

CHAPTER - I

THE FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

'The Framework of the Study' is the first chapter of this research work. This chapter has been discussed under several headings starting with the introduction followed by the statement of the problem, growth of newspapers in India, growth of language press and language newspapers in India. This chapter also includes the review of literature and a detailed discussion has been done on the review of literature. The chapter further includes rationale of the study, scope of the study, objectives of the study and research questions. It also explains the methodology adopted in the study and also defines operational terms mentioned in the research study.

1.1. INTRODUCTION

In a developing country like India mass communication plays an important and crucial role in creating people's awareness about different policies and programmes related to development. Since the commencement of national five-year plans in India, importance of mass media has increased manifold. To achieve socio-economic objectives set in the plan, it is imperative that people must have adequate knowledge and awareness about various development programmes and actions. It acts as a mediator between the common people and the government and transforms knowledge and information from the policy makers to the recipients, for whom policies mean to be.

The media reflect and help to shape the public's opinion on various societal issues. It is an important social institution and is crucial presenters of culture, politics, and social life, shaping as well as reflecting how these are formed and expressed.

According to Vilanilum (2005), the media are as much influenced by the society as society is influenced by the media, and its impact is mutual and continuous. Media perform certain functions in a society as Fourth Estate, as watch-dog, as agenda-setter, as gate-keeper and as force-multiplier.

In ancient times, before the advent of newspaper, radio and television, news was communicated by words of mouth. But slowly and gradually with the invention of

printing press, the process becomes easier. Its purpose was to serve the people by reporting and interpreting what is happening around the globe. Communication as a means of transmission of information and as a process of development has undergone many changes with the invention of printing press (i.e., newspapers). Till today, the press is playing significant role in bringing about changes in society.

The importance of media, particularly the print media has been enhanced by the role of press in India's struggle for independence where the language press had to face more years of persistent struggle before it was recognized as a significant segment of the Indian press along with English or national dailies. After independence, the main challenge before the language press was to sensitise the readers towards developmental issues affecting the Indian masses. It acts as a promising medium for disseminating information and knowledge about family planning, nutrition and many other vital issues.

As a magnificent gift to mankind and highly indispensable, the press perform its crucial and pivotal role as communicator. It acts as a major force and is forming public opinion over the world. It has effects national and global efforts towards socio-economic progress and understanding. A society needs newspaper for the same reason as a man needs eyes. It would not be unacceptable to say that air is to living beings; the press is to the society. It molds public opinion and acts as an agent in societal change. Because of its importance and significance it has been highly acclaimed admired and appreciated.

The press not only played a major role in creating a feeling of national integration and solidarity among the people during the freedom struggle but it has also contributed significantly to the social change and development.

The Social Responsibility Theory of the press states that media has lot of responsibilities towards society apart from the right to criticize government and other institutions. The foremost duty of the press is to preserve democracy by properly informing the public and by responding to society's interests and needs. The most significant contribution of the social responsibility theorists is their view, about citizen's right to access information. According to the theorists it is more important

for citizens to have the right of access to information than it is for the press to achieve complete freedom of speech.

Press has innumerable roles and functions towards society because it directly influences the latter. It molds public opinion and acts as an agent in societal change. That is why, how the press should function in a state, is a matter of great concern for a civil society.

However, the concern for the language newspapers today is somewhat inextricably interwoven in their struggle for existence. Its focus has now been shifted towards sensationalism and yellow journalism practice. The main motto of these papers is to increase circulation. The ethics of journalism like truthfulness, responsibility, objectivity and fair play has taken its back seat and in lieu the contents are dictated by partisan motives like political instability, violence, scams, theft, and other related issues. Development or literacy related news is far from their agenda. Media 'discourse' is important both for what it reveals about a society and for what it contribute to the character of the society (Bell, 1995). Thus, the present study assumes a broad and wider importance in the present context.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Setting up of printing press led to the publication of bulletins, newspapers, books and magazines in different parts of the world. Its aim was to serve the people by reporting what is happening in the world around them.

Hanno Hardt (1979), states that the assimilation function of the press in society includes binding society together, giving leadership to the public, helping to establish the 'public sphere', providing space for the exchange of ideas between leaders and masses, satisfying the public needs for information, providing society with a mirror of itself and acting as the conscience of society (McQuail, 2005).

The press plays an important role in the fulfillment of the information needs of the people. It touches almost every aspect of our public life. It affects the mind of the people in such a manner that their thinking and ideas are changed which results finally

into social change. Over the years the press has been playing a dominant role in the dissemination of news and information.

The coverage that is given by media about the social issues have been a matter of debate and contention since, the beginning of the Indian press and still continues to be a major issue in Indian society, as seen by the importance and attention given to various social issues in major newspapers across the country.

To enable people to participate in social change process, it is necessary that people have adequate knowledge about the nature and content of various social programmes. In a country like India, mass communication plays a vital role in creating people's awareness about policies and programmes of social causes and development in motivating them to be active partners in the nation-building endeavor.

The mass communication has multiplier properties. It produces development attitude rapidly (Lerner: 1967: 316). And it calculates the capacity empathize and facilitate psychic mobility. Empathy is a necessary condition for the liberation of people from traditional bonds (Lerner: 1958:54-54). Certain types of media content raise achievement motivation, which is necessary for social change (Ms Clelland: 1961).

Most people get their view of the world from the media. It is, therefore important that media be objective and present accurate and diverse representations of what go on in the field of social change. The power of the press arises from its ability of appealing to the minds of the people and being capable of moving their hearts. Despite the fast growth of the electronic media, the printed word continues to play a crucial role in disseminating information and mobilizing people. However, it has been noticed that the press in India have not evinced the requisite interest in social change.

