feel to me an outmoded medium. While I still had a great romance for it, nonetheless I feel this is not the right medium any more to produce journalism,” Brown reportedly said. Clearly, the digital revolution is fundamentally transforming news as business. So much so that, while the old model is breaking down, there is no clear alternative in sight.

This is of immense significance because the news industry, warts and all, is seen as central to democracy. Is this, then, merely a time of transition and can we expect to soon have a new model in place? Or are we at a tipping point beyond which the way news is purveyed and accessed will be fundamentally altered? If so, what could be the nature of the news business of the future? Not enough has happened to discern a clear answer to these questions.

We now take for granted the transformation of the processes of collection, collation, storage and processing of information made possible by the digital revolution. The long-term consequences of that transformation is an issue on which much has been written based on fact, and a lot more said and written based on speculation and wishful thinking. But, underlying all that is the recognition that, in ways that are obvious and perceptible, the combination of increases in computing power, advances in communication and sheer human ingenuity have indeed brought about dramatic changes.

The challenge is of course not just to the news business. In the realms of book publishing, music and film, for example, the way in which content is produced and delivered to the reader, listener and viewer has changed and is changing dramatically. This poses challenges to traditional businesses engaged in the production, marketing and distribution of these sources of information and entertainment. The physical forms—ink-and-paper books, CDs, DVDs—in which these services (such as telling a story, playing music, purveying information and analysis, or making and showing a movie) are embodied to make them products that can be sold off shelves, are disappearing. As a result, the physical wholesale and retail outlets that stock and sell these services packaged as products are also disappearing as ‘download’ becomes the mode of delivery and/or consumption.

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In areas such as the book, music or film business, the challenge seems manageable. It can be met by reorganising the industry to deliver services in new forms and pricing them appropriately to retain a market. It also involves exploiting niche strengths that permit charging an adequate price or fee for old-style physical delivery in the face of competition from the Internet. The challenge is manageable because these are, in the first instance, products marketed at a price that is meant to cover costs and deliver a profit. What the digital revolution has done is to change the way in which outputs are produced and, more importantly, sold. The brick-and-mortar distribution business may be challenged, but the industry is not.

**The newspaper business**

The problem, on the other hand, in the business of collecting, collating and reporting news, and offering long-form news analysis, is that its costs are not covered by the prices charged—whether it be in print or in television. It is not just newspaper profits but newspaper production costs—newsprint, industrial (printing, shipping, delivery) and editorial costs—that are covered by revenues from advertising. Based on data from 17 representative newspaper companies, the Newspaper Association of America (NAA) estimated that in 2012, circulation revenues accounted for only 27 per cent of total newspaper media revenue, whereas print advertising delivered as much as 46 per cent, despite its long-term decline relative to advertising in competing media. The balance came from non-traditional sources such as digital marketing, promotional events and niche publishing.

Despite the dominance of advertising revenues, circulation matters, because advertising dollars or rupees are linked to the numbers and profile of the audience of any potential vehicle for advertising. This makes the news business quite unusual. Whereas newspapers and magazines claim to cater to their readers, the reader is not typically a consumer in the conventional sense since advertisers are the ones who pay to cover most costs and returns. The reader is partly the product delivered to the advertiser in the news business model evolved by capitalism in all relevant contexts.

This, as we know, influences content in more ways than one. If the focus is on profit, what matters is readership and circulation. In the resulting race for numbers, content can be dumbed down in the name of giving readers what they want. It can also be manipulated to suit corporate advertisers. In the process, what N. Ram (former editor-in-chief of *The Hindu*) identifies as the twin roles of providing credible information and adopting a critical, investigative and even adversarial stance vis-à-vis the state and corporate capital can be compromised. The more one or more newspapers in a given market adopt this stance, the greater is the pressure on others to follow. Some no doubt hold out, to their credit. But their number is small.

Further, since the evidence suggests that the responsiveness of circulation figures to price cuts — what economists term the elasticity of circulation with respect to price — is low in the news industry, there have been instances where large price reductions have been resorted to with the objective of boosting circulation. Such cuts have to be partially or wholly met by competitors if they are to stay in the business. The resulting price war can have two consequences. First, since only the larger players with deep pockets can survive such a war without much difficulty, there emerges a tendency towards consolidation, which is not good for content even if it is for profits. Second, with circulation revenues down, there is even greater dependence on advertising revenues. The adverse effect is cumulative.

**The case against regulation**

Thus, the business model in the news industry has two tendencies...
built into it: a threat to quality and the danger of consolidation, which has its feedback effects. This does have implications for the media’s role as the Fourth Estate, monitoring government and being an important part of the ‘checks-and-balances’ mechanism that sustains democracy. Corporate control implies that the press is not an independent agency representing the public interest. And when such control is in the hands of a monopoly or oligopoly, sectional influences are strong, and the reader’s choice (as consumer) with regard to content and stance is limited and almost left to chance. In other circumstances this would provide a case for state regulation and even ownership. But that is unacceptable with respect to the news business in a democracy, which needs a ‘free press’, however hobbled that may be by corporate influence.

To quote media practitioner and analyst Sashi Kumar (chairman, Media Development Foundation): “The temptation to fix the media through an external regulatory authority may well seem a fashionable urge, much in the same vein as caricaturing and debunking politics is the hobby-horse of a section of the middle-class. But it could mean a dangerous departure from the long nurtured and cherished principle of the freedom of the press as the sine qua non of our democracy. Inasmuch as the Fourth Estate constitutes the fourth pillar of democracy and is, therefore, by implication and extension, as relevant as the three other pillars (the Executive, the Judiciary and the Legislature) in terms of the ‘checks and balances’ aspect of the principle of the separation of powers envisaged by the Constitution, any administrative tampering with it can have serious consequences for the larger democratic project itself.”

If public intervention is unacceptable, the news business must both regulate itself and address its own challenges including that faced by the newspaper industry in the age of the Internet. That challenge now appears daunting. Across the world, although with some exceptions including India, newspapers and magazines have experienced a steep decline in circulation numbers and advertising revenues.

Back in 2010, an OECD study found that the annual growth of global newspaper circulation, which was slowing since 2004, reached zero in 2007 and then turned negative. Relative to 2004, circulation had by 2010 fallen by 34 per cent in the United States, 22 per cent in the United Kingdom, and 18 per cent in Japan. Matters have only worsened since. In the US, in particular, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulations, paid weekday newspaper circulation peaked at 63.1 million in 1973, fluctuated in the 60–63 million range till 1990, then fell sharply to 50.7 million in 2007 and further to 44.4 million in 2011.

The drop in print circulation was due to larger numbers accessing news from other sources. The first shift was to television. But the substantial difference in the way news is purveyed through that medium made this more of an opportunity than a challenge. If newspapers could restructure themselves to provide the background and analysis to the events and developments captured by television’s immediacy, those whose interest was triggered by television news would turn to print. This did indeed happen in many contexts. The problem arose when both news and analysis of varying authenticity began to be made available by multiple providers through the Internet. The importance of this alternative source of news and analysis depends of course on the spread, ease, speed and cost of access to the Internet. The digital promise lies in the fact that the world over,

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**inext takes vending machine route to widen circulation**

_inext_, the bilingual daily from Jagran Prakashan, has adopted a parallel distribution channel by installing newspaper vending machines to widen the circulation net and to engage readers at crucial touch-points. The three-fold initiative includes utilising sales promoters in customised jackets and customised bicycles for distribution of the paper, besides the vending machines. The specially designed jackets donned by the promoters can hold up to 50 copies of the newspaper. These trained promoters stimulate copy sales at high traffic points in the city such as market places, crossings and shopping malls. Similarly, branded cycles would be used to enhance the visibility of _inext_ and also to impart an exclusive connect with the masses. All this shall work as a support system for this parallel distribution channel of newspaper vending. The five-rack vending machines, installed across 10 cities across Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar and Uttarakhand, carry other newspapers and magazines from the Jagran Prakashan Group as well. The machines accept Re 1, Rs 2 and Rs 5 coins and notes of Rs 5, Rs 10, Rs 20 and Rs 50 denominations. The vending machines also offer space to bear multiple logos and visuals to give good branding opportunity.
the pace at which universal access to high-speed connectivity is being realised, though slower than what was expected.

Turn to the Internet

Given the newspaper industry’s revenue structure, the conclusion must be that the sharp decline in advertising revenues is destroying the current revenue model. This is a crisis of the news business under capitalism, and not a crisis of the news industry as a result of a technological meteor called the Internet. Yet, the drive now is to find a new form for the news business, geared towards private profit. If looked at in terms of the opportunities offered by audience behavior, the appropriate strategy would seem to be an increasing emphasis on online news, repackaged to attract a larger share of netizens. The newspaper industry, which had for long considered the Internet a poor, if not inappropriate, medium to carry its editorial content, and a mere add-on to direct traffic towards print, is being forced to rethink. But going online too does not seem to be a solution to the problem, for a number of reasons.

The first is that it does not resolve the cost–price discrepancy that characterises the industry, with unit price falling far short of unit cost. As of now, online editions and news websites for print news enterprises are not substitutes but add-ons. So, there are only additional costs to be incurred when going online and no saving. But if the move, as in the case of Newsweek, is away from print to the web, some saving is inevitable. In the case of print, for example, one estimate suggests that costs can be divided into core promotional, editorial and administrative costs, amounting to 40 per cent of the total, and production and distribution costs that account for 60 per cent. The shift to the web is expected to cut production and distribution costs by at least half.

However, this does not go far enough. As of now, costs are seen as absorbing close to 90 per cent of revenues in successful news ventures. But only about a quarter
of those revenues comes from sales; the remaining comes from non-circulation revenues, principally advertising. A small percentage, or virtually nothing, comes from online presence. So, even an online news venture that is substituting for declining print circulation and revenues must draw substantial advertising revenues. This is where the catch lies. Though advertising through the Internet has grown rapidly, news sites are not important vehicles for advertisers. Technology companies—such as Google, Yahoo, Facebook, Microsoft and AOL—dominate the digital advertising market, taking as much as two-thirds of the total. That leaves little for print providers seeking to increasingly move online.

The pay wall rush

Hence the drive to monetise the web, by creating metered or full-fledged pay walls. All of a sudden, online editions are being seen as potential sources of subscription revenue to support the industry. The practice of setting up pay walls for access to online editions, which was earlier restricted to a few newspapers such as The Wall Street Journal and Financial Times, and then adopted by some general interest papers such as The Times and The New York Times, is spreading fast. By late last year, around 250 out of 1500 newspapers in the US, accounting for a third of newspaper readership, had opted for a pay wall. The most recent adopters of the practice include The Washington Post, The Orange County Register, The Telegraph, The San Francisco Chronicle and The Sun. Most of these have set up metered pay walls offering free access to a specified number of articles or for a limited time period before the meter starts ticking. Pricing in most cases is aimed at transiting readers to a pay regime and is set at less than the price of the print edition per Day-and print subscribers are often given free or discounted access to transit to the web. Further, many newspapers allow free access to those visiting their online edition through links on search engines or the social media to boost their online traffic. All in all, however, the effort to charge for access to online content is gathering momentum. Once that practice becomes standard, the expectation seems to be that prices can be suitably adjusted.

The idea, clearly, is to make news pay for itself to the maximum extent possible. There is strong evidence to show that in print, those looking for quality reportage and news analysis are not too responsive to price. But online editions attract many occasional visitors who are discouraged by a pay model. Not surprisingly, a 2012 Paid Content Benchmarking Study by the Newspaper Association of America found that page views dropped at least 10 per cent in more than half the news sites opting for a pay wall. However, more than 20 per cent experienced increased page views. Moreover, 20 per cent of newspapers that had a paid-content strategy in place for a year or more reported increases in page views of 20 per cent or more.

So, setting up price walls may not in itself damage the transition in all cases, unless what is being offered is not worthy. But gains are slow. In 2011, The New York Times saw only 390 thousand of its 33 million unique US visitors opt for a digital subscription. And there are other challenges. With advertising through news delivery channels down, advertising revenues across media have fallen. Given the current revenue model of the industry, even allowing for savings in industrial costs as a result of a shift from print to digital, the price that needs to be charged to make the news business viable appears too high for market comfort.

Second, whatever the subscription price, any increase, often from nil, must be justified by an appealing, easily navigable and content-loaded website, which must, in terms of substance, coverage and/or appearance, attract readers. However, most newspapers did not choose to invest in the transition to online delivery when times were good. Being worthy requires money, and the best time to spend it is not when times are bad.

Third, there are institutions, including the Guardian, that are investing time, money and ingenuity to build a valuable web presence. In the process, they hope to attract the audience needed to kick-start advertising flow. The Guardian has emerged as the third most visited newspaper websites across the world, but has done so while staying with a free access model. Just a third of those readers are from Britain. A foreign readership is not confined to serious newspapers like the Guardian or The New York Times, which is the second largest newspaper website. It is also true of Britain’s Daily Mail with its tabloid style. The Mail, which is the largest newspaper website in terms of readership, has only a quarter of its readers from Britain.

Finally, the competition that news websites face from free access sources is immensely larger and more threatening than the losses the music or book publishing sectors suffer on account of piracy. Copyright in the news business is difficult to define and administer. So, news collators pull out material from their original websites and feed them for free to visitors to their websites, and use the traffic to try and earn revenues from means such as advertising or e-Commerce. With no investment in editorial costs and the ability to hone content to reach well-defined target groups, some of these may turn viable. There are
also innumerable netizens and their collectives who are willing and eager to use the Net to report news and analyse developments for free. Competition from sources like these is difficult to face for an industry that has its costs defined but not its revenue sources.

All this only establishes the commonly accepted principle that the old revenue model for the news business is broken. As of now, the attempt to price online news is a feeble attempt to fix it in obvious ways. But an industry grasping at every straw can find some cause for optimism. One source of such optimism is that a high proportion of those who get their news from the Web do so from the online editions of established newspapers. The result is an increase in the aggregate readership (print and online) of many established newspapers. The problem for the big players in the news business is not loss of readership, but that of a paying readership.

Online advertising

In their view the task now, therefore, is to attract advertising adequate to cover editorial costs and the costs of going digital, besides delivering a profit. So, the question to ask is whether advertising will soon move towards online news sites that invest heavily in editorial content. Unfortunately, the revenue from advertising aimed at the eyeballs of those going online for news does not accrue to the newspapers that are investing in checking the facts and recording the news with an adequate degree of accuracy and balance. Given the information overload on the Web, where an uncommitted reader goes is mediated by search engines like Google and Yahoo. These gateways are the first port of call. They, in turn, have adopted a clever practice of purveying news at no cost by providing a link to the story on a newspaper’s site, so as not to be seen as violating copyright. Therefore, though they are not the immediate providers of the news story, they serve as gateways to the multiple sources that provide a story on the event or issue involved.

Advertisers, clearly, would prefer to catch the audience here rather than after they have dispersed in various directions, depending on their preferences or partialities. Moreover, digital engines like search engines allow for an easy match between the target audience of an advertiser’s product and the tastes of those undertaking a particular search. This gives search engines an immense advantage in the advertising market, resulting in an overwhelming share of the advertising pie accruing to them as of now. A large share of Google’s annual revenue, of close to $40 billion, reportedly comes from the sale of ‘sponsored links’ that pop up alongside free search results. Since that advertising edifice is partly built on fact-checked and accurate news from the regular media, Google is being accused of closing an avenue through which newspapers and magazines can receive returns generated from services they deliver, and of capturing the revenues for itself. Google has partly accepted this by launching a scheme under which it sells advertisements for its newspaper ‘partners’ and keeps a share of the revenue.

The newspaper industry has reacted to this perceived loss of potential revenue by throwing the copyright book at the search industry. Pressured by the print media, governments in a number of leading European countries (Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Switzerland and elsewhere) are debating or planning legislation aimed at getting search engines and news aggregators like Google (the main target, for obvious reasons) to pay a fee even when they display excerpts from news articles along with a link to the relevant newspaper or magazine’s web site. Google has responded aggressively, claiming in its brief to the French government, for example, that this would (i) destroy its revenue model and threaten its very existence; (ii) damage the newspaper industry, since 30–40 per cent of traffic on news sites in France is mediated by Google search; and (iii) go against Google’s commitment to a free and open Internet (which it of course dominates). However, it is working to quell the protest. It has settled its disputes with publishers in France and Belgium for what many say is a small price. While refusing to pay a license fee for the headlines and extracts it uses to contextualise its links to newspaper stories, it agreed to pay $80 million dollars into a fund that would be used to strengthen the presence of the French media on the Internet. In Belgium, Google has promised to advertise in the newspapers involved as well as to market advertisement space for them for a share of the revenue. Small change for retaining control over a big empire.

In sum, the traditional news business is having to share its meagre advertising revenue with a technology company called Google. The power of the latter because of its presence on the Web is immense—a fact partly reflected in the evidence that while revenues of the total newspaper industry in the US in 2012 was $38.6 billion, Google’s was as much as $50.2 billion. Not all Internet companies are missing a revenue model. As Robert McChesney notes, 13 of the 30 largest publicly traded corporations in the US are Internet-related companies.

Some probable outcomes

The challenge is doubly daunting for those who have
decided that providing an online edition for free is not a viable proposition. Charging for content requires ensuring that it is unique. If, for example, news aggregators on the web can, without being prosecuted for copyright violation, access and publish not just links to but actual content from the originating website, there is no guarantee that many would stay with the online edition of a newspaper. They would instead turn to aggregators providing versions for free. Newspapers would lose not just their subscriptions but their advertising as well. Thus, imposing copyright law is crucial for any strategy that seeks to monetise the web.

It is not enough that content is unique. It also needs to be of high quality. So, pursuing such a strategy requires substantial investment in editorial costs and in exploiting the benefits of the new media for purveying news and analysis. Unfortunately, the behaviour of most print media businesses has been counter-cyclical: ignoring the Internet when times are good and rushing to it when times are bad. With revenues down and margins thin, this is not the best time. This has triggered cost reduction efforts, including in editorial costs. As a result of staff reduction, the number of full-time professional employees in the newspaper industry has fallen to less than 40,000, which is the lowest reached since the middle of the 1970s. According to a report on the State of the News Media 2013 of the Project for Excellence in Journalism at the Pew Research Centre, the news industry is “undermanned and underprepared to uncover stories, dig deep into emerging ones or to question information put into its hands.”

As the Pew report puts it, the public is taking notice. “Nearly a third of US adults, 31 per cent, have stopped turning to a news outlet because it no longer provided them with the news they were accustomed to getting. With reporting resources cut to the bone and fewer specialised beats, journalists’ level of expertise in any one area and the ability to go deep into a story are compromised. Indeed, when people who had heard something about the financial struggles were asked which effect they noticed more, stories that were less complete or fewer stories over all, 48 per cent named less complete stories while 31 per cent mostly noticed fewer stories.”

All said, as of now, even if newspapers find a place on the Web behind pay walls, they are likely to survive only by shrinking the scale of their operations. If that remains so, the future of the industry is indeed bleak. With little spent on covering the news, checking the facts and analysing them, newspaper web sites can hardly claim or ensure any significant superiority over the many communities that pool reportage on issues of common interest. So one needs to be optimistic to believe that at least some of the print news sources will successfully go digital, implementing a revenue model that combines priced access and advertising. This is an outcome that does not look likely today, except for specialist newspapers and magazines like the Financial Times, the Wall Street Journal and The Economist.

A second possible outcome involves shrinking the news business and making it dependent on small and large philanthropy. Some believe that it is possible to think of news as a not-for-profit activity supported by charitable foundations which see news reporting as an element of ‘a good society’. But whether this will happen depends on how much money the activity would need to sustain itself, without compromising quality. A third trend likely to characterise smaller, local newspapers is to look for and find synergies in combining news online with other businesses (such as eCommerce and gaming) to deliver a quantum jump in price-based and advertisement-driven revenue.

Social media

Finally, there is the option of the news business turning free and anarchic. There is much talk today of how proliferation of the social media is creating a Fifth Estate that will displace the Fourth Estate. The Fifth Estate is indeed delivering—through tweets, Facebook posts, blogs and the like—a large volume of information and opinion on newsworthy events and other subjects. It has also been seen, as in the case of the ‘Arab Spring’ and in a number of societies with a controlled media, as a force to record injustice, to organise dissent and protest, and to contribute to a democratic transition.

