

# Harivansh's experiment with **AD-Vocacy Journalism** From Ads to Action, Words to Change

# A S Raghunath







Portrait of a family of the old tribes in the region - Mt. Nibani



Traditional life in a village of the old tribes in the region



The Nibani people in their traditional white robes



Three Nibani, in robes and their white robes, in the region of the old tribes



A Nibani family acquiring a boy who was a slave in the region



A group of Nibani taking their traditional food



A **Bhamb** man and his wife with their son in a tree.

== M T W T F R S C M T W T F R S C M T W T F R S



A group of **Bhamb** looking their traditional houses.

== M T W T F R S C M T W T F R S C M T W T F R S



The **Bhamb** couple in their characteristic white outfit.

== M T W T F R S C M T W T F R S C M T W T F R S



An animal head - A **Bhamb** woman and child.

== M T W T F R S C M T W T F R S C M T W T F R S



A group of **Bhamb** boys - Dhamsa in the field.

== M T W T F R S C M T W T F R S C M T W T F R S



A **Bhamb** woman with 'Dhamsa' (her son) and her family in the field.

== M T W T F R S C M T W T F R S C M T W T F R S

Harivansh's experiment with

# **AD-Vocacy Journalism**

From Ads to Action, Words to Change

Written & Edited by

**A S Raghunath**

 **indiastat**publications

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## Harivansh's experiment with AD-Vocacy Journalism

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न गुरोरधिकं तत्त्वं न गुरोरधिकं तपः ।  
तत्त्वज्ञानात् परं नास्ति तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ॥

There is no truth greater than the Guru. No penance higher than the  
Guru, and no knowledge beyond the wisdom imparted by the Guru.  
Salutations to that revered Guru.

Gratitude to all my teachers and mentors for their wisdom,  
patience, and unwavering support. Their guidance shaped my  
path, strengthened my resolve, and continues to  
inspire me every day. I owe my professional journey to their  
invaluable influence.

To Geetanjali, my wife.  
She's all I have.



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# CAMPAIGN INDEX

The Campaigns will be displayed sequentially  
across the pages on the Right-hand side.



Campaign Series 1:

## **Hum hai naye, Career kyun ho Purana?**

**007 - 013**

Prabhat Khabar's efforts in Jharkhand and Bihar were deeply rooted in reshaping the region's approach to education. Recognizing that true progress lies not in rote degrees but in meaningful, skill-based learning, the paper sought to challenge the prevailing obsession with government jobs. For years, students enrolled in colleges not to gain knowledge, but merely to become eligible for PCS exams—lured by relaxed age limits, multiple attempts, and the illusion of stability. Coaching centres flourished, feeding this dream and monopolizing the aspirations of an entire generation. This culture often consumed the brightest years of youth, diverting them from emerging opportunities in dynamic, high-growth sectors. To counter this, Prabhat Khabar championed a broader, future-ready vision of education—centered on employability, relevance, and self-worth. With this mission, it launched the powerful campaign: *"Hum Hai Naye, Career Kyun Ho Purana?"*—a clarion call for a new generation to think beyond old dreams.

Campaign Series 2:

## **Restoring Pride in Government Schools**

**015 - 019**

A powerful and long-running social advocacy series built around two resonant call-to-action slogans: *Gaurav Lautaeen, Sarkari Schoolon Ka* (Let's Restore the Pride of Government Schools!) and *Sarkari School Bane Super School* (Let's Transform Government Schools into Super Schools!). This two-pronged campaign aimed to awaken the collective conscience of the government, educators, parents, and society at large, serving as a rallying cry to redefine, uplift, and transform government education.

Campaign Series 3:

## **Prabhat Khabar's Pamphlets- A Legacy of Reader connect**

**025-033**

During its early struggles, Prabhat Khabar found an innovative way to connect with readers—printing pamphlets on leftover newsprints and distributing them in busy marketplaces. Even as resources improved, the newspaper continued this tradition, using pamphlets to reach grassroots communities, especially Adivasis, during election campaigns. In July 2008, eight years after Jharkhand became a separate state, Prabhat Khabar relaunched its anti-corruption campaign through pamphlets, directly engaging with readers once again. More than just promotion, these pamphlets played a vital role in raising awareness about social issues, reinforcing Prabhat Khabar's commitment to responsible journalism.

