

Origin of Public Relation in Pakistan:

Like other parts of the globe, in the areas now constituting Pakistan, PR was practised in one form or the other, even thousands of years ago. The rulers of South Asia sub-continent made use of rocks and specially constructed monuments to convey royal proclamations and decrees and/ or to highlight their achievements. The royal proclamations, the words of wisdom and Achievements of some rulers of the bygone days can be seen carved on some rocks near Mansehra, Gilgit and other areas in the northern Pakistan even today.

Ashoka's (about 300B.C) royal decrees appear on a rock near the present city of Mansehra in NWFP. The main purpose of these carvings on rocks/monuments was the desire of the ruler to keep a constant channel of communication, and thus sustained understanding, with the public. Even today the main job of a PR practitioner is to promote mutual understanding between his Organization and its public/clientele.

When we go through the pages of history, we find that the Muslim rulers of South Asia sub-continent had appointed Waqa-i-Nawees (scribes) throughout India for keeping them informed about the opinions and sentiments of the public and also about the general state of affairs in the country. These scribes kept posted information to in order the emperors to enlighten than about the important happenings in their province/region. The scribes worked directly under the ruler and also reported to him on the conduct and general, behaviour of the provincial/regional governors/officials, including army commanders.

The daily feedback or summary of important news, views, comments etc appearing in the Press, prepared by information officials today for senior functionaries of the state is the improved form of the reports sent by the scribes to the emperors or the kings. In his famous book Aain-i-akbari. Abu-el-Fazal writes that the system of "Waqa-i-Naweesi" existed in India even before the arrival of the Mughals, but Emperor Akbar the Great (1558-1605) recognised its lofty objectives and perfected it.

We can deduce from the above two examples that the history of Public Relations in the areas now constituting Pakistan is quite old and some people have been engaged here in activities which even today form an essential component of the overall job of a PR practitioner. However, a widespread use/application of the public relations activities, as now generally recognised, took roots in the beginning of the twentieth century when some British firms used PR techniques not only to build-up a good image of their organizations' but also to boost up the sales of their products.

Earlier, the British Government in India had established Public Relations offices at the Provincial level to keep the public informed about the official policies, welfare schemes and development plans launched by the government, while at the same time keeping itself fully informed about the views and reactions of the public to various official policies/ measures. The Provincial Public Relations/Information Departments also performed protocol functions, administered the Press Laws and issued official advertisements. However, at the central level we see a gradual and systematic beginning of the official PR activities when during the World War II the colonial government decided to set-up an Inter-Services Public Relations Directorate (ISPR) for motivating the natives to join the Armed Forces and, for keeping up

the esteem and morale of the Indian soldiers in the British Army. Later, - Press Information Department and the Department of Advertising, Films and Publications were set-up at the centre.

During the same years, some commercial companies, particularly those marketing vegetable ghee and tea appeared on the scene, striving through mass media and street demonstrations to attract the masses to their products. The employees' of those companies offered tea and snacks fried in vegetable ghee to the people gratis. This also used commercial films for inducing the people to take tea and for persuading them to abandon using the "ghee" prepared from animal fats. These films highlighted that the "ghee" prepared from butter or animal fats was extracted (by the natives) under extremely unhygienic conditions while vegetable ghee was prepared and packed by machines strictly conforming to the health laws and observing a high standard of hygiene. As regards tea, the films conveyed the message that the use of tea has a soothing effect in summer, and that it keeps the body warm in winter. Such was the state of affairs in the domain of PR in the South Asia Sub-continent till 1947. We can, therefore, say that modern PR practices had just started here when the British left India and when two independent and sovereign states of Pakistan and India appeared in the Sub-continent in the middle of August 1947.

Status of Public Relations after Independence

At the time of Independence, a pre-dominant number of professional staff of the PR establishments, both in the public and private sector, comprised of non-Muslims who preferred to stay in India, and serve there. Although the provincial governments in, Pakistan had their own PR/Information set-ups, but their non-Muslim staff also migrated to India. The Government of Pakistan had therefore to re-organise and strengthen the Provincial PR/Information departments on priority basis and also establish at the Federal level Press Information Department, Radio Pakistan and the Department of Advertising, Films and Publications. This was an uphill task as there was dearth of qualified and trained staff.

