

B.A. Mass Communication
(2nd year)

BMC-109

NEWS WRITING



**Directorate of Distance Education
Guru Jambheshwar University of
Science & Technology**

HISAR-125001

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NEWS WRITING (BMC-109)

Block: A

Unit: I

Lesson: 1

INTRODUCTION TO NEWS

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LESSON STRUCTURE:

In this lesson we shall discuss about the various introductory aspects of news. Specifically, we shall focus on some definitions of news. We shall also briefly discuss the concept of news and some major aspects of news. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 1.0 *Objectives*
- 1.1 *Introduction*
- 1.2 *Presentation of Content*
 - 1.2.1 *News- An Overview*
 - 1.2.2 *Definitions of News*
 - 1.2.3 *Concept of News*
 - 1.2.4 *Major Aspects of News*
- 1.3 *Summary*
- 1.4 *Key Words*
- 1.5 *Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)*
- 1.6 *References/Suggested Reading*

1.0 OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this lesson are:

- *To Get An Overview of News*
- *To know Some Definitions of News*
- *To Understand the Concept of News*
- *To Know About Some Major Aspects of News*

1.1 INTRODUCTION:

Journalism is a major component of mass communication. It deals with the collection, processing and dissemination of information. But all information cannot become the content of journalism. A major portion of the content of journalism comes in the form of news. Rest of the subject matter of journalism is also information related to news-analysis, opinion, comments and advice, etc.

However, the quantity of news has always far exceeded the quantity of the rest of the journalistic material. In fact, today we have a full-fledged *news industry*.

There are a number of news media available today: television, newspapers, magazines, radio and news portals. All these media primarily deal with news. But is news? There is no consensus among scholars and journalists on the definition of news. But everyone has some vague understanding of the concept of news. It is rather difficult to define the concept of news. For a professional journalist or a newsperson, it is important to have better understanding of the concept of news. In this lesson, we shall try to understand the fundamentals of the news.

1.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *News- An Overview*
- *Definitions of News*
- *Concept of News*
- *Major Aspects of News*

1.2.1 NEWS- AN OVERVIEW:

Let us start with what constitutes news. It is important to understand what makes news? Do people make news? Do places make news? Do all information form news? Here we shall try to find answers to these questions.

NEWS AS INFORMATION: News is essentially a package of information. It is essentially information about certain events and the persons, organizations, or processes related to the events.

NEWS AS IMPORTANT INFORMATION: Every piece of information is not news. We all live in a thick jungle of information. It is humanly impossible to be aware of everything around us. At individual level there are certain bits of information that are of value to us, rest is trash at any given point of time. Similarly at group level also every piece of information is not important and relevant. So information has to be considered important at individual or group level to be considered as news.

NEWS IS IMPORTANT INFORMATION THAT GETS SHARED: Important information confined to an individual or a small group is no news until many persons know about it. A discovery made by a scientist is only important information till it

remains with the scientist or the team. If and when it becomes available to large numbers it can be considered as news.

NEWS IS IMPORTANT INFORMATION THAT GETS SHARED THROUGH MEDIA: Sharing of important information with very large number of people is not possible unless some technology of dissemination is used. Radio, television, printed-paper and Internet help in the dissemination of information. These devices are called media.

Combining the above four ingredients, we have one definition of news:

ANYTHING THAT APPEARS IN THE NEWS SPACE OF VARIOUS MASS MEDIA IS NEWS.

Here news space would mean the news pages of newspapers and magazines, news bulletins of radio and television and news portals on Internet. This is the concept of news as a *final finished product*. It also conveys a meaning that any *information that finds place in the news media is news* and rest is not news. This may not be always true. On the days when in the newsrooms of news media there is abundance of information many otherwise important pieces of information do not find place, as there is always a scarcity of news space. Moreover, some piece of information gets reported in one news media but is ignored by others.

The crucial issue with regard to news is: *what is important?*

In the field of journalism this matter has been left to the newsmen. Journalists, with their expertise, training and experience, determine which events or information are important. Only these events and information are converted into news. So we can say: **NEWS IS INFORMATION THAT JOURNALISTS PERCEIVE AS IMPORTANT.**

Examples:

- When you get good marks in your examination you share it with your parents and friends because that is important and relevant for you and your social circle. This information reaches only a small group but does not reach the masses. It would become news for the media if you have scored the highest marks in the college or university.
- When a politician makes a statement to his wife that he is not going to contest the elections, the information is relevant for the family. But the same statement becomes news if made in public.

Therefore, we can say that when we discuss about the concept of NEWS we are essentially referring to at-least three factors:

- *News is related to mass media.*
- *News is information.*
- *News is information that the media persons perceive to be of importance or relevance to the users of the mass media.*

Thus: **NEWS IS ANY INFORMATION THAT APPEARS IN THE NEWS SPACE OF THE NEWSPAPERS OR RADIO OR TELEVISION OR NEWS PORTALS OF INTERNET.**

What appears as news in news media is determined by the newsmen. There must be some criterion on the bases of which the newsmen perceive a set of information as worthy of treating as news. The traditional concept of news proposed in many books as: **N-North, E-East, W-West, and S-South** is not only incomplete but also misleading. First, there is no Center in this description; second, everything happening in any of the four directions

is not news. Neither is news plural form of new. Many events that are not new do make news. Similarly, everything new cannot be news.

Examples:

- Every year on 2nd October many leaders of the nation go to *Gandhi Samadhi*, but every leaders visit to the *Raj Ghat* does not make news. How ever, every year someone tops the list of candidates selected for Indian Administrative Services, but the name and picture of the topper becomes news in media.
- Birth of a child after many years of marriage of an ordinary common couple is new for the family and friends but it is not news for the mass media. Similarly joining a course in mass communication is new for many students but it is not news.

Another commonly given definition of news is: **When a dog bites a man it is not news, but when a man bites a dog it is news.**

In this definition an important element of “not normal” is added. Information about the events that take place in normal routine is not news but if there is some variation, the event may become news.

Examples:

- Normal climatic conditions like rain, snow or dry weather do not make news, but information about lack of rain or excessive rain does find place in the newspapers and the news bulletins.
- All good things happening around us do not make news. If the traffic is moving normally and there is no accident, this information hardly gets mentioned as news but a traffic jam or an accident is a deviation from the normal and hence makes news.

It is in this context that it is generally said, “**No news is good news**”.

Dog biting is a painful and troublesome, but normal mis-happening for the victim and bad information for the small social circle but not of much interest to persons outside the social circle of the victim and the owner of the dog. An element of abnormality makes it news when the man bites a dog.

Examples:

- Long time back, a stray dog bit Atal Behari Vajpayee, while he was out on a morning walk. This became news, as an important person was involved. Thus information about persons who hold important positions in the society often becomes news.

In recent time film, television, fashion and sports personalities have also become socially important and what they say or do becomes news.

1.2.2 DEFINITIONS OF NEWS:

Placed below are some of the definitions given by experts. It can be noted that every definition has a different perspective or separate point of emphasis.

- **Events, action or statements that make us stop and shake our heads in wonder or puzzlement are news.** (Melvin Mencher)
- **News is anything that will make people talk.** (Charles Dana)
- **News is what interests a good newspaperman.** (Gerald Johnson)
- **News is anything that makes a reader say Gee whiz.** (Arthur McEwen)
- **News is current or fresh information that is gathered and disseminated through a news process to public about an event or**

subject of interest to a significant number of people. (Melvin DeFleur & Everette Dennis)

- **News is ‘man bites a dog’; news is something you have not heard before, news is what editors and reporters say it is.** (Bruce Itule and Douglas Anderson)

It is clear that *news is different things to different people*. Integrating most of the characteristics of news mentioned by various experts a working definition of news can be stated as:

- **News is any new information that finds place in the news space of the news media because newsmen consider this information worthy for the people due to its importance, its relation to important persons in the society or its abnormality.**

The following key words must be kept in mind while defining news in the above-mentioned manner: **New, information, news space, newsmen, important, people, abnormality, relevance, interest, and proximity**

1.2.3 CONCEPT OF NEWS:

‘News’ is a dynamic concept. The concept of news can change every moment, hour, day, week or month, etc. Earlier it was said that *yesterday’s news was no news*. Today, in the era of twenty-four hour channels, what is news in the morning is outdated by the afternoon. As we have discussed earlier, news is about an event and the persons, organizations, or processes related to it.

Newsmen are generally called journalists. Newsmen are professionals involved in the gathering, processing and presentation of news.

A newsmen could be a *field journalist* or an *editing journalist*.

Field journalists include *reporters, correspondents, photographers and camerapersons*. Editing journalists include *sub-editors, chief-sub, news editors and editors*, etc.

In case of television, *input editors and output editors* are newsmen. *Anchors* are also included in this category. But persons, engaged in marketing, management, and advertising in news media, are not labeled as newsmen.

Professionals working in entertainment field are sometimes media persons but they are not newsmen.

1.2.4 MAJOR ASPECTS OF NEWS:

We have already discussed about some aspects of news. These include:

- *News is information-centered.*
- *News is event-centered.*
- *Routine happenings usually do not make news.*

Let us now discuss about some more aspects of news. These include:

- *Importance*
- *The Unusual*
- *Prominence or Eminence*

Importance: This is a very subjective concept and may vary from situation to situation. Generally importance is considered to be dependent upon the context, which includes the place, event and persons involved. The entire debate of 'objectivity' in journalism is centered on the variability in the interpretation of information as important. This topic will be further discussed in the next Unit on the News Values.

The Unusual: The more there is *deviation from normal* greater is the value of information as news. The unusual generally refers to anything that is *not routine*, anything that is *off the beaten track*, etc. Some times the *abnormal* also becomes news.

Prominence or Eminence: Prominence is the quality or status that some people achieve in the society. They are the 'Important people'. The general public wishes to know about their activities and views.

But these important people are not always the 'good' people of the society. Veerapan remained in the news more than many saints and social workers. These days, celebrities from the fields of film and television, fashion and sports have also joined at the top in the list of important persons. It must also be kept in mind that there are different important persons for different audiences of media.

'Relevance', 'interest' and 'proximity' are other major aspects of news. Proximity or whatever news is nearer physically, socially, economically and culturally are often relevant and useful for us. And what is relevant is often interesting. News that is relevant and interesting is often enjoys close proximity or closeness at an emotional level.

1.3 SUMMARY:

- News is essentially a package of information. It is essentially information about certain events and the persons, organizations, or processes related to the events.
- News is information shared through mass media. And sharing of important information with very large number of people is not possible unless some technology of dissemination is used. Radio, television,

printed-paper and Internet help in the dissemination of information. These devices are called media.

- Events, action or statements that make us stop and shake our heads in wonder or puzzlement are news. (Melvin Mencher)
- News is anything that will make people talk. (Charles A. Dana)
- News is what interests a good newspaperman. (Gerald Johnson)
- News is current or fresh information that is gathered and disseminated through a news process to public about an event or subject of interest to a significant number of people. (Melvin L. DeFleur and Everett E. Dennis)
- News is 'man bites a dog'; news is something you have not heard before, news is what editors and reporters say it is. (Bruce D. Itule)
- Newspersons are professionals involved in the gathering, processing and presentation of news. A newsperson could be a field journalist or an editing journalist. Field journalists include reporters, correspondents, photographers and camerapersons. Editing journalists include sub-editors, chief-sub, news editors and editors, etc.
- Some major aspects of news include: Importance, The Unusual, and Prominence or Eminence.
- 'Relevance', 'interest' and 'proximity' are other major aspects of news. Proximity or whatever news is nearer physically, socially, economically and culturally are often relevant and useful for us. And what is relevant is often interesting. News that is relevant and interesting is often enjoys close proximity or closeness at an emotional level.

1.4 KEY WORDS:

News: news is the final finished product that finds place in the news media is news; and it conveys some important information or a meaning.

News Defined: News is any new information that finds place in the news space of the news media because newsmen consider this information important for the people due to its importance, its relation to important persons in the society or its abnormality.

Newsmen: Newsmen or journalists are professionals involved in the gathering, processing and presentation of news. A newsmen could be a field journalist or an editing journalist. Field journalists include reporters, correspondents, photographers and cameramen. Editing journalists include sub-editors, chief-sub, news editors and editors, etc.

Concept of News: At a basic level we can understand the concept of news as follows: News is information-centered. News is event-centered. Routine happenings usually do not make news.

Journalists: Field journalists include *reporters, correspondents, photographers and cameramen*. Editing journalists include *sub-editors, chief-sub, news editors and editors*, etc.

1.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. Discuss the concept of news and the various aspects of news.
2. Write a detailed note on the concept of news with the help of some definitions of news.
3. Write a detailed note on the major aspects of news with suitable examples.

1.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

- *Reporting* by Charnley
- *Active Reporter* by James Lewis
- *Professional Journalist* by John Hohenberg
- *Professional Journalism* by Patanjali Sethi
- *Professional Journalism* by M.V. Kamath
- *News Writing* by George Hough

B. A. Mass Communication (2nd year)

NEWS WRITING (BMC-109) Block: A Unit: II Lesson: 2

NEWS VALUES

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LESSON STRUCTURE:

In this lesson we shall discuss about the various aspects related to news values. Specifically, we shall focus on the major news values. We shall also briefly discuss some additional news values and the dynamics of news values. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 2.0 *Objectives*
- 2.1 *Introduction*
- 2.2 *Presentation of Content*
 - 2.2.1 *News Values- An Overview*
 - 2.2.2 *Major News Values*
 - 2.2.3 *Additional News Values*
 - 2.2.4 *Dynamics of News Values*
- 2.3 *Summary*
- 2.4 *Key Words*
- 2.5 *Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)*
- 2.6 *References/Suggested Reading*

2.0 OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this lesson are:

- *To Get An Overview of News Values*
- *To Understand the Major News Values*
- *To Know About the Additional News Values*
- *To Understand the Dynamics of News Values*

2.1 INTRODUCTION:

In the previous lesson, we discussed the concept and some definitions of news. In this discussion the important fact that emerged was that the journalists decide which information is to be treated as news. But the parameters of news cannot be arbitrary and left to the individual judgment of journalists. Journalism is about 400 years old and during this period some basic guidelines have emerged. In this lesson, we shall discuss the values that govern the professional decisions of news selection.

2.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *News Values- An Overview*
- *Major News Values*
- *Additional News Values*
- *Dynamics of News Values*

2.2.1 NEWS VALUES- AN OVERVIEW:

Out of the innumerable events taking place around us journalists decide what few events are worth reporting. Deciding what is newsworthy is not an exact science. Newsworthiness is often decided on the basis of news values. News

values are not static. The news values undergo changes with changing times.

Generally, news values are influenced by:

- *Trade practices*
- *Changing technology*
- *Editorial policies and*
- *Economics*

TRADE PRACTICES: Everyone learns by experience, journalists also learn by doing. And one generation of journalists pass on their learning to the next generation. The new entrants in the trade of journalism learn journalistic practices from seniors. In this process precedent also frame the practices. A guideline to include or exclude a particular news item becomes a precedent and next time a similar story comes it is treated based upon the past practice.

CHANGING TECHNOLOGY: Technology also decides to formulate the news values. Fashion shows became news mainly because they could be shown on television. A news item with a photograph is more likely to be selected, and digital transmission has made it possible to send the pictures easily and without loss of time or quality. Similarly, a news item with good sound byte will stand better chances for being included in the radio news bulletin.

EDITORIAL POLICIES: Owners and media persons holding senior posts in news organizations also influence the news values. In pre-independent India, the news values for an owner or editor committed to the movement for the freedom of the country would have been different from an owner or media person who believed in the continuation of the British Empire in India. Even today, the news values for foreign news channel would be different from those of Doordarshan.

ECONOMICS: Gradually economics is becoming more and more important in influencing the news values of news organizations. Advertising is the life and blood of a news organization and it becomes difficult to carry news contrary to the interests of the advertisers.

Example: When an organization found that some brands of aerated cold drinks bottled in India contain harmful chemicals far beyond the tolerable limits and much more than those bottled in Europe and US one of the leading English newspaper carried the major story on page 3 and explanation of the manufacturers on page 1. Everyone knows that a major portion of the revenue for the media comes from the ads of cold drinks.

2.2.2 MAJOR NEWS VALUES:

The news values keep changing with changing practices. Nonetheless most academicians and newsmen agree that there are common elements that characterize the newsworthiness. Accordingly, six main news values have been identified. These are:

- *Timeliness*
- *Proximity*
- *Conflict*
- *Eminence and prominence*
- *Consequence and impact*
- *Human Interest*

TIMELINESS: Essential element of news is the freshness of the information. News is new information. Old information though may be reported, but very rarely so. This is perhaps because of the people's interest in the latest. Old becomes stale and inconsumable. In a morning newspaper readers want

yesterday's news only. In the evening newspaper even yesterday's information is not news, but the readers expect reports of whatever important has happened since morning.

On television everyone wants the *latest*, which is *right now*. *Current* or *instantaneous* information is the need of the hour. It is also said that the news is a *perishable commodity*. That is, old news is no news. Similarly, it is also said that the *shelf life of a newspaper is only few hours long*. With passage of time, news becomes stale or outdated. News often loses its relevance when it becomes old.

Examples:

- *If it snows in Shimla today it must be reported in electronic media today only and in the newspapers tomorrow. If it is reported day after tomorrow, it is no news.*
- *The national address given by the President of India on the Republic Day has to be reported in the first edition of the newspaper after the ceremony.*

PROXIMITY: Human beings take interest in the happenings close by. Readers and viewers wish to learn more about their own villages, towns, states and countries. All other things being equal, news from close to home is more important than news from far away. But it must be noted that the proximity is not only in terms of physical distance. Proximity may be social as well as psychological. Following examples will illustrate:

Examples:

- *Elections of local municipal committee are important for the people of the town, district and state in the decreasing order. But this information is of very little importance to the people of another town hundreds of kilometers away.*

- *Same information about the elections of the municipal committee becomes newsworthy for those people who belong to that area but are present working hundreds of kilometers away. This is because of the social and psychological proximity.*
- *A cricket match series in which India is also playing is of lot of news value to cricket lovers in India though the match is being played in Australia. Psychological affiliations overcome the physical distance.*

CONFLICT: Conflict is an essential element of human social system. There are internal conflicts within us. There are inter-personnel conflicts and group conflicts. When a conflict gets manifested in an unusual manner, it becomes new worthy. In fact, conflict reporting is in abundance these days. There are suggestions that conflict reporting is harmful to the society as increases the negativity and must be reduced.

Examples:

- *Because of the repeated failure of crops a farmer is not able to manage his finances and in desperation commits suicide. This becomes news. A series of suicides by farmers makes even bigger news.*
- *Clash of interests between two leaders of a political party leads to its split and news is created.*
- *Social tension between two castes or sects leads to communal or ethnic violence and becomes news to be reported.*

PROMINENCE AND EMINENCE: Famous persons in the society make news. Their ordinary utterances and normal activities also make news. The prominent persons may be politicians, businessmen, academicians, administrators, scientists, social activists, actors and performers, achievers,

criminals, etc. It is not only what eminent persons say or do that makes news, but many a times what they do not say or do not do makes better news.

Examples:

- *Whatever the Prime Minister says publicly always is newsworthy.*
- *Whatever Amitabh Bachchan says or does publicly or otherwise often always becomes news.*
- *Activities of an underworld don allegedly involved in smuggling are reported extensively in the news media.*
- *Absence of the Prime Minister in the Lok Sabha when an important bill is being introduced becomes news.*

CONSEQUENCE AND IMPACT: Every human being is interested in any information that is going to be of consequence to him or her. Such information is likely to impact peoples' lives now or later and hence is of great value. Two factors are important here. One, the *degree of impact* and second *the number of persons to be affected*. More the intensity of the impact and larger the number of persons involved greater is the newsworthiness.

Examples:

- *Increase or decrease in the income tax rates is news because it is going to strongly affect very large number of people.*
- *Increase or decrease of the price of diesel and petrol by a few paise becomes news although its degree of impact is small but the number of affected persons is very large.*
- *Declining the plea for mercy by the President of a person sentenced to death also becomes news because of the intensity of information, although the number of affected persons is small.*

HUMAN INTEREST: Important persons and important events are not the only news items that appear in the news media. Stories that arouse human emotions also make news and such stories are much appreciated. The number of human-interest stories is gradually increasing in all the news media as they relate to the ordinary people.

Examples:

- *Descriptive account of how a rag picker girl graduated with distinction will be read and viewed by the audiences with great interest.*
- *A mother caught in the sea waves struggles to save her two infant children. Finding it difficult to save both of them she abandons the elder child and later finds her, saved by an unknown person. This incident found prominent place in all the media all over the world.*
- *Information about a former Olympic Hockey player now selling tea on a railway platform also arouses the human emotions and is worth reporting in the media.*

2.2.3 ADDITIONAL NEWS VALUES:

The six news values discussed above are the major contributors to the newsworthiness of any information. There are other factors that may also influence news. These are:

- *News fall*
- *Audience*
- *Influences*
- *Convenience*

NEWS FALL: This refers to the total information available in the newsroom while producing a newspaper or a news bulletin. There are occasions when the news items are available in abundance and many stories, which are

otherwise very important, have to be left out. But there are also occasions when the news fall is scanty and the editorial staff finds it difficult to fill the space or time. On such occasions news values are often diluted.