This role on occasion cannot be denied. But structurally, the social media are not endowed with the democratic potential attributed to it. Being a space in which the distinction between consumers and providers of news is blurred, and where there is no coordinating agency checking facts, privileging facts over opinion and filtering out prejudice, the social media can go awry when taking on a journalistic role. Way back in 2008, Google’s chief executive Eric Schmidt had famously declared that the Internet was fast becoming a ‘cesspool’ in which false information thrives, making quality content from reputed media companies crucial. The ‘coverage’ of the bomb explosions at the finish-line of the Boston marathon is the most recent instance when this became clear. Moreover, there is no single, common community on the Net. The audience for any information shared or set of views expressed on the social media is self-
selecting. This could create what have been described as virtual echo chambers, in which shared prejudices influence not only the information purveyed but also the conclusions arrived at. The Fourth Estate, as we knew it till now, is by no means an unsullied pillar of democracy. But the social media with no checks-and-balances cannot be a good substitute.

What then can we expect? The shift to online news access will no doubt continue. This will perhaps accompany a split between news sources (not just newspapers) that are global and those that are local. There is also likely to be a split between those online news ventures that depend on a combination of pay walls and advertising, and those in which news provision is a free add-on to a host of other services. Expect the former to be the true news sites as compared to the more gossipy or rumour-based social media equivalent. Finally, there could also be a closer alliance between technology ventures or Internet companies and news sources in the provision of news, with a pricing and advertising revenue-sharing agreement that could make the news business viable.

If successful, this would involve a redistribution of revenues between the news and Internet businesses. In the process, the pattern of ownership and control is bound to change. Expect, therefore, a major restructuring of the news business. How that will influence content, in terms of combination of fact and opinion, credible information and sensationalism, and progressive versus regressive viewpoints, is a matter for speculation.

How relevant is all this to India? At the moment it does not seem to matter, with print newspaper circulation and advertising still high and even rising. But the model here too is the one that capitalism has given to the Fourth Estate. Still low but rising incomes, enhanced literacy and education, a messy democracy and the as yet limited spread of the Internet have ensured that the Indian print media are still short of the peak on an inverted U-shaped circulation curve. That does seem to breed complacency. The evidence seems to be that, with some honourable exceptions, the Indian print media is slipping relative to the past. We have even entered a phase when instances of advertorials and paid news are routine. This could mean that in the face of the technological challenge from the Internet, the print news business per se will not hold. The crisis is imminent but yet to arrive. So the questions here are different. Will the industry discipline itself and invest adequately in an online presence before the downturn comes? And will it find a business model that will work? Frankly, your answers are as good as mine.

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Times Crest stops publication

BCCL India’s largest publishing company has shut down its Saturday special, Times Crest. July 20 was the last edition of the paper. The broadsheet that was launched in 2009, tried hard to create a niche for itself. With long format, insightful, analytical stories, the paper had created a loyal audience base. With increasing media fragmentation and saturation in urban markets, the going has got tough for English dailies when it comes to increasing circulation and readership.

As compared to the Indian Readership Survey (IRS) 2012 Q3 data, where seven of the top 10 English dailies saw growth in Average Issue Readership (AIR), only five of the top 10 English dailies saw growth in AIR in IRS Q4 data realised in April this year. Times of India, BCCL’s flagship daily, which had seen growth in IRS Q3, witnessed decline in IRS Q4. With metros and larger cities increasingly witnessing intense competition, marketers, advertisers and publishers are either trying to consolidate their presence in the regional markets or create a window for themselves. The process of expansion and consolidation has been happening since the last couple of years and states such as Maharashtra, Kerala, West Bengal, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have seen several major players enter the market.

Revenues at Dainik Bhaskar, India’s second largest Hindi language paper, grew at around 10 per cent in the year ending March 2013, whereas HT Media, a company that competes directly with BCCL in many markets, delivered a topline growth of around two per cent, underlining where future growth for newspapers will come from. BCCL itself has been very aggressive on regional space with launches across the country – from Bengal to expansion in Maharashtra.
The transition from conventional to digital

The 1980s was the decade of Computers, the 1990s the decade of the Internet. The present one is the decade of Convergence – the integration of high-definition digital communication technologies. The media economy has now turned mature with the help of twin forces – technology and globalisation and this has brought a tectonic shift in media industries across the globe. The cost effective invention and innovation taking place in communication technologies is already creating new digital markets and is accelerating the fluid movements of media resources.

The convergence between online or Internet services and television has often been represented by the term Web-Television or broadcasting-over-the-web. However, this does not represent the complete picture. Media convergence can be defined as the dynamic approach or integration of different communication and information-based market applications. The main aspect of convergence is that it brings out integrated multimedia products and services in such a way that the satisfaction of additional and multiple consumer preferences are met. The computer industry is tending to augment its traditional offering with multimedia components and services. Besides the transformation of the end user, the device industry, telecommunication carriers and media companies are uniting within an emerging market segment; that is, intelligent digital broadcasting to combine entertainment, information and social networking and much more.

Today, convergence is defined as a process through which different types of media content are evolving into a single media platform through the Internet. The conversion of analog signals to digital signals is one of the major steps in making media convergence possible. The key factors in the process are the continued advancement and decreasing cost of digital communication technology, network and infrastructure, and media proliferation and media usage fragmentation in individual households.

No matter whether you think in terms of technologies, information, or people, convergence is tearing down barriers as it runs through society, industry and institutions. For some convergence proponents, the end product will be a massive interconnection of digital technologies. The connection can be wired or wireless, voice or data, terrestrial or space, etc, but the ultimate goal is to enable all technologies, from the television set in the drawing room at home to the data server located wherever, to connect with speed, accuracy and purpose.

Convergence is known as a transformation of ‘atoms into bits’, digitisation of all media content whether it is text, sound, video or graphics. It is a creative transformation of words, images and sounds into digital information which can be quickly and easily broadcast over multiple delivery platforms and is thus expanding the potential relationships between various media formats and products. It enables media content to flow...
across borders, no matter physical, social, cultural or technological. Convergence today means a whole world in itself where people are not denied access to any ideas or visions. It is a process through which people are interconnected. The essence of convergence is the freedom to interact with people not only electronically, but also at a personal level.

Media technologies are the key players in the development of any country. All media services require a strong and comprehensive technology support. The analog technology is disappearing and images and sounds are converging into digital. But the converged technology needs to be transparent to the people who consume them. For this, an overarching cross-media, cross-modal technology approach is needed to facilitate the integration of all the new media technologies, such as the Direct-to-Home, High Definition, Internet Protocol Television, WiMax, and many more.

The tools of human interaction – image, video, sound and text – can now be digitally transmitted, stored, combined and manipulated in various ways thanks to convergence. A classic example is Web 2.0, an innovation that allows us to find and connect with people across boundaries, helps us to become aware of what others are doing, provides us ample freedom and technology support to rapidly distribute ideas, experiences and knowledge and also an opportunity to tap into the knowledge of our informal network. The concepts of blogging, forums, wikis, social networks, bookmarking, folksonomy, tagging, syndication, instant messaging, rich Internet applications, open source collaborative software all are collaborating and sharing user-generated content, which is shifting, changing and constantly reconstructing only because of Web 2.0.

Changing dynamics

The convergence of media contents is also a crucial issue. Content convergence generally means to combine various media contents and services into segment specific packages or channels. It is always consumer oriented and its central task is to organise a program bundle. In doing so, content convergence moves within the recipient as well as the content procurement and media markets. During the process of content convergence, the targeted contents and functions are systematically organized, compiled and marketed. The whole process includes content management, content design, collection, development and purchase of contents, technical functionality, switching ability and the integration of product components. The new dynamics of convergence of media contents are providing greater freedom for audience and individuals, to produce, consume and engage with a wide range of new texts, audio and video.

The convergence of media industries links up manufacturing and selling of media products and services, creation, display, distribution, and storage of media contents comprising text, visuals and sound. The media industry includes computer, television, and telephone but cannot be limited to these only. Cinema and television programme production, data storage, broadcasting technology, publishing, photography, consumer electronics, appliance manufacturing, are also part of it.

The new market for media products is characterised by the value driven customers and the adoption of key technologies – mobility, cloud computing, business intelligence and social media. This transformed media industry is creating new wave of wealth and is attracting the investors to make huge investments in communication technologies. The new digital communication around the Internet and wireless technologies have already set in motion a third wave of capitalism transforming the global media market places accessible to everyone. The business model for media is taking a new format – from ‘subscription’ to ‘freemium’, a business model that combines free services with paid-for-premium services. For media institutions, convergence is a ‘runaway world’ where cultures, economies and politics appear to merge across geographical boundaries.

Many of today’s wireless limitations are going away because of the advances taking place in bandwidth, protocols and hardware, but at the same time, there are many challenges to address. Convergence of ministries, regulators, etc in the telecom spectrum, in IT and broadcasting is now a policy issue and there are difficulties catching up with technological innovation and convergence at policy level. It is also not easy to maintain a balance between creating new employment opportunities in digital media markets, as the whole process of switching from analog to digital environment requires huge investment, difficult for developing countries. The rise of a new techno-economic paradigm is invariably disruptive, as it challenges established media business models, industry structures, organisational frameworks and infrastructural settings. The new architecture of digital media has some conflict with the established media structures regarding the social and cultural adaptation of technological changes.

A regulatory framework suitable to both consumer and broadcaster is required for the current transition from analog to digital migration. Developing a new licensing framework from the current to a new one is also not easy. The rise of user-created content, and the shift in the
nature of audiences towards a more participatory media culture, is associated with greater user control over their individual media environment. This is related to a greater diversity of choices of media contents and platforms. Thus, creating content for converged media platforms requires new skills and understanding.

If old consumers were passive, new consumers are active. If old consumers were predictable and stayed, new consumers are migratory, showing a declining loyalty to digital media networks. If old consumers were isolated individuals, new consumers are socially connected. If the work of media consumers was once silent and invisible, new consumers are now noisy and public. The changing dynamics of media consumers and markets due to convergence requires a new marketing strategy encouraging efficiency and fair competition and increased reliance on market forces.

Is there real press freedom?

In India, the world’s biggest democracy, the authorities insist on censoring the Web and imposing more and more taboos, while violence against journalists goes unpunished. The regions of Kashmir and Chhattisgarh have thus become increasingly isolated, according to the World Press Freedom Index 2013 by Reporters without Borders for Freedom of Information, a Paris-based organisation. In Asia, India ranks 140, its lowest since 2002, because violence against journalists happens with impunity and Internet censorship continues to grow.

The second Freedom on the Net Report by the Washington-based Freedom Institute has expressed concern over the decreasing freedom of expression on the Internet in India. The institute, which puts India in the company of countries such as China, Egypt and Iran which saw a deterioration of freedom of expression on the Internet since its 2009 report, highlighted the tightening of surveillance and prosecution of online posts. India’s freedom index declined from 34 in 2009 to 36 in 2011, reflecting the tightening controls.

A democratically-elected government and organisations and institutions under it should be ready to face criticism. But what do we see in reality? Many of our readers may recall the incident in Mumbai when the editor of an evening newspaper was incarcerated for writing something negative against the Maharashtra State Legislative Assembly; he had refused to apologise for the write-up. A similar episode took place in Assam when the editor and reporter of an Assamese daily (now closed) were subjected to similar treatment. Readers may recall the treatment meted out to the Tehelka team when it made revealed the defence contracts scams. Scores of cases under various regulations were filed against it to break its back but the gutsy news organisation survived with its head held high. So, there are indirect ways to try and threaten and muzzle anyone defying the ‘comfort zone’ of the authorities.

There is of course the aspect of media showing restraint; the other is can we justify gagging the media? The point is that people have a right to know what is happening in cases relating to public affairs. Then there is the matter of following an inconsistent policy. The government has opened up the airspace for community radio and private FM radio channels. Yet, after more than a decade’s existence, community radio stations are not allowed to broadcast news and current affairs programmes. Private television news channels had the privilege from Day One.

It is interesting to see what purposes such restrictions/curbs on the media serve in today’s age of social media when information is available on the Internet or on your mobile phone in a jiffy. Then of course you can publish what you like on your blog. Freedom of expression... it’s all so confusing really, isn’t it?

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High time for an independent regulator

There are more than 820 satellite television channels and about 250 private FM radio channels in the country, beaming content 24x7 to about 150 million Indian homes. However, it has to be said that there is no comprehensive and deterrent regime of self-regulation put in place by the broadcasting fraternity nor is there any semblance of ‘legal regulation’ by the Ministry of I&B in its capacity as content regulator under extant legal provisions. The establishment of an independent authority to regulate various aspects of broadcast media is still an elusive dream. The unfortunate result of this regulatory vacuum had been that the millions of Indian audience are rendered voiceless without any basic/credible grievance redress mechanism against the content-related violations by the channels, which is adversely affecting their basic rights as consumers of broadcast content.

The government had made some attempts earlier such as with the Broadcast Bill of 1997, the Communications Convergence Bill 2000, the Broadcasting Services Regulation Bill 2006, the Broadcasting Services Regulation Bill 2007 (with accompanying self-regulation guidelines for the broadcasting sector in the 2007 and 2008 versions), but nothing materialised for various reasons. Since 2008, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting has not taken any initiative to finalise the draft broadcast bill.

A perusal of the Annual Report (2011-12) and the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of I&B for the period 2011-17 reveals that it has completely shelved the efforts towards enactment of the much-needed statute to regulate broadcast media. There is no mention therein of any ongoing efforts/progress made by the ministry in enacting the broadcast legislation. While the ministry acknowledged the absence of a regulator as one of the prime weaknesses of the broadcast sector and the growing unhealthy competition among TV channels and the limitations of ‘self-regulation’, its unbothered and broadcaster-appeasing stance is clear when it concludes (pages 62 & 63 of Strategic Plan 2011-17): “…there has been stiff opposition from the broadcasters and others, on the issue of regulation of content … One of the major apprehensions of the broadcasters is that such a regulator will not be allowed to function independently and the Government was likely to interfere with the content in one way or the other. The view of the broadcasters is that the issues relating to content should be left to self-regulation…and no purpose would be served by introducing any other measures to regulate content… In view of this, the strategy for the Ministry in the context of self-regulation is to put in place a self-regulating mechanism which is acceptable to all stakeholders.”
Thus, it is clear that the government is not for establishing an independent regulatory authority for broadcast media just because (i) there is opposition from the broadcasters due to their 'perceived apprehensions' about the independent functioning of proposed authority and (ii) some self-regulatory mechanism is in place. Regarding arriving at a suitable structure for proposed regulatory authority, there is no dearth of models at the international level. Due to their vested interests, the broadcasters are putting a blanket opposition to any move for enacting broadcast legislation and the government is tacitly playing along in complete defiance to the judgement of Supreme Court and in utter disregard for viewers' interest. While the court in a case relating to the use of airwaves held “…monopoly of broadcasting media, whether by government or by an individual, body or organisation is unacceptable…and the use of airwaves has to be regulated by a public authority,” the government prefers to do the exact opposite, that is, retain control and facilitate the monopoly of private broadcast entities over air waves in the name of ‘self-regulation’.

‘Self-regulation’, especially by the competitive and TRP-driven broadcast media is an oxymoron. While it is desirable, it is not workable. The same is proved beyond doubt in view of the plethora of violations by unscrupulous broadcasters and the inefficacious role of ‘self-regulatory’ bodies. Also, self-regulation is not an end in itself. It may run parallel to the statutory mechanism or at best can be part of overall legal architecture governing broadcast regulation. Nowhere in the world is content regulation left to the sweet discretion of broadcast entities; it is regulated by independent authorities. In this context, it is pertinent to examine the actual working and efficacy of current regimes of regulations and the self-regulation of the broadcast content in India.

A bureaucratic farce

In the absence of an independent authority, under extant legal provisions (Uplinking & Downlinking Guidelines, 2011, Cable Network Regulation Act & Rules), content regulation is being exercised by the government, that is, by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, the most ill-suited entity to undertake such complex and delicate task. Pending the constitution of a dedicated authority, the Government of India should have put in place, a systematic and time-bound complaint redress process involving all stakeholders for looking into the plethora of viewers’ grievances against broadcast content and given wide publicity about the same among the audience. But, the government has failed to do so as on date, as substantiated below:

1. The Ministry of I&B constituted a composite Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) to look into complaints against all private television and FM radio channels in 2005 for violation of programme and advertisement codes. However, it had not given any publicity about the same through print or electronic media so that the public could know about it. As on date, there is absolutely no information available on the website of the Ministry of I&B for the benefit and guidance of viewers in case they want to make any complaint against content-related violations by the TV.
2. Except for stipulating the composition, the Ministry of I&B’s order dated 25-4-2005 constituting the IMC doesn’t prescribe any well-defined terms of reference or rules of procedure for systematic functioning of the committee; There is no dedicated secretarial set up to aid and assist IMC in processing the complaints.
3. Being a pure bureaucratic apparatus headed by
the additional secretary, Ministry of I&B, and joint secretaries from various ministries as members (lone exception being a member from ASCI), the IMC is meeting rarely to deliberate on the complaints received against the satellite TV & FM radio channels. In 2012, the committee met only three times. Further, the broad-basing of membership of IMC has not been effected till date by the ministry by including representatives from other stakeholders such as broadcasters, civil society, representatives from relevant specialised statutory bodies such as the National Commission for Women, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, the Press Council of India, etc, which will add to the representative nature of the committee, apart from infusing focus and expertise in dealing with myriad content-related issues.

4. In 2005 and 2008, the Ministry of I&B had issued orders to all state governments for the constitution of state-level and district-level committees to monitor the content of private TV channels and forward recommendations to the Ministry of I&B for taking action against erring channels. Their functioning in almost all states is by and large confined to paper as hardly anyone knows about their existence. Neither the Ministry of I&B nor the state governments has given any publicity in the print and electronic media regarding the same for the benefit of audience.

5. The Government of India set up the Electronic Media Monitoring Centre in 2008 to monitor violations of programme and advertising codes by satellite TV and FM radio channels. While the Ministry of I&B is receiving reports on regular basis from EMMC regarding hundreds of violations by the satellite TV and FM radio channels, the inter-ministerial committee is not processing them seriously and the ministry is hardly taking any action against the erring channels.

6. Both the local cable networks and satellite channels are bound by the same programme and advertisement codes prescribed under the Cable Network Rules, 1994. While authorised officers (sub-divisional magistrate/district magistrate/ commissioner of police) under Cable Networks Act are responsible for taking action against local cable networks for any violations, the Ministry of I&B is empowered to take action against erring satellite channels under the Uplinking & Downlinking Guidelines (last amended in 2011). The penalty prescribed for first violation by any channel is ‘suspension of the transmission up to a period of 30 days’. For a second violation, the quantum of penalty increases further to up to 90 days and so on. However, in practice, the ministry is dealing with the violations as follows: 1. issuing advisory 2. issuing warning 3. requiring channel to scroll an apology for a specified number of days 4. suspension of broadcast for specified time period. Curiously, the first three modes of ‘penalties’ have no legal basis at all and it is not understood as to on what basis the ministry is awarding such informal ‘punishments’ to the TV channels. While the advisories and warnings are hardly taken note of by the channels, orders for suspension of broadcast or scrolling apology are rare. Thus, the ministry acts like a virtual ‘safety valve’ and erring channels are able to get away with nominal ‘punishments’ and continue to flout the norms without any fear for law.

Time and again, in India, it is proved that the so-called ‘self-regulation’ by electronic media is a cruel joke as channels repeatedly flout basic norms of broadcast ethics and also routinely violate the extant legal provisions relating to broadcast content. Hence, the moot question now is not whether self-regulation is desirable, but what if self-regulation fails? Both the broadcasting fraternity as well as government pretend to ignore this question.

The News Broadcasters Association representing 20 news and current affairs broadcasters comprising 45 news and current affairs TV channels had initiated a self-regulation effort by evolving a ‘Code of Ethics and Broadcasting Standards’ and a complaint redress mechanism in the form of the News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA) which started functioning from 2-10-2008. The Indian Broadcasting Foundation (IBF), representing about 250 non-news, non-current affairs entertainment TV Channels, had initiated a self-regulation effort by evolving ‘Self-Regulatory Guidelines for non-news & current affairs programmes’ and a complaint redressal mechanism in the form of Broadcast Content Complaints Council (BCCC) which started functioning from 1-7-2011.
However, the self-regulation efforts initiated so far by NBA and IBF, though commendable, are not comprehensive and have limitations. The regime put in place by them is hardly ‘viewer-centric’ so as to inspire any public confidence in self-regulation, much less to have a deterrent effect on the erring channels, as elaborated below:

1. While a section of the broadcasting fraternity felt the responsibility to come under some voluntary self-regulation in the form of membership in NBA/IBF, the majority of the broadcasters are not genuinely interested in being part of a self-regulation regime. Not even 300 out of about 850 broadcasters are part of NBA or IBF.

