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27

PHOTOJOURNALISM

Man has always had a desire to learn and expand his knowledge. This he did by travelling to new places. Man drew pictures of the new things he saw or wrote about his travels. Then came printing. Printing could make the written word more popular amongst people. The printed word was combined with hand drawn pictures to describe what was written. This added to the people's knowledge of things and they could visualise what was being written about. With the coming of photography news could be conveyed with greater authority and emphasis with photographs. Photographs started supporting the written news in newspapers and magazines and thus photojournalism was born.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- describe the meaning of photojournalism;
- discuss the nature and scope of photojournalism;
- state the importance of composition in photojournalism;
- explain the terms 'photofeature' and 'photoeditor.'

27.1 MEANING OF PHOTOJOURNALISM

Every morning we wake up and read the newspaper. There is always a picture on the first page which shows the important news of the day. Such a picture is a result of what we know as photojournalism.

Once photography grew popular and became easy to do, it started getting specialised in its use. By this, you must understand that soon after the discovery of photography people were very excited and busy getting their photos taken. Soon they started travelling with the camera, gathering pictures of far off places and showed them to people who could not get there.

Wars were happening in the world; photographers went to such places and took pictures. Such photographers were the first war photojournalists. Still it was not

possible to print these pictures on the newspaper alongside the written news.

Around the 1880s, a technology called half tone developed by which photographs could be printed in the newspapers. Photojournalism as we know today is news photography. Photographs that support the story of a news event fall in this category and photographers who specialise in this are called photojournalists.

27.2 TYPES OF PHOTOJOURNALISM

Photojournalism has grown into a very specialised form of photography and it has many more avenues. This is because news itself has many areas wherein a particular person is assigned to work in. So photographers according to their likes and dislikes have gone into specific areas. When a photographer is gifted with the ability to write in support of his photograph in a few words, he becomes a photojournalist.

Let's find out the different types of photojournalism.

- **Sports photojournalism:** As sports events are a big part of news, there are photojournalists who specialise in photographing sports. This is also because sports photography requires a specialised skill as well as equipment. Nowadays there are photojournalists who specialise in photographing individual sports. For example in India, there are photojournalists who are dedicated to cricket photography as it is the most popular sport and is now played throughout the year irrespective of it being day or night.



Fig 27.1 : (a) Sports photography



Fig 27.1 : (b) Sports photography





Notes



Fig. 27. 1: (c) Sports photography

- **War photojournalism:** This is the earliest form of photojournalism, where photojournalists have covered wars and sent photos from the centre of action. In India we see a lot of photographs in newspapers, of conflicts within the country such a terrorist activity or a riot where the photographer is in a dangerous situation and yet he manages to send us pictures, risking his life.



Fig. 27.2: War photography

- **Glamour photojournalism:** Film stars and other famous personalities have become a major part of news coverage as most people want to peep into the lives of the rich and famous. There are photojournalists who specialise in this kind of photography only are also called paparazzi, which is an Italian word.
- **Spot news photojournalism:** This means covering events that make day

**Notes**

Fig. 27.3 : (a) Spot news photography



Fig. 27.3 : (b) Spot news photography

- **Travel photojournalism:** This type of photojournalism involves the documentation of an area's landscape, people, cultures, customs and history.

Travel photographs are taken by professionals or even amateurs. Photographs taken by amateurs are shared online with friends, relatives etc through photosharing websites.



Notes



Fig. 27.4: Travel photography

- **Wildlife photojournalism** : This is regarded as one of the more challenging forms of photojournalism. Advanced photographic equipment as well as a good knowledge of the animal's behaviour as well as the terrain is needed to take wildlife photographs.



Fig 27.5: (a) Wildlife photography

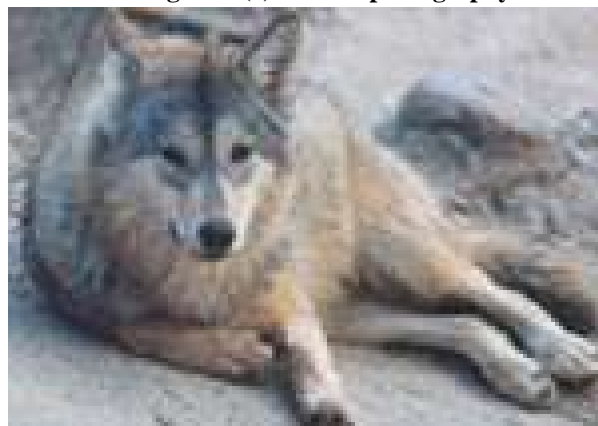


Fig. 27.5 : (b) Wildlife photography

**Notes**

Though these are only some of the many specialised categories of photojournalism, each newspaper has its set of photojournalists who cover all affairs that may make news around the globe.

Photojournalists can be of two kinds, those who are employed by the newspaper and the others who work as freelancers i.e. those who work independently and sell the pictures that they take to newspapers and other news agencies.

Photojournalism is now no longer limited to newspapers. With the emergence of the internet as a major source of news, the scope of photojournalism has extended itself into what is known as web based photo journalism. Some of you who use the internet would have seen websites that are like newspapers. These sites also employ journalists as well as photojournalists to gather news for their organisations.