This is also applicable at reporting level. Many things happening simultaneously may force the reporters to choose and pick. At the same time there are days when the reporters find it difficult to find news worthy stories and there is constant pressure from the newsroom for stories. There are cases when on such occasions the reporters have created fictitious stories also.

AUDIENCE: Though journalism is an important form of communication for the masses, every news organization has a specific audience. Audiences are generally determined by language, reach and preferences. Most of the news channels started telecasting news in English but later found that this language has limited reach, so they also started telecasting in Hindi and other Indian languages. The parameters for news selection and presentation also changed accordingly.

- *The Pioneer* is considered to be the paper meant for intellectuals and its content is tuned accordingly.
- *The Tribune* caters to the news needs of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Delhi.
- On the other hand the *Decan Herald* serves the needs of English reading population of some states in South India.

News production meant for farmers will carry news according to the preferences of farmers. Times of India have a stated policy of reaching those persons who have higher purchasing power and hence the news is tuned to their preferences.

INFLUENCES: Influence of the audiences is mostly not direct and rarely measured. But with the realization that news coverage has a major role in shaping the opinions and attitudes of the people external direct influences on the news media have increased. Release or stoppage of advertising is the most potent influence exerted not only by the government but also by political parties, business and industry and even social organizations.

Terrorists and insurgents create influence by the threat of physical violence. News media in Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir and the North-East are full of such examples. Though the newsmen are trained to be objective, fair and just external influences do have a role to play in deciding which information is to be treated as news.

CONVENIENCE: Collection of reliable information and verifying and validating the information collected is a very tedious process. But this is said to be the basic need for news writing. In such a situation it would be natural that there would be preference for performing journalistic jobs with minimum effort. In this process some important news worthy events remain uncovered or their coverage is incomplete.

But more worrying development is the exploitation of this tendency by certain organized systems particularly the public relations departments of the state and private bodies. A *ready-to-use-news-release* is provided to the journalists and the publicity purpose gets served at the cost of relevant and important information. Good news organizations are aware of this development and have started asking their media persons to reduce their dependence on ready-to-use material.

Press Information Bureau (PIB) of the Government of India distributes material to the Urdu press that can be directly used for lithographic printing. It

also sends printing blocks for the pictures and photographs. These measures have increases the acceptability of the news sent by PIB.

2.2.4 DYNAMICS OF NEWS VALUES:

It should be clear from the above discussion that the factors that contribute the news values are not very precise. Deciding what is newsworthy is not an exact science. We can also say that the concept of news itself is not a fixed concept. In fact, the concept of news and the news values change with time and also with the change of place. News values also change with the changes in the social structures and functions. We can say that the concept of news and news values is a dynamic concept.

Dynamism of news values is a welcome and positive attribute. If a concept or dogma remains static and does not change with times, then often it becomes irrelevant or useless. Sometimes it may even become a subject of ridicule.

Dynamism in news values also keeps the news media relevant to the people. The media organizations that do not change or refuse to accept the news values of the society become unacceptable and perish.

The main inspiration of the dynamism of the news values is the dynamism of the social system. We know that the society is always in a state of dynamic equilibrium. It means that the society is always changing but the change itself creates a status of stability. The social values also change. When the social beliefs, values and preferences change the news values are bound to change.

The other contributing factor for the dynamism is the change in the clientele of the news. Like any other products, the news media also is always in the process of expansion and extension. A leading newspaper of Madhya Pradesh decided to expand its activities in Rajasthan. With a significant

readership in Rajasthan the news coverage also changed. Though it published a separate edition for Rajasthan yet in the minds of news selectors it was now not Madhya Pradesh alone. The same newspaper is today spread in almost entire Hindi belt of the country. Earlier its news policy was state or region oriented today it is more nation oriented.

Yet another reason for the dynamism of news values is the economics of the news production. When the news organization faces financial crisis it spends less on news collection. In a situation of good financial health, media organizations explore new areas, create new infrastructure and provide better tools for news collection. The role of advertising, which is also a major economic factor, is also very important.

Examples:

- In the later part of the eighteenth century when journalism began in India, *religious preaching and social reform* dominated the news values. In the first half of the twentieth century *patriotism and ills of the foreign rule* determined the worth of news. After independence *nation building and watchdog function* became the guiding principles. Today, for a majority of the media, *consumerism and modern life styles* are the major news values.
- Enforcement Directorate was investigating the business deals of an Industrial House that also owns a chain of national newspapers. The newspaper did not carry the news of the investigation. Instead, it carried stories against the investigating agencies. Other newspapers, specially the one in direct competition, published the stories of investigation with prominence.
- During elections, contesting parties and candidates give advertisements to the newspapers with a condition that additional matter given by them will also be carried as news.

- During elections, newspapers publish news and news supplements when the parties and candidates place orders for the purchase of a few thousands of the copies. These copies are distributed to the voters as if the newspaper has created the matter published.

It must also be kept in mind that the nature and quality of dynamism also changes with time and new and innovative news values will always be created and practiced.

2.3 SUMMARY:

- The common elements that characterize the newsworthiness are called news values. Accordingly, six main news values have been identified. These are: timeliness; proximity; conflict; eminence and prominence; consequence and impact; and human Interest.
- Newsworthiness is often decided on the basis of news values. News values are not static. The news values undergo changes with changing times. Generally, news values are influenced by: trade practices, changing technology, editorial policies and economics
- An essential element of news is the currency or freshness of the information. News is new information. Old becomes stale and inconsumable. It is also said that the news is a *perishable commodity*. News often loses its relevance when it becomes old.
- Human beings take interest in the happenings close by. Readers and viewers wish to learn more about their own villages, towns, states and countries. All other things being equal, news from close to home is more important than news from far away. But it must be noted that the proximity is not only in terms of physical distance. Proximity may be social as well as psychological.

- Conflict is an essential element of human social system. There are internal conflicts within us. There are inter-personnel conflicts and group conflicts. When a conflict gets manifested in an unusual manner, it becomes new worthy.
- Famous persons in the society make news. Their ordinary utterances and normal activities also make news. The prominent persons may be politicians, businessmen, academicians, administrators, scientists, social activists, actors and performers, achievers, criminals, etc.
- Every human being is interested in any information that is going to be of consequence to him or her. Such information is likely to impact peoples' lives now or later and hence is of great value. Two factors are important here. One, the *degree of impact* and second *the number of persons to be affected*.
- Important persons and important events are not the only news items that appear in the news media. Stories that arouse human emotions also make news and such stories are much appreciated. The number of human-interest stories is gradually increasing in all the news media as they relate to the ordinary people.
- Deciding what is newsworthy is not an exact science. The concept of news and news values change with time. News values also change with the changes in the social structures and functions. We can say that the concept of news and news values is a dynamic concept.
- Dynamism in news values keeps the news media relevant to the people. The media organizations that do not change or refuse to accept the news values of the society become unacceptable and perish.

2.4 KEY WORDS:

News Values: The common elements that characterize the newsworthiness are called news values. Accordingly, six main news values have been identified. These are: *timeliness; proximity; conflict; eminence and prominence; consequence and impact; and human Interest.*

Timeliness as a News Value: An essential element of news is the currency or freshness of the information. News is new information. Old becomes stale and inconsumable. It is also said that the news is a *perishable commodity*. That is, old news is no news. Similarly, it is also said that the *shelf life of a newspaper is only few hours long*. With passage of time, news becomes stale or outdated. News often loses its relevance when it becomes old.

Proximity as a News Value: Human beings take interest in the happenings close by. Readers and viewers wish to learn more about their own villages, towns, states and countries. All other things being equal, news from close to home is more important than news from far away. But it must be noted that the proximity is not only in terms of physical distance. Proximity may be social as well as psychological. Often emotional or psychological affiliations overcome the physical distance.

Conflict as a News Value: Conflict is an essential element of human social system. There are internal conflicts within us. There are inter-personnel conflicts and group conflicts. When a conflict gets manifested in an unusual manner, it becomes new worthy. In fact, conflict reporting is in abundance these days.

Prominence as a News Value: Famous persons in the society make news. Their ordinary utterances and normal activities also make news. The prominent persons may be politicians, businessmen, academicians, administrators, scientists, social activists, actors and performers, achievers,

criminals, etc. It is not only what eminent persons say or do that makes news, but many a times what they do not say or do not do makes better news.

Consequence & Impact as a News Values: Every human being is interested in any information that is going to be of consequence to him or her. Such information is likely to impact peoples' lives now or later and hence is of great value. Two factors are important here. One, the *degree of impact* and second *the number of persons to be affected*. More the intensity of the impact and larger the number of persons involved greater is the newsworthiness.

Human Interest as a News Value: Important persons and important events are not the only news items that appear in the news media. Stories that arouse human emotions also make news and such stories are much appreciated. The number of human-interest stories is gradually increasing in all the news media as they relate to the ordinary people.

Factors Affecting News Values: Newsworthiness is often decided on the basis of news values. News values are not static. The news values undergo changes with changing times. Generally, news values are influenced by: trade practices, changing technology, editorial policies and economics

Economics as a Factor Affecting News Values: Gradually economics is becoming more and more important in influencing the news values of news organizations. Advertising is the life and blood of a news organization and it becomes difficult to carry news contrary to the interests of the advertisers.

Additional News Values: In addition to the six major news values, there are other factors that may also influence news. These are: *news fall, audience, influences, and convenience*.

Dynamism of News Values: Deciding what is newsworthy is not an exact science. News values change with the changes in the social structures and functions. More importantly, the concept of news and the news values change with time and also with the change of place. So it is evident that the concept

of news and news values is a dynamic concept. Dynamism in news values also keeps the news media relevant to the people. The media organizations that do not change or refuse to accept the news values of the society become unacceptable and perish.

2.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. Write a detailed note on news values.
2. Discuss the major news values in detail with examples.
3. Write a brief note on the additional news values.
4. Write a detailed note on the dynamism of news values.

2.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

- *Reporting* by Charnley
- *Active Reporter* by James Lewis
- *Professional Journalist* by John Hohenberg
- *Professional Journalism* by Patanjali Sethi
- *Professional Journalism* by M.V. Kamath
- *News Writing* by George Hough

B. A. Mass Communication (2nd year)

NEWS WRITING (BMC-109) Block: B Unit: I Lesson: 3

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF NEWS

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LESSON STRUCTURE:

In this lesson we shall discuss about the structure and content of news. Specifically, we shall focus on the inverted pyramid structure of news and the chronological structure of news. We shall also briefly discuss the recent changes in the field of journalism. Finally we shall discuss how news writing differs from other types of journalistic writing. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 3.0 *Objectives*
- 3.1 *Introduction*
- 3.2 *Presentation of Content*
 - 3.2.1 *Content of News*
 - 3.2.2 *Structure of News*
 - 3.2.3 *Recent Changes in the Field of Journalism*
 - 3.2.4 *Differences Between News and Other Journalistic Writing*
- 3.3 *Summary*
- 3.4 *Key Words*

3.5 *Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)*

3.6 *References/Suggested Reading*

3.0 OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this lesson are:

- *To know About the Content of News*
- *To Understand the Structure of News*
- *To Know About the Recent Changes in the Field of Journalism*
- *To Know the Differences Between News and Other Journalistic Writing*

3.1 INTRODUCTION:

News is new information about important or interesting events. This is perhaps because of the people's interest in the latest. Old information is stale. Whether in newspapers or on television, everyone wants the *latest information right now*. Every one wants *current* or *instantaneous* information. It is also said that the news is a *perishable commodity*. With passage of time, news becomes stale or outdated. Also news often loses its importance and relevance when it is old.

In this lesson, we shall discuss about the content and structure of news.

3.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Content of News*
- *Structure of News*
- *Recent Changes in the Field of Journalism*
- *Differences Between News Writing and Other Journalistic Writing*

3.2.1 CONTENT OF NEWS:

For any news, readers, listeners and viewers have six basic questions and the news writer must answer these. These six questions are **Who, What, Where, When, Why and How**. These are popularly known as the **5 'W's & 1 'H'**.

Who: It relates to the persons involved in the news event and covered in the news story.

What: It is the kind of the action or the activities of the news event.

When: It provides information about the time of the news event.

Where: It relates to the place or places of the occurrence of the news event.

Why: It provides real or perceived reasons for the event reported in news.

How: It is the detailed description of how the event took place or how things happened.

While mentioning the names of the persons care should be taken that correct names and spellings are used. It is not how the name should be written but how the person writes his or her name. The correct spellings may be Surrender but the person so called may be using Surinder, in such case the later has to be used.

There may be some confusion about the similarity between 'What' and 'How'. But both are quite different. 'What' tries to inform the actions and activities of occurrence or event, 'How' is the answer to the curiosity of *the manner in which it has happened*. While reporting an accident, information about the collision between a car and a truck is the answer to 'What' and head-on-collision, deaths on the spot or brought dead to hospital, hospitalization, etc. are the answers to 'How'.

While giving the timing (When) in the news story, the journalist has to keep in view the timing when the story is going to be read or listened or

viewed by the receivers. We should not write today if we are reporting for a morning newspaper as the reader is going to read it tomorrow. Similarly it would sound strange if we mention the day and date of today for a story for radio or television to be broadcast on the day of reporting. In such a case 'today' is a better option.

In many news stories, answers to 'Why' may not be available. Still in other stories, the reasons may not be factual and only opinion can be given. In such cases the journalist should resist from making guesses and try to find the opinion of related persons with report them with attribution.

In some cases the journalist may also provide a range of possible reasons. A meeting between two political leaders of opposing parties may lead to lot of speculation but while reporting the possible motives of the meeting need to be carefully reported; else the journalist may appear to be an activist or partisan.

The search for answers to *5 Ws and 1 H* begins as soon as the reporter starts collecting information about the news event. Yet, while looking for information and then while writing down the news story the reporter must always ensure that maximum of these *5 Ws and 1 H* have been taken care of.

3.2.2 STRUCTURE OF NEWS:

Once the reporter has all the facts about the news story, these have to be written down. Students of journalism should keep in mind that the news stories have to be put in writing not only for the print media. Also for radio and television, news must be first written down. Only when doing live reporting this may not be required. The basic principles of news writing are similar for all media except for a few differences when reporting for radio and television. It must also be kept in mind that reporting for radio and reporting for television also have certain differences.

The basic objective of news writing is to inform the audiences about the actions and events by creating pictures and visuals in the minds of the audiences. In print media and also in audio media (radio) this is done by the use of words. Pictures are weaved in the minds of the audiences by the use of language. Words have to do the magic.

The difference is in delivery only. In newspapers it is the printed word, whereas in radio it is the spoken word. In television the verbal presentation of facts is complemented by the visuals, and vice versa. However, the importance of words in TV news is undeniable.

Therefore it should be kept in mind that for all the media language is the key for communication and the journalists have to be the masters of words.

DATELINE:

A news report for a newspaper begins with dateline. Though the term 'dateline' seems only to refer to the date, yet it contains two very important information pieces, namely: the PLACE of occurrence, and the DATE of occurrence.

It is important for the audiences of the news to know the place from where the news has arisen, and this information is provided in the dateline. It is important to know that the name of the place mentioned in the news story has to be the place from where it has been filed. (Sending of the news story by the reporting staff to the newsroom is called filing of the story). In many cases it may not be the place of occurrence of the event or action. The place of occurrence and place of filing of the story may be the same or different. If different the place of occurrence comes in the main body of the story, but dateline will carry the name of the place from where the correspondent has

sent the story. While reporting war or defense many a time the dateline carries information: 'Somewhere in Northern Sector'.

It has been observed that many times the name of the place mentioned in the dateline is not familiar for many readers. The reporter or the staff in the newsroom should provide additional information so that the reader is able to properly locate the place in his or her mind. For example, if reporting from a village the name of the District may be mentioned. If reporting from a District of the far away place, name of the state may be given. Similarly, if reporting from a not too familiar location from abroad the name of the country may also be given.

It has also been observed in many cases that while reporting from Chandigarh, which is the capital of both Haryana and Punjab and also a Union Territory, even after reading the entire story it does not become clear whether the story was about Haryana or Punjab. The reporters assume that the readers would know and the sub-editor ignores. It would be advisable to refer to the state preferably in the dateline or at-least in the first few sentences of the story.

As in the case of place, in the dateline also the date of the filing of the story has to be mentioned. If the date of occurrence and the date of filing are different, then the date of occurrence should be mentioned in the news story.

The ways newspapers use the dateline are different. Each newspaper has its own style of mentioning the date and the month. Some examples are:

Jan. 16,

January 16;

16th January;

16th Jan.

Many newspaper including The Times of India, Amar Ujala and Dainik Jagaran have stopped giving date in the dateline. The reason perhaps is to serve late and stale news also, which is not a healthy practice.

CREDIT LINE & BYLINE:

Credit line contains information about the source from where the news has been taken for publication. The news may be taken from a news agency and the abbreviated form of the name of the agency is used. Examples: PTI (Press Trust of India), UNI (United News of India), Bhasha (Hindi), Varta (Hindi), AP (Associated Press), Reuter etc.

When the news has been picked from more than one news agency either the names of all the agencies are given or Agencies is mentioned in the credit line. In some newspapers the name of the agency is given at the end of the news.

Some newspapers have an unhealthy practice of not attributing the story from the source it has been taken. Many newspapers are increasingly using the Internet and net-editions of newspapers but the source is very rarely mentioned.

When the staff reporters or correspondents of the newspaper file news stories, there are three ways of mentioning it. First, credit is given by mentioning the name of the journalist. This is called giving by-line and is used only in special cases when the journalist has done something more than the usual. Second, designation of the person who has filed the story is given. Examples: *Our Special Correspondent*, *Our Correspondent*, *Our Staff Reporter*, *HT Correspondent*, etc. Similar versions are used in Hindi and other languages. Third, instead of mentioning the name or designation, the news stories are attributed to the newspaper. Examples: *Tribune News Service* or *Times News Network* or just *Our Bureau*.

When a newspaper's own staff and News Agencies have provided the information for news jointly, all the names may be used. In important stories, more than one correspondent may have reported, in such cases joint or multiple by-lines are also given.

The Dateline generally follows the headline and there is no fixed place for the credit line. But every newspaper has its own style of printing the dateline and credit lines. Some examples:

Business Line: Our Bureau Mumbai, Jan.16

The Hindu: BHABHUA/BUXAR/ARA/ (BIHAR), Jan. 16

The Times of India: By M K Venu/TNN New Delhi:

Hindustan Times: Press Trust of India, *New Delhi, January 16*

Pankaj Vohra and Raveen Thukral, *Ambala, January 16*

The Pioneer: Navin Upadhy/Ara (Pioneer News Service)

The Tribune: Aditi Tandon, Tribune News Service, Uri/Hardwar, January, 16

The Indian Express: EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE, AMBALA, JANUARY16

NEWS STORY STRUCTURES OR FORMATS:

There are two major formats for writing the main body of the news story: the *Chronological Format*, and the *Inverted Pyramid Format*.

CHRONOLOGICAL FORMAT OF NEWS STORY WRITING:

Chronological format is widely used for narrating or writing stories, real or fictitious. The entire sequence of events is presented in order of their occurrence. The result is that the most important information may be placed anywhere in the narration according to the fact when it occurred. This format is mainly used either to create documentary evidence of the actions or events, as in recording of evidence in courts or when the purpose is to entertain and the climax is brought forward in the end.

Generally in a feature film the peak of the story is at the end and events are projected in a chronological order, may be sometimes in flash back. Stories told by grand parents also follow the order of occurrence, and suspense is delayed till the end.

But news is not merely for entertainment. Its primary purpose is to inform. Therefore the facts are not presented in order of occurrence but according to the relative importance of each fact. Most important fact is presented first followed by the facts of lesser importance in order. The order is not chronological but of importance. The most important facts form the base and the base becomes narrow and narrow gradually with the presentation of facts of lesser importance. This takes the shape of an Inverted Pyramid, hence the name.

It is also important to note that in the Inverted Pyramid Format the first paragraph is called 'Lead' or 'Intro' and '*Amukh*' in Hindi. It contains one or two or maximum three bits of information that are considered most important and most relevant. Intro has to be written most carefully, as it is the entry point of the story. Good intro will make the reader go through the entire story whereas a badly written intro can make otherwise an interesting story unreadable.