2. IBF & NBA could not ensure that member channels allocate at least a few seconds of air time to explain to the viewers the new self-regulatory procedure. The occasional scrolls regarding the complaint being redressed by the member channels merely state that the audience can complain to BCCC/ NBSA and ask viewers to visit the websites for further details. The scrolls in many regional channels are not in the respective Indian language and given only in English.

3. The charter of ‘penalties’ evolved by IBF/ NBA on erring channels is hardly a deterrent to have any salutary effect. For example, IBF’s complaint adjudicating body, BCCC, has ‘powers’ only to ‘modify’, ‘withdraw’ or ‘shift the timing’ of the programmes. There is no provision for any penalties at all (monetary or non-monetary) even if a channel is found to have violated the self-regulatory code. Even when a member channel doesn’t comply with the directions of BCCC, the token ‘actions’ prescribed are ‘issuance of warning’, ‘order for apology’, ‘not to consider the outstanding amounts of the channel for processing by IBF’, etc.

4. There are no incentives accorded by the government for the broadcasters coming under the voluntary self-regulation regime. No legal recognition is given for the self-regulatory codes evolved by IBF/ NBA. No appellate mechanism is presently available for complainants/ broadcasters against the decisions of BCCC and NBSA in case of inaction or arbitrary decisions.

MediaWatch-India had filed several complaints with the members of IBF/ NBA; appeals to BCCC/NBSA (Tier-II) were not even heard. Not even in a single case, the time limit to acknowledge/respond to the complaints as per the code was adhered to by the broadcasters/ BCCC/ NBSA. It is indeed sad to note that for many complaints and vital suggestions, even to this date, there is no acknowledgement of receipt from broadcasters/ NBSA/ BCCC, let alone communication of a decision. Also, for the complaints made with specific grounds citing relevant provisions of the self-regulatory codes, no reasoned orders are being issued by BCCC. Only one-sentence judgements are communicated to the complainants, such as “Your complaint is not upheld by BCCC.”

The government should wake up from slumber and re-initiate efforts to enact the much-needed broadcast legislation in a way that is acceptable to all stakeholders. It is only hoped that an independent regulatory authority for broadcast media becomes a reality soon, which will mark a victory for millions of Indians.

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**Wijeya Newspapers, TELiBrahma in strategic pact**

Mobile advertising solutions company TELiBrahma has announced its partnership with Sri Lanka based Wijeya Newspapers Group to bring interactive print content live on readers’ mobiles/ tabs. The partnership is to augment editorial and advertising content of TELiBrahma and Wijeya Newspapers Group across Ada, a Sinhalese paper, and Daily Mirror, an English paper. Both publications from the Wijeya Newspapers Group will be powered by the PointART mobile app of TELiBrahma. By integrating augmented reality, Ada and Daily Mirror will be able to bring interactivity to static print pages with 3D models, videos, slideshows, social media connect, links to download content and emphasize the importance of connecting print publications with digital engagements through mobile.
Ethical issues in mass communication

Ethics by definition is a set of moral principles applicable to the conduct and practice of a profession. Media performance is certainly a profession of vital importance in the modern world and therefore the issues connected with it deserve special attention. Communication theorists and practitioners remind us about this frequently. Several violations of media ethics are taking place now. It is only good and proper to devote some attention to the violations. There are some who argue that politicians and administrators are violating norms so much that the Supreme Court is making strictures against them and, therefore, violations by the media are nothing unusual. This is a false argument if we as theoreticians and practitioners want to do an ideal job and be above board.

First, let us enlist a few characteristics of mass communication, without forgetting the essential differences between communication and mass communication, and remembering that for all forms of communication, ethics is of the utmost importance.

- There is large-scale production of messages by groups of trained professionals under the management of fairly large organisations.
- Messages that are relevant both to the immediate surroundings and to the distant future are reached to huge audiences running into millions. Almost all the messages coming through any medium are transient, rapid and evanescent unless purposely recorded; however, all messages are relevant for the current or future generations.
- The message producers and receivers are heterogeneous and anonymous to one another.
- Messages are usually meant for anonymous audiences, although they are tailored sometimes to specific groups.
- All messages are not received by all media users. Some media users either intentionally or by force of circumstances skip or miss certain messages while concentrating on specific messages of special interest to them.
- Messages flow in a unidirectional manner, except in the case of social media which are mostly inter-personal, although capable of growing into mass communication through multiplication of interpersonal communication on a mass scale.
- Most messages are imbalanced and unequal unless the message producer takes extra care in dealing with all aspects of an issue comprehensively. Frequently, deadline pressures compel the media workers to be less comprehensive. Journalism has been described by some as “history in a hurry”.
- Most messages are presented in an impersonal and objective manner, but sometimes issues are presented in a biased and subjective style deliberately favouring an institution, group or individual.
- Contents are organised in a standardised and simple style to reach the maximum number of receivers.

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Sometimes advertisements/commercials are presented in the guise of news for a consideration. Such news is called ‘paid news’. Such manipulation is still prevalent in India, according to recent reports.

Media owners sell newspaper space and air-time for ads and commercials, even omitting the news of real value to many sections of the readers.

Messages are likely to be coloured and controlled by the bias and special interests of media owners and media professionals.

Entertainment is given so much importance, especially in the electronic media, that the media is heavily criticised by substantial sections of media users. Vital national issues affecting large sections of people are ignored, lightly treated, or even discarded by particular media units, often leading to the criticism that the media are more interested in money-making than in nation-building. Sometimes messages are designed to attract the maximum number of readers, listeners or viewers.

Accuracy and attribution are sacrificed for expediency and meeting the deadline.

Discerning media scholars and users ask many relevant questions:

Who communicates what by which channel to whom, how and for what purpose and with what consequence and effect? That was Harvard Professor Harold Lasswell 65 years ago.

Subsequent mass communication research scholars have tried to analyse communications on the basis of these vital questions. Charles Wright, Denis McQuail and George Gerbner raised ethical questions about the role of the media in society and the good and bad aspects of the cultural influence of media products such as newspapers, magazines, radio.
and TV programmes, films and later, even the practitioners of social media which qualify as mass communication devices when they are used by millions of individuals interpersonally.

Mass communication can be dysfunctional too, according to Wright: Criminals and criminal acts get status thanks to frequent discussion in the mass media. Status Conferral, Ethicisation and Narcotisation are some dysfunctions of the mass media. Ethicisation is the new and sometimes unwanted advisory role taken up by the media. There was a time when parents, elders, teachers and religious leaders and some opinion leaders used to advise society on a number of issues, particularly issues connected with social behaviour, etiquette, adolescence, sex within and without marriage, and adult life. But nowadays, the mass media have taken up that advisory role through their columns and programmes, perhaps because of the circulation and reach of the media when such advice becomes popular. (Some people argue that the media take up the new role with the intention of raising their circulation and reach.)

We are now living in a changed world where no democratic society can function without a free and independent press, although some media owners who work in close collaboration with business empires manipulate the media for economic and political advantages, power and pelf. Moreover, the media has grown into big business empires or they have been absorbed by conglomerate business groups. Aberrations are inevitable in a mass society and they are to be avoided to the extent possible through deliberate action by professionals and owners sticking to certain ethical principles. The big questions facing us are: What is the media for? What is journalism’s role in society? What is the media doing to improve people’s station in life? Do they have any responsibility in advocating measures that safeguard the living and working environment of citizens?

May I draw the reader’s attention to two documents that uphold certain fundamental ethical principles regarding the profession and practice of journalism in a modern society: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights passed unanimously by the United Nations in December, 1948 and the more recent Declaration of the Rights and Responsibilities of Journalists in a Democratic Society, known otherwise as the Salzburg Declaration of March 2002. It is important that all media function with set rules and regulations so that they can control their own action and function responsibly for the society in which they function, and not simply amass or promote the means to augment private wealth at the cost of probity, straightforwardness, and dedication to public service. The goal of the media should be to serve society. Control within the media, and working for the benefit of society through self-imposed restrictions by the media professionals themselves is always better than control exercised from outside by a government ministry or its bureaucrats.

Cybernetics and Mathematical Model of Communication and Control were propounded by Shannon and Weaver and it is relevant in today’s media world because powerful sections of the elite control the media, most of which have huge businesses and they utilize the media for favouring or disfavouring certain public institutions, and sometimes forget that most of the media in the world have been started with high and noble goals of service to people, and in the public interest. But the bulk of communication through print and audiovisual channels and on the Internet, and devices accessible to the public is a “social affair”, according to Colin Cherry and others. It is not simply mathematical or technical. Society is all important and the literary giants and social reformers of the last two centuries have dealt with important aspects of the imbalance and drawbacks in society.

Political thinkers and social reformers of the late 19th and 20th Centuries are of great importance in introducing basic changes nationally and internationally, although some reactionary thinkers and narrow-minded religious leaders were active in earlier centuries; some are still active in the 21st century.

Very real changes have occurred in certain sections of individual nations, but overall, the sociological fabric of several countries such as India has not changed even today. Critics point out that the Indian media have not shown ethical responsibilities towards the large majority of the people and that they ignore the fundamental changes that are yet to be made: essential land reforms, using science and technology to improve the water supply (by replacing the pipes laid in the British period, for example), drainage and waste disposal including the elimination of the bhangi system of scavenging. The media often forgets that large sections of the public who do not have housing, employment and education. The real conditions of the majority of our people are indeed pitiable.

The media’s attitude towards real social change essential for the country, including in a comparatively progressive state like Kerala, is unfortunately unhelpful because it is being shaped by a greed for gold and filthy lucre, and not by a desire to change the socioeconomic and cultural conditions of the large majority of our people.
Apart from being a national leader and social reformer, Gandhiji was a great communicator. More than anyone else, he recognised that communication is the most effective tool to shape opinion and mobilise popular support. He was successful because he had a latent skill in communication that surfaced in South Africa where he had gone initially to set up practice as a lawyer. This gave him the clue to rally millions of his countrymen when he returned to India. Gandhi’s journalism belonged to an era where there were no modern mass communication gadgets.

Gandhiji spoke just once over radio, and that was three months prior to his assassination. There was virtually no TV channel, no Internet, yet he was able to mobilise the masses even in the remotest areas, who themselves had little access to the mass media. He did make use of his mighty pen to convey his heart to millions of his followers and admirers in and around the globe.

Communication theorists see communication essentially as sharing of meaning, although they are not unanimous with regard to who are involved in this sharing (Fiske; 1990). One might have performed in a wide variety of communicative situations: one might have written letters to individuals, and expressed one’s views in newspapers or magazines, or written books, given interviews, spoken to individuals and to small groups, and spoken to large gatherings in public meetings, etc. Obviously Gandhi used all these forms of communication during his lifetime.

**His channels of communication**

Gandhiji did make good use of the nationalist press and his own journals – *Young India*, *Harijan* and *Navjivan* – to reach the nook and corner of the country. He also knew that the secret of reaching out to the hearts of people living in the rural areas was through the age-old oral tradition, and *padayatras* (walks). There was no substitute for direct, non-mediated communication through meetings and discussions, through song and prayer and through the folk media. Hence, he used all the available means of communication channels of the time to give a new direction to the national struggle and became the sole leader in national politics.

As the editor of three journals, he guided the national movement and propagated his ideas of non-violence and *satyagraha* (fasting). His apprenticeship in journalism had begun during 1903 at Johannesburg in South Africa when he bought the international printing press and started producing a newspaper, *The Indian Opinion*, for community education. *Indian Opinion* was a weekly published in four languages, namely English, Gujarati, Tamil and Hindi, during 1903-1915 in South Africa. South Africa not only shaped many of the thoughts, ideas and traits of Gandhi, but made an out-and-out journalist of him as well. If the London Vegetarian Society afforded him a forum to write and speak while he was a student of Law there, the political situation in South Africa chiseled him into a
conscientious journalist.

While fighting incessantly against all disabilities imposed on Indians through representation, petition, memorandum etc, Gandhiji did not for a moment minimise the important role of newspapers. He would scan through all the local newspapers and reply suitably to any misrepresentation or distortion of facts. Soon, he became well known to the newspapermen in South Africa for his zeal in expounding the causes of the Indians. Gandhi’s feeble voice could not reach thousands of Indians scattered all over South Africa. This led to the launching of the weekly, *Indian Opinion*. This foolscap-size three-column journal started publishing views and news from the Indians. Discriminatory law cases involving Indians, letters to the editor, important happenings in India and contributions from competent writers on social, moral and intellectual matters were published through the columns of *Indian Opinion*. Gandhiji tried his hand on aesthetic and intellectual subjects as well.

When Gandhiji arrived in India on January 9, 1913, journalism had not established itself as profession, excepting in case of the Anglo-Indian press. Advertisements did not play that important a part as it plays today. By and large, newspapers had to depend on sales promotion and, more important, on monetary help from individuals. In 1919, the editorship of *Young India*, an English weekly of the Home Rule League, was offered to Gandhiji. He took over as its editor and immediately transformed it from a weekly to a bi-weekly, to be converted again into a weekly. The Gujarati monthly, *Navajeevan*, under the same management, was also placed at his disposal. *Young India* was brought from Mumbai to Ahmedabad when there was the facility of a press at the disposal of the editor. *Navajeevan* first appeared on October 7, 1919.

Gandhiji soon made his personality felt through the columns of *Young India* and *Navajeevan*. The impending change was visible from the very beginning. He turned those into his ‘viewspapers’. “They enabled me freely to ventilate my views and put heart into the people,” he said. He was not happy editing an English weekly. He was editing the English journal mainly for the benefit of his friends in the Madras Presidency. But he warned: “I will not be a party to editing a newspaper that does not pay its way. *Young India* cannot pay its way unless it has at least
that was in practice in India when he reached here. His English was biblical. Some compared it with that of masters like Ruskin and Thoreau. He was meticulous about the use of words, carefully chose the correct word at the right moment. Above all, his sentences were simple and lucid. The fact that he wrote from his heart made his writings all the more absorbing. More important than the style was the content. The subject matter he chose was down to the ground. Gandhiji was able to divert the attention of rising journalists and authors from cities to villages; that the journalist’s and author’s job was to write about villages and villagers. Thus, he was able to put Village India on a wider and livelier canvas. This indeed changed the priorities of even the urban elite journalists and authors. Gandhiji himself declared all his journals as ‘views papers’. And all of them were organs of political and social movements and discussed with intensity and concentration the problems which demanded immediate action.

Gandhiji, in fact, brought many new elements which introduced a free life in the field of journalism. As a result of his wide interest, his genius for simplification, his eagerness to reach the largest number of people and the startling nature of his activities, there was a quickening of life in journalism as it were. Many of his followers were moved to write and publish in the Indian languages and in imitation of his own direct style. Thus, regional journalism began to acquire an importance and there was hardly an area in the country that did not have its newspapers.

An effective communicator, Gandhiji was fearless and eloquent with his words. He reached out to millions of people and convinced them of his cause. According to Chalapathi Raju, an eminent editor, Gandhi was probably the greatest journalist of all time, and the weeklies he ran and edited were probably the greatest weeklies the world has known. He published no advertisement, and at the same time he did not let his newspapers run at a loss. Young India and Harijan became powerful vehicles of his views on all subjects. He wrote on all subjects. He wrote simply and clearly but forcefully, with passion and burning indignation. One of the objects of a newspaper, he said, is to understand the popular feeling and give expression to it, another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments, and the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects.

**Humanistic approach**

Gandhiji undoubtedly introduced a new and a noble element in the field of journalism. It was his human approach which gave his writings a character. He never looked upon the leading public as a target audience for propaganda. He regarded them as living reality whose interest, tastes and defects he unwillingly shared and fathomed in order to bring a real change in the country and the world. He belonged to the people by identifying himself with them and he wrote about their feelings and aspirations. His voice was the voice of humanity, not the voice of a pamphleteer. He wanted to change the human character and would never be satisfied by changing a few laws or acts here and there.

As far as the language for communication is concerned, he chose to express himself in Gujarati, Hindi (or Hindustani, as he would call it) and English. The choice of the language obviously depended on whom he was addressing. Truth for him was God. He could not barter away truth for anything. This made him one of the greatest and most credible communicators of the human race.
Compassion of a wise man and a friend

It was shortly after the terrible cyclone that had ripped through coastal Odisha in November 1999. Justice Jagdish Sharan Verma had just taken over as the chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). Caught up with acquainting himself with the demands of his new office he may have been, but he also saw the enormous human calamity caused by that cyclone as a concern that came within his remit. His first public action as chairperson of the NHRC was to take *suo motu* cognisance of that natural disaster.

This is what he told me at that juncture, “As head of this Commission, I perceive this tragedy in three phases: The first concerns the period before the onset of the cyclone. What was the information which was at hand and what was the time available? Was the information received all that could be had? Once that information was obtained, was it transmitted at every level? What action, if any, was taken by the authorities to protect people? While the cyclone raged, what further measures could have been taken to reduce the extent of damage? After the cyclone, what measures need to be mounted to safeguard human life and provide relief to the people?”

Such framing was characteristic of Justice Verma, who was soft-spoken in the extreme but whose words resounded far beyond the space from where he delivered them. The Constitution of India was for him a moral and juridical compass. Having met him on many occasions, I was always struck by the deliberative manner in which he framed his thoughts, his spontaneous empathy with the disadvantaged and voiceless, and his uncompromising espousal of human rights.

Justice Verma brought these qualities to pretty much everything he did as NHRC chair, which included a hard-hitting analysis of the Gujarat riots of 2002 after he himself had visited the camps of displaced people in that state. He clearly perceived those riots as a dereliction of duty by the Gujarat Government and made no bones about stating it.

Constantly engaging with the world, his was a mind that refused the comfort of ossification. As NHRC chair he argued vociferously in favour of “reformative”, not “retributive”, justice. As he put it in an interview with me, “The premise is that every individual is a human being and has certain basic, inalienable rights. These rights do not belong to his/her station in life or his/her circumstances.”

As NHRC chairperson, a major concern for him was police reform. He saw the police as “first and foremost an important law-enforcing agency – their duty is not just to apprehend criminals but to prevent crime”. This also meant that the impunity displayed by the police system in the country was simply unacceptable. Today, as calls for police accountability get louder, Justice Verma’s words assume great relevance, “They [the police] must be made to realise that they are prosecutors, not persecutors. The brutality they display comes from the fact that they perform their functions as persecutors.”

It was again through the framework of human rights, that he perceived women’s autonomy and agency. Justice Verma had once revealed that he...
was personally even as a young man struck by how unfairly society treated women – just by observing life within his own family. Years later, in 1997, when as the chief justice of India, Verma had to pronounce on a case involving Bhanwari Devi, a grassroots worker who was gang-raped because of her efforts to stop child marriage in her village (Vishaka vs State of Rajasthan), Verma brought women’s right to work and free movement within the ambit of right to life. As he put it to me in an interview, “Any affront to the dignity of a woman is more than an affront to the divinity of an individual – it is an affront to the dignity of society.”

It was a chord that was struck again in the introductory chapter of the Verma Committee Report of 2013, which read: “We still feel distressed to say that all organs of the state have, in varying degrees, failed to fulfill the promise of equality in favour of women.” Recognising the right of every woman to bodily integrity, the Verma Committee asked for marital rape to be outlawed. He also wanted the “systematic or isolated sexual violence, in the process of Internal Security duties” legitimised by the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), to end. Neither of these two far-reaching recommendations made it to the statute books, but for the women’s movement the very fact that they found mention in the Verma Report is an important step forward – an intimation of change.

As if conscious of his responsibility to the future, Justice Verma spared no effort to come up with the Report that bore his name within the mandated timeframe, along with his colleagues Justice Leila Seth and former solicitor general, Gopal Subramaniam, even if it meant typing in material himself. When asked during a television interview whether the effort had exhausted him, he replied in the negative. Adding as an afterthought, “If at all you feel tired, it is after it is over, not before that.” That foundational document will now remain a testimony to the compassion of a wise man with a mind that never ceased to question. Justice Verma’s death has caused widespread grief within his fraternity, but for women activists, it is as if they have lost a friend.

(Courtesy: Women’s Feature Service)

Justice Jagdish Sharan Verma gave back to Indian women nothing less than their right to regain their constitutional rights. The recent report he gave his name to was seen as a women’s bill of rights for India.

Lokmat has new look

In order to interact more with readers and sustain the brand as a credible source of information and a premier advertising medium, Marathi daily Lokmat has refreshed its look in terms of format and presentation. An important feature of the new look is introduction of the latest high quality typefaces in Devanagari script especially designed for Lokmat by Indian Type Foundry. The custom-made font family consists of five weights to ensure better legibility and give a pleasurable reading experience. “We can proudly say that Lokmat is the first newspaper from India to use these new typefaces,” Darda claimed. The group undertook a huge study that compiled feedback on satisfaction levels with existing content, the need gaps, look and feel, and the perception in readers’ minds.

