

**PRESS AND ITS SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
IN NORTHEAST INDIA: A CONTENT ANALYSIS**

ABSTRACT

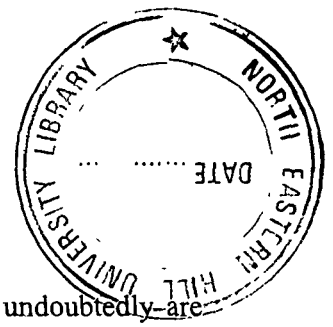
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1 Introduction

Among the modern media of mass communication, the newspapers undoubtedly are one of the oldest, the most influential and enduring medium of information. Though over the years the newspapers have undergone revolutionary changes, thanks to advancements in the area of information-communication-technology (ICT), there are many unchanging values in the press such as its social responsibility, commitment to promote democracy, credibility and truthfulness. Social responsibility of the press, which is the theme of the present study, implies the belief that the press has a basic responsibility to the public, and failing to do so would be undermining a fundamental trust the public has reposed in it. For this reason the press cannot be equated with other industry or business enterprises.

The present study is primarily focused on Northeast India. The press in the region is often blamed for reporting blood-dripping stories that deal with violence, insurgency and a host of other negative issues to the detriment of reporting news of development activities, peace efforts and people's movements. In the light of such negative coverage, which undermine economic growth and development, we seek to examine how responsible is the press in the region.

2 Research Site and Design

The research project has been designed to undertake content analysis of news, editorials, articles and letters to the editor of two pioneering newspapers of the region, namely, *The Assam Tribune* and *The Shillong Times* spread over a 3-year period, 2003-2005. The data contained in the two papers were examined for both quantitative as well as qualitative characteristics. Each news or op-ed page item has been analysed from a variety of angles to examine the social responsibility of the press. We used FoxPro 9.0 to enter and tabulate 24450 items distributed between news and op-ed pages. The computer programme enabled us to compute findings accurately and easily, as well as to retrieve data for re-examination or counter checking, thereby minimizing error.

The two newspapers were chosen as they are the most representative in the region in terms of history, prominence, circulation, nationalistic and patriotic objectives for which they were established, and the public support they enjoy as credible means of information. The period

chosen for the study also indicates that both the papers had completed at least 50 years of their existence, and the study marks the completion of the golden jubilee of India's independence.

3 Objectives

The study had the following objectives:

1. To assess the social responsibility of the press by analysing newspaper content.
2. To measure the various kinds of bias in print media in Northeast India.
3. To categorize the contents of newspapers in negative news and positive news.
4. To study how prominently does the press cover social issues.
5. To suggest ways to make the press more conscious of its social responsibility, and thereby fulfill its obligations to the public.

4 Hypothesis

While it was assumed that the newspapers under study have accepted the traditional roles and functions as their primary guiding principles, the following hypotheses pertaining to the social responsibility of the press were tested:

1. The print media in Northeast India is subject to bias (gender, urban-rural, and religious bias).
2. The press in Northeast India emphasizes more on negative news (violence, conflict, killing, kidnapping) as compared to positive news.
3. Press is not socially responsible.
4. Social issues such as education, health, development, peace and environment are not prominently covered.

5 Methodology

The researcher used content analysis as a method to study newspaper content. Since computer copies of the texts were not available, a manual checking of 312 newspapers were done, but the data entry, tabulation, analysis and interpretation were done through the computer programme. Each newspaper issue and each story was assigned a specific code number each to identify them and to avoid error of repetition. The variables examined for each item included the size of the columns, news location, space allotment, headline weightage,

photo prominence, gender, geographic location etc. to examine the prominence given to stories. The quality of content was studied by examining whether a news item is positive or negative, and by checking the level of its responsibility. Each story was classified under one of the 36 story themes and the frequency and prominence of each story was studied. The former indicated how often a story appeared, and the latter showed how prominently it was covered. Based on the data it was possible to prove the hypothesis of the study to be true.

6 Content Analysis

Content analysis as a methodology is extensively used to study characteristics and impact of media on society and individuals. Content could be newspapers, books, vision statements of organisations, policy documents of governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), reports of police cases, criminal records, suicide notes etc. The objectives include identifying the intentions of the communicators, determining psychological states of persons and groups, detecting propaganda and subversive tendencies in the publications of organisations and groups, securing political and military intelligence, addressing legal issues, studying cultural patterns, social and individual values, mores, interests, attitudes and so on.

Content analysis is widely used for media studies. It uses a set of categorisation procedures for making valid and replicable inferences from data (text or images) to their context. Inferences may be about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of which these are a part. Since it can be applied to examine *any* piece of writing or occurrence of recorded communication, content analysis today is used in a variety of fields, ranging from marketing and media studies, to literature and rhetoric, ethnographic and cultural studies, gender and age issues, sociology and political science, psychology and cognitive science.

Communication research is traditionally divided into two basic genres: *Media-centric research* which focuses on the structure of the communications industry and on media content, with minimal attention to impact on the intended audience. *Effects-centric research* focuses on audience effects and takes media organisation and content as given. Content analysis is traditionally practiced as a media-centric methodology.

The present study has shown how content analysis can be effectively used as a methodology to study newspaper content. With the aid of suitable computer programmes, study of newspaper content can assist many social sciences as has been demonstrated here. The relevance of such studies become pertinent when we consider the fact that print media in India, which is both large and powerful, has few studies by way of examining its internal performance.

The study of social responsibility of the press in Northeast India is situated in the context of the history and growth of the press in India to get a glimpse of what the pioneers expected the press to be. This is followed by an extensive review of literature related to content analysis in media studies, journalism and press in India and the region, and important ethical issues in the press. The various theories of the press are studied in relation to democratic governance and the people's right to information.

7 Major Findings of the Study

The present study has resulted in the following findings: The press is subject to various kinds of biases. The press has a gender bias which is unfavourable towards women, and is expressed overtly and covertly in numerous ways – disproportionate presence of women in the press, particularly in positions of importance and power; absence of women as sources of information and comment. Proportionately the news items dealing with women are very few, they enjoy less prominence, bringing to light the fact that a gender bias against women does exist. It may be noted that news about women will continue to be less in the newspapers as long as politics continue to dominate news pages, and as long as women continue to be only marginally present in politics. Newspapers thus point, though unwittingly, to an existential reality, that is, marginalisation of women in politics, governance, administration etc. There is also an urban bias in the press, which is unfavourable to the rural areas and people. The urban news reports far outweigh the rural news. Often events that happen in rural areas are also covered from the urban centers without the reporters visiting the place.

The press has a religion bias manifested in inadequate coverage of news about religion, religious issues and events. Religion is often portrayed in the press when the event is negative and when there are scandals. There is a bias against religion both in terms of the

sheer quantity and quality of religious news reports. Ignorance about religions among journalists is also evident in the reports published. Sometimes a religious controversy is played up to enhance reader interest. Bias is also evident in the distribution and coverage between regional, national and international news items. Bias, whatever be its target and motif, affect the newspapers and erode their credibility.

The press focuses more on negative news (violence, conflict, killing, kidnapping) in relation to positive news, that is, news dealing with peace, harmony, development etc. Press has a penchant for sensational news and even tends to sensationalise news. Violent or sensational events get greater coverage in the newspapers than those that deal with peace and development. A militant gets more attention in the press than a peacemaker or social activist. Thus we can state that the press is inherently prone towards publishing the negative news.

The press needs to effect serious changes in its content and coverage if it is to be socially responsible and face the challenges posed by the new media, and the fast decline in newspaper readership worldwide. Politics, crime and violence are given proportionately much greater importance in terms of space and prominence than news about several other important issues. This leads to the downgrading of other important news items or their omission altogether. Newspaper content does not always fulfil the needs of the readers as they fail to address concerns that are important to them. There is a mismatch between reader interest as evident in the letters to the editor and rest of the content.

Press persons seldom analyse the content of the newspapers, and are often not aware of the subject-wise distribution of content issues, space allotment and prominence given to specific issues or the gender or geographic distribution of content. There has been no serious effort to study and analyse the contents of the newspapers in the region.

There exists hardly any training and on-the job formation for the newspaper staff including reporters, sub-editors and editors. Qualitative improvement in content would evolve only when journalists' competence increases. Editors are often not critical enough and thus many errors and unethical practices creep into the pages of the newspapers.

Newspapers do not adequately cover social issues. Our study has amply proved that the newspapers provide much space to report events and little space to cover issues.

Reporting social issues need a greater degree of competence and depth of knowledge. Politics, crime and violence dominate the content of the press. A serious effort to effect significant change in content is essential if the press is to live up to its social responsibility.

Newspapers give excessive coverage and prominence to celebrities at the detriment of neglecting rural poor and the majority of population. Information is being presented as entertainment leading to the increase of what is being described as infotainment.

One can witness the absence of serious effort to separate news and opinion. News is becoming more interpretative, opinionated and sensational. Sometimes opinion masquerade as news: the distinction between the two seems to be fast blurring in the press. News reports tend to be more and more opinionated today as there is a growing tendency to include editorial comments and editorialise the news. Activist journalism and advocacy journalism are on the increase. Indian newspapers have for long preserved objectivity by reporting news without editorial comments, and this has been a distinguishing trait of the journalism in the country. The readers expect from the newspapers depth of analysis, interpretation, elaboration, background etc. While these are necessary and welcome, it is not a healthy trend when reporters tend to editorialise news. Journalism trainees need to be taught to clearly differentiate news from opinion. It is for the editors to ensure that any unhealthy practice in trying to editorialise news be checked.

The reports of the regional and local journalists tend to show greater degree of bias, exaggeration and lack of professionalism. Proximity and emotional involvement as well as political, ethnic, religious affiliation of journalists sometimes colour their writings and often reduce objectivity and impartiality. News reports sourced from international agencies and sources as well as national news agencies show greater journalistic professionalism. But the regional press is sometimes over-dependent on the agencies for objectivity. Often the attribution is vague and generic.

Many local reports based on press releases received by the newspapers indicate poor editorial quality. Adjectives and expressions intended to enhance public relations image of the issuing organisations damage the quality of the reports. Newspapers by lowering standards to publish such reports are undermining their own credibility and the readers' preference for well-written and objective stories. In several of the local news stories the

sources are not cited or are vague. This can considerably reduce the quality of news, making reporters less responsible. Local reporters tend to take for granted the requirements of providing to the readers the source of news. Some of the news items do not have sufficient news value as they do not have relevance to a large section of the readers.

8 Suggestions

The social responsibility of the press is the collective task of all - chief editor, editors, reporters, management or proprietor, ombudsperson and the public. The press, if it wishes to be socially responsible, ought to have a thorough knowledge of social issues, awareness about gender matters, and need to pay greater attention to rural realities, ensure adequate balance between news, features, letters to the editor and advertisements. Social responsibility is a goal, which can be achieved only gradually and through a careful and judicious process, something to which every newspaper ought to be committed, and strive for in view of the serious nature of the mandate the newspaper enjoys in the eyes of the public.

To overcome its gender bias, the press needs to pay greater attention to increase the number of news and features on women. Women need to be more often sources of information and should be quoted in the press. Stories related women should be given more prominence. The newspapers, if they are to successfully implement gender equality, must be willing to change the news perspectives and diversify the themes adopted for coverage. A greater emphasis on rural news and development issues can also contribute to improve gender balance. There should be a numerical gender balance in workplace in the press; women should be assigned important decision making roles and responsibilities. Newspapers should also periodically review their content to examine the quantity and quality of gender related news.

In order to address the problem of urban bias in the press, it is proposed that the newspapers give greater attention to the coverage of rural news. This can be effected by increasing the rural reporters and ensuring that they file stories from the rural areas. Greater financial allocation to enable rural reports should be adopted. It is necessary that the newspapers periodically check and verify the rural-urban ratio of reports to see where they stand. The press must also diversify its choice of themes to give attention to issues relevant to the rural people, such as agriculture, animal husbandry, rural development or lack of it, etc.

Newspapers can ensure that every reporter is assigned, at least for a few days of the month, to visit rural areas and report from location. Since the readers prefer regional news items as their first choice, followed by national news and international news items, the press needs to maintain a judicious balance between the three.

The study has found the reporting on religion inadequate and biased. The reporters should be trained on religious matters and issues, and the press should give more attention to cover stories on religion more comprehensively and accurately. Newspapers should, periodically, undertake content analysis to find out the number and kind of stories on religion and other issues published by them. The data on positive and negative news in the newspaper content show that negative news are far more than positive news in number, and that they enjoy a higher prominence index and prominence impact. Journalists and media firms consider negative news as more newsworthy. Traditional news perspectives on newsworthiness of events should be re-examined and reformulated. Even when covering negative news items, the press should provide background information, which includes causes of conflict or violence, and efforts being made to restore normalcy, peace and other steps to improve the situation.

The press needs to become socially more responsible if it is to fulfil its mandate. It is not enough that the newspapers have more responsible items than irresponsible items; it needs to ensure that stories are objective and authentic. Social responsibility will be enhanced when newspaper staff, public authorities and the consumers consciously strive to improve the quality of the newspaper content to make it more wholesome and constructive. The study also found that several important social issues are not covered adequately. When the press consciously adopts a policy focusing more attention on the marginalised, the minorities, rural population, women, and emphasize development issues, the press would undoubtedly become more responsible.

9 Proposals

The methodology for carrying out content analysis of newspapers as developed and used in the present research can be effectively used by newspapers, students of journalism and others for sociological studies. The findings could be compared with data on reader

expectations, public perception, impact and audience feedback. The public needs to monitor and analyse how the press deal with certain issues pertinent to society. Greater exchange, interaction and review of the findings of content analysis with the public and the journalists would be mutually beneficial.

Using this or similar methods of content analysis, smaller samples could be selected from several newspapers across the country to study the press coverage of just one single issue. The method is also suited for area specific or subject specific content studies. For instance, a researcher desiring to study any particular item such as news, editorials, photographs, letters to the editor etc. can do so. Similarly major headlines and related stories of a week in the country or a region could be studied to examine how the newspapers dealt with particular issues. As more and more newspapers are becoming available on the Internet, and as soft copies of archival materials are also becoming obtainable, it would be easy for researchers to use one of the several computer programmes available for content analysis.

A possible further research is to undertake a comparative space allotment, prominence and content of the advertisements. Study of advertisements would help understand the target group of the newspaper audience such as age, income category, consumer preferences etc. It is also important to study how advertisers control and influence the newspaper content, influence behaviour, social habits, policies etc. Researchers can also compare what is available as content with what is absent and what ought to have been published. Content analysis data could be compared and co-related with audience surveys and reader preference studies. Comparing the news source with the content quality would help to understand issues like reporter or source bias, professional quality etc.

Small and medium newspapers and vernacular press need to be promoted more conscientiously. Single newspaper towns need alternative newspapers so as to provide alternative perspectives and to avoid monopoly. The nature and quality of newspaper content will depend very much on professionalism on the part of the newspaper management and vigilance and active participation by the public. All stakeholders need to work collaboratively and concertedly to promote understanding and awareness about regional, national and global issues, to avoid bias and to ensure that the press is socially responsible.

Newspapers need to balance the content in favour of processes than events. Even violent events need to be reported in a perspective, and the press should not ignore causes of conflict that lead to violence, peace processes, etc. We need to re-examine and if necessary reformulate the traditional definitions and canons of journalism that tend to highlight negative issues as more newsworthy than constructive events.

10 Conclusion

When one observes the growth and expansion of the press in the Northeast, it is important to examine critically its social responsibility. The study assumes particular significance in the light of a host of problems such as militancy, unrest, unemployment, lack of development, geographical isolation and ethnic and linguistic unrest, linguistic plurality. The press in India from its inception was seldom seen as a medium of entertainment, or a means to make profit, but as a powerful tool to promote national interest and development.

The press in India possesses many admirable qualities. It has enjoyed the trust and confidence of the masses. Personalities like Raja Rammohun Roy, Mahatma Gandhi and a galaxy of eminent personalities, through their involvement in the field of newspaper journalism, have lent prestige to the profession and ennobled it. Some of the leading journalists and editors who followed the path traced out by them in the post-independent history of Indian journalism have carved out a niche for themselves for objectivity, impartiality, patriotism, professional integrity and ethical conduct. But the phenomenon of the shrinking social space in newspapers has become a major concern for media critics and readers of newspapers.

Today the press is tempted to leave behind the majority who are left in the margins, the voiceless, the marginalized sections, the dalits, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, the rural and urban poor, who hardly ever figure in the pages of the newspapers. The inadequate representation or near absence of these categories in the mainstream press often betray a lack of social commitment. Lack of appropriate training about ethical, moral and social issues, absence of adequate laws and regulations within the press, affect journalistic work, making it socially less responsible. The conflict approach to news coverage gives prime news space and news time to those urging violence and ignores those working for non-violent

solutions to various problems. Newspapers need to shift its emphasis from negative news to balance the news coverage with positive and neutral news items. Development communication and positive news need to be given more prominence in order to have a balanced and healthy newspaper.

Definitions of news are not static, and news values such as prominence, conflict, and timeliness have been modified in recent years, not always to the benefit of the news audience. News elements and criterion on what constitutes news needs to be reviewed. News is also a highly perishable commodity. News has a short shelf life. Nothing is as old as yesterday's news. It is helpful for news reporters, the news audience, and news sources to distinguish between the timeliness of news and the immediacy of news coverage. Timeliness speaks of the topicality and relevance of a news report. There is a danger that the substance of a report will suffer in the quest for the glitter of immediacy.

Newspapers not only provide information, but also manifest bias in numerous ways. The strong pro-urban bias is evident in the number and kind of news featured in the newspapers. Bias is also evident in the way the press portrays individuals or ethnic communities, racial groups or people of different nationalities and genders.

The press has its own unique role and function in society. Therefore, instead of resting on the laurels of the past, the newspaper industry in India needs to introspect on its current performance and plan for its future. The healthy press is not a finished product. It is ever evolving. The present study, it is hoped, would some way contribute to this on-going process of evolution, growth and change.

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**By
GEORGE PLATHOTTAM**

**SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENT OF THE DEGREE OF
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**IN
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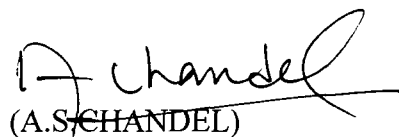
I, George Plathottam, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University, Institute.

This thesis is being submitted to North-Eastern Hill University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Library and Information Science.


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Acknowledgement

The study of the *Press and Its Social Responsibility in Northeast India: A Content Analysis* has been like an arduous journey – strenuous but rewarding nevertheless. The study took me through vast quantity of data comprising of 312 issues of newspapers, 24450 news reports, editorials, articles and letters to the editor which appeared in *The Assam Tribune* and *The Shillong Times*, spread over three years. The extensive analysis of newspaper content under various criteria and the nature of the analysis, have certainly been a very enriching experience.

Why did I study newspapers? I owe much to the print media and my association goes back to the time I learnt to read and write. This study is both an acknowledgement of the power of the press and a tribute. The press today is undergoing rapid changes, and its survival is being challenged in unprecedented ways, thanks to the television, Internet and other new media. Therefore this study is prompted by a desire to remind the press of its social responsibility, to study its strengths and weaknesses, and potential to overcome the crisis it is confronting today.

While reading the interpretation of the data and the conclusions, one might get the impression that the study is negative and overly critical of the newspapers in general and of the two newspapers chosen for the research in particular. While such a perception is not totally unfounded, I must admit that the study of an issue as pertinent as the social responsibility of the press, was born of a deep sense of appreciation for the newspapers on the one hand, and the great expectations that the researcher and almost all readers have of the daily newspapers to which most people habitually turn every morning.

Hence, any criticism of the way the newspaper functions is not intended to cast aspersions on the press or to ignore the struggles and challenges that the people involved in the newspaper industry face. One cannot underestimate the commitment, hard work and team spirit involved in bringing out the newspaper every morning without fail in rain and sunshine. Most readers instinctively turn to the daily newspaper as a credible source of information. They trust their papers. The study is hence a sincere effort to understand the duties and responsibilities of the press to society and individuals.

One might notice that a lot of examples and models of content analysis cited in this study are of American or European origin. The reason is not lack of appreciation for what is Indian but this has been necessitated by the fact that journalism as an academic discipline, as well as other media studies have been pioneered by scholars and institutes in the West, particularly the United States of America. Much of Indian journalism has faithfully followed the laws, standards and practices of the press in the West or adapted them. We may also observe the near absence of content analysis of newspaper data in our country. I feel that this is a serious lacunae as well as a challenge to social scientists and media professionals to respond to. A country which is linguistically and socio-culturally so diverse as India needs to undertake serious research based on newspaper content analysis.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to those who assisted, supported and guided me in the process of this research. I would like to begin by paying homage to the memory of Late Prof. Veena Saraf. I was fortunate to have known her, though only for a short period of time, and at the initial stages of my research. She was an admirable

combination of a rigorous academician who demanded nothing but the best from her students, and a loving sister who was compassionate, cheerful and affirming.

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Chapter 1

Press in India and Northeast India: Historical and Contemporary Scenario

Different epochs in history have been described by the dominant characteristic traits of that particular period; thus we have the 'Stone Age', the 'Iron Age', the 'Bronze Age', the 'Age of Industry' and so on. The most dominant hallmark of the contemporary age is that it is an age of information-communication. Hence, we often use expressions like 'Information Society', 'Communication Era', the 'Information Age', the age of 'Information Communication Technology' (ICT) and so on. Today the impact of media is so powerful and all-pervading that we describe the contemporary era as "Media Age". As McLuhan (1964) has said: "This is the new world of the Global Village". But any serious study of media cannot be isolated from other facets of human life. As McLuhan (1964) has observed, "any new medium, by its acceleration, disrupts the lives and investments of whole communities." The print media, the oldest among the various modern means of communication, is the subject of the present study. Today the print media faces an unprecedented challenge from electronic media like radio, television and internet. In order to understand the ramifications of this challenge, it is necessary to examine the

traditional role of the press and the current challenges it faces in spite of remarkable technological and sociological developments, which can augur well for the press.

In this introductory chapter we trace the history of the press in India as a whole and of Northeast India in particular. We examine the role and function of the press against the backdrop of the sociological and political processes that shaped the nation state that India is. In particular we examine the contribution of the Christian missionaries and the European pioneers who laid the foundations of the press in India. This early phase is followed by the nationalist press spearheaded by leaders like Raja Rammohun Roy, Mahatma Gandhi and others. It is in their writings and journalistic practices that we find the seminal concepts concerning the need for a socially responsible press. We shall examine the ideas and thoughts of the pioneers who led the movement to achieve the socialistic and nationalistic goals through their writings and publications. Raja Rammohun Roy and Mahatma Gandhi represent the two pillars of the twin movement to achieve social reform and independence respectively.

The notion of social responsibility has not ceased to have relevance today. Even in the vastly changed historical circumstances in which we live today, one cannot undermine the importance of the social responsibility of the press. Newspapers today are experiencing a global decline in circulation, but it has not diminished the pre-eminent role it has traditionally enjoyed as the 'Fourth Estate' and as the 'watchdog' of democracy, and a powerful agent of social change. The press, we must affirm, is quite different from other kinds of industry or business enterprise. Its functions include being the voice of the people to herald reform and change.

1.1 Definition

Before we set out to examine the social responsibility of the press in Northeast India, it is necessary to define and clarify terms that are central to our study.

i) The Press

The term 'press' in everyday parlance denotes many things: the printing press as well as the newspapers, and in some instances the book publishing industry. The reason for such wide-ranging connotations for the term 'press' is due to the fact that printing evolved over a long period of time and in varying historic circumstances. The technology as well as the method used for printing too varied from country to country. The term 'press' indicates the process used for rapid and standardised form of producing copies of texts. The term applied in the beginning to connote the technology of printing was later applied to the production of books and newspapers when they came into vogue. Persons engaged in the gathering of news and information and the production of newspapers came to be broadly referred to as 'the press.'

In our study we refer to the press to mean journalistic activity centered on the newspaper industry. However, in the historical section where we speak about the pioneers and the first printing presses, we have sometimes used, for want of another suitable word, the term, 'press' to denote the printing establishment, including the machinery and the industry that it denotes. We have used the expression 'the print media' to denote the newspaper industry as well as the printing press. This is

necessary when we need to distinguish the print media from the electronic media. Our primary focus in the present study is on the press as a medium of communication and not on printing as an industry.

ii) Social Responsibility

We intend to examine the social responsibility of the press on the basis of conventional norms and precepts on which the press is founded. Siebert et al (1956) deal with the social responsibility theory of the press. Nordenstreng et al (1989) review developments concerning the status, rights and responsibilities of journalists around the world. The Constitutions of many countries either explicitly or implicitly define the role and functions of the press. Press Commissions and various newspaper publishers and editors have also defined the principles which govern the press. According to Eapen (1989), "If press responsibility, in its ultimate analysis, is to the readers, then press persons ought to maintain a high degree of integrity and uphold the rights and hopes of all social segments". Social responsibility of the press demands widening the canvas of coverage, reducing the gap between the information rich and the information poor, including the use of language style which the neo-literate can fumble through. Rights and responsibilities cannot be end in themselves; they can only be means to an end. The press occupies a privileged position in modern society. But more than simply seeking out truth and reporting it to an otherwise ignorant populace, the press plays an active role in influencing and shaping public opinion. That is why it is disturbing when the media in general and the press in particular choose to lie or mislead their consumers in full knowledge of the ramifications of that decision. When the press fails to act truthfully and responsibly it

undermines a fundamental trust. This is not to imply that readers should forego critical thinking and blindly believe whatever opinion the press generates, or whatever information it communicates. There is a fundamental difference between opinions that appear in the editorial pages of every daily newspaper and news which is distinctly different from opinion. The well-guarded and traditionally accepted distinction between news and opinion seem to be fast blurring in many of our newspapers today. At worst one can also find opinion masquerading as news.

The trust of its readers is crucial to the smooth functioning of the press. The public needs to trust the press, but trust is not given unless responsibility is demonstrated. It is therefore crucial for newspapers to act properly and responsibly. Each country has its own rules and guidelines, rights and duties which govern the press. In addition, each newspaper has a set of internal regulations intended to ensure its editorial integrity, protect its sources and ensure that it maintains certain ethical standards. According to the ethical guidelines for editors, the editor-in-chief is personally and fully liable for the newspaper's content. This also applies to advertisements.

As universal rights, freedom of speech, freedom of expression and freedom of the press may not be compromised or done away with by laws enacted by governments. Nevertheless they are not absolute in practice. The press is restrained by moral and legal responsibility as they may come in conflict with other rights similarly guaranteed. On the universal plane, journalists are aware of personal rights of individuals, like the right to privacy that others are entitled to enjoy. Respect for

these rights is the responsibility that guides journalists in the exercise of their freedom.

One of the principle goals of journalism is to be faithful and responsible to the truth. Whether individual journalists or publications meet that ideal is often debated, but they all, at a basic level, have a definitive responsibility - to their readers. At the first sign of anything like restraint or caution calling to act responsibly, the press tends to cry foul and call it censorship. It considers any such infringement as an affront on the idea of freedom which is held to be an absolute right. But in the absence of any countervailing force, the press and the other media conglomerates have used in recent times to create a cesspool of messages about licentiousness, murder, violence, immorality, 'objectification' of women, glorification of greed and force, and much more. The audience is often left with no choice but to live with what is proffered as news and information. This media-created environment of undesirable values, role models, and desensitising experiences has important effects on every one - particularly the most vulnerable segment of society like children and young people. It is in the light of such fast changing trends that affect the press and other media today that the issue of social responsibility is becoming increasingly important.

The social responsibility of the press implies the belief that the press has a basic responsibility to help strengthen and support democratic processes. The press is often referred to as the 'Fourth Estate' and its functions include being a 'watchdog'. Only a press that is socially committed and responsible can become a critical voice in the democratic system. A press that is a mouthpiece of the government in power or

other vested interest groups not only fails in its responsibility but also becomes in the course of time one which lacks credibility in the eyes of the public.

There are media analysts who feel that today there is too much of creative freedom, and not enough creative responsibility. Those who are content with what they get from the press today do not feel the need for any kind of social or governmental control or responsibility. McQuail (2004) notes the problem of growing absence of media responsibility for wider matters of social and cultural concern. Media, he says, seem to be more concerned with private accountability to the shareholders than public accountability to the audiences, government or society at large. Theories of democracy, according to him, seem unable to provide any coherent account of the necessary role of press in the political process and theory of journalism seems also incapable of providing what is missing.

There is a serious crisis of confidence and trust in the press. As Wahl-Jorgensen (2004) of Cardiff University summed up the results of a U.K.-based 2001 Mass Observation (MO) study into public attitudes. According to him “journalism cannot be trusted because news organisations are too commercially driven, biased, and aligned with government and special interests.” This crisis is evident in the decline of newspaper circulation and readership. It also points to the apparent inability of mass media to serve their ideal role in a democratic society, that of creating an informed public. But if consumers desire a socially more responsible press, it is essential to address the issue of social responsibility which in turn implies the need for reviewing existing laws, guidelines and policies, as well as enacting new ones that favour a more responsible press.

iii) Northeast India

Northeast India, which is the primary focus of our study, consists of seven political states, namely, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, and is called the “Seven Sisters.” The state of Sikkim has been added to the Northeast for the purposes of planning and other administrative objectives to the seven states, making the final count eight. It may be observed that the term ‘Northeast’ applied as a collective nomenclature to the eight states of the region is itself being considered problematic. According to Hussain (2004) “there is a serious problem with the bracketing of this region with its diverse tribes, customs and cultures, into what is called the ‘Northeast.’ By doing so we often tend to ignore the distinct identity and sub-national aspirations of these ethnic groups.

With a land area of 2.55,00,000 square kilometers, the region constitutes 7.8 per cent of India’s total territory. Geographically, the region is part of a great tropical rain forest that sweeps across the Himalayan foothills to the Malay Peninsula. The region’s strategic location is evident from the fact that it has over 4000 kilometres of international border with Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and China. In fact, Northeast has 98 per cent of its border with these countries and only 2 per cent of boarder with the rest of India through what is known as the ‘Chicken’s neck’ or the ‘narrow Siliguri corridor’. Seventy per cent of the land area in the region is hilly and the rest plains. With a wide forest cover, the region is one of the richest bio-diversity hotspots in the world. Though the state of Sikkim is often included as part of Northeast, we have in our study excluded it as this inclusion is comparatively recent and primarily motivated by administrative and economic considerations.

The region's 38 million people belong to a variety of ethnic races and linguistic and cultural groups. Nearly half the population of the region belongs to the Scheduled Tribes. According to Singh, (1994) of the 653 tribal communities in India, 200 live in Northeast India. Of the 325 languages spoken in India, more than 200 of them are in the Northeast. Most of these languages fall within the category of Tibeto-Burman languages. In short, the region is a veritable microcosm of India's ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity.

1.2 Christian Missionaries and the Press in India

One of the most outstanding Christian missionaries in the East, Saint Francis Xavier, exerted considerable pressure to get printing presses established in several places in the East. Portuguese Jesuits in 1556 introduced the first printing press. Goa, however, was not the intended destination of that press. The printing press dispatched from Portugal was meant for Abyssinia but did not reach its destination due to certain political conditions there. This press, which came to Goa en route to Abyssinia, stayed on in Goa, becoming the first printing press in India. By October of that year, printing commenced in Goa with Jesuit Brother Joao de Bustamante serving as the first printer. The first works printed in India were loose sheets called *Conclusoes* in 1546. Since such works are not considered as books, the first printed book was the Catechism composed by St. Francis Xavier called *Doutrina Christao*, printed in 1547 by Bustamante. It is this book that is considered as the first printed book in India. Records indicate that the early printers who came from Lisbon had able Indian assistants, though we do not have any record of their names (Kesavan, 1985). The

Portuguese from Goa made a gift of a printing press to the Emperor Akbar in the 1560s (Srambical, 1982-83).

Printing spread throughout India during the 250 years that followed its introduction in Goa. Besides the Portuguese, the British, Spanish and Danish helped disseminate the technology of printing. Twenty years after the first press was opened in Goa, a Spanish Jesuit lay brother, Goao Gonsalves, set up a press in Malabar and printed the first work in a local language- a Malayalam translation of Francis Xavier's *Doutrina Christao*. In extreme south India, in the village of Pudikail near Tirunelvelly, Father John de Faria started a press in 1587, and cast types of Tamil letters (Lent, 1981-82).

The Danish, who started Protestant missionary work in India, had a press in Tranquebar (in Madras state) in 1712, its aim being to produce the Bible in Tamil. Its printer, Bartholomew Ziegenbalg must have been very industrious, for by April 1713, 32 books in the Malabar language and 22 in Portuguese were published. By 1713, the Danish missionaries were manufacturing paper, and shortly after, they persuaded the king of Tanjore to establish a press there. The Tranquebar press flourished until 1739 (Lent, 1981-82).

A press that had the greatest influence on India was the Baptist Mission Press started by William Carey in Mudnabatty in 1798 and moved to Serampore in 1800 (Lent, 1981-82). This printing press was instrumental in helping other nations open presses, sending trained printers and equipment to them. McMurtie (1935) wrote that this press was the first and most important of a long line of mission presses in India, which "exerted so great an influence on the spread of printing in that country."

Responsible for the Serampore press was William Carey, a missionary who, when he arrived in Calcutta in 1795, had to carry on his evangelical work in secret because of East India Company restrictions. Carey requested a press from the London Missionary Society in 1798; the following year, other missionaries were sent to assist Carey with his missionary and printing duties. The first books of the Serampore press were a Bengali translation of the Gospel of St. Matthew, done by Carey in 1801, and Carey's Dialogue intended to Facilitate the Acquiring of the Bengali Language in 1801. In 1816, Carey and his fellow missionaries founded the Calcutta Book Society, and in 1818, published at Serampore a Bengali monthly and a weekly, the first periodicals published in an Indian language. In 1812 two missionaries of the same church who were denied admission in Calcutta were sent to Bombay where they developed a press by 1815-17.

Missionary printers were not always welcomed or tolerated by the authorities in India. The British rulers feared that missionary activity might endanger the stability of British rule. Presses that were allowed to operate often were placed in areas where the authorities could easily control them (Lent, 1981-82).

Other printing presses were established in places like Vepery, Mangalore, Serampore, Gorakhpur (Kesavan, 1985). Kesavan (1985) says: "Regardless of the motives of the missionaries, one cannot but admire what was virtually a martyrdom of the highest caliber of a man of God like William Carey, who truly, is pre-eminent among the pioneers whose gift to India, is something we can never forget."

Malayalam and Tamil are close contenders for the honour of being the first Indian languages to use movable type for printing. The East India Company, never

overeager to encourage the initiative of missionary activity towards the spread of printing for its own political reasons, finally woke up to a situation wherein it became necessary to fashion such Indian language typography as could help their administrative machinery in its work (Kesavan, 1985).

Within a hundred years of the printing of Gutenberg's Bible in Germany, India initiated the fashioning of types for the many Indian languages. According to Kesavan, if the location of the earlier printing presses in India were plotted on the map, it will be found that they all hug the coast line of the Peninsula: Goa, Cochin, Pudukail (Northeast of Cape Comorin), Vypincotta (a mile south of Cranganore), and Ambalakkadu (a village 20 miles south of Trichur), are the places along the west coast. Tranquebar, Madras, Fort William- Calcutta, and Serampore along the East Cost represent the shaping of Indian printing. Bombay contributed its share towards the closing years of the second phase of the vigorous growth of early Indian printing (Kesavan, 1985).

1.3 Newspapers and Periodicals in India: The European Pioneers

The credit for starting the first newspaper in India goes to James Augustus Hicky who brought out the *Bengal Gazette* alias *Calcutta General Advertiser*. The first issue of the two-sheet weekly was published on January 29, 1780 in Calcutta. Hicky called it a 'weekly political and commercial paper open to all parties but influenced by none.' Its contents included items taken from newspapers in England,

Hicky's home country, letters from local and *mofussil* readers, and items of gossip and scandal of interest to the European community (Partahsarathy, 1991).

Hicky's paper began to attract the wrath and displeasure of Warren Hastings, then Governor General of India and others who often featured in the gossip columns of Hicky's paper. Hicky was imprisoned and the types from his press were seized. His paper came to an end within two years of its commencement. Hicky's fortunes had already begun to decline in the same year when a rival paper called *Indian Gazette* was launched by Messers B. Messink and Peter Reed which began publication in 1780. It was a much better newspaper with four pages, each 16 inches long with three columns and well printed. (Natarajan 2000; Partahsarathy, 1991). The publishers of *India Gazette* obtained the consent of the Governor General and sought postal concession, promising to abide by any regulations issued by him. Four years later, followed the *Calcutta Gazette* published under the direct patronage of the government. In the following year came two monthlies *Bengal Journal* and the *Oriental Magazine of Calcutta Amusement*. With the *Calcutta Chronicle* which began publication in 1786, there were four weekly newspapers and one monthly magazine published from Calcutta within six years of Hicky's maiden effort (Natarajan, 2000). According to Natarajan (2000) the new editors trod warily the trail, which Hicky had blazed for them. *The Bengal Gazette* was the forerunner of many more journals and newspapers in Calcutta and other parts of the country.

The first newspaper in Madras was *Madras Courier* which came into existence in 1785 as an officially recognized paper founded by Richard Johnson, the government printer. In 1791, Hugh Boyd, who was editor of the *Madras Courier*

resigned and started the *Hurkaru*, but the paper ceased publication a year later when he died. *Madras Courier* continued without a competitor till 1795 when R. Williams started the *Madras Gazette*, followed a few months later by the *India Herald* which was published without authority by one Humphreys who was arrested for unauthorised publication. Censorship was introduced in Madras in 1795 (Natarajan, 2000).

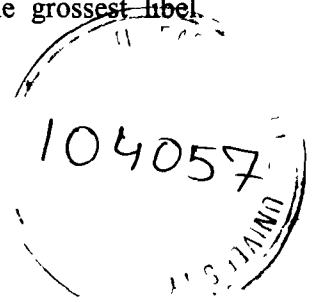
Bombay's first newspaper, the *Bombay Herald* came into existence in 1789. The *Courier* which was published a year later carried advertisements in Gujarati. The *Bombay Gazette* was published in 1791 and the *Bombay Herald* merged into it the following year. In Bombay and Madras, newspapers did not on the whole come into conflict with the government as was the case with the papers in Bengal. Most of the editors and publishers were anxious to earn official recognition and enjoy the favour of the government. Some of them submitted proof sheets to the authorities prior to publication. When they were pulled up for what was considered offensive to the authorities, the editors published apologies (Natarajan, 2000).

In Bengal the position was quite different. The editor of the *Bengal Journal*, William Duane, faced a lot of trouble from the government, his property was confiscated and he was eventually deported to England. Sir John Shore, the Governor General, wrote that newspapers in Calcutta had assumed 'a licentiousness too dangerous to be permitted in this country.' Between 1791 and 1798, newspapers in Bengal were pulled up for various offences many of which related to military subjects (Natarajan, 2000).

The turn of the century marked the end of a phase in journalism marked by absence of press laws, censorship of the papers, deportation of editors and other punishments. Those who refused to toe the government line were denied postal privileges. The press at this period largely catered to the interests of the Europeans in India (Natarajan, 2000). According to Natarajan (2000) the early newspapers were started by ex-servants of the Company who had incurred its displeasure and their columns were devoted to the exposure of the evils and malpractices of the time. Many of the writings were scurrilous and their authors indulged in the grossest libel. Nevertheless, they served a useful purpose.

1.4 The Nationalist Press

The nationalist press had two important objectives: social reform and freedom struggle. As one of the luminaries who inspired and guided the nationalist press through its nascent years, Raja Rammohun Roy is considered the father of Indian journalism. In 1816 Raja Rammohun Roy launched the first Indian-owned English daily, *Bengal Gazette*. Though his paper had the same name as that of Hicky's, the content and purpose of Raja Rammohun Roy's paper were quite different. He used the medium of newspapers and periodicals to promote social reform and make it effective because the law by itself did not, and could not, accomplish social reform. His *Sambad Kaumudi*, launched in 1821 spelt out the case against the evils in Hindu society. He also launched a Persian weekly, *Miraqt-ul-Akhbar* to reach those who were unfamiliar with Bengali and English, and an English periodical, *Brahmanical Magazine* to counter the propaganda of the Serampore missionaries (Bhargava, 2005).



Raja Rammohun Roy opposed through his publications such superstitions and taboos as widow burning or sati, human sacrifice, the caste system, opposition to widow remarriage and practice of polygamy, untouchability, addiction to opium, degradation of the social position of women and ostracisation of those who crossed the seas (Bhargava, 2005). He also advocated practice of freethinking and the spirit of enquiry, laid the foundation of democratic spirit, inculcated democratic ideas and social outlook. He was a champion of the freedom of the press (Bhargava, 2005).

In 1885 Dadabhai Naoroji started the first English daily newspaper, *The Voice of India*, in Bombay. It was also known as the *Indian Spectator*. This broadsheet was more interested in British government's doings and sayings. However the paper advocated social and administrative reforms. A Gujarati weekly called *Goktar* was started in the same year. Dadabhai, called the 'Grand Old Man of India', founded some thirty institutions, the most important among them being, the Indian National Congress. Most of his contemporaries were closely associated with one or the other newspaper or periodical of the era. They include Mahadev Govind Ranade, Badruddin Tyabji, Pherozeshah Merwanji Mehta, Kshinath Triambak Telang, Dinshaw Eduljee Wacha, Jhaverilal Umashankar Yajnik, Rahimtoolah Muhammad Sayani, Narain Ganesh Chandavarkar, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, W.C. Banerjee, Manmohan Ghose, Surendranath Banarjee, Lal Mohan Bose, Anand Mohan Bose, Kalichurn Banurji, Dr.Satchidanand Sinha, Sir S. Subramania Iyer, G. Subramania Iyer, of *The Hindu*, Anandacharu, Salem Ramaswamy Mudaliyar, C.Vijayaraghavachariar, Gazula Lakshmi Narasimhalu Chetty and Madan Mohan Lalaviya (Bhargava, 2005).

Lokamanya Tilak edited *Kesari* in Marathi and *Maratha* in English. Sri Aurobindo Ghose edited *Bandemataram* and *Karmayogin* in English and *Dharma* in Bengali. Sisir Kumar Ghosh founded and edited *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. Ranade and his colleagues started the *Deccan Sabha* in Pune and G.K. Gokhale was associated with this quarterly journal *The Bengali*, started by W.C. Banerjee. Bengal had other periodicals like *Hindoo Patriot*, *Reis* and *Rayyat*. Keshab Chandra Sen founded the *Indian Mirror*. Dr. Satchidanand Sinha started newspapers by the name of *Bihar Times*, *Hindustan Review*, *Kayastha Samachar*, *The Indian People* from places like Allahabad and Patna in the first decade of 20th century. Telang started the *Indu Prakash*, which was later run by Chandavarkar.

G.Subramniya Iyer of Madras was the founder-editor of *The Hindu*. Hriday Nath Kunzru founded the *Indian Herald* in Allahabad. Sardar Dayal Singh Maajithiya launched *The Tribune* from Lahore. Among the 'Anglo-Indian' publications of the early twentieth century were *The Civil and Military Gazette*, (Lahore), *The Statesman* (Calcutta), *The Times of India* (Bombay), and *The Pioneer* (Lucknow).

The early newspapers focused on the twin task of social reform and political emancipation of the country. Journalism served to spread the message of social reform and freedom movement as well as communicate with the authorities (Bhargava, 2005). These papers, many of them regional in language and outreach, rendered a yeomen service to create over the years a spirit of nationalism and social reform. The names of people associated with the founding and growth of these papers, show that they were driven by a passion for the social, ethical and political reawakening of India and not so much by commercial or material consideration. In

that sense the pioneers of the Indian press possessed a strong sense of social responsibility.

1.5 Press and Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi edited and published several periodicals and books. On June 4, 1903, Gandhi together with two of his close associates launched in Durban, South Africa, a foolscap-sized three-column weekly journal called *Indian Opinion*. It was non-commercial and meant to voice the feelings of the Indians in South Africa and to improve their lot (Bhattacharya, 1969). Though he was not the official editor of *Indian Opinion*, Gandhi was responsible for its policy, finances and editing. He regularly wrote columns in the paper, deliberated on issues like *Satyagraha* in its pages. Though the journal was primarily intended to advance the moral, political and social condition of Indians in South Africa, Gandhi through his writings expounded the struggle for human rights and equality before law for all people. Gandhi in evolving the idea of passive resistance or 'Satyagraha' was influenced by Christ, Socrates, Thoreau, Tolstoy and others who advocated peace and non-violence as a weapon against aggression. Gandhi explained that without *Indian Opinion*, the movement for civil rights, which he pursued for almost two decades in South Africa, would have been impossible. Gandhi's writings won him several followers and collaborators from among the Englishmen like Albert West, Henry Polak, Herbert Kitchin etc. The cosmopolitan climate of the very first Gandhian 'ashram' is obvious: it was a true meeting place of East and West (Bhattacharya, 1969).

Within a few years after Gandhi returned to India, he took up the leadership of *Young India*, a weekly established as an organ of the Home Rule League of Bombay. In 1999 Gandhi took over its editorship. He stripped the journal of all advertisements and brought to its pages his message to the Congress party, setting before the country his programme of swadeshi aimed at making every village sufficiently productive to meet its own needs.

His papers and writings were primarily aimed at being an adversary of the British and to wrest freedom from the foreign rule. In his preface to Sunil Sharma's book, *Journalist Gandhi*, (Sharma, 1994), one of India's well known journalists, Kamath (1994) outlines some of the chief qualities of Gandhi's journalistic writings. Gandhi wrote extensively on a wide variety of topics – politics, economics, sociology, religion. Kamath calls Gandhi's writing provocative in an endearing way. He did not duck difficult questions but faced them head-on. He was also admired for his intellectual honesty and simple and intelligible style. He had no literary pretensions but what he wrote could be described as literature. This is because he wrote with his heart and not with his mind. He wanted the content to be studied, not the style. His style stunned because of its very simplicity. It carried conviction because of its innate honesty. *Harijan*, according to Kamath (1994) was the most talked about journal in India. *Harijan*, established in 1933, made more news than it reported. It was suspended, suppressed and restarted during the period preceding India's independence. *Harijan* reflected the many social and individual concerns which were a part of Gandhi's complex and continuing analysis of the human predicament.

Printed on hand-made paper it was the voice of Mahatma Gandhi and, by extension, the Voice of India. *Harijan* presented the Mahatma when he was alive in his many moods: friend, philosopher, guide, politician, statesman, saint. He was all that and much more; he was the complete editor. There never was no editor like him before and there never will be another like him in the future. The times, of course made the man. But the man contributed to his times in many wondrous ways (Kamath,1994).

Kamath (1994) says “One can look at the Mahatma’s journalistic forays in either of two ways; as the moralist who took to journalism or as the journalist who undertook a moral crusade. That the Mahatma was crusader par excellence is unquestionable. He crusaded for morality in politics and in public life. He wrote with disciplined simplicity. The result was one most important quality of literary act, namely, clarity.

Gandhi’s influence and example in journalism, according to an observer, was like “an elixir to Indian journalism” (Bhargava, 2005). That the newspapers and the political movement moved hand in hand in the early twentieth century was noted. K. Rama Rao writes of Gandhi: “We of the press particularly lived in his reflected effulgence. To the newspapers he lent prestige and importance as the media of his message, as the vehicles of his inspiration and as the recorders of his operations in the field, as well as of his vital counsels in conferences, cabinet and committees (Bhargava, 2005).

Gandhi believed that the sole aim of journalism should be service. “The true function of journalism is to educate the public mind and read the mind of the country

and to give definite and fearless expression to that mind” (Kamath,1960). Gandhi was an ardent advocate of press freedom. Freedom of the press, he said, is a precious privilege that no country can forego. The liberty of the press is a dear privilege, apart from the advisability or otherwise of civil disobedience.” The press, he believed, has power, but to misuse that power is crime. He adopted the human approach to journalism. He never considered the public as target for propaganda. His voice was the voice of humanity- not the voice of a pamphleteer. For Gandhi, readers were most important. A Journalist may be a patriot, a party member, or a faithful employee, but his loyalty, according to him, should primarily, to his readers. Public has the right to know the truth. It must be informed objectively as to what is happening. If the paper loses confidence of its readers, it has lost all that is worth in journalism (Sharma, 1994).

Gandhi did not carry advertisement as he expected the publication to survive on subscriptions. His intention was that ads would unduly influence the policy and conduct of the publication. It is difficult to think of the survival of newspapers today without advertisements. But commenting on Gandhi’s policy in this regard, Bhargava aptly states: “Gandhi in his farsightedness might have visualized the situation in the late 20th and early 21st centuries when newspapers would sell editorial space for advertising” (Bhargava, 2005).

The theme of social responsibility is not difficult to discern in the many writings and pronouncements of Gandhi. In simple, yet forceful and clear style, he exposed social evils and advocated inter-caste marriages, Hindu-Muslim unity and launched a multi-pronged attack on all forms of social disability. He called for social

change without sensation. In spite of the sensitive issues he took up, Gandhi achieved remarkable success with his papers and his writings as rival Gujarati papers declined in popularity, and the circulation of his paper *Navjivan* more than doubled within a year of his assuming its editorship. Gandhi was a leader and trendsetter in journalism. He inspired and influenced the thinking of many other freedom fighters as well as editors of his time.

Gandhi's own observations about the objectives of a newspaper were spelled out in *Young India*. "I have taken up journalism not for its sake but merely as an aid to what I have conceived to be my mission in life" (Bhargava, 2005). Gandhiji spelt out his perception of the objects of a newspaper as understanding 'popular feelings and giving expression to it; another is to arouse among the people a certain desirable sentiments; the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects' (Bhargava, 2005).

1.6 The Press in the Post Independent India

As we have seen the press in India had fought shoulder to shoulder with the nationalist forces in the freedom struggle. The press rejoiced with the 400 million people of independent India and in the first flush of freedom, it rode with the current and was sympathetic and cooperative with the new national government which faced a deluge of problems plunging the country into strife and bloodshed and instability. A section of the press, according to Parthasarathy (1991), had not got over the hangover of colonial rule and indulged in fanning communal passions and hatred and in scurrilous writing. Sensational journalism became a fashion with some and the country's interests ceased to be paramount. The leaders in the new government, many

of whom had a close rapport with the press, felt that a section of the press played the role of an opposition instead of playing a constructive role. Nehru, who otherwise was champion of liberal democracy, came down on the press frequently. He recalled British premier Stanley Baldwin's remark about newspapers that they enjoyed power without responsibility (Parthasarathy, 1991).

But the press justified its position citing its responsibility to the public. Frank Moraes, the editor of the *Times of India* said after some reflection and consultation he decided that "Since Nehru was faced virtually with no opposition in the parliament and since a democratic government could not effectively express itself in the absence of an opposition, the press should take it upon itself to function as an unofficial opposition outside Parliament, exercising that role with responsibility and circumspection (Parthasarathy, 1991). Another leading paper, *The Hindu* expressed similar views when it wrote: In the new circumstances the " Press may be expected to take a more detached as also a more responsible view of its obligations on the one hand to the government of the day, and on the other to the people as a whole, opposing official policy when it must, supporting it when it can and at all times bringing constructive opinion to bear from different angles on all important issues so that the people may decide with full knowledge" (Parthasarathy, 1991).

While the Draft Constitution was under consideration in the Constituent Assembly, the government appointed a Press Laws Enquiry Committee to "review the Press Laws of India with a view to examine if they are in accordance with the fundamental rights formulated by the Constituent Assembly of India." The Committee submitted its report in May 1948. It favoured the repeal of the Press

(Emergency Powers) Act, 1931 and the incorporation of some of its provisions in the general statutes laying down the law of crimes. The Act of 1931 was accordingly repealed and replaced by the Press (Objectionable Matters) Act 1951 (Sarkar, 1984). One of the distinguishing features of the Act from the previous laws was that the judiciary and not the executive were to decide on the necessity for action and the nature of the action taken. The Act was a temporary one and was allowed to lapse in 1956.

A Press Commission under the chairmanship of Justice Rajadhyaksha was appointed in 1952. Its terms included the state of the press, working conditions, of journalists' freedom of the press and machinery for ensuring high standards of journalism. The Commission submitted its report in 1954. Its recommendations included setting up of a Press Council with a view to safeguard freedom of the press, encourage the growth of a sense of responsibility and of public service among those engaged in the profession of journalism. The Commission also recommended the appointment of a press registrar (Parthasarathy, 1991).

The Press Council was established by an Act of Parliament in 1965. Its first president was Justice N. Rajagopala Iyengar. Its members included members of Parliament and representatives of newspapers. Though the Council closely resembled the British Press Council, it was different in as much as it was vested with statutory authority and had judicial powers.

The Press Council Act was repealed during the Emergency in 1975 and it was re-established under the Press Council Act of 1978. A second Press Commission was set up in the same year under the chairmanship of Justice P.C. Goswami. But Justice

Goswami and his colleagues resigned in 1980 with the formation of the new government. The Commission was reconstituted under the chairmanship of Justice K.K. Mathew. Among other things the Commission's terms of reference included the role of the press and the responsibilities it should assume in developmental policies, readers' right to objective news and free comments.

The Mathew Commission affirmed that the role of the press in a developing democratic society should neither be that of an adversary nor an ally of government. A free press, it said, should be a constructive critic. The Commission said that a newspaper was essentially a public utility and whatever be the precise form of ownership of newspapers, the exercise of ownership rights had to be subject to some measure of restraint and regulation. Public interest was the criterion that should regulate this activity. The Commission said: "The press has a social responsibility and accountability to the public. The theory that the freedom of the press knows no restraints is gone." It said in the changed situation, the freedom of the issuer of news alone is not sufficient; the freedom of the consumer must also be protected (Parthasarathy, 1991). The Commission called for giving the press council powers to deny facilities of accreditation for a specified period to editors and journalists who had been held by the council thrice for violating the accepted principles of journalistic ethics. The Commission further pointed out that the Indian press is free but does not have a wide enough reach and it has an urban and middle class base which limits its contribution towards making the development process more widely participatory" (Parthasarathy, 1991).

The declaration of the Emergency in June 1975 by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi came as a blow to the Indian press, which was its greatest victim. According to Kumar (1981) unlike her father, Mrs. Indira Gandhi had never been at ease with the press. 'How much freedom can the press have in a country like India fighting poverty, backwardness, ignorance, disease, superstition?' asked she in the first year of her regime. In the face of mounting confrontation with the press, Mrs. Gandhi clamped internal emergency on the nation. Censorship was imposed on the press and the Press Council was abolished. The two news agencies, Press Trust of India (PTI) and United News of India (UNI) were merged into one. In 1977 with the coming to power of the Janata Party government, the freedom of the press was restored and the institutions like the Press Council were revived.

Under the Indian Constitution the freedom the press is guaranteed in article 19(1) which provides freedom of speech and expression. In 1951, the Constitution Act (First Amendment) provided for reasonable restrictions being imposed on the exercise of press freedom in the interest of the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence. However, freedom of expression guaranteed in the Constitutions on which "freedom of the press" rests, have often been interpreted differently to suit the views and interests of various categories of people.

The Mathew Commission said the press, as a medium of communication is a modern phenomenon. It has "immense power to advance or thwart the progress of civilisation. Its freedom can be used to create a brave new world or to bring about

universal catastrophe.” It further observed that since the citizen was entirely dependent on the press for the quality, proportion and extent of the news supply, the exclusive and continued advocacy of one point of view through the medium of a newspaper which held a monopolistic position was not conducive to the formation of healthy public opinion. “The assumption in a democratic set up is”, the Commission said, “that the freedom of the press will produce a sufficiently diverse press not only to satisfy the public interest by throwing up a broad spectrum of views but also to fulfill the individual interest by enabling virtually everyone with a distinctive opinion to find some place to express it.”

But the Commission noted with concern the dominance of commercial interests and the interpretation of article 19(1) which upholds the freedom of the owner to do as he chooses with his media as it is the private property of the owner who sells a manufactured product at his risk, and that a newspaper owes nothing to the public which grants it no franchise. The Commission felt that the constitutional imperative of free expression becomes the very instrument for repressing competitive ideas. Self-censorship by the press, the Commission observed, is practically as great a menace to the freedom of expression as government censorship. It said the point of a free press is that ideas deserving public hearing and the decision as to which ideas deserve that hearing shall not rest solely within the editors and owners. The widest possible dissemination of information from as many diverse and antagonistic sources, as could be ensured, alone will secure public welfare and the constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech and expression (Parthasarathy, 1991).

The rights of the public to know and the press to publish or refuse to publish have often been a bone of contention in the interpretation of article 19 of the Indian Constitution. Proposals to amend article 19 does not seem to suit a workable solution as it is likely to create more problems than solve. The public has the right to information and to know the different trends of opinion and views. But the press cannot be compelled to publish what it does not consider worth publishing. The freedom of the press would demand that the press use its discretion regarding what to publish and what not to publish. What is needed is not to argue in favour of one or the other parties, but to create many forums necessary to give expression to diverse, even opposing views with a sense of responsibility and common good. The debate over the issue has lessened today with the availability of many round the clock television news channels, internet and other avenues through which the public can have access to information.

1.7 Press in India in the Post Liberalisation Era

As we have seen, in the pre-independent era the newspaper industry faced many restrictions and problems from the British authorities. This was followed by the post-independence press which focused on democracy, politics and social issues. The growth in information, communication technology (ICT), the economic liberalisation in India, the ever-widening social base has all contributed to exponential growth of media. The New Economic Policy (NEP) which India adopted in the early 90s was characterised by devaluation, deregulation, privatisation, liberalisation and globalisation. The NEP ushered in rapid expansion of the communication sector

which benefited the growth of media. The post liberalisation era witnessed the mushrooming of new television channels, widespread diffusion of internet and broadband, and birth of new newspapers and periodicals and overall expansion in the telecommunication sector (Singhal-Rogers, 2006).

The Indian newspaper in the post liberalisation era has shown marked improvements in layout and quality of printing, graphics and design. The physical environment in newspaper offices has undergone revolutionary changes. The work atmosphere in newsrooms has become more congenial for serious work; it has become more compact, much cleaner. Convergence in technology and interface between the various persons involved in the editing, layout and production have contributed to improve the press remarkably. Today most newsrooms are equipped with computers. The teleprinter has been replaced with Internet. Technology has automated the whole process of newspaper production. Today most newspapers get their inputs of news and photographs electronically. The print technology has moved from Desk Top Publishing (DTP) to Computer to Print (CTP). Technology has speeded up the process of news gathering, editing and publishing. Digital technology has helped improve the speed and quality of photographs and other data. Storage of content and photos has become more organized and efficient with the help of technology (Sharma, 2006).

The print media face serious challenge from television and Internet, two of the modern mass media that are seriously threatening the future of the print media globally. Though circulation figures of newspapers in India show that the threat is not so serious as of now, worldwide statistics indicate the need for the press to be ever

prepared to face the challenges ahead. At the dawn of the 21st century, it is perhaps too early to predict what is in store for the press in the next hundred years or more.

Commenting on the media of the post liberalisation era, one of India's leading journalists, B.G. Verghese notes: "The market era and rising advertising budgets saw media demand and supply expand exponentially. Indian language papers have exhibited the fastest growth with multiple editions and technological innovation. But he cautions against certain worrying factors like the market becoming more pervasive than government. Poverty and marginalisation have led to discontent and violence among large sections of population. In a scathing attack on the press, he analyses some of the major ills of the press in India: "competition for circulation/ratings and a larger share in the consumer rupee through advertising, there has been a dumping down of serious reportage and analysis, a trivialization of news and events, sensationalism and prurient coverage, invasion of privacy, trial by the press, resort to rumour, gossip and innuendo without verification, and disregard for fair and balanced reporting or prompt correction when in error and the right of reply. While there are admittedly fine journalists and some excellent writing, there is a lot of editorializing in the news, conjecture in place of fact and lazy journalism marked by shallow writing, inadequate research or patent ignorance of background and context (Verghese, 2006).

1.8 Press in India Today

Today in the face of serious challenges from television, internet and other media, the press is tending to become more and more commercial. In order to

understand the transitional phase of contemporary society, it is necessary that we examine the current scenario of the press in India today. Data indicates that there is a remarkable growth in the vernacular press while a major section of the English press seems to suffer a decline in readership. India is not entirely free from the threat of fast decline in readership faced by the press elsewhere in the world. Howsoever serious the threat may be the print industry in India needs to seriously consider the future of the press and prepare itself to meet the challenges confronting it. We shall examine the present scenario and the future prospects of the press in Northeast India. Our study, it is hoped, will contribute to the discourse on the challenges the press is expected to face in the years to come.

Table 1.1 Top Ten Newspapers According to Circulation (2004-2005)

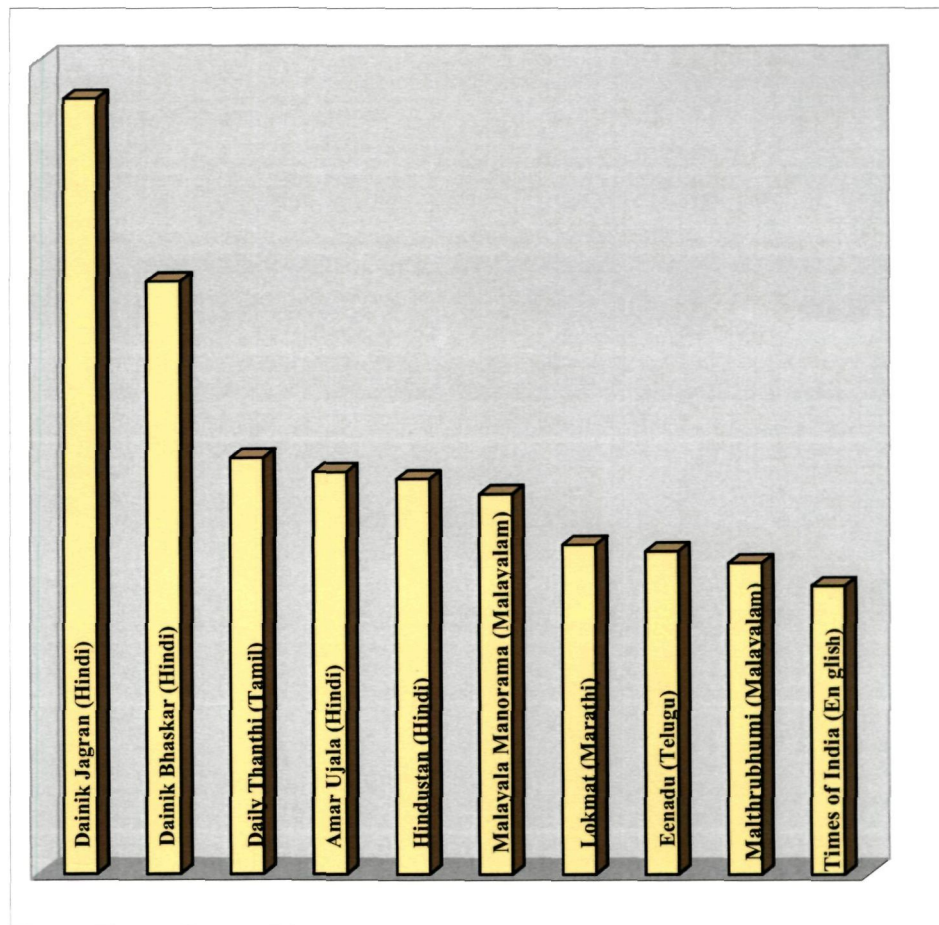
Position	Name of the Newspaper	Language	In Million
1	Dainik Jagran	Hindi	19.07
2	Dainik Bhaskar	Hindi	14.57
3	Daily Thanthi	Tamil	10.23
4	Amar Ujala	Hindi	9.89
5	Hindustan	Hindi	9.72
6	Malayala Manorama	Malayalam	9.35
7	Lokmat	Marathi	8.10
8	Eenadu	Telugu	7.94
9	Mathrubhumi	Malayalam	7.65
10	Times of India	English	7.08

Source: *Press in India 2004-5*, The Annual Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI)

Statistics show that the press is facing a serious decline in readership worldwide. However, the picture is quite different in countries like India. The print media in India is far from being dead if the official report on the state of the print publications is anything to go by. According to *Press in India 2004-5*, the annual report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI), the print media claimed a

substantial share in the information space in the country registering 1,948 new newspapers and over a two crore increase in circulation in 2004-05.

