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DEVELOPMENT OF NEWS AGENCY JOURNALISM IN INDIA AND ITS ROLE

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ABSTRACT

News agencies often referred to as 'wire services' have always played a critical role in gathering and dissemination of news to newspapers, periodicals, radio and television broadcasters, government agencies, and other subscribers, who by sharing costs obtain services they could not otherwise afford. News agencies continuously track all important happenings and keep media organizations engaged in the business of transmission and exchange of news with latest updates. With globalization and innovation in technology there has been a virtual revolution in the world of news and the information explosion has created a highly competitive environment leading to changes in the significance, approach and working mechanism of news agencies today. News agencies have been making use of the latest communication technologies for dissemination of news across their network, thereby making the exchange of information more competitive and accessible by overcoming the disadvantages of yesteryears. From the telegraphs and telephones to radio and satellite transmission and now internet, agencies today have breached most of the challenges in procuring news and disseminating them timely and thereby giving a value addition to the whole proposition of being first with the news. As Simon Denver of Reuters rightly sums it, "There are so many channels today for the audience to access news. So if a news agency has to survive in such a scenario, it will have to provide that 'value addition' or some 'extra bit' to retain the interest of its audience."

OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH: 1. To Study the Origin and Development of News Agencies Journalism in India, 2. To Access the Overview of Indian News Agencies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: The present study descriptive and exploratory research, the researcher will use historical and observation approach as the main methods of the study.

Introduction : India - Keshab Chandra Roy a journalist from Calcutta went to Simla, the summer capital of the Government of India, and became special correspondent of several Indian newspapers. As early as 1908, Roy saw the possibilities of starting a national news agency. He learnt in 1906 that England had adopted the multi-address telegraph system, enabling newspapers to send press telegrams and receive them at special rates. Along with some British journalists, he persuaded the viceroy, Lord Minto, to institute a similar system in India which proved a boon and paved way for syndication of news messages. Roy was an admirer of the AP and dreamt of starting a similar agency in India. In 1910 he launched an agency - the Press Bureau, with offices at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. He argued that Indian newspapers could not pay separate telegraphic rates and so correspondents' messages to The Press Bureau offices would be copied and distributed. By 1913 the Press Bureau had worked for three years and was in red because the Indian newspapers were not paying the bills. Its subscribers included the Statesman and the Madras mail. Roy had to sell his property to keep the agency going. About this time, Edward E. Coates, the representative of the Statesman of England and Reuters, was persuaded by the Finance Member of Viceroy's Executive Council to start an Indian

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news agency as he could know of failure of a bank in Madras full one week later. This agency supplied Indian news to about a hundred officials all over the country and entered into an agreement with Reuters for the supply of foreign news. Sir Roderick Jones, Reuters' chairman persuaded Roy to amalgamate his agency with Coates and form a new one, which he called Eastern News Agency.' It was, however, called the Associated Press of India (API)'. Coates sold his interest and retired while Roy took charge of the news operations in 1919 under the overall control of the Reuters general manager based in Bombay.' Roy is credited with great persuasive skills. The Indian Telegraph Act was amended, at Roy's instance, to secure for news agencies the facilities available to registered newspapers. It was again Roy who persuaded Hugh Keeling, the chief engineer, to allot to the agency the site in New Delhi's Parliament Street on which the Press Trust of India building was to come up many years later. Reuters' outward service from India was supplemented by Reut- Buck providing amplification of certain messages, which the Government was interested in and Globe-Reut provided for similar amplification worldwide. The British Government started the British Official Wireless, compiled by the British Foreign Office. Messages were relayed on wireless between Rugby in England and Kirkee in India.

