

## INTRODUCTION

Editorials or leaders as they are often called are an essential and most important part of a newspaper or journal. These are written by the head of the editorial team or publisher of a newspaper or periodical journal. Editorials are for thinking people and not for a casual or non-serious readers. Leaders of ruling as well as opposition parties, bureaucrats, senior officers and diplomats read the views expressed in the editorials of good newspapers and news magazine with considerable seriousness.

Legendary editors Frank Mores said that in a democracy when the opposition is weak it is the job of the press to act as a strong opposition to the ruling party.

While critically examining government policy and performance, editorials act as principal spokesperson of the opposition.

A journal can be on any theme or a number of themes. There are journals on politics, economy, sports, science, health, environment, law, media, education culture, religious, international relations etc. Then there are national, regional and local newspapers. Every newspapers or journal has its own specific readership. These can have different and even conflicting ideas and ideologies.

Newspapers or journals know what their readers want from them. The editorials are often written keeping the readership in mind.

An editorial is a leading article or leader that presents the opinion of a journal or newspaper on an issue. It reflects the majority view of the editorial board. An editorial is usually unsigned. We can call an editorial an opinion piece on some development that makes news.

You cannot think of any good journal without an editorial. Because of their importance, editorials can be said to be the 'heart and soul' of a journal. In fact, it is the first introduction to a journal. It can also said to be the face of a journal. Newspapers or journals can be inclined towards any socio-economic or cultural

group. These can be pro-rich or pro-working class. Editorials reflect their basic character.

### **Brief History of Editorial Writing**

Editorials are the content component of a journal. In fact, the most intimate form of writing for communication is expression of a communicator's personal views or opinion on a subject, the communicator thinks to be of general interest. Viewed in this framework, the editorial writing started when someone thought of conveying

the views he/she thought must be shared with everyone who is a member of our information society.

Editorials are basically expression of opinion by an individual or a small group which is viewed as being important for the people by and large. Editorials are not orders, announcements and general instructions or suggestions. The opinions and views contained in an editorial set the tone of public discourse in a democratic set up. Editorials are vox populi.

The earliest form of print media, as we call newspapers and periodical journals now, were the newsletters sea-goers used to write from their port- of- call to their parents and families to inform about their welfare. Only after German Goldsmith Johannes Gutenberg developed metallic types fonts in the 15th century, could newspapers come into existence. Therefore, the first editorial of print media history could not have been written before the 16th century. The Courant , the first successful newspaper with a fixed periodicity, carrying an editorial appeared only in the year 1702.

### **Evolution of Editorial as an Integral Part of Print Media**

In fact, editorial writing as we understand it today evolved with the onset of professionalism in Indian newspapers. Professionally run newspapers segregated news from views. They earned their place due to the fact that news attracts a

reader fast and views or opinions of editors/writers came in next. Newspapers were initially launched to express opinions of the persons who brought them out. All initial newspapers in India, Hickey's Bengal Gazette (1780) to Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Sambad Kaumudi (1821) or Mirat- ul- Akhbar (1822) were meant to express strongly held beliefs and views of their promoters. This trend continued till the Times of India (1838), The Statesman (1875) and The Pioneer (1864-65), all inspired by the British newspaper industry, appeared in India and gave new professional dimension to print media.

### **Editorial and Newspaper Readers**

Editorials are no doubt the most important component of newspapers. However, their readership is limited. Several studies have revealed that of every hundred persons who read a newspaper or journal hardly 6 to 7 persons care to read the editorials. This is the reason why editorials are placed deep inside of a newspaper and other haughty stuff like crime or accidents finds place on the front page.

The poor readership of editorials of a newspaper can be attributed to several factors. However, the best explanation is that while general news interests each and everyone, editorials attract only serious minded people. Such people form the top layer of society and they often seek the opinions of learned editorial writers and seasoned media professionals for policy making.

Since newspapers are supposed to be vehicles of public opinion, the inputs from a good newspaper's editorials is supposed to represent public opinion.

Any government, especially a democratic government that has to face masses in elections to return to power has to know the public mind well to be able to formulate its policies that appeal to the masses.

Yet another reason for low editorial readership is the fact that most of us seek information but want to keep our beliefs and views secured from the views we

do not like. Therefore, while news is received without inhibition we not want or entertain opinions of others that can influence our thinking or pet beliefs.

