

A Study of the Newspapers of Assam
and their Editorial Policies,
1954-78.

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This is to certify that Shri Arabinda Mazumdar has prepared the thesis on A Study of the Newspapers of Assam and their Editorial Policies, 1954-1978 under my guidance according to the regulations in force and that this work, which is the result of his own investigation, was not submitted either in part or in whole for any degree of any other University.

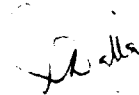

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PREFACE

The mass media particularly the newspapers in the complex society of to-day are playing an important role in the Socialist as well as Capitalist countries. Irrespective of whether the Government is democratic or totalitarian, the need for mass media is there. The only difference and this is a vital difference - is that in the case of totalitarian countries, mass media function under a system of total control in which free expression of opinion is not allowed while in democratic countries the method used is one of persuasion.

However, the mass media specially the newspapers all over the world have been playing a vital role in the political, social and economic fields. They act as the catalysts in bringing about changes in the country. They also act as the spokesman of the people, play sometimes the role of the Opposition both inside and outside Parliament, educate the people and detect the breakdown in the social and political systems.

On the other hand the mass media can mislead the people and nation by suppressing the news, the publication of which may be vitally important in the interest of the country. They create a sensation by high-lighting the most important news in the front or prominent page of the newspapers. Sometimes, one-sided exaggerated statement is repeated in different forms with different captions. Thus make-up of the main page or

important space is devoted to the spate of adjectival exuberance and news of much greater importance is jettisoned to the less important page. The impact of this kind of 'slant' and 'splash' make-up on the society is dangerous and harmful. Significantly, the newspapers with broader and neutral outlook will treat all the news only for their proper news value.

It is in this context that the present study of the newspapers of Assam from 1964 to 1978 begins. The purpose of the study is to examine the growth, and economic viability of the Press and also to evaluate the other roles of the newspapers of Assam which have completed 133 years of chequered history since the birth of the first newspaper "Arunodoi" in 1846. During the period under study many important events took place in Assam, as for example, the language movement, creation of separate Naga and Hill State (Nagaland and Meghalaya). Moreover, during this period Assam also passed through political vicissitudes resulting from the General Elections which led to the change of Ministry of both in the State and Centre. Being a student of journalism, my main focus of study will be the treatment of these important events by the newspapers of Assam. To arrive at the avowed objective, it would be necessary to deal with the organisations of these newspapers and also their ownership and control.

Although the Assamese journalism has completed a long period of its existence yet there has been no study by any researcher or any organisation like Assamiya Sahitya Sabha

to evaluate its importance in the development of socio-political and literary consciousness of the Assamese people or the people of Assam. Only a few historians and Assamese literateurs made some casual references to the Assamese Press. Scattered facts, with little or no figure and certainly no inference drawn from them, do not make a history of the Press. Little attention has been focussed on the role of the newspapers of Assam in the political system and on the complex relationship between the Press and the Government, the Press and the Public. This study is a first attempt to fill up this gap.

I chose to study the subject from 1954-78 because during this period all the important events affecting the State of Assam and India as a whole had taken place. I have taken different types of events in different chapters for broader examination of the role of the Press from various angles. The method adopted is primarily historical and analytical but resort has also been had to the 'content analysis' and 'interview'.

Since the Assamese and English language newspapers have been dominant with their large circulation, I have chosen to study only the Assamese dailies and weeklies and English newspapers published in the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam. Hence the newspapers published from the district of Cachar, which has been dominated by the Bengali-speaking people, have been excluded from this study.

The present study has been done on the basis of the old copies of the Assamese language- dailies and weeklies and English newspapers such as the Assam Tribune and Assam Express - of the relevant period that has been taken for consideration in this project. The old copies of the newspapers were available at the National Library, Calcutta, and at various offices of the newspaper enterprises at different districts of Assam. I have also gone through the several records of the Government of Assam in connection with this study. Whatever comments have been made in this study is purely on the basis of these records. It is hoped that more facts when unearthed would not bias this study.

The study has been divided into the following chapters: Chapter I which is an introduction to the subject deals with the value and role of the mass communication.

Chapter II presents a brief history of the Press in India in general and Assam in particular upto 1954. It also deals in details with the role of the Christian missionaries who heralded the vernacular Press in India. An analysis of the aims of the Press in Assam before and after independence has also been made in this chapter.

Chapter III examines the pattern of the growth of the Press in Assam in relation to the socio-economic factors such as education, industrialization, urbanisation and per capita income. An analysis of the style and content of the newspapers also helps determine the various roles of the Press, their

Attitudes towards the society and the Government. It is equally important to know not only what that content was but what factors governed the choice of the content. It is very difficult to ascertain which feature or editorial of a newspaper is a consequence of which pressure. The style and the contents are a product of compromise of frequently competing forces. The style and the content have a relation with the political system of a country. It varies alternatively with the change of Ministry or Government. This chapter also deals with the economics, organisation and ownership of the Press since these are fundamental to the very existence of a newspaper. Who and what controls the contents of a newspaper - the editor, the proprietors, or the level of advertisement or a belief in the importance of scoops ?

Chapter IV examines the language movement which vitally affects the society and people. The process of integration is hampered by the communal tension and violence as it results in hardening the suspicions and prejudices. The study of this explosive problem may contribute to an understanding and even solution of the most acute and baffling problem of Indian politics - the unending human conflicts which raged the country in the past and is continuing even to-day.

Chapter V deals with another important problem - the Hill People's demand that had already affected the rich soil of Assam. The political map of Assam underwent tremendous change during the past one decade. The study of this problem may help trace

out the forces working behind the rebels.

Chapter VI intends to examine the role of the Press on the important national events like J.P. movement in Bihar, 1974, the Allahabad Judgment of 1975, and pre-election scene after the lifting of the Press Censorship in 1977.

Chapter VII - the concluding chapter sums up the findings and draws appropriate conclusions from them.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

MASS COMMUNICATION : VALUE AND ROLE

Man throughout history has tried to know his environmental world and mass communication in one form or another, primitive or sophisticated, adequate or not, has been one of the means of knowing it. Mass communication serves man's unchanging need even though, the society out of which it springs, must itself keep changing. Even when human society was that of primitive tribes huddling in caves against the cold and the ever-present dangers, it had certain essential information needs in addition to the sort of everyday information exchanged in courtship, family life, children's play or casual conversation¹. The tribe had to post a watchman, for instance, to scan the horizon and report on dangers and opportunities.

They lived their entire lives in relatively small groups or in 'small state' or 'Republic'² in a face-to-face communication or relationship when 'public criers' and 'beating the drums'³ served as the only medium for communicating ideas.

After the invention of printing press by William Caxton in 1476 in England - the first mechanical device by which man could share his thoughts with others on an extended scale - people had

1. Schramm, Wilbur, Mass Media and National Development, P.28, 1964
2. Altkar, A.S., State and Government in Ancient India, P.124, 1968
3. Berster, Arthur, Palmer, H.H., Ingraham, H.G., Introduction to Advertising, P.4, 1964

no need to go through the cramped handwriting of manuscripts or depend on the 'beating of drums' or 'public criers'. The rise of printed communication threw not only a challenge to the primitive means of communication but also led to the development of language and literature. There was then a gradual growth of newspapers, journals, and pamphlets. For quite a long time the printed media or newspapers—'editing' of which has been known as 'Journalism'⁴ alone informed and enlightened the public, interpreted events and issues, challenged capricious authority and entertained the populace.

The communication revolution of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries brought into the world the motion pictures, radio and television which joined the printed or Press media in disseminating information and ideas. Because of their electronic nature and the variety of ways in which they have carried out their functions they have made 'Journalism' as 'obsolescent' term for denoting all media'⁵.

Definition

The word 'communication' is derived from the Latin 'Communis' which means "to make common, to share, to impart, to transit".⁶ Communication helps people control one another's behaviour and

4. Peterson, Jenson and Rivers—The Mass Media and Modern Society, P. 6, 1975

Vide also Mansfield, F.J., The Complete Journalist, P. 2, 1936

5. Peterson, Op.Cit., P. 3

6. Kuppaswamy, B., Communication and Social Development in India, P. 1, 1976

unite themselves in groups. It is a means for achieving mutual understanding. Peterson, Jensen and Rivers defined communication as : 'Communication is the process of communicating, communications is the technical means used to carry out the process . It is all the ways by which a person influences another and is influenced by him. The ways may be direct, as when a teacher talks to a student, or indirect as when a tan-tan or television station carries the message. Communication is the carrier of social process; it makes interaction within humankind possible and enables men to become and remain social beings.⁷

Gunnar R. Waisselund, defined mass communication as ' a multi-disciplinary, multi-phased, multi-purpose activity⁸, which has at least three dimensions. (1) Information must penetrate into the society, in order to give people the grounds for actions and reactions. (2) But information must also permeate the social activities among groups of people, among individuals and their equals, (3) Furthermore, when ideas have been discussed, developed and refined, the conclusions must be brought to the attention of the decision-makers in order that they may be capable of deciding on priorities on the basis of as much information as possible from outside, from within, from above and from below. C.H.Cooley observed: 'By communication is here meant the mechanism through which human relations exist and develop all the symbols of the

7. Peterson, Jensen Rivers - Op.Cit., P.14

8. Waisselund, Gunnar R. Director, Dept. of Mass Communication UNESCO. From information to communication system in development - Udara Vol. 10, No.1 Feb. 1973, P.52

mind, together with the means of conveying them through speech and preserving in time. It includes the expression of face, attitude and gesture, the tones of the voice, words, writing, printing, railways, telegraphs, telephones and whatever else may be the latest achievements in the conquest of space and time.⁹

Charles R. Wright defined: "In the popular usage the term prefers to such particular mass media as television, motion pictures, radio, newspapers and magazines. But the use of these technical instruments does not always signify mass communication. To illustrate, a nationwide telecast of a political speech is mass communication; closed circuit television over which a small group of medical students observe an operation is not.¹⁰ So mass communication is directed towards relatively large and heterogeneous audiences that are anonymous to the communicator.

Communication is the means man has for organising and changing his social life. The social process depends upon the exchange and transmission of knowledge and knowledge in turn depends upon communication. By communication man maintains his social values and institutions from generation to generation. Communication is the human relationship involving the perception, motivation and other psychological process. People who read newspapers, listen to radio programme, or view televisions and

9. Cooley, C.H., Social Organization, P.81

10. Wright, Charles R., Functional Analysis and Mass Communication P.82 (ed) Lewis and Miller, 1964.

films cannot remain a passive individual after hearing all the messages. Certainly, they will be influenced by the communication in their actions.

At each step of human history, the formulation of law and the organisations of social structure have been conditioned by the nature of the message of communication. All social organisations rest upon communication. Indeed, all social structures rest upon and evolve within the framework of the methods of communication available to them at any given time. There appeared successively: the tribes and their foot-messengers and tentens, the kingdoms of cavalry and royal envoys, the empires of chariots, from pre-historic times to the times of Babylon or Rome and these all show that the development of society depends largely upon the nature of communication.

Where do we stand to-day ? We may call it the atomic age or the space age. To-day we live in a revolution of mass communication. There are countless opportunities open to us. Thanks to electronic innovations, communication satellites, computers, new video-recording facilities, cable television, portable production equipment for sound and picture transmission by wave guides, radio-film and T.V. - all these are but a few aspects of the communication explosion. So the society has gone from a period of scarcity to one of abundance. To-day mass communication has enveloped the entire globe.

Importance of mass media

The founder of democracy had always recognised the importance of mass media. James Madison, one of the founders of American democracy, said: " Knowledge will forever govern ignorance. And a people who mean to be their own governors, must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives. A popular government without proper information or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce, or a tragedy, or perhaps both.¹¹ Almost in the same language Thomas Jefferson, American President, said : " Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspaper or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.¹² The strongest statement in support of the media was made by Edmund Burke, a British political philosopher and well-known orator. He said, " There were three Estates in Parliament; but in the Reporters' gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than they all.¹³ Ramsay MacDonald in 1934, when he was the British Labour Prime Minister, paid a most striking tribute : " Journalists belong to a great and honourable profession. The journalist is a man whose craft means that by instinctive ability he can gather together and co-ordinate all those feelings that go to the making of public opinion, who has got an instinctive sense of what the interests of the people are, and who, with skill and mastery, can sit down and under the

11. Gaillard Hunt(ed), The writings of James Madison.
Vol. 4, P.308, 1949

12. Rivers, Op. Cit, P.3

13. Mansfield, Op.Cit, P.1

most trying and impossible conditions produce the finished article.¹⁴ Another appealing tribute came from Lord Rosebery in 1913, when he was the Chief Justice of England:" I believe in the power of the Press. I believe in the potentiality of the Press. I believe even more in the responsibility of the Press". He further said ; "The power of the newspapers was immense, and it was no exaggeration to say that they would mould public thought and opinion into almost any shape they chose.¹⁵

Two concepts of free Press.

They always hold that a society that wishes to develop its own resources and to achieve the fullest development of its citizens' talents and characters must have a system of communication to match its inspiration. Such system must be "free in its express and open in its access and as rich in its range as the potential of the community it serves.¹⁶ On the question of a "free" Press or "free" media there are two concepts—the Western and the Soviet.¹⁷ The concept of a "free" Press, as conceived in the Western democratic countries, fundamentally differs from that of the communist countries. In democratic countries any man or a group of persons or an institution or a business enterprise is at liberty to publish and circulate any newspaper or magazine or book which seeks to inform people and

14. Ibid - P.6

15. Ibid - P.7

16. Evans, Harold, Editor, The Sunday Times, London, Stewardship of Mass Media, P.1, One Asia Assembly Seminar - 1973.

17. Peterson, Jenson, Rivers, Sp. Cit. P.83

to criticise the policies of the Government. A free Press is characterised by criticism and counter criticism, clash of ideas, facts and opinions. It is a process which seeks to ferret out truth.

Another criterion of a "free" Press in a democratic country is that a "free" Press rests on the private ownership. A free enterprise is a pre-requisite of a free Press. Sasman Fyiri, Secretary General of Wihon Shinbun Kyokai, Tokyo observed: "There can be no true criticism unless there is a clear demarcation between those who criticise and those who are the subjects of this criticism. Thus, newspapers, if they are to fulfil their critical functions should be under private ownership."

In democratic countries the Press and other media have a wide latitude of freedom to aid men in their quest for truth. To bring out truth the media men must be given a free access to information and ideas. John Milton in his famous 'Areopagitica', which has been regarded as a classic defence of a free Press, pleaded for an absolute liberty of the Press and observed that any restriction on Press would harm the mankind. He further argued that 'licensing is the evil child of evil parents.'¹⁸ Licensing hinders man's search for truth. Truth is ferreted out in free and open encounter of ideas. Milton also said that the surest way of suppressing

18. Fyiri, Sasman, Stewardship of the Mass Media, P.4
One Asia Assembly-1973, New Delhi.

19. Peterson, Jensen, Rivers, Op. Cit., - P.80.

falsehood was to have it refuted. 'Licensing discourages writing, it affronts learning, spells an end to teaching, and makes ignorance a virtue.²⁰

But Milton's concept of free Press was discarded by Lord Mansfield, who sat as Chief Justice on the King's Bench in England in 1760. Lord Mansfield observed that the Government had 'no right to suppress any material' before it was published. But the authority had the right to punish publishers of materials which caused damage as determined by the common law and Parliament.

Thomas Jefferson, American President in 1801, another exponent of free Press, holds that freedom of the individual was the core of democracy. An important function of the Press, he believed, was to safeguard personal liberties, to serve as a watch dog to sound the alarm whenever peoples' rights were infringed. 'Every Citizen, he said, 'may freely speak..... his sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of that liberty'.²¹ Here Thomas Jefferson also differed from the theory of right of unlicensed printing as advocated by John Milton. The liberty of the Press means the liberty of publishing whatever any member of the public thinks fit on any subject without any preliminary license, but he will be held responsible for violation of people's rights.

Raja Ramchun Roy, a staunch supporter of a free Press, also strongly denounced the restrictions on the Press. In his historic

20. Ibid. P.93

21. Drucker, Herbert, Communication is Power, P.237, 1973

petition to the Supreme Court in defence of freedom of the Press, he said, : " Every good ruler, who is convinced of the imperfection of human nature, and reverences for the Eternal Governor of the World, must be conscious of the great liability to error in managing the affairs of a vast empire; and therefore, he will be anxious to afford every individual the readiest means of bringing to his notice whatever may require his interference. To secure this important object, the unrestrained liberty of publication, is the only effectual means that can be employed. And should it ever be abused, the established law of the land is very properly armed with sufficient powers to punish those who may be found guilty of misrepresenting the conduct or character of the Government, which are effectually guarded by the same laws to which individuals must look for protection of their reputation and good name."²²

The concept of a "Free" Press, which meant in earlier days merely freedom from Government control for owners and publishers and freedom from governmental censorship and licensing requirements has now grown to mean freedom from all restraints business as well as governmental that interfere with its proper functioning. It has come to refer to the freedom of readers to know, as well as the the freedom of proprietors to speak. It also means to-day freedom of access to its pages, as well as freedom to read what is printed

22. Indian Journalists' Association, Golden Jubilee, Commemoration Volume - 1973, P.3-4

thereon, freedom to receive fair wages as employees, as well as reasonable profits as owners.

23

Nowadays mass media are owned by the big 'business magnates'. Most of the editors are not the owners of the newspapers. They are the employees of the media organization. Media owners do not confine themselves to the criticism of Government's policy or to the suppression and distortion of news, they are more interested in influencing the policies of the Government in their favour. Media which are subsidiary to some other industry cannot be independent and a publisher who does not live by media alone but has more profitable business outside the media industry cannot be expected to have a sense of responsibility in relation to the public and the nation. The recognition that political as well as economic power can be achieved through ownership or control of the media consequently leads to a concentration of media management in free societies. In free societies there is a continuing tendency for media chains to add to their holdings. 'In the United States, 200 daily newspapers are now owned by six Press groups', said Leonard Sussman. He further said: 'Despite the efforts of the Federal Communication Commission to limit concentration of radio and T.V. ownership, the news programmes of the major television and radio networks tend to influence those affiliates owned independently.'²⁴ Concentration of media management in the hands of a few results in the lack of competition which is the essence of democracy. Consequently there is a great erosion of the freedom of Press and other media.

23. Sussman, Leonard, *The Mass Media: Opportunities and Threats*, *The American Review*, Vol. 24, No. 2, P. 88, Winter, 1980.

24. Ibid.

In the Marxist-Leninist concept a 'free' Press stands at the very top of 'the hierarchy of the means of propaganda and agitation.'²⁵ The Marxist-Leninist theory sees the mass media as a channel through which the party can influence the masses, communicate with them and direct them in the process of constructing classless society ; it sees the Press as a tool of education and organiser of the society on the principles of scientific socialism. Lenin himself dealt with the problem of utilizing the Press and other mass media in the struggle for power and in establishing and strengthening the party's supremacy over the masses in his work, What is to be done ? In the chapter 'Can a newspaper be a collective Organiser?', he defined the tasks of a Communist newspaper as :

"A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and collective agitator, but also a collective organiser. In this respect, it can be compared to the scaffolding erected around a building under construction, it marks the contours of the structure and facilitates communication between the builders, permitting them to distribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organised labour".²⁶

So in the communist countries the mass media are the tools for conducting mass propaganda and agitation and for organising and mobilising the masses as far into the future as one can visualise.

25. Busek, Antony, How the Communist Press works, P.38, 1964

26. Lenin, Selected Works, Vol. I ,Page 251, 1970.

Lenin also said :²⁷ " The newspaper would become part of an enormous pair of Smith's bellows that would fan every spark of the class struggle and of popular indignation into a general conflagration".

The Soviet Press is in no sense a business venture— a means of investing capital for profit. It is also not conceived of as an instrument for expressing the opinions of individual publishers or as a means of reflecting or mirroring public opinion.²⁸ The Press in the Soviet Union is viewed as a major social force to facilitate the attainment of the society's goals which are determined by the communist party. So it is the party that controls the Press. The Soviet Press is expected to operate on the basis of the principle of 'militant loyalty'²⁹ to the party. Stalin himself had stated: " The Press is the prime instrument through which the party speaks daily, hourly, with the working class in its own indispensable language. No other means such as this for weaving spiritual ties between party and class, no other tool so flexible, is to be found in nature".³⁰

The Soviet Press has to fulfil the functions and tasks assigned to it by Marxist-Leninist Theory.³¹ The theory is that the Communist Press must be truthful, principled, partisan, ideological and dedicated to the cause of the working class.

27. Ibid P.254

28. Inkles, Alex, Public Opinion in Soviet Russia, P.126, 1960

29. Ibid, P.124

30. The Press in the Land of Socialism, Moscow, 1939, P.64

31. Raymond A. Baner and David B. Gleicher- 'Work of mouth communication in Soviet Union ed(Lewis and Dexter)P.414, 1964

What information and ideas shall pass through the media and also who shall have access to what information and ideas—are all determined by the communist party and the Government. The most important features of Soviet communication policy is the principle of monopoly. The official media are highly controlled and organized. Publication of printed materials contrary to the official policy is prohibited. All media, particularly the newspapers are mobilized for repetitive didactic campaigns.³²

The Soviet concept of Press freedom rejects the notion of absolute freedom in society. As Lenin said³³ "to live in a society and to be free from this society is impossible". The communist Press, therefore, cannot be free from communist society, it must be dependent on its leading force—the working class. The communist party is the outward, political expression of the will of that class, and therefore, the Press must depend on the party. Yet the Article 125 of the Soviet Constitution declares that "in conformity with the interest of the working people, and for the purpose of strengthening the Socialist system, the citizens of the U.S.S.R. shall be guaranteed by law: (i) freedom of speech (ii) freedom of the press (iii) freedom of assembly and rallies, (iv) freedom of street processions and demonstrations. These rights of the citizens shall be ensured by putting at the disposal of the working people and their organisations printing

32. Buzek, Antony, Op.Cit. P.61

33. Inkles, Alex, Op.Cit - P.136

presses, stocks of papers, public buildings, streets, communication facilities and other material requisites for the exercise of these rights.³⁴ Thus the Article 125 of the Soviet Constitution specifically mentions that the freedoms are guaranteed only " in conformity with the interests of the working people and " in order to strengthen the Socialist system". Since it is the party which determines what is in conformity with the interests of the people, it is the party which determines when one is free to exercise one's rights and when not. So in the Soviet Union exercising the rights of the freedom is subordinate to the goals of the society. Hence the role of responsibility that comes first in the communist country and the consideration of freedom is secondary to the responsibilities of the Press, and may be sacrificed if it is needed, whereas in the democratic country the " emphasis is³⁵ placed on freedom rather than on responsibility". Freedom of expression is the absolute value and the consideration of common good is secondary to the freedom of expression and may be sacrificed to that freedom. Antony Buzek said "The basic difference between the Western and the communist concepts of Press freedom is that in the West the stress is on freedom of expression, while in the communist society it is on the free³⁶ access to means of publication.

It has been argued by the communists that freedom of the Press in capitalist society is only for the rich few, who misuse

34. The Constitution of the U.S.S.R., Moscow, P.99, 1964

35. Inkle s, Op.Cit. P 139

36. Buzek, Op.Cit., P.62

it for their own interests. They hold the view that even where capitalist society formally permits freedom of expression, the system makes it impossible in practice for the workers, individuals or independent groups, who lack the capital necessary to launch a newspaper. Lenin himself stated "Freedom of the Press means in the capitalist country freedom for the rich to buy the Press freedom to utilise their wealth for the fabrication and forging of so-called public opinion." ³⁷ In the Soviet Union there could be no such things as abstract freedom of the Press. The 'uncontrolled freedom of information', said by the Soviet delegation in the U.N. Geneva Conference in 1948 can lead to a concentration of power over the mass media in the hands of a few and to the abuse of such freedom to the detriment of the majority. ³⁸ A second major aspect of the communist Press is the conception of what is news and how it should be treated. In the democratic country news is largely 'synonymous with events, incidents, and related 'timely' happenings or people. ³⁹ The concept of news in the United States or any other democratic country is expressed in the popular phrase. "If a dog bites a man, that's not news; but if a man bites a dog that is news." In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, not events but social processes are treated as news and regarded as being newsworthy. A news item in the Soviet Union is the process called 'socialist construction' ⁴⁰ that is the general effort to build up Soviet Society. The communist

37. Lenin, Collected works, Vol.28 , P 439

38. The democratic Journalist, the Journal of the International Organization of Journalist -P.19 ,1971

39. Inkeles, Alex, Op.Cit., P.128

40. Ibid, P.128

conception of economic processes or productions which are important factors in the development of society must form the basis of the informative part of the newspapers. Lenin said: "One of the most urgent tasks in socialist construction is to change the Press from an organ which is for the most part merely announcing political news into an important organ of economic re-education of the masses"⁴¹. The communists hold that news and information must suit the educational and organising tasks of the Press and that news must be 'predominantly of economic character'. The purpose of information is not commercialising news, but of educating the great mass of workers, and organising them under the exclusive direction of the party according to clearly defined objectives. 'Information is one of the instruments of the class war, not one of its reflections. As a result, an objective concern with events prevents information from being used in its true purpose, namely to organise the workers'⁴².

Thus the necessity to combine in news reporting the two demands the agitational and the informative led to two types of information: factual and creative. But N.G. Palgunov, the former general Director of the Soviet News Agency, TASS stressed facts alone. He said in his book, Principles of information in the Newspapers: TASS and its Role. 'Information is the literary reflection of a fact or facts concerning any sphere of life, knowledge, politics, culture, economics, science or technology'⁴³. He further said: 'News must be organised; otherwise

41. Busek, Antony, Op.Cit. P 169

42. The democratic Journalist, The Journal of the International Organisation of Journalists-P2. '76 - P.5

43. Palgunov, N.G. Principles of Information in the Newspapers: TASS & its Role - P.8, 1961

it is a mere account of events and happenings. News should not be merely concerned with reporting such and such a fact or event. News or information must pursue a definite goal; it must serve and support the decisions related to fundamental duties facing our Soviet society, our Soviet people marching on the road of gradual transition from socialism to communism. Information is agitation through facts; it must educate and instruct. In selecting the object of information, the author of an informative report must, above all, abandon the notion that just any fact or just any event has to be reported in the pages of the newspaper. The aim of information must be to present selected facts and events.

So at the root of the whole question of a free Press in the Western and communist country lie the philosophically different concepts of freedom, news, objectivity and truth stemming from the different ideological foundations.

Mass media and society.

Mass media whether in democratic or communist country are always agents of social change. They through the increasing number of newspapers, radios, televisions and cinemas can bring about a corresponding increase in the rate of social change.

Mass media can widen horizon. People in a traditional society perceive a quality of magic in the media when they first encounter them. They are a 'liberating force because they can break the bonds

of distance and isolation⁴⁵ and transport people from a traditional society to the modern society. It enables mobile persons to operate efficiently and helps develop the quality of 'empathy' in a changing world. Empathy is the capacity to see oneself in the other fellow's situation. This is an indispensable skill for people moving out of traditional settings.

The traditional society as Daniel Lerner said 'is non-participant, it deploys people by kinship into communities isolated from each other and from a center; without an urban-rural division of labour, people's horizons are limited by local and their decisions involve other known people in known situation.'⁴⁶

But the modern society is participant in that it functions by 'consensus'-individuals making personal decision on public issues must concur often enough with other individuals. The historic achievements of the participant society are that most people go to school, read newspapers, and vote in elections which actually decide among competing candidates and express opinions on many matters which are not their personal business.⁴⁷ Thus the media, by bringing what is distant near and making what is strange understandable can help to bridge the transition between traditional and modern society.