The basic principles of media writing have to be applied to intro writing most effectively. Intro should not be crowded with information nor it should be shallow and without any substance. The rest of the news story is called the body of the story and here also the information is presented in order of its importance. The body must be divided into small paragraphs with minimum possible punctuation marks other than the full stop.

Since the information given in the intro is of greater value it is a general practice to repeat the same information in the body of the news story. All 5 Ws and 1 H must be taken care of in the body of the news.

We know that by definition news is only presentation of facts, therefore any attempt by the news writer to comment or analyze directly or indirectly is not considered a good journalistic practice. Test of a good news writer is that after reading his or her news the reader should not be able to judge the opinion, thinking or attitude of the news writer on the subject of news.

It is also important to note that inverted pyramid format of news writing does not allow any conclusion or summary. This quality of news writing along with other qualities will be discussed when we take up the differences between news writing and other forms of writings.

Example of Chronological Format:

It was a cold day and there was dense fog all around. Visibility was very poor. A Maruti car was coming from Chandigarh. It was being driven by Ashok Kumar. The owner of the car, Mr. S. C. Mehta, his wife and two children were in the car. At 3 in the evening they had crossed Panipat and were riving at the speed of 70 km. per hour. Another truck had started from Ghaziabad at about 12 noon. Mr. Sher Singh was driving and Mr. Parvez was assisting. The truck crossed Murthal at about 3 in the evening. The truck was carrying electronic toys to Amritsar.

After about 15 km from Panipat when the fog was very dense the car of Mr. Mehta and the truck driven by Mr. Sher Singh came opposite to each other and neither could see the other their vehicles collided with each other. There was a big bang noise and the car turned upside down and then rolled down into the nearby pool of water.

The truck also turned upside down. Mr. Parvez could come out of the truck and he first looked at his friend and Guru Mr. Sher Singh who was lying unconscious and Parvez thought that he was dead and started crying loudly. Hearing his cries some farmers working in the nearby fields rushed to the

scene and found two vehicles damaged heavily. Some of the rescuers went to the car and dragged out four persons after bringing the car on its wheels.

Soon the ambulance came and the paramedical staff started giving first aid to the injured. They found that the both the drivers and Mr. Mehta who was sitting in the front seat were dead and Mrs. Mehta was profusely bleeding. Two children had received minor injuries.

The police also arrived. Photographs of the damaged vehicles were taken and statements of some persons were recorded. Injured and dead were taken to the nearby hospital in Panipat. The damaged vehicles are still there. Later, it was learnt that Mrs. Mehta was out of danger and both children were also safe.

INVERTED PYRAMID FORMAT OF NEWS STORY WRITING:

Three persons died in an accident near Panipat yesterday. The accident occurred because of the dense fog. According to the police sources the dead include Mr. S.C.Mehta and his driver Mr.Ashok Kumar driving in a car from Chandighr and Mr. Sher Singh driver of the truck coming from Ghaziabad. Mrs. Mehta and two children also traveling in the car are injured but safe. Mr. Parvez assistant of the truck driver Mr.Sher Singh did not receive any injury. Paramedical staff provided the first aid and police took the injured to the civil hospital in Panipat.

The inverted pyramid format of news writing has the following advantages:

- Only important bits of information go to the readers and unnecessary details are kept out.
- The information is presented in order of importance and the readers have the choice to read as much story as they wish without missing the important facts.

- It keeps the interest of the readers live and opens one fact after another.
- This style also helps the staff on the desk (sub-editors). If the story needs to be cut because of the shortage of space or time, it can be cut at the tail and loss is only of the unimportant information.
- The inverted pyramid format lays emphasis on the facts and thus the comments and opinions of the news writers are not included which in itself is a healthy journalistic practice.

However, it must also be admitted that inverted pyramid style of news writing limits the storytelling abilities of the writers. Some experts feel that there is hardly any scope for creativity. But this is not entirely true. To write news stories briefly, focused and leaving out unnecessary information and still make it readable for a wide variety of news readers is itself a great challenge for creative abilities of the writers.

3.2.3 RECENT CHANGES IN THE FIELD OF JOURNALISM:

In recent years journalism has changed and so has the news writing. Journalists have taken liberties and have presented facts in a variety of ways. We can divide the present journalism into the following types depending upon the manner in which facts are treated:

SENSATIONAL JOURNALISM:

The facts are presented in shocking, bizarre and scandalous manner. The selection and order of presentation of facts is dependent upon their potential of tantalizing the feelings of the receivers.

OBJECTIVE JOURNALISM:

Facts are separated from comments and opinions. Presentation is without emotions. There is always an attempt to be fair, balanced and objective.

FEATURISED JOURNALISM:

In order to make the news more readable journalists are increasingly using the styles of feature writing for writing news stories. Scene settings, extended dialogue, points of views, interior dialogue and creating of composite characters are some of the characteristics of featurised news writing.

ADVOCACY JOURNALISM:

The objective is not only to inform but also to make efforts to change the opinions, attitudes and behaviors of the people.

PRECISION JOURNALISM:

Reporting is based upon research and investigation and quantitative information is provided to the receivers in an understandable manner.

3.2.4 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NEWS & OTHER JOURNALISTIC WRITING:

Following are the essential qualities of good media writing: *clarity, conciseness, being to the point, using minimum number of words and modesty.*

But news writing has some additional requirements that make it different from other forms of writing. We can divide the newspaper writing into the following categories:

- News
- Analysis
- Comment
- Features

Most of the newspaper space is meant for news. There are one or two write-ups, which analyze the current news along with facts from the past. Every newspaper also contains some write-ups in which experts and known persons provide commentary on the current affairs. Features present the information and analysis in an interesting manner. In newspaper parlance such items are known as columns. The articles published in the edit page include analysis, comment and opinion. Editorials provide a news organization's collective opinion and are generally prescriptive in nature.

The major differences between all these journalistic writings can be understood in terms of how the facts, analysis and opinions form the content. The news is pure and dry presentation of facts, without any analysis or comment. Complete objectivity is the cherished goal. Opinion of others is included as facts but the opinion of news writers is undesirable.

Editorializing of the news is not permissible in an ideal news organization. Analysis columns restrict to selection of relevant facts and their analysis without any comment or opinion. Comments columns are known to be the opinions of the column writers and the readers are aware of this.

Features may present selected facts in an interesting manner thereby introducing an element of subjectivity. Articles contain analysis of certain related facts and contain judgments or opinions and may also include some suggestions as well. Editorials unlike other news writings include minimum of facts, a little of analysis and comments but it should mainly include suggestions and guidelines.

Thus we see that in media writing there is a gradual movement from importance of facts only in news to the importance of opinions only in editorials. In between there are writings that include varying degree of facts, comments, analysis and opinions.

3.3 SUMMARY:

- News stories try to answer six basic questions. These are *Who, What, Where, When, Why and How*. These are popularly known as the 5 'W's & 1 'H'.
- *Who* relates to the persons involved in the news event and covered in the news story?
- *What* is the kind of the action or the activities of the news event?
- *When* provides information about the time of the news event?
- *Where* relates to the place or places of the occurrence of the news event?
- *Why* provides real or perceived reasons for the event reported in news?
- *How* is the detailed description of how the event took place or how things happened?
- Some times there is confusion about the similarity between 'What' and 'How'. But both are quite different. 'What' tries to inform the actions and activities of occurrence or event, 'How' is the answer to the curiosity of *the manner in which it has happened*. While reporting an accident, information about the collision between a car and a truck is the answer to 'What' and head-on-collision, deaths on the spot or brought dead to hospital, hospitalization, etc. are the answers to 'How'.
- The search for answers to 5 *Ws and 1 H* begins as soon as the reporter starts collecting information about the news event. Yet, while looking for information and then while writing down the news story the reporter must always ensure that maximum of these 5 *Ws and 1 H* have been taken care of.
- Credit line contains information about the source from where the news has been taken for publication. The news may be taken from a news agency and the abbreviated form of the name of the agency is used.

Examples: PTI (Press Trust of India), UNI (United News of India), Bhasha (Hindi), Varta (Hindi), AP (Associated Press), Reuter etc.

- When the staff reporters or correspondents of the newspaper file news stories, there are three ways of mentioning it. First, credit is given by mentioning the name of the journalist or by-line. Second, designation of the person who has filed the story is given. Examples: *Our Special Correspondent*, *Our Correspondent*, *Our Staff Reporter*, *HT Correspondent*, etc. Third, the news stories are sometimes attributed to the newspaper. Examples: *Tribune News Service* or *Times News Network* or just *Our Bureau*.
- Chronological format is widely used for narrating or writing stories, real or fictitious. The entire sequence of events is presented in order of their occurrence. The result is that the most important information may be placed anywhere in the narration according to the fact when it occurred. This format is mainly used either to create documentary evidence of the actions or events, as in recording of evidence in courts or when the purpose is to entertain and the climax is brought forward in the end.
- Only important bits of information go to the readers and unnecessary details are kept out.
- The information is presented in order of importance and the readers have the choice to read as much story as they wish without missing the important facts.
- It keeps the interest of the readers alive and opens one fact after another.
- This style also helps the staff on the desk (sub-editors). If the story needs to be cut because of the shortage of space or time, it can be cut at the tail and loss is only of the unimportant information.

- The inverted pyramid format lays emphasis on the facts and thus the comments and opinions of the news writers are not included which in itself is a healthy journalistic practice.

3.4 KEY WORDS:

Basic Questions: News stories try to answer six basic questions. These are *Who, What, Where, When, Why and How*. These are popularly known as the 5 'W's & 1 'H'. *Who* relates to the persons involved in the news event and covered in the news story. *What* is the kind of the action or the activities of the news event. *When* provides information about the time of the news event. *Where* relates to the place or places of the occurrence of the news event. *Why* provides real or perceived reasons for the event reported in news. *How* is the detailed description of how the event took place or how things happened.

Objectives of News: The basic objective of news writing is to inform the audiences about the actions and events by creating pictures and visuals in the minds of the audiences. In print media and also in audio media (radio) this is done by the use of words. Pictures are weaved in the minds of the audiences by the use of language.

Dateline: The term 'dateline' seems only to refer to the date, yet it contains two very important information pieces, namely: the PLACE of occurrence, and the DATE of occurrence.

Credit Line & Byline: Credit line contains information about the source from where the news has been taken for publication. The news may be taken from a news agency and the abbreviated form of the name of the agency is used. Examples: PTI (Press Trust of India), UNI (United News of India), Bhasha (Hindi), Varta (Hindi), AP (Associated Press), Reuter etc.

Chronological Format of News Story Writing: Chronological format is widely used for narrating or writing stories, real or fictitious. The entire sequence of events is presented in order of their occurrence. The result is that the most important information may be placed anywhere in the narration according to the fact when it occurred.

Inverted Pyramid Format of News Story Writing: Here only important bits of information go to the readers and unnecessary details are kept out. The information is presented in order of importance and the readers have the choice to read as much story as they wish without missing the important facts. It keeps the interest of the readers alive and opens one fact after another. This style also helps the staff on the desk (sub-editors). If the story needs to be cut because of the shortage of space or time, it can be cut at the tail and loss is only of the unimportant information. The inverted pyramid format lays emphasis on the facts and thus the comments and opinions of the news writers are not included which in itself is a healthy journalistic practice.

3.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. Write a detailed note on the news content with examples.
2. Discuss the various structures used for news stories.
3. Write a detailed note on inverted pyramid style of news writing.
4. Write a detailed note on chronological style of news writing.

3.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

- ***Reporting*** by Charnley
- ***Active Reporter*** by James Lewis
- ***Professional Journalist*** by John Hohenberg
- ***Professional Journalism*** by Patanjali Sethi
- ***Professional Journalism*** by M.V. Kamath
- ***News Writing*** by George Hough

B. A. Mass Communication (2nd year)

NEWS WRITING (BMC-109)

Block: B

Unit: II

Lesson: 4

WRITING NEWS HEADLINES

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LESSON STRUCTURE:

It is said that headlines sell the newspapers. In print media every news, analysis, article, column and editorial must have a headline. But in radio television journalism only important stories are included in the headlines, thus in electronic media headlines also indicate the degree of the importance of news item.

In this lesson we shall discuss about the various aspects of headlines. Specifically, we shall focus on headline writing. We shall first discuss some essential elements of headlines. Next, we shall discuss the types of headlines. Finally, we shall cover the use of typography and designing in headlines. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

4.0 Objectives

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Presentation of Content

4.2.1 Essential Elements of Headlines

- 4.2.2 *Functions of Headlines*
- 4.2.3 *Principles of Headlines*
- 4.2.4 *Types of Headlines*
- 4.2.5 *Typography and Design in Headlines*
- 4.3 *Summary*
- 4.4 *Key Words*
- 4.5 *Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)*
- 4.6 *References/Suggested Reading*

4.0 OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this lesson are:

- *To Know About the Essential Elements of Headlines*
- *To Understand the Functions of Headlines*
- *To Understand the Principles of Headlines*
- *To Know About the Types of Headlines*
- *To Understand the Use of Typography and Designing in Headlines*

4.1 INTRODUCTION:

No content of media – word, sound or picture – is created for self-consumption. For every message there is a specific target audience. But every reader, listener or viewer has to be made aware of the content and also persuaded to read, listen and watch. News is also created for the masses and there has to be some technique of attracting the people towards it.

The art and science of journalism also includes writing and presenting the news in a manner that attracts maximum exposure. In the profession of advertising also advertisement's first task is to make maximum number of people to get exposed to the content. In journalism 'headline' is one very

important part that provides useful entry into the world of the news. Headline may also be called the calling card of news stories.

In this lesson we shall cover some introductory aspects of headlines.

4.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

In newspapers and news magazines the headlines are one of the major elements of page layout. Pictures, headlines and placement of advertisements together constitute the 'first look' of the page. In radio and television news headlines inform the listeners and viewers what to expect from the rest of the bulletin. It can be said that headlines are like the items displayed in the show windows.

Here, we shall discuss some introductory aspects of headlines.

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Essential Elements of Headlines*
- *Functions of Headlines*
- *Principles of Headlines*
- *Types of Headlines*
- *Typography and Design in Headlines*

4.2.1 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF HEADLINES:

Headline writing has been described as both an art and science. Writing an appropriate headline is a highly creative art and needs high levels of concentration, wisdom and awareness of the current events. Perhaps headline writing needs higher levels of creativity than writing poetry because only a very small number of words can be used to inform, educate and entertain. But presenting the headline is the work of science. In print media typography is used to make the headlines presentable. In radio and television

editing techniques are used to present the headlines. Combination of creative writing and creative uses of technology makes the newspapers and news programmes attractive and addictive. The good headlines must contain all or most of the following elements:

THE HEADLINE MUST BE SHORT BUT COMPLETE:

Headline by its nature has to be short and crisp, but that does not mean that headline should provide incomplete information.

Examples:

○ **ADVANI PLEA TO PM**

This headline may be short, but it does not provide enough information.

○ **ADVANI PLEA TO PM ON MUSLIM BILL**

This gives more information but is still not complete. Short and complete option can be:

○ **ADVANI TO PM: TAKE MUSLIM BILL TO COURT**

THE HEADLINE MUST CONVEY ONLY ONE MEANING:

In an effort to be short and crisp the headline writers sometimes create double-meaning headlines.

Examples:

○ **THOUSANDS IMMERSE IN GANGA**

This headline may convey a tragedy whereas it actually refers to a holy dip. It could be:

○ **THOUSANDS TAKE HOLY DIP IN GANGA**

THE HEADLINE MUST CONVEY THE MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Every news story has many pieces of information. The headline writer has to go through the entire story and look for the information, which would be of the greatest importance both for the audience and the organization. Based on this information the appropriate headline has to be created.

For achieving this it is essential that the person responsible for writing the headline reads the story not only once but many times so that the most important point emerges. It is also customary in the newsrooms to discuss the headlines with the colleagues.

Examples:

- **BUS COLLIDES WITH JEEP**

This headline does not convey the most important information. A better option here could be:

- **7 KILLED IN BUS-JEEP COLLISION**

THE HEADLINE MUST ATTRACT AND CREATE CURIOSITY:

The best method of ensuring that the reader reads the story below the headline or the listener and viewer waits for the story is to arouse curiosity for further information. Bland headlines can kill otherwise good stories and 'curiosity arising' headlines can force the readers to read otherwise less interesting stories. Only tools available to the headline writer are the words and presentation. Thus a good headline writer has to be the juggler of words.

Examples:

- **FEW SURPRISES IN 2004-05 UNION BUDGET**

This headline, in-fact may dissuade the readers to read the news, but alternatively the following headline will create anxiety and may make the reader to go for the details.

- **RELIEF IN IT, TV COSTLIER, NO NEW TAXES**

A note of caution is necessary here. Many times in order to make the headline attractive and 'curiosity arising' the journalists resort to sensationalism. In-fact there is very thin line between an acceptable interesting headline and a sensational headline. When the headline tries to make the information much more interesting than it is actually the element of sensationalism creeps in. The following would be a mildly sensational headline whereas the next two will be highly sensational:

Examples:

- **TV BECOMES UNAFFORDABLE**
- **FM BOWS TO TV INDUSTRY**
- **TV INDUSTRY BRIBES PM**

The last headline will make the readers immediately look for the information and on finding the headline-information false and interpretative only the audience will lose faith in the newspaper or the channel. It is not an unhealthy practice but also affects adversely the credibility of the medium.

4.2.2 FUNCTIONS OF HEADLINES:

A good headline must do three things:

- Tell the reader what the story is about.
- Give this information in a quick and easy-to-grasp format.
- Make the reader want to know all about the story.

Both in print and electronic media headlines perform all or some of the following functions:

- To provide the most important information of the news in short.
- To help the audiences to select the news of their choice
- To attract the audience towards the news story
- To make the news story attractive

- To make the page or the bulletin attractive
- To highlight the characteristic of the story
- To give a personality to the newspaper, magazine or the bulletin
- To provide basic information if the audience do not have the time or interest to get exposed to the entire story
- To arouse the curiosity of the audience
- To separate news stories from each other

4.2.3 PRINCIPLES OF WRITING HEADLINES:

Here are few principles that are applied for writing headlines:

HEADLINE IS NOT A COMPLETE SENTENCE:

Headlines are like announcements, commands and slogans. They do not follow the rules of grammar for sentence making. Still they convey the meaning.

Example: In the budget 2004-05 presented by the Finance Minister there are only a few surprises and tax on television sets has been increased and there is some relief to income taxpayers.

- **NO SURPRISES IN BUDGET, TV COSTLIER, IT RELIEF**

ADDITION OF A VERB PUTS LIFE IN THE HEADLINE:

Since headlines have a language of their own, certain things are taken as implied. In this process verbs are likely to be excluded. Headline without a verb is considered passive headline, and simple addition of a verb may make the headline active and more appropriate.

Examples:

- **TSUNAMI WAVES IN KARALLA** (This is a label)
- **TSUNAMI HITS KERALA** (This is action)

- **SEVEN DEATHS FROM HOOCH**

This may be a good headline but still better would be:

- **HOOCH KILLS SEVEN**

Similarly

- **COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN BENGAL**

This can be modified as:

- **COMMUNAL VIOLENCE HITS BENGAL**

But verb can be taken as implied also.

Examples:

In many headlines: or – implies 'says' or 'said'

- **DEVELOP APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY: PM**

- **POLITICS NO OPTION- AMITABH**

Again

- **SNOW IN HP**

Implies

- **SNOW HAS FALLEN IN HP**

Many news organizations insist that the articles like 'a' and 'the' and verbs like 'is' and 'are' may not be used in the headlines.

- **SHANKRACHARYA ARRESTED**

Implies

- **SHANKRACHARYA IS ARRESTED**

Which becomes a full sentence and sounds less like a headline. But complete ban on the use of articles, prepositions and verbs like 'is' and 'are' is not justifies. If in the above headline 'is' is put in italics a useful emphasis is added and the headline speaks more than the words say.

- **SHANKRACHARYA *IS* ARRESTED**

Similarly use of 'a', 'the' 'in' can also add to the communicability of the headline.

JARGONS AND TECHNICAL WORDS MAKE THE HEADLINES DIFFICULT:

Like any other media writing headline writing is not to show off the vocabulary richness of the author. Simple rule is to use the words whose meanings are clear to most of the audiences. Use of difficult words is still more harmful. A word not understood will dissuade the reader from reading the story and entire purpose of writing the headline gets defeated.

While writing science and technology related stories it becomes a challenge to write headlines that are communicative. It is again advisable to avoid using scientific terminology in the headline. In the body of the news meaning of the jargon can be explained but there is no such scope in a headline.

Examples:

Words like female infanticide, feticide and uxoricide are not in the vocabulary of common people. They have easy understandable replacements:
female infanticide-killing the girl child, feticide- killing the child in the womb, uxoricide- wife killing

In headline writing short and understandable is the key principle.