Mass media has a prominent role to play in a modern society. It can bring about radical changes and improve social situation as it influences our social, civil, cultural, political, economic and aesthetic outlook. It is pervasive in modern life. It is a bridge between traditional societies transition toward a modern society. The influence of media on society has been growing tremendously. With the rapid growth of mass media enormous changes have taken place within the last decade in the political and economic scenario of the world. Consciously or unconsciously, most often the society

is influenced by mass media and it has become an important part of social life such as persuading the media to use a particular product or indirectly persuaded to support a particular political party. The shift pattern of behaviour that resulted from the mass media can occur in a family environment, school, and in social life. The impact of mass media can include a wide range of behaviours that deviate from social norms or cultural values (Paul Virginia, et. al., 2013).

However, the media are distinctive in several ways in respect of knowledge production. They have a general 'carrier function for knowledge' of all kinds. They operate in the public sphere, accessible to the whole society and for all members. It is found to contribute a change in society in various ways (Dennis McQuail, 1976).

Media has positively highlighted the issues like violence and crime prevailing in most of the countries. Apart from these basic issues, media, from time to time, have created a positive public opinion towards environment protection, pollution, and conservation of natural resources, health issues, and diseases like AIDS, cancer terrorism, war, oppression and above all basic human rights to all. But the process of change should not be unduly rapid, violent and earth shaking but should be normal, gradual and a slow one (Kumar R., 2011).

Mass media and social change

The mass media play a vital role in disseminating information, conducting propaganda, educating and enlightening people, strengthening national integration and accelerating social development. The communication media are potent instruments of social change, contributing substantially to national development. When we talk of national development, we mean of men and women, and when we talk of women and development and the media role in their development, we have to identify the two dimensions of the term "development". Firstly, it is the development of women and the role of the mass media in this process. Secondly, it is the development of the society and the nation through the development of its women.

The role of media in development of women is twofold (a) Development through exposure to media by way of programmes and printed material. This is a consumer-oriented function, and by the consumer, we mean women. (b) Development through

the active participation of women in the production of media messages by participating in the decision-making process regarding programme content, policies and the projection of a balanced image of women.

A preliminary examination of the literature concerning the image, role and social conditions of women in mass media showed that any study of the image of women in the mass media and women's association in the production of messages will have to be viewed in the socio-economic, political and cultural context.

In the ultimate analysis, the presentation of women in the mass media depends on the interplay of forces that shape social reality and one of these forces is the media itself.

Notwithstanding the debate regarding the role of media as that of a reflector vs creator of culture, empirical research of the past decades indeed points to the direction of a creative, reinforcing and transforming cultural impact of mass media. This poses the question of 'influence' of the mass media in bringing about social change.

1.3. GROWTH OF NEWSPAPERS IN INDIA

India is one of the fastest growing media markets in the world not only in the field of newspapers but also in other forms of media which are also growing at a fast pace like radio, television channels and new media such as internet.

The first newspaper in India in the modern sense was the *Bengal Gazette* or *Calcutta General Advertiser*, which made its appearance on 29th January 1780 edited and published by James Augustus Hickey. It was a weekly newspaper well known as *Hickey's Gazette* and was exclusively meant for the British. This paper did not take into consideration the aspiration of the local population and thus, the Indian community was unable to join. However, reflecting the ups and downs of the Indian society a newspaper in Indian language was published by an Indian teacher with reformist ideas name Ganga Kishor Bhattacharjee. As he was the first Indian to bring out a newspaper, he was perhaps called as the 'Papa of the Indian Press'. This weekly paper known as the *Bengal Gazette* was published between May 12 and May 18 in 1818 A.D. (Ghosh 1991).

At the time of India's independent, the country had only 3533 publications. Among them 3203 were periodicals and 330 were daily newspapers. After the 50 years of independence, there has been a 12fold increase in the number of publications. According to the data published by the Registrar of News Papers of India in 1997, there were 41705 publications among which the number of newspapers was 4719. In 2006, it has rise up to 45600 publications among which 5600 are newspapers. At present, India has 398 major newspapers with an overall circulation of 30,772,000 copies. It has the world's largest newspaper market after China. While news papers market are struggling in Europe and USA, in India and China there is a boom. It can be noted that the world's three top countries in newspaper circulation China rank the first position with 98.70 million copies, India with second position 88.90 million and Japan rank the third position with 69.10 million copies. Growth of newspapers can be calculated in two ways, one is by circulation and the other is by readership. Several people may read one copy of the newspaper. For example, if a family subscribes to a newspaper it is likely to be read by four or six members. So, if a newspaper has a circulation of one lakh, its readership may be four or five lakhs. A close study of newspaper readership in India shows that there are more readers for language newspapers. This is mainly because English newspapers are confined to cities and towns whereas language newspapers are widely circulated in the rural areas.

Some of the major factors that have contributed in the steady growth of newspapers in India are discussed below:-

There is a steady rise in the literacy rates in all the states of India. More and more people are being initiated into the world of both reading and writing. Thus, they slowly and gradually learn to read newspapers and periodicals. Robin Jeffrey who made elaborate studies about the newspaper revolution in India says that the fastest growth rates in newspaper circulation were in the states, which showed the strongest growth rates of literacy.

Moreover, as the Indian middle-class expands, it leads to an increase in the circulation of newspapers. It can be seen that when a household makes economic and educational progress, they consider it as a status of symbol to subscribe to a newspaper. Moreover, it can be seen that India still has an estimated 350 million people who can

read and write but do not buy or subscribe any newspaper. As a result there is a vast segment that is still untapped as far as newspaper circulation is considered. More and more newspapers are trying to woo this section. It is most often said that if you educate a woman you are educating the next generation. In India women are getting more and more educated and this in turn leads to education of children. Thus, it contributes a lot to the growth of readership.