Mass media have three major tasks in society. Harold Lasswell defined them as: surveillance of the environment, co-relation of

45. Schramm, Wilbur, Op.Cit., P 127

46. Lerner, Daniel, The Passing of Traditional Society-P.48, 1964

47. Ibid, P.49

the components of society in responding to the environment, and transmission of the social heritage.⁴⁸ Wilbur Schramm has defined them as watcher, forum and teacher.⁴⁹ Surveillance of the environment means the collection and distribution of information concerning the events which happen. This corresponds to 'news' in the newspaper and journals. The second function of the media-correlation of the component of society - is the interpretation of the information and prescription for conduct in relation to these events. This refers to the editorials, and columnist's reactions. The third function- transmission of the social heritage-means that the knowledge, values and social norms are transmitted from one generation to next generation. To these three functions enumerated by Lasswell a fourth function-entertainment has been added by Charles R. Wright.⁵⁰

The 'news' is of great importance to the society. It has a utility value, it helps the people in their normal work and also in preventing disasters. The flow of news helps the normal functioning of the various institutions like stock market, transportation, Government Offices. A man may enhance his prestige in the society by keeping himself well informed about the contemporary events. A man may attain a high public status because the mass media report his activities. Lazarsfeld and Merton have said that the spreading

48. Lasswell, Harold, The Structure and Function of Communication in Society, P. 36, 1968

49. Schramm, Wilbur, Mass Communications: P. 18, 1968

50. Wright Charles, R. Functional Analysis and Mass Communication
Public Opinion Quarterly, 1960-P. 606

of news has also the function of enforcing the social norms, both positive and negative.⁵¹ The people speak of the social norms which are broadcast and which reinforce these norms.

Economic development

These functions of mass media - whether newspaper or radio of providing information and opinions on the experiences of other people and other nations, stimulate the desire of a people to emulate these experiences and help organise economic development. William B. Ward, Head of the Department of Communication Arts, Cornell University, New York, observed: "Mass communication is the one and only or even the most important factor in modernisation and development. It is not magic. It does not perform miracles by itself. But it is complementary and creates a climate of change."⁵²

Without communication, there cannot be any social development. Communication is predominant not only as an agent of change but also in absorbing societies themselves. Communication is an essential component in development work and it transmits knowledge to involve people in nation-building activities. Communication is 'occupying a greater and greater role as a productive force in society.'⁵³ and this evidently holds good in capitalist as well as socialist system. 'They' (mass media), as Wilbur Schramm said, 'are the great multipliers. Just as the machines of the Industrial Revolution are able

51. Lasarsfield and Merton, Mass Communication, P.181, 1948.

52. Ward, William, B., Mass Media in India's agricultural development - Vidya, Vol. 8, No.5, 1971

53. Nordenström, Kaarlo, Director, Institute of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Tampere, Finland, Social system dictates use of communication technology - Vidya, Vol.10, No.6, Dec.1973

to multiply human power with other kinds of energy, so are the communicating machines of the Communication Revolution able to multiply human messages to a degree previously unheard of. Communication can bring about a revolution by removing the economic disparity and cultural differences among different communities. Chanchal Sarkar said that mass communication can 'remove inequality and do away with islands of privilege'⁵⁴ that exist in society. He also said that communication can reduce 'inequality in culture and in the opportunities for entertainment.'⁵⁵

The most important factor, which promotes socio-economic development, is the mobilisation of the human resources. This is possible when the country promotes the educational services through media so that everyone gets education quickly. Education will help persuade people to give up their ancient practices, belief and customs. Thus, new attitudes and new skill already implanted by the communication into people's mind will promote modernizing agriculture and industry. So the communication motivates individuals for changing themselves and the system in which they operate; it can also supply a stabiliser and a balancing wheel to the dynamics of change by articulating issues and persuading people.

Influence of the media

Harwood L. Childs referring to the influence of the Press said: Its (Press) power is reputed to mould public opinion to shape public

54. Schramm, Wilbur, Op.Cit., P.90

55. Sarkar, Chanchal, A two pronged movement is needed, ELDERA Vol.10, No.6, Dec.1973, P.396.

56. Ibid, P.397

Policy, to create and destroy governments, to make war and maintain peace, to preserve the status-quo and to reconstruct society.⁵⁷ Although Childs was writing on the impact of the newspapers, yet his concept can profitably be extended to all mass media. It is extremely difficult to measure the impact of the media precisely although their influences have been widely accepted on less convincing evidence. Occasionally stated is the opinion that the media formerly possessed great influence but that now they are no longer so significant in shaping events and moulding views. Also it is argued that increasing popular education as well as the frequency with which the media are politically biased have made many people suspicious of what they read, listen, hear or see through the media.

To these arguments, it might be replied that increasing popular education means that more people are exposing themselves to the media with the possibility of being influenced by what they are able to read, hear or see. If the media wield no power, then why have the governments so frequently tried to suppress, control or use them? Why do people use mass media? Why is the circulation increasing? Certainly, politicians, organised groups, business and religious leaders, advertisers would devote far less time and money than they do to the media if they did not believe that the media were a powerful moulder of public opinion.

To deduce from the failures of the media to swing people's opinion or government acts in a given direction, that the media

57. Childs, Harwood, L. - Public Opinion, Nature, Formation and
Causes, P. 100, 1964.

have little influence is over simplification. That the media do not win on a particular matter in a given situation means only that media were not sufficiently powerful within the existing circumstances to achieve its target.

The circumstances in which the media will influence particular readers, listeners or viewers will vary with the media, the readers or listeners, the strength of the arguments relating to an issue, the nature of the items involved, the time, and the place. So there are number of factors that condition the influence of the media. It may be easier for media to influence children than adults, women than men, long-term rather than short time subscribers. Influence may be greater when other media support rather than oppose, and when competing organisations in the public opinion are not strong. It seems plausible that influence varies with the amount and nature of direct exposure to the pages of the newspaper. Also influence on approved subject or issue may be greater than on controversial matters. The existing attitudes, and pre-dispositions of the consumer of the media facilitate or hinder projection of influence. Influence will also vary with the prestige or position of the paper, editor, owner and writer of the newspaper.

The British Royal Commission on the Press observed in 1977 in a report published by it, that readers were more influenced by the local and regional news than world or international news. The investigation carried by the Royal Commission gave a list of 11 types of news to see which ones the readers were interested in reading about. It was found that "news about what is going on in

this part of the country" (England) came out top, followed by "news about what the Government is doing in Britain" and "news about what the local council is doing."

The 'news about what is happening in other countries' came fourth, followed by 'news about football'. Next came 'news about 'political parties' and 'news about business and industry and then 'news about trade union affairs', 'news about fashions', and 'news about people in the entertainment business' and 'news about horse racing.'⁵⁸

But it is very difficult to say when and how an editorial column or news report influence individual or group of people. In its feature, in its news items, in its letters to editor, sports column, everywhere newspaper shows some interest or value which may influence readers.

The political influence of a newspaper may be reflected in the content of its news as much as its editorial columns. It is easy to see the political direction of the editorials than of news columns. The newspaper with its variety of news stories and columnists may be such a confusing and conflicting complex of influence that it is virtually impossible to determine the direction of the influence.

Politicians and party organisations think that newspapers and other media are influential. Hence they leave no stone unturned to woo the media only to get a favourable publicity, both free and paid for. But in most of the cases influence of the media in elections

is far from satisfactory. The repeated victories of American President, Franklin D. Roosevelt against 'over-whelming newspaper opposition' seems to prove the electoral impotence of the media. Mrs. Gandhi's victory in the 1980 General Elections in India in the teeth of severe opposition of the newspapers is another example of the waning influence of the Press.

But media do have influence in the area of crime and morals. The amount of space given for crime, sex, divorce and violence may vary from paper to paper, but the fact remains that such publication helps the newspaper enhance its influence. There seems to be some plausible evidence that exposure to such material has affected the behaviour of children and young people. It is also said that this sort of 'sensationalism' or 'yellow journalism' is a specific case of anti-social behaviour in the society.

It is argued that positive and developmental news, which are professionally termed as 'good news', have less influence or marketability than negative or 'bad news'. As T.S. Mathews said: "The Press has a negative power - to titillate, alarm, enrage, amuse, humiliate, annoy, even to drive a person out of his community or his job. But of the positive power to which it pretends, and of which the Press lords dream to make war and break governments, to swing an election, to stop a war or to start a revolution - there is no tangible evidence."⁵⁹

59. Mathews, T.S. - The Sugar Pill, P.156, 1959.

There are many other ways in which the newspapers and other media exert their influence. They do it by screening and selecting the items to be printed, by way of newspaper make-up, by the way news items are presented, the emphasis and treatment accorded them, the headlines and pictures used, the typography and format employed.

Media also use many other devices for exploiting news for propaganda purposes. News is played up and played down, dramatized, repeated, spelled out, underscored, and all sorts of falsification resorted to increase the desired influence. Many more techniques are being used by the media man to make the media interesting, attractive, entertaining, informative, exciting and shocking, to enhance their influence. Thus, it leads to the belief that worst of the media has a great impact. As Walter Lippmann said: "The quality of the news about modern society is an index of its social organisation. The better the institutions, the more all interests concerned are formally represented. The more issues are disentangled, the more objective criteria are introduced, the more perfectly an affair can be presented as news. At its best the Press is the servant and guardian of institutions, at its worst it is a means by which a few exploit social disorganisation to their own ends."⁶⁰

60. Lippmann, Walter, Public Opinion, P.363-4, 1961.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

THE EARLY HISTORY OF PRESS IN INDIA

The idea of modern 'journalism' or 'mass communication' originated from the ancient spy system and postal communication. Even before the invention of ink and paper the importance of 'news' which created the modern 'newspapers' was well understood. In those days the necessity and curiosity led the ancient rulers as well as people to the quest of news. ¹ As for rulers news was essential from administrative stand point and for people it meant both to usefulness and gossip. The early Hindu rulers maintained 'an elaborate system of espionage and secret service ² men as prescribed by the law-givers and theorists for collection and transmission of news for State purposes. This body of intelligencers was an indispensable part of the Government in the early age in every country of the world. They had collected all sorts of information about the kingdom and also about the neighbouring countries.

1. Prabhu, P.N. Hindu Social Organisation, P.16, 1961

2. Salatore, Bhasker Anand, Ancient Indian Political Thought and Institutions, P.480, 1968.

Vide also Shamasastri, Arthashastra - P.18-23.

Kautilya mentions 'a variety of both settled and wandering spies who maintained the link of communication and carried reports for the guidance of Hindu ruling princes.

Sanial, S.C., The history of journalism in India.
Calcutta Review, 1907, P.380

The Muslim rulers had not only realised the importance of maintaining the espionage system of the Hindus but also improved it to a great extent, because it was needed for the enforcement of their rigorous policies. There was a well organised department for the supply of news. The Moghul made an overall change of the pre-existing system of espionage and news-writers³. The news-writers used to write news at the end of the day and communicated the same to the king. Rains and showers, storms and thunders could not prevent them from sending the news. They regularly pumped off the news in all weather and without the slightest delay.

There was a close relation between the news-writers and the postal department. The 'Dak-Chauki' or post office was not merely an ordinary instrument for conveying intelligence but an extra-ordinary one for obtaining it. The post-masters were the 'confidential agents'⁴ of the court. In fact, 'The postal system of India, like that of other countries, had its origin in the necessity of maintaining communication throughout the

3. Sharma, Ram, A Bibliography of Mughal India, P.8-13

Side also Luard, C.E., Contemporary Newspaper Account of Events during Mutiny in Central India, P.7-8, 1938

4. Clarke, 'The Post office of India and its story' - P.60, 1940

Various parts of the great Empire in order that the Emperor might be kept continuously informed of what was taking place and might be able to keep in constant touch with the officer-in-charge of Provinces at a distance from the capital.⁵

Geoffrey Clarke in his 'The Post Office and its HISTORY' observed: "When Ibn Batuta was travelling in India in the middle of the fourteenth century he found an organised system of couriers established throughout the country governed at the time by the great Mahamed Bin Tughlak. The system seems to have been very similar to that which existed in the Roman Empire."⁶

The official communications were carried by the couriers who mounted on horses in relays at four-mile intervals. The place where the couriers used to take rest was known as 'Sarai'. At every 'Sarai' were placed two horses for the news-reporters. So there were 3,400 horses, in all the 'Sarais' together, always ready to bring intelligence everyday from every quarters.⁷ Apart from this kind of couriers who mounted on horses, there were couriers who travelled on foot. They were organised separately. Ibn Batuta said: "At every third of a mile, there is an inhabited village, outside which there are three tents.

5. Ibid - P.88

6. Ibid - P.88

Wide Also Misra, B.B., The Central Administration of the East India Company, P.415, 1955.

7. Sharma, S.R., The Mughal Empire in India, P.116

In these sit men girded up ready to move off, each of whom has a red, a yard and a half long, with brass bells at the top. When a courier leaves the town he takes the letters in the fingers of one hand and the red with the bells in the other and runs with all his might. The men in the tents on hearing the sound of the bells, prepare to meet him. One of them takes the letter in his hand and passes on, running with all his might and shaking his red until he reaches the next station and so the letter is passed on till it reaches its destination.⁸

Besides, the official system of communication there were several 'private and semi-public'⁹ news-writers who regularly wrote news and copied as many copies as they could. These were circulated among large sections of people spread throughout the length and breadth of the country. This was their chief means of livelihood. The private and semi-public news-letters were carried by the travellers, sadhus, faquirs during journey from one place to the other¹⁰. During this period of the Moghul regime the manuscript press had struck a deep root and made a tremendous progress which paved the way to the modern journalism in India.¹¹ The manuscript writers even before invention of the printing press laid a solid foundation of the Press, which can well claim the meaning of 'Press' as it is understood to-day.

8. Ibid - P.118.

9. Nanncci, Niccolao, Storia de Neger, P.214,

10. Dr.Bhatnagar, Ram Ratan, The Rise and Growth of Hindi Journalism - P.7, 1947.

11. Srivastava, K.L. The Revolt of 1857 in Central Asia 1784-1868, P.68, 1961

With the invention of the printing, the printing press began to grow in India during the British rule. It may be recalled that the art of printing was first begun in China in the middle of the eleventh century when Pi Sheng invented the movable type.¹² In the West the credit for the invention of printing press went to Gutenberg who started his press at Mainz in Germany in the middle of 1440. In England the printing press was introduced by William Caxton in 1476. The printing press was brought to India from the West particularly from England mostly by the Christian missionaries who heralded the language Press in India. In the beginning the missionaries were not allowed by the East India Company to enter and preach Christianity in the Company's territories as the Company thought it might antagonise the Indian people and endanger a peaceful rule in India. In the early period it was the policy of the British rulers to keep the 'natives' of India in the profoundest darkness. Any attempt to diffuse the light of knowledge among the people and introduction of so dangerous a thing as the printing press was vehemently opposed.

In the late eighteenth century Britain was in the grip of economic and political, humanitarian and religious movements which challenged the conservative and imperialist Government of the United Kingdom. Political philosophers like Jeremy Bentham and Thomas Paine were advocating sweeping political

12. Bhatnagar, Op.Cit., P.681

13

and social changes in the country. A better way of life for the Negro slaves, the poor and the labouring classes was the demand of the humanitarians. It led to philanthropic activities, such as establishment of schools, hospitals and charitable institutions. Anti-church ideas propagated by Thomas Paine among the poor and his powerful criticisms of the Bible gained considerable momentum among a section of the English people and it brought about a revolt against the traditional way of life. Paine's two famous books The Age of Reason and Rights and Man created a great upheaval in the world. His support to the political ideas held by the French Revolutionaries further encouraged the Liberals to exert pressure on the British Government to take up liberal and reformatory measures in the British Empire. With the object of preventing the spread of French revolutionary ideas and anti-church feelings among the poor a mushroom growth of Missionary Societies took place in England within a short time. They did not confine their activities to England only but carried them to the whole world. They demanded facilities for entry into colonial countries to carry the message of Christ to the people of the world. James Mill, the author of The History of British India and a staunch supporter of Liberal Movement turned the attention of the Liberals and Utilitarians of England towards India. They urged the British Government to undertake liberal measures in India.¹⁴

13. Pearce, George D., British attitudes towards India, 1704-1858
P.68, 1961.

14. Stokes Eric, The English Utilitarians and India, P.234-63
1969

Missionaries worked hard to gain support of the East India Company and the Government of England for the promotion of education and Christianity in India. Missionary Societies, however, failed to insert a clause in the Charter Act of 1793 for admission of missionaries in India because of a strong opposition of the Directors of the East India Company. They had repeatedly taken up the issue of entry into India during the renewal of the Company's Charter in the British Parliament. But the mutiny among the company's sepoys at Vellore in Madurai in 1806 was a setback to their cause as many of the members of British Parliament argued in the House that the attack on the Indian religions by the missionaries was the root cause of the mutiny. However, the missionaries scored a victory in the Charter Act of 1813. Clause-XXXIII of the Charter Act, 1813, said: "Such measures ought to be adopted as may tend among them (Indians) of useful knowledge and of religious and moral improvement, and in furtherance of the above object, sufficient facilities ought to be afforded by law to persons desirous of going to and remaining in India."¹⁵ Since then a large number of missionaries started coming to India.

Prior to the advent of the Christian missionaries under the Act of 1813, the Press journalism had already struck its roots in India. Though the Company did not like the introduction of printing press in India, yet a 'disgruntled'¹⁶ employee of the

15. Sengupta, K.P., The Christian Missionaries in Bengal, P.41, 1971

16. Bhatnagar, R.R., Op.Cit, P.15

East India Company, James Augustus Hicky, who was the pioneer of the Indian Journalism, published the first newspaper in India, the Bengal Gazette or Calcutta General Advertiser, an English Weekly from Calcutta on Saturday, January 29, 1780.¹⁷ The Anglo-Indian journalism, which was started with Hicky's Gazette in 1780, had nothing to do with the administrative aspect of the Company. It was solely the affair of the Company's servants and people who stood against the corruption of the Company.

However, following Hicky's Gazette a good number of newspapers in English came into existence in India : The Indian Gazette (1780), Calcutta Gazette (1784), Bengal Journal (1785) Oriental Magazine or Calcutta Amusement (1785), Madras Courier (1785), Calcutta Chronicle (1785) , Bombay Herald (1789), Bombay Courier (1790) , Bombay Gazette (1791). These were all Anglo-Indian newspapers and solely a European affair. They had nothing to do with the Indians and Indian aspirations.

The Indian-owned English journalism did not rise till two decades of the 19th Century had elapsed, and its rise was followed by the beginning of the vernacular journalism. The English journalism by the Indians achieved its first victory in Bengal. Gargadhar Bhattacharjee, a teacher who was greatly influenced by the liberal ideas of Raja Ramohan Roy,¹⁸ was the pioneer of

17. A complete file of the Gazette is still found in National Library, Calcutta.

18. Natarajan S., History of the Press in India, P.25, 1962

the first Indian newspaper in English-The Weekly Bengal Gazette which was published in 1830

Like the English journalism, the vernacular journalism was also first started in Bengal because Calcutta was the capital of India at that time. The Dig-Darshan, a monthly Magazine in Bengali, published by the Serampore missionaries in April, 1818, was the first vernacular or language paper in India. It was a propaganda organ of the Christian missionaries. On May 23, 1818 Serampore missionaries brought out one more newspaper- The Weekly Samachar Darshan in Bengali.

In the history of the printing press in India, Serampore, a place in West Bengal, which was under the Dutch Government, has a unique place of importance. William Carey, an apprentice to a shoe-maker in England, who arrived in India at the age of thirty-three and in spite of his poverty studied Latin, Greek and Hebrew, William Ward, son of a carpenter, who learnt the trade of printing in England and edited newspapers in his own country, and Josiah Marshmann, a teacher,- these three famous Serampore trio were the founders of Serampore Printing Press and also the pioneers of the Bengali journalism.¹⁹ The two Serampore missionary papers, Digdarshan and Samachar Darshan were the torch-bearers in the path of progress of the Indian vernacular journalism. There was an editorial staff with Marshmann

19. Bearee, Georg, D., Op. Cit., P.84

as the head. But the responsibility was on the native editors referred to as 'Pandit'. Jaigopal Tarkalankar and Tarini Charan Ghironani were some of the members of the staff of these papers. The 'Samachar Dardan', besides serving as a vehicle for propagation of gospels of Christianity, carried a vast store of information from all parts of Bengal. The Marquis of Hastings allowed Samachar Dardan the concession of paying only one fourth of the usual amount of postage and his successor Lord Amherst subscribed for a hundred copies which were distributed in the offices. This paper was widely patronised by the merchants and businessmen. The chief civilians in the mofussil subscribed to it for valuable information which could not be obtained from official channel. The Dardan continued its publication till 1840. The Serampore missionaries published a Persian edition of this paper under the name Akhbar-i-Serampore on April 25, 1826.

Pioneers of Language Press.

Thus the Christian missionaries heralded the advent of a new paper - the Indian Vernacular Press destined to play a significant role in emancipating India from foreign rule. They devoted an unforgettable chapter to and took untold pains in establishing the vernacular Press. Actuated by the indomitable

zeal for the evangelisation of India, the Christian missionary enterprises adopted the Indian languages as vehicles of propagating the gospels of Christianity. They envisaged that the best and the most effective way of communicating with the Indian people was through their own languages. So they left no stone unturned to study and master the Indian languages and grammars. They used high-flown Sanskritised literary languages. They moulded types, trained the Indians in the art of printing, nourished and strengthened the vernacular journalism. The missionary newspapers played a historic role in forging the vernacular literatures, prepared the ground for secular ideas by liquidating the prejudices and the evil practices like 'Sati', female infanticide which had crept into the ancient Hindu society, and awakened the people to the need of educating themselves in western arts and sciences. The remarkable feature of this early vernacular Press was that religion dominated the newspapers and journals for quite some time even after the Sepoy Mutiny till politics took the place of religion.

The oriental culture and religion came in for severe criticism in the missionary papers.²⁰ They proclaimed the superiority of English culture and religion. Soon the susceptibility of the Indians was roused and they counter-attacked the missionary propaganda through the Press and the platform. The clash between

20. Pells, E. Daniel, British Baptist Missionaries, 1703-1837, :
The history of Serampore and its Missions,
P. 167-168, 1967.

different religious groups led to the mushroom growth of newspapers and journals adhering to different ideals. There was a great emotion and intense social urge among the people. The whole nation appeared to be vocal. Religious reforms awoke the people from slumber to action. Newspapers flashed more controversies and views on religion than news on socio-economic conditions. All these were mainly responsible for firmer foothold of vernacular Press even at its adolescent stage. The journalism of this period was merely propaganda affair in various spheres. Propagandists of Christianity, of Hinduism, of Liberalism and of Orthodoxy - all took journalism as a medium to win the masses in their favour.

As a result of conflict between the progressive and the reactionary forces a section of Hindus began to feel that Hindu religion was not free from criticism and some customs followed by the Hindus had no sanction of the Vedas and the other Shastras. A spirit of self-criticism had developed and people began to look forward for inspiration and for a bright future. Religious and social customs were thoroughly tested and re-examined. People did not blindly follow what the Brahmins said. The Indian people who looked more to the world beyond than the world they lived in now realised that they would have to do something for their mundane existence.

The activities of the missionaries made serious impacts on the Indian societies. Their attack against the centuries old Hindu customs and Hindu way of life caused a two-fold reaction among the Hindus. First, it had led to the birth of a new school of thought aiming at reforms in Hinduism and Hindu society. Various reformatory organisations like Brahmo-Samaj and Neo-Samaj came into existence.

Secondly, it gave rise to a Conservative and orthodox Hinduism which was opposing the activities of both the reformist organisations and the Christian missionaries. The most remarkable feature of these organisations was that all of them were armed with newspapers to fight against each other.

In 1815 Rammohan Roy founded the Atmiya Sabha for the dissemination of religious truth among the people and also promotion of free discussion of theological subjects. The Sabha severely criticised the practices of polygamy, practice of Sati and caste system in the Hindu society. It also considered the necessity of introducing widow re-marriage. Prominent personalities like Dwaraknath Tagore, Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Wanda Kishore Bose and many others of Bengal attended meetings of the Atmiya Sabha. Subrahmanya Sastri, a renowned scholar of Madras, also attended one of its meetings. The Atmiya Sabha was the forerunner of the Brahmo-Samaj.

The establishment of Brahma Samaj on the 30th August, 1829 by Rammohan Roy marked the beginning of a new era in the history of Hindu awakening in India. It wielded tremendous influence and drew a large number of followers into its progressive fold. Within a short time the Samaj was able to bring back a good number of people who lost their faith in Hinduism. In the beginning the Samaj appealed only to the educated and influential sections of the people of Bengal. But soon the Brahma movement began to spread to other provinces of India.

To counteract the reformation movement the conservative Hindu formed 'Gaudiya Samaj' in 1823 in Bengal.²¹ The leading members of the Samaj were Radha Kanta Deb, Ram Kanai Sen and Bhabani Charan Bandopadhyay. They opposed tooth and nail the activities of Rammohan Roy as well as the spread of Christianity by the missionaries. Immediately after the abolition of 'Sati' on December 4, 1829 by Lord Bentinck the orthodox Hindus formed another society called 'Dharma Sabha' in a meeting held at Sanskrit College of Calcutta on the 17th January, 1830, with the object of restoring the rite of 'Sati' under the Presidentship of Bhabani Charan Bandopadhyay. The Dharma Sabha sternly warned its patrons not to read any book or paper which criticised Hinduism. The Sabha stubbornly resisted the Governor General's order for the abolition of 'Sati'. But Rammohan Roy and Christian

21. Bose, W.S., The Indian Awakening and Bengal, P.35, 1960.

missionaries were extremely delighted at the abolition of the century old social evils and congratulated the Governor General for the humanitarian measure.

Development of Language Press.

Following the two missionary papers Digdarshan and Sambhar Darshan there was a rapid growth of native newspapers in Bengal, demanding reforms in Hindu society on the one hand, and orthodox Hindu papers opposing any form of reforms on the other. Rammohan Roy, a great reformer and founder of vernacular journalism in India, published his epoch-making paper Sarwad Karmadi in December, 1821. Since then a great upsurge stirred the entire country. The emergence of this paper, although short-lived, was hailed by Silk Buckingham in his paper The Calcutta Journal, established in 1818. The practice of 'Sati', human sacrifice rigidity of caste system, disfavour of widow marriages, polygamy, sectarianism, untouchability, excessive opium-eating, degraded social position of women, ostracisation for sea voyages which crept into the Hindu society came in for severe criticism in Rammohan's journal. His remarkable contribution in the field of social reforms was his fight for the abolition of 'Sati'. It was because of his unqualified support that Lord Bentinck ventured to abolish 'Sati'. Lord Bentinck himself acknowledged Rammohan's role in bringing about its abolition. Both Rammohan Roy and the missionaries prepared the minds of the people

for such a desirable measure. Rammohun Roy launched a vigorous campaign against the inhuman female infanticide in the Sambad Kautudi or The Moon of Intelligence. It published a series of articles supporting progressive measures in India. Besides, the paper flashed political issues and domestic matters without fear or favour. It moulded public opinion tremendously and continued its publication even after 1832. Bhabani Charan Bandopadhyay who was at first associated with this paper left after the publication of some issues as he did not support the critical views of Rammohun on the practice of 'Sati'. In 1822 Bhabani Charan himself published The Samachar Chandrika which became the mouthpiece of the reactionary Hindus. A tussle between these two papers was a regular affair. The Samachar Chandrika unleashed a ferocious attack on Rammohun, missionaries and the young Deresians. This journal stubbornly opposed the abolition of 'Sati' and it became popular among the conservative Hindus. Some more orthodox papers appeared as a counterpart to the progressive journal Sanyad Kautudi. These were the Sanyad Tinirnasak published by Krishnamohan Das in 1823 and the Sanyad Prabhakar edited by Iswar Chandra Gupta in 1831. Kashi Prasad Ghose, founder of Dharma Sabha, published another conservative weekly The Hindu Intelligencer. Thus, a war of words engulfed the Bengal Press and this helped it to take a firm foot-hold even at the infant stage.

