

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LEGAL SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

[ISSN 2581-9453]

---

Volume 6 | Issue 3

2024

---

© 2024 International Journal of Legal Science and Innovation

Follow this and additional works at: <https://www.ijlsi.com/>

Under the aegis of VidhiAagaz – Inking Your Brain (<https://www.vidhiaagaz.com>)

---

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the International Journal of Legal Science and Innovation at VidhiAagaz. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Journal of Legal Science and Innovation after due review.

In case of **any suggestion or complaint**, please contact [Gyan@vidhiaagaz.com](mailto:Gyan@vidhiaagaz.com).

---

**To submit your Manuscript** for Publication at International Journal of Legal Science and Innovation, kindly email your Manuscript at [editor.ijlsi@gmail.com](mailto:editor.ijlsi@gmail.com).

---

# Code of Ethics for Persons in Mass Media in India

---

DR. AJOY JOSE<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

*Professionals of mass media like other professionals are governed by all the laws of the land. In the profession of mass media as in other professions, there is a sizeable area of activity which remains out of the domain of law and must be governed by a professional code of ethics or self-regulation. Various Codes of Ethics have been formulated from time to time to guide journalists and the mass media. It is not possible in the Code of ethics to detail all the probable incidents which could come up for discussion on ethical grounds. To formulate a comprehensive, rigid Code of ethics for a journalist is neither feasible nor prudent. Yet, some organizations have adopted Codes of Ethics.*

**Keywords:** *Ethics, Mass Media, Law, Self-regulation.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

‘Ethics’ is a system or Code or Morals, of a particular person, religion, group. Profession etc. Ethics is defined as “that branch of philosophy dealing with values relating to human conduct, with respect to rightness and wrongness of certain actions and to the goodness and badness of the motives and end of such actions”. Media ethics apply mostly to cases not specifically covered by law<sup>2</sup>. At present sub-standard journalism exists everywhere. Journalists and other media persons operate without any guidelines at all. There is need for a Code of ethics for media persons. The Code of ethics for media persons is a statement of broad moral principles which will aid and guide the media persons, and which will help them in the process of self-appraisal and self-regulation<sup>3</sup>.

### (A) Meaning of Mass Media

‘Mass media’ is a term used to denote a section of the media specifically envisioned and designed to reach a very large audience such as the population of a nation State. It was coined in the 1920s with the advent of nationwide radio networks, mass-circulation newspapers and magazines, although mass media was present centuries before the term became common<sup>4</sup>. Thus

---

<sup>1</sup> Author is an Assistant Professor at School of Law, Woxsen University, Hyderabad, India.

<sup>2</sup> Moore, R.L., Murray, M.D., Farrell, M. and Youm, K.H., 2017. Media law and ethics. Routledge.

<sup>3</sup> Crook, T., 2009. Comparative media law and ethics. Routledge.

<sup>4</sup> Black, J., 2011. Doing ethics in media: Theories and practical applications. Routledge.

‘media’ refers to various means of communication. ‘Mass media’ aims to reach a very large population, such as the entire population of a country. By contrast, ‘local media’ covers a much smaller population of a locality or demographic groups<sup>5</sup>.

In society, millions are exposed to a variety of messages each day. Every community consists of groups with diverse backgrounds of social class, economic status and potential or religious affiliations. Society needs some communication system so its various organizations may perform their designation functions. Communication is a process of sharing or exchange of ideas, information, knowledge, attitude or feeling among two or more persons through certain signs and symbols. The primary function of communication is to inform, instruct, entertain and influence people to make them function smoothly and efficiently<sup>6</sup>. Communication has a secondary function too to perform: through debates and discussions, cultural promotion and integration; it fosters consensus, creativity and understanding among people, groups and societies so that they live in peace and harmony. Communication can be taken place among persons, among the groups and among large sections of community. Such communication takes place through the media<sup>7</sup>.

Some people refer to mass media as the mainstream media referencing the fact that it tends to stick to prominent stories which will be of interest to a general audience, sometimes ignoring controversial breaking news. The term ‘public media’ has a similar meaning as ‘mass media’: it is the sum of the public mass distributors of news and entertainments across mediums such as newspapers, television, radio, broadcasting, films and internet media which can include personal web pages, podcasts and blogs. Sometimes mass media are referred to as the ‘corporate media’ because the mainstream media are themselves composed of large multinational corporations, and promote those interests<sup>8</sup>.