Now with so many people carrying the camera in their phones, it may be of interest for you to know that newspapers and websites use photos sent by people like us to them, because we as ordinary people may be present with our mobile phone cameras at places when an incident of interest to the newspaper may take place!

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 27.1**

1. State whether the following statements are true or false.
 - i) Covering events that make day to day news is known as glamour photo journalism.
 - ii) War photographers are not photojournalists.
 - iii) Photo journalism is limited to newspapers.
 - iv) Web based journalism uses photojournalism as one of its components.
 - v) Spot news photojournalism is one of the most common types of photo journalism.

27.3 COMPOSITION

Any photograph must speak for itself. This means that on seeing a photograph the person watching it must immediately understand what it is trying to convey. There is a saying that “a single picture is worth a thousand words”. This means that a picture can convey a message more convincingly than a thousand words. You may have seen many photographs that leave a lasting impression on you. Have you wondered why it is so? This is because the subject which is photographed is placed in the picture frame in such an intelligent manner that it leaves an impact on the viewer. This placement of the subject or subjects within the picture frame is called **composition**.

Composition has a special meaning when it has to convey news to the public as is the case in photojournalism. It is the placement of the subject being photographed



Notes

that leaves an impact on the viewer. Let us consider a situation where you have to show a photograph of a poor man. You can take a simple photo of a beggar on the street and convey your message. But if the same photograph is taken in such a manner that the beggar is close to the camera but at a distance is also a rich man sitting in a big car. This picture will have a greater impact because its composition shows the contrast in the two people in the same picture and highlights the condition of the beggar as against the rich man. One can think of many such instances.

Composition also deals with making the picture look more appealing to the eye. Action photographs of war or sports show a kind of energy that should make the viewer feel that he is in the midst of those actions.

Composition also demands balance, that is to say a photograph must be taken in such a manner that it should not seem to make our eye wander to a corner. The various subjects should be so organised that the picture has a pleasing effect. There are some basic rules of framing, of which the **rule of thirds** is the most common. It states that elements in a frame must be so placed that they roughly fall on the intersection of the lines that divide the frame in three rows and three columns. This is no hard and fast rule, yet it helps in leaving a positive impact on the viewer.

Camera angle is another factor that has an impact on composition. If the person in a picture is an important person like a leader or a film personality, one composes the picture by keeping the camera below the person's eye level. When this is done the person shall appear much larger. Similarly taking a picture from above a person's height also called top angle makes the person appear small. All such methods of composition are employed to make the picture more effective in terms of what it is trying to say, so that the viewer can immediately understand its meaning.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 27.2

1. Name a basic rule of framing.
2. What is composition?
3. Identify a factor which affects composition.

27.4 PHOTOFEATURE AND PHOTOEDITING

A photofeature is also called a **photo essay**. As the name suggests it is a story or an essay on a subject told using photographs. It can be done on anything that is photographed, a place or person etc.

You may have come across photofeatures in magazines on certain interesting issues. How does a photojournalist work on a photofeature?

A photofeature is generally conceived at the desk of the editor of the magazine or newspaper who will brief the photo editor about it.



Notes

Now who is a photo editor? A **photo editor** is the overall in charge of the photo section in a newspaper or magazine. He chooses the photographer and discusses the topic. He may also choose a reporter who will write the story around the photo essay. It is also the job of the photo editor to decide and select on the best pictures that convey the whole story.

You have already learnt that a single picture is worth a thousand words”. Therefore a good photo essay which comprises of few very nice pictures will have a greater impact on its viewer than the best written essay.

Let us consider the example of a photo feature that will be based on a family and attempts to list five photographs which shall introduce them to others. If there are parents, their daughter, and grandparents in the family, you may have the following photographs:

- Group photo of the whole family having a meal together.
- father leaving for work.
- mother preparing food in the kitchen
- daughter coming home from school
- grandparents watching television.

These are the few photographs that will make a brief photo essay on the above family. Of course there may be many other interesting pictures that could be taken. Here you will have to be your own photo editor or take the opinion of a senior person to pick up the best photos that make a complete photo essay on the family.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 27.3

1. What is a photo feature?
2. Who is a photo editor ?
3. What is the other name for a photo essay?



27.5 WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- > Meaning of photojournalism
- > Types of photojournalism
 - sports photojournalism
 - war photojournalism
 - glamour photojournalism



Notes

- spot news photojournalism
- travel photojournalism
- wildlife photojournalism

→ Composition of a photograph

- placement of the subject
- balance
- camera angle

→ Photofeature and photoediting



27.6 TERMINAL EXERCISES

1. What is photojournalism. Explain with examples from newspapers.
2. What is the use of composition in photojournalism.
3. Explain the role of a photo editor in a photo feature.



27.7 ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

- 27.1**
1. i) False
 - ii) False
 - iii) False
 - iv) True
 - v) True.

- 27.2**
1. Rule of thirds.
 2. The placement of the subject or subjects within the picture frame elements is called Composition.
 3. Camera angle.

- 27.3**
1. Photo feature is a story or an essay on a subject told mainly by photographs
 2. A photojournalist is the person who is the overall in charge of the photo section in a newspaper
 3. Photo Feature.