On the issue of abolition of 'Sati' Ramchurn Roy, missionaries and Berozians unitedly resisted the reactionary forces and successfully mobilized public opinion in favour of abolition, although rivalry between the Sanyal Kamandi and missionary papers continued on other matters. The Samachar Darpan zealously supported the abolition of 'Sati' and fought for the prohibition of the practice of throwing children at the confluence of the Ganges and the sea. A series of articles defending abolition of 'Sati' were published in the Samachar Darpan and the Digdarshan. These two missionary papers made a significant contribution to the development of Bangali prose literature and the diffusion of English education.

Only at the age of 16 Ramchurn waged his crusade against superstition and idolatry in his treatise written in Persian entitled Tuhfat-ul-Munabbih or A Gift to Discern. It challenged the preachers of super-natural and miraculous things which have no relation with religion. He considered that the preachers of religions were liable to error and hence people should make an impartial enquiry about the truth of religion. His The Presents of Jesus and The Guide to Peace and Happiness published in 1820 which denied the divinity of Christ raised resentment of the Christian missionaries of that time. He said that he had no quarrel with the Christian religion. But he was not prepared to

identify Christ with God, as propagated by the missionaries. Ramohan Roy came in for severe criticism in the Serampore missionary papers Amoschar Bazar and The Friend of India, an English monthly, which was established in 1818. He defended himself against the missionary attack through his three Annals to the Christian Public published between 1820-23. He argued that the missionaries should teach the real truth of Christianity to the native Indians. He asserted that the preaching of miracles and dogmas instead of moral precepts of Christianity would harm the cause of Christian religion.

A bitter controversy followed. Even some of the most responsible missionaries lost their temper and hurled objectionable remarks against Ramohan Roy. The severity of the attack is seen in the statement of Reginald Heber, who was the Bishop of Calcutta at that time. He said, "Our chief hindrances are some deistical Brahmins, who have left their old religion and desire to found a new sect of their own, and some of those who are professedly engaged in the same work with ourselves, the Dissenters. These last are, indeed, very civil and effort to rejoice at our success, but they, somehow or other cannot help interfering and setting up rival schools close to ours, and they apparently find it easier to draw off our pupils, than to look out for a fresh
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and more distant fields of exertion and enterprise."

Rammohan gave rejoinders to all attacks with traditional calmness. A good number of Christian people including the Press appreciated the candour and excellent temper with which Rammohan defended his position and also his clear concept of Christianity. In 1821 Rev. William Adam, a young Baptist missionary, was deeply moved by Rammohan's idea of one God. He openly converted himself to Unitarianism which believed that the God of Christianity existed in one person and denied the doctrine of Trinity. With the help of Rammohan, Adam established a Unitarian Committee in 1821. The object of the Committee was to fight against superstition and to disseminate the truth of Christianity. The conversion of Adam further infuriated the missionaries. Rammohan's satirical criticism of the orthodoxy of Christianity in his The Asiatic Magazine enraged even Dr. Tytler, a Professor of Hindu College, in 1823. One side of the pages of this magazine was written in Bengali and the other side contained the English version. In this journal Rammohan Roy vehemently criticised the attempt of the missionaries to convert the native Indians by the temptation of worldly gain.

The tussle between Rammohan Roy and the missionaries attracted the attention of the people of the world. International views were polarized. Some Unitarian stalwarts of the United Kingdom and U.S.A. such as Dr. T. Ross and Reverend Henry Ware were very much sympathetic towards Rammohan's reformation movement. The London Unitarian Society reprinted the three

Essays of James and Appendix to the Christian Public written by Ramohan Roy.

The Utilitarians like Jeremy Bentham and James Stuart Mill, the noted historian William Roscoe, the great socialist Robert Owen, and Lord Brougham, the advocate of the abolition of slavery, supported Ramohan Roy in his war against religious dogmatism and orthodoxy. Ramohan was accorded a dignified funeral by his Utilitarian friends in Bristol where he died in 1833. Jeremy Bentham admired him as a "dearly beloved collaborator in the service of mankind" and Max Muller called him "Father of Comparative Theology."

Ramohan Roy's faith on religion was 'shaped by the doctrine of self-knowledge inculcated by the Upanishads, the social message of Buddhism, the emphatic monotheism of Islam, ²⁴ the simple piety of the Hindu saints, and ethics of Christianity.

His unbiased and rational views on all religions made him the centre of attack both by the conservative Christian missionaries and the reactionary Hindus. He held that the cult of idolatry was not justified by the teachings of the Vedas. Kritisraj Vidyakar, an orthodox Hindu, had challenged Roy's denunciation of the worship of God in his Yatnata-Sandehika. Roy replied to it in his thesis entitled, "A Refutation of the

24. Potts, E. Daniel, Op.Cit., P.236

Monothetical system of the Vedas" in 1817. In a Bengali tract "Char Prama" (Four Questions) written by Kashinath Tarkapanchanan, Ramchandra Roy and his followers were treated as renegades. Soon Roy defended himself through one of his most outstanding tracts Brahma-Panttalika Sanyas in 1820.

The early history of the growth of newspapers in other parts of India was different from that of Bengal. There was no such clash of ideas and controversies as in Bengal to stimulate the Press. Hence the early history of newspapers of North Western Provinces was a placid one. During the Moghul regime Persian was, the lingua franca of the court and the Barabar. It was also the language of the educated people of the society. The Moghul Emperor specifically mentioned in the Charter granted to the East India Company that Persian would continue as the court language and also in other matters of communication. Hence most of the attempts were made in the Persian language in the earliest period to establish Press in India. This was responsible for the rapid growth of Persian journalism long before Hindi and Urdu made their appearance in India. In fact, before the establishment of the printing press in India the manuscript journalism in the Persian language dominated all-India journalism as it was the official language. In 1835 Persian was replaced by Urdu as a Court language and Urdu was also used as a medium of expression in the Province. Since then Urdu journalism flourished rapidly in India. Another reason for the late rise of Urdu journalism

even in the Urdu speaking areas was the non-existence of the litho-press till 1837.

The birth of Hindi journalism took place much later than Urdu and Persian journalism as Hindi was not the official language at that time. The first Hindi weekly Sambada Masina was edited by Jagal Kishore Sookool from 'Amratale-Ki-Gali' of Calcutta in 1826. ²⁵ Ramsohan Roy's Hindi edition of Rangdoot, the second Hindi paper from Calcutta in 1829, was a big step forward towards the growth of Hindi journalism. It helped to a great extent to prepare the ground for secular outlook by liquidating the Hindu prejudices. It showed a new trend which served as guide-lines to contemporary journalists. Till 1844 Calcutta was the only centre of Hindi Press and during this period a number of sporadic attempts were made but most of the papers had an ephemeral life. The first Hindi missionary paper Lokmitra saw the light of the day from Mirzapur in 1863. In the Hindi-speaking areas, Benares, Mirzapur, Jabhalpore and Agra were the main centres which published the Christian weeklies and monthlies. Mangal Samachar, Sabat School Ke Path and Arya Pathra were some of the Christian Hindi papers. But these missionary papers could not impress the people much. As a result, the Christian missionaries could not extend their activities in the Hindi-speaking places. The main reason was that the Hindu organisations like Brahmo Samaj, Neo-Hinduism

25. Dhatnagar, Op.Cit, P.27

and Arya Samaj, which were active and powerful, opposed westernisation both through the press and the platform and looked to Vedic culture for ideals. Rammohan Roy's talented successors like Keshava Chandra Sen, Wabin Chandra Sen and Devendra Nath Tagore published Zaitun Bahadur Patrika in Hindi. Besides, the Nitin Vijnan and Gyan Pradavini Patrika were some of the Hindi papers sponsored by the Brahma Samaj. The Gyan Pradavini Patrika was a popular and powerful paper. It published, besides the doctrine of the Brahma Samaj, historical subjects.

In 1864 Calcutta came forward with the first Hindi daily Samachar Sabha Varshan. It was published from Bara Bazar of Calcutta and edited by Shyam Sunder Sen. It was a bilingual paper. The news and editorials were written in Bengali and news relating to merchandise, ships, market reports and other news concerning business were written in Hindi. So, we find that the imperial city of Calcutta, the first capital of the British Empire, evinced a traditional penchant and tolerance for the growth of the Indian languages. During the British rule the city spoke many languages - Bengali, Hindi, Persian, Urdu and a host of other languages besides English. And this polyglot character of the city and peaceful and friendly co-existence of a multiplicity of languages continue even to-day. As a result, many Indian language newspapers sprang up in Calcutta.

Like U.K., France and Russia where newspapers had grown and concentrated in the capital, in India also newspapers were centralised first in Calcutta, the most cosmopolitan city of the country. After the transfer of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi, things became a bit different. Still Calcutta continues to be a pioneering and a most important centre of the Fourth Estate. In fact, Calcutta is the only city that gave birth to newspapers in at least five Indian languages - Bengali, Hindi, Persian, Urdu and Assamese.

In the early period the Bengal Press influenced the growth of the various Indian language papers to a great extent. For the Bengal Press attained maturity long before the language Press in other parts of India began to grow. The journalism of Bengal was always an ideal, a model, to the 19th century sponsors of Hindi journalism and even afterwards when Hindi Pradesh itself owned its press, it remained a good hinterland of Calcutta journalism. The early Hindi newspapers were really an appendage of Bengali papers and journals. The news and articles of the Bengal newspapers were translated and published in Hindi papers. As a result many Bengali words, idioms and phrases crept into the fold of the Hindi language. Many Hindi papers were influenced by Bengali titles like Samachar Sadha Varshan, Kavivachan Sadha, Sadhakar and Hindi writers used many Bengali words unconsciously. The Vidya Dharma Darika, a Hindi Magazine vehemently opposed such

26. Thomas Iver, The Newspaper, P.5, 1951

27. Bhatnagar, Op. Cit., P.152

free borrowing from the Bengali language. It published a series of articles under the caption 'Hindine Calcutta' drawing the attention of the Hindi writers and journalists to this matter.

The growth of Telugu journalism bears a close resemblance to the beginning of journalism in Bengal. The social reformers, political leaders and even the literatures of Bengal greatly influenced the movement of Andhra during the later half of the 19th century. The first journal Satyashodha was published by the Christian Association of Bellary in 1838. It was printed in Madras which was the capital of the composite Madras Province consisting of parts of Andhra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala at that time. Telugu journals were first published from Madras. Following the missionary paper a good number of journals came into existence. These were The Writtantini in 1840, the Shiksha Samini in 1845 and The Dina Vartamani in 1850. To counteract the missionary propaganda native people took the aid of newspapers. The most notable was The Tattvashodhini published by the Ved Samaj in 1854. With the emergence of Rao Bahadur Kondakuri Veerasalingam Pantulu, a great social reformer, the Andhra vernacular journalism gained further momentum. He started a weekly Vyaktavardhini for social reforms in 1874.

The credit of establishing the printing press in Mysore also goes to the German missionaries. The Kannada newspaper, Kannada Samachar was published by these German missionaries in

1812 from Bellary. The first Tamil paper known as Tamil Magasine was also published by the Christian Religious Tract Society, in 1831. Although the propagation of Christian religion was the main intention, the missionaries played a significant role in the development of Tamil Press. In Malayalam, as in Tamil, the printing press was introduced by the Christian missionaries. The only newspaper published in the early period were Vishaya Vicharanam in 1840 and Paschimam Tharaka in 1852.

The first Oriya paper Jagananna was also started by the missionaries in 1849. It was edited by Rev. Lacy from Cuttack. It was the English missionaries again who established the printing press at Ludhiana in 1809. They printed the first version of Gurmukhi grammar in 1838. The clash between Hindi and Gurmukhi led to the birth of a paper called Akhbar Shri Bahar Sahib in 1857. It was the first newspaper in the Punjabi language. The editor was Munshi Harinarayan.

The early papers started in the Bombay Presidency were edited by the members of the Parsee community who had acquired the knowledge of the English language for their business connections. The leaders of the Parsee community were the pioneers of Gujarati journalism. Bhinji Parikh, a Parsee pioneer, persuaded the East India Company to bring from England at his expense two experts in type-cutting.

The first Gujarati paper Bombai-va-Samachar was published by Fardooji Marzaban in 1822 from Bombay. The Marathi paper The Bombay Darshan appeared 10 years after the first Gujarati paper. In the beginning the vernacular Press in Bombay drew inspiration from 'calender controversy'²⁸ between two groups of Parsees. This calender question led to the establishment of two native papers in Bombay. These were Bhala-va-Khabar and Akhal-va-Khabar. Both the papers were short-lived, but they made people deeply interested in social affairs.

With the emergence of missionary papers, vernacular Press gained a new dimension which firmly established the Press in Bombay. Missionaries started the Jyotsnadar in June 1842 from Ahmednagar. It was a monthly paper which became fortnightly later on. The first six issues were in Marathi and after that it became an anglo-Marathi journal. It celebrated the 125 year of its existence in 1966. This paper made a scurrilous attack on the tradition-old superstitions and evils of Hindu society that opposed any form of social reforms. To counteract the missionary activities many Marathi papers sprang up. Foremost in the field was Yashwantrao Dinkar published by Vishva Bhikaji Gokhle in 1852. In the same year another prominent Marathi paper appeared and joined the tussle that started between the missionary papers and the native papers. This paper was Vishva Lekhari published by Krishna Shastri Chipmankar. Two other papers Jyoti-Prakash and Indu-Prakash also stood for the cause of social

28. Burns, Margherita, The Indian Press, P.100, 1940

Reforms. Thus clash and controversies laid a solid foundation of vernacular Press in India.

✓ ASSAMESE PRESS

The newspapers in Assam like those in other parts of India originated and developed as private enterprises. The first Assamese newspaper Ambedai (Sunrise) which was published from Sibsagar in 1846, owed its origin not to the Government but to the American Christian Missionary. Actuated by the indomitable zeal for the evangelisation of the people of Assam the Christian missionary adopted the Assamese language as vehicle for propagation of the gospel of Christianity. They also helped the Assamese language Press - without quite knowing it.

The Ambedai, the first Assamese monthly which survived for 36 years, has an unique place in the history of Assamese literature. It made a remarkable contribution to the growth and development of the Assamese literature. Dr. B.K. Barua in his History of Assamese Literature said:

" It was in the pages of the Ambedai that we find the first florescence of modern Assamese literature. It gave a literary status and dignity to the spoken language of the people both in poetry and prose, and,

29. Gait, E.A., Report of the progress of Historical Research in Assam, 1897

broadly speaking; the language thus evolved
 continues to be the standard language of Assamese
 literature even to-day.³⁰

The Amraongi like its Bengali counterpart published current news of varied interest - educational, literary and cultural. It carried in its issues stories and information relating to scientific knowledge. But the tone of the Amraongi was generally 'religious and sectarian' and " for fear of incurring displeasure of the Government it hardly published anything offensive to the Government.³¹ Although it was mainly a 'mouth-piece of Christian propaganda', yet it disseminated Western ideas and learning and 'inspired the younger generation of the Assamese and paved the way for an intellectual awakening.'³²

About two and half decades after the Amraongi, the second Assamese monthly, Assam-Bilashini appeared in 1871 from the Bhawan-prakash Press of Majuli in Sibsoagar. This was the first Assamese paper published by the Assamese people. Like Amraongi it was also an organ of a religious order Anantatiya Satra, a Hindu religious organisation. It was mainly a religious paper and continued for 'twelve years'.³³ Following it a few Assamese periodicals came into existence:

30. Dr. Barua, H.K. - History of Assamese literature, - P.100, 1904

31. Dr. Barpujari, H.K., General Editor, Political History of Assam: 1824-1919, Vol. I, P.100, 1977

32. Ibid, P.126 - 6

Assam Baran (1874), Chandradara (1878), Assam Binika (1878), Assam Karm (1882), Assam Bandha (1885), Han (The Bee) (1885), Juski (1889), but most of them were short-lived. Out of these Assam Karm, Assam Bandha and Juski were influential. Edited by Han Chandra Barua, the Assam Karm entered useful 'knowledge and information' with the object of 'creating public ³⁴ opinion.'

The Assam Bandha appeared as a monthly magazine from Waugang under the editorship of Gajbihari Barua. It kept politics out of its discussion. The editor of the paper said, "We don't want to interfere in politics. We are inexperienced in it." ³⁵ The Juski (moon Light), another important ^{monthly} magazine, edited successively by well known Assamese literary figures like, Chandra Kumar Agarwala, Han Chandra Goswami and Lakshminath Barbarua, also shunned politics but contributed much to the development of Assamese literature. It served as a forum for the discussion of Assamese literature by eminent writers who were 'inspired to a great extent by their counterparts in Bengal.' ³⁶ Lakshminath Barbarua, a great pioneer of Modern Assamese Literature, himself edited Bandi (flute) in 1900. Besides, creating a batch of Assamese writers, it was 'the first Assamese magazine' that introduced ³⁷ Cartoons in newspapers. The Han (Dawn) edited by Padmanath Gehain Barua in 1907 engaged in

34. Baryajari H.K., Op. Cit., P.151

35. Baryajari H.K., Op. Cit., P.152

36. Ibid - P.144

'long drawn polemics' on literary and sometimes social problems with the Banhi. These two magazines also make very valuable contribution to the Assamese literature—Prose and Poetry. 38

Thus, from 1846 to 1914 the following Assamese newspapers appeared: Arunodai (1846), the first Assamese newspaper, Assam Bilashini (1871), Assam Mihir (1872), Assam Darpan (1874), a monthly magazine from Calcutta, Goalpara Hitasothora (1876), Chandrodaya (1876)—edited by Dihingiya Goswami, Assam Dinika (1876), Assam News (1882), Assam Bandhu (1885), Man (1886), Assam Tara (1886), Loka Bandhu published from Calcutta (1888), Jonaki (1889), Binli edited by Krishna Duara from Dibrugarh (1890), Assam edited by Manik Chandra Barua (1894), Assam Mani edited by Mathura Mohan Barua from Tezpur (1900), Binli edited by Lakshminath Sarma from Shillong (1902), Dipki published by the Christian missionary from Dibrugarh (1905), Alochoni edited by Lakshmi Prasad Chaliha from Dibrugarh (1906), Usha edited by Pudmanath Barua (1907), Bisma Bhasat edited by Kaliram Barman from Gauhati (1900), Assam Bandhu (1910), Assam Bilashini edited by Krishna Kanta Bhattacharjee from Tezpur (1914). During the same period i.e. from 1846 to 1914 the following English newspapers also emerged. The Times of Assam, the first English Weekly (1896), The Eastern Herald edited by Bansabhad Mitra from Dibrugarh (1902), The Advocate of Assam (1905), Assam Chronicle

edited by Krishna Chandra Barua from Gauhati (1906), The Assam Herald edited by Krishna Chandra Barua (1912)

The period between 1914-19 was covered by the first World War. Just as the war broke out, the British Government in India feared disloyalty of Indian people and promulgated the Defence of India Act, 1914. Obviously, the role of the newspapers for India's self-determination was severely restricted. Whatever freedom the newspapers enjoyed so far was nuzzled by the restrictions imposed by the Defence of India Act. As a result a good number of newspapers particularly the extremist papers were forced to stop their publications. It may be observed that India was already expressing national aspirations - why should she support a war to defend 'the principle of self-determination' when she herself was denied its application? There was little sympathy with the British in spite of loud professions of loyalty. Moderate and Extremist alike learnt with satisfaction of German victories. There was no love for Germany, of course, only the desire to see their 'own' rulers humbled. Although the princes and the people of India came forward with great help in men and materials yet as the war went on the spirit of questioning the self-determination grew. The Anglo-Indian Press, "a mouth-piece of Government of India" was preaching the necessity of putting the war first, and national aspirations next, the moderate Press

39. Watarajan S., Op. Cit. ., P.172

40. Nehru, Jawaharlal, An Autobiography, P.31, 1962

41. Watarajan S., Op. Cit., P.140

was supporting the war with a hope that the principle of self-determination will be applied to India as best after the war.

During this period of the Indian history when India was in grip of the Defence of India Act, there appeared The Assam Kishiki in 1914, the Akha in 1915, Iskonia Akha in 1915 and Assamika founded by Chandra Kumar Agarwala, a well-known litterateur in 1915. The Defence of India Act or any other restrictions did not come in their way because they were literary magazines. Literature and not politics dominated the Assamese newspapers. There was no moderate or extremist newspapers as were found in other parts of India. It appears that the Assamese newspapers could not play any important role during the period of self-determination for India as the Assamese literature occupied the dominant place in the pages of the Assamese newspapers.

Immediately after the World War I, there was rapid growth of Assamese newspapers but most of them met ephemeral death. These were : Assam Kishiki, edited by Warayan Chandra Barua, published in 1919, Prabhati, an organ of Kochari Babu Sangha in 1920, Angna, edited by Shikhandata Akhbari (1921), Uttam edited by Nigamanth Choudhary (1921), Shikhand, edited by Anil-ogiri Roy Choudhary (1924), Sadhana, edited by Muhammad Salimullah (1924), Arza Barua, edited by Nigamanth Choudhary (1924), Uttam edited by Muhammad Salimullah (1924), Assam, edited by Nigamanth Choudhary and published from Calcutta (1925), Assam Kishiki, edited by

Kamalakanta Bhattacharjya (1925), Geetia edited by Dimbeswar Bora (1925), Jayanti, edited by Raghunath Choudhury (1926), Rai, edited by Kirtinath Bordoloi and published from Jorhat (1927), Assam Sahitya Sabha Patrika edited by Sarat Chandra Goswami (1927), Ghor-Janti edited by Kanaklata Chaliha (1928), Laxariya edited by Toswar Dhekial of Dibrugarh (1928), Satyabadi a monthly from Dibrugarh (1928), Bihar an organ of Kachari community, published from Dhubri (1929), Bainik Batoni edited by Nilmoni Phukan (1929), Amabon edited by Dinanath Sarma and published from Calcutta (1929), Amar Dash edited by Tulsinarayan Sharma of Jorhat (1931), Bordoloihila edited by Siva Prasad Barooah (1931), Assam Bazar edited by Devendra Nath Sarma of Gauhati (1932), Jahnnabi, a bi-lingual Hindi-Assamese Journal published from Varanasi under the editorship of Janardan Acharyya (1934), Harion edited by Nilmoni Phukan (1934), Batoni, first as weekly and afterwards as daily, edited by Nilmoni Phukan of Jorhat (1935), Asom edited by Kirtinath Bordoloi (1935), Swaraj edited by Kirtinath Bordoloi (1935), Swaraj edited by Raghunath Choudhury in 1936, Nagaraj Katha edited by Mafazzal Hussain of Jorhat appeared in 1936, Pakhila edited by Narendra Nath Sharma and published from Calcutta (1936), Pratima edited by Gangaram Choudhury of Gauhati (1937), Khadim from Gauhati (1937), Janasiksha edited by Nirmaleswar Sarma of Gauhati (1938). All these newspapers were published between the two World Wars. The Amabon, an important literary magazine, appeared in 1929 under the editorship of Dinanath Sharma. It was published from Calcutta and it continued its publication upto 1939 when the second World

War began. This was the most popular magazine and it creditably maintained a high literary standard. New ideas and fashions in literature, the short story, scientific literary criticism - these were the special merits of this magazine.

* Besides the literary magazines, there were some journals specially meant for the children and women. The Amra edited by Hem Chandra Goswami appeared in 1915 while the Ujjan under the editorship of Raghunath Choudhury was published in 1921. Both were children's magazines. Two more children's magazines published from Calcutta - The Amra in 1925 under the editorship of Mahadev Sharma and the Ujjan edited by Haradranath Sharma in 1936. The Chandimati, a women's journal, edited by a woman - Kanaklata Chaliha was published in 1922.

Along with the Assamese language Press, the English Press had also begun to develop. The English journalism in Assam had begun with the emergence of The Times of Assam, an English Weekly, published at the Radhanath Press, Dibrugarh in 1906. It was the mouth-piece of the tea planters and advanced section of the Assamese community. Edited by Radhanath Choudhury, it catered news for the English oriented Assamese people for over half a century and helped the growth of public opinion in Assam.

Following the Times of Assam two more English Weeklies - The Eastern Herald and Citizen appeared in 1908 and both were edited by Bamsahad Mitra. But they were short-lived. In 1904

another English Weekly - The Advocate of Assam under the editorship of Nathuramchandra Barua came into existence and continued its publication upto 1912. This was a powerful English Weekly and stood for 'nationalism'. Next came out The Assam Tribune in 1930, a Weekly published from Dibrugarh under the editorship of Lakshminath Phukan. This was also a very powerful English weekly. It turned into an English daily after the second World War. Many newspapers and magazines in both Assamese and English language covering various information have appeared since the Assam. A chronological list of the newspapers, Assamese and English, has been given in Appendix 'A' and 'B'.

It has been found that till the outbreak of World War II the Press in Assam played an important role in forging the Assamese literature. Unlike the Press in other parts of India, the language and literature dominated the Assamese journalism. There was no connection or agitation. Nor there was any clash of ideas between Hindus and the Christian missionaries which was found in Bengal and other provinces of India in the early period of history of newspapers. Newspapers - big or small had a tremendous impact on the 'trend' of the Assamese literature as well as on the Assamese people. Dr. Birinchi Kumar Barua said: "Literary journals, newspapers and periodicals have to exercise a great influence on modern trends in Assamese literature, and some of the different literary epochs have been named after leading journals like Assam,

Ignaki, Khabli and Anshan. Each new journal is the rallying point of writers of a new school of thought, and in successive monthly issues their views and literary ideals are enunciated, expressed and practised. These journals thus define the age and give it its name.⁴⁴ Each newspaper wielded a tremendous influence over the Assamese people because of the fact that the newspaper served the cause of the Assamese language. All newspapers - big or small - helped also to a great extent in raising the political consciousness and in developing the 'national mind' of the people of Assam. K.W. Datta in his book Landmarks of the Freedom Struggle in Assam, said: "Journalism in Assamese and English on modern lines had also its birth and newspapers and periodicals like The Assam Mirror, The Assam, The Advocate of Assam, The Assam Bistrakti, The Voice of Assam, The Naba and the Khabli made their appearance. They also contributed their share in developing the national mind."⁴⁵

Another important feature of the early journalism in Assam was that the elite from different walks of life were attracted to this novel profession. Journalism in those days was more a social service than a profession and trade. Journalists stood for idealism. Their sense of responsibility brought a place of honour and respect for them in the society. Public had an unshattering faith in the

44. Dr. Barua, Biranchi Kumar, Op. Cit, P.133.

Vide also Barua, Prasanna Kumar, The Assam Delegation to the Joint Parliamentary Council, Assam, 1952, Part-II, P.4, 1952.

45. Datta K.W., Landmarks of the Freedom Struggle in Assam, P.57, 1957

Role of the Fourth Estate. One of the main reasons for such faith was that most of the freedom fighters, social reformers and literateurs edited the newspapers. They served the press in whatever capacity they could.

With the beginning of the Second World War (1939-45), the whole atmosphere of Indian politics changed, and the first institution to be gagged by the British Government was the newspapers. The Defence of India Regulation, 1938 said:

" No person shall endeavour whether orally or otherwise to influence public opinion in a manner likely to be prejudicial to the defence of the realm of the efficient prosecution of the war. "

In reality the Defence of India Regulations covered a wide field of journalistic activity and gave the Government drastic power to sabotage all free expression and public comments. That apart, with the outbreak of the war, Indian newspapers faced great difficulties due to the Government's control of newsprint. This helped the bureaucracy to gain a " strategic position by being empowered to determine the quotas of newspapers. Obviously, few newspapers could come into existence without official favour.

45. Hindustan Standard, September 18, 1939

47. Watsarajan, S., Op. Cit, P.238

As a result a good number of newspapers were forced to close down.