Campaign Series 4:

## **A Newspaper with a Mission, Not Just a Business**

**035**

While rival newspapers flaunted their appeal to the elite, Prabhat Khabar took a different stand—one rooted in the struggles of the marginalized. Harivansh, after meeting countless victims of exploitation, crafted a bold counter-narrative through the newspaper's own ads. These vintage ads, preserved in this book, told real stories of injustice, reinforcing Prabhat Khabar's unwavering commitment to the voiceless. One of his most powerful captions read: *'They say, 'A newspaper is a business. We say, 'Changing circumstances is our responsibility too. 'This defining approach sets Prabhat Khabar apart, not as just another publication, but as a force for justice and change.*

#### Campaign Series 5:

### **The Fodder Scam Exposé: Prabhat Khabar's Defining Moment**

**037**

When Harivansh took over Prabhat Khabar, the newspaper was struggling to survive. That changed in the early 1990s when it broke the Fodder Scam, exposing Rs. 930 crores in embezzlement within Bihar's animal husbandry department. Unlike other papers, Prabhat Khabar went beyond surface reporting, deploying reporters deep into South Bihar's treasuries to uncover fraud at its roots. Its relentless investigative journalism led to the scam's national exposure, forcing the case into CBI scrutiny and resulting in the arrest of top officials, including the then Chief Minister. Despite threats and financial retaliation from the state government, Prabhat Khabar continued its fearless reporting, earning recognition from national and international media, including the BBC and The Tribune. This exposé transformed the newspaper into a symbol of fearless journalism, proving that even a regional daily could shake the corridors of power.

#### Campaign Series 6:

### **Justice for Dr. Vashishtha Narayan Singh, A Genius Lost in Oblivion**

**039**

On February 17, 1993, Prabhat Khabar published an emotional appeal under Harivansh's pen name 'Darshak,' highlighting the tragic neglect of mathematics genius Dr. Vashishtha Narayan Singh. The article, accompanied by a powerful photo, moved readers to action, sparking public outcry. Former students, concerned citizens, and institutions rallied in support, compelling the Chief Minister to visit his village, Basantpur. This intervention led to Dr. Singh's transfer to NIMHANS, Bengaluru, for treatment, offering him a chance of recovery.

#### Campaign Series 7:

### **A Stand Against Petty Corruptions**

**041 - 049**

During its early struggles, Prabhat Khabar found an innovative way to connect with readers—printing pamphlets on leftover newsprints and distributing them in busy marketplaces. Even as resources improved, the newspaper continued this tradition, using pamphlets to reach grassroots communities, especially Adivasis, during election campaigns. In July 2008, eight years after Jharkhand became a separate state, Prabhat Khabar relaunched its anti-corruption campaign through pamphlets, directly engaging with readers once again. More than just promotion, these pamphlets played a vital role in raising awareness about social issues, reinforcing Prabhat Khabar's commitment to responsible journalism.

#### Campaign Series 8:

### **Ghoos Ko Ghoonsa: Fighting Bribery with RTI**

**051 - 057**

One of Prabhat Khabar's most impactful campaigns, "Ghoos Ko Ghoonsa" (Drive Against Bribe), struck at the heart of corruption by leveraging the Right to Information (RTI) Act. The newspaper actively championed the enactment of RTI in

2005, working closely with activist Aruna Roy, a key architect of the law. Taking its fight to the grassroots, Prabhat Khabar, organized RTI awareness camps across Jharkhand and Bihar from July 1-15, 2006. These camps empowered citizens to file RTI applications, teaching them how to demand transparency and accountability from government departments. The campaign demonstrated RTI's power as a tool against bribery, ensuring people could access their rightful services without paying "speed money." Through this movement, Prabhat Khabar transformed ordinary citizens into informed warriors against corruption in Bihar, Bengal and Jharkhand.

#### Campaign Series 9:

### **Theft of Government Quarters by Unauthorized Occupants**

**059 - 061**

In a hard-hitting investigation, Prabhat Khabar exposed the large-scale illegal occupation of government quarters meant for public sector colliery workers in Dhanbad. Instead of rightful employees, these residences were taken over by politicians, coal mafias, contractors, police officers, and even civil servants—forcing workers to live in rented homes.

By systematically naming and shaming the illegal occupants, Prabhat Khabar ignited public outrage, leading to protests and calls for Dhanbad Bandh. The High Court took suo-moto cognizance, ordering immediate eviction and directing government undertakings to issue public notices, many of which were based on the newspaper's investigative reports. This exposé not only brought justice to displaced workers but also reinforced Prabhat Khabar's role as a fearless watchdog against corruption.

#### Campaign Series 10:

### **A Code of Ethics That Redefined Election Journalism**

**063-065**

To uphold fairness and transparency in election coverage, Prabhat Khabar introduced its own Aachar Sanhita (Code of Conduct)—not just for editorial news but also for advertisements. This ethical standard was strictly followed across all its editorial centers in Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal during both Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections. By reinforcing impartiality and integrity, Prabhat Khabar assured readers of unbiased, fact-based reporting. Widely praised by the public, this initiative set a new benchmark in ethical journalism, eventually compelling rival newspapers to follow suit—cementing Prabhat Khabar's leadership in restoring credibility to election reporting.

#### Campaign Series 11:

### **Badlo Jharkhand, Badlo Bihar: A Call to Action**

**067-079**

Ahead of state elections, Prabhat Khabar launched the "Badlo Jharkhand" and "Badlo Bihar" campaigns, urging voters to rethink their choices. By presenting hard-hitting statistics, the newspaper empowered readers to take charge of their future and demand real change. Through bold reporting and impactful campaigns, Prabhat Khabar reminded citizens that in a democracy, power rests with the people. More than just a news source, it became a catalyst for awakening, pushing the state toward the ideals it was meant to achieve.

