give us an insight to the world around us, while middles add a dash of humour and wit. A close reading of the editorial, articles, features, middles and letters to the Editor will reveal that their structure, content and style of writing are different from one another. A journalist may be a good news reporter or article writer, but may prove to be a poor editorial writer. To be a good editorial writer, one needs a good grasp of the language. As such one has to develop his or her language skills. Editorial writing gives one the opportunity to use his or her command over vocabulary and usage to the best of one's abilities. Letters to the Editor is an important feature of a newspaper where feedback from the readers is received in the form of opinions on various burning issues, besides, criticism and suggestions for improvement of the coverage of the newspaper. Language skills coupled with craftsmanship to structure a readable editorial, article or feature adds to the overall attraction of the newspaper. A letter to the editor sent by a reader may not be in the desired format needed for a newspaper. A sub-editor has to apply his skills to correct or even re-write a letter to make it fit for publication.

In this unit we shall discuss the finer points of Editorial writing which largely consist of the editorial, features, articles, middles and letters to the Editor.

2.3 INTRODUCTION TO THE EDITORIAL PAGE (EDITORIAL, FEATURES, ARTICLES, MIDDLES, LETTERS TO THE EDITOR)

The editorial page can be described as the soul of the newspaper as it reflects the mindset and taste of the newspaper. The policy and stand of the newspaper on the burning issues of the day are projected through the editorials. Diverse opinions and analysis of different issues are presented through the articles where eminent persons specialising in their area of activity are given a platform to express their views and thereby expand the horizon of understanding of the readers. Features in newspapers today are an extension of the hard news capturing the news headlines. Historical and cultural background of problems in the news, interesting facets of tourism spots, environmental issues, write-

and powerful editorials published in popular newspapers mould public opinion and act as catalysts of change. They also serve as watchdog of public interest by pointing out anomalies and irregularities in public policies and developmental works, besides offering suggestions and solutions to problems and burning issues of the society.

All editorials in the newspaper are published in the name of the editor. However, all editorials are not written by the editor himself. In big or medium-size newspapers, there is generally a panel of editorial writers who are assigned subjects of their specialised study by the editor. Sensitive and delicate issues which call for spelling out the newspaper's stand are generally handled by the editor himself or a close aide who is well acquainted with the newspaper's policies.

In the days when communication technology was in its nascent stage and the geo-political situation in the world developed at a slow pace, the general trend for the newspapers was to have one editorial, or at the most two. As the electronic media like the television was not much developed, the people depended on the newspapers for the news and views on the developments taking place around the world. As most of the readers were not aware of the background and causes of sudden socio-economic and political developments, most editorial writers used to discuss the subject on hand by giving the reader an idea about the background of the subject, then going on to analyse the pros and cons of the new development and its consequences and finally concluding with the newspaper's stand on the issue and suggestions for a solution.

However, with the development of communication technology the world today has become much closer. Any happening around the globe is immediately flashed on our television screens. People are today aware of the developments taking place. As such, the reader does not need to be explained about the development. Present day editorials directly approach the subject with the newspaper's views and comments, thereby cutting down the number of words compared to earlier editorials. This has given the editorial writers liberty to write two to three editorials regularly touching on varied subjects and engaging the atten-



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

3. Explain the importance of editorial writing ?

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ACTIVITY



Read the editorial of two leading English newspapers of Assam over a week .Now compare and contrast the style of writing and choice of issues discussed in the editorial in the two newspapers. Which one has appealed to you more and why ?

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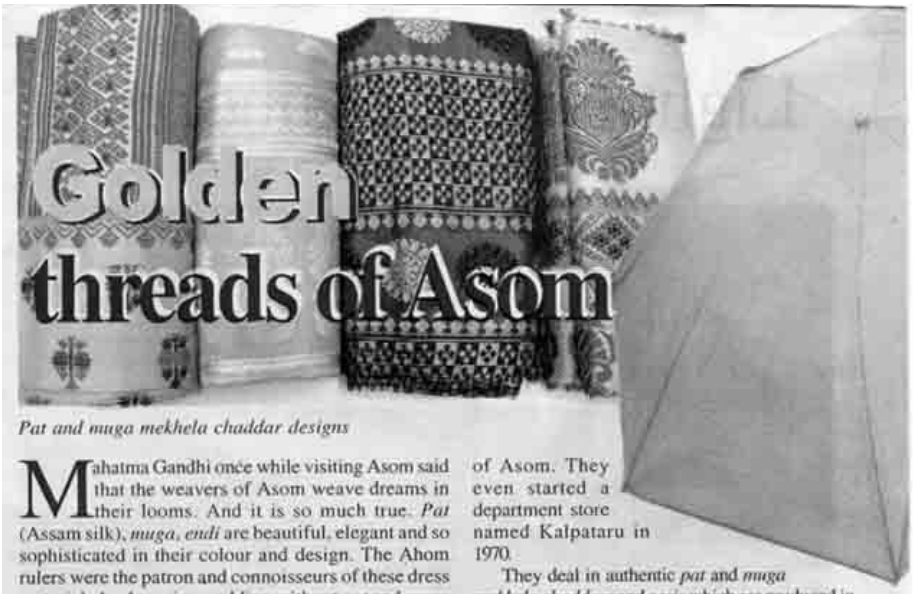
2.5 WRITING THE FEATURE

Every reporter likes to write a story that is interesting from beginning to end and which can be used next week or even next month because it has a semitimeless quality. Such stories which rely on something other than immediacy for their appeal are known as features.