## **II. CHARACTERISTICS OF MASS MEDIA**

- Comprises both technical and institutional methods of production and distribution. This is evident throughout the history of the media from print to the Internet, each suitable for commercial utility.
- Involves the “commodification of symbolic forms”, as the production of materials relies on its ability to manufacture and sell large quantities of the work. Just as radio stations

---

<sup>5</sup> Mhiripiri, N.A. and Chari, T. eds., 2017. Media law, ethics, and policy in the digital age. IGI Global.

<sup>6</sup> Begum, N., 2014. Media Ethics: Different Perspectives. *International Journal of Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity*, 11(1), pp.448-466.

<sup>7</sup> Ward, S.J., 2011. *Ethics and the media: An introduction*. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>8</sup> Black, J. and Barney, R.D., 1985. The case against mass media codes of ethics. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 1(1), pp.27-36.

rely on its time sold to advertisements, newspapers rely for the same reasons on its space.

- “Separate contexts between the production and reception of information”.
- Its “reach to those ‘far removed’ in time and space, in comparison to the producers”.
- “Information distribution” – a one to many form of communication, whereby products are mass produced and disseminated to a great quantity of audiences.

### **III. IMPORTANCE OF MASS MEDIA ON PEOPLE**

Society is affected by the media multifariously. Media plays its role efficiently in the following areas:

#### **A) Information**

Access to media means access to facts and documents which help one acquire information and knowledge. Mass Media as purveyors of news and views, have a decisive role of preparing the human race for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Media organization and communication hardware expand access to information. The world became closer and cohesive due to transmission of information. Within seconds, information reaches every nook and corner of all the countries<sup>9</sup>. Everyone knows everything happening everywhere.

#### **B) Public Watchdog**

Mass Media have played a leading role in shaping, guiding and reflecting the public opinion. These functions of media help to establish democracy. A well-developed media system, informing and teaching its citizens, helps democracy move towards its ideal state. In the current corrupt society, media plays a pivotal role in exposing the current activities taking place in both Government, trade and profession and make the public to think and act accordingly<sup>10</sup>.

#### **C) Safeguarding Democracy**

Media access is important in the political sphere. Access to media is access to public opinion, so essential to protect and preserve democratic institutions. It is advantageous to both the leaders and masses<sup>11</sup>. Leader can address masses depending upon their convenience. They reach widely dispersed masses simultaneously through the media. One of the chief advantages

---

<sup>9</sup> Christmas, C.G., Fackler, M., Richardson, K.B. and Kreshel, P.J., 2020. Media ethics: Cases and moral reasoning. Routledge.

<sup>10</sup> Norris, B., 2013. Media ethics at the sharp end. In *Ethics and Media Culture: Practices and Representations* (pp. 325-337). Routledge.

<sup>11</sup> Belsey, A. and Chadwick, R., 2002. Ethics and politics of the media: the quest for quality. In *Ethical issues in journalism and the media* (pp. 1-14). Routledge.

of media access is that it helps to correct distortions in facts, views and attitudes.

#### D) Entertainment

The mass media has monopolized the leisure industry. Literature, music, drama, dance, sports, interaction with resourceful persons, cultural entertainments etc. which are popular among public such as 'Harikatha'. 'Burrakatha' are some of the performances which are liked by masses. The media play a large role in shaping modern culture<sup>12</sup>.

#### E) Education

The overall human development is directly related to education. Media enable the spread of education through conventional as well as unconventional methods. Ignorance can be eradicated with adequate information supply. Media add new information to human knowledge<sup>13</sup>. This is an educative value. Media may also be educational in nature, as in the instance of public broadcasting station which provide educational programming to a national audience. Newspapers release special 'education plus' supplements every week which contain material useful to student community.

#### F) Economic Growth

Media can be used for both the social and business concerns. They can include advertising, marketing, propaganda, public relations and political communication. Through advertisements in mass media, the market for goods expands and economic growth takes place. Information about national development is available through media and the public. The needed skills are being taught through media: farmers learn the methods of modern farming; workers get information to master technical skills, people in general learn more about how to keep themselves healthy and strong. A healthy media keeps a wealthy nation and on development track<sup>14</sup>.

Mass media play a significant role in shaping public perceptions on a variety of important issues, both through the information that is dispensed through them, and through the interpretations they place upon this information. They also play a large role in shaping modern culture, by portraying a particular set of beliefs, values and traditions (an entire way of life) as reality. That is, by portraying a certain interpretation of reality, they shape reality to be more in line with that interpretation<sup>15</sup>.

---

<sup>12</sup> Saragih, M.Y., 2021. Law, journalistic profession and mass media ethics. Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal) Vol, 4(2), pp.2532-2540.

<sup>13</sup> De Beer, A.S. and Froneman, J., 1994. The quest for media ethics: an introduction. *Ecquid Novi*, 15(1), pp.3-25.