#### Campaign Series 12:

### **Jharkhand's Governance Crisis-You Are Responsible! 081-087**

Political instability gripped Jharkhand, with nine chief ministers in 14 years and three instances of President's rule, signaling chronic governance failures. Administrative turnover was just as dire—16 chief secretaries and 10 DGPs in the same period, disrupting long-term policymaking and weakening governance. Hard data exposed the state's stagnation across crucial sectors, highlighting the cost of instability. Through meticulous reporting and bold editorial campaigns, Prabhat Khabar not only presented the facts but also challenged citizens with a stark question: "If the state is in bad shape, you are responsible!" This approach ignited crucial public discourse, urging people to hold leaders accountable and demand better governance.

#### Campaign Series 13:

### **Call for a Stable Government that lasts! 089 - 093**

During the 2014 Jharkhand Assembly elections, Prabhat Khabar launched the "Abki Baar, Sthir Sarkar" campaign, urging voters to prioritize political stability. With just 81 assembly seats for a population of 2.69 crore, Jharkhand lagged in representation compared to smaller states like Himachal Pradesh and Manipur, leading to frequent coalition collapses. Hung assemblies and ideological rifts fueled instability, making governance fragile. Through bold editorial advocacy, advertising outreach, and grassroots efforts, Prabhat Khabar sparked voter awareness, turning "Abki Baar, Sthir Sarkar" into a powerful rallying cry for change.

#### Campaign Series 14:

### **Lessons from Best: Can Jharkhand Catch Up? 095 - 103**

Prabhat Khabar studied governance models from states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu to identify strategies that could uplift Jharkhand. Rooted in advocacy, it consistently pushed for reforms through data-driven journalism. During elections, the newspaper sharpened its focus on key issues, using hard-hitting slogans like "Why Have Jharkhand's Chimneys Lost Their Fire?" to provoke voter reflection. By making citizens active participants in the state's progress, Prabhat Khabar redefined journalism as a force for change.

#### Campaign Series 15:

### **Longest Reads, Highest Reader Engagement 107 - 109**

Harivansh's and other renowned commentators' long-form op-eds were among the most read and appreciated content. To test whether in-depth articles resonated with readers in an era of rapid news consumption, Prabhat Khabar commissioned a survey across Jharkhand, led by Dr. Sharad Sarin of XLRI. The daily also carried out an internal study through its circulation department. Printed questionnaires reached Prabhat Khabar readers as well as those of competing newspapers. The findings shattered the myth that modern readers lacked patience for long-form journalism, proving Prabhat Khabar's audience showed higher engagement than

its competitors. The Indian Readership Survey (IRS) later validated this trend, confirming that Prabhat Khabar's 'Average Time Spent Reading' far exceeded regional English and linguistic dailies. This achievement reinforced the newspaper's ability to captivate readers through depth, quality, and impactful journalism.

#### Campaign Series 16:

### **Bachpan Bachao: Safeguarding Childhood 111 - 133**

Prabhat Khabar's commitment to social advocacy extended far beyond journalism, actively confronting deep-rooted societal challenges in Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal. Recognizing the silent yet growing menace of digital addiction and other modern-day threats eroding childhood, the newspaper launched the Bachpan Bachao (Save Childhood) campaign in May 2012—well before the issue gained mainstream attention. This far-sighted initiative combined a series of hard-hitting editorials, over 30 impactful social advocacy advertisements, and school-based awareness programs to educate parents, teachers, and students alike. By addressing these pressing concerns, Prabhat Khabar reaffirmed its role as a force for change, striving to preserve the innocence of childhood in an increasingly distracted world.

#### Campaign Series 17:

### **Empowering Voters, Defying Fear 137**

Prabhat Khabar launched a bold voter awareness campaign in Naxal-affected regions, urging residents to reject fear and elect leaders with integrity. Harivansh personally visited these areas, inspiring communities to reclaim their democratic rights. The newspaper converted its freight jeep into a mobile campaign van, displaying powerful voter awareness messages. Led by Jamshedpur editor Anuj Kumar Sinha, the team held meetings and distributed pamphlets encouraging fearless voting. This innovative initiative made Prabhat Khabar a catalyst for change in the region.

#### Campaign Series 18:

### **Dr. Kalam's Endorsement Prabhat Khabar's Commitment to Public Issues 139 - 141**

Prabhat Khabar relentlessly highlighted Bihar's struggles, emphasizing that India's progress depended on the state's development. Its investigative journalism even caught the attention of President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. Before accepting an invitation to serve as guest editor, Dr. Kalam personally reviewed a month's archive to ensure the newspaper's neutrality. Convinced of its integrity, he took charge for a day in June 2012, praising its focus on social issues like senior citizen isolation and the burden on children in nuclear families. He was particularly impressed by Prabhat Khabar's rural newspaper Panchayatnama, seeing it as a vital step toward grassroots empowerment.