Figure 1.1 Top Ten Newspapers in India According to Circulation



Source: *Press in India 2004-05*, The Annual Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI)

As of March 31, 2005, there were 60,413 registered newspapers on record as against 58,469 at the end of March 2004. With an annual increase of 2,36,31,621, the total circulation of newspapers in India in 2004-05 was 15,67,19,209 copies. Four newspapers also ceased publication during this period.

Dainik Jagran retained its No 1 position among newspapers with 19.07 million readers, *Dainik Bhaskar* followed second with 14.57 million, and *Daily Thanthi* is third with a readership of 10.23 million. *Amar Ujala* was at four with 9.89 million readers. *Malayala Manorama* (9.35 million) and *Hindustan* (9.72 million) interchanged positions at number five and six. *Lokmat* with 8.10 million, *Eenadu* with 7.94 million, *Mathrubhumi* with 7.65 million, and *Times of India* with 7.08 million readers were at the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth spots, respectively. *Times of India* was the only English daily to find a place in the top 10. Except for *Amar Ujala* and *Hindustan*, every other publication in the top ten list had experienced a marginal decline in readership.

Among magazines, *Saras Salil* (Hindi) with a readership of 7.36 million topped the list. A distant second was *Kungumam* (Tamil) with 3.76 million, followed by *Vanitha* (Malayalam) with 3.52 million readers. *India Today* (English) was fourth with a readership of 3.51 million. *Grihashobha* (Hindi) moved up a notch to number five, and was followed by Tamil weekly *Kumudam*, *India Today* (Hindi), *Malayala Manorama* (Malayalam), Tamil weekly *Anand Vikatan*, and Hindi monthly *Meri Saheli*. *Kungumam*, *Anand Vikatan*, and *Meri Saheli* were newcomers in the top ten list.

Table 1.2 The Top Ten Magazines in India According to Circulation

Position	Name of the Newspaper	Language
1	Saras Salil	Hindi
2	Kungumam	Tamil
3	Vanitha	Malayalam
4	India Today	English
5	Grihashobha	Hindi
6	Kumudam	Tamil
7	India Today	Hindi
8	Malayala Manorama	Malayalam
9	Anand Vikatan	Tamil
10	Meri Saheli	Hindi

Source: *Press in India 2004-5*, The Annual Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI)

Most English dailies saw a fall in readership, though overall the English daily readership showed an increase. Both the top two, the *Times of India* and *Hindustan Times* saw a decline while third-placed *The Hindu* increased its readership marginally. Among English magazines, number one India Today dropped by 10 per cent from 38.99 lakh to 35.09 lakh. *Filmfare* saw one of the steepest falls. Its readership fell 21 per cent to 16.71 lakh. *Outlook* with 11.44 lakh dropped by 11 per cent. *Stardust*, too, dropped and was at 10.95 lakh in comparison to the 13.11 lakh in the previous round.

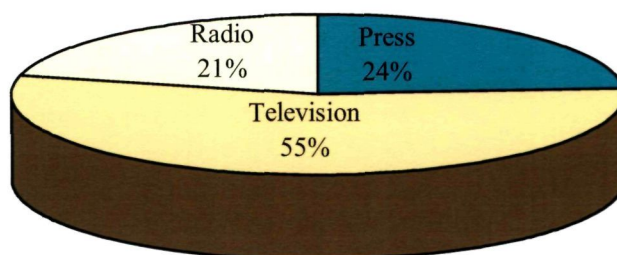
The data shows that the reach of mass media has stagnated in the last three years. Press reach has been hovering around at 24 per cent, TV at 55 per cent, radio at 21 per cent, and Internet at 1.5 per cent at the all India level. In urban India, press and TV have declined. The press reach declined from 42.9 per cent in 2004 to 41.7 percent in 2006. TV declined from 80.2 per cent to 78.9 per cent in the last three years.

Table 1.3 Decline in Readerships of English Magazines

Name of the Magazine	Current Circulation in lakhs	Decline Percentage
Filmfare	16.71	21%
Stardust	13.11	13%
Outlook	11.44	11%
India Today	35.09	10%

Source: *Press in India 2004-5*, The Annual Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI).

Figure 1.2 Mass Media Outreach



Source: *Press in India 2004-05*, The Annual Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI)

In urban India the press reach declined from 42.9% in 2004 to 41.7% in 2006.

TV viewer ship declined from 80.2 % to 78.9 %.

Table 1.4 Ownership Profile of Newspaper

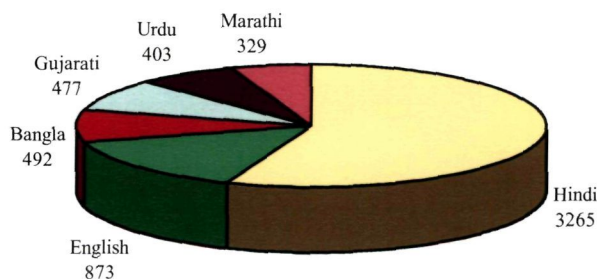
Sl. No.	Ownership	No. of Newspapers
1	Individuals	5680
2	Joint Stock Companies	973
3	Firms and Partnerships	169
4	Trusts	157
5	Societies and Associations	134
6	Central and State Governments	64
7	Cooperative Societies	49
TOTAL		7226

Source: *Press in India 2004-05*, The Annual Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI)

Newspapers are registered in English and 22 main languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. Newspapers are also registered in 100 other languages including dialects and a few foreign languages. The highest numbers of newspapers are published in Hindi (3,265). This is followed by English (873), Bangla (492), Gujarati (477), Urdu (403) and Marathi (329). Among language dailies, Hindi led with 799 newspapers followed by 181 in English. The languages that published more than 100 daily newspapers were Marathi (127), Urdu (162) and Telugu (110). Circulation-wise, the Hindi press maintained its dominance with 3,37,73,557 copies followed by English with 1,07,71,169. Uttar Pradesh had the largest number of daily newspapers (285), followed by Maharashtra (197).

Uttar Pradesh published the maximum number of periodicals in a single language i.e., 1,155 in Hindi. Other states with notable number of language periodicals were Rajasthan 545 in Hindi, Delhi 492 in Hindi, Gujarat 439 in Gujarati, West Bengal 430 in Bangla, Madhya Pradesh 422 in Hindi, and Maharashtra 309 in Marathi. It was also noticed that regional language periodicals were leading both in number and circulation in all major states. Bilingual and multilingual publications are excluded since these are not individual languages.

Figure 1.3 Newspapers Language-wise



Source: *Press in India 2004-05*, The Annual Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI)

Regional language periodicals were leading both in number and circulation in all major states. Out of 7,225 newspapers, as many as 5,680 were owned by individuals, 973 by joint stock companies, 157 by trusts, 134 by societies and associations, and 169 by firms and partnerships. In all, 64 newspapers were brought out by the central and state Governments. Cooperative societies, educational institutions and the like owned the remaining 49. Newspapers owned by individuals had the largest share in circulation- 53.10 per cent, followed by those owned by joint stock companies 37.38 per cent.

Out of the total 5,351 periodicals, 4,645 deal with news and current affairs, while 63 were dealing with religion and philosophy. Apart from these there were other periodicals, dealing with various subjects, such as social welfare, medicine and health, education, finance and economics, literature and culture, children, women, law and public administration, cinema, commerce, agriculture and animal husbandry, science, sports, engineering and technology, industry etc. Apart from general

newspapers and specialised journals, there were 3,724 registered publications, without a definite periodicity.

1.9 The Press in Northeast India

The history of the printing press in Northeast India, like elsewhere in the country, may be traced to the period of the advent of Christian missionaries. From the beginnings of printing and journalism in Northeast India about 160 years ago, the print media in the region has made remarkable progress. Today in the face of challenges from the new media, as well as vastly changed socio-political and economic situation, it is apt that we examine the role and function of the press and whether the press in the region is socially responsible or not. In a region like Northeast India, with a vast international border, ethnic conflict and unrest and myriad of other problems, it is necessary to examine the social responsibility of the press in the light of issues like development, democracy and national integration. The present study, it is intended, may contribute in some measure to deepen our understanding of these issues, which in turn can lead to progress and development for all.

Recent trends indicate that the press in the region continues to grow rapidly, and that the newspapers have a decisive role in the social and political process that characterizes the region. The present study on the *Press and its Social Responsibility in North East India*, through content analysis of two of the leading, earliest and most prominent newspapers of the region, namely, *The Assam Tribune* and *The Shillong Times* is aimed at understanding in greater depth the social responsibility of the press.

Can we call the press in the region socially responsible? We intend to explore questions that deal with the extent to which the press live up to its social obligations. We also intend to propose ways in which the press can become more socially responsible. In this chapter we shall briefly examine the history of their establishment, development and importance in the region. We shall also examine the vision and mission of these two newspapers.

Print media in Northeast dates back to the Assamese language press and journalism, the pioneer in print media in the region. The Assamese press is greatly indebted to the American Baptist missionaries. It was they who promoted the Assamese language and launched the first Assamese monthly called *Arunodhoi* (Sunrise). *Arunodhoi* played a pivotal role in promoting cultural, religious and linguistic aspirations of the Assamese people, inculcated scientific temper and nationalism and helped provide to the Assamese language a distinct identity.

Today all the states in the region have newspapers and periodicals in English and in a few of the vernacular languages. The factors that have positively assisted the growth of the print media in the region include growing literacy rates which enable people to read, employment opportunities and the desire to be informed as well as connected with the rest of the country and the world in this era of globalisation. However, it may be noted that in many of the region's languages and dialects there are no printed materials at all. For want of any printed books or literature, some of the dialects or languages are likely to become extinct in the years to come. Even for the existing periodicals and books, readership is by and large low. Circulation of newspapers and periodicals are limited largely to the urban areas of the region.

The electronic media with a wide network of radio and television stations in the Northeast enjoy a prominent place in the media scene. The region's geographical isolation with the rest of India and its proximity to several foreign countries have prompted the setting up of radio and television stations in the state capitals and other important towns of the region. Besides connecting the people of the region with the rest of India through national programmes, these media help foster national integration. They pay special attention to provide local language programmes, which in turn help strengthen ethnic identity and promote culture.

The tribal population of the region has a strong oral tradition and a rich culture, folklore, story telling, dances and songs. They have a variety of costumes that make them a colourful people. The tribals have a strong sense of the community and they have a strong tradition of self-governance and democracy. They have a time-tested tradition of equality, justice and egalitarian values. They are known for their hospitality, love for singing, dancing and story telling. The press in the region can become a powerful agent in providing a glimpse of the richness and uniqueness of the region and its people to others.

The multiplicity of languages is a big challenge for the press. The press also face difficulties in news-gathering and distribution due to lack of adequate transport communication facilities, lack of trained personnel, inadequate resources etc. The dearth of print media as well as low circulation of newspapers and books results in people becoming more and more dependent on electronic media as their source of information. Non-literate as well as neo-literate communities are often over-exposed to and over-dependent on electronic media, with little critical analysis of its impact.

Our research is expected to examine the social responsibility of the press in the way it serves as a source of information, and an instrument in shaping opinion, preserving and enhancing traditional values and culture.

The Christian missionaries are credited with introducing printing and publishing activities in Northeast India. William Carey and his missionary press was instrumental in publishing the first books in Assamese, Khasi and Manipuri. These books were translations of the Bible or books on Christian doctrine or textbooks for schools. 1836 American Baptist missionaries Nathan Brown and Oliver Cutter started the first printing press in Sadiya in Upper Assam. They brought along with them a printing press, 100 reams of paper and other materials and established the press in Sadiya where they published a book in the Assamese language using Roman script. A year later Rev. Miles Bronson joined them. He brought another printing press along. The mission and its press moved to Jaipur (Assam) by 1838, where during 1842-43, Cutter had to dismantle the press and hide it during an insurgence. (Plathottam, 1996).

In 1846 Brown with the help of Cutter started from Sibsagar to publish a monthly paper in Assamese called *Arunodhoi*, the first Assamese journal as well as the first periodical of the entire Northeastern region. It survived for thirty-six years till 1882 under eight successive editors (Plathottam, 1996). The history of journalism in Northeast India dates back to *Arunodhoi*. D.K. Barua in his History of Assamese Literature observes: "It was in the pages of the *Arunodhoi* that we find the first florescence of modern Assamese literature. The magazine gave a literary status and dignity to the spoken languages of the people both in poetry and prose, and broadly

speaking, the language thus evolved continues to be the standard language of Assamese literature even today (Mazumdar, 1993).

From 1879, the first journal in the Garo language, *A'chikni Ripeng* (the Friend of the Garos) was published from Tura. The journal was aimed at creating greater spiritual awakening, to bring about uniformity in thought, promote cooperation and encourage one another, and to bring about the well-being of the whole tribe (Plathottam, 1996). The first journal in the Khasi language was a monthly called *Nongkit Khubor* (The Messenger) published from Shella by William Williams in 1889. Another journal called *U Nongialam Khristan* was edited and published by J.C. Evans. The leader of the Catholic missionaries in Northeast India Fr. Otto Hopfenmueller, was a journalist and editor of a Catholic periodical in his native Germany prior to his coming to the Northeast India in 1890. He gave great importance to the press. The Salvatorian missionary society to which Hopfenmueller belonged, started a Khasi monthly called *U Nongialam Katholik* (The Catholic Leader) which was later renamed *Ka Iing Khristian* (The Christian Family) (Plathottam, 1996).

Though the primary objective of the Christian missionaries in Northeast India was to announce and teach the Christian message, they gave great importance to the development of the languages and literature of the region. Besides Bible translations the missionaries and their collaborators engaged themselves in writing and publishing dictionaries, primers, grammar books, and periodicals. These literary efforts helped the people of the region to break out of their isolationism. Development of the various

languages and publications in these languages helped foster increased awareness of people's cultural identity as well as social cohesion and development.

1.10 The Assam Tribune

The Assam Tribune was founded by Radha Govinda Baruah on August 4, 1939 as a weekly from Dibrugarh (The Assam Tribune 1939-1989 Golden Jubilee Publication, *henceforth referred to as Golden Jubilee*,1989). When nationalist movement was raging strong across the subcontinent, and the northeastern state of Assam wanted to be part of the national aspiration for independence, Baruah set out with courage and determination to launch the paper. There were acute dearth of experienced editors and journalists but Baruah brought Laksminath Phookan who was on the editorial staff of *The Hindustan Standard*, a leading English daily of the Ananda Bazar group from Calcutta.

The objective and policy of *The Assam Tribune* was clear from the first editorial which spoke of the global situation of conflict and war. The editorial also warned against the dangers India as a subject of the British colonial power, was subjected to. In fact a month after the paper was started England declared war against Hitler.

Encouraged by the increasing goodwill and cooperation of the people in general and the readership of the weekly, Baruah decided to convert his weekly paper into a daily and to shift it to Gauhati, a more central location. Thus *The Assam Tribune* began publication from Gauhati as a daily from September 30, 1946. It became the first English daily newspaper from Assam and like many other nationalist

newspapers of the time, played a key role in the freedom struggle. The paper also strongly criticised the government policy of encouraging unrestricted immigration of people from undivided Bengal as it anticipated such influx would jeopardise the identity of the indigenous people. It also voiced its concern on other important issues like the illegal migration from East Pakistan, which became Bangladesh since 1971, uprising in the region, the division of Assam into smaller states, lack of development of the region and host of other issues. However, as a responsible newspaper, *The Assam Tribune* followed an independent policy without aligning with any political party. Throughout its history the paper has taken up the issues closer to the people and in the words of former Indian president R.Ventkataraman, *The Assam Tribune* “permeated Assam’s collective consciousness” (Golden Jubilee,1989).

1.11 The Shillong Times

The Shillong Times was established in 1945. In 1961, Parsva Nath Chaudhuri bought *The Shillong Times* newspaper and press from the founder editor, proprietor, S.B. Chaudhuri and took over the editorial reins. With the untimely death of its second editor, P. N. Chaudhuri on 1 April 1978, his youngest son, Manas Chaudhuri, already actively working for *The Shillong Times*, took over the management of the paper.

A symbolic mesay - Independence Day, 15 August, 1991 – was chosen as the day to switch over the paper to the modern computer typesetting and offset printing technique to keep abreast with the latest in printing technology. For the first time *The Shillong Times* appeared as a broad sheet daily.

Realising that the Garo Hills comprises virtually half of Meghalaya and that there was no vehicle of information to disseminate information of events taking place in those parts, *The Shillong Times* launched its Garo Hills edition giving the readers of Tura a morning newspaper for the first time on 9th November 1992.

1.12 Growth of Newspapers in Northeast India During the Last 15 Years

The press in Northeast India has undergone rapid change since the period of liberalisation in the 1990s. The press in the region received a major fillip during the last decade and half due to factors such as the rising standard of the people, increasing mass awareness, growing literacy, greater political participation, increase in infrastructure facilities, travel and transportation, and more importantly due to the unprecedented advancement in the information- communication technology (ICT).

Print media in the region has made significant progress in terms of reporting, writing, presentation, designing, printing and circulation. Today in Northeast India there are more than 1074 titles registered with the Registrar of Newspaper for India (RNI) as compared to 700 at the beginning of 1992 indicating a growth rate of 53% during the period. Among the eight Northeastern states (Sikkim being formally included under 'North Eastern Council'), Meghalaya saw the highest growth of 78% followed closely by Assam with 67%. Of the total 59 titles registered with RNI, 26 have come up during the period in Meghalaya.

The region characterised by ethnic pluralism and linguistic diversity, has seen the birth of several new publications in different languages ranging from the

scheduled languages to languages spoken by various tribes. Although Assamese, Manipuri, Bengali, Hindi, Nepali and Bodo are the only scheduled languages of the Northeast, many dailies and magazines in other major languages such as Khasi, Garo, Mizo, Lushai, Kuki, Karbi, Nyshi, Hmar etc. have been started during the period. During this period 118 titles were registered in Assamese followed by 57 in English and 52 in Bengali. In Assam, out of the total of 550 titles registered with RNI, 220 have been registered during the last 15 years. It may be noted that out of the 15 daily newspapers in Assamese language currently circulated from Guwahati, 12 have been started during the last fifteen years. This is in sharp contrast to the English dailies where only two out of a total of seven currently circulated from Guwahati were registered during the period. This indicates the immense importance and popularity enjoyed by the vernacular press as the preferred medium of communication.

The Assam Tribune, first published in 1939, still remains the most respected and widely circulated English daily in Assam. The media in Mizoram, which saw a steady growth of 38% during the period, has only two dailies *Highlander* and *Newslink* that are published in English while there are 26 dailies published in Mizo language from Aizawl only. The press in Manipur which registered one of the lowest growth rates in the region is severely hit by militancy. Tripura, which also suffers from insurgency, registered a slow growth of 20%. The print media in Arunachal Pradesh is in the early stages of development with only a total of 9 titles including dailies, magazines and periodicals. Nagaland which saw a high growth of 62% during the period saw 5 new English dailies hitting the news stand. In Sikkim the print media started significantly only during the early 90's and has maintained a

steady growth ever since. All of the five Nepali dailies that are currently circulated in Sikkim were started during the last 15 years.

The English dailies published from the region are facing a new threat over the past few years with the national dailies, which till recently have been operating through regional correspondents, setting up offices in the region and launching regional supplements and editions. In a way this trend reflects the growing importance of the region. These, no doubt, have affected the circulations of the local dailies but are not yet able to compete with the local newspapers in coverage of local news. The local press with its finger on the pulse of the local population is more in sync with the local issues. In terms of advertisement potential at local/district level of limited services and products, local dailies enjoy preference. One of the major concerns for the media of the region is that it is often caught in the quagmire of insurgency with insurgent groups as well as the government agencies trying to use media as the force multiplier.

States like Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura which have been bearing the brunt of militancy most for the last few decades have seen killing and kidnapping of editors of several newspapers and magazines. The merciless killing of Parag Das, editor of *Pratidin*, H.A.Lalrohlu, editor of Hmar daily *Shan*, Brajamani Singh, editor of *Manipur News* and Khupkholian Simte, editor of *Lenlai* magazine bear testimony to this sad reality. Violence against media persons continues in different forms, which hamper objective and qualitative media work.

In addition to the press, the region has other sources of information. In terms of access to telephone, internet and other electronic media, the region has experienced

remarkable growth in the last one and half decades. However, access to these communication amenities have remained largely confined to the urban areas. Only 30% of the villages in northeastern states excluding Assam have access to Village Panchayat Telephone (VPT). Although accurate data on the current subscriber base of the internet is not available, as in the case of telephone there is a significant digital divide between urban and rural areas. According to a NASSCOM survey, sixty-eight cities and towns account for more than 92% of net access in India. (Bharali, 2007)

The media of the region is often being implicated for giving more importance to violence by insurgents, like killing, kidnapping and extortions while neglecting the news of development works being carried out at various levels. The overemphasising and coverage of the incidents of violence projects the region in a negative way to the outside world, consequently hampering the economic growth of the region. As Hussain (2004), journalist and Director of Center for Development & Peace Studies, Guwahati, points out, in order to make the 'mindset' of the people in the region to be changed and made forward looking, a sustained campaign needs to be carried out through the media, dedicated to the cause of development and progress. This campaign must reach the common people as well as policy makers or policy influencers who play a key role in matters concerning this region.

1.13 Press in Northeast India: Contemporary and Future Challenges

The kind of media attention the region gets in the press, be they the so-called national or regional press, is often negative and focused on the region as an

insurgency ridden troubled spot. According to Hussain (2004), “the area is known to the outside world as a land of rugged beauty and constant turmoil. This image is working at cross-purposes”. While the region’s image as an area of breathtaking natural beauty and a vibrant culture arouses interest and fascinates the rest of the country or the world, reports about insurgency, ethnic strife, and under-development in the region gets wide coverage in the media. While development agencies and financial institutions are striving to make the region’s enormous potential known to the outside world, very little of such efforts is reflected in the mainstream as well as regional media. This is largely because the media coverage of the area is ‘violence driven’. The focus on pioneering developmental efforts has been overlooked to a great extent by the media, and a mindset has been created and sustained to focus only on incidents of violence, and very little on the efforts to transform the region’s economy. A study of the content in these newspapers would reveal the dearth of coverage given to news concerning developments at the state, districts or village levels. This gives an impression to those who are outside the region that nothing is happening in the region other than bandhs, and violent acts like killings, kidnappings and extortions by insurgents.

Given the fact that the media houses in the region have no journalists specifically and exclusively trained in ‘development journalism,’ it is difficult to imagine that the existing print media in the region would be able to play the role of an effective medium to spread the good word regarding the efforts to transform the economy of the area through outside investment. We still need to believe that the power of the media, if effectively harnessed and channelled, can go a long way in

dispelling myths and act as a force-multiplier in all ongoing efforts for peace and development. Most importantly, coverage of the immense potential of the available resources and the region's proximity to the emerging Asian Tigers in the proper perspective could encourage prospective investors to open shop in the region. In addition, there is need for concerted efforts by government agencies, development organizations and media to help change the 'mindset' of the people in the region and made forward-looking. Media can help launch a sustained campaign to promote development, peace and progress. This campaign must reach the common people as well as policy makers or policy influencers who play a key role in matters concerning this region (Hussain, 2004).

With the advent of every new media of communication since the invention of printing, be it radio, television, computers and now the Internet, there are widespread fears that the printed word and thereby the press, would become extinct. The prophecy about the demise of the press has not come true so far. Nevertheless circulations of many newspapers have decreased, and several newspapers have diversified themselves while a few others have closed down. The biggest challenge to the traditional forms of newspapers and books has come from the Internet, which has revolutionized communication. The Internet has affected the content as well as the manner of communication including the process of information gathering and dissemination, interactivity, access, analysis, advertisements, marketing, feedback, and a host of other activities.

Newspaper readership did decline globally in the last decade. According to the report of Monique van Dusseldorp prepared for the European Journalism Centre

(EJC), Maastricht, there is an annual decline of about 600,000 newspaper readers a year. In the same report, Director General of the World Association of Newspapers, Timothy Balding observed that European newspapers lost 1.2 million readers in 1997, twice as many as the year before (Dusseldorp,1998). This confirms the findings of the UNESCO World Communication Report: “In most countries, newspapers have gone through a serious recession characterised by a general downturn in sales, a loss of advertising market share, dwindling readership among the younger generations and a general decline in the influence of the press compared to radio, television and now the computers (UNESCO World Communication Report 1997).Of the institutions that contribute most of the development of a society, the press perhaps performs the most critical role. It serve as a vehicle through which voices of the people gets carried to large audience that are spread over vast geographical areas and hence different mindsets, needs and moral values. As Justice G.N. Roy, Chairman, Press Council of India once observed. “The role of media is not merely to inform, educate and certain as a detached observer but also to motivate, mould and mobilize public opinion towards the realization of sustainable peace, development, harmony and happiness in the civil society. The press today as a mass communicator has not only become the most important of the four estates, but has even acquired the power of setting the political, social, economic, educational and cultural agenda of the country (Bharali, 2007).

In this chapter we have examined the press in India from a historical perspective. We have defined the important terms of reference for our research, and have studied the historical developments as well as the major guiding principles that

contributed to the growth and development of the press in India. As our study is primarily focused on Northeast India, special mention has been made of the historical development of the press and the challenges the press faces today in the region. A brief overview of the contribution of the Christian missionaries to the founding of printing in India, the pioneering work of the founders of the first newspapers and periodicals, and the path breaking efforts and contribution of Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Mahatma Gandhi and the other leaders of the nationalist movement are included in this section as it was considered important to understand the need for a socially committed and responsible press. We have also examined the current data on the status of the press in India, the challenges faced by the print media in the country and the region, and the future prospects of the press. Such a historical and contemporary overview of the press in India and the region was considered necessary to at the very outset of our study in order to set the background for a more detailed discussion on the social responsibility of the press.

Chapter 2

Literature Review: Content Analysis

Literature survey constitutes an integral part of any research in social sciences. In the present study we have examined the literature available on the subject of content analysis and social responsibility of the press. The literature reviewed here includes theoretical studies on content analysis and empirical research on projects working with qualitative content analysis and literature on computer programmes in support of qualitative content analysis and frequency word count. Pollock's study of newspaper content using community structure approach as well as the impact study of newspaper content is of particular significance to the present study.

2.1 Content Analysis as a Research Method

The term *Content Analysis* as a research methodology is nearly a century old but it may rightly be admitted that its history dates back to human history itself, to the beginning of human use of symbols and language. Today content analysis is no longer defined by its traditional application of understanding meaning of messages. It has, over the years, developed into a methodology in its own right that it enables the researcher to plan, to communicate, and to critically evaluate a research design

independently of its results. Krippendorff (1980) presents a brief history of content analysis and distinguishes it from other methods and exemplifies its domain of practical application.

As a research method content analysis uses a set of categorisation procedures for making valid and replicable inferences from data (text, voice or images) to their context. Inferences may be about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of which these are a part. Texts can be defined broadly as books, book chapters, essays, interviews, discussions, newspaper headlines and articles, photographs, historical documents, speeches, conversations, advertising, theatre, informal conversation, or any occurrence of communicative language. Since it can be applied to examine *any* piece of writing or occurrence of recorded communication, content analysis today is used in a variety of fields, ranging from marketing and media studies, to literature and rhetoric, ethnographic and cultural studies, gender and age issues, sociology and political science, psychology and cognitive science. Additionally, content analysis reflects a close relationship with sociology and psycholinguistics, and is playing a key role in the development of artificial intelligence.

Communication research is traditionally divided into two basic genres: *Media-centric research* which focuses on the structure of the communications industry and on media content, with minimal attention to impact on the intended audience. *Effects-centric research* focuses on audience effects and takes media organisation and content as given. Content analysis is traditionally practiced as a media-centric methodology.

However vast may be the study, content analysis requires that a particular collection of texts is initially selected as a sample. The identification of relevant features is always subject to individual interpretation in accordance with the aims of a particular study. Even if the purpose of a study is clearly defined, no two researchers would be likely to generate the same initial categories in a collection of texts. As Winick et al (1973) note, in a content analysis based on advertisements containing a wide assortment of tangible and intangible elements, content item definitions cannot be refined to a point where all subjectivity is eliminated from the coding process. It is not necessary to subscribe to the ideology of absolute objectivity in order to employ content analysis.

Content analysis, as noted earlier, is extensively used to study characteristics and impact of media on society and individuals. It is used to study a variety of content- newspapers, books, vision statements of institutions and organisations, policy documents of governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), police cases, criminal records, suicide notes and so on. Sinha (1980) has listed several other functions of content analysis such as identifying the intentions of the communicators, determining psychological states of persons and groups, detecting propaganda and subversive tendencies in the publications of organisations and groups, securing political and military intelligence, legal purposes, study of cultural patterns, social and individual values, mores, interests, attitudes and so on. Hart's (1933) pioneering study of the contents of selected popular magazines in USA from 1900-1930 revealed changing social attitudes and interests.

Content analysis pertains not only to the study of the manifest content of the material. Becker and Lissmann (1973) have differentiated levels of content: themes and main ideas of the text as primary content and context information as latent content. The analysis of formal aspects of the material belongs to its aims as well. Content analysis embeds the text into a model of communication within which it defines the aims of analysis. This is expressed by Krippendorff (1969) who defines content analysis as "the use of replicable and valid method for making specific inferences from text to other states or properties of its source." Qualitative content analysis defines itself within this framework as an approach of empirical, methodologically controlled analysis of texts within the context of communication, following content analytical rules and step-by-step models, without rash quantification.

We can distinguish different phases in the historical background of content analysis (Merten, 1983; Krippendorff, 1980; Mayring, 1994a). Approaches to analyse and compare texts in hermeneutic contexts vary. These include Bible interpretations based on textual analysis, early analysis of newspaper content, graphological procedures, the dream analysis by Sigmund Freud. The basis of quantitative content analysis has been laid by Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Harold D. Lasswell in the United States during the twenties and thirties of the twentieth century. The first textbook about content analysis as a method was published by Berelson in 1952.

In the sixties of the twentieth century there was an interdisciplinary broadening and differentiation. Content analysis found its way into linguistics,

psychology (Rust, 1983) and other social sciences such as sociology, history and arts. The procedures have been refined (fitting into different models of communication); analysis of non-verbal aspects, contingency analysis, computer applications (Pool, 1959; Gerbner et al, 1969). Since the middle of twentieth century objections were raised against a superficial analysis without respecting latent contents and contexts, working with simplifying and distorting quantification (Kracauer, 1952). In the following years qualitative approaches to content analysis was further developed and perfected as a methodology for social science researches (Ritsert, 1972; Mostyn, 1985; Wittkowski,1994; Altheide,1996).

2.2 Definitions of Content Analysis

Krippendorff (1980) defined content analysis as a “research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context.” Berelson (1952) defined it as “a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.” Berelson listed some seventeen uses of content analysis most of which pertain to study of communication. Stone & Dunphy (1966) saw journalism and mass communication as the historical origins of the technique of content analysis. Holsti (1969) placed data in the context of communication between sender and receiver.

The following list adapted from Berelson (1952) offers more possibilities for the uses of content analysis. Content Analysis can be used to:

- Reveal international differences in communication content
- Detect the existence of propaganda

- Identify the intentions, focus or communication trends of an individual, group or institution
- Describe attitudinal and behavioural responses to communications
- Determine psychological or emotional state of persons or groups.

The early definitions of content analysis were quite narrow and focused more on quantitative characteristics. Making inferences from the communication content is the primary function of content analysis. It does not study behaviour itself, but it infers data of communication. Content analysis has proved that 'text' is an excellent vehicle for studying long-term changes of attitude, concerns and styles (Sinha, 1980). Study of text provides insights into the context. Lasswell's classical definition of communication as "who says what, to whom in which channel" (Lasswell, 1942) points to content. But in content analysis the study centres more on *what* is said than what is understood by the receiver. The significance of the content or *what* is said becomes one of the chief concerns of the present study. As what is said, in most instances cannot be fully abstracted from the way it is said, we also study the quality of what is said. In the present study, content analysis is both quantitative as well as qualitative. It involves measuring as well as judging and evaluating. The researcher here is concerned with the content as well as method, since any attempt to study communication in its entirety would require both these components.

2.3 Content Analysis as Quantitative and Qualitative Research

Content analysis is a standard methodology used in social sciences like communication and can be applied in quantitative and qualitative research. However, scholars on the subject like Holsti (1969), Krippendorff (1980) consider content analysis as a quantitative research and excludes the possibility of qualitative research. Veal (2006) and others consider it as a research methodology suited to quantitative and qualitative study of the data. Quantitatively it starts with word counts, space measurements (column centimeters in the case of newspapers), time counts (for radio and television). Qualitatively it may involve any kind of analysis where communication content is categorised and classified.

Qualitative research is the umbrella term given to a group of research methods applied to the collection and analysis of qualitative data or information. Rather than merely looking at the numerical data it stresses that the fundamental basis of qualitative research is that it is used to attempt an interpretation of reality at a certain point of time and within certain contexts. As the world is not a fixed phenomenon, but is interpreted by individuals in many different ways, it opens an opportunity for research into these different perspectives of the world.

Quantitative research deals traditionally with anonymous statistics, where people are numbers on a spreadsheet. The current research goes beyond what Kelly (1980) described as purely quantitative research as it deals with detailed analysis of qualitative data which are capable of yielding reliable results. This research takes an inductive approach in that it ultimately serves the purpose of identifying a range of

issues and recurring patterns in the data. The researcher then offers a detailed description of the findings from the data analysis which leads to conclusions, as well as creating a framework for issues to be discussed in further study (Merriam, 2000; Peterson, 1994).

Content analysis can be quantitative or qualitative (Veal, 2006), the former being where frequencies of a word or image are counted and placed within categories to which a statistical analysis will be applied. The present research has adopted a combination of interpretive quantitative and qualitative approach. It attempts to investigate and interpret, within the context of the research subject, how the press depicts socially relevant issues.

Qualitative content analysis wants to preserve the advantages of quantitative content analysis for a more qualitative text interpretation. There are obvious advantages. But qualitative content analysis should be determined on the basis of what part of the communication inferences shall be made, to aspects of the communicator (his/her experiences, opinions, feelings), to the situation of text production, to the socio-cultural background, to the language and literary style, to the text itself or to the effect of the message. The material is to be analysed step by step, following rules of procedure, devising the material into content analytical units.

The aspects of text interpretation, following the research questions, are putted into categories, which are to be carefully founded and revised within the process of analysis (feedback loops), criteria of reliability and validity: the procedure has the pretension to be inter-subjectively comprehensible, to compare the results with other studies in the sense of triangulation and to carry out checks for reliability. For

estimating the inter-coder reliability, qualitative content analysis is used instead of quantitative content analysis.

Although the equation of content and meaning should be rejected, there can be no dispute that texts do have content and that the generation of meanings is not unconstrained by such content. As long as one avoids reductive assumptions about how such content will be interpreted by others, content analysis can provide useful data: for example, data about statistically significant differences between features in one set of texts compared with another; differences that may not be obvious from simple observation. Furthermore, the use of such a technique is not incompatible with associated qualitative studies of how individuals interpret the same texts. Since content analysis is a technique for a certain kind of textual analysis, the investigation of meaning (for instance, the sense that children make of advertisements) requires other techniques such as ethnographic interviews.

2.4 Procedures of Qualitative Content Analysis

The above listed components of quantitative content analysis will be preserved to be the fundament for a qualitative oriented procedure of text interpretation. Among the number of procedures of qualitative content analysis two approaches are central: inductive category development and deductive category application (Mayring, 2000). We shall examine what each of these categories mean.

i) Inductive Category Development

Classical quantitative content analysis has few answers to the question from where the categories come and how the system of categories is developed. Though very little is written about it, within the framework of qualitative approaches it would be of central interest, to develop the aspects of interpretation, the categories, as near as possible to the material, to formulate them in terms of the material. For that scope qualitative content analysis has developed procedures of inductive category development, which are oriented to the reductive processes formulated within the psychology of text processing (Ballstaedt et al, 1981; van Duk, 1980).

Step model of inductive category development (Mayring, 2000) is a procedure to formulate a criterion of definition, derived from theoretical background and research question, which determines the aspects of the textual material taken into account. Following this criterion the material is worked through and categories are tentative and deduced step by step. Within a feedback loop those categories are revised, eventually reduced to main categories and checked in respect to their reliability. If the research question suggests quantitative aspects (e.g. frequencies of coded categories) it can be analysed.

ii) Deductive Category Application

Deductive category application works with prior formulated, theoretically derived aspects of analysis, bringing them in consonance with the text. The qualitative step of analysis consists in a methodologically controlled assignment of the category to a passage of text. Even if several procedures of text analysis are processing that step, it is poorly described. Here we are referring to the step model

within qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2000). The main idea here is to give explicit definitions, examples and coding rules for each deductive category, determining exactly under what circumstances a text passage can be coded with a category. Those category definitions are putted together within a coding agenda.

2.5 Practical Applications of Content Analysis

Content analysis has often been used as a tool for determining authorship of books and manuscripts when authorship is not known, or are in dispute, or when the work is very ancient. One technique for determining authorship is to compile a list of suspected authors, examine their prior writings, and correlate the frequency of nouns or function words to help build a case for the probability of each person's authorship of the data. Mosteller and Wallace (1964) used Bayesian technique based on word frequency to show that Madison was indeed the author of the Federalist papers. Foster (1996) used a more holistic approach in order to determine the identity of the anonymous author of the 1992 book *Primary Colors*. Content analysis has helped to establish the authorship of several books of the Bible. For instance, the Letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament of the Bible, formerly considered to be the work of Saint Paul, was found to be the work of some other writer than Paul. By analysing the language of the text and literary style, allusions and other internal evidences deduced from the work, it is also possible to establish the period in which such a text was written.

Content analysis is also useful for examining trends and patterns in documents. For example, Stemler and Bebell (1998) conducted a content analysis of

school mission statements to make some inferences about what schools hold as their primary reasons for existence. One of the major research questions was whether the criteria being used to measure programme effectiveness (e.g., academic test scores) were aligned with the overall programme objectives or reason for existence. It is also possible to compare stated goals and objectives of institutions with specific tasks adopted to achieve them. The method not only helps to understand language competence and literary standard, but also to examine motives, personality traits, character, bias, worldviews - all of which find expression in the way language is used.

Further, content analysis provides an empirical basis for monitoring shifts in public opinion. Data collected from the mission statements project in the late 1990s can be objectively compared to data collected at some point in the future to determine if policy changes related to standards-based reform have manifested themselves in school mission statements. Shift in policy and perspective can be studied if election manifestoes of political parties in various elections over a period of time are studied through this method. Content analysis is used to examine suicide notes, anonymous letters, crime records, nature of authority etc. Investigators of crime have often been able to establish whether a death is a suicide or a murder by analysing the contents of the so-called 'suicide notes' and by verifying its authorship.

2.5.1 Conducting a Content Analysis

According to Krippendorff (1980), one of the leading scholars on content analysis, six questions must be addressed in every content analysis. They are:

1. Which data are analysed?
2. How are they defined?

3. What is the population from which they are drawn?
4. What is the context relative to which the data are analysed?
5. What are the boundaries of the analysis?
6. What is the target of the inferences?

At least three problems can occur when documents are being assembled for content analysis. First, when a substantial number of documents from the population are missing, the content analysis must be abandoned. Second, inappropriate records (e.g., ones that do not match the definition of the document required for analysis) should be discarded, but a record should be kept of the reasons. Finally, content analysis should be abandoned if some documents might match the requirements for analysis but are uncodable because they contain missing passages or ambiguous content (GAO, 1996).

2.5.2 Analysing the Data

Perhaps the most common notion in qualitative research is that a content analysis simply means doing a word-frequency count. The assumption made is that the words that are mentioned most often are the words that reflect the greatest concerns. While this may be true in some cases, there are several counterpoints to consider when using simple word frequency counts to make inferences about important issues. Synonyms may be used for stylistic reasons throughout a document and thus may lead the researcher to underestimate the importance of a concept (Weber, 1990). Besides each word may not represent a category equally well since nuances and context can vary with each instance. Further, words may have multiple meanings. For instance the word 'state' could mean a political body, a situation, or a

verb meaning 'to speak'. The word 'spring' may mean one of the seasons, a source of water, a mechanical devise, or the act of springing in the air and so on. The nuances of words become clearer in specific contexts and situations in which they are used and not merely in the frequency with which they occur. As there are no well-developed weighing procedures, using word count requires the researcher to be aware of the many limitations it entails. Furthermore, as Weber (1990) reminds, "not all issues are equally difficult to raise".

A good rule of thumb to follow in the analysis is to use word frequency counts to identify words of potential interest, and then to use a *Key Word In Context* (KWIC) search to test for the consistency of usage of words. Most qualitative research software, such as NUD*IST, Hyper RESEARCH, allow the researcher to pull up the sentence in which a particular word was used so that the researcher can see the word in some context. This procedure will help to strengthen the validity of the inferences that are being made from the data. Certain software packages (e.g., the revised General Inquirer) are able to incorporate artificial intelligence systems that can differentiate between the same words used with two different meanings based on context (Rosenberg et al, 1990). There are several software packages available that can help facilitate content analyses.

However, content analysis extends far beyond simple word counts. What makes the technique particularly rich and meaningful is its reliance on coding and categorising of the data. The basics of categorising can be summed up in these quotes: "A category is a group of words with similar meaning or connotations" (Weber, 1990). "Categories must be mutually exclusive and exhaustive" (GAO,

1996). Mutually exclusive categories exist when no unit falls between two data points, and each unit is represented by only one data point. The requirement of exhaustive categories is met when the data language represents all recording units without exception.

2.5.3 Coding Data

There are two approaches to coding data that operate with slightly different rules, namely, *Emergent vs. A priori coding*: With *emergent coding*, categories are established following some preliminary examination of the data. The steps to follow are outlined in Haney et al (1998) and may be summarised here. First, two people independently review the material and come up with a set of features that form a checklist. Second, the researchers compare notes and reconcile any differences that show up on their initial checklists. Third, the researchers use a consolidated checklist to independently apply coding. Fourth, the researchers check the reliability of the coding (a 95% agreement is suggested; .8 for Cohen's kappa). If the level of reliability is not acceptable, then the researchers repeat the previous steps. Once the reliability has been established, the coding is applied on a large-scale basis. The final stage is a periodic quality control check.

When dealing with *a priori* coding, the categories are established prior to the analysis based on some theory. Professional colleagues agree on the categories, and the coding is applied to the data. Revisions are made as and when necessary, and the categories are tightened up to the point that maximises mutual exclusivity and exhaustiveness (Weber, 1990).

2.5.4 Coding Units

There are several ways of defining coding units. The first way is to define them physically in terms of their natural or intuitive borders. For instance, newspaper articles, letters, or poems all have natural boundaries. The second way is to define the recording units syntactically, that is, to use the separations created by the author, such as words, sentences, or paragraphs. A third way to define them is to use referential units. Referential units refer to the way a unit is represented. For example a text might refer to Mahatma Gandhi as "the Father of the Nation," "Gandhiji" or "Bapu". Referential units are useful when we are interested in making inferences about attitudes, values, or preferences. A fourth method of defining coding units is by using prepositional units. Prepositional units are perhaps the most complex method of defining coding units because they work by breaking down the text in order to examine underlying assumptions. For example, in a sentence that would read, "Investors took another hit as the stock market continued its descent," we would break it down to: The stock market has been performing poorly recently/Investors have been losing money (Krippendorff, 1980).

Typically, three kinds of units are employed in content analysis: sampling units, context units, and recording units. *Sampling units* will vary depending on how the researcher makes meaning; they could be words, sentences, or paragraphs. In the present study the sampling unit is a particular 'story' or piece, which may be a news item, article, editorial, column, or letter to the editor, in general called 'stories' or 'items'. *Context units* neither need to be independent or separately describable. They may overlap and contain many recording units. Context units do, however, set

physical limits on what kind of data one is trying to record. In the present study, context units are stories or items. *Recording units* are rarely defined in terms of physical boundaries.

2.5.5 Reliability

Weber (1990) notes: "To make valid inferences from the text, it is important that the classification procedure be reliable in the sense of being consistent. According to him, "reliability problems usually grow out of the ambiguity of word meanings, category definitions, or other coding rules". Yet, it is important to recognise that the people who have developed the coding scheme have often been working so closely on the project that they have established shared and hidden meanings of the coding. The obvious result is that the reliability coefficient they report is artificially inflated (Krippendorff, 1980). In order to avoid this, one of the most critical steps in content analysis involves developing a set of explicit recording instructions. These instructions then allow outside coders to be trained until reliability requirements are met. Reliability may be discussed in terms of stability, or intra-rater reliability. Reliability can be ensured if the same coder is able to get the same results again and again.

2.6 Computer Programmes in Support of Qualitative Content Analysis

Computer applications have greatly enhanced the quality and speed of different social research studies, including content analysis of a variety of texts, images and data. During the last few years several computer programmes have been

developed within the framework of qualitative analysis to support (not to replace) steps of text interpretation (Huber, 1992; Weitzman and Miles, 1995; Mayring, 1996; Fielding and Lee, 1998). The computer plays here a triple role: it works as assistant, supporting and making easier the steps of text analysis on screen, doing such functions as working through the material, underlining, writing marginal notes, defining category definitions and coding rules, recording comments on the material etc. It offers helpful tools in handling the text and carrying out such processes as searching, jumping to different passages, collecting and editing passages etc.

It works as documentation centre, recording all steps of analysis of all interpreters, making the analysis comprehensible and replicable (e.g. to trace back the material in case of non-reliabilities between two coders). It offers links to quantitative analysis (often already implemented within the programme), e.g. to compare frequencies of categories, without the danger of errors in data transfer by hand to another computer programme.

Hansen (1995) provides an overview of using information technology to analyse newspaper content and to access and analyse electronic texts of newspaper stories. He discusses the use of word processing, concordance, and text retrieval software and reviews some of the basic approaches to coding newspaper content. Kelle (1996) in his paper on "Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis: An Overview" describes how the latest generation of software for qualitative data analysis (e.g., NUDIST, HyperResearch) enables researchers to create nested and linked codes. He also reviews the hypothesis testing features of these programmes. He suggests that these features are perhaps more appropriate for quantitative rather

than qualitative analysis, although he notes that hypothesis testing can be used profitably by qualitative researchers provided they exercise caution in interpreting their results.

2.7 Content Analysis in Journalism

While journalism is a formal discipline in academics, content analysis emerged as an instrument for analysing journalism nearly a century ago. Willey's (1926) study of newspapers, *The Country Newspapers in 1926*, is one of the earliest sociological analyses of newspaper content.

Some of the earliest applications of content analysis were related to quantitative analysis of printed materials. Loebel (1903) published in German an elaborate classification scheme for analysing the 'inner structure of content' according to the social functions newspapers perform. Hotchkiss and Franken (1920) published a study of the newspaper reading habits of college students. They sent a questionnaire to 1761 men and women college students in New York. A similar study was done by W D Scott in 1916 in Chicago. He sent the questionnaire to four thousand prominent people in business and industry. These studies revealed that on an average people spent only a quarter of an hour a day to read newspapers.

In 1910, Max Weber (1911) proposed a large-scale content analysis of the press but for a variety of reasons it did not get off the ground. Since then with the growth of journalism schools and proliferation of newspapers and periodicals, the quest for quantitative assessment and ethical standards have grown. Quantitative newspaper analysis arose as a response to this quest. Speed (1893) in one of the

earliest studies of content analysis, raised the rhetorical question, “Do newspapers Now Give the News?” The author showed how religious, scientific, and literary matters had dropped out of leading New York newspapers between 1881 and 1893 in favour of gossip, sports and scandals. A similar study attempted to reveal the overwhelming space devoted to ‘demoralising’, ‘unwholesome’ and ‘trivial’ matters as opposed to ‘worthwhile’ news items (Mathews, 1910). By simply measuring the column inches a newspaper devotes to particular subject matter, journalists attempted to reveal “the truth about newspapers”(Street, 1909). Content can help find a way of showing the profit motive as the cause of “cheap yellow journalism” (Wilcox, 1900). Fenton (1910) became convinced that the study of content established “the influence of newspaper presentations on the growth of crime and other antisocial activity”. White (1924) concluded that a “quarter-century survey of the press shows demand for facts”.

Quantitative newspaper analysis contains many valuable ideas. In 1912 Tenney called for a large-scale and continuous survey of press content to establish a system of bookkeeping of the “social weather” comparable in accuracy to the statistics of the U.S. Weather Bureau. Sociologist Willey’s (1926) study of *The Country Newspaper* traced the emergence of Connecticut country weeklies, reported their circulation figures, changes in subject matter, and the social role they acquired in competition with large city dailies. Quantitative newspaper analysis was used in response to questions like how the Negroes were presented in the Philadelphia press (Simpson, 1934). Allport and Fender (1940) studied newspaper content from an entirely new perspective. Their “Five Tentative Laws of the Psychology of

Newspapers” attempted to account for the changes that information undergoes as it travels through an institution and finally appears on the printed page.

Content analysis is used to identify, evaluate and audit standards, to establish what kind or how good an object is. It has been used for examining trends and patterns. Speed (1893) compared several New York dailies published in 1881 with those published twelve years later and observed changes in subject matter categories. Lasswell (1942) proposed a study and presented preliminary findings on trends in the frequencies with which references to various countries occur in different national presses. Another significant factor in content analysis is examining the differences in communication. The two newspapers, namely, *The Assam Tribune* and *The Shillong Times*, the contents of which are being analysed in the present research, obviously have several differences such as ownership, geographical location, the manner of covering news, content, policy, type of readers, priority etc. In these two newspapers we can discern a close relation between differences and trends.

Hoover Institution’s study of 19,553 editorials that appeared in American, British, French, German, and Russian prestige papers during 1890-1949 led Pool (1959) to observe-predict that proletarian doctrines replace liberal traditions, that an increasing threat of war is correlated with growth in militarism and nationalism, and that hostilities toward other nations are related to insecurity.

The Royal Commission on the Press in England appointed by the Queen in 1947 made use of mainly content analysis of subject and form from the newspapers, besides other things, to ascertain the extent of suppression, distortion and inaccuracy over a period of twenty years (Sinha, 1980). Bettelheim and Janowitz (1950) studied

racial, ethnic prejudice by means of unstructured interviews and by analysing the content of their responses. Content analysis has been widely used to measure the suitability of printed textbooks, to study stylistic features, language and literature. In Northeast India, content analysis has been used by a few researchers to study academic curriculum and textbooks. However, content analysis as a methodology has not been used to carry out systematic and scientific study of print or other media in Northeast India.

The evaluation of the performance of the press has been a major preoccupation since the emergence of quantitative newspaper analysis. The concern with changes from quality to quantity of news reporting (Speed,1893) or with increase of trivial, demoralising, and unwholesome subject matter at the expense of worthwhile information (Mathews,1910) assumes evaluative standards, albeit, implicitly. It is difficult to agree on a sufficiently acceptable scale that places newspapers between good and bad. Many of the evaluative studies have limited themselves to measuring biases. Even this becomes difficult, as there is no consensus on what constitutes journalistic bias, impartiality etc. Merrill (1962) used a battery of evaluative criteria on journalistic presentations (attribution bias, adjective bias, adverbial bias, contextual bias, photographic bias, and outright opinion) but the catalogue is far from complete.

Many content analyses use measurable entities as indices of not so directly measurable phenomena. To cite a few examples: speech disturbance ratio to measure a patient's anxiety during a psychiatric interview (Mahl, 1959), the frequency of certain words indicating motive to be achieved (McClelland, 1958), typographical

space as an index of importance to an issue (Budd, 1964), television violence index (Gerbner et al, 1979), indices of citizen dissatisfaction computed from letters of complaint (Krendel, 1970).

Content analysis has more specifically been used to study propaganda. The first significant study of propaganda was by Kris and Leites (1947) who analysed propaganda in the two world wars. The most glaring example of the use of propaganda is by German Nazi leader and politician, Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945) who was Hitler's minister of Propaganda from 1933, during the Nazi regime. Goebbels's task was supposed to have been equivalent to today's minister for communications and information. He has given us the word 'Goebbelesim' to mean propaganda and misinformation. It includes manipulation of information, unethical practices, lies, deception, misinformation by the political powers, often using the press, for purposes such as political advantages, commercial interests, or other acts of irresponsibility.

Since then we have numerous instances of misuse of information, as during the Vietnam war spearheaded by the then US administration, and the more recent instance of manipulating information during the Gulf war and the invasion of Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam Hussain. We have today the term 'embedded journalism' to mean manipulative practices in journalism in which the journalist becomes an agent of the government or the powers that control society. In India too, manipulation of information content is used by political parties during the elections. Political parties continue to manipulate information in various ways to suit their needs and to achieve certain ends.

The press by engaging in any manipulative method of using information belies the trust placed on it by the public. One recent and glaring example is that of *The Shillong Times*, dated April 1, 2007, which misled its readers by publishing four fake stories on its front page and in the sports page on April 1, 2007. This was to coincide with the April Fools' Day. The next day the newspaper carried a disclaimer. This kind of gimmicks was continued on April 1, 2008 as well. Many readers resent such moves by newspapers, which already suffer from lack of credibility or have a fast dwindling readership and circulation. Many readers were angry for duping and misleading them by indulging in distasteful April Fools' Day pranks. News and information is manipulated and planted in the pages of newspapers also by the various militant organisations in Northeast India. They use the media to suit their propagandist goals.

As every system and ideology tend to use information to suit the preservation and promotion of its objectives, content analysis can provide guidance and direction to readers, and reduce misuse and manipulation of information. No serious and systematic study of newspaper content has been undertaken in India, and hence, such studies are necessary to ensure a healthy relationship between the press and the public in a country that is so vast and diverse. Media content has, time and again, inflamed passions and led to communal flare-ups and riots. The disruption of the Valentine's Day celebrations in parts of the country, the vandalism of the paintings of India's leading artist M.F. Hussain, forbidding the shooting of certain films, the publication of the novel, *Satanic Verses*, of Salman Rushdie are a few instances that illustrate the point.

2.8 Frequency and Word Count

Frequency of a symbol, word, idea and subject indicate importance, attention, emphasis given to that issue. The count of favourable or unfavourable attribute of a symbol or idea helps to interpret or measure bias. Lasswell (1942), Leites and Pool (1942) emphasise the importance of studying word as an important unit of content analysis. Though word count and frequency of words are considered important elements in content analysis, in the present study the researcher has not adopted word count or frequency of occurrence of particular words as a unit for quantitative analysis or as a unit of measurement. He has instead used the qualitative analysis to suggest context, to enable easy interpretation, to deduce meaning and value judgment. While word count and word frequency are suitable to measure attitudes or biases related to specific themes like aggression, violence, peace, war propaganda it is difficult to apply it effectively when the entire newspaper issue is analysed for several quantitative and qualitative characteristics. Excessive and exclusive dependence on word count could in certain instances mislead and provide erroneous inferences. For instance, Pool's (1951) observation that symbols of democracy appear less frequently when a representative form of government is accepted than where it is in dispute suggests the deficiency in mere word count and frequencies without considering their correlation with other issues. It further points to the fact that words do not exhaust communication content. Silence, signs, symbols, body language and other non-verbal elements too communicate meaning.

Word count and frequency devoid of the context can yield misleading results. For instance, in a country ruled by a dictatorial government, the word 'democracy'

might occur in the newspapers more frequently than where democracy may be functioning effectively, as in the former, there could be protests against curtailment of democracy, frequent demands for introduction or restoration of democracy. The difficulty becomes more compounded when one has to use a computer programme to count word frequency. The computer can mechanically carry out word count without reference to the context in which it is used or without being able to interpret the nuances of the words. Such applications of content analysis can fail to provide contextual meanings, connections and linkages between words and ideas. Word count and word frequencies are indicative not only of quantity but must also take note of qualitative correlation and measurements in order to obtain a comprehensive idea of the content in context and its meaning.

2.9 Examples of Projects Working with Qualitative Content Analysis

There are several examples of empirical studies using qualitative content analysis procedures: Vicini (1993) conducted 14 open-ended in-depth interviews with educational advisors about concrete case-studies from their advisory service with the aim of reconstructing the theory of mind of advice. He used summarising qualitative content analysis leading to eight main categories. The results were that advice praxis had become therapy-oriented, that there are totally different concepts of advice.

Gerwin (1993) made a diary study with 21 middle school teachers about their daily hassles and uplifts and analysed the transcripts with summarising qualitative content analysis. She could demonstrate that being a teacher means severe stress,

from everyday problems with the copy machine to treating students with behaviour disorders.

Beck and Vowe (1995) analyzed 25 media products (newspapers, journals, radio transmissions) concerning new multimedia approaches. They used a combination of inductive and deductive qualitative content analysis. They found patterns of argumentation like: euphoria about multimedia; economic optimism; political critic; apocalyptic predictions.

Dolde and Goetz (1995) have conducted five open-ended interviews with adult students in an on-the-job computer education studio. Working with inductive and deductive qualitative content analysis they analysed their learning activities and learning strategies. The main advantage of the learning concept in the course seemed to be flexibility in time, as main disadvantage appeared heterogeneity of course members.

Bauer et al (1998) analyzed the biographies of 21 Alzheimer disease patients to find out common patterns and to compare them with 11 vascular dement patients of the same age. The biographical interviews had been worked through with qualitative content analysis and led to typical biographical patterns (e.g. overprotecting social network) of the Alzheimer patients.

Mayring et al (2000) studied unemployment of teachers in the eastern parts of Germany. The material had been collected through open-ended interviews and open-ended biographical questionnaire of 50 unemployed teachers, asking for their psychosocial stresses and coping behaviour. The results were compared with a former study on teacher unemployment in West Germany by the same team. Inductive and

deductive computer-assisted content analysis pointed out that the doubled crisis situation of the persons (unemployment and German unification) caused specific stress and new chances for adaptation.

With the qualitative content analysis Mayring et al (2000) wanted to describe procedures of systematic text analysis, which try to preserve the strengths of content analysis in communication science (theory reference, step models, model of communication, category lead, criteria of validity and reliability) to develop qualitative procedures (inductive category development, summarising, context analysis, deductive category application) which are methodologically controlled. These procedures allow a connection to quantitative steps of analysis if it seems meaningful for the analyst. The procedures of qualitative content analysis seem less appropriate, if the research question is highly open-ended, explorative, variable and working with categories would be a restriction, or if a more holistic, not step-by-step ongoing of analysis is planned. On the other hand qualitative content analysis can be combined with other qualitative procedures. The research question and the characteristics of the material should have the priority in making decisions about adapted methods. Mayring opines that it is better to discuss questions about methods in respect to specific content areas (Mayring, 1994b; Schmitt & Mayring, 2000) and then to compare different methodological approaches, including quantitative approaches.

A host of scholarly studies which examine communication content are available. Evans et al (1995) in "Science Content and Social Context" reviewed content analytic studies of popular science news and recommend that researchers do

more to examine visual imagery and non-elite news content. They also recommend that content analysts incorporate perspectives from linguistics and rhetoric and more formally contextualise content analytic data in terms of social theory. Brosius et al (1995) in their article "Killer and Victim Issues: Issue Competition in the Agenda-Setting Process of German Television" challenge the "equal-displacement" model of agenda setting in which it is assumed that when media coverage of an issue increases, media attention to other issues decreases more or less evenly across issues. Instead, the authors develop a "restructuring" model in which one can identify "killer" issues that are relatively more likely to displace other issues and "victim" issues that are relatively more likely to be pushed off the media agenda by "killer" issues.

Gonzenbach (1996) carried out a Longitudinal Analysis of the Drug Issue in which he presented the interactions between media coverage of illegal drugs, presidential structuring of drug issues, government policy regarding illegal drugs, public concern regarding illegal drugs, and real-world measures of the severity of the illegal drug problem. He identified four stages of media coverage (pre-problem, discovery, plateau, and decline) and reports that public concern and media attention lead presidential and government attention to the issue of illegal drugs.

Ideodynamic model of the relationship between media coverage and public opinion developed by Hertog et al (1995) was applied to newspaper and newsmagazine coverage of HIV transmission. News coverage of whether or not HIV can be transmitted via toilets, sneezing, or insects was found to predict public belief (as measured through survey research) in the likelihood of HIV transmission via these routes.

Popovich (1995) reviewed quantitative magazine research published between 1983 and 1993, including analyses of magazine advertising, photo coverage, minority coverage, and other content features. Finding a relatively small number of studies of magazine audiences and effects, he concluded that "magazine researchers rely too heavily on content analysis techniques, remain fragmented in focus, and lack theoretical foundations from which to pose their research questions."

According to Craig (1995) there are limitations to the traditional agenda setting models. He suggests an alternative approach that relies on longitudinal analysis and considers the interplay of news coverage of an issue, scientists' attention to an issue, government attention to an issue; and public concern with an issue. This approach allows researchers to identify distinctive phases in the agenda setting process and to more rigorously identify interactions between variables.

Randall (1995) examined the development of quantitative measures of verbal intensity and reported on an experiment that showed that verbal intensity scores generated with an elaborated definition of intensity were more highly correlated with subjects' estimates of the intensity of discourse manifested in audio recordings of discourse than were scores generated with an earlier definition. He elaborated definition of verbal intensity, assessed the frequency of death references, qualifiers (or 'intensifiers'), obscure words, sex references, profanity, and metaphors.

Textual ambiguity is the subject of study of Roberts, Carl W and Popping (1996). They drew attention to three potential sources of textual ambiguity that may challenge researchers seeking to construct network representations of texts. Texts may contain idiomatic ambiguity (i.e., the presence of idiomatic words and phrases),

illocutionary ambiguity (in which the illocutionary intention of a sentence is unclear), and relevance ambiguity (in which some relationships between themes may be irrelevant). They contended that researchers who conduct network analyses of texts must do more to take into account these three sources of ambiguity.

Ben (1997) developed and tested a theory that international conflict can be predicted by assessing the number and nature of a nation's newspaper editorials that focus on other nations. The author reported that these measures successfully predict international conflicts around the world over the past several decades. He suggested that mass media are crucial in government attempts to cultivate public consensus that conflict with other nations is justified.

The article of Kabanoff (1996) aimed at organisational behaviour researchers provides an overview of computer-supported content analysis, arguing that documents generated by organisations can provide valuable data about organisational behaviour, including data about organisational goals and the cognitive processes of top managers. He discussed the advantages and limitations of computer-supported content analysis and reviews several organisational behaviour studies that have made good use of computer-supported content analysis.

In many content analyses, only a sample of all coded units are coded by multiple coders. Lacy, Stephen and Riffe (1996) contend that this method of assessing intercoder reliability poses potential problems that have seldom been discussed in the extant literature. The authors provide a formula designed to estimate sample sizes required for valid reliability assessments. In addition, they discuss the

need for more careful reporting of reliability assessment procedures when these procedures involve sampling of coding units.

In a study of Russian political speeches delivered between 1964 and 1993 Anderson, Ronald D Jr (1996) reported that Russian politicians manifested a decrease in the ratio of nouns to verbs, a decrease in the use of the conjunction "and" relative to "but," a decrease in the use of the negative prefix ("un" and its variants) relative to the negative particle ("not" and its variants), an increase in the use of first-person singular voice, and an increase in the use of personal pronouns. The author claims that these changes reflect a decreasing conceptual distance between politicians and the populace. Such changes, the author suggests, are typical of shifts from authoritarianism to democracy.

Mergenthaler, Erhard (1996) argues for a 'marker view' of lexical content analysis in which words are seen as indicators of the presence of themes rather than as direct measures of themes. He describes his computer-assisted system for identifying cycles and key moments in transcripts of clinical psychological sessions. This system works by charting the frequency of words that have been shown to be correlated with emotional expression and abstraction.

Perloff (2000) in his study records how during the 1930s, after thousands of African Americans had been put to death by mobs - particularly in the South, but in other regions of the country as well - lynchings were no longer unusual or shocking events that deviated from the norm. Although there have been many studies of racial biases in the modern media and a host of scholarly investigations of the African American press during the late nineteenth century, Perloff (2000) says that there has

been virtually no research examining the ways in which the mainstream American press covered the lynching epidemic that swept the South during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. “In view of the paucity of research, it is not surprising that journalism history textbooks devote virtually no space to press coverage of lynchings. Many papers in southern parts of U.S.A. provided vicious coverage of lynchings during the late nineteenth century”.