Development in Public Relations in Pakistan

Every successive government in Pakistan recognised the importance/need for moulding the public opinion through public relations/publicity. Consequently, The operations/ functions of PR/Information departments were gradually expanded to many new areas. A brief account of the PR/publicity network that now exists in Pakistan, along with its activities, is given under two separate headings, viz:

(a) Official PR/Publicity

i) Internal PR/Publicity

ii) External PR/Publicity

(b) Non-official PR/Publicity

Internal PR/Publicity

The Federal Government conducts internal PR/Publicity through the following organisation:

a) Press Information Department (PID)

It is one of the important and effective departments of the Government and it not Only suitably projects the policies, plans and development efforts of the Government but also keeps a constant liaison with the newspapers/magazines and the working journalists. Other notable functions of this department include release of official advertisements, conducting of research, preparation of initial drafts for the speeches to be delivered by the Head of the State (President) and the Chief Executive of the country (Prime Minister). It also prepares a daily press summary, containing important news reports and editorial comments/columns/articles/letters to the editors on matters of national significance, for circulation amongst the top -hierarchy of the country.

b) Directorate of Films and Publications (DFP)

This Directorate, which was known as the Directorate of Advertising, Films and Publications till mid-sixties, was considered to be one of the most effective PR/ publicity organs of the government. However, with the introduction of TV in 1964 and transfer of the advertising wing to the Press Information Department, this department could not maintain its erstwhile pivotal and dignified position. However; it is still playing a very important role and it specializes in the preparation of documentaries, news documentaries, news reels and all sorts of publications. It brings out a number of regular magazines and also publishes well researched and documented material on issues of national significance, including an Official Handbook depicting progress in-various sectors, for circulation both within and outside the country. In short, DFP is one of the main sources for printing and supplying publicity/information material, including pictorial both within and outside the country.

c) Pakistan National Centre (PNC):

The department was established in 1964 under the name of Pakistan Council for. National Integration, but its nomenclature was changed to Pakistan National Centre, in 1972, because of the exigencies of the time and the emergence of an independent state of Bangladesh. The Centre arranges lectures, seminars, symposia and group discussions on subjects of national importance. It has 30 branches, called centres, one each in all important towns/cities of Pakistan. Each Centre has a well-equipped library whose membership is open to all citizens of Pakistan.

d) Directorate of Research and Reference:

It identifies major problems facing the country and suggests their possible remedies. It used to be a very efficient and effective organization till early 70s but it seems to have become a victim of indifference and apathy these days.

e) Radio Pakistan:

Initially, established as an attached department, Radio Pakistan was converted into a corporation on 19th of December, 1972. This is one of the main PR/publicity organs of the state in a country where over 70 percent people are illiterate. The corporation broadcasts news bulletins in national and regional language and also programmes aimed at creating a

better awareness amongst people about various issues. It is the sole source of entertainment for a large majority of the people, particularly those living in the rural areas of Pakistan.

f) Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV):

It made its debut in Pakistan in 1964 when Television Promoters Company started experimental telecasts. The company was converted into a limited company in 1967 under the nomenclature of Pakistan Television Corporation. The Corporation has stations, one each at the Federal and Provincial capitals. The Corporation is entirely a government controlled/owned company. Over the years television in Pakistan has emerged as the most powerful medium for bringing about the desired change in the attitudes of the people through its programmes. The PTV enjoyed a monopoly till 1990, but it is now facing a severe competition from the Network Television Marketing (NTM), a private sector company which started its regular transmissions on July 17, 1990 by acquiring rights for this purpose from Shalimar Recording Company. As on 30th of May, 1996, NTM was telecasting programmes from 10 stations located in major cities of Pakistan. The emergence of NTM has created a healthy competition in the field of popular entertainment and resultantly the programmes of both the networks have tremendously improved.

g) National Press Trust (NPT):