Photo: WFS
Standing up and raising their voice

Inequality, discrimination, violence, women face this three-fold threat every step of the way – which is why it is time to “strike, dance, rise” against violence, OBR style.

At 37, Arpita Kakkar is no longer embarrassed at being called an ‘abandoned’ woman. For nearly a decade, she suffered her doctor husband’s beatings, hoping that through counselling or psychiatric treatment his bouts of anger and violent outbursts at home would gradually reduce. But two years ago, when nothing seemed to be working, she ran away from her marital home in Australia to her parent’s place in Kolkata. Even though her husband kept insisting that she return, he never apologised for his behaviour – he assumed that wife beating was a right society gave to “the man of the house”.

With fear and silence as her constant companions for the last couple of years, Kakkar tried to deal with the scars of the emotional trauma she had endured. Today, she has finally decided to “tell everyone how brutally she was treated in her own home even though I am not officially divorced yet”. She goes on to reveal, "I left my husband because in that house I had lived like a caged animal.”

What brought on this change in attitude? “I realised that women put up with violence – it could be for 10 years like me or it could be for a lifetime – because they think it is normal. They hope it will get better with time so they bear it all in silence. But I want to tell everyone that it does not get better, one just starts living with it. Only talking about the crimes that women are subjected to will enable other women to realise that it’s not ‘normal’ to be violated in this way,” she says.

Like Kakkar there are thousands of women across Bengal, who have been subjected to violence in various forms – whether it is domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, honour killings or trafficking. The National Crime Records Bureau statistics present a grim picture. Bengal tops the charts when it comes to crimes against women; it ranks the highest in domestic violence and the second highest in rape and dowry-related murders. Moreover, cases of sexual harassment have increased 217 per cent over the last six years in the state and they continue unabated because few manage to gather the courage to break their silence.

But this sound barrier is slowly breaking thanks to campaigns like One Billion Rising (OBR), a global call to end violence against women, that urge men and women to join hands and “sing, dance, share, walk and strike against violence”. Call it a revolution. Term it as an uprising. See it as a sign of change.

One woman who has chosen not to take things lying down is the victim of the high profile Park Street gang rape case. The incident had occurred in the early hours of February 6, 2012, when the 37-
year-old woman was allegedly gang-raped by five young men at gunpoint, after being taken from a pub in the upmarket Park Street area in Kolkata. It’s been a year of endless struggle but the single mother’s crusade for justice continues undeterred.

While she has faced many difficulties – incriminating CCTV footage has gone missing and even the main accused has been on the run – the one constant has been the bid to discourage her from talking about her case. In the last hearing held on January 22, 2013, the judge had observed that “it is for the good of the victim” that “she should not talk too much about her case”. But the victim’s aunt, who is a teacher and has been drumming up support on behalf of her niece, says firmly, “Why should the crime and the criminal mindset not be talked about. The victim has gone through hell and had all of us not joined hands she could not have reached this far.”

Clearly, the need of the hour is to bring such issues into the public space. And that’s where the OBR campaign is playing a pivotal role. Says Anuradha Kapoor, director of Swayam, “The OBR campaign gives us all an opportunity to say ‘let’s get out there and raise this issue’ and as more and more people get connected to it, the impact will be more widespread. Piyashi Roy Chowdhury, 35, is a firm OBR supporter. As the mother of a seven-year-old daughter, she feels that it is her duty to stand up against gender violence to ensure a safe future for young girls. “I do not want to tell my daughter that she is not safe in this world. But today I find that she is growing up with the same threats that I did. I want to change that. I support the OBR campaign, as I want to show people that we don’t live in a jungle. We live in a civilised society, amongst people who are law abiding and can respect each other,” she says.

Adds Suhasini Dayal, a 17-year-old schoolgirl, “There needs to be a total change in mindset. The very idea of overpowering women at home, at the workplace and everywhere else, simply has to go. I will stand up and raise my voice.” Activists too see great merit in bringing people together to train the spotlight on violence. Dr Vinod Tiwari, secretary and counsellor at Prem-O-Asha, an organisation that has been working with victims of domestic violence as well as trafficking, says, “For all of us who have been working in some way to free women of violence, this campaign gives an opportunity to do some soul searching. We all have to work with each other to secure equal rights for everyone - women and men.”

Women find various expressions of anger.

Lokmat Samachar launches 7th edition

Lokmat Media, publisher of Lokmat Samachar, has made its entry into Madhya Pradesh with its seventh edition in Chhindwara. The newspaper first appeared in 1989 in Nagpur, and was thereafter launched in Aurangabad, Akola, Kolhapur, Jalgaon and Pune in that order. Lokmat Samachar’s Chhindwara edition will have 12 pages and has been launched with a cover price of Rs 3. The maiden edition of Lokmat Samachar in Madhya Pradesh was launched by Union Urban Development Minister Kamal Nath. Maharashtra Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan was also present at the launch function.
Use sensitivity when reporting on children

The brutal rape of a student in New Delhi in December last year brought to the fore the inadequacies of our social system to prevent such heinous crimes against women and children in India. Of course, Indians rallied together to change the situation, and we today have a stronger enforcement and legal framework to check acts of violence against women. But that is where it all ends. In Uttar Pradesh, the law enforcement structure (read UP Police) that was being revamped to be more women- and children-friendly was itself violating those very basic rights that were in place for protection of women and children from heinous crimes and their protection.

Just three days earlier to the Delhi incident, a young student in UP was going through the harrowing experience of being stalked at school by another student. The latter then abducted her at gunpoint and held her captive for two days during which he raped her repeatedly. After two days of torture, the victim, who also happened to be a minor (16 years), was dropped off at the police thana (station) where she was put to even more harassment by the thana station officer and forced to implicate her own uncle as the culprit. Every legal document, FIR and complaint being made in the case by the victim and her family did not contain the name of the offender that the girl kept naming as the real culprit in her statement to the enforcement and legal authorities.

If that was not bad enough, the shameful torture, and emotional harassment of a 10 year old rape victim at Bulandshaher too hit the headlines and forced the Supreme Court to take cognizance. The court advised strong action against the erring police personnel and for the first time it seemed that the guilty would be held accountable. Things seemed to be under control and a fool-proof system seemed to finally be taking shape, but in April this year another brutal rape of a five-year-old in the National Capital Region shook the very foundation of the social system which was trying to set up a strong structure to prevent brutal attacks against women and children.

So what’s was going wrong with our approach to building a protective environment for our children and women? What message was percolating down to the masses every time media flashed news of such brutal attacks? Why were such shameful incidents against women and children being tolerated in a democratic set-up like India? Whose responsibility was it to ensure that the culprits were not only caught but also fitfully punished for their barbaric acts. Today, people wonder whether the role of the enforcement agencies such as the police is now going to be carried out by the media and NGOs working to address rights-based violations. It is indeed a valid point since the police and related stakeholders are hardly taking the matter seriously or making a sincere effort to prevent heinous crimes against women and children.

Says Zeba Hassan, senior reporter i-Next, Dainik Jagran, Lucknow, who regularly highlights issues of child and women abuse from Uttar Pradesh,
“The media is more proactive and sensitive in Uttar Pradesh now than they were few years back towards issues related to women and child rights. There are many cases where children have got justice and proper shelter after their cases were highlighted by media. The initiative media took in exposing the abuse of institutionalised children helped address the issue strongly at the administrative as well society’s level.” Zeba feels that the issue of protection can be properly addressed only if the attitude of the common person changes. “As part of the media we can highlight the issue but if the attitude of the people does not change and they don’t support the issues we raise and demand action against the culprit, then the impact of our efforts too is waylaid,” she adds.

Zeba explains the challenges and constraints. “The biggest constraint we face when we highlight issues of abuse against women and children is the attitude and hostility of the government agencies, particularly if the incident is related to government-run homes. We do not have the clearance to visit these homes so we have no way of knowing what is happening with women and children kept in such institutions. This is what needs to change, and more transparency must be exercised by the government. Media on the other hand needs to take up more issues related to women and children and do regular follow-up until action is initiated against the culprit.”

This is fairly well demonstrated by a recent case of the sodomy of a 13-year-old boy student of a madarsa (a religious school) in East Delhi. The child despite complaining to the imam of the madarsa continued to face abuse at the hands of other boys in the madrasa. The imam threatened him with dire consequences if he spoke to anyone about the abuse he was facing within the

religious institution. “This is a typical attitude plaguing most institutions housing or imparting instruction to children,” says Yogesh from the Association For Development, a New Delhi-based child rights watchdog organisation that highlights issues related to children. It had exposed the sodomy issue. “Ironically, the sexual abuse of a child in an educational institution be it a madarsa, ashram, gurukul do not come under the RTE Act. As a result, there is no monitoring provision to ensure quality of education and protection and care of child rights. Moreover, in cases of sexual abuse of children in such institutions, the police and child welfare committees take up the cases. It is important to question when recording the statement of a victim of abuse why these agencies do not intervene to provide protection to the child.”

Says Abhishek Pathak, program coordinator and UP Head, Childline India Foundation, North Regional Resource Centre, New Delhi, “In cases of sexual abuse, the family of the victim does not want to pursue the case for fear of victimisation by society, police and judiciary. This gives the police a comfort zone and they continue to be inactive in intervening in such cases. In protection issues related to children, the police is an important part of the implementing agency but they need to have a pleasant attitude while dealing with such sensitive cases so that they can build the confidence of the family and the minor victim. But they don’t do that and their insensitive approach leads to victimisation of the victim by the society and the judiciary.”

Stresses Pathak: “The media’s approach when covering an incident of sexual violence or abuse of a minor, the way coverage is done, is like raping the victim all over again. All they are interested is getting photos or footage of the child and as much sensational information they can find. This is not what is desired by the press while covering a story related to a minor victim. A great deal of attention is needed to be
paid to the language used in both print and electronic media when reporting such issues.”

Victims of brutal attacks don’t find solace in such explanations but agree nevertheless, “Why does the police and courts not listen to me when I am trying to tell the truth. Nobody understands that I am a victim and not the culprit, yet I am accused of being characterless and loose and blamed for what has happened to me. I never imagined that I would be a rape victim and face such humiliation at the hands of those who should be apprehending the culprits. My life has changed completely after this incident but things have not changed in our society; everyday someone or the other is made to suffer the same humiliation. Even the mindset of the police is the same; insensitive and cruel towards victims. Until this attitude changes the rehabilitation of the victims will never be complete or effective,” rues Ritu Sharma (name changed) who was abducted and subjected to brutal rape by her classmate and also had to face extreme police apathy.

In such situations the only hope for the victim is the judiciary. But does it help in terms of providing timely relief to her? Explains Pramod Goel, member secretary, Uttar Pradesh State Legal Services Authority, “Overall, the approach and attitude of the judiciary is quite favourable when it comes to ensuring that the rights of a victim are not violated. But I still feel that civil society has a much greater role to play when it comes to seeking relevant changes and formulating of new laws and sections to prevent crimes against women and children.”

Adds K.K. Sharma, district judge, Lucknow, who took the initiative to create three special courts to exclusively try cases of rape and sexual abuse, “There was a lot of discussion post the New Delhi rape and how extreme cases like this can be addressed effectively and fast so that victim can see justice done as soon as possible instead of waiting for years. I felt fast track special courts could to some extent help ensure that. So three special courts were set up in January 2013 at the District Court here in Lucknow to hear and try cases of rape and abuse. The courts are operating quite well and cases related to sexual abuse and rape are automatically admitted in these three courts when an FIR is registered in any thana related to heinous crime against women. For extra sensitive cases one of the courts has a woman assistant district judge presiding and legal counsels who take up the case are also women.” The media does not seem to have got a whiff of this; the press in Uttar Pradesh has not written about it till now.

Says Sharat Pradhan, a senior journalist in Uttar Pradesh who is credited with raising a number of people-centric issues while addressing their rights violations, “The media in UP has to be more alert to pick up stories related to rights violations from the development sector. Journos here most of the time do not have any exposure to development sector issues and usually stick to reporting the incident with a masala twist. It is very necessary to sensitise the younger professionals taking up media as a profession on reporting these issues, only then highlighting such issues will be effective.”

Child rights action group formed in Lucknow

Following increasing attacks on children in Lucknow, a group of child rights activists and social organisations have come together to form a forum that will address issues of child protection and abuse in the city. Designed to act as a pressure group to assert and uphold the rights of children in Lucknow, the first meeting of Chirag (as the forum is named) convened in July, chalked out a plan of action to build a protected environment for children in Lucknow.

The initiative for such a forum was taken by a core working group which included Anshumali Sharma, founder, Human Unity Movement; Anjali Singh, director, Saaksham Foundation; Manish Singh, child rights consultant; Sunil Kumar, expert on the Juvenile Justice System and Integrated Child Protection Scheme; Vinod Chandra, Circle For Child and Youth Research Co-operation in India; and Manu Singh, Amity University, Lucknow. The forum will expand membership to include prominent child rights groups and individuals. Its objectives include bringing out a social mechanism for child protection issues and abuse, strengthening the existing juvenile justice system, developing sustainable intervention mechanism for child protection, and advocacy and raising awareness on child protection.
The real truth behind sex-selective abortions

The state and civil society need to move beyond statist and patriarchal notions of marriage, reproduction and gender relations. This means more than just celebrating brave mothers who have saved their daughters or focusing on ‘poor men’, who havenowomentonarry. This also means accepting women as equals and as individuals with needs, dreams, desires and rights, including the right to exercise control over their bodies. And this is the truth that we as a country are still not ready to accept.

After the findings of the 2011 Census, it was Bollywood actor Aamir Khan’s high profile television show, *Satyamev Jayate (May Truth Win)* that brought the issue of India’s declining child sex ratio and sex selective abortions to the fore. In his show, Khan underscored the Nawanshahr intervention by the Punjab Government as the most effective campaign so far in addressing the issue of India’s declining child sex ratio and sex selective abortions. But exactly what was this intervention?

In 2005, a massive campaign to counter Punjab’s declining sex ratio was launched in the Nawanshahr District of the state. It was organised by the district authorities and it monitored the pregnancies of expectant mothers, conducted medical audits of scanning centres, and mobilised the youth at the district, block and tehsil levels on the issue, with the deputy commissioner of Nawanshahr playing a pro-active role.

While the district authorities did indeed display great enthusiasm rarely seen among bureaucrats today, the methods employed were rather peculiar and sometimes worked against women’s rights. The monitoring of pregnancies not only led to pressure on women, it encroached on their privacy. If a woman wanted an abortion, within the existing legal framework, she found it difficult to get one because she had to prove that sex-selection was not her motive. Certain macabre methods were also resorted to, including the staging of *shok sabhas* (mourning meetings) for the dead foetuses near homes and nursing homes where it was believed that sex selective abortions had taken place.

There can be no denying that the Nawanshahr experiment was perhaps the most pro-active campaign in Punjab, or even in India for that matter, and generated an unprecedented awareness on the issue. But we need to question the privileging of such an intervention, given the cavalier way it treated women’s rights and the elements of coercion and fear that were built into it. After all, working on improving the child sex ratio is not just about increasing the number of girls born but also about countering gender discrimination and violence.
We need then to look at the big picture. The so-called culpability of a woman needs to be interrogated, as well as gender insensitive interpretations of the law and its ineffective implementation. The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostics Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act (PCPNDT Act) has focused on some broad issues – the ethical use of new reproductive technologies, the role of the medical community, the market and families. Irrespective of some loopholes in the law, it can be considered a sound piece of legislation. Unfortunately though, it remains one of the least used pieces of legislation in the statute books.

There can be no denying the complicity between the state and the society in terms of a shared ideology about the issue. The implementing authorities, irrespective are themselves steeped in a culture that perceives son preference as the natural fallout of the secondary status of the daughter who can never be an adequate substitute for a son. The role of doctors in expediting sex-selective abortions is clearly recognised by the law but in practice there is a tendency to overlook their role since the doctor is seen as only providing what the family wants. The issue is also often framed in terms of discrimination meted out by women against other women: Mothers-in-law pressurising their daughters-in-law for sons, or the wish of the woman herself to have a son, is often cited. In the process, it is women, not their husbands, who end up getting criminalised, with doctors invariably let off the hook.

Official understanding, in line with society’s thinking, underlines the active agency of women in perpetuating the heinous practice. The idea of gender discrimination being the root cause for such behaviour is never articulated. Courts have largely been unsympathetic to women who fight their families and clinics over sex determination tests or sex selective abortions. It is they who are perceived as having misused the law to get back at their husbands.

Another strategy for intervention that Khan seems to promote is to emphasise the “utility” of women, especially when it comes to men and marriage. By presenting contemporary examples of how men now find it difficult to get brides because of the dwindling numbers of women, he seems to be imploring families to keep their daughters for this reason. This fails to take into account that in many parts of India the decline in the number of women has led to a double burden on them. The practice of coerced polyandry has resulted in daughters getting eliminated, even as brides are bought and sold. Given this reality, the utilitarian argument about women’s “use” as “providers of sex and sons” is essentially anti-women. Nowhere is there an attempt to perceive the inequalities within marriage, its predominantly patriarchal structure and the
potential for violence within it.

There are inspiring initiatives that are worth remembering, which did not figure in the television show. As early as in 1974, the Towards Equality Report had noted how the sex ratio is a significant indicator of women’s status. Let us also not forget the vibrant citizens’ campaigns in Maharashtra that brought about the first legislation against sex selection in the country. Then there’s the public interest litigation filed by Sabu George, Masum and Cehat, which led to Supreme Court directives to state governments to implement the PCPNDT Act. And not to overlook the numerous and sustained actions of the Indian women’s movement. It has been very alert to the coercive nature of population policies that contributed to the rise of sex-selective abortions and other forms of gender discrimination. It revealed the insidious link between local and global markets in reinforcing the practice of sex selection and how these markets, by providing sex selection kits through the internet, have appropriated the language of choice. What is important to note is that women activists don’t define the issue in terms of “correcting” numbers, nor do they harp on the “utility” of women. They argue for the right to safe legal abortion and woman’s reproductive choices.

Individuals and civil society organisations have done their bit. Mannoharan Sharma of the Voluntary Health Association of Punjab has waged a long-running campaign to address the issue in a multi-pronged manner. Subash Mendapurkar of Sutra in Himachal Pradesh has been tirelessly working on the issue. The Centre for Advocacy and Research has been consistent in its efforts to raise awareness on the issue in the media and to sensitise mediapersons in reporting this concern. Nila Madhab Panda’s insightful tele-serial, Atmaja, on Doordarshan has tried to link the issue of sex-selective abortions to dowry, the patriarchal nature of marriage, and biased inheritance practices.

Some of these interventions have shown results. For instance, sustained campaigns have forced some states to withdraw the two-child norm that disqualified candidates for panchayats and municipal bodies from contesting if they had more than two children.

Bijayalaxmi Nanda

(The writer, a feminist activist and researcher, teaches Political Science in Miranda House, Delhi University. Courtesy: Women’s Feature Service)

New challenges, familiar threats

At least 15 reporters and other media professionals have been killed in Syria in the past 12 months, as the safety of journalists continues to be of major concern in conflict zones and elsewhere, the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers reported in its Global Press Freedom Report. Covering the period from June 2012 to May 2013, the report takes a twelve-month snapshot of the major issues affecting press freedom and freedom of expression worldwide. It also records the number of journalist deaths and provides detailed information on the particular circumstances. The report reveals that at least 10 media professionals lost their lives in Somalia. Whether at the hand of extremists, organised criminal gangs or official security forces, journalists increasingly find themselves in the firing line. A total of 54 deaths were recorded between June 2012 and May 2013.

Where the media is targeted, impunity for the killers of journalists continues to prolong the agony for the victims’ families and cast a chilling shadow over the profession. In countries where justice persistently fails, such as in Pakistan or Mexico, independent investigative reporting is vital and journalism is too frequently a deadly occupation. The report finds that criminal defamation and other legal weapons aimed at muzzling independent media persist, with cases in Russia, Italy, Libya and Cameroon highlighting the global appeal to those in power of legislation that stifles criticism and debate. Proposals for tighter press regulation in the United Kingdom and a Secrecy Bill in South Africa have caused global alarm.

