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335en288

## ROLE OF A PHOTOJOURNALIST

You would have understood by now that the back bone of photojournalism is the photojournalist. A good photojournalist is both a skilled photographer who uses the camera and other equipment to his best advantage. He must also be a thinking creative person who mixes technique and judgement to capture images as they happen because news events do not wait for the photographer.

Some photojournalists attempt to make their photographs more interesting by manipulating the image (for example, by making people pose for the photograph). This is wrong as the main task of a photojournalist is to give the viewer an image that is truthful and speaks for itself. Manipulating an image is like making up a news story. It would no longer be journalism but story telling.



### OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to do the following :

- describe the preparedness required for a photojournalist;
- explain the work ethics in photojournalism;
- discuss the history of photojournalism in India;
- enlist some famous photojournalists of India.

### 28.1 PREPAREDNESS OF PHOTOJOURNALISTS

Events wait for no one, especially for photojournalists. A photojournalist must be prepared to act fast and have his camera always at hand. The interesting pictures are most often a result of the alertness of the photojournalist who is at the right place at the right time. If a photojournalist is casual about his job, he is likely to miss many important chances. It is also not just being present at an important location but it is also about being positioned at the best place with the camera ready.

There are some events about which a photojournalist has advance information. So he can be there well before the action begins. For example, a public function like



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a sports event or a political meeting is usually announced well in advance. Newspapers are informed about the time and the venue. If the photo editor thinks that the event is important he will assign a photojournalist to attend the event. The photographer will take pictures of the participants, the audience, the venue etc..

However, there are events that no photojournalist can prepare for like a terrorist attack, a riot, a train accident, an earthquake or a bridge collapse. If a photojournalist is present when some thing like this occurs he has to act quickly while at the same time ensuring his own safety. It is rare for photojournalists to capture terrorist attacks, serious accidents or major natural disasters as they happen. It is usually the aftermath that the camera captures. The photojournalist then tries to take pictures that convey the sense of the event, its magnitude and its impact on people and the place where it has occurred. The best pictures are a result of the judgement and sensitivity of the photographer.

Only a small selection of pictures appear in the newspapers each day. Why is this so? Just as not all the news stories gathered by reporters get published in a newspaper not all pictures taken by photojournalists get published. A photo editor will look at all the pictures that have been submitted by various photojournalists on any given day and make a choice about what will appear and what will not.

Let us see how this is done by the photo editor.

One consideration will be the major news events of the day. A photograph that enhances the lead story is almost certain to be published. For example, if the most important news of the day is that fuel prices are going to go up, a photograph of long lines of auto rickshaws of trucks at a petrol station is quite likely to get published.

Another consideration is the photograph itself. If a photograph is hard hitting, or tells a story then it has a better chance of being published. For example, a picture of a flood, with only the roofs of houses above water has a greater impact than many hundred words describing the same flood.

What will interest the reader is also a consideration while choosing pictures for the newspaper. So photographs of local events like an inter-school sports competition or the inauguration of a new school building often get published.

When a photojournalist is doing a photo feature, there is need for a different approach and different kind of preparedness. If the photos are of people then the photojournalist must have patience and win the trust of the people to be photographed. Most people are self-conscious when they have a camera pointed at them or feel shy when facing one and do not behave as they normally would. The photographer should work in a way that the people who are being photographed do not feel his presence. This is most easily done if the photojournalist spends time with the people being photographed, talks to them about what they are doing and explain the purpose of the photograph. So when the photographs are being taken they are no longer curious or worried about the photographer's interest in them and can ignore the camera and behave naturally when the camera is pointed at them.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 28.1**

1. Name two events for which a photojournalist is prepared and two events for which he cannot be prepared.
2. What is the role of a photoeditor ?
3. How does a photojournalist prepare for a photofeature?