Drawing on historical works, secondary sources, and hundreds of newspaper accounts, Perloff (2000) summarises what we know about how newspapers discussed lynching of Blacks in America on their news and editorial pages during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Far from suppressing news about lynchings, newspapers embraced them, providing abundant, even graphic, coverage of vigilante violence. As Clark (1964) observes in a book on the southern country editor, “many editors did not spare their readers' sensibilities. Whatever their motives, they (editors) wrote full, detailed accounts.” Most lynching stories contained grisly details, identified the victim as a Negro, and even suggested that the accused was guilty of the crime and therefore deserving of punishment (Perloff, 2000). Some newspapers and magazines denounced the practice of lynching Black Americans. Articles on lynchings of the Blacks had a special vitriolic quality. Newspaper stories identified the race of the accused, assumed without question that the accused person was guilty, used a number of dehumanising terms to label the Black victim, E.g., ‘wretch’, ‘fiend’, and ‘desperado’, assumed the Black person's race predisposed him to commit violent crimes, particularly rape, and sometimes self-righteously defended lynching of Black individuals. Newspaper data on lynchings became very helpful for

researchers to obtain quantitative facts about press biases. Studying the press coverage of lynching can shed light on the way various kinds of biases affect newspaper reporting.

2.10 Pollock's Study of Newspaper Content Using Community Structure Approach

John C. Pollock has used content analysis to study US newspapers on a variety of social and ethical issues. His research has demonstrated the usefulness of content analysis as an effective tool to measure contemporary issues ranging from newspaper coverage of Islam post 9/11, ethical and moral issues like cloning, homosexuality, Internet privacy etc. In all the studies reviewed below, Pollock has used community structure approach.

2.10.1 Nationwide Newspaper Coverage

i) Islam Post-September 11

In a nationwide study of nineteen US newspapers, Pollock (2005) tracked the coverage of Islam post- September 11. The study, undertaken a year after the attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001, explored links between city characteristics and coverage frames by combining 'prominence' and "direction" scores to yield a single 'Media Vector', measuring issue projection. Using Lexis Nexis, this study explored 325 articles, all of 500 words or more in nineteen major US newspapers printed between September 11, 2001 and September 12, 2002. All articles were coded and assigned two scores – 'prominence' score, a numerical rating from 3 to 16 points based on placement of the article in a

newspaper, headline size, length of the article, and the presence of photographs or graphics. A second score called 'directional score' was used to determine coding each article's 'framing' as favourable, unfavourable, or neutral/balanced. Most (fourteen) cities revealed positive coverage. Pearson correlations and regression analysis yielded several significant 'stakeholder' characteristics negatively correlated with favourable coverage of Islam. Contrary to expectations that a greater presence of foreigners, in particular Arabic or Farsi speakers, would be linked to appreciative perspectives, the higher the percentage of foreign-born citizens or number of Arabic/Farsi speakers the less favourable the coverage of Islam. In our research, we have used Pollock's concept of 'prominence score' with modifications. We have termed it 'prominence index'.

Pollock's study examined how a national cross section of major US newspapers reacted to critical choices about framing Islam after September 11 and how much the content of their coverage reflected the communities they serve. He concluded that while newspapers are active in setting public agendas, they are also influenced by the society that surrounds them.

ii) Homosexuals in the Boy Scouts of America

Using a 'community structure approach', Pollock et al (1977, 1978, 1994-2002), carried out a nationwide study and explored systematic links between community demographic characteristics and newspaper reporting on homosexuals in the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), especially the Supreme Court decision permitting gay exclusion. All articles over 150 words on the topic published between January 1, 1998, and March 1, 2001, were selected from a national cross-section sample of

twenty-one newspapers, yielding 322 articles. A single score, the Media Vector, was calculated to combine article 'prominence' as well as reporting direction (favourable, balanced/neutral, or unfavourable).

iii) Privacy on the Internet

In this study, primary research was conducted to investigate how newspapers from different cities in the United States reported on Internet Privacy. The study compared hypotheses on different city characteristics and newspaper coverage of Internet Privacy using the 'community structure approach', tested in earlier versions in Minnesota by Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1973, 1980) and elaborated in nationwide studies by Pollock and others (1977, 1978, 1994-2000), suggesting that certain demographic structures of a community are systematically linked to newspaper reporting on critical issues.

A national cross-section sample of twenty-one newspapers was selected from the DIALOG newspaper database, and a sample of 25 articles above 350 words in each newspaper on Internet Privacy were drawn from January 27, 1996 to November 7, 2000. The resulting total of 495 articles was analysed using content analysis. A single score, the Janis-Fadner Coefficient of Imbalance, was calculated to combine attention given to each article as well as reporting direction (favourable, balanced/neutral, or unfavourable). Pearson correlations were used to link different city characteristics to coverage of Internet privacy regulation.

iv) FDA Regulation of Tobacco

The report on FDA Regulation of Tobacco discussed the way in which newspapers in major cities across the United States have covered the issue. The

community structure approach developed by Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien (1973, 1980), and elaborated by Pollock and others (1977, 1978, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998), suggests that the structures of communities, regarding certain demographics in particular, are linked systematically to the coverage of critical issues in its newspapers. The approach was used to create and test a set of hypotheses studying the correlation between city characteristics and newspaper reporting on FDA regulation of tobacco.

A sample of articles with a minimum of 400 words was drawn from newspapers in fifteen major cities using the DIALOG database. They were all written between the years 1993 and 2000. The final total of 272 articles was then analysed, focusing on content and direction. The content was based on article placement, headline size, word count, and direction. The direction (favourable, unfavourable, or balanced/ neutral) was then assigned to each article and used to calculate the Janis-Fadner Coefficient of Imbalance for each newspaper. The results showed that newspaper coverage varied widely throughout the nation, with coefficients of imbalance ranging from .246 to -303. }

v) 1998 Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement

The 206-billion dollar tobacco industry agreed to pay 46 states in November 1998, in an unprecedented act. Previously, although sued several times, the tobacco industry was almost always victorious. When former tobacco company employees became willing to testify, these outcomes changed. The tobacco industry was shown to have intentionally stalled scientific and health awareness regarding smoking throughout the 50s. States sued to recoup health care money spent on ill smokers.

Ultimately the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) was developed as a legal remedy, signed by 46 states, joining Florida, Minnesota, Mississippi and Texas, which came to similar settlements a few months earlier.

This study explores the connection between city demographics and nationwide news coverage of this event, specifically using a 'community structure approach' initiated in Minnesota by Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1973, 1980) and elaborated in nationwide studies by Pollock and colleagues (1977,1978, 1994-2001). This approach suggests that particular demographic structures of a community are systematically linked to newspaper reporting perspectives on critical issues.

vi) Physician-Assisted Suicide

Physician-assisted suicide has recently been a topic of vigorous debate, yet few studies seek to explore this highly charged topic as a communication issue. Unlike other studies exploring the impact of media on society, this investigation examines the impact of society on media, specifically linking city characteristics to systematic content analysis of newspaper coverage of physician-assisted suicide. Specifically, this study maps the way newspapers from a national cross-section of cities across the United States differ in their coverage of physician-assisted suicide. The community structure approach suggests that certain demographic structures of a community are systematically linked to newspaper reporting on critical issues. This approach was used to test a set of hypotheses exploring the correlation between city characteristics and nationwide newspaper coverage of physician-assisted suicide.

The study, part of a continuing series exploring the relation of city characteristics to newspaper coverage of "critical events" such as, Magic Johnson's

announcement, Dr. Kevorkian's activities or tobacco's Master Settlement Agreement, confirms the strong association nationwide between community structure and media alignment with political and social change.

vii) Embryonic Stem Cell Research

This study uses a "community structure approach" to explore the connection between city characteristics and nationwide newspaper coverage of embryonic stem cell research. A sample of 350 articles, chosen from twenty-one newspapers across the nation, was coded for 'prominence' and article 'direction' (favourable, unfavourable, or neutral). The results were combined to calculate a single-score 'Media Vector' for each newspaper. Pearson and regression analysis revealed that three variables accounted for 85% of the variance: "health care access" (number of physicians per 100,000 residents); "stakeholders" (% Catholic and % Republican); and "media access" (% cable-subscribers). Healthcare and media access are linked to favourable coverage of stem cell research.

viii) Detainee Rights

The terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the subsequent war in Afghanistan have created some unique problems for the United States government. One of the issues to be dealt with is what to do with the former Taliban fighters who have been captured in Afghanistan. The most dangerous have been transported to the detainee camp in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where they are being held under heavy guard indefinitely. A controversy arose over how to treat the detainees. The issue not only created a partisan split, it polarized parts of the Bush administration and put the U.S. at odds with the rest of the world.

This study uses a “community structure approach” to explore the connection between city characteristics and nationwide newspaper coverage of extending Prisoner of War status to the Taliban and Al Qaeda detainees imprisoned at Guantanamo, Cuba. A sample of all the longest articles over 150 words in a nationwide cross-section of twenty-two newspapers in the sample period January 1 to March 15, 2002, yielded 302 articles. These were coded for “prominence” and article “direction” (favourable, unfavourable, or neutral) and combined to calculate Pollock’s “Media Vector” for each newspaper. The results confirmed Pollock’s “stakeholder” hypothesis. Contrary to expectation, Pearson correlations revealed significant relationships between voting Republican and favorable detainee rights coverage. By contrast, higher percentages of Catholics, Democrats, and Hispanics were found significantly related to negative coverage of detainee rights. Regression analysis revealed that five variables accounted for 95% of the variance: “stakeholders” (% Republican); “media access” (% cable-subscribers); “buffer” (% Income over US\$ 100,000); “Position in Lifecycle” (families with children aged between 8-18); and “violated buffer” (% Crime).

ix) Music Censorship

A nationwide study of music censorship compared hypotheses linking different city characteristics and nationwide newspaper coverage, using the “community structure” approach to research, as developed in nationwide studies by Pollock and others (1977, 1978, 1994-2002).

x) Same-Sex Adoption

Same-sex adoption is an emerging controversy. In some states same-sex adoption is supported, but in conservative Florida, homosexual couples are forbidden from adopting children. Yet the American Academy of Pediatrics welcomes same-sex adoption. Supporters of gay adoption argue that since there is no conclusive evidence on whether children of gay families are negatively impacted, and also because many children who are products of homosexual parents are happy and well-adjusted, there is no reason to ban same-sex adoption. Opponents of same-sex adoption argue that both male and female counterparts are needed to adequately raise a family and homosexual parenting raises the issue of sexual abuse. Differing opinions surrounding this issue make same-sex adoption an important topic to explore.

Specifically, this study uses a community structure approach, initiated by Tichenor, Donahue, and Olien in Minnesota (1973, 1980) and revised and tested by Pollock and other researchers in nationwide studies (1977, 1978, 1974-2003) to explore the ways certain demographic structures of a community are linked to newspaper reporting on same-sex adoption. A sample of newspaper articles of 150 words or more printed on the topic was collected from Lexis-Nexis from October 31, 2000 to December 1, 2002. The resulting 216 articles were analysed using content and statistical analyses. Content analysis combined a “prominence” score -- comprised of the article’s placement, length, headline size, presence of photographs or graphics -- and overall “direction” -- favourable, unfavourable, or neutral/ balanced -- for each article to calculate Pollock’s “Media Vector” for each newspaper, yielding a measure of issue “projection.”

2.10.2 City Characteristics and Newspaper Coverage

i) NAFTA

Since many citizens identified the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with employment/unemployment issues, Pollock et al (Pollock, 1995) used this critical event as an ideal opportunity to study the association between citizen/influential concerns and newspaper coverage. Using DIALOG, a national newspaper database, he analysed locally generated articles published from September 1, 1993 to December 31, 1993, twenty major newspapers representing a geographic cross-section of cities in the United States. A content analysis technique was used to evaluate both the "amount of attention" an article received and its "direction" to yield a single score for each newspaper. These scores were compared with a variety of city characteristics to test hypotheses associating several aspects of community structure with reporting variations.

Employing correlation and multiple regression analyses, one key factor was found clearly associated with coverage favouring or opposing NAFTA. Contrary to positions taken by organised labour, the higher the proportion of the labour force employed in manufacturing in a city, the more positive that city's reporting on NAFTA is likely to be. Mapping coverage of the NAFTA debates demonstrates that archival data comparing newspaper databases and city characteristics can reveal significant variations in reporting on political and economic policies.

ii) Human Cloning

In February 1997 Dolly, a cloned sheep, and her maker, Scottish scientist Ian Wilmut, hit the headlines. The story figured prominently in newspapers, on

television, across the Internet, and in conversations. Since the ability to clone humans became a reality, there was a media frenzy sparking many a debate among a variety of publics: scientists, lawyers, ethicists, religious leaders, government representatives and others. Pollock et al (2000) tracked news coverage from different regions of the United States sampled systematically in twenty-two newspapers throughout the nation during the period of January 1997 through December 1998. The time frame included both coverage on Dolly, the first sheep cloned, and Richard Seed, the person who announced he had the ability to begin cloning humans. Previous studies suggest that variations in community or city characteristics (using aggregate data and demographics) have a great deal to do with variations in reporting on critical issues).

The DIALOG Classroom Information Program, a national newspaper database, was used to collect 380 articles over one paragraph in length. Each of the articles was read and coded for two kinds of information: a "display" or "attention" score (ranging from 3 to 16 points based on article placement, headline size, article length, and presence of photographs, captioned or not) and a "directional" score (legitimizing/favourable, delegitimising /unfavourable, and balanced/neutral).

iii) Magic Johnson HIV Announcement

Although many articles have appeared in the past few years on the connection between mass media outputs and perceptions of HIV/AIDS, only recently has attention been drawn to the relation between reporting on HIV/AIDS and the structural characteristics of local communities. A recent "white paper" drafted by distinguished health communication scholars for the NIMH Office of AIDS asks that researchers begin to explore links between national or community-specific norms and

reporting patterns. This research (Pollock et al, 1994) is one of the first systematic efforts to test that linkage by examining a cross-sectional national sample of newspapers. Over 450 articles were studied using a content analysis technique that ultimately assigns a single "score" to each of twenty-one papers in distinct U.S. geographic regions. Comparing the rankings of those scores with city rankings on a variety of selected aggregate data indicators, several findings emerge.

Four clusters of hypotheses were tested, regarding size (city population and media saturation); belief system differences; athletic and fitness involvement; and status and achievement -- privileged lifestyles. Curiously, there is little relation between variations in coverage of Johnson and such city characteristics as: ethnic identity (percent Black or Hispanic); fan enthusiasm (percent television sports fans); or belief system variations (percent Catholic; percent engaged in devotional reading). Income matters relatively little. In sum, a community structure analysis of newspaper coverage suggests that the Magic Johnson HIV announcement reflects achievement, success and fitness issues more than ethnic or moral issues, or even sports fan involvement. The apparent Johnson message: hard work and success carry no immunity from a deadly virus that is voraciously democratic.

The above studies led by Pollock deal with a variety of contemporary themes. They show content analysis of newspapers can be used today with great degree of scientific accuracy to measure and examine how newspapers and other media deal with issues of relevance to the community at large. Such studies are easily replicable and are particularly useful in measuring newspaper's objectivity, social responsibility, bias and a host of other attitudes that can affect the content.

2.11 Impact Study

The Readership Institute of the Media Management Center at Northwestern University, USA, in 2001 embarked on the largest content analysis of newspapers ever completed. This study, which measured newspaper content, is named the 'Impact Study'. It examined 100 US newspapers, analysing 47,000 stories in 700 issues across the United States (Lynch and Peer, 2002). Rather than asking consumers to describe what kind of news and information they want to know and how they should be covered, the Impact Study measured newspaper content, measured consumer reaction and then looked for significant correlations between the two. 37,000 readers and non-readers in the 100 Impact newspaper markets reported how important different types of information and news are to them. They were also asked how satisfied they were with their local newspaper's coverage of these topics. The study pertained to five standard circulation ranges. Newspapers were ranked in size from 10,000 to 600,000 average daily circulations. The Readership Institute developed its own tools to measure content and trained a team of researchers.

The researchers measured news content in those same local newspapers, documenting exactly to what consumers were reacting. The Readership Institute adopted a multi-dimensional approach to measure each story which helped to gauge what types of news are covered as well as how news is covered. Of the 74,000 stories in the selected papers, 47,000 stories were chosen for in-depth analysis. The Readership Institute designed a multi-dimensional approach to measure each story.

For each story the researchers measured several characteristics including the theme, origin (source) geographic focus, news style, visual complexity, front page diversity, overall counts and content organisation.

The study examined the percentage of coverage of various kinds of news and found that the smaller papers give more emphasis on local stories on the front page than the larger papers, which give greater emphasis to national and international stories on the front page. The study also examined how news is covered – photographs, graphics, difference on the coverage on Sundays, gender diversity in sourcing. A 450-question survey among 37,000 readers was also conducted. The study revealed that even the slightest increase in overall content satisfaction increases readership. In other words, the study revealed what content practices related to consumer satisfaction (transcripts of interviews, discourses, protocols of observations, video tapes, documents etc).

2.12 The Press in India

Though the press has played a very important role in the political and socio-cultural history of India, media research is quite new and scanty. As much of the studies available in India are based on media research done in the West, there is great scope and vital need for media research in the country. Today with the mushrooming of several media faculties and university departments on the one hand, and a growing and vibrant press and electronic media, media research assumes great significance. Content analysis, as we have seen, can be an important research method for serious study of media content in general of the press in particular.

One significant study of newspaper content regarding the way press covers issues pertaining to women was undertaken by Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma (1994). They studied newspaper coverage of five major issues - dowry, rape, Shabano case, foeticide and Sati. The period covered was from 1979 to 1988. The data was both quantified in terms of the total number of items on each issue and their break-up across separate categories like news, editorials, articles etc. The qualitative analysis was done by looking at the placement of the item within the publication and analysing its content. The placement and type of coverage given to an issue signify the relative importance granted to it by the newspaper. Of the 498 items related to the five themes, Sati topped the list with 41.1 per cent, and Shabano case was the second with 29.1 per cent. Five leading English newspapers were chosen for the study, namely Hindustan Times, The Indian Express, The Times of India, The Statesman and The Hindu. The study was carried out on four leading vernacular language press-namely, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi and Tamil. The study was also extended to the development of women's programming on Indian television and the ideology of some of its 'women oriented serials telecast in the mid-eighties.

Much of the literature available on the press in India pertains to the history and growth of the press. Ever since the Portuguese missionaries established the first printing press in Goa in 1556, the press in India has played an important role in the growth of literacy, education, development of languages, and the promotion of social consciousness. Many of the pioneers of newspapers and periodicals in the country had clear nationalistic goals. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the press served as an important instrument in the struggle for India's independence. Besides

the Europeans, who included missionaries, several Indian leaders like Raja Rammohun Roy, Bal Gangatarak Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, used the print media with the social and nationalistic goals in mind. (Sharma, 1994)

There is an abundance of literature on the pioneering years of the press in India and other south Asian countries. However, most of these are not related to critical studies of content, but rather deal with the history and development of the press. Lent's (1981-82) scholarly article 'The Missionary Press of Asia 1550-1850' outlines the history of the press in Asia. Natarajan (2000) traces the history of the press in India. The press in India has not only survived the onslaught of those who tried to muzzle and suppress it but became one of the powerful forces the authorities had to reckon with in the struggle for independence. Natarajan chronicles this struggle and highlights the important milestones in the growth and development of the press in India.

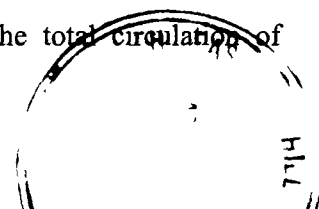
There are several other scholarly and historical studies on the press in India. We may mention the most outstanding of these: Aurobindo Mazumdar (1993) deals specifically with the role of the press in the freedom struggle from 1937-42. Parthasarathy (1991) brings in more than four decades on his experience to tell the story of the press in India and the doyens of the Indian press. Sarkar (1984) presents the history of the press in India from the legal perspective. Bhargava (2005) has traced the evolution of the press in India as an industry and the way it has coped with the challenges and changes that marked various eras. Kesavan (1988) in a two-volume study presents a comprehensive history of printing and publishing in India.

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The history of the press in India and the freedom struggle go hand in hand. Not only did the press powerfully assist the country's aspiration and yearning for freedom, but it has also, in the post-independence era, stood firmly in upholding the democratic principles enshrined in the Constitution of India.

A free press has played the role of a 'watchdog', a handmaid to democracy, and a responsible 'Fourth Estate.' India has been able to maintain its democratic system of government uninterrupted for more than six decades while several other Asian countries, formerly under colonial powers, had to live with periods of authoritarian governments. In addition to the wisdom of the framers of India's Constitution and the sagacity of the people of this nation, we might pay tribute to an independent and responsible press, which has contributed in no small measure to the social and political process that shaped and continues to shape the destiny of India.

But one can witness winds of change everywhere. In this first decade of the 21st century there is widespread apprehension about the survival of newspapers. We are witnessing an alarming decline of newspaper circulation and readership worldwide. In many countries such as India the picture is quite different. The print media in India is far from being dead, if the official report on the state of the printed publications is anything to go by. According to *Press in India 2004-5*, the annual report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI), the print media claimed a substantial share in the information space in the country registering 1,948 new newspapers and over a two crore increase in circulation in 2004-05. As on March 31, 2005, there were 60,413 registered newspapers on record as against 58,469 at the end of March 2004. With an annual increase of 2,36,31,621, the total circulation of



newspapers in India in 2004-05 was 15,67,19,209 copies. Four newspapers also ceased publication during this period.

2.13 The Press in Northeast India

History of the press in northeast India dates back to the establishment of the first Assamese monthly *Orunodhoi* in 1846. The region's press is hence 162 years old. (Plathottam,1996) The press in Northeast India has played the role of a catalyst, not only merely to inform, educate or entertain, but also to promote ethnic and communal harmony, nationalism, public opinion and other democratic functions. The geographic features of the region, the presence of several languages, and the ethnic diversity have had a decisive impact of the press in the region.

Data on the number of newspapers in the region indicates an ever-growing, vibrant press in the region. Print media in the region has made significant progress during the last fifteen years. Today there are 1074 registered titles with Registrar of Newspaper for India (RNI) as compared to 700 at the beginning of 1992. Hence we can observe 53% growth during this period. Meghalaya is leading in the number of registered periodicals with a growth rate of 78%, followed closely by Assam with 67%. In Assam, out of 15 daily newspapers registered in Assamese language, 12 have been started during the last fifteen years (Bharali, 2007).

While statistics indicate rapid growth of the press in Northeast India, there has been no scientific study of the content and social responsibility of the press in the region. Hence it is our attempt to document, study and evaluate the contents of two of the leading newspapers of the region, *The Assam Tribune* and *The Shillong Times* and present evidence in support of conclusions on the social responsibility of the press in

northeast India. The thesis is an attempt to provide empirical evidence in support of the concept of social responsibility of the press in northeast India.

2.14 Social Responsibility

Social responsibility implies that the press assumes voluntarily the task of providing adequate coverage to all sections of the community, be they economically or ethnically significant or powerful. In this section we intend to review literature on laws, legislation and guidelines enacted in various countries pertaining to the social responsibility of the press. These include provisions enacted for a free and socially responsible press in the Constitutions of various countries, journalism reviews started by well-known journalism institutes which critically examine the role and function of the press, Press Councils, Commissions, Editors' forums and independent organisations concerned with fair and responsible practices in journalism.

Since the publication of *A Free and Responsible Press* by the Hutchins' Commission on Freedom of the Press in USA in 1947 there has been a renewed interest in the moral dimensions of journalism (Schmuhl, 1989). There exists a close and intimate link between journalistic ethics and social responsibility of the press. Without defining and specifying ethical standards it would be difficult to lay down the ground rules for a socially responsible press. Even though journalism schools place a great deal of importance to ethics in their curriculum, rarely do we find journalists referring back to them in their journalistic practices.

Grover (1990) traces the press laws and the emergence of institutions like the Press Council. One of the first countries in Europe to legislate on the press was

Sweden, which established the Press Fair Practices Commission in 1916. *Washington Journalism Review* established in 1961, and *Columbia Journalism Review*, which followed, paved the way for strengthening awareness about the social functions of the press. An *Editor's Note* column in *New York Times* started in 1983 by A.M. Rosenthal, Executive editor, examined significant lapses of fairness, balance or perspective. Other attempts along similar lines were 'Inside Story' on PBS, 'Viewpoint' on ABC, Mellet Fund for a Free and Responsible Press established in the late 1960s, the National News Council, established in 1973, which was wound up in 1984, and a host of other initiatives.

In 1985, the UNESCO asked the international and regional organisations of professional journalists to prepare a review (Nordenstreng, 1989) of developments concerning the status, rights and responsibilities of journalists around the world. This work coordinated by Kaarle Nordenstreng, President of the International Organisation of Journalists, and ably assisted by a Turkish expert Hifzi Topuz, was undertaken on behalf of several leading press organizations in various continents like the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ), International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), Federation of Latin American Journalists (FELAP), Federation of Latin American Press Workers (FELATRAP), Union of African Journalists (UAJ), Federation of Arab Journalists (FAJ) and Confederation of ASEAN Journalists (CAJ). Though the editors of the volume admit that the work is far from being a comprehensive review, it is the first time at the international level such a well-documented publication was brought out. The work is rich in data, case studies, facts and figures, documents and viewpoints. The UNESCO commissioned study under the

leadership of Sean MacBride (1980) and published under the title *Many Voices, One World*, more popularly called the MacBride Report, calls for a New World Information, Communication Order (NWICO).

In India, the social responsibility of the press can be traced to the role the press played in the freedom struggle, the writings of Mahatma Gandhi and the other leaders involved in the freedom struggle, the Constituent Assembly and its deliberations on the press and its responsibilities, the post-independent legislations of the government and other bodies like the Press Council of India, the Press Commissions, the Advertising Standards Council of India etc. Bhabani Bhattacharya (1969) in his book *Gandhi the Writer*, presents the spirit that moved Gandhi to write extensively. He sheds much light on Gandhi's journalistic activities. K.E. Eapen (1995), one of the pioneers of journalism and communication education in India, calls for serious and systematic training in journalism. S.C. Bhatt's (1997) book, *Indian Press Since 1955*, is a well-researched work on the growth of the press. Besides these we have a large corpus of literature on the press by pioneers of the Indian press and journalism, the publications of Press Institute of India, books and reviews published by other media institutes in the country. *Vidura*, the journal of the Press Institute of India in its July-September 2006 issue dealt with the theme: 'Media and Social Responsibility.' The Right to Information Act enacted by Indian government in 2005 provides greater possibility for the press to seek information and offers easier access to sources of information of a public nature. The Act can help enhance a more effective exercise of social responsibility.

In this section we have reviewed the literature on content analysis and issues related to quantitative and qualitative factors that are related to the process of content analysis. Several computer programmes available today have made content analysis easier and more reliable. We have also reviewed some of the major projects working with content analysis. We have reviewed John C. Pollock's studies of newspaper content using community structure approach to understand social issues.

We also reviewed the Impact Study by Readership Institute, USA, which examined 100 US newspapers, analysing 47,000 stories on 700 issues across the United States. The Impact Study is perhaps the largest content analysis of newspapers ever completed. We have included in the review of literature materials on social responsibility as well as literature on the press in India and Northeast India.

Research in newspaper content is gaining a great deal of importance today as newspapers are undergoing rapid changes and are facing serious challenges from the new media. The availability of newer tools to aid social research and the establishment of many media institutes of research, one can hope that content analysis would be able to advance further as a tool for media research.

Chapter 3

Literature Review: Social Responsibility

In this chapter we review the literature on social responsibility of the press and the various theories related to it. We examine the literature on the historical developments as well as various legislations and laws, proposals and recommendations of the press commissions, deliberations of press councils, other juridical, government, industry agencies which emphasis the social responsibility of the press. Besides written laws and ethics, the *dharma* of the press includes unwritten conventions and what is generally termed as good journalistic practices and ‘good taste’. As the press is generally considered to have certain social obligations, we begin by examining the nature and extent of these obligations with a view to study issues like social responsibility and accountability of the press, freedom of the press, the role and function of the press in relation to democracy and government, ethical issues in the press and some of the institutional safeguards which are necessary for a socially responsible press.

The press in a democratic system is expected to regulate and direct its practices voluntarily and without external coercion or censorship. While carrying out its tasks the press is expected to follow good business practices and management, without undermining its social obligations to the public. The press is to be objective

and free from bias. We shall study the issue of social responsibility from the perspective of the newspaper management, the government and other statutory bodies and the public.

3.1 Development of Social Responsibility Theory

The concept of social responsibility of the press evolved over a long period of time. Several factors have influenced its growth and development. We shall briefly examine some of the important milestones in the growth of the idea of social responsibility.

Political free thinkers, proponents of libertarian views and those who fostered a democratic spirit like John Milton had a profound influence on the growth of the notion of social responsibility. Other factors that contributed to the development of the social responsibility of the press include the transition in political systems from monarchy to democracy, emergence of participatory and free political systems, the growth of printing which increased the phase with which ideas spread across the world, and the development of the rational spirit. The press is a child of liberty and freedom, free speech and expression. The invention of printing with movable types in the West effected major changes in the political, religious and social thinking of Europe. The United States of America, then as a newly emerging nation, by considering freedom of speech and expression as something sacred and non-negotiable, provided a fresh impetus to this movement. Several European countries incorporated the notion of a free press into its Constitutions. The First Amendment in the American Constitution which enshrined freedom and responsibility for the press

has often been cited as a pattern and framework for many nations which resolved to opt for a free press.

Various forms of ethical guidelines were in existence from the earliest days of the newspapers. But press freedom and responsibility to the public was challenged time and again by dictatorial political systems under Communism, Fascism, Nazism and other such authoritarian regimes. Adolph Hitler and Joseph Goebbels, for instance, saw that rationality was the enemy of 'National Socialism' and dictatorship and that modern mass communications (radio and newspapers) offered unlimited power to displace reason through the use of propaganda. In Hitler's view: "What luck for governments that people don't think." Thinking may be done only when an order is given or executed. If this is different, human society could not exist." Goebbels, who carried out a pogrom of propaganda and the displacement of reason, would "see that the press be so artfully organised that it is so to speak like a piano in the hands of the government, on which the government can play"(Morrisett, 2003).

3.1.1 Canons of Journalism

Every mass media group has its own code of ethics which aims at guiding its staff. The oldest, shortest and broadest of the codes is the Canons of Journalism, adopted by the American society of Newspaper Editors in 1923 (Sandman, 1976). It called on newspapers to practice responsibility to the general welfare, sincerity, truthfulness, impartiality, fair play, decency, and respect for the individual's privacy. Implicit in the Canons are faith in the human person who is rational and capable of discovering truth and able to separate right from wrong by power of reason; faith in the efficacy of the self-righting process; and the belief that newspaper is chiefly an

instrument of enlightenment making its appeal to the critical sense of the reader (Siebert et al, 1956). The Canons seemed to assume that the newspaper should promote democratic government by expediting the self-righting process by striving for such ideals as truthfulness and fair play. The one new idea in the Canons was that the press is responsible to the general welfare.

The seven canons are entitled Responsibility; Freedom of the Press; Independence; Sincerity; Truthfulness, Accuracy; Impartiality; Fair Play; and Decency. The Canon on Responsibility reads:

The right of a newspaper to attract and hold readers is restricted by nothing but considerations of public welfare. The use a newspaper makes of the share of public attention it gains serves to determine its sense of responsibility, which it shares with every member of its staff. A journalist who uses his power for any selfish or otherwise unworthy purpose is faithless to a high trust.

The Canons of Journalism was revised in 1975. Sandman (1976) calls this and similar media codes by and large negative, platitudes with little provision of enforcement or means to punish those who violate them.

3.1.2 The Hutchins Commission

The social responsibility theory gained prominence in the late forties against the backdrop of World War II. Supported by funding from publisher Henry Luce and from Encyclopedia Britannica, a group of eminent scholars and authors convened a Commission under the direction of Robert M. Hutchins, President of Chicago University (Commission, 1947). This Commission set up in 1942 was called the Committee on a Free and Responsible Press, more commonly known as the "Hutchins

Commission" after its chairman. (Henceforth referred to as Commission or Hutchins' Commission).

The Commission in 1947 published its first report in a 50-page volume titled *A Free and Responsible Press*. The Hutchins' Commission was the first to enunciate in a coherent and systematic way the social responsibility theory of the press. Since its publication, the report of the Commission has provided a blueprint for many subsequent studies on press responsibility and ethics.

Prior to 1947, the press was widely faulted for lack of social responsibility. The Commission exhorted the press of its obligation to project a "representative picture of the constituent groups in society". The press, it observed, should portray more faithfully the true condition and aspiration of ethnic and religious minorities and rural people. It urged the press to adopt affirmative action in this regard. It addressed a broad array of questions dealing with the future of a free press in a society dramatically changed from the society out of which the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution grew. It called for action by the press itself to correct certain of its perceived shortcomings.

The difference between the libertarian and social responsibility theories is subtle, but vitally important. The former holds that if each publication and station does whatever it wants, all will work out for the best. The social responsibility theory disagrees. It urges the media to do what the libertarian theory assumes they will do – provide a free marketplace of ideas (Sandman et al, 1976). "A new era of public responsibility for the press has arrived", stated the Commission. "The variety of sources of news and opinion is limited. The insistence of the citizen's need has

increased... We suggest the press look upon itself as performing a public service of a professional kind.”

Some of the core concepts that emerged from the Commission’s study were:

- 1 The First Amendment grew, in part, out of Miltonian notions expressed in the *Areopagitica*. One of these was that confronted with challenging ideas, human beings would seek out all conflicting opinions, weigh them carefully, and that in the "free and open encounter" thus engendered, truth would be discovered.
- 2 The press is crucial to the process of conveying opinions and viewpoints and thus to the process of discovering truth.
- 3 We now live in a time where there are so many competing opinions and viewpoints and many things are being published in different media that no one person can study and review all matters relevant to many of the important decisions today (Commission, 1947).

The social responsibility theory is an outgrowth of the libertarian theory. However, social responsibility goes beyond "objective" reporting to "interpretive" reporting. A truthful, complete account of the news is not necessarily enough today, notes the Commission. "It is no longer enough to report the *fact* truthfully. It is now necessary to report *the truth about the fact*." Today's complex world often necessitates analysis, explanation, and interpretation (Commission, 1947). As the Commission stated:

The emerging theory does not deny the rationality of man, although it puts far less confidence in it than the libertarian theory; but it does seem to deny that man is

innately motivated to search for truth and to accept it as his guide. Under the social responsibility theory, man is viewed not so much irrational as lethargic. He is capable of using his reason but he is loath to do so (Commission, 1947).

If man is to remain free, he must live by reason instead of passively accepting what he sees, hears, and feels. Therefore, the more alert elements of the community must goad him into the exercise of his reason. Without such goading man is not likely to be moved to seek truth. The languor which keeps him from using his gift of reason extends to all public discussion. Man's aim is not to find truth but to satisfy his immediate needs and desires (Commission, 1947). It is the press, therefore, that must be the "more alert element" and keep the public informed, for an informed populace is the cornerstone of democracy.

But according to the Commission, today's large media conglomerates, however, may not function naturally as a public forum, where all ideas are shared and available. The Commission stated, "the owners and managers of the press determine which persons, which facts, which versions of these facts, shall reach the public" (Commission, 1947).

According to the Commission, the mass media should:

1. Provide a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in context, which gives them meaning.
2. Provide a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism.
3. Provide a representative picture of the constituent groups in society.
4. Be responsible for the presentation and clarification of the goals and values of society.

5. Provide full access to the day's intelligence.

Given the changed circumstances of society, the Hutchins Commission grappled with the question of what should the role of a free press is or be. The concepts expressed by it are crucial to understand the social responsibility of the press. The Commission listed five things which contemporary society requires of the press. It noted that these standards were drawn largely from the professions and practices of those who operate the media.

The first requirement of the press, according to the Commission, is to provide "a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning." This requirement demands that the press be accurate; it must not lie. It means, also that the press must identify fact as fact and opinion as opinion. The press seemed in substantial agreement with the Commission that the media should be accurate and should separate news and opinion. This is evident from the fact that there was a growing fidelity to the public interest and development of the idea of objective reporting, which according to Brucker (1973) is one of the outstanding achievements of the American press.

In the nineteenth century, it was not uncommon for newspapers to use the news as a political weapon; sometimes news items were distorted, biased, and suppressed to meet the needs of the moment. Later in the century newspapers began to confine their opinions to the editorial page; they strove to record the news objectively, without personal intrusion and comment, and to present not just one side but all sides. According to Peterson (Siebert et al, 1956) this development was due to economic factors, growing professionalism and the self-righting process. Objectivity

had become more than a 'goal', it had become a 'fetish' by the time the Commission issued its report in 1947. According to Peterson (Siebert et al, 1956) in trying to develop objectivity the press has developed a curious sort of objectivity – a spurious objectivity which result in half-truths, incompleteness, incomprehensibility. In adhering to objective reporting, the press has tried to present more than one side to a story; but in doing so, the suggestion is, the media have not bothered to evaluate for the reader the trustworthiness of conflicting sources, nor have they supplied the perspective essential to a complete understanding of a given situation. Instead of assuming that two half truths make a truth, the Commission says in effect, the press should seek “the whole truth.” Though the press largely accepted the principle that it should separate fact and opinion, there was reluctance on publishing the truth about the fact as it entailed mixing fact and opinion, as it would sometimes lead to prejudices and bias masquerading as objective fact. Today objective and interpretative reporting has become essential with news breaking round the clock on television and Internet. But objectivity and accuracy continue to be a big minefield wrought with difficulties. Journalists today are faced with a more complex society and hence ethical codes and issues of social responsibility have assumed greater importance now than in the past.

The second requirement of the press, according to the Commission, is that it serves as “a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism.” It means that the press should carry views contrary to their own without abdicating their own right of advocacy. The press should try to represent all important viewpoints, not merely

those with which it agrees. With the newspaper ownership and control getting concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, this task assumes greater importance.

Norman Isaacs (1953), former managing editor of *The Louisville Times* and president of the Associated Press Managing Editors Association stated: “The one function we have that supersedes everything is to convey information. We are common carriers. The freedom of the press was given for that purpose – and that purpose alone. Freedom of the press cannot mean the license to keep people from knowing. And we keep them from knowing whenever we are backward and arrogant in operating our papers.” Edward Lindsay (Siebert et al, 1956) of the Lindsay - Schaub Newspapers reiterated the same view when he said, “Newspaper publishers are denied the luxury of refusing to deal with those whom they dislike or of using their control of a medium of communication to punish those who patronise a competitor.”

A third requirement of the press, the Commission states, is that it projects “a representative picture of the constituent groups in society.” This demands that the press accurately portray various social and ethnic groups. A fourth requirement, which the Commission mentions is that the press be responsible for “the presentation and clarification of the goals and values of the society.”

The final requirement mentioned by the Commission is that the press provide “full access to the day’s intelligence.” This means that the press should have a wide distribution of news and opinion which can reach a wide audience. Freedom of information and people’s right to information are basic rights. The press as agents of the public must help break down barriers to the free flow of news and information.

The Commission proposed certain specific steps to be adopted by the press, the public and the government in order to improve the performance of the press. It urged the press to “assume the responsibilities of common carriers of information and discussion, and to experiment with high quality content which offers no immediate promise of financial return. Press should engage in vigorous mutual criticism, and should seek to improve the caliber of its personnel” (Siebert et al, 1956).

The Commission stressed certain obligations that the public must assume toward the press. These include awareness of the tremendous power enjoyed by the mass media. Since the power is concentrated in too few hands, the public must be aware of how far the press fails to meet the needs of society. Non-profit organisations and educational institutions should create centers for advanced study, research, and critical publication in the field of mass communications; the present schools of journalism should give students the broadest of educations. The Commission also stressed the need for establishing an independent agency to appraise press performance and report on it. The Commission said the government while affirming the right of the press to remain as a privately owned business, must ensure that it has a responsibility towards the citizens in giving the kind of communication they require. The government can encourage new ventures in the communications industry, can adopt new legal remedies to rectify chronic and blatant abuses of press freedom, and can enter the communication field to supplement the privately-owned media (Siebert et al, 1956).

3.1.3 Response to the Commission

Though the press accepted these standards set by the Commission, critics of the press observe a wide breach between the acknowledgement of these standards by the press and its actual practice. A section of the press was hostile to the report of the Commission, but its criticism were not directed to several of the primary assumptions of the report such as the social responsibility of the press and the functions of the press in contemporary democratic society. Many press persons shared the views expressed by the Commission on these and other key issues. The Commission acknowledged that it took most of its ideas from the profession of the communications industry itself (Siebert et al, 1956).

But the report of the Commission was criticised and denounced by several newspapers in America. Editors and publishers called it a blueprint for government regulation of the press. Hutchins, the chairman of the Commission, and the other members were criticised for not conducting systematic analyses of the press and for not involving journalists more intimately in the deliberations. In spite of such criticism, the Commission's report has provided a basis for many subsequent studies on press responsibility and ethics. Today it continues to generate renewed interest in the moral dimensions of journalism. Several ideas, including the 'social responsibility' theory espoused in the report took many years to take root and gain acceptance in the thinking of journalists, journalism educators, and the public at large. In spite of the criticism, it may be observed that the Hutchins' report was more influential than any other works that preceded it, and it continues to have relevance today.

3.1.4 Social Responsibility Theory of the Press

Frederick S Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm (Siebert et al, 1956) in their work *Four Theories of the Press*, enunciated the social responsibility of the press. Their theories, namely, the Authoritarian, the Libertarian, the Soviet Communist, and the Social Responsibility theories, helped to clarify the relationship between mass media and the political society in the modern world. The purpose of the work was to establish and explain four normative theories that ought to illustrate the position of the press in relation to its political environment. Though by "press" they meant all the media of mass communication, including television, radio, and newspaper, in the present study we use the term 'press' to mean only the print media. Though they enunciated four theories of the press, we are here concerned primarily with the social responsibility theory of the press.

The four theories are still acknowledged by media researchers as the most appropriate categories to describe how different media systems operate in the world. However there are scholars who consider their approach outdated and too simplistic to be useful today as the socio-political as well as technological context in which the press and other media function have changed considerably. Politically, the Soviet Union has ceased to exist. As far as media are concerned, we have new media like cable television and Internet which have changed the way information is shared. Media studies as well as research too have advanced greatly. Siebert et al (1956) evolved their theories based on four general political ideologies of the time, claiming them to be measurements for all current media systems. The critical question, then, is whether or not the four theories of the press are ignoring the subtle variations among

the numerous media systems of the world. The 'theories' is also considered to divide the press into four neat compartments which does not correspond to existing reality.

Theodore Peterson (1956) who authored the section on the Social Responsibility of the Press noted that the theory is a development of the twentieth century and is a further development of the libertarian theory. The Libertarian theory, according to Peterson (1956) was born of a concept of negative liberty, which can be defined loosely as "freedom from" and more precisely as "freedom from external restraint." The social responsibility theory, on the contrary, rests on a concept of positive liberty, "freedom for," which calls for the presence of the necessary tools for the attainment of a desired goal.

The major premise of the theory according to him is that "Freedom carries concomitant obligations; and the press, which enjoys a privileged position under the government is obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication in contemporary society. He outlined six tasks usually ascribed to the press:

1. Serving the political system by providing information, discussion, and debate on public affairs.
2. Enlightening the public so as to make it capable of self-government.
3. Safeguarding the rights of the individual by serving as a watchdog against Government.
4. Servicing the economic system, primarily by bringing together the buyers and sellers of goods and services through the medium of advertising.
5. Providing entertainment.

6. Maintaining its own financial self-sufficiency so as to be free from the pressures of special interests.

According to Peterson (1956) the framers of the American constitution had no intention to bind publishers to certain responsibilities in exchange for freedom. They believed that the government was the chief foe of liberty, and the press must be free to serve as a guardian against governmental encroachments on individual liberty. But somewhere along the way, faith diminished in the optimistic notion that a virtually absolute freedom and the nature of man carried built-in correctives for the press. Demands for a certain standards of performance from the press began to arise. Social responsibility began to be linked with freedom and codes of ethical behaviour and concern for the public good and a rationale of social responsibility began to evolve. In this same light, Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) warn that:

...the power and near monopoly position of the media impose on them an obligation to be socially responsible, to see that all sides are fairly presented and that the public has enough information to decide; and that if the media do not take on themselves such responsibility it may be necessary for some other agency of the public to enforce it. Siebert, Peterson and Schramm also note "freedom of expression under the social responsibility theory is not an absolute right, as under pure libertarian theory. One's right to free expression must be balanced against the private rights of others and against vital social interests. For example, it would not be socially responsible to report how the terrorist, using some new method, evaded security measures and smuggled a bomb onto a commercial airline.

The social responsibility theory was influenced by several factors like technological and industrial revolution, the new intellectual climate, the development of a professional spirit of journalism which attracted people of principle and education. Technological advances increased the size, speed, and efficiency of the old media, brought new ones – movies, radio and television. Industrialisation ushered in a growing volume of advertisements which became the major support of newspapers and broadcasting. Urbanisation helped to increase mass circulation of newspapers. The press came under criticism as its ownership began to be concentrated in the hands of a few. Many of the press owners resisted social change, became subservient to big business, and began to wield enormous powers. Often they paid more attention to the superficial and sensational than to the significant. These and several other factors contributed to the development of social responsibility theory.

Journalism and the press began to sense the need for formulating codes of ethics and professional standards. Schools of journalism emerged and there was increasing concern regarding the need for social responsibility. The expression “the public be damned” was replaced by the expression “the consumer is king.” Joseph Pulitzer (1904) in an article in the North American Review wrote: “Nothing less than the highest ideals, the most scrupulous anxiety to do right, the most accurate knowledge of the problems it has to meet, and a sincere sense of moral responsibility will save journalism from a subservience to business interests, seeking selfish ends, antagonistic to public welfare.”

Peterson (Siebert et al, 1956) summed up some of the perceived shortcomings of the press.

According to him the press:

1. Has wielded enormous power for its own ends. Its owners have propagated their own opinions, especially in matters of politics and economics, at the expense of opposing views;
2. Has been subservient to big business and at times has allowed advertisers to control editorial content;
3. Has resisted social change;
4. Has often paid more attention to the superficial and sensational than to the significant in its coverage of current happenings;
5. Has endangered public morals;
6. Has invaded the privacy of individuals;
7. Is controlled by one socio-economic class, loosely described as the 'Business-class', which makes access to the press difficult for newcomers and thereby endangers the free and open market of ideas.

The goal of the social responsibility system according to Siebert et al (1956) is that media as a whole is pluralised, indicating "a reflection of the diversity of society as well as access to various points of view". As opposed to the libertarian theory, the social responsibility principle is to provide an entrance to different mass media to minority groups. The journalist is accountable to his audience as well as to the government. Most press organisations in Western Europe, America and in liberal democratic countries in other continents today come close to accepting the cardinal principles of social responsibility theory.

The theories of the press were intended to be *normative*, meaning that "they do not attempt to stipulate how social systems *do* operate, rather than with specification of how they *should* or *could* work according to some pre-existing set of criteria." One must not mistake Siebert's theories as being a representation of how the mass media system actually works. Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) also note "freedom of expression under the social responsibility theory is not an absolute right, as under pure libertarian theory. One's right to free expression must be balanced against the private rights of others and against vital social interests." According to Kumar (1981) the social responsibility theory of the media led to the establishment of Press Councils, the drawing up of codes of ethics, anti-monopoly legislation, and to press subsidies to small newspapers. State and public intervention in the exercise of free expression was therefore considered legitimate, under certain circumstances.

In no country, including USA, which purports to have the most free and liberal press, the press can be called absolutely free or responsible. In most countries, including those that are democracies and claim to have a free press, the press is characterised by different kinds of bias, controls and pressures. In no country can we describe the press as definitively and fully 'libertarian' or 'socially responsible'. Instead in every country one can discern the existence of a combination of various elements of the four theories– in some more and some less measure. One can discern among the different countries degrees of social responsibility. One of the defects of the four theories is that it ignores important variations among the many press systems of the world.

3.1.5 McQuail's Theories

McQuail (1987) criticised the four theories of the press enunciated by Siebert et al saying they are "biased" because they omit mass media in the Third World. Based on the criticism of the four theories and to rectify these deficiencies, McQuail added two more theories to the original four theories of the press. The two additional theories, the Development theory, and the Democratic-participant theory, seek to depict two normative systems that were absent in Siebert's model. The importance of McQuail's contribution consists in enabling researchers realise that the classic four theories fail to be flexible enough to fit all parts of the world.

A communicative approach would be more open for the patterns of idealism (media influencing the social structure but not vise-versa) and interdependence (mutual influence). In Siebert et al's explanation of the four models, it is evident that they assume that only the social responsibility theory has these positive qualities. Hence, they are favouring one particular theory through the choice of words, which gives the other theories a worse reputation than they claim to have. This model remains normative; one might for instance suggest that media ought to strive for an audience-oriented content. The social responsibility theory is an outgrowth of the libertarian theory.

Another deficiency in their approach is reducing transmission of political opinion simply into a matter of two parts - the medium itself and the government. A more fruitful approach would be to bring in the third and the largest party, the audience. Today with major changes in global political situation, like the break up of

Soviet Union, theories like the Soviet Communist Theory of the press have lost much of its relevance.

3.1.6 MacBride Report

The International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems established by UNESCO, presented its report called “Many Voices, One World” in 1980. This report is known as "The MacBride Report" after the Commission’s chairman Sean MacBride (MacBride et al, 1980). Though the Report does not directly deal with the issue of social responsibility of the press, some of the concerns it raised regarding the flow of information, imbalances in communication, monopoly, control and issues of development are relevant for our study. The Report was critical of imbalances in world information flows and called for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) where there is greater equity, justice and balanced distribution of communication.

The Report was prepared in a much different global context than the one in which we live today. In 1980, the Cold War had a profound influence on geopolitical alliances, and the choice to be "non-aligned" was in reference to this great polarity. The Report sparked political rage and became a historically dividing reference point in communication, information and development circles. It precipitated the decision by the U.S. and British governments to withdraw their membership from the UNESCO. This decision, obviously was made on behalf of big mass media and telecommunications industry interests in the United States and U.K. Much has changed since the MacBride Report was published, not only in global politics, but also in global communications.

Commenting on the impact of the MacBride Report twenty five years after its publication, Calabrese (2005) says “the MacBride Report projects a spirit of hopefulness about how a better world is possible, about the continued importance of public institutions as means to ensure global justice at local, national, and transnational levels, and about the value of global communication as a means to knowledge, understanding and mutual respect. Calabrese feels that the legacy of MacBride Report should be understood by a new generation of communication rights activists. Despite the geopolitical limitations that filtered the contributions of its authors, they had the foresight to hope for a kind of "globalization" that, rather than signify divisions among citizens of the world, acknowledged our common humanity. As a follow up to the report, a communications rights advocacy group called the MacBride Round Table was created in 1989 to stimulate discussion of issues embodied in the MacBride Report. Over the years the Round Table has become an international communication rights advocacy group which brings together scholars, activists, journalists and other communication experts devoted to the monitoring of world communication, legal ramifications, and information imbalances; and disseminating its findings to community groups, UN agencies, non-governmental organisations and the news media.

3.1.7 Social Responsibility in the Press in India

It may be difficult to observe any clearly articulated social responsibility theory as such in the Indian press, but one cannot fail to discern ideas of social responsibility in the press in India. The missionary press ushered in the liberal worldviews of the west and promoted literacy, scientific temper and modernity. The

missionary press also sowed the seeds of social emancipation and addressed issues like superstitions. Profoundly influenced by the pioneering spirit that characterised the era, the Indian leaders saw in the press a powerful potential for social and nationalist goals. In their writings and activities we can discern principles of social responsibility. As we have seen, the history of the press in India is closely associated with two important goals: first, social emancipation and fight against superstition, social discrimination, caste system, sati etc. spearheaded by persons like Raja Rammohun Roy; and the nationalist press led by Mahatma Gandhi and other freedom fighters, which championed the cause of India's independence from British rule. Often these two movements co-existed and worked in tandem.

Bhattacharya (1969) in his book *Gandhi the Writer*, presents the spirit that moved Mahatma Gandhi to write extensively. He sheds much light on Gandhi's journalistic activities. Gandhi articulated the importance of a responsible press thus: "The sole aim of journalism should be service. The press is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges the whole countryside and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy. If the control is from without, it proves more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within (Grover,1990). The press in India at that time in its infancy did not desist or shy away from exposing social issues. The socio-political movement that swept the country dominated the press. As Mazumdar (1993) has pointed out: "Though the pioneers of the Indian press did not find journalism a very smooth and peaceful vocation, they had a strong determination to carry on." The press has been a powerful force to foster democracy and highlight public problems. Tushar Kanti Ghosh, editor

of *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and president of the Indian Journalists Association in 1938, highlighted the importance of journalism education in India. “The high degree of perfection which the readers expected from the newspapers had made it imperative that the work of journalism should be carried out by experts” (Mazumdar, 1993).

The history of the press in India, says Mazumdar (1993), is the history of the freedom movement in the country. Though the struggle of the press against the British government in India was an unequal one, the press stood its ground bravely, defying the heavy odds pitted against it. It struggled and suffered but never surrendered; keeping aloft the banner of service and of professional pride without flinching. Kumar (1981) observes: “Prior to Independence, the press in India had a clear-cut role to play in the nation’s struggle against British rule. It had put up a brave fight in its heroic effort to expose the brutality of the regime, particularly in its suppression of the freedom movement. Many editors of the vernacular press defied censorship regulations to keep the nation informed (and agitated) about the progress of the movement, and especially of the plight of national leaders like Gandhi and Nehru.”

In the Indian press the commercial interests were subservient to nationalist and social goals. Political and patriotic ends, social objectives and goals were the driving force behind the birth of newspapers in India. Thus, unlike in the west, the press in India was looked upon not as a business proposition, but as an instrument for enlarging the bounds of freedom in the country. Commenting on the contribution of outstanding leaders and patriots to journalism in India, Mazumdar (1993) says: From Raja Rammohun Roy to Mahatma Gandhi – leaders from all walks of life were

actively engaged in journalism. The newspapers they edited truly served as a mirror of life, recorded the deeds of average men and women, gave expression to their needs and aspirations and by highlighting virtue and goodness, they encouraged and guided the people in their march towards the path of progress and prosperity.

In the post-independent era, the idea of social responsibility received attention in the Constituent Assembly and its deliberations on the press. In the years that followed, the various legislations of the government and other agencies like the Press Council of India, the Press Commissions, the Advertising Standards Council of India and other bodies within the government, civil society, academic institutions and the press themselves have highlighted the need for a responsible and free press. The press in India in the post-independent era has largely followed the principles and practices of the pioneers and has incorporated modern journalistic principles which emerged in the west. The Indian press, in spite of occasional pitfalls, has by and large, exhibited a high sense of professionalism and social responsibility.}

3.2 Freedom of the Press and Social Responsibility

Freedom and responsibility of the press are closely related to each other. It is often described with some time-honoured metaphors. It is called the Fourth Estate of the Realm, a concept of British origin, where its importance is elevated to that of the first three Estates, the king and the two houses of parliament. In America, a slightly changed metaphor, the Fourth Branch of Government, is in vogue. This concept implies that those involved in communications play as vital a role in the governance of democracy as the other three branches – the Executive, the Legislature and the

Judiciary. Not all journalists feel flattered by the thought. Some dislike the press being considered part of the government, and they feel that the watchdog or adversary role is a more apt description. The press, they believe, ought to act as the watchdog on behalf of citizens, on other centres of power in society. It has to stand apart from these centres, often in an adversary stance. The press plays the role of an early warning system for major troubles that loom on the horizon of a nation or a community. Lippmann (1922) described the main function of the press as “signalling an event” - the recorder of current history. When the press has a clear concept of its role and plays it effectively, few problems of responsibility arise. But in the actual world of journalism they do arise very frequently, mainly because of the inability of the press to get out of outmoded concepts, because of unhealthy practices that have grown up, and because of inadequacies in its performance, in general (Munagekar, 1996).

The press, by and large, still sticks to the concept of news proclaimed in 1882 by Charles Dan in *The New York Sun*: “When a dog bites man that is not news; but when a man bites dog that is news.” Reporting the “exceptional” has preoccupied the press for over a century. Today we have arrived at a situation where the exceptional and the extraordinary have become ordinary. This has led to a sense of unreality. An ill-effect of this concept is the over-emphasis on action and drama in news coverage. The press acts like a flashlight beam in search of action. What lies beyond the sphere of the beam remains obscure. Trends and long-term current are hardly reported, explanations rarely given (Munagekar, 1996).

According to *A Guide to Journalistic Ethics* by Press Council of India, “the salutary rule of journalistic ethics and fairness follow as a necessary corollary from two basic principles. The first of them is a fundamental canon of natural justice, that no one should be condemned unheard. The second is, that freedom of the press is not merely a right of the publishers and editors but also of the readers’ or peoples’ right to know all sides of an issue of public interest.” A free press is considered essential to democracy. Freedom of the press has been established in most countries through hard and difficult struggle. Political powers and governments in many countries have tried to stifle and suppress the press through licensing, censorship and prohibitions. In spite of such repressive measures, liberal thinkers and enlightened leaders fought for a free press. Thomas Jefferson, a great champion of freedom of the press said (Sarkar, 1984), “If it is left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I would not hesitate to prefer the latter.” India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru reiterated similar views when he said: “I would rather have a completely free press with all the dangers in the wrongful use of that freedom than a suppressed or regulated press”(Sarkar, 1984).

Responsibility of the press affirms the basic premise that the press ought to help strengthen and support democratic processes. Although this is a concept which is subjective and hard to define, arguments have been made for newspapers and other media of communication to act as a watchdog of government, as a gatekeeper and an instrument to disseminate necessary information. The press must also be alive to and reflect cultural interests and trends in society. Harold Evans, the former editor of *The Sunday Times*, London, believes that the major role left for the press today is “to set

the agenda of public debate” by making its own inquiries on matters of public interest and publishing the results of such inquiries (Munagekar, 1996).

One of the fundamental and crucial principles on which newspapers function is the trust of its readers. The public needs to trust the press, but trust can be found only when responsibility is shown. It is essential for the press to act properly and responsibly. Each country has developed and articulated its own rules and guidelines, rights and duties concerning the press. In addition, each newspaper is expected to have its own internal guidelines and regulations intended to ensure editorial integrity, protect sources and ensure that it maintains an ethical standard which is socially acceptable.

As universal rights, freedom of speech and expression which individuals enjoy, and freedom of the press are non-negotiable and may not be abridged by laws enacted by governments. However, these rights are not absolute in practice but should be governed and guided by moral and legal obligations and responsibility. This is more so when they may come in conflict with other rights similarly guaranteed. The Libertarian theory considers the state as the chief foe of liberty. But the social responsibility theory holds that the government must not merely allow freedom; it must also actively promote it. Government remains the residuary legatee of responsibility for an adequate press performance, says Hocking, a member of the Hutchins’ Commission (Siebert et al, 1956).

On the universal plane, journalists should be aware of the objectives of the press. Gandhi in his autobiography defined the duties of a newspaper thus: “One of the objects of a newspaper is to understand the popular feeling and give expression to

it; another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments; and the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects” (Sarkar, 1984). Outlining the duties of journalists, the All India Newspaper Editors’ Conference in their memorandum to the First Press Commission said that “Journalism should strive to inform the people of current events and trends of opinion, to create and sustain an ever widening range of interest, and to encourage discussion of current problems with due regard to all points of view, all of which involve accurate and impartial presentation of news and views and dispassionate evaluation of conflicting ideals. The presentation of news should be truthful, objective and comprehensive without any suppression or distortion and without vulgar sensationalism in presentation (Sarkar, 1984). Journalists while practicing their profession must also be aware of personal rights, like right to privacy, which people are entitled to enjoy. Respect for these rights is the responsibility that should guide journalists in the exercise of their freedom.

There is substance in the criticism that the press has developed a negative attitude of “good news is no news”, resulting in the neglect of developmental activities or the positive side of life. The beat system of news coverage causes structural imbalances like these and large sections of society and news concerning them go unreported. Public affairs as reported in the press today, like advertising, have become merely so much “background noise” in public life. What happens or is made to happen at the top, in centers of power, gets excessive publicity. What happens at the grassroots is hardly examined. Such lopsided news coverage impairs the effectiveness and reach of the medium. The system leads to what James Reston, *The New York Times* columnist, described as the “tyranny of topicality” (Munagekar,

1996). Tom Wicker, another *New York Times* columnist described the phenomenon as the “dailiness of journalism”. He calls it the bane of the system.

Reston has persistently campaigned in recent years for the need to get our minds off the day-to-day headlines and concentrate on seeping long-term changes. “We are in trouble because we have not kept pace with the need of the age. Change is the biggest story in the world today and we are not covering it adequately. Change in the size of movements of people; change in the nature, location and availability of jobs, violent change in the relationships between village and town, town and city, city and state.... Unless we report these changes, people will not adapt to them, and every civilization must either adapt or perish. A basic change in the fundamental concept of news itself is urgently needed (Munagekar, 1996).

The Hutchins Commission considered freedom of the press in terms of a responsible press, and cautioned that only a responsible press can remain free. The Commission affirmed that failure of the press to meet the needs of a society dependent on it for information and ideas is the greatest danger to its freedom.

In its analysis of the dangers to the freedom of the press the Commission pointed out the following:

1. As the importance of communication has increased its control has come into fewer hands.
2. The few who control have failed to meet the needs of the people.
3. Press practices at times have been so irresponsible that if continued society is bound to take control of it for its own protection.

The Commission asserted that the citizens have a right to truthful information on public affairs. "No democracy will indefinitely tolerate concentration of private power, irresponsible and strong enough to thwart the democratic aspirations of the people. Referring to the American First Amendment, the Commission cautioned: "If these giant agencies of communication are irresponsible, not even the First Amendment will protect their freedom from government control. The Amendment will be amended" (Commission,1947).

Reinhold Niebuhr, (Schmuhl, 1988) one of the members of the Commission, while underlining the need for some overall philosophy of mass communication, stated the obvious difficulty of such a philosophy. "It is difficult to enforce responsible behaviour upon the producer, though the theory of social responsibility is right in holding the producer morally responsible for the product of news and entertainment in the mass media." He admitted of the dangers of state regulation in the realm of ideas. At the same time he also admitted that securing consumer pressure to police the media is even more difficult than in the case of the market of goods.

Niebuhr lucidly defined the dilemma of the 'social responsibility' theory and the quandary confronting any effort at news media regulation. A free press, he admitted, is a constitutional right and fundamental to a democratic society. A responsible press is a worthy objective, but largely dependent on how individual journalists and news institutions define the term 'responsible'. Outside regulation is unthinkable. Limited, practical mechanisms for fostering and encouraging responsibility and ethical reflection within the media are the only sensible avenues available (Schmuhl, 1988). It is not a matter of whether we should have freedom or

not as stated by Albert Camus who said: "A free press may be good or bad, but a press without freedom can only be bad. For the press as for mankind, freedom is the opportunity for improvement; slavery is the certainty of deterioration" (Desai & Ninan,1996). According to Pran Chopra only journalism which is both responsible and free, and seen to be both, can enjoy the respect of the people and earn credibility in their eyes (Desai & Ninan, 1996).

In May 1904, writing in *The North American Review* in support of his proposal for the founding of a school of journalism, Joseph Pulitzer summarized his credo: "Our Republic and its press will rise or fall together. An able, disinterested, public-spirited press, with trained intelligence to know the right and courage to do it, can preserve that public virtue without which popular government is a sham and a mockery. A cynical, mercenary, demagogic press will produce in time a people as base as itself. The power to mould the future of the Republic will be in the hands of the journalists of future generations.

3.3. Safeguards to Social Responsibility

In a democratic society all major institutions are expected to be free and responsible to the public. While the representatives of the government are elected by the public, the media managers are not elected, and hence the public need to be vigilant and watch the so-called watchdog to ensure that its conduct is responsible and ethically sound. In this section we shall examine the safeguards for social responsibility of the press. According to Sandman (1976) control over the flow of

information and entertainment is exercised by publishers and reporters, station owners and editors, advertisers and government officials.

There are several mechanisms established over the years which can safeguard the social responsibility of the press. We shall briefly examine them.

3.3.1 Press Councils

Press councils, which today exist in several countries, is a mechanism for the public to respond to the way the press functions. Typically, a press council is an appointed, voluntary body of professional journalists, distinguished citizens, ordinary laypeople, or some combination of the three. It investigates complaints from the public about the performance of the press and reports its findings (Sandman, 1976). Press councils do not have any formal power to enforce their recommendations. Their only weapon is the publication of its judgments and their prestige. Most countries today have press councils or similar organisations to monitor the functioning of the press. They can be found in all Nordic, Germanic and Anglo-Saxon democracies - as well as in countries as diverse as India, Chile, Israel, Tanzania and Estonia.

