

10th Foundation Day Function of Media Academy, Orissa at Hotel Swosti, Bhubaneswar on 8.9.2008

It gives me immense pleasure to participate in the 10th Foundation Day Celebration of Media Academy, Orissa. Today, the 8th of September is also observed as the International Literacy Day. I am happy to find that this institution was formed on 'International Literacy Day' ten years ago with initiative of some conscious citizens having long experience in public life. Today their brain-child has completed ten years and is entering into the eleventh year of its existence. On achieving this important milestone, I extend my hearty appreciation and congratulation to each one associated with the growth of this institution.

Media Academy has definitely made promising beginning in taking up worthy causes like promotion of journalistic ethics, grooming personnel of Mass Communication, propagation of Orissan art and culture, fight against social evils and also in honouring deserving individuals. Today, I have great pleasure in felicitating the dynamic editor of 'Sambad', Shri Soumya Ranjan Patnaik with 'Media Academy Samman'. Besides being a very successful editor of one of leading Oriya dailies, Shri Patnaik's inspirational leadership led Ama Odisha to give a boost to both literacy sector and also voluntary blood donation in the State. I congratulate him and wish him all success in his noble endeavour.

During past few days, I have the opportunity of attending functions associated with media institutions and organizations. I may say that there is a serious concern to uphold the noble tradition and ethics of journalism. Media or Press is termed as the 'Fourth Pillar' of our democratic polity and they are the watchdog of our democracy. The more they are strong and unbiased in their reporting, the stronger will be the roots of our democracy.

The press and media derive their rights to free speech and expression because they do a service to the society. The rights arise from the role and functions of the media are entrusted with, in a society and responsibility and accountability go together with these rights.

It goes without saying that all other freedoms become irrelevant without the freedom of the press and media because denial of freedom means strangling of democracy. Freedom of press is only an extension of citizen's right to freedom of speech and expression. That freedom should be enjoyed with responsibility and not abused so that others will raise finger at the profession.

The media or press in India has a long and glorious history and tradition. During freedom struggle, it was the powerful medium to propagate nationalistic feelings. The pen of great leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru worked ceaselessly for enthusing the countrymen to fight for freedom. They were all great journalists. Similarly, I understand Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das, Dr. Hare Krushna Mahatab, Sashi Bhusan Rath, Gouri Sankar Ray, Nilamani Vidyaratna to name a few who took journalism to great height in Orissa. When we celebrate the foundation day or annual function of any media organization or institution, we remember these legendary figures with respect and draw inspiration to follow their footsteps.

The role of media continues to hold as much importance, now, as it was during freedom struggle. Effective media holds the key to people's empowerment. In the changed scenario, the need of the hour is to harness the potential of media in bringing about equitable socio-economic growth with justice and ensuring peace and communal harmony in society.

It is very much required that our young students of media education should be groomed with skills and media ethics so as to emerge successful in the profession and render effective service to the society. I am happy to know that Media Academy consists of experts in the field of journalism, education and administration. I am sure, their guidance and vast experience will continue to lead our young media persons in right direction.

It is heartening to know that Media Academy responding to the call of its formation day is promoting literacy through providing writing and reading materials to poor and needy students. I appreciate this small yet meaningful effort in improving literacy. In our State

illiteracy is the prime obstacle on the path of progress and prosperity. Here, about 47 percent people live below poverty line. Poverty and illiteracy are two sides of the same coin and one breeds another. As I often say, poverty leads to illiteracy but literacy drives away poverty. When literacy rate among our tribal brothers and sisters is very low and particularly when the female literacy is most concerning as it is only around 25 percent, we can not expect to achieve all-round development leaving behind 75 percent women. So, it is very much essential to make this section of women literate in order to bring them into mainstream of life and enable them to contribute to the well being of the family and the society. In such a situation, the media persons have to play a positive role and create awareness among the people towards the benefit of literacy. I appeal to media both electronic and print, to come forward to free our brothers and sisters from the clutches of illiteracy.

I have a mission to drive away illiteracy from the State completely and see that the State becomes hundred percent literate. I appeal to all to take forward the movement of 'Gyanaloka' – through literacy programmes like Sarva Shiksha Abhijan and to spare no effort to remove the dark blots of illiteracy and poverty from the beautiful face of Orissa.

With these words, I have great pleasure to be with you all on this momentous occasion and I am sure the Media Academy which has made laudable contribution to the society will continue to work for the fulfillment of its objectives and help in creating a better journalistic environment for our future generation.

Jai Hind