The Free Press : The combination of Reuters and the Associated Press meant official control and this became apparent in the early twenties with Gandhi's movements. S. Sadanand launched the Free Press Agency (FPA) in 1927. He said in his statement of objects and reasons that public opinion was moulded entirely by news supplied from day to day and it was "difficult if not impossible to mould healthy public opinion owing to the monopoly held in the supply of news by subsidised news agencies." The FPA had a foreign section as well. Cables of some of the leading news agencies of the world were selected and pooled by the London office and sent out to India. Reuters often lost this race. The full weight of the imperial authority was deployed to thwart this enterprise. Official pressure was exerted on Sadanand's fellow directors and four of them resigned in 1929 and the fifth did so in 1930. The Press Ordinance of May 1930 came down with a heavy hand on newspapers publishing FPA news. The Free Press telegrams were subjected to a strict censorship and newspapers grew reluctant to publish news supplied by the agency for the fear of offending the Press Ordinance or other emergency press laws. API also exerted pressure by insisting that its service would not be available to newspapers subscribing to the other agency. Sadanand sought other ways of continuing the battle, and he started the Free Press: journal as a morning daily in June 1930 from Bombay; associated newspapers were started publishing Free Press news exclusively. In 1930 a smuggled copy of the Free Press journal was the cause of much concern in the Reuters office in Bombay and cables were sent home of Reuters being beaten by the opposition. Important FPA scoops included the Chittagong armoury raid case in February 1933. K. Rama Rao, one of the most respected journalists of his times, dug up the background of the case and printed the story of the arrest of Surya Sen, the leader. - There was a protest against a news agency running newspapers, and when his directors arrived at an agreement with the Associated Press, Sadanand had to give up his chain newspaper enterprise. In 1935. When his newspapers' securities were confiscated, Sadanand had to close down his agency. Sadanand went bankrupt through the forfeiture of the heavy securities he had to pay repeatedly for the violation of the imperial code. Penalty had to be paid for an editorial entitled "Swaraj is the only remedy" in the agency's paper Free Press Journal and for publishing extracts from an article by Mahatma Gandhi and for a report of Vithalbhai Patel's speech in New York. If Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was a freedom fighter, journalist Swaminath Sadanand was a journalist freedom fighter. He fought for the freedom of the press not only when the British were ruling India but also after independence when he could warn about the dangers of Dominance of the world news by a few news agencies. He did not invent the phrase "new world information and communication order" but he could see the problem from which the world is suffering even today. In his early journalistic career, Sadanand worked with Reuters (rather, its subsidiary Associated Press of India) for a while. Hardly anything is available on that period but it is clear that his desire to have an independent Indian news agency was born during that time. He had also been to Burma before coming back to Bombay to launch Free Press of India News Agency.

United Press Of India: United Press of India The United Press of India was started from Calcutta in 1933 by B. Sen Gupta, who had resigned from the Free Press. Sen Gupta was the Managing Director and Dr. B. C. Roy, Chairman of Board of Directors. The news agency had financial and other difficulties from the beginning. The competition was with the Associated Press with its speedy teleprinter transmission. When Dr. Rajendra Prasad inaugurated the United Press teleprinter services in 1948, the news agency had a fresh lease of life. The agency finally dosed down in 1958, as newspapers were unwilling to keep it alive. C. Raghavan wrote about the collapse in 1977, "At the time, on behalf of the Indian Federation of Working Journalists, I repeatedly met the Home Minister, the late Govind Ballabh Pant, in an effort to prevent the closure. Pandit Pant was willing to declare a moratorium on UPI's debt to the Post and Telegraph Department- quite a substantial sum- provided he was assured by the owners and newspapers that they would meet the other debts, including the

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Provident Fund dues of employees, and assure that the service could be run economically. The newspapers were unwilling and the owners were unable to do anything. And on the United Press of India (UPI) collapsed."¹⁴

Press Trust of India : The Press Trust of India, was incorporated in Madras on 27 August 1947. This was within a fortnight of what Jawaharlal Nehru described as India's "Tryst with Destiny" at the historic central hall of Parliament on the night of 14-15 August. In 1948, Indian news papers formed the Press Trust of India, on the basis of cooperative ownership." It arrived at a three-year agreement with Reuters under which it took over the Associated Press and joined Reuters as a partner¹⁵ in the collection and dissemination of news from all over the world. At the end of four years, the agreement was ended and the Press Trust of India began purchasing Reuters' services in bulk and distributing them to its subscribers in India. The idea of the takeover of API from Reuters was mooted in 1946 at a meeting of the Indian and Eastern Newspapers Society (IENS) in - Lahore. Among those who supported the scheme were Devdas Gandhi of the Hindustan Times, Kasturi Srinivasan of the Hindu and Tushar Kanti Ghosh of Amrit Bazar Patrika. Meanwhile, the Labour government which had come to power in England in the wake of the Tory defeat in 1945, had sounded Reuters to come to terms with the Indian newspapers about the transfer of its interests. Reuters were reluctant to give up its monopoly in India even at a time when the British had decided to transfer the power to Indians, while agreeable to the handing over of the business of the internal agency, API, to the national news agency, Reuters wanted to retain control over the foreign news service. Then Reuters could manipulate the Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society (IENS) to get into a post-independence arrangement favouring Reuters all the way. The deadlock was finally resolved through the intercession of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Member for Home and Information of the Government of India. He insisted on the total transfer of Reuters's Indian interests to the Indian news agency, Press Trust of India, which the Reuter teleprinter line license due for renewal in July 1947, would not be renewed. Sardar Patel asked the IENS president to inform the Reuters that a new agreement be made for the immediate transfer. Reuters promptly agreed to a total transfer and invited an Indian newspaper delegation to visit England to negotiate a new deal, as the teleprinter line license of Reuters was due to be renewed in July 1947 and there was a government resolution that future licenses could be given only to Indian agencies. The new partnership deal was approved by IENS on 27 July 1948. The agreement was finally announced on 21 September 1948. On 14 January 1949, PTI remitted the required money and became a partner of Reuters with effect from 1 February 1949. Thus, the Press Trust of India (PTI) which had been registered as a company in August 1947, went into operation on 1 February 1949. PTI began as a non-profit venture. PTI exchanges news with nearly 100 news agencies of the world as part of bilateral and multilateral arrangements, including Non-Aligned News Agenda Pool and the Organisation of Asia-Pacific News Agencies PTI Services:

English News Service : Available in two forms. The core service covers major developments in diverse fields in a compact form. A more comprehensive segmented service allows papers to pick additional inputs from segments of their choice: national, regional, economic, commercial, international, and sports. Core service puts out about 40,000 words and the full-segmented service up to 100,000 words per day.

Bhasha : Bhasha is the Hindi language news service of PTI. With its own network in the Hindi-speaking states and drawing on PTI files, Bhasha puts out about 40,000 words per day.

Stork Scan : Screen-based services providing stock market information from main stock exchanges of the country.

News Scan : Displays news in capsule form on video monitors. Major developments in the country and abroad are covered.

Data India : A reference weekly, provides a digest on the happenings in India, in a user-friendly alphabetical listing.

Economic Service : A fortnightly journal providing analytical reports on the state of the Indian economy and trends in the corporate world.

PTI Mag : A weekly package of 11 special stories on topics ranging from arts to business to science. Available through the wire service as well as through mail.

Science Service : Reports on the developments in the fields of science and technology with particular reference to India in a fortnightly journal.

PTI Graphics : A weekly mailer package of 14 graphics. Covers all major developments. On special occasions like the budget, graphics are distributed by satellite.

PTI Feature : A package of four weekly features on topical, national, international and general events.

PTI-TV : Provides spot coverage and makes corporate documentaries on assignment basis.

Photo : PTI Photo provides pictures on the national, foreign and sports scenes via satellite, dial-up and hand delivery.

United News of India : United News of India or UNI is one of the largest and most popular news agencies working dedicatedly in India and also across the Asia. United News of India or UNI was

launched in 21 March, 1961, and has grown into one of the largest news agencies in Asia. During these years, the agency have acquired a reputation for fast and accurate coverage of all major news events in India and abroad in all areas, including politics, business, economics, entertainment, sports, stock markets and so on. The service also provides subscribers with a rich choice in features, interviews and human-interest stories.

United News of India, serve more than 1000 subscribers in more than 100 locations in India and abroad. The subscriptions include newspapers, radio and television networks, web sites, government offices and private and public sector corporations. The communication network stretches over 90,000 Km approximately in India and the other Gulf states. There are more than 325 staff journalists around the country and more than 250 stringers of United News of India, who cover news events from remote corners. United News of India also have correspondents in major world cities such as Washington, Dubai, London, Colombo, Islamabad, Kathmandu, Dhaka, Singapore, Sydney and Vancouver, bringing stories of interest to the subscribers.

The wire service of United News of India is available in three languages, namely English, Hindi and Urdu. United News of India launched UNIVARTA in Hindi in 1982 and pioneered a wire service in Urdu in 1992. United News of India has been the first news agency in the country to launch a Financial Service, a Stock Exchange service and also a National Photoservice. United News of India also have other additional services like UNI darshan (Television News Clips and Features), UNI Sean (News Display on Television sets for Hotels, top Government officials and corporate clients), UNI Direct (for top executives in the government, corporate and other sectors) and UNI Graphics (Computer-designed Graphics in ready-to-use form). The news offered by United News of India is not only of human interest but also aims at developmental proceedings in the long run of the nation.

Hindustan Samachar : India's for multilingual agency, the Hindustan Samachar, was set up in Bombay as a private limited company in 1948 by S. S. Apte. Its avowed aim was to educate the masses to take part in national development and to strive for national integration through the promotion of all Indian languages. This early effort was limited to the distribution of news among local newspapers through Devanagari telegrams. The agency fed news to its more than 135 subscribe. in 10 languages - Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali, Oriya, Assamese, Telegu and Malayalam

Samachar Bharti : The second language agency, the SamacharBharti, was registered as a company in 1962, was inaugurated on 2 October, 1966, and commenced commercial distribution of news to newspapers from January 1, 1967. In 1970, the agency was converted almost into a government company with the State governments of Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Karnataka holding more than 50 percent of the company's shares.

Its first chairman was the governor of Bombay, Sri Braltasa. JayaprakashNatain. training to language journalists and stringers.

Samachar : The four agencies, PTI, UNI, Hindustan Samachar and SamacharBharti merged their separate identities into what came to be known as "Samachar" in February 1976. The decision to "restructure" the four teleprinter news agencies had been taken by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi at a meeting held in her office on 26 July 1975. The minister of Information and Broadcasting, V. C. Shulda, discussed several times with the heads and representatives of the four agencies his proposal for all the agencies merging together to form a single agency.