On the other hand, in the past few years the development of technology has also added to the growth of newspapers in India. In earlier days, it was a costly affair to establish a new edition or to start a newspaper publication. But with the advancement of technology it became an easy task for the newspapers to start new editions. Hence, it has led to an expansion of newspapers even into small cities and towns.

1.4. GROWTH OF LANGUAGE PRESS AND LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS IN INDIA

From the time of James Augustus Hicky to the present day the Press in India has been playing a pivotal role in shaping the attitudes and behavioural patterns of the people. Indian Journalism has contributed a lot for national independence, democratic evolution, national integration and progress. It has been playing a crucial role in molding public opinion in spite of its limited reach both in terms of geographical area and population when compared to electronic media.

However, still now the printed words, has tremendous credibility and impact (Guru, 1995). As A.S. Ramaswamy writes, “Development cannot be imposed from above it has to be generated from within. The participatory process implies partnership in development by two parties, viz., the people themselves and the Government Organisations or Non-Government Organisations. The participatory process refers to a host of development functions like collection of data, processing and analyzing, determination of needs and their planning programmes, budgeting, raising of resources, implementation, monitoring and impact evaluation all done in a manner”. Hence, development has to be engineered by mass media organisations including that of journalism since the people are deliberately kept in a state of power-less-ness by the powers-that-be. Journalism could become a platform for debates, discussions,

public opinion formation and enlightened people's participation in the process of nation building.

Wilbur Schramm observes, "A rural newspaper, especially a small language newspaper published from district town is one of the great movers of national development".

The hallmarks of India are its multi-ethnicity, multi-culture and multi-language. In fact our country is a linguist's delight. Though, 1652 languages are spoken as mother tongues by the people of India but the constitution has recognized only 18 major languages. While, North- India is considered Hindi heartland, labeled after the dominant language, South India has four important Dravidian languages, namely, Kannada, Telegu, Tamil and Malayalam. East India has Oriya, Bengali and Assamese while the Western states have Marathi, Gujarathi, Rajasthani and Punjabi, (Nagaraj and Guru, 1997).

The Press in India is said to be of two different kinds, the English Press and the language press. The English press is identified with the elite and educated readers whose intellectual interest is supposed to cover a wide canvas and is mainly confined in cities and urban areas. While, the language press is identified on regional or local basis having readers who are both literate and semi-literate and appeals to a particular language audience. Obviously, it might reach the growth centers in small towns along with major roadsides. It is accessible only to a small majority of population based on common linguistic and cultural back ground of a particular region. In India the language press is regional in character. Hence, no language press claims its national character in the sense as claimed by some English newspapers.

But in the true sense, no English newspaper in our country shows national character as it is understood to exist in the western and communist countries. During pre-independence period the English press had growth rapidly compared to the language press but after the independence the situation has changed as the language press found a better space for its growth in professionalism and leadership. However, the only demerit in the case of the language press was that, barring a few, majority of the

language newspapers lack good marketing strategy and sound financial background (Patnaik and Bedi, 1997).

It was observed that a silent revolution took place in the Indian press as the two-century old dominance English press was overcome by the Indian language press in terms of both the numbers of newspapers and their combined circulation. During the time of Independence, there were about 3000 newspapers and periodicals, among which 300 were major English and language dailies. But just after the fifteen years of independence, a remarkable change took place. The Hindi language press dominates the English press and left it behind in terms of circulation also. In 1989 the numbers of Hindi newspapers was almost double to that of English newspapers which was an indicator of steady progress and prospect of language press.

During 1960 there were about 392 language dailies along with combined circulation 36 lakhs but however, in 1971 the number of daily newspapers rose to 704 and combined circulation to 68 lakhs. Also at that time all the top four dailies were language dailies. Thus, the circulation of language dailies nearly doubled between 1960 and 1971.

However, the reasons for the growth of newspapers in India that we have studied so far are equally applicable for the growth of language newspapers. Also there are some other factors that have helped the rise of the latter. At the early days, the language press was looked down upon as 'vernacular dailies' by the English press but the impression was changed with the emergence and rise of language media.

Indian economy is generally considered as a rural economy. According to a survey by National Sample Survey Organization, more than 16 crore households live in the rural areas. Over the past 50 or 60 years a paradigm shift has been seen in the rural population. The Indian farmers, who were classified as born in debt, live in debt and die in debt, are now considered as one of the most influential consumer groups in society. With the increase of income levels their tastes and preferences have also shown changes. Thus, the advancement of the rural mass has resulted in the growth of language newspapers.

Again, a marked change in the coverage of local news by newspapers is another cause for the growth of language newspapers. In the past the national and international news dominated the Indian press. But with the experiment of some newspapers, especially the southern states, by covering local news with prominence gave a big boost to their circulation. Soon, newspapers of other parts copied this technique. These newspapers started covering issues that were basically concerned with the ordinary people. The rural mass found that there is a medium to express their grievances and aspirations.

Also, starting of multiple editions was another reason that resulted in the growth of the language press. Before newspapers were confined to state capital cities only but with the emergence of more and more potential readers from other parts, newspaper owners started editions from even district centers. On the other hand, the boom in advertising also helped in the growth of the language press. The rural people turned out to be the biggest market for any product. Thus, to attract them, advertisers were forced to give advertisements in local papers which in turn resulted in an increase of revenue for the language press.

1.5. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature on press in connection with socio-economic developmental news coverage in context of India as well some other countries world over may now be reviewed.

Davis (1951) in his study on ‘Crime News in Colorado Newspapers’ revealed that the crime coverage in Colorado newspapers bore no relationship to changes in state crime rates.

Dube (1964) in his study conducted a survey of the perception of emergency after the Chinese attack. He revealed that 83.3% of the respondents were aware of the Chinese aggression. He also revealed that the level of awareness was fairly high in the states far away from the area of conflict. The quick spread of news to the farthest areas only establishes that the proverbial isolation of the Indian villages is only a myth now. The information gathered on the awareness of the state, national and international events revealed that the people were more aware of the state events than the national and

international, regarding the level of awareness towards the different aspects of the rural development program in the villages.

