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Media ethics is the branch of Professional Ethics. Which concerned about the question of what is right or wrong, good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable about the means and ways that the media collects and presents information and news. It is also about the normative and prescriptive nature of guiding and controlling the practical aspect of media with ethical principles. Relevance of these principles is always discussed, at times contested also by journalists and audiences depending on the specific situations and context. The impact that media has on the audience is always comes under the purview of media ethics.

### **CODE OF ETHICS FOR MEDIA**

The importance and inevitability of media is expressed in the following saying, “If journalism at one time seemed to be an appendix to culture, today, by contrast, culture finds itself at the mercy of journalism. It is part of a world dominated by journalism. The mass media decide who will be known and to what degree and according to which interpretation.” Mass Media is the fourth pillar of Indian Democracy. Media is influential and here not exaggeration to say that journalists make daily decisions for people. There is always a tension between the

public's right to know the truth and an individual's claim to privacy. Those decisions are grounded in ethical decision-making tools that may include a formal Code of Ethics. Media ethics tries to prevent any monopoly over information diffusion; upholds pluralism instead of the uniform gloss over media content that is typically brought on by authoritarian regimes; maintains objectivity by providing different sides of an issue, which empowers audiences to formulate their own judgments and increases levels of truthfulness in reporting.

**The following codes of ethics are formulated to regulate the media**

**Responsibility:** The right of a newspaper to attract and hold readers is restricted by nothing but considerations of public welfare. A journalist who uses his power for any selfish or otherwise unworthy motive is not trustworthy. We shall elaborate on this elsewhere.

**Freedom of the Press:** Freedom of the press is guarded as a vital right of media. It is the unquestionable right to discuss whatever is not explicitly forbidden by law including the wisdom of any restrictive statute.

**Independence:** Freedom from all obligations except that of fidelity to the public interest is vital.

**Sincerity, Truthfulness, Accuracy:** These enable media to have a good rapport with the reader.

**Impartiality:** news reports and expression of opinion are expected to be free from bias of any kind.

**Fairplay:** question of private rights and public interest distinguished from public curiosity, is discussed in fairplay of the media. it is the privilege as well as the duty, of media to make prompt and complete correction of its own serious mistakes of fact.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS AND SOLUTIONS TO MEDIA ETHICS**

Habermas theories of communicative action and discourse ethics have indirect impact in media ethics. Ethics in the public space is discussed here. Habermas reminds us of the urgent need to protect and insulate

the public discourse and its dialectics. Discourse is always collaborative or collective and bears an impact upon the receiving of a piece of communication. The author of any discourse is made responsible for its impact. Habermas' discourse ethics in Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action provide a convenient framework for making this point: he borrows the universalisation principle from Kant's moral theory, extending the notion of categorical imperative to include all those affected by a norm as its participants. Any communication involves both the listener and the speaker. The journalist who is communicating is intrinsically linked to his listeners. The fundamental principle of media's obligation to fulfill public interest is this relationship.

Everyone in this world is born to live comfortable life. When basic comforts are deprived people tend to forget the ethical codes and conduct in life. It would also never mean that poor are unethical. To live peacefully the basic amenities must be fulfilled. Similarly living a good life needs to be ethical by all means. Speaking of mass media one can vouch that it has done a good service so far to the people. No doubt, we have been benefited by them. It serves as a powerful tool in keeping up the democratic spirit.

**Crimes against the Law:** These shall never be presented in such a way as to throw sympathy with the crime as against law and justice or to inspire others with a desire for imitation.

1. Murder – a. technique of murder must be presented in a way that will not inspire imitation b. Brutal killings are not to be presented in detail c. Revenge in modern times shall not be justified.
2. Methods of crime should not be explicitly presented.
3. Illegal drug traffic must never be presented.

**Sex:** The sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld. Pictures shall not infer that low forms of sex relationship are the accepted or common thing. Adultery and Illicit Sex, sometimes necessary plot material, must not be explicitly treated or justified, or presented attractively.

**Scenes of Passion:** These should not be introduced except where they are definitely essential to the plot. Excessive and lustful kissing, embraces, suggestive posture and gestures are not to be shown. In general, passion should be treated in such manner as not to stimulate the lower and baser emotions.

**Vulgarity:** The treatment of low, disgusting, unpleasant, though not necessarily evil subjects should be guided always by the dictates of good taste and a proper regard for the sensibilities of the audience.

**Obscenity:** Obscenity in word, gesture, reference, song, joke, or by suggestion (even when likely to be understood only by part of the audience) is forbidden.

**Profanity:** Pointed profanity and every other profane or vulgar expression, however used, is forbidden.

## **FREEDOM OF PRESS AND RIGHT OF PRIVACY**

Many journalists believe, as witnessed particularly in India during the last couple of years, that the public's right to know and the need to expose vice and corruption are superior to all other concerns. Most of the time it turns out to be focusing more on privacy of people which is turned out to be 'newsworthy' item in their media career. People in public life are vulnerable when their private lives become a spotlight for the media. The growth in mass media size, profile and influence together with technological change or otherwise called 'information revolution,' made the privacy of people so fragile. Privacy is one of the fundamental freedoms of people and it is essential to liberty and human dignity. Media justifies such interference in privacy of people arguing that it is in the public interest. Privacy is not just a concern over personal information and the dangers of 'surveillance society.' It is more than the mere maintenance of one's 'data protection,' or confidentiality of any information.

In using the personal information of people and facts about events in an individual's life media has a greater responsibility. Even though there are strangely few odd persons who try to seek a high profile and

public recognition, to further their own interests or some cause or philosophy they support through publicly going with personal details. The balance between individual's right to privacy and public's right to know, is often unsteady. Ethical issues and choices arise out of it. The public's right to know is one of the guiding principles of journalists. They believe strongly that if officials are allowed to act in secrecy, miscarriages of justice and corruption may result. Is it an unobstructed right to know everything? Is the public's right to know always in 'the public interest'? Do journalists understand 'the public interest' to mean the public 'good', in the classic sense, or the public's curiosity? If we assume the public is always curious about the private details of other's lives (or pictures of their experiences), does that make it right to 'print everything you know'? Is the public always curious or are they often offended by the information or photographs put before them, and are the media therefore out of step with the very audience they claim to serve? These are the serious concerns in media ethics. Simple check before a journalist when deciding whether to print or broadcast a piece of information or a picture: Is it true? Is it fair? And is it necessary?

**CONCLUSION:** Media power to determine what the people read, hear and see or what they want or should have, must not be left entirely to the judgment of a small group of men with a large financial interest in the decision. It has to be ethical oriented. Only by freedom and conflict of ideas can truth in the long run be found. Unless the press, the broadcasting stations, and motion pictures are free channels for information and discussion, there can be little freedom of thought or of expression. Discourse in the public space is fed with facts and news by mass media. Thus, the goods and services distributed by mass media, are probably the most important consumer commodities purchased in the contemporary world. The emotional and mental aspirations are satisfied and fed with these information.