#### Campaign Series 19:

### **Turning Readers into Citizen Journalists 143 - 145**

Prabhat Khabar redefined journalism by actively engaging readers through its Nov 2009 Aap Bole campaign and through the Janata Reporter ad series, urging them to voice their concerns and participate in societal change. Harivansh's message emphasized that silence breeds corruption and called for public action against systemic misgovernance. The campaign gained momentum amid the Madhu Koda corruption scandal, exposing how Jharkhand's wealth was looted while essential infrastructure remained neglected. Encouraging citizen journalism, Prabhat Khabar empowered locals to report real issues, some even becoming regular correspondents. This trust-driven approach led to major exposés, including the mining scam uncovered by a common man who personally delivered evidence to Harivansh.

#### Campaign Series 20:

### **Your Vote, Your Power to Change Bihar 147 - 165**

The Aapka Vote Aapki Taqdeer campaign used sharp messaging, striking visuals, and data-driven insights to provoke readers into questioning Bihar's stagnation. It raised hard-hitting questions on neglected infrastructure, unfulfilled promises, and the state's failure to uplift its own workforce. Why did Bihar, despite having so many Railway Ministers, still lack proper railway development? Why were Bihari laborers building smart cities elsewhere while living in poverty at home? The campaign urged voters to recognize their power in shaping Bihar's future.

#### Campaign Series 21:

### **A Citizen's Handbook Guide to Fighting Corruption 167 - 169**

In 2007, Prabhat Khabar published a Citizen's Handbook of Governance, exposing the corruption and inefficiencies plaguing Jharkhand's civic services. It mapped the bureaucratic hurdles citizens faced for basic documents like transport permits and caste certificates. The handbook empowered people with knowledge to navigate these challenges. Additionally, the newspaper's Jharkhand & Bihar Development Reports provided critical insights into governance and human development, influencing policymakers and public discourse.

#### Campaign Series 22:

### **Jharkhand's Awakening Through the Power of Vote 171 - 177**

Prabhat Khabar's Jago Jharkhand and Vote do Halaat Badlo campaigns urged citizens to rise above caste-based politics and demand accountability from leaders. These ads exposed Jharkhand's paradox—rich in resources yet struggling with poverty, poor infrastructure, and failing governance. The campaigns emphasized that real change begins with informed voting. By questioning systemic failures, Prabhat Khabar empowered readers to use their vote as a tool for progress.

#### Campaign Series 23:

### **Awakening Bihar's Social Conscience 179 - 213**

Prabhat Khabar spearheaded a behavioral change campaign in Bihar, tackling deep-rooted social issues like vandalism, train arson during protests, land encroachment, and public urination. Through a long-running ad series, it urged citizens to abandon these regressive practices. The campaign aimed to foster civic responsibility and position Bihar as a progressive, law-abiding state.

#### Campaign Series 24:

### **Change India: A Call for Accountability and Civic Duty 217**

Prabhat Khabar's Change India campaign challenged society's habit of reacting only in crises while ignoring deeper behavioral flaws. It highlighted electricity theft as a symbol of civic irresponsibility and exposed the rampant extortion culture in Bihar, Jharkhand, and Bengal. Traders, industries, and even transporters were routinely harassed for forced contributions, often under threat of violence. The campaign urged citizens to break this cycle of complacency and demand accountability for a more just and law-abiding society.

#### Campaign Series 25:

### **From Awareness to Action in Civic Elections 219 - 221**

Prabhat Khabar's campaigns encouraged active citizen participation in local elections while exposing critical failures in municipal schools and primary healthcare. By highlighting these pressing issues, the newspaper empowered people to demand better governance and services.

#### Campaign Series 26:

### **Campaign on Women Dignity & Safety 223**

Prabhat Khabar's campaign emphasized women's dignity and safety, urging society to break stereotypes and ensure their rightful place with respect. By amplifying these issues, it reinforced its commitment to a more just and inclusive society.

#### Campaign Series 27:

### **Our Daughters our Pride – Ad-Vocating Gender Equality 225**

Prabhat Khabar's Hamari Betiyan, Hamara Samman [Our Daughters, Our Pride] campaign challenged deep-seated gender inequality in Bihar and Jharkhand, particularly in feudal Bihar. Launched after the Nirbhaya case, it pushed for gender justice, workplace safety, and women's empowerment. The campaign influenced policy changes, including the implementation of the Vishaka Committee's guidelines.



Campaign Series 28:

### **Bihar's Fight for Special Status, Fueled by Prabhat Khabar** 227

Prabhat Khabar played a pivotal role in Bihar's special status movement, going beyond reporting to actively shape public discourse. Under Harivansh Ji's leadership, the newspaper led extensive research, editorial campaigns, and a statewide signature drive. The movement gained momentum with Nitish Kumar's Adhikar Rally in Patna and Delhi's Ramlila Maidan, culminating in 12.5 million signatures submitted to the Prime Minister's Office. Prabhat Khabar's sustained coverage ensured national attention, solidifying its role as a driving force behind Bihar's demand for special status.