The British press council, which is considered as a model by several other countries, has a unique way of carrying out its work. Cases before the British press council fall into five categories: regulation of content; privacy and news sources; professional ethics; access to news sources; and sex in the news. In each case, the aggrieved party is asked to try to work things out with the local editor first. If that fails, the council will act as a mediator between the two. Only as a last resort does the council issue a public statement. When that happens the council's action is given wide publicity (Sandman, 1976). The press councils are to ensure responsibility and

foster professionalism. They serve as a deterrent against snide journalism – private matters versus investigative journalism involving public persons and issues, ‘chequebook journalism’ – paying large sums to get stories of immoral, violent criminals. It seeks to avoid blackmailing or character assassination which the press may indulge in. The press council (Grover, 1990) is expected to foster growth of a sense of responsibility and public service among those engaged in the profession of journalism.

The first independent agency to evaluate journalistic performance dates back to 1916 with the creation of the Press Fair Practices Commission in Sweden (Schmuhl, 1988). The first Royal Commission of the U.K. Report was published in 1949 and the U.K. Press Council was established in 1953. The first such body was established in USA only in the 1960s when the Mellet Fund for a Free and Responsible Press (a private foundation) supported six councils in different American cities. Its aim was to foster dialogue between journalists and the public about responsible news media performance. In 1973 the National News Council (NNC) was established in the U.S. Although opposed by some major news organisations like *The New York Times* and the Associated Press, the NNC investigated and reported on over two hundred complaints during the eleven years of operation. However, in 1984 the NNC voted to dissolve itself. Though NNC had no legal authority, some media organisations issued apologies upon its recommendation while some others refused to recognise its value, its ability to use, in its phrase, ‘the cleansing light of publicity’. The NNC suffered from a lack of visibility and public awareness (Schmuhl, 1988).

The Australian Press Council among other things stresses the importance of ensuring a “free, courageous but self-restrained press.”

3.3.2 Journalism Reviews and Schools of Journalism

Two factors that have contributed greatly to bring the discussion of social responsibility to the public domain are, the establishment of numerous journalism reviews and the founding of several schools of journalism. During the last fifty years or so, one can see the remarkable growth in both these spheres, auguring well for the press. One of the earliest and qualitatively rich journalism reviews was the Columbia Journalism Review (CJR) started in 1961. This review and the subsequent publication of media criticism have contributed to serious, sustained, press scrutiny and evaluation of the press. Regular media criticism changed the environment in which journalism operates and has helped to make the press more ethical and responsible. Each issue of CJR has carried an excerpt from the first editorial which sums up the vision of the review: “To assess the performance of journalism in all its forms, to call attention to its shortcomings and strengths, and to help define- or redefine- standards of honest, responsible service... to help stimulate continuing improvement in the profession and to speak out for what is right, fair and decent” (Schmuhl, 1988).

The diverse, yet constant stream of analysis and evaluation keeps the fundamental principles of press responsibility in the forefront of the minds of practitioners and the public. The work of news critics can lead to a reassessment of journalistic practices and to a more enlightened and demanding audience for

journalism (Schmuhl, 1988). Most countries have various forms of press councils or equivalent bodies to ensure that the press is responsible.

3.3.3 Ombudspersons

Some of the newspapers have tried to instil responsible practices by appointing full time ombudsperson or regular staff members who are vested with the responsibility to evaluate news coverage and to handle concerns of readers. An ombudsperson reviews the performance of the press, handles complaints from readers, explains newsgathering procedures, and mediates controversies that arise between the reporting staff and management. These in-house critics have the responsibility to find out whether a story is accurate, fair and balanced. The practice originated in Europe and later spread to America and other countries.

The value of an ombudsperson is that he or she is paid to think, full-time, about questions of quality and ethics. According to Schmuhl (1988) having an ombudsperson can 'improve a news organisation's credibility, because the existence of such a position signals to the public the willingness of the organisation to rectify its practices and work'. Internal criticism done by either an ombudsperson or editors achieves two principal goals: news people become more ethically sensitive to potential problems involving such matters as accuracy, fairness, and balance, and the public becomes more aware of the fallibility of the press and journalist's own concern for responsible conduct. The press can also improve its image by being more responsible and concerned with ethical principles by undertaking to conduct periodic 'ethical audit' by which its journalistic practices are examined. The scheme of having an ombudsperson, who should combine the functions of bringing the complainant and

the editor together with a view to retraction, withdrawal, apology or clarification, has been woven in the Press Council in countries like Sweden, where it is functioning quite effectively (Grover, 1990). An ombudsperson represents another step towards ensuring journalistic ethics, standards, accountability and responsibility.

3.4 Press in India and Social Responsibility

Though newspaper celebrated its 400th birth year in 2005, the newspaper journalism in India is only 225 years old. As per the annual statistics of 2005-06 of the Registrar of Newspapers in India (RNI) the number of dailies being published in the country was 2130. Their claimed circulation figure was 8,88,63,048 copies, 12.93% higher than that the previous year. India has the second largest circulation of dailies in the world (Sahay, 2006). But the press in India cannot be considered as a monolith. There is a substantial variety and differences in the Indian press. India is a vast sub-continent with a complex history, and ethnic and linguistic diversity. These factors make it difficult to lay down a uniform press code for the whole country. As Eapen (1989) commenting on the press in India pointed out: "No continent has the press appearing in so many guises." In India the press is largely confined to the urban areas and its focus seems to be news pertaining to the urban elite in comparison to the rural issues. He has described the press in India as "mostly class rather than a so-called mass press".

There have been several scholarly studies on the press in India. These relate to the study of gender as in the works of Ammu Joseph (2005) and the joint work of Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma (2006). They have analysed issues like the

disproportionate presence of women in journalism, gender bias in social attitudes, case studies and research on the current scenario and proposals for improvement. Robin Jeffrey's (2000) scholarly and researched study on India's language papers is a major contribution to understand the problems, struggles and challenges the vernacular press in India is faced with. His study situates in the context of India's freedom struggle and the democratic socio-political context. We may also mention other perceptive studies on some of the major issues pertaining to journalism and press in India are found in the works of Nalini Rajan (2005), Desai and Ninan (1996) and others.

The press in India, according to the First Press Commission, should help secure and protect a social order in which justice (social, economic and political) would prevail. But as Kumar (1981) observes, the role of the press in India need not be that of an adversary or of blind support to the government. The press should be a watch-dog and act as a catalytic agent to hasten the process of social and economic change.

3.4.1 The Press Council of India

In India the Press Council Act was adopted in 1965, and established by the Parliament in the following year. The press council was the fruit of the recommendations of the First Press Commission. The primary objective of the council is preserving the freedom of the press and maintaining and improving the standards of the press in India. In India the press council is a statutory, quasi-judicial

body which acts as a watchdog of the press. It adjudicates the complaints against and by the press for violation of ethics and the freedom of the press (Grover, 1990).

The Press Council of India is headed by a Chairman, who has by convention, been a retired judge of the Supreme Court of India. The Council consists of 28 other members of whom 20 represent the press and are nominated by the press organisations/news agencies recognised and notified by the Council as all India bodies of categories such as editors, working journalists, news agency representatives and owners and managers of newspapers. Five members are nominated from the two houses of parliament and three members represent cultural, literary and legal fields as nominees of the Sahitya Academy, University Grants Commission and the Bar Council of India. The members serve on the Council for a term of three years.

The council is funded by revenue collected by it as a fee levied on the registered newspapers in the country on the basis of their circulation. No fee is levied on newspapers with circulation less than 5000 copies. The deficit is made good by way of grant by the Central Government, through the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

Anyone who has a complaint against a newspaper, for any publication, which is considered objectionable and affects one personally, or non-publication of a material, one should first take it up with the editor or other representative of the publication concerned. If the complaint is not resolved to satisfaction, one may refer it to the Press Council of India. The complaint must be specific and made in writing and should be filed within two months of the publication of the impugned news item in case of dailies and weeklies and four months in all other cases. The complainant must

state in what manner the publication/non publication of the matter is objectionable within the meaning of the Press Council Act, 1978 and enclose a copy of the letter to the editor, pointing out why the matter is considered objectionable. If a newspaper or journalist is aggrieved by any action of any authority that may impinge on the freedom of the press, he can also file a complaint with the council. The aggrieved newspaper or journalist may inform the council about the possible reason for the action of the authorities against him i.e. if it is as a reprisal measure taken by the authorities due to critical writings or as a result of the policy that may effect the freedom of the press. Declaration regarding the non-pendency of the matter in any court of law is also necessary. On receipt of a complaint made to it or otherwise, if the council is prima facie satisfied that the matter discloses sufficient ground for inquiry, it issues a show cause notice to the respondents and then considers the matter through its inquiry committee on the basis of written and oral evidence tendered before it. If on inquiry, the council has reason to believe that the respondent newspaper has violated journalistic norms, the council keeping in view the gravity of the misconduct committed by the newspaper, warns, admonishes or censures the newspaper or disapproves the conduct of the editor or the journalist as the case may be. It may also direct the respondent newspaper to publish the contradiction of the complainant or a gist of the council's decision in its forthcoming issue.

Similarly, when the council upholds the complaint of the aggrieved newspaper/journalist the council directs the concerned government to take appropriate steps to redress the grievance of the complainant. The council may, if it

considers necessary, make such observations, as it may think fit, in any of its decisions or reports, respecting the conduct of any authority, including the government.

Among the tasks of the press council are to ensure that newspapers maintain high standards of public taste, and foster due sense of both the rights and responsibilities of citizens, encourage the growth of a sense of responsibility and public service among those engaged in the profession of journalism. The council is enjoined to encourage the growth of a sense of responsibility and public service among all journalists; to keep under review such developments as are likely to restrict the supply and dissemination of important news of public interest.

3.4.2 Social Responsibility: Trends in the Press in India

Demographic data shows the changing population profile of India. According to 2001 census of India 53.82 percent of the country's population is below 25 years and about 30 per cent between 10 and 25 years. This factor significantly affects the newspaper industry in the country. Newspapers, aware of the altered demographic profile of its consumers, have changed their menu accordingly (Sahay, 2006). The post-liberalisation period of the press in India has also witnessed rapid changes in the Indian newspapers. Today the press has become more market driven, techno-savvy and trendy. Commercial considerations seem to be fast taking over concerns of social responsibility and service to the public.

The nature of the Indian newspaper industry is such that major segment of it are part of large industrial-commercial establishments. Often, this leads to proprietor-

editors who may be tempted to run a paper just like another factory. Financial interests might weigh heavily with such a tribe whereby public accountability of keeping society at large reasonably well informed dwindles (Nordenstreng & Topuz, 1989). Social responsibility demands that the press avoid confrontation with the government remain independent of the industry and business. The press should primarily be at the service of the public. 'If press responsibility, in its ultimate analysis, is to the readers, then press persons ought to maintain a high degree of integrity and uphold the rights and hopes of all social segments (Nordenstreng & Topuz, 1989). Despite the fact that there are several universities and institutes offering journalism studies, professional education and training continue to remain a lacuna in the Indian situation.

Sahay (2006) has analysed some of the recent changes in the newspapers: "A noteworthy trend is the devaluation of the status of the editor in newspapers. Though the system of contract has jeopardised the journalists' job security, the Indian newspapers have still clung on to 'expose journalism' as its first duty." The news writing style has become crispier and its tone contemporary, making reportage a pleasurable reading. The look of a newspaper has become more youthful, thanks to increasing use of visuals, doctoring of pictures, and morphing of images. With television becoming the primary source of news, newspapers are getting marginalized. They have become oriented to glamour, films and infotainment. Bereft of their position as prime news carriers, the newspapers prefer covering high society as it makes more business sense. This is why they dazzle readers with pictures of tycoons, film stars, celebrities, and models in skimpy clothes (Sahay, 2006). The

changes affecting the press are also visible in other media in different measures. Media in India as a whole are undergoing rapid changes in the context of commercialisation and a liberalised economy. Issues like permitting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the press and other media have dominated the debate on the press in India.

It may be observed that the media, while welcoming a more liberalised economy and greater freedom and autonomy, has also resisted any effort to regulate, control or tread on its freedom. The press in India, unlike many of its counterparts in other neighbouring countries has been free and vibrant except for a short period of Emergency, when press freedom was curbed and editors were stripped of their rights.

Today the controls on the press are more from internal than external. Sanjay (2006) chronicles the sweeping changes the press in India is currently undergoing: “The institution of the editor was either reduced to an inconsequential position or was abolished altogether. The leaders or the ‘gatekeepers’ of journalistic conscience no longer call the shots. Further, the confidence of journalists dwindled greatly in setting their own professional agenda, and owners took over the front page. Editors basked in the glory of being ‘page 3’ celebrities and derived story ideas from the Internet. The quota of pin-up beauties and sensational stories in papers from the west registered a quantum increase, blurring the gap between newspaper and tabloid. Packaging became more important than solid news content; ‘magazinification’ of newspapers was complete and the magazine became a niche product. The western media has taken over the role of agenda setting of the Indian English media (Sanjay, 2006). These changes have serious consequences for a free and socially responsible press.

One can see the two opposite viewpoints we have mentioned in two of India's oldest and widely circulated daily newspapers, *The Times of India* and *The Hindu*. *The Times of India* oriented itself as a 'fast moving mass-distributed consumer product company.' Its management believes that 'to stay ahead in the competition was the management principle and to learn from the market was the key. Offering readers, listeners and viewers what they (consumers) liked and not what we (management) liked' became the credo. Closing down publications that were making losses and converting the publications that were doing well into brands was another strategy. 'It was realised by us that a good Brand needs sound marketing principles such as Product development, Pricing, Promotions and Packaging and not just fill up the content. This marked a major shift in the mindsets of people. "We were now clearly into consumer product marketing as against bringing out a newspaper to be the conscience keepers/watchdog of the nation."

Contrary to this aggressive market-driven approach, *The Hindu* wrote in its editorial in 2003 on the eve of the celebration of its 125th anniversary: "Journalism in India used to be regarded as a 'calling.' Fired by the spirit of patriotic and social reforming idealism, it was able to draw in outstanding talent as the freedom struggle and movements for social change intensified and as new educational and career opportunities arose in a modernising society. As is often the case with such pursuits, the calling was conspicuously underpaid. The transformation of the calling into a profession took place over a long period, mirroring the change in the character of a newspaper like the *Hindu* from a purely societal and public service mission into a business enterprise framed by a societal and public service mission." The editorial

further noted with concern the kind of compromises on the core values of journalism that is evident today: “In the name of the omnipotent market, a new kind of demand is made for manipulating news, analysis, and opinion to suit the owners’ financial and political interests – and for tailoring the editorial product to subserve marketing goals. There is also evidence of creeping corruption in Indian journalism” (Sahay, 2006).

The Indian press according to Eapen (1989), cannot escape the criticism, barring exceptions, that it belongs to the ‘haves’ to the power structure and is a man’s world. As a consequence, it tends to pursue covertly, if not at times, overtly, the interests of the establishment, of the professional class and missing the world of the Indian womanhood except when a P.T. Usha wins an Olympic medal or a Rajasthani lass performs sati. Social responsibility of the press demands widening the canvas of coverage, of reducing the gap between the information rich and information poor, including the use of language style which the neo-literate can fumble through. Rights and responsibilities cannot be end in themselves; they can only be means to an end.

Social responsibility of the press entails a truly free press- a press which is free from the fissures and pressures of business, industry, political parties and ideologies (Nayar, 2005). The nature of the Indian newspaper industry is such that major segment of it are part of large industrial-commercial establishments. Krishna Menon, India’s first Defense minister in Nehru’s cabinet, called the press ‘Jute Press’ since many of the then newspapers were owned and controlled by the people in the jute business (Nayar, 2005). The Second Press Commission, like its predecessor, recommended the de-linking of newspapers from business. It proposed a news to ad ratio of 60:40 for big newspapers, 50:50 for medium and 40:60 for small newspapers

(Eapen, 1989). But the ad industry seems to have a stranglehold over the press. On the one hand advertisers subsidize the newspapers, making the Indian newspapers much cheaper than newspapers in most other countries. This phenomenon, though helpful to subscribers, is wrought with undesirable effects like seriously compromising with the nature and quality of news, reports and features.

3.4.3 Role of the Editor and Social Responsibility

Freedom of the press entails editorial independence. The editorial work takes place in accordance with the legislation and ethical guidelines for the media in each country. Some newspapers have evolved internal regulations intended to ensure its editorial integrity, protect its sources and ensure that they maintain ethical standards. According to the ethical guidelines for editors, the editor-in-chief is personally and fully liable for the newspaper's contents as well as advertisements. Though the editor usually reports to the company's board, he or she has independent charge of the editorial work on the basis of the company's policies and memorandum of association. The newspapers have developed special delegation routes and routines on how the work is to be carried out throughout the 24-hour media day. The objective of this is to ensure quality and integrity. Some newspapers as a policy have chosen to include "editorial control of the operations" in their annual reports.

Joseph Pulitzer (1904) defended his proposal for a school of journalism in a North American Review article with these words: "Nothing less than the highest ideals, the most scrupulous anxiety to do right, the most accurate knowledge of the problems it has to meet, and a sincere sense of moral responsibility will save journalism from a subservience to business interests, seeking selfish ends,

antagonistic to public welfare.” Today many large corporations have become so powerful they “no longer feel compelled to consider the public interest as they pursue their goals of maximising profits.” The press is not immune from these pressures that affect corporations and industry in general.

3.4.4 Journalists' Attitudes towards Civic Journalism

By the early 1990s, as the 50th anniversary of the Hutchins Commission approached, editors and scholars perceived a growing disconnection between the news media and citizenry, and they pointed to other cultural and economic signs that indicated newspapers as well as public life were in trouble. Studies showed a significant drop in voter participation, a decline in newspaper readership and an erosion of public engagement in civic life. A 1994 Times Mirror poll indicated 71 percent of Americans believed the news media hindered efforts to solve society's problems. Some journalists and scholars believed not only journalism but democracy was threatened. Civic journalism, also known as public journalism, began as a reform movement to address some of these issues. In little more than a half-decade, more than 400 media outlets, mostly newspapers, have undertaken civic journalism projects aimed at using the media's resources to reconnect the public to the democratic process. This focus on connection is viewed by the movement's supporters and critics as profoundly different from the media's common practice of detachment, or objectivity. Rosen (2001), an early and vocal proponent of civic journalism, considers democracy and journalism as inextricably linked. Without an engaged and active citizenry, there would be no need for journalism. A 1995 report by the Pew

Center for Civic Journalism and the Poynter Institute for Media Studies explains the concerns of civic journalism (www.pewcenter.org).

What the news people do is ultimately aimed at the public, from which it follows that pressure for improvement from the public could be important. One safeguard against biased and incompetent reporting is for the public to know more about the news business than it does (Schumhl,1989). Citizens who do not participate in the life of their community have little need for news. Civic journalism seeks to address some of these issues and is an effort to improve journalism in a way that may help stimulate civic discourse (Abel et al, 1998).

The newspaper is the oldest and traditionally the most important source of current information. The average newspaper contains far more news than is available on television or the internet. However, the newspapers cannot rest on its laurels as with each passing day they continue to grow less influential. Newspaper readership, as said earlier, is steadily declining worldwide. However, because of the unique nature of the product it sells and also because of its historically evolved and universally acknowledged role as the Fourth Estate and a custodian of the public interest, a newspaper has a certain social responsibility and accountability.

If there is to be a lasting and sustained effort to ensure that we have a socially responsible press, both the journalists as well as the public need to be educated on the social obligations and ethical principles on which the press functions. At a time when even producers of commodities and providers of services are being held accountable to consumers and users far more rigorously than in the past, newspapers with some of

the attributes of public institutions are even more answerable not only to their readers but to the general public as well.

The Second Press Commission said: “gathering and selling of news is essentially a public trust” (Desai & Ninan, 1996). Like other professions, journalism is greatly influenced by ethical standards. But as Sandman et al (1976) have observed, journalism unlike other professions, has avoided codifying its ethics into clear and usable rules. The various professional codes of the mass media tend to concentrate on truisms and trivia, ignoring the real ethical problems faced by working journalists. Procedures for making individual journalists accountable to the public or the profession – not only to their boss- are only beginning to be established. Professions like medicine and law have formalised ethical codes. Sociologists claim that two of the defining characteristics of a profession are a code of ethics and rules of enforcement. Journalism, according to him, has neither. Critics point out that often there is nothing in the canons of journalism that a publisher or editor needs to fear. Most canons of journalism have hardly any provisions to enforce them or to punish those who violate them.

That being so, we also need to admit that most journalists have as individuals a strong sense of responsibility to the public, a deep conviction that what they do has significant impact on society and should therefore be done responsibly (Sandman et al, 1976). In fact many students of journalism are inspired by a strong desire to make an impact, influence policy and bring about positive change in government and society. This inner urge to join the journalistic profession is evidenced by the fact that since the Watergate expose`, a landmark event in the history of investigative

journalism, there has been a mushrooming of journalism schools and increase in the number of students enrolling themselves for journalism studies worldwide. Such idealism and desire to serve the public behoves well for the profession. It is imperative that in the face of growing challenges facing the newspaper profession and industry today, social responsibility and ethical issues should not be disregarded as irrelevant or inconsequential. With the advent of new media and convergence in information-communication technology, and the journalism industry and profession being increasingly market driven, it is imperative that we pay greater attention to issues of journalistic ethics, accountability and social responsibility standards.

Chapter 4

Social Responsibility and Ethical Issues

In this chapter we shall examine some of the issues that concern journalism today in the light of what is considered ethically sound and socially responsible practices in the profession. As Schmuhl (1989) has pointed out, 'so much of contemporary journalism involves immediate response that the ethical formation of the individual newsperson is crucial in deciding how he or she will cover a story. Given the urgency and speed with which journalists need to operate and the challenges posed by fast growing technological developments coupled with competition from the new media, it is becoming increasingly difficult for journalists to verify and check the news for accuracy and ethical precepts. In the course of practicing their profession, journalists do not always have the time or opportunity to consult codes or to refer to journalism books for ethical guidelines. What he or she does at the moment of reckoning will often develop out of the moral principles and standards that have been internalised over time and through one's conscience and personal convictions.

In the light of growing commercialisation and aggressive competition in the field of journalism and other media today, there is a growing awareness of the need to evolve and practice social responsibility and ethical principles. This requires that

media professionals as well as media teachers learn and refer to norms, guidelines and conventions to understand the goals and objectives that guided the press in the past. Such efforts will enable them to evolve policies and precepts that suit the contemporary needs and challenges. This chapter, while reinstating the need for such an effort, attempts to provide some indicators for this task.

4.1 Ethics and Social Responsibility

The issue of journalistic ethics and social responsibility of the press are closely linked. Without defining and specifying ethical standards it would be difficult to lay down the ground rules for a socially responsible press. Efforts to critically look at the responsibilities and ethical functions of the press have brought into sharper focus the importance of a press that is more responsible. Professional codes provide a sense of professional identity for the practitioners. Journalism ethics addresses issues that pertain to the behaviour of reporters, photographers, editors, designers, and managers. Journalists not only provide information but also help their audience to understand the meaning of the information they provide. It is in this complex situation that lack of consensus or clarity and ethically grey areas surface. Sometimes these lead to conflict situations either within the newspaper organisation or with the public or civic bodies.

In assessing the current situation of media, Carter (1983) observed: “the domain of the mass media today is an ethical jungle in which pragmatism is king, agreed principles as to daily practice are few, and many of the inhabitants pride themselves on the anarchy of their surroundings.” But there are several paths being

cut through the ethically unclear landscape that eventually may lead to the road to greater journalistic responsibility.

Lack of appropriate training about ethical, moral and social issues do affect journalistic practice, making it socially less responsible (Nordenstreng-Topuz, 1989). The Hutchins Commission (1947) stressed the importance of journalism training to improve the standards of journalism education, which should impart not only the skills, but also values of journalism, the 'know-why' as well as the 'know-how.' However, it has been pointed out that though many schools of journalism include ethics as part of their curriculum, journalistic practice seldom entails referring back to them.

It may also be noted that discussions on social responsibility, ethical guidelines and codes have remained at times inconclusive due to lack of consensus on what constitutes an appropriate code and how to apply them. A code can be vague, and enforcing it can entail practical difficulties. But education in ethical and responsible journalism is essential to journalism training. Organisations which employ journalists can provide them on- the- job and on-going formation, which include training, discussion sessions, exposures, internships, and case study reviews. These can help journalists to deepen their understanding of ethical issues. Even though ethical principles are universal and permanent, ethical issues, perspectives, rules and yardsticks of objectivity may arise, which according to varying contexts demand fresh approach and response from journalists and editors. Journalists, whose profession consists in chronicling everyday events of society and interpret reality to the public, cannot stop the process of learning and updating.

Social responsibility demands something beyond and more than "objective" reporting. Hutchins Commission (1947) urged the press to provide "a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context that gives them meaning." The goal of accuracy, of striving to discover and disseminate the truth about public affairs, is part of the journalist's conventional responsibility. Most people in the press know the need to separate fact and opinion. Reporting today demands greater interpretation of issues and events. A truthful, complete account of the news is not enough. Today's complex situations often necessitate analysis, explanation, and interpretation of the event that is being reported.

If humans are to remain free, they must live by reason instead of passively accepting what they see, hear, and feel. Therefore, the more alert elements of the community must goad them into the exercise of their reason. Without such goading humans are not likely to be moved to seek truth. The languor, which keeps them from using their gift of reason, extends to all public discussion. Human beings aim not so much as to find truth as to satisfy their immediate needs and desires (Commission, 1947). It is the press, therefore, that must be the "more alert element" and keep the public informed, for an informed populace is the cornerstone of democracy. Lippmann (1922) described the main function of the press as "signaling an event" - the recorder of current history.

Today's large media conglomerates, however, may not function naturally as a public forum where all ideas are shared and available. "The owners and managers of the press determine which persons, which facts, and which versions of these facts, shall reach the public," observes the Commission (1947). In the same light, Siebert et

al (1956) warn: "...the power and near monopoly position of the media impose on them an obligation to be socially responsible, to see that all sides are fairly presented and that the public has enough information to decide; and that if the media do not take on themselves such responsibility it may be necessary for some other agency of the public to enforce it." The Canons of Journalism adopted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) in 1922 and revised and renamed in 1975 as Statement of Principles, addressed these same obligations when it called on newspapers to practice responsibility to the general welfare, sincerity, truthfulness, impartiality, fair play, decency, and respect for the individual's privacy. Though many countries have formulated code of ethics they vary in form and scope from one country or region to another (Kumar,1981).

As far as India is concerned, there have been several attempts to draw up a set of guidelines. As Kumar (1981) has observed, "attempts to draw up a code of ethics for journalists in India have upto now drawn a blank. Neither the Press Council nor the All India Editors' Conference have come up with a code acceptable to the whole profession." In 1966 the Press Council circulated a list of guidelines to over 10,000 newspapers and journals, for their observations, but the feedback was not promising. Ten years later a committee of 17 editors presented a Code of Ethics and Editors Charter to parliament, but since it was the period of Emergency when the press freedom was severely curtailed, it was suspect. It demanded that the press must present a truthful, comprehensive and reliable account of the events in a context which gives them meaning, project a representative picture of constituent groups in society, regard itself as a forum for comment and criticism and discharge of social

responsibilities by clarifying the goals and values of society (Kumar 1981). The Second Press Commission as well as media professionals and several experts suggest that the press should be left to itself evolve policies and guidelines to regulate itself rather than controlled from outside. Press Councils and other bodies can step in when the press acts irresponsibly.

4.2 Balanced and Inclusive Approach in Journalism

Most people in the press know the need to separate fact and opinion. The press is urged to evaluate the truthfulness of conflicting sources. Facts need to be placed in a context that gives them meaning (Schmuhl, 1988). The Commission (1947) urged the press to serve as a “forum for the exchange of comment and criticism”. It means that newspapers, news agencies, and other media should try to present all significant viewpoints on public issues, including viewpoints that happen to be unpopular or in conflict with their own (Schmuhl, 1988).

Social responsibility demands that a newspaper do not refuse space for the actions and viewpoints of various groups and individuals. Monopoly publishers in this age of one-newspaper cities and towns need to be more sensitive today to their civic responsibilities than in the past. The Commission (1947) reminded the press of its obligation to project a “representative picture of the constituent groups in society”. The press ought to portray more faithfully the true condition and aspiration of ethnic and religious minorities and rural people. It needs to adopt affirmative action in this regard (Schmuhl, 1988). Social responsibility also demands that the press remain

independent of the government, industry and business. Its primary obligation is to be at the service of the public (Nordenstreng & Topuz, 1989).

The press occupies a privileged position in modern society. But more than simply seeking out truth and reporting it, the press has a role in influencing and shaping public opinion. It is therefore, a matter of serious concern if the press chooses deliberately to mislead its readers in full knowledge of the implications of that decision. When the press lies to its readers they undermine a fundamental trust. The Canons of Journalism (1922) stated: "A journalist who uses his power for any selfish or otherwise unworthy purpose is faithless to a high trust." This does not mean consumers should uncritically accept whatever opinion the press generates and provides. The public too has the responsibility to watch the press and to provide comment and feedback.

As universal rights, freedom of speech, freedom of expression and freedom of the press may not be abridged by law or abolished by authoritarian governments. Nevertheless these rights and privileges are not absolute in practice. They need to be restrained by moral and legal responsibility as they may come in conflict with other rights similarly guaranteed. Journalists need to be aware of the personal rights of individuals, like right to privacy, that everyone is entitled to enjoy. Respect for these rights is the responsibility that should guide journalists while exercising their freedom. Whether *individual* journalists or publications meet these ideals is often debated, but they all, at a basic level, admit that they do have a definitive responsibility to their readers.

4.3 People's Right to Know and the Right to Information

One of the important factors that contribute to free flow of information and a more socially responsible press is people's right to information. The phrase 'people's right to know' was coined in 1945 by Kent Cooper, then general manager of the Associated Press. His primary interest was to break down the barriers to free international communication (Schmuhl, 1988). Harold Cross (1953), a lawyer, in his book "The People's Right to Know" wrote: "Public business is the public's business. The people have the right to know. Freedom of information is their just heritage." It was after years of pressurising by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and social activists, and much debate that the government of India passed the Right to Information Act (RTI) in 2005, granting to all citizens the right and the possibility to access information of a public nature.

The Act makes it mandatory to respond in time to citizen's requests for government information. It is an initiative taken by Department of Personnel and Training, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions. According to the Act, "right to information" means the right to information accessible under this Act, which is held by or under the control of any public authority and includes the right to—

- (i) Inspection of work, documents, records;
- (ii) Taking notes extracts or certified copies of documents or records;
- (iii) Taking certified samples of material;

(iv) Obtaining information in the form of diskettes, floppies, tapes, videocassettes or in any other electronic mode or through printouts where such information is stored in a computer or in any other device;

Such access made possible through RTI is essential for the press as well as other democratic institutions to function in a healthy manner. The press needs to ensure that it has the wherewithal to act as the watchdog of democracy and that the people are provided with information that is accurate, timely and relevant. As far as the press is concerned, the RTI is a powerful instrument to promote and ensure social responsibility and ethical conduct.

4.4 Development Communication and Social Responsibility

The MacBride (1980) report advocated adoption of comprehensive national communication policies linked to the overall cultural, social and economic development, stating that: "Communication should not be left to chance but fostered to grow for the development of an inter-dependent world." It also argued for strong national news agencies and viable regional networks to increase news flow and to make information more accurate and balanced.

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) discussed these issues, but because it was a government initiative, many communication experts felt that the media and civil society should discuss these issues by themselves. Therefore, it was felt that there is an independent global forum outside the Summit with participants being active media people in mainstream media, to discuss these issues.

The second Press Commission of India in its report submitted in 1982 maintained that a free press should be neither an adversary nor ally of the government but a constructive critic. The press, it said, should help accelerate the process of development. It recommended development journalism for reporting both successes and failures of various programmes, welcomed the trend of investigative reporting and emphasised the importance of follow-up of issues reported. Development communication does not seem to have received the kind of attention it deserves both in academic circles as well as in journalistic praxis. Newspapers today seem to give lesser and lesser space for development news, issues related to women, youth and children. As Sanjay (2006) has observed what we witness in the press today is insensitivity and apathy to development issues, and overemphasis on celebrities through the infamous 'Page Three' phenomenon.

The social responsibility of the press is seriously called into question when we consider the shrinking space devoted to social issues in the press. We find that the press often does only lip service to its social obligations by covering social issues only occasionally. One cannot but notice the serious absence of analysis, depth reporting, and follow up stories. Most newspapers cover the 'event' without adequate analysis of issues. Social analysis calls for a breed of journalists who are schooled in understanding the social issues that concern the country. 'If press responsibility, in its ultimate analysis, is to the readers, then press persons ought to maintain a high degree of integrity and uphold the rights and hopes of all social segment (Nordenstreng & Topuz, 1989). Professional journalism training is comparatively new in India, and

even today, the social content in the curriculum seems to be inadequate to equip would-be-journalists to understand the complex social issues that they need to cover.

The press needs to maintain a balance between its business and commercial interests and the social responsibility. Large segments of society or issues are ignored altogether or downplayed by the press as reporting on them does not seem to be economically profitable. Sainath (1996), a leading development journalist, has written extensively on issues like famine, poverty, health, education and survival strategies of the rural poor. His writings focus on the people who are “beyond the margins of a press and media that fail to connect with them.” But the numbers of newspapers that devote space to such stories today seem to be fast dwindling.

The English language press in India has remained by and large a vestige of the British press. The names of several of the Indian newspapers have, for instance, been borrowed or are patterned on British or American press. The excessive pre-occupation of the press with politics at the cost of neglecting other important social issues and the confrontationist attitude of the press to political forces are inherited from the colonial times. If one can notice some change in the press, unfortunately it is not always in favour of qualitative improvement. Instead the new trend appears to be directed towards catering to the needs and interests of the urban elites and the consumer class.

4.5 Television and Internet: Challenge to the Print media

Newspapers today face serious competition from the new media, particularly television and internet. Many newspapers are trying to be visually more attractive than focus on the quality of content. One can notice the all too evident tendency of 'televization' of the newspapers, a tendency by which newspapers try to make themselves more pleasing to the eye rather than provide content that can feed the mind. Some of the best and most attractive pages of most newspapers today are devoted to less significant content, including trivia, featuring film stars, sports personalities and other celebrities. Even small town papers devote much space to Hollywood actors, models and celebrities and matters related to their private lives at the neglect of serious social and cultural issues that have more significant consequence for the masses.

The task of the journalists has undoubtedly been enhanced by new technologies. But the speed with which information is gathered, presented and transmitted to the audience, make the journalist's task of being objective, accurate and responsible more challenging. Today information is available through several sources, and the press does not have monopoly as providers of news and information. In the 'global village' in which we live today, not only are events around the world easily accessible, but with the availability of many sources of information, the audience cannot be taken for granted as they can shift loyalties from one medium to another, from one newspaper to another.

Responsibility in journalism can be established when a reporter can answer questions like whether the report is accurate and complete, whether it is fair and

balanced, whether the motives and methods used for covering the information are ethically sound, and whether a journalist is aware of the legal and social consequences of publishing a particular report. In short, the relationship between the reader and the newspaper is built over a long period of time through credible and accurate reporting. As in life, so too with newspapers and the reading public, if trust is once lost, it is difficult to rebuild it.

4.6 Need to Watch the Watchdog

In the new media environment, watching the so-called 'watchdog' has become essential. Readers, as well as viewers of media have become more critical and conscious than in the past. People inside the industry as well as social scientists and civil society have become more and more critical consumers of media, including the press. They have become more discerning and discriminating in the way information is accessed and processed. They criticise the specific conduct and practices of journalists and news institutions. They pay attention to ethical questions concerning issues like the lack of fairness and balance, the disregard for privacy, the existence of bias, and the glorification of the sensational and trivia (Schmuhl, 1989). While a section of the media professionals are doing some soul-searching, the public is becoming more restive and less intolerant of aberrations in media. Criticism of the press come from different quarters- media reviews, media critics, from public officials, from individual citizens, from courts and judiciary, from press councils and other bodies.

The news business builds people up and then acquires an interest in tearing them down. Newman (1989) thinks that there is ‘not nearly enough criticism of us, not nearly enough understanding of how we work, of why we do what we do, and of how powerful our habits and stereotypes are. According to him the responsibility of a journalist “is to be a journalist- a competent, qualified journalist”.

Newspapers in developing countries like India earmark only a meager budget for newsgathering. Eapen’s (1989) comment that only five percent of a newspaper’s revenue in India, on the average, goes into gathering information, should be a matter of serious concern. A newspaper that intends to do justice to its readers need to spend more on newsgathering and research. When newspapers invest only such a meager portion of its revenue for newsgathering they are compelled to depend on press releases, briefings and official news sources, which may be easily accessible, but less relevant, reliable and socially responsible. The lion’s share of coverage given to political events and the utterances of politicians at the cost of neglecting other important social issues may be considered to be direct fallout of this phenomenon.

Serious long term educational programmes can ultimately lead to making a journalist become aware of his or her responsibilities, and lead to institutional sensitivity and action (Schmuhl, 1989). Codes, internal and external criticism, news councils, and above all education can contribute to an environment within journalism that places ultimate value on ethical responsibilities. If the public perceives that, as a result of these acts of self-regulation, media reports are more truthful, fair, balanced, and sensitive, credibility and trust will follow. As journalism becomes more professional and as the audience served by the news media becomes more

sophisticated and vigilant, acts of irresponsibility will be unmasked for what they are (Schmuhl,1989).

4.7 Regulating the Press

The press, like other institutions in the service of the public, need to be regulated. But any form of restraint or control by the authorities is often viewed by the press as censorship. However, the fact remains that in the absence of any countervailing forces, the press can exhibit lack of responsibility and accountability to the public and become a medium for publicising messages about licentiousness, murder, crime and violence, immorality, 'objectification' of women, glorification of greed and force, consumerism and individualism. Such an environment of undesirable values, role models, and desensitising experiences has important consequences on every one - particularly the young and most vulnerable sections of society. The media conglomerates are happy to reap the reward of modifying behaviour for monetary gain. That's what media do: they charge for advertising, and people pay to have their advertising messages carried in the media, because they believe that advertising makes people buy more of whatever products are being advertised. But the media do not welcome the suggestion that they should bear some of the costs associated with their power to change behaviour, usually for the worse, in areas of human activity that aren't focused on selling products.

Any law or court decision, or guidelines of non-judicial organisations or public opinion, which can change the press for the better, would be a step in the right direction, particularly if these could enable the press to become more conscientious

about its responsibility. At the moment it seems that there is too much of creative freedom in the press, and not enough creative responsibility or self-regulation.

Credibility and trust of the press became subject of much discussion and debate since Janet Cooke of *The Washington Post* won Pulitzer Prize for a story which was later found to be false. In 1981, after her deception was exposed, she was stripped of the prize and sacked from the *Post*. The diverse, yet constant stream of analysis and evaluation keeps the fundamental principles of media responsibility in the forefront of the minds of practitioners and the public. The work of critics can lead to a reassessment of media practices and to a more enlightened and demanding audience for journalism (Schumhl, 1989).

4.8 Social Responsibility and Commercial Interests

Social responsibility implies that the press assumes voluntarily the task of providing adequate coverage to all sections of the community, be they economically or ethnically significant, powerful or not. The privileges allotted to the press by the constitutions of various countries imply that the press is not merely an industry or business establishment like any other. The privilege is founded on the assumption that the press is supposed to serve some important public good. The press is exempt from restraints and restrictions that fall on others because of the contribution journalists make. The information they reveal, it is assumed, contributes to the search for truth, to democratic citizenship, and to the solution of social problems. If what journalists do doesn't serve these goals, then journalism is nothing more than a business and deserves no special protection (Lichtenberg, 1990).

Social responsibility, therefore, demands that a newspaper should not refuse space for the actions and viewpoints of various groups and individuals merely because they do not serve its commercial interests. The understanding of newspaper management about what a newspaper should be seem to be undergoing rapid change today. While one group argues that the newspaper's role should continue to be in the public domain with necessary responsibility, another group argues that a newspaper is a brand like any other consumer item and accordingly, marketing is what the newspaper should be focusing on. Often, proprietor-editors are tempted to run a paper just like any other business venture. Financial interests might weigh heavily with such a group whereby public accountability of keeping society at large reasonably well informed dwindles (Nordenstreng & Topuz, 1989).

The press is urged to evaluate the truthfulness of conflicting sources. Facts need to be placed in a context that gives them meaning (Schmuhl, 1989). The Commission (1947) also said that the press must serve as a "forum for the exchange of comment and criticism." It means that newspapers, news agencies, and other media should try to present all significant viewpoints on public issues, including viewpoints that happen to be unpopular or in conflict with their own.

The Commission exhorted the press of its obligation to project a "representative picture of the constituent groups in society". The press should portray more faithfully the true condition and aspiration of ethnic and religious minorities and rural people (Schmuhl, 1989). The press needs to adopt affirmative action in this regard.

All media have a fascination for negative news, news with violence. As Schmid & Graaf (1982) observed, crime has always been good news as far as selling newspapers is concerned. The rape and murder of two sisters in Chicago in 1965 boosted newspaper circulation by 50,000 copies. The circulation of Italian newspapers *La Stampa* and *Il Corriere* recorded 35 to 40 per cent increase in circulation following the kidnapping and assassination of Aldo Moro. Often journalists, during the course of their professional training, are taught to select news events that are more profitable. In Great Britain there is a rule of thumb for the relative newsworthiness of disasters, called 'McLurg's Law' after the legendary editor that says for instance that a crash in Europe is more newsworthy than one in Asia. This proximity principle has various expressions, one of which says, 'one European is worth twenty-eight Chinese, or perhaps two Welsh miners worth one thousand Pakistanis' (Schmid & Graaf, 1982).

The press needs to maintain a balance between its business interests and social responsibility. Today many newspapers tend to make their publishing decisions primarily on the basis of economic considerations, leaving little space for socially relevant content. Sections of community or kinds of news are downplayed as trivial and insignificant, or are ignored altogether since they are considered to be economically not lucrative. The publisher of *Los Angeles Times* is said to have argued that it would not make sense financially for his paper to expand its coverage of low-income minorities because, that audience "does not have the purchasing power and is not responsive to the kind of advertising we carry" (Schmuhl, 1989).

4.9 Press and Propaganda

World War II witnessed the way information was falsified and propaganda and misinformation were used as a tool for manipulating truth. Truth, as has often been said, is the first casualty in war. This was proved true when Hitler's minister for Propaganda, Josef Goebbels used media for subversion of truth. The post-war Europe and the countries that gained independence from colonial powers in Asia and Africa recognised the importance of a free press as an essential tool for democratic governance and social development.

However, propaganda is not something of the past as was evident in the recent US led war in Iraq. During the same war journalism also gained a new, but unethical, word in its lexicon called 'embedded journalism'. Journalistic work was heavily controlled; stories were planted, manipulated and pre-fabricated. The war in Iraq witnessed how the leading news agencies of the world became the unofficial news agencies of the US, helping it to trivialise what was crucial and deify what was trivial. The US army was embedded with journalists from all over the world, who wrote and told the world what were dictated stories (Sanjay, 2006).

The New York Times revealed in January 2002, that the US Minister of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, had created the "Office of Strategic Influence"—authorised to manipulate media with lies if necessary to rally the media behind the war against terrorism. The 'Office' was apparently closed down after this exposure, but the operation continued under the name "Operation for Special Plans" and was under the direct control of Central Command at the headquarters in Qatar, during the war against Iraq. Hollywood consultants were used to polish up the Pentagon's

information strategy. The war in Iraq, according to Rune (2003), was the most dangerous war for journalists ever.

Even a liberal nation like the United States can manipulate the media. A Washington Journalism Review article after the Gulf War in January 1991 pointed out that media in fact are censored. Kamen (1991) reports how the American reporters were required to run battlefield stories past censors before being dispatched.

Newspapers are constantly tempted to be tools of propaganda for political parties, governments, multi-national companies, and other vested interest groups. Many journalists depend heavily on official versions of the news, government press releases, and dispatches from organisations. Some of these organisations do not have credible record of being truthful or objective, and the newspapers concerned do not always verify, nor seek independent reports as these entail time, costs and strenuous efforts.

4.10 Gender

Gender issues have assumed a lot of attention and interest in India as far the press is concerned. While the number of women entering journalism is on the increase, women's capacity to influence the agenda, practice and output of the media is still limited by several factors. This according to Ammu Joseph (2005) is due the fact that "the number of women in key decision-making positions is still relatively small. For the majority of women in the press today, the struggle to overcome gender bias and win respect and recognition as proficient professionals seems to be far from over. The concentration of women in certain areas of journalism is one indication of

this reality. She notes that in many parts of the country, the women reporter is still a rare species. The desk is usually considered a more appropriate place for women in the profession; yet, even there, they are often sidelined.

Citing national as well as international studies Gallagher (1995) highlights the continuing reality of the glass ceiling, the male-defined 'rules of the game' that determine journalistic culture, as well as the persistence of gender based discrimination in media organisations, all of which militate against women's advancement and empowerment in the media. Looking at the issue from a broader perspective she observes that "the pursuit of equality in the media- as in all other spheres- is not a radical feminist issue. It is a matter of human rights, a part of the struggle for genuine democracy in society at large and in media institutions in particular. As long as women and men are not given the possibility to work together on an equal basis, sharing the same rights and the same responsibilities, there is a "democratic deficit" in our societies. Until media employment patterns reflect a more equitable gender balance, it will be impossible to claim that there is genuine democracy in the media or their messages."

Bathla (1999) points out how coverage of violent crime against women, which was a media focus in the early 1980s, declined sharply since then, with editors citing 'reader fatigue' over atrocity-related stories as an excuse for no longer focusing on them, even though there was no cessation of such violence in everyday life. According to Philipose (2005) the neglect of journalism in the public interest had serious repercussions on the coverage of gender issues. ..The self-confident, urbanised women professional, unrepresentative though she was of the women in the country,

came to be hailed as the symbol of the 'liberated' Indian women who flaunted her disposable income and sexuality with equal élan. She now figured in advertisements for scooters, computes, holiday packages.

There is poor representation of women from traditionally disadvantaged communities in the media profession. The representation of scheduled castes and tribes in the media workforce is not only minimal but, also, completely disproportionate to their presence in the population. With gender compounding the disadvantages of caste, women from Dalit- not to mention Adivasi- communities clearly have even less access to media employment than men from the same or similar social groupings. Likewise, the representation of some religious minorities, notably Muslims, in the media is relatively marginal. Here, again, women from these communities are undoubtedly doubly disadvantaged.

Despite being a diverse and complex nation like India women from minority communities and from the underprivileged sections of society are missing from the pressroom. Jeffrey (2000) observes that women in the 1990s were estimated to hold about 8 per cent of jobs on Indian newspapers but majority of them worked at the desk or in administration than as reporters or editors. Many women also tended to work on women's page and women's magazines. Commenting on the role of women in language press, Jeffrey (2000) further observed: "Their numbers... were scant, the jobs few and the prejudices against them formidable." Yet the fact that many women worked at all on Indian-language newspapers marked a change. The consequence of a paucity of women writing and editing Indian-language newspapers nevertheless meant that the 'woman's angle' on a story would be just that- an angle probably

determined and written by men. He observes that newspapers willing to encourage a substantial influx would give the wheel of history a visible shove.

The special situation of the media and media women in the Northeastern states was highlighted by the participants from the region during a women journalists' workshop in Shillong (September 2001). It was noted that within a media context where most newspapers (other than a few in Assam) belong to the small and tiny sectors, are typically run in an ad hoc rather than professional manner, exist primarily to serve the needs and interests of the numerous ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse communities that make up the population of the seven states in the region, and operate in a situation of perennial (often violent) conflict, gender is only one of the main problematic factors that journalists have to contend with. According to the study though most women journalists in the northeast admitted that there is no gender discrimination at the workplace, they suggested that the gender bias prevailing in society as a whole is reflected in the media, too, especially in terms of the beats to which women are traditionally assigned and the fact that some newspaper houses have an unwritten policy against employing women as reporters (Ammu Joseph, 2005).

Obstacles to women's advancement in media occupations include social roles and attitudes, lack of institutional support that would allow the reconciliation of family and professional responsibilities, sexual harassment, lack of training, exclusion from male networks where decisions are often made as well as working hours and in some cases shift work. There is a high attrition rate of women from the media industry, even among those in high-level positions. Some of the complex

reasons for this trend include women's perception and experience of discrimination; frustration arising from their limited impact on news priorities and other media content; a feeling that they can regain autonomy and make a bigger contribution from working outside the media'. The increasing market orientation of media systems', the growing cult of celebrity or personality journalism, associated with heavy commercialization of media', shifting ' the emphasis away from quality news and information to sound bite and entertainment news' (Ammu Joseph, 2005)

4.11 Monopoly and Control

The MacBride (1980) report addressed the issue of inequalities in the information flow and called for a new information world order which would turn around the practice and perception of news flow and make it a more balanced, equitable and just process. The report analysed in detail the inequalities existing in the flow of information between the North and the South, with the latter only on the receiving end and the former determining what information was best for the rest of the world. The so-called Third World countries as well as developed western countries were dependent on four major news agencies for their basic news supplies. A flood of western value-loaded news flows to the third world, and a trickle of distorted third world news into the west – was inimical to third world interests (Samarajiwa, 1984). The report linked information flow with economic development, arguing that media organisations in the south were at a disadvantage since they did not have the technology that their northern counterparts wielded. It emphasised information as a right, both in receiving and communicating.

The issue of communication rights cannot be underestimated. For example, the Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) campaign aims to broaden and deepen the debate on the information society by promoting democratisation of access to communication and strengthening commitments to communication in the service of sustainable development. What is envisaged is "a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society, where everyone can create, have access to, utilise and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential. By its very nature, the media have always claimed an intention to serve or represent the public. It is premised that media derives its so-called power from the public, whom it claims to serve, awaken, and sensitise (Sanjay, 2006).

Information monopoly has struck at the communication rights of communities and nations in spite of the fact that information and communication technologies (ICT) are perhaps the most outstanding development and the biggest leap in information and communication sector since the MacBride report. But twenty-five years since the publication of the Report there seems to be increased concentration of information in the hands of a few multinational conglomerates. Today we seem to be worse in many ways than in the past. Information is no longer considered a cultural factor in development but merely a market commodity.

4.12 Information as Entertainment

News, information and entertainment are being trivialised for the vast majority of people. Emphasis is given to information rather than meaning, surface

events rather than depth and reflection. Information is being piped to audiences through the television as entertainment. It is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish the two. The emphasis seems to be on glamour, 'audience appeal' and not so much on the quality of content. The choices that influence news selection in the media are prompted by its value as a 'saleable' commodity than as information that is essential to the community. Media content presents itself today as a global form of entertainment. The concepts of game shows, talk shows, soaps and films are equally created around the world to mirror one type of society. What works in one country is exported heavily through a complex network of distribution and co-operation agreements as well as economic interests in other countries than their own. The implications of these for small ethnic groups, cultures are often devastating.

Thussu (2008) has studied the explosion of 'infotainment'. His account of war as infotainment, the 'Bollywoodization' of news and the emergence of a global infotainment sphere, is as compelling as it is alarming. He examines the rise of infotainment, the infrastructure for its globalisation as well as coverage of recent wars on television news as high-tech infotainment and the growing synergies between Hollywood and Bollywood-originated infotainment. A 'global infotainment sphere' is emerging, within which competing versions of news - from 24/7 news networks to bloggers - coexist.

4.13 Reporting Crime and Violence

Violence is one of the dominant contents of newspapers. How responsibly should a journalist report violent incidents are a matter of debate. Brucker (1973)

writing about the journalists' responsibility in covering riots and violence states that most press persons want to be responsible about reporting the news. Yet their first responsibility is to get the news. The Eisenhower Commission on Violence in USA, (Eisenhower, 1969) whose task it was to suggest ways of avoiding violence, learned that for the press to soft-pedal reports of violence is a dereliction of duty: "Unless we propose to emulate the ostrich, we must expect – indeed the public has a right to demand – that the press will report the day's intelligence including that which is violent. As with other events, when there is violence, the public has a right to know it".

Another US Commission headed by Kerner (1969) came to the identical conclusion when it said: "...it would be imprudent and even dangerous to downplay coverage in the hope that censored reporting of inflammatory incidents somehow will diminish violence." The word will spread independently of television or newspaper reports, and it can diminish confidence in the media and increase the effectiveness of those who monger rumours and the fears of those who listen. Media, as the Kerner commission observed, are not a cause of riots, "any more than they are the cause of other phenomena which they report" (Kerner, 1969). Rumours always fly when there is a vacuum of authentic, believable news. You can no more separate news coverage of a spectacular event from the event itself than you can get rid of a man's shadow. Therefore the wise course is neither to overplay violence nor to hide it. Sociologist Otto N. Larsen (1968) author of *Violence and the Mass Media* said: "The basic issue is not the elimination of violence from the mass media. The matter rests more on *how* rather than on *whether* it is presented.

Coverage of crime, conflicts and violence call for utmost caution and objectivity. How does a journalist weigh conflicting ideologies in the context of communal riots, ethnic clashes and violence? It is on occasions of such turmoil that the society at large looks to the journalists for direction and light. The spotlights are turned on them, and people expect them to show the way. Grover (1990), a former judge of the Supreme Court and Chairman of the Press Council of India, led a comparative study of the press coverage of events following the assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi. According to him, the coverage, albeit small aberrations, exaggerations of death tolls, were balanced and responsible. Violence was condemned and appeal for peace and calm was made in the editorials of these papers.

Grover (1990) however observed that the guidelines issued by the Press Council on reporting of communal matters have not been followed by most of the newspapers in India. The communal polarisation and periodic communal and ethnic clashes in the country demand that the press is made to strictly adhere to the guideline of the Press Council. Since the print media is growing and can never cease to be a major means of mass communication, it is necessary that the question of social responsibility must be kept in the forefront.

It would be futile to suppress violent events from being reported either through censorship or suppression. Rather than government action to have news suppressed, it is better that the press and journalists practice restraint, moderation, caution and discretion. On the part of journalists it does require thought, energy, and action. In the face of sensationalism, inaccuracies and distortions, newspapers should

strive to provide a balanced, factual and accurate report. Social responsibility of the press demands that reporting on violence should include the causes, consequences of social disorders and the underlying problems that may be responsible for the incident.

Irresponsible journalism has at times aggravated riots and communal clashes. Irresponsibility includes sensational headlines, identification of the communities involved in the riots, exaggerated threats, unverified claims etc. The example of the publication of cartoons portraying Prophet Mohammad (Bonde, 2007) in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* is a case in point.

The press must report situations and developments and conditions through the long months or years or even decades before anything overt happens. Because nothing spectacular was going on, journalism left us largely unaware of these long periods of incubation, which set the stage for the seemingly spontaneous explosions that shock people when they erupt without apparent reason. A journalist must dig painstakingly for news where none seems to exist, by means of highly skilled, interpretive reporting. (Desai & Ninan, 1996)

The press has to be aware of and stress the ills and difficulties of sections of society, their sense of grievance, slights and indignities, the biases, paternalism and indifference to which they are subject to. As Brucker (1973) states: "If one backs off to see the whole forest of journalism's difficulty, one sees that the task of reporting becomes more subtle, more complex all the time. It can be discouraging, as when a paper or a broadcaster takes the trouble and expense to dig into something that lies behind the excitement of the moment, only to find that most of its readers or viewers pass it by. But that's the way it is. ... Most of us seem to feel that, in this tumultuous

world, we cannot even keep track of, let alone try to understand, all that happens. Yet journalism has no alternative but to try to make the individual see at least the things that matter.

Responding to editors who say that people do not read such stories, the Kerner (1969) Commission suggests that the press must “find more ways of telling the story, for it is a story you, as journalists, must tell – honestly, realistically, and imaginatively.” It is the responsibility of the news media to tell the story. With notable exceptions, the media have not yet turned to the task with the wisdom, sensitivity, and expertise it demands. The challenge of reporting in depth and dimension is growing as society and social organisations get more and more complex. But if journalism learns that it has to anticipate the events it reports, and devotes its full resources to digging constantly under the surface for what may be going on there, it will be doing all we can ask of it (Brucker, 1973).

4.14 Sensationalism

It is not difficult to find sensationalism masquerading as news in the pages of newspapers. One of the standard definitions of journalism is the one originated by John B. Bogart, city editor of Charles A. Dana’s Sun in 1880: “When a dog bites a man, that’s not news, but when a man bites a dog, that’s news” (Bogart, 1992). The press is constantly under the temptation to sensationalise events in its reporting. Newspapers have recourse to reporting sensationally because they are primarily driven by a desire to boost circulation and sales and thereby increase profit. Newspapers at times claim that their readers like to read such stories, and so use this argument to justify publication of sensationalism. But responsibility of the press

demand going beyond what people, or a section of the public prefer to read, to provide them what should be read. Sensational reporting and publishing seriously compromises the social responsibility of the press. Traditionally accepted Canons and Criteria of Journalism need to be reviewed and if necessary reformulated. The news elements traditionally taught in schools of journalism include prominence, proximity, timeliness, conflict, oddity etc. seem to highlight a newspaper's preference for what is sensational and controversial.

4.15 Paparazzi Journalism

One group of media practitioners who are consistently viewed more negatively than others is the paparazzi. The term is usually used in reference to media persons who invade the privacy of celebrities (Mendelson, 2007). Paparazzi Journalism refers to pursuing celebrities and stars in hot chase or intruding into their privacy to report, capture sound bites and pictures. The word *paparazzi* was popularized after a film by Italian film producer Federico Fellini named *La dolce vita* released in 1960 (Bondanella, 1992). One of the characters in the film is a news photographer named Paparazzo played by Walter Santesso. Fellini took the name 'paparazzi' from an Italian dialect word for a particularly noisy, buzzing mosquito. In his school days, Fellini remembered a boy who was nicknamed "Paparazzo" (Mosquito), because of his fast talking and constant movements, a name Fellini later applied to the fictional character in *La dolce vita* (Bondanella, 1992). Due to the reputation of paparazzi as an annoyance, some states and countries restrict their activities by passing laws, and by staging events in which paparazzi are specifically allowed to take photographs. In Germany and France photographers need the

permission of the people in their photographs. The presence of paparazzi is not always seen as annoying; paparazzi sell their work to dozens of magazines and newspapers that publish such photos for their readers and subscribers, and many paparazzi feel that they are helping celebrities and public figures in general by increasing their visibility. Photographers often earn a lot of money for a 'valuable' picture. The death of Princess Diana and Dodi Al-Fayed in 1997 is attributed to a car accident while they were being pursued by paparazzi .

Time magazine (McCarthy, 2005) ran a story entitled "Shooting Stars", in which Mel Bouzad, one of the top paparazzi in Los Angeles at the time, claimed to have made US\$ 150,000 for a picture of Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez after their breakup. "If I get a picture of Britney and her baby", Bouzad pointing to the mansion-studded slopes above Sunset Boulevard, is said to have claimed, "I'll be able to buy a house in those hills." "That would go for \$2 million worldwide." *Paparazzi* author Peter Howe told *Time* (McCarthy, 2005) that "celebrities need a higher level of exposure than the rest of us so it is a two-way street." Some have argued that it is the paparazzi who "make" people celebrities, but very often, the celebrities attempt to act as if they hate and fear the paparazzi.

4.16 Celebrity Obsession

The newspapers are becoming more and more obsessed with celebrities: the film and sports personalities, models and pop singers dominate the pages of the press. Celebrities get a larger than life portrayal in the press by way of reports and photographs. Shah Rukh Khan, one of the leading Bollywood actors is often referred

to as 'King Khan' and Amitabh Bachchan is called the Big B. Social activists and development workers often complain that events featuring celebrities have innumerable media persons to cover them, while events related to the plight of the poor, bonded labourers, child workers, get hardly any journalists to cover them. Court cases and arrests of Bollywood stars like Sanjay Dutt and Salman Khan and their subsequent release were lapped up by Indian papers as their main menu for several days. 'The Page Three' phenomenon in newspapers is a sign of the glorification of celebrities.

Newspapers in Northeast India are not free from such obsession with celebrities. *The Shillong Times* under study has devoted nearly a page a day to cover news and photographs of Hollywood and Bollywood film stars, pop singers. Celebrities like Michael Jackson find frequent mention in its pages for his deeds as well as misdeeds. Most of the celebrity stories are low on social content and deal with trivia: who is courting whom, who is dining with whom, about celebrity datings, marriages, pregnancies, divorces and other issues related to the private lives of the film stars.

If there is to be a lasting and sustained effort to have a socially responsible press, both the journalists as well as the public need to be educated on the ethical principles on which the press should function.

4.17 Speed and the Compulsions of Breaking Story Vis-à-vis the Need for Accuracy

Journalism has often been called 'literature in a hurry': Hasty reporting can adversely affect the quality of news, responsibility and accuracy. If a journalist carries an accusation against somebody, he or she has the duty to contact that person for comment. So too a journalist should not edit what people say to make them look bad or good. A journalist should not allow oneself to be used or manipulated. News is a business and today with round the clock channels airing news headlines, the press has a tough task on hand to be 'first and fast' with the latest news. Competition leads to some aberrations too – hasty reporting, exaggeration or sheer sensationalism. Sometimes the headline does not justify the story. There are numerous examples every day in the press of what Edwin Newman has called 'flagrant examples of cheap scare journalism' (Newman, 1989).

Competition exists within the organisations and among journalists who want to hit the front page, make a name for themselves, and get ahead. But no institutional safeguards will protect the public against bad reporting. What counts in the news business in the last analysis are the competence, wisdom and honesty of the people in the news business.

According to Newman (1989). 'news is also a matter of habit, of stereotype.' We are in the habit of looking for it where we have usually found it, and of reacting to it and judging it in the way that we usually have. What is news on television often depends on where your reporters and camerapersons are. This probably explains the

reason why most of the news stories are centred around the urban areas and concerns the elite.

As Schmuhl (1989) has pointed out, “so much of contemporary journalism involves immediate response that the ethical formation of the individual newsperson is crucial in deciding how he or she will cover a story.” Given the speed, which the new communication technology offers as well as demands, there is usually little time to consult codes or to consider the commentary generated by internal or external critics about similar situations. What the newsperson does at the moment will frequently develop out of the moral principles and standards that have been internalised over time.

Journalism being defined as ‘literature in a hurry’ demands of the journalists to be ‘first and fast’. Speed is one of the most decisive factors today in news gathering as well as reporting. One can understand the pressures under which any working journalist functions. In the face of such pressures, journalist organisations are not always willing to set aside time and resources to provide updating programmes for journalists. Often the ethical issues, including controversies, emerging from an individual journalist’s work comes up before the editor, sometimes the individual journalists do not feel the pressure of the situation. In a highly competitive world of speed, quality of content, ethical issues and principles can take a back seat in the thinking and praxis of a working journalist who runs the daily mill of reporting his or her beat. Journalists need to learn to balance essentially important components of reporting - how to break the story quickly and at the same time be accurate with facts and ethically sound.

The Associated Press in 1965 issued guidelines (Brucker, 1973) for its reporters. It begins with Joseph Pulitzer's three rules for reporting: 1 Accuracy 2 Accuracy 3 Accuracy, before going into the following specific guidelines:

1. Be Precise. Tell exactly what happened without embellishment.... Choose your words carefully. If it's a minor disturbance, don't call it a riot. But if a full-scale riot develops, say so.

2. Credibility. The source of your information is most important. We don't rush out with rumours of impending trouble. We don't rush out with a story about a disturbance on the basis of a single telephone call. Agitators love to give false information. Well-intentioned persons let emotions sway their better judgment. Check and double check. One should not be an alarmist reporting stories with such expressions as "tensions mounted steadily" unless they are verified.

3. Damage. We report what qualified and responsible officials say, but we do not state it as fact.

4. Perspective. We don't reach for headlines by throwing a story out of focus with an isolated cry, or an isolated shooting.

5. Background. All disputes have a history and we should know enough about the town to say what it is...If the reporter finds that most of a crowd is angry, or troubled, he should say what it is angry at, or why it is troubled." Spell it out. Don't generalise. Get both sides of any grievance.

