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MEDIA ETHICS: A GUIDE TO COMPLETE JOURNALISM

by

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Media Ethics, Truth, Fairness and Objectivity: composed by Paranjoy Guha Thakurta; Oxford University Press, Second expanded edition, Delhi, 2/11 Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi –110002. Phone: 011-23273841–2. Fax: 011-23277812. Email: northcare.in@oup.com. pp. 542, Price Rs. 450, ISBN 9780198070870

Knowledge of ethics is an essential part of media education. It is different from law in this sense that it is not enforceable like the law. While carrying out the role of watchdog of the society, media people must know about various laws and ethics so that their outcome of work will get restrained to certain extent. It should be remembered by all media people while working. Still exceptions happen. Many a times it has been found that media has been accused of committing illegal actions or violating the ethical guidelines. There are many reasons behind this. Growing competition, corporatization and ‘Murdochization’ of media, fulfilling corporate interests and meeting advertisers’ demand, media organizations prefer to violate laws and flout the ethical guidelines. But such practice should be curtailed. This book depicts of various pros and cons of media ethics and its importance in journalism profession in detail.

The first chapter of this book represents the idea of ethics as a whole and the perception of media ethics in particular to be practiced as a media person. References have been made to the Aarushi murder case and murder of Father Mario Ross to highlight the drawbacks of Indian journalism while attempting their best to attain popularity. What Noam Chomsky referred on the existing political economy of the mass media was also mentioned in detail. The corporatization of media

since the advent of Rupert Murdoch in global media field has also found significant place in this chapter.

In the second chapter, the author has given the definition and relevance of truth and truthfulness as essential parts of media activities. He has referred to the theories like correspondence theory, coherence and consensus theory in this chapter to project the ideology of truth, fairness and objectivity which must be practiced in journalism. Challenges to be faced while dealing with these three fundamental values of journalism have also been well depicted.

The third chapter describes the sources of information as a whole. The code of conduct to be followed as per the guidelines of the Press Council of India has also been mentioned with detailed analysis.

In the fourth chapter, the author describes about the editorial content and integrity and its influence on the readers/audience mind as a whole. Apart from mentioning about the social responsibility of the media, the author also underlines the growing trends towards obscenity practiced in journalism with special reference to the Indian context. How to report on judicial proceedings and electoral campaigning have also been mentioned with due examples.

The fifth chapter deals with the laws related to property rights and PCI guidelines on privacy and public interest. Proper examples have also been cited.

In the sixth chapter, the pros and cons of media market, the industrial journalism, relevance of editorial and advertorial in the changing market scenario, impact of commercialization of media in editorial have been discussed with proper examples. A special reference has been made to the Indian media scenario in this context.

The chapter seven hits on the paid news, a growing and widely practiced phenomenon in media industry nowadays. The author stressed on new revenue line up, difference between news and paid news, role of private treaties and its effect on media, etc. How the press people have expressed their repercussions against this widely practiced trend has also been mentioned. The role of paid news in Indian elections and the Election Commission of India's guidelines in this regard has also been notified. Basically this chapter unveils the different levels and extension of corruption in Indian media industry.

The eighth chapter gives a brief description on basic media laws like libel and slander, free speech and reasonable restriction, contempt of court and their applications in different contexts. Examples have also been given. The ninth chapter focuses on the ethics of reality television.

The chapter ten deals with the sting journalism and investigative journalism with special reference to the Indian context. The different stages of a sting operation have also been narrated here with proper examples.

In the era of new media, no one can ignore the pervasiveness of Internet. The eleventh chapter focuses on various issues related to plagiarism, misinformation, obscenity and indecency, social networking sites and their uses as medium of information, use of blogs, etc.

Chapter twelve describes whether proper ethical guidelines are being followed by the advertising agencies while preparing ads on different products. What guidelines should be followed by these ad agencies have also been mentioned here. The thirteenth chapter describes about the ethical guidelines to be practiced by the Public Relations agencies.

Chapter fourteen, the concluding chapter of this book describes about the relevance of media freedom as a whole. Besides describing the importance of media freedom in a democratic country like India, the author also focuses on the perils faced by the media houses at various times in the history of Indian media.