Campaign Series 29:

### **Bihar @100: A celebration of Heritage and Honor** 230

The Aapka Vote Aapki Taqdeer campaign used sharp messaging, striking visuals, and data-driven insights to provoke readers into questioning Bihar's stagnation. It raised hard-hitting questions on neglected infrastructure, unfulfilled promises, and the state's failure to uplift its own workforce. Why did Bihar, despite having so many Railway Ministers, still lack proper railway development? Why were Bihari laborers building smart cities elsewhere while living in poverty at home? The campaign urged voters to recognize their power in shaping Bihar's future.

Campaign Series 30:

### **Aao Badle Bihar ki Taqdeer (Let's Change Bihar's Destiny)** 233

Marking 16 years of Prabhat Khabar in Bihar, this campaign urged people to reclaim the state's lost glory through collective effort and determination.

Campaign Series 31:

### **Nayi Bahar, Naya Bihar (A New Dawn, A New Bihar)** 235

A resounding call for the revival of Bihar's rich heritage, inspiring citizens to take ownership of rebuilding their state's future.

Campaign Series 32:

### **Promotion of Hindi** 237

A heartfelt initiative celebrating the beauty of colloquial Hindi, reinforcing its cultural and linguistic significance in everyday life.

Campaign Series 33:

### **Cancer Awareness** 241 - 243

A campaign of hope, spreading the message that cancer is not the end but a battle that can be won with early detection and the right treatment.

Campaign Series 34:

### **Drive for a Plastic-Free Society** 245 - 247

A wake-up call against the hazards of plastic, encouraging sustainable choices to protect the environment for future generations.

Campaign Series 35:

### **Your Vote, Your Power** 249 - 259

Prabhat Khabar launched long campaigns during different times of elections to inspire informed and responsible voting. It urged citizens to recognize the transformative power of their vote.

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Finally, to my family for freeing me from the household responsibilities during the past six months while I immersed myself in this project.



# FOREWORD

When Prabhat Khabar fused journalism with **AD-Vocacy**

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Those were days of hardship, unwavering determination, and relentless dreams. A deep-seated resolve to awaken public consciousness through journalism had led me to Bihar—a land whose history was, in essence, the history of India itself. It was a fertile land for social change, where movements had long taken root and shaped history. This was the very soil where the JP Movement emerged, where revolutions were born, and where transformation had always been inevitable.

Yet, the newspaper I chose as my laboratory of change—after serving Dharmayug of the Times of India Group in Mumbai and Ravivar of the Anandabazar Group in Kolkata—stood on the brink of collapse. It lacked both financial resources and a structured revival plan. Each day was a battle, a relentless struggle to ensure the paper somehow made it to print by morning, against all odds. Still, I chose to stay—despite far more lucrative opportunities both in the government sector and in journalism—driven by my unwavering commitment to the profession and, perhaps, a touch of personal whim.

A senior journalist friend of that time even wrote me a letter, warning that by choosing to work in the remote forest terrain of Bihar, I was throwing away a promising career. But those were the days of my prime youth, and I carried within me a stubborn conviction—that I had what it took to serve Bihar and make a real difference.

During those very days, a new plan began to take shape within me—a vision of crafting new dreams and finding innovative solutions despite limited resources. Challenges arose at every step, and obstacles overshadowed every window of opportunity. While we were transforming the newspaper through innovation, a greater challenge lay ahead—how to communicate this change to our readers. Promotion required funds, and we had none.

We undertook a comprehensive study of every aspect of newspaper publishing—circulation, advertising, editorial content selection, high-quality printing, timely distribution, and brand-building efforts to expand our reach. Working within our modest means, we sought innovative strategies to enhance efficiency at every level, even finding ways to maximize the performance of our aging and dilapidated printing machines.

In this endeavor, Basant Kumar Jhavar, Chairman of the Usha Martin Group and the newspaper's promoter, consistently encouraged us to seek creative solutions. At the time, spare parts for our outdated Bandhu Brand printing machines were no longer available, as the company had ceased production. With the purchase of new machines requiring substantial capital—something the newspaper simply could not afford—we had to find an alternative path forward.

It was then that Jhavar Ji introduced us to an unfamiliar yet transformative concept: retrofitting. A term we had never encountered before, retrofit engineering involved modifying existing machines by integrating compatible components, technology, or features to enhance their efficiency. In essence, it allowed us to refurbish and modernize outdated equipment without requiring a complete replacement. By adopting this ingenious approach, we not only overcame a critical hurdle in our printing infrastructure but also breathed new life into every aspect of our operation.

As the newspaper evolved and grew in numbers, conveying its transformed identity and new profile to readers became just as crucial. Working within our modest means, we devised innovative

strategies to effectively communicate this transition to the market, ensuring that our audience remained aware of the changes shaping their trusted daily.