Examples:

'Probe' is a better word than 'investigation', 'quizzed' has three letters less than 'questioned', 'flop' is better and shorter than 'unsuccessful', 'surprised' is better than 'astonished' 'kidnap' is better than 'abducted' In radio and television the words are to be spoken so additional care has to be taken while selecting difficult words. Words should not only be short and simple but their pronunciation should also be easy. Sometimes when the names are involved

it is advisable that the headline writer also provides guidelines to the anchor for speaking the name.

TOO MANY ABBREVIATIONS SPOIL THE HEADLINES:

In order to say more with less words abbreviated phrases are used. Names and processes which are used many times need to be shortened. These shortened versions are very useful in the headlines as they save space and time and have greater communicative value. But two precautions need to be taken while using abbreviations. First only those abbreviations be used that are of common knowledge. Unfamiliar abbreviations are like jargon and make the headline un-understandable. Second crowding the headline with too many headlines also spoils them.

Examples:

○ **US INVASION OF IRAQ ILLEGAL: UN**
appears to be a good use of abbreviations. But

○ **CHECK US, RS TELLS UN**
is crowded.

Similarly, readers or listeners may not be familiar with the abbreviations used in the following headline:

○ **NUJ REJECTS PCI PROPOSAL**

Here NUJ is National Union of Journalists and PCI is Press Council of India. Journalists may be quite familiar with these abbreviations but common media users are not expected to be aware of these.

TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE INFORMATION KILLS THE HEADLINE:

Every headline has to be short and crisp but informative as well. No or little information will not make it attractive enough. At the same time cramming too many pieces of information will reduce the headline to an unorganized intro. Too much information will fail in persuading the reader to read rest of the news.

Examples:

- **SEVEN KILLED**

This headline gives too little information, whereas

- **SEVEN KILLED, THIRTY INJURED, BUS TURNS TURTLE**
- **CAR CATCHES FIRE, DRIVER ARRESTED**

This is no headline at all. Appropriate headline could be:

- **BUS HITS CAR- SEVEN KILLED**

PUNCTUATION MARKS SHOULD BE USED RARELY IN THE HEADLINES:

Since headline is not a sentence punctuation marks should also be used only when absolutely necessary. Punctuation marks seldom communicate; they only help the communication of words. Full stop is never used in headlines. Comma and semicolon may be used for separating one information from other, parenthesis are almost never used. For reporting the actual words of someone, earlier quotes were used. Now a day even quotes are out of fashion and just: is preferred. But some newspapers still continue using the quotes. In radio and television emphasis on certain words and pauses are used to enhance the communicability of the headlines. More than one punctuation mark makes the headline clumsy.

Hyphenated words find place in headlines only when they cannot be avoided.

Examples:

This headline will be very rare and unacceptable in a good newspaper:

- **SECULARISM, CORRUPTION, PRO-POOR POLICIES ELECTION ISSUES IN BIHAR ASSEMBLY POLLS: UMA BHARATI**

Instead, it may be better to say

- **SECULARISM, CORRUPTION AND POLICIES FOR POOR ARE ELECTION ISSUES: UMA BHARATI**

4.2.4 TYPES OF HEADLINES:

Depending upon the content, headlines have been divided into three main groups. These are *label headlines*, *active headlines*, and *impressionist headlines*.

1. LABEL HEADLINES:

When the headline just indicate the class or the type of the event that is described in the news it is called Label Headline.

Examples:

In Parliament Today, City Notes, Obituary, Radio Programmes, UNO Decisions, Supreme Court Today

Label headlines are generally used for regular columns and for reference news. Writing a label headline for any news story tends to “kill” the story and stifle the reader’s potential interest in it. When the First World War ended the Times of India’s headline was

- **THE ARMISTICE TERMS ANNOUNCED; WORLDWIDE REJOICING**

2. ACTIVE HEADLINES:

These headlines are informative, get to main point of the story and usually contain an active verb. These are considered to be the ideal headlines and all

newspersons should learn to write active headlines. Active headlines are possible for all types of news stories including the fillers.

Examples:

- **IAF AIRLIFTS STRANDED PASSENGERS**
- **YOUTH COMMITS SUICIDE**
- **Rs. 5.75 LAKH LOOTED**
- **SOHAB FINED WITH TWO OTHERS**
- **ACHARYA GETS BAIL**
- **SECURITY IN AHMEDABAD IS A CONCERN: PAK**
- **BJP CHANGES STRATEGY IN BIHAR**

3. IMPRESSIONIST HEADLINES:

Some headlines are used not so much to transfer information but to convey the mood.

Examples:

- **TENSION IN MEERUT**
- **INDIA DOES IT AGAIN**
- **TERROR IN SOUTH DELHI**
- **IT WAS NOT SO FUNNY**
- **KASHMIR CHILLS; SHIMLA PERSPIRES**

Depending upon the structure and arrangements headlines can be of many types. Some of them are described below with examples:

SINGLE LINE OR CROSS LINE HEADLINE: One line headline that may spread across one or more columns. The headline may touch the extreme left and right of the news story (FLUSH) or it may be placed in the middle of the story. Most headlines are of this type (CENTRALISED)

Examples:

Single line – centraised XXXXXXXXXXXXX

Single line – flush XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX (both for two col. Stories)

TWO-LINE OR DOUBLE CROSS LINE HEADLINE: Headline is long and is adjusted in two lines. Normally such headlines are used for stories of more than one col. width. Three options are available. Both the lines can touch the extreme left and right of the story (Flush) or both can be centralized or one can be flush and the other centralized. Normally upper line is flush and second line is centralized.

Examples:

Two lines – centalised

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Two lines – flush

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Two lines – flush-centralised

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

INVERTED PYRAMID HEADLINE: There are more than two lines in the headline and top one is the widest and the width of the lines taper towards the vertex down, thereby forming an inverted pyramid. Generally there are three lines in this type of headline; rarely there can be four but never more than four. Such headlines are given to important stories with many important points. Such stories are many columns wide.

Example:

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX

DROPLINE HEADLINE: This type of headline has two or three lines and arrangements of lines look like a staircase. The top line is flush left; second line begins a little bit away from the left extreme and ends a little after the first line. The third line begins from a little towards left from where the second line has started and ends more towards right than the second line.

Example:

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

INVERTED STAIRWAY HEADLINE: This is just opposite of the drop line headline.

Example:

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX

OR

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX

HANGING HEADLINE: In this case all the lines of the headline are flushed either left or right, first line takes the entire width of the news but rest of the lines can take variable width.

Examples:

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

RECTANGLE AND SQUARE INDENTION: Using 3-4 lines headlines and arranging them in a rectangular or square format is widely used in many newspapers in America and Europe.

Examples:

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

OR

XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX

WAISTLINE HEADLINE: Both the top and bottom lines are wide and equal but the central line is narrow and small.

Example:

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

SKELETON HEADLINE: In some cases just above the main headline a minor headline is added in smaller case with a rule (line) under it.

Example:

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

BANNER HEADLINE: Whenever there is extraordinarily big news entire width of the newspaper is used to splash it in big and bold type. Similarly, Tsunami disaster's news was also splashed across the front page of newspapers for 2-3 days.

Example:

XX

Most of the formats of headlines have been described above. However it may also be kept in mind that after the advent of the process of page-make-up on computer screen the scope for new experimentation has expanded infinitely. New styles and arrangements are seen and in future also new types of headlines will be seen. One area of further modifications of headlines is the use of colours.

4.2.5 TYPOGRAPHY AND DESIGN IN HEADLINES:

The creative capabilities of the headline writer have also to be supported by the kind, size and arrangements of the printing type in the print media. After all the reader first sees the headline and then goes through it. The visual impact of the headline is dependent upon the typography.

Before the advent of photo-type setting the headline writer had an additional job to perform. He had to indicate the type and size of font to be used. Sub-editors who used to write the headlines also calculated the space

available for the headline and on that basis recommended the type and size of the font. Every student had to learn to calculate.

There were limitations of the font availability in the newspapers also. But first phototypesetting and then the use of computers have expanded the horizon and the sub-editor can actually see how the headline is going to appear the next day. Not only availability of font types is almost unlimited manipulative tools have also helped the newspapers to create attractive and innovative headlines.

WHITE SPACE: Whites pace refers to the space in and around the printed matter, which has no print impressions. It would be wrong to say that this space is unutilized, as presence of white space helps to create sense in the printed matter. It would be completely unreadable and meaningless if there were no white space between the words.

While writing headlines white space has to be taken into consideration at the following places:

- Between letters
- Between words
- Above the lines
- Between the lines
- Below the lines
- Left and right of the headline

Two basic principles must govern the amount of white space to be provided.

- Too little white space makes the material unreadable and meaningless
- Too much white space makes the related material to appear unrelated.

Thus, we should keep in mind that white space in print is not only a matter of aesthetics but there is a scientific logic behind it.

USE OF CAPITAL LETTERS IN HEADLINES:

Writing in English provides the option to use capital letters. There are rules for using capital letters. All proper names must begin with a capital letter.

At many occasions capital letters are used to highlight and to give importance to certain matter. Headlines are also important and there can be a case that headlines be published in capital letters. For many years many newspapers followed it. But research in the readability of the printed matter revealed that reading printed matter in all-caps is difficult and requires greater effort. So, the practice of using all-caps in the headlines is almost abandoned now. However, basic principles of the use of capital letters of English grammar are followed.

There is another practice of the use of capital letters. Every word of the headline begins with a capital letter. This appears to serve no purpose and most publications follow the following principles:

- First letter of the first word of the headline is in caps.
- Proper nouns must start with a capital letter
- All other letters will be in lower case including the first letters of the first words of second or third line of the headline

USE OF NUMERALS IN HEADLINES:

In many cases numbers also form an important part of the text of headline. The simple rule for the use of numbers in headlines is to reduce the information into a form that uses minimum space but conveys its meaning. Use of numbers is a space-reducing method. But combining numbers with words is still better.

Examples:

92 LAKHS AND NOT 92,00,000 NEITHER NINETY TWO LAKHS

3500 AND NOT 35 HUNDRED NEITHER THREE THOUSAND AND FIVE HUNDRED

7.5 CRORES AND NOT 7,50,000,00 NEITHER SEVEN AND A HALF CRORES

In Indian publications it is better to use lakhs, crores, kg, km, meters, etc., rather than millions, billions, pounds, miles, feet, inches, etc.

4.3 SUMMARY:

- In newspapers and news magazines the headlines are one of the major elements of page layout. Pictures, headlines and placement of advertisements together constitute the 'first look' of the page.
- Every news story has many pieces of information. The headline writer has to go through the entire story and look for the information, which would be of the greatest importance both for the audience and the organization. Based on this information the appropriate headline has to be created.
- A good headline must do three things: tell the reader what the story is about, give this information in a quick and easy-to-grasp format, and make the reader want to know all about the story.
- Headlines are like announcements, commands and slogans. They do not follow the rules of grammar for sentence making. Still they convey the meaning.
- Headline without a verb is considered passive headline, and simple addition of a verb may make the headline active and more appropriate.

4.4 KEY WORDS:

Headline Writing: Headline writing has been described as both an art and science. Writing an appropriate headline is a highly creative art and needs high levels of concentration, wisdom and awareness of the current events.

Curiosity in Headline Writing: The best method of ensuring that the reader reads the story below the headline or the listener and viewer waits for the story is to arouse curiosity for further information. Bland headlines can kill otherwise good stories and 'curiosity arising' headlines can force the readers to read otherwise less interesting stories. Only tools available to the headline writer are the words and presentation. Thus a good headline writer has to be the juggler of words.

Functions of Headlines: A good headline must do three things: tell the reader what the story is about, give this information in a quick and easy-to-grasp format, and make the reader want to know all about the story. In addition, headlines try to: To provide the most important information of the news in short, To help the audiences to select the news of their choice, To attract the audience towards the news story, and To make the news story attractive.

Addition of a Verb Puts Life in a Headline: Since headlines have a language of their own, certain things are taken as implied. In this process verbs are likely to be excluded. Headline without a verb is considered passive headline, and simple addition of a verb may make the headline active and more appropriate.

4.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. What are the essential elements of headlines? Discuss in detail.
2. Write a detailed note on the various types of headlines.
3. What are the functions of headlines? Discuss in brief.

4. What are the principles of headline writing? Discuss in detail.
5. Discuss the various types of headlines giving suitable examples.

4.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

- ***Reporting*** by Charnley
- ***Active Reporter*** by James Lewis
- ***Professional Journalist*** by John Hohenberg
- ***Professional Journalism*** by Patanjali Sethi
- ***Professional Journalism*** by M.V. Kamath
- ***News Writing*** by George Hough

B. A. Mass Communication (2nd year)

NEWS WRITING (BMC-109) Block: C Unit: I Lesson: 5

TYPES OF NEWS STORIES

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LESSON STRUCTURE:

In this lesson we shall discuss about the various types of news. Specifically, we shall focus on hard news and soft news. We shall also briefly discuss follow-up news and breaking news. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 5.0 *Objectives*
- 5.1 *Introduction*
- 5.2 *Presentation of Content*
 - 5.2.1 *News- An Overview*
 - 5.2.2 *Major Types of News*
 - 5.2.3 *Hard News*
 - 5.2.4 *Soft News*
 - 5.2.5 *Breaking News*
 - 5.2.6 *Follow-up News*
 - 5.2.7 *Single-Element & Two-Element News Stories*
- 5.3 *Summary*
- 5.4 *Key Words*
- 5.5 *Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)*
- 5.6 *References/Suggested Reading*

5.0 OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this lesson are:

- *To Get an Overview of News*
 - **To Know the Major Types of News**
- *To Understand Hard News*
- *To Know about the Soft News*
- *To Know about the Breaking News*
- *To Understand Follow-up News*
- *To Know about the Single-Element & Two-Element News Stories*

5.1 INTRODUCTION:

Newspapers are a printed mass medium. Thus newspapers use news stories as their major tool. A newspaper is a collection of many news stories. Additionally, newspapers also have features, articles, editorials, etc. And they also use visuals including photographs, graphs, charts, computer graphics, drawings, etc.

Newspapers perform many functions. They educate. They entertain. Newspapers are a very powerful and effective medium of persuasion. But the basic function of newspapers is to *inform*. Thus the major component of newspapers is *news*. The rest of the materials perform supplementary roles to news.

In this lesson we shall discuss about news and specifically some types of news.

5.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *News- An Overview*
- *Major Types of News*

- *Hard News*
- *Soft News*
- *Breaking News*
- *Follow-up News*
- *Single-Element & Two-Element News Stories*

5.2.1 NEWS- AN OVERVIEW:

News is often new information that we did not know before. News is something that interests people. News is something that influences people. News is something that involves people.

A beginner's definition could be: News is something that interests, excites, concerns, or influences people. News not only interests but also at times excites and at times concerns because it may be a mishap or a tragedy.

John B. Bogart of the *New York Sun* defines news thus:

When a dog bites a man, that is not news; but when a man bites a dog, that is News.

The crux or gist of this definition is anything *unusual* is News.

But more often usual, day-to-day, and routine events make news. Accidents, thefts, meetings, seminars, incidents, natural and other calamities make news.

In this lesson we shall discuss some types of news stories.

5.2.2 TYPES OF NEWS STORIES

There can be many factors on the basis of which news can be classified into various types. Some of these classifying factors are: *currency or immediacy of the event, importance of the event, interest level of the event, story-breaking pattern, continuation stories, number of elements in the events to be*

covered, etc. Accordingly, the following types of news stories have been identified:

- *Hard News*
- *Soft News*
- *Breaking News*
- *Follow-up News*

5.2.3 HARD NEWS:

News may be broadly divided into hard news and soft news. News that has great importance and impact on the life of a nation or people or news that has great significance or affects life of many people is termed hard news.

The swearing-in of a President or Prime Minister, the presentation of the national budget, the passing of an important Bill in Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha, the assassination of a Prime Minister or a President, a major earthquake, plane crash, etc. are examples of hard news.

News, which is of immediate importance, is called *hard news*. It must be brought to the notice of the audience as soon as possible. For a newspaper the waiting period is time of publication of the next issue. In radio and television the first new bulletin after the information about an event reaches the newsroom must carry the hard news. With the advent of twenty-four hour news channels, the waiting period for the hard news is almost zero. It is told instantaneously.

Examples:

Election results, accidents, swearing-in of a government, fall of a government, budget announcements, removing of a Vice Chancellor, murder, rape, dacoity, theft, marriage or divorce of a celebrity, death of a public figure etc.

5.2.4 SOFT NEWS:

News that interests people but has great significance is called soft news. The wedding of a film actor, the birthday party of a celebrity, a rock show, a beauty contest, or a campus festival are examples of soft news. There are many news stories that contain any information that needs to be disseminated urgently. They have the news values, which will not be reduced with the passage of time. Such news stories are called soft news.

Soft news stories can wait for publication or broadcast. Soft news is some times sensational in nature. Soft news is on the priority list of the news desk. Soft news is also generally first to be 'killed' (rejected) when due to the shortage of space or time only some stories have to be included.

Newspapers are meant for hard news. But every newspaper carries a mix of hard news and soft news daily. This is because the changing taste of the news audience.

With a high level of entertainment content on most media including TV, radio, magazines and the Internet; even newspapers have started giving more space to entertainment. This is reflected in the increased coverage of sports activities and the entertainment world. Also in addition to short stories, poetry, satire and other such write ups, newspapers have started giving more of soft news.

This is not a new phenomenon. The age-old definition of news: 'When a dog bites a man, that is not news; but when a man bites a dog, that is news' reflects that soft news has been in vogue since almost the beginning. The very first newspaper of India- 'Hicky's Gazette' was full of such soft stories like who arrived back from England, Who had a fight with whom, Who had a romantic liaison with whom, etc.

A newspaper, a news programme, or a news bulletin normally contains a judicious mix of hard news and soft news but hard news always gets higher

priority in terms of selection and placement. Soft news is also used to break the monotony of bunch of hard news items in radio and television news bulletins.

Examples:

Voters' perception about contesting candidates, release of a book, seminars and workshops, peoples reaction about budget proposals, lifestyle stories, follow-up stories etc.

5.2.5 BREAKING NEWS:

Events have the habit of happening unexpectedly without any prior intimation. Not only nature behaves without any warning, human behavior is also quite unpredictable. When hard news is flashed immediately on the radio and television it is called *breaking news*.

Breaking news means releasing news stories while the event is still taking place or it has just happened. Such news stories are of immense consequence and are flashed on television and radio even when other scheduled programmes are being broadcast.

There is intense competition amongst different news channels and broadcasting media to be the first to break news stories. In-fact, breaking news is the measure of efficiency of the news gathering network of a news system. Channels take great pride in breaking news and use such achievements as selling points. In some cases news channels have been found bragging about breaking a particular story for months.

Sometimes it so happens that a major story breaks when the newspaper is about to be sent for printing or is being printed. Under such situations the printing job is stopped for a short while and a brief news item is inserted under the heading '*stop press*' (*chhapte-chhapte* in Hindi).

5.2.6 FOLLOW-UP NEWS:

Only a few stories are one-time happenings. In most cases new events unfold and need to be reported over and over again. The news that relates to the stories filed on earlier days is called follow-up news and is a very important component of news media. Journalists need to be vigilant to follow events for further developments. This task needs the skills to anticipate new developments and a lot of hard work including legwork.

5.2.7 SINGLE-ELEMENT & TWO-ELEMENT NEWS STORIES:

Many news stories have only one major aspect, angle, or dimension around which rest of the information revolves. Such stories are found in plenty and are called Single-element news stories.

Examples:

- *Three persons killed and eight injured in a bus accident,*
- *President suffers from eye-flue,*
- *Dearness allowance of Government employees increased,*
- *Examinations postponed,*
- *Famous filmmaker dies,*
- *Timber godown destroyed in fire.*

The story begins with the lead in the first paragraph. The second and third paragraphs elaborate the lead and provide the necessary background. It depends upon the importance of the necessity of the background, whether it would come in the second or the third paragraph. The story continues with the supporting and buttressing information about the lead. Once all the information about the lead is given secondary information, if available and/or required, is given.

Examples:

Lead: Fire broke out in a timber godown in Mayapuri area of capital New Delhi late last night causing heavy losses.

Explanation: The Fire Officer of South Delhi spread of fire informed that there was danger of fire spreading to the neighborhood due to unauthorized constructions and storage of large quantities of timber in them.

Elaboration: He also informed that *prima facie* it appeared that short circuit in the electric wires may have been the cause of the fire. Seven fire fighting engines and more than forty firemen were engaged in controlling the fire. Eyewitnesses said that the firefighters reached the place of fire within ten minutes of the noticing of the fire.

Additional information: No loss of life has been reported so far. Many civilians were seen helping the firemen in extinguishing the fire. The owner of the godown could not be contacted.