The National Press Trust used to publish two English newspapers (dailies Pakistan Times and Morning News) and two Urdu newspapers (dailies Mashriq and Imroze) for promoting healthy traditions of journalism in the country and also for moulding public opinion and for keeping the people favourably disposed towards the policies of the government. In keeping with its policy of privatization, the Government of Pakistan decided on March 27, 1991, to privatize the NPT newspapers, except the Pakistan Times. However, in a subsequent meeting held in January 1994, it was decided to privatize all newspapers without any exception and consequently the Pakistan Times was handed over to a private group on 22nd of May, 1996.

h) Miscellaneous Departments:

The authorities and the people in Pakistan are now fully aware of the importance and potential of PR as a tool of managing affairs amicably and almost all organizations, including autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies worth their name, have regular PR outfits of their own. Notable among such bodies are WAPDA, PTDC, TDCP, PIA, State Bank, IDBP, PICIC, ADBP, CDA, KDA, Pakistan Railways, Pakistan Steel, State Cement Corporation, OGDC, Sui Northern, and Southern Company, Seed Supply Corporation of Pakistan, Attock Oil Company, Population Planning, National Savings Directorate and National Highway Authority etc.

External PR/Publicity

The basic aim of external PR/publicity is to project abroad a positive image of the country, its people and culture as well as to create an increased awareness about Pakistan's policy goals, its endeavours for socio-economic development and for promoting peace within and

outside. Though it is not the main objective, but efforts are also made for attracting foreign investments in Pakistan, boost-up tourism and sale of Pakistan products.

It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Pakistanis missions abroad to maintain, at official level, an overall good image of the country. But it is imperative that cordial friendly relations that exist between Pakistan and other governments be diversified to their mutual benefits so that a reflection of good relations is found in all walks of life. This vital job is handled by the External Publicity Wing (E. P. Wing) of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting through its over 20 Information Sections abroad. The Information Sections, which are attached to Pakistan's missions in major countries, cultivate good relations with leaders of public opinion, intellectuals and the working journalists and facilitate, and when required, their visits to Pakistan.

The E. P. Wing is responsible for removing mistrust and suspicions about Pakistan by providing factual information in addition to counteracting negative propaganda. It also prepares a feedback on the general views of the people and foreign media on various issues of interest to Pakistan.

Public Relations of Private Sector

In Pakistan, PR in private sector is still in its infancy. Most of the medium and small-size business/trade/industrial companies do not have a well-defined PR programme. Wherever PR outlets exist emphasis seems to be on cheap publicity and fostering friendship with the representatives of the media. PR officials of some companies also get commercial films prepared, release advertisements to the friendly newspapers/journals and print leaflets, booklets, brochures, annual reports and house journals etc. However, PR staff in the private-sector generally seems reluctant to adopt, innovative and/or psychological approach which can yield better and quicker results. Some PROs are incapable of clearly determining the PR needs and goals of their organisation and recommend steps in carrying out the project. However, one learns only through experience and gradually acquires maturity in counselling/management.

The managements of some organisations think that the sole job of a PR person is to project 'the boss' or to do some odd jobs for him or the company. They think that like other modern outlets, it is prestigious to have a PRO but seem reluctant to assign him/her any meaningful role in the organization. Generally, people working as PROs in the private sector are not qualified or trained for those positions and anyone who is found redundant in the organization is given this position. Despite lack of interest, future of public relations in the private sector is quite bright.

Managements now fully realize that in this era of severe competition an organization must not only be efficient but its efficiency should also be recognized by the intended publics. It is also now acknowledged that PR is important not only to the business but also to the government which comes to power and remains at the helm of affairs until it enjoys popular support. Hence, both the government and the enlightened industrial/commercial organizations try to keep the public opinion in their favour by launching suitable programmes of public relations aimed at convincing the people that their motto is larger

good or welfare of the people and that their programmes/policies and products are better than those of their competitors.

Resultantly, the importance of PR practitioners, both in the public and the private sectors, has also increased in Pakistan. The day is not far when all big Organizations in Pakistan will have a strong and efficient PR programme manned by person quite senior in the hierarchy, as is the case in the developed countries.