We adopted a simple yet effective means of outreach—pamphlets. Leftover newsprint scraps, which were usually discarded, were repurposed to create these pamphlets, turning them into a powerful tool for communicating the newspaper's ongoing transformation to readers. The strategy proved highly effective in reaching the masses and soon evolved into a tradition—an essential part of Prabhat Khabar's brand of journalism. It may well have been the first such experiment in the field of journalism.

It was then that we realized—a small beginning can spark a turning point, a single step can define a long and unforgettable journey.

While major media houses relied on advertising agencies and expert copywriters to craft promotions—treating their newspapers as commercial products with sleek campaigns, catchy slogans, and polished ad copy—we chose a different path. Unconventional yet deeply impactful, our method spoke directly to the readers, bridging the gap between journalism and its audience in a way that no advertising campaign ever could.

In a raw, indigenous way, I personally wrote most of the advertisement copy for the pamphlet series, had them designed, and played an active role in distributing the printed promotional pamphlets across different reader locations. This was a novel experiment—not in a major metropolitan city, but in an underdeveloped, economically struggling region where resources were scarce, and innovation was a necessity.

Perhaps for this very reason, the effort remained largely unnoticed, initially.

Gradually, the situation began to improve, and the impact of our efforts became evident. Circulation increased, and with it, the flow of advertisements grew steadily.



As the newspaper grew, we brought in Raghunath, a seasoned brand marketing veteran. He, in turn, introduced us to Abhimanyu Mishra and Krishnendu Dutta, two accomplished creative directors with extensive experience in leading multinational advertising agencies. Recognizing the potential of Prabhat Khabar, they agreed to take on its account, assembling a talented team of Hindi and English copywriters, visualizers, and graphic designers.

This dynamic team included Ms. Vishakha, Mou Pal, Arpan, Sudarshana, Amitabh Naval, Karan Raghav, Nishant Nanda, Samarendra Upadhyay, and Biju Lal—each bringing their creative expertise and fresh ideas.

Soon this entire team became an integral part of our mission. Together, we pioneered several innovative branding experiments for the newspaper. One of our key initiatives was seamlessly integrating advertising with social advocacy campaign sequels, making impactful journalism a core part of our outreach.

While working on this project, I would sometimes decide on the themes for the Social Advocacy series, while at other times, the team would bring in their own creative ideas. I would then expand on the subject, narrate it to the team, and together, we would conceptualize an advertising campaign series. This was a pioneering experiment in the media industry—transforming social issues into advertising campaigns and publishing them as an ongoing series, further reinforced by editorial writings.

When Prabhat Khabar rose beyond the region's three largest Hindi newspapers, it secured a place of its own despite their deep financial backing. This bold and unconventional approach played a pivotal role in its success.

The media never documented this unique experiment, where editorial teams deeply engaged with a subject, distilled its social essence, and transformed it into a compelling promotional campaign. Unlike conventional methods, the process was reversed—editorial insights shaped the Ad campaign's core message first, which was then refined into impactful ad copy and captivating creatives. The newspaper further reinforced these issues through in-depth editorial coverage, integrating them into a structured, ongoing campaign series. With this strategic approach, we not only expanded Prabhat Khabar across Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal but also positioned it among the country's leading Hindi newspapers.

This seamless fusion of editorial depth and strategic outreach was a groundbreaking effort in journalism. Yet, despite its impact, it remained largely unrecognized.

This book by Raghunath captures that remarkable journey—an ambitious campaign that reintroduced a transformed Prabhat Khabar to its readers in a way never attempted before, all without any capital investment. More than just an account, it is a testament to the ingenuity, resilience, and unwavering commitment that fueled this transformation. As both a witness and an active participant, Raghunath has meticulously chronicled what he calls the AD-Vocacy experiments of Prabhat Khabar—a bold fusion of journalism and advertising that reshaped the newspaper's identity and impact.

**Harivansh**  
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# PROLOGUE

Many Newspapers, One Standout brand initiative  
*Prabhat Khabar's Social AD-Vocacy*



## Many Newspapers, One Standout brand initiative *Prabhat Khabar's* Social AD-Vocacy

By mid-2005, I prepared to move on from my transformative tenure as National Brand Head, Product, at Dainik Jagran in Delhi. While the role was rewarding, I longed to return to the creative freedom of freelance media consultancy and the dynamic world of collaborating with diverse media houses and brands. Teaching in media schools, a profoundly fulfilling pursuit, also beckoned. Opportunities were already unfolding; with several media groups I had previously worked with willing to re-engage my services.

Amid this transition, a serendipitous suggestion arrived—a former colleague urged me to connect with the management of *Prabhat Khabar* and shared their contact details. The name alone stirred memories. Jharkhand, once South Bihar, was more than just a geographic location to me. It was my cradle, where I spent my formative years, completed my studies, and launched my career in advertising profession back in 1977. It was a place deeply etched into my being, where every street whispered fragments of my history.

Fate seemed to beckon me. By May 2005, I found myself in Ranchi on two days trip, ready to rediscover an old world and perhaps, craft a new beginning. I had spent over a decade in the 1980s serving Patna edition of Hindustan and Hindustan Times. Later, during my time in Ahmedabad, I extended my services to Uditvani. These two experiences endowed me with a profound understanding of the intricate dynamics of the media market.