Many news events contain two very important aspects, angles, or dimensions; and relevant pieces of information are available. It is the job of the reporter that both the elements get adequately projected in the news. There are two ways of writing the two-element news story:

- If both the elements can fit easily into one or two sentences each, both can be put in the first paragraph. Care has to be taken that the paragraph does not extend beyond approximately 40-50 words.
- In many cases the two elements of the story are so diverse and almost equally important that both cannot be stated in one sentence or one paragraph. In such cases the recommended style is to write a Summary Lead. In-fact summary lead consists of two short and crisp leads. Decision about which one of the leads will be given priority and first position has to be taken by the reporter based upon his assessment, wisdom and experience.

Examples:

- *Single sentence:* Passengers furious at seven-hour delay of the Mumbai flight forced three Air-India officials to sit on floor for three hours.
- *Two sentences:* Air-India flight from Delhi to Mumbai was delayed for more than seven hours. The agitating passengers forced three airline officials to sit on the floor for more than three hours till the flight left for Mumbai.
- *Summary lead:* Air-India flight from Delhi to Mumbai was delayed for more than seven hours due to a technical snag, last night. The flight scheduled to leave at four in the evening left a few minutes before eleven at night. The harassed passengers shouted slogans and forced three senior officials of the air-line to squat on the floor of the waiting lounge allegedly for misbehaving with a female passenger.

For organizing the rest of the story of two-element news, the background information and explanation of the lead has to be given in the same manner as for single element story with one main difference. While writing the story one element may be dealt with completely and only then the second element be taken.

Repeated jumping from one element to another creates confusion and makes the story difficult to read. Words like: *while, but, in addition, next* are used to move from one element to another.

OTHER CLASSIFICATIONS OF NEWS:

Based on the subject and manner of collecting information, news stories can also be classified as follows:

1. *Economic Reports*
2. *Development reports*
3. *Political reports*

4. *Crime Report*
5. *Lifestyle Reports*
6. *Sports Reports*
7. *Film News*
8. *Legislative and Parliament News*
9. *Rural News*
10. *Legal-Court News*
11. *Local body News*
12. *Commerce News*
13. *Health News*
14. *Environmental News*
15. *Educational News*
16. *Religious/spiritual News*
17. *Commercial News*
18. *Science News*

Based on the area of the origin of reports they can be divided into following categories:

- *International News / Foreign News*
- *National News*
- *Inter-state/ Regional News*
- *News Local News*

Based on the importance news can be divided into following categories:

- *Special News*: Events of great relevance to all.
- *Contextual News*: News relevant to only a limited area or population
- *Spot News*: News of value and relevance only for the time being. With the passage of time such news becomes stale and irrelevant.

Examples:

Special News: India wins cricket match against Pakistan

Contextual News: Prime Minister to Visit Chandigarh (relevant for the people of region but may not be news for people of Kerala)

Spot News: Monday declared holiday for public servants, President leaves for goodwill visit to US.

5.3 SUMMARY:

- Newspapers perform many functions. They educate. They entertain. Newspapers are a very powerful and effective medium of persuasion. But the basic function of newspapers is to *inform*. Thus the major component of newspapers is *news*. The rest of the materials perform supplementary roles to news.
- Some of the factors on which classification of news is based are: *currency or immediacy of the event, importance of the event, interest level of the event, story-breaking pattern, continuation stories, number of elements in the events to be covered*, etc. Accordingly, the following types of news stories have been identified: *Hard News, Soft News, Breaking News, and Follow-up News*.
- News may be broadly divided into hard news and soft news. News that has great importance and impact on the life of a nation or people or news that has great significance or affects life of many people is termed hard news.
- News that interests people but has great significance is called soft news. There are many news stories that contain any information that needs to be disseminated urgently. They have the news values, which will not be reduced with the passage of time. Such news stories are called soft news.

- With a high level of entertainment content on most media including TV, radio, magazines and the Internet; even newspapers have started giving more space to entertainment. This is reflected in the increased coverage of sports activities and the entertainment world. Also in addition to short stories, poetry, satire and other such write ups, newspapers have started giving more of soft news.
- Events have the habit of happening unexpectedly without any prior intimation. Not only nature behaves without any warning, human behavior is also quite unpredictable. When hard news is flashed immediately on the radio and television it is called *breaking news*.
- Based on the subject and manner of collecting information, news stories can also be classified as follows: Economic news, Development news, Political news, Crime news, Lifestyle news, Sports news, Film news, Legislative and Parliament news, Rural news, Legal-Court news, Commercial news, Health news, Environmental news, Educational news, Religious/spiritual news, Commerce news, and Science news.
- Based on the area of the origin of reports they can be divided into following categories: International news / Foreign news, National news, Inter-state/ Regional news, State news, and Local news.
- Based on the importance news can be divided into following categories: special news or events of great relevance to all; contextual news or news relevant to only a limited area or population; and spot news or news of value and relevance only for the time being. With the passage of time such news becomes stale and irrelevant.

5.4 KEY WORDS:

Factors of Classifying News: Some of the factors on which classification of news is based are: *currency or immediacy of the event, importance of the*

event, interest level of the event, story-breaking pattern, continuation stories, number of elements in the events to be covered, etc. Accordingly, the following types of news stories have been identified: *Hard News, Soft News, Breaking News, and Follow-up News.*

Hard News: News that has great importance and impact on the life of a nation or people or news that has great significance or affects life of many people is termed hard news. The swearing-in of a President or Prime Minister, the presentation of the national budget, etc., are examples of hard news.

Soft News: News that interests people but has great significance is called soft news. The wedding of a film actor, the birthday party of a celebrity, a rock show, a beauty contest, or a campus festival are examples of soft news.

Breaking News: Events have the habit of happening unexpectedly without any prior intimation. Not only nature behaves without any warning, human behavior is also quite unpredictable. When hard news is flashed immediately on the radio and television it is called *breaking news.*

Follow Up News: Only a few stories are one-time happenings. In most cases new events unfold and need to be reported over and over again. The news that relates to the stories filed on earlier days is called follow-up news and is a very important component of news media. Journalists need to be vigilant to follow events for further developments.

5.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

- Write a detailed note on the various types of news. Cite suitable examples.
- Discuss hard news and soft news in detail.
- Discuss breaking news and follow-up news in detail.
- Discuss single-element news and multi-element news in brief.

5.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

- ***Reporting*** by Charnley
- ***Active Reporter*** by James Lewis
- ***Professional Journalist*** by John Hohenberg
- ***Professional Journalism*** by Patanjali Sethi
- ***Professional Journalism*** by M.V. Kamath
- ***News Writing*** by George Hough

B. A. Mass Communication (2nd year)

NEWS WRITING (BMC-109)

Block: C

Unit: II

Lesson: 6

NEWS FEATURES, NEWS ANALYSIS AND BACKGROUNDEERS

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LESSON STRUCTURE:

In this lesson we shall discuss about various *news related write-ups*. First, we shall focus on *news features*. Then we shall discuss *news analysis*. Finally, we shall also discuss *backgrounders*. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Presentation of Content
 - 6.2.1 News Features
 - 6.2.2 News Analysis
 - 6.2.3 Backgrounders
- 6.3 Summary
- 6.4 Key Words
- 6.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 6.6 References/Suggested Reading

6.0 OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this lesson are:

- *To Learn About News Features*
- *To Learn About News Analysis*
- *To Learn About Backgrounder*

6.1 INTRODUCTION:

Writing new stories follows two major principles- facts and only facts can be given, and the inverted pyramid structure of writing is often always strictly followed.

Both these principles have helped journalism to be taken with credibility by the masses. People absorb information and facts in order of relevance and importance and then make their own opinions. These principles have withstood the tests of times and are still followed quite religiously.

But it is also true that these principles also put restrictions on the creativity of the news writers and reporters. Moreover, there is also a felt and expressed need for variety both in style and content in news presentation. In newspapers, these needs are met through different types of writings.

Three kinds of writing ups that are primarily concerned with presentation of information and facts in different manners will be discussed in this lesson. These are: *News Features*, *News Analysis*, and *Backgrounders*.

6.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *News Features*
- *News Analysis*
- *Backgrounder*

6.2.1 NEW FEATURES:

News features deal with both information and facts. Only the news features are written in a more interesting manner. In news features, the presentation may be dramatic and major information may be revealed after creating some suspense or after creating a receptive environment.

STYLE IN NEWS FEATURES:

Compared to the rigid and straightforward style of news writing, news feature writing is relaxed and informal. The people in the story become the actors and they are made to convey to the readers. Their words are used to recreate the scene in the minds of the people. The story is made to move ahead with quotes and incidents. Even dialogue can be used and actors in the news story can be presented as interacting among themselves.

Realistic dialogue fascinates the readers. Verbs that create pictures in the minds of readers are useful. In many cases present tense is used to give the reader a sense of continuing action.

In nutshell, it can be said that, for writing news features the objective is to make it interesting and readable as far as possible but without compromising on the basic premise that objectivity and balance have to be maintained. The objective still remains to inform and not to educate or persuade.

INTRO (LEAD) IN NEWS FEATURES:

In news features, the most important information is normally not given in the beginning. *Delayed leads* are recommended. An anecdote or incident can be the beginning. The lead has to convey urgency, something so curious or provocative that the readers will have to read the rest of the story. Possibilities

for writing leads for news features are endless and each story will also have many possible leads.

The writer has to make use of his or her creative abilities to the maximum. It has been said that lead should be shouting: '*Hey, you can't leave me! Stop and read me!*'

At the same time the lead should be in tune with the main story. If the lead promises too much and the story does not deliver, the reader feels cheated.

BODY IN NEWS FEATURES:

News features more or less follow the chronological order of story telling. All-important pieces of information are covered. These can be given in an imaginative manner using *quotes*, *dialogue* and *picture making verbs*.

Selection of information is the essence of a news feature. Every piece of information that is with the writer need not be given. News features may not need a conclusion, as there are possibilities that while concluding the writer's opinion may creep into it.

The Wall Street Journal, a leading US newspaper, gives the following instructions to its journalists to write news features.

Beginning: Start with an anecdote or illustration of the theme.

Theme: Shortly after the beginning, state the main point of the piece. Don't drop the main point much lower.

Body: Provide details that elaborate the theme. Tell the reader what is happening, why and what's being done about the situation.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING NEWS FEATURES:

Here are some guidelines for writing effective news features:

- *Practice the art of writing interestingly.*
- *Collect information from a wide variety of sources including official files, reports, archives, and interviewing and observing.*
- *Before beginning to work upon a news feature learn to search for the background information. This will prepare a ground for your work and in getting relevant information. Learning in advance about persons who are to be interviewed helps in asking suitable questions.*
- *Every news feature writer has to have very sharp and a keen ability to observe. Clothes, language, articles, persons around, mood and many things need to be taken note of to put the entire situation in a context.*
- *Take extensive notes. Note down even those details, which may seem to be unimportant. Journalists normally keep small notepads with them. Many journalist use tape recorders.*
- *While seeking information formally or informally ask as many questions as possible. If the reporter fails to understand a certain point, he should not hesitate to ask for explanation.*
- *Write draft news feature as soon as you get the time. Delay only adds to loss of information and interest. Write another draft. Discuss with others and improve. With every rewriting the feature will improve.*
- *Check the facts, figures and spellings of places and persons carefully.*
- *Add pictures and graphics depending upon availability and suitability.*
- *News features are mostly about people and are always for people. Use quotations, and paraphrases in the story so that it appears that sources are communicating with the readers.*

Example-1:

One of the stories people tell about Abdul Rahim is that he handed over a terrorist to the police. He is petty shopkeeper in the suburbs of

Srinagar. The terrorist he handed over to the police was his own son, Parvez. 'When my own children do wrong, I don't protect them. The law must be respected.'

Abdul has two sons, the second, the younger one is visually handicapped and lives with the family, mother and two young daughters. "I would rather see Parvez behind bars than someone to call me to identify his body in a morgue", told Abdul to the media persons.

Example-2:

Rani Munda woke yesterday morning with a headache. Last night she had gone to bed with a head full of dreams. Today, she is famous for her beauty and intelligence.

The 19-year old tribal girl from Jharkhand was crowned Miss India at the International Center in New Delhi.

"I felt terrible all day," Rani said after her victory. "But as soon as I walked into the auditorium, something happened. Like, you know, it snapped". The lights, the excitement of the competition, the possibility of going all the way to the top had its effect. "I just knew I could do it," she said...

6.2.2 NEW ANALYSIS:

As a matter of principle, news writing deals with the presentation of facts and arguments. Interpretation of the facts and deriving meaning out of the facts is left to the reader.

It is the practice in newspapers that every issue contains a few *items/events/issues* in which all the available facts are treated together and

objective analysis is provided to the readers. News analyses usually have no fixed place unlike editorials.

In many newspapers the bottom of the front page carries news analyses, while in others some place in the inside pages carries the news analyses.

The task of writing the news analysis is given to experienced staffers or trusted outside experts. Traditionally, senior sub-editors or the chief-sub-editor write the news analyses. Sometimes, outside writers were also given the job. These days the field staff like reporters, correspondents and bureau chiefs also sometimes write news analyses.

There is clear difference between news and news analysis. In news, current facts are more important and past facts may be given only to pad the story. The news writer does not attempt the analysis.

News analysis is also different from writing articles and editorials. The editorial is mainly opinion writing and provides clear-cut opinions. Articles also contain opinions and guidelines; they may also have some component of analysis. But news analysis is not supposed to carry any opinion or prescription. It is simply objective analysis of the assorted facts about an event or issue.

Some newspapers and television news, now days, include analysis, comment and opinion in the news also. Professionally this is considered to be an aberration only. Professional journalistic values respect the wisdom of the readers and therefore provide analysis, comment and opinion in specified columns only.

WRITING NEWS ANALYSIS:

Writing news analysis involves more work than writing news. Following steps make the task systematic and the output is better and more comprehensive.

Selecting a Subject:

As a rule, news analysis is prepared on a topic that is current. But all topics of current value do not qualify to be the subject matter of analysis. Normally a 'burning event' is selected for the news analysis. It means that a news subject that has remained front-page news for more than one day would be fit to be analyzed in detail.

In addition to being current, the subject of news analysis must be fascinating or interesting. It means that the subject has to be relevant to the audiences. For example, an issue, which is of much importance in UK, may not be very relevant in India.

Similarly, the subject matter for news analysis must have wide impact and many ramifications. A straight story with no angles and controversies may not render itself for detailed analysis. Suicides by the students of class ten and twelve may not be the main stories but many such incidents occurring during the examinations will be a good subject for analysis.

GATHERING INFORMATION AND FACTS:

Since the subject of news analysis is current, much information will be easily available. But news analysis must contain facts and arguments that the reader has so far not received. Following are some of the sources for gathering such information:

- *Previous issues of the newspapers*
- *News magazines*
- *Official reports and documents*
- *Annual reports*
- *The Internet*
- *Public personalities and specialists*

ANALYZING THE INFORMATION & FINDING TRENDS:

After collecting as much information as possible on the subject, the writer of news analysis makes a deep study of the collected information. Here, the information must be looked in historical perspective, i.e., with relation to the previous months, years, decades, etc. This generally brings out certain interesting trends, which form the basis for writing the news analysis. News feature writers also try to bring out startling inter-relationships.

For example, while doing news analysis of dowry deaths a writer finds that most of the girls killed due to demand for more dowry were professionally qualified and they had resisted the demands for dowry. The analysis may bring out the trend that educated newly weds when confronted with demands for dowry passionately put up resistance and then suffered violence. The general principle is more information and deeper analysis provides better results.

ORGANIZING THE STRUCTURE:

The writer has a mine of information, but all information cannot be presented. The writer evaluates the collected material and selects information that is both relevant and important. The selected bits of information are then arranged in order of priority.

At this stage it is always better to verify the selected information and facts from variety of sources. Only the verified information and facts must be presented. Even an insignificant error may make the entire exercise a farce in the eyes of the readers.

WRITING THE NEWS ANALYSIS:

The writer of the news analysis must follow all the basic principles of clear writing and the presentation must be precise and easily comprehensible. The

writer should be familiar with the wants and tastes of the readers of the newspaper in which the analysis is to be published. The lowest denominator of the audience must be the target of the writer so that every reader above that level is able to make sense.

The news analysis must resist temptations to allow his or her comments and opinions to creep into the write-up.

It is always advisable to create one or two graphics for the news analysis. The choice is between graphs, bar diagrams, pie charts, pictures and caricatures. Depending upon the nature of the subject, and space available; decision about the illustrations and graphics has to be taken.

The scope of writing news analysis is much wider in news magazines. Many news stories in news magazines contain an element of news analysis, but the principles remain the same. Since deadline in a news magazine is a little bit extended and space is also more (not unlimited) the skills of news analyst are better displayed in news magazines. These days the supplements of daily newspapers have also started carrying news analyses, sometimes on quite non-traditional subjects.

6.2.3 BACKGROUNDEERS:

Backgrounders add meaning to the events and issues in the news. Backgrounders do this by explaining them further through background material. These write-ups bring the readers up to date explaining how, why, and when of the event and issue so far.

Backgrounders are more or less an historical presentation of the information and facts. For example, if the news of the death sentence to a killer rapist is in the news an historical account of the persons hanged in the past will be good topic for the backgrounder. During elections, background

information about constituencies, political groups and contestants is very important and every newspaper publishes it.

There is clear difference between news analysis and backgrounders. There is no or very little element of analysis in the backgrounder. The objective is to provide as much background information as possible. It can be said that a backgrounder is loaded with information, whereas a news analysis would concentrate to find causes and establish trends.

WRITING BACKGROUNDERS:

It is advisable to write backgrounders in a systematic and planned manner. The first two steps for writing backgrounders are same as for the news analysis. The subject is chosen out of the current topics and as much information as possible is collected from various sources. Sometimes, need for the backgrounders can be anticipated and the pieces are prepared well in advance. Elections, festivals and ceremonies are some of the occasions when advance planning can be done.

For a backgrounder the data is generally organized in chronological order. Care should be taken to go into the past as much as possible. Since the writer is dealing with the past, there are likely to be gaps. If even after reasonable efforts the gaps are not filled it is advisable to mention this in the writing itself. Similarly, the readers should also be informed if certain data is unconfirmed. The writer has to select the information according to their relevance.

Since the backgrounder contains lot of facts, it has to be written very carefully to make it interesting and readable. This is a challenge before the writer.

Traditionally backgrounders do not contain any pictures or graphics. But there is no harm if the backgrounders are also made more attractive and

interesting by presenting data in tabular formats or in the forms of bar diagrams, pie charts, graphs etc. An odd picture may also be used here and there.

It is worth mentioning here that in the new journalistic practices of today, distinction between various forms of newspaper writing is getting obliterated. There are many backgrounders that are very well illustrated. There are news items, which contain a few facts lot of analysis and interpretation, some historical perspective, and it may begin or end with an editorial guideline or prescription.

6.3 SUMMARY:

- News features deal with both information and facts. Only the news features are written in a more interesting manner. In news features, the presentation may be dramatic and major information may be revealed after creating some suspense or after creating a receptive environment.
- Compared to the rigid and straightforward style of news writing, news feature writing is relaxed and informal. The people in the story become the actors and they are made to convey to the readers. Their words are used to recreate the scene in the minds of the people. The story is made to move ahead with quotes and incidents. Realistic dialogue fascinates the readers. Verbs that create pictures in the minds of readers are useful. In many cases present tense is used to give the reader a sense of continuing action.
- News features more or less follow the chronological order of story telling. All-important pieces of information are covered. These can be given in an imaginative manner using *quotes*, *dialogue* and *picture making verbs*.

- News analyses are write-ups on current *items/events/issues* in which all the available facts are treated together and objective analysis is provided.
- There is clear difference between news and news analysis. In news, current facts are more important. The news writer does not attempt the analysis. News analysis is also different from writing articles and editorials. The editorial is mainly opinion writing and provides clear-cut opinions. Articles also contain opinions and guidelines; they may also have some component of analysis. But a news analysis is simply objective analysis of the assorted facts about an event or issue.
- The scope of writing news analysis is much wider in news magazines. Many news stories in news magazines contain an element of news analysis, but the principles remain the same. Since deadline in a news magazine is a little bit extended and space is also more (not unlimited) the skills of news analyst are better displayed in news magazines.
- Backgrounders add meaning to the events and issues in the news. Backgrounders do this by explaining them further through background material. These write-ups bring the readers up to date explaining how, why, and when of the event and issue so far.
- There is clear difference between news analysis and backgrounders. There is no or very little element of analysis in the backgrounder. The objective is to provide as much background information as possible. It can be said that a backgrounder is loaded with information, whereas a news analysis would concentrate to find causes and establish trends.

6.4 KEY WORDS:

News features: These deal with both information and facts. Only the news features are written in a more interesting manner. In news features, the

presentation may be dramatic and major information may be revealed after creating some suspense or after creating a receptive environment.