Schramm (1964) noticed change in social, cultural, religious and personal attitudes which subsequently have helped change and shape a society completely different. The Indian society has by and large reacted almost in an identical manner. This has been amply established by some well-known studies conducted by Indian mass communication scholars such as Rao, Damle and several others.

Rao emphasized that social responsibility is a concept that need to be practiced by all the media including the press. In a developing country like India, the mass media has important roles to play. That needs the media to be socially responsible. A socially responsible mass media can serve the interests of the society at large.

Murthy Krishna Nadig (1966) in his work 'Indian Journalism' made sincere and wide study of the growth, development and role of press in India since the early days of James Augustus Hicky.

Rau Chalapathi M., (1968) in his study of the Press has covered the various aspects of the Press sits pattern, internal freedom, relationship with society, etc.

Ranade (1971) in his 14 days study of editorials in six newspapers revealed that out of 192 editorials, 35 (18%) (all papers were put together) were on health/medicine, education, science, agriculture, social, cultural and sports while the rest were on economic and political issues.

Barghouti's study (1974) of Jordan media found that political news got more prominence than socio-economic development news.

Another study by Mustafa (1974) found that Malay language newspapers devoted half of their news hole to development news while the English language dailies devoted 32%.

Vilani's (1975) in his study of four Indian dailies revealed that the English dailies- *The Times of India* and *The Hindu* - gave 9.2% and 18.8% of space respectively for social issues and developmental news, whereas the two native language papers *Aaj* (Hindi) and *Malayala Manorama* (Malayalam) gave 19.5% and 10.3%. However, the

study concluded that all four newspapers devoted more space to government and political news than to social issues and developmental news.

Dasgupta (1976), in her study of women's issues in four English dailies published in New Delhi in 1975, observed that women's issues received no attention in the six subject categories social, economic, political, art and culture, biographical and other issues. However, the study did not elaborate the methodology adopted for the study.

Rogers (1976), suggested a new definition of development as a widely participatory process of social change in a society which intended to bring about both social and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people through gaining control over their environment. The predominant role of communication has been: a) to transfer technological innovations from development agencies to the clients and, b) to create an appetite for change through raising a climate for modernization among members of the public.

Rukmini (1979), in her study of letters to the editor published in three Andhra Pradesh dailies observed that the two English dailies- *The Hindu* and *Indian Express* gave more emphasis to national issues than local and state issues while the regional English daily *Deccan Chronicle* focused on local and state issues compared to the national dailies.

Rau Chalapathi M., (1980), in his study has written, 'the future of Indian Press means essentially the future of Indian language press. India will gradually have mammoth circulation in all the Indian languages. There is no doubt that with increase in literacy and in the purchasing power of the people living in slums, in the cities and in the rural areas, there will be significant increase in the circulation of regional language newspaper, not only in India but in Asia as a whole.' (Rural Development and Media Strategies in Third revolution in Indian Perspective-Contemporary Issues and Themes in Communication Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi).

The second Press Commission (1982) reported that all the newspapers in the country consistently allocated more space to politics and conflict news than to socio-economic developmental news. The Commission also observed that the English papers devoted nearly 50% of the space of front page and inside pages to news on conflict and

politics. In comparison to 52.4% and 42.8% for conflict and politics news on the front page socio-economic developmental news occupied only 12.2% and 17.2 %.

Sutapo (1983), examined six Indonesian national newspapers and concluded that Indonesian newspapers used more socio-economic developmental news than non-development news and that each newspaper in the study had a different view about which socio-economic development issue was most deserving of attention.

A study by Mohapatra (1984), in a comparative analysis of two newspapers, pointed out that the two newspapers- *The Times of India* and *Samaj* (Oriya) devoted 25% of editorial space to developmental news and social issues. But they were all about demands, complaints and opinions, etc. Space devoted to serious issues like family planning, literacy, dowry, rape, etc. was insignificant.

A study of editorials by Srinivasan (1985) of three national dailies- *The Hindu*, *The Times of India* and *The Hindustan Times* showed that 27.3%, 27.8% and 46.3% respectively were emphasized to cover politics. His study also examined the treatment given to the issues in the editorials on a three point scale favourable, unfavourable and neutral and found that favourable editorials were more in all the three dailies.

Subscribers and readers express their opinions and views on development issues through letters to the editor column. Most often, newspapers give attention to letters that contain references to political statements and conflict issues. Devi Prasad et.al.(1992) in a study of letters to the editor found that maximum of those letters dealt with civic amenities such as public transport, communications, power, etc.

Ahmed (1986), in his study revealed that the regional press devoted more than half of the space to regional news. The study based on the four Malayalam newspapers in Kerala revealed that regional press devoted a large proportion of the space to political news rather than news on socio-economic development of the state.

Partha Sarathy Rangaswami (1989), in his study 'Journalism in India' did his best to write a historically meaningful story of Indian journalism from the days of Hicky to modern times. Some other studies in related fields include that of Raghavan's (1994), Bhatta's (1997), Srivastava's (1972), etc.

Greenwald (1990), after analyzing the coverage of women in the business section of two metropolitan newspapers found that women were the main subjects in only 5 of 180 stories.

A study by Shah and Gayatri (1994), of two Indonesian newspapers found that nearly 45% of the total news hole was devoted to socio-economic development news.

Nadeem Ul Haque and Arif Sheikh (1994), in their study of daily newspapers in Pakistan revealed that newspapers devote extensive space to international news. They also revealed that national news is usually confined to the statements of politicians and political parties with a very little space given to economic issues or court proceedings.