Following Mahatma Gandhi's campaign of individual civil disobedience⁴⁸ on October 17, 1942, the British Government in India issued on October 23, 1942, another notification under the Defence of India Rules, prohibiting, "the printing or publishing by any printer, publisher or editor in British India of any matter calculated, directly or indirectly, to foment opposition to the prosecution of the war to a successful conclusion, or of any matter relating to the holding of meetings or the making of speeches for the purpose, directly or indirectly, or fomenting such opposition as aforesaid."⁴⁹ This order of the Government brought a "tight control over publication of Indian news"⁵⁰. Again on August 9, 1942 when the All India Congress Committee met in Bombay approved and endorsed the Working Committee's 'Quit India' resolution, taken at Wardha on July 14, 1942, the Government launched a sudden attack on the Press.⁵¹ Defence of India Act, Section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code, The Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act, 1941 and The Indian Official Secret Act, 1923 were not considered sufficient to combat the national movement. New rules were passed

48. Menon, V.P., The Transfer of Power to India, P.101
Orient Longman - 1957.

49. The Hindustan Standard, October 27, 1942.

50. Natarajan S. Op. Cit., P.226 -22.

51. Menon V.P., Op.Cit., P.122

placing a number of restrictions on the Press and enabling the provincial authorities to add to them. The effect was that the newspapers were not allowed to publish any news except those coming from the registered correspondents and the latter could not send any without its having been passed for publication by the district censor, and except the news derived from (a) Official sources, (b) The Associated Press of India, (c) The United Press of India, (d) The Orient Press of India.⁵² As a result, a large number of newspapers suspended their publication. The Government wanted to control not only the publication but even the character of factual news through compulsory press advising, the restrictions placed on the number of messages relating to the disturbances, the nature of headlines and the space devoted to particular news. These new measures caused widespread bitterness and resentment.

After the World War II there had been a steady and rapid growth of newspapers in Assam. Some of the newspapers that were born immediately after the World War II are still living. The first important English daily The Assam Tribune turned from an English Weekly to daily in 1946. Edited by Lakshminath Phukan, Assam Tribune changed its place of publication from Dibrugarh to Gauhati in the same year. Since then it has been the only leading English daily of North-East India. Late R.G. Baruah, a "staunch supporter" of Indian National Congress and his

52. The Hindusthan Standard, August 9, 1942.

family members have been the owners of this paper. The year 1947 - the year of independence of India, witnessed the emergence of a powerful Assamese Weekly - The Janabhum from Jorhat under the editorship of T.C. Sarma. This is the oldest Assamese Weekly which survives even to-day. The year 1948 saw the emergence of an important literary monthly - The Ramdhani and a children's magazine - The Ranghat. Both were edited by Dr. Birinchi Kumar Barua and published from Gauhati. Dr. Barua himself said about Ramdhani; " This has been the pivot of a modern intellectual and literary movement - a movement which may be likened to a great river embracing many small and apparently insignificant tributaries, all of them ultimately converging by winding courses into the great stream and thereby enlarging and reinforcing Assamese literature in all its variety and profundity"⁵³. This important monthly ceased to exist in 1972 but again reappeared in 1979 under the editorship of R. Bhagavati.

In 1949 a 'Popular'⁵⁴ and leading Assamese daily - The NUTUN ASSAMIYA appeared from Gauhati under the editorship of Devakanta Barua, Ex-Congress President. Due to "financial difficulties"⁵⁵ the paper was closed down in 1970 and again reappeared as fortnightly which is still continuing. Besides creating a political consciousness

53. Dr. Barua, Birinchi Kumar, Op. Cit., P. 195

54. Ibid - P. 194

55. Bhagavati R., Editor, NUTUN ASSAMIYA, Gauhati.

among the Assamese people the daily NUTUN ASSAMIYA devoted itself to the development of Assamese literature. Its literary pages particularly Sunday issues reflected a new ground⁵⁶ in Assamese literature. ✓

So the period from 1946-1949 is specially significant in the history of journalism in Assam since during this period two important and popular dailies- The Assam Tribune and the NUTUN ASSAMIYA from Gauhati, a Weekly - The Janashakti from Jorhat and a monthly - The Bandhanu from Gauhati were born.

Perhaps, because of the restrictions imposed on the newspapers by Government the role of the Assamese Press during this important period of Indian Freedom Struggle was very placid and insignificant in comparison with the role of the newspapers of the rest of India. Between 1938 and 1945 there was virtually no newspaper worth the name. Barring the most short - lived Assamese literary monthly - The Abhijan which was published in 1941 from Gauhati, no newspaper appeared between the beginning and end of the World War II. (Appendices). Contrarily a good number of newspapers came to a stop just after the outbreak of the war. The Dainik Batori edited by Nilmoni Phukan and the popular The Anand edited by Dinanath Sharma - both ceased to exist in 1938. A few Assamese Weeklies - The Kratiya and

56. Dr. Barua, Birinchi Kumar, Op. Cit., P.195

Jamalikhya appeared at the outbreak of the war but disappeared in the same year 1938. Only two English Weeklies - The Times of Assam and The Assam Tribune survived during the War.

During the post- independence period there had been considerable increase of newspapers and journals in Assam but most of them were short-lived. The increase in number of newspapers both Assamese and English may be attributed to the rise of educated Assamese middle class. It would not be presuming too much to suggest that most of these newspapers were of the nature of venture on the part of the two component elements of this class, the capitalists investing the requisite money, and the educated middle class putting in their brains.

Like other States of India, Journalism in Assam made a great departure from its earlier stand. Newspaper enterprises were converted into commercial ventures from a mission of service to the people and nation. Journalism turned into a profit-making business. This development has changed the very character of the profession. With the accumulation of capital that accrued from the honest labour of the journalists, a class of non-journalists emerged gradually to run the Press. The journalists are no more the guardians of the newspapers and journals. They now turn into a class of labourers earning monthly wages. Thus, there is a new relation between the owners of the newspapers who

control the means of production and the journalists who work or sell their labour power for wage. This development is nothing peculiar in the economic history of the world. Since the beginning of the 19th Century every trade and industry saw this strange phenomenon in the relation between the owners and labourers. In fact, commercialisation of journalism was virtually completed before the Second World War and journalists turned into a monthly wage-earning class having nothing to do with the profits and less account or the policy of the newspapers that goes to form what is called public opinion in a democratic country. The journalists were deprived of a regulated wage and of enjoying the fruits of their toil.

It was only after independence of India Journalists' Organisations began to grow in strength on the trade union lines in true sense of the term. Finally, the growing demand of the journalists for the Workman status under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, culminated into the passing of the Working Journalists (Condition of Service) and Misc. Provisions Act, 1955. The Employees' Provident Fund Act, 1952 has also been extended to all newspaper establishments. But unfortunately these are not followed by all newspapers. On the other hand the trade unions or Journalists' Associations are not strong enough to raise their voice against their masters.

CHAPTER - III

POSITION OF PRESS IN ASSAM AFTER 1964

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT.

The growth and expansion of Press depends largely on the socio-economic factors such as economic, social and educational development of a country. There has been a high degree of correlation between the development of Press and the economic factor in general, particularly income. Similarly, the development of Press has a close relationship with literacy, industrialization and urbanization of a nation. Generally, it has been found that as income rises, the demand for newspapers or mass media increases in greater proportion. It thus becomes apparent that as the economy of a country expands, one may expect a commensurate increase in expansion of newspaper enterprises or of circulation of newspapers. This is true of all other factors industrialization, urbanization and literacy.

There is, in fact, a reciprocal relationship between the development of Press and the economic and technical development. On the one hand, a society must reach a certain level of wealth and technological advancement before it can establish and maintain the services of the Press or other media. On the other hand, the Press or mass media can markedly stimulate the capacity to create further wealth and can spur technical progress by enlisting the human factors, such as improved skills and better education. The Press thus can serve effectively in winning public

support and participation in these efforts.

All the socio-economic factors that are responsible for the growth of newspapers are taken into consideration to study the nature of growth of newspapers in Assam. A co-efficient of co-relation on the basis of Karl Pearson's formula as shown in Table-I has been found out between the circulation of Assamese newspapers from 1962-1976 and per capita income, industrialization, urbanization and literacy. The industrialization figures of Assam are calculated on the basis of the contribution of the industrial sector to the State, urbanization on the basis of urban population and per capita income at constant price. While calculating the figure the relative increase in each year has also been taken into account on the basis of projected or estimated expansion of industry, growth of urban population and increase in per capita income. It has been found that the co-efficient of co-relation (r) in all cases is very low. The co-efficient of co-relation between the circulation and industrialization is +0.1750, between per income +0.13, urbanization +0.1252, and between the literacy is also not satisfactory. The total number of circulation of Assamese newspapers as per 'Press in India' in 1970 is 120000 as against the total number of literates as per 1971 census 410000. This means that one ^{copy of the} Assamese newspaper is shared by 33 ^{literate} persons. This clearly indicates that the circulation of the Assamese newspapers ^{has} ^{not} ^{been} ^{able} ^{to} ^{keep} ^{pace} with the growth of industrialization, income, urbanization and literacy of Assam. Considering these facts, the growth and expansion of Assamese newspapers is ^{been} not satisfactory.

has

TABLE-I

Karl Pearson's formula of co-efficient of co-relation

$$r \text{ (co-efficient of co-relation)} = \frac{\sum XY - N \bar{X} \bar{Y}}{\sqrt{(\sum X^2 - N \bar{X}^2)(\sum Y^2 - N \bar{Y}^2)}}$$

\sum = Sigma = summation

\bar{X} = mean of X

\bar{Y} = mean of y

N = Number

Here is the case of our study:

y = Urbanisation, Industrialisation, Literacy and per capita income as the case may be.

X = Circulation of newspapers from 1966-1976.

\bar{X} = mean of circulation from 1966-1976.

\bar{Y} = mean of Urbanisation, Industrialisation, Literacy and per capita income as the case may be.

Sources of data : 1. Circulation of newspaper from 1966-1976 : Census in India.

2. Figures of urbanisation, Industrialisation, Literacy, per capita income: Estimates of State of Assam, Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Census Report 1961, 1971.

TABLE-I (CONTD)

Co-efficient of co-relation with urbanization.
(On the basis of Urban population).

X	Y	X ²	Y ²	XY
130	925	16900	855625	120250
102	950	10404	902500	96900
95	927	9025	859129	88065
113	1014	12769	1028196	114582
107	1002	11449	1004004	107214
105	1101	11025	1212201	115605
108	1009	11664	1018081	108972
107	1007	11449	1014049	107669
111	1076	12321	1157776	119436
105	1412	11025	1993744	148260
115	1000	13225	1000000	115000
104	1004	10816	1008016	104416
<u>1114</u>	<u>Y=1007</u>	<u>14004</u>	<u>1700100</u>	<u>140000</u>

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\Sigma X}{N} \quad \bar{Y} = 1007$$

$$\bar{X} = 111$$

$$r = \frac{\Sigma XY - N \bar{X} \bar{Y}}{\sqrt{\left\{ \left(\Sigma X^2 - \frac{(\Sigma X)^2}{N} \right) \left(\Sigma Y^2 - \frac{(\Sigma Y)^2}{N} \right) \right\}}}$$

$$= \frac{140000 - 111 \times 111 \times 1007}{\sqrt{\left[14004 - 12 \times (111)^2 \right] \left[1700100 - 12 \times (1007)^2 \right]}}$$

$$= \frac{140000 - 123222}{\sqrt{(14004 - 14772) (1700100 - 1353648)}} = \frac{16778}{\sqrt{3428 \times 346452}}$$

$$= \frac{16778}{\sqrt{1181100000}} = \frac{16778}{34354} = +0.488$$

TABLE-I (CONTD)

Co-efficient of co-relation with industrialization.
(Contribution of Industrial Sector to State).

X	Y	X ²	Y ²	XY
130	77	16900	5929	10010
102	75	10404	5625	7650
98	82	9604	6724	8036
113	91	12769	8281	10283
107	95	11449	9025	10165
106	95	11236	9025	10070
100	99	10000	9801	9900
107	100	11449	10000	10700
111	105	12321	11025	11655
105	115	11025	13225	12075
116	118	13456	13924	13688
124	125	15376	15625	15500
<u>1234</u>	<u>1192</u>	<u>140004</u>	<u>119290</u>	<u>XY=121000</u>

$$\bar{X} = \frac{1234}{11}$$

$$\bar{Y} = \frac{1192}{11}$$

$$n = 11$$

$$r = \frac{\{XY - n \bar{X} \bar{Y}\}}{\sqrt{((X^2 - n \bar{X}^2) (Y^2 - n \bar{Y}^2))}} = \frac{121000 - (11 \times 111 \times 90.5)}{\sqrt{(140004 - 12 \times (111)^2) (119290 - 12 \times (90.5)^2)}}$$

$$= \frac{121000 - 111990}{\sqrt{(140004 - 147732) (119290 - 124427)}} = \frac{300}{\sqrt{52272 \times 98863}}$$

$$= \frac{300}{\sqrt{515776}} = \frac{300}{2278} = + 0.1700$$

TABLE-I (CONTD)

Co-efficient of co-relation with per capita income.
(On the basis of constant price)

X	Y	X ²	Y ²	XY
139	318	19321	101124	44092
102	392	10404	153664	39984
96	348	9216	117649	33528
113	367	12769	134689	41471
107	377	11449	142129	40329
106	383	11236	146649	40598
108	402	11664	161604	43416
107	435	11449	189225	46545
111	451	12321	203401	50061
106	489	11236	239121	51954
116	501	13456	251001	58116
204	514	15376	264196	105792
<u>1334</u>	<u>4993</u>	<u>149694</u>	<u>2045791</u>	<u>544923</u>

$\bar{X} = 111$

$\bar{Y} = 409$

$r = \frac{\sum XY - N \bar{X} \bar{Y}}{\sqrt{(\sum X^2 - N \bar{X}^2)(\sum Y^2 - N \bar{Y}^2)}}$

$= \frac{544923 - 12 \times 111 \times 409}{\sqrt{(149694 - 12 \times (111)^2)(2045791 - 12 \times (409)^2)}}$

$= \frac{544923 - 542456}{\sqrt{(149694 - 147852)(2045791 - 1997508)}}$

$= \frac{2467}{\sqrt{1842 \times 48283}}$

$= \frac{2467}{9399} = + 0.26$

Although the increase in circulation is not satisfactory yet the number of Assamese newspapers has been increasing steadily as shown in Table 2. The number of Assamese Dailies in 1976 is 2 as against 1 in 1962, and Weeklies 12 as against 4. With the emergence of the ASSAM EXPRESS as a daily in 1971, the number of English dailies has gone to two in this North-East India. This is a great step forward in the history of English journalism in Assam. A chronological list of the Assamese and English newspapers has been given in Appendix 'A' and 'B'.

TABLE '2'

Number of Newspapers in Assam(1962-76)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Daily (Assamese)</u>	<u>Daily(English)</u>	<u>Weeklies(Assamese)</u>
1962	1	1	4
1963	1	1	5
1964	1	1	6
1965	2	1	7
1966	2	1	9
1967	2	1	6
1968	2	1	8
1969	2	1	10
1970	1	1	10
1971	1	2	9
1972	1	2	10
1973	2	2	9
1974	2	2	8
1975	2	2	9
1976	2	2	12

Sources : Press in India: 1965-77

The number and circulation of Assamese dailies including tri-weeklies and bi-weeklies per thousand population are also very low as compared to those of the other States of India. Though the circulation of Assamese dailies had gone double in 1973 as compared to 1967 yet the position of the Assamese newspapers is low in comparison with that of Indian language newspapers. The number and circulation of dailies of India in 1967 and 1973 are given in the following Table-3 showing the position according to circulation and number:

TABLE- 3.

Number and circulation of dailies(both English and language papers), 1967 and 1973.

Language.	Number of dailies.		Circulation in thousand.	
	1973	1967	1973	1967
English	75	61	22,30	17,82
Hindi	265	174	16,99	10,22
Malayalam	65	44	11,12	7,02
Marathi	78	48	9,49	6,29
Tamil	85	28	2,74	7,81
Gujarati	34	28	7,42	5,22
Bengali	17	12	5,09	4,72
Urdu	92	88	2,91	2,62
Kannada	47	21	2,24	2,51
Telegu	14	14	2,21	1,92
Oriya	7	6	94	75
Punjabi	18	15	81	84
Assamese	3*	2	25	17

* including bi-weeklies and tri-weeklies.

Sources: Report of the Post-Finding Committee
1973, P.22

Even after 1973 the increase in circulation of Assamese dailies and weeklies is not satisfactory. The Assamese newspapers recorded a decrease of 6000 copies in circulation in 1974. During the eight years ending 1976, the total increase in circulation of Assamese language newspapers was of 2,000 copies as shown in Table-4.

TABLE -4.

**Circulation of Assamese newspapers (1969-76)
per thousand population.**

YEAR	Dailies (including Tri- weeklies and bi-weeklies)	Weeklies	Others	Total.
1969	29	64	14	1,07
1970	31	66	9	1,06
1971	7	49	12	68
1972	21	66	22	1,10
1973	25	66	11	1,12
1974	24	62	19	1,06
1975	42	66	3	1,10
1976	45	68	17	1,15

**Sources: Press in India, Part I
1976, 1977**

Out of the total circulation of 1.95 lakh during 1976, the Assamese language newspapers claimed the largest share in circulation - 59.0 per cent and the English newspapers recorded only 24.1 per cent. The circulation of the newspapers based on language and periodicity published in Assam during 1976 is given in Table 5 below:

TABLE - 5

Circulation of Newspapers, 1976

(Language and periodicity wise) Circulation (.000)

Language	Dailies *	Weeklies	Monthlies	Others	Total
Assamese	45	53	3	14	1.15
English	39	...	4	4	47
Bengali	2	15	2	1	21
Hindi	..	6	..	..	6
The Rest	..	2	..	4	6
TOTAL	86	77	9	23	1.95

* including tri-weeklies and bi-weeklies.

Sources : Press in India, Part
1977

Throughout the ages the newspapers have grown and developed mainly in and around the cities or the State Capitals. This is true of even to-day in India in general and Assam in particular. In 1975 about 42 per cent of all the dailies were published from cities with a population of more than one lakh including the metropolitan cities - Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras- and the State Capitals.¹ Each of these two latter categories accounted for about one-sixth of the total number of papers. Towns with a population of less than one lakh accounted for a little less than one-fourth. In circulation, however, the metropolitan dailies had the largest slice, namely 39 per cent. Cities with a population of more than one lakh accounted for less than a third of the total circulation.

The pattern of growth and circulation of newspapers in Assam present a similar picture like that of rest of India. In Assam also the newspapers have concentrated in the State Capital - Gauhati. Three dailies out of the four dailies are published from Gauhati. The State Capital - Gauhati had the largest number of newspapers with 1.29 lakhs copies claiming 65.2 per cent of the total circulation. Towns with less than 1,00,000 population shared 33.8 per cent of the circulation. The number and circulation of newspapers according to centres of publication are given in Table 6.

1. Report of the Fact Finding Commission on Newspaper Industry, 1975, P.22

TABLE 6

Number and circulation of newspapers
according to centres of publication, 1976.

Centres.	(A) Number			(.000) Total	
	Dailies.	Weeklies	Others	1976	1975
State Capital	5	8	28	41	31
Cities with a population of 1,00,000 and above.	...	...	...	...	...
Towns with a population less than 1,00,000	3	24	28	55	47
TOTAL	1976	8	32	55	96
	1975	8	25	45	73

Centres	(B) CIRCULATION			(.000) Total.	
	Dailies * weeklies	Others	1976	1975	
State Capital	74	37	18	1,29	1,26
Cities with a Population of 1,00,000 and above.	...	...	...	...	...
Towns with a population less than 1,00,000	12	40	14	66	55
TOTAL:	1976	86	77	32	1,95
	1975	79	88	14	1,81

* including tri-bi-weeklies.

Sources: Press in India, 1977, Part I

The data in the Table 6 clearly show that a major portion of the circulation of the newspapers particularly dailies is concentrated in the Cities in which they are published. The circulation pattern clearly indicates that the newspapers in Assam have an urban bias. They give more importance to the news or matter relating to urban population and ignore the vast segment of the population who live in the rural areas. There should be more space in the newspapers for rural news. For healthy functioning of democracy the newspapers should try to penetrate into the rural areas which are left uncultured even after 33 years of independence.

However, there is no denying the fact that there are some obstacles to the development of Press in Assam. These are: availability of newsprint, communication bottleneck, and shortage of technical staff. In addition to these, there are some more obstacles to the Press particularly the small newspapers which are lacking in capital, and upto-date composing and printing machines. Generally, the small newspapers are supported by the 'Job-printing Orders'. The low percentage of literacy is also another great obstacle to the development of Press in Assam.

Nevertheless, it appears that there is a large reading public which could be reached if newspapers and periodicals of popular appeal could be made more readily available to them. It may be anticipated that the future will bring about a sharp increase in demand for the information in Assam. It may reasonably be assumed that the future level of demand for the newspapers can be related to the following factors:

1. Growth of population.
 2. Increase in per capita income.
 3. Increase in literacy.
 4. Growth of industrialization.
 5. Growth of urbanization.
-

NEWSPAPER ORGANISATION.

To-day journalism is a business. Professor Emeritus, F. Fraser Bond, said that the history of newspaper " as it develops tends to put an ever-increasing emphasis on the newspaper publishing as a business"². So it is hardly surprising that the organisation of newspapers should be along with the lines of business organisation in general. Like business organisation the newspaper has too its planners, its manufactured product of news, features and advertising turned into the printed paper, its sales force to distribute the product and sell its advertising space, and an office organisation for supervision and accounting.

Although there is no standard way of organising a newspaper plant³ the most of the newspapers in Assam, which do not have their printing done elsewhere have two divisions - editorial and business. The big newspaper like, The Assam Tribune, The Binnik Assam have three basic departments in general. These are: 1. Editorial 2. Mechanical and 3. Business or office.

Publisher or Owner-Operators: The publisher -owner is the overall in-charge of the newspaper enterprise. He is the pivot of the newspaper.

Editorial : This department looks after the writing and of the newspaper. It attends to the production not only of

2. Bond, F. Fraser, Professor Emeritus, Journalism Deptt.
New York University - An Introduction to Journalism - P. 150
1961.

3. Ibid - P. 151

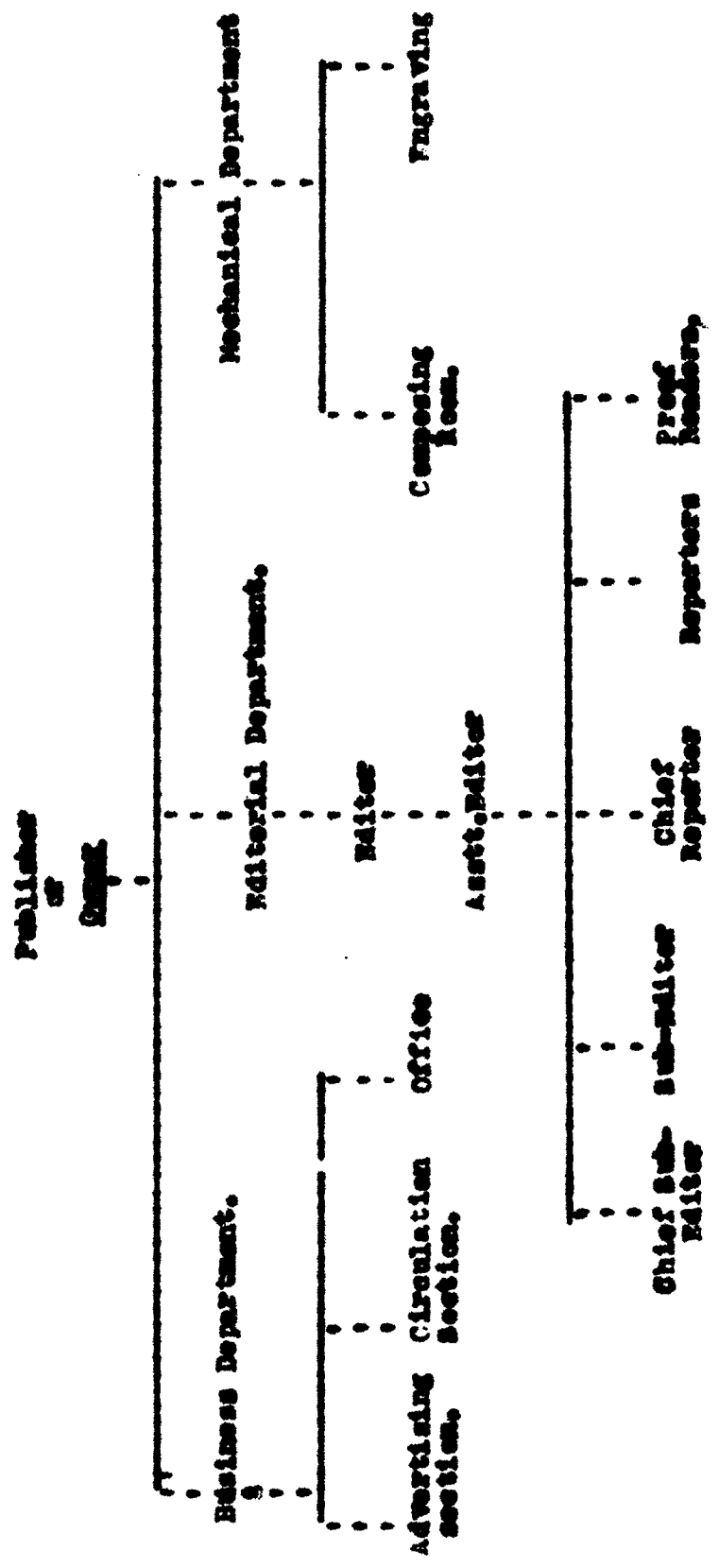
editorials but of all news and features including the pictorial ones. News gathered from various sources is written into readable and interesting form. The same news is again sub-edited and displayed in the newspaper. Editorials, special articles, fiction and other features are also collected and presented in the newspaper. All these materials are processed by the editorial department.

2. Mechanical : This department handles the composition of the newspaper, which means setting the written copy in type and placing into page forms; stereo-typing, which transforms the page forms into metal half-cylinders. and thereafter printed upon the newsprint. This is a technical and mechanical process. Every newspaper has a mechanical department.

3. Business Department: The business office gets the money which the other departments spend. To finance these two departments - editorial and mechanical, advertising space must be sold, subscriptions must be obtained, and the news commodity must be delivered - hence the advertising and circulation divisions.

The Table - 7 shows the sample of newspaper organization of dailies of Assam.

TABLE -7
Organization of The Assam Tribune/Dainik Assam



OWNERSHIP

Ever since the birth of newspapers both the ruler and ruled have realised that the Press has not only been a powerful instrument for making profit or earning money but also a powerful instrument for stimulating and moulding the public opinion. This has led the people of various walks of life as well as the Government to own or control the Press either directly or indirectly. The rapidly growing power of the mass media has generated complex and growing controversies. The recognition that political as well as economic power can be achieved through ownership or control of the mass media has consequently led to a concentration of media management in free, and partly free societies. In free societies there is a tendency for newspaper chains to add to their holdings. This has posed a great menace to the freedom of the Press. It has been said that the Press is 'free but not independent'. The implication of this statement is that the editors and journalists are not free to write what they wish. Because neither the editors nor the Journalists are the owners of the newspapers. They are the employees of the newspaper organisations and those who owned the Press are not journalists. The big business magnates are the owners of the newspaper enterprises. They are more interested in influencing the policies of the Governments in favour of their business interest. So what is wrong with the Press is the grip that the industrialists in the country have secured over it.

A newspaper which is a subsidiary to some other industry cannot be independent and a publisher who does not live by his newspaper industry cannot be expected to have a sense of responsibility in relation to the public and the nation.