Soft-censorship has become the weapon of choice for governments looking to exert financial pressures on the independent press. Government interference in advertising distribution in countries such as Argentina and Azerbaijan forms part of a larger worldwide pattern of economic sanction against independent journalism. Policing the digital debate has led to increased online censorship and imprisonment of netizens in countries around the globe. Bahrain has targeted Twitter users while Vietnam continues to jail bloggers in its on-going suppression of political debate. The report finds that China remains key to how online censorship will develop, with its Great Firewall still policing hundreds of millions of users and restricting the free-flow of information.
Save the girl child before it is too late

As far as sex ratio is concerned, Census 2011 shows a decline of 13 points from 927 in 2001 to 914 in 2011. In states such as Haryana, Punjab, Delhi and Gujarat, the ratio has declined to less than 900 girls per 1000 boys. Newspapers, television advertisements, magazines, theatre, posters, kiosks, hoardings, radio jingles and even films have defined the problem of declining sex ratio and its dimensions but they need to reach out to more people. A film like Matrubhoomi – A Nation Without Women by Manish Jha (the director) has portrayed a situation where no women exists. Yet, we continue to kill the female child without thinking of the consequences.

The main theme of the film focused on a society where no women are left. It looks at the physical and emotional aspects emanating due to the absence of women. The film explores a futuristic situation in rural India where women are partially extinct because of female infanticide. It looks at how the situation could worsen with only the few women left made to face the cruelty of males inside and outside the family.

Matrubhoomi starts with female infanticide being practiced in a village. The most affluent family in the village, the Ramcharan Family, is looking for a brides for its sons. The pandit, who has the responsibility of looking out for a bride, reveals on the wedding day that the bride is actually a boy, sold by his father as a girl. He then desperately searches for a proper bride and spies a girl in a nearby village. He forces the girl’s father to get her married to all the five sons of Ramcharan and in turn get five lakh rupees.

The girl, Kalki, is forced to be a modern-day Draupadi and more. She is forced to spend nights between her five husbands and father-in-law. She falls in love with the youngest brother. The elder brothers get this brother killed. Kalki tries to convey her situation to her father but instead of helping her, he takes money from the father-in-law for spending his nights with his daughter. She tries to elope with one of the servants but the brothers kill the servant and chain Kalki in an animal shed. Kalki becomes pregnant. It has now to be decided who is the father of the child. Ramcharan, the head, is made the father. The villagers turn violent, almost all are killed but Kalki survives and gives birth to a daughter in the end.

When a survey was conducted, the majority of the respondents (92.5 per cent) agreed that films were an effective medium for highlighting the issue. They felt that all target groups, from both sexes, must be involved to create awareness. So, what is the way forward?

- Political parties must have an agenda to fight female foeticide and this should be reflected in their manifesto.
- Inspiring stories of successful daughters as heirs of business and taking good care of parents should find space in news dailies, radio and television.
- Separate campaigns and communication strategies should be followed in villages and in large cities.
- The campaign ‘save the girl child’ should run on an equal footing with the ‘pulse polio campaign’ and the media, film celebrities, women of substance, civil society, policymakers and government officials should join together and make it a mass campaign.
- It is necessary to sensitize the fraternity of medical practitioners about the unholy alliance between medical technology and the dreadful practice. The judiciary, police and academia must help fight the menace.
- Movies like Matrubhoomi should be promoted and screened in different institutions to create awareness and sensitise the masses.
- The youth should be associated with the campaigns. They are the future parents.

(Ruchi Gaur is assistant professor, Lady Irwin College, University of Delhi. For this article, she was assisted by Sarita Anand, associate professor in the same college.)
Three murders and a mystery

The recent killing of three newspaper employees when they were working in the office of a daily newspaper in Tripura spread shock waves among the media fraternity in the country and brought to the fore the sense of vulnerability of journalists especially in India’s northeast. The peaceful State of Tripura, bordering Bangladesh, witnessed the murder of three newspaper employees on May 19, 2013. News broke from the Tripura capital of Agartala, when unidentified assailants stormed into the office of Dainik Ganadoot, an Agartala-based Bengali newspaper and stabbed three workers to death. All the injured persons were taken to the nearby hospital, but attending doctors declared them ‘brought dead’.

According to the local police, the incident took place at 3.30 pm in the Palace Compound locality of Agartala. The three killed were Ranjit Chaudhary (manager, aged 61), Sujit Bhattcharjee (proof reader, aged 25) and Balaram Ghosh (driver, aged 31), all employees of Dainik Gandoot. The assailants came on a motor cycle, asked for Sushil Chowdhury, the editor-cum-proprietor of the lowly circulated Bengali daily, who was upstairs at the time. Chowdhury later claimed he was the actual target of the assailants, but has not revealed the reason. He announced Rs 100000 to each of the families of the victims as compensation. He also declared a reward of Rs 1000000 for providing information about the assailants or the mastermind.

Reacting to Chowdhury’s claim that he was the target of the attackers, a senior journalist based in Agartala, who wanted anonymity, said it was not because of him being a journalist. Ganadoot has limited circulation and it had never reported against powerful elements in society. Rather, Chowdhury was involved in various non-media business activities that might have led to the attack, the journalist asserted.

Leaving aside the few incidents of attacks on media persons in the past, there has been no record of journalists being killed in the state, which supports nearly 50 weekly and daily newspapers mostly in Bengali and in English. Even during the time of insurgency in the 1990s when tribal separatist groups spread terror across the state, journalists were spared by the armed outfits. The Agartala Press Club first condemned the incident and it was followed by the Journalist Forum Assam which issued a statement immediately after the incident asserting that in any situation an attack on a newspaper house cannot be tolerated and urged Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar, who also holds the Home portfolio, to punish the guilty persons and compensate the families of the victims.

The Tripura Working Journalist Union, the Arunachal Pradesh Union of Working Journalists, the Arunachal Press Club, the All Meghalaya Journalists’ Union, and the Shillong Press Club also condemned the episode and urged the Tripura Government to provide security to journalists and employees of media houses in the state. The Editor’s Guild of India, the National Union of Journalists, and the National Federation of Newspaper
Employees etc in separate statements expressed heartfelt condolence on the demise of the newspaper employees. The leaders of the national bodies said the incident showed that reporting from conflict-zones remains very difficult as the journalists have to put their lives at risk. Reporters Without Borders, the International Federation of Journalists, the Committee to Protect Journalists and the International Press Institute also expressed serious concern over the incident and called for immediate measures to protect the victims' colleagues and families.

The Tripura police chief Sanjay Sinha informed the media that the police had gathered some important clues and investigation was going on right direction, but unfortunately they could do little except arresting Chowdhury and the wife of driver Ghosh. Both of them had to spend few weeks in the jail. But the mystery remains unsolved.

Governance Now in Hindi

English fortnightly magazine Governance Now is all set to launch its Hindi edition next month. Governance Now was launched in January, 2010 by the SAB Group under Sri Adhikari Brothers. B.V. Rao is the editor of the magazine, while Ajay Singh is the managing editor. The organisation has roped in Alok Mehta as editor for Governance Now Hindi. Mehta was editorial director with National Duniya. He was earlier chief editor of NaiDunia. Mehta has more than 40 years' experience in journalism and has also served as president, Editors Guild of India. He was conferred the Padma Shri in 2010.
How American Baptists brought cultural progress

The Christian Missionaries played a significant role in the growth and development of the press in India. In Bengal, they introduced the printing press primarily for publishing missionary leaflets. Thanks to them, the first half of the 19th Century saw the publication of a large number of journals, periodicals and newspapers in various languages, propagating new ideas and enriching the provincial literature of India. In Assam, the history of journalism started with the publication of *Orunudoi* by Nathan Brown. The missionaries, rather than threatening Assamese culture, liberalised and preserved it and helped in modernising the language.

This is the age of communication. In India, the press can be said to be a by-product of the British rule; with the introduction of Western education, the press too inevitably developed in India. The British entered Assam and established their rule in the early years of the 19th Century. Soon after, the different Christian denominations gradually established their outposts and set off with evangelistic zeal. Their main objective, no doubt, was to spread Christianity. But in the process they also undertook to spread literacy, render medical service, open schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutions. Of all the denominations that worked in the Northeastern region, the American Baptists were able to spread out in many parts. The American Baptists Mission in Assam had a major influence in the development of the press, and in education and health.

The beginning of the 19th Century is perhaps the most significant period in the chapter of Christian Missionaries in India. It saw the arrival of four English missionaries in Serampore, Bengal – Joshua Marshman, Hannah Marshman, William Carey and Willam Ward – who between them were the architects of the Serampore Renaissance. Although they came chiefly for the purpose of preaching Christianity, they dedicated themselves to the service of the ailing and distressed people in and around the town, spreading education, social reforms and being engaged in social reconstruction. Carey was instrumental in bringing out the first printed book in Assamese, *Dharmapustak*, an Assamese version of the Bible translated by Atmaram Sarma of Nowgong and printed in 1813. The original volume runs into 864 pages.

Between 1801 and 1832, the Serampore Mission Press printed 212000 copies of books in 40 different languages. The local inhabitants played a passive role. Only a few among the affluent comprising absentee landlords and businessmen seized the opportunity for higher education by sending their children to the academic institutions of the missionaries. On the other hand, people belonging to the lower economic strata sent their children to the monitorial schools, which provided basic education. In the process,
there emerged a class of the local gentry which had a favourable attitude towards the missionaries. All the seven states in the Northeast have the presence of Christian missionary work, and Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram are predominantly Christian.

**Pioneering journey**

In 1834, Captain Jenkins, the commissioner of the governor general of India for Assam, asked the Calcutta Baptists to start a mission on the frontiers with chief reference to the Shans or Khamti tribes. The authority of the Calcutta Baptists missionaries received the proposal in 1835. The plan of establishing a mission in Assam was recommended by other important considerations. The language of the Shans was similar to that of the Burmese and could be easily acquired by a missionary. The characters used in printing were essentially the same. The possibilities of promoting access to the Chinese also encouraged the immediate recommendation of the proposal. In the circumstances, the proposal was accepted by the board, which immediately referred the matter to the missionaries at Moulmein in Burma.

Nathan Brown (1807-86) and Oliver T. Cutter (1811-81) were appointed to commence the mission at Sadiya. Brown had mastered the Burmese language and Cutter possessed considerable experience in eastern printing. In September 1835, they reached Calcutta with their families. They received a printing press, a hundred reams of paper and relevant materials for printing. On 23rd March the following year, they reached Sadiya, after completing four tedious months journeying by boat over River Brahmaputra. In April 1837, Miles Bronson and Reverend Jacob Thomas joined them, but unfortunately Thomas was killed by a falling tree from the bank before he could reach Sadiya.

The success of the Baptist Mission in changing the religious outlook of the people, particularly in the plains of Assam, was limited. But in the other directions, notably in the field of education, literature and culture, the American Baptist Mission brought about a sort of renaissance. Bronson commenced work for the Singphos at Joypur, but within two years he left the place and started missionary work for the Nagas at Namsang. On 19th January 1839, the Khamtis revolted against the Company’s rule and Singphos killed Major Adam White, the political agent of Sadiya and his subordinate officials in a sudden attack. As a result, Brown and Cutter abandoned the Sadiya Mission and on 12th May, 1839 they moved to Joypur. Ever since, Sadiya lost its importance as the centre of missionary work in Assam.

The Christian missionaries in Joypur soon decided to expand their work in the plains where the majority of Assamese lived, rather than confining themselves only to the scattered hill tribes around Joypur. So, in 1841, the American Baptist Missionaries moved to Upper, Lower and Central Assam. Reverend Burker and Lady Burker had already started work in Sivasagar from 1814. Soon, Brown and Cutter moved to Sivasagar. The Magazine Report for September 1845 had described Sivasagar as one of the most important and central positions for missionary labour in Assam. In October, 1851, the Assam Baptist Mission was formed with Sivasagar, Nowgong and Guwahati churches.

The Western educated missionaries had much influence on the lives of the people who came in contact with them. The intention of the British Government was for the Missionaries to educate the immediate neighborhood and create a congenial atmosphere so that the local communities would be in a better position to participate in the British governance system. Thus, the missionaries first started the education process, printed primers as textbooks and started human development work. The fruits of that process are the
developments we witness today in terms of schools, colleges and hospitals.

During 1846-1851, Brown, Cutter and Whitting were translating, printing and teaching in and around Sivasagar. In 1846, Orunudoi, the first Assamese newspaper was started. The newspaper played a vital role in the development of the modern Assamese language. Brown wrote the Assamese grammar. Bronson undertook the great literary work of his life – the writing of the Assamese-English dictionary, which was published in 1867.

The dawn of Orunudoi
Christian Missionaries are often criticised for destroying the traditional beliefs and culture of the native people but whatever the criticism may be, the contributions of missionaries for the betterment of society cannot be overlooked. In this context, one is reminded of Reverend Nathan Brown who played a significant role in the history of Assamese literature and press. Born on June 22, 1807 in New Ipswich in the state of New Hampshire in US, he graduated from Williams College in 1827. He married Eliza Ballard on May 5, 1830 who assisted and played a vital role in the field of education in Assam. For a few years, he was associate principal of Bennington Seminary and the editor of a weekly newspaper called The Vermont Telegraph. He attended the Newton Theological Institute in order to prepare himself for missionary work.

With the establishment of the first printing press in Assam, Brown’s arrival ushered in an era of literary development in the region. Towards the end of 1844, Brown travelled from Sivasagar to Guwahati, visiting villages to study personally the diverse cultural and racial characteristics of the people. He along with Bronson and Cyrus Barker, founded the first Baptist church at Panbazar in Guwahati on January 25, 1845. Brown also established schools in different parts of the state, 14 Assamese-medium schools in and around Sivasagar by 1846. Brown, a linguist, was deeply involved in teaching, translating and preparing books in Assamese. In 1848, he published Grammatical Notes of the Assamese Language, which served as the first Assamese grammar book. In the introduction he wrote, “For beauty and softness, the Assamese language is much superior to the Bengali,” showing his keen love and appreciation of the language.

Brown found that the Assamese Bible published by William Carey, which was in circulation at that time, was full of Bengali and Sanskrit terms. Therefore, he undertook to translate the Bible and published the New Testament in pure and simple Assamese in 1848. Brown was also a pioneer in writing school books such as Pratham Ganana (1845), Dutio Ganana (1855) and Bhugulor Biboran (1851). He translated John Bunyan’s famous Pilgrims Progress into Assamese. Brown’s wife, Eliza, opened a boarding school for girls, and was actively associated with literary work. She translated a dozen tracts into Assamese and wrote arithmetic and story books for children.

Brown’s magnum opus was Orunudoi, which translates to The Dawn. It was the first newsmagazine in Assamese published from the Mission Press, Sivasagar, beginning January 1846. Brown did the editorial work while Cutter was involved in printing and publishing the magazine. The tag line of the magazine stated: ‘The Orunodioi, A monthly paper, devoted to Religion, Science, and General Intelligence, is printed and published at the Sivasagar Mission Press by O.T. Cutter, for the American Baptist Mission in Assam’. The columns of the magazine featured news from all parts of the globe. With illustrative articles on science, geography, astronomy, history and many other subjects, it soon found an encouraging readership among the Assamese intelligentsia and paved the way for Assamese journalism to surge ahead.

Orunudoi carried stories and articles related to missionary work in Assam, the local British administration, literary contributions, social events and
so on. Being the first newspaper, it can claim credit for infusing new ideas in the minds of the people. Many Assamese scholars like Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, Gunabhiram Baruah and Hemchandra Baruah contributed articles and the magazine became a launch pad in the struggle for the restoration of the Assamese language. Brown was editor till he left for US. After his leaving, Orunudoi was in circulation with occasional breaks until 1880. Brown’s farewell note read, “One of the hardest partings I ever experienced. If God in mercy restores my health so that I can again be useful, I will return and labour for them till life ends, with all my heart.” Brown died on January 1, 1886 at Yokohama in Japan.

**Other newspapers**

Following the example of Orunudoi, several newspapers and magazines were published in Assam in the second half of the 19th Century. Prominent among these were Asam Bilashini, Asam Darpan, Asam Bandhu, Asam Deepika, Jonaki and Assam News. Brown was also a pioneer in the unearthing of old manuscripts and in editing and publishing them. Under his editorship, Orunudoi published history by bringing out the texts of old chronicles in properly edited form such as Chutta Buranji, Purani Asom Buranji and Kamrupar Buranji. Through his encouragement, some Assamese scholars too published books. Among them, Kashinath Tamuly Phukan’s Asom Buranji (1842), Anandaram Dhekial Phukan’s Asomia Lorar Mitro (1849) and A Few Remarks on the Assamese Language and on Vernacular Education (1855) printed at the Mission Press in Sivasagar are worth mentioning.

Asam Bilashini, the second monthly paper in Assamese language, was published from Majuli. Although its prime objective was to counter the works of Christian missionaries, it served as a mouthpiece for local grievances against the government. In 1883, Tara, another monthly paper Asom Dipak was issued from the Dharma Prakash press in 1876. But it lasted only for a year. Asom Pradipika, a monthly journal devoted to the teachings of Vaishnava saint Sri Deva Damodar, was published in 1920 under the patronage of Sri Naradev Goswami of Dakhinpat Satra. It appeared from Dibrugarh under the editorship of Rajani Kanta Bordoloi and was printed at Radha Nath Press of Dibrugarh. More such periodicals and journals emerged thanks to state patronage, to counter the evangelistic Christian Missionaries.

Islamic Akhbar, a monthly journal espousing the cause of Islam religion could claim the status of being the first paper of the Assamese Muslim community. It appeared in 1919 under the editorship of M.U. Ahmed. Pracharak, the journal of the All Assam Muslim Association, appeared in 1928, as a monthly journal from Dibrugarh. It served the purpose of Hindu-Muslim unity, particularly in Assam.

Modern prose-style in Assamese literature to a great extent is credited to the work of Brown and other missionaries. Since the initial printing and literary
activity occurred in Upper Assam, the language was introduced in schools, courts and offices and thus came to be formally recognised as Standard Assamese. Well-known Assamese literary figure Maheswar Neog says: “...but now in contact with English-speaking people, Assamese developed modern prose-style; and this should perhaps be considered the greatest contribution of the Baptists to Assamese literature and culture. The everyday language of the people could now be the medium of literary expression, which now began to imbibe the qualities of English rhythm and syntax.” Language is the chief ingredient of culture. The missionaries, rather than threatening Assamese culture, liberalised and preserved it and helped in modernising the language. Therefore, the historians have termed the era of American Baptist Missionaries as a period of “cultural progress” in Assam.

Ten years after the treaty of Yandaboo, concluded between the Burmese and the British in February 1826, the rulers passed orders that Bengali and not Assamese would be the language of the courts and schools of Assam. The American Baptist Missionaries, including Brown and Bronson, realised the gravity of the situation as did Sri Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan. They joined forces to muster up an agitation for Assamese. Since 1836, Bengali had remained the official language and medium of instruction in Assam for a period of 38 years despite protests from Baptist missionaries and Assamese intellectuals. Thus, together with the loss of political independence, Assam lost the right to its own language. Bronson made a conscious effort towards linguistic regeneration by bringing the Assamese natives on a common platform so that they could fight for their mother tongue. Bronson’s participation led to the restoration of Assamese (in 1873) as the language of the Assamese people, and he is remembered for his efforts.

Tomas Brunegård, chairman of the Stampen Media Group in Sweden, was elected president of the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA). Brunegård, who was elected to a two-year term during the organisation’s annual meetings in Bangkok, Thailand, succeeds Jacob Mathew, executive editor and publisher of the Malayala Manorama Group of Publications in Kerala.

“It is an honour to take the helm of WAN-IFRA and to succeed Jacob Mathew, who should be commended for steering us through two years of industry transition and transformation,” said Brunegård. “I look forward to contributing to the development of our industry’s multimedia and multifaceted future, and, most importantly, to enhance the WAN-IFRA core mission of defending and promoting press freedom, and the economic independence of news media as an essential condition of that freedom.

Brunegård has been a WAN-IFRA Board Member since 2003 and chairman of its Press Freedom and Media Development Board. The new president’s goals for the organization also include developing a global innovation hub for the industry, increasing cooperation with media industry stakeholders including advertisers, broadcasters, and digital players, developing the organisation’s services in growing markets, and strengthening its role in Europe and North America.

The Stampen Group is a fast growing media group and one of Sweden’s biggest newspaper owners. It also includes digital media, printing operations, distribution companies and outdoor advertising companies.

Five new members were also elected to the Board of WAN-IFRA: Alessandro Bompieri, managing director of RCS Quotidiani, Italy, representing the Federazione Italiana Editori Giornali (FIEG); Liam Kavanagh, managing director of The Irish Times, representing the National Newspapers of Ireland (NNI); Luis Enriquez Nistal, CEO of Vocento, representing the Asociacion De Editores De Diarios Espanoles (AEDE), Spain; César Pérez, president of the Asociación Ecuatoriana de Periódicos (AEDEP), Ecuador; and Dipankar Das Purkayastha, managing director & CEO of ABP in India, representing the WAN-IFRA Advisory Council.
Compared to many other Indian languages, journalism in Tamil language was rather slow in growth initially. There were not many Tamil newspapers till the end of the 19th Century. The early Tamil journals were non-political and mostly promoted by missionaries who used them as vehicles for proselytising. 