According to Banerjee (1995), even after 50 years of independence Gandhiji's dream of rebuilding Indian villages is still a far cry. In the context of this critical situation, the journalists have an important role to play to bring about a new environment. Journalism is a social trust and journalists are social workers as well as agents of social change. Their duty is to give the message of hopes and aspirations to the teeming millions who live under the clouds of frustration in rural areas. Also, their duty is not only to inform but also to interpret and educate the masses. Further, it is their responsibility to guide the people to change the quality of life, through better health, family welfare, agriculture and environment.

Banerjee also revealed that the journalists should be given proper incentives and encouragement by the government. They should be provided adequate protection in order to carry their job with honesty and integrity.

Maslog's study (1996), of the Phillipines newspapers found that the newspapers gave more importance to politics and sports than socio-economic developmental issues.

Bhatnagar in his study, (1996a) analysed the development news content of four Telegu dailies in 1991 and revealed that among the four dailies, *Andhra Prabha* devoted more space to socio-economic development news than the other dailies. He also revealed that in all the samples regional news occupied more space than national and international news.

However, other studies examine the fact that the coverage of socio-economic development news differs from country to country. For example, Mustafa (1974) revealed that Malay language newspapers emphasized half of their newshole to socio-economic development news while the English language dailies devoted 32%.

Bhatnagar's study (1996b), of women's issues in six English newspapers published in New Delhi in 1987 indicated that only 280 (1 %) items in the sample reported about the problems and welfare activities about women. Important items like women's education, rights and wage rates of women workers did not receive adequate coverage in any newspaper under study.

The Indian journalists Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma (1997) carried out a study on how the Indian press reported on five gender issues between 1979 and 1988. They examine four of these five issues - dowry deaths, rape, sex determination test and sati because the women's movement had drawn national attention to them. In 2006, the authors published a revised edition of the study which looked at how these same issues including Shah Bano controversy were addressed by the print media in the first years of the new millennium. The authors found that events and issues involving politics, economics, law, and religion considered most news worthy. That is why Shah Bano controversy and sati issue earned much wider coverage than any other five issues. They also states that the increased attention to women and to women's issues in the media in the last decade has not been free of blatant sexism and/or subtle distortions, partly *as* a consequence of overt biases and partly due to the very structure of the media. By and large the media scene in India is that media does not address serious issues about exploitation and in equal treatment to women in different spheres but is keen in reporting sex-related incidents by way of sensationalizing news of atrocities on women. It is unfortunate that there is lack of sensitivity among the newspapers in general to women and their problems. Newspapers with a limited space cover women's problems drawing the attention of policy-makers to issues requiring immediate attention such as the adverse sex ratio, infant and maternal mortality, crime against women and the effects of poverty on women and their families, (Between the lines: Women's Issues in English language newspapers- Ammu Joseph, Kalpana Sharma).

Hollifield in her study (1997) compared coverage of the proposal for a National Information Infrastructure (NII) by the communication industry trade press, the general trade press, and newspapers. She depicted that the trade press was less likely to cover the social implications of policy proposals.

In a study by Behnoosh Payvar (2004) aimed to examine the coverage of Gender, Environment and Development (GED) issues in the Indian English-language newspapers. A main hypothesis that was formulated is that the high rate of gender discrimination in India contributes to a gender bias in the coverage of GED stories. The newsworthiness of GED has been analysed with the help of a frequency analysis. In the study of gender and media some key concepts namely gender stereotypes and gender typifications were used to examine the contents of articles and news stories. The possible selection biases were discussed. Also the results of the frequency analysis were discussed in relation to evaluations and assessments made by newspaper's editorial staff, gender scholars, Indian government representatives, international and Indian NGOs. Data for the study was gathered through interviews and observations at the sorting desk of the Indian Express during a two months field study in India. The data revealed that the press is influenced by certain biases in the coverage of GED issues and in practical it does not reflect the actual needs of people in India. Press, NGOs and gender scholars' watch organizations believe that the press performance regarding the coverage of GED is weak.

Another study carried by Porismita Borah employs three methods to understand media content. Firstly, the study examines the 'peak periods' to ascertain the pattern of coverage. Secondly, the study examines the prominent frames used by the newspapers with a sample of 4058 articles. Thirdly, with the help of interviews of journalists from the same newspapers, the study examines the factors that influence the way these frames are created in the first place. Results show that, in general, the driving force of this coverage is marketability of the stories. This is implied by the all total coverage as well as the responses of journalists, (Examining media content: A case study of newspaper coverage of dowry in India, 1999-2006).

A study carried by Tarun Kumar Bose (2007), on regional and national newspapers in Jharkhand revealed that regional newspapers cover socio-economic developmental

news, more than the national newspapers. He also revealed that though regional newspapers highlight women's issues but there is dismal coverage to adolescent girls or women trafficked for mining in Jharkhand. Also there is little sensitivity among the newspapers towards women's development needs. Hardly there is any coverage of gender justice, women's empowerment, women's health, malnutrition, dalits, weaker sections, poverty, environment, etc.

In a study of three newspapers each in English, Hindi and Urdu, carried out in Patna in the year 2008 by a freelance journalist named Aneesh Ankur, it was found that when it comes to giving space to news on social issues related to children and women Urdu newspapers are more generous in the coverage given to these issues than the newspapers in Hindi and English. *Roznama Rashtriya Sahara*, an Urdu daily leads all newspapers by giving 20% of its news space for coverage of the issues related to the children and women. Hindi daily *Hindustan* was second in their coverage of issues covered. Another popular Urdu newspaper of Bihar *Qaumi Tanzeem* gives 9% of its space for women and children issues according to the analysis. Hindi dailies like *Rashtriya Sahara* has 13%, *Dainik Jagaran* 9%, *Prabhat Khabar* 8%, *Aaj* 8%, and *I-next* is at the lowest with its 6% of coverage to the children related issues. The coverage of English dailies like *TOI* is 9% and that of *Hindustan Times* is 7%. Mr. Ankur tallied his numbers after monitoring various news papers for a month.