In fact, all over the world the Press is owned by the industrialists who have a good amount of capital and investment. As a result, journalism has come to be regarded as a product to be sold. The real information service and a good reporting have been sacrificed to sensationalism and entertainment so as to obtain a wider readership which can ensure profit and attract advertisement.

The ownership pattern of newspapers in India has a great similarity with that of Assam. In India there are various forms of ownership: Individual, Joint Stock Company, Firm and Partnership, Trust, Society or Association, Political parties, and Government. Among the various forms of ownership, 'Individual' continues to claim the ownership of the largest number of newspapers in India. More than three-fifths of all dailies in 1973 were owned by individuals. In 1967 less than three fifths were so owned. Joint Stock Companies owned the next largest slice of the dailies followed by firms and partnerships. The Table -8 shows that 62.2 per cent of the papers were owned by individuals in 1973 and only 17.2 per cent by Joint Stock Companies accounted for 29.6 per cent and private limited companies 22.1 per cent.

In Assam newspapers are owned mostly by the individuals. Big or small all are in the hands of private persons and they

can be termed as 'family newspapers.' Only a few political parties like the Congress and the Communist party of India publish newspapers which are very irregular and have little impact on the public. The 'Agam' monthly organ of the Congress Party, although established in 1953, commands a very negligible circulation. Established in 1958, the 'Janmat', a weekly journal of the Communist Party of India is regularly an irregular publication with a very poor circulation.

TABLE- 2.

Ownership pattern of dailies, 1973 and 1974.

	1974	
	1973	1974
Individual	516 (62.2)	392 (34.5)
Joint Stock Company	143 (17.2)	116 (10.7)
Firm and Partnership	90 (11.2)	88 (12.9)
Trust	32 (3.9)	18 (2.1)
Society/Association	20 (2.5)	31 (5.3)
Political parties	10 (1.2)	8 (1.3)
Government (Central or State)	1 (0.1)	1 (0.2)
TOTAL	823 (100.0)	838 (100.0)

Sources : Figures from Press in India.

A large percentage of the dailies and a large share of the total circulation are accounted for by dailies owned by common ownership units, also described as chain groups and multiple units. The ' Common ownership unit has been defined as ' a newspaper establishment owning two or more news- interest newspapers, at least one of which is a daily⁴. The total number of common ownership units in India at the end of 1973 was 94 which together owned 206 dailies with a combined circulation of 66.92 lakhs. The corresponding figures for 1967 were: 62 common ownership units owning 142 dailies with a combined circulation of 49.66 lakhs. The Table -9 shows the number and circulation of dailies under common ownership rose by 45.1 per cent and 34.8 per cent respectively during the period, 1967-73 against 41.2 per cent and 34.2 per cent in the case of all dailies.

TABLE -9

Number of common ownership units and number and circulation of dailies owned by them.

Year	Number of ownership units	Number of dailies	Circulation (Thousand)
1973	94	206	66.92
1974	95	211	64.39
1971	98	217	67.94
1970	72	182	60.69
1969	65	170	54.99
1968	64	165	49.88
1967	62	142	49.66

Sources: Figures from Report of the Fact Finding Committee on Newspaper Economics, P.37

4. Press in India, Part I, 1973, P.62

During 1973 there were 19 common ownership units each claiming a combined daily circulation of one lakh copies and above. The ten leading common ownership units, the number of dailies owned by them and their combined circulation are shown in Table -10.

TABLE -10

Number and circulation of Newspapers owned by leading common ownership units (1973)

Common Ownership Unit.	Number.	Circulation (Thousand)	Dailies	
			Percentage share in the circulation of dailies in different languages.	
1. <u>Express Newspapers.</u>	14	9,00	English	18.8
			Marathi	15.2
			Kannada	14.2
			Tamil	20.4
			Telegu	40.3
2. <u>Hindustan Times and Allied Publications.</u>	6	3,78	English	8.3
			Hindi	11.0
3. <u>Bennett Coleman & Co., Ltd.</u>	8	7,28	English	15.6
			Hindi	14.5
			Marathi	12.1
4. <u>Ananda Bangar Patrika (Private) Ltd.</u>	3	3,08	English	2.8
			Bengali	32.4
5. <u>Thanthi Trust Allied Publications.</u>	13	3,41	Tamil	30.0
6. <u>Anvita Bangar Patrika and Allied Publications.</u>	4	3,37	English	6.6
			Bengali	32.9
7. <u>Malayala Nuzhama Co. Ltd.</u>	2	3,16	Malayalam	23.4
8. <u>Muthrakkuzhi Printing & Publications Co. Ltd.</u>	2	2,75	Malayalam	24.7
9. <u>Kasturi & Sons.</u>	3	2,05	English	9.2
10. <u>Stateman Ltd.</u>	2	1,85	English	8.7

The Table-10 shows that the Express Newspapers group, with 14 dailies and a combined circulation of over 9 lakhs, was the leading common ownership unit in 1978 followed by the Bennett Coleman and Co. Ltd., with 8 dailies and a combined daily circulation of 7.3 lakhs. The large shares of the total circulation in particular languages commanded by one group is shown in Table-11.

TABLE -11.

Group	Language	Percentage share in total daily circulation.
1. <u>ANANDA BASU PATRA</u> (Pvt) Ltd.	Bengali	52.4
2. <u>EXPRESS NEWSPAPERS</u>	Telugu	49.3
3. <u>Thanthi Trust and Allied Publications.</u>	Tamil	39.0
4. <u>ANANTA BASU PATRA</u> (Private) Ltd. and Allied Publications.	Bengali	38.9

Each of these groups thus controlled 33 per cent or more of the total market supply in the respective fields.

The pattern of ownership of newspapers in Assam presents no different picture from that of the rest of India. In Assam The Assam Tribune (Private) Limited is the biggest group which has been publishing the Assam Tribune, the

highest circulated English daily (20,175) in Assam, the Dainik Assam, the Assamese Daily whose circulation is also highest (24,225) and the Assam Bani, an Assamese Weekly which continues to enjoy the top position among the periodicals with a circulation of 21,795 copies. Another common ownership group in Assam is the Jamabhangi (Pvt) Limited of Jorhat which publishes the Dainik Jamabhangi and The Weekly Jamabhangi. But this group is yet to gain a good circulation. So the only one group - 'The Assam Irikhna' commands an effective circulation in Assam. This clearly indicates that the Assam Irikhna group commands the public opinion of the majority people of Assam.

The language-wise circulation share of dailies under common ownership as given in Table -12 shows that the Assamese language newspaper occupied an important position as compared to the others. The daily Press in English, Tamil, Bengali and Assamese belonged mostly to common ownership units. The share of circulation of dailies published by these units language-wise in 1975 was : English 88.7 per cent, Tamil 86.8 per cent, Bengali (81.8 per cent), Kannada 71.9 per cent, Telegu 68.2 per cent, Assamese 67.6 per cent, Gujarati 64.9 per cent, Hindi 63.4 per cent, Marathi 62.4 per cent, Malayalam 58.1 per cent and Oriya 57.6 per cent. The details are given in Table -12.

TABLE - 12

Dailies having a combined circulation of over 15,000 copies published by different common ownership units and their percentage in the total circulation.

Sl. No.	Language	Number of dailies	Number of units publishing such dailies	Percentage to total circulation of all dailies in the language.
1.	English	25	14	22.7
2.	Tamil	20	4	24.5
3.	Bengali	2	2	21.8
4.	Kannada	5	4	71.9
5.	Telugu	5	3	62.2
6.	Assamese	1	1	67.6
7.	Gujarati	12	6	64.9
8.	Hindi	37	20	62.4
9.	Marathi	11	8	62.4
10.	Malayalam	6	4	52.1
11.	Oriya	1	1	51.6
12.	Urdu	2	2	19.9

Sources : Figures from Press in India, Part I, 1977

ANALYSIS OF CONTENT OF NEWSPAPERS.

The style and content of the newspapers determine their roles in the country. The differences in their basic orientations, their relationships to the economy and polity, their audience of readers and their intentions are clearly evidenced in the contents of the newspapers. The impact of the newspapers is also dependent on what the contents of these newspapers are and on who reads the newspapers. The power of the Press derives from the fact that people read it.

The figures in Table -13 are based on the samples of the two dailies- Assam Tribune and Dainik Assam of 1977. The sample contained 36 issues, distributed over the year in such a way that every month was represented by three issues, one in the first week, second in the middle and third in the last week of the month. The definition of 'national news' or News (India) means news of national importance of all India importance or news concerning India as a whole. The provincial news means news relating to State only.

The heavy reliance of the newspapers upon advertisement is the first thing to notice in Table-13. Out of the total space the Assam Tribune devotes 50% only to advertisement. The average number of pages of the Assam Tribune is 6(six). With an average 4 pages, the Dainik Assam of the total space allots 33% to advertisement. The percentage of space allotted to advertisement by each paper as shown in the Table-13 does not mean that the newspapers have any

TABLE - 13

Coverage given to News, Features etc.

Mean average No. of pages	Space given to (Column Cms.)		Sports Letters.	Inter- national.	Other
	News	Editorial			
	(National)	(Previous)			
Asom Balam (English Daily)	6	56	13	2	2
Dainik Assam (Assamese Daily)	4	22	13	2	2

Sample : 36 issues in 1977

3 issues in each month.

Percentage in the table are rounded.

inclination to fix the advertisement space to a certain point or limit. It has been found particularly in the case of Dainik Assam, whose advertisement traffic is lower than the Assam Tribune, to cut short the news space whenever the flow of advertisement increases. This means that the volume of advertisement determines what amount of space is to be allotted to news on any day.

It may be mentioned here that the Fact Finding Committee on Newspapers' Economics had recommended that the present 60 : 40 news - advertisement ratio should be around 50 : 50 in the total space of daily newspapers. The report had suggested that the advertisement space ratio should be brought down when conditions improve.

As regards the space for national news, the Assam Tribune being the English daily gives more space to the news of all India concern. On the other hand Dainik Assam being the language daily gives more space to the news concerning the State of Assam.

The proportion of the political news overwhelmingly predominates the business and other social news in both the papers. Yet there is a difference between the two papers. The Dainik Assam gives more prominence and space to the domestic politics or politics relating to the State of Assam than the Assam Tribune. The Dainik Janashakti, another Assamese daily published for Jorhat, follows the similar policy like Dainik Assam. It gives more prominence to local political news relating to Upper Assam.

The detailed breakdown of the editorial, feature or article columns as shown in the Table '13 has revealed that these two columns also significantly give more importance to political matter rather than social and economic development.

The same is true of letters which are just a voice of the editor or an analysis of an event already reported by the paper itself.

It has been found that the newspapers place heavy reliance on the news agency service for news rather than on the staff reporters. As a result, identical news with no change in the content and style are found in different newspapers. This makes a paper dull and monotonous. Obviously such newspapers cannot satisfy the inquisitiveness of the news-hungry people. The lack of competition among the newspapers for their styles and contents is the major defect of the newspapers of Amman. The sheer parrot-like repetition without variation in the content and style of the newspapers is bound to irritate the readers.

The repetition has been found not only in the manner of presentation of news, but in the use of language, photographs and aid available in these swiftly-changing times. The monotony of repetition has also destroyed the interest in the editorial columns. Editorials occupy a prestigious place in daily newspapers. They represent the policy of the newspapers and their views and proclaim what the newspapers stand for. Editorials are often called the "heart and brain" of the newspapers. The efforts put in on the editorials are very much

out of proportion to their size when compared to the news columns. This tendency reflects the importance a newspaper attaches to its editorial.

Generally speaking the editors seem to have inherited a legacy based on old notions and misconceptions. It is amazing that even in the 20th century, they do not want to part with the outdated past legacy. It seems to be a divine precept with them that the editorials must be verbose, written in ambiguous language and in one long piece as per whims and fancies of the editors. Most of the editorials are unintelligible, incomprehensive, dull and boring. Editorials are obsessed with politics and often they do not put forward any concrete suggestions or remedy to the problem. It is very disgusting - reading editorials about politics day in and day out. They always make 'Central Government' and 'Establishment' responsible for any failure. Their criticisms are stereo-type, formal, vague and are of fixed pattern. Such criticisms cannot create any healthy impression on the people.

Writing good editorial is an art but this is sadly neglected. The language of a good editorial is clear, forceful and persuasive, the sentences are short and paragraphs are brief. Editor should interpret the facts and put them in balance. In most cases editorials are nothing but reproduction of news without suggesting any remedy as to how to solve the problem. News is the root and stem. Interpretation of that news is the flower and seed, giving significance and worth to the whole plant.

An understanding of the vastly increased importance of news, socially, politically, economically and ethically is very important. The editorial page is not a trophy. It is a vital organ of journalistic body. The most important question for the journalists is how to meet new conditions. The mission of the journalism is to satisfy the inquisitive mind of the people.

The editorials often foment feelings and exaggerate the real picture particularly on issues like 'immigration', 'jobs for the sons of the soil', 'unemployment problems', 'extension of railway line', 'construction of bridge over the Brahmaputra river', 'language', 'border dispute' and other local problems.

Editorials rarely touch many of the other important aspects of a reader's life or echo his thinking, his reflections. Things of human interest, achievements of individual in various fields, arts and so on, hardly attract the notice of the editors. These might be the reasons for readers skipping the editorials. To attract the readers the editors and journalists are now injecting views into the news in order to make stories more readable.

Academic Background of Journalists.

Journalism today is an exacting calling. To gather, present and interpret the news by whatever medium - Press, film or T.V - demands not only a good academic background and technical skills but also the ability to understand

and make understandable to others the swiftly changing panorama of modern times.

The situation not only presents a challenge to those engaged in the profession, it carries wider social implications which affect everyone. If, as is generally conceded, an informed public opinion is one of the best guarantees for a healthy national climate and since the basis of public opinion is the information carried by the newspapers or mass media, then it follows that the validity of opinions held by the public will largely depend on the knowledge, understanding and responsibility of those who provide the information. The experts on mass media agree that the key to improving the quality of information and thereby the quality of the newspapers lies in more thorough education and training of journalists in all media. There cannot be any dispute that the good journalists can produce good newspapers as well as well-informed citizens.

The quality of a newspaper is also related to the nature of news coverage. If a newspaper subscribes to several news agency services, it receives different versions of the same news and the paper would be in a position to give variety or novelty to its readers. Similarly the wide coverage of news through correspondents stationed at different places helps a newspaper to make its news-story more interesting and different from others.

Judging by these considerations, it appears that the Asam Ikhbar, the oldest English daily of Assam with a circulation of 31,572, is the only paper which has a better

network of news coverage than other dailies. The Tribuna subscribes to both P.T.I. and U.N.I. news service and has stationed one full time correspondent at Shillong and another at New Delhi. Whereas the other three Dailies-Dainik Assam, Assam Express and Janabhuini subscribe to only one news agency service each. It may be mentioned here that both the Assam Tribune and Dainik Assam are owned by the same proprietors. The Assam Tribune has a 17 men editorial staff (Vide T-14). Of the four M.As, two secured Diploma in journalism from the University of Gauhati. The remaining 9 journalists are graduates and 4 undergraduates. The editorial strength of the Assam Express, another English Daily, consists of only 9 journalists, out of which one is a Master's Degree holder and the rest are graduates. Out of the two language Dailies, the Dainik Assam is better equipped with staff. It has 3 M.As, 10 graduates and 3 undergraduates. On the other hand, the Janabhuini, another Assamese Daily, is armed with only one M.A., 9 graduates and 4 undergraduates.

Out of 55 journalists engaged in the four Dailies, only two journalists are M.As. with journalism diploma, the rest are 7 M.As, 36 graduates and 11 undergraduates. The percentage comes to :

M.As with journalism qualifications	: 3.5%
Master degrees	: 12.8%
Graduates	: 64%
Undergraduates	: 19%

TABLE-14.

Academic Background of Journalists.

Name of paper and place of publication.	Daily <u>MAHARASHTRA</u>					
	Total No. of journalists.	Post graduates with diploma in journalism.	Post graduates with diploma in journalism.	Graduates with diploma in journalism.	Graduates	Under-graduates.
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1) <u>AMAR TRIBHUN</u> English, Gauhati.	17	2	2	-	9	4
2) <u>AMAR TRIBHUN</u> English, Gauhati.	9	-	1	-	6	-
3) <u>Dainik Aam</u> Assamese, Gauhati.	16	-	2	-	10	2
4) <u>Dainik</u> <u>Assamese</u> , Tezhat.	14	-	1	-	9	4
Total	56	2	5	-	34	10
Percentage		3.6%	8.9%	-	61%	18%

FIGURE FROM TABLE ABOVE

It may be reasonably concluded that the majority of journalists are graduates and only a negligible percentage of journalists have the journalism diploma or any sort of training prior to their joining the profession of journalism.

THE SMALL PUBLICATIONS.

Strength sometimes lies in smallness. The small publications can play a vital role in the world of to-day when the growth of monopoly or chain newspapers has posed a threat to the freedom of expression. During a period of crisis these small publications can play an important role as they did during the last Emergency in India. The Emergency revealed how a national newspaper with substantial fixed assets and circulation yields to pressure. But the small publications straightway rejected the illegal and arbitrary orders.

In Assam there has been mushroom growth of weeklies and other small publications but most of them were short-lived. Amidst the birth and death a few weeklies have survived. Each district of Assam comes out with a weekly which has a considerable circulation in its place of birth: the oldest weekly, the Janashakti (1947) published from Jorhat, Assam Bani (1965) the largest circulated weekly (30,000) from Gauhati, Mahajati (1966) from Tezpur, Sambalika

(1968) from Newgong, Prantabashi (1967) from Dhubri. Gauhati being the capital of Assam is favoured with more weeklies like Alak (1960), a R.S.S. sponsored weekly, the Janant (1968), a weekly financed by the Communist Party of India, and the Santahik Nilantol (1968)

Most of these small publications enjoy a kind of sympathy from the local people and a monopoly of their virgin soil. They boast themselves to be the "Outstanding and popular" weeklies. Published in respective atmosphere of backwater areas, catering to subservient civil servants and conformist politicians, at the beck and call of the leaders of the insular societies and publishing the P.I.B. (Press Information Bureau) and other Government handouts, they might easily be mistaken for official gazettes. It is futile to look for any reflection on current events without distortion in any of them. Their pages marked often by rumours, exaggeration, communal feelings and editorial pontification for semi-literate societies using information media to 'tell the people what the Government is doing for development alone' is not proper communication. Communication does not mean publicity for political or administrative officers visiting development projects, cutting ribbons, laying down foundation stones, or dispensing welfare grants. What is meant here is that the media should not be used as an instrument for brainwashing the public. Nor the media should speak about development programmes in chorus with one voice with the Government. What is stressed is that the media should present a critical and constructive view of the

development programmes.

The small publications are more or less rural in their bias. The field of the rural Press is much wider than the urban Press or big dailies which serve only the elites. Rural Press which can serve 80% of the total population of the country, can reflect the mood and temperament of the majority people. The big newspapers are urban oriented and so the duty of the rural Press is to inform the masses about the problems of the country and disseminate information about new farm techniques, nutrition, health, family welfare (family planning), growth of transportation, protection and exploitation of natural resources, increase per capita incomes, the participation of citizens in national affairs, educating the masses on the importance of putting national interest above the regional.

There are some inhibitions. They are dependent on news-print quotas and Government advertisement. Their proprietors are handicapped by diverse commercial interests. Their news sources are extremely limited. Like the weeklies of big cities, they do not have enough space at their command nor do they have impressive printing machines.

The borrowed clichés that stud the pages of these weeklies further bore the readers. Tick off the headline and one will find: "From Assam Air Bases with Love", "Untold story", "Do you know", "Better not to print", "With body and soul", "Fanning the Flames", "The Sounds of Silence", "After Sinha When", "All the News that is unfit to print",

'Garibi Hatao' . Their lack of originality hardly calls for comment.

Impartial examination of living conditions, sympathetic treatment of abuses to which we are hardened, the exposure of scandals, and unorthodox points of view lie at the heart of welfare journalism. There is a need to add to human knowledge, to move numbed public conscience, provoke an outcry, and compel ameliorative action. If such publication is not an instrument of change, it has no business to be in business. But there is little so far of that ideal. Periodicals have more opportunities and obligations of more lasting relevance than the dailies, even when entertainment is the ostensible objective.

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THE ECONOMICS OF THE PRESS.

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Economics are fundamental to the role of the newspapers in society. The economic standards decide whether a newspaper stays in existence. One cannot expect to run a newspaper at a loss. Of course, the newspapers sponsored and subsidized by the political party with a view to propagate party's ideology may take the risk of running the paper even at a loss, for profit is not the sole motive of the newspaper which runs as a political organ.

Economics of a newspaper are important not only from the question of a paper's existence, but also from the point

of view of its style of functioning. The factors of cost and revenue have a considerable influence on the way in which a paper runs - on the size and payment of staff and also on the nature and quality of its products. The paper with sound financial background may effort to have a well-trained and well qualified editorial staff which may help improve the standard and quality of the newspaper.

Two facts about the economic structure of a newspaper industry are vitally crucial : proportion of revenue comes from the advertisements ; and proportion of costs. The newspaper enterprise sells two commodities : space to the advertisers, and reading matter to the public.

Both are connected with each other. Space sold to the advertisers owes its value to being the part of the reading matter for the general public. The space meant for advertisements in any print medium, which does not carry any news or views, has a little value from economic point of view if it were not linked with the reading matters. In other words, the value of advertisement space in a newspaper has a close link with the reading materials and the readership of the paper. The main aim of the advertiser is to sell his idea or goods to more and more people or consumers. So the newspaper with a wide circulation will provide the advertiser with a large number of prospective consumers. Obviously the more circulation the more the value of the advertisement space. On the other hand a newspaper cannot exist only on the basis of the sale proceeds from the general public. The public do not pay the full cost of their paper. They are heavily

subsidised by the advertisement revenue. A newspaper may start losing advertisement revenue not because the unpopularity has decreased its circulation but simply because an economic depression has reduced the availability of advertisement.

Hence the advertisement revenue is vulnerable to any general recession in trade and may lead to the closure of a newspaper organisation. Apart from the general recession, the newspaper may lose advertisement revenue to its competitor - T.V. which is considered by the advertisers as the most effective medium. The emergence of T.V. has posed a threat to the survival of the newspapers.

The cost of newspaper production may be split mainly into : newsprint and ink , editorial, production and distribution. Newsprint and ink are important items of cost of newspaper. The cost of these items are directly related to a paper's circulation and size. Rises in the price of newsprint are also an important factor in the rise of price of newspapers or cost of the newspaper.

The production cost may be different in different papers. The main departments are compositors concerned with type-setting and proof-reading, a process which produces plates from photographs, foundry, doing jobs like casting moulds of pages for the rotary Presses ; machine department, where presses work and publishing and bundles of newspapers are wrapped. The distribution and circulation are the lowest cost for all papers.

The role of the Press in society with which we are much concerned, relate to the costs of the editorial of a newspaper. It is important to know what per cent of the total costs is devoted to news coverage or news-collection of the paper. The news coverage should be the first consideration of any newspaper. The size and scope of the news coverage determines not only the editorial expenses but also the quality of the newspaper to a great extent. The editorial expenses are treated as fixed and the cost of newsprint and ink, production and distribution may be treated as both variable and fixed.

On the question of news coverage the newspapers of Assam present a different picture from that of the metropolitan cities of India. There is no wide network for news coverage by the newspapers.

The Assam Tribune and Dainik Assam have been placed in Class III and journalists of these papers are paid as per provisions of the Wage Board. Except a few newspapers like Assam Tribune and Dainik Assam, newspaper authorities do not strictly follow any regular pay-scale for the journalists. Although some organizations earned a good amount from the advertisements and "Job Works", yet they are very reluctant to pay the journalists what they deserve. The Association of journalists are also not strong enough to stand against their masters. The poor and irregular pay scare away the young journalists with good academic background and those who are already in line, took this profession

as a mere stopgap arrangement for a better future. This clearly shows that the newspaper enterprises do not have to pay much for their editorial expenses.

That apart, the newspaper authorities do not follow a standard policy for recruiting and appointing journalists. The acute unemployment problem helps the authorities to recruit educated youth at a low pay. Professional competence and specialisation in work are not insisted upon even by the established newspaper enterprise. A raw reporter, with no experience or training is sent to cover such assignments as a Legislative session, a Press Conference of the Chief Minister or even the Prime Minister if the P.M. happens to be in the city, and sensational and delicate issues like 'immigration', 'language' and 'border dispute'. Even with the highest academic qualifications, such a system is bound to produce a less than average copy. This is a great drawback of the Assamese Press.

Because of this lack of professional training the news items of the average newspaper do not carry the 'W's and 'H' (five Ws - what, where, who, when, why and one H - how) in their stories to produce a readable and interesting copy. A proper selection of academically qualified people with a talent for journalism would go a long way in improving the quality of the journalism in Assam.

It has also been found that the authorities do not take such interest to take the newspapers to their readers in time. There is a common complaint against the local Press that the local newspapers reach very late their news hungry

readers. What is most surprising is that the Calcutta newspapers sometimes reach their Assam readers earlier than the local newspapers. The same is true of weeklies which do not come out on the schedule date. The readers have even to miss some issues. This shows that the authority pays a very negligible amount for the distribution. In other words the distribution cost is low.

Except the Assam Tribune group, there is no other newspaper house which is economically viable. This is revealed in vide Table -13, which shows that the paper devotes 50% space to the advertisement. This clearly indicates that a few newspapers are financially sound.

But from the interviews with the editors and from other sources it has been found that financial conditions of the small newspapers are not so bad. Because they also receive advertisements more or less regularly from the Government and public enterprises like Bank, Insurance and Railways. Besides they are heavily subsidised by the 'Job Orders.' These newspapers are more job-oriented than newspapers in the sense of 'Press' .

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CHAPTER IV
LANGUAGE MOVEMENT

Even before the independence there were a good number of communal disturbances on the ground of religion, language and castes in India which had greatly shattered the concept of oneness or the consideration of India as one. The partition of India based on the two-nation theory was the result of such human or ethnic conflict. Unfortunately these conflicts, which raged the country in the past, are continuing even to-day.

There are parallels to such a situation in the history of many countries of the world like the U. S. A. and the U.K. which have grown out of diverse socio-cultural milieu and which to-day are united entities.

BACKGROUND OF THE LANGUAGE CONFLICT

The present study will deal with the linguistic riots that took place in Assam in 1960. Before discussing the role of the newspapers on the explosive language issue, it would be better to trace the origin of the Assamese-Bengali language conflict which occurred repeatedly after the independence of India. Since ancient times Assam has been very close to Bengal from geographical, commercial and cultural points of view. Inflow of people from Bengal had started during the reign of Ahom Kings who had encouraged people from Bengal to settle in Assam as artisans, weavers, clerks and scholars. After the annexation of Assam by the East India Company in 1826, Assam was placed under the Bengal Administration. The Company, like the Ahom Kings, encouraged a good number of Bengalees who were already conversant in the art of administration, to come to Assam on various assignments in the interest of the British Administration to replace the "indolent" nobility of the earlier regime.¹

On April, 1831 the Government of Bengal made Bengali in place of Persian the court language of Assam on the ground that it was very difficult and too costly to have replacement when a Persian scribe was on leave or left the service.²

1. Barpujari, H.K., Assam in the Days of the Company, P.43, 1963

2. Ibid - P.226

This further made the services of the Bengalees indispensable in the province of Assam. Besides, the Company found it inconvenient to transact business or impart lessons in the Assamese language because of non-availability of standard books in Assamese.³ The first printing press was introduced by the Christian missionaries only in 1843 in Assam. So there had been no remarkable progress of the Assamese language and the dearth of standard text books posed an insurmountable obstacle to make the Assamese the language of the government in Assam.

