

A Journey from Print to Broadcasting

It was about four in the evening when I finished my review meeting in Aurangabad. I thought of sipping a hot cup of tea in the staff cafeteria on the ground floor before leaving for Nasik which is about four hours drive from Aurangabad.

I always find my cafeteria a good place to catch up with my colleagues from the other departments which is otherwise difficult to do individually.

I saw my communications engineer sitting there and having the evening snacks. He was pleased to invite me to his table and ordered a cup of black tea with lemon for me. After exchanging a few pleasantries I asked what was new. He told me that we are able to now make pages of the district news at the respective district offices and transfer them to Aurangabad for timely printing. The ad schedule is communicated to them, they leave the space and we flow the ad on the plate.

"We are able to catch the latest happenings in district sir," he said. I said, "Wow, it is wonderful so you are able to reduce the time in subbing and page making. But you would require a solid bandwidth for this."

He explained that we have the data network already in place and we can move files fast enough. My next question to him was on our spread in Marathwada. "In almost all the districts and Talukas, Sir," he stated.

"Oh that is incredible network. What is the network downtime?"

"Barring a few incidences, we have not faced any major problems so far, sir."

"That is great," I said, and patted his back and glanced at my watch which was suggesting me to move or I shall be late in reaching Nasik. I shook hands and left.

It was a good time in the car to close my eyes and catch some sleep after a long day of discussions and review. But there was something in mind that was making me restless. I was glancing out the window and was noticing the passers by and shops on the streets. It looked to be a different Maharashtra than what it was 10 years ago. The Gandhi *topi* which was the usual head gear of the Maharashtrian folk has been replaced by a smart cap. Youngsters' were zip zapping on the mobikes and almost all the paan shops had a STD booth and a huge stock of Bisleri and Pepsi - along with variety of wafers and snack food. I was also surprised to see the people surrounding these joints - if I can so call them. I also noticed the battery recharge booths of Hutch and Airtel at couple of the joints and probably that was the reason for people hanging around there. Wow, what a great time for mobile service providers.

Suddenly, the car stopped. I realized that the driver had taken the car on the side of the road in some town kind of a place. I opened my eyes lazily and asked him what had

happened. He said the rear tyre of other side wheel was flat and that we needed to change the tyre. He stated that I would have to get down for a while. It was difficult to come out of the air-conditioned comfort and stand on a rather warm evening on the countryside on this Nasik Road. I felt like shouting at the driver but that was no solution. Knowing that it would take fifteen to twenty minutes, I thought I might jolly well take a stroll in the town of Vaijapur.

I spotted a restaurant on the other side of the road. It was pretty decent and clean. The person on the counter was able to see me coming out of the car and gave me a welcoming smile. I looked up at the watch. It was about seven in the evening. I thought to sip a cup of tea again to refresh myself. I entered the restaurant.

"Which Press are you?" he asked. I realized the car I was traveling in had a Press sticker. "Lokmat," I replied.

He got up from the counter and came out to receive me.

"It will take some time for you please sit in the VIP enclosure," he said.

I was aghast at this restaurant having a VIP enclosure.

"What is VIP here?" I asked. He directed me to the inner side of the restaurant which had a room with an AC, better furniture and a TV set which had a news channel running.

"I shall send you the tea. Would you like to have anything else, we make very good Bhajiyas," he offered.

I politely turndown the offer for Bhajiyas and asked for the tea. He was quite excited to see me there, and was personally serving me. I asked him how old the restaurant was, why does he have the VIP enclosure, and some more questions to keep him engaged. After I have finished my tea, he asked, "Sir, why do you not start a TV channel."

It turned out that the TV ran all day. The TV is put on as soon as the restaurant is opened in the morning there is nothing safer than the news to be put on it.

So what happens when anybody doesn't want to view news?

"Sir my remote is spoiled. Now who will go and tune the channel so once set it just runs the whole day. I have two TV sets in the restaurant one in this area and another small one right on the counter for my personal viewing and at both the places we run news only. In fact, no remote works in my restaurant," he stated matter of factly.

I realized that news was consumed like tea and coffee in this town.



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Almost every one replied that the customer was coming from a diverse background; and that each medium was becoming relevant according to the size of its delivery.