6. Staffing. Get staff to the scene at the first hint of trouble. There is no substitute for the eyes, ears, and wits of our own staffers.

4.18 Measures to Promote Ethics and Responsibility

The 'private consciences' of the individual reporters and editors have, no doubt, a decisive impact on the way the news reports are gathered and presented. However, there is a growing awareness about the need to develop a process of moral reasoning to guide the activity of news people. Many schools of journalism have courses on journalistic ethics. There are also continuing education programmes for journalists like seminars, conferences and meetings, which explore issues of media responsibility. Serious long term educational programmes can ultimately lead to making a journalist become aware of his or her responsibilities, and lead to institutional sensitivity and action (Schmuhl, 1989). Codes, internal and external criticism, news councils, and education can collectively contribute to an environment within journalism that places ultimate value on ethical responsibilities. If the public perceives that, as a result of these acts of self-regulation, media reports are more truthful, fair, balanced, and sensitive, credibility and trust will follow. As journalism becomes more professional and as the audience served by the news media becomes more sophisticated and vigilant, acts of irresponsibility will be unmasked for what they are (Schmuhl, 1989).

What the news people do is ultimately aimed at the public, from which it follows that pressure for improvement from the public could be important. One safeguard against biased and incompetent reporting, according to Newman (1989) is for the public to know more about the news business than it does. Journalism will improve if efforts are made to improve the mechanisms of feedback which have been made possible today thanks to the information technology. The public who are the

beneficiaries of the journalists' work will perceptively discover qualitative change and improvement. This qualitative improvement is not a one-time activity but need to be adopted as a continuing process.

Pulitzer and Hearst brought in a great deal of concern for social responsibility into the press. History of the press is replete with attempts by rulers and dominant classes to control the press through censorship, regulations, licensing and other instruments of control. Resistance to efforts to regulate and control the press and growing democratic movements have helped the growth of a libertarian and socially responsible press. Freedom and responsibility became applicable to the press.

4.19 Need for a More Balanced and Inclusive Journalism

The data pertaining to the quantity of reporting bias related to gender, religion and rural-urban as shown in our study should shed light on the nature of the problem. If we want to correct the imbalance we need to ensure that there is greater representation of women in the press, in newsgathering as well as the decision making roles at the desk. Reporters also need to be offered a more in-depth education on social and religious issues. The press must strive towards reducing space for urban coverage to create room for more rural reports. There is also need for greater diversification of the themes and issues that a newspaper chooses to cover. The press needs to break out of its traditional mindset of excessive political coverage and balance it with other relevant issues such as socio-cultural and economic matters.

The media occupy a privileged position in modern society. But more than simply seeking out truth and reporting it to an otherwise ignorant populace, the press

has an active role in influencing and shaping public opinion. That is why it is so very disturbing that the press, much less the entire aggregation of media, might choose deliberately to mislead their consumers in full knowledge of the ramifications of that decision. When the press lies to its consumers, they undermine a fundamental trust. This is not to say consumers and readers should be free to forego critical thinking and swallow whatever opinion the press generates, but there is a fundamental difference between opinion mongering of the sort that goes on in the pages of a daily newspaper and the sort of abject lies that pass for "news".

As universal rights, freedom of speech, freedom of expression and freedom of the press may not be abridged by law or abolished by authoritarian governments. But they are not absolute in practice. They should be restrained by moral and legal responsibility as they may come in conflict with other rights similarly guaranteed. On the universal plane, journalists should be aware of personal rights, like right to privacy, that others are entitled to enjoy. Respect for these rights is the responsibility that should guide journalists in the exercise of their freedom. The ideal of journalism is to be responsible to the truth. Whether journalists and publications meet that ideal is often debated, but they all, accept in principle that they have a definitive responsibility to their readers in this regard.

Journalists should not acquiesce under pressure from the powers that be, nor play into the hands of vested interest parties or patrons who can manipulate the press. The press is called a watchdog. But as B G Verghese, one of India's leading journalists, has pointed out, the press "must be wary of being patted and patronised as though a lap dog" (Desai & Ninan, 1996). The chief question raised is can a beholden

press function effectively as a watchdog? As Arun Shourie wrote memorably in *The Asian Age*, a dog with a bone in his mouth cannot bark (Desai & Ninan, 1996).

Today journalists are more likely to seek freedom not from their proprietors but from state governments seeking to impose restrictive legislation, or from terrorists who issue chilling codes of conduct for them and hold them to ransom. Terrorists in conflict zones like Kashmir, Punjab and Northeast India have not only increased professional hazards for journalists, they have also fuelled new debates on whether reporters who gain the confidence of terrorists and penetrate their ranks are becoming unwitting publicists for their cause. In these states a beleaguered press walks on the tin edge of the razor (Desai & Ninan, 1996). Often it is hard to distinguish whether a militant, terrorist or outlaw is merely a source or a close ally of the journalist. The privilege of journalists not bound to disclose their sources and the relationship they have with insurgents and terrorist groups came under sharp focus when journalist Nakeeran Gopalan had access to notorious sandalwood smuggler Veerappan. The relationship between the insurgent and the journalist continues to be a much-debated issue. This issue has important bearing on journalism in Northeast India. That takes us to the question of editorial control and social responsibility, which we shall examine in the next section.

4.20 Editorial Control and Social Responsibility

Freedom of the press entails editorial independence. The editors carry out their work in accordance with the legislation and ethical guidelines for the media in each country. Some newspapers have evolved internal regulations intended to ensure its editorial integrity, protect its sources and ensure that they maintain ethical standards. According to the ethical guidelines for editors, the editor-in-chief is personally and fully liable for the newspaper's contents as well as advertisements. Though the editor reports to the company's board, it has independent charge of the editorial work on the basis of the company's articles of association and memorandum of association. The newspapers have developed special delegation routes and routines for how the work is to be carried out throughout the 24-hour media day. The objective of this is to ensure quality and integrity. Some newspapers as a policy have chosen to include "editorial control of the operations" in their annual reports.

Pulitzer (1904) defended his proposal for a school of journalism in a North American Review article in 1904 with these words: "Nothing less than the highest ideals, the most scrupulous anxiety to do right, the most accurate knowledge of the problems it has to meet, and a sincere sense of moral responsibility will save journalism from becoming subservience to business interests, seeking selfish ends, antagonistic to public welfare". Today many large corporations have become so powerful they no longer feel compelled to consider the public interest as they pursue their goals of maximizing profits." The press is not immune from such pressures. Social responsibility according to Kamath (1980) is an omnibus term that covers a wide range of activities. "Next to politics", he observes, "the mass media is the most

potent instrument of a society for economic and social transformation.” According to him, there should be cross fertilization of ideas between editors and officials. Together they have a responsibility towards the larger public in keeping it reasonably and accurately informed.

Chapter 5

Methodology and Data Sample

The present chapter consists of two parts. In the first part we shall examine what content analysis is and how relevant it is as a research methodology, and its application to journalistic and other media studies and some of the specific methodological issues related to content analysis. In the second part we shall discuss the specific methodology adopted for the present research.

5.1 Definitions

In this section we define some of the key terms and expressions that are pertinent to our study. These definitions are operational and set the limits and parameters within which we discuss the newspaper content. They serve as tools to explore or keys to unlock the concepts we would be discussing in the course of our analysis in the following chapters.

5.1.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research technique that is based on measuring the amount of something in a representative sampling of some mass-mediated popular art form such as newspaper stories. It is a research method which involves counting communication phenomena and categorising them according to a taxonomy or

typology scheme. It is especially useful for archived data (texts, transcripts, audio and videotapes).

Content analysis is applied to a document consisting predominantly of texts and images, and which generally allows the researcher to analyse the material in a systematic manner enabling statistical comparisons to be drawn between subjects (Finn et al., 2000; Baker, 1994; Mehmetoglu, 2004). A textual analysis can be applied in several different ways, ranging from, for example, an interpretative analysis of literature by English literature students on a specific text, to a quantified form of analysis, known as content analysis (Veal, 2006).

Content analysis is the systematic quantitative analysis of communication content (Holsti 1969; Krippendorff 1980). It is used to determine the presence of specific terms or concepts in a text or set of texts and to infer meaning from such content in a given context. Analysis includes manifest content where the meaning is obvious, and the latent content where meanings are less apparent or indirect and may need interpretation.

According to Berger (1991) "Content analysis is a methodology by which the researcher seeks to determine the manifest content of written, spoken, or published communications by *systematic, objective and quantitative analysis*". Content analysis has been defined as a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding (Berelson, 1952; GAO, 1996; Krippendorff, 1980; and Weber, 1990). Holsti (1969) offers a broad definition of content analysis as, "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages".

Under Holsti's definition, the technique of content analysis is not restricted to the domain of textual analysis, but may be applied to other areas such as coding student drawings (Wheelock, Haney, & Bebell, 2000), or coding of actions observed in videotaped studies (Stigler, Gonzales, Kawanaka, Knoll, & Serrano, 1999). In order to allow for replication, however, the technique can only be applied to data that are durable in nature. Researchers are able to use content analysis to sift through large volumes of data with relative ease in a systematic fashion (GAO, 1996). It can be a useful technique to discover and describe the focus of individual, group, institutional, or social attention (Weber, 1990). It also allows inferences to be made, which can then be corroborated using other methods of data collection. Krippendorff (1980) notes that "much content analysis research is motivated by the search for techniques to infer from symbolic data what would be either too costly, no longer possible, or too obtrusive by the use of other techniques".

Texts include content of newspapers, magazines, books, articles, manuscripts, interviews, pictures and diagrams, transcript of conversations, advertised materials, theatre, and communicative language. In order to do content analysis, the text is usually coded, broken down into manageable categories and examined.

Cohen (1960) notes that there are three assumptions to attend to in using this method. First, the units of analysis must be independent. Second, the categories of the nominal scale must be independent, mutually exclusive, and exhaustive. Third, when using kappa is that the raters are operating independently. In other words, two raters should not be working together to come to a consensus about what rating they will give.

An important factor in any research is to recognise that a methodology is always employed in the service of a research question. As such, validation of the inferences made on the basis of data from one analytic approach demands the use of multiple sources of information. (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Shapiro & Markoff (1997) assert that content analysis itself is only valid and meaningful to the extent that the results are related to other measures.

One advantage of this technique is that it is unobtrusive and not influenced by the presence of the researcher, as it is based on image or text and not behaviour (Babbie, 2001). In social researches in which individuals are surveyed or interviewed, the results can be influenced or the outcome can be affected by the very nature of the process of research. This does not occur in content analysis as the researcher is dealing with text and data that are more stable, static and not influenced. Another advantage is that the analysis can easily be repeated if any problems arise or if preliminary analysis was unsatisfactory (Babbie, 2001). Further, it is a safe form of data analysis because, if one makes mistakes in the process of doing content analysis it is possible to start all over again.

However, one major disadvantage of content analysis is that inferences made by the researcher can be subjective and it is possible that data can be used improperly to represent a cause rather than a reflection of socio-cultural phenomena. Researchers using content analysis further need to be conscious of anachronism affecting their research, especially when analysing ancient texts or data. If a text of the past is analysed with today's tools and interpretative skills and knowledge, it is likely to affect objectivity. Space and time can affect the meaning of text. Language, which is

the substratum of much of the text under analysis, can undergo change with change in time and space. Hence, time, space and historical context associated with the data being analysed need to be carefully considered in order to avoid errors.

When used properly, content analysis is a powerful data reduction technique. Its major benefit comes from the fact that it is a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding and dealing with large volumes of data. The technique of content analysis extends far beyond simple word frequency counts. On account of the many limitations associated with word frequency counts, as we shall explain later, word frequency count has not been adopted in the current research.

Content analysis was used at first with newspapers towards the end of 19th century. It was done manually by measuring the amount of lines and space in newspapers. With the rise of common computing facilities like PCs, computer based methods became popular in content analysis. Answers to open ended questions, newspaper articles, political party manifestoes, medical records or systematic observations in experiments and a host of other data are today objects of textual analysis. Contents of communication be it from the mass media or from personal communications, available as machine readable texts, are taken as input and counted for word frequencies. Dictionary-based approaches generate a list of categories from the frequency list and control the distribution of categories over the texts. Methods in quantitative content analysis in this way transform observations of found categories into quantitative statistical analysis.

5.1.2 Prominence

The press considers prominence as one of the elements for an event or person to be newsworthy. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Hornby, 2000) defines prominence as the state of being important, well known or noticeable. Thus prominence is both an 'ascribed' as well as a 'perceived' quality. It is ascribed in as much as media and the public attribute importance to persons and events. It is perceived in as much as the audience views a person or event as prominent for a variety of reasons and on the basis of information they have obtained. Prominence in our study refers to the importance and attention the journalists, editors and the readers ascribe to news or other items in the newspaper. Prominence in our study is both ascribed as well as perceived.

The journalists make choices on what to report from the many events that happen or issues in any given day. The editors, in turn, make a series of decisions regarding what to publish and with what prominence, from among the number of items that come to the editorial desk. Importance of the person being covered in the news, the strangeness and rarity of the event, timeliness, element of conflict, the perceived interests of the readers, human interest are some of the principle factors that prompt both journalists and editors to cover news and information about certain persons or events. Competent journalists and editors are those who can gauge the proclivity of readers to read certain kind of items in the papers they subscribe to. Telling the story compellingly and powerfully to readers is vital to enhance reader interest. Undeniably, circulation and marketability greatly influence the choice of content, and the manner of presenting a particular event. All media, including

newspapers, create 'heroes' by attributing or giving prominence to individuals, often making them larger than life figures. Their subjects include political leaders, film stars, singers and musicians, sports personalities, to name a few.

Our study of prominence is based on measuring several factors, most of them latent, as they appear in the newspapers. We have examined the external, observable factors that are perceivable and measurable. We have also attempted to gauge non-latent factors like the perceived intention of the writer, editor or the reader. As we shall see in the following sections, we have used several methods to measure prominence. In our study prominence index is the sum of the values of the five prominence indicators each of which have a maximum possible value of 5. Hence for given news item, any of its particular attributes studied can have a maximum prominence index of 25.

We have also measured the prominence impact, which is a measure of the general impression regarding a given attribute of a news item created by a newspaper on the reader on account of the prominence factors. Hence we have termed it in our study as *Prominence Impact*. For a given attribute, prominence impact is obtained by multiplying the number of news items having that attribute by their average prominence.

5.1.3 Imbalance and Bias

Imbalance in our study implies an excessive attention given to a particular issue or perspective in the coverage of news and other items. Bias on the other hand, refers to decisions or acts based on prejudiced or pre-conceived notions and attitudes. According to Webster dictionary (2008) bias is an inclination of temperament or

outlook; a personal and sometimes unreasoned judgment, an instance of such prejudice, or deviation of the expected value of a statistical estimate from the quantity it estimates, systematic error introduced into sampling or testing by selecting or encouraging one outcome or answer over the other. It is not easy to distinguish or judge objectively bias since it can be present subtly. In our study we have examined bias and imbalance in news and editorial page items using several criteria. We have examined in great detail gender bias, rural-urban bias, religion bias as well as the imbalance in theme frequency.

5.1.4 Positive and Negative News

It is not always easy to divide newspaper content neatly into positive and negative news. We have tried to identify and distinguish the newspaper content as positive or negative on the basis of certain criteria we have described in the section on methodology adopted for the study. These criteria are guidelines that can help one to look at a particular report as related to an event that is positive or negative. We do not intend to go into the positive results of reporting a negative event or the effects these can have on the readers. Instead, we have categorised a particular news item as negative or positive on the basis of its content as empirically found in the newspapers under study. The public in general and readers in particular, identify news items as positive or negative on the basis of common perceptions and beliefs. An event is considered negative if it deals with violence, killing, kidnapping, cheating, corruption, environmental pollution and other criminal activities. Positive news includes development and service-oriented activities, promotion of peace, communal and religious harmony, environment, economic development, acts contributing to

enhance education, culture, health, human dignity, rights of people, and well-being of society.

5.2 Methodology Adopted in the Present Study

The present section discusses the methodology used for the content analysis, and procedures used to discuss and derive conclusions. The research explores *what* is covered in the press and *how*. Using a detailed set of criteria, the researcher has analysed the print version of news, editorials, articles and letters to the editor in the two newspapers chosen for research. The aim of the researcher is to study the various issues covered, the extent and nature of coverage, their impact, positive and negative characteristics and to examine the social responsibility of the press.

The study deals with measuring and analysis of content and aims at understanding newspaper content and its implications from the perspective of social responsibility. To do so, the researcher developed a methodology for data entry as well as analysis. The content was categorised as news and features, editorials, columns/articles and letters to the editor. A unit of research in this study is referred to by the term: *item or story*. Advertisements, obituaries, business and sports items were excluded from the purview of the study.

A multi-dimensional approach was adopted to measure various characteristics of stories. For every single story several factors have been measured. Values for each of the categories have been created after careful consideration. Taken together, these are expected to yield results that are objective and accurate.

The content analysis used in the present study is both quantitative and qualitative. It is quantitative, as the items have been counted for total numbers; they are measured for column weight; their location has been identified. Quantitative analysis of items include the total number of stories surveyed, their numbers, size, length, prominence in terms of location in the page, font size for headlines, frequency counts, space allotment, colour, photo size and page location.

It is qualitative in as much as the researcher looked at the specific meaning or significance of items on the basis of content, meaning and value. Qualitative analysis include examining whether a news item is positive or negative, whether it has been responsibly reported or not, its style, content quality, reliability, social responsibility, reporting ethics and so on. Compliance with or violations of ethical laws and regulations were examined so as to ascertain how responsible are the content of the newspapers. The potentially subjective nature of qualitative analysis was addressed in the research by the use of a detailed set of criteria related to several fields and by correlating them to determine qualitative factors. The researcher has adopted a combination of interpretive quantitative and qualitative method, which aims to investigate and interpret, within the context of the research subject, how the press depicts and mirrors society.

Qualitative features of items under study could be described as either latent or manifest. Study of 'writing style' for instance is considered as 'latent.' In content analysis normally categories should be mutually exclusive and not overlapping. At times it has not been easy to make fine distinctions. In such situations, what we could at best do was to affirm that a particular item indicates probability, trends, degrees of

certainty and so on rather than swear by absolute certainty. We have avoided the same story being coded under different theme categories. Items that could not be classified under specific category have been coded under 'Other' whenever considered necessary.

Aware of the various strengths and weaknesses of content analysis, the researcher has aimed to tackle the issues of subjectivity and ensure that inferences made about the data are carefully considered and maintained within the context of the subject matter. With regard to objectivity the comment made by Berlo (1960) is pertinent: "The scientist's own values inherently are partial determinants of his work, the types of behaviors he chooses to study. In that sense, it is absurd to argue that scientific activity is value-free, or should be... The observer is part of any observation. That statement should lead the scientist to protect his observations as much as possible from his own biases, but it should not cause him to rule out his own experiences and introspective ideas from his conceptual framing of constructs and hypotheses."

The research involved a manual content analysis due to the non-availability of online versions of the complete newspaper texts. In addition, the researcher felt computer word searches inapplicable in the present research due to the varied categories studied and their interpretation to measure responsibility. Consequently, a computer word search, even at a preliminary stage, would not provide a detailed enough summary of the information provided by the newspapers, and hence it was felt that a physical reading of the print versions, though laborious and time consuming, would result in a fairer and more comprehensive analysis.

Even though there was a large quantity of data to be entered, since the newspapers under study were not available online or on soft copy, manual entry was adopted. The researcher with the help of a computer data entry operator manually scrutinised each of the 312 newspaper issues under study. The findings were entered in a computer programme designed for the purpose of our research using FoxPro. Though the process has entailed a lot of work and time, it has helped to ensure greater accuracy and reliability. Multiple coders were not involved since more than one coder would lead to the possibility of individual coders interpreting data and meanings differently, leading to coding inconsistencies. In order to avoid individual bias and coding inconsistency, all coding was done by the researcher himself.

We have measured many characteristics, such as:

1. Theme: The research deals with the theme of the item. It examines under the theme such questions as 'what is the story about' – through classification of news item categories with a view to find out the percentage of stories under various story types according to different themes (eg. How many numbers and percentage of news are related to *politics; crime*).
2. Location: The location of an item refers to the geographical focus which indicates whether a news item is *international, national* or *regional*, and again whether a news item is *rural, urban* or *other*. In location, the placement of the story in a particular page is also considered as it describes prominence.

3. **Space:** The amount of space allotted for each news category type in terms of percentages of pages is an important indicator to identify the prominence attached to various categories.
4. **Size:** Size refers to quantity. Quantity is measured on the basis of column numbers and space allotments and the size of the headlines.
5. **Prominence:** Prominence is studied from the point of view of column space and physical location. For instance, the first page items enjoy greater prominence in the estimation of both editors and readers.
6. **Visual factors:** Several visual factors in the newspaper add value to the content. These factors include presence of photos, and whether they are in colour or black and white; whether the item is in box or not, whether the headline is in bold font or not; typographical factors such as the font size of the headlines, whether the news is presented in screen (grey background or shading) or not. These attributes taken together or each of them separately enhance the prominence or importance of items the paper has covered.
7. **Average number of stories per issue** in each of the two papers has been identified. Comparative figures of stories between the two newspapers are also an important tool to gauge the content.
8. **Gender Factors:** We examined news items to see whether they are male, female or other category. Gender specifications are calculated in terms of numbers and percentages, and factors related to

prominence. Gender characteristic of an item is established on the basis of whether quotes, photos, names and themes in the story refer to male or female, or other. In examining information about gender we were able to cross check and correlate information to see other factors of prominence, namely headline weightage, column weightage, space allotment, presence of photos and so on. The data has helped us to examine if bias exists in news reporting on the basis of the number of stories, the nature of coverage, the manner of presentation and so on.

5.3 Research Design

The research project has been designed to undertake content analysis of news, editorials, articles and letters to the editor in *The Assam Tribune* and *The Shillong Times* spread over a 3-year period. The purpose of the research is to examine whether newspapers are socially responsible or not. In this section we wish to define the terms and categories used for our research. The study examines, analyses, evaluates content, presenting evidence to support conclusions related to the social responsibility of the press. The process of content analysis and the computer programme developed for this thesis can be applied to a variety of contexts and situations such as study of newspapers, books and other written literature, policy statements and documents, administrative records and so on. The researcher has developed a set of criteria which can be adapted and used according to need for choosing sample size, data

entry, codification, analysis and measuring of the data both qualitatively and quantitatively.

The study examines both quantitative as well as qualitative characteristics of the data contained in the two papers. A specific programme was developed to undertake content research to study published copies of the two newspapers. The data obtained thus is tested in the light of the hypotheses adopted for the research. Each individual item in the newspaper copies, which we have studied, has been examined from a variety of angles to examine the social responsibility of the press.

The coding system developed specifically for this study has been tested for consistency and accuracy. The computer programme enabled us to compute findings accurately and easily, as well as to retrieve data for re-examination or counter checking, thereby minimising the margin of error. According to the coding system we adopted, we assigned to each of the news items a specific identity enabling identification as well as prompt and accurate retrieval and counter checking.

The vast quantity of information recorded by means of the programme has enabled us to do a detailed content analysis and has offered scope for scientific analysis, interpretation of the data and deriving certain conclusions. This is expected to greatly reduce the margin of error associated with a study of this nature and magnitude.

5.4 Objectives

The press in India is closely associated with the freedom struggle, and many patriotic leaders like Gandhiji, Gokhale and others founded and edited newspapers.

The press in India played a crucial role in winning India independence. Since then the press has contributed significantly to preserve democratic values and foster national integration. Northeast India is geographically distant and isolated from the other parts of the country. Ethnically, the region is inhabited by a wide variety of tribes and ethnic groups having distinct identities, speaking diverse languages. The newspapers play a critical role in voicing the concerns and aspirations of the people of the region. They serve as the 'Fourth Estate' in democracy and other political processes like election, people's participation and governance. The main objective of the present study is to assess the social responsibility of the press in Northeast India by analysing their contents. Therefore, the objectives of the present study are as follows:

1. To assess the social responsibility of the press in Northeast India by analysing newspaper content.
2. To measure the various kinds of bias in print media in Northeast India (gender, urban, local-national-international, religion).
3. To categorise the contents of newspapers in negative news (violence, conflict, killing, kidnapping) and positive news.
4. To study how prominently does the press cover social issues such as development, peace, education, health and environment.
5. To suggest ways to make the press more conscious of its social responsibility, and thereby fulfill its obligations to the public.

5.5 Hypotheses

While the study presumes that the newspapers under study have accepted the traditional roles and functions as their primary guiding principles, the study analyses and test certain hypotheses pertaining to the social responsibility of the press.

Keeping in view the above objectives of the study, the following hypothesis have been framed:

1. The print media in Northeast India is subject to bias (gender, urban-rural, and religious bias).
2. The press in Northeast India emphasises more on negative news (violence, conflict, killing, kidnapping) as compared to positive news.
3. Press is not socially responsible.
4. Social issues such as education, health, development, peace and environment are not prominently covered.

5.6 The Sample: Newspaper Identity

The research site of our study consists of the two dailies chosen are the oldest and most prominent papers of the two leading states of the region: Assam and Meghalaya. They are published from two of the most important state capitals of the region: Guwahati and Shillong, respectively. The period of study covers three years: 2003, 2004 and 2005.

We have chosen 52 issues per year of each of the newspapers, one for each week of the year. That gives us 156 issues for each of the two newspapers, giving a sample size of 312 issues of newspaper copies. The sample size of our study is 14.44 percent of the total number of issues of the two papers for the years 2003, 2004 and 2005. Each issue has been serially numbered from 1 to 312. Serial numbers 1 to 156 represents *The Assam Tribune*, 157 to 312 represents *The Shillong Times*. To ensure uniform distribution of the samples in the time period of the study one issue per week was chosen, thus obtaining 52 issues per year.

Further, in order to give equal weightage to each day of the week, each issue of a paper was chosen by lot from a series of numbers ranging from 1 to 7, representing the days of the week from Sunday to Saturday. We considered a cycle of 7 weeks. For each week in this 7-weekly cycle, one number was picked up at random from the series 1 to 7. After each selection, that number was eliminated for that 7-weekly cycle, to ensure that a newspaper of that day of the week was not chosen again for the same cycle. If the newspaper issue of a particular day in a week thus selected were not available due to a holiday on which the newspaper is not published or if the copy of a particular issue could not be obtained due to non-availability, the random selection was repeated till an available paper was chosen. This method ensured that each of the papers selected is of a different day of the week and that each day of the week was represented in the 7-weekly cycle. The process was repeated seven times in segments of seven weeks, to cover 49 weeks, and then repeated once more to cover the remaining three weeks of a year, thus selecting one issue for each of the 52 weeks.

This random and uniform distribution was adopted to ensure objectivity and impartiality and to avoid bias, to minimise distortion, to ensure accuracy and reliability. The process ensured that in any given year at least seven issues of a particular day's paper would be studied.

5.7 Reasons for Choosing the Two Papers

The growth and development of the press in India is closely associated with the freedom struggle, and many patriotic leaders founded, edited or wrote for

newspapers. As has been noted in the first chapter, the press in India played a crucial role in winning independence for India. During the last six decades since India became independent, the press has contributed significantly to promote and preserve democratic values and foster national integration and secularism.

Northeast India is geographically distant and isolated from the other parts of the country. Ethnically, the region is inhabited by a wide variety of tribes and ethnic groups having distinct identities, speaking diverse languages. The newspapers play a critical role in voicing the concerns and aspirations of the people and fostering integration, development, harmony and peace. The researcher chose for the current research the two leading newspapers of Northeast India, namely, *The Assam Tribune*, from Guwahati, Assam, and *The Shillong Times* from Shillong, Meghalaya. These two newspapers are chosen, as they are the most important, among the oldest, most widely circulated papers of the region, and representative newspapers of the region. They are published from two important state capitals of the region, Guwahati and Shillong.

The period of 2003-2005 was chosen in the light of the fact that it marks the beginning of the new century and millennium. The period is significant as it represents over 50 years after independence of India. Today the press is undergoing rapid and sweeping changes. Television and internet are posing serious challenge to the survival of newspapers. Circulations are declining every year all across the world, with a few exceptions in countries like India. In the face of these challenges, it is imperative that the newspapers re-examine their roles and functions. This period also marks the rapid growth and widespread use of other electronic and satellite media of

communication, especially television and internet in the region. The study is expected to help the newspapers to examine the impact of these media on the press and to adapt themselves to the changes. Hence, historically and technologically the period under study is considered critical to enable analysis of the constants and changes that affect the newspaper industry and its functioning.

The study is undertaken with a view to examine if the press in Northeast India is socially responsible, whether it is upholding the traditional role of being the 'Fourth Estate', fulfilling its social responsibility, its role as a watchdog of democracy and a medium that aims to promote values of unity, communal harmony, peace, national integration, development, democracy and the rights and duties of all citizens. The study also intends to make proposals on how the press should be socially more relevant, committed and responsible. The findings and proposals of the study are expected to have far reaching consequences on media in general and newspapers in particular, and enable the press to assess its functioning as well as plan its future strategy.

The readers consider the two newspapers as socially responsible. By and large they continue to enjoy good reputation, popularity and readers' esteem. The public has a lot of expectations of these two newspapers as providers of reliable, credible information. Both papers were founded by pioneers with great national vision and patriotic objectives. They undertook a lot of risk, braved innumerable difficulties and faced hardships to establish and keep the papers running. In the light of the historical background, it is expected that these papers maintain high standards of journalism and social commitment. The two papers enjoy considerable public esteem. They

regard them as important and reliable providers of news and information and expect them to be socially responsible. The findings of the study, it is hoped, have important implications for newspapers in the country in general. The study is also expected to help critically assess the social responsibility of the press, and make proposals to improve the functioning of the press in the country with special focus on Northeast India.

5.8 Limitations

Due to practical difficulty of examining physically vast quantities of data, the study is limited to news and features, editorials, articles, columns and letters. Excluded from the research are advertisements, listings and announcements, obituary columns, poems, children's columns, sports pages, business and economy pages, Sunday supplements. Columns in the editorial pages which are reprints of columns published many years ago, and are reproduced for historic interest are also excluded. However, news items and features, editorials related to business, sports or other themes have been studied whenever they occur in the general pages.

A story is said to have 'jumped' when it starts on the front page and is continued on another page, usually inside the pages with a tag such as '*see page 3*, or *continued on page 6*. When news items 'jump' or continue to run from the first page to another inside page, it is assigned the value due to the first page item. Again, news pages are divided into upper half and lower half on the basis of the folding of the newspaper page in the middle. The upper half news is considered to be more prominent since readers tend to consider them more important than stories below the

fold or the lower half. The quantitative values are assigned on the basis of the total space allotted for the item.

5.9 Variables Used in the Research

The researcher examined the newspaper content pertaining to news category under 13 variables, and those pertaining to contents of editorial page items under 6 variables

5.9.1 Variables Used for News Items

The 13 variables used for study of news items are numbered serially under the following four broad categories:

- A Identification B Prominence Index
- C Reporting Index D News Classification

The variables used for News items are:

1. Newspaper Identity (1-312)
2. News Item Identity (PPCNN)
3. Column Weightage
4. News Location
5. Space Allotment
6. Headline Weightage
7. Photo Prominence
8. Content- Positive, Negative, Other
9. Content Quality- Responsible or not

10. Geographic Location – International-National- Regional
11. Location- Urban-Rural, Other
12. Gender Male, Female, Other
13. News type (36 theme categories)

We shall explain each of them.

A Identification

Under this section on Identification, the researcher has set out criterion followed in the present study for identifying each particular issue of the newspapers chosen for the study as well as the distinct identity of each news item being investigated. Taken together, the newspaper identity and news item identity provide a complete reference to issue of the paper and the specific story in the issue being investigated.

1 Newspaper Identity

Under the section Newspaper Identity, newspapers are identified with their names, year, month, date, day and week. Newspaper Identity refers to the serial numbers of the newspaper issues chosen for study numbered serially from 1 to 312. This is further divided into two categories according to the two newspapers as follows: *The Assam Tribune* 1-156; *The Shillong Times* 157-312. Newspaper Identity includes the date, day and week of the newspaper issue selected for study (For a complete listing of the newspapers with their identity, see Appendix)

2 News Item Identity

Besides the newspaper identity, each unit of item (news, editorials, columns/articles, letters) is assigned a code number. This enables one to distinguish each item from the other and make it possible to refer to any item in case of necessity, and to maintain the distinct identify of each item. The papers under study have a maximum of 1 to 16 pages. Hence, they are numbered by pages serially from 01 to 16. Thus, any reference to 01 indicates that the reference is to page 1. C stands for Column number. The papers being studied are broadsheets, having maximum of 8 columns, hence C is a single digit entry and represents column numbers 1 to 8.

Each news item in a paper has been given a unique identity in the format codenamed PPCNN, where PP stands for the page number and C represents the column number in which the news item appears. NN is a number of two digits, identifying sequentially from top to bottom, a news item in a column. This has been called *News Item Identity*. Thus for instance, if the news item identity is listed as 01603, it identifies the news item on page 01, in column 6, and is news item number 03 from the top. This method further enables to distinguish each particular story under analysis, and makes it easier to refer to the story for any further reference, rechecking or verification if needed. 'News Item Identity' includes all entries under the study including contents of editorial pages. However, a separate matrix was designed to enter data related to the editorial page as it is quite different from news pages.

It may be noted that the researcher has used terms like '*news*', '*story*', '*item*' throughout to refer to news, features, editorials, articles/ columns, letters to the editor which constitute the content of newspapers under investigation.

Whenever a photograph with photo and caption alone (without a detailed descriptive report) occurs it is treated as one of the news items like the rest and apply the same criterion as in the variables. For news with accompanying photos, a different coding system and allocation of values has been used as shall be described later. Photograph without caption, or without it being part of a news item occurs, it has been excluded from the analysis.

B Prominence Index

Prominence index indicates a number of variables, which help to establish the importance of a particular news item in a given paper. The variables studied are: how much space is allotted to a particular news item, how prominently it is located, how big is the headline, and whether the news item is accompanied by photographs. The researcher has tried to quantify these variables in the study by allotting values to each of these variables in order to examine 'Prominence Index'.

'Prominence Index', helps to establish whether a news item is given prominence or not. The researcher is indebted to John C. Pollock whose measuring score for data on newspaper coverage of US twin tower attack post-September 11, has been adapted to suit the present study. Pollock (2005) in his community structure approach study on the newspaper coverage of Islam post-September 11, uses the expression 'Prominence Score'. I have borrowed the expression 'Prominence' from Pollock, but have modified the expression and called it 'Prominence Index' in the

present study. The researcher has created variables to measure the prominence of a news item. Prominence Index is computed as the sum of the scores obtained from the following: 1. Column Weightage, 2. News Location 3. Space Allotment 4. Headline Weightage, and 5. Photograph. Each of these variables is measured on a scale of 1 to 5. Thus one can obtain a maximum score of 25 from which one gets a measure of prominence given to a particular news item by the paper. This is called ‘Prominence Index’. We shall examine the specific criterion followed for each of these categories that help to find the Prominence Index.

3 Column Weightage (on a scale of 1-5)

Number of columns allotted by the newspaper for a particular item is a measure of its prominence. The more the number of columns a news item gets, the more prominent it is. Accordingly the following scores have been given for the news items on the basis of column weightage. If a particular item is in a box or has a screen it has been allotted an additional point each as it enhances prominence. The numerical ratings for the column weightage on a scale of 1-5 are as follows:

Table 5.1 Numerical Ratings for Column Weightage

Description	Score
5 columns or more	4
4 ”	3
3 “	2
1&2 columns	1
News in box or screen	1 (additional point)

4 News Location (on a scale of 1-5)

The position of the news in a newspaper indicates prominence. Prominence in newspapers may be compared to 'primetime' on television. Prominence on the basis of news location is decided on the basis of the way the editors allot prominence to a particular news item by placing it in a prominent position in the page, and on the basis of how readers usually perceive importance given to the news on the basis of what they chose to read first. The position of the news invariably indicates prominence. While everyone agrees that the upper half of the first page is the most prominent space in a newspaper, opinion could vary regarding the comparative merits of values for the rest of the space allotments of news items.

In considering allotment of values to the rest of the pages, the researcher has been guided by assessment of reader preference. Readers normally want to get to the most important news items as fast as they can, and so normally read the upper half of the first page, then second half of the first page, followed by page 3, upper half, and then all other upper half pages, and then the lower half pages. This distribution of value is based on the researcher's understanding and assessment of reading habits of people as well as the editors' choice of space allotment for news of varying importance. As page 2 usually contains classified columns and advertisements in the papers under study, it is less likely to be the preferred choice of average readers before they read other pages. The last page, which is normally a prominent page and which should get prominence after the first page, has been omitted from our study as this page is usually devoted to sports. As mentioned earlier, sports pages have been left out of the study.

The numerical value for the news location on a scale of 1-5 is as follows:

Table 5.2 Numerical Ratings for News Location

<u>Description</u>	<u>Score</u>
Page- 1 upper-half	5
Page- 1 lower-half	4
Page- 3 upper-half	3
All other upper-half –pages	2
Lower- half pages	1

5 Space Allotment (on a scale of 1-5)

Quantity of space allotted for an item is an important indicator of prominence attributed to that particular item. The more space allotted for particular news, the more prominent it will be. Here the researcher has recorded the quantitative measure of space allotted for a particular news item to check the prominence of that particular item. Jump stories (stories continued onto inside pages, photographs included along with the story or additional photos in the inside pages) are also taken into consideration when measuring the quantity of space allotment.

Table 5.3 Space Allotment and Score

<u>Description</u>	<u>Score</u>
½ page or more	5
¼ page or more	4
1/8 page	3
1/16 page	2
All the rest (0 to 1/16)	1

6 Headline Weightage (on a scale of 1-5)

News headlines in newspapers have at all times enjoyed prominence. The size of the headline indicates the importance of the news. Newspaper headlines are an

important factor in a newspaper copy. Readers want to get to know the news quickly and briefly by reading the headline. It must also have a high visibility and hence the size is an important factor. It is said that a good headline not only tells the story, but sells the copy. With declining newspaper readership being reported globally, a good headline is a decisive factor. The bigger the headline, the more likely that the paper will be sold and consumers will read. Often newspaper vendors shout out the headlines to motivate people to buy the paper and thus sell more copies. The expression ‘making headlines’ which has become an idiom in English language further underlines the importance of the ‘headline.’ Television news headlines and the news bar have increased the pressure on the newspapers to write more catchy and imaginative headlines for their stories. The bigger the size of the headline, the more prominent the news. One point is allotted for the headline in bold as it adds to prominence. Headline weightage is measured on a scale of 1-5.

Table 5.4 Headline Weightage and Score

<u>Description</u>	<u>Score</u>
1.5 cm or more	4
1 cm or 1.5	3
.5 cm or 1	2
Below .5	1
Bold	1

7 Photo (accompanying news) Prominence (on a scale of 1-5)

Photographs, which accompany a news report, indicate prominence of the news item. Like space allotment, we measure the quantitative space taken up by the photo in terms of columns. A large photo will be published along with the text of the

news only when the editors feel that the event is important to warrant much attention, or the persons featured and the occasion are significant. Publication of one or more photos also indicates that the event of person is important. In considering the value of photos we have noted the size of the photo or the space it has occupied in terms of columns, the page where it is placed, whether the photo is in colour or black and white. The total value of different variables as indicated below is added up to determine the score for the photo prominence.

Table 5.5 Photo Prominence and Score

	<u>Description</u>	<u>Score</u>
Photos of	3 or more column size	3
Photos of	2 or 1 column size	2
Photos of	Colour Photos	1
Photos of	Photo on front page	1
Photos of	No photo	0

C Reporting Index

Though content analysis is considered by many scholars to be a research methodology suited for quantitative analysis, we have adopted certain steps to measure the quality of the newspaper content on the basis of whether the content is responsible or not. The qualitative nature of the news items are examined on the basis of whether and to what extent they adhere and practice norms and guidelines governing the journalistic profession. Such norms and guidelines are derived from legislations, recommendations of press organisations, governments, or other bodies that regulate the press, long standing traditions and conventions, public perception on

what is in good taste and what is considered responsible. On the basis of this we have examined if a particular item is responsible or not.

News items are also examined for their content value. We have classified them as Positive (P), Negative (N) or Other (O) on the basis of the nature of the news item reported. The guidelines to decide whether a particular item is Positive, Negative or Other is based on guidelines adopted for the study as indicated.

8 Content Quality

Having examined prominence index, primarily on the basis of quantitative data available in the issues of the papers, we now turn our attention to analyse the reporting quality with regard to news items. The study aims at examining the social responsibility of the press. The press is expected to fulfill certain social obligations. The public expects the press to provide credible and accurate information. Content quality is analysed in terms of degrees of responsibility which yield the reporting index. Newspaper items have been classified as positive, negative or neutral. Content analysis is primarily a tool for measuring quantitative data. Neuendorf excluded the possibility of qualitative analysis of data in content analysis. According to Readership Institute's Newspaper Content Analysis (2001) in order to consider content analysis to be objective, the idea must be capable of objective measurement. It is obviously difficult to measure objectively the content of a news item to examine if it is 'positive', 'negative', or 'other'. Though it is difficult to establish objectivity, it is nevertheless not impossible. While undertaking to examine the qualitative factors of news reports like content quality, positive- negative-neutral etc. one will not be able

to get as objective and accurate data as in the case of quantitative analysis. However, the researcher has adopted several verifiable criteria to measure responsibility. Coder subjectivity, bias, possibility of overlapping and exclusion are likely to be present. Every effort has been made to minimise these possible errors and to code qualitative data in order to obtain as accurate a picture as possible.

Content quality is measured on a scale of 0 to 5 on the basis of the responsibility of each and every news item in the papers under study. Criterion for considering the responsibility/ irresponsibility of a news, editorial or other columns is based on traditionally accepted rules, guidelines and conventions of journalism, ethical considerations and legal provisions within which a newspaper and the journalistic profession functions. Constitutions of most countries provide explicitly or implicitly, special protection and privileges to newspapers and journalists in the belief that they are expected to render public service related functions. Therefore the press is expected to possess a high level of social responsibility. The public has great expectations of the press which include providing accurate, unbiased, objective news and views. Hence we have adopted a method to examine the responsibility quotient of the news item on the basis of whether a news item adheres to socially, legally and ethically accepted norms of fair journalism and responsibility.

Content Quality is measured on the basis of whether there are violations from the point of view of responsible journalism. Accordingly various degrees of responsibility/ irresponsibility in the news items and content of editorial page are divided into five categories. The criterion for considering an item under one or the categories is listed below.

The extent of non-violation/ violation is measured on a scale of 0 to 3. (0, 0.5, 1, 2, 3.) Each item in the newspaper under study which does not have any violation (0) as per the list below, will automatically be given a rating of 4 points and considered *Responsible*.

A score on the basis of whether there are violations from the point of view of responsible journalism or not may be described as follows:

1. Responsible
2. Somewhat Responsible
3. Irresponsible
4. Very Irresponsible
5. Absolutely Irresponsible

Criterion for considering a news item, editorial or other columns is based on traditionally accepted rules, guidelines and conventions of journalism, ethical considerations and legal requirements. The press is expected to have a high level of social responsibility and the public has great expectations of the press, which include providing accurate, unbiased, objective news and views.

For the purpose of this study the researcher has classified the extent of violation on a scale of 0 to 3. (0, 0.5, 1, 2, 3.) Each news or other item in the newspaper under study which does not have any violation as per the list below, will automatically be given a rating of 4 points and considered *Responsible*. As a news item under study is found to violate any of the qualities of responsible journalism, score points will be deducted. Accordingly the following content quality scores are ascribed.

1. Responsible: A news item having a score of 4 (0 violation)
2. Somewhat Responsible: A news item having a score of 3.5 (any violation under category 0.5)
3. Irresponsible: A news item having a score of 3 (any violation under category 1)
4. Very Irresponsible: A news item having a score of 2 (any violation under category 2)
5. Absolutely Irresponsible: A news item having a score of 1 (any violation under category 3)

List Indicating Extent of Non-Violation/Violation

0

No violation

0.5

Not reporting both sides of the story

Not identifying the source clearly or giving vague source

No clear or vague attribution

Accused party's view not quoted

1

Sources, data unverified news

Editorialising news (opinion, comment as news)

Not objective news (i.e, public relations items, publicity without adequate information content, has personality cult, is cheap and irrelevant, celebrity-centred)

Partial and incomplete, not constructive

Has little benefit to the public as information

2

Not truthful/ or is false

Not in good taste

Not fair comment

Is harmful and violates moral and ethical values

Supports, justifies acts of violence, crime or terror

3

Publishing sensational photos: naked or mutilated bodies

Publishing obscene pictures: naked, semi-naked figures

Mention by name of victims of rape, HIV- AIDS, loathsome sicknesses

Making provocative statements, comments leading to violence, killing etc.

Inciting to violence, abetting crime, riots or communal disturbance.

Violations of the Limitations to Freedom of Speech and Expression under the Constitution of India, Art. 19(1) (a) under the following clause may be brought under the above according to the nature, extent and degree of violation.

1 Sovereignty and Integrity of India

2 Security of the State

3 Friendly relations with foreign States

4 Public order

5 Decency and morality

6 Contempt of Court

7 Defamation

8 Incitement to an offence

9 Content Value

Measuring a news item as positive or negative on a scale is problematic. However the researcher has followed certain criterion to identify whether a news item is: Positive (P) Negative (N) Other (O). All news items are classified under three categories on the basis of content value as Positive (P) Negative (N) Other (O). This is a qualitative method of content analysis. The criteria to consider an item as Positive (P) Negative (N) Other (O) is as follows:

Positive News (P)

Reporting of following categories of news will be classified under Positive news:

1. Life Saving/ Rescue Acts/ Relief, Rehabilitation Aid
2. Social Awareness
3. Communal Harmony/National Integration
4. Improvement of Civic Amenities/ Social Awareness
5. Service/ Welfare Schemes, Acts of Justice
6. Peace Efforts, Peace Meetings, Peace Marches or Rallies
7. Literacy/Education
8. Positive, Affirmative Legislation
9. All other positive news

Negative News (N)

Reporting of following categories of news will be classified under Negative news:

1. Ethnic Riots, Conflicts
2. Abduction, Ambush, Kidnapping
3. Rapes, Sexual Assault

4. Bomb Blast, Arson, Looting
5. Bandhs, Protests, Strikes
6. Physical Assault, Wounding, Injuring
7. Floods, Earthquakes, other natural disasters
8. Verbal Abuse
9. All other negative news

Other (O)

There are several news items, which do not have clearly identifiable value in terms of classifying them as positive or negative. News or features that cannot be clearly distinguished as Positive or Negative is considered as other. Such items are included in the category of Other.

D News Classification

News classification includes geographic location to which the news or information pertains. All news items are categorized into: 1 International 2 National 3 Regional. *International* pertains to news outside India; *National* to news about India excluding Northeast; *Regional* includes news about Northeast excluding the rest of India. If a story has multiple locations, the one that is predominant in the news will be chosen. In determining the geographic location of news, the decision is made not merely on the basis of the dateline in the newspaper. Dateline indicates the place from which the reporter files the story; hence dateline does not necessarily indicate the location where event reported took place. For instance a story may have a New Delhi dateline, but the news may be related to Northeast India. In such cases, it will be classified under Regional, and not under National. Similarly a national event taking

place in the region (National Games) is considered as national. Hence, geographic location of news is dictated by the overall content of a story rather than names of places mentioned in the story.

10 Location (Geographic)

1 International 2 National 3 Regional

International pertains to news outside India; National pertains to news about India (excluding Northeast); Regional includes news about Northeast (excluding the rest of India)

For the purpose of easy data entry in the computer database the following codes were used.

Table 5.6 Location (Geographic) and Code

1

2	<u>Code</u>	<u>Description</u>
	1	International
	2	National
	3	Regional

11 Location (Urban/Rural/Other)

The study also examined the location of news to understand whether news content is Rural or Urban. Any place equivalent to a district headquarters or above are considered urban; places below a district headquarters, are considered as rural. Though the Census of India considers factors like population, civic amenities etc. to classify a place as rural and urban, the researcher has not adopted this criterion as it would entail practical difficulties and become cumbersome to check each of these factors for each of our story locations. News is also classified as Urban, Rural and

Other on the basis of where the event takes place, and from where the report is filed. In instances when a story does not pertain to urban or rural, or cannot be clearly identified as belonging to either of them, it is considered 'Other'. The three categories are: R= Rural U= Urban O=Other.

For the purpose of easy data entry in the computer database the following codes were used.

Table 5.7 Location- Rural-Urban and Other and Code

1	<u>Code</u>	<u>Description</u>
3	R	Rural
	U	Urban
	O	Other

12 Gender

Newspapers are often blamed for gender imbalance and gender bias. One of the effective ways to study the treatment of gender is to count how many news items are about men, how many about women, and how many are *other*. Hence all the stories have been classified under one of the three categories. A consistent pattern has been followed in assigning a story under any one of the categories on the basis of content. Whenever the chief character of the story is female, or a woman presides over functions, or they are quoted in a significant way to affect the news which is reported, it is classified as Female. Whenever women's photographs are there, or activities, programmes, seminars etc. are concerning women, or when the editorials deal with women related issues, we have classified them as Female. Correspondingly, when men are quoted, featured or primarily the theme is about men, it is classified as

Male. Stories, themes or photographs which have mixed characters (men and women) in the same report, it is classified as Other. M= Male F= Female O=Other.

For the purpose of easy data entry in the computer database the following codes were used.

Table 5.8 Gender and Code

	<u>Code</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	M	Male
	F	Female
4	O	Other

13 Theme

An item is classified under one of the many major themes categorised for the purpose of our research. All possible newspaper themes are categorised under a total of 36 broad themes, which are subjected to content analysis. The choice of the themes was based on the researcher's observation of various kinds of topics usually covered in the two newspapers. In order to standardise the criterion for deciding the content themes, certain boundaries for themes were set, which seem apparently overlapping. For instance, the theme 'politics' is differentiated from 'government' on the basis of whether a news item deals with party politics or administrative acts, policies and decisions of the government. A member of the government, say, a chief minister speaks at a political rally of his party, would be considered a news item under the theme of politics.

Content is an important factor for readership as well as reader preference. We have identified the themes corresponding to the news type. A separate list of items

with a serial number list was developed in order to enter frequency of various themes in the news items studied. In the course of data entry, the corresponding numbers which stands for the story has been entered. Most stories in a newspaper are complex and therefore involve more than one theme. The researcher had to decide which theme is most prominent in a particular story. At the time of coding the following questions were asked: what is the story about, what are its main points in terms of content, what is the central concept described in the story, in order to decide under which theme it should be classified.

In most instances, the story itself suggests its theme. In other cases, it is necessary to look for the news peg, the angle, the purpose or the main focus of the story which suggest the theme. The decision to include a story under one or the other themes is based not merely on reading the section titles, headlines, subtitles or highlights. When a story has multiple themes: Example: Puja being offered by Hindu religious priests to obtain victory in a cricket match, it could be classified under *Sports* or *Religion*. But in this particular instance, the religion angle is the more dominant one, which is the main reason why the news has found a place in the newspaper, and hence, it would be classified under *Religion*. When a particular news item has common denominators (e.g. socio-economic and political at the same time) the most prominent category on the basis of content is chosen. Since the coding of all items under research were done by the researcher himself it has been easier to follow coder consistency in classifying stories according to the theme categories. In the column only the numbers corresponding to the news type or theme have been entered.

To handle vast number of topics, the researcher has also grouped some topics of similar nature under one number. (For instance, Number 8 includes all news items pertaining to Accidents, Disasters, Floods and Earthquakes). The 36 theme classifications in the study as listed below have been later listed in the descending order with the highest number to lowest number of frequencies. We have also calculated the percentage of news items for each theme as against the total number of stories in order to establish the prominence given to a particular theme (See the chart with list of themes, frequency count and percentage). Further the 36 themes have been brought under four major categories using a taxonomy to further investigate the hypothesis adopted for the study.

Table 5.9 Story Themes

S.No	Story Theme
1	Crime/Violence/Conflict/War/ Corruption/ Kidnapping
2	Politics
3	Administration/Government/ Election/UN
4	Militancy/Terrorism
5	Education
6	Media/Books/Literature/Films
7	Health
8	Accidents/Disaster/Floods/ Earthquakes
9	Celebrity/Stars/VIPs/ Entertainment
10	Development/Aid/Water/Relief
11	Art/Culture/History/Language/ Music/Cultural Festivals
12	Trade/Business/ Industry/Tourism
13	Agitation/Dharma/Bandh/Strike
14	Bilateral Relation/Internal Security
15	Environment/Nature/Forest/ Ecology/ Climate/ Weather/Wildlife
16	Law/Justice/Human Rights
17	Religion
18	Police/Armed Forces/ Military/Defense
19	Transport/Communication
20	Science/Technology/Space/ Nuclear Issues
21	Economics/Finance/Budget/ Banking
22	Peace/Harmony
23	Games/Sports/Adventure
24	Agriculture/Food/Pisciculture/ Animal Husbandry
25	Law and Order
26	Fashion/Sex/Beauty Contests
27	Migration/Influx/Refugees
28	Employment/Career
29	Communalism
30	Women
31	Social Issues/Ethics
32	Death/Killing/Murder
33	Children
34	Youth
35	Nation/Patriotism
36	Population/Ethnicity

5.9.2 Variables Used for Editorial Page Items

The contents of editorial page items are studied under six variables. As the content and format of the opinion and editorial page is different from the rest of the

news pages, a different approach to study its content is followed. A separate matrix has been followed in order to enter data about the editorial pages and to analyse them. The three commonly found items in the editorial page are: 1 Editorial 2 Columns/Articles, 3 Letters to the Editor. Each of them is assigned a number in serial order. Hence, the numeral 1 represents editorials, 2 articles, and 3 letters to the editor. Individual items within each of these would be given an extension marked with the number plus a point and serial numbers. Editorials in general are assigned Number 1. Hence, 1.1 would indicate the first editorial; 1.2 would indicate a second editorial, if there is a third editorial it would be 1.3, and so on. Number 2 indicates articles. Counting for articles, signed or syndicated columns, the numbering is from left to right. Accordingly, 2.1 refers to the first article, 2.2 the second, 2.3 the third and so on. Number 3 represents letters to the editor. The letters, counting from left to right would be marked as 3.1; 3.2; 3.3; 3.4 and so on depending on the number of letters published.

Editorial page follows the same criterion for paper identity. In the editorial page 'middles', quotes or historical columns from the past issues which are not regular columns, have been left out. The variables included for editorial pages are: themes, gender, geographic location. Location is further divided into: International, National, Regional. *Urban*, *Rural*, and *Other* category have been omitted for the editorial pages. As normally photographs are not published in the editorial page, photo prominence is excluded. The editorial page is more or less standardised in its format and layout, and content, so headline size and column weightage are not

studied. Gender is included in the theme category depending on whether the editorial or article is about Male, Female or Other.

Thus, in the editorial pages we have studied the following variables:

1. Paper Identity - items in the op-ed page follow PPCNN for paper identity
2. News Item Identity
3. Content Quality which examines whether the content is Responsible or not
4. Geographic Location to know whether the item refers to 1 International 2 National, 3 Regional
5. Gender of the item to classify an item as Male (M), Female (F), Other (O)
6. Subject or Theme of the item decided on the basis of under which thematic category does the item occur and the frequency of the occurrence.

5.10 Computer Programme Used for the Study

A computer programme based on FoxPro was developed specifically for this study. All data entry and coding have been done using this software. Computerisation of data was considered necessary due to the large quantity of news and feature items we had to code and investigate as part of the present research.

The sample size of the study is 312 issues distributed between *The Assam Tribune* and *The Shillong Times*. Both these newspapers have 8 columns, each

column having several news items. Hence attempting to record the variable attributes of every news item under study with regard to prominence index, reporting index and news classification manually without the aid of a computer would indeed be a herculean task. Further, trying to analyse the data to gather meaningful insights by traditional manual counting techniques would render the task too difficult and time consuming. This is where computerisation becomes immensely helpful.

The recording of data is done covering a period of three years and involves a large amount of work. Consistency in the classification of data is an important factor to be kept in mind even when the work is spread out over a long period of data. A computer programme with built in checks and balances can take care of maintaining consistency in the task of data collection. It can therefore avoid subjectivity that is likely to creep in especially in the absence of a well-defined and rigorous classification built into the process of data collection. The computerisation of data collection has enabled the researcher to do away with large number of registers, notebooks and score sheets with elaborate tables that would have been required in the absence of a computer programme.

The computer programme had built-in controls to ensure that accidental mistakes would not creep in. The unique identity of each news item ensured that the same news item would not be analysed more than once. This may seem trivial; but it is a real possibility when the data collection is spread over several months. The menu system ensured that while an attribute of a news item would be recorded as a code number, the user did not have to memorise any code, but merely select a given description from a list of choices. It was also possible to add to the list of choices, as

for example in the case of subject themes, as it is not possible to make an exhaustive list of themes at the start of the data collection process.

The programme was designed to enable the research to address the problem of analysing all data during or after the coding. It took care especially of the following:

- Counting
- Correlating data
- Filtering – subsets
- Multiple filtering conditions

The greatest advantage of computerisation was obviously in the task of analysing the data. It would be extremely difficult, tedious and error-prone to have to scan a total of 24,450 news items every time some statistical data about their attributes is required. The task becomes even more forbidding when one has to correlate two or more attributes of the 24,450 news items. The computer programme, instead is able to render the results with precision and accuracy in a fraction of a second.

The computer programme also allows the researcher to do calculations on a subset of the data collection, irrespective of the criteria used to filter out the subset of items from the larger data set. Hence, the programme ensured speed, accuracy and possibility of retrieval, if it became necessary for reassessment.

The computer programme used for data-entry was developed using FoxPro 9.0. This Windows-based package lent itself to creating user-friendly screens for easy data entry. Adequate error-trapping procedures were incorporated to prevent inadvertent mistakes in data-entry. This made it possible to avail the services of an

assistant to help in data entry while the researcher concentrated on the actual content and its classification under the various aspects like prominence index, reporting index and classification.

The attributes of the news items were recorded in tables having structures as detailed below.

Table 5.10 Structure for Table: CONTENT.DBF

	Field Name	Type	Width	Dec	Remarks
1	PAPERID	Numeric	3		A unique identity for a paper.
2	NEWSID	Character	5		A unique identity for each news item
3	COLWT	Numeric	1		The column weightage
4	HEADLINE	Numeric	1		The headline weightage
5	NEWSLOC	Numeric	1		The location weightage
6	PHOTO	Numeric	1		Weightage for photo
7	SPACEALLOT	Numeric	1		Space allotted
8	CONTENTPN	Character	1		Positive, Negative, Other (P/N/O)
9	CONTENTQ	Numeric	6	2	Content Quality
10	LOCGEOG	Numeric	1		Location Geographic (1,2,3)
11	LOCUR	Character	1		Rural, Urban, Other
12	GENDER	Character	1		Male, Female, Other (M/F/O)
13	NEWSTYPE	Numeric	2		

Table 5.11 Structure for table: EDITPAGE.DBF

	Field Name	Type	Width	Dec	Remarks
1	PAPERID	Numeric	3		A unique identity for a paper
2	ITEM	Numeric	4	2	A unique identity for each news item
3	CONTENTQ	Numeric	5	2	Content Quality
4	LOCGEOG	Numeric	1		Location Geographic (1,2,3)
5	GENDER	Character	1		Male, Female, Other (M/F/O)
6	NEWSTYPE	Numeric	2		

The figures in the next pages give two sample shots for data-entry input.

Figure 5.1 Sample Shot -1

Content Analysis

PRESS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY Content Analysis

A Identification

Paper: 125 Copy

News Item: 07204

Op-Ed

B Prominence Index

Column Weightage: 1 & 2 Columns Box / Screen

News Location: Last Page Lower

Space Allotment: 1/4 page or more

Headline Weightage: 0.5cm or 1cm Bold

Photo: 3 or more column Front Colour

C Reporting Index

Content Value (+ve / -ve):

Content Quality: Yes/Responsible

- 0.0 No Violation
- 0.5 Not confirmed source
- 0.5 Not reporting both sides of the story
- 0.5 Not identifying the source clearly or if
- 0.5 Not clear or vague attribution
- 0.5 Accused party's view not quoted
- 0.5 Lack community, Public interest
- 0.5 News related to personality or individual
- 0.5 Exaggeration, hyperbole
- 1.0 Fraud

D Classification

Location - Geographic: National

Location (Urban/Rural/Other): Urban

Gender: Female

Subject / Theme: Ajalation/Dhamaal

E Options

Figure 5.2 Sample Shot-2

PRESS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY Content Analysis

A Identification

Paper: 133

Op-Ed

Item: 0.00

B Prominence Index

C Reporting Index

Content Quality: **Irresponsible**

- 1.0 Sources, data unverified news
- 1.0 Editorializing news (opinion, comment)
- 1.0 Partial and incomplete
- 1.0 Not objective news (i.e. public relations)
- 1.0 Content has personality cult, cheap analysis
- 2.0 Name of rape victims
- 2.0 Not constructive
- 2.0 Not in good taste
- 2.0 Not fair comment
- 2.0 Supports, justifies acts of violence, etc.

D Classification

Location - Geographic: Regional

Gender: Female

Subject / Theme: Education **Add New**

E Options

Save & Continue Edit Reset

Save & Exit Cancel

The analysis of the data and all the statistics obtained from it was done using FoxPro directly and the outputs of the queries were recorded in an Excel worksheet. A separate programme was not developed for statistical analysis. This was found to be convenient since any type of query could be handled and results obtained by anyone with sufficient knowledge of FoxPro.

Data gathered in the present research is an invaluable mine of raw information from which one is able to draw a lot of information pertaining to the research. As this rich resource of data and its interpretation have not been fully exhausted, there still remains the possibility of obtaining more information depending on the query and type of co-relation required. Further research and interpretation can yield other meaningful and validated conclusions.

Chapter 6

Data Analysis: Prominence and Bias in the Press

The present chapter and the next deal with analysis of the data derived from the contents of the two newspapers in order to examine certain issues considered pertinent to the research in the light of the hypothesis adopted for the study. The present chapter examines prominence given to stories in the two newspapers and characteristics associated with them, more particularly some of the most significant biases that are found in the press as can be deduced from the analysis of the content.

The study comprises of detailed in-depth analysis of the contents of 24450 items, spread over 312 issues of the two newspapers. The content includes news, editorials, articles and letters to the editor. The figures of total items are further distributed under two categories: the items appearing on the news pages comprising of news and features, which number a total of 22396, and the second category in the editorial page with a total number of 2054 items consisting of editorials, columns and letters to the editor. Following the methodology outlined in Chapter 5, two different set of variables were used in order to analyse the contents of the news pages and those of the editorial pages. Though several kinds of information can be deduced from the

data in the computer programme by posing the questions, only important issues relevant to the present research have been analysed in detail.

6.1 Total Pages and Newspaper Items Studied

Though the number of issues of the two papers studied was equal (156 each), the total space or pages differ significantly between them. This is due to the fact that *The Assam Tribune* has 14 pages per issue, whereas, *The Shillong Times* has only 8 pages per issue. *The Assam Tribune* with 156x14 pages has a total of 2184 pages. *The Shillong Times* with 156x8 pages has only a total of 1248 pages. The total pages in both the papers we have studied add up to 3432 pages. We have omitted certain sections as has been mentioned earlier.

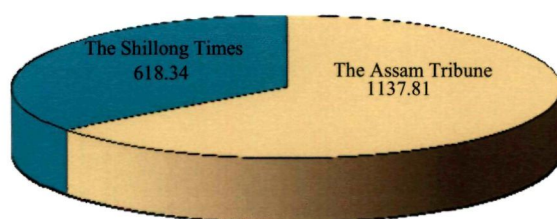
Table 6.1 Total Pages of the Two Newspapers Studied (312 Issues)

Issue No.	Newspaper	Total Pages Studied	% of Actual space studied (excluding ad, sports etc.)	% of Total space (News, Editorial Page) Between Assam Tribune & Shillong Times
1-156	The Assam Tribune	1137.81	28.61	64.79
157-312	The Shillong Times	618.34	13.47	35.21

The total pages studied as indicated in the table are: *The Assam Tribune* 1137.81 pages, and *The Shillong Times* 618.34 pages. 64.79 percentage of the pages studied belong to *The Assam Tribune* and 35.21 percentage of pages belong to *The Shillong Times* The actual space studied in the two papers is only 42.08 percentage of

the total newspaper space since we have omitted pages devoted to sports, obituary, business pages and advertisements.