The subject of a feature may be anything – a person, an idea, a situation, a hobby, a process, a historic anniversary. The objective of the writer may be to inform, to explain, to instruct, or only to entertain.

The qualities that set the feature apart from other stories are its lack of immediacy and its indepth treatment of an interesting or provocative subject. Good example of features can be found in the Sunday supplements of newspapers.

Human interest features are quite popular among readers of newspapers. The struggle of ordinary mortals to reach dizzy heights and the actions of the rich and powerful which display their human face fascinate the common readers. An ordinary rickshawpuller returning a bag containing Rupees two lakhs to its rich owner captures our imagination. Similarly, the action of a rich man who goes out of his way to help the poor and weak in a novel way may make interesting reading.



Golden threads of Asom

Pat and muga mekhela chaddar designs

Mahatma Gandhi once while visiting Asom said that the weavers of Asom weave dreams in their looms. And it is so much true. *Pat* (Assam silk), *muga*, *endi* are beautiful, elegant and so sophisticated in their colour and design. The Ahom rulers were the patron and connoisseurs of these dress material. An Asomiya wedding without *pat* and *muga mekhela chaddar* is unthinkable. Many shops have mushroomed into existence that cater to the requirements of the dress materials of the Asomiya people as well as to a wide mass of people in India and abroad.

The Assam Co-operative Silk House Ltd. was one of the first co-operative societies to be registered before Independence, in 1941 which is still catering to the people of Asom. They even started a department store named Kalpataru in 1970.

They deal in authentic *pat* and *muga mekhela chaddars* and *saris* which are produced in Sualkuchi and cotton *mekhela chaddars* which are produced in Azara, south Kamrup and Dhemaji. 70% of the goods are produced by the co-operative society themselves while they procure 30% to 40% from other establishments. Apart from the traditional dresses, they also deal in *gamochas*, Indian National flags, Manipuri and Naga shawls etc.

The *mekhela chaddar* with golden thread work (*guna*)



Different designs of muga mekhela chaddar

5. What is 'news peg'?

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ACTIVITY

Write in about 500 words a feature on :

1. Famous personality of Assam.
2. Sattra culture of Assam.

2.6 WRITING THE ARTICLE

The article is one of the most serious piece of writing in the editorial page. It is generally written on a topical subject of importance or on a debatable issue. It is positioned at the top of the page, thereby reflecting the importance accorded to it by the editors.

The objective of the article is to enable the readers to understand better the burning issues of the day. It provides the readers an insight to the issues involved and gives crisp and though provoking analysis of the problem. Generally, articles are written by experts specialising in their area of work so that the reader gets an inside view of the issue at hand.

Analysis of an issue by considering all its pros and cons and interpreting the development in the light of past history and the prevailing socio-economic and political situation through the article provides useful insight and food for thought to the readers.

Normally newspapers try to get their articles on specific subjects written by experts in the field. If the subject pertains to national politics, an article written by a popular political commentator who has been closely monitoring the developments and have wide experience in the field would be preferred. Similarly, a former diplomat or senior foreign service officer may be asked to write on foreign affairs and so on.

The Trend of Inflation

Dr BK Mukhopadhyay

The ongoing situation has been worrying everyone. It has mainly emerged from unprecedented rise in global oil prices and the resultant effect on the economies. Not only India, but also the developing economies in Asia are facing the inflation challenge. Inflation alarm bells have started ringing in financial markets as soaring energy as well as commodity prices have affected growth. Many companies are nervous about an economic slowdown.

In fact, for as many as 2.6 million people living in extreme poverty, the actual situation has rather worsened over the last couple of years which have been marked by poor harvest brought about by natural disasters like flood and drought. Food inflation has even affected aid efforts at a crucial time, as aid agencies anticipate the need for more handouts in rural areas facing a leaner than normal year ahead. Global economists have rightly warned that the second-round inflation effect (rising prices for goods and wages across the board) would pose a major threat to developing countries.

Inflation is termed as an increase in the overall level of prices in the economy and the inflation rate refers to the percentage change in the price index from the preceding period. Stagflation, on the other hand, refers to a period of falling output and rising prices, whereas recession refers to a period of declining real incomes and rising employment. Depression is a case of severe recession.

Inflation is thus a situation of sustained increase in the general price level. Creeping inflation sometimes accelerates, while at the same time on some occasions decelerates as well. While creeping inflation has many causes, galloping inflation occurs only when the government prints an incredible amount of money. The fact also remains that low inflation does not necessarily lead to high inflation.

It is already a popular myth that during inflation the workers lose purchasing power (purchasing power of a given sum of money is the volume of goods and services that it will buy). It is, however, clear that the wages that the people earn are also prices (price being paid for the labour services). Real wage rate, in such a context, refers to the wage rate adjusted for inflation, which in turn indicates the volume of goods and services that money wages will buy.

