UNIT 2 PHOTO EDITING

Structure

2.0 Objectives
2.1 Introduction
2.2 What is Photo Editing any way?
2.3 Why a Professional?
  2.3.1 Qualities of a Good Photographer
  2.3.2 Going about a Story
2.4 Creative Cropping of Pictures
2.5 Choosing a Picture
2.6 Captions
2.7 Graphic Illustrations
2.8 Computer Application in Photo Editing
2.9 Let Us Sum Up
2.10 Check Your Progress: Model Answers

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall introduce you to the exciting and fast-moving world of the photo journalist and photo editor. We shall also discuss the basic techniques involved in becoming a successful photo journalist, the news-gathering skills, news-spotting, shooting pictures specifically geared to a particular newspaper or magazine, and the relationships among pictures, stories and people. After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the essential features of photo journalism;
- state the sequence involved in making a picture to a final publication material;
- state the qualities and techniques of a good photo journalist;
- point out the strengths and weaknesses of a published photo.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this block, we are concentrating on various aspects of editing involved in the print journalism. An editing job is an extremely important one in a newspaper. It requires a lot of skills. One has to acquire them. Editing is an art. The editors make a readable copy out of a raw copy, just like a sculptor creates a statue out of clay, block of wood or stone. He has to make it focused, brief and sharp, keeping the essence of the matter in view.

We have seen in Unit 1 of this Block, how the editors work on the copies received from the correspondents, the wires, fax and telex machines.

In this unit, we shall consider the various aspects of the photo editing. It requires skills, art, and a lot of attention. It is equally important as the text of the news items. Having considered the editing skills and artwork involved in the news items and photographs in Units 1 and 2, we shall proceed to discuss the editing aspects involved in the layout of the pages of a newspaper and the typography. We shall also discuss in Units 3 and 4, how communication technologies are bringing about a fundamental change in the layout of the newspapers.
Activity 1

Before you proceed further with the unit, engage yourself in an exercise.

- Take a copy of a newspaper of recent origin.
- Cut out all the photographs/pictures with their captions.
- Paste them on a spread-sheet.
- Pay attention to each picture, and read the caption printed with it.
- Having done this, evaluate each of them on the following points:
  - Does it convey any meaning/message or is it only a picture?
  - Does the caption enhance the meaning of the picture?
  - Does the picture enhance the caption?
  - Do you think the picture is complete or something more is required?
  - Do you think some elements of the picture could be done away with?

Use the following proforma to complete your exercise.

Name of Newspaper: .................................................................
Place of Issue: ..........................................................
Total No. of pictures: ..........................................................

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Picture No.</th>
<th>Meaning/Message</th>
<th>Role of the Caption</th>
<th>Role of the Picture</th>
<th>Picture Complete</th>
<th>Picture Incomplete</th>
<th>Elements to be deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2.2 WHAT IS PHOTO EDITING ANY WAY?

Pictures submitted for publication in the newspapers and magazines have to be edited to fit into the layout of the page, and also the unnecessary portions cut off, which the photographer might have added in the actual composition. The competent photo editor’s job is to see to it that he does not waste space, andframes a picture keeping the main essence of the subject intact. This reduction process, keeping the essential parts of the photographs intact, is called cropping. Since the photographers are emotionally involved in shooting their pictures, they might think whatever they have added in a picture would be published. This aspect is left to the judgement of the photo editor, when the final composition of the photograph for publication is made.

For example, a photographer might have given a group picture of the newly appointed ministers. The clever photo editor might use only the heads of the ministers and cut off the rest of the portion in order to economize on space. A narrow strip of the faces of
the newly selected ministers is certainly of more interest for the readers, and definitely not the dress they are wearing! Just as the editor edits a story by cutting the irrelevant portions, the photo editor also crops the picture, bringing out the emphasis of the photographic message as effectively as possible. To improve the look of the newspaper or a magazine, the photo editor might opt for vertical or horizontal pictures depending on the layout of the page make up, and, in the process, not a picture drastically, keeping the main subject in focus. Unless he has the freedom to crop the pictures, he will not be able to introduce new ideas for improving the look of the page.

An example, where the caption is as powerful as the photograph itself. It has been edited perfectly to convey the message.