Figure 6.1 Total Pages of the Two Newspapers Studied

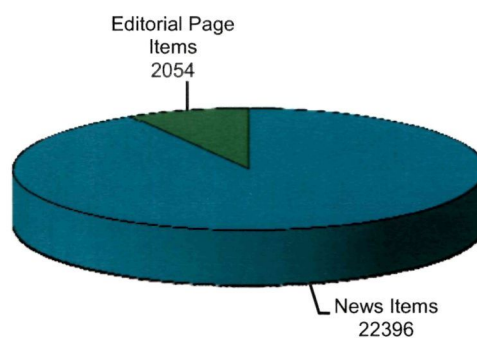


The total pages studied in *The Assam Tribune* are 1137.81, and that of *The Shillong Times* is 618.34. Though the number of issues is same for both the papers, that is 156, the difference is due to the difference in the number of pages per issue between the two papers.

In *The Assam Tribune* 13651 news items were studied. This occupies a total of 981.81 news pages. In terms of percentage it works out to be 44.95 % of the total space of this paper. Total editorial pages studied were 156, which is 7.14% of the total space. The total space covered by news and editorial space for *The Assam Tribune*, is thus, 52.10%. The rest of the space is devoted to advertisements, sports or business pages, which have been omitted. Similarly, in *The Shillong Times* we studied 8745 news items which had an actual space of 462.34 news pages adding up to 37.05% of the total space, and 12.50% of op-ed pages. The total space in *The Shillong Times* studied is 49.55%.

Here one notices that *The Shillong Times* allots much less space than *The Assam Tribune* to cover news. Since the editorial page is limited to one page per issue in both the papers, there are 156 pages in each of these, and hence they are the same in terms of space allotment. In terms of percentage, the total space between the two papers is as follows: *The Assam Tribune* 64.79% and *The Shillong Times* 35.21% .

Figure 6.2 Distribution of Total Number of Items in the two Newspapers: News and Editorial Pages



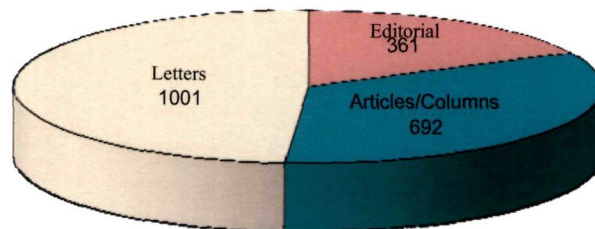
The study consists of a total of 24450 items of which 22396 are news items and 2054 are editorial page items. In the 316 issues of papers studied, there were 361 editorials. Whenever the newspapers carried a second or even a third editorial in the same editorial page, it was considered as another editorial, and that is the reason why numerically there are more editorials than the number of issues of the papers. The articles and signed columns or bylines number 692, and the letters to the editor 1001. The total number of items in the editorial pages adds up to 2054 in all. Both the news page items and editorial page items are further divided according to various themes

under 36 theme categories. The following table and figure give a break up of the contents of the editorial pages.

Table 6.2 Contents of Editorial Pages: Item-wise Totals and their Distribution

Item Type	No. of Items
Editorial	361
Articles/ Columns	692
Letters	1001
Total Items	2054

Figure 6.3 Contents of Editorial Pages: Item-wise Totals and their Distribution



6.2 Prominence

As prominence is closely linked to the idea of social responsibility, study of the prominence is based on measuring several factors, most of them latent, as they have appeared in the newspapers. The researcher has examined the external, observable factors that are perceivable and measurable. He has also attempted to gauge non-latent factors like the perceived intention of the writer, editor or the reader and the possible impact of newspaper content on readers. The computer programme

using FoxPro, has yielded a fairly reliable method of measuring prominence in the press. The researcher examined the prominence in the news pages as well as the op-ed pages by examining the frequency of occurrences of different themes and several other factors. He counted how many items were carried in the newspapers under a total of 36 themes. The tabulation of the data did not begin from a pre-determined list of themes, but the list was constructed on the basis of conventions followed by the two newspapers as the researcher went along with the data entry and content analysis. In order to ensure that the list is not too long, overlapping and unwieldy, themes of similar nature were grouped into meaningful and manageable categories at the beginning of the research after conducting preliminary surveys of the newspapers and kind of themes they deal with. New themes were identified and listed whenever it was considered necessary. Each theme was given a number and the number was entered in the computer as and when a particular theme occurred. All items in the study are fitted into one of the 36 categories. Whenever themes are separated by a word followed by an oblique (/) sign, the theme belongs to the same category; a comma separates the themes to indicate a new theme.

In the early stages of data entry the researcher categorised subject themes according to a random list and later after the data was tabulated they were ranked in descending order so as to find out the total occurrences or frequencies of items under each of the themes. The choice for grouping subjects or themes according to various categories is based on thematic similarities as would be perceived by a journalist. Journalists are assigned 'beats' by editors or sub-editors to ensure that each journalist in a particular newspaper knows the boundaries of his or her reporting area, theme

and sources without having to step into each other's domain. In fact, journalism today is emerging with several specialisations within it on the basis of themes and thus we have political or economic correspondents, crime reporters, sports reporters, those who specialise in gender or environmental issues, to name a few. In developing the theme categories, the researcher has also looked at the perceived distinctions a reader would normally make while reading the newspaper and if he or she were called upon to make a thematic classification.

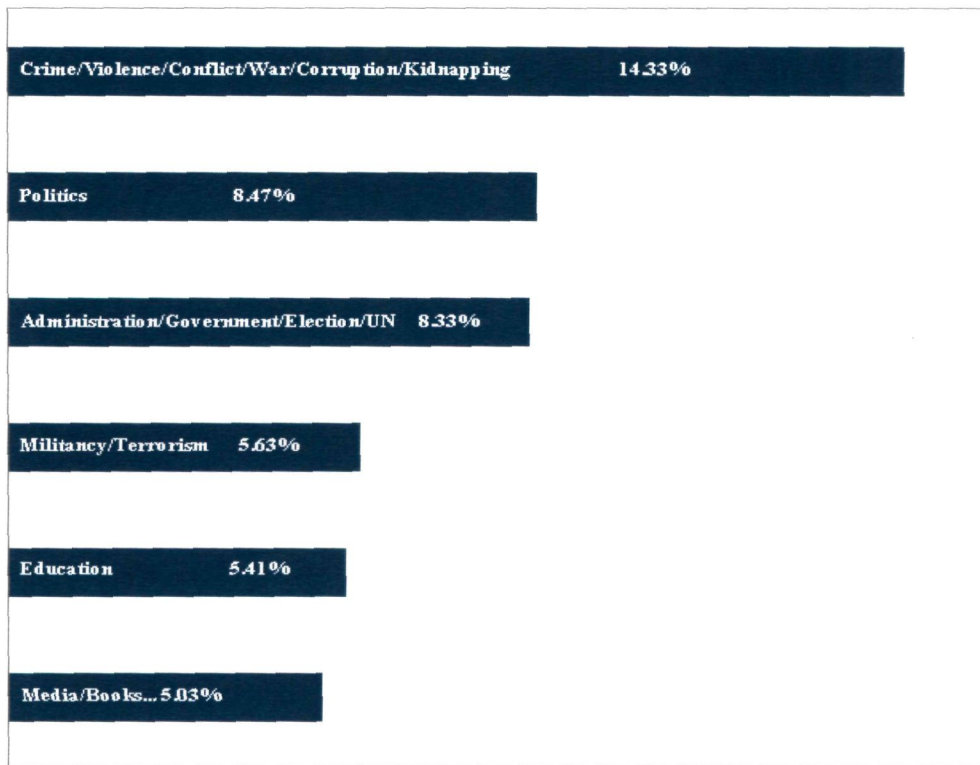
The following table indicates the themes, their frequency and the percentage obtained among the various news themes. This list has been ranked in descending order (ordered) so as to help understand easily prominence on the basis of number of occurrences or frequencies.

**Table 6.3 News: Theme Frequency with Totals and Percentage
Ranked in Descending Order**

Rank	Story Theme	Frequency Count	Percentage
1	Crime/Violence/Conflict/War/Corruption/Kidnapping	3209	14.33
2	Politics	1897	8.47
3	Administration/Government/Election/UN	1865	8.33
4	Militancy/Terrorism	1261	5.63
5	Education	1212	5.41
6	Media/Books/Literature/Films	1126	5.03
7	Health	1016	4.54
8	Accident/Disaster/floods/Earthquakes	1013	4.52
9	Celebrity/Stars/VIPs/Entertainment	970	4.33
10	Development/Aid/Water/Relief	771	3.44
11	Art/Culture/History/Language/Music/Cultural Festivals	745	3.33
12	Trade/Business/Industry/Tourism	683	3.05
13	Agitation/Dharna/Bandh/Strike	655	2.92
14	Bilateral Relation/Internal Security	623	2.78
15	Environment/Nature/Forest/Ecology/Climate/Weather	513	2.29
16	Law/Justice/Human Rights	507	2.26
17	Religion	497	2.22
18	Police/Armed Forces/Military/Defence	478	2.13
19	Transport/Communication	466	2.08
20	Science/Technology/Space/Nuclear Issue	465	2.08
21	Economics/Finance/Budget/Banking	284	1.27
22	Peace/Harmony	224	1.00
23	Games/Sports/Adventure	202	0.90
24	Agriculture/Food/Pisciculture/Animal Husbandry	183	0.82
25	Law and Order	179	0.80
26	Fashion/Sex/Beauty Contest	173	0.77
27	Migration/Influx/Refugees	166	0.74
28	Employment/Career	145	0.65
29	Communalism	133	0.59
30	Women	125	0.56
31	Social Issues/Ethics	124	0.55
32	Death/Killing/Murder	120	0.54
33	Children	117	0.52
34	Youth	115	0.51
35	Nation/Patriotism	110	0.49
36	Population/Ethnicity	24	0.11
TOTAL		22396	

Theme frequency was measured by counting how many times a particular theme has occurred in the newspaper pages. The study showed that of the 22396 items in the news pages, the highest score was for the combined single theme category called *crime/ violence/ conflict/war/corruption/kidnapping* with a total of 3209, which amounted to 14.33 percent of the total news items. This was followed by *politics*, which has 1897 items with a percentage of 8.47. Political news gets wide coverage due to a number of factors such as the role of the press in the freedom struggle and the subsequent democratic form of government which India adopted. India is politically vibrant, and political equations undergo continuous change. Government news is also high since it is the easiest to gather. Political parties and government officials are happy to explain their viewpoint, and to supplement the explanation with handouts and other documents. The least occurrences in our theme list was *population/ethnicity* with only 24 items and a percentage of 0.11. Often sensational news as well as negative news are given more prominence in the press due to the belief that such reports are preferred by the readers and would help boost circulation.

Figure 6.4 Theme Frequency of Top Six News Items with their Percentages



The top six themes among the news items were added up, namely crime/violence/conflict/war/corruption/kidnapping, politics among administration/govt./election/UN, militancy/terrorism, education, media/books/literature/films. It was found that they have a combined frequency count of 10,570 with 47.2 percentage of the total. The top six items have a combined frequency count equivalent to those of the 30 other themes. This indicates the imbalance in the way in which newspapers allot prominence to different themes. Even among the six top items, the disparity is obvious with the first item having a percentage of 14.33 with the others having a frequency which is far below. The last

three items among the six are in fact with a score of less than six percentages each. The data also points out how several important themes find only marginal or passing mention in the pages of the newspapers, or are ignored altogether. If a newspaper highlights a particular theme frequently, it implies that other themes would be deprived of space, as the newspaper space is limited. Many important news items and themes need to jostle for space in the newspaper page. Similarly, the following Table indicates the overall theme distribution in the editorial pages.

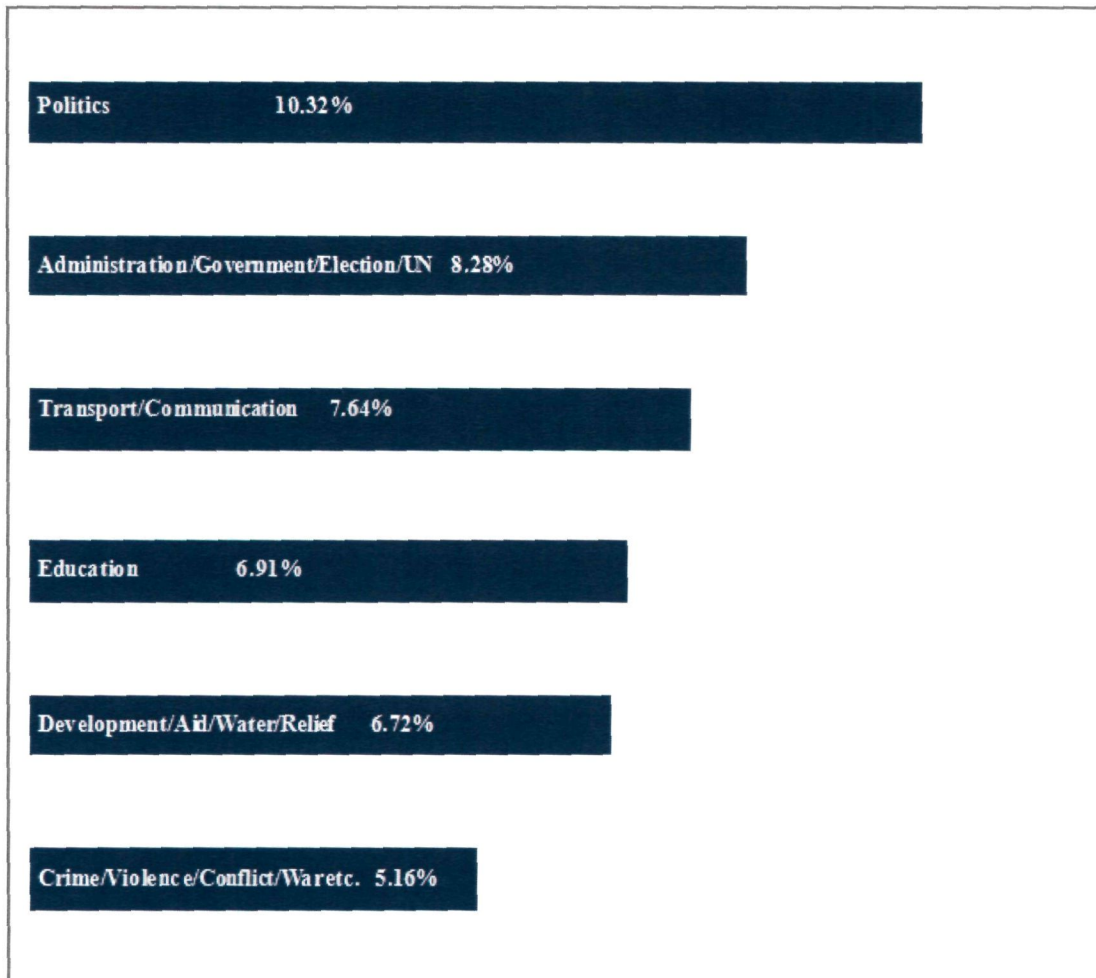
Table 6.4 Theme Distribution in the Editorial Pages, Frequency and Percentage

Rank	Story Theme	Frequency Count	Percentage
1	Politics	212	10.32
2	Administration/Government/Election/UN	170	8.28
3	Transport/Communication	157	7.64
4	Education	142	6.91
5	Development/Aid/Water/Relief	138	6.72
6	Crime/Violence/Conflict/War/Corruption/Kidnapping	106	5.16
7	Economics/Finance/Budget/Banking	106	5.16
8	Bilateral Relation/Internal Security	98	4.77
9	Trade/Business/Industry/Tourism	85	4.14
10	Health	82	3.99
11	Militancy/Terrorism	71	3.46
12	Environment/Nature/Forest/Ecology/Climate/Weather/Wildlife	70	3.41
13	Media/Books/Literature/Films	66	3.21
14	Games/Sports/Adventure	60	2.92
15	Art/Culture/History/Language/Music/Cultural Festivals	52	2.53
16	Religion	40	1.95
17	Law/Justice/Human Rights	37	1.80
18	Science/Technology/Space/Nuclear Issues	37	1.80
19	Accidents/Disaster/Floods/Earthquakes	34	1.66
20	Migration/Influx/Refugees	31	1.51
21	Peace/Harmony	30	1.46
22	Nation/Patriotism	29	1.41
23	Social Issues/Ethics	28	1.36
24	Employment/Career	27	1.31
25	Police/Armed Forces/Military/Defense	25	1.22
26	Communalism	24	1.17
27	Celebrity/Stars/VIPs/Entertainment	19	0.93
28	Agitation/Dharna/Bandh/Strike	19	0.93
29	Women	14	0.68
30	Agriculture/Food/Pisciculture/Animal Husbandry	14	0.68
31	Law and Order	10	0.49
32	Children	7	0.34
33	Population/Ethnicity	6	0.29
34	Death/Killing/Murder	4	0.19
35	Youth	3	0.15
36	Fashion/Sex/Beauty Contests	1	0.05
	Total	2054	

As far as theme frequency of the overall contents of the editorial pages are concerned, of a total of 2054 items in the editorial pages, the highest entry was for the theme *politics* with 212 entries, with a percentage of 42.40. The lowest score was for fashion/sex/beauty contests with just one entry with a percentage of 0.05. Of the 361 editorials the highest number with 51 was again on *politics*. The second highest number of editorials with a total of 39 was on the combined theme of *administration/ government/ election/ United Nations/other international bodies*. There were only one editorial each on *religion, population/ethnicity, nation/patriotism, agitation/dharna/bandh/strike, migration/influx/refugees, children*. There were no editorials at all on the following themes: *youth, law and order/riots, fashion/ sex/ beauty contests*.

As for articles and columns in the editorial pages, there were 692 items. *Politics* again dominated with a total of 90 entries, followed by *bilateral relations/internal security* with a score of 61. There were three items with one article/column each, namely, *youth, population/ethnicity, fashion/sex/beauty contests*. There were no article or column on *death/killing/murder*. Of the 1001 letters to the editor, the highest was on the theme of *transport/communication* with 134 entries, followed by *education* with 110. *Administration* and *politics* ranked third and fourth. One theme, *fashion/ sex/ beauty contests*, did not have even one letter to the editor.

Figure 6.5 Theme Frequencies of the Top Six Items in the Editorial Pages: Editorials, Articles, Letters with Percentages



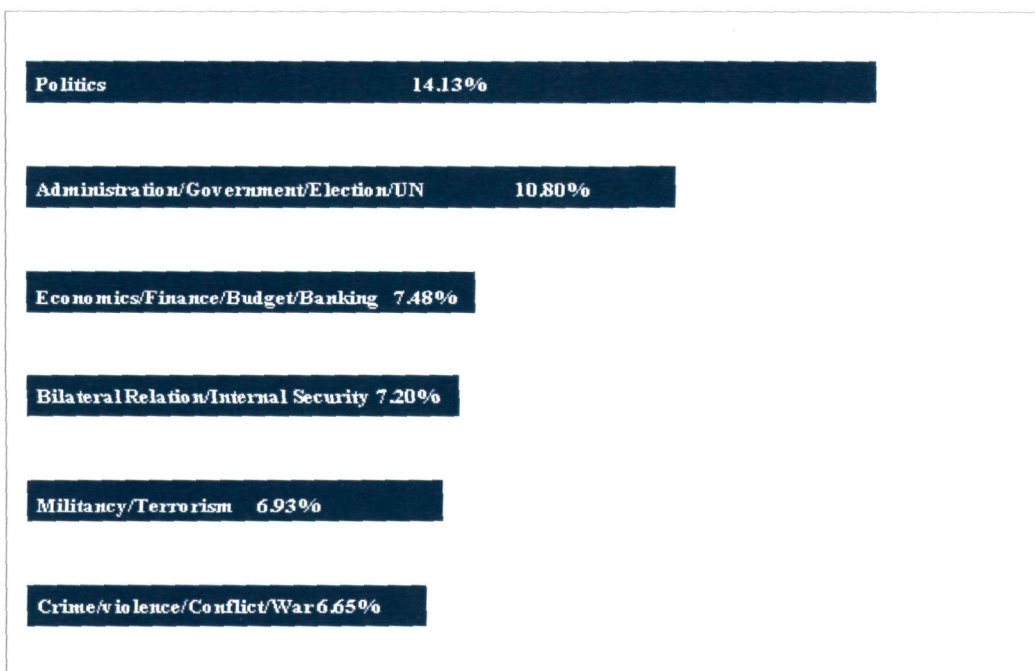
The top six themes from among the 2054 items of the editorial pages were added and it was found that they have a combined frequency count of 925 with 45.03 percentage of the total. As can be observed, the top six items have a combined frequency count, which is close to the score of nearly 30 of the rest of the themes,

Table 6.5 Editorials: Numbers and Percentage

Rank	Story Theme	Frequency Count	Percentage
1	Politics	51	14.13
2	Administration/Government/Election/UN	39	10.80
3	Economics/Finance/Budget/Banking	27	7.48
4	Bilateral Relation/Internal Security	26	7.20
5	Militancy/Terrorism	25	6.93
6	Crime/Violence/Conflict/War/Corruption/Kid	24	6.65
7	Development/Aid/Water/Relief	23	6.37
8	Games/Sports/Adventure	18	4.99
9	Trade/Business/Industry/Tourism	16	4.43
10	Health	11	3.05
11	Environment/Nature/Forest/Ecology/Climate/	11	3.05
12	Transport/Communication	10	2.77
13	Media/Books/Literature/Films	8	2.22
14	Accident/Disaster/floods/Earthquakes	8	2.22
15	Science/Technology/Space/Nuclear Issues	7	1.94
16	Education	7	1.94
17	Law/Justice/Human Rights	6	1.66
18	Social Issues/Ethics	5	1.39
19	Employment/Career	5	1.39
20	Communalism	5	1.39
21	Agriculture/Food/Pisciculture/Animal Husban	5	1.39
22	Police/Armed Forces/Military/Defence	4	1.11
23	Art/Culture/History/Language/Music/Cultural	4	1.11
24	Women	3	0.83
25	Peace/Harmony	3	0.83
26	Death/Killing/Murder	2	0.55
27	Celebrity/Stars/VIPs/Entertainment	2	0.55
28	Religion	1	0.28
29	Population/Ethnicity	1	0.28
30	Nation/Patriotism	1	0.28
31	Migration/Influx/Refugees	1	0.28
32	Children	1	0.28
33	Agitation/Dharna/Bandh/Strike	1	0.28
34	Youth	0	0.00
35	Law and Order/Riots	0	0.00
36	Fashion/Sex/Beauty Contests	0	0.00
TOTAL		361	

The table above shows that among the 36 themes ranked in the order of frequency, politics is the most frequent theme among the editorials with a total of 51 items. There are no editorials on the last three items in the list.

Fig.6 .6 Theme Frequency of Top Six Items in the Editorials with Percentage



The top six themes from among the 361 editorials in the editorial pages were added to find that they have a combined frequency count of 192 with 53.19 percentage of the total. As can be observed, the top six items have a combined frequency count, which amounts to a percentage higher than that of the rest of the 30 themes, which indicates the imbalance in the way in which newspaper editorials deal with theme allotments. The data also points out how newspaper editorials are somewhat stereotyped and lack variety in the treatment of themes. Several important themes find only marginal or passing mention in the editorial pages of the

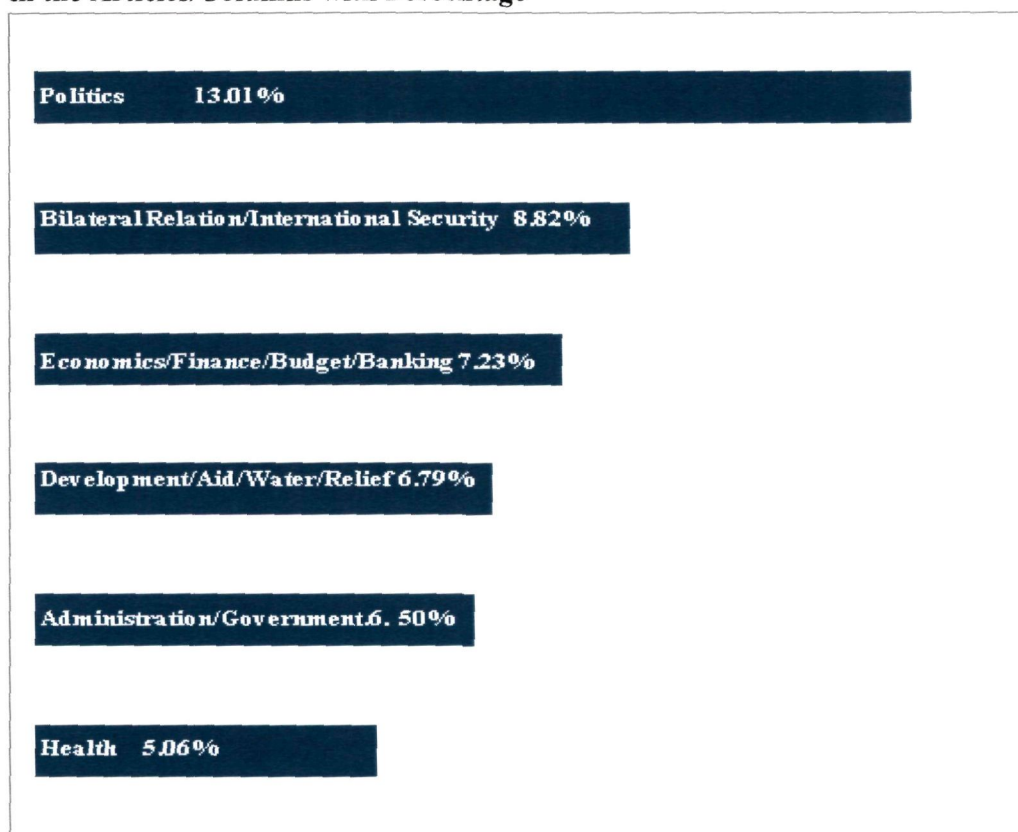
newspapers, or are ignored altogether. Though newspaper editorials are generally expected to debate on and set agenda on current political, social issues, guide policy decisions and mirror concerns affecting the public, one cannot expect the newspapers to fulfill these responsibilities effectively if the choices of editorial themes are limited and somewhat stereotyped.

Table 6.6 Editorial Page: Articles/Columns with Frequency and Percentage

Rank	Story Theme	Frequency Count	Percentage
1	Politics	90	13.01
2	Bilateral Relation/Internal Security	61	8.82
3	Economics/Finance/Budget/Banking	50	7.23
4	Development/Aid/Water/Relief	47	6.79
5	Administration/Government/Election/Union	45	6.50
6	Health	35	5.06
7	Trade/Business/Industry/Tourism	33	4.77
8	Crime/Violence/Conflict/War/Corruption	30	4.34
9	Religion	28	4.05
10	Education	25	3.61
11	Art/Culture/History/Language/Music/Cinema	25	3.61
12	Militancy/Terrorism	24	3.47
13	Science/Technology/Space/Nuclear Issues	22	3.18
14	Environment/Nature/Forest/Ecology/Climate	22	3.18
15	Peace/Harmony	16	2.31
16	Transport/Communication	13	1.88
17	Communalism	12	1.73
18	Police/Armed Forces/Military/Defence	11	1.59
19	Nation/Patriotism	11	1.59
20	Celebrity/Stars/VIPs/Entertainment	11	1.59
21	Law/Justice/Human Rights	10	1.45
22	Accident/Disaster/floods/Earthquakes	10	1.45
23	Migration/Influx/Refugees	9	1.30
24	Media/Books/Literature/Films	9	1.30
25	Social Issues/Ethics	8	1.16
26	Employment/Career	8	1.16
27	Women	7	1.01
28	Agriculture/Food/Pisciculture/Animal Husbandry	5	0.72
29	Agitation/Dharna/Bandh/Strike	4	0.58
30	Games/Sports/Adventure	3	0.43
31	Children	3	0.43
32	Law and Order	2	0.29
33	Youth	1	0.14
34	Population/Ethnicity	1	0.14
35	Fashion/Sex/Beauty Contests	1	0.14
36	Death/Killing/Murder	0	0.00
TOTAL		692	

The frequency distribution of themes among the columns and articles in the editorial pages indicate that politics is the most frequently occurring item with 90 entries. There is no article or column in the last item in the list.

Figure 6.7 Editorial Page Theme Frequency of Top Six Items in the Articles/Columns with Percentage



The top six items among the articles/columns in terms of frequency count were identified. They include Politics, Bilateral Relations/ International Security, Economics/Finance/Budgeting/Banking, Development/Aid/Water/Relief, Administration/ Government/ Election/UN, Health. The top six themes among the articles/ columns from among the 2054 items of the editorial pages were found to have a

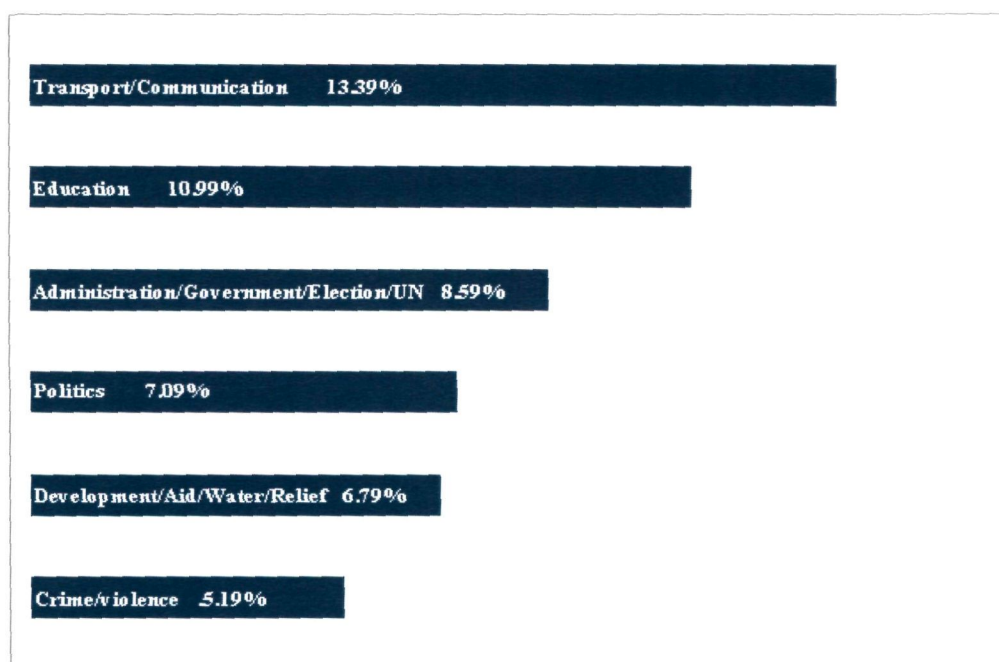
combined frequency count of 328 with 47.41 percentage of the total. The top six items have a combined frequency count, which is equivalent to nearly 30 of the rest of the themes, which indicates the imbalance in the way in newspaper articles and columns deal with theme allotments. The data also points out how several important themes find only marginal or passing mention in the articles and columns in the editorial pages of the newspapers, or are ignored altogether.

Table 6.7 Editorial Page: Letters to Editor with Frequency, Percentage

Rank	Story Theme	Frequency Count	Percentage
1	Transport/Communication	134	13.39
2	Education	110	10.99
3	Administration/Government/Election/UN	86	8.59
4	Politics	71	7.09
5	Development/Aid/Water/Relief	68	6.79
6	Crime/Violence/Conflict/War/Corruption/K	52	5.19
7	Media/Books/Literature/Films	49	4.90
8	Games/Sports/Adventure	39	3.90
9	Environment/Nature/Forest/Ecology/Clima	37	3.70
10	Trade/Business/Industry/Tourism	36	3.60
11	Health	36	3.60
12	Economics/Finance/Budget/Banking	29	2.90
13	Art/Culture/History/Language/Music/Cultu	23	2.30
14	Militancy/Terrorism	22	2.20
15	Law/Justice/Human Rights	21	2.10
16	Migration/Influx/Refugees	21	2.10
17	Nation/Patriotism	17	1.70
18	Accident/Disaster/floods/Earthquakes	16	1.60
19	Social Issues/Ethics	15	1.50
20	Agitation/Dharna/Bandh/Strike	14	1.40
21	Employment/Career	14	1.40
22	Religion	11	1.10
23	Peace/Harmony	11	1.10
24	Bilateral Relation/Internal Security	11	1.10
25	Police/Armed Forces/Military/Defence	10	1.00
26	Science/Technology/Space/Nuclear Issues	8	0.80
27	Law and Order	8	0.80
28	Communalism	7	0.70
29	Celebrity/Stars/VIPs/Entertainment	6	0.60
30	Women	4	0.40
31	Agriculture/Food/Pisciculture/Animal Husb	4	0.40
32	Population/Ethnicity	4	0.40
33	Children	3	0.30
34	Death/Killing/Murder	2	0.20
35	Youth	2	0.20
36	Fashion/Sex/Beauty Contests	0	0.00
TOTAL		1001	

Among the 1001 letters to the editor analysed according to the theme frequency, it was found that *transport/communication* tops the list with *education* closely following it. The theme frequency of the letters to the editor indicates the difference in the perception and preference of the readers as far as choice of issues and themes they wish to see in the newspapers. The data indicates that the readers are primarily concerned with local and regional issues and also they would like to read about issues that address their day-to-day problems.

Fig.6.8 Editorial Page: Theme Frequency of Top Six Items in the Letters to the Editor Columns



The above table indicates the six top most themes on which the letters to the editor were published in the newspapers. The list indicates a marked difference between the theme frequencies of editorials, articles and columns in relation to the

letters. By adding the top six themes from among the 1001 letters to the editor it was found that they have a combined frequency count of 621 with 52.04 percentage of the total. As can be observed, the top six themes among the letters have a combined frequency count, which is more than 30 of the rest of the themes, which indicates the imbalance in the way in which letters to the editor appear in the newspapers. The data also points out how the letters to the editor do not deal with several important themes. Readers and editors need to be aware of this imbalance.

Analysis of the letters to the editor shows that the readers are more concerned with regional and local issues rather than international or national issues. Of the 1001 letters to the editor published during the period under investigation, it was found that 801 letters (80.02%) dealt with regional issues, while 163 (16.28%) dealt with national issues, and only 37 (3.70%) letters dealt with international issues. This indicates that the readers are more concerned with local and regional issues that affect them directly than national and international issues. The former have greater bearing on their day-to-day lives. Newspapers can derive a clue from this reader preference and pay greater attention to provide regional and local news. The two newspapers are considered regional papers. One of the reasons why local and regional newspapers and periodicals continue to enjoy considerable support and popularity is due to the fact that they cover local and regional issues more prominently, frequently and comprehensively than the so-called national or metropolitan papers. The newspaper management, which faces considerable pressure and competition from other media, will do well to note this reader preference factor in planning and scheduling their reporting and publishing priorities. A newspaper might argue that its responsibility

includes giving to readers not only *what they want* to read but also *what they ought* to read. That being so, every newspaper ought to be conscious of the preferences and needs of the readers and deal with the issue with balance and fair judgment.

If one compares the thematic choices, frequency of themes among the news and editorial pages, one can realise that newspapers give a lot more attention and space to international news and issues than desired by the readers. Qualitatively too the international news and views published deserve to be more desirable and relevant. International events and issues are more often centered on celebrities and not on global issues that have important ramifications on readers everywhere. Issues like the war in the Middle East, global warming, international terrorism, worldwide rise in crime and violence, major disasters that affect foreign countries, international political events and processes certainly deserve to be adequately covered. The imbalance and inconsistency in the space allotment of international, national and regional news is often due to the absence among newspapers of a clear-cut policy on the issue.

6.3 Prominence Index

Stories have been attributed a series of characteristics such as column weightage, news location, space allotment, headline weightage and photo prominence. Each of these characteristics was given a value on a scale of 1 to 5, and their values were added to obtain a total score out of 25. As mentioned earlier, the researcher has called the total score obtained as *Prominence Index*. On the basis of

this score it is possible to find the average prominence index of any particular news item or category or theme and the prominence given to a particular theme. On the basis of the prominence index and other news item attributes the researcher measured the impact of the content on the readers. This has been termed Prominence Impact. Prominence impact is the measure of the general impression regarding a given attribute created by a newspaper on the reader on account of the prominence factors. For a given attribute prominence impact is obtained by multiplying the number of news items having that attribute by their average prominence index.

6.4 Imbalance and Bias

In the present study imbalance and bias have been grouped together to examine deviations from what is considered professionally acceptable and standard practices. The study has shown that bias does exist in the content as well as in the manner in which the press reports news. Bias is more conspicuous in the way in which gender, rural issues and religion, studied at great length in the research, are represented in the press. We begin by examining the nature and extent of gender bias which leads to discrimination against women, and bias which affects the choice of themes in newspapers.

Table 6.8 News Ranked by Frequency, Percentage and Average Prominence Index

Rank	Story Theme	Frequency Count	Percentage	Average Prominence Index
1	Crime/Violence/Conflict/War/Corruption	3209	14.33	7.58
2	Politics	1897	8.47	8.50
3	Administration/Government/Election/Union	1865	8.33	8.55
4	Militancy/Terrorism	1261	5.63	8.58
5	Education	1212	5.41	7.37
6	Media/Books/Literature/Films	1126	5.03	7.67
7	Health	1016	4.54	7.61
8	Accident/Disaster/floods/Earthquakes	1013	4.52	7.79
9	Celebrity/Stars/VIPs/Entertainment	970	4.33	7.24
10	Development/Aid/Water/Relief	771	3.44	7.98
11	Art/Culture/History/Language/Music/Cinema	745	3.33	7.87
12	Trade/Business/Industry/Tourism	683	3.05	8.19
13	Agitation/Dharna/Bandh/Strike	655	2.92	8.54
14	Bilateral Relation/Internal Security	623	2.78	8.74
15	Environment/Nature/Forest/Ecology/Climate Change	513	2.29	8.17
16	Law/Justice/Human Rights	507	2.26	7.75
17	Religion	497	2.22	8.07
18	Police/Armed Forces/Military/Defence	478	2.13	7.85
19	Transport/Communication	466	2.08	8.50
20	Science/Technology/Space/Nuclear Issues	465	2.08	7.80
21	Economics/Finance/Budget/Banking	284	1.27	8.20
22	Peace/Harmony	224	1.00	8.08
23	Games/Sports/Adventure	202	0.90	9.21
24	Agriculture/Food/Pisciculture/Animal Husbandry	183	0.82	8.07
25	Law and Order	179	0.80	8.11
26	Fashion/Sex/Beauty Contest	173	0.77	7.39
27	Migration/Influx/Refugees	166	0.74	8.80
28	Employment/Career	145	0.65	7.58
29	Communalism	133	0.59	8.64
30	Women	125	0.56	7.39
31	Social Issues/Ethics	124	0.55	7.28
32	Death/Killing/Murder	120	0.54	7.28
33	Children	117	0.52	7.05
34	Youth	115	0.51	7.66
35	Nation/Patriotism	110	0.49	8.29
36	Population/Ethnicity	24	0.11	8.42
TOTAL		22396		

The average prominence index is calculated on the basis of the score obtained from factors such as column weightage, news location, space allotment, headline weightage and photo prominence. Here the news items are ranked in descending order with their respective percentages. The prominence index is given in the last column.

6.5 Gender Imbalance and Bias

Gender imbalance and bias do exist and are manifested in many areas of society. The press is no exception. The study of gender in the newspaper content reveals glaring disparities that exist in the way newspapers report on the two genders, males and females. A decisive dominance of male news over female news is discernible. But it needs to be stated that the press which reports the political and social processes in society cannot be solely blamed for imbalance in the way women are represented. Newspapers are supposed to be mirrors of what happens in society and hence the gender imbalance in a way reflects the reality that exists in society. However, media, including newspapers, play a key role in setting the agenda and in shaping public opinion and bringing about social transformation by carrying out their functions responsibly. Newspapers by being aware of biases and imbalances that characterise the press can evolve strategies to address them and consciously adopt measures to implement gender equality and balance. As mentioned earlier with regard to reporting on lynching of Blacks in America, it is possible for newspapers to

report the event as well as create awareness and awaken social consciousness by highlighting a particular issue. Hence, newspapers have an import role in setting the agenda and raising awareness about the need for greater gender balance.

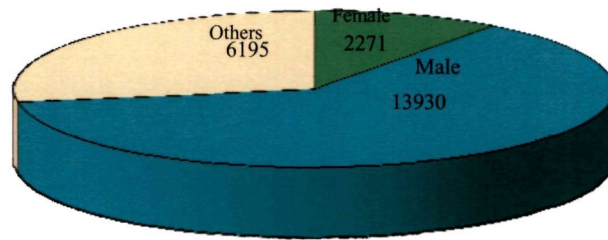
6.5.1 Gender in News Reports

The present study shows gender disparity exists in the coverage of news and articles. Once can observe an inadequate representation of women in the press. The underlying causes for gender imbalance and bias in reporting are similar to the ones prevalent in other areas of social life as well. In our study of the two newspapers we discerned a number of biases. There is an obvious bias in the way gender is represented and treated in news, features, columns and articles. We shall examine with the help of data the different ways in which gender bias is manifested in the newspapers.

(i) Number of Stories about Male, Female and Other

According to gender-wise distribution of the 22396 news stories, we found that 13930 are about male, while 2271 about female, and 6195 about other. In terms of percentage, these figures work out to be male 62%; female 10.14%; other 27.66%. The disproportionate way male and female news items are published is an obvious indicator of gender bias.

Figure 6.9 Gender-wise Distribution of 22396 News Stories

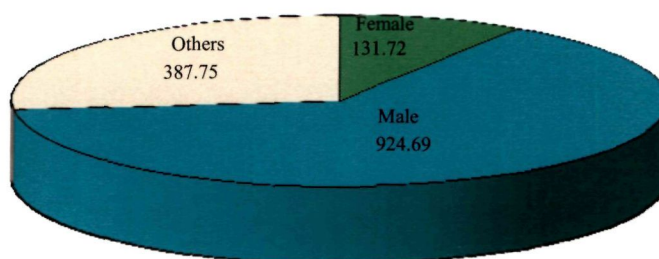


The chart indicates the gender-wise distribution of news and the imbalance that exists in the newspapers. Male items which dominate the contents are followed by other and news items about female are ranked only third and the numbers are glaringly disproportionate. The first task for the newspapers in effecting greater gender equality is to increase the number of news items on women, and working out a more equitable distribution of news among the three categories.

(ii) Space Allotment for Male, Female and Other Stories

We measured the total amount of space allotted to news stories related to Male (M), Female (F) and the rest which we have called Other (O). The space worked out in terms of actual number of pages as: Male 924.69; Female 131.72; Other 387.75. In terms of percentage it works out to be as follows: Male 26.94%; Female 3.84% and Other 11.30%. It may be noted that the total of M, F and O is only 54.27% of the total space since we have omitted from our study pages devoted to sports, business, finance, advertisement.

Fig.6.10 Gender-wise Space allotment for News Stories in Pages



We examined the total newspaper space in terms of number of pages as distributed for news items among Male, Female and Other. Accordingly, space allotment for male is 924.69 whereas that of female is 131.72. Others with 387.75 ranks the second. Space allotment to female news items ranks only third. One can observe that the disparity between male and female news item in terms of space allotment is very significant. Space allotment and number of stories published go hand in hand, and increase in one is expected to result in increase in the other, hence, when more news about Female are published, the space allotment also would be better balanced.

(iii) Headline Weightage for Male, Female, and Other Stories

We further examined the headline weightage of stories pertaining to Male, Female and Other.

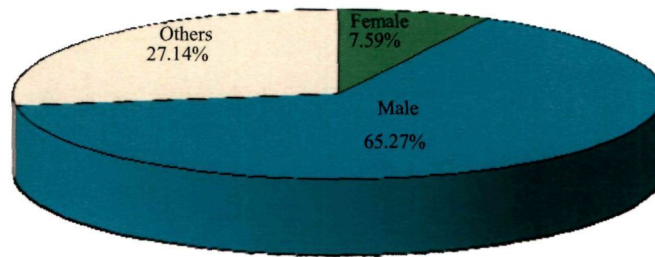
Table 6.9 Headline Weightage for Male, Female, Other Stories

Headline weightage score is calculated on a scale of 1-5 on the basis of font size (the bigger the font size, the more prominent), place where the headline is located.

Score	No. of News items with the given score for			
	Male	Female	Other	Total
5	14	2	5	21
4	473	29	105	607
3	4713	459	1679	6851
2	7207	1024	3603	11834
1	557	239	223	1019
0	966	518	580	2064
Total News Items	13930	2271	6195	22396
Comparative Weightage % among M, F, O on News Items	62.20%	10.14%	27.66%	
TOTAL Score	30515	3551	12688	46754
Comparative Weightage % among M, F, O Total Score	65.27%	7.59%	27.14%	

Among the 22396 stories examined, the score for the headline weightage of Male stories is 30,515 among a total of 13930 stories whereas Female stories have only a headline weightage of 3551 among a total of 2271 stories. The same score for stories pertaining to Other is 12688 among a total of 6195 stories. Comparative headline weightage in terms of percentage of stories among male, female and other is 65.27%, 7.59% and 27.14% respectively.

Figure 6.11 Gender-wise Headline Weightage for News Stories



The chart shows how the headline weightages are distributed among Male, Female and Other news items. Male news has highest headline weightage followed by Others. Female headline weightage is the lowest with only 7.59 showing a very low score. This further indicates the serious imbalance with regard to gender in newspaper content.

(iv) Photo Prominence for Male, Female, and Other Stories

Of the 22396 stories studied, 3191 had accompanying photographs. Data indicates that 14.25% of all the news items carried photos. Photographs were ascribed a score on the basis of size of the photographs, the page in which it is printed, whether it is in colour or not etc. and the points scored on a scale of 1 to 5 yielded a total score of 9298. Of the 3191 photographs 1697 were Male photographs, which amounted to 53.18% of all photographs published. The male photographs had a total score of 5045 and a comparative prominence percentage of 54.26. The total number of Female photographs was 732 with a total score of 1982 and a comparative

prominence percentage of 21.32. The total number of Other photographs were 762 with a total score of 2271 and a comparative prominence percentage of 24.42.

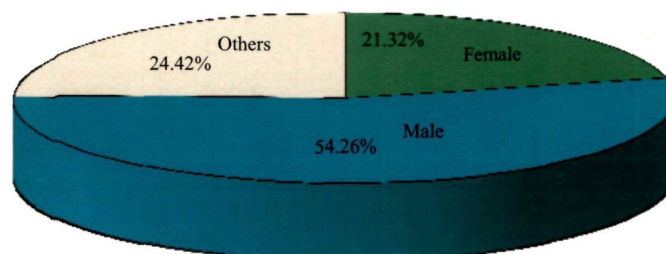
Table 6.10 Photo Prominence for Male, Female, Other Stories

Score	No. of News items with the given score for			
	Male	Female	Other	Total
5	163	53	79	295
4	284	79	90	453
3	594	201	330	1125
2	656	399	263	1318
1	0	0	0	0
Total News Items	1697	732	762	3191
Comparative Prominence % among M, F, O on News Items	53.18%	22.94%	23.88%	
% News Items with Photos among 22396 items	7.58%	3.27%	3.40%	14.25%
TOTAL Score	5045	1982	2271	9298
Comparative Prominence % among M, F, O on Total Score	54.26%	21.32%	24.42%	

Photo score is based on the size of the photos measured according to column size as well as whether the photo is in colour, and the location of the photos. For instance, a photo which is 3 columns or more in size gets 3 points, if in colour 1 additional point, and if it occurs on the front page another point, thus obtaining a total of 5 points.

Of the total 3191 photographs published in the two newspapers, we observe that 1697 are Male, 732 Female and 762 Other. In terms of percentage, the Female photo prominence is less than half of the Male, and more than that of Other. In comparison to number of news items, space allotment and headline weightage pertaining to Female, there is a much higher percentage of prominence given to women with regard to photographs. This figure might give the impression that there is greater gender equality in terms of presence of photographs. But our analysis of the kind of photographs published indicates that this does not necessarily support gender balance. Most media, including newspapers, magazines portray women as glamorous and as sex objects. According to estimates about 80 percentage of advertisements carry female figures. Photographs of female figures, especially celebrities like film actors are given prominence in the newspapers. Most of these were not socially significant. This was more particularly true of *The Shillong Times*, which regularly devotes a lot of space to feature Hollywood and Bollywood actresses and other celebrities prominently.

Figure 6.12 Gender-wise Photo Prominence for News Stories



Gender imbalance is evident in the photo prominence as indicated in the above chart. Male news items get higher score with 54.26 percentages as against 21.32 percentage of females while the remaining 24.42 belongs to other. Here too the score for the female news items ranks only third.

Among the total number of 22396 news items classified under the 36 themes, we included a category titled 'Women' to record news items related to women. Under this category there were only 125 news items exclusively dealing with 'women'. In terms of descending order of themes from 1 to 36, 'women' ranked 30th. This further supports our contention that there is a clear gender bias against women in newspapers. The phenomenon of gender imbalance is prevalent in most newspapers. There are several factors responsible for such imbalance. These include disproportionate or marginal representation of women in media as reporters, editors and decision makers in newspapers. Politics, which dominates the news in the newspapers, is a male bastion and there are fewer women in politics, elected bodies, administration. Hence, women are often neglected as newsmakers. They are seldom quoted as sources for news. In addition a large section of the newspaper industry today is driven by considerations of profit, commercial benefits, increasing circulation etc. Unless a greater sense of social responsibility and commitment to serve the public are adopted by the newspapers, the gender divide would only widen further. Other data about the number and kind of reporting on women indicates the stereotypes and negativity that surrounds reporting on women.

6.5.2 Gender in Editorial Pages

We examined the way gender is profiled in the editorial pages. The total number of items in the editorial pages we studied is 2054. This figure is further distributed as 361 Editorials, 692 Columns or Articles, and 1001 Letters to the Editor.

In the editorial page we examined item-wise distribution of themes. Out of 361 editorials, only 3 deal exclusively with the theme of women, yielding a percentage of 0.83. Among the 692 articles or columns, those that deal exclusively with women are only 7, yielding a percentage of 1.01. Among the 1001 letters to the editor, those that deal exclusively with women are only 4, yielding a percentage of 0.40.

Table 6.11 Gender-wise Data (Editorial Pages)

Item Type	Male		Female		Other		Total
	No. of Items	%	No. of Items	%	No. of Items	%	
Editorial	148	41.00%	19	5.26%	194	53.74%	361
Articles/Columns	237	34.25%	24	3.47%	431	62.28%	692
Letters	314	31.37%	47	4.69%	640	63.94%	1001
Total							2054

In the overall theme frequency count of editorial page under the 36 themes, women rank nearer to the bottom of the list at 31. Out of 2054 items in the editorial pages, there are only 10 items exclusively on women, yielding a percentage of 0.49.

Among the editorials with three entries, the topic of women ranked at 24, among the 36 themes in the editorial page contents. Among the Letters to the Editor, the theme of women with four entries ranked at 30, with a percentage of 0.40.

A comparative study of the contents of the editorial page on the basis of gender was done in order to know the distribution of editorials, articles/columns and letters to the editor on the basis of gender. The results revealed that out of 2054 items, male related items numbered 314 with a percentage of 31.37; the female related items numbered 47 with a percentage of 4.69, and other items numbered 640 with a percentage of 63.94

Figure 6.13 Gender-wise Data for Editorial Page Items: Editorials

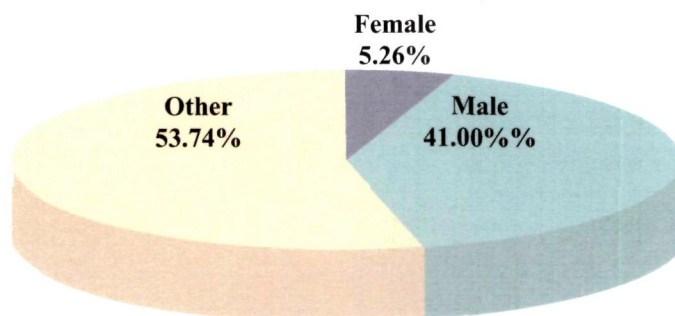


Figure 6.14 Gender-wise Data for Editorial Page Items: Articles/ Columns

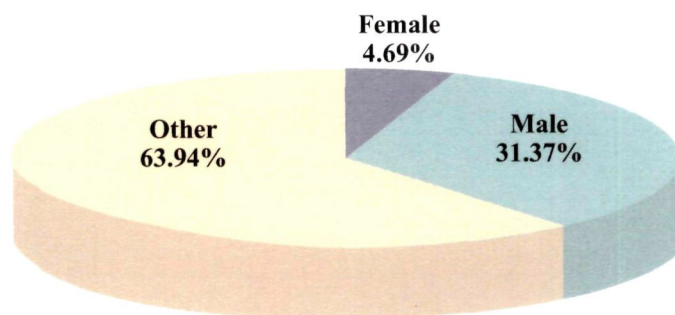
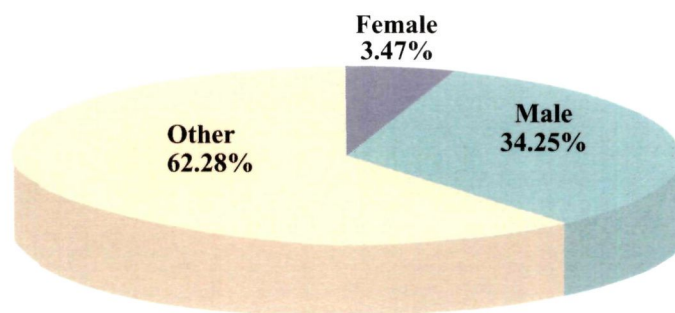


Figure 6.15 Gender-wise Data for Editorial Page Items: Letters to the Editor



We further analysed these figures to find out the distribution of Male, Female and Other among editorial, article/column and letters to the editor columns. Accordingly out of 361 editorials, 148 of them related to Male, yielding a percentage of 41. Female related editorials numbered 19 with a percentage of 5.26. Editorials on Other, numbered 194 yielding a percentage of 53.74.

As far as the columns/ articles are concerned, out of a total of 692 items, 237 were related to Male, yielding a percentage of 34.25, and 24 were related to Female yielding a percentage of 3.47, and 431 related to Other, yielding a percentage of 62.28. As for the letters to the editor columns, out of the total of 1001 letters, 314 related to Male, yielding a percentage of 31.37; and 47 letters related to Female with a percentage of 4.70; and 640 letters dealt with Other, yielding a percentage of 63.94.

6.5.3 Conclusions and Comments on Gender Bias in Newspapers

The study reveals glaring examples of bias and gender inequality in the way the news and other content of newspapers deal with women and women related issues. The data clearly proves hypothesis one, which states that the print media in Northeast India is subject to gender bias. As most of the journalists and editors are men, they tend to ignore issues related to women. Women are often silent and do not speak up even when issues which are considered important to them occur. It was also observed that among the 36 themes under which all content items were classified, the first four leading items are crime, politics, government, militancy, areas in which

women are less involved. In the descending order in which we listed the 36 themes on the basis of frequency of reporting indicate an obvious disparity and imbalance. Unless there is a conscious effort to bring in issues pertaining to women into the mainstream reporting, women will continue to be peripheral in the print media.

The low presence of women in the news and other columns of newspapers indicate two things: firstly that they are inadequately represented in politics and administration and other areas which are considered newsworthy. In other words, often newspapers do not consider them as newsmakers or they are not considered newsworthy. Secondly, issues concerning women, most of which we may note, have implications on all, are greatly bypassed and ignored by media due to male chauvinism, gender bias and discrimination. Sometimes important news related to women are relegated to the pages of supplements on women or to magazines exclusively meant for women.

The image of women as portrayed in media, especially in entertainment and advertising, is a critically important topic, because it undoubtedly reflects society's attitude towards women today and will set the agenda for the future generations, say from ten to twenty years from now. Equally important, and even more important in the short term, is news coverage of issues of special relevance to women.

The study shows that it is in the nature of news to highlight what is negative, such as violence, crime, corruption, accident etc. If one were to examine the crime graph one can notice that men lead among the criminals and those convicted of crime. Similarly, more military personnel, police and civic leaders, those who control transport-communication, those who lead in sports, etc. are men. As long as news is

about these persons and their actions and their utterances, news is going to continue to be dominated by male characters. A greater gender balance can be affected when news perspectives undergo change in favour of more development news in which women are important players. The rural-urban bias which shows most of the news items are related to urban population and issues, also have a bearing on the gender inequality and bias against women, which we observe in newspaper content.

Both in broadcasting and in newspapers, hard news is nearly always the exclusive preserve of men. Female reporters and editors are often given mostly feature stories to handle. News, features and advertisements in newspapers continue to reinforce stereotypes and gender bias. Scrutiny of the text and its relation to the image reveals 'commodification' of women.

One of the principle reasons for the gender disparity and bias in the press is the absence of women in media management positions. Newspapers formerly hired women mostly as secretaries and women's page writers. Gender discrimination in employment in media continues to adversely affect the way women are featured in the media.

Battling the bias should begin in the newsroom. Many journalists, though, may be unaware of how their leanings affect their coverage, news judgment, space allotment, photo selection, and many more of their decisions. Reporters and editors must have sound judgment, balanced and objective reasons for their decisions and actions. They need to be conscious of the fact that there are many ways in which bias can sneak into the pages of the newspapers. The best way to maintain readers' trust is by letting objectivity take the upper hand. Though reporters and editors are paid to

offer their opinions, their work earns respect when it is fair to the side with whom they don't agree. Reporters need to be careful about using unproven sources or sketchy information, or tampered photographs to advance a particular opinion.

Journalists, editors and newspaper management need to pay more conscious attention to gender issues and strive to carry greater number of women-related stories in the newspapers. Gender balance and sensitivity to women issues need to be cultivated among newspaper staff and consciously implemented in the daily practice of journalism. More women need to be appointed as editors and reporters to effect greater gender balance. Special correspondents and column writers should be engaged in addressing the issue more specifically. More women should be given training in print media to take their place in the profession. Journalism institutions that train personnel, both male and female, need to inculcate values of gender sensitivity and balance in the course of training. The press should focus more on rural peoples and issues and development news. Newspapers need to give greater attention to economic and entrepreneurial activities in which women are more seriously engaged in than politics.

There are specialised periodicals for women but most of them are not geared to serve the needs and concerns of women but feature women as objects of fashion and sex symbols and other stereotypes. The women's section of a typical newspaper contains little news but is devoted to recipes, fashion, beauty and homemaking tips, wedding and engagement announcements, society features and advice columns. These are the staples of the section; but some change is discernible with increase in the presence of women in politics, business, administration, sports, and other areas of

social life. Serious features on women achievers in business, industry, politics and other walks of life are increasing. With the increase of institutes which offer training to women in journalism and media, their presence as professional journalists, editors and decision makers are also increasing. A handful of newspapers have consciously adopted policy change in favour of effecting gender balance on their staff. In spite of such efforts, the gender imbalance continues to persist, and more conscious efforts are needed to bridge the divide.

6.6 Bias and Imbalance in Distribution of Rural-Urban News

The data was analysed to see the distribution of news and other items under the categories of rural and urban. In the present study any place which is a district headquarters or above were considered as 'Urban' and the rest were considered 'Rural'. News items which do not fall under either Rural or Urban were categorised as 'Other'. Of the total 22396 news and feature stories studied, 20,392 belonged to Urban category. This constitutes 91.05 percentage of all news items. There were only 1967 Rural news items, which constituted 8.78 percentage. There were 36 items with a percentage of 0.16 which were categorised as Other. As far as the number of news items and their distribution between Rural and Urban is concerned, newspapers have an obvious urban bias.

Further, the headline weightage given to rural, urban and other news items were measured and found that urban news had a total headline weightage score of 42583 with a percentage of 91.08 as against the rural news items which had a total

headline weightage of 4101 with a comparative weightage of 8.77 percentage. The news items under category, Other, numbered 70 and had a comparative weightage of 0.15 percentage.

Table 6.12 Headline Weightage for Rural, Urban, Other

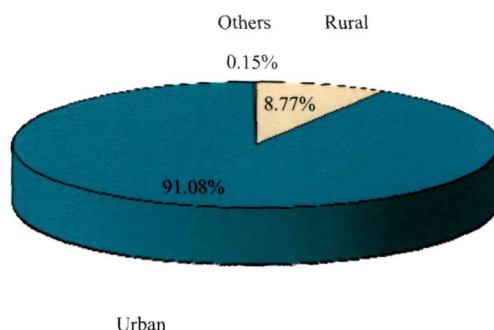
Headline weightage score is calculated on the basis of the font size, column inches, and the location of the story in the pages of the newspaper. A scale of 0 to 5 is adopted.

Score	No. of News items with the given score for		
	International	National	Regional
5	4	7	10
4	152	207	248
3	1734	1866	3251
2	2448	3376	6010
1	563	204	252
0	694	533	837
Total News Items	5595	6193	10608
Comparative Weightage % among I, N, R on News Items	24.98%	27.65%	47.37%
TOTAL Score	10726	13213	22815
Comparative Weightage % among I, N, R on Total Score	22.94%	28.26%	48.80%

We studied the photo prominence among the Rural, Urban and Other news. Of the 22396 stories, 3191 carried photographs. The distribution of photos were as

percentage of news items under each category carried photos the following score was obtained: 13.38% Urban news items carried photos while only 0.84% Rural news items carried photos, and only 0.03% of Other news items carried photos. The comparative prominence among Urban, Rural and Other news items, which carried photos, in terms of percentage, showed that Urban news had 93.92 percentage of photos, whereas Rural news had only 5.89 percentage and Other 0.19 percentage. Comparative prominence percentage of photos among Urban, Rural and Other were 93.91%, 5.92% and 0.17% respectively.

Figure 6. 16 Location: Rural-Urban of News Stories



As can be noticed vast majority of news, i.e., 91.08 items are Urban. The Rural news items is less than one tenth of the total news items published. The score of Other is also very limited. The data shows the need to diversify the news content distribution in terms of greater prominence to rural news. The urban concentration of news implies that a large section of the population living in rural areas are being left

out of the content of the newspaper. Their problems and concerns figure only through the urban news. Unfortunately, most of the newspapers do not have a mechanism either to check and assess the problem nor measures to rectify the deficiency. To the extent the news is centred around the urban areas, newspapers will not be able to build a good circulation in rural areas. Hence a better rural-urban balance in coverage would also imply that the newspapers can explore new avenues for marketing the product, and thus ensure its growth and survival.

Table 6.13 Photo Prominence for Rural, Urban, Other

The score for the photo prominence is calculated on the basis of the size of the photos, whether it is in colour or black and white, and where it is placed etc.

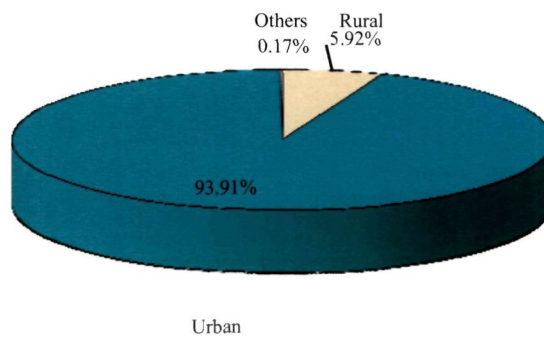
Prominence score is measured on a scale of 1-5.

Score	No. of News items with the given score for			
	Urban	Rural	Other	Total
5	281	14	0	295
4	438	15	0	453
3	1019	102	4	1125
2	1259	57	2	1318
1	0	0	0	0
Total News Items	2997	188	6	3191
Comparative Prominence % among U, R & O on News Items	93.92%	5.89%	0.19%	
% News Items with Photos among 22396 items	13.38%	0.84%	0.03%	14.25%
TOTAL Score	8732	550	16	9298
Comparative Prominence % among U, R & O on Total Score	93.91%	5.92%	0.17%	

The data indicates that, like news content, the photos too are predominantly in

favour of the Urban at the neglect of the Rural photos. The score is in fact lower in the case of photos than news items.

Fig. 6.17 Photo Prominence among Rural-Urban News Stories



Like in news items, with regard to photos published too, urban news has greater photo prominence than rural ones. The urban photo prominence is 93.91 as against 5.92 rural. The gap between the two is alarmingly high.