A study conducted by Ray (2008) of two regional and two English newspapers in Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Uttaranchal and Uttar Pradesh found that prominent newspapers publish only 5% of women related issues and 8% are published on main page and remaining are placed inside. Study showed no importance is given to development issues of women.

A comparative study by Uppal Charu (2009) based on the assumption that there is a marked difference between the developing world (India as representative) and the environmental activism developed (U.S./Canada as representative). Social injustice is more of concern in environmental activism in the developing world. The study evaluates four years of news coverage in both countries to find out if those concerns are still reflected in the news coverage of environmental issues. Contextual analysis was used to analyze the coverage of hydroelectric projects in two Indian newspapers

(*The Hindu* and *The Times of India*) and two U.S. newspapers (*The Buffalo* and *The New York Times*) in the environmental cultural context of their respective countries. Environmental activism was measured by examining the 'power of news stories to invite public participation'. With the help of Barton's classification of news formats, presence of 'disjunctive' news format was considered an indication of newspaper's emphasis on citizen involvement. Charu's study demonstrates that there is a marked difference in the way environmental activism, as it relates to the hydro-electric projects is covered in India and in the United States. Few of the major findings of his study are: - 1) Disjunctive news formats that potentially invite public participation and which create a sense of discontent was much more prevalent in the Indian newspapers. 2) The coverage of hydroelectric controversy in the U.S. newspapers was much more complacent and it seemed to discourage public participation. 3) Environmental activism appeared more potent in the Indian newspapers than their U.S. counterparts.

A study by Vilanilam (2009) of seven Indian dailies found that the English newspapers gave top priority to international news whereas there was very little international news in the Malayalam newspapers. *The New Indian Express* and *The Hindu* devoted the least amount of space to domestic socio-economic development news as compared to the space devoted to political news. The Malayalam newspapers are similar with the English newspapers in their approach to the coverage of socio-economic development news. Vilanilam also found that there was significant difference among the seven newspapers on the basis of ownership as far as the number of editorials and features on globalization and socio-economic development-related matters were concerned. Compared to the Malayalam newspapers the English newspapers published more information on these matters. Another finding was that the Malayalam newspapers as a group gave very little space to international news and matter related to globalization, liberalization and privatization. Its main focus was in covering soft news, especially human interest stories, religious news, particularly on pilgrimages, temple festivals, tribute to VIPs, particularly departed souls, accidents and above all to governmental and political news.

Violence against women is often in the news and its complex nature makes it an interesting issue for feature writers. These stories making it to the headlines have something in common. They are all “sensational” news items. They are either gang rape cases with voyeuristic descriptions of how women are stripped or paraded naked, rapes that involving a celebrity, rapes ending in suicide, murder or mutilation. Pre-trial publicity is injurious to the health of a fair trial. Innocents may be condemned for no reason or those who are guilty may not get a fair trial or may get a higher sentence after trial than they deserved.

However, the fact that violence against women is so complex can mean that even journalists with the best of intentions can misrepresent some of the issues (Mishra, 2014).

1.6. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

A study of review of literature shows that the present study of the coverage of socio-economic development issues by the vernacular press in Cachar district of Assam is the first of its kind as the research findings are expected to provide a systematic study of the nature and extent of socio-economic development issues covered by the Bengali newspapers of this region. Thus, the study is conducted with the hope that the research findings will provide an assessment of the nature of social issues that brings social change in the society covered by the vernacular newspapers of this region which have not been studied till now to the best of my knowledge.

This study will also provide a systematic study of the origin and growth of the Press in Silchar and also provide a systematic study of the origin and growth of the ‘Press in Cachar district of Assam’, because without knowing the history of the origin and growth of Press in Assam and Cachar district in particular, the nature of the coverage of the socio-economic development issues, based on social change by the Bengali newspapers in Cachar district cannot be fully understood.

As the studies reveals social change is not an absolute change, it is partial and related to the particular period of time since, it is continuous process which takes place in each and every society. Therefore, researcher has taken the period of one and half year i.e., 1st January 2012 to 31st June, 2013 to do content analysis of the selected local

language newspapers which are in larger and having more readership i.e., *Samayak Prasanga* and *Dainik Jugasankha* as well as to do descriptive and explanation of the news items and issues related to socio-economic development, issues related to social aspects and cultural aspects that causes social changes.

1.7. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The press as an agent of mass media can play a decisive role by disseminating messages relating to social change. But, print media in India is often accused of neglecting socio-economic development news and issues related to social aspects and cultural aspects which have much significance in the uplift of the masses. The coverage of socio-economic development issues, issues related to social aspects and cultural aspects in the language newspapers are read by common and ordinary people. Therefore, it is an urgent need to find out how issues related to socio-economic development, issues related to social aspects and cultural aspects are perceived and treated by the language newspapers in India. Thus, the present study is an attempt to measure the extent and frequency of socio-economic development issues, and issues related to social aspects and cultural aspects and to assess the nature, placement, format, context, role of language press as an agent of social change and patterns of socio-economic development news coverage in two languages daily, in particular and the Indian press in general.

The advancement of the media and information technology have widened the scope of social communication and blurred the time and space dimensions all over the world. Social change is a continuous process which takes place in each and every society. The present study will be useful in evaluating the issues related to socio-economic development, issues related to social aspects and cultural aspects that cause social changes at local, regional as well as national levels. It will also help the policy makers and the media professionals in formulating their strategies for social communication.