Style in News features: Compared to the rigid and straightforward style of news writing, news feature writing is relaxed and informal. The people in the story become the actors and they are made to convey to the readers. Their words are used to recreate the scene in the minds of the people. The story is made to move ahead with quotes and incidents. Even dialogue can be used and actors in the news story can be presented as interacting among themselves.

News Analyses: These are write-ups on current *items/events/issues* in which all the available facts are treated together and objective analysis is provided. There is clear difference between news and news analysis. In news, current facts are more important. The news writer does not attempt the analysis. News analysis is also different from articles and editorials. The editorial is mainly opinion writing and provides clear-cut opinions. Articles also contain opinions and guidelines; they may also have some component of analysis. But a news analysis is simply objective analysis of the assorted facts about an event or issue.

Gathering Information and Facts: Since the subject of news analysis is current, much information will be easily available. But news analysis must contain facts and arguments that the reader has so far not received. Following are some of the sources for gathering such information: Previous issues of the newspapers, News magazines, Official reports and documents, Annual reports, The Internet, and Public personalities and specialists.

Backgrounders: Backgrounders are more or less an historical presentation of the information and facts. For example, if the news of the death sentence to a killer rapist is in the news an historical account of the persons hanged in the past will be good topic for the backgrounder. During elections, background

information about constituencies, political groups and contestants is very important and every newspaper publishes it.

6.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. What is a news feature? Discuss in detail.
2. What is a news analysis? Discuss in detail.
3. Write a detailed note on backgrounders.
4. Write a news feature on any current event in about 300 words.
5. Write a news analysis on any current event in about 300 words.
6. Write a backgrounder on any current event in about 300 words.

6.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

- *Reporting* by Charnley
- *Active Reporter* by James Lewis
- *Professional Journalist* by John Hohenberg
- *Professional Journalism* by Patanjali Sethi
- *Professional Journalism* by M.V. Kamath
- *News Writing* by George Hough

B. A. Mass Communication (2nd year)

NEWS WRITING (BMC-109)

Block: D Unit: I Lesson: 7

INTERVIEWS- AN INTRODUCTION

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LESSON STRUCTURE:

In this lesson we shall discuss about the various aspects of interviews. First, we shall focus on research in interviews. We shall briefly discuss a few types of interviews. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Presentation of Content
 - 7.2.1 Interviews- An Overview
 - 7.2.2 Research for Interviews
 - 7.2.3 Setting up Interviews
 - 7.2.4 Funnel Interviews
 - 7.2.5 Inverted Pyramid Interviews
 - 7.2.6 The Art of Asking Questions
 - 7.2.7 Structure of Interviews
- 7.3 Summary

- 7.4 Key Words
- 7.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 7.6 References/Suggested Reading

7.0 OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this lesson are:

- *Interviews- An Overview*
- *Research for Interviews*
- *Setting up Interviews*
- *Funnel Interviews*
- *Inverted Pyramid Interviews*
- *The Art of Asking Questions*
- *Structure of Interviews*

7.1 INTRODUCTION:

Interview is a situation of interaction for gathering information by one set of participants from another set of participants. In an interview for job, a group of experts gather information from the aspirants. In police investigation, the police officials gather information from various kinds of persons. Similarly in the marketing situations, the marketing personnel collect information from the potential consumers or buyers. In research, the researchers gather information from a large number of persons.

But in journalism, the purpose of the interview is to collect information for writing news or other write-ups.

Each type of interview situation demands a different approach and setting. In journalism interview has become a very important source of news information and the journalists need to learn the art and craft of interviewing.

In any interview, a reporter must ask right questions with fineness at the right time. That requires homework, confidence, and ability to listen, observe and absorb.

In this lesson, we shall discuss about various aspects of interviews.

7.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Interviews- An Overview*
- *Research for Interviews*
- *Setting up Interviews*
- *Funnel Interviews*
- *Inverted Pyramid Interviews*
- *The Art of Asking Questions*
- *Structure of Interviews*

7.2.1 INTERVIEWS- AN OVERVIEW:

A journalistic interview is essentially an exchange of information between the journalist and the source. If right questions are asked in the appropriate manner, the source becomes an important window to the news worthy information. An interviewer needs plenty of patience, ability to listen, participate, observe and grasp the information given by the source. A good journalist should be able to understand when a source is giving the truth, embellishing it or lying.

An interview is not an opportunity for the journalist to exhibit his or her superiority in articulation and knowledge. The task is to extract as much information as possible from the source for the audience. Efforts are made to collect relevant information from the source for the audience.

At present the television channels provide many examples of ideal interviews where the viewers are not only richer but they also undergo a pleasant experience. But at the same time, there are a number of interview situations where the arrogance and hypocrisy of the journalist/interviewer is quite evident and at the end the audience is not better informed but feels cheated.

Contemptuous smile coupled with the cunningness to make the source make statements, which he or she has no intentions to do, is the style of some of the journalists today. Such interviews should be treated as examples of how not to conduct interviews. An interviewing journalist should not appear to be judge declaring the verdicts.

An interview should be treated like a situation of comfortable dialogue between two persons of equal status.

In day-to-day journalism two types of interviews are conducted:

- *Planned interviews*
- *Spot interviews*

There are many situations in all the media (newspapers, news magazines, radio and television); when the interviews are scheduled and there is time to make preparations. But while covering spot news, interviews need to be conducted spontaneously to gather relevant and interesting information without much preparation. A journalist should be equipped to handle both the situations efficiently.

For the planned and scheduled interviews there are four stages. Each stage needs careful planning and expertise. These stages are:

- *Research*
- *Setting up the interview*

- *Questions and answers*
- *Presentation*

7.2.2 RESEARCH FOR INTERVIEWS:

The art of doing a journalistic interview lies in the ability to convert the situation into a dialogue. Experts tell us that the best of the information can be extracted in a situation of comfort. One to one talks between equals are best situations. The task of the journalists is two folds. First, the journalist has to be at ease and natural. Secondly, the source must also be made to feel like a participant in the process.

The journalist must gather as much as possible information about the topic, which is to be discussed, and also about the person with whom the dialogue is to be created. To do this, journalists must do their homework so that they do the interview knowing both the background of the source and something about the subject of the story.

Sources will be more relaxed and will give more information they feel that they are talking to reporters who speak with knowledge and authority. Sources are likely to withhold information if they feel that the interviewer is not asking intelligent questions or does not understand the subject.

There is an infamous example of a TV journalist interviewing the then Home Minister Mr. Inderjit Singh out side the parliament. The lady journalist ignorant of the identity of the source, asked for the introduction of the source after finishing the spot interview. The reply was, “My dear lady, I happen to be the Home Minister of the country”.

Most newspapers have clippings on various subjects and personalities in a department called *morgue*. Internet is another source that should be tapped for preparing for the interview. Libraries can also be used. Other media persons who have dealt with the topic or the source earlier are also

good guides. Friends and relatives of the source can also be approached. The journalist must also ask for the bio-data of the source.

If required, a pre-interview meeting can also be arranged. But care must be taken that this session should not be a rehearsal of the interview otherwise the spontaneity of the real interview will be lost.

7.2.3 SETTING UP OF THE INTERVIEW:

Once the background information has been gathered the interview need to be arranged. In many cases the interview is fixed well in advance. There are few steps to follow for setting up of the interview:

- Request the source for the interview in advance. This can be done on telephone or by writing a letter or even by personal meeting or on Internet.
- Establish your credentials with the source including your name, position as a journalist, name of the organization that you represent and the programme for which the interview is to be conducted.
- In consultation with the source or his/her representative, decide the time and place for the interview. The estimated time for conducting the interview may also be conveyed.
- Convey to the interviewee the general type of information that would be sought during the interview. It is advisable that the specific questions are not revealed. In some cases the source may ask for the list of questions in writing. There is no harm in giving a list of general questions but also make clear that the questions would arise out of the interview but the source should be given an opportunity to come prepared.
- Prepare the scene of interview in advance. For television interviews lot of effort goes into it and there is a whole team to do it. Even if the

interview is to be carried out at the place of work or residence of the source advance planning is essential.

- Dress according to the status of the source and the occasion. The journalist should appear to be appropriately dressed and prepared. Shabby looking journalists do not inspire respect and confidence.
- Reach the venue of the interview well before the scheduled time.

7.2.4 FUNNEL INTERVIEW:

These interviews proceed gradually from simple-to-complex; and from easy-to-difficult. The toughest and the complex questions are asked towards the end of the interview. The interview begins with background information, followed by general questions on the subject and then the most complex and crucial questions are asked.

In this style of interviewing the journalist gets a good chance of establishing rapport with the source and the interviewee responds more candidly to the tough questions. From the point of view of the audiences, the subject gets built up gradually from simple to complex and there is more understanding and grasping.

Funnel interviews are generally used for interviewing people who are not accustomed to being interviewed and when the duration of the interview is not important.

7.2.5 INVERTED PYRAMID INTERVIEW:

When the source is a known person and is accustomed to being interviewed the key questions can be asked in the beginning itself. Such interviews are also a must when the time for interviewing is less. In most of such situations the responses of the source are likely to be breaking news. In planned interviews, it is advisable not to use this approach.

7.2.6 ART OF ASKING QUESTIONS:

The interviewers must prepare two sets of questions in advance. First set is of essential questions that must be put to the source, as they are crucial for the topic. Second set is of supplementary questions that may be asked if time permits. It is better to write down these two sets of questions.

For conducting interviews for print media and radio the interviewer may refer to these questions while conducting the interview. But for an interview for television whether live or otherwise looking at the written questions is not advised. However, teleprompter is used for this purpose. Also if the producer wants the interviewer to ask some new questions, then slips of papers with questions written are given to the interviewer.

The questions should be short, specific and with 'one meaning' only. The basic principle that needs to be followed is the lesser the time taken by the interviewer better the interview. This gives more time to the person giving the interview.

Vague questions will get diverse responses that may not be relevant and to correct the situation the journalist will have to ask more questions.

Two types of questions can be asked:

- *Closed-ended Questions, and*
- *Open-ended questions*

Closed-ended Questions: Closed-ended questions seek specific responses. For example: *Do you agree with the NDA that Railway Minister should resign after the charges have been framed against him in fodder case?*

Open-ended Questions:

In open-ended questions, general information is sought with more scope to the source to give information. For example: *What is your opinion on the continuation of Ministers against whom charges have been framed in the courts?*

Open-ended questions on television create problems for the anchors, as there arises a need to interrupt. And interruptions are not advisable for a good interview. Interruptions must be few and used only as last resort. Open-ended questions also provide an opportunity for the source to make controversial statements, which sometimes lend the interviewer and the organization into a legal problem. When the source gives incomplete information follow up questions are asked.

A good interview consists of a judicious mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed ended questions do not help to convert the interview into a dialogue, but some essential specific information can be obtained only with the help of such questions.

Responses to open ended questions put life to the interview but there are two dangers. One; more time is taken and second; the source may take up subjects that are not the subject matter of the interview.

In the field of journalism many occasions arise when interviews cannot be anticipated and planned. Particularly while covering news, on-the-spot interviews need to be conducted. It is the job of the journalists to be ready for such situations. In-fact these are the times when the journalistic skills are put to test. An inefficient journalist will mumble and fumble and fail to extract information. Asking the victims of Tsunami "Aap ko kaisa lag raha hai?" (How are you feeling?) is one such example.

It is important for the journalist interviewing for the spot news that they appear to be neutral and objective. Getting excited and showing it on camera

while interviewing a celebrity on camera only shows that the journalist is a novice.

It is always advisable to use the audio tape recorders for doing interviews for the print media. Taking detailed notes breaks the conversation and the source may start dictating rather than talking. Tape recorded interviews also help in writing the interviews properly and also give quotes. Tape-recorded interviews also save the journalists if the source after having said something, denies later on.

Journalists and anchors doing live interviews have to be especially careful. Even for the coverage of spot news interviewers need to be careful.

7.2.7 STRUCTURE OF INTERVIEWS:

In a live radio interviews, there is hardly any scope for editing or fine-tuning the interview. In case of a live interview for television in a single camera situation, on-line editing is restricted to zoom, pan and tilt movements of the camera. In multiple camera situations the producer is able to make the presentation of the programme more meaningful and interesting by appropriate camera placements and selection of camera movements. A creative combination of the sound and visuals can also be used.

For example: Selecting the visual of a over-the-shoulder-shot of the source when the interviewer is asking the question can show the level of comfort or discomfort of the source while facing tedious questions. Some producers also use different types of lights in interviews to make them more interesting.

For print media, both for newspapers and magazines, interview writing is more challenging. Broadly, there are two formats or structures for presenting the interviews in print media:

- *The Descriptive Format*

- *The Question-Answer Format*

The Descriptive Format:

The descriptive format is most commonly used method of writing interviews for print media. The basic principle of 'inverted pyramid style' is used. The information gathered during the interview is presented in order of importance and relevance. The lead or intro becomes the window of the write up and contains 2-3 most important bits of information along with the introduction of the source.

In the body, the source is introduced in greater detail and the information presented not in order in which it was obtained but in the order of importance.

The Question-Answer Format:

The question-answer format is rarely used in newspapers but widely used in magazines. In this case the interview is presented as it had taken place.

After writing a paragraph on the subject, topic, occasion and the interviewee, question as asked and the answers as received are given. This format is more realistic and makes the readers more and better informed.

It must be mentioned that interviewing is an important tool of journalism. All media persons need to learn the art and craft of interviewing. Reading, listening and watching more and more interviews will help to become proficient in the art and craft of interviewing.

7.3 SUMMARY:

- Interview is a situation of interaction for gathering information by one set of participants from another set of participants. In an interview for job, a group of experts gather information from the aspirants. In police

investigation, the police officials gather information from various kinds of persons. In journalism, the purpose of the interview is to collect information for writing news or other write-ups.

- *In any interview, a reporter must ask right questions with fineness at the right time. That requires homework, confidence, and ability to listen, observe and absorb.*
- An interviewer needs plenty of patience, ability to listen, participate, observe and grasp the information given by the source.
- There are many situations in all the media (newspapers, news magazines, radio and television); when the interviews are scheduled and there is time to make preparations. But while covering spot news, interviews need to be conducted spontaneously to gather relevant and interesting information without much preparation.
- Most newspapers have clippings on various subjects and personalities in a department called *morgue*. Internet is another source that should be tapped for preparing for the interview. Libraries can also be used. Other media persons who have dealt with the topic or the source earlier are also good guides. Friends and relatives of the source can also be approached.
- Funnel interviews proceed gradually from simple-to-complex; and from easy-to-difficult. The toughest and the complex questions are asked towards the end of the interview. The interview begins with background information, followed by general questions on the subject and then the most complex and crucial questions are asked.
- When the source is a known person and is accustomed to being interviewed the key questions can be asked in the beginning itself. Such interviews are called inverted pyramid interviews and are used when the time for interviewing is less. In most of such situations the

responses of the source are likely to be breaking news. In planned interviews, it is advisable not to use this approach.

- Two types of questions are asked for interviews. These are: closed-ended questions, and open-ended questions.
- Closed-ended questions seek specific responses. For example: *Do you agree with the NDA that Railway Minister should resign after the charges have been framed against him in fodder case?*
- In open-ended questions, general information is sought with more scope to the source to give information. For example: *What is your opinion on the continuation of Ministers against whom charges have been framed in the courts?*

7.4 KEY WORDS:

Interviews: Interview is a situation of interaction for gathering information by one set of participants from another set of participants. In an interview for job, a group of experts gather information from the aspirants. But in journalism, the purpose of the interview is to collect information for writing news or other write-ups. In any interview, a reporter must ask right questions with fineness at the right time. That requires homework, confidence, and ability to listen, observe and absorb.

Types of Interviews: In day-to-day journalism two types of interviews are conducted: planned interviews and spot interviews.

Stages of Conducting Interviews: For the planned and scheduled interviews there are four stages. Each stage needs careful planning and

expertise. These stages are: research, setting up the interview, questions and answers, and presentation.

Funnel Interviews: These interviews proceed gradually from simple-to-complex; and from easy-to-difficult. The toughest and the complex questions are asked towards the end of the interview. The interview begins with background information, followed by general questions on the subject and then the most complex and crucial questions are asked.

Closed-ended Questions: Closed-ended questions seek specific responses. For example: *Do you agree with the NDA that Railway Minister should resign after the charges have been framed against him in fodder case?*

Open-ended Questions: In open-ended questions, general information is sought with more scope to the source to give information. For example: *What is your opinion on the continuation of Ministers against whom charges have been framed in the courts?*

The Descriptive Format of Interviews: The descriptive format is most commonly used method of writing interviews for print media. The basic principle of 'inverted pyramid style' is used. The information gathered during the interview is presented in order of importance and relevance. The lead or intro becomes the window of the write up and contains 2-3 most important bits of information along with the introduction of the source.

The Question-Answer Format of Interviews: The question-answer format is rarely used in newspapers but widely used in magazines. In this case the interview is presented as it had taken place.

7.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. What are the different formats of interviews? Discuss in detail.
2. Write a detailed note on interviews are conducted.
3. Write a detailed note on the types of questions asked in interviews.

7.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

- *Reporting* by Charnley
- *Active Reporter* by James Lewis
- *Professional Journalist* by John Hohenberg
- *Professional Journalism* by Patanjali Sethi
- *Professional Journalism* by M.V. Kamath
- *News Writing* by George Hough

B. A. Mass Communication (2nd year)

NEWS WRITING (BMC-109)

Block: D

Unit: II

Lesson: 8

WRITING NEWS FOR NEWSPAPERS

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LESSON STRUCTURE:

In this lesson we shall discuss about the various aspects of news writing for newspapers. Specifically, we shall focus on the structure, lead, and body of news stories. We shall also briefly discuss some principles of news writing.

The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Presentation of Content
 - 8.2.1 News Writing for Newspapers
 - 8.2.2 Structure of News Stories
 - 8.2.3 Lead of News Stories
 - 8.2.4 Body of News Stories
 - 8.2.5 Principles of News Writing
 - 8.2.6 Style of News Stories
- 8.3 Summary

- 8.4 Key Words
- 8.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 8.6 References/Suggested Reading

8.0 OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this lesson are:

- *To know about News Writing for Newspapers*
- *To learn about Structure of News Stories*
- *To learn about Lead of News Stories*
- *To learn about Body of News Stories*
- *To understand the Principles of News Writing*
- *To understand Style of News Stories*

8.1 INTRODUCTION:

In the previous blocks and units the concept, structure, types and tools of news have been discussed in detail. After having learnt the basics about news it is time that the art and craft of news writing is also learnt. Writing news is the spirit of journalism. Journalism begins and ends with writing news. This is also true for radio and television journalism as in any case whether for print or electronic media news has to be scripted.

News writing is basically a process of describing events and processes, not for the purpose of documentation as in the case of history writing but for the important function of communicating to the masses.

8.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *News Writing for Newspapers*
- *Structure of News Stories*

- *Lead of News Stories*
- *Body of News Stories*
- *Principles of News Writing*
- *Style of News Stories*

8.2.1 NEWS WRITING FOR NEWSPAPERS- AN INTRODUCTION:

News is an art of producing descriptions for the consumption of masses. Essentially, news must contain information about *five Ws and one H*. These are:

- *What*
- *When*
- *Where*
- *Who*
- *Why and*
- *How*

In Hindi it can be said that news description must have information about six *ka's* or '*ka' kaars*. These are:

- *Kya?*
- *Kab?*
- *Kahan?*
- *Kaun?*
- *Kyon?*
- *Kaise?*

What: - is the kind of the action or the event of the news story

Who: - relates to the persons involved in the news story

When: - provides information about the time of the action or event

Where: - relates to the place or places of the occurrence of the event

Why: - provides real or perceived reasons for the action or event reported as news

How: - is the detailed description of whatever has happened

While mentioning the names of the persons care should be taken that correct names and spellings must be used. It is not how the name should be written but how the person writes his or her name. The correct spellings may be Surender but the person so called may be using Surinder, in such case the later has to be used.

There may be some confusion about the similarity between 'What' and 'How'. But both are quite different. Whereas 'What' is the answer to the type of occurrence, 'How' is the answer to the curiosity of the manner in which it has happened. While reporting accident information about the collision between a car and a truck is the answer to 'What' and head-on-collision, injury or death, hospitalisation etc. are the answers to 'How'.

While giving the timing (When) in the news story, the journalist has to keep in view the timing when the story is going to be read or listened or viewed by the receivers. We should not write today if we are reporting for a morning newspaper as the reader is going to read it tomorrow. Similarly it would sound strange if we mention the day and date of today for a story for radio or television to be broadcast on the day of reporting. In such a case 'today' is a better option.

In many news stories answer to 'Why' may not be required. Still in other stories the reason may not be factual and only opinion can be given. In such cases the journalist should resist from making guesses and try to find the opinion of few related persons with report them with attribution. In rare cases the journalist may provide a range of possible reasons. A meeting between two political leaders of opposing parties may lead to lot of

speculation but while reporting the possible motives of the meeting need to be carefully reported; else the journalist may appear to be an activist or partisan.