2.3 WHY A PROFESSIONAL?

It is the job of the photo editor to select the best photograph which tells the story on its own. The photo editor edits it to suit the space in the page without destroying or distorting the essence of the picture, and gives it a good display. It is not always to the liking of the photographer, but the photo editor has to do his job. A good photo editor always takes the photographers into confidence, holding frequent discussions with them from the time the assignments are given to them till the final output come of the photograph on the photo editor's desk. It is the photo editor's duty to give the photographers ideas about the picture possibilities. While the photographers are in the dark room with the enlarger, he joins them in composing the picture on the easel board, which saves a lot of time, and leaves no ill feeling with the photographers. What most of the photographers hate is when the picture is trimmed and edited in their absence.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Answer the following questions.
ii) Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of this unit.

1) What is cropping in photo editing?
2) Enlist the essential steps a photo editor could undertake to avoid misunderstanding with his photographers.

2.3.1 Qualities of a Good Photographer

A good photographer must be able to handle every assignment the editor gives him to his own satisfaction. Pictures are in everything around us. Each one of us sees different pictures in the same object and situations, owing to the different background and experience each of us have.

You must have seen a lot of photographers which have won prizes. The subjects of these pictures must have been very ordinary or common. But, the way the photographers composed them, and brought forth the essence, made a difference. Didn't they? Probably, you might have tried a picture or two on the same subject. But the judges were not excited. Why? It is not that you are wrong, and they are right; it is just that your vision is different. There could be as many photographs on a particular subject as there are journalists. You will be most successful when your vision is in tune with that of your editor. It does not mean that you will have to suppress your creativity. It is only to channel your creativity to achieve certain goals.

One has to work with great speed on a location. This is significant. On location, no one will wait while you try to figure out your shutter speed and lens aperture adjustment in your camera. Even as you get out of your vehicle, you should be setting your aperture for the type of lighting available on the location or what you intend to use (like an electronic flash), and be ready to focus to an average distance.

You should actually shoot a news event from several different angles, and let your photo editor decide which picture to use. But when everything starts happening, at the same time, you must be quick enough to do your own editing on the spot. Your grasping power must be like quick silver. You must decide which picture from what angle would be the best, and then get yourself in position to shoot it.

The newspaper photographs are based on factual situation. The photographs illustrates an event, bring depth into it, and probably comment on it. Usually, the photographer is given only an idea to work with, and is expected to create an appropriate photograph to illustrate it. This is where a good memory or a notebook will come in handy. The photographic techniques involved in shooting for magazines are not much different from those in newspapers. The technical skill is again taken for granted, and your primary concern is to illustrate the story clearly and completely.

Activity 2

It may be a good idea for you to know how a photographer organises his day, particularly what he does with an assignment.

- Identify a photographer in a newspaper organisation.
- Talk with him/her about his/her daily chores.
- Ask and note how he/she goes about his/her professional assignments.
You could organise the outcome of the interview in the form of a flow chart in the space given below.

2.3.2 Going about a Story

How would you go about your photographic assignment? Not very difficult. Think about your subject; Look at the subject; and find the images that show what you feel about the subject. Take a dozen pictures, take a hundred, then pick out the ones that show your subject with really something that is interesting. Sometimes you would be surprised to find that only two or three photos out of the hundred event come close to being good pictures. Do not be discouraged. This is not a bad average, even for a professional. That is why the professionals shoot dozens and dozens of rolls on a single assignment. If there are not many good shots this time, there will be more the next time and, who knows you might be closer to your goal.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Answer the following questions.

ii) Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of this Unit.

1) a) Why is it important for a photographer to tune his/her vision with that of his/her editor?

b) In such a case, will not his/her creativity be killed or suppressed?

2) Why must a photographer be very quick to organise himself/herself and the equipments in the middle of an event, when it is unfolding?
2.4 CREATIVE CROPPING OF PICTURES

The intelligent photo editors adopt different creative cropping techniques to bring out the exact point of emphasis a 'pix' (a term used for picture). They try to enlarge the main image, which will have a better visual impact. For instance, a surviving child in an accident was picked up by the policemen and the photographer took a pix, which almost looked like a group, involved in the rescue operations, holding the baby, this pix should not be published as it is. The subject of the main interest is the child, and the readers would like to see its condition and how it looked like after the accident. Here comes the job of a photo editor to do the cropping in such a way that the child stands out prominently in the pix. Many a time, the photographers do their job mechanically, giving relevance only to technical qualities, and having no instinct for news. A photo editor, who keeps track of the news, also highlights the portion in the photograph which has news value.

The marked portion of the picture is complete in the contest. The rest of the picture does not add any element.