1.8. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- 1.) To study the role of language press as an agent of social change.
- 2.) To assess the coverage of socio-economic developmental issues related to social change of the taken newspapers.
- 3.) To study the extent of coverage of socio-economic development issues and issues related to social and cultural aspects as published by the two selected daily newspapers.
- 4.) To measure the frequency of socio-economic development issues and issues related to social and cultural aspects as published by these daily newspapers.
- 5.) To find out the relative importance given to socio-economic development issues and issues related to social and cultural aspects originating in local areas and outside?

1.9. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1. How many numbers of news items appear on socio-economic development issues in the two select newspapers?

RQ2. What are the nature and extent of coverage of socio-economic development issues by the two select newspapers?

RQ3. What are the patterns of coverage of socio-economic development issues in the sample newspapers under discussion?

RQ4: What kind of emphasis do the two selected newspapers place on socio-economic development coverage as measured by placement of news items?

RQ5: What are the common formats of socio-economic development issues that appear in these dailies?

RQ6: What relative importance is given to socio-economic development issues originating in local areas and outside?

RQ7: What type of coverage most of the socio-economic development issues receive in the two dailies?

RQ8: How many number of news items appear on socio-economic developmental issues related to social change in the selected newspapers?

RQ9: How many numbers of news items appear on issues related to social aspects and cultural aspects in the selected newspapers?

RQ10: What are the extents of coverage of issues related to social aspects and cultural aspects by the two selected newspapers?

RQ11: What kind of emphasis do the two selected newspapers place on social aspects and cultural aspects coverage as measured by placement of news items?

RQ12: What relative importance is given to issues related to social aspects and cultural aspects originating in local areas and outside?

RQ13: What are the roles played by language press as an agent of social change?

1.10. METHODOLOGY

This study is an attempt on the part of the researcher to bring to light the role-played by the print media in informing, educating and communicating people about various issues related to social change. For this, the study also undertakes a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative content analysis of two leading Bengali newspapers namely, *Dainik Jugashankha* and *Samayik Prasanga*.

1.11. CONTENT ANALYSIS AS A RESEARCH METHOD

Bernard Berelson defined content analysis as ‘a research technique for the objective, systematic and qualitative description of manifest content of communications’ (Berelson, 1952). It is one of the commonly used research methodologies used by scholars dealing with media and communication. Content analysis entails a systematic reading of a body of texts, image and symbolic matters, not necessarily from an

authors or user's perspective. It is a method of communication analysis as well as a method of observation (Kerlinger, 1973). In content analysis, the content of communication becomes the basis of inference. Charles Wright (1986), in *Mass Communication: A Sociological perspectives* writes:-

‘Content analysis is a research technique for the systematic description of communication content according to a certain usually pre-determined categories. It may involve quantitative and qualitative analysis or both. Technical objectivity requires that the categories of classification and analysis be clearly and operationally defined so that other researchers can follow them reliably’.

1.11.1. SAMPLE

For the study, the researcher selected two Bengali leading newspapers, *Dainik Jugasankha* and *Samayik Prasanga* published from Silchar.

1.11.2. BASIS OF SELECTION OF NEWSPAPERS

The two newspapers are selected keeping in mind their circulation, geographical location and language.

1. *Dainik Jugasankha* is a leading Bengali daily newspaper of Barak Valley. It has the highest circulation among all Bengali dailies of Barak Valley as well as entire Assam.
2. *Samayik Prasanga* is Bengali daily newspaper of Barak Valley. It has the second highest circulation among Bengali dailies of Barak Valley after *Dainik Jugasankha*.

1.11.3. SAMPLE TECHNIQUE

The sampling technique adopted in this study is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is also known as judgmental sampling or relevance sampling. In this type of sampling the researcher purposively chooses particular units of sample, which according to his/her judgment about some appropriate characteristics required of the sample numbers, are thought to be relevant to the research topic and are easily available to him/her. In this technique, some variables are given importance and it

represents the universe but the selection of units is deliberate and based on prior judgment. This sampling technique aims at selecting all textual units that contribute to answer the given research questions.

1.11.4. THE UNIVERSE AND THE SAMPLE SIZE

The universe for the present study comprises of all the issues of the two selected dailies during the period of one and half year i.e., from 1st January 2012 to 30th June, 2013. Thus, the study includes 1094 issues of 547 days.

1.11.5. VARIABLES

The socio-economic development issues, issues related to social aspects and cultural aspects published in each of the two sample newspapers during the period of study are the variables in the present study.

- I. **Press:** Press here means the language newspapers, *Dainik Jugasankha* and *Samayik Prasanga*, to be used in the study.
- II. **Social Change:** Social change can be defined as a term use to described variations in, or modification in any aspects of processes, social patterns, social interaction or social organization and even change in structure, functions and relationship of the society.
- III. **Socio-Economic Development Issues:** Socio-economic development issues may be defined as those issues, which are important in the process of development of the society. Such social issues are matters, which directly or indirectly affect many or all members of a society. These include issues like:
 - Women empowerment
 - Poverty and unemployment
 - Communalism
 - Insurgency
 - Terrorism
 - Drug addiction

- AIDS
- Gender inequality or gender discrimination
- Human rights
- Environment
- Violence and crime
- Child marriage and dowry
- Domestic violence

For studying socio-economic development issues, all news items including soft news, hard news, articles, editorials, and letters to the editor, columns, features, middles and anchor stories covering socio-economic development issues are considered as variables in this study.

IV. **Socio-Cultural Value:** Socio-cultural value consists of two components- social structure and cultural life. The term ‘Social Structure’ refers to the basic institutions of the society such as family, marriage, kinship, economy, political system, fashion and forums of social stratification and the term ‘Cultural Life’ refers to the cultural activities such as religious life (worship of God and goddesses, rituals of life cycles), festivals and fairs, religion in crisis situations (Worship of deities of specific diseases).