With the progress of education following the British occupation, the demand for the restoration of Assamese as a language of education, administration and court had been gradually voiced by men like Ananda Ram Bhakial Phukan.⁴ Similar views were expressed by the Press in Assam. The Assamese newspapers since the birth of Arunodei in 1843, never ceased to protest against the employment of non-Assamese in educational services and demanded the Assamese language in educational, administrative and judicial service as a medium.⁵

2. Bengal Government Resolution dated 19th April, 1872 on Introduction of the Assamese language

4. Mill's Report, Appendix I

5. Barpujari (ed) Political history of Assam, P.152-3, 1977

"Lt. Governor in a resolution dated April, 19, 1873 prescribed the use of Assamese in the Court and also asserted that Bengali could be replaced only if books in Assamese were available."⁶

Sir J. S. Cotton, Chief Commissioner from 1896-1902, had a strong view on the language question in Assam. He observed: "Every educated Assamese is bound to know Bengali just as every educated Welshman is bound to know English and the cry for the restoration of Assamese as a language of culture in this Province is as hopeless as the agitation ... for the official recognition of the Welsh language in Scotland. The tendency is all in one direction and the classical literature in Assam of which apparently little remains, will in due course, be placed in the category of the writings of Cadwallon or Fingal or Ossian. All efforts to booster up Assamese as a separate language are, I am convinced doomed to failure."⁷ Like Cotton, J. Willson, B. P. L., also strongly opposed the introduction of Assamese in schools on the ground of absence of text books in the Assamese language. The Deputy Commissioner, Goalpara, went a step further. He held an extreme view. He observed that for a really thorough education, a thorough knowledge of Bengali was necessary and Assamese had practically no literature ancient or modern and no newspapers, scientific books and novels. Early familiarisation of the Assamese boys with Bengali language and instruction in Bengali can "best give them what is wanting in their own."⁸

6. Mill's Reports, Op. Cit.

7. Assam Secretariat File (A. S. F.)
No. Home 4, December 1897, Nos. 50-54

8. Ibid

On the other hand organisations like Assamiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhani Sabha originated in Calcutta and Sarbajnik Sabha formed at Jorhat in 1884 demanded the introduction of the Assamese language and also pleaded that due consideration be given to local candidates for appointments in the departments of Forests, Police, Post and Telegraphs. The voice of these literary associations was echoed by the political organisations. The Assam Association (1905-20), the Assam Sahitya Sabha (1917), a literary organisation and the Chhatra Sammilan (1919) attempted to articulate the unsettled demand for a linguistic regional identity.

The first popular Ministry under Government of India Act, 1935, led by Sir Saadulla, was formed in Assam. But still the Assamese language could not be introduced for want of text books—the same old argument. The Education Minister of the Saadulla Ministry, Rohini Kumar Choudhary, stated in the Assembly on August 4, 1937 that funds were provided for the production of suitable text books, due to paucity of which the introduction of Assamese as a medium had to be postponed. He also observed that the old problem of suitable text books in Assamese remained unsolved and translations from Bengali books had to be used.

In 1941, an Assamese member asked in the Provincial Legislature : "Are the Government aware of the undesirability

9. Baruah, P.K. The Assam Delegation to the Joint Parliament Committee presided by Lord Selborne, 1919, Part II, p 4-8, 1955

of introducing translations of Bengali books where the original Assamese books are available?" Rohini Kumar Choudhury replied : "Yes, if the original Assamese books are at least as good as the translations of Bengali books."¹⁰

So the policy of the British Commissioners and the absence of standard Assamese books were the greatest obstacles to the introduction of Assamese as a medium of instruction in educational institutions, courts and administration.

The language problem in Assam was further complicated with the reconstitution of Assam by bringing into it a large Bengali speaking area comprising Cachar, Sylhet and Goalpara in 1874. During the British rule in India the boundaries of the provinces were determined on the basis of administrative and other convenience rather than linguistic homogeneity. Dr. Amalendu Gaha observed : "Provincial boundaries in British India were fixed in accordance with considerations of convenience and economy, rather than of regional homogeneities.

The Province of Assam, therefore, engulfed almost the whole of present North-East India, with its many region-based language and tribes."¹¹

10. Assam Secretariat File No. 4, Education A, March 1939, Nos. 22-23

11. Gaha, A. Language Politics in North-East India- the Background, (Seminar Paper - Shillong), September, 23, 1979

This may be treated as the beginning of the language controversy in Assam.

With the emergence of the middle class, the linguistic polarisation had taken turn from bad to worse. The middle class aspiring for economic and political power found rival competitors in jobs, business and other opportunities which were limited. In course of competitions and conflicts, the Assamese middle class played its role in making its own ethnic group self-conscious through the Press and platforms about the desirability of an autonomous status for the Assamese nationality. Language, as a mobilising symbol of 'nationality-formation'¹² had played a remarkable role in Assam and North-East India. In Assam the language symbol remained all along the strongest spiritual bond. The status of the language in offices and educational institutions and the growing numerical strength of the Assamese-speaking community from census to census - remained the chief concerns of Assamese nationalism.

Immediately after the partition of India, Assamese middle class and their leaders became very vocal about the position of their language and culture and demanded the introduction of Assamese in the province as the only State language. They anticipated that the Bengali speaking areas would pose a threat

12. Brass, Paul R., Language, Religion and Politics in North India, P.412-13, 1978

to the Assamese language. Perhaps, this was one of the reasons why the Assamese leaders supported the separation of Sylhet from Assam and its inclusion into erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). To quote Dr. Triguna Sen:

"The transfer of Sylhet to Pakistan had already been secretly decided upon and accepted by the Congress High Command and also by many in the Assam Congress to reduce the Bengalee element in Assam's population."¹³

When the partition of India was decided upon, Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury, Secretary of Assam Jatiya Mahasabha (Assam National Conference) declared on July 22, 1947:

"It is our definite opinion that whatever sense there has been in retaining Sylhet as a whole in Assam, there is no justification whatsoever in the Cachar and Sylhet leaders trying to retain a few Hindu-majority thanas of the district within Assam. There is little cause in trying to retain the junior partner of Sylhet - the Cachar Plains, at any rate the Hailakandi sub-division in Assam."¹⁴

The Assam Tribune endorsed Roy Choudhury's statement on July 23, 1947.

13. Sen, S.P., Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. I, Calcutta-1972, P. 336.

14. The Assam Tribune, July 23, 1947.

On July 17, the Assam Tribune had suggested the transfer of four (Bengali speaking) thanas of Dhubri Sub-division to Pakistan. The Assam Jatiya Mahasabha's Kamrup district branch on January 1, 1948 suggested that Assam should come out of the Indian Union and become an independent State like Burma.¹⁵ On January 3, 1948, Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury sent a wire to the President of the Naga National Council, conveying the Mahasabha's support to the Naga stand for self-determination. On April 19, 1948, the Assam Tribune editorial said, "Assam does not want unity."

On March 1948 Gopinath Bardoloi, Chief Minister of Assam, himself admitted the multilingual character of the State. He said in the Assembly: "If you analyse the population of Assam, you will find there is hardly any community in Assam which may be called the majority community. I do not know whether this fact is known ... In Assam there is no community which may be called majority community in which the population of one community is predominantly more than the population of another community."¹⁶

But Bardoloi's assurances were not honoured by his successors. On March 29, 1948, Nilmoni Phukan, an Assamese leader said: "Geographical territory of Assam can no longer be disturbed on any other ground of linguistic basis of any minority community. Regarding our language, Assamese must be the State language of the province. So the question of language for the minority

15. The Assam Tribune, January 4, 1948

16. A.G. Vol. VI, 1948 P. 488-89

communities in Assam is also solved. All the languages of different communities and their culture will be absorbed in the Assamese culture ... We will have Assamese alone as our State language and the State cannot nourish any other language in this province."¹⁷

The Assam Government responded to the chauvinistic call of the Assamese leader with a stern action against the Bengali educational institutions. In 1937 the Brahmaputra Valley had a total of three thousand three hundred and seven Primary Schools against three thousand five hundred and fifty-nine in the Surma Valley. Of these, Goalpara had seven hundred and twenty-three. Altogether two hundred and seventy-eight schools of all classes in the Brahmaputra Valley continued to impart education in Bengali, two hundred and sixty-seven in Goalpara alone.¹⁸ During the next decade, the number of Bengali Primary Schools in Goalpara had dwindled to three only. In this context a statement made by Phani Bora, a veteran Assamese Communist leader at a Press Conference at Gauhati on May 27, 1954, may be quoted : "The Assam Government, through their official and non-official agents forcibly sealed off all Bengali Schools in Goalpara district denying safeguards of the Bengalees' cultural and linguistic rights. Such imperialist and Reactionary actions of the Assam Congress Government were responsible for encouraging disintegrating elements in Assam."

17. A.G. Vol VI, 1948 P. 881-82

18. A.G. Vol VI, 1937 P. 1839-40

Even the State Reorganisation Commission of 1953 prescribed a population percentage of seventy or more for any State to be unilingual and distinctly admitted the multilingual composition of Assam. It is interesting to note the observation of the States Reorganisation Commission : "From a historical point of view, Assam and North-East India seem to have been intended by nature to be the meeting place of many tribes and races. Right through its history, there has been immigration into and settlement in the State from various sources, with the result that till comparatively very recent times, that is to say, upto 1921 when linguistic tabulation was undertaken, Assamese was not in fact a language spoken by a majority of the inhabitants of the State."

The composition of the population in this North-East India is so diverse that nowhere in India there is such a large number of tribes and plains people speaking different languages as in the North-East India. The States of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Union Territories - Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, which were previously within the State of Assam, are completely tribal areas. Even in the present truncated State of Assam, there are a good number of tribals who speak different languages or dialects. In recent times, Bodos, who are also within the State

19. Report of the Commission on the Hill Areas of Assam, 1965
(Patankat Commission) Ministry of Home Affairs,
Govt. of India, P.13.

of Assam, made a claim that their language must be reorganised. According to 1961 Census the Assamese language is spoken by 57.14 per cent of the population, Bengali by 17.36 per cent, Hindi by 4.31 per cent and Bodo by 2.36 per cent of the total population of Assam.²⁰ Besides, the various tribal people, there are Muslims who constitute about 25 per cent of the total population of Assam and they have no particular choice for any language - Assamese or Bengali whatsoever. Rather their choice depends upon the political situation of the State. But unfortunately neither the Assamese leader nor the newspapers of Brahmaputra valley recognised the multilingual character of the State. They always doggedly demanded that the Assamese should be the sole State language of Assam. The linguistic conflict of a violent nature broke out in Assam in the month of June, 1960 and again in 1968 and 1972.

On December 17, 1960 the Assam Official Language Act was passed and the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference (APHLC) reiterated its demand for the separation of Hill areas from the State of Assam. By 1972 the State of Assam was split into three full-fledged States of the Indian Union. So the efforts at making the Assamese the only Official language in the State of Assam became frustrated.

The makers of the Constitution of India in full knowledge of such separatist forces adopted certain measures calculated to

essent linguistic unity. They felt the importance of incorporating provision for interlingual communication which can be gauged from the fact that a whole part, Part XVII, of the Constitution of India is named "Official Language", Chapter I of which is headed 'Language of the Union', Chapter II, 'Regional Languages, Chapter III, 'Language of the Supreme Court and High Court, etc., and Chapter IV, 'Special Directives'.

There are four articles 350, 350A, 350B and 351 which comprise the Chapter on Special Directives. Of these, articles 350A and 350B providing for instruction at the primary stage through the mother-tongue of the children belonging to linguistic minorities of particular States and enjoining the appointment of a Special Officer, now known as the Commissioner of Linguistic Minorities, to study and report annually on the problems of these minorities, State by State, were added in 1955.

Article 350 entitles members of minority languages (including dialects) 'used in the Union or in the State, as the case may be', 'to submit a representation for the redress of grievances to any office or authority of the Union or a State' in their languages or dialects. While laying down a code for the implementation of the various safeguards for linguistic minorities, the Chief Ministers Conference of 1961 provided in their scheme for this particular Article, by requiring that for all such representations 'arrangements should be made for replies to be sent, whatever

possible in such other languages in the language of the
²¹
 representations".

The recognition of any mother-tongue for official purpose according to the Government of India Memorandum is to be governed by the following principles :

1. A state should be recognised as unilingual only where one language group constitutes about 70% per cent or more of its entire population and that where there is a substantial minority constituting 30 per cent or more of the population, the State should be recognised for administrative purposes.
2. The same principle might hold good at the district level, that is to say, if 70 per cent or more of the total population of a district consists of a group which is a minority in the State as a whole the language of the minority group and not the State language should be the Official language in that district.
3. The arrangements to be made for the purpose of recognising two or more official languages in a State or district which is treated as bilingual will be without prejudice to the right, which may be exercised under Article 350 of the Constitution by any one resident in the State, to

21. Report of the Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities
 (Fifth Report), 1961, P.77

submit a representation for the redress of any grievance in any of the languages used in the Union or the State.

4. In districts or smaller areas like municipalities and tehsils where a linguistic minority constitutes 15 to 20 per cent of the population of that area, it may be an advantage to get important government notices and rules published in the language of the minority in addition to any other languages or languages in which such document may otherwise be published in the usual course."²²

Many things will come to light if the question of language is seen in this context.

Economic roots of communalism

The communal riot based on religion, language or race - arises mainly out of the socio-economic rivalry between two or more communities. Mr. Hired C Choudhuri, while referring to the 1960 disturbance of Assam in his book 'The Continent of Cires', said that the 'economic and cultural rivalry' was the root cause of the communal disturbances in India.²³ According to H. Gerald Barrier : "This problem (communal riot) is a problem arising

22. Report of the Commissioner of Linguistic Minorities
(Report 2nd) P.41

23. Choudhuri, Hired C, The Continent of Cires
P.26, 1963

out of the mutual distrust and the real or supposed conflict of rights and interests of the two major communities of India. In its very nature, it implies the presence in each community of a separate collective consciousness as well as of separate collective communal motives under which each can as a single unit act and react against the other." ²⁴ Paul R. Brass said : "The basic condition for group conflict based on ethnic differences is the perception of the existence of unevenness in development between two or more groups." ²⁵ Prof. M.V. Mathur, Director Asian Institute for Education, Planning and Administration, observed : "Lot of things happen in our country in the name of communal disturbances, linguistic disturbances, regional rivalries but their root cause lies in the lack of development and lack of equitable distribution of whatever ²⁶ we get."

So the real reason behind the linguistic riots in different regions is that when the emerging educated middle class in an effort to get a share in the political as well as economic market faces competition not only with the so-called outsiders but also with a section of people of their own community who are well placed in economic sense, the deprived

24. Harrier, Gerald H, Roots of Communal Politics, P.43-44, 1970

25. Brass, Paul R, Cit., P.419

26. Mathur, M.V, Inaugural Speech in Seminar on 'Regionalism and National Integration in India' in the University of Rajasthan in January, 1970

get frustrated. In addition to this a large number of agricultural labourers with a hope of getting better employment are rushing to the urban areas and they later on get disappointed. This frustration along with the urban middle class's strong regional and linguistic bias create a situation in which a fierce fury is directed against the 'outsiders' who constitute a fair section of the working class population. So the entire blame of disappointment and anger fall upon the minority community who becomes the scapegoat. Regrettably, the question of economic development of the State of Assam completely went uncovered by the Assam Press.

The tendency of nailing the blame for the community's failures and shortcomings, on others, is a handy technique of engineering the community's discontent into umbrage against others. In a state of mixed composition of population it is easy for the Press or a community to throw the blame on others and ignite communal hatred especially when the interests clash and estranged relations provide a stimulus. Statements by leaders and policies designed to satisfy political and communal extremists and to divert attention to scapegoats during the period of economic crisis and political disruption, are a familiar feature of national and international politics throughout the ages. To divert the attention of the people of erstwhile East Pakistan from the internal economic crisis, the Government of Pakistan made India a scapegoat in a number

of occasions. This is equally true of other countries also. So the aggressive statement of one state against another has no foundation other than that of domestic struggles for economic and social reform.

The existence of different communities in a State cannot be the cause of communal strife. Most states comprise different communities. If religion, ethnic differences, class or language are regarded as causes of communal conflict, then every state faces communal problem in some form or the other. Dr. John W. Barton, Director of the Centre for Analysis of Conflict, London, observed: "... it is not the existence of different communities that leads to conflict between them, but the failure of the political system to satisfy demands."²⁷

The conflict may arise even in a country where homogeneous people reside. This kind of conflict does not fundamentally arise from communal conflict. The clash between the 'have' and 'have-not' is universal. Dr. Barton said: "Even in cases of communal conflict it is not always clear that the origins of conflict relate to the presence of different ethnic groups. The same kinds of conflict emerge between different classes within the same ethnic group. Fear and threat, denial of participation rights, perceived injustice, disappointment

27. Barton, Dr. John W., Director of the centre for Analysis of Conflict, London, Conflict and Communication: Controlled Communication, P. 32, 1966

in expectations, are the typical origins of conflict
²⁸
 behaviour."

So scapegoating, though temporarily an effective technique of absolving a community of the responsibility of its failure, does not provide a genuine solution to the problem. Rather it escalates the conflict. The problem has to be resolved by political and constitutional procedures. Any community which holds another community responsible for its plight or backwardness, evades accepting the reality of its historical failure in developing its socio-economic conditions. This kind of hysteria is the greatest danger to peace - locally, nationally and internationally.

In some cases conflict between one or more states, State and Centre, one sovereign country and another, emerges from spill-over from internal communal strife. For example, a Hindu-Muslim riot in Bangladesh will certainly lead to exodus of Hindus from Bangladesh to India, so also a communal riot like Assamese-Bengali in Assam will lead to an influx of Bengalees from Assam to West Bengal for shelter. Obviously one state comes into a conflict with another. Similarly a conflict between the Chinese and Malaysians in Malaysia, the Fijians and Indians in Fiji, the Greek and Turkish Cypriots in Cyprus, and the Hindus and Muslims in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, will affect the harmonious international relations. Thus,

28. Ibid, P. 24

a local dispute escalates into a matter of national as well as international concern.

So the most acute and baffling problem of Indian politics is the solution of the economic struggle which takes the shape of linguistic or racial conflicts with endemic outbursts of murderous ferocity. Obviously an integrated economic policy may help the country to get rid of this evil. The implementation of the much publicised land reforms and minimising the outflow of rural unemployed to the urban areas may help reduce the tension to a large extent.

Prof. Satish Chandra, Chairman, University Grants Commission, said :

"The only method of countering these is to develop a broad socialist movement based on the fundamental interests of the masses and basing itself on the modern scientific outlook, democracy, and secularism and imbued with a sense of true national traditions based on a scientific appraisal of our history and culture."²⁹

With heterogeneity of cultures, religions and races, India's main concern is to create homogeneous outlook out of the prevailing social diversities and conflicts. The newspapers

29. Satish Chandra, Chairman, University Grants Commission, the Roots of Hindu Communalism, seminar paper in the University of Rajasthan, 1970

and other media have a vital role to play in integrating the society at the human level and in creating a homogeneous outlook. It is very easy to produce a "safe newspaper" which offends none. But a newspaper which is vigorous in its search for truth, courageous in exposing corruption and crime, bold in denouncing communal tension or riots, is bound to cause offence. Today newspapers have a great responsibility in the area of social and economic conflicts.

Anatomy of Assam riots

The communal riot that flared up in June, 1960 following the demonstration in Shillong, the then Capital of Assam, on the question of State Language is the case study in this Chapter.

The purpose of this study is to find out how the local newspapers covered the troubles. The journalists who criticise other people so constantly should feel conscience-bound to indulge in a bit of self-flagellation. Because of their selfishness and prejudices, the innocent people should not fall victim to man-made holocaust.

How do the Journalists deal with problem of social conflict? What do they say to their readers and how do they say it? Is it conditioned by their own ideologies or prejudices? Do they report with restraints? Do they snowball an already tense situation? Are they fair in their reporting? Should not they have any

social responsibility? Should there be any legal restrictions in reporting the communal riots? All these will decide the shape of the future Indian society.

Following the Shillong demonstration on June 1, 1960 against the introduction of Assamese as the only State language of Assam, the English daily, the Assam Tribune came out with one full column editorial captioned 'anti-Assamese propaganda', on the next day, i. e., June 2. Simultaneously it carried news about the Shillong demonstration in the front page with two columns head-line. The editorial of June 2, consisted of three long paragraphs and the same thought was repeated in three paragraphs. The main theme was : it was the Bengalees who were responsible for the Shillong demonstration. Although the demonstrators were mostly Khasis and only some Bengalees who were living in Shillong.

The contention of the paper was that the "anti-Assamese propaganda" was led by the Bengalees who were "dreaming for a Greater Bengal" and who had been agitating against Assamese being declared the State language. In the whole editorial the paper repeated the words "Anti-Assamese propaganda" as many as 10 times.

Interestingly, the Natun Assamiya, the only Assamese daily, carried similar type of news and editorial in its June issues. This paper also lashed at the Bengalees with pungent

criticism and blamed the Bengali community for the Shillong demonstration. The paper said that the Bengalees were dreaming for a "greater Bengal" and would "crush" the Assamese culture and language. It also advised the Assamese people to guard themselves against the Bengali attack.

The most provocative part of the editorials of the Assam Tribune and Natun Assamiya was the spread of rumours to hit the sentiment of the Assamese community against the Bengalees. The Assam Tribune wrote on June 2, :

"And recently a propaganda is being whipped up against the Assamese people that they are crudely parochial and will resort to all manner of pressures including violence to drive out outsiders."

The same kind of rumour was rotated with reinforcement of more effective adjective "militantly parochial" in the next paragraph. The paper did not say who, when, and where such allegations were made against the Assamese community. But it simply generalized that it was the Bengalee community who was responsible for it.

The paper then expressed its apprehension that "unless these sinister moves were not stopped there might be greater difficulties in making the Assamese the State language, it said:

"We are afraid that unless these sinister moves are nipped in the bud there will be still greater difficulties thrown in the way of making Assamese the Official language."

Frequency of news communication

As a result, there were counter-demonstrations in various parts of Assam Valley which was reported by the Assam Tribune itself with a photograph of the processionists on June 3. A simmering tension followed by sporadic incidents gradually seeped down in different parts including the countryside of the Brahmaputra Valley. Meanwhile, the newspaper was flooded with news relating to 'State language' or '3 language formula', 'the Shillong demonstration', 'Jobs for the sons of the soil', etc., with a catchy and sensational headline like, 'anti-Assamese conspiracy'. All these slants or man-made news were flushed with a greater vigour through the entire month of June, 1960³⁰. The frequency of news in this month was 100% and prominence of the news was 70% in both the newspapers - Assam Tribune and Natun Assamiya in the month of June, 1960. The prominence of news means here some or particular news items that appeared in the front page over a number of times. The frequency of news means here repetition of news over a period of time.

30. The Assam Tribune, June 1960 - All Issues.

During this month Assam Tribune wrote five editorials dealing with both the Shillong demonstration and the language problem. In the following month, i. e., July, Assam Tribune wrote 17 editorials on the disturbances.³¹ The Natun Assamiya wrote 12 editorials in the month of June and 19 in July on the disturbances.³² So both the papers increased their frequency of editorial in the month of July on the same subject.

The news frequency also remained unchanged that is 100% in both the papers. Interestingly, the news prominence had gone up to 100% during the month of July in comparison to 70% in the month of June.

The Assamese weeklies also had fallen in line with the dailies in inflating the news day after day during the disturbances. The oldest Assamese weekly - Janambhumi - of Jorhat wrote in a filthy language in its June issue that the "Bengalee colonies" in Assam should be demolished immediately.

The 'letter to the editor' column was used as a forum for discussion of the language issue. Interestingly, the headlines used in this column were identical with those of the editorial and news and equally smacked of provocation and sensation. The contents of the letter were also almost similar with the views expressed in the editorials.

31. The Assam Tribune, July, 1960 - All Issues.

32. The Natun Assamiya, June and July, 1960 - All issues.

So from this analysis it has been found that the more the tension mounted the more was the tendency of the dailies and weeklies to report rumours with greater frequency in all their columns during the disturbance. Robert North observed : "The higher the tension, the stronger the tendency to report, consciously or unconsciously, rumours more often than at other times."³³

The newspaper further fuelled the agitation by publishing the list of names of the affected people and pictures of the victims from time to time during the disturbances.

During the month of June both the Assam Tribune and Nutan Assamiya made more references to the following items both in their editorial and news column.

1. "Anti-Assamese propaganda."
2. "Assamese as State language in Assam."
3. "Calcutta papers' propaganda against Assamese."
4. "Jobs for the sons of the soil."
5. "Political" or "Ulterior" motives of few against the Assamese.
6. "Immigrants" from East Pakistan, and "Bengalee" Hindu refugees from East Bengal."

33. North, Robert, Content Analysis P.81, 1963

During the month of July, the Assam Tribune and Natun Assamiya made more references to the following items both in their editorial and news column.

1. "Curfew withdrawn."
2. "Gauhati killing."
3. "Assamese as State language."
4. "Nehru supports Assamese" as State language.
5. "Bengalee youth in Luding riots."
6. "Assamese refugees in Assam."
7. "Anti-Assamese conspiracy."
8. "Calcutta papers' propaganda against Assamese."
9. "Centre's intervention" or "President's Rule" - Condemned.

Repetition

The principle of repetition played an important part in aggravating the situation. Repetition makes persuasion most effective. "Public memory is short." So the repetition reminds the reader or public the goal of the persuasion. Adolf Hitler also observed :

"The receptive powers of the masses are very restricted and their understanding is feeble. On the other hand, they quickly forget. Such being the case, all effective propaganda must be confined to a few bare essentials and those must be expressed as far as possible in stereo typed

formulae. These slogans should be persistently repeated until the every last individual has come to grasp the idea that has been put forward.³⁴"

Hitler also asserted :

"Its (propaganda) chief function is to convince the masses, whose slowness of understanding needs to be given time in order that they may absorb information; and only constant repetition will finally succeed in imprinting an idea on the memory of the crowd."

Each news item and view presented in the editorial touched the sentiments of the masses. Each issue of the newspaper sought out a new vulnerability in all or some of the readers. Repeated exposure of the sensitive issues reinforced a growing response tendency in the individual reader.

Repetition also amounts to over-reporting a particular news and suppressing or playing down the importance of others as the space in the newspapers is limited. Of course, overemphasis may be considered by some as "heroic disclosure" and by other as bad kind of journalism or biased reporting.

H. A. Taylor observed :

"Over-emphasis considered by some critics to be one of the besetting sins of popular journalism is, for

34. Hitler, Adolf, Mein Kampf, P.189, 1968

a far larger number of readers, a kind of condiment without which writing is insipid and unattractive. What to one man is dogmatism is, to another, the spirit of sweet reasonableness or of heroic disclosure."³⁵

Placement of news

Like repetition there are somethings which journalists should not do, but they do. There is something like principle of restraint in reporting communal disturbances which they should observe, but they do not do. This tendency among the journalists is unfair.

The unfair or biased reporting also may be made through the placement of news. The importance of a news item can be reduced by placing it on the back or inside page with a minimum or little space and also by sandwiching it in between the insignificant news items. Similarly the importance of a news item can be increased by presenting it on the prominent page, i.e., on the front page of the newspaper as was done by the Assam Tribune and Nutan Assamiya during the disturbances.