Thus from the total news distribution, headline weightage score and photo prominence index, we are able to establish that there is a clear urban bias in the newspapers at the neglect of rural news. This proves the hypothesis number 1 of our study which states that the print media in Northeast India has an urban bias.

The reasons for this glaring disparity are due to the fact that most of the newspapers, press offices are set up in urban areas. Major events in the cities get reported. Even when events take place in rural areas, the sources of information

quoted are from the urban areas. For example when law and order problems or crimes occur in a rural area, press reporters tend to get the news from the police sources or law enforcing authorities based in the urban areas.

Rural news gets neglected also due to the low budget for news gathering available to most newspapers, reluctance of editors to send reporters to rural areas as it entails time and costs. Reporters also tend to cover rural beats and obtain stories from the urban centres where most of them are based, rather than undertake to travel to rural locations. The rural-urban disparity in development of transport, communication facilities, absence of competent and trained journalists in rural areas adversely affect rural reporting. There is also bias which is evident in quoting an 'expert' as a source of news. Journalists are often reluctant to recognise farmers, rural people as 'experts' and as such eligible to be credible and competent sources for their news reports.

Most newspapers sell more copies in the urban areas, and so from the perspective of covering urban and rural news, urban news gets more attention. The pro-urban bias is motivated by commercial benefits too. Most advertiser clientele is drawn from urban areas and so the newspapers favour their interests. Urban bias is prevalent also in the national press. The meticulous and frequent coverage given to accidents by BlueLine buses or crimes like murder in the national capital, New Delhi, may be compared with many similar or more newsworthy events in rural areas that go unreported. Most journalists base themselves in the urban areas and do their reporting there, and visit the rural areas only rarely. Thus, news seems to be located in the proximity of where the journalists live and work.

Today in urban areas the people have access to many sources of information like the television and Internet. In urban areas, which are considered the traditional bastion of newspaper circulation, the press is facing serious threats to its survival from the Internet and other new media. One way out for the press to respond to this crisis is to focus more seriously on rural realities and ensure that people and issues of rural areas are more adequately represented in the newspapers, so that the press would be able to retain its readership and improve its circulation. Newspapers need to live up to their social obligations and learn to balance social responsibility with commercial considerations. The press is called upon to live up to its objective of being a watchdog of democracy, a medium which will expose the evils and undesirable elements of society, of being a saner, sober and balancing force, of being a philosopher, friend and guide to the public, and an agency that would promote socially relevant goals and objectives.

6.7 Bias and Imbalance in Distribution of International, National, Regional News

The study also focused on the distribution of news and features in relation to the geographical area. In order to study bias and imbalance in news distribution according to geographical or territorial divisions, we classified all news items under the categories of international, national and regional. International includes all news outside the country, national refers to all news within the country, except those which relate to northeast India, and regional includes all news and features related to northeast India.

The space allotment for each of these categories was measured on a scale of 1 to 5 to understand the comparative importance given to various categories by the newspapers. Accordingly it was found that out of a total of 22396 news items, 5595 of them were international, which adds up to 347.38 pages with 10.12 percentage of newspaper space. The national news items had only a marginally higher score from the international score. There were 6193 national news items with a space occupation of 384.69 pages and a percentage of 11.21. Regional news had a better score in the two newspapers with a total of 10608 news items being regional. This amounts to a total of 712.09 pages with a percentage of 20.75. The data reveals that in the two newspapers under study there is only a slight margin of difference between international and national news. Northeast India being geographically distant and somewhat isolated from the rest of the country, and since national integration is a goal yet to be achieved fully, it is important that newspapers of the region allot proportionately more space to cover national news. Besides most of the readers of the two papers do not read an alternative paper from which they can obtain national news. In the order of priority the two newspapers studied have a news distribution with regional news items at the top followed by national and international news items.

Table 6.14 Space Allotment for International News Items

Score	Average space for this score (in pages)	No. of News Items of this score	Actual Space (in pages)	% of total space used
5	0.75	1	0.75	0.02%
4	0.375	12	4.50	0.13%
3	0.1875	334	62.63	1.82%
2	0.09375	1848	173.25	5.05%
1	0.03125	3400	106.25	3.10%
TOTAL		5595	347.38	10.12%

Table 6.14(a) Scores on Space Allotment has been recorded as per the following Criteria

Score	Meaning	Mean* Value for the score (in pages)
5	0.5 page or more upto a maximum of 1 page	0.75
4	0.25 page or more upto a maximum of 0.5 page	0.375
3	0.125 page or more upto a maximum of 0.25 page	0.1875
2	0.0625 page or more upto a maximum of 0.125 page	0.09375
1	upto a maximum of 0.0625 page	0.03125

*The mean value for a score is the median of its range in terms of a page.

Table 6.15 Space Allotment for National News Items

Score	Average space for this score (in pages)	No. of News Items of this score	Actual Space (in pages)	% of total space used
5	0.75	3	2.25	0.07%
4	0.375	18	6.75	0.20%
3	0.1875	378	70.88	2.07%
2	0.09375	1980	185.63	5.41%
1	0.03125	3814	119.19	3.47%
TOTAL		6193	384.69	11.21%

Table 6.15(a) The Scores on Space Allotment has been recorded as per the following criteria

Score	Meaning	Mean* Value for the score (in pages)
5	0.5 page or more upto a maximum of 1 page	0.75
4	0.25 page or more upto a maximum of 0.5 page	0.375
3	0.125 page or more upto a maximum of 0.25 page	0.1875
2	0.0625 page or more upto a maximum of 0.125 page	0.09375
1	upto a maximum of 0.0625 page	0.03125

*The mean value for a score is the median of its range in terms of a page.

Table 6.16 Space Allotment for Regional News Items

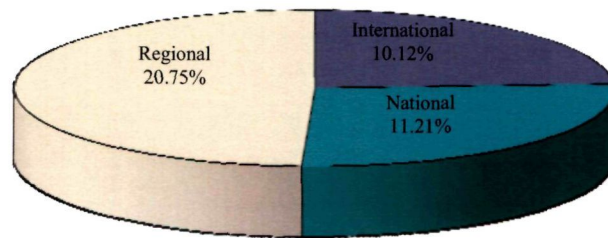
Score	Average space for this score (in pages)	No. of News Items of this score	Actual Space (in pages)	% of total space used
5	0.75	3	2.25	0.07%
4	0.375	75	28.13	0.82%
3	0.1875	1001	187.69	5.47%
2	0.09375	3140	294.38	8.58%
1	0.03125	6389	199.66	5.82%
TOTAL		10608	712.09	20.75%

Table 6.16(a) Scores on Space allotment has been recorded as per the following criteria

Score	Meaning	Mean* Value for the score (in pages)
5	0.5 page or more upto a maximum of 1 page	0.75
4	0.25 page or more upto a maximum of 0.5 page	0.375
3	0.125 page or more upto a maximum of 0.25 page	0.1875
2	0.0625 page or more upto a maximum of 0.125 page	0.09375
1	upto a maximum of 0.0625 page	0.03125

*The mean value for a score is the median of its range in terms of a page.

Fig.6.18 Space Allotment for Location: Geographic International-National-Regional News Stories



The Headline Weightage given to International, National and Regional news items were also examined. Accordingly, International news had a total score of 10726 with a percentage of 24.98, while National news had a score of 13213 with a percentage of 27.65. The total score for Regional news was 22815 with a percentage of 47.37. The comparative headline weightage score for International, National and Regional news were 22.94%, 28.26% and 48.80% respectively.

Table 6.17 Headline Weightage for International, National, Regional News

Headline Weightage for International, National, Regional News				
Score	No. of News items with the given score for			
	International	National	Regional	Total
5	4	7	10	21
4	152	207	248	607
3	1734	1866	3251	6851
2	2448	3376	6010	11834
1	563	204	252	1019
0	694	533	837	2064
Total News Items	5595	6193	10608	22396
Comparative Weightage % among I, N, R on News Items	24.98%	27.65%	47.37%	
TOTAL Score	10726	13213	22815	46754
Comparative Weightage % among I, N, R on Total Score	22.94%	28.26%	48.80%	

In studying photo prominence among International, National, Regional news on the basis of photographs published along with news items, we found that among the total of 3191 photos that accompanied news, the Regional news had highest number of 1251 photographs, followed by International news with 1074 photographs, and National with 866 photographs. In terms of percentages these figures show that 39.20% of all the published photographs were related to the Regional news items, while 33.66% photographs were about International news, and 27.14% about National news. Of the total 22396 news items, the total percentage of news items

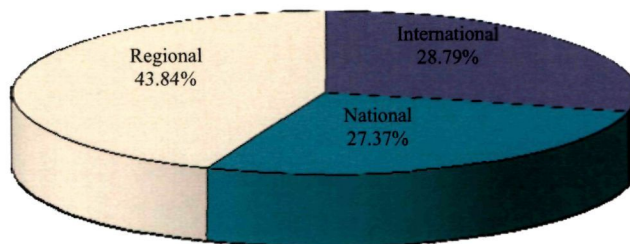
which carried photographs were 14.25%. When distributed among the International, National and Regional news items these figures were: 4.80%, 3.87% and 5.59% respectively.

Photos were also rated on the basis of prominence on a scale of 1-5. Photo prominence was calculated on the basis of factors like size or column width, whether the photos are in colour or not, the page in which it is published etc. Accordingly the total score for 3191 photos was 9298 with International photographs having a score of 2677, National 2545, and Regional 4076 with percentages of 28.79, 27.37 and 43.84 respectively. It was observed that though the Regional photographs are numerically slightly more than the International and National photographs, in terms of prominence, the Regional photographs have a much higher score. While the higher number of Regional photographs and a higher prominence score for them are a good index for the two Regional papers, the numbers and scores for the National news should have been higher than that of the International news. The higher preference for International photo prominence is due to the greater interest the papers manifest in covering and featuring international celebrities in films, sports, politics etc. and easy availability of such photos through news and photo service agencies.

Table 6.18 Photos Prominence for International, National, Regional News

Score	No. of News items with the given score for			
	International	National	Regional	Total
5	32	70	193	295
4	54	168	231	453
3	325	267	533	1125
2	663	361	294	1318
1	0	0	0	0
Total News Items	1074	866	1251	3191
Comparative Prominence % among I, N, R on News Items	33.66%	27.14%	39.20%	
% News Items with Photos among 22396 items	4.80%	3.87%	5.59%	14.25%
TOTAL Score	2677	2545	4076	9298
Comparative Prominence % among I, N, R on Total Score	28.79%	27.37%	43.84%	

Fig. 6.19 Photo Prominence for Location: Geographic (International-National-Regional) News Stories



The chart indicates photo prominence according to Regional, National and International in terms of percentage. Regional news gets a high percentage of 43.64 as against 27.37 percentage of National and 28.79 percentage of International photo prominence among news stories.

We studied the geographical location of International, National and Regional items in the editorial page, namely, the distribution of three categories among editorial, articles/columns and letters to the editor. Of the 361 editorials we studied, the distribution was equal for International as well as Regional items with 108 editorials each, with a percentage of 29.92 each. 145 editorials, that is, 40.17% of the total, dealt with National issues. Of the 692 articles and columns published in the papers under study, 158 of them, with a percentage of 22.83, dealt with International issues, whereas 373 of them, with a percentage of 53.90, dealt with National issues, and 161 of them, with a percentage of 23.27, dealt with Regional issues. Thus it may

be observed that the editorial writers and columnists give greater attention to National issues in comparison to International and Regional issues. This is not reflected in the proportion of coverage given to National issues in the news reports and letters to the editor. Of 1001 letters to the editor, International issues figured only 37 times with a low score of 3.70%, while National issues figured 163 times, with a score of 16.28%. Vast majority of letters, 801 of them, with a percentage of 80.02, dealt with Regional issues. Hence, it is safe to conclude that the readers are more interested and concerned with Regional issues than with International and National issues. The order of preference of the readers is Regional, National, International news and issues. This data is a useful guide to editors to make policy decisions in favour of prioritising newspaper content in the order of Regional, National and International. Reader preference is obviously in favour of Regional news, events, photographs than what is National and International. This is in consonance with the idea of proximity (what is nearer home is of greater news value than what is far away) taught to journalism students. Editors need to pay attention to this indication and allocate more space to cover local and regional issues in preference to national and international issues. A good newspaper will strive to maintain a judicious balance between the three categories while allotting space for news and features.

Table 6.19 Geographic Location Editorial Page

Item Type	International		National		Regional		Total
	No. of Items	%	No. of Items	%	No. of Items	%	
Editorial	108	29.92%	145	40.17%	108	29.92%	361
Articles/Columns	158	22.83%	373	53.90%	161	23.27%	692
Letters	37	3.70%	163	16.28%	801	80.02%	1001
Total							2054

The reason for a high percentage of international news, according to our study is that a lot of international events related to film, sports, celebrities are given importance. For instance, the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal, the death of Princess Diana, court proceedings against Michael Jackson, news about Hollywood celebrities and such international items have received excessive coverage in the regional press, to the detriment of many important rural, regional and national issues which go unreported. The Gulf war, which raged during the period of the present study, was also given a lot of coverage. A further analysis of the sources of news and photographs in national as well as regional papers show that the proportionately high level of coverage to international news is due to undue dependence of the local and national press on western sources of news, particularly on news agencies such as Reuters, Associated Press (AP), Agence France Presse (AFP) and international photo service agencies.

In the light of the above analysis, it is necessary to emphasize the need for less dependence on foreign news agencies, greater investment in news gathering as well as

engaging more reporters in loco. Journalists also need to be trained to report on their own regarding national and regional issues. It is unfortunate that at times newspapers in the major metropolis of the country pick up stories about events in their respective cities from international news agencies rather than engage their own reporters and photographers to do direct and independent stories. The news stories from developing countries distributed by western agencies have been found to be coloured and biased. Studies have shown that there is a higher content of violence in the stories on Latin America in the reports of a US agency in comparison to the same reported by the reporters of the concerned countries.

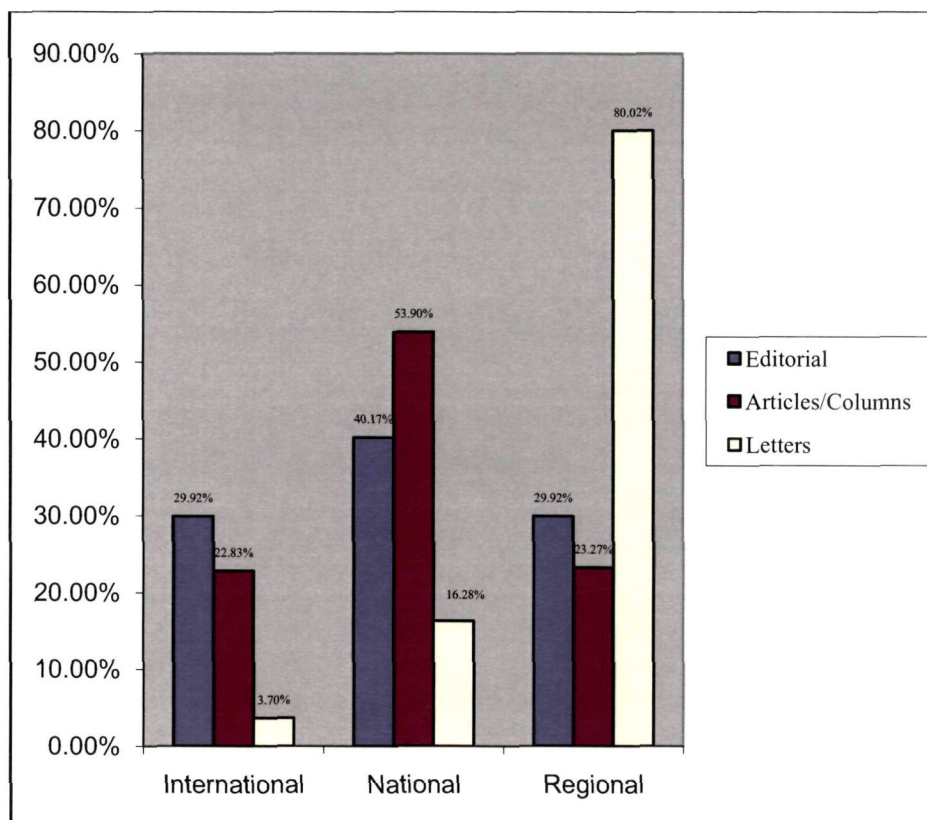
There is an obvious bias in the perspective of news dealing with persons in the west in comparison to news dealing with the so-called 'Third World'. The press should exhibit greater social commitment and responsibility to promote the worldview of a global community. Though the newspapers in developed world claim that they enjoy universal validity, an analysis of their content often reveals parochialism and bias in the coverage of news and the values ascribed to events in the west vis-à-vis in developing countries. One cannot overlook the fact that all news and views, however, one is objective, is an interpretation of reality, and the perspectives will differ according to the worldview and mindset of the one who files the story or writes the column.

According to many studies and surveys the least read and least interesting news for the audience is foreign news. Audience apathy towards foreign news is one reason why most editors cut their foreign news to the bone. In addition, foreign news is both difficult to cover and expensive to obtain. However, the two newspapers

studied indicate that there is an imbalanced ratio in the distribution of news among, International, National and Regional. Though the coverage of regional news is somewhat satisfactory, the national items should have been given a greater prominence and space allotment, considering the fact that Northeast India comprises of several boarder states of the country, and that newspapers can substantially contribute towards the goal of achieving greater national integration. Besides, most of the readers of the two papers studied, depend on these papers alone for national news, and do not read an alternative national paper to obtain news about events of a national nature outside the region. Though there is a high percentage of international news items, a careful analysis of the nature of the content of the international news items and photographs revealed that a sizable portion of it do not contain serious matter but deal with trivial items like personalities and events about Hollywood and other international celebrities.

The study reveals that in the two newspapers we have studied, about one fifth of the newspaper space is devoted to coverage of regional issues. This is undoubtedly a commendable record. However, if newspapers intend to improve their service to the community and wish to be concerned with issues that primarily concern the public, it is necessary that they adopt a policy shift in favour of maintaining a judicious balance between Regional, National and International news.

Fig. 6.20 Location: Geographic (International-National-Regional) Editorial Page



The above chart indicates the variation among the International, National and Regional issues as covered in the editorial pages. On International issues, the order is editorial followed by articles and then letters, whereas with regard to National issues, articles and columns get higher scoring followed by editorials and then letters. But the Regional issues as covered in the editorial pages is remarkably different with more than eighty percentage of the contents being letters to the editor dealing with local and regional issues.

6. 8 Bias and Imbalance in Reporting of Religion

When one examines the frequency of news items published on the theme of religion, it may be observed that religion as a news item does not get the attention it deserves. Religion figures only 497 times out of a total of 22396 news items. This amounts to only 2.22 percentage of the total. Among the 2054 items in the editorial pages, religion gets coverage only 40 times, which is only 1.95 percentage. If the contents of the editorial pages are further distributed among the three categories it can be found that only one out of 361 editorials deal with religion. But religion has a higher frequency among the articles/columns. Out of 692 articles or columns, religion is represented 28 times and is ranked 9th among the 36 themes. Among the 1001 letters to the editor, religion occurs only 11 times and is ranked 22nd among the 36 themes. The public response to religious issues is also low. However, from day to day life experiences and numerous surveys conducted in India, it is evident that religion is very important to people, and they devote a lot of their time and attention to religion and things that concern religious beliefs and practices. Religion is a new buzzword for many young people as well as grown ups.

Among the religion stories included in the study are all items connected with religious worship, activity, programmes. However, if a story is about a religious leader involved in crime, it is included under the topic 'crime' or 'legal issues' and not under religion. Though such news may involve one or more religious person, the news is published primarily because of legal or criminal issues. At times there have been overlapping of themes making it difficult to categorise it one way or the other,

but maximum care and discretion have been used to ensure that the classification is based on certain criteria and the pattern of classification is consistently applied. The overriding consideration for classification under one theme or the other has been guided by the inherent nature of the story as could be understood from the content and why the story is reported in the newspapers. Sometimes religion has been closely linked with politics as in the case of Ayodhya issue. It is an issue that has both religious as well as political ramifications.

The investigation further indicates that quite a few times when religion is reported in the news, it is more for the aberrations and scandals, sensational news pertaining to religion, obscurantist religious practices that are linked to religion than religion per se.

As careful analysis of Indian films show, religion is often mocked, scorned and ridiculed. In a country with a rich religious heritage and pluralism, large number of religious festivals, activities and celebrations, it is surprising that religion gets only a marginal mention in the press. Some newspapers devote columns specifically meant for religious values and teachings. The two papers we studied do not have a regular space assigned for religion.

As far as paucity of religious reporting is concerned, one may identify some possible reasons. The newspapers and editors tend to swear by the secular nature of the country and feel it their obligation to distance themselves from religion. The political background in which the Indian press was nurtured and grew, it is understandable that politics continue to dominate the press. India is the biggest democracy in the world and a major segment of the press believes that it is its duty to

give primary importance to politics and governance. Another factor that inhibits reporting on religion is due to the fact that many reporters are not adequately trained in reporting complex religious issues. The knowledge of journalists and editors about religious issues is far from satisfactory. Hence they end up reporting on the obvious, external and social aspects of religion, prominent religious personalities, as well as aberrations and scandals. Some journalists and editors consider religion as something that is personal and private and not suitable for the public domain of press coverage. Some others have an innate distrust or negative feelings towards religious news.

It has been observed in the course of this study that news items about religion are not covered in a balanced way, ensuring that there is a proportionate presence of religious news commensurate with the size and significance of the particular religious communities. Though religious news items were not separately classified according to various religions, it may be noted that there were proportionately fewer news items about Islam and Christianity, than Hinduism, though among the readers of the two papers there is a sizable number of Muslims and Christians. Besides, the overall reporting on religions is marginal, religious news is often stereotyped and lacks depth. Religion news is again linked to politics or political leaders as when the president or governor or other dignitaries greeting the people on the occasion of a religious festival or other.

Religious news too has followed conventional journalistic practices of giving prominence to individual celebrities. For instance, several of the Christian news is about the Pope and Mother Teresa rather than issues pertaining to the larger Christian community, or their contribution to society as such. Overall, religions are grossly

misrepresented and religious news finds a place when negative events and aberrations are found. For instance, the press lapped up news about child abuse scandals in American church, covered Mother Teresa in connection with a controversial film or when Buddhist monks led demonstrations in Myanmar, when the Dalai Lama was involved in the protests by Tibetans worldwide or the Shankaracharya was accused of crime or Yoga Guru Ramdev was blamed for questionable medical practices, or when a speech of Pope Benedict XVI in Regensburg, Germany, raised a storm in the Islamic world, or following the publication of cartoons lampooning Prophet Mohammad in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*, which offended the religious sentiments of Muslims. The World Youth Day held in Sydney, Australia, in July 2008, shot into prominence in the Indian media only when some 30 delegates from India went missing, though a large delegation of over 500 youth had represented India in the event. The event would have gone unreported in the Indian media, were it not for the scandal and embarrassment the disappearance of the youth caused to the authorities. While it is necessary for the press and other media to focus on these issues, one might ask where are the reports on religion in the normal course of the day or the year, particularly when religion or religious leaders are involved in promotion of harmony, peace, development etc. The data proves hypothesis number one which states that the print media in Northeast India is subject to religious bias.

The context of religiosity, religious pluralism and the keen interest of people in religious matters on the one hand, and the situation of religious conflicts, fundamentalism, aberration and misuse of religion by vested interest groups on the other, should make the press allot more space to discuss, cover and deliberate

religious issues. A responsible newspaper can, instead of fanning into flame religious controversy with disastrous consequences, help allay fears, disseminate aberrations and superstitions promoted by religious ideologies and help to inculcate healthy religious and ethical values. Every religion teaches moral and ethical values like good conduct, peaceful living and love and respect for one another. The press by focusing on these more purposefully can contribute towards building inter-religious and social harmony.

6.9 Hypothesis 1: Bias

Table 6. 20 Bias in Coverage

Gender Bias						
	Nos. of stories	Space in pages	Headline weightage in percentage	Number of photos	No. of Photos percentage	Score points
Male	13930	924.69	65.27 %	1697	53.18 %	5045
Female	2271	131.72	7.59 %	732	21.32 %	1982
Other	6195	387.75	27.1 %	762	24.42 %	2271
Total	22396					
Urban-Rural Bias						
	Nos. of stories	Percentage	Headline weightage in percentage	Score points percentage		
Urban	20392	91.05 %	42583	91.08 %		
Rural	1967	8.78 %	4101	8.77 %		
Other	36	0.16 %	70	0.15 %		
Total						
Religious Bias						
			Items	Percentage		
Total News on Religion (out of 22396)			497	2.22 %		
Op-ed (2054)			40	1.95 %		

The analysis of the data of newspaper content as cited and the table above indicates the existence of gender bias favouring male and the neglect of news items about women; urban bias which leads to neglect of rural news; and a religion bias in the overall coverage and nature of reporting on religion. Thus the study conclusively proves that the print media in Northeast India is subject to bias, thus, Hypothesis # 1 which states that the print media in Northeast India is subject to bias (gender, urban, and religious bias) has been accepted.

Besides bias, one can also observe gross imbalance in the way the various issues are dealt with as well as the geographic distribution of news as can be gauged from the analysis of various variables to study prominence. The newspapers influence the readers and their thinking. Study of prominence and bias help us to understand various factors that contribute to shape the relationship between the newspaper management and the public.

Chapter 7

Data Analysis: Positive and Negative News, Content Quality and Social Responsibility

This chapter deals with the analysis of data in order to examine how the newspapers cover positive and negative news, and how socially responsible the press is. Though it is not easy to divide news items into neat categories as ‘positive’ and ‘negative’, the researcher has used a number of characteristics, both quantitative and qualitative, such as space allotment, headline weightage, photo prominence etc. on the basis of which it is possible to conclude that the newspapers give more prominence to negative news than positive news.

7.1 Positive, Negative and Other News

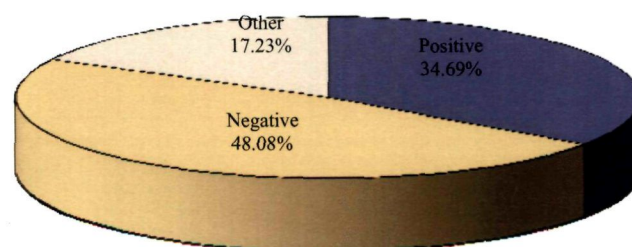
The 24450 stories analysed in the present study have been distributed under three categories, namely, *Positive*, *Negative* and *Other* on the basis of content quality. The decision to classify a particular news item as *Positive*, *Negative* or *Other* categories has been done carefully and as objectively as possible. In order to be consistent in the coding pattern a set of guidelines were evolved. Under the news item

category any event that is generally considered negative, such as killing, murder, crime, conflicts, riots, strikes etc. has been recorded as Negative (see Chapter 5 for methodology).

The *Positive* items include reports of alternative acts intended to fight against or ameliorate events reported under negative news. Reports on any short term or long-term efforts to counteract negative acts or trends, sustainable efforts to promote human dignity and welfare of the community are considered Positive. More specifically, Positive news includes news related to acts of justice, peace efforts, service to community, affirmative action in favour of the weak, disadvantaged etc. Items under Other are those which are not clearly distinguishable as positive or negative. In the course of research and data entry each news item was classified under one of the categories, namely, Positive, Negative or Other in the computer programme designed for this purpose.

Figure 7.1 Positive, Negative and Other News Items

Distribution of 22396 news items under Positive, Negative and Other in percentages.



Of the 22396 news items in the news pages, Positive items were 7768 (34.69%) as against 10769 (48.08%) Negative items. The Other items numbered 3859 (17.23%). Thus negative news items were numerically more and had a much higher percentage of reportage than Positive or Other news items.

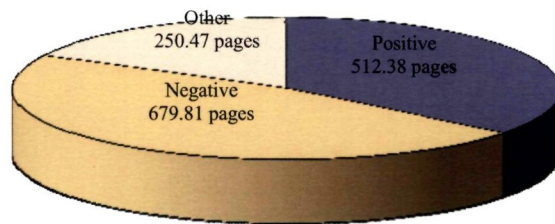
The 2054 items in the editorial pages were not examined to check their quality on the basis of Positive, Negative or Other. However the content quality of the editorial page items to check their level of social responsibility was examined, as shall be seen shortly.

7.1.1 Space Allotment among Positive and Negative News

The greater the amount of space allotted to particular news, the higher would the prominence score be. For instance, a story with 0.5 page or more upto a maximum of one page would obtain a score of 5, the maximum score a particular story would be able to obtain for space allotment. In the descending order of scores, a story with the minimum space to a maximum of 0.0625 page would get just one point on the scale.

Figure 7.2 Space Allotment among Positive, Negative and Other News

The chart shows how many pages are allotted for Positive, Negative and Other news items in the two papers.



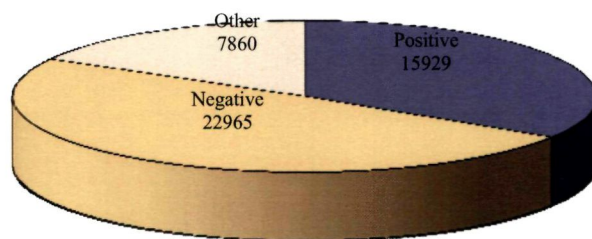
The total of 7768 Positive stories were allotted 512.38 pages in the newspapers, which amounts to 14.93% of the total newspaper space. The Negative news occupied a higher space allotment in comparison to Positive news. The 10769 Negative news items had a total space of 679.81 newspaper pages with a percentage of 19.81. The Other news items, numbering 3841 had a space allotment of 250.47 pages with a percentage of 7.30.

It may be noted that the total space we have studied is only 42.04% of the total newspaper space since pages dealing with sports, business pages as well as advertisements were omitted. The comparative space allotment in terms of newspaper pages show that more space was devoted to covering Negative news items, and that Negative news items enjoyed a far greater prominence than the Positive or other news items.

7.1.2 Headline Weightage among Positive, Negative and Other News

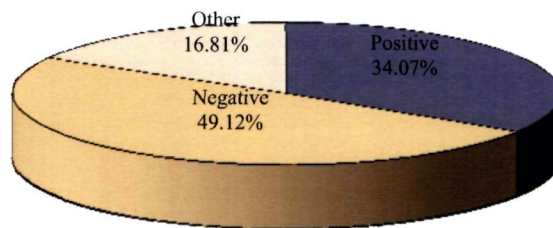
Headline weightage of news items were studied on a scale of 1-5 in order to measure the prominence given by the newspapers to various kinds of news items. Headline weightage was calculated on the basis of the font size used in the headline as well as the column inches and the column size.

Figure 7.3 Headline Weightage Points of Positive, Negative and Other News



The 7768 Positive news items scored total headline weightage points of 15929 which is 34.68%. However, 10769 Negative news items scored a total of 22965 headline weightage points with 48.08%. The 2859 Other news items had 7860 headline weightage points with 17.23%. Negative news items had a much higher headline weightage in comparison to Positive news.

Figure 7.4 Comparative Headline Weightage among Positive, Negative and Other News



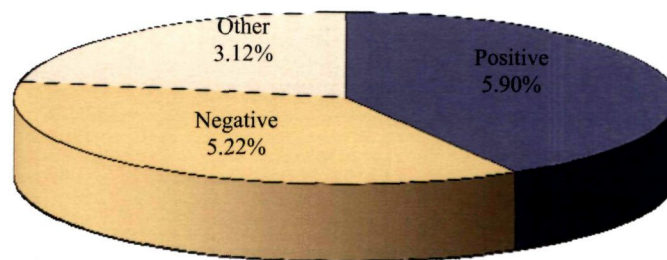
The comparative headline weightage in terms of percentage for Positive news was 34.07%, Negative news was 49.12% and Other news 16.81%. These scores clearly indicate that as far as headline weightage is concerned, Negative news gets more prominence than Positive or Other news items.

7.1.3 Photo Prominence among Positive, Negative and Other News

Positive, Negative and Other news items were studied on the basis of the prominence given to news items on the basis of inclusion of photographs. Again, a scale of 1-5 was used to measure the photo prominence in news. Photo prominence was measured on the basis of the size of the photographs, the place or location where it is included, (for instance a photo on the front page means more prominence), whether the photo is in colour or black and white (colour photos are more attention grabbing and hence more prominent than black and white photos). The total number of news items with photographs was 3191, and the total score points among Positive, Negative and Other were 9298. In all 14.25% of all news items had photographs

accompanying them. Comparative prominence percentage among the Positive, Negative and Other news items were found to be 42.96%, 36.01% and 21.04% respectively.

Figure 7.5 Score Points of News Items with Photographs in Percentage



The score for photo prominence among Positive news was 3994 with a percentage of 5.90%, whereas the score for Negative news was 3348 with a percentage of 5.22, and the score for Other news was 1956 with a percentage of 3.12. The data reveals that the photo prominence among Positive news is marginally higher than that of Negative news.

The prominence index of the editorial pages were calculated only on the basis of theme frequency counts since the contents of the editorial pages are standardised. Hence, headline weightage, news location, space allotment etc. does not arise. The editorial page seldom carries photographs, and hence photographs were not studied in the editorial page items. While analysing the frequency among the news, editorials, articles/columns and letters to the editor, it was seen that the perspective of the editors

and the readers vary from each other. While the editors and columnists give prominence to themes like crime, politics, administration etc, the response or the feedback of the readers, as is evident from the letters to the editor, show that they are more concerned with transport/ communication, education and so on.

7.2 Hypothesis 2: Positive and Negative News

That the newspapers prefer negative news to positive news is obvious when one reads the newspapers everyday. This fact is corroborated by the different definitions and descriptions of what news is. Reporters and editors try to adhere to the traditional definitions of journalism many of which emphasize what is negative as more newsworthy. Content analysis of the news published in any given day in the papers show that numerically negative news far outweighs positive news. Besides the numerically higher quantity of news items, it was also found that a number of qualitative factors that favour negative news items published with prominence, prove the contention that newspapers highlight negative news and give it greater prominence than positive news.

News media, as a whole, has a penchant for what is negative. “Bad news”, in the words of a journalist adage, “is good news, good news is bad news, and no news is bad news”. Much of the newspaper content is negative. Positive, inspiring news are the exception. This is due to the interplay between the psychology of attention and the free forces of market. Emotions, sex and violence catch attention much better than positive news. What catches the attention tends to sell better in a free market.

The riots in Mumbai in the beginning of 2008 spearheaded by supporters of Raj Thackeray's political outfit called Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) showed that two taxis were attacked by four men in front of video cameras. Nine television channels faithfully and uninterruptedly covered the incident and telecast it across the country calling it 'Breaking News'. Similar stories of heightened prominence to negative news is rampant in the media be it in the coverage of Northeast or Jammu and Kashmir. For instance, the rescue operations of Prince, a boy who fell in the well, Nithari killings of children near New Delhi, the Arushi murder case, the anti-reservation protests, the Gujjar agitation demanding scheduled tribe status, murders, bomb blasts and similar events receive wide coverage in media because they are marked by suspense, mystery, violence and bloodshed. Media is being increasingly used to garner publicity for some lesser known persons and causes, propelling them to larger than life heroes. Violence and mayhem have come to be increasingly used as the most appropriate tool to manipulate the media and to draw the attention of the public and the governments and to get them to concede to all kinds of demands they make. Terrorists, kidnappers and militants often include among their demands publication in the media items like their manifestoes, demands, strike calls or other agitation programmes. Newspaper content tend to confirm the perception that the press believes that readers wish to read stories that have shock value in preference to stories that are ordinary and routine.

The rise of the mass press has shifted the balance from news as information to news as commodity. Violence has become interesting marketable news. Morally bad news could be commercially good news. Terrorism cannot be understood only in

terms of violence. It has to be understood primarily in terms of propaganda. Violence and propaganda, however, have much in common. Violence aims at behaviour modification by coercion. Propaganda aims at the same by persuasion. The victim is considered dispensable, a mere fodder in the canon of the militant or terrorist. The press often unwittingly plays into the hands of those who engineer these acts. In the every day press we have far greater number of negative news in comparison to positive news. The various attributes given to news show that negative news gets more prominence than positive news. The newspapers carry proportionately more negative news than there is positive news. This has been confirmed to be true in the data we have analysed in the present study as well.

Studies as well as everyday experience of newspaper readers reveal that newspapers project proportionately a higher percentage of negative news than positive news that actually happen or exist in society. Such negative portrayal of the world and society can influence the readers to believe that the world is more negative, hence more dangerous, than what it might actually be. Often the media portrayals are exaggerated, and people whose opinion is shaped solely by newspaper reports or media portrayals will have a distorted picture of the places and countries covered by the press.

As to the reason for the prominence given by newspapers to negative news, it may be observed that the traditional understanding of journalism and news is that it is negative. It is in the psychology of reporters to highlight that which is negative, bizarre, and unsavory in society. Newspapers use several arguments to justify their actions. These include the argument that readers want such news and features, that

newspapers have an obligation to tell its readers what is wrong with society with a view to help improve it, that readers are wary of reading a paper if it highlights positive news and leave out negative news, and so on. Commercial interests play an important role in the way newspapers cover or emphasis stories.

Journalism students and beginners are taught to report on the basis of criteria such as human interest, prominence, timeliness, conflict, proximity, consequence etc. Definitions of news are not static, and news values such as prominence, conflict, and timeliness have been modified in recent years, not always to the benefit of the news audience. The definitions of what news is, as well as the news elements and criterion on what constitutes news taught in every school of journalism clearly imply that the negative events are the more preferred news item. Development communication and positive news need to be given more prominence in order to have a balanced and healthy newspaper.

The variables used to measure the quality of news as to whether they are positive or negative, indicate the press emphasis more negative news in terms of frequency of occurrences, space allotments, headline weightage, photo prominence etc. The table below gives in a nutshell the findings of the study which conclusively prove that the second hypothesis of the study is true.

Table 7.1 Emphasis on Positive-Negative News

Positive & Negative News							
	News Items (N=22396)	%	Space Allotment (in pages)	%	Headline weightage	Photo Prominence	%
Positive	7768	34.69	512.38	14.93	15929	3994	5.90
Negative	10769	48.08	679.81	19.81	22965	3348	5.22
Others	3859	17.23	250.47	7.30	7860	1956	3.12

Not only are negative news items numerically more, but they also have a higher prominence index and prominence impact. Acting in unison, these can contribute to make the press more negative in its content as well as the effects of that content on readers. Thus, Hypothesis # 2 which states that the print media in Northeast India emphasises more on negative news (violence, conflict, killing, kidnapping) as compared to positive news, has been accepted to be true.

7.3 Prominence and Positive-Negative News Item Attributes

Besides finding the average prominence score of various categories of news items, we also examined the data to see how three categories of items, namely, urban-rural-other, gender and geographical location of news, stand with regard to positive, negative and other attributes and their overall average. The study attempted to find the measure of the general impression that is likely to have on the reader regarding a given attribute created by a newspaper on account of the prominence factors. It has been termed *Prominence Impact*. For a given attribute, *Prominence Impact* is obtained by multiplying the number of news items having that attribute by their average prominence.

The table indicates the prominence index of urban-rural-other news items, gender (male-female-other) news items and international-national-regional news items and analyses the data of prominence index to study news item attributes. Prominence, as stated earlier, is the sum of the values of the five prominence indicators each of which have a maximum possible value of 5. Hence for a given news item, any of its particular attributes studied can have a maximum prominence score of 25.

Though the average prominence could be same in some instances, a larger number of news items of a particular kind, say, negative news items, could have a decisive impact on the reader, and affect his or her perception as the newspaper being responsible or not. For instance, among the urban-rural-other items, urban negative news items are numerically much higher than urban positive news items. Therefore, though the average prominence of positive news is marginally higher than the negative ones, the impact would be greater as can be seen in the Prominence Impact column in the above table. The prominence impact for positive news is 55,346.10 only whereas the negative prominence impact is 78,621.84. The measuring of prominence impact, therefore, helps one to examine the level of responsibility the newspaper shows in the way it deals with the content.

Table 7.2 Prominence Index and Other News Item Attributes

News Type	No. of News Items			Average Prominence			*Prominence Impact					
	Positive	Negative	Other Total	Positive	Negative	Other Average	Positive	Negative	Other Total			
Urban	6,904	9,927	3,561	20,392	8.02	7.92	8.11	8.02	55,346	78,621	28,879	162,847
Rural	851	827	289	1,967	7.49	7.82	7.73	7.66	6,373	6,467	2,233	15,075
Other	13	15	9	37	7.85	8.07	7.89	7.95	102	121	105	294
Male	4,791	6,662	2,477	13,930	8.04	8.08	8.22	8.09	38,519	53,828	20,360	112,709
Female	728	1,109	436	2,271	8.23	7.42	7.65	7.72	5,974	8,228	3,335	17,539
Other	2,251	2,998	946	6,195	7.73	7.92	7.91	7.85	17,400	23,744	7,482	48,627
International	1,408	3,201	986	5,595	7.9	7.39	7.42	7.53	11,123	23,655	7,316	42,094
National	1,586	3,418	1,189	6,193	8.43	7.84	8.41	8.10	13,369	26,797	9,999	50,166
Regional	4,774	4,150	1,684	10,608	7.83	8.51	8.23	8.16	37,380	35,316	13,859	86,556

7.4 Content Quality and Social Responsibility

The primary objective of the present study is to investigate whether newspapers in Northeast India are socially responsible or not. Responsibility is measured by examining the content quality of newspaper items by analysing whether the contents of newspaper reports are responsible or not. The researcher developed a system of measurement to check the responsibility of news on the basis of traditionally accepted canons and principles, laws, guidelines, conventions and precepts governing the profession of journalism. A checklist was developed to which values were ascribed to examine each item and to see if there is any violation of the rules and guidelines governing journalism. If no violation was found, that particular news item was considered responsible. According to the nature and gravity of violation news, articles, editorial items were rated as *Responsible*, *Somewhat Responsible*, *Irresponsible*, *Very Irresponsible* and *Absolutely Irresponsible*. From a total of five points allotted to responsible news, points were deducted for violations. The points deducted depended on the nature, gravity and extend of violation as listed in the table provided in chapter 5 which describes the methodology for the research.

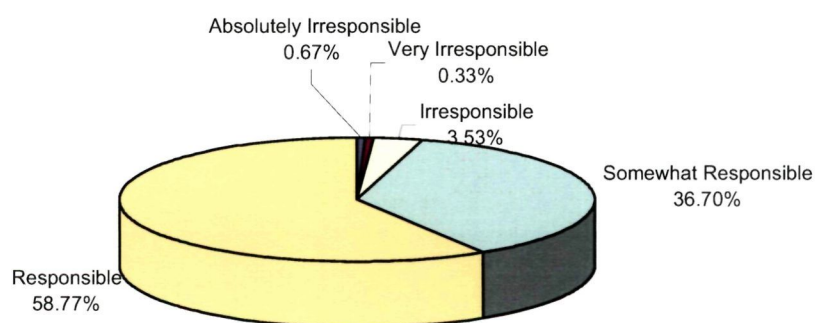
Since all newspapers are expected to be socially responsible in the manner in which they gather, edit and publish news items, the researcher looked for violations of responsibility in newspaper content. On the score chart the following content quality scores were allotted on the basis of non-violations or violations: News items with 0 violation were allotted 5 points and are considered *Responsible*; news items with 0.5 violation were allotted 4 points and are considered *Somewhat Responsible*;

news items with 1 violation were allotted 3 points and are considered *Irresponsible*; news items with 2 violation were allotted 2 points and are considered *Very Irresponsible*; news items with 3 violation were allotted 1 point and are considered *Absolutely Irresponsible*.

All items under investigation were classified on the basis of whether they are responsible or irresponsible. News and articles are considered irresponsible if the item violates conditions specified under responsible journalism. Criterion for considering whether a particular news item is responsible or not, is based on traditionally accepted rules, guidelines and conventions of responsible journalism, ethically sound practices and precepts, and legal frameworks and guidelines, constitutional guarantees and restrictions on freedom of expression. The press is expected to be socially responsible as the public has great expectations of the press. They expect the press to provide accurate, unbiased, objective news and views. The press ought to be fully responsible.

Figure 7.6 Content Quality Responsibility Index of News in Percentages

News reports are divided into 5 categories on the basis of the level of responsibility. Given below is the percentage of news items under each of these categories.



Of the 22396 news items we analysed 149 items (0.67%) were considered to be *Absolutely Irresponsible*, while 73 (0.33%) were considered *Very Irresponsible* and 791 (3.53%) *Irresponsible*. 8220 (36.70) items were *Somewhat Responsible*, and 13163 (58.77%) were *Responsible*. Hence in our study of news items in which we examine whether they are responsible or not, we found that only 58.77% news items may be considered fully responsible as the rest belong to four categories with varying degrees of irresponsibility, ranging from *Somewhat Responsible*, *Irresponsible*, *Very Irresponsible* to *Absolutely Irresponsible*.

Even a small percentage of irresponsibility is to be considered with grave concern as the newspaper is expected to be fully responsible for what it reports. In addition, it is an organised, activity with constitutional privileges and protection and hence expected to be judicious and responsible. As a general principle there is no valid and convincing reason for the newspapers to claim immunity or to be excused for acts of irresponsibility. In certain cases as in publication of inflammatory or defamatory reports, the violations are punishable under law.

In terms of absolute numbers, the 149 *absolutely irresponsible* news items are not to be brushed aside as marginal; they indicate dereliction of duty, callousness, ignorance or incompetence. But readers who subscribe to newspapers expect all of its contents in its entirety to be true, factual and accurate. A newspaper cannot be considered responsible because it has a majority of news items or a high percentage of news items under the category of responsible news in comparison to irresponsible news items.

Readers hold in high esteem newspapers of the kind analysed in the present study. In general the public has high expectations of newspapers and the trust they repose in the newspapers cannot be belied. Besides, the press continues to enjoy great credibility as is evident from the fact that people often quote from newspapers to prove a point, and newspapers are at times brought to parliament and other legislative forums to prove the veracity of certain incidents. Thus, every newspaper ought to be conscious of its obligation to be truthful and responsible. Responsibility of the press is closely related to the ethics of the press. However, like in other ethical issues, there is no middle ground whereby the press can justify its faults by indicating percentages

of what is responsible and what is not. The data we have examined in the two newspapers prove our third hypothesis that the press in Northeast India is not socially responsible. The score indicates that the newspapers studied need to be more responsible with regard to the quality of their content. By projecting the findings of the study, as well as by critical reading of other newspapers, one can affirm with a certain degree of certainty that newspapers in general, with a few and rare exceptions, need to strive for much greater responsibility.

7.5 Content Quality and Prominence Index: a Comparison

We compare the findings of the study between content quality and prominence index.

Table 7.3 Content Quality of Story Themes

Rank	Story Theme	Responsible	Somewhat Responsible	Irresponsible	Very Irresponsible	Absolutely Irresponsible	Total	Percentage	Average Content Quality	Average Prominence Index
		4	3.5	3	2	1				
1	Crime/Violence/Conflict/War/Corruption/ Kidnapping	2012	1068	88	15	26	3209	14.33	3.77	7.58
2	Politics	1218	620	44	0	15	1897	8.47	3.79	8.50
3	Administration/Government/Election/UN	1160	653	43	0	9	1865	8.33	3.79	8.55
4	Militancy/Terrorism	845	390	16	0	10	1261	5.63	3.81	8.58
5	Education	508	628	71	1	4	1212	5.41	3.67	7.37
6	Media/Books/Literature/Films	617	435	64	5	5	1126	5.03	3.73	7.67
7	Health	578	407	25	0	6	1016	4.54	3.76	7.61

8	Accidents/Disaster/Floods/ Earthquakes	628	361	15	0	9	1013	4.52	3.78	7.79
9	Celebrity/Stars/VIPs/ Entertainment	394	354	175	43	4	970	4.33	3.54	7.24
10	Development/Aid/Water/Relief	409	336	22	0	4	771	3.44	3.74	7.98
11	Art/Culture/History/Language/ Music/Cultural Festivals	379	316	46	1	3	745	3.33	3.71	7.87
12	Trade/Business/ Industry/Tourism	418	242	14	0	9	683	3.05	3.76	8.19
13	Agitation/Dhama/Bandh/ Strike	352	282	15	0	6	655	2.92	3.73	8.54
14	Bilateral Relation/Internal Security	492	123	5	0	3	623	2.78	3.88	8.74
15	Environment/Nature/Forest/ Ecology/ Climate/ Weather/Wildlife	301	201	8	0	3	513	2.29	3.77	8.17
16	Law/Justice/Human Rights	330	162	11	0	4	507	2.26	3.79	7.75
17	Religion	277	197	17	2	4	497	2.22	3.74	8.07
18	Police/Armed Forces/ Military/Defense	310	157	9	0	2	478	2.13	3.80	7.85
19	Transport/Communication	273	179	9	1	4	466	2.08	3.76	8.50
20	Science/Technology/Space/ Nuclear Issues	310	146	3	0	6	465	2.08	3.80	7.80
21	Economics/Finance/Budget/ Banking	188	90	6	0	0	284	1.27	3.82	8.20
22	Peace/Harmony	160	61	2	0	1	224	1.00	3.84	8.08
23	Games/Sports/Adventure	122	72	8	0	0	202	0.90	3.78	9.21
24	Agriculture/Food/Pisciculture/ Animal Husbandry	104	72	6	0	1	183	0.82	3.75	8.07
25	Law and Order	98	75	3	0	3	179	0.80	3.72	8.11
26	Fashion/Sex/Beauty Contests	68	75	27	3	0	173	0.77	3.59	7.39
27	Migration/Influx/Refugees	108	54	2	0	2	166	0.74	3.79	8.80
28	Employment/Career	64	74	5	0	2	145	0.65	3.67	7.58
29	Communalism	68	61	4	0	0	133	0.59	3.74	8.64
30	Women	66	53	5	0	1	125	0.56	3.72	7.39
31	Social Issues/Ethics	57	61	5	1	0	124	0.55	3.70	7.28
32	Death/Killing/Murder	72	40	7	1	0	120	0.54	3.76	7.28
33	Children	61	51	4	0	1	117	0.52	3.72	7.05
34	Youth	39	69	6	0	1	115	0.51	3.62	7.66
35	Nation/Patriotism	59	49	1	0	1	110	0.49	3.74	8.29
36	Population/Ethnicity	18	6	0	0	0	24	0.11	3.88	8.42
TOTAL							22396			

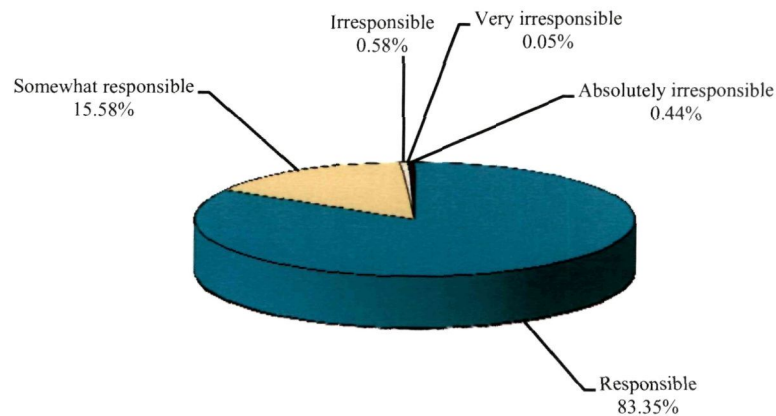
The researcher compared the average prominence index of the news items with the content quality. Accordingly it was found that *absolutely irresponsible* news items had the highest average prominence index of 8.42 as against 8.18 for *responsible* news, 7.72 for *somewhat responsible* news, 7.49 for *irresponsible* news and 7.16 for *very irresponsible* news. This leads to the conclusion that negative news as well as irresponsible news items get more prominence. We have also tabulated the content quality score of each news item according to the story theme in descending order with their respective average content quality and average prominence index.

Rank	Story Theme	Responsible	Somewhat Responsible	Irresponsible	Very Irresponsible	Absolutely Irresponsible	Total	Average Content Quality
		4	3.5	3	2	1		
1	Politics	165	46	0	0	1	212	42.40
2	Administration/Government/Election/UN	138	30	2	0	0	170	34.00
3	Transport/Communication	134	22	0	0	1	157	31.40
4	Education	130	11	0	0	1	142	28.40
5	Development/Aid/Water/Relief	116	22	0	0	0	138	27.60
6	Crime/Violence/Conflict/War/Corruption/Kidnapping	72	33	1	0	0	106	21.20
7	Economics/Finance/Budget/Banking	97	7	2	0	0	106	21.20
8	Bilateral Relation/Internal Security	88	9	1	0	0	98	19.60
9	Trade/Business/Industry/Tourism	74	11	0	0	0	85	17.00
10	Health	72	8	0	0	2	82	16.40
11	Militancy/Terrorism	52	19	0	0	0	71	14.20
12	Environment/Nature/Forest/Ecology/Climate/ Weather/Wildlife	60	9	0	0	1	70	14.00
13	Media/Books/Literature/Films	53	13	0	0	0	66	13.20
14	Games/Sports/Adventure	46	13	1	0	0	60	12.00

15	Art/Culture/History/Language/Music/Cultural Festivals	50	2	0	0	0	52	10.40
16	Religion	36	4	0	0	0	40	8.00
17	Law/Justice/Human Rights	31	5	1	0	0	37	7.40
18	Science/Technology/Space/Nuclear Issues	34	2	0	0	0	36	7.20
19	Accidents/Disaster/Floods/Earthquakes	24	9	0	1	0	34	6.80
20	Migration/Influx/Refugees	28	3	0	0	0	31	6.20
21	Peace/Harmony	26	2	1	0	1	30	6.00
22	Nation/Patriotism	27	2	0	0	0	29	5.80
23	Social Issues/Ethics	23	4	1	0	0	28	5.60
24	Employment/Career	25	1	1	0	0	27	5.40
25	Police/Armed Forces/Military/Defense	18	7	0	0	0	25	5.00
26	Communalism	14	10	0	0	0	24	4.80
27	Celebrity/Stars/VIPs/Entertainment	16	3	0	0	0	19	3.80
28	Agitation/Dharna/Bandh/Strike	12	7	0	0	0	19	3.80
29	Women	11	2	0	0	1	14	2.80
30	Agriculture/Food/Pisciculture/Animal Husbandry	14	0	0	0	0	14	2.80
31	Law and Order	8	2	0	0	0	10	2.00
32	Children	7	0	0	0	0	7	1.40
33	Population/Ethnicity	4	2	0	0	0	6	1.20
34	Death/Killing/Murder	4	0	0	0	0	4	0.80
35	Youth	2	0	1	0	0	3	0.60
36	Fashion/Sex/Beauty Contests	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.20
	Total						2054	

Similarly, the average content quality of the editorial pages, namely, the editorials, the articles/columns and letters to the editor, were tabulated to examine the nature and extend of responsibility.

Figure 7.7 Content Quality Index of Editorial Page Items in Percentages



The Figure indicates the content quality of the editorial pages, namely, the editorials, the articles/columns and letters to the editor, which help to examine the nature and extend of responsibility. Of the 2054 items of the editorial pages, 1712 items (83.35%) is *responsible*, whereas 320 items with 15.58% are *somewhat responsible*, and 12 items with 0.58% are *irresponsible* and one item (0.05%) is *very irresponsible*, and 9 items with a percentage of 0.44% are *absolutely irresponsible*.

The researcher compared the prominence index score with content quality of positive and negative news items, as well as international, national and regional news items. The way news item for each of these categories is reported was examined to see the level of responsibility as to whether they are responsible, somewhat

responsible, irresponsible, very irresponsible or absolutely irresponsible. The average prominence of these items and the prominence impact of these items were checked.

Table 7.5 Prominence Index and Content Quality of Positive and Negative, International-National-Regional News Items

	Way news item is reported	Positive News Items			Negative News Items		
		International	National	Regional	International	National	Regional
No of news items	Responsible	1,010	1,151	2,190	1963	2307	2,050
	Somewhat Responsible	374	402	2,381	942	1012	1,920
	Irresponsible	13	13	181	215	71	150
	Very Irresponsible	-	-	1	54	6	9
	Absolutely Irresponsible	11	20	21	27	22	21
Average Prominence	Responsible	7.92	8.40	8.39	7.55	7.81	8.91
	Somewhat Responsible	7.79	8.51	7.34	7.24	7.92	8.09
	Irresponsible	8.38	6.92	7.36	6.64	7.79	8.41
	Very Irresponsible	-	-	7.00	7.15	7.17	7.44
	Absolutely Irresponsible	9.18	9.10	8.95	7.89	8.45	8.24
Prominence Impact	Responsible	7,999	9,668	18,374	14,821	18,018	18,266
	Somewhat Responsible	2,913	3,421	17,477	6,820	8,015	15,533
	Irresponsible	109	90	1,332	1,428	553	1,262
	Very Irresponsible	-	-	7	386	43	67
	Absolutely Irresponsible	101	182	188	213	186	173

*Prominence Impact is a measure of the general impression regarding a given attribute created by a newspaper on the reader on account of the prominence factors. Hence we term it as Prominence Impact. For a given attribute, it is obtained by multiplying the number of news items having that attribute by their average prominence.

Prominence is the sum of the values of the five prominence indicators each of which have a maximum possible value of 5. Hence for a given news item, any of its particular attributes studied can have a maximum prominence of 25.

Table 7.6 Prominence Index & Content Quality of Positive-Negative, Male-Female Other News Items
Table 7.6 Prominence Index & Content Quality of Positive and Negative Male-Female-Other News Items

	Way news item is reported	Positive News Items			Negative News Items		
		Male	Female	Other	Male	Female	Other
No of news items	Responsible	2,764	434	1,153	4034	506	1,780.00
	Somewhat Responsible	1,905	266	986	2383	405	1,086.00
	Irresponsible	97	18	92	180	150	106.00
	Very Irresponsible	-	-	1	18	41	10.00
	Absolutely Irresponsible	25	8	19	47	7	16.00
	Responsible	8.31	8.39	8.18	8.13	7.74	8.09
	Somewhat Responsible	7.63	7.97	7.25	8.01	7.32	7.67
	Irresponsible	7.78	7.72	6.92	7.88	6.83	7.55
	Very Irresponsible	-	-	7.00	7.67	6.76	8.10
	Absolutely Irresponsible	9.08	9.50	8.84	8.23	7.14	8.44
Prominence Impact	Responsible	22,969	3,641	9,432	32,796	3,916	14,400
	Somewhat Responsible	14,535	2,120	7,149	19,088	2,965	8,330
	Irresponsible	755	139	637	1,418	1,025	800
	Very Irresponsible	-	-	7	138	277	81
	Absolutely Irresponsible	227	76	168	387	50	135

*Prominence Impact is a measure of the general impression regarding a given attribute created by a newspaper on the reader on account of the prominence factors. Hence we term it as Prominence Impact. For a given attribute, it is obtained by multiplying the number of news items having that attribute by their average prominence.

Prominence is the sum of the values of the five prominence indicators each of which have a maximum possible value of 5. Hence for a given news item, any of its particular attributes studied can have a maximum prominence of 25.

When we compare the degree of responsibility/ irresponsibility between news stories and editorial page items, we find that the latter show greater responsibility. We could ascribe this to a number of reasons. The contents of editorial page, particularly the editorials and columns, are usually written by the editors or experts on respective issues and themes which are considered important after due deliberations and discussions. Though the letters are written mostly by readers, those who write letters to the editor by way of feedback or comments on various issues belong to the above average category of readers. They usually are more educated and have greater maturity. Besides, the letters published in the newspapers are carefully chosen for publication by the editors from several letters received at the desk, and are sometimes edited for brevity and clarity and to ensure that its contents are not libelous.

Table 7.7 Content Quality (News)

Content Quality Score	Score Description	Extent of Violation	No. of News items	Percentage	Average Prominence Index*
4	Responsible	0	13163	58.77%	8.18
3.5	Somewhat Responsible	0.5	8220	36.70%	7.72
3	Irresponsible	1	791	3.53%	7.49
2	Very Irresponsible	2	73	0.33%	7.16
1	Absolutely Irresponsible	3	149	0.67%	8.42
Total News Items			22396		

Table 7.8 Content Quality (Editorial Page)

Content Quality Score	Score Description	Extent of Violation	No. of News items	Percentage
4	Responsible	0	1712	83.35%
3.5	Somewhat Responsible	0.5	320	15.58%
3	Irresponsible	1	12	0.58%
2	Very Irresponsible	2	1	0.05%
1	Absolutely Irresponsible	3	9	0.44%
Total News Items			2054	

As noted, a comparison of the editorial page content with news items show that the latter show lesser responsibility than the former. Hence, one may conclude that reporters need better training and orientation on journalistic responsibility. It also needs to be stated that the editors and sub-editors need to be more critical and consistent while editing reports filed by their reporters so as to ensure greater responsibility. The regional and low-income newspapers are often compelled to hire novices and inexperienced journalists or even those with no journalistic training at all as reporters. Several newspapers depend on stringers, part timers and freelancers to fill their pages with news reports, thereby unwittingly compromising on quality. The concept of news as something valuable for its own sake, and hence to be reported as accurately and honestly as can be, remains journalism's highest goal. To the extent that the press can put this precept into practice, it becomes socially responsible, serving impartially all sections of people.

7.6 Hypothesis 3: Social Responsibility

The data in this analysis shows that though irresponsible news items are fewer in number, they have a higher average prominence index and hence their impact would be higher. For instance, absolutely irresponsible international negative news items with only 27 items, has an average prominence index of 7.89, which is the highest among the five categories of responsibility/irresponsibility. Similarly in all categories, except regional news, the average prominence index is the highest for absolutely irresponsible news items.

Prominence impact is a measure of the general impression regarding a given attribute created by a newspaper on the reader on account of the prominence factors. For a given attribute, it is obtained by multiplying the number of news items having that attribute by their average prominence. Prominence is the sum of the values of the five prominence indicators each of which have a maximum possible value of 5. Hence for a news item, any of its particular attributes studied can have a maximum prominence of 25.

Though the average prominence could be same in some instances, a larger number of news items of a particular kind, say, negative news items, could have a decisive impact on the reader, and affect his or her perception. For instance, among the urban-rural-other items, urban negative news items are numerically much higher than urban positive news items. Therefore, though the average prominence of positive news is marginally higher than the negative ones, the impact would be greater as can be seen in the prominence impact data. The prominence impact for positive news is 55,346.10

only whereas the same for negative news is 78,621.84. The measuring of prominence impact, therefore, helps one to examine the level of responsibility the newspaper manifests in the way it deals with the content. The data regarding the various kinds of bias and imbalances in newspapers as well as the higher number and prominence given to negative news items, as proven in the first and second hypotheses too support our third hypothesis that the press is not socially responsible.

But above all, the number of news and editorial page items of various degrees of responsibility and the comparative analysis of the average prominence index with content quality as indicated in the table above, it can be concluded that the press is not socially responsible. Thus, Hypothesis # 3 which states that the print media in Northeast India is not socially responsible has been accepted to be true.

Though a separate study of the news content on the basis of sources was not undertaken here, news received from international and national news agencies, and those which are reported directly by the newspaper's own staff, in the light of our research as well as experience in journalism and media, it may be observed that the well established news agencies, both international and national, have a better standard of reporting in terms of content quality and style than reports filed by the newspaper's own staff. The latter often lack the resources and competence to do a thorough and more professional reporting. Several news items pertaining to local and regional news are also taken almost verbatim from press releases and official sources and spokespersons. Often non-professionals and public relation agents write them, and many such reports reveal lack of journalistic quality. A newspaper that depends greatly on government and non-governmental organisations for its daily fare of news

via press releases will unwittingly become their spokesperson and agent. This adversely affects the press to be socially responsible.

Newspaper management needs to keep in mind that whether the paper is small in terms of circulation, or operate on a low budget, it serves a public that deserves nothing but the best in terms of qualitative and responsible news, features, editorials and articles. Most newspaper readers do not have access to an alternative paper and limit themselves to reading just one single newspaper which becomes their primary source of news. That places a greater challenge on the press to provide the reader with the best, and nothing but the best, in terms of content.

Since the mission of a newspaper is to serve its clients, while at the same time making itself a commercially successful business venture, the newspaper that constantly strives to provide the readers the best in terms of content and quality would succeed on both counts. Newspaper management needs to carefully balance the delicate tasks of community service and commercial viability. This requirement further prompts us to urge the government and public at large to ensure that all newspapers, particularly those with less circulation, vernacular papers, and single newspapers that serve towns and cities, are adequately supported to render a more fruitful service to their clients. The best newspaper, in fact, evolves and grows as a result of the dialectics between the interests of the readers and the newspaper management. The public while ensuring that the newspaper does not become a pawn of profiteers or public relation agents of the government must support it for its survival and growth. Regarding democracy, it is said, we get the kind of government we deserve. Similarly, it may be said that we get the kind of newspapers we deserve.