▪ **Quantitative variables:**

1. Extent in terms of total space in column centimeter.
2. Frequency in terms of number of items appeared on socio-economic development issues and issues related to social aspects and cultural aspects.

▪ **Qualitative variables:**

1. Emphasis of the news story placement was considered either of its appearance in the front page or any of the inside pages.
2. Nature of socio-economic development news was categorized under positive, negative and neutral.

3. Format of socio-economic development news in terms of soft news, hard news, articles, editorials, letters to the editor, columns, features, middles and anchor stories.
4. Context of the news story were categorized in terms of local, regional, national and international news stories.
5. Types of coverage of socio-economic development news were categorized in terms of analytical and informative.

The data collected from newspaper content is quantified both in terms of column centimeters and numbers of news items appeared on socio-economic development issues and issues related to social aspects and cultural aspects.

In qualitative analysis the placement, nature, format, context and types of coverage of socio-economic development issues are studied by the researcher. The placement and context of issues related to social aspects and cultural aspects are also studied.

1.12. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

- **Analytical coverage:**

Analytical coverage refers to process reporting of socio-economic development news. It ensures in-depth study and consistent reporting of socio-economic development phenomena by journalists in order to assess the impact of socio-economic development on the people and nation.

- **Article:**

An article is a special piece of writing on a particular topic, written by an expert on the subject.

- **Anchor:**

Anchor is a news story appearing at the bottom of the front page of a newspaper.

- **Column:**

Column is an individual piece of writing expressing opinion of the writer on any issue or theme. People who write columns are known as 'columnist'.

- **Column Centimeter:**

It is a unit of measurement in which space is sold in a newspaper. Each unit stands for one column wide and one centimeter high. As all the newspapers are in hard copy form so in this present study all the measurements are made in column centimeters since column centimeter is the easiest and simplest identifiable unit while measuring newspaper content in terms of space.

- **Context:**

Context are dateline specific news stories published from various locations which shows the extent of dependence of newspaper organization on external agencies. It can be categorized under local, regional, national and international. Local news stories refer to all those news stories originate from within the local place. Regional news stories refer to those news stories originate from within the region. National news stories are those news stories which come from any region of India and international news stories are those stories that are datelined from outside India. Here local news stories refer to all those news stories that have originated from places within the three districts of Barak Valley. Regional news stories here stands for news stories originating from the entire north-eastern region. National news stories are as usual those news stories which come from any region of India and international news stories are those news stories that are datelined from outside India.

- **Editorial:**

Editorial is an important written material in a newspaper that expresses the editor's opinion about an issue.

- **Features or Human Interest Stories:**

These news stories involve adventure, disaster or a triumph. Human interest is also involved when it depicts extra-ordinary persons in ordinary situations. Human-interest stories resemble anything that appeals to everybody not because of interest in the subject but because everybody shares human experience.

- **Hard news:**

Hard news is all news reports that are presented in an objective and dispassionate manner answering five Ws and one H about any event. The five Ws and One H are questions whose answers are considered basic in information gathering or problem solving. They are often mentioned in journalism, research, and police investigations. They constitute a formula for getting the complete story on a subject. According to the principle of the five Ws, a report can only be considered complete if it answers these questions starting with an interrogative word:

- What happened?
- Who is involved?
- Where did it take place?
- When did it take place?
- Why did that happen?

Some authors add a sixth question, 'how', to the list, though 'how' can also be covered by 'what', 'when', or 'where':

- How did it happen?

- **Informative coverage:**

Informative news coverage refers to event reporting of socio-economic development news. There is no in-depth analysis and comprehensive coverage of events of socio-economic development. Informative socio-

economic development news only informs readers about simple events relating to socio-economic development.

- **Language Press:**

Language newspapers mean newspapers published in different languages spoken in the country. These newspapers are also called regional newspapers. In India, language papers are published in more than 100 languages but the main papers are published only in 16 principal languages. These papers vary from English papers in their presentation, style and approach. Newspapers in India can broadly be classified into two categories - English newspapers and language newspapers. As the name indicates, English newspapers are published in English language and are mainly published from big cities and towns, whereas language newspapers are published in different Indian languages. Unlike the English papers, these are available even in the remote villages of the country. Thus, they have a vital role in formulating public opinion across the country. Here language newspapers stand for the two Bengali dailies of Cachar district- *Dainik Jugasankha* and *Samayik Prasanga*- that have been taken in this study.

- **Letters to the editor:**

Letters to the editor are the letters on relevant issues sent by the public to the editor of the newspaper concerned.

- **Middle:**

Middles are the extension of the letters to the editor appearing on the editorial page of a newspaper.

- **Negative content:**

Contents that deals with conflicts, death, murder, suicide, negligence, violence, disorganization, indifferent attitude of the government or any other group of individual, instability and weakness, negative occurrences of socio-economic developments concerning socio-economic subjects.

- **Neutral content:**

Content reflects neither positive nor negative conditions.

- **News Items:**

A news item is any item on a timely event with a current date line, an account of that event reported by the paper's own correspondent or reporters or items from the wire services. These include human-interest stories. (Partha Sarathy 1984, pp. 107-108).

- **Positive content:**

Contents dealing with social cohesion, co-operation, stability, strength, positivity, any plan, program or policy of the government for the benefit of the people or place, financial assistance, advocacy and awareness generated.

- **Press:**

Reporters, editors, feature writers, columnists and reviewers are identified as journalists. This term also includes those who write for syndicates, press associations and magazines. They are all part of what is generally termed as press, i.e., the print media. But today the term 'press' covers not only print media journalists but journalists from all media. In this study, 'the press' refer to newspapers only.

- **Print Space:**

Print space is a total space available for printing in a newspaper.

- **Soft news:**

Those news items that present human-interest angle to any news story with an element of the reporter's subjectivity getting into the story.