The first Tamil journal, Tamil Patrika (1831), a monthly, was published by the Religious Tract Society. Although it had government support, it did not survive long and closed down after two years. Another journal of the period was Rajavvritti Bodhini (1885), which specialised in publishing news items translated from newspapers received from England. Dinavarihamani, its contemporary, was a weekly edited by Reverend P. Percival and published by the Dravidian Press. It had government support and was reputed to have had a circulation of 1000 copies, which was considered large in that age. A British-sponsored publication was Jana Vinodhini which captured public imagination by carrying a series on the Ramayana. It gave greater importance to literary and educational subjects than to current events and news. Viveka Vilasam appeared in 1865 and its main object was to counteract the missionaries’ propaganda. It was promoted by non-Christian Tamil scholars. Madras was the home of these journals and it was also the centre from where newspapers in several other regional languages were published. In 1876, nineteen journals were published from Madras (now Chennai) in four languages: Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Hindi.

The first Tamil newspaper in the real sense was the Swadeshamitrarn which was started as weekly in 1882 by G. Subramania Aiyer, who was also one of the founders of The Hindu. It became a daily in 1899 and dominated Tamil journalism until 1934. It was a pioneering effort for Subramania Aiyer and very soon he was equally at home in Tamil journalism as he was in English. The poet and patriot, Subramania Bharati entered the portals of journalism through the Swadeshamitrarn where he served as a sub-editor for a short period. He paid this tribute to Subramania Aiyer in a letter to The Hindu from Pondicherry in December, 1914: “Unaided he (Subramania Aiyer) had made Tamil journalism a fact of the world, in spite of his very imperfect early training in Tamil literature. Learn, says the Tamil aphorist, while you are yet young. In Subramania Aiyer’s youth he had wholly neglected his mother tongue like most people in this country.

1. Tamil journalist and author A. Ma. Samy in his book (History of Tamil Journals - 19th Century; Navamani Pathippagam, Chennai) seeks to establish that the first ever Indian language publication was Maasa Dina Sarithai (Monthly Chronicle of Daily Events) by Gnanaprakasam, which was published in 1812. According to Samy, the credit for the first ever Tamil publication of the composite Tamil speaking region under the British rule should be assigned to Arasaanga Varthamani - the Government Gazette of Ceylon, which appeared in 1802.
who claim to have been ‘educated’ in English schools. But his mature patriotism had to realise later on that for the elevation of the Tamil race, the Tamil language would be not only the most rational but the indispensable medium. They win who dare; Aiyer dared and he has succeeded in establishing a Tamil daily journal which with all its faults is the most useful newspaper in the Tamil country.”

After Subramania Aiyer, A. Rangaswami Iyengar took over the editorship of the paper. He carried out many improvements in its format and contents and made it very influential in provincial and national politics. The Swadeshamiran became the mouthpiece of the Congress and it was also the Tamil version of The Hindu whose popularity and circulation it shared in fair measure. But the man who was its greatest editor and made it a household name was C. R. Srinivasan, who took over from Rangaswami Iyengar in 1928. His strongest weapon was his editorials in which simple language and style, he explained to his readers political and economic issues which until then had remained beyond the cognitive reach of large masses of Tamil readers. In his hands the Swadeshamiran proved to be both a teacher and a leader for the Tamil literates whose political consciousness was stirred by its relentless campaign for the social development and political emancipation of the country. CRS, as he was affectionately known in journalist circles, was a brilliant commentator in English, too. His frequent contributions on men and matters appeared in The Hindu and were greatly enjoyed by its readers. The Swadeshamiran declined after his passing away in 1962 and folded up some years later. It was revived under another owner but did not quite pick up. The old magic was gone.

In 1917, V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar started a daily, Desabhaktan, which had a short life of three years. Its aim was to present a new and refined style in display of news and one of its editors was the revolutionary, V.V.S. Aiyer. It did not have much of an impact. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar’s weekly, Navasakhti, which was a political and literary magazine, was an instant success. Another great name in Tamil journalism during the period was P. Varadarajulu Naidu, who published Tamil Nadu, a daily from Madras in 1926. It achieved significant success. Varadarajulu Naidu was a Congressman and an ardent supporter of Annie Besant’s Home Rule movement. He carried on a campaign against the Justice Party through his paper and it added to his popularity. Varadarajulu Naidu, however, began to waver in his support to the Congress from 1926 and his critics said he was leaning towards the Hindu Mahasabha. Tamil Nadu closed down in 1930. Some enterprising Congressmen started a paper, India, in 1931 but it did not make much headway. Jayabharati, a tabloid priced at 3 pice, came on the scene and had some initial success. A party newspaper started by the Justice Party was the Dravida edited by J.S. Kannappar.

When Dinamani, sponsored by the Express Group, made its appearance in 1934, it electrified the atmosphere of Tamil journalism. It was a low-priced newspaper (six pice) but it was a different from its rivals in presentation of news and views. Within a month of its publication its circulation shot up and it was more than the combined circulation of all other Tamil papers. Dinamani had originally been started by S. Sadanand who purchased the Indian Express from Varadarajulu Naidu. Both the papers later came into the possession of Ramnath Goenka. The first editor of
Dinamani was T. S. Chockalingam, an ardent Congress man and a powerful writer. With him as joint editor was A.N. Sivaraman who was later to set up new records in Tamil Journalism. Both Chockalingam and Sivaraman were close associates even before they came to Dinamani. They had jointly produced a quarter anna tri-weekly, with news and views on the Satyagraha Movement and very critical of the government. Along with Swathantra Sanghu, another quarter-anna weekly, edited by Sangu Ganesan, it became a rage at the height of the Satyagraha movement and sold like hot cakes. Chockalingam left the Dinamani in 1943 and started a daily of his own, Dinasari, in 1944. And the burden of running Dinamani fell on Sivaraman.

Sivaraman, the most distinguished Tamil journalist, often referred as the Bhisma of Tamil Journalism, did not have much of an education in the conventional sense. He passed the secondary school course and joined a college in Tirunelveli but left it after barely six months. He was attracted by the Congress movement, especially by the ideals of Bal Gangadhar Tilak and he took it upon himself to carry out the movement started by the Congress. Although he had discontinued college education, he began educating himself through wide and purposive reading. Reading at all hours and far into the night became his habit. He was a prominent Congress volunteer in the Salt Satyagraha of 1930 and went to prison. He strayed into journalism when he joined Chockalingam in producing the tri-weekly Gandhi. After joining Dinamani, he switched over to its sister paper, Indian Express, for some years. He covered the San Francisco Conference for his paper and remained in the US for some years as its correspondent. He wrote articles on subjects like science and technology, agriculture and industry, Political science and economics in a way which the common man can easily follow and understand. He was a teacher and guide for his readers, whose mission was to educate his readers to be good citizens and educated patriots.

In 1942, S.B. Adiyman, a barrister and a staunch Congressman, started a daily, Dina Thanthi, in Madurai, deliberately aimed at the lower class and the semi-literate population. The paper indulged in sensationalism and its four pages were filled with stories of crime, violence and cinema, written in an easy style and language. He provided readers what they liked to be fed on and they lapped it up. The paper’s circulation increased manifold and Adiyman brought out editions from Madras and other centres. As the Dravidian parties, the Dravida Kazhagam (under E.V. Ramaswami Naicker) and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (under C.N. Annadurai) began to dominate the political scene in post-independence Madras state (before it was renamed Tamil Nadu), Adiyman resigned from the Congress and joined the Dravidian movement. His contribution to Tamil journalism was that he took the newspaper to the doorstep of the poor and downtrodden. Over the years, Dina Thanthi and its sister publications have not changed much in the type of journalism it began with. Neither has its popularity waned.

The path shown by Dina Thanthi has been followed by many other Tamil dailies. The most common
features have been: a. wide coverage of political warfare in Tamil Nadu, b. dominance of crime, sex and cinema, and c. multiple editions. Dinakaran followed this path and added more good investigative stories. It is published from multiple centres. Unlike Dina Thanthi, it has an editorial. It has a good circulation and one reason for its popularity is said to be its anti-establishment posture.

Another daily which has made its mark is Dinamalar, established by T.V. Ramasubba Aiyer, a Congressman of Tirunelveli. It was started in 1951 in Trivandrum and played an active role in the agitation for the merger of Tamil areas in Travancore with Tamil Nadu and was very popular for that reason. At one stage, the paper’s office was raided by the police and its copies were seized. This happened when Pattom Thanu Pillai was the chief minister of the state. After the success of the agitation and when Nagercoil and Kanyakumari were merged with Tamil Nadu, Ramasubha Aiyer moved to Tirunelveli where Dinamalar in 1960 concentrated on the problems of the local people and in getting the people’s grievances redressed. Its circulation went up and an edition was started at Tiruchi in 1966 followed by one in Madras in 1979 and in Erode in 1984. Dinamalar introduced offset printing in 1981 and adopted other modern techniques of printing. A feature of the paper is its photographic coverage which gives it a unique place in Tamil journalism. During the Pope’s visit to Madras in 1986, it came out with a four-page photo feature of the Pope’s engagements in the city.

A Tamil daily which was the result of cooperative efforts is Makkal Kural, which appeared in Madras in 1973. It came to life on the ashes of Navamani, founded by a cooperative society, which got into trouble with the DMK Government and had finally to close down. One of its leading journalists, Shanmuga Vel, floated the Newsmen Associates in 1972 and the Makkal Kural came into being the next year. It had an able an experienced editor in T.R. Ramaswami, who was formerly connected with Patriot and Link of New Delhi and with the Federation of Working Journalists. TRR, as he was known to his readers, had a powerful pen and a head for facts and figures. In 1982, it started an evening English daily, News Today.

Tamil papers outside India
Tamil language newspapers have been published from outside the country from the pre-Independence era. There was a Tamil newspaper titled Tamil Nesan in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia since 1924. It was the lome Tamil newspaper in Malaysia till Tamil Osai was launched in 1981. Later it was rechristened Makkal Osai, which in English means Tamil voice. Thamizhavel G. Sarangapani launched Tamil Murasu in Singapore on 1935. By mid 2012, it was the only Tamil language newspaper in Singapore.

Several Tamil language newspapers have been published from Sri Lanka, the best known being Virakesari. It was first published on August 6, 1930 by P.P.R. Subramanian, an entrepreneur and journalist from Avanipatti Village in Tamil Nadu. Subramanian guided the publication for over 20 years, during which the publication focused on the rights and grievances of the plantation workers, capturing the attention of the Tamil-speaking population. By mid-2012, it was the most widely circulated and read newspaper by the entire Tamil-speaking population in Sri Lanka. In 2005 Virakesari’s e-paper was launched, which it claimed was the world’s first Tamil e-paper.

Among other Tamil language newspapers published from Sri Lanka were Eelamurasu, Eeelanadu and Uthayan (all the three papers were published from Jaffna, a Tamil majority area. Uthayan was founded in 1985 by journalist Nadesapillai Vithyatharan. Thinakkural was founded by Pon Rajagobal, former editor of Virakesari in 1997, and Sudar Oli was founded in Colombo on 10 September 2000 as a weekly newspaper. It became a daily newspaper on 29 October 2001. Nadesapillai Vithyatharan became the paper’s editor in 2002. Almost all Tamil language newspapers in Sri Lanka suffered heavily during the conflict beginning early 1980s. Besides Sri Lanka and Malaysia, Tamil newspapers are also published from countries like Singapore, UK, Canada, Australia and several countries in West Asia.

Leading Tamil dailies
By end-2012, Daily Thanthi was the largest-read daily in Tamil Nadu. According to the Indian Readership Survey Q-4 2012, it occupies the seventh position in the top ten publication of the country. Hindi daily Dainik Jagran tops the list. Daily Thanthi is followed by Dinakaran and Dinamalar. Among the Tamil magazines, Kumudum is the largest circulated. It occupies sixth position in the list of top ten language magazines of the country. Malayalam periodical Vanitha tops the list.

Newspapers across the country and languages have had political leanings, some overtly some covertly. But an interesting feature of Tamil journalism is that it has had distinct in-your-face political leanings. Several newspapers were open and vocal about their
leanings. In the pre-Independence era, it could be divided into three groups: the Dravidian Press, the Nationalist Press, the Muslim Press. Post-Independence, the trend continues; albeit with different rallying points.

Radio: Radio broadcasting was pioneered in India by the Madras Presidency Club Radio in 1924. The Club worked a broadcasting service for three years, but owing to financial difficulties gave it up in 1927. In the same year (1927) some enterprising businessmen in Bombay started the Indian Broadcasting Company with stations in Bombay and Calcutta. This company failed in 1930; in 1932 the Government of India took over broadcasting. A separate department known as Indian Broadcasting Service was opened. The service was later designated All India Radio (AIR) and was placed under a separate ministry – the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. AIR is controlled by a director general, who is assisted by several deputy directors and a chief engineer. The first FM broadcasting in India began in 1977 in Madras. By mid-2011, Tamil Nadu had two AM and ten FM radio stations, operated by All India Radio and private broadcasters. Chennai-based Anna University has the distinction of running India’s first campus community radio station, which was launched on 1st February, 2004.

Television: TV broadcasting in Tamil Nadu began in 1974 after Doordarshan set up its Chennai station the same year. Currently, the public broadcaster runs three terrestrial television channels in Tamil Nadu - DD Chennai (DD-1), DD News (DD-2) and DD Podhigai, and one satellite television channel, Podhigai TV, from its Chennai centre. Tamil Nadu has witnessed tremendous growth of private TV channels after 1991. Major private TV networks operating in the state are Sun TV, Raj TV, Star Vijay, Jaya TV, Makkal TV, Kalaignar TV, Thamizhan TV. Chennai is the first city in India to have implemented the conditional access system for cable television.

New media: Tamil Nadu was at the forefront of new media revolution. The Hindu, which has at its headquarters in Chennai, was the first newspaper in India to go online in 1995. Regional newspapers made their online presence by late 90s. By early 2013, almost all major newspapers and periodicals had their presence on cyber world with several having their e-papers. There are hundreds of Tamil speaking population-focused news sites and subject specific websites.

Amar Ujala app for merchants

Amar Ujala has taken a step towards expanding the digital and mobile medium to the masses by launching its Best Deals app for local merchants and customers in Agra. The app has been jointly developed by Amar Ujala and Ahoy Telecom. The Amar Ujala Best Deals platform offers merchants in small towns an opportunity to attract customers in their vicinity using geo-targeted ad campaign feature. This feature empowers the local halwai to clear his inventory towards the evening by updating a quick deal targeting customers in the vicinity of his shop. Cinema halls can now offer progressive discounting on tickets and announce it directly to the handset of the consumers who are in the 5km radius of the cinema hall. The local vegetable vendors can now offer discounts on perishable vegetables and fruits. At the same time, the app provides discounts on beauty & spa, food & beverages, electronics, clothing and accessories and many more. Customers are given a plethora of deals to choose from. Using their smart-phones users can now know the discounts in their city before stepping out for shopping. The Amar Ujala Best Deals app is compatible with all major operating systems and is available on Android, Apple, Blackberry, Windows and Java. It is free of cost for users.
Saroj Khan is one of the most celebrated, talented and awarded dancer-teacher-choreographers in Indian cinema. She is also the subject of a 57-minute documentary, The Saroj Khan Story, possibly the first ever documentary on a film choreographer, produced by the Public Service Broadcasting Trust and directed by Nidhi Tuli.

It took a long and uphill climb for Saroj Khan to become the subject of a documentary film. Her career charts the metamorphosis of dance in Bollywood cinema from classical-based choreography in films like Ladki and Bahar through Helen’s sizzling numbers to the present-day item numbers that probably began with Madhuri Dixit’s Ek do teen in Tezaab, choreographed and directed by Saroj Khan. She excels in the Indian classical styles and in Western forms, and in all the colours of the choreographer’s palette between the two polarities – hip-hop, salsa, ballroom, Indian folk styles, fusion, item numbers and any other dance style fall between these two extremes.

The Saroj Khan Story began as a search for the genius behind one of the greatest choreographers Indian cinema has ever seen. It is a deeply personal story of determination, passion, extraordinary skill and the sheer will to survive that is both intimate and inspiring,” explains Nidhi, adding, “I was a fan of hers like most people who know about her choreography are, but it was during the making of the film that I discovered that she is a genius and she wears that so lightly; she is a perfectionist and a very passionate dancer.”

Saroj Khan’s varied repertoire ranges from purely classical numbers in the Tamil film Shringaram – Dance of Love (2005) through the beautifully graceful numbers executed by Aishwarya Rai in Subhash Ghai’s Taal and Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam and Devdas. “The Madhuri Dixit number on the song in Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s Devdas (2002) had the refrain maar dala four times in each stanza. “I taught Madhuri to execute each refrain differently each time. This spread over to three or four stanzas and each time, she expressed this refrain differently,” explains Khan.

The choreography also got her the national award preceded by another national award for the dance numbers in Hemant Gowarikar’s Lagaan (2001) alongside the Filmfare Award. One similar milestone is Bhansali’s Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam, which brought her a string of awards. She won the American Choreographer Award for Lagaan.

Shringaram is special because it was directed by a noted dancer, Saradha Ramanathan, produced by Padmini Ravi, a classical dancer, and was a period film harking back to the 19th Century about the life of a devadasi. Aditi Rao Hydari a talented Bharat Natyam dancer played the role of the devadasi (servant of God). Though the producer and director were both celebrated dancers themselves, they placed the onus of choreography on Saroj Khan. Her choreography of the dance numbers in the film fetched...
her a national award. Padma Bhushan Lalgudi G. Jayaraman who composed the music for the film also won the national award.

In The Saroj Khan Story, the camera focuses on her as she narrates her slow but rocket-like rise in filmdom, from a chorus dancer in the back row to a leading choreographer who composed and directed every other leading lady from Madhuri Dixit to Aishwarya Rai to Kareena Kapoor to Sonakshi Sinha. The film opens with Saroj Khan in her car, talking on the cellphone till it cuts to a close-up of the woman at home with walls filled with photographs and portraits of herself and family members. She looks back wistfully into her past that includes the unceasing sickness of a daughter who passed away later. But Saroj-ji does not dwell on her personal grief much.

Nidhi Tuli made her debut with Ladies Special (2003), a very interesting documentary on a local Mumbai train that runs exclusively for women. The film bagged the John Abraham National Award in 2005 and the George Ragot Love the Train Award at the Cine Rail Paris in 2009. Her other films include the widely appreciated Art in Exile, TIPA, Of Friendship, Films and Swords and The Saint of Chitrakoot. The Charles Wallace Scholar’s The Saroj Khan Story is perhaps the first documentary on a choreographer in Bollywood. Saroj Khan has choreographed for not less than 200 films. Tuli tries to bring out the emotions of this creative performing artiste whose professional struggle followed by success is counter-pointed by the constant pain and suffering in her personal life.

Tuli avoids intruding into Khan’s privacy unless she comes forth herself. An example is her narration about her love affair with her dance teacher who married her but abandoned her after some months, leaving her pregnant. She talks about it in her natural no-nonsense manner without much emotion. There are brief interviews with Sanjay Leela Bhansali, Subhash Ghai and some other directors Saroj-ji has worked with in her long career, and also with Madhuri Dixit.

DNA has new editor-in-chief

C.P. Surendran, former senior editor of The Times of India, Gurgaon has joined DNA as editor-in-chief. In Mumbai, Surendran has worked with The Times of India, Times Sunday Review and Bombay Times, among other publications. He was also resident editor of The Times of India, Pune for three years.
REMEMBERING RUTH PRAWER JHABWALA (1927-2013)

Dear Ruth, we’ll miss you

I will miss Ruth Prawer Jhabwala. One of the most gentle, affectionate women that I have ever met, she became a dear friend. We first met at the home she and her husband, Cyrus Jhabvala (Jhab, as he was known to us), had shared on the Ridge in Delhi. The year was 1967. Jhab had struck a friendship with my husband, Lakshmi Jain, as far back as in the 1950s.

Lakshmi was then the general secretary of the Indian Cooperative Union, which at the time was managing the Central Cottage Industries Emporium. It was Jhab, an architect by training, who had performed the miracle of transforming a musty, almirah-ridden salesroom into a modern, accessible display-style shop. The mutual admiration and cooperation between the two men continued over the years and Lakshmi recruited Jhab’s help in not only designing the Super Bazar that came up in Delhi’s Connaught Place in 1966 – the year Lakshmi and I got married – but in designing and implementing the Apna Bazar, that was located in the INA market area of the city.