Inherent Bias

There is some inherent bias in the manner of collection, selection and treatment of news by the journalists. The form and

35. Taylor, H. A., The British Press : A Critical Survey, P. 26, 1970

content of much of the news are liable to be affected by the judgment of the reporters and editors. The reporters' view of what is interesting or important determines what goes into a story or news item and what is to be omitted. The writers' personal ideals, professional standards and sense of values determine his receptivity to certain impressions. The reporter or Sub-Editor may modify or shift the emphasis in a report by what he cuts out and what he permits to survive. H. A. Faylor remarked :

"Even if there were unlimited space in newspapers, condensation would still be necessary, interest, proportion and the patience of the reader demand it. Thus the opportunity of journalist to influence by selection and manipulation of emphasis is over-present."³⁶

Journalists and editors select some out of many events which constitute "news" for any day. News selection thus rests on inferred knowledge about the audience, inferred assumptions about society, and a professional code of ideology. News stories are coded and classified, referred to their relevant contexts, assigned to different spaces in the newspapers and ranked in terms of presentation, status and meaning. Paul Rock said :

"It (news) is the product of a set of institutional definitions and meanings, which in the professional shorthand, is commonly referred to as news values."³⁷

36. Ibid P.133

37. Rock, Paul, News as eternal Recurrence, P.73, 1971

The editor of the newspaper selects news in a way designed to support certain viewpoints to be entertaining at the expense of 'hard' reality or not to antagonise the audience. The first Royal Commission on the Press, 1949, remarked:

"By consistently selecting items of news which supported its own policy and omitting others, or by giving more prominence to events and aspects of affairs having this tendency than to others, a newspaper could in an extreme case produce in the minds of its readers an impression totally divorced from the truth."

The outcome of all these vicious circles is that news does not fall from heaven but reflects a whole climate of undefined understanding among editors, reporters and even proprietors. The opportunities for error are enormous while collecting news from a number of sources. They are increased by speed at which the work is done and the number of people who have a share in doing it. Royal Commission on the Press, 1947-48, observed :

"A daily newspaper is obliged by the character of its material to treat as ascertained fact pieces of information of widely differing reliability. Much of its information is obtained by one fallible human being from another, usually by word of mouth. If the informant himself is reliable, he may be misunderstood by a journalist unfamiliar with his technicalities or with points which to the expert are too obvious to mention, if the informant

is not certain of his facts he may mislead the journalist... when the sources are many and indirect the risks of inaccuracy are multiplied."

Changing attitude

All people have an inherent attachment or loyalty to their own language. So people have a preconceived notion on the language they speak. The already existing opinions, interest of people, more particularly their predispositions influence their behaviour or attitude vis-a-vis mass communication.

Predispositions lead people to select communications or news which are congenial, which support their previous position. For example, more 'Congressmen(I)' than 'Janata' (Supporters of Janata party) will listen to Mrs. Indira Gandhi and more Janata than Congressmen(I) will listen to the Ex. Prime Minister Mr. Morarji Desai. By and large, people tend to expose themselves to those communications or news reports or editorial writings which are in accord with their formed attitudes and interests. Consciously or unconsciously they avoid news reports or editorial writings of opposite hue.

In the month of June following Shillong incident, the Assam Tribune and Natun Assamiya flooded its pages with news and views relating to language problem. There was an unprecedented spurt of such news concerning Assamese language with catchy headlines. The papers knew well who were their readers and what were the 'predispositions' or 'preconceived

notions' of these readers and in what type of news or views they liked themselves to be exposed. So they dished out such materials which were most palatable to the readers. No doubt this had helped the newspapers to a great extent increase their circulation rapidly. Thus, the increase of circulation had earned more profit which might be one of the motives behind playing such a dangerous game that had led to the conflagration.

Time chosen for such reports was another factor which helped the newspaper to create an opinion in its favour so easily. Efficiency of newspaper in creating opinion on new issues or problem during a time of social unrest is enormous. Joseph T. Klapper said :

"The apparent efficacy of the media in creating opinions on new issues suggests that their potential during a time of revolution, or social unrest may well be enormous."⁴⁰

Although the readers had some 'pre-conceived' idea about the language yet their opinions were not crystallised on the issue before they were brought to such explosive exposure. Had there been a crystallised opinion among the people, they would not have been the victims to newspapers' trap. The ignorance of the people, who are habitually susceptible to language issue, was also a factor that helped the newspapers to carry out their explosive communication which had a greater penetration among the people

40. Klapper, Joseph T., The effects of Mass Communication, P.73, 1966

whose level of information was low and had no firm opinion on the issue prior to this exposure. Klapper said :

"The efficacy of mass communication in creating opinion, it may be argued, can be gauged only in reference to issues on which, at the time of exposure, people are known to have no opinion at all."⁴¹

Joseph Goebbels, a magnificent mass communication practitioner, also affirmed :

"whoever says the first word to the world is always right."⁴²

It seems, Goebbels wanted to stress upon the point that the mass communication is more effective in creating attitudes on newly arisen problem or issue and the point of view first expressed will prevail over later persuasive communication to the contrary.

It appears that the newspapers in Assam whether dailies or weeklies during the period of tension in June and July, 1960 wanted to reach and encircle the entire community through all possible routes - the news, letters to editors and editorial columns. The people, it seems, are in the midst of an organised orgy that tried to take hold of the community. It imposed such a view on people who were susceptible to only one interpretation

41. Ibid P.89

42. Ellul, Jacques, Propaganda: the formation of Man's Attitudes, P.188, 1973

or one-sided view of an issue precluding any divergence. This orgy becomes so powerful particularly in regard to a sensitive problem like language, religion and castes that it invades every area of consciousness leaving no faculty or motivation intact. It stimulates in the individual a feeling of exclusiveness and produces a biased attitude. The myth has such a motive force that once accepted, it controls the whole of the individual who becomes immune to any other influence. This explains the totalitarian attitude that the individual adopts. It does not tolerate any contrary position and in such a situation a man loses his patience. His attitude towards his fellow men and his conception of the world are changed.

Referring to the capacity of the newspaper to create a myth, Karl Marx says :

"Uptil now it has been thought that the growth of the Christian myths during the Roman Empire was possible only because printing was not yet invented. Precisely contrary, the daily press and telegraph, which in a moment spread inventions over the whole earth, fabricate more myths ...⁴³ in one day than could have formerly be done in a century."

Lack of rival newspapers in the State further helped the Press to create this kind of myth. More newspapers mean more news and views or in other word more competition. The absence of

43. Marx, Karl, writing on atrocity stories in the British Press during the Paris Commune - in a letter to Kugelmann, July 1871

competition means absence of contradictions. This helped the Assam Press to take a totalitarian attitude during the period of the social turmoil.

In 1960 there were two dailies - one English - The Assam Tribune and the other Assamese - The Natun Assamiya. Although the proprietors were different, these two newspapers were the monopoly dailies in the field of journalism in Assam. Barring a few weeklies there were none to compete with them. Because of this unique monopoly position, these two newspapers had the tremendous advantage in changing the attitudes of the masses. As a result, the 1960 disturbances did not itself burst like a storm but it was the newspapers who led the movement. The Press acted as an instrument to aggravate the tense situation by making false claims and accusations.

The effect of such false propaganda by inciting one community against another resulted not only in perpetrating unprecedented atrocities on a sister community but also it made thousands of people homeless. This is the most heinous crime committed by the Press.

What Press should do

A better relation between the different communities can be brought about if the newspapers give emphasis on the essential truths common to all and if the minds of the people, particularly

of the younger generation, are attracted towards these common truths. Efforts should also be made for the inclusion of the graded books, which present these common truths, in the courses of study prescribed for primary and higher classes of all educational institutions. Translation of books written by good authors will also help reduce the communal tension.

The newspapers should uphold the good causes of different linguistic and religious groups and show sympathy for the neighbouring states' socio-economic development although the newspapers may not have a considerable readership in that State or community. But this certainly can help create a good relation between different communities living in the same State.

The newspapers should also encourage the study of different languages. The editors, reporters of newspapers should regard it as a sacred duty to refrain from writing or publishing things that may tend to incite one community against the other.

The newspapers should expose the policy and methods of communalistic leaders, especially by the papers of that community. The economic co-operation between members of the two communities should be encouraged. Special efforts should be made to carry the idea of economic upliftment of the society among the educated youth of different communities.

To bring about a better understanding the newspapers should also encourage gatherings of different communities in social

functions like marriage, club and other festivals. Inter-community marriage, exchange of teachers and cultural programmes will improve the relations.

To bring about a fusion of the so-called differences, to remove all barriers which prevent the stream of unity from flowing in one direction should be the final object of all. The goal may appear distant to many, but it is not impossible to attain it within a reasonable period of time. The main reason for entertaining this kind of feeling is that the things that bind them and are common to them are stronger than the things that separate them. They have in all essentials a common language. There are more similarities between the Assamese and Bengali languages than differences. Both the Assamese and the Bengalee observe many common practices and rituals in their daily life and also on ceremonial occasions, such as festivals, marriage and death. They have a common religion, food habit and dress. There have been hundreds of matrimonial relations between these two communities who live side by side. The differences that have been recently created, are removable or reducible to such an extent that they may be confined to very narrow limits and may not affect the common social and political life of the two communities. If the political leaders, social workers and the Press have faith in this common culture and social life and can resist the temptation to work for their

own separate communities, and are prepared to come forward to organise themselves with courage, devotion and selflessness and appeal to the imagination of the masses both by communicating through the Press and setting an example, the country can feel assured of the success in this mission.

It is not true that the Press is powerless in removing the prejudices or racial feelings that already exist in man. It can provide new centres of interests and thereby divert racial feelings. Today newspapers have tremendous responsibilities in the area of socio-economic conflicts that exist in India.

CHAPTER V

The Press And The Hill People's Demand.

The State of Assam has a unique place in the history of India for its diverse peoples with their different languages, their peculiar customs and simple way of life, and their old history and mythology. Before 1962, there were the State of Assam, and Union Territories of Manipur and Tripura in North-East India. By 1972, Assam was split up into three full-fledged States of the Indian Union and two Union Territories. With the completion of reorganisation process there are at present in the North-East India five States- Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura and two Union Territories- Arunachal Pradesh (formerly known as the North-East Frontier Agency or N.E.F. A) and Mizoram (the former Mizo district of Assam) with a common Governor and High Court. The region is strategically placed with common frontiers and with three foreign countries -China, Burma and Bangladesh right on the border.

The basic objective of the reorganisation was to restructure the administrative arrangements in the region and provide adequate opportunities to the people of the different parts to participate in the task of development of their own territories. It has also a special forum, the North-East Council, in which the

States and Union Territories can discuss and reach agreements on matters of common interest. The completion of the reorganisation scheme was the result of many years of patient and purposeful discussion among the Chief Ministers, Political Leaders, Governor and the Lieutenant-Governors of the region.

What were the reactions of the people, Political leaders and Government of Assam who bore the wrench of separation and truncation with detachment? What was the role of the Press in Assam. How the Press reacted to such unfortunate events? What was the attitude of the Press towards the tribal people in general? Did they fight for the development of tribal areas? What were the views of the Press on the medium of instruction in the tribal areas? How did the Press fight for the preservation of the tribal culture and traditions? Was the attitude of the Press in Assam towards the Hill tribes one of 'Superiority'? These are some of the questions which lie at the root of the Hills - Plains conflict.

Background of conflict between the Hills and the Plains.

The political awareness had grown among the hill people of North-East India long before the independence of India. In 1946 a Khasi-Jaintia Political Association which was formed at Shillong, submitted a memorandum to

the Secretary of State for India and Cabinet Mission through the Secretary to His Excellency the Governor of Assam stressing that 'the Khasis belong to a race quite distinctly individual from any other race in India living in democratic communes' and expressed their gratitude to the British Crown for preserving their 'individuality' but showed their apprehension for 'future'.¹

A prominent hill personality, Mac Donald Khar-kongor after leaving the Congress party founded the Hills Union with a demand for a Hill State. In his pamphlet, A Case of the Hills Tribes of the North-East Frontier of India (June 1946), he criticized the Government of Assam for lack of development in the hill areas. The North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded and partially Excluded Areas Sub-Committee of the Advisory Committee of the Constituent Assembly which visited the hill areas in 1947 observed :

" The Hill people, even in the Excluded Areas, were not found lacking in political consciousness. Perhaps(not without instigation by certain elements), this consciousness was used to instill ideas of an independent status, the external relations under which would be governed by treaty or agreement only."²

1. Memorandum by the Secretary, H. Lyngdoh, of the Khasi - Jaintia Political Association, 1946 .

2. Report of the North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas Sub-Committee, 1947

In 1954 the Chief Executive Member of the UK-J Hills District Council, B.M. Roy said in the meeting of the Chief Executive Members of all District Councils :

"
The number of points for discussion proposed and submitted separately by you conveniently be reduced to and covered by two common points of supreme importance and those points are : (1) Formation of a separate Hills State and (2) Amendment of the Sixth Schedule, which evidently you all have found out by experience does not fully satisfy us because it confers no real autonomy...."³

Mr. William A. Sangma, the Chief Executive Members of the Garo Hill District Council, who convened the meeting also said that the attitude of the plainmen was not conducive to unity. He cited a resolution of the Asom Jatiya Mahasobha to the effect that the areas opposed to Assamese as a State language should be severed from Assam. He said that if this was the attitude of the plainmen there was no alternative but demanding a Hill State. Mr. William Sangma's apprehension was based on facts.⁴ The Asom Jatiya Mahasobha made statements on several occasions that the Assamese should be the only State language of Assam. On March 29, 1948 Nilmoni Phukan, a leading public

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3. Proceedings of the Chief Executive Members Meeting of the District Councils, 1954 . Appendix A.
 4. Memorandum to the States Reorganisation Commission submitted by Hill Peoples of the Autonomous Districts, Shillong, 1954

in Assam, said that the Assamese 'alone' would be the State language of Assam and the State of Assam must not 'nourish' any other language in the province.⁵

As a result the Eastern India Tribal Union, (FITU) which was born at Aijal on October, 1956, demanded a separate State for the hills people before the State Reorganisation Commission when it visited Assam. But the demand of the E.I.T.U. was not conceded by the State Reorganisation Commission.⁶ Later on the E.I. T. U. expressed its dissatisfaction and concern at the S.R.C's inability "to appreciate the aspiration and demand of the tribal people of this part of the country" and called for the "bringing of all hills under one administration."⁷

On April 1960 the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (A.P.C.C) declared that the Assamese should be the State language of Assam. The immediate reaction to this decision was the meeting of All Assam Hill Leaders Conference at Tura on April 28 under the Chairmanship of Rev. B.M. Pugh who was the President of FITU. The conference vehemently opposed the decision of the APCC to make Assamese the only State language. The leaders also decided to form the All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) which played a vital role in the formation of Meghalaya. The language riot that broke out on June 1960

5. A.G. Vol. VI, 1948, P.581-82.

6. Report of the States Reorganisation Commission, 1955, P.188

7. Resolution No.1(a) passed at the Aijal Conference, FITU, 1956

gave further momentum to the demand for a separate "Hill State. Dr. V. Venkata Rao said : "The amount of damage caused by the language movement was enormous. As a matter of fact the cause itself suffered. . . . And the process of dis-integration of the State began. It gave birth to the ⁸APHC."

The declaration of Assamese language as the State language of Assam gave birth not only the APHC but it also united the hill leaders who were in disarray earlier. Dr. Chaube observed : "the Hill State movement was not really born until the middle of 1960, when the Hill parties were in real disarray. It was the language issue which helped them to unite on a common platform, following the outbreak of violence between the Assamese speaking and Bengali-speaking communities in the Assam plains."⁹

Newspapers' support to Assamese Language Bill.

When the hill people were unitedly agitating against the APCC's decision to make Assamese the only State language, the newspapers in Assam instead of playing a constructive role had completely ignored the demand of the hills people. The newspapers had also fallen in line with the APCC and Assam Jatiya Mahasobha. The various columns of the newspapers—daily or weekly - including the editorial filled up with the demand for immediate introduction of Assamese as the only State

8. Rao, V. Venkata, A Century of Tribal Politics in North-East India, 1874-1974, P.366, 1976.

9. Chaube, Shibanikinkar, Hill Politics in North-East India

language in Assam. On June 25, 1960 the Assam Tribune in its editorial said :

" The decision of the Government of Assam as contained in a Press statement of the Chief Minister, Sri Bimala Prasad Chaliha, to introduce a Bill in the next session of the State Assembly to declare Assamese as the State language of Assam will be widely hailed. The Bill, it was further revealed, would be on the lines of the recommendations of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee". The paper further said that those who opposed the introduction of Assamese were "proceeded from either ignorance and prejudice or from political motives". Like the Assam Tribune, the Natun Assamiya and the Janabhum also 'hailed' the APCC's decision and demanded 'immediate' introduction of Assamese in the educational institutions.

Only July 6, 1960 the Assam Tribune in its editorial captioned 'Reconstitution of Assam' put forward a 'permanent solution' to the problem arising out of the imposition of Assamese as the State language. The paper virtually gave a green signal to hill areas and the district of Cachar to sever themselves from Assam if they were not prepared to accept the Assamese language. It said " a permanent solution which however painful it may seem, lies in the reconstitution of the State of Assam with the six plains districts and the Mikir Hills. Seventy five per cent of the people of the Assam Valley are Assamese and 85 per cent know Assamese. A resolution for such a reconstituted

State, it is reported, is likely to be moved in the next session of the Assembly. We have no doubt that the move will have the unanimous support of the Assamese people. As for those people who have always demanded such separation, they must welcome the move as the fulfilment of their long cherished dream". The similar view was expressed through the 'letter to editor' column. L.C. Barua, now the President of Assam Yuvak Samaj, one of the organisations which is agitating currently on the 'foreign national' issue, said in a letter to editor in the Assam Tribune on June 25, 1960 that in view of the hill people's agitation against the declaration of Assamese as the State language " a separate Hill State including Cachar or Purbachal may be constituted as a separate administrative unit". He further said " if such separation be effected, then Assam with six plains districts" would be financially a gainer.

Hill People's Reaction To Assamese Language

This kind of attitude of the newspaper of Assam towards the non-Assamese and hills people in particular created an unprecedented fear of losing the cultural identity in the minds of the hills people. They thought that both the Government and Press of Assam were adopting an 'imperialistic design' towards the hills. It is important to mention here that the APHIC did not demand for a separate Hill State in its meeting at Tura on July 6-7, 1960

but they demanded that the Assamese Language Bill should be dropped and English should continue as the official language of Assam. The APHLC in its resolution said :

"(a) The position and conditions of the Hills people in Assam are such that the acceptance of the Assamese language now or at any time, which would place the Assamese in a more dominant position, will lead to the assimilation of all the Hills people in the Assamese community, thereby gradually leading to the disintegration of their identity as distinct communities in India, which identity has been given recognition and protection under the Constitution.

(b) The imposition of the Assamese language will overburden the Hills people with too many languages (Hindi, the vernacular, English and Assamese) in different scripts.

(c) The adoption of Assamese as the official language of the State will adversely affect the opportunities and prospects of the Hills people in the Government Services and other avocations notwithstanding any amount of safeguards which can always be circumvented.

(d) There is no justification for the declaration of Assamese as the official language even from the population point of view, as less than fifty per cent of the population have Assamese as the mother tongue.

(e) The move has already created discord, disruption and violence among the different language groups of the State thereby defeating the very purpose which an official language is intended to serve.

(f) The imposition of the language by law will create more chaos and insecurity in this frontier State, which will be catastrophic especially in view of the Chinese aggression.

(g) Assam being India in miniature, inhabited by people of diverse races, cultures and languages, the proper official language should be Hindi. Meanwhile, English should continue as the official language until such time as the people of the State are ready to adopt Hindi as the official language." ¹⁰

But the newspapers did not at any time make it a point that the APHLC gave up their demand for a separate Hill State and hence the problem stood on a different footing.

10. Memorandum to the Commission on the Hill Areas of Assam submitted by APHLC, Appendix A. 1960.

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What the newspapers did was that they made language an issue of life and death before their Assamese readers who are habitually sensitive to their own language. As a result, the public opinion was too high in favour of immediate implementation of the Assamese Language Bill. At this juncture the APHLC met at Shillong on August, 1960 and authorized the Council of Action "to prepare a plan or pattern of separation, to submit the same to all political parties and District Councils in the Autonomous Hill Districts of Assam."¹²

NEWSPAPERS' PROPAGANDA

What was more damaging was that instead of finding out the real cause behind the hill people's demand for a separate hill state, the newspapers made a third party a scapegoat who were held responsible for the whole movement. The Assam Tribune on June 2, 1960 said :

"

The Shillong demonstration might appear to be the honest rumblings of some linguistic minorities, but there is ample ground for the belief that it is a deliberate move of a section of Bengalees still dreaming of 'Greater Bengal' to rope in the simple Khasis in staging an agitation against Assamese being declared the State language".

Again on June 25, 1960 The Assam Tribune said :

" it is now abundantly clear, it is the political motives of the few which have played on the ignorance

and prejudice of a section of the hill tribals to stir up opposition to the nature aspiration of the overwhelming majority of the people of this State to see Assamese elevated to its rightful place as the State language of Assam The unpleasant truth about the opposition to the demand, which we do not want to elaborate is that it is mainly sponsored by a minority of migrants who have forgotten the lessons of history to resume their ancient role of leader of the opposition to the progress and development of this State".

Similarly the Natun Assamiya and Janabhumai accused the Bengalees and 'Calcutta newspapers' with filthy language of the 'anti-Assamese' agitation in hill areas. According to these papers "Bengalees and Calcutta newspapers were instigating the hill people" against the Assamese people.¹² This kind of constant accusation of the Bengalees and Calcutta newspapers is a peculiar phenomenon of the Assamese journalism which owed to a great extent for its growth and development to the journalism of Bengal. In most cases the newspapers of Assam may scan to be nothing but an appendage to the Calcutta newspapers.

Influence of Christian Missionaries

Since long the Christian missionaries have wielded tremendous influence upon the tribal people of the

12. Natun Assamiya ; Janabhumai - June 1960 issues.

North-East India. This is amply proved by the fact that the religion of the hills people is Christianity and the medium of instruction is English. Many a time the activities of the missionaries in the hill areas of this region came in for severe criticism in the Government circles both Central and provincial and they were accused of 'instigating' the hill people against the Government of India and implanting a 'separatist' tendency in the hill people. In this context Dr. V. Venkata Rao said :

" The Government of Assam also stated that the Christian missions were responsible for generating the separatist tendency in the tribals. They were also responsible for westernization which was not conducive for the integration of the tribals with the main stream. I discussed this question with Rev. Sairema of the Welsh Mission at Aizawl. He informed the present writer that except one no one taught the faithful to secede from the Indian Union. . . . The contention that the Christian Missions were responsible for the separatist tendency among the tribals is not tenable."¹³

Although Dr. Rao said that the 'Christian Missions' were not responsible but the fact remains that at least a section of missionaries was highly responsible for instigating the hill people. Knowing fully well that the elite of the hill people were more tilted towards the British culture and

13. Rao, V. Venkata , Op. Cit, P 302

administration, a few British official like Parry, Robert Reid and Hutton tried to convert the hill areas into 'Crown Colony at the time of independence of India. However, the plot failed. It was also a fact that a section of the middle class hill people and chiefs because of their long association with the British Raj did not like to join with Indian Union. A secret plot to persuade the Khasi States to accede to Pakistan was frustrated by Akbar Hydari, the Governor of Assam, in 1947. The ring leaders of the plot were Nichols Roy, a member of the Congress Ministry and a leader who spearheaded the movement for a separate hill state later on, and Abdul Matin, a Muslim League M.L.A. of Sylhet. The hesitant Chiefs of Cherra, Mylliem and Jhyrim and their followers, twenty states in all, were compelled by the Governor of Assam, to change their minds. They signed the instrument of accession on December 15, 1947 in favour of Union of India.

Emergence of Hill Middle Class

The conflict between the plains and the hills widened further with the emergence of the middle class hills people who wanted a share in the political and economic fields. The language issue provided the ground for Hill state movement

14. Das. D, Sardar Patel's Correspondence,
Hydari to Patel , P.43

but the real cause was economic. Dr. Chaube also said :

" The outstanding aspect of the hills problem is political, the economic foundations of which can be traced not only in 'the Hills peoples' long-standing grievances' but also in the aspirations for a new destiny. In short, the hills problem is a problem of growth which under special circumstances, has been articulated in political movements¹⁵

The hill leaders were thoroughly dissatisfied with the valley politicians because of the step-motherly attitudes towards the development of the hill areas. They were deprived of the right to administer their own hill areas. The then Chief Minister, Bishnu Medhi, did not allot the portfolio of Tribal Affairs to Nicholas Roy, who later on resigned from the Congress and joined the APHLC. The late Govind Ballabh Pant, who was then the Union Home Minister, had to intervene to allay the misgivings of the hills people. He persuaded the hill leaders to join the Chaliha Ministry by placing the department of Tribal Affairs under the charge of one of the hill leaders. But even this arrangement proved a failure. The Council of Action, APHLC observed :

" This arrangement was neither an easy nor a happy one and Captain Williamson Sangma (the Minister in charge of Tribal Affairs who later became Chief Minister of Meghalaya) was

15. Chaube , Sibani:kinar , Op.Cit., P 107

confronted with indifference, non-cooperation and even hostility from some of his cabinet colleagues and the whole arrangement was contemptuously dubbed by the Assamese politicians as a "State within a State".¹⁶ Hitches were created and intensified, and the situation reached a climax when, in 1960, the Assamese dominated State Government pushed through a Bill in the Assam Legislative Assembly declaring Assamese as the sole official language of the State in the teeth of united opposition from the Hills. Captain Williamson Sangma and his BIFU associates resigned from the ministry and the hill people took this as the last straw that broke the camel's back.

Creation of Nagaland

The creation of Nagaland as a separate State on August, 1960, had further strengthened the demand of the A.P.H.L.C. for a Hill State. It may be mentioned here that the demand for the separation of Naga Hills was more a 'political' than economic one. The study team of the A.R.C. observed : "Nagaland is in a class by itself. It was given statehood on purely political grounds without any consideration for financial viability". (Report of the Study Team; Administrative Reforms Commission's on Administration of Union Territories and N.E.F.A., New Delhi, September, 1968). Since June 1947, Nagas have been demanding the separation of Naga Hills district

16. Proceeding of APHLC, Shillong, 1967

from India. On August 1, 1960, the Prime Minister Nehru announced in Parliament that Government had decided to make Nagaland a State- the 16th State in the Indian Union. On December 1, 1963 the State was inaugurated by the President of India.

What is most significant is the choosing of time for the declaration of a separate State for the Nagas on August 1, when the attentions of both the people and the Press of Assam were drawn to the most sensitive language issue and at a moment when the entire North-East India was rocked by the communal violence. In normal circumstances, this would have made newspaper headlines. But in the context of the language issue, the declaration of a separate State of Nagaland which was within Assam received scant notice in the newspapers of this region. There was no commotion or agitation in the Press. But this should not make any one wander. Because the newspapers of Assam along with Asom Jatiya Mahasobha extended a full support to the Nagas for self-determination. On January 3, 1948, Ambikagiri Foy Choudhuri sent wire to the President of the Naga National Council conveying Mahasobha's sincere support to the Naga stand. ¹⁷ It may be mentioned here that Nagas wanted (majority of them still want) to secede from India to make Nagaland a complete sovereign independent country. The Assam newspapers, which stood more as a mouthpiece of the Asom Jatiyatabadi, a chauvinistic element, than newspapers having independent

17. The Assam Tribune, January 4, 1948

policies of their own, tried to act as an agent of the Naga National Council.

The separation of any kind is really a painful one. But the Press of this region accepted the separation of Nagaland as a fait accompli. On November 12, 1963 "The Assam Tribune", the only premier English daily of Assam in its editorial "congratulated" the Nagaland Administration for its speedy arrangement for the first general elections in Nagaland. It said :

" The Nagaland Administration is to be congratulated on the speed with which it has completed all arrangements for the State's first General Election. . . . But it is now a matter of gratification as such to the Nagas as to their fellow citizens in the rest of India that a new life is set for Nagaland from December 1 next- the day when she becomes a full-fledged State like other States of this big country".