<sup>14</sup> Frost, C., 2015. Journalism ethics and regulation. Routledge.

<sup>15</sup> Evers, H., 2000. Codes of Ethics. Media Ethics. Opening Social Dialogue. European Ethics Network Core Materials for the Development of Courses in Professional Ethics. Leuven, pp.255-281.

#### **IV. WHY LAW IS REQUIRED FOR MEDIA?**

Law consists of rules made by authority for the proper regulation of community or society. According to Austin, “Law is a rule laid down for the guidance of a being by an intelligent being having power over him”. Law means any set of uniform principles which is generally followed. It is referred to those rules which are issued by the State for determining the relationship of men in organized society. The purpose of law is to regulate and control human action in society. Some propagate self-regulation for media following their own code of ethics<sup>16</sup>. Disagreeing with the concept of self-regulation by the media, Justice Markandey Katju said that he favoured only regulating media, not controlling it. But regulation should be by an independent body and not by the Government<sup>17</sup>. He says that “self-regulation is not always enough and that is why we have law”.

#### **V. DIFFERENT CODES OF ETHICS INTENDED FOR MASS MEDIA**

A Code of ethics is an essential requirement for every profession. Several Code of Ethics have been formulated from time to time to guide the persons of Mass Media such as Journalists, Broadcasters, Public Relation Persons etc. These are adopted by the concerned Associations of Mass Media. They are given below:

- International Code of Ethics, 1991
- The Code of Ethics and a Charter for Editors Formulated by the All India Newspaper Editors’ Conference in 1953
- All India Newspaper Editors’ Conference Code of Conduct, 1968
- National Integration Council Code of Conduct for the Media, 1962
- Press Council Code of Ethics
- Press Council Code of Ethics on Communal Writings
- Parliament Code of Ethics, 1976
- Code of Ethics for Broadcasters, 1969
- Code of Ethics Adopted by the International Public Relations Association at Athens, 1965

---

<sup>16</sup> Drechsel, R.E., 1992. Media Ethics and Media Law: The Transformation of Moral Obligation into Legal Principle. *Notre Dame JL Ethics & Pub. Pol’y*, 6, p.5.

<sup>17</sup> Belsey, A. and Chadwick, R., 1995. Ethics as a vehicle for media quality. *European Journal of Communication*, 10(4), pp.461-473.

The Code of Ethics are not legal documents but they are guidelines for the professional quality and efficiency. In order to maintain the credibility of his newspaper or magazine, a journalist has to disseminate news in accordance with established norms and traditions of the society<sup>18</sup>. Despite all the provocations and dangers, journalists must function strictly within the framework of ethical norms. As the Codes of Ethics are not formulated by the State Legislature they are not Acts and they cannot be enforced by law. Yet, the Code of Ethics makes a journalist a 'perfect professional' if he digests the Codes of ethics and adopts them in his professional life<sup>19</sup>.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Ethics examines human conduct and lays down rules of duty and ideal conduct, dealing with the value of life. Laws are meant for regulating human conduct and for subduing the individual ego to the social ego. It is the function of ethics to evolve those which should be followed because they are good in themselves; law, on the other hand, consists of the rules recognized and acted on by Courts of Justice though in the modern concept of law with social emphasis, it also balances the benefits secured by its obedience with the harm resulting from its enforcement by compulsion<sup>20</sup>. Ethics concentrates on principles affecting man's conduct so as to determine the standard of right and wrong; law is more concerned with social relations of men and the social consequences ensuing therefrom.

Ethics must consider the motive as all important, whereas law insists merely on the compliance of conduct with certain standards. The rules of ethics are not obligatory, but legal obligations are binding on the individual. Ethics depends on law for enforcement of some of its rules, through the instrumentality of the law Courts. So also good legislation must be based on ethical principles<sup>21</sup>.

\*\*\*\*\*

---

<sup>18</sup> Sarikakis, K. and Winter, L., 2021. Journalism codes of conduct and ethics as a form of media governance. In *The Routledge companion to journalism ethics* (pp. 427-434). Routledge.

<sup>19</sup> Lumby, C., 2020. Media ethics. In *The Media and Communications in Australia* (pp. 345-349). Routledge.

<sup>20</sup> Malik, A.A., 2016. The issue of ethics in the media and communication profession. *Journal of Islamic Social Sciences and Humanities*, 7, pp.79-93.

<sup>21</sup> Ashwini, S., 2021. Social Media Platform Regulation in India—A Special Reference to The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. *Perspectives on Platform Regulation*, pp.215-232.