What struck one about Ruth was her transparency. I asked her how she was able to write such brilliant books while she brought up three daughters. It was a heartfelt question. At that stage, I was struggling to do anything more than mind my baby son and keep up with my teaching commitments even though I, too, nursed great ambitions to write fiction. She told me that the best way to find the time to write was to re-locate one’s writing desk to the centre of a big room where the young children were allowed the freedom to sleep, cry, play, and fight! She told me, “Do not try to find a quiet room to do your writing. It can only happen in the midst of that chaos.”

In Bombay (now Mumbai), she said, the family had lived in a one-roomed flat – a very large room with a kitchen attached. “In fact, it gave me the most free time to have the children around me while I wrote. So the first trick is: Don’t try to put the children anywhere else if you want to have time to yourself,” she had stated, and laughed so uproariously that I still remember her mirth.

In a way that was Ruth, absolutely straight, incapable of anything but the truth in everything she said, did – in the way she lived. She found the behaviour of Indians fascinating. As she and I became closer, we would meet as friends, not necessarily because of the friendship of our respective husbands. I could see that basically she was a keen observer of life around her, the societies in which she lived and enjoyed portraying it all through fiction. I do not think she had any particular distaste for Indian society. She just found intriguing the fact that it threw up so many types of customs and behaviours. The comedy of it all, struck her above all.

Another highlight for me was when Ruth invited me, along with one of her “favourite men”, namely my husband, for the opening of the Ivory/ Merchant film, The Householder, at Delhi’s Vigyan Bhavan. We were privileged as we had seats next to Ruth, somewhere in the middle of the hall. She had her own way of displaying the pure joy she felt – this time it was to see the film in a way that did not entail a public exhibition.
An image that comes back to me, and which would never fail to delight me, was that of seeing Ruth and Jhab sitting deep in the back of the huge car – whether it was a Buick or a Chevrolet, I do not remember – relaxing and driving on the Ring Road from Rajpur Road to New Delhi. I would pass their car quite frequently as I drove on the opposite side of the road on my way to the university. The two looked like the lovers they were, driving like royalty on that big wide road in that big car.

As we grew older, Ruth, I think, began to find ‘the heat and dust’ of India overwhelming. Moreover, apart from the traffic, buses and crowds, so many dimensions of Indian society were changing. All this must have contributed to the move she and her husband made in trading Delhi for New York in 1975. But they kept their flat in Alipur Road, and would come back during the cold New York winters to catch up with Delhi’s lovely winters and springs. It was a safari that their daughter, Renana, used to facilitate as the years went by. For us, it became a ritual to meet them during these visits.

Today, as I write this, I recall the easy way in which I could sit and talk to her about the hundred and one things – the books she was writing or the work I was doing – even as our husbands laughed and enjoyed their anecdotes of the work they did together in the 1950s and 1960s. I missed that annual reunion this year. Both Ruth and Jhab had begun to feel weaker and couldn’t make their way to Delhi. Their daughters, each a significant player in creative global fields, were Ruth’s passion. My heart goes out to them on their loss of her quiet but critical guidance at all times. And Jhab? I cannot bear to think... with Lakshmi gone, I understand well the loss of a lifetime companion.

A book of Ruth’s short stories, located not in India but in other parts of the world, was released just a year or two ago. As I read it, I can see so clearly Ruth’s ability to capture the character of the people she wrote about, and her humour that was never far away.

A personal tribute by Devaki Jain
(Courtesy: Women’s Feature Service)

Guide to the World Publishing Expo

The World Publishing Expo (IFRA Expo and Conference) will be held at the Messe Berlin exhibition grounds from 7 to 9 October next. The Expo, organised by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) for more than four decades, showcases the latest technologies and brings together suppliers to the industry with its thought leaders and decision makers. It is one of the world’s best venues for the latest developments in print, workflow efficiency, social-local-mobile, revenue generation, and more.

Axel Springer’s CEO Mathias Döpfner will open the World Publishing Expo 2013, speaking about the importance of technology for the future of publishing. A full list of the exhibitors can be found at http://tinyurl.com/pmu9lab. More than 200 speakers and presenters will be featured over the Expo’s three days, in both free and paid-for events. The free events, to be held on four Media Port stages scattered throughout the Expo, will feature collaborations between publishers and suppliers and provide case studies of what can help publishers now. The paid events are for top-level industry executives and editors and will discuss strategies for the future of news publishing.

These premium events include the 6th Tablet and App Summit on 7 and 8 October, the World Editors Forum International Newsroom Summit on 8 and 9 October, and three Shaping the Future of News Publishing (SFN) Forums on digital printing opportunities (7 October), audience analytics (8 October) and new revenue streams (9 October).

The World Editors Forum’s 12th International Newsroom Summit aims to provide strategies for breaking down barriers in the newsroom and increasing collaborations between editorial and technology and among broadcast, print and digital operations. Speakers include Raju Narisetti, senior VP and deputy head of Strategy for News Corp., Kerry Northrup, creator of the US$2.5 million Newsplex prototype convergent newsroom-studio and currently the Turner Multimedia Professor at Western Kentucky University, and Anthony De Rosa, editor-in-chief of Circa, the first born-on-mobile news publisher. Full details for all World Publishing Expo events can be found at http://www.wan-ifra.org/ifraexpo2013.
With the passing away of Veena Mazumdar, our Veenadee, the Indian Women’s Movement has experienced an irreparable loss. Veenadee personified a far-sighted and strong-willed thinker and a forceful speaker and convincing debater who had faith in human goodness. Her intellectual prowess did not lead her to live in an ivory tower, in her approach towards her colleagues and fellow travelers made up of academicians, policy makers, researchers and feminist activists. She always remained warm at heart, easy to approach, there was instant building of rapport, and she was magnanimous in sharing her knowledge and institutional resources as director of the Centre for Women’s Development Studies.

Veenadee’s charm lay in her electrifying persona, her always smiling face conveying optimism, her down-to-earth approach, her ideological sharpness, her story-telling laced with wit and, most important, her courage of conviction combined with honesty of purpose. This is what explained her command and stature whether she was in the decision-making bodies of the University Grants Commission, the Indian Council of Social Sciences Research, the Planning Commission of India or in the ministries. She could galvanize students, teachers, researchers, women’s organisations, trade unionists, bureaucrats, politicians and law makers into action as she was one of the best ‘argumentative Indians’ produced by the women’s studies movement.

She was very good at coining catchy terms such as ‘women’s studies movement’, ‘the Indian psyche defined by binary Ma versus Maal’, and the dichotomy that worships motherhood and dehumanizes/commodifies the rest of women. Her contemporary powerful men in the universities, research institutions and ministries called her a “bulldozer” while women scholars and practitioners found her the most trustworthy friend and mentor. I worked closely with Veenadee for the Women’s Studies Conference hosted by SNDT Women’s University in 1985, for preparing the End of the Decade alternate country report on the status of women in India, in 1986 for the research committee’s panel discussion on Ante-natal Sex Selective and Abortions of Female Foetus in India for the World Sociological Conference, and in 1988 for a multi-centric research project on Child Care as an Essential Input for Women’s Development.

Veena Mazumdar was born in 1927 and completed her schooling in Calcutta. She did her honours course from Benaras Hindu University as well as Ashutosh...
College, Calcutta University, and obtained a doctorate in Philosophy from Oxford University. In 1947, she went to Oxford University and completed her graduation in 1951. In 1960, she enrolled as a research scholar at Oxford University and within two years was awarded her doctorate. Veenadee taught Political Science at Patna University and Berhampur University for couple of years. After that she joined UGC. As an officer in the UGC Secretariat she made a mark as an energetic officer. She was also selected as a Fellow of the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Simla. In 1972, when the Indian Government agreed to honour the UN mandate to prepare a status report on women, Veenadee was appointed as member secretary of the Committee on the Status of Women in India. Her contribution while preparing the landmark report, Towards Equality, as a researcher backed by analytical rigour to explain material and ideological conditions that determined women’s predicament in India, made her a most sought-after scholar-activist during 1970s through till the beginning of the New Millennium.

In 1974, when the All India Institute of Medical Science began conducting a sample survey of amniocentesis to find out about foetal genetic conditions, it easily managed to enroll 11000 pregnant women as volunteers for its research. The main interest of the volunteers was to know sex of the foetus. Once the results were out, the women who were told that they were carrying female fetuses, demanded abortion. When the young researcher at AIIMS shared the observation with Veenadee, she mobilised a women’s delegation to meet the health minister to stop the abuse of amniocentesis for sex-selective abortions. Veenadee was a great champion of participatory action research. Her writings provided a road map for developmental initiatives. Her memoir, Memories of a Rolling Stone, published by Zubaan Books in 2010 provides vivid description of her principles, programmes, policy initiatives in collaboration with her team of movers and shakers.

A tribute by Vibhuti Patel

(The writer is a member of the Women’s Research and Action Group, Mumbai, and president, WomenPowerConnect, Delhi. She is professor and head of the Department of Economics, SNDT Women’s University, Mumbai, and a member of the advisory board of the Department of Women’s Studies of the National Council of Education, Research and Training, Delhi.)

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**Trends in Newsrooms 2013 released**

The World Editors Forum has just published its ninth annual edition of Trends in Newsrooms, which highlights five key trends this year: mobile, innovative storytelling, paid digital content, social media, and data and metrics. “While editors around the world continue to struggle with ongoing challenges relating to tight budgets and smaller newsroom staffs, we also see a number of trends that make our profession promising, interesting valuable,” said Erik Bjerager, president of the World Editors Forum and editor-in-chief and managing director of Denmark’s Kristeligt Dagblad. The report, which is jointly published by WEF and the Shaping the Future of News Publishing Project of the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), examines:

- Mobile, where the explosion of tablets and smartphones means the demand for good content that takes advantage of mobile attributes is rising;
- Innovative storytelling, as more news publishers start thinking in terms of multimedia elements from the beginning of the process rather than afterthoughts tacked on at the end;
- Paid digital content, which seems likely to become the standard in many parts of the world and can provide significant income;
- Social media, for finding stories and for distributing news, and as the first place to cover fast-moving stories;
- Data and metrics, to be used by both journalists and data specialists not only for reporting but to understand traffic and reader habits.
REMEMBERING RITUPARNO GHOSH (1963-2013)

A film-maker and a multifaceted genius

The sudden and tragic demise of Rituparno Ghosh on May 30 at the young age of 49 is a tremendous loss not only to Indian cinema but also to Bengali literature. His multifaceted talent covered an entire range of cultural expression beginning with copywriting in Bengali for a noted ad agency, making ad films, direction, and passing through editing, creative and journalistic writing, brilliant lyrics and acting. He leaves behind an enviable personal library comprised of around two-and-a-half lakh books, so passionate he was about reading as much as he was with his other creative pursuits. He was also a very successful television anchor who made some brilliant telefilms and serials.

He joined Response, a noted ad agency directly after his graduation in Economics from Jadavpur University. Two of his immortal ‘copies’ in Bengali discussed within agency circles are Boroline – Bongo Jeeboner Ongo for Boroline cream and Dekhte Kharap Makhite Bhalo for Neem toothpaste. He went on make around 400 commercials some of which bagged international awards. He then turned his attention to his first, full-length feature film Hirer Angti (1992) produced by the Children’s Film Society of India. No one then had heard of the film or its young director because the film was never released publicly in theatres though it was screened internationally. This was followed by Unishe April (1994), which bagged the top award at the National Film Awards the following year. As the cliché goes, the rest is history.

However, even after Unishe April, Rituparno continued to write Bengali copy on an assignment basis for Clarion in the mornings and Trikaya Grey in the evenings but quit his full-time job because he had made his decision – making films. He failed to get a producer for Unishe April, so his friend Aparna Sen and theatre personality Renu Ray who was close to Aparna decided to produce the film while Rituparno became the third partner. Distributors remained unenthusiastic. But after the award, the partners decided to distribute the film themselves. It was a small-budget film shot entirely in a posh flat in New Alipur got through Renu Ray’s network. Bibi Ray, a famous costume designer who later got a national award, did the interior décor for the film. “For Ritu, the process of filmmaking was not a life-and-death situation but an enjoyable process of happiness. It was necessary for him to live through that process,” says journalist-filmmaker Sudeshna Ray, who has known him since their school days.

For most of his 17 feature films, Rituparno bagged the national award in 12 of them, for the film, for his direction, for screenplay and for his actors. Over the last six years of his life, he edited Rabbar, the Sunday magazine of a Bengali daily Sangbad Pratidin. His editorial was named First Person and was its main selling point. Before
that, even while he was full-time filmmaker, he edited Anandadali, the famous film fortnightly from the ABP Group. When circulation dropped, he changed the look of the magazine with his own copy on the billboards – Ulte Dekhun, Palte Gachhey (Turn it over, it has changed) and the circulation soared.

Between Unishe April and Chitrangada, Ghosh became one of the most outstanding filmmakers in India. He began with woman-centric films - Unishe April, Dahan, Asookh and Bariswali. He generously drew from literature to make Antarmahal (Tarasankar Bandopadhyay) Chokher Bali (Tagore), Shuchinmohurut (Agatha Christie), The Last Lear (William Shakespeare) and Noukadubi (Tagore). He focussed on the complex shades inherent in man-woman relationships in Dosar, Raincoat (Hindi) based on a story by O’Henry, Shob Charitra Kalponik, Titli and Abohomaan. He probed into the mindset of an extended family reunited in their ancestral mansion for the annual Durga Pooja in Utsab. He revealed how a creative artiste can mercilessly exploit the naive emotions of his artiste in Khela, visible earlier in Bariswali and later in Abohomaan and The Last Lear. He unabashedly pointed a finger at himself through the story of a filmmaker who kidnaps a little boy just because he feels that the boy is ideal for a character.

Rituparno transcended the barriers of regional cinema, firstly by bringing in actors and actresses from national cinema to star in Bengali films, such as Mithun Chakraborty in Titli, Sharmila Tagore and Raakhee in Shubho Muhurt, Kiron Kher in Bariswali, Aishwarya Rai in Chokher Bali and, secondly, by stepping directly into Hindi territory with Raincoat, starring Ajay Devgun and Aishwarya Rai. He then brought in Soha Ali Khan, Jackie Shroff, Nandita Das, Abhishek Bachchan, Monisha Koirala and Bipasha Basu in his subsequent Bengali films. He had the gift of drawing out the best performances from stars of commercial cinema noted for their mainstream mannerisms. One classic example of this is Prosenjeet, the top box office grosser in Bengali cinema. Prosenjeet has acted in five of Ghosh’s films. These are Unishe April, Utsab, Dosar, Shob Charitra Kalponik and Noukadubi. In each one of the films, the star has stripped himself completely of his commercial image to step into the character and become one with it.

Rituparno came out of his closeted sexual identity as an androgynous personality after the demise of his parents with whom he was extremely close. His last three films, Just Another Love Story, Memories in March and Chitrangada – The Crowning Wish, the first two as actor and the last as actor-director, he explored his androgynous identity and expressed the private pain of being ‘different’ and the humiliation by a world where alternative sexual preferences and androgyny are considered ‘marginal’. The director faced the wrath of the media, the Bengali audience and Tagore scholars for his interpretations of Chokher Bali based on a novel by Rabindranath Tagore, and Tarasankar Bandopadhyay’s short story, Protima, made into Antarmahal. His later films are noted more for their attention to the physical detailing of sets, production design, architecture, costume, make-up and cinematography than on historical details such as time, space and logic. This culminated in bigger criticism when Chitrangada – The Crowning Wish was released. But this did not discourage him from wearing his androgynous identity in public through his way of dressing that included make-up and jewellery which few celebrities will take the risk of doing.

The physical pain and the overload of medicines he had to struggle through due to his severe pancreatic disease, acute diabetes, and the severe after-effects of the series of hormone therapy and sex-change surgeries he undertook never showed up in his public appearances. His behaviour, however, had changed specially with the media. This stemmed probably from his frustrations about people laughing at his expense behind his back, or making jokes at his expense. He chose the media to vent his frustrations and anger on. Professional photographers complained about his trying to control and monitor them each time they clicked their cameras while journalists he did not know or who were comparatively less known had to face his ire or face constant refusal to give them interviews or even brief quotes. All this is explained away through his extreme loneliness he lived within for the past several years of his life. This is very sad considering that he was a journalist and an editor, too.

Rituparno’s last two works – Satyanweshi, a thriller based on the famous Bengali Byomkesh Bakshi series and his documentary on Rabindranath Tagore – remain unreleased till today. His friends and associates are planning to release the feature film in the last week of August to coincide with Rituparno’s 50th birth anniversary. The films he dreamt of making, such as a film adaptation of the late poet Mallika Sengupta’s Kobir bouathan, based on Tagore’s controversial relationship with his sister-in-law, or an animation film on a famous children’s book will now never be made. The dreamer is still dreaming but in a different world.

A tribute by Shoma A. Chatterji
REMEMBERING SHARMILA REGE (1964-2013)

A leading light in the world of women’s studies

I am indeed shocked to learn about the sad and untimely death of Sharmila due to cancer of the colon at the young age of 49. She was not only a good scholar but also a refined human being and ajatshatru (individual without personal enemies). Prof Sharmila Rege was an Indian sociologist, feminist scholar and widely discussed author. She was a leader of the Kranti Jyoti Savitribai Phule Women’s Studies Centre (KJSPWSC) at the University of Pune who fought for her ideological commitment for the excluded and brutalized sections of society.

I was amazed when Sharmila, head of Department of Sociology decided to join the Centre for Women’s Studies as director and reader. In an hierarchical institution such as a university, a scholar established in the mainstream discipline switching for ‘lower’ position without batting an eyelid showed her commitment towards women’s studies. Under her leadership, KJSPWSC became an intellectually vibrant centre providing a platform to academicians, retired scholars, freelance researchers, social activists and feminists. I had opportunity to meet Sharmila for 10 years continuously, from 1996 to 2006 when I was invited by her centre to deliver four lectures a day on gender budgeting, globalisation, sex selection, declining sex ratio and sexual harassment at workplace for the refresher and certificate courses in women’s studies. I was impressed by nurturing, voluntary and cooperative atmosphere created by Sharmila even in the midst of tremendous financial crunch experienced by the centre in that period.

Sharmila as a social activist, feminist scholar and analyst single-mindedly challenged the Brahminical patriarchy from the Dalit standpoint. In 2008, her inspiring and insightful Savitribai Phule Oration on Education as Trutiya Ratna: Towards Phule-Ambedkarite Feminist Pedagogical Practice sponsored by NCERT in a jam-packed hall at SNDT Women’s University, Mumbai was mind-blowing. The audience, whether they agreed with her or not, listened to her with rapt attention and many of them gave her a standing ovation.

Sharmila could convincingly explain women’s predicament determined by the complex interplay of class, caste, religion and sexuality with the help of historical evidences, contemporary concerns of Dalit-tribal-minority women and the queer community. Sharmila practised what she preached within academia and from political platforms. She fought for the right of the Dalit students in her university. She legitimised the crucial contribution of Babasaheb in examining Indian civilization from the point of view of the oppressed and exploited sections such as shudra (untouchables) and ati-shudra. She brought to the fore knowledge of the ‘subjugated’ and challenged the dominant Brahminical discourse.

Sharmila left a lasting impression on any one who met her. She had a huge fan following among postgraduate, M Phil. and PhD. students. How can anyone forget the courteous, mild mannered and soft spoken Sharmila who gave quality time to her non-English speaking students, who with great perseverance brought out important works of women’s studies in Marathi. Her concerns were encapsulated in the quotation from Dr Ambedkar that invariably accompanied her emails: “My final words of advice to you are educate, agitate and organise; have faith in yourself. With justice on our side, I do not see how we can lose our battle.”

Sharmila’s book, Writing Caste, Writing gender: Reading Dalit Women’s Testimonies published by Zubaan, Delhi in 2006, had a massive ripple effect among sociologists, political scientists, women’s studies and Dalit studies scholars.

A tribute by Vibhuti Patel
A short take on writing features

The second edition of N. Meera Raghavendra Rao’s *Feature Writing* is not just a re-run of the original version, but has fresh chapters and inputs that add to its utility as a handbook for journalism students and anyone wanting to try their hand at writing. The volume covers all the essentials of feature writing in a concise way. After an introduction to journalism in general, bolstered by a comprehensive selection of quotes from media luminaries like C.P. Scott, former editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, and Joseph Pulitzer, and giants of the literary world such as Oscar Wilde and John Steinbeck, and even Mahatma Gandhi, Rao gets down to the nitty-gritty of feature writing.