My meeting with the Top troika of , Harivansh, K.K. Goenka, and R.K. Dutta was thorough and illuminating. It provided me with a clear understanding of their current standing and immediate needs. Harivansh, ever meticulous, had his diary at hand and outlined his expectations with precision: a robust focus on brand promotion, both within the readers' domain and among the media fraternity. Additionally, he emphasized his desire for enhanced public service advertisements addressing social issues in *Prabhat Khabar*. He was already familiar with some of the social service ads I had crafted while at Jagran. There, space constraints often relegated such ads to the inside

pages. Harivansh, however, assured me that at *Prabhat Khabar*, space and size would not be limiting factors at *Prabhat Khabar*. "Take as much space as you need," he promised, a commitment that was music to my ears. As someone deeply invested in brand promotion, I had frequently faced pushback from editorial departments who viewed such ads as wasteful encroachments on editorial space. Harivansh's openness was refreshing and heartening.

With this inspiring brief, my role was formalized. I returned to submit my papers, ready to embark on a new chapter. Relaunching my consultancy services with a modest number of four other media groups in 2005, *Prabhat Khabar* quickly rose to become my most significant mission.

Working for *Prabhat Khabar* was a distinct pleasure, for two compelling reasons. First, Harivansh's meticulous briefing on brand promotion assignments made execution seamless and aligned with his vision. Approvals were swift, enabling quick turnarounds—a sharp contrast to my previous role as Brand Head at another leading publication. There, briefs would arrive from various centres, but proposals or creatives had to navigate a labyrinth of approvals from half a dozen directors, delaying execution.

At *Prabhat Khabar*, the process was refreshingly straightforward. Harivansh himself was the sole point of contact for editorial-driven projects and his signature Social Advocacy series ads, while K.K. Goenka handled advertising and circulation promotions. This clarity of leadership streamlined every task.

The second reason was more personal. Jharkhand and Bihar, regions where I had lived most of my life, felt like home. Crafting communication packages for an audience whose geography and demography I deeply understood was immensely fulfilling. My travels through their five socio-cultural regions had immersed me in their lives and traditions, making this assignment not just a professional endeavor but a meaningful connection to my roots.

### *Prabhat Khabar* : Two States, One Voice for Change

Amid Jharkhand's dense forests and untapped resources, a voice had risen—a daily newspaper that transcended the north-south Bihar divide, bound by a shared legacy of advocacy journalism. *Prabhat*





***Loose Lips Sink Ships** – A powerful World War II poster created by the War Advertising Council of the U.S., cautioning citizens against careless talk that could lead to sensitive information leaks and endanger national security.*



***We Can Do It!** – An iconic World War II poster designed to inspire women to join the U.S. workforce, showcasing their strength and resilience in supporting the war effort.*



*Khabar* captivated its readers like a piper, who rallied behind its clarion call for truth and transformation.

During my tenure with Hindustan Times in Bihar during the 80s, my work often took me to South Bihar to canvass business. My most trusted source of insight into the region's newspaper circulation was our agent in Jamshepur, who also managed the AH Wheeler counter at Tatanagar Railway Station. I had known him since childhood, as my family lived in the nearby Railway Colony. In the early 90s, during one of my visits, he spoke somberly of *Prabhat Khabar's* decline, lamenting that the newspaper was on the verge of closure. Yet, when I returned to the newly carved Jharkhand state in 2002 to oversee another newspaper's simultaneous launch in Jharkhand's three cities, I found him speaking of *Prabhat Khabar* in an entirely different tone. No longer a struggling entity, it had staged a dramatic resurgence—rising from the brink of collapse to becoming a formidable force, challenging the very existence of other dailies in the region.

He credited this transformation to the visionary leadership of Harivansh but cautioned me about the challenges ahead. He warned that the extravagant ad blitzkrieg we had orchestrated for the new daily's launch in Jharkhand was unlikely to succeed. *Prabhat Khabar* was not just a newspaper; it had become the lifeline of Jharkhand's identity, championing self-governance and amplifying the aspirations of its people. This man, the sole selling agent for dailies across Tatanagar's bustling railway platforms through his AH Wheeler counters, understood the pulse of the readers like no other.

Like rivers nourishing Jharkhand's fertile lands, *Prabhat Khabar* coursed through the veins of the state's cultural, social, and political consciousness. It was more than ink on paper—it was a movement, a voice for the marginalized, a beacon for the oppressed, and a guiding force for farmers, labourers, entrepreneurs, women, and tribal communities. From chronicling history to shaping it, *Prabhat Khabar* had not only informed but also inspired, igniting change and led generations towards empowerment.

During the Jharkhand movement, *Prabhat Khabar* was not just a chronicler of events but a catalyst for change. It championed the cause of self-determination with intellect and passion, amplifying the voices of those fighting for a separate state. In doing so, it transcended the role of a newspaper, becoming a socio-cultural movement that bridged the

chasm between aspirations and achievements. It was more than ink on paper—a symbol of hope, empowerment, and the relentless pursuit of identity.