During the times of such inflation, people pay higher prices for the same quantities of goods and services they had paid before. For example, in Philippines, inflation is soaring now to nine-year high. Food, which accounts for around half of the basket of goods and services in the consumer price, jumped by 14 per cent in May 2008 from a year earlier. Filipino households have had to pay 14 pesos more in May 2008 for buying the same amount of food they had bought in May 2007. So, more and more income is needed for just maintaining the standard of living.

Inflation does not typically erode real wages since increase in nominal wages is compensated for the rising prices. Inflation acts as a redistributor of income and wealth; as inflation does not proceed evenly, it redistributes income and wealth in arbitrary, unfair ways and, as such, systematically discriminates against people living on fixed incomes. It may favour the borrower at the expense of the lender (here, real interest rate comes into play, which refers to percentage increase in purchasing power that the borrower pays the lender in exchange for loan).

Accurately anticipated inflation need not redistribute wealth between the borrower and lender. That is to say, if the actual inflation rate turns out to be different from the expected rate, unanticipated redistribution would follow suit. Fewer social problems are created in case inflation is (i) lower than higher and (ii) remains steady (that is, relatively predictable) rather than being variable in nature.

Yet, the fact remains that the inflation-created uncertainties may hamper long-term contracts that have been made. The other cost of this sort of cyclical fluctuation is that inflation may impose real costs on shoppers whose information feedback about relative prices goes down.

So far the ongoing global increase in prices of commodities is concerned, a number of factors have played their roles: (1) demand for food crops and edible oils rose due mainly to rise in income in the developing world — strong demand from the oil exporting countries as well as increased use of these crops/commodities in biofuels, with biofuels accounting for 5 to 10 per cent of the global production of primary biofuel feedstocks; (2) food prices rose because of low output stocks; (c) higher cost of cultivation; and (d) rise in the price of metals was due to increasing demand from emerging economies like China.

Also, in an open economy, the domestic prices of commodities depend on the very behaviour of their global process. The pass-through is found to be very often incomplete and, that too, it may get influenced by administrative and fiscal interventions.

Though in these days of globalization the external factors cannot be fully insulated, yet avoidable areas must not be lost sight of. One clear example is food grains. In many cases it is better to concentrate on boosting indigenous production than to depend on others for various reasons. The prices do rule high (wheat, for instance) and imports would be costlier in view of the fact that global demand, stemming from population rise and other factors, would be higher as compared to supply.

What about food security? The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has clearly indicated that despite record output, import costs would go up by 35 per cent.

In fact, global prices these days have more pronounced impact on domestic prices as the ability to meet shortfalls at affordable prices in being eroded by global shortages and rising prices. It is higher productivity and efficient supply-chain functioning that could contribute to the growth process productively.

(The writer is a faculty member at the Indian Institute of Bank Management, Guwahati)



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

6. What is the objective behind writing an article ?

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

8. What is an integral part of the editorial page?

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9. What is the objective of the middle?

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2.8 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The 'Letters to the Editor' column is an important component of the newspaper where the views of the readers on burning problems of the day, their grievances and aspirations are reflected. This column is a part of the editorial page and acts as a medium of interaction with the readers. The input received from the readers is a good indicator of the popularity of the newspaper. Some of the letters also offer suggestions for improvement and constructive criticism of the published material which may help the editorial desk to take corrective measures keeping in view the likes and dislikes of the readers.

As the name suggests, 'Letters to the Editor' should be addressed to the Editor of the newspaper or publication. Writers should not waste time in introducing a subject but should go to the point. Ornamental language should be avoided. Simple and lucid language should be used so that the idea is conveyed in clear terms. Letters should be short and concise. Different ideas should be presented in different paragraphs.

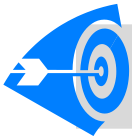
It may be a good idea for aspiring journalists to start their foray into journalism by writing letters to the editor of their local newspaper. They should select people-oriented subjects and put forward their points of

of the burning problems of the day. So in this unit you have learnt the importance of editorial and how to write an editorial. Letters to the Editor is an important feature of a newspaper where feedback from the readers is received in the form of opinions on various burning issues, besides, criticism and suggestions for improvement of the coverage of the newspaper. You have also learnt about the importance of middle and feature in a newspaper. By now you must have understood how to write an editorial and importance of middle, feature and letters to the Editor.



2.10 FURTHER READINGS

- Mass Communication and Journalism, *D. S. Mehta, Allied Publishers, New Delhi.*



2.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. The policy and stand of the newspaper on the burning issues of the day are projected through the editorials. Diverse opinions and analysis of different issues are presented through the articles where eminent persons specialising in their area of activity are given a platform to express their views and thereby expand the horizon of understanding of the readers.

2. The letters to the Editor column is published in the editorial page.

3. The editorial is the soul of a newspaper. The editorial reflects the policy and stand of the newspaper on the burning issues of the day. Strong and powerful editorials published in popular newspapers mould public opinion and act as catalysts of change. They also serve as watchdog of public interest by pointing out anomalies and irregularities in public policies and