**Notes****28.2 ETHICS AND THE PHOTOJOURNALIST**

Ethics is an important word in journalism. Ethics are the moral principles that influence the conduct of people. Journalistic ethics are the moral principles that govern the practice of all forms of journalism. They guide the photojournalist in deciding what is right and what is wrong.

Truthfulness is a core journalistic ethic. A photojournalist must always strive to take pictures that tell the truth.

This issue of ethics has become more important in the digital age when it is very easy to change the photograph on the computer. It is believed that the camera never lies. But now with a few clicks of a computer mouse, you can completely change a photograph. So much so that it is no longer a record of an event. For example, you can show a man to be smoking even if he has never held a cigarette in life or in the company of someone he has never met. You can show a crowd of people at a place when in fact there were only a few people present when the picture was taken. You can make people appear to be standing in front of well known monuments in foreign countries to which they have never been!

All manipulation of photographs is a violation of basic journalistic ethics. For the photojournalist must capture the truth. This means that the photojournalist must only photograph what has happened, when it happened and not invent a situation or recreate one by moving things around in the picture to make it seem more interesting than it really was.

It is also against journalistic ethics to stage or create a picture by having people pose for the camera. For example if a photojournalist wants a picture of a mid-day meal scheme in a school he must go to a school at meal time and take pictures of what is seen. These might be of food being prepared or served to the children or the children eating their food. It would be against journalistic ethics if he were to make a group of children in school uniform sit in rows with plates in front of them and pretend to be eating a meal at school.

A photojournalist who takes his professional responsibilities seriously would never manipulate an image or stage an event for the benefit of his camera.



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**INTEXT QUESTIONS 28.2**

1. State whether the following statements are true or false:
  - i) Truthfulness is not a core journalistic ethic.
  - ii) Manipulation of photographs is violation of basic journalistic ethics.
  - iii) In the digital age, it is possible to change any photograph on the computer.
  - iv) A photojournalist can invent or recreate a situation according to his convenience.

**28.3 PHOTOJOURNALISM IN INDIA**

Photography arrived in India almost within two years of its discovery. As India was being ruled by the British, British photographers started taking pictures of the country, its scenery and monuments. When the first war of Independence happened in 1857, it was one of the first incidents of war photography in the world and you may have seen some photographs in magazines.

Later on when the camera became smaller, photojournalism gained greater popularity. Many political developments were also taking place in India especially around the freedom movement. All this gave a lot of chance to photojournalists to take pictures.

**Raja Deen Dayal** was one of the first notable Indian photojournalists. He was a court photographer in India during the rule of the sixth Nizam of Hyderabad. As he was the only native photographer, he has left behind a very impressive record of British India.



**Fig. 28.1: Raja Deen Dayal**



Among the famous photojournalists who worked then was **Sunil Janah**. A political activist and journalist, Sunil Janah began to photograph while writing assignments for his newspaper. At the time of India's independence, Janah photographed the significant events in the country and made a record of the transition from British rule to independent India. His photographs of India's partition, its people; specially the tribals as well as pictures of industries and temple structures are very famous. Photographs of Nehru and Gandhi by Sunil Janah are now seen by us everywhere.



**Fig. 28.2** Photograph taken by Sunil Janah

There is another name which needs a special mention here, also because in a profession dominated by men, she was the first woman photojournalist. She is **Homai Vyrawalla**. Her work was first published in 1938 in the Bombay Chronicle, and later in other major publications of those times. She also worked for the Illustrated Weekly of India and during World War II covered every aspect of wartime activities in India. Her documentation of the events of the freedom movement are significant. She remained a freelance photographer until 1970 and was highly respected amongst all photojournalists.



**Fig. 28.3** : Homai Vyrawalla



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There are several international photojournalists who loved photographing in India. Amongst them, the name of *Henri Cartier Bresson* is famous. Henri Cartier Bresson was French and his name is counted amongst the best photojournalists of the world. He travelled in India in the 1940s and then kept coming back here in later years. His most famous photograph is that of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru announcing the death of Gandhiji. His book called 'Henri Cartier Bresson in India' is very well known.