The narrative was equally stirring across the border in Bihar, though distinct in its battle. *Prabhat Khabar* played a pivotal role in liberating the state from the grip of a corrupt regime that had held Bihar hostage for over a decade and a half. Despite being blessed with mighty rivers like the Ganga, Kosi, Gandak, and Son—nurturing one of India's most fertile agricultural belts—Bihar's potential had been stifled. Its resilient workforce, which had shaped the destinies of distant lands like Mauritius, Suriname, and the Caribbean, and driven industrial growth within India, found itself trapped in a state paralyzed by crime, corruption, and policy stagnation. The very lifeblood of Bihar—its enterprise and indomitable spirit—had been throttled.

As Bihar embarked on its transformative journey, *Prabhat Khabar* stood at the fore-front, awakening the people's collective consciousness. Through incisive reporting and compelling storytelling, it became the voice of resistance, spearheading movements against corruption and advocating for political stability. The newspaper did not just document change; it demanded it, urging Biharis to look beyond their immediate struggles and reclaim their legacy of progress. Whether in the fight for Jharkhand's identity or Bihar's resurgence, *Prabhat Khabar* remained a force that refused to be silenced—fuelling revolutions, inspiring generations, and redefining the power of journalism.

While Jharkhand grappled with the challenges of early governance, *Prabhat Khabar* remained a stabilizing force in Bihar, ensuring that the momentum for reform did not wane. Its unwavering commitment to truth and transformation empowered readers, equipping them with knowledge and the conviction to envision a brighter future. In this dual role, the newspaper became more than a chronicler of events—it was a bridge between two states, one forging its identity and the other reclaiming its lost potential, all while staying deeply rooted in the ethos of advocacy journalism.

By interlacing history with aspiration, *Prabhat Khabar* has redefined the very essence of journalism. It does not merely report; it ignites change. It is a force of creation, a thread of connection, and a catalyst for transformation. Whether amplifying the voices of Jharkhand's tribal



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A S Raghunath is a seasoned Media Marketing professional with 46 years of experience. During his illustrious career, he has been associated with leading newspaper groups across diverse languages, including Hindi, English, Gujarati, Telugu, Tamil, Marathi, and Odiya. These include The Searchlight, Hindustan Times, Dainik Jagran, Prabhat Khabar, Gujarat Samachar, Jai Hind, Rajasthan Patrika, Sakshi, Deccan Chronicle, Andhra Bhoomi, Vaartha, Andhra Jyothi, Daily Thanthi, Deshonnati, Dharitri, among others. Raghunath began his journey in 1977 with advertising agencies such as Wheels in Jamshedpur, Maadhyam in Patna, and served as a Copywriter Associate with Additions Advertising in Ahmedabad, where he also wrote Shri Narendra Modi's first-ever assembly election campaign in 2002. As an academic contributor, he has served as a Guest Faculty at prestigious institutions including Mudra Institute of Communications Ahmedabad (MICA), Indraprastha University School of Mass Communications, and Jagran Institute of Management and Mass Communications (JIMMC) in Delhi. Raghunath is also a Life Member of the Ahmedabad Management Association, underscoring his commitment to professional excellence.

### **'Harivansh's Experiment with AD-Vocacy Journalism: From Ads to Action, Words to Change,'**

meticulously authored and edited by A. S. Raghunath, captures the transformative journey of Prabhat Khabar under the visionary guidance of Harivansh and his dedicated team. This compelling narrative demonstrates how journalism can transcend conventional roles, evolving into a powerful vehicle for meaningful social reform.

Set amidst the vibrant sociopolitical landscapes of Bihar, Jharkhand, and Bengal, the book chronicles Prabhat Khabar's remarkable evolution from near collapse to becoming a fearless voice championing social justice. Through an innovative fusion of impactful editorial content and thoughtfully designed public-service ad campaigns, this coffee table book highlights critical societal issues including corruption, education, governance, and civic empowerment.

Enriched by personal anecdotes, expert perspectives, and vivid reflections from Ad agency professional who crafted the Ads, media industry veterans, and members of the academia, the narrative reveals the profound influence of 'AD-Vocacy journalism' practiced by Prabhat Khabar. From exposing the infamous Fodder Scam to promoting youth empowerment, gender equality, and childhood welfare, each selected campaign from the 1990s to 2016 exemplifies journalism's transformative impact on lives and communities.

Raghunath, leveraging his extensive experience in media marketing and deep regional insights, offers readers an exclusive behind-the-scenes exploration of this pioneering advocacy journalism model. Harivansh's unwavering commitment to integrity and public welfare underscores every page, illustrating the remarkable potential of strategic, purpose-driven communication.

More than a retrospective account, AD-Vocacy Journalism serves as an inspirational blueprint for journalists, marketers, and activists. It showcases how authentic storytelling, and targeted campaigns can effectively unite communities, driving lasting societal change through the true power of media.