When a major fire broke out in the Nasal Phalanx in New Delhi, a photographer submitted a five-column picture of the fire emitting from the windows, and a man in panic standing on a window about to jump out from one (and he lost his life in the process later). The photo editor cropped the pix drastically, and gave emphasis to the window in which the man was standing and displayed it in a three-column vertical, and that pix was the talk of the town. It showed the agony on the man's face, and it really looked dramatic, whereas the photographer wanted to show the density of the fire by including all the windows.

A photo editor studies the picture carefully, and decides about the cropping. First, he crops the picture mentally (visualizing how it would look like), and then decides on the final edited photograph. A badly cropped pix cannot be repaired, and the person who does such a job for the cropping sake gets the nick name of 'a butcher' from the photographers.
The marked portions could have been enlarged which is more than sufficient to convey the story. The rest of the picture is only diluting the subject. I have shown how it could be enlarged in three different ways.

A good photo editor is one who can visualize how the picture will look like when it is cropped and printed in different sizes and shapes. Generally, as a rule, a bad quality picture should be enlarged to the maximum size to enable the readers to see the details in the photograph, whereas a good quality print will show up clearly even in a smaller space.

2.5 CHOOSING A PICTURE

In a professional organization, the photographers leave contact sheets with the photo editors to enable them to choose the right frame, and mark the composition. Sometimes, the photographers send the exposed rolls, and leave the rest of the job to the photo editors. In most countries, where there is competition amongst the leading newspapers, the photo editor looks for pictures from the freelancers as well. He chooses the best picture, and places it in the newspaper. It leaves no bad feelings amongst the staffs, because they also know that their newspapers should have the best coverage. This system makes every photographer work very hard on the assignments, and be alert with the competitive spirit.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Answer the following questions.

ii) Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of this Unit.

1) What is a 'pix'?
2) Why should a professional photographer have a good sense of the news value?

3) Why does a professional photo editor look for the freelancers, and accept photographs from them?

A very well caught and well cropped picture of Millos of Israel who lifted 155 Kg. to win
2.6 CAPTIONS

Is a caption a must for a picture? Yes. Even though the news picture is supposed to tell a story on its own, one should say where and when the incident took place. Caption writing is an art by itself, and it comes with experience and aptitude. It is, generally, the job of the new editor. The picture and its caption are complementary to each other, and it is very essential to mention when and where the picture was taken, and who the persons seen in the picture are. When a pix shows a VIP getting down from a car, the caption instead of saying that such and such a person is ‘getting down’ from the car should rather say so and so is ‘arriving’ at the particular venue or place for doing a particular activity, as the case might be. There is, for example, no need to say that a person is eating when the picture is showing it. One should say why, where and what he is eating, and on what occasion. A caption reading ‘under the clutches of a monster,’ showing the picture of a scooter trapped under a huge lorry, is a good one.

If photograph is described in the body of the story, then there is no need for a separate caption and the pix could hang in between the paragraphs. Sometimes the News Editor might prefer to box a powerful picture with just a detailed caption to brighten the page. A really good picture could express the equivalent of a thousand words!

Captions for the sports pictures are very important, and most of the photographers simply prefer to say something like ‘a melee in the goal mouth,’ which should actually say who is doing what. For example, it should read as ‘Mr. X, who scored a hatrick, scoring his third goal in a row beating the defender Mr. Y’. This applies to all games. Sometimes the news editors prefer to give no captions, and the pictures simply hang under the headline, which itself serves as the caption. ‘Queen Ann wins the Derby’, ‘Kapil clean bowled for a duck’ and ‘Mr. X takes over as Chairman’, are some examples.

Activity 3

You have just read that ‘Caption’ is very important. Caption has a purpose, and it is written with care.

Now, you undertake an exercise of studying the photographs and the caption together. Take a magazine (any issue), may be ‘India Today’ or ‘Sunday’ or the ‘Sports Star’.

Evaluate the photographs and caption from the following viewpoint. You might number or put index mark for each photograph.

- Are the captions written in simple language?
- Do you think the captions were required?
- Do you agree with the caption? If given an opportunity, what ‘caption’ would you write?

The following proforma could help you to complete the activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Picture (Index or No.)</th>
<th>Caption Required (Yes)</th>
<th>Agree with Caption (Yes)</th>
<th>Your Caption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.7 GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATIONS

In most news coverages, the photographer reaches the spot only after the incident takes place, and is able to take only the result of what had already happened. In such special cases the newspaper or magazine might have to depend upon graphic illustrations to detail the activities that had taken place on a particular spot earlier.
It is seen here, how the illustration can give a general idea of the place where the work is in progress. The illustration and the photograph together give a complete story.
You have seen here how the illustration could give a general idea of the place where the work is in progress.