When a newspaper fails, the public ought to share part of the blame since the public also has an obligation to watch the watchdog.

Journalism ought to report what citizens or government or both may not want to hear, as well as what they do want to hear. Newspapers must not seek to lessen or to prevent some evil by withholding news of what has happened, or by playing it down or blowing it up. If they distort the truth, some evil worse than the one they seek to avoid may follow.

There are reasons for which the editors and journalists need to refrain from publishing certain news items or postpone doing so. Editors and journalism scholars usually support the view that newspapers need to suppress news if there are convincing reasons for doing so. The value of suppression should outweigh those of publication. Things like the names of youngsters in trouble with the law, or of victims of rape, are frequently withheld. Indian journalism has traditionally withheld identities of religious and ethnic groups in conflict to prevent further escalation of violence. The news of a kidnapping, or of arrangements for ransom, may be left unpublished where there is compelling reason to believe a life may be saved by doing so. For instance, when highjacking airlines became popular among political zealots and seekers after easy money, the wire services, newspapers, and broadcasters were glad to co-operate with the airlines and pilots' associations, lest flamboyant or detailed reporting of one air piracy might inspire another. In the same spirit not only military preparations may be brought under censorship, but also some sensitive peacetime negotiations between governments, may go unreported until they succeed or fail.

However, a newspaper must weigh carefully the decision to publish or withhold information on the basis of ethically sound arguments, between the people's right to information vis-à-vis the need for secrecy. Governments may at times want to suppress information. Newspapers are managed by human beings, and so are no more perfect than any other human institution. Freedom of the press in its various formulations is embedded in the Constitutions of most democratic countries. It is not merely to make life easier or more profitable for newspapers and their owners, but to enable them to carry out their functions responsibly.

7.7 Theme Frequency and Prominence of Social Issues

The various issues covered by the newspapers have been studied under 36 themes. Some of the topics, which are similar, have been combined in the classification on the basis of common characteristics. For example, law, justice, human rights have been clubbed together under one theme title. The total number of 22396 news items, which were studied, has been distributed among the 36 themes ranging from the highest to the lowest. We have further classified the 36 themes under four broad theme categories on the basis of common characteristics. At the top of the list is the theme of crime, violence, conflict, war, corruption and kidnapping with a total of 3209 items and a percentage of 14.33 of the total items. At the bottom of the list is population and ethnicity, with only 24 items and a percentage of 0.11.

The story themes in the editorial pages have been distributed into the same 36 categories as in the case of news items. In the editorial page we have 2054 items,

consisting of editorials, articles/columns and letters to the editor. The highest entry was for the theme 'politics' with 212, and a percentage of 42.40 and the lowest for fashion/sex/beauty contests with just 1 entry and a percentage of 0.20.

The analysis of story themes in the news pages and editorial pages shows that several important issues are not given sufficient attention by the newspapers and are relegated to the bottom of the list or are ignored altogether. For instance, the highest 6 items in terms of frequency of themes in the news are 1. crime/ violence/ conflict/ war/ corruption/ kidnapping 2. politics 3. administration/ government/ election/ United Nations and other international bodies 4. militancy/terrorism 5. education 6. media/ books/ literature/ films. These six items have a combined frequency score of 10,570 out of 22396. The most frequently occurring six themes at the top of the editorial page are: 1. crime/violence/conflict/war/corruption/kidnapping, 2. games/sports/adventure, 3. transport/communication 4. Bilateral relations/internal security 5. Migration/influx/refugees 6. education, with a combined total of 819 out of 2054. In the theme frequency score such items as trade, economy, banking, sports/games would have scored higher frequency and percentage had we not omitted in our study pages specifically dealing with them. But themes that deserve greater attention include social and ethical issues, women, children, youth, nation, patriotism, population, migration, employment, communalism, agriculture etc.

The researcher examined the theme frequency and reporting percentage of five important social themes from among the 36 items among news, editorials, articles and letters to the editor. The five social themes are Education, Health, Development, Peace and Environment. Education had 5.41% theme frequency

among the 22396 news items, only 1.94% editorials, and only 3.61% articles, while there were a remarkably high 10.99% letters to the editor. Though education had a 5.54% overall frequency among the themes, it is due to the high occurrences of letters to the editor. That Education did not enjoy adequate prominence is also evident from the fact that it has the lowest prominence index with 7.37 among all the five topics dealing with social issues. The data further indicates that education is considered by the readers as very important and relevant but not given adequate prominence in the news, editorials and articles.

Similarly, issues like health, development, peace, environment, though socially significant and important, have proportionately low scores and less prominence. In a region that is high on militancy, violence, ethnic conflicts and unrest, the reporting on peace is extremely low with only 1% news, 0.83% editorials, 2.31% articles and 1.10% letters to the editor.

**Table 7.9 Frequency of Social Themes with their Percentages
(News-Editorial Page)**

Coverage of 5 Social Themes										
	Education		Health		Development		Peace		Environment	
News	1212	5.41%	1016	4.54%	771	3.44%	224	1.00%	513	2.29%
Editorial	7	1.94%	11	3.05%	23	6.37%	3	0.83%	27	7.48%
Articles/Columns	25	3.61%	35	5.06%	47	6.79%	16	2.31%	50	7.23%
Letters to the Editor	110	10.99%	36	3.60%	68	6.79%	11	1.10%	29	2.90%
Total	1354	5.54%	1098	4.49%	909	3.72%	254	1.04%	390	1.60%
Average Prominence Index	7.37		7.67		7.98		8.08		8.17	
Prominence Impact	8932		7793		6153		1810		4191	

Fig. 7.8 Distribution of Social Themes among News Items

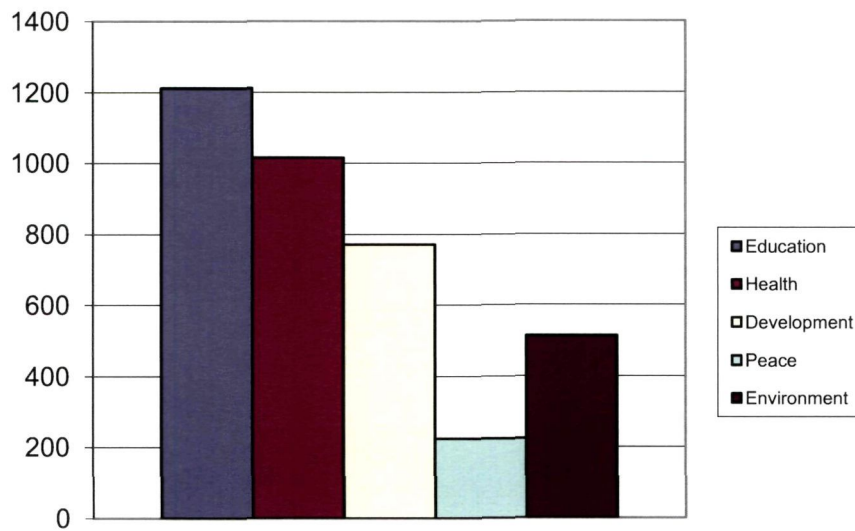


Fig. 7.9 Distribution of Social Themes among Editorial Items

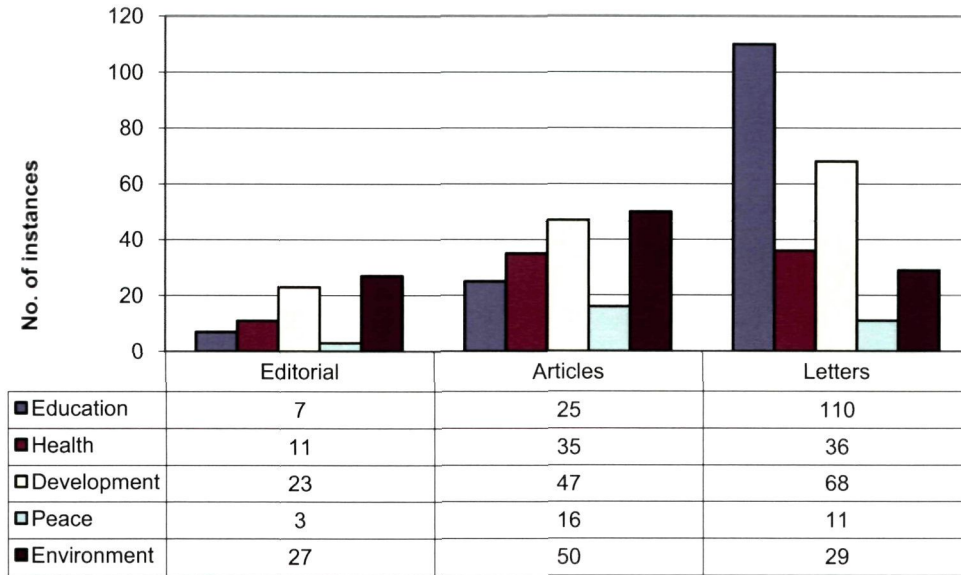


Fig. 7.10 Distribution of Social Themes in News

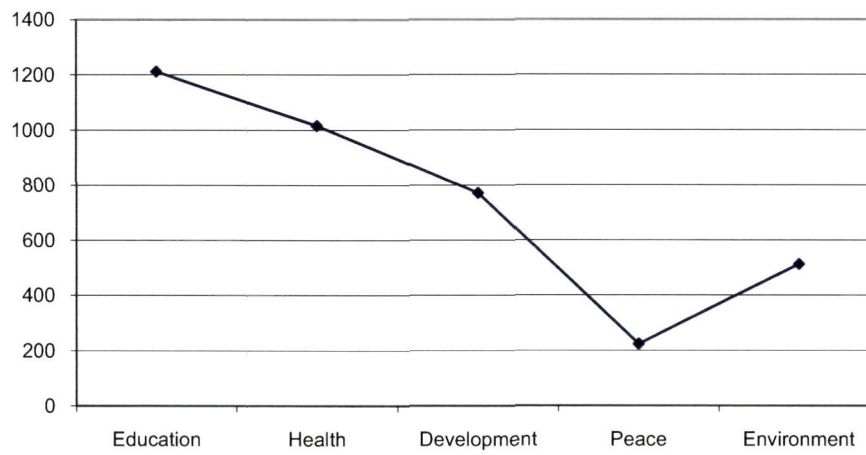
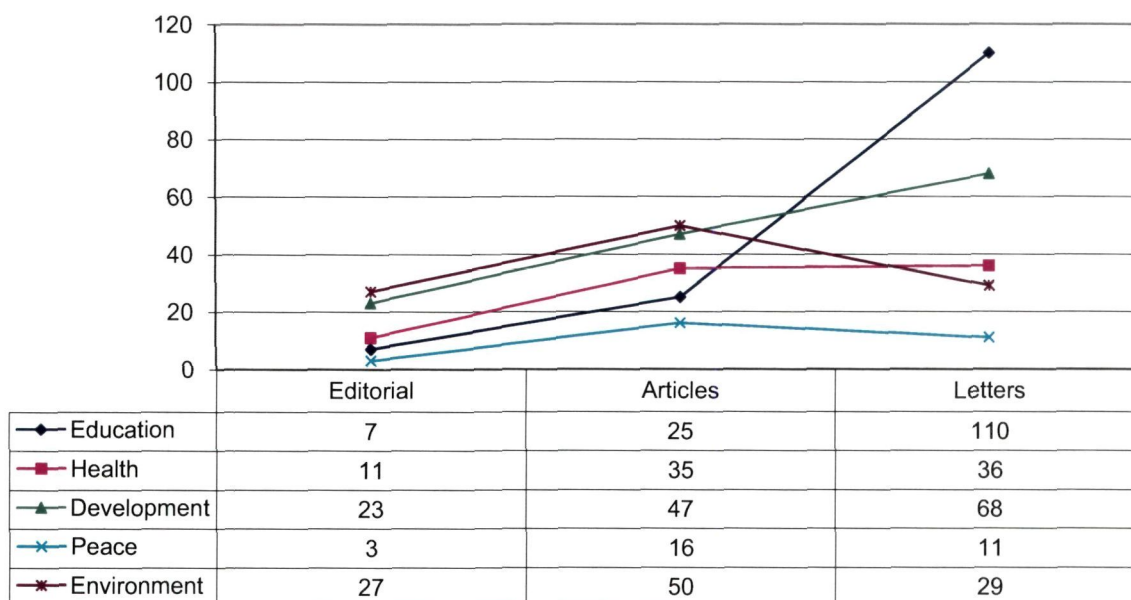


Fig. 7.11 Distribution of Social Themes among Editorial Items



This data pertaining to theme frequency and prominence index and prominence impact as illustrated above, prove our fourth hypothesis that the press does not emphasise in its coverage of social issues such as education, health, development, peace, environment etc.

7.8 The Five Social Themes and the Top Themes in Frequency: A Comparison

We have analysed the data among the five themes, namely *Education*, *Health*, *Development*, *Peace* and *Environment* and found that the press does not cover these themes prominently. This is evident when we consider the fact that out of 22396 news items the five themes listed above together have only a frequency of 3736, which is 16.68% of the total whereas the single theme of *crime and violence* appears 3209 times

among the news items with a percentage of 14.33, and *politics* appear 1897 times with a percentage of 8.47.

Among the editorials the five themes together appear only 55 times with a percentage of 15.24 whereas *politics* alone appears 51 times with a percentage of 14.13. Among the articles, the five themes together appear 145 times with a percentage of 20.95, while *politics* alone appears 90 times with a percentage of 13.01. Among the letters to the editor, the five themes have a combined frequency count of 262 with 26.48%. The highest single theme among the 36 items among the letters is transport communication with 134 items and a percentage of 13.39.

Following the Dewey Decimal System the researcher classified the 36 themes under four major categories, namely, 1 Social Problems 2 Public Administration 3 Social Services 4 Varia, in order to find out the comparative prominence and frequency allotted to each of them. Accordingly it was found that social problems which include mostly negative themes like crime, violence, killing, kidnapping etc. had a higher frequency as well as prominence than social service related themes.

The data indicated above shows that the important social themes as listed above have not been given prominence in the newspapers. Only in the letters to the editor, which reflects the reader preference, can we find a higher frequency among the five themes. Therefore, Hypothesis # 4 which states that social issues such as education, health, development, peace and environment are not prominently covered has been accepted to be true.

Table 7.11 Summary Data

We present in a nutshell the summary of the data as per distribution among various categories: Positive, Negative, Other; Male, Female, Other; International, National, Regional; Urban, Rural, Other; the coverage of religion, and the content quality which examines responsibility.

	No. of News Items	Percentage of the total
<u>Content Value</u>		
Positive	7768	34.68%
Negative	10769	48.08%
Other	3859	17.23%
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	13930	62.20%
Female	2271	10.14%
Other	6195	27.66%
<u>Religion</u>		
News items (22396)	497	2.22%
Editorial Page items (2054)	40	1.95%
<u>Geographic Location</u>		
International	5596	24.99%
National	6193	27.65%
Regional	10607	47.36%
<u>Location - Rural/Urban/Other</u>		
Urban	20392	91.05%
Rural	1967	8.78%
Other	37	0.17%
<u>Content Quality</u>		
Responsible	13163	58.77%
Somewhat Responsible	8220	36.70%
Irresponsible	791	3.53%
Very Irresponsible	73	0.33%
Absolutely Irresponsible	149	0.67%

Thematically, newspapers must take up more issues that are pertinent to the society and to the people. Unlike television, which offers headlines and summaries of major news breaking events, newspapers are expected to provide depth and analysis. Attention to development news must not be merely lip service, but a conscious decision and a habit. Newspapers need to provide more relevant content concerning youth. Indian newspapers, including the two we have studied, allot a lot of space to sports news at the cost of neglecting other important news. Even in reporting sports, cricket carries the lion's share of sports coverage space. Excessive coverage of any particular item, including sports can have a narcotising influence on the readers. Newspapers instead of enlightening the readers become opium for the people. People would not be able to concentrate much on social issues and political and democratic processes. The attention of the readers would thus be deflected from serious issues.

Newspapers present a variety of themes to its readers. But as we have seen, a topic that has direct impact on the readers – violence, crime, and human interest-dominate the news. Topics that are new or difficult to report, or perceived to be uninteresting to the audience, unusually receive short shrift in the pages of the newspapers. Such topics nevertheless are often very important.

One may observe that we have been rather critical of the newspapers – for two reasons, first that the newspapers deserve and need criticism. Second, it is vitally important that future journalists, editors and owners of newspapers are aware of what is wrong with the press or how imbalanced or lopsided it is, so that they can help change it for the better and enable the press to serve the public and maintain balance and perspective. However, it needs to be said that in spite of all the flaws we have

observed, the two newspapers we have studied stand well ahead of many of their peers.

7.9 Democracy and Development Issues vis-à-vis Social Responsibility of the Press in Northeast India

The press in India has played a significant role in defining and shaping the democratic character of the country. The press in Northeast India too has been a powerful instrument in the democratic and political process that we witness today. The two newspapers we have studied have been founded with clear nationalistic and patriotic objectives in mind. The study of the content of these newspapers show that politics and governance together have been the most widely covered story in the newspapers. Politics and political issues have dominated both national, metropolitan as well as vernacular, regional press. Even six decades after India's independence, the press continues to be excessively obsessed with coverage of political news at the neglect of several other important issues and concerns which do not find adequate space in the newspaper pages. Instead of being excessively preoccupied with a handful of dominant issues, newspapers need to diversify its content and coverage and the manner in which they portray the various facets of life.

Newspaper content, as can be found in the reports, generally deal with events and not with processes. The press has been preoccupied with reporting events, informing rather than discussing, debating and deliberating at depth on a wide range of issues. The press, if it is to be faithful to its mission, must do much more in educating the people to understand, participate and absorb democratic values and

practices. The press has no doubt given adequate coverage to issues like the election process, political instability, change of government in Northeast India, but what is perhaps lacking is a deeper analysis of the causes of political instability, mal-administration, corruption, militancy, violence, ethnic conflicts and other malaise that affect the region, solutions to these and proposals towards making democracy more effective and beneficial to the masses.

There are a number of development concerns that the press ought to address. The development indices of the region indicate that Northeast India is faced with unemployment, corruption, economic backwardness, urban-rural divide, low literacy, poverty, sicknesses of epidemic proportions like malaria, the growing problem of HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, rural backwardness, lack of adequate infrastructure for higher education and a host of other issues. Much of the development has been limited to urban areas and has not percolated to the rural areas. As far as development is concerned the gap between rural and urban areas is widening. Militancy and unrest of various kinds have not only claimed thousands of lives, but continues to feed on these social ills and paralyse normal life. They also slow down progress, deter investors, drive away economic investments and dissuade tourists. The porous border with Bangladesh and other countries, large scale influx from across the border pose serious threat to the ethnic identity of the people of the region. The newspapers and other media can help meet the people's yearning to affirm their respective ethnic and cultural identity, to become more visible and to be heard, to be understood and to be assisted on their march towards progress and peace.

Newspapers need to ensure that the output of information they provide be socially relevant, so that the press can empower people rather than highlight only or mostly the weaknesses of the society and individuals. By judicious exercise of its social responsibility the press in Northeast India can inculcate in the people values that foster progress and development. There is wide agreement among media researchers that newspapers are crucial in cultivating consensus on public matters. The press ought to be not only a channel of information about what is happening in the region, but also be able to interpret social and political events and processes that have a bearing on the people. That calls for in-depth study and analysis, debates and discussions, and deliberations on all issues of concern that have important consequence for the people and the region. Such a discourse in the press would eventually lead to enacting policies that contribute to the welfare of the whole community. Failing to do so would be neglecting its important responsibility. The press need to consciously veer itself away from the stranglehold of trivial news-celebrities and their deeds and misdeeds, fashions, beauty contests, an excessive coverage of certain sports like cricket at the neglect of other sports. The press needs to desist from becoming opium of the masses, but instead be a torchbearer, a voice for the voice suppressed, a philosopher, friend and guide. Newspapers need to make serious policy shift if they are to be socially more responsible.

Chapter 8

Findings and Conclusions

In this concluding chapter we present the major findings of the research, the role of various stakeholders with regard to social responsibility of the press, suggestions based on the research, proposals for further research and conclusions.

8.1 Findings

While we presume that the newspapers under study have accepted the traditional roles and functions of the press as their primary guiding principles, we have analysed and tested certain hypotheses pertaining to the social responsibility of the print media. The study of newspaper content has resulted in the following findings:

The press is subject to various kinds of biases. The press has a gender bias which is unfavourable towards women, and is expressed overtly and covertly in numerous ways – disproportionate presence of women in the press, particularly in positions of importance and power; absence of women as sources of information and comment. Proportionately the news items dealing with women are very few, they enjoy less prominence, bringing to light the fact that a gender bias against women does exist. We must also admit the fact that news about women will be less in the

newspapers as long as politics continue to dominate our news pages, and as long as women continue to be only marginally present in politics. Newspapers thus point, though unwittingly, to an existential reality, that is, marginalisation of women in politics, governance, administration etc.

There is also an urban bias in the press, which is unfavourable to the rural areas and people. The urban news reports far outweigh the rural news as the data in our study indicates. Even events that happen in rural areas are often covered from the urban centers without the reporters visiting the place. Newspapers should maintain a healthy balance between rural and urban news.

The press has a religion bias manifested in inadequate coverage of news about religion, religious issues and events. Religion is often portrayed in the press when the event is negative and when there are scandals. Our study shows that religion has news value when there is something bizarre, scandalous or controversial. The coverage religion gets under normal circumstances is only marginal. On any given day, the religious content in the papers under study is scanty. This is quite surprising when we consider the fact that religion is very important for people at large, including large segment of newspaper readers. Obviously there is a bias against religion both in terms of the sheer quantity and quality of news reports on religion. Ignorance about religions among journalists is also evident in the reports published. Sometimes a religious controversy is played up to enhance reader interest. Bias, whatever may be its target and motif, affect the newspapers and erode their credibility.

The press focuses more on negative news (violence, conflict, killing, kidnapping) in relation to positive news, that is, news dealing with peace, harmony,

development and other such issues. Press has a penchant for sensational news and even tends to sensationalise news. Violent or sensational events get greater coverage in the newspapers than those that deal with peace and development. A militant gets more attention in the press than a peacemaker or social activist working for the welfare of others. Thus we can state that the press is inherently prone towards publishing the negative news.

Commercial interests dominate the press as against principles of service and social responsibility. Commercial interests and considerations prompt the press to ignore important issues, or cover inadequately news pertaining to the masses. 'Saleability' is often a dominant consideration than reader interest. As a cynic has observed, news is what is written behind the advertisements. In many newspapers the advertisement space is sold out first and only what remains is available to the editorial desk to carry news. Social responsibility of the press demands that the news and other columns receive precedence over advertisements.

The press has contributed to build social awareness, national integration, and promotion of communal harmony, literacy and education, participation in democratic processes and a host of other values. Geographically isolated from the rest of the country, the newspapers in Northeast have served as important catalysts in fostering nationalism, integration, political education, social consciousness, communal harmony and peace.

The press in India and Northeast has enjoyed considerable freedom to report, publish and circulate newspapers. The press has also enjoyed freedom of expression without serious attempts by the governments or other forces to muzzle or censure the

press or suppress the voice of the people. Militancy has, time and again, served as a deterrent to freedom of the press and the normal functioning of the press.

The press needs to effect serious changes in its content and coverage if it is to be socially more responsible and face the challenges posed by the new media, and the fast decline in newspaper readership worldwide. Besides competing with faster medium like television, which breaks the news ahead of the newspapers, the press devotes more energy and space to analysis and interpretation of events for the public.

Politics, crime and violence are given proportionately much greater importance in terms of space and prominence than news about several other important issues. This leads to the downgrading of other important news items or their omission altogether.

Newspaper content does not always fulfil the needs of the readers as they fail to address the important concerns of the audience. Only a small segment of what is important to people is being offered in newspapers. This trend manifests the great chasm that exists between the journalists and readers. The data available on the theme classification in the letters to the editor clearly illustrates this point. There is a mismatch between reader interest as evident in the letters to the editor and rest of the content.

Press persons seldom analyse the content of the newspapers, and are often not aware of the subject-wise distribution of content issues, space allotment and prominence given to specific issues or the gender or geographic distribution of content. There has been no serious effort to study and analyse the contents of the newspapers in the region. Though the two papers we studied have completed their

golden jubilees, there have been no serious efforts to analyse the content both for quality and quantity.

There exists hardly any training and on-the job formation for the newspaper staff including reporters, sub-editors and editors. Their punishing work schedules and low pay, impede them from enhancing their journalistic training and acquiring new skills. Journalists seldom get opportunities to attend professional courses and seminars to update themselves. Qualitative improvement in content would evolve only when journalists' competence increases.

Editors are often not critical enough and thus many errors and unethical practices creep into the pages of the newspapers. Elsewhere we have discussed about the erosion in the authority, role and identity of the editor. Smaller papers with low circulation and small budgets find it difficult to employ able and competent editors who can judiciously check, verify and edit the newspaper content.

Most of the persons working in the newspapers do not seem to be aware of the social responsibility of the press, ethical issues, press laws, rights of citizens etc. Many journalists in the field do not have any professional training and hence their work reflects inadequate knowledge of legal, ethical issues and their responsibilities to the public. Hence our study points out the fact that the press in the region is not socially responsible.

Newspapers do not adequately cover social issues. Our study has amply proved that the newspapers provide much space to report events and little space to cover issues. Reporting social issues need a greater degree of competence and depth of knowledge. Politics, crime and violence dominate the content of the press. A

serious effort to effect significant change in content is essential if the press is to live up to its social responsibility.

Newspapers give excessive coverage and prominence to celebrities at the detriment of neglecting rural poor and the majority of population. This trend is growing in the press, and is prompted by commercial considerations like profit and popularity among a section of the readers. We are currently witnessing a merging or even disappearance of the boundaries between traditional broadsheets and populist tabloids. The sensational coverage of trivial events is on the increase. Information is being presented as entertainment leading to the increase of what is being described as infotainment. Newspapers today are facing threat to their survival. It is worrying to note that some of the things being done by newspapers today seem to be determined by a mere survival strategy and the need to stay alive.

One can witness the absence of serious effort to separate news and opinion. News is becoming more interpretative, opinionated and sensational. Sometimes opinion masquerade as news: the distinction between the two seems to be fast blurring in the press. News reports tend to be more and more opinionated today as there is a growing tendency to include editorial comments and editorialise the news. Activist journalism and advocacy journalism are on the increase. Indian newspapers have for long preserved objectivity by reporting news without editorial comments, and this has been a distinguishing trait of the journalism in the country. This becomes obvious when we compare them with newspapers of other South Asian and Middle Eastern countries. Today the newspapers are heavily influenced by television. Several 24-hour news channels on television are available. A growing section of audience has

also moved away from reading newspapers to browsing the Internet for their daily fare of news, thus reducing the people's dependence on newspapers for breaking news. The readers expect from the newspapers depth of analysis, interpretation, elaboration and background information. While these are necessary and welcome, it is not a healthy trend when reporters tend to editorialise news. Journalism trainees need to be taught to clearly differentiate news from opinion. It is for the editors to ensure that any unhealthy practice in trying to editorialise news is checked.

The reports of the regional and local journalists tend to show greater degree of bias, exaggeration and lack of professionalism. Proximity and emotional involvement as well as political, ethnic, religious affiliation of journalists sometimes colour their writings and often reduce objectivity and impartiality. News reports sourced from international agencies and sources as well as national news agencies like PTI, UNI show greater journalistic professionalism. But the regional press is sometimes over dependent on the agencies for objectivity. Often the attribution is vague and generic. A story loses its objectivity and credibility when the source is simply cited as 'according to reports', 'according to sources' without full authentication or appropriate sourcing. Attributions like 'from reliable sources' do not necessarily enhance the credibility of a news item.

Many local reports based on press releases received by the newspapers indicate poor editorial quality. Adjectives and expressions intended to enhance public relations image of the issuing organisations damage the quality of the reports. Such coloured and exaggerated reports show ignorance or lack of professional training. Such stories, if published without major editorial changes, will obviously please those

who issue them, not serious readers. But the newspapers by lowering standards to publish such reports are undermining their own credibility and the readers' preference for well-written and objective stories.

In several of the local news stories the sources are not available or are vague. Some reporters take shelter under generalisations like 'sources said'. This can considerably reduce the quality of news, making reporters less responsible. There is also a serious lack of effort to contact and get a point of view from the people or institutions involved in or affected by the news. Sometimes facts can be verified but the reporter tends to take them for granted. By not checking with the sources, especially by not giving the accused party the opportunity to defend, deny, refute or clarify, the reporter or the newspaper can show that it is partisan and biased.

According to the data we have analysed, the reports by international and national agencies seem to be more responsible. Local reporters tend to take for granted the requirements of providing to the readers the source of news. Quite often press releases are left unedited and they border on becoming public relation pieces. Some of the news items do not have sufficient news value as they do not have relevance to a large section of the readers. Some of these items would do well if they are included in the classified columns. These include announcements of programmes and events organised by NGOs or institutions. If they are published at all, reporters ought to rewrite them in such a way as to sharply focus on the news angle.

8.2 Role of Stakeholders in Promoting Social Responsibility

The social responsibility of the press is the collective task of all, chief editor, editors, reporters, management or proprietor, ombudsperson and the public. Collectively we shall call them *stakeholders*. There are specific and common tasks that each category of persons needs to carry out. The press if it wishes to be socially responsible ought to have a thorough knowledge of social issues, awareness about gender matters, and need to pay greater attention to rural realities, ensure adequate balance between news, features, letters to the editor and advertisements. Social responsibility is a goal, which can be achieved only gradually and through a careful and judicious process, something to which every newspaper ought to be committed, and strive for in view of the serious nature of the mandate the newspaper enjoys in the eyes of the public.

8.2.1 The Editors

We include in this category the chief editor and others who have the responsibility of editing and deciding the content. The editors of newspapers play a decisive role in monitoring and checking the news content and their quality. The chief editor, as the head of the newspaper is truly at the helm of affairs and should take complete responsibility for the entire content of the paper. In the history of the Indian press, we have had many towering personalities as chief editors, whose voice was listened to and whose views were respected. We observe a gradual diminishing of the power and responsibility of the chief editor. In some of the big newspapers, the chief editors have become invisible, anonymous. Sometimes their powers have been

usurped by the management or proprietors. It is a worrying phenomenon for the newspapers if the proprietors and managers are becoming more powerful and control editorial policies and act in ways that would be detrimental to the authority of the editor. The former often decide or influence the content of the newspaper.

Many editors today do not seem have a clear policy guideline on which to make decisions regarding the day to day working of the newspaper. Editors often do not have a universal standard or criteria to apply in deciding which stories to use, which to reject. They invent their own criteria, and each editor makes a different choice. Working under deadline pressure each editor decides almost entirely what his or her paper will publish about the world the next day. At times commercial considerations such as circulation, advertisements affect editorial decisions and assume greater role in determining the content, be they news or editorial pages. In some instances, the place of the editor has been taken over by owners, advertisement managers, commercial heads and spin-doctors. If newspapers are to maintain its traditional independence, the role of the editor need to be reaffirmed and the figure of the editor is to be restored.

8.2.2 The Journalists

As society is becoming more complex and knowledge pool is expanding rapidly, journalists ought to be more than those who can write creatively and well. They need more professional training in journalism as well as knowledge of the social forces at work. They also need to learn about legal and ethical issues. They need a more comprehensive knowledge and education on gender, religions and social issues. Each newspaper should evolve internal guidelines regarding ethics and code of

conduct for journalists. Journalists are to be trained in reporting adequately and in a balanced and objective way. Overall reporting quality has to be improved especially with regard to local and regional news.

Journalists' training should include on the job refresher and updating programmes. Reporters, especially the inexperienced ones, need better editorial supervision. Editors should carefully check for quality, bias, credibility and objectivity. Rigorous adherence to principles would result in overall qualitative improvement.

8.2.3 Ombudsperson

One of the proposals to improve the functioning of the papers and to ensure that they are more responsible is the appointment of an ombudsperson. The ombudsperson is available to receive feedback and criticism from readers and address their grievances and offer redressal. The very fact that a newspaper appoints an ombudsperson is in itself an indication of its willingness to accept corrections and admit mistakes and address issues of redress; and that the readers are taken seriously.

The ombudspersons can be effective in promoting interaction and ensuring effective feedback system; they act as link between editors, managers, journalists and the public. They can also initiate feedback through opinion polls, surveys, and commissioned studies. Content analysis by independent teams under the supervision of the ombudsperson would be an effective way to check the content and quality of the press. The existence of an ombudsperson greatly enhances the credibility of a newspaper.

8.2.4 Newspaper Owners and Management

The newspaper owners and managers need to understand that the newspaper is not merely an industry or business but an activity that involves social obligations, and the welfare of the community. As Thakore (2007) observed, issues of press freedom, protection of journalists, key components of democracy are all connected not to the relation of the newspaper with the advertiser, but with the reader. A press that is overly concerned with profit, or too partisan in its political ideology at the cost of sacrificing its social responsibility, will lose its credibility and effectiveness. The owners and management must also be conscious of the fact that its primary responsibility is to the reader and not to the advertiser or sponsor. The task of business is to cater to markets that can bear to pay. The task of democracy is to cater to a population. So newspapers that serve a population will have different standards than newspapers that cater to markets. Newspapers that are driven by commercial interests as the primary purpose of their existence will exhibit a low level of reporting on social issues from those areas where the markets are not drawn. Whether the press tends to serve the market or the public, it is important that the management clarify what does a paper stand for, whether it is primarily a business, or is it driven by the motive of service with remuneration and costs.

Newspapers in India have considered a healthy balance to have a news, advertisement ratio of 60 to 40 percent. But for many big newspapers, the advertisement revenue is higher than the revenue from circulation. If not conscientious, the temptation for such papers is to serve the interests of the advertisers and those who pay more. The newspaper in such instances can become a

pawn in the hands of the highest bidder. They tend to oblige the interests of the better paying master, namely the advertiser.

The moral authority of a newspaper comes from the way it carries out its obligations to the public. It is important that the owners and management while bearing this in mind adopt a balanced approach to the various stakeholders: editors, advertisers and circulation departments, the public and the government.

8.2. 5 Public

The public is variously described as the reader, audience or consumer. The interest of the public is paramount in the functioning of a newspaper. A newspaper need to mirror not only the society in all its varied aspects, but must also help set the agenda for the public discourse on issues pertinent to the community as a whole.

8.2. 6 Government

The press has often been described as the Fourth Estate, indicating the role the press has in relation to governance. In a democracy, the press is expected to be the watchdog. This means the press must maintain its independence and should not become too close to the government or receive undue favours that might compel it to compromise with its principles. The government on the other hand should not interfere in the free functioning of the press, free expression of ideas, including criticism of public policies. Laws and regulations enacted by the government should be aimed at helping the press to carry out its functions, and not to control and impede its effective functioning.

8.2.7 Judiciary and Press Councils

The judiciary as the guardian of the Constitutions is to ensure that the freedom of the press is not impinged upon by any government interferences or policies. The judiciary must arbitrate in case of disputes between the government and the press. It can also oversee and support the functioning of other independent bodies like the Press Council, which monitor the free and fair practice of newspaper journalism. Legal disputes should be attended to without undue delay. The Press Council should become more visible and the public needs to be made conscious of its existence and role.

8.2.8 Press Institutes, Reviews, Professionals and Critics

Though the press institutes, media professionals and critics of media are not officially appointed with a mandate to control or govern the press, by virtue of their expertise, experience and acceptance by the public, they enjoy prestige and credibility. The press should consider and evaluate the guidelines and proposals of these and effect necessary changes in favour of rendering more effective service to the public through the press. The growing number of media reviews have an important role in critiquing the press and its functioning.

8.2.9 Schools of Journalism

One of the emerging institutions that can have a positive impact on the press is the growing number of schools of journalism and media training institutes. Formerly journalists did not have any formal training before they entered the profession, but today there are several institutes that confer university degrees in journalism. Media

studies including journalism have emerged as an academic discipline in its own right. Newspapers can draw much benefit by availing of the services of these schools and institutes to undertake serious research, study and documentation. Today there are several international and national professional bodies that have decisive impact on journalistic activities all over the world. They monitor curtailment of the freedom of the press, violence against journalists and other media persons, and play advocacy roles. Seminars and study sessions at national and international levels also enhance the professionalism of the press in various ways. A greater interface between the newspaper industry and these schools of journalism and bodies would augur well for a more effective functioning of the press.

8.3 Suggestions Based on the Research

In this concluding chapter it is necessary to propose certain suggestions that are the result of the research undertaken to examine the social responsibility of the press. The study analysed the nature and extend of bias in newspaper content. It has been conclusively proved that the press has a gender bias which is unfavourable to women. To overcome this bias, it is proposed that the press pay greater attention to address the issue by increasing the number of news and features and other items on women. Women should become more often sources of information and be quoted in the press. The number of photographs of women should be increased; they should be given more prominence in the news by placing stories in prominent places, by improving headline prominence, by increasing space allotment for female news. The

newspapers, if they are to successfully implement gender equality, must be willing to change the news perspectives and diversify the themes adopted for coverage. A greater emphasis on rural news, development issues etc can also contribute to improve gender balance. There should be a numerical gender balance in workplace by employing more women in the press and this should be followed by allocating them important decision making roles and responsibilities. Women related issues should not be relegated to women's supplement pages or women's magazines, as they are common concerns for all. Newspapers should also periodically review their content to examine the quantity and quality of gender related news.

In order to address the problem of urban bias in the press, it is proposed that the newspapers give greater attention to the coverage of rural news. This can be effected by increasing the number of rural reporters and ensuring that they file stories from the rural areas. More reporters and stringers can contribute stories from rural areas, if the press consciously strives to do so. Greater financial allocation to enable rural reports should be adopted. It is necessary that the newspapers periodically check and verify the rural-urban ratio of reports to see where they stand. The press must also diversify its choice of themes to give attention to issues relevant to the rural people, such as agriculture, animal husbandry, rural development or lack of it. Newspapers can ensure that every reporter is assigned, at least for a few days of the month, to visit rural areas and report from location.

As far as regional, national and international news items are concerned, the study revealed that the readers prefer regional news items as the first choice, followed by national news and international news items. The press needs to maintain a

judicious balance between regional, national and international news items, in that order, and reduce the prominence given to international news in favour of greater coverage of national issues.

The study has found the inadequate reporting and bias with regard to covering of religion. The reporters should be trained on religious matters and issues, and the press should give more attention to cover stories on religion. Religion reports, as has been found, are more negative, hence efforts should be made to give more positive stories related to religion in the press. Newspapers should, periodically, undertake content analysis to find out the number and kind of stories on religion published by them. Just as the newspapers have a sports correspondent, or other theme based beats, there could be a religion correspondent with a specific beat.

The data on positive and negative news in the newspaper content show that negative news are far more than positive news in number, and that they enjoy a higher prominence index and prominence impact. Journalists and media firms consider negative news as more newsworthy. It is necessary to adopt a balanced approach to the distribution of news between positive and negative items. Traditional news perspectives on newsworthiness of events should be re-examined and reformulated. Even when covering negative news items, the press can provide better background information which include causes of conflict or violence, and efforts being made to restore normalcy, peace and other steps to improve the situation.

The press needs to become socially more responsible if it is to fulfil its mandate. It is not enough that the newspapers have more responsible items than irresponsible items, but the press is bound to publish each and every story only after

duly verifying them and ensuring that they are objective and authentic. Even objective items need to be reported suitably with discretion and responsibility. Social responsibility will be enhanced when newspaper staff, public authorities and the consumers consciously strive to improve the quality of the newspaper content to make it more wholesome and constructive. The study also found that several important social issues are not covered adequately. When the press consciously adopt a policy focusing more attention on the marginalised, the minorities, rural population, women, and emphasise development issues, the press would become more responsible.

8.4 Proposals for Further Research

The methodology for carrying out content analysis of newspapers as developed and used in the present research can be effectively used by newspapers, students of journalism and those interested in specific issues as covered by newspapers or other media. Newspapers which occupy a prominent place in society, in democratic governance and in mirroring society in all its aspects, need to periodically examine the content and assess their own performance. Such studies could be further compared with data on reader expectations, public perception and audience feedback. The public needs to monitor and analyse how the press deal with certain issues pertinent to society. Greater exchange, interaction and review of the findings of content analysis with the public and the journalists would result in a mutually beneficial functioning of the press.

Content analysis as carried out in the present research offers immense possibilities to study newspapers and other print media. The present study was focused on two newspapers. We studied a large data sample of 312 newspaper issues and 24450 items. We examined thirteen different variables such as newspaper identity, news identity, column weightage, news location, space allotment, headline weightage, photo prominence, content quality, content value, geographic location, rural-urban location, gender and theme.

Following the same methodology, a smaller sample could be selected from several newspapers across the country for content analysis. One can also study the press coverage of just one single issue using content analysis. The programme and methodology we have developed are suited to undertake much smaller studies based on particular subjects or specific themes, or area specific content analysis. For instance, a researcher desiring to study any particular item such as news, editorials, photographs, letters to the editor etc. can do so. Similarly major headlines and related stories of a week in the country or a region could be studied to examine how the newspapers dealt with current issues. Pollock's studies dealing with specific issues as reviewed in the present study are a good model one can adopt in order to study how newspapers treat particular issues of relevance to the community. As more and more newspapers are becoming available on the internet, and as soft copies of archival materials are also becoming obtainable, it would be easy for researchers to use one of the computer programmes available for content analysis.

In our study we excluded study of advertisements. A possible further research is to undertake a comparative space allotment, prominence and content of the

advertisements. Study of advertisements would help understand the target group of the newspaper audience such as age, income category, consumer preferences etc. It is also important to study how advertisers control and influence the newspaper content, influence behaviour, social habits, policies etc. Researchers can also compare what is available as content with what is absent and what ought to have been published. Content analysis data could be compared and co-related with audience surveys and studies and reader preferences. The Impact study we have reviewed is a good model which has combined content study with reader expectations.

Newspaper content comes from a variety of sources: individual journalists employed by the newspapers (own correspondents), news agency sources or wire services, as they were formerly known, public relations persons of firms, NGOs, government agencies and the citizens. Comparing the news source with the content quality would help to understand issues like reporter or source bias and professional quality.

Content analysis could be used as an effective tool to do peer reviewing of news reports among journalists of a particular newspaper. This can help enhance professionalism and improve quality, journalistic integrity and ethics, and responsibility. Some newspapers make it mandatory for their journalists to read the publications of their competitors. Journalists could be asked to evaluate the contents of these papers through analysis of the data therein.

In the age of globalisation, when media giants are becoming more and more powerful, it is imperative to support small and medium newspapers through a process of public, private partnership. Promotion of vernacular press in Northeast India, in

particular, is vitally important in the context of linguistic pluralism that exists in the region. These need to be done without however, impinging on the freedom of the press and without excessive government control. Single newspaper towns need alternative newspapers so as to provide alternative perspectives and to end monopoly. The nature and quality of newspaper content will depend very much on professionalism on the part of the newspaper management and vigilance and active participation by the public. All stakeholders need to work collaboratively and concertedly to promote understanding and awareness about regional, national and global issues, to avoid bias and to ensure that the press is socially responsible.

Newspapers need to balance the content in favour of processes than events. Even violent events need to be reported in a perspective, and the press should not ignore causes of conflict that lead to violence or peace processes. We need to re-examine and if necessary reformulate the traditional definitions and canons of journalism.

8.5 Conclusion

The press, the oldest among the various modern means of communication, today faces a serious challenge from electronic media like radio, television and internet. In the light of sweeping changes affecting the press, we thought it pertinent to study the issue of social responsibility of the press. Our study primarily focused on Northeast India with a view to understand at some depth the role and function of the press in ushering in development, peace, good governance and democracy, ethnic

harmony and national integration. The print media is considered to have played a key role in enhancing these processes. The literature in various languages is growing steadily. However, no critical study of the social impact of the press has so far been done by any research scholar. Hence the present researcher undertook to study critically the social responsibility of the press through content analysis of two leading newspapers of the region.

The study entailed examining the nature, role and function of print media and its contribution to the country. When one observes the growth and expansion of the press in Northeast India, it is important to examine critically the social responsibility that the press ought to have. The study assumes particular importance in the light of a host of problems such as militancy, unrest, unemployment, lack of development, geographical isolation and ethnic and linguistic unrest. The region of Northeast India has sometimes been called 'a Paradise in Peril'. It may be observed that the entire region has been exposed to modern education and various modern media of communication only recently. The importance of the press can be gauged from the ever-growing number of newspapers and magazines in the region as well as interest in journalism studies.

Newspapers play a very vital role in ensuring that democracy is alive, vibrant and participatory. Traditionally newspapers are expected to fulfil the 'watchdog' function. The press is also called the *Fourth Estate* in view of the importance it has in influencing public policy and governance. These and other attributes of the press express beyond doubt that the press is expected to be socially responsible and that it is a reliable source of support to guide the destinies of nations and individuals.

The press in India was born and brought up under the constraints imposed by the colonial masters. However, the press has enjoyed great credibility because of the important role it played in the freedom struggle. Many of our patriots and freedom fighters recognised the press as a potential instrument to mobilise public opinion, to provide information and to debate issues, to launch nationwide non-violent protests, to fight against social evils, to promote unity and integrity of the vast sub-continent that India is. The press was seldom seen as a medium of entertainment or a means to make profit or as a lucrative business venture, but as a powerful tool to promote national interest and development.

The press in India possesses many admirable qualities. It has enjoyed the trust and confidence of the masses. Personalities like Raja Rammohun Roy, Mahatma Gandhi and a galaxy of eminent personalities, through their involvement in the field of newspaper journalism, have lent prestige to the profession and ennobled it. Some of the leading journalists and editors who followed the path traced out by them in the post-independent history of Indian journalism have carved out a niche for themselves for objectivity, impartiality, patriotism, professional integrity and ethical conduct.

But the phenomenon of the shrinking social space in newspapers has become a major concern for media critics and readers of newspapers. While television is seen by many others as a primarily entertainment medium, and radio a mouthpiece of the government by virtue of its ownership and management, it is to the press that many look up for information. Readers expect to get up-to-date and objective news through the pages of the newspapers. But our analysis of content shows that the space allotted

to social issues is fast shrinking in favour of trivia, issues of little consequence to most readers.

When critics raise this issue, media often take shelter under the alibi saying the people want such and such news. There has not been any accurate study on what the readers want, the papers have not done adequate research, and hence it is inaccurate to claim to know what the readers want.

Newspapers in the region have to address several issues if they are to maintain professionalism and accuracy and make qualitative improvement to win the respect and admiration of the readers. In our study, we have found stories repeated verbatim in different issues, public relations and even advertisement materials appearing as news and features. Many regular columns like the city round ups lack reporting quality. The journalists as well as the editors do not seem to duly weigh and evaluate the newsworthiness and news value of such stories. Many news items are devoid of appropriate sourcing.

Many stories are poorly edited or not edited at all. Sometimes stories that do not have relevance to readers are published. Inaccuracies of facts and language style also creep in into reports. Opinion and fact are often not clearly separated. The reasons for these range from poor judgment to lack of adequate training or presence of bias.

In the first decade of the 21st century, the press is faced with an unprecedented challenge from the new media. The press today is under serious pressure to meet the competition imposed by television, Internet and other media, and the compulsions of the market to make it a commercially successful business venture. Those who suffer

most in this dialectics seem to be the public, the readers. Social responsibility can be witted away gradually when the press forgets its basic commitment to serve the public, and focus on profit as its primary concern. The press also suffers from a lack of credibility when it compromises with its independence and indulges in party politics. In order that the newspapers be the voice of sanity, it must keep its head above the troubled waters of vested interest groups including political parties, government or other ideological groups.

Today circulation and marketability seem to be greatly influencing the choice of content, and the angle in which a particular event is presented. Newspapers create 'heroes' out of political leaders, film stars, singers and musicians, sports personalities or tear them down as 'villains'. In the process, they leave behind the majority who are left in the margins, the voiceless, the marginalised sections, the dalits, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, the rural and urban poor, who hardly ever figure in the pages of the newspapers.

The inadequate representation or near absence of these categories in the mainstream press often betray a lack of social commitment which the press ought to have. Lack of appropriate training about ethical, moral and social issues, absence of adequate laws and regulations within the press, affect journalistic work, making it socially less responsible. The press also has various kinds of bias, expressed covertly or overtly. Bias is expressed in the inadequate representation of ethnic or religious minorities as well as through gender disparity.

We have discussed at some length issues like newspaper's propensity to publish negative news at the cost of leaving out positive news and events. Some of

the inherent beliefs that the events reported should be negative, violent, need to be challenged. Hence, many pressure groups, including terrorists and militants, use violence to get media attention. It is in the psychology of reporters to highlight the negative, the bizarre, the unsavoury things that happen in society. It is unfortunate that the media favour a militant to a peace maker. Sometimes newspapers use several arguments to justify their action. These include, the claim that the readers want such news and features, that newspapers have an obligation to tell its readers what is wrong with society with a view to help improve it, that readers are wary of reading your paper if you highlight positive news and leave out negative news and so on. But one of the dominant factors that prompt newspapers to give greater attention to publishing negative news is a matter of financial motives, of wanting to boost sales and circulation. Journalism students and beginners are taught to report on the criteria such as human interest, prominence, timeliness, conflict, proximity, oddity, consequence.

There have been proposals to lessen the emphasis on conflict as a news criterion. If riots and civil disobediences merited news coverage, it was reasoned, so did some of the causes of the unrest. The conflict approach to news coverage gives prime news space and news time to those urging violence and ignores those working for non-violent solutions to various problems. Newspapers need to shift its emphasis from negative news to balance the news coverage with positive and neutral news items. Development communication and positive news need to be given more prominence in order to have a balanced and healthy newspaper.

Definitions of news are not static, and news values such as prominence, conflict, and timeliness have been modified in recent years, not always to the benefit of the news audience. The definitions and descriptions of news elements and criterion on what constitutes news taught in every school of journalism clearly imply that the unusual, negative, and conflict related events constitute news. Journalism needs to review such traditional attitudes towards news as negative and evolve a more balanced and comprehensive approach.

News is also a highly perishable commodity. News has a short shelf life. Nothing is as old as yesterday's news. It is helpful for news reporters, the news audience, and news sources to distinguish between the timeliness of news and the immediacy of news coverage. Timeliness speaks of the topicality and relevance of a news report. There is a danger that the substance of such a report will suffer in the quest for the glitter of immediacy.

Newspapers not only provide information, but manifest bias in numerous ways. The strong pro-urban bias is evident in the number and kind of news featured in the newspapers. Bias is also evident in the way individuals or ethnic communities, racial groups or people of different nationalities, genders, are portrayed by the press.

Gender bias and imbalance continue to be a matter of concern as far as responsible journalism is concerned. The press should show the way in effecting gender equality by giving greater representation to women in news reports, editorials and columns. They should be quoted more often as sources of news.

Similarly, stereotypes and glaring disparity in the way newspapers treat various themes point to the need to balance and diversify themes in order to ensure

that other issues are adequately covered. Religion, integral to people's lives, development news, peace efforts are some of the issues that need to get more attention, if the press is to effect a course correction.

In spite of fears to the contrary, the print media continues to hold its importance. The publishing industry is a fast growing one. New newspapers and magazines keep on being added to the already existing array of publications in India. No doubt, the television and internet have posed many challenges to the newspaper, but as far as India is concerned, there is no immediate threat of the press being extinct. The press has its own unique role and function in society.

Instead of resting on the laurels of the past, the newspaper industry in India needs to introspect on its current performance and plan for its future. The healthy press is not a finished product. It is ever evolving. It needs to reinvent itself everyday. The present study, it is hoped, would some way contribute to this on-going process of evolution, growth and change.

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Appendix

The Assam Tribune (1) Year 2003				
S. NO	MONTH	DATE	DAY	WEEK
1	January	2	Thursday	1-7
2	January	11	Saturday	8-14
3	January	20	Monday	15-21
4	January	26	Sunday	22-28
5	February	4	Tuesday	29-4
6	February	7	Friday	5-11
7	February	12	Wednesday	12-18
8	February	24	Monday	19-25
9	March	1	Saturday	26-4
10	March	7	Friday	5-11
11	March	16	Sunday	12-18
12	March	25	Tuesday	19-25
13	March	26	Wednesday	26-1
14	April	3	Thursday	2-8
15	April	14	Monday	9-15
16	April	17	Thursday	16-22
17	April	29	Tuesday	23-29
18	May	2	Friday	29-5
19	May	11	Sunday	6-12
20	May	14	Wednesday	13-19
21	May	24	Saturday	20-26
22	May	29	Thursday	27-2
23	June	7	Saturday	3-9
24	June	15	Sunday	10-16
25	June	20	Friday	17-23
26	June	30	Monday	24-30
27	July	1	Tuesday	1-7
28	July	9	Wednesday	8-14
29	July	20	Sunday	15-21
30	July	26	Saturday	21-27
31	August	1	Friday	28-3
32	August	6	Wednesday	4-10
33	August	11	Monday	11-17
34	August	21	Thursday	18-24
35	August	26	Tuesday	25-31
36	September	7	Sunday	1-7
37	September	11	Thursday	8-14
38	September	16	Tuesday	15-21
39	September	26	Friday	22-28
40	October	4	Saturday	29-5

41	October	7	Tuesday	6-12
42	October	15	Wednesday	13-19
43	October	20	Monday	20-26
44	October	28	Tuesday	27-2
45	November	6	Thursday	3-9
46	November	12	Wednesday	10-16
47	November	22	Saturday	17-23
48	November	28	Friday	24-30
49	December	7	Sunday	1-7
50	December	13	Saturday	8-14
51	December	18	Thursday	15-21
52	December	28	Sunday	22-28

The Assam Tribune (1) Year 2004

S. NO	MONTH	DATE	DAY	WEEK
53	January	1	Thursday	1-7
54	January	11	Sunday	8-14
55	January	19	Monday	15-21
56	January	23	Friday	22-28
57	January	31	Saturday	29-4
58	February	10	Tuesday	5-11
59	February	17	Wednesday	12-18
60	February	19	Friday	19-25
61	March	1	Monday	26-1
62	March	3	Wednesday	2-8
63	March	9	Tuesday	9-15
64	March	20	Saturday	16-22
65	March	25	Thursday	23-29
66	April	4	Sunday	30-5
67	April	10	Saturday	6-12
68	April	13	Tuesday	13-19
69	April	22	Thursday	20-26
70	May	3	Monday	27-3
71	May	5	Wednesday	4-10
72	May	14	Friday	11-17
73	May	23	Sunday	18-24
74	May	28	Friday	25-31
75	June	7	Monday	1-7
76	June	10	Thursday	8-14
77	June	20	Sunday	15-21
78	June	23	Wednesday	22-28
79	June	29	Tuesday	29-4
80	July	10	Saturday	5-11
81	July	14	Wednesday	12-18

82	July	22	Thursday	19-25
83	August	30	Friday	26-1
84	August	8	Sunday	2-8
85	August	10	Tuesday	9-15
86	August	21	Saturday	16-22
87	August	23	Monday	23-29
88	September	5	Sunday	30-5
89	September	11	Saturday	6-12
90	September	16	Thursday	13-19
91	September	20	Monday	20-26
92	September	29	Wednesday	27-3
93	October	5	Tuesday	4-10
94	October	15	Friday	11-17
95	October	20	Wednesday	18-24
96	October	28	Thursday	25-31
97	November	6	Saturday	1-7
98	November	7	Sunday	7-13
99	November	15	Monday	14-20
100	November	26	Friday	21-27
101	November	30	Tuesday	28-4
102	December	7	Tuesday	5-11
103	December	15	Wednesday	12-18
104	December	19	Sunday	19-25

The Assam Tribune (1) Year 2005

S. NO	MONTH	DATE	DAY	WEEK
105	January	4	Tuesday	1-7
106	January	12	Wednesday	8-14
107	January	20	Thursday	15-21
108	January	23	Sunday	22-28
109	February	4	Friday	29-4
110	February	7	Monday	5-11
111	February	12	Saturday	12-18
112	February	24	Thursday	19-25
113	February	27	Sunday	26-4
114	March	8	Tuesday	5-11
115	March	16	Wednesday	12-18
116	March	19	Saturday	19-25
117	March	28	Monday	26-1
118	April	8	Friday	2-8
119	April	14	Thursday	9-15
120	April	19	Tuesday	16-22
121	April	27	Wednesday	23-29
122	April	30	Saturday	30-6

123	May	8	Sunday	7-13
124	May	20	Friday	14-20
125	May	23	Monday	21-27
126	May	31	Tuesday	28-3
127	June	6	Monday	4-10
128	June	11	Saturday	11-17
129	June	19	Sunday	18-24
130	June	30	Thursday	25-1
131	July	6	Wednesday	2-8
132	July	11	Monday	9-15
133	July	19	Tuesday	16-22
134	July	28	Thursday	23-29
135	August	3	Wednesday	30-5
136	August	6	Saturday	6-12
137	August	14	Sunday	13-19
138	August	25	Thursday	20-26
139	August	31	Wednesday	27-2
140	September	4	Sunday	3-9
141	September	13	Tuesday	10-16
142	September	17	Saturday	17-23
143	September	26	Monday	24-30
144	October	1	Saturday	1-7
145	October	13	Thursday	8-14
146	October	17	Monday	15-21
147	October	25	Tuesday	22-28
148	October	30	Sunday	26-1
149	November	2	Wednesday	2-8
150	November	12	Saturday	9-15
151	November	21	Monday	16-22
152	November	23	Wednesday	23-29
153	December	4	Sunday	30-6
154	December	13	Tuesday	7-13
155	December	15	Thursday	14-20
156	December	24	Saturday	21-27

The Shillong Times (2) Year 2003

S. NO	MONTH	DATE	DAY	WEEK
157	January	3	Friday	1-7
158	January	12	Sunday	8-14
159	January	21	Tuesday	15-21
160	January	22	Wednesday	22-28
161	February	1	Saturday	29-4
162	February	10	Monday	5-11
163	February	13	Thursday	12-18

164	February	21	Friday	19-25
165	February	27	Thursday	26-4
166	March	10	Monday	5-11
167	March	12	Wednesday	12-18
168	March	25	Tuesday	19-25
169	March	30	Sunday	26-1
170	April	5	Saturday	2-8
171	April	9	Wednesday	9-15
172	April	22	Tuesday	16-22
173	April	27	Sunday	23-29
174	May	2	Friday	29-5
175	May	10	Saturday	6-12
176	May	15	Thursday	13-19
177	May	26	Monday	20-26
178	June	1	Sunday	27-2
179	June	3	Tuesday	3-9
180	June	13	Friday	10-16
181	June	21	Saturday	17-23
182	June	26	Thursday	24-30
183	July	7	Monday	1-7
184	July	9	Wednesday	8-14
185	July	18	Friday	15-21
186	July	23	Wednesday	21-27
187	August	2	Saturday	28-3
188	August	10	Sunday	4-10
189	August	14	Thursday	11-17
190	August	18	Monday	18-24
191	August	26	Tuesday	25-31
192	September	4	Thursday	1-7
193	September	9	Tuesday	8-14
194	September	21	Sunday	15-21
195	September	27	Saturday	22-28
196	September	29	Monday	29-5
197	October	8	Wednesday	6-12
198	October	17	Friday	13-19
199	October	22	Wednesday	20-26
200	November	2	Sunday	27-2
201	November	4	Tuesday	3-9
202	November	10	Monday	10-16
203	November	20	Thursday	17-23
204	November	28	Friday	24-30
205	December	6	Saturday	1-7
206	December	14	Sunday	8-14
207	December	18	Thursday	15-21

208	December	22	Monday	22-28
The Shillong Times (2) Year 2004				
S. NO	MONTH	DATE	DAY	WEEK
209	January	3	Saturday	1-7
210	January	11	Sunday	8-14
211	January	20	Tuesday	15-21
212	January	23	Friday	22-28
213	February	2	Monday	29-4
214	February	11	Wednesday	5-11
215	February	12	Thursday	12-18
216	February	20	Friday	19-25
217	February	28	Saturday	26-1
218	March	2	Tuesday	2-8
219	March	14	Sunday	9-15
220	March	17	Wednesday	16-22
221	March	29	Monday	23-29
222	April	1	Thursday	30-5
223	April	10	Saturday	6-12
224	April	19	Monday	13-19
225	April	21	Wednesday	20-26
226	April	27	Tuesday	27-3
227	May	9	Sunday	4-10
228	May	14	Friday	11-17
229	May	20	Thursday	18-24
230	May	26	Wednesday	25-31
231	June	6	Monday	1-7
232	June	8	Tuesday	8-14
233	June	20	Sunday	15-21
234	June	26	Saturday	22-28
235	July	2	Friday	29-4
236	July	8	Thursday	5-11
237	July	17	Saturday	12-18
238	July	22	Thursday	19-25
239	August	1	Sunday	26-1
240	August	6	Friday	2-8
241	August	10	Tuesday	9-15
242	August	16	Monday	16-22
243	August	25	Wednesday	23-29
244	September	5	Sunday	30-5
245	September	11	Saturday	6-12
246	September	13	Monday	13-19
247	September	22	Wednesday	20-26
248	September	28	Tuesday	27-3

249	October	8	Friday	4-10
250	October	14	Thursday	11-17
251	October	24	Sunday	18-24
252	October	28	Thursday	25-31
253	November	6	Saturday	1-7
254	November	9	Tuesday	7-13
255	November	15	Monday	14-20
256	November	24	Wednesday	21-27
257	December	3	Friday	28-4
258	December	5	Sunday	5-11
259	December	14	Tuesday	12-18
260	December	25	Saturday	19-25

The Shillong Times (2) Year 2005

S. NO	MONTH	DATE	DAY	WEEK
261	January	2	Sunday	1-7
262	January	11	Tuesday	8-14
263	January	20	Thursday	15-21
264	January	24	Monday	22-28
265	February	2	Wednesday	29-4
266	February	5	Saturday	5-11
267	February	18	Friday	12-18
268	February	22	Tuesday	19-25
269	March	2	Wednesday	26-4
270	March	7	Monday	5-11
271	March	13	Sunday	12-18
272	March	24	Thursday	19-25
273	April	1	Friday	26-1
274	April	2	Saturday	2-8
275	April	9	Saturday	9-15
276	April	17	Sunday	16-22
277	April	29	Friday	23-29
278	May	2	Monday	30-6
279	May	12	Thursday	7-13
280	May	17	Tuesday	14-20
281	May	25	Wednesday	21-27
282	May	29	Sunday	28-3
283	June	4	Saturday	4-10
284	June	16	Thursday	11-17
285	June	20	Monday	18-24
286	June	28	Tuesday	25-1
287	July	8	Friday	2-8
288	July	13	Wednesday	9-15
289	July	17	Sunday	16-22

290	July	29	Friday	23-29
291	July	30	Saturday	30-5
292	August	11	Thursday	6-12
293	August	15	Monday	13-19
294	August	24	Wednesday	20-26
295	August	30	Tuesday	27-2
296	September	5	Monday	3-9
297	September	15	Thursday	10-16
298	September	18	Sunday	17-23
299	September	24	Saturday	24-30
300	October	4	Tuesday	1-7
301	October	14	Friday	8-14
302	October	19	Wednesday	15-21
303	October	22	Saturday	22-28
304	November	1	Tuesday	26-1
305	November	4	Friday	2-8
306	November	10	Thursday	9-15
307	November	21	Monday	16-22
308	November	27	Sunday	23-29
309	November	30	Wednesday	30-6
310	December	11	Sunday	7-13
311	December	16	Friday	14-20
312	December	27	Tuesday	21-27

PARTICULARS OF THE CANDIDATE

NAME OF THE CANDIDATE	George Plathottam
DEGREE	Doctor of Philosophy
DEPARTMENT	Department of Library and Information Science
TITLE OF DESSERTATION	Press and Its Social Responsibility in Northeast India: A Content Analysis
DATE OF PAYMENT OF ADMISSION	27-07-2007
APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL	
1 BPGS	09-05-2006
2 SCHOOL BOARD	12-05-2006
REGISTRATION NO.& DATE	1048 of 12-05-2006

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Head

Department of Library and Information Science