The search for answers to 5 Ws and 1 H begins as soon as the reporter starts collecting information about the news. Yet, while looking for information and then while writing down the news story the reporter must always ensure that these 5 Ws and 1 H have been taken care of.

8.2.2 STRUCTURE OF NEWS STORIES:

Once the reporter has all the facts about the news story, these have to be written down. It must be kept in mind that the news stories have to be put in writing not only for the print media but for radio and television news also they must be first written down. Only when doing live reporting this may not be required.

The basic principles of news writing are similar for all media except for a few differences when reporting for radio and television. It must also be kept in mind that reporting for radio and television is also dissimilar.

The basic objective of news writing is to inform the audiences about the actions and events by creating pictures and visuals in the minds of the audiences.

In print media and also in audio media (radio) this is done by the use of words. Pictures are weaved in the minds of the audiences by the use of language. Words have to do the magic. The difference is in delivery only. In newspapers it is the printed word, whereas in radio it is the spoken word.

In television the presentation of facts is supplemented by the visuals, but the importance of words is still there. Therefore for all the media language is the key for communication and the journalists have to be the masters of words.

Most commonly used structure of news writing is 'inverted pyramid' style. In the Inverted Pyramid Format the first paragraph is called 'Lead' or 'Intro' and '*Mukhra*' in Hindi. It contains one or two or maximum three bits of information that are considered most important and most relevant. Intro has to be written most carefully, as it is the entry point of the story.

Good intro will make the reader go through the entire story whereas a badly written intro can make otherwise an interesting story unreadable. The basic principles of media writing have to be applied to intro writing most effectively. Intro should not be crowded with information nor it should be shallow and without any substance.

The rest of the news story is called the body of the story and here also the information is presented in order of its importance. The body must be divided into small paragraphs with minimum possible punctuation marks other than the full stop.

Since the information given in the intro is of greater value it is a general practice to repeat the same information in the body of the news story. All 5 Ws and 1 H must be taken care of in the body of the news.

We know that by definition news is only presentation of facts, therefore any attempt by the news writer to comment or analyze directly or indirectly is not considered a good journalistic practice. Test of a good news writer is that after reading his or her news the reader should not be able to judge the opinion, thinking or attitude of the news writer on the subject of news.

It is also important to note that inverted pyramid format of news writing does not allow any conclusion or summary. But care should be taken that the end of the story is not abrupt or absurd.

8.2.3 LEAD OR INTRO OF NEWS STORIES:

While writing the intro one or more elements of news are described. Selection of the element(s) would depend upon the importance. So the intro can be of six types depending upon which element of the news has been considered more importance. Examples:

WHAT-BASED INTRO:

*Seven persons **dead***

*City **flooded***

*Building **collapses***

*Suspect **arrested***

*Accused **hanged***

*Ministry **falls***

WHO-BASED INTRO:

***Manmohan Singh** announces*

***Advani** arrested*

***Bush** cries...*

***Viushnukant Shatri** dead*

***President** declares...*

WHEN-BASED INTRO:

***Midnight** arrest*

*Meeting **tomorrow**, draw of lots **today***

*Lok Sabha convened on **27th March***

WHERE-BASED INTRO:

***Bollywood** shocked*

Indonesia rocked
Andhra University closed

WHY-BASED INTRO:

Rain disrupts match
Unruly behavior leads to adjournment
Signal failures blocks rail traffic

HOW-BASED INTRO:

Sabarmati Express **rams** into stationary goods train
Tight vigilance keeps the intruding terrorists away
Right to Information bill **passed unanimously** by Lok Sabha

It must be kept in mind that in order to make the intro more effective new experiments are regularly carried out and we can find innovative intros in the newspapers and magazines. Some of the new forms of intro are:

INTERROGATIVE INTRO:

Will UPA government support Lalu?, Is President Mussaraff honest in his intentions to improve relations with India? How far Polio campaign has succeeded in reducing the incidence of polio in the country?

QUOTE-BASED INTRO:

“Question of my resignation does not arise” says Lalu, “I am innocent” declares the rape accused, “Tista an agent of terrorist forces” alleges the defense lawyer.

ADVISORY INTRO:

Take your umbrellas with you tomorrow as the weather department has predicted heavy rains from tomorrow, Do not eat anything offered by strangers while traveling by train as it may be an attempt to loot your money belongings.

8.2.4 BODY OF NEWS STORIES:

The body of the news story is complete package of information in itself irrespective of the contents of the headline or intro. In-fact, information in the headline or intro is repeated in the intro, which is logical as this is the most vital information of the news, and deserves to be mentioned more than once. Once again the body must contain information about Five Ws and One H. This presentation has to be in the order of relevance and importance and not in order of the happening of the events.

8.2.5 PRINCIPLES OF NEWS WRITING:

In order to build and maintain the credibility of the news media the news writing must adhere to the following six principles:

- *Accuracy*
- *Plurality*
- *Fairness*
- *Objectivity*
- *Balance*
- *Source attribution*

ACCURACY:

The old basic principle of journalism is: ***Facts are sacred opinions are free.***

In-fact entire journalism is the process of finding the truth and presentation of

the truth. Therefore for all the facts that the journalist mentions in the news a test of accuracy needs to be run. It is general practice that facts are verified before given for print.

Verification of the facts should be preferably from the source other than the original. Accuracy, authenticity and truthfulness should be known characteristics of journalism as evidenced in the news writing.

PLURALITY:

Events and processes can be looked at and described in more than one manner. This fundamental nature of plurality of views must be evident in the news writing. It should be the endeavor of the news writer to provide all or all-possible viewpoints to the audiences.

FAIRNESS:

In a situation of conflicts and wide variety of views, there is always a possibility that the journalist also subscribes to a point of view. But while writing the news story the journalist has to remain neutral. Journalists must give fair coverage to all irrespective of their own beliefs and opinions.

OBJECTIVITY:

The facts of the news must be presented as they are. Any deletion or interpretation on the part of the news writer will tend to make the presentation of facts in favor or against a person or an organization. This aptitude of remaining objective has to be cultivated by the journalists with effort. Complete objectivity may not be possible but good journalists have to resist the temptations to support or oppose persons, organizations and issues.

BALANCE:

To make a presentation of plurality of facts in a fair and objective manner is to maintain balance. This is a difficult task, but no one says that journalism is an easy profession. Society expects the journalists to provide information in a complete neutral manner and the audiences will be free to interpret and make their own opinions. In news space of the news media the journalists must appear to be fully informed, fair to all and neutral in their approach. In-fact this is the only way in which journalism can be the business of truth.

SOURCE ATTRIBUTION:

In order to establish the credibility of the information provided in the news it is essential that the source from which the journalist has obtained information must be mentioned while writing the news. The readers are then free to decide how much importance to be given to the information, depending upon their own perceptions about the sources. Attributing information to 'reliable sources' or hiding the identity of the source is not a good journalistic practice.

It must be noted that all the six attributes of news are inter-related and dilution or distortion in one will affect the others. But all these are the essential components of stating truth and if journalism has to be the business of searching and dissemination of truth then adequate attention has to be given to all six of them.

8.2.6 STYLE OF NEWS WRITING:

News must always be written keeping in mind the level of reading proficiency of the audiences. What would be readable and understandable by the least educated and least experienced will be understood by all. Robert Gunning had been the consultant for more than hundred newspapers. In his book "The Techniques of Clear Writing" he has developed *ten principles of clear writing*.

Although these principles were developed long back, they are still highly relevant and if followed help the journalists to write good copy. These are:

KEEP THE WORDS SHORT:

It is always advisable that we write short sentences, as they are easy to understand. Gandhiji always wrote in short sentences. At the same time, all the sentences should not of about the same size. Gunning advised that the sentences must be kept short but in any writing the number of word per sentence should keep on changing.

PREFER SIMPLE TO COMPLEX:

Complex sentences can always be broken into two or more simple sentence. Simple sentences are not only easy fore the reader, but they are easy to write also. Complex sentences may also be used but only when required.

PREFER FAMILIAR WORDS:

The news writer may have a vast vocabulary but the writing is for others. Therefore only those words, which are in the vocabulary of the most of the readers, should be used. In case a difficult or a new word is to be this may be explained in the writing itself.

AVOID UNNECESSARY WORDS:

In journalism there are severe limits of time and space. Therefore words have to be used in the same manner in which a miser uses the money.

PUT ACTION INTO YOUR VERBS:

“Strong-flavored, active verbs give bounce and hold reader’s attention”

Gunning has written. Sentences should always be written in active voice.

WRITE THE WAY YOU TALK:

News writing is a narration of the events. Thus, if we write in the manner we speak it would be more effective.

USE TERMS YOUR READERS CAN PICTURE:

Technical terms used in the news story can make it difficult to understand. If such terms are used they must be explained.

TIE IN WITH YOUR READER'S EXPERIENCE:

Explain the news in a manner the reader can relate to. Writing news on the budget is a challenging job and most readers do not understand much. If writing about VAT, its impact on the price of some consumer goods is also given; the readers will relate to it and thus appreciate the news better.

MAKE FULL USE OF VARIETY:

Every writer must develop a style of writing unique in itself. Information given in intro needs to be stated again in the body. This should be done in words and sentences different from those used in the intro. Innovative writing is the key to be a good news writer.

WRITE TO EXPRESS, NOT TO IMPRESS:

As mentioned earlier the purpose of writing is none other than communication to the readers. This communication is not to prove that writer is a very knowledgeable person but to provide information about the subject of news story.

Finally, it would be appropriate to refer to the tips given by **Jim Bishop** for writing good news stories:

- *Be fair. Presenting all sides of story is not copping out.*
- *Observe good taste.*
- *Make the lead provocative, clear and simple.*
- *Sentences should be short.*
- *Quotes improve the story. Use them.*
- *An important story need not be long.*
- *Select adjectives carefully. Too many are dangerous.*
- *Go directly to the source when possible.*
- *Don't be impressed with an important assignment.*
- *Leave no question unanswered. Do not assume that the readers know the background.*
- *Be polite, but don't be servile.*
- *Get details.*
- *Don't be afraid to try something which is not in the **book**.*
- *Even if you have mastered the language, use short, easy words.*
- *Stories are improved by injection of time element.*
- *After the lead (intro) blend the story from paragraph to Paragraph.*
- *Don't give adversely about castes, sects, minorities, etc.*
- *Don't abuse your privileges or the weapons of your Industry.*
- *Admit errors quickly and fully.*
- *Name the source of your story when possible. If it is an expose from a confidential source protect that source.*

8.3 SUMMARY:

- Writing news is the spirit of journalism. Journalism begins and ends with writing news. This is also true for radio and television journalism as in any case whether for print or electronic media news has to be scripted.

- Essentially, news must contain information about *five Ws and one H*. These are: *What, When, Where, Who, Why, and How*.
- In Hindi, news must have information about six *ka's* or '*ka' kaars*. These are: *Kya? Kab? Kahan? Kaun? Kyon? and Kaise?*
- *What* is the kind of the action or the event of the news story?
- *Who* relates to the persons involved in the news story.
- *When* provides information about the time of the action or event.
- *Where* relates to the place or places of the occurrence of the event.
- *Why* provides real or perceived reasons for the action or event reported as news.
- *How* is the detailed description of whatever has happened.
- The most commonly used structure of news writing is 'inverted pyramid' style. In the Inverted Pyramid Format the first paragraph is called 'Lead' or 'Intro' and '*Mukhra*' in Hindi. It contains one or two or maximum three bits of information that are considered most important and most relevant. Intro has to be written most carefully, as it is the entry point of the story.
- News writing must adhere to the following principles: accuracy, plurality, fairness, objectivity, balance, and source attribution.
- The old basic principle of journalism is: Facts are sacred opinions are free. In-fact entire journalism is the process of finding the truth and presentation of the truth. Therefore for all the facts that the journalist mentions in the news a test of accuracy needs to be run. It is general practice that facts are verified before given for print.
- The facts of the news must be presented as they are. The aptitude of remaining objective has to be cultivated by the journalists with effort. Complete objectivity may not be possible but good journalists have to resist the temptations to support or oppose persons, organizations and

issues. To make a presentation of plurality of facts in a fair and objective manner is to maintain balance. This is a difficult task, but no one says that journalism is an easy profession.

- It is essential that the source from which the journalist has obtained information must be mentioned while writing the news. The readers are then free to decide how much importance to be given to the information, depending upon their own perceptions about the sources. Attributing information to 'reliable sources' or hiding the identity of the source is not a good journalistic practice.

8.4 KEY WORDS:

News: News writing is basically a process of describing events and processes, not for the purpose of documentation as in the case of history writing but for the important function of communicating to the masses.

Inverted Pyramid Structure of News: The most commonly used structure of news writing is 'inverted pyramid' style. In the Inverted Pyramid Format the first paragraph is called 'Lead' or 'Intro' and '*Mukhra*' in Hindi. It contains one or two or maximum three bits of information that are considered most important and most relevant. Intro has to be written most carefully, as it is the entry point of the story.

Interrogative Intro: Will UPA government support Lalu?, Is President Mussaraff honest in his intentions to improve relations with India? How far Polio campaign has succeeded in reducing the incidence of polio in the country?

Quote-based Intro: "Question of my resignation does not arise" says Lalu, "I am innocent" declares the rape accused, "Tista an agent of terrorist forces" alleges the defense lawyer.

Advisory Intro: Take your umbrellas with you tomorrow as the weather department has predicted heavy rains from tomorrow, Do not eat anything offered by strangers while traveling by train as it may be an attempt to loot your money belongings.

Accuracy: The old basic principle of journalism is: *Facts are sacred opinions are free.* In-fact entire journalism is the process of finding the truth and presentation of the truth. Therefore for all the facts that the journalist mentions in the news a test of accuracy needs to be run. It is general practice that facts are verified before given for print.

Plurality: Events and processes can be looked at and described in more than one manner. This fundamental nature of plurality of views must be evident in the news writing. It should be the endeavor of the news writer to provide all or all-possible viewpoints to the audiences.

Fairness: In a situation of conflicts and wide variety of views, there is always a possibility that the journalist also subscribes to a point of view. But while writing the news story the journalist has to remain neutral. Journalists must give fair coverage to all irrespective of their own beliefs and opinions.

Objectivity: The facts of the news must be presented as they are. Any deletion or interpretation on the part of the news writer will tend to make the presentation of facts in favor or against a person or an organization. This aptitude of remaining objective has to be cultivated by the journalists with effort.

Balance: To make a presentation of plurality of facts in a fair and objective manner is to maintain balance. This is a difficult task, but no one says that journalism is an easy profession.

Source attribution: In order to establish the credibility of the information provided in the news it is essential that the source from which the journalist has obtained information must be mentioned while writing the news.

8.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. Write a detailed note on the various structures of news stories.
2. Write a detailed note on the various leads of news stories
3. Write a brief note on the body of news stories.
4. Write a detailed note on the various principles of news writing.
5. Write a detailed note on the various styles of news stories.

8.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

- ***Reporting*** by Charnley
- ***Active Reporter*** by James Lewis
- ***Professional Journalist*** by John Hohenberg
- ***Professional Journalism*** by Patanjali Sethi
- ***Professional Journalism*** by M.V. Kamath
- ***News Writing*** by George Hough

B. A. Mass Communication (2nd year)

NEWS WRITING (BMC-109)

Block: E Unit: I Lesson: 9

INTRODUCTION TO RADIO NEWS WRITING

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LESSON STRUCTURE:

In this lesson, we shall discuss about the various introductory aspects of radio news. Specifically, we shall focus on radio news writing. We shall also briefly discuss some guidelines for radio news writing. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Presentation of Content
 - 9.2.1 Radio News- An Introduction
 - 9.2.2 Style of Radio News Writing
 - 9.2.3 Guidelines for Radio News Writing
- 9.3 Summary
- 9.4 Key Words
- 9.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 9.6 References/Suggested Reading

9.0 OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this lesson are:

- *To get an Introduction to Radio News*
- *To know more about the Style of Radio News Writing*
- *To know more about the Guidelines for Radio News Writing*

9.1 INTRODUCTION:

The basic concept of news remains same for all media. The elements of news, structure of news, and the principles of news writing remain same for all media. However the style of writing and presentation is dependent upon the nature of the medium- whether it is newspaper, magazines, radio, television, or Internet.

So far we have discussed the basic concept of news in the previous lessons. These basic principles apply to all media. We have discussed the basic concept of news more specifically for the print media. Print media news is mainly meant for reading. Other than the reading content print media has less visual content in the form of pictures, graphs, charts, diagrams and caricatures.

Radio, on the other hand, is solely meant for the ears. Radio news is only for listening. On the contrary television is a medium both for the eyes and the ears. The basics of television news writing shall be discussed in the next lesson. Here in this lesson, we shall discuss about the basics of news for radio.

9.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Radio News- An Introduction*
- *Style of Radio News Writing*
- *Guidelines for Radio News Writing*

9.2.1 RADIO NEWS- AN INTRODUCTION:

Radio and television are grouped together either under electronic media. These are also called the broadcasting media. But technology aside, writing for radio is different from television news. It is said that writing radio news is more similar to print media writing than to writing for television.

This is because in both print media and radio, words form the soul and the spirit. Words are used to create pictures in the minds of the receivers. In print media the words are read and in radio the words are heard. In both only one sensory organ is used. Television, on the other hand, is a multi-sensory medium. Television makes use of pictures to communicate. Since pictures are not able to communicate completely, words are also used.

There are technical and other differences among the different news media. Therefore, there are specific requirements for writing news for radio, television and print media.

The basics of writing for radio news are discussed here and for television it will be discussed separately in the next unit.

9.2.2 STYLE OF RADIO NEWS WRITING:

Many stories contain too much of numerical data which is important and must be mentioned in the news story. Numerical figures must be written in a manner that is easy for the newsreaders to read and easy for the listener to understand and remember. Following is suggested:

- *To simplify the complicated numbers use terms such as approximately, more than, about and almost, etc.*
- *To emphasize trends and changes use terms like dropped sharply, tumbled, cut in half and slightly more than ... percent, etc.*
- *Number below 12 should be written in words, and use numerals from 12 to 999.*

- *Use combination of numerals and words to write higher numbers. For example: 23 thousand workers, 20 lakh voters, 3 and a half crore trees, etc.*
- *Use either Indian names for the numerals (thousands, lakhs, crores etc.) or Roman numerals like million, billion etc). Combined use creates confusion and is not advisable.*
- *Try to convert as many figures as possible into round numbers, for example: 98,34,44,003 can be written as a little less than 100 crores.*
- *Write fractions as hyphenated words.*
- *Where age needs to be mentioned the newspaper style is not conversational. Do not write, Om Praksh Jindal, 74, died in a helicopter accident. Write, 74 year old, Om Praksh Jindal died in an helicopter accident.*
- *For exact number like license numbers use hyphens, Mumbai license number M-H-2-1-3-7-9-0-5.*

In radio time reference is also handled differently. It is suggested that in most cases present tense should be used, some experts also suggest that use of present perfect tense is better.

Some other tips about time are:

- *Avoid mentioning old time elements as much as possible. Avoid saying yesterday in the lead, listener expects radio to give latest developments*
- *Instead of today, try saying this morning, late afternoon*
- *Wherever possible and needed give precise time, there will be load shedding from nine in the morning to six in the evening.*

When quotations are to be used the best option is to give actual sound bytes. But if the quotation is to be given it should be short and crisp, as the listener cannot see the quotes. The quotes in radio should be preceded by words like: “in what he called”, which she described as”, or “in his own words”.

In radio never start a lead sentence with an unfamiliar name; listener is likely to miss it. Unfamiliar names must be explained. Instead of “Parvati, a well known Kathak dancer...” it would be better to say, “A well known Kathak dancer, Parvati...”

In radio news abbreviations are as a rule not used, unless the abbreviations have become the well-known proper nouns. For example: NUJ, IFWJ, KUTA are not familiar names but UNESCO, CBI, SAARC, ISI are familiar and should be written with hyphen between two letters, U-N-S-C-O, C-B-I, I-S-I.

9.2.3 GUIDELINES FOR RADIO NEWS WRITING:

Radio writing has to be conversational. Writer must write copy for the radio news as if the news reader/ presenter is entering into a conversation with the listeners. One also has to remember that this conversation is only one-sided. This makes writing radio news different from writing for print media. Each radio broadcasting network or radio channel has its own way of writing.