However, a lot of newspaper readers repose an unflinching faith in views expressed

in editorials and worship editors who write these editorials. Long after their retirement and death. Post-independence readers may remember editors like K. Rama Rao, M. Chelapati Rao, Edalta Narayan, Rusi Karanjia, Shamlal, Frank Moreas, R. Madhvan Nair and Giri Lal Jain.

In the world of Hindi journalism Ajaye, Raghuvir Sahay, Rajendra Mathur, Prabhat

Joshi and Manohar Shyam Joshi left a deep impression on the minds of readers of the Hindi belt. As Hindi journalism grew at a fast pace in post-emergency era after 1977, the influence of these editors surpassed even those of big English language dailies like The Hindustan Times and The Times of India.

At regional and local level, many editors of smaller newspapers and magazines leave a deep impact on their readers. And party line news journals like New Age, Saamna, Panchjanya, Samajwadi Bulletin, Mamadhu Amma, Peoples Democracy,

Jago Bangla and others almost motivate readers especially those who are party workers, camp followers or admirers of the ideological line of the party they like.

## **CONTENT OF AN EDITORIAL**

Contents of editorials differ from journal to journal. Here we must understand a simple fact i.e. no two journals, be they daily, weekly, fortnightly or monthly are alike. Every journal represents a different thought stream; therefore, contents of all journals are bound to be different from each other. The editorials are written in keeping with the general content of a newspaper or journal.

We now live in a world of what is called niche journals. The journals on science, environment and health etc will have contents only of these areas. Naturally

editorials will also centre around these subjects. Whatever the public interest in World Cup Cricket a journal on science will not have an editorial on marks and demerits of the Indian team selected for the World Cup.

### **What Do All Editorials Have in Common?**

However, all editorials have something in common. The common features of all editorials in all newspapers or journals big or small are:

a journal's policy approach is reflected in views expressed in editorials on certain important developments affecting or attracting people in general. In professional terms this is called the 'editorial line' of a newspaper.

a persuasive approach to attract and convert the readers to the editorial line taken by the journal towards that development;

a rational presentation to look reasonable so that it could appeal to the minds of the readers; and

an inviting and attractive writing style and good language.

All Editorials also have:

an introduction, body and conclusion like any other media writing.

a simple explanation of the issue, especially so if the issue is complex and needs elaboration to be understood by lay reader.

an inviting new angle to attract readers.

all good editorials talk and discuss issues and not personalities and they also

refrain from name-calling a good editorial should take a pro-active approach to be of constructive criticism and contain positive suggestion good conclusion that satisfies the readers by adding to their knowledge and understanding of the subject.

### **Journals and Editorials**

We can broadly divide all journals on the basis of two categories: Periodicity and Theme.

Besides daily , weekly, fortnightly and monthly, we have journals on politics and public affairs, economics and financial matters, sports, health, education, home,

media, science, agriculture, , law, women, children and so or so forth.

It is only natural that an economic journal will carry an editorial on economic policy and market trends and a sports journal will carry an editorial on an event related to sports.

Different journals carry editorials not only in keeping with the theme of the journal but also in keeping with the taste and requirements (communication needs) of the readers of their journal. As can be easily understood, the taste and character of readership differs from journal to journal and from place to place.

### **Features of an Editorial**

Editor generally look for the following things when writing an editorial:

that the topic chosen for editorial is current and timely, and

it is linked to some recent development of importance; and common interest.

that the editorial meets the concerns of readers and is relevant to them.

the topic of the editorial has relevance in catchment area of the publication (where the newspaper or journal is circulated and read).

that the editorial piece is small and generally not more than 500 words; and

that it is clearly written and has simple and grammatically correct language.

#### **7.3.4 Language of an Editorial**

The language of an editorial has to be simple, straight and sober. It should be such as to go straight to the point and leave no ambiguity in the mind of the reader.

It should have force and flow but should be decent and uninvolved. There is no place for slangs and outdated expression in it. It should be impressive without being boisterous.

However, in campaign journalism the norms about language are not observed.

Journals brought out by political parties often attack the political opponents of their party in language which is aggressive, indecent and even defamatory. That is the reason you must be wary of words while writing or expressing yourself in media.

Advocacy journalism is also making its appearance felt in Indian media world. While propagating their viewpoint, journalists often use language which is loud and less than decent.

However, use of simple, sober and non-aggressive language is the best as it leaves a lasting impression on the minds of the readers.