Starting with the difference between news and features, she covers the whole gamut of this genre of journalism, right from the idea stage to the writing process itself. The many elements of a feature – peg, angle, facts, quotes, pictures, to name a few – the different types of features and even the personality traits that make for a good feature writer are all set out in detail. While the various types of features – Brights, News Features, Personality Sketches, Interview Features, Human Interest stories, Travel features, etc are dealt with individually, the craft of feature writing itself is also given considerable space. The many varieties of leads and endings, the use of characters, quotes, conversation, the vocabulary, the various styles possible, the importance of headlines and of pictures and their captions are discussed.

All the various aspects of feature writing are amply illustrated by examples, the vast majority of them drawn from the author’s own work. In fact, if there is a fault it is that the illustrations have been scattered with too heavy a hand – at times the book reads more like an anthology of Rao’s writing. Several features are reproduced in toto while others are quoted from extensively. Examples are cited from the work of other writers too, though these are limited, possibly owing to copyright constraints. In fact, that is one of the USPs of the book – the fact that it is written by an Indian author in an Indian context as a guide for aspiring Indian writers.

Two additions in the second edition are the chapters on Rural Journalism and Online Features and Blogs. While writing for the rural masses is particularly relevant in the Indian context, online journalism is of universal modern relevance. However, at least in the instance of rural journalism, no ground-breaking insight is offered into the subject, except to say that “The approach to feature writing about rural India and its people is no different from writing features of different kinds dealt under [sic] various chapters…. What is important for the feature writer is to identify his sources and establish a rapport so that he/she can get the best out of his sources. This can be achieved if the feature writer is conversant with the local lingo.”

There are also chapters on Obituary and Tribute Features and Sports Features which have been added in this version of the book. The reader gets a chance to compare and contrast styles – very useful to those seeking to develop styles of their own.

The book would have been even better with a little more attention to proofing, editing and page design, so that there are no printer’s devils such as spelling errors – pouring vs. poring for instance, jumps in the text like the one in the section on different types of leads, which suddenly skips to “some of the other popular endings…” , no repetitions and no confusion caused by different fonts for sub-headings at the same level – for example the section headed Explanatory Notes with Examples of Some Key Terms Used in the Book.

The author has drawn on her own over three-decade-long experience as a Chennai-based features writer and author to produce a hands-on effect and also packs in a lot of information about journalism as a whole. Her handy hints to prospective writers and sidelights such as the one on the origin of the term ‘blog’ are particularly interesting. Most of the chapters conclude with a summary, and there are suggestions for exercises which can act as pointers to both teachers and the self-taught. Altogether, the Second Edition of Feature Writing is a handy little volume for students of journalism as well as freelance writers who learn on the job, so to speak.

Susan Philip

(The reviewer, based in Chennai, had earlier worked with the Press Trust of India.)
100 years of baking bread and more

It has been giving people their daily bread since 1913. ‘K.R. Sassanian, Bakery and Restaurant, High-Class Baker and Refreshment Caterer’, proclaimed their poster of the early days. ‘Before trying elsewhere, please give us a trial’, it appealed, noting that the eatery was run ‘under the proprietor’s personal supervision’. Much has changed since then — an extra S has been added to its name, the menu has moved from the brun-maska-chat (crisp bread, butter, tea) of the typical Irani cafe to Parsi and Chinese dishes and sizzlers as well. But the personal supervision remains.

“Our mava and plum cakes, bread pudding, khari (biscuits), dhaansak, hot pattice, etc are our specialities,” says Meheraban Kola, speaking to us with his partner Adi K. Yazdabadi by his side. “We know Sassanian opened in 1913 but we don’t know the specific date, so March 21 (Jamshedi Navroz) seemed a nice starting point to celebrate a century with a jashan and small party,” smiles Yazdabadi.

Sassanian is situated opposite the Gol Masjid at Dhobi Talao in Bombay. Down the road is the distinctive small structure of the Sodawaterwala aviary. “Right up to the early 1960s, Marine Lines station had its exit very close to the restaurant. There were many bungalows at Marine Lines and along Queen’s Road. There was much more Parsi and Catholic population in the area, along with Gujaratis and a few Muslims. We would also get the cinema crowd from Metro and Liberty cinemas nearby. The Parsi population around Marine Street/Dukkar Galli (side street) has become much less. They have shifted to the suburbs or gone to Poona,” explains Kola.

The march of time and the arrival of the ubiquitous Udupis, pizzerias, bars, bistros, fast food joints and coffee chains have all eaten into the share of the Irani restaurants, with just about a handful remaining. “My father used to say: dil thi khavaro (feed people large-heartedly). I love this place. This is my first wife. Our (bakery) oven is never shut. I am a pucco Zarathushti. All this is due to Ahura Mazda,” says Kola who sits at the restaurant for the greater part of the day, Parsi topi (cap) on head, faith in the heart, forthright in his views. Assisting him as and when the need arises are his sister Dlinaz and her husband Shahrukh Sanjana. The focus is on food, not frills as far as decor or ambience is concerned. The brun/bun maska costs Rs 15, bread pudding is also Rs 15, omelette Rs 30, kheema Rs 45, etc.

Kola has a son Jahanbax and two daughters Zeenia and Natalia who are abroad with their mother Ruhangeez. “My siblings and I grew up in Bombay. We have been living in Canada for the last 10 years,” says Zeenia who is a real estate agent specialising in the Greater Toronto area. Present in Bombay for the centenary celebration, Zeenia recalls her childhood memories: “Around 1987, apart from cakes, puffs, biscuits and tea, Sassanian had signed up for Dollops ice-cream but it didn’t do that well and we discontinued. Around the late 1990s, my mother, dad and their business partner Sharookh Irani (Adi Yazdabadi’s late brother, who was known to all as Uncle Sam) decided to revamp the bakery side, giving it the new name of Sassanian Boulangerie. We introduced chicken rolls, Manchurian rolls, salads, cheesecake, etc. There have
been ups and downs, as every business has. You need patience, trust and confidence.”

Yazdabadi lives with his English wife Valerie in the UK. They have four sons — Steven, Paul, Nigel and Alan. Steven and wife Havovi are in Abu Dhabi, Nigel and Natasha in Sydney, while Paul and Alan are in UK. “I don’t interfere with Merwan (as Meheraban is often called),” says Adi who was with the Rank Organization earlier. He visits Bombay “as I can’t get away from it (Sassanian). After a few days I do get fed up of Bombay, yet something always pulls me back.” Another partner, Irandokht Behjat, also resides in Canada, as do her children Banoo, Nergish, Nazir and Kaikhushroo.

Sasanian was started in 1913 by Adi’s grandfather Rustom Yazdabadi. The Kolas became partners later. “I myself was born in Bombay in 1952. My ancestors were from a village called Arestan in Iran,” narrates Meheraban, whose father Khodadad was sent around the year 1920 to Bombay, touted even at that time as the city of gold. After working for a while at the Irani restaurant called Kyani nearby, Khodadad joined Sasanian, becoming a partner later. We ask Meheraban for his assessment as to why so many Irani Zoroastrians arriving in India in the early 1900s took to opening cafes. “Iranis believe in two things – the food business and buying land,” he answers in his straightforward manner. “In the early days, we (Sassanian) used to open at around five in the morning and the fresh bread — brun, laadi pao (block of small soft loaves), etc would fly off the shelves. Irani cafes at that time were also small convenience stores. We would stock soap, toothpaste, Polson butter, newspapers... Trainers and race lovers like K. Irani would drop in early before proceeding to Mahalaxmi Race Course for the training sessions. They would come back at 11 am. When Marine Lines station shifted northwards, it was a big blow to our business.”

Be it tea for two, tech talk over the fruity flavors of a Mangola or Raspberry, or just a walk-in and walk-out with Easter eggs, the café has through the decades seen a cross section of society — taxi drivers and office goers, families in simple celebration... “Busybee (late Behram Contractor, the chronicler of the life and times of many an ordinary man) has written about us in his Round and About column. The late Adi Marzban, Jimmy Pocha and several others were my father’s friends and patrons over the years,” Kola recalls.

On the counter stands a framed photo of the late Sharookh (Uncle Sam), popular with patrons for his jokes and sunny temperament. “Dad, Uncle Sam and Shahrukh Uncle have given a lot of dedication to this business. There were times we could not go on holidays or parties, or be at family events together because the shop has to be running. You have to sacrifice personal life at times,” Zeenia declares. With Jahanbux having completed his hotel management course before moving abroad, the father is sanguine he will come back at the right time to run the business. “He has an attachment to the place... If Almighty wishes, he will return and keep the family name going.”

“Bombay had its own glory in the 1950s and 60s. I grew up in the territory and have been coming here since I was a child. I remember their lovely cream pastries. Everything was made in house. Sassanian was my rendezvous round the corner,” says old customer, family friend and historian Deepak Rao. The restaurant’s bentwood chairs (introduced in Austria as early as 1859 and so named because they were made using a unique steam-bending technology for wood) imported from Poland and tables with marble tops are all original and still going strong, Rao tells us. “At the time of Independence in 1947, there were 348 Irani restaurants in Bombay. You can read about this on the site (blog) called irani chai mumbai. There is an Australian named Bruce Carter who has done research on this,” states the retired policeman whose knowledge of the history of Bombay is extensive.

(Courtesy: Parsiana. Written by Hilla P. Guzder)
**Publishers meet with Thai PM**

A group of leading publishers and editors from around the world met with the Thai Prime Minister, Yingluck Shinawatra, to discuss how a free press could be the cornerstone of a flourishing Thai democracy. Twenty-two publishers and editors engaged in a free flowing discussion with the Prime Minister at Government House in Bangkok as part of the World Newspaper Congress and World Editors Forum, organised by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA). The delegation called on the prime minister to lead a meaningful dialogue with members of Parliament, the judiciary and citizens to eliminate misuse of the country’s *lèse majesté* laws, which criminalises criticism of the King and royal family and has been used to jail journalists.

Thomas Brunegard, newly elected president of WAN-IFRA, and chairman of the Stampen Group in Sweden, and Erik Bjerager, president of the World Editors Forum, presented the Prime Minister with a letter expressing concern over the law, citing a recent prison sentence of ten years handed down to Somyot Pruksakasemuk, former editor of the magazine *The Voice of Taksin* in January 2013. Former WAN-IFRA president Jacob Mathew called on the Thai Government to do everything in its power to release all journalists who were jailed under the law.

**Publishers launch global forum on copyright**

Publishers from around the world met in Bangkok to take steps to establish a new global forum to share experiences and concerns about how content aggregators and search engines impact their businesses. The issue is a contentious one, as search engines and aggregators can play both a positive and negative role for publishers, driving traffic to news sites but often using content with no discussion with publishers whatsoever.

Until now, engagement with search engines, aggregators and regulators has generally occurred at the national or regional level, as publishers have little opportunity to meet with colleagues from afar to discuss the issues on a global scale. “We need to create a global forum for the debate and the discussion,” said Vincent Peyrègne, CEO of WAN-IFRA. “Organisations like Google have huge means to lobby at the worldwide level. Our industry has to come up with strong positions, or we will lose,” said Margaret Boribon, secretary general of Belgium’s French language newspaper association, which has successfully sued Google for copyright violations. “Solidarity at the local level is essential, but solidarity at the global level is a goal as well.”

WAN-IFRA’s IP and Copyright Forum is a new informal initiative to provide publishers with a global platform to learn about and understand similar challenges publishers are facing in different markets around the world.

**Free prisoners, WAN-IFRA tells China**

The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers has called on China to free all imprisoned journalists and put an end to its attacks on freedom of expression. “WAN-IFRA reiterates its call for the release of 2007 Golden Pen of Freedom laureate Shi Tao, and all other journalists imprisoned or held without charge in connection to their work,” the Board of WAN-IFRA said in a resolution issued during its meeting at the 65th World Newspaper Congress and 20th World Editors Forum. The resolution called on the Chinese authorities to recognise that a free press helps promote a more prosperous, equitable and just society. Recent data shows at least 32 journalists are held in Chinese prisons, making the country one of the world’s worst jailers of media professionals. The resolution also called on the government to cease its pursuit and harassment of ‘netizens’ and bloggers who are increasingly targets of repression, and to welcome a more open and participatory information age.

**A tribute to Myanmar journalists**

Thirteen years after being named as Golden Pen of Freedom laureates, Myanmar journalists San San Nweh and U Win Tin finally received their awards in Yangon. Awarded in 2001 in recognition of their “outstanding services to the cause of press freedom in Burma” (Myanmar), at the time both were serving harsh prison sentences in Yangon’s notorious Insein prison in connection to their writing. With Myanmar’s recent opening up to reform, unprecedented levels of freedom are now evident throughout society, including in the media. The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) led an international press freedom mission to Myanmar ahead of the organisation’s 65th World Newspaper Congress and 20th World Editors Forum, and used the occasion to finally deliver the two Golden Pen of Freedom awards.
“20 years ago there were so many excellent, hardworking writers and committed journalists,” San San Nweh told WAN-IFRA, speaking at her home in Yangon. “That you picked me is an honour, and I am proud to receive the award on behalf of them all.”

At the age of only 15, San San Nweh became a correspondent for three national newspapers. Two years later she was the first Burmese woman to receive a complete training as a journalist. On 6 October 1994, she was arrested, together with her daughter, and found guilty of “publishing information harmful to the state” with a view to “fomenting disorder”. She was sentenced to seven years in jail, the maximum provided by the emergency law, and then to a further three years for “giving biased viewpoints” to French journalists in an April 1993 interview. After serving seven of her ten-year prison sentence, San San Nweh was released in July 2001 but was prevented from leaving the country. Her reputation as a writer is known around the world, and since 1974 she has published a dozen novels, over 500 short stories and poems.

Prominent journalist, writer and senior member of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD), U Win Tin served nineteen of a twenty-year term in prison after being sentenced on three consecutive occasions. Held in solitary confinement for much of this time, at the age of 79 he was finally released by the military on 23 September 2008 as part of an amnesty for political prisoners ahead of 2010 elections. As former chief editor of Hanthawathi newspaper, U Win Tin wrote many articles criticising the regime. He has been a close advisor to Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi and is considered by many as her right-hand-man.

Now aged 84, U Win Tin remains defiant - he still dresses in the blue prison colours of his years in detention, demanding to be absolved of the ‘crimes’ he never committed. His determination to see democracy flourish, however, resonates throughout Myanmar society: “We are embarking on a long journey to the future, but we strive, all of us, to go on.”

The Golden Pen of Freedom is WAN-IFRA’s annual award recognising individuals or organisations that have made an outstanding contribution to the defence and promotion of press freedom. Established in 1961, the Golden Pen of Freedom is presented annually.

It’s Amsterdam for World Expo 2014

After this year’s event in Berlin, Germany, which is expected to draw more than 300 exhibitors and more than 8000 visitors from 7 to 9 October, the World Publishing Expo will next year return to Amsterdam, which has hosted the event 16 times in 44 years, more than any other venue. The World Publishing Expo (IFRA Expo and Conference) will be held from 13 to 15 October 2014, at the Amsterdam RAI exhibition centre, which has invested heavily in infrastructure and optimised exhibitor services. Amsterdam is one of the world’s most innovative cities and is ranked in the top 10 in the latest Innovation Cities Global Index.

Italy to host Newspaper Congress 2014

The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), has invited the world’s press to attend the 66th World Newspaper Congress and 21st World Editors Forum, to be held in Torino, Italy, from 9 to 11 June 2014. The invitation was issued at the close of this year’s World Newspaper Congress and World Editors Forum in Bangkok, Thailand, one of the most successful in the history of the events.

Torino is a major business and cultural centre in northern Italy, the capital of the Piedmont region and home to Fiat, Lancia, Pininfarina, Alfa Romeo, Lavazza, Martini & Rossi, Ferrero and many other international companies. The city, surrounded by the Alps, is known for its museums, churches, palaces, theaters and other cultural offerings. It was the host of the 2006 Winter Olympics.

The Congress and Forum are supported by La Stampa and by northern Italy’s other two major publishing groups – RCS and Espresso – which together represent 75 per cent of the country’s total paid-for newspaper circulation, as well as the City of Torino, the Province of Torino, the Piedmont Region, FIAT and major local institutions, including the European Training Foundation, University Institute of European studies and the University of Torino.

Bjerager re-elected president, World Editors Forum

Erik Bjerager, editor-in-chief and managing director of the Danish national daily Kristeligt Dagblad, was re-elected president of the World Editors Forum for a second two-year term. Bjerager was re-elected on Sunday at the annual general meeting of the WEF, held during the organisation’s annual meetings in Bangkok. Marcelo Rech, the director of Journalism at the RBS Group in Brazil, was elected vice-president of the organisation.

Bjerager has served as editor-in-Chief of Kristeligt Dagblad since 1994. He became managing director of the daily a year later. He has been a member of the WEF Board since 2001. Rech was recently appointed director of Journalism at RBS, which is based in Porto Alegre in southern Brazil and includes 18 TV stations,
two community TV stations, one rural channel, 25 radio stations, eight newspapers and four internet portals. Mr Rech is a former general director of the newspaper division, and a former managing editor of the Zero Hora newspaper.

And now, The Hindu Hub

In a move to create a one-stop access point for ad agencies, advertisers and media planners to gain information and insights about the industry, The Hindu Group of Publications has unveiled a new website, The Hindu Hub. The website was launched on July 22. Keeping in mind the stakeholders’ interests, the B2B website will carry reports on consumption patterns in South India, the Indian Readership Survey and so on. Promotional activities for the new website include direct mailers to a large database of advertisers and agencies, advertising in The Hindu Group publications as well as in trade magazines and portals.

The Telegraph taps students with You

In a move to strengthen its leadership position in the East and to further connect with young readers, The Telegraph has launched a new supplement, You – ‘your campus buddy’. You is a supplement for students, which focuses on careers, campus life, facts, news, trivia on students and college life. Across researches, it was found that in the current scenario, wherein students have access to career information across various mediums and sources, one tends to act more on information/suggestion received from within their peer group or from someone whom they can relate well. Also, getting into the right college or career is one of the concern areas. Taking this into account, You talks the language of the college student and highlights various aspects in a college student’s life. The first issue of You hit newsstands on June 13; the eight-page broadsheet supplement was distributed free with The Telegraph. It will be given free with The Telegraph as a four-page broadsheet supplement on alternate Thursdays.

6th edition of Dainik Divya Marathi launched

DB Corp has launched the latest edition of Dainik Divya Marathi from Akola in Maharashtra. With the launch, the company has expanded its presence to six cities in Maharashtra with six editions in the region and 65 editions across India. The key theme anchoring the Akola launch campaign was ‘Launch of Divya Marathi to break the long drawn silence’. As with all other launches conducted in Maharashtra, an intense survey preceded the Akola launch. The survey was conducted to introduce the Divya Marathi brand to readers, connect with them, and ascertain their individual preferences to ultimately develop news daily that will address their unique issues.

The pre-launch was planned in phases to create anticipation amongst readers, with hoardings conveying the ‘integrity and unbiased’ nature of the product. Strong focus was given to marketing activities through inserts, product handbooks and pre-booking and pre-subscription orders. Pole kiosks, auto back branding, road caravans with sample version of product, and innovative ideas such as the Green Ambulance were some of the branding activities undertaken that helped connect the product with its audiences.

Publicitas, Financial Times ink contract

International media services company Publicitas has signed a contract with Financial Times to service all media sales, including print, digital and events across South East Asia. As of September 1, 2013, Publicitas will bring to advertisers multi-media solutions from the Financial Times. On signing of the contract, the key ad sales staff from the Financial Times team will join Publicitas, ensuring seamless continuity of operations. They will combine strengths with Publicitas’ experts across the network. Publicitas has expertise in sales across media platforms – print, TV, digital, OOH and events.

Patrika gives voice to Bastar's tribal belt

The Patrika Group, which recently forayed into the Bastar region with its 33rd edition from Jagdalpur, has been highlighting issues related to local population, especially the tribal belt. The edition, which hit newsstands on June 25, covers the seven districts of Bastar region – Kanker, Kondagaon, Dantewara, Narayanpur, Bijapur, Sukana and Bastar/Jagdalpur.
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Only one entry per individual is permitted for either category. The participating candidate will have to produce the proof of his or her article or picture published in the respective newspaper or magazine.

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- Entries with complete details can be emailed to editorpiirind@gmail.com or sent to the Press Institute of India, RIND Premises, Second Main Road, Taramani CPT Campus, Chennai - 600113

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