The role of news agencies is discussed the dissemination of information, through a news agency, by the publicist has certain advantages. The news agencies can transmit his message to local newspapers through the teleprinter network in the quickest possible time. As such, the publicist is saved from the botheration of sending his hand-out to local newspapers individually. Also, through news agencies the publicist reaches the outstation papers in no time which would be otherwise difficult. However, it would not be a wise policy, except in the case of very important news items, to send the news material only to the agencies and not to the newspapers. News agencies may not use the publicist's copy or reduce it drastically before crediting it to the subscribers. In that case, newspapers are deprived of a fuller version, and even if they wish to publish the story they would not be in a position to do so. While the news agency has the biggest merit of getting the widest newspaper coverage in the quickest possible time, it has the disadvantage also of its news not being used by newspapers. By and large, a newspaper does publish news given by its own correspondent, almost in its full form. The general principle, therefore, is to send the item to both the agencies and newspapers unless it is decided to 'sell' the story on 'exclusive' basis to a particular news agency or to a single newspaper or category of newspapers based on language, region, or frequency. Where news is given out on 'exclusive' basis to a news agency, the news agency correspondent should be clearly told about it, so that he will do full justice to the material.

Role in Democratic Set-up The role of news agencies in a democracy with free press is of crucial importance. There are some basic principles which should govern the functioning of news agencies in a democratic set-up. Some of these are, there should not be any monopoly of one news agency. Competitive

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service freely available to all users is absolutely necessary. The news agencies should not be state-owned or state-controlled. The government should not participate in ownership, nor have any voice in the control of the agency either editorially or administratively. Financial assistance in the form of loans, etc. may be given by the government but without any strings. The payment made for services rendered comes altogether in a different category. The set-up of news agencies should be a public corporation formed on the basis of cooperative efforts of newspapers, other users and interests. In functioning, they should keep in view the overall interests of State and society. They should abide by the laws of the country, as well as by the code of professional conduct. They should develop the system of coverage of foreign news by having their own correspondents at major foreign capitals, and use their dispatches to supplement and correct, where necessary, the services of foreign agencies which have the monopoly of world news. Also, they should provide the country's news to newspapers and other media in foreign countries. They should provide adequate coverage of regional news and meet the requirements of regional newspapers. The agencies should provide different types of services—full or comprehensive, brief and summary (for district newspapers) to different categories of subscribers. The tariff should be so devised that the subscribers are charged in equitable manner, or according to the use made of the service. The subscription rate to be charged from newspapers should be in relation to their number of pages, circulation, income and other factors. In addition to the services provided to newspapers, the news agencies also provide news service, including commercial and special services, to individual subscribers—Central and State government departments, public sector undertakings, business houses, etc. In India, All India Radio, Doordarshan, External Affairs Ministry are important subscribers of the services of news agencies. The payment of subscription from official agencies should be based on sound principles and not on an ad hoc basis. The news coverage should be fast, objective, comprehensive and accurate. Only items which have 'news value' should be selected. While determining 'news value', the appeal to the readers and the significance of the event are to be taken into consideration. The criterion of 'news value' must undergo changes as social, political and economic developments take place in the country. In selection of news, the agencies should have a sense of integrity and impartiality. Selection of news should be made on the basis of importance and priority attached to individual facts. All relevant facts of significance should be reported. The news agencies should not have any specific editorial policy. The agencies should avoid giving views or comments while reporting news. The privilege of comments should lie with the newspapers. The agencies, in giving news, should be fair to different points of view. The views of opposition should be treated fairly and equitably in respect of length and coverage. Since the agencies cater to subscribers of diverse and contradictory views, it will not be proper for the agency to select news to suit the interests of any particular client. The interests or prejudices should not influence the agencies in selection of news. In fact, the conflicting trends in the country and society should be projected, but in a balanced manner and in proper perspective. News agencies should be free from bias. It should also be immune to pressure from any quarter—governmental, or big business, or proprietarily. As far as possible, news agencies should be viable. In brief, the news agencies in a democratic society should provide complete, impartial, objective, accurate, countrywide and competitive news services free from slant, pressure, or interference from any source or quarter. It has to guard against the danger of being dominated by any vested interests economic, social, communal or political.

CONCLUSION : As the news agencies are the first source of news in the early days of life of newspaper and with the passage of time the print and electronic media is growing faster, however the reliance on the news agencies are somehow is still there. Basically news agencies are working on quantitative policy, they have agreement with the newspaper's management against the each news or bulk news. In some cases the authenticity of the news is doubtful. But still news agencies play a vital role in the modern media.

On the other hand to get a news from the government department the role of news agency which is government owned agency is very important. For the international news they play a major role. Somehow we can say the role of news agencies cannot be decreases.

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