

*VIVEKANANDA COLLEGE
THAKURPUKUR
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NAAC ACCREDITED 'A' GRADE*

Topic: Political Reporting

Course Title: Reporting and Editing

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Political Journalism

An astute intelligence, instinctive perception of ground realities, good judgment of people, and a strong historic sense would make a good political reporter. Since politics is the main focus of newspapers, too many new entrants would like to be political reporters hoping that it would be a ladder to the coveted office of the editor.

Nevertheless, there is a dearth of good political reporting in India- reporting with insight, reporting that captures in flesh and blood the actors of the political play field, reporting that exposes the naked ambitions of political beings and the hypocrisy of political parties and the machinations of those in power.

Politics, undoubtedly, is a game for power, a game for supremacy, a game for personal aggrandizement, always played in the name of the people for evoking national greatness. An overwhelming majority of politicians are there because they were misfits everywhere else and are driven by a desire to make up for their past failures and frustrations.

For example, a first class medical doctor or a chartered accountant, a management wizard or an academic will not sacrifice his profession for politics. Politics is one of the few professions, which demand no particular qualifications, and it is now widely known that even criminals are joining politics enmasse.

The sad thing about Indian democracy is that it is they who guide the destiny of some 900 million people. Bereft of ideas, intelligence and character, they exploit caste, religion and language to stay in power and the country slip from crisis to crisis.

Political commentators and reporters should never glorify politicians but truthfully present their achievements and failures. Programmes of political parties should be critically evaluated and their flaws commented upon, so that the people are not carried away by their rhetoric or patriotic postures. The performance of governments need constant review and herein is the wisdom and maturity of the political commentator or reporter set on a national spectacle.

A lot of things happen behind the scene: horse-trading, dinner diplomacy, lobbying, image-building, snake-charming and hatching conspiracies. Nothing much is visible to the outside world but the tip of an iceberg. And the challenge of political reporting is in unmasking the behind-the-scene operations, which has a high curiosity and

readership value. Connections and inside sources are the strength of a political commentator/reporter.

Party conferences, campaigns and rallies and press conferences are normal reporting events. But to add news value to these the reporter should have 'inside' information or exclusive stories. The best selling newspapers in any country are those with a strong political bureau, satisfying the political curiosity of the readers.

Inadequate political coverage, not judged by quantity but quality, bring down the circulation of a newspaper.

Familiarity with politicians and discerning the promising ones from the rotten ones are quintessential to the reporter's task. The honest and well-meaning politicians deserve your support and the people's support. One of the basic duties of political reporting is to bring to national focus leaders who deserve to lead the nation and to warn the nation against criminals and psychopaths in political garment. Timely warning can avert a national catastrophe and Hitler's in the making can be halted before it is too late.

The political commentator/reporter should have a sound knowledge of history and the intellectual sensitivity to understand how ideas shape history.

Your political report could be history if you have the foresight or the ability to see the chain of events before it

happened and the wisdom to translate your thoughts into memorable words.

Reading latest books and reputed international magazines like Time, Newsweek, Economist and Indian magazines like Outlook, India Today, Frontline, Week and Sunday could fine-tune your perception and your style. Students are advised to keep a diary of events with their comments, which could turn out to be a gold mine if tenaciously worked upon. It could be your ready reference book, giving ideas for articles and even your future book because the longest journey must begin with a single step. Remember a book is nothing but a collection of articles and chapters, skillfully woven by the thread of a theme, be it a strong political personality around whom events galvanize or a decade or a martyr of a century or a country and its people.