Professor Donald E. Brown has prepared common guidelines for radio news writing. The following guidelines are adopted from Prof. Brown’s suggestions:

- *Use computers for writing the radio news copy. Newsreaders normally read from a prompter or a monitor screen.*
- *Use big font sizes. Font size and type should be fixed for each system*
- *If reading is to be from papers use standard size papers, avoid using stiff bond paper which is noisy when handled in front of a microphone*

- *Triple space all copy and print on only one side of the paper*
- *In the upper left-hand corner of each page print a slug line (consisting of one or two words) that clearly identifies the story. (For example: Tsunami rescue, Budget-Lok Sabha, Security Council-India, ODI-Delhi)*
- *In news rooms where many persons work writers name may be mentioned below the slug line*
- *Keep about 2.5 cm margin on left and right of the page keep the margins uniform so that lines can be counted and scripts can be timed. Ordinarily, 16 typed lines take the reader one minute.*
- *In radio dateline is not given. Necessary place references may be given in the intro.*
- *Use a symbol used by all writers of the system to indicate the end of the story. Commonly used end symbol is #.*
- *Keep sentences and paragraphs short. Announcers and news readers read short sentences and paragraphs more comfortably*
- *Do not make too many marks on the copy*
- *Keep individual stories on separate pages, it helps in arranging the stories for the bulletin*
- *Avoid editing symbols that are used in a newspaper copy*

9.3 SUMMARY:

- *The content on radio includes a wide range of programmes: from pure hard news to pure entertainment. It ranges from purely educative and informative programmes to purely entertaining content.*
- *The news and current affairs programmes on radio have increased manifolds in number and the content has improved dramatically. There are radio channels that are exclusively meant for news and current*

affairs. Many other channels, which are mainly entertainment channels, also have a component of news.

- In radio news, it is important to simplify the complicated numbers use terms such as *approximately, more than, about and almost, etc.*
- In radio news, it is important to use either Indian names for the numerals (*thousands, lakhs, crores, etc.*) or Roman numerals like *million, billion, etc.* Combined use creates confusion and is not advisable.
- In radio news, it is important to try to convert as many figures as possible into *round numbers*, for example: 98,34,44,003 can be written as a little less than 100 crores.
- In radio news, it is important to where age needs to be mentioned the newspaper style is not conversational. Do not write, Om Praksh Jindal, 74, died in a helicopter accident. Write, 74-year-old Om Praksh Jindal died in a n helicopter accident.
- In the upper left-hand corner of each page print a slug line (consisting of one or two words) that clearly identifies the story. (For example: Tsunami rescue, Budget-Lok Sabha, Security Council-India, ODI-Delhi)
- In news rooms where many persons work writers name may be mentioned below the slug line
- While writing news for radio, keep sentences and paragraphs short. Announcers and news readers read short sentences and paragraphs more comfortably
- While writing news for radio, keep individual stories on separate pages, it helps in arranging the stories for the bulletin
- While writing news for radio, avoid editing symbols that are used in a newspaper copy

9.4 KEY WORDS:

Content on Radio: The content on television includes a wide range of programmes: from pure hard news to pure music and entertainment. It ranges from purely educative and informative programmes to purely entertaining content.

News on Radio: The news and current affairs programmes on radio have increased manifolds in number and the content has improved dramatically. There are few radio channels that are exclusively meant for news and current affairs. These channels have no 'sleeping time'; they broadcast for twenty-four hours a day.

Opportunities in the Field of News: Opportunities are available in the fields of news gathering, news processing, news presentation; and a variety of jobs are available for qualified and trained persons to write, to manage and organize, to visualize, to work on machines and to do research.

Anchor read: Major portion of the writing for radio news involves preparing script for the anchor or newsreader to read. In-fact, *anchor read* is part-reading and part-announcing. In both television and radio, the scripting should in a conversational style

9.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. Write a detailed note on radio news writing.
2. Radio news writing is a special craft. Do you agree? Discuss.
3. What are the physical parts of radio news? Discuss in detail.

9.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

- ***Reporting*** by Charnley
- ***Active Reporter*** by James Lewis
- ***Professional Journalist*** by John Hohenberg
- ***Professional Journalism*** by Patanjali Sethi
- ***Professional Journalism*** by M.V. Kamath
- ***News Writing*** by George Hough

B. A. Mass Communication (2nd year)

NEWS WRITING (BMC-109)

Block: E

Unit: II

Lesson: 10

INTRODUCTION TO WRITING FOR TELEVISION NEWS

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LESSON STRUCTURE:

In this lesson we shall discuss about the various introductory aspects of television news. Specifically, we shall focus on writing news for television. We shall briefly discuss some guidelines for TV news writing. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Presentation of Content
 - 10.2.1 Television Content- An Introduction
 - 10.2.2 Television News- An Introduction
 - 10.2.3 Television News Writing
- 10.3 Summary
- 10.4 Key Words
- 10.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 10.6 References/Suggested Reading

10.0 OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this lesson are:

- *To get an Introduction to Television Content*
- *To get an Introduction to Television News*
- *To learn more about Television News Writing*

10.1 INTRODUCTION:

Today, television has become the main medium of news and entertainment. Its reach has become very wide. The number of TV channels is increasing everyday. Satellite transmission and cable networking help bring a large number of channels to our homes. With multiple channels available through satellite services and cable networks, we get a wide variety of content. Direct-to-Home (DTH) has also increased the reach of television many folds. It helps in the penetration of television channels even in areas where cable is not available. Conditional-Access-System (CAS) gives the option to users in getting what ever channels they want.

People have also accepted television as an important part of their lives. It brings information and entertainment into our bedrooms. The variety of programmes on television is unimaginable.

The content on television includes a wide range of programmes: from pure hard news to pure non-serious gossip. It ranges from purely educative and informative programmes (*Discovery Channel* and *National Geographic Channel*) to purely titillating content (*Fashion TV* and *Trendz*).

In addition, there are many efforts to make television programmes participative by involving the viewers in the programmes in a variety of ways. Television receiver sets have also become less costly. Not only television has reached majority of the households, people are spending more and more time in front of television. Daily routine is being organized according the timings of

the television programmes. In-fact, it can be said that today television, for many people, has become a friend, a companion, and a guide.

10.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Television Content- An Introduction*
- *Television News- An Introduction*
- *Television News Writing*

10.2.1 CONTENT ON TELEVISION - AN INTRODUCTION:

Television has seen a lot of changes in the last few decades. The reach of television has increased by leaps and bounds. The number of channels and the type of specialized channels are increasing beyond our dreams. In addition, the type of programming also has seen sea changes.

The news and current affairs programmes on television have increased manifolds in number and the content has improved dramatically. There are television channels that are exclusively meant for news and current affairs. These channels have no 'sleeping time'; they telecast for twenty-four hours a day. Many other channels, which are mainly entertainment channels, also have a component of news.

Regional channels telecasting in Hindi and languages other than English have also become prominent in news dissemination. Many local cable networks also produce and transmit local news. Telecasting technology has also made national boundaries and natural barriers like mountains, deserts, seas and rivers irrelevant as signals are transmitted through satellites. It would be appropriate to say that television has converted the entire world into a big village in the real sense, where physical distance has lost its relevance.

10.2.2 TELEVISION NEWS- AN INTRODUCTION:

For media persons, the unprecedented expansion of television industry provides tremendous opportunities for employment. There are many opportunities in the field of TV news. Opportunities are available in the field of news include:

- *Information gathering (Reporting),*
- *News processing (Editing),*
- *News presentation (News reading or Anchoring)*

A wide variety of jobs are also available for qualified and trained persons *to write, to manage and organize, to visualize, to work on machines and to do research.*

To learn the art and craft of writing for television news is essential for everyone who desires to work in the field of news and current affairs. Because of the uniqueness of the television medium, writing for its content is also typical and different from writing for newspapers and radio.

For a writer for print media only one tool, the *written word* is available. For a writer for radio also, only the spoken word is available. But for television news, two media are available, namely visual content and verbal content (words). The verbal content on TV includes both the spoken words; and the written words in the shape of scrolls, tickers, etc.

For TV, both visual and verbal content are used simultaneously. But one cannot be the substitute for the other. More importantly, there needs to be a strong relationship between the two. The relationship between the verbal content and visual content has to be both complimentary and supplementary.

In TV news, whatever is being shown in the visual may be explained in words as well. At the same time visuals have their own limitations of communication potential; this gap is also filled by the words. Therefore, it

would be wrong to assume that for television visuals are more important than the written or spoken word. Both need to be given adequate importance. Also most of the words that are spoken on TV, other than live programmes, interviews, and discussions, etc., are first written and then spoken.

Moreover, it would be impracticable to assume that complete and sufficient visuals are available for all that needs to be conveyed through television news. There are many occasions when no visuals are available but the news is breaking news. In such circumstances, use of the words is the only choice available. In television jargon such stories are called dry stories.

10.2.3 TELEVISION NEWS WRITING:

An important point is that almost all that is spoken in a television news programme is to be made available in the written or printed or electronic format for the anchors or voice-over artists.

Expertise in writing is as important in television as in the other media. In-fact, in television the challenges for the writers are far greater. First, the verbal content should complement and supplement the available visuals. Second, in most cases there is very little time available for scripting, invariably it has to be instantaneous and spontaneous.

Two types of writing are required for television news:

- *To be spoken (On-camera or as Voice-over)*
- *To be put on the screen (As scrolls and tickers)*

STYLE OF TV NEWS WRITING:

Many stories contain too much of numerical data which is important and must be mentioned in the news story. Numerical figures must be written in a

manner that is easy for the anchor to read and easy for the viewer to understand and remember. Following points are suggested:

- To simplify the complicated numbers use terms such as *approximately, more than, about and almost, etc.*
- To emphasize trends and changes use terms like *dropped sharply, tumbled, more than doubled, cut in half, and slightly more than ... percent, etc.*
- Number below 12 should be written in words, and use numerals from 12 to 999.
- Use combination of numerals and words to write higher numbers. For example: *23 thousand workers, 20 lakh voters, 3 and a half crore trees, etc.*
- Use either Indian names for the numerals (*thousands, lakhs, crores, etc.*) or Roman numerals like *million, billion, etc.* Combined use creates confusion and is not advisable.
- Try to convert as many figures as possible into *round numbers*, for example: 98,34,44,003 can be written as a little less than 100 crores.
- Do not write Rs. 435; write 435 rupees.
- Write fractions as *hyphenated words*.
- Where age needs to be mentioned the newspaper style is not conversational. Do not write, Om Praksh Jindal, 74, died in a helicopter accident. Write, 74-year-old Om Praksh Jindal died in a n helicopter accident.
- For exact number like license numbers use hyphens, Mumbai license number M-H-2-1-C-7-9-0-5.

In television, time reference is also handled differently. It is suggested that in most cases present tense should be used. Some experts also suggest that use of present perfect tense is better.

Examples:

Board of Cricket Control in India is still deciding when the Indian team will leave for South Africa.

Or

Board of Cricket Control in India has not decided when the Indian team will leave for South Africa.

Some other tips about time are:

- Avoid mentioning old time elements as much as possible. Avoid saying yesterday in the lead part of the news. Listeners expect television to give latest developments.
- Instead of today; try saying this morning, late afternoon.
- Wherever possible and needed; give precise time, there will be load shedding from nine in the morning to six in the evening.

When quotations are to be used, the best option is to give actual sound bytes either with the visual or the phone-in. But if the quotation is to be given it should be short and crisp. The quotes on television should be preceded by words like: “in what he called”, which she described as”, or “in his own words”.

On television never start a lead sentence with an unfamiliar name; listener is likely to miss it. Unfamiliar names must be explained. Instead of “Parvati, a well known Kathak dancer...” it would be better to say, “A well known Kathak dancer, Parvati...”

In television news, three types of writing situations arise:

- *Anchor read*
- *Voice over*
 - *Piece to camera (P 2 C) or (P to C)*

ANCHOR READ:

Major portion of the writing for television news involves preparing script for the anchor or newsreader to read. In-fact, *anchor read* is part-reading and part-announcing. As mentioned earlier in television and radio the scripting should in a conversational style

Scriptwriters for television news need to develop this conversational style. Unfortunately, in Indian television systems many persons who came from print media have failed to adapt to the television style of writing. This can be seen many times not only on Doordarshan but also in private channels. But the need to bring professionalism in to television news writing has been felt by all. And special training programmes are organized to meet this need. New comers to this field will become more successful if they master the art and craft of writing for television news.

VOICE OVER:

In TV news, both audio content and visuals are available. But to make the news more authentic and realistic someone other than the anchor reads the important portion of the news. This has to be scripted keeping in view the visuals. Some visuals are self-communicating, others need explanation and some information not available in the visuals has also to be incorporated.

The person who is assigned to record the voice over may do the scripting or another proficient person may write it.

PIECE TO CAMERA:

While reporting from the field the cameraman takes the shots and the reporter writes the story. But to put the entire story in a proper perspective the reporter gives the essence of the story on camera. This is called Piece to Camera (PTC). A good reporter prepares for this important component of news telecast first by writing his script, memorise it and then say it on the camera with confidence without fumbling, mumbling or repeating. However, many reporters feel confident that they can speak ex-tempore. This is not good practice. Many seasoned and experienced reporters of BBC, CNN etc. are known to script their pieces and also rehearse them for PTC. The viewers deserve the best and not carelessly produced content.

WRITING THAT APPEARS ON THE TV SCREEN:

There are four kinds of writings that appear on the TV screen during news telecasts. These are:

- *Scrolls*
- *Headlines*
- *Transcriptions*
- *Credits*

SCROLL:

These are short and crisp sentences about the major news items. Scrolls run at the bottom of the screen. These move as if they are rotating. These are like headlines and introduce the news even if something else is on the main screen. Anchors never or rarely talk about or announce these scrolls.

Though this task is given to the new comers and junior persons; there is plenty of scope to write these scroll sentences in an innovative, effective and interesting manner.

These scrolls need to be updated continuously.

HEADLINES:

Before each news bulletin is telecast, the headlines are written. Headlines, in bold and big letters, are put on the TV screen. In some cases, anchors also read out the headlines in an announcement mode. The art and craft of preparing these headlines is the same as that for print media.

But for television the headlines have to be still shorter and crisp.

TRANSCRIPTION:

Sometimes, whatever is being said or read by the anchors, reporters, etc., is put on the screen. Such transcriptions or scripts are usually used as scrolls or superimposed. Transcriptions are used in two situations:

One, when the language of the sound byte or the PTC is different from the language of the news being telecast.

Second, when the quality of the sound bytes is not clear.

CREDITS:

Credits mean the names and positions of the persons involved in the production and transmission of the news programme. This is a simple process but care must be taken to spell the names correctly.

GUIDELINES FOR TV NEWS WRITING:

Writing for the spoken word is for listening of the viewer and generally follows the principles described for radio writing in the previous unit. These are being reproduced here with modifications for television:

- Use computers for writing the television news copy. Anchor or voiceover person should normally read from a prompter or from a monitor screen.
- Use big font sizes.

- If reading is to be from papers use standard size papers, avoid using stiff bond paper, which is noisy when handled in front of a microphone
- Triple space all copy and print on only one side of the paper
- In the upper left-hand corner of each page print a slug line (consisting of one or two words) that clearly identifies the story. (For example: Tsunami rescue, Budget-Lok Sabha, Security Council-India, ODI-Delhi)
- In newsrooms where many persons work writers name may be mentioned below the slug line
- Keep about 2.5 cm margin on left and right of the page. Keep the margins uniform so that lines can be counted and scripts can be timed. Ordinarily, 16 typed lines take the reader one minute.
- In television also dateline is not given. Necessary place references may be given in the intro or the visual
- Use a symbol used by all writers of the organization to indicate the end of the story. Commonly used end symbol is #.
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short. Anchors newscasters read short sentences and paragraphs more comfortably
- Do not make too many marks on the copy
- Keep individual stories on separate pages, it helps in arranging the stories for the bulletin
- Avoid editing symbols that are used in a newspaper copy

10.3 SUMMARY:

- With multiple channels available through satellite services and cable networks, we get a wide variety of content. Direct-to-Home (DTH) has also increased the reach of television many folds. It helps in the penetration of television channels even in areas where cable is not available. Conditional-Access-System (CAS) gives the option to users in getting what ever channels they want.
- The content on television includes a wide range of programmes: from pure hard news to pure non-serious gossip. It ranges from purely educative and informative programmes (*Discovery Channel* and *National Geographic Channel*) to purely titillating content (*Fashion TV* and *Trendz*).
- Television reaches majority of the households, and people are spending more and more time in front of television. Daily routine is being organized according the timings of the television programmes. In-fact, it can be said that today television, for many people, has become a friend, a companion, and a guide.
- The news and current affairs programmes on television have increased manifolds in number and the content has improved dramatically. There are television channels that are exclusively meant for news and current affairs. Many other channels, which are mainly entertainment channels, also have a component of news.
- Many opportunities are available in the field of news- from information gathering, news processing, and news presentation. A wide variety of jobs are available for qualified and trained persons to write, to manage and organize, to visualize, to work on machines and to do research.
- In TV news, it is important to simplify the complicated numbers use terms such as *approximately*, *more than*, *about* and *almost*, etc.

- In TV news, it is important to use either Indian names for the numerals (*thousands, lakhs, crores, etc.*) or Roman numerals like *million, billion, etc.* Combined use creates confusion and is not advisable.
- In TV news, it is important to try to convert as many figures as possible into *round numbers*, for example: 98,34,44,003 can be written as a little less than 100 crores.
- In TV news, it is important to where age needs to be mentioned the newspaper style is not conversational. Do not write, Om Praksh Jindal, 74, died in a helicopter accident. Write, 74-year-old Om Praksh Jindal died in a n helicopter accident.
- In television, time reference is also handled differently. It is suggested that in most cases present tense should be used. Some experts also suggest that use of present perfect tense is better.
- In television news, three types of writing situations arise: Anchor read, Voice over, and Piece to camera (P 2 C) or (P to C)
- While reporting from the field the cameraman takes the shots and the reporter writes the story. But to put the entire story in a proper perspective the reporter gives the essence of the story on camera. This is called Piece to Camera (PTC). A good reporter prepares for this important component of news telecast first by writing his script, memorise it and then say it on the camera with confidence without fumbling, mumbling or repeating.
- There are four kinds of writings that appear on the TV screen during news telecasts: Scrolls, Headlines, Transcriptions, and Credits.

10.4 KEY WORDS:

Content on Television: The content on television includes a wide range of programmes: from pure hard news to pure non-serious gossip. It ranges from

purely educative and informative programmes (*Discovery Channel* and *National Geographic Channel*) to purely titillating content (*Fashion TV* and *Trendz*).

News on Television: The news and current affairs programmes on television have increased manifold in number and the content has improved dramatically. There are television channels that are exclusively meant for news and current affairs. These channels have no 'sleeping time'; they telecast for twenty-four hours a day.

Opportunities in the Field of News: Opportunities are available in the fields of news gathering, news processing, news presentation; and a variety of jobs are available for qualified and trained persons to write, to manage and organize, to visualize, to work on machines and to do research.

Anchor read: Major portion of the writing for television news involves preparing script for the anchor or newsreader to read. In-fact, *anchor read* is part-reading and part-announcing. As mentioned earlier in television and radio the scripting should be in a conversational style

Voice over: In TV news, both audio content and visuals are available. But to make the news more authentic and realistic someone other than the anchor reads the important portion of the news. This has to be scripted keeping in view the visuals. Some visuals are self-communicating, others need explanation and some information not available in the visuals has also to be incorporated.

Piece to camera: While reporting from the field the cameraman takes the shots and the reporter writes the story. But to put the entire story in a proper perspective the reporter gives the essence of the story on camera. This is called Piece to Camera (PTC). A good reporter prepares for this important component of news telecast first by writing his script, memorise it and then say it on the camera with confidence without fumbling, mumbling or repeating.

However, many reporters feel confident that they can speak ex-tempore. Many seasoned and experienced reporters first write their pieces and also rehearse them for PTC. The viewers deserve the best and not carelessly produced content.

Scroll: These are short and crisp sentences about the major news items. Scrolls run at the bottom of the screen. These move as if they are rotating. These are like headlines and introduce the news even if something else is on the main screen. Anchors never or rarely talk about or announce these scrolls.

Headlines: Before each news bulletin is telecast, the headlines are written. Headlines, in bold and big letters, are put on the TV screen. In some cases, anchors also read out the headlines in an announcement mode. The art and craft of preparing these headlines is the same as that for print media. But for television the headlines have to be still shorter and crisp.

Credits: Credits mean the names and positions of the persons involved in the production and transmission of the news programme. This is a simple process but care must be taken to spell the names correctly.

10.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. Write a detailed note on television news writing.
2. Television news writing is a special craft. Do you agree? Discuss.
3. What are the physical parts of TV news? Discuss in detail.

10.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

- ***Reporting*** by Charnley
- ***Active Reporter*** by James Lewis
- ***Professional Journalist*** by John Hohenberg
- ***Professional Journalism*** by Patanjali Sethi
- ***Professional Journalism*** by M.V. Kamath
- ***News Writing*** by George Hough

