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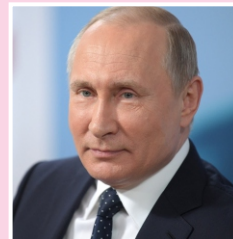
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Politics and Freedom of the Press

Politics is nothing but the political behaviour of individuals and the society. There can be no politics in the absence of communication amongst the members of the society. This communication is largely on political matters. How the society is to be governed, what type of the state or polity is to be shaped, who are to be the rulers and who the ruled, the functions and duties and the authority of the State, the limits of that authority, the role of the individual in the State and his rights and duties, the end of the State, the happiness and welfare of one and all, all these are some of the important issues which do require deliberation and discussion. Since every individual is affected by the politics of his country, it is but right and proper that he must have a say in its political life. He must be free to express his views on political matters. That is why the concept of the freedom of speech and expression has come to be treated as a political concept and freedom of expression has come to be regarded as a political necessity, one of the essential ingredients of individual freedom and as the sheet anchor of democracy.

The freedom of speech and expression in modern times has come to be viewed as the freedom of the Press, since it is through the Press that the people may make their voice heard and views understood throughout the country and the world. In modern times indeed the Press has come to perform a number of functions. It enlightens the people about the various policies and programmes of the government. It disseminates information of various sorts thereby keeping the people posted with what is going on all around them. Its piercing eyes delve deep into the acts of commission and omission of the government and its functionaries, bring out the truth which otherwise could never have been brought to the surface. It prepares the ground work for the people to evaluate the performance of the government. The government too, thus knows the pulse of the nation through the Press, understands its

moods and makes necessary changes in the policies, programmes or legislation. It may be recalled that during the Prime Ministership of Rajiv Gandhi the Defamation Bill was dropped by the Indian government in deference to the sensibilities of the people made vocal through the Press, despite the fact that the measure had been passed in the Lok Sabha by an overwhelming majority.

The Press is a handy and more potent medium than any other medium with the people to voice their grievances through, against the acts, policies and programmes of the government. The people through the Press keep the government on its toes, which, too, in its turn makes amends whenever necessary. The Press is thus a helping and not a hindering factor for the government. It promotes its stability when it works, warns if it errs, pulls it down if it fails in its basic duties. A free Press is thus a very potent factor in the political life of a country.

From what has been said above it is evident that the Press performs important functions. It has become the life-blood of democracy and an unavoidable and essential factor of political and social life of a country. It is imperative, therefore, that it must be granted the largest measure of freedom so as to enable it to do its duties faithfully, efficiently and effectively. Though it is not formally recognised as a part of a political system, yet since it wields such a significant indirect social influence, it has rightly been termed as a **fourth estate**, the others being the legislature, the executive and the judiciary.