On December 1, 1963, the day President Radhakrishnan inaugurated the State of Nagaland, The Assam Tribune in its editorial appreciated the Government of India for the "highly imaginative and thoroughly democratic policy" in giving the Nagas the "fullest opportunity" for self-expression. It said :

"The inauguration of the new State of Nagaland today, by President Radhakrishnan is a landmark in the annals of India. The occasion symbolises the normal

climaxing of the highly imaginative and thoroughly democratic policy of the Government of India to give tribal people the fullest opportunity for self-expression. It will be revealed that the first step towards the formation of the State was taken in 1957 when the Naga Hill- Tuensang areas came into being as a separate area for administrative reasons".

After expressing 'happiness' on the occasion of the inauguration of the separate Nagaland, the Assam Tribune came forward to help the newly born State. "Assam and other States of the Eastern Zone", the paper said, "will be happy to render any assistance to the new State, specially in the field of technical and trained personnel".

But the activities of the Naga underground came in for severe criticism in the newspapers of the region. The Assam Tribune in its editorial on December 19, 1963 expressed "concern" at the outbreak of Naga hostilities. It said :

"No doubt the concern will be shared by the public at large, particularly by the people of Assam. The hostiles, it is said, were actually on their way to East Pakistan. . . to lift the arms supplied by the Pakistan Government. It is also suspected that the hostiles are planning large-scale disturbances during the general elections due to be held in the middle of next month".

The Asom Bani, an Assamese Weekly, went to a step further. It suggested a strong action in bringing the Naga rebels under control. It recalled late Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and his firm policy of annexing the princely States into the Indian Dominion. It said :

" The latest demand of the underground Nagas have compelled the Indians to recall late Sardar Patel and his policy. After independence Sardar Patel who has been known as 'iron-man' annexed the princely States of India with strong hand. If Sardar Patel's Policy would have been accepted by the (then) Prime Minister Nehru in the case of Kashmir also, there would not have been any Kashmir problem by now".

The paper further warned that if the Government of India do not take strong action against the Naga rebels, the Government would be held responsible before the public. It said :

"Even after the Government of India's liberal policy towards the Naga rebels, they (Naga hostiles) are bringing India into disrepute in the international field. Under the circumstances if the Government of India do not take firm policy in quelling the rebels, the Government of India will be held responsible to the people of India".

Hill State.

On June 10, 1963 a delegation of A.P.H.L.C. met the Prime Minister Nehru in Delhi for the realization of their demand for a separate Hill State. A plan known as Nehru Plan emerged out of this meeting. The Government of Assam and A.P.C.C. vehemently opposed this plan. Both the Government and A.P.C.C. observed that the Nehru Plan would undermine its unity and integrity, it would affect the democratic form of Government, it would destroy the functioning of the Cabinet as a team with collective responsibility to the State Legislature.

But the reaction of the Nehru Plan in the Hills was quite different from that of the plains. The plan was immediately accepted by the District Congress Committee of the K & J. Hills and the Assam Hill People's Convention. On April 17, 1964, the A.P.H.L.C. in its meeting promised to give a 'trial' to the P.M.'s plan of full autonomy and requested him to proceed with the appointment of the Commission to work out the implementation of the proposed plan.

Meanwhile, the newspapers in the plains were highly critical of the Nehru Plan. The Assam Tribune in its editorial captioned 'Nehru Plan' on December 25, 1963 said: "The Plan involves a question of vital concern to the people of Assam" and "it is extra-ordinary that the people of Assam have not been taken into confidence and the Assam

Assembly has not even been sounded". It further said that it was not "clear if even the Chief Minister of Assam was consulted" . Again, on December 28, 1963, the Assam Tribune in its editorial said that the Nehru Plan was " an undemocratic plan". It said :

"The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee has rightly and forcefully questioned the authority of the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference to speak solely on behalf of the Hills people. Now that the Assam Assembly has also expressed its view and the A.P.C.C. too has given its firm opinion on the Nehru Plan.... But we feel that in hatching a solution of this kind there should be less secrecy than was unfortunately noticed in respect of the Nehru Plan".

Pataskar Commission

After the death of Nehru on May 27, 1964, his successor Lal Bahadur Shastri appointed the Commission on March 16, 1965 with H.V. Pataskar as Chairman, Shankar Prasad and G.S. Rau as members. The Pataskar Commission, which submitted its report on March 1966, suggested the appointment of a Minister for the hill areas and such other Ministers of State, but did not plead for a separate Hill State as demanded by the A.P. H.L. C. The Commission felt that the basic problem of the hill areas was that of economic development for which the two regions of Assam - the hill areas and

the plains - were interdependent. The Commission also said that as far as practicable the general economic condition of the hill areas should be raised to the level of that of the plains within reasonable period of time.¹⁸ The Commission further observed that the links of the hills with the plains constituted a factor of importance to both of them, and there was a great need for preserving these links. The people of the plains highly appreciated recommendations of the Commission. The Government of Assam and A.P.C.C. had also accepted Commission's recommendations. The newspapers of the plains, although they accepted the recommendations of the Pataskar Commission, hesitated to accept the suggestion for creation of a separate Tribal Area Department to look after the Hill Districts. They treated it as a "separate wing grown out of the revenue of Assam". K.C. Barua, the President of Assam Yuvak Samaj, in an article in the Assam Tribune said: "The Government were treating the Hill Tribals as a separate entity, different from the people of the plains including the plains Tribals"²² So it appears that neither the Press nor the people of the plains stood in favour of the fulfilment of the aspirations of the hill people.

The A.P.H.L.C. rejected the recommendations of the Commission on the ground that it adopted a partisan attitude in favour of the State Government of Assam. Meanwhile, A.P.H.L.C. spearheaded a strong agitation for the realization of their demand for a separate Hill State. It also is to be noted here

18. Report of the Pataskar Commission, 1966

that the (hill people or) Eastern India Tribal Union, a regional party contested election in 1967 on this emotional issue - separate Hill State. Since 1962 the A.P.H.L.C. has been contesting election on the same issue - separate State for Hills people and they won a sweeping victory in elections.

Federal Plan

On December 29, 1966, the Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi invited the A.P.H.L.C. to Delhi for discussion on January 11, 1967. The A.P.H.L.C. accepted the invitation and decided to keep the agitation in abeyance and that in the event of failure of Delhi talks agitation would be launched for immediate fulfilment of their demands. The A.P.H.L.C. leaders also requested the Government of India to postpone general elections in the hill districts and that in case the elections were held they would boycott the Assembly elections. On January 13, 1967, the Government of India announced its decision to reorganise the State of Assam on the basis of a federal structure giving equal status to the hill areas with the rest of the State of Assam.

The Government of India Press Note issued on that date said :

" The Prime Minister and the Home Minister have held detailed discussions with the leaders of the A.P.H.L.C. The Government of India appreciated the political aspirations of the people of the hill areas of Assam

and have decided to reorganise the State of Assam."

The A.P.H.L.C. welcomed the federal plan and decided to participate in the Committee composed of representatives of the Government of India, the Government of Assam and the A.P.H.L.C. to be set up to work out the details of the plan. Asu'ma Mehta, then Minister of the Government of India for Petroleum and Chemicals and Social Welfare, was appointed as the Chairman of the Committee. All the members were, according to the Committee, opposed to the idea of a federation as they considered that it would lower the present status of the State of Assam and subsequently pave the way for the disintegration of the State. The Committee came to the consensus: a federal structure should not be the basis of reorganisation of the present State of Assam, while the Committee considered the unity and integrity of the present State of Assam as essential for the interests of the plains and hills, it recommended the maximum autonomy to the hill areas. The recommendations of the Committee could not satisfy the A.P.H.L.C. So the A.P.H.L.C. rejected it. But the people as well as the Press of the plains were highly satisfied with the report of the Committee.

It is to be observed that the announcement of reorganisation plan on January 13, 1967 led to vigorous movement mostly organised by the students and political parties against the plan. Meetings and Seminars were held in different parts of Assam to oppose the plan. The agitation gained momentum with Mrs. Indira Gandhi's statement at Jorhat that

the Mehta Committee did not satisfy the aspirations of the hill people. The movement reached its climax when the Students Organisation gave a call for 'boycotting' the Republic day-January 26, 1968. This had caused widespread violence which marked the Republic day. The announcement of reorganisation of Assam by the Government of India caught a banner headline in the Assam Tribune on January 14, 1967. On January 16, three days after the declaration of federal plan, the Assam Tribune wrote a very lengthy editorial captioned 'Partition of Assam' which had been continued for three consecutive days (January 16, 17 and 18). In this unusually lengthy editorial the paper made some contradictory opinions on the federal plan. On one hand it said that the federal plan would be a "source of constant conflict" between the federating units and hence the people of Assam should resist it, and on the other hand the paper itself accepted the federal plan since it was 'a fait accompli.' It said :

"We strongly feel that the so-called federal structure as contemplated by New Delhi without having regard to political dangers inherent in any novel plan with unsure results must be abandoned forthwith, if that is not done and the federation idea contained in the Home Ministry's statement of January 13, is perused that may well become a source of constant conflict between the federating units and may even provide them scope for further disintegration of the region at all stages of bargaining among its constituents".

The paper gave a clarion call to the people as well as leaders of Assam to "awake and arise" and 'oppose' the federal plan if they wanted to 'survive'. It said :

"What we would like to emphasise is the fact that for Assam the next six months will be crucial time. Let the people and their leaders take cognizance of it if they want to survive".

In the same editorial the paper expressed another opinion, which is quite different from the above call which reads as: "This is now a fait accompli which the people of Assam and its Government have to accept although they have been resisting the move for a separate Hill State over the last six years or so".

Even the Government of Assam and the A.P.C.C. were in a fix as to whether to accept the federal plan or to reject it. The fact remains that the Executive Committee of the A.P.C.C. met on April 7, three months after the announcement of the federal plan and resolved to oppose the federal plan on the grounds of unity, security, integrity and requested the Government of India to accept the recommendations of the Pataskar Commission. The 'popular opposition' against the federal plan was so strong that even the Government of Assam and the A.P.C.C. had to surrender themselves to it. Although the A.P.C.C.'s hesitancy to accept or not to accept the federal plan struck the newspapers' eyes, yet they were quite late in bringing it before the public. The Assam Tribune reported it only on January 16, 1968 :

" Initially the State Government of Assam and the A.P.C.C. exhibited Hamletian hesitancy to accept or not the federal plan. But the popular opposition to the January 13 announcement had become so irresistible that the Assam Government and the A.P.C.C. had to line up with the people and they too discarded their posture of indecision. Policy-makers in New Delhi afterwards realised that the regional federal plan was not worthwhile in the least and they seemingly sought to find out a basis for an agreed formula acceptable to both the parties involved".

So this is another case where the Government and political parties yielded to popular pressure.

Most interestingly, the newspapers did not stand in the way to the fulfilment of the aspirations of the hills people. They had no objection if Assam was 'clearly' divided and a separate hill State was created for the hills people. What the papers objected to was that the plain districts should not suffer in 'status' by being made to join a federation. The Assam Tribune said on January 16, 1967:

"The plain people would certainly extend goodwill to their brethren in the hills but why the people of the plain should suffer in status by being made to join a federation of novel nature is not understood. Let the hillmen be happy with their long-awaited State and the plainmen with what remains of Assam after the hill districts leave the parent State as it is constituted

today. What the plain districts would insist on is that there should be no piecemeal solution of the hills and plain problem through a new, unclear and indeed doubtful experiment as the Government of India has hatched".

"The parties concerned", the Assam Tribune said on January 17, 1967 " should in our view accept the fact of an outright partition of Assam into clear and well defined separate States as was done in the case of say, Gujarat and Maharashtra." It further said though parting is always a matter of sadness, it could be a bridge of understanding provided it was not hedged in by risky experimentation of a federal idea. The paper severely resented that the capital of Assam be still at Shillong in the "garb" of a federal seat".

The main concern of the most of the newspapers of the plain was for the six districts of Brahmaputra valley. To keep a separate 'status' of All India level for this valley, they were prepared to accept the partition of Assam, if necessary. The reorganisation plan was opposed since it hampered the integrity and status of Assam as a State within the constitution of India.

The Dainik Ason on January 11, 1967 accused the Government of India for giving unnecessary 'importance' to the demand of the A.P.H.L.C. The paper said that there were many differences among the hills people themselves. According to the paper it was because of Government's indulgence, the A.P.H.L.C could build up an image of its own among the hills people of various languages and having different interests. On January 16

1967, three days after the declaration of the federal plan, the Dainik Assam said in its editorial that "Assam would turn into a second grade State in India under the federal plan". The paper regarded the plan as "a State within a State". It is very interesting how the daily looked at the plans

" For the sake of defence, territorial integrity and economic development, Assam have to come forward to sacrifice herself like a goat at the communion table under this plan". The weeklies were also in line with the dailies. The three important weeklies of Assam - Milachal, Assam Jhoni and Janabhuvi - opposed the federal plan as it would-according to them - undermine the "status" of Assam.

On December 26, 1967, the Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi made a statement at Jorhat on the reorganisation of Assam in which she reported to have said that the Mehata Committee's recommendations did not offer a solution to the hills problem. Editorialising her Jorhat statement, the Assam Tribune, on January 9, 1968 said that her (Mrs. Gandhi's) statement was 'highly deplorable' and this had thrown a challenge to the people of Assam. The paper was also very critical of S.S.P. for their withdrawal of support for the Mehata Committee's recommendations.

The Assam Tribune in a very catchy editorial headline ' A Year of protests' on January 16, 1968 gave a rousing call to the people of Assam to resist the federal plan tooth and nail.

It said:

" This day, a year ago, we strongly reacted to the Government of India's decision to reorganise the State of Assam on the basis of a regional federation. Pointing out that the die was cast and that Assam's disintegration was in the offing, we called upon the people to unsettle a settled fact as we saw in the plan a host of potential dangers to the very existence of Assam as a full-fledged State. It is a matter of satisfaction that our call has been responded to in full measure by the people who have risen against the January 13 announcement as "men" and "no mankind" - the three memorable words with which Gandhiji had inspired the Assam people to fight the monster of the Grouping plan sponsored by the then British Government to forcibly seat Assam in a Muslim majority group. It was pointed out in this column on more than one occasion that the federal plan was hardly a lesser evil"

The editorial column of Assam Tribune not only expressed the views of its own on the reorganisation issue but also served as a forum for ventilating the grievances of the A.P.C.C. against State reorganisation plan. On January 23, 1968 the Assam Tribune in an attractive editorial headline 'The A.P.C.C Warning' said :

" The warning sounded by the joint meeting of the executives of the A.P.C.C. and the Congress Parliamentary party held in the Congress Bhawan on January 21, that

any solution on the basis of so-called federation or a separate Hill State or States or Union Territory will not only spell ruin to this area but also release forces of disintegration in other parts of the country".

On January 26, 1968, the Republic Day, the Assam Tribune expressed its concern on the 'Political Future' of Assam. It said that Assam had joined the country in the celebration but while doing so, she was conscious of the 'big question mark' that overhung her 'political destiny!' The past year had been particularly anxious for Assam with Centre's vacillation about her political future—the paper said.

The Natun Asomiya, a fortnightly, expressed similar views like those of the Assam Tribune and Dainik Assam. It had stubbornly opposed the reorganisation of Assam. In its views the implementation of the federal plan would undermine the status and position of Assam as a State. Like other papers, the Natun Asomiya was also highly critical of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi for her statement at Jorhat on December 26, 1967 on the reorganisation of Assam. It made a sweeping attack on Mrs. Gandhi in its editorial on January 2, 1968. Again on January 17, 1968, Natun Asomiya lashed at the Government for ignoring the interest of Assam and wishes of her people. It urged upon the people of Assam to come forward and face the challenge of the federal plan.

The Natun Asoniya like the Assam Tribune and Dainik Assam also expressed its 'happiness' over the people's 'resentment' against the plan. It extended its support to the "Assam Unity day" observed in Assam as a mark of protest against the reorganisation scheme. The newspapers in the plain (Assam Valley) - big or small - daily or weekly-came forward to register their protest against the federal plan through their various columns. Identical views were expressed in the 'letter to the editor', feature and editorial columns. These columns always supported the popular opposition organised by the various students and political organisations against the reorganisation move.

Thus the newspapers not only got themselves involved in the movement but also took a leading part. They created such a situation that the agitating people lost all their reasons and good sense. They incited people with their inflated news and views and did not give the movement a proper perspective. As a result the "Assam Unity day" turned into a big communal violence day leading to an attack on the minority communities who were mostly businessmen from Rajasthan and U.P. It was really unfortunate that the Republic Day of January 26, 1968 was marked by burning of national flag, showing disrespect to the national anthem, and communal violence.

The declaration by the Government of India on September 11, 1968 for the creation of an autonomous Hills State within Assam was another momentous event for the newspaper of Assam. The news was splashed with banner headline and

editorials were written expressing "relief" and "satisfaction" over the announcement. The newspapers said that the uncertainties about the future of Assam, the growing tension among the various groups of people living in the strategic State and the widening misunderstanding between the hillmen and the plain people would gradually disappear. On September 13, 1968, the Assam Tribune said :

"The decision to set up an autonomous Hill State within the State of Assam for Khasia and Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills districts giving the Mikir and North Cachar Hills an option to join the Hill State with 2/3 majority of their respective District Council should find acceptance with those who sincerely desire the integrity of Assam and at the larger autonomy for the hill people".

Creation of Meghalaya

On November 10, 1970, the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi announced in the Lok Sabha the acceptance in principle by the Government of India of Meghalaya's demand for full statehood. The newspapers in the plain welcomed the declaration. Big or small - all newspapers extended a sincere "congratulation" to the newly born State and expressed a hope that a good neighbourly relation would be maintained between the plains and hills. They also expressed the hope that the shifting of the capital of Assam from Shillong should not cause misunderstanding between the newly born and parent State.

The study reveals that any plan which was likely to hamper the 'status' or 'position' of the Brahmaputra valley - politically and economically - was doggedly resisted by the newspapers - big or small - of the plains. To maintain the so-called status of the Assam Valley the newspapers were even prepared to accept the partition of Assam.

They welcomed the Government of India's declaration for the creation of an autonomous Hill State within Assam. The newspapers whether big or small had always supported the popular movement launched by the students and politicians against the reorganisation of Assam. They gave a clarion call to the people of the plains to resist any reorganisation of Assam stubbornly. They remained always with the aspirations of the people of the plains of Brahmaputra valley. The political and economic aspirations of the hills people were completely ignored by the plains newspapers. As a result they had no impact upon the hills people. The hills people held the plains newspapers responsible for suppression of their legitimate aspirations. This widened the gap between the plains and the hills and created more misunderstanding than unity. The newspapers - both English and Assamese - failed to play a role for keeping the plains and the hills together. With their blind and aggressive support to the demand of the plains, the newspapers always championed the cause of the Assamese people only. The national integration and interest were subordinated by the Assam Press to the chauvinistic Assamese nationalism.

CHAPTER- VI

PRESS BEFORE AND AFTER EMERGENCY.

The periods immediately preceding the declaration of emergency on June, 1975 and after the declaration of Lok Sabha elections in 1977 are very important for the study of the role of Press in Assam. Many events took place during this periods under Study. It is impossible to take all the events for consideration. So only very important national events like J.P.'s movement in Bihar in 1974, the Allahabad Judgment of 1975 and pre-election scene after the lifting of censorship of 1977 are taken for the study in this Chapter. The period of emergency is deliberately excluded from the study since the newspapers were under the strict censorship imposed by the Government.

The year 1974 was a year of dissent and questioning. Many events contributed towards making the year 1974 a remarkable one in the Indian history. These are : dissolution of Gujarat Assembly, import licence scandal and Sarvodaya leader, Jayprakash Narayan's movement in Bihar. Initially J.P.'s movement was not an anti-congress or anti-Indira Gandhi crusade. His

movement was against the menace of corruption, unprecedented price rise, and for an immediate electoral reforms and change in the system of education. Although these were frequently talked about by the Opposition in Parliament, but Sarvodaya leader gave them a new dimension and relevance. It was because of a man like Jayprakash Narayan, whose "credibility with the people ranked higher than the sum of all Opposition parties together" (Statesman, November 29, 1974), the Bihar movement received a countrywide significance. He gave the people a new mood of dissent in Parliamentary democracy.

The prevailing socio-economic conditions in India were the main factors which fuelled the J. P. movement in Bihar. There was an economic crisis all over India. The situation in Bihar was worse than in the other States in India. Even after 25 years of independence people in the village have been living at the proverbial "Rip Van Winkle" stage with all the traditional way of life completely divorced from the modern way of living. There was no proper co-ordination between the Society and the State or Government. The Statesman of November 29, 1974 wrote:²

" The countryside in Bihar shows more sharply than the towns the great gap between the society and the State. The two are unintegrated."

But the people's upsurge that swept the State gradually percolated into the countryside also. The Indian Express, April 24, 1974 reported :

" As the Ghafour Ministry is struggling to take a final shape to be able to meet the situation arising from the students' agitation, procession of men women and children passed through different parts of the city demanding dissolution of the Assembly and expressing support for the agitation against high price, corruption and unemployment. Procession by advocates, teachers, students and others were reported from districts."

To meet such an explosive situation the Government of Bihar left no stone unturned including the delisting of two dailies of Patna - The Searchlight and Pradesh which were very critical of the Ghafour Ministry.

Against this backdrop of the Bihar scene, it will be interesting to study how the newspapers of Assam covered the J.P. Movement with reference to the problems of Assam since Assam too was not immune from the disease of price hike, corruption, old education system and electoral defects. Her people have been equally affected by the problem of unemployment because of lack of industrial development during the 25 years of Congress rule.

Before analysing the news coverage and editorial comments on the movement in Bihar certain factors should be emphasised: On March, 1974 Sri Jayprakash Narayan started his movement in Bihar which reached its climax in the month of November in the same year and received a nationwide significance. It was an event of much importance to all Indians and all the States of India. It was a crusade against corruption and it was really the corruption which fuelled the agitation in Bihar. J.P. has been a non-political leader and his movement was a movement for reforms rather than for any political gain. The wave of the movement had the chance of percolating into other States suffering from the same disease of corruption. There was no Press censorship. So the Press was free to write or comment.

These factors will have to be considered, therefore, in analysing both news coverage and editorial comments. The questions which have to be asked are : What was the view of the newspapers on rampant corruption that prevailed at official or Ministerial level ? Were the newspapers bold enough to expose corrupt practices ? Could the paper foresee any alternative rule or change of party Ministry ? What was the role of the Press in bringing about the electoral reforms to curb corrupt practices ?

On November 3, 1974 , a day before the 'Patna Bundh ' call given by Jayprakash Narayan. The Dainik Ason , the largest circulated Assamese daily, expressed its concern for the "Uneasy tension in Bihar". It advised both the parties - Government and the Organisers of the 'Bundh -Call' to avoid such a "face to face Confrontation" in the interest of the people and State of Bihar. On November 3, 1974, Dainik Ason in its editorial said:

" In view of the present economic crisis particularly the drought conditions which has already weakened the State of Bihar, it would be better to avoid such a great face to face confrontation."

The Dainik Assam realised that Sri Jayprakash Narayan was a force and his movement had the popular support. So it cautioned the Government that "trial of strength" would 'intensify' the movement only. On November 6, 1974, Dainik Assam in its editorial wrote:

" The speed of the 8 months old Bihar Movement led by Jayprakash Narayan remains unabated. The movement cannot be stopped by dubbing it as "reactionary" and bringing Sarvedaya leader into contempt. Even the use of Police force cannot put down the movement if this present trial of strength continues, the problem will be complicated. The government should realise it."

But the paper was not in favour of "dismissal of elected representatives". It wrote on November 18 :

" We should try to strengthen whatever principles of democracy have been built up in India. Our national leaders should not forget it".

On November 23, it admitted that the movement had yielded some results. It wrote : " it is true that J.P. movement compels the Government of Bihar to undertake some reform measures but at the same time it cannot overthrow the Government of Bihar."

It also expressed doubt that the movement might take a turn to satisfy the "narrow political ends" and the "interest of the common people" might be jeopardised.

On November 6, 1974, an Assamese Weekly "Natun Assamiya" published from Gauhati said that J.P.'s movement had turned into a "People's movement". It said : "The successful gheras of the Assembly Secretariat and M.L.As amply proves that Jayprakash Narayan's movement for reforms has turned into a people's movement. While taking all measures to throttle the gheras programme, the Government has virtually gheraced themselves and by doing so the Government has indirectly acknowledged the success of the J.P.movement.. .. This proves that the J.P. Movement which has turned into a people's movement can be compared with the movement led by Mahatma Gandhi during the British Rule in India".

The popularity of this movement had also been compared with that of Mahatma Gandhi's movement against the British rule in India. On November 17, it came out with another editorial urging upon the Government to come to a compromise with J.P. and criticised the Govt. for use of lathi and bullet on the peaceful procession. It also extended its full support to the J.P.movement and vehemently condemned the 'brutal attack' on Jayprakash Narayan. It said :

" Jayprakash's movement is not conducted without any reasons. Instead of coming to a compromise with J.P. both the centre and the State Government under Mrs. Gandhi's direction took people's movement as an 'attack' on them. By launching a 'counter attack' on J.P., they have greatly increased the misery of the people. It is well known that the Ministry of Bihar is the most corrupted Ministry in India. What is condemnable is the Government's use of force and bullet on the peaceful people's movement and even the most respected old leader like Jayprakash Narayan was not exempted from such a brutal attack".

On November 27, 'Natan Assaniya' in two and a half column editorial again lashed at the Government and the Congress leaders for attacking J.P. personally and giving a distorted version of his movement. "Neither Jayprakash Narayan nor his movement is the enemy of the nation". It said : The "Corruption and the lust for power " among the high Officials and Ministers were the main causes for the sad state of affairs in the country. In another lengthy editorial on November 29, it predicted that the Centre might stifle the 'most corrupted Bihar Ministry' for fear that the movement may spread to other States.

The 'Santapana', another Assamese Weekly published from Newgong, went a step further. It did not only lend an unqualified support to the J. P. movement but also threw a bait before the youth of Assam. On November 6, 1974, it said :

" A good number of leaders have been preparing for such a movement in Assam, it is learnt. Such movement will surely depend upon the people's support. We call upon the youth of Assam to make the movement a success".

Again on November 20, it lashed at the Congress President, Sri Deb Kanta Barua. "Under the guise of Save democracy slogan", it said " the Congress is doing the election campaign."

The Jamshanti, the oldest Assamese Weekly published from Jorhat, extended a moral advice to the Congress. It said that Congress should " win the heart of the people" to counteract the J.P. movement. On November 20, it wrote:

" The only way to counteract the J.P. movement is to win the heart of people of every hamlet of Bihar. The numerical strength of people joined in the procession is not the real index of mind against the J.P. movement. Since the number of people in the procession can be increased by various dishonest means".

With an ironical caption, 'save Congress' , 'Maha Jati', an Assamese Weekly from Tezpur, wrote in its editorial on November 17, that in the name of the ' Save democracy' there were processions on 11 and 13 November in Patna only to "Save CPI " and 'Save Congress'. It further said that a huge amount was spent under the Centre's direction in this programme of so-called "Save democracy". The paper supported the J.P. movement in Bihar.

The day after the Patna Bundh, i.e., on November 5, 1974, the Assam Tribune, the premier English daily, in a news item with three columns headline in the front page said : " J.P. lathi - charged " and again on November 6 it published a news item in the front page with two columns headline which read as "Patna Bundh passes off peacefully". Till November 7, the paper did not comment anything on 'Patna Bundh' in its editorial.

But on November 8, the paper came out with an editorial on 'Patna Bundh' which was captioned " Living with J.P." The editorial said that the 'Patna Bundh' was marked by violence and "Living with J.P. and agitation had many disadvantages ". The editorial begun with :

" The incidents of removal of railway tracks, cutting tele-communication links, looting of goods grains, attacks on a Railway station and some Rajya Transport