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## **Freedom of the Press**

The press has been hailed everywhere as the guardian of liberty. The freedom of the press is the measuring yard of all the civil, political, religious and social rights of the citizen. The freedom of the press is an inevitable factor for the success of a democratic society.



A free press plays a positive and constructive role in the life of a democratic nation. Unless the press enjoys freedom, it cannot defend and protect the rights and liberties of the citizens. A free press signifies an open society where decisions are made according to democratic traditions. A press can perform its duties only if it is free and independent in publishing news and views. This means that governmental control on the press should be the minimum. The press should not be afraid of upholding and supporting a just and righteous cause. It should not be afraid of making a constructive criticism

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of the government and its policies. The press should also not be afraid of criticising influential politicians, businessmen and other persons and should bring them before the law if they violate the rules of the country. The press should be always vigilant to protect the rights of workers, poor people, the minorities and backward and oppressed sections of the society.



Since the 18th century, the press has been considered as the Fourth Estate. It gives information and news. Democracy can be successful only with a free, frank and fearless press. In a democracy, the press keeps the people informed about the programmes and policies of the government. Similarly, it keeps the government informed of the desires, suggestions and grievances of the people. Thus it tries to bridge the gap between the government and the people. Thus it represents free public opinion which is the cornerstone of democracy.

The freedom of expression of individuals indirectly depends upon the

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freedom of the press. It places checks and balances on the government. It publishes many facts which the governments try to hide. Investigative journalism can bring to light corruptions of politicians, ministers and businessmen, the relationship between the politicians and the underworld dons, anti-social practices like smuggling and drug addiction, and the internal and external forces which threaten the peace and security of a nation.

The press is expected to publish balanced news and views. This will help in the formation of a healthy public opinion. But sometimes, certain newspapers resort to sensational news and yellow journalism. They publish biased news to excite the people. Some newspapers also spread communal and sectarian feelings. Rumors and ill-feelings spread by such newspapers result in communal riots. So, such actions on the part of the press must be discouraged. Thus, it is evident that the foremost duty of the press should be truthful and impartial reporting of news and views. The press should also be instrumental in eradicating the social evils and in removing poverty. It should raise its voice against corruption, exploitation of the poor and the weak, pollution, antisocial practices and nuclear weapons.

To conclude, the freedom of the press should not be misused to create a situation of anarchy. The press should impose certain restrictions on itself. It should not publish views which harm the interests and security of the nation. It should uphold the rights and liberties of the citizens and oppose the wrong policies of the government by creating healthy public opinion. Thus the role of a free press is to strengthen democracy and to contribute to the emotional integration of the nation.

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