The illustration and the photograph together would give a complete story.

From the information available, the entire incident in the original sequence could be sketched out so as to give the reader a clear idea of what the news story is about. Such graphic illustrations have been used time and again for depicting incidents of varying degrees.

For most of the mountaineering expeditions, the routes taken by the mountaineers could be sketched out, adding all the necessary information regarding the routes.

In an assassination case, a graphic illustration could show the position of the assassin, the victim and others in the vicinity.

The graphics come in handy for the tabloids and magazines, where detailed stories are published with lots of illustrations — pictorially and graphically. With limited space, the newspapers go in for graphics, but not as a routine.

## 2.8 COMPUTER APPLICATIONS IN PHOTO EDITING

The latest technology enables one to use sophisticated equipment for photo editing. The selected negatives are scanned, the contrast adjusted, and the picture cropped on the computer video display terminal as required. Then, the image is directly transferred to the page. The elimination of the intermediary procedures, used in the conventional system until now, avoids handling of the negatives or transparencies, thus making sure that the reproduction is of a class. A very important aspect or such method is that the picture quality in terms of tones, density, color sharpness, and so on, could be reproduced to near perfection, which was not always possible in the previous conventional methods. This also applies to the ‘Photo Fax’, where photographs are faxed from outstations, and are transmitted directly to the computer, from where all necessary adjustments could be made. Photos could be stored and recalled on the computer as and when required.

## 2.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed in details the various aspects of the photo journalism, particularly the aspects of photo editing.

A competent photo editor would never waste space in a newspaper. The main task of a photo editor is to remove the parts of a photo which are not required. He/she keeps only the essential section. This process is called ‘cropping’. Generally, cropping is done by an editor in the presence of the photographer, who clicked the photo.

A press photographer is given an assignment. His/her task is to follow the instructions given to him/her by the photo editor. The photo editor and the photographer, generally, discuss the various aspects of a photograph before cropping. Therefore, it is essential for a photographer to follow all the instructions given to him by his/her editor. A photographer should also understand the minds of the photo editor so that cropping becomes less painful. The ‘pix’ (picture) should always be creatively cropped so that it could serve the purpose for which the photographer was assigned.

A ‘caption’ is a brief explanation of a picture. It must be kept to the minimum words. It must only highlight the point that the ‘pix’ makes. Many a times the ‘caption’ need not be given as the ‘pix’ may explain all.

In addition to the picture, a photo editor might like to use illustrations to explain in great detail an event which has taken place.
With the advancement of technology, photo editing is done by the computer, which eliminates all the unessential elements, and gives out only the section as per the commands.

2.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: MODEL ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1) Cropping in photo editing means trimming a photograph, keeping only the essential parts. Cropping helps a photo editor to highlight the essential parts.

2) The following are the steps, which a photo editor should take to avoid misunderstanding:

- Provide assignments clearly.
- Provide possible angles to the photographer to take the same events.
- Continue discussion throughout the process of developing the picture, and crop the picture in the presence of the photographer.

Check Your Progress 2

1) a) The editor has a certain vision for a theme. He/she would like to highlight a point or two. Therefore, the photographer must follow the vision of the editor, otherwise, his/her photographs will not be accepted.

   b) Creativity, particularly in a newspaper, has a purpose. Therefore, creativity must follow certain parameters and purposes. Therefore, so long as creativity meets that objectivity, it could never be considered as suppressed or killed.

2) Many a times, the event occurs without any warning. Events are not acting for a film; these happen live, and are acted only once. Therefore, the photographer must record the sequences of events as it unfolds. If he/she misses something, it is missed for ever.

Check Your Progress 3

1) A 'pix is a term used for a picture in the newspaper offices or news agencies.

2) A newspaper’s main commodity is news. It sells news. Therefore, all the journalists must orient themselves with the news values of the newspaper. A photographer is a photo journalist, therefore, he should have a strong orientation in the news values his newspaper follows, otherwise, he will not be able to serve his/her newspaper.

3) Sometimes, the freelancers would provide appropriate and rare photographs, which the photographers of the newspapers might not provide. That is why the photo editors always look for the freelancers.