Fig. 28.4 (a) : Henri Cartier Bresson



Fig. 28.4 (b) : Photograph taken by Henri Cartier Bresson



Amongst the photojournalists after Independence, the name of Raghu Rai is most famous. Rai's photographs are still seen as he continues to do photography. **Raghu Rai** started his career in photojournalism in the 1960s in Delhi and worked for important national newspapers like the Hindustan Times and Statesman. Later he became the Chief Photographer for 'India Today' where he worked for a long time. Now Mr Rai works as an independent photographer and his work is truly respected all over the world. His photographs of famous personalities such as Indira Gandhi and Mother Teresa are very well known. Apart from this Raghu Rai has covered all important events that have taken place in the second half of the last century such as the Bhopal gas tragedy and the Bangladesh war. He has brought out books on various subjects such as Delhi, Taj Mahal, Sikhs, Benaras etc. His early pictures are mostly in black and white but later he has photographed in colour. They all have a beautiful quality about them.



**Fig. 28.5 : Raghu Rai**

**Prashant Panjiar** is another successful photojournalist of the present times. Born in Kolkata, he is a self taught photographer who has worked for many magazines in Delhi. His most successful career was with the 'Outlook' magazine as its chief photographer and associate editor. He is a founding member of this magazine and through his photographs, he gave it a popular appeal among people and now Outlook has become a leading news magazine in India.

Mentioned above are just a few names of important photojournalists. Apart from them there have been so many who have made important contributions to the field of photojournalism by their work in the print media all over the world. With the improvement in printing technology, newspapers have started using more photos and in colour. This has given rise to a greater demand for trained people in the field of photojournalism.



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**INTEXT QUESTIONS 28.3**

1. Relate the names of photojournalists given below with their respective work.
- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| i) Homai Vyarawalla       | a) photographs of India's partition                                       |
| ii) Henri Cartier Bresson | b) photograph of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru announcing the death of Gandhiji |
| iii) Prashant Panjiar     | c) photograph of World War II   |
| iv) Raghu Rai             | d) photographs in 'Outlook' magazine                                      |
| v) Sunil Jannah           | e) photograph of Mother Teresa  |

**28.4 WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

Role of photojournalists

- preparedness of a photojournalist
  - events for which a photojournalist is prepared
  - events for which a photojournalist is prepared
  - judgement and sensitivity of a photojournalist
  - role of a photoeditor
  - approach of a photojournalist while taking photographs
- work ethics in photojournalism
  - truthfulness – core journalistic ethic
  - manipulation of photographs – violation of basic journalistic ethics
- photojournalism in India
  - arrival of photography in India
  - famous photojournalists
  - Sunil Jannah
  - Homai Vyarawalla
  - Henri Cartier Bresson
  - Raghu Rai
  - Prashant Panjiar



### 28.5 TERMINAL EXERCISES

1. Describe in detail the factors to be taken into account by a photojournalist while taking pictures for different purposes.
2. “The issue of ethics in photojournalism has become more important in the digital age when it is very easy to transform the photograph on the computer”. Discuss.
3. Explain with examples the role played by famous photojournalists in India before and after Independence.



### 28.6 ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

- 32.1**
1. i) political meeting, football match, any other  
ii) accident, earthquake, any other
  2. A photoeditor chooses the pictures that would appear in newspapers on any given day. This will depend upon i) the major events of the day which should be supported by photographs ii) hard hitting nature of photographs which can tell a story well and iii) interests of readers.
  3. A photographer should be patient and win the confidence of the people he wants to photograph. The photographer should work in such a way that people who are being photographed do not feel self-conscious and behave normally when the camera is pointed at them.
- 32.2**
1. i) False  
ii) True  
iii) True  
iv) False
- 32.3**
1. i) (c)  
ii) (b)  
iii) (d)  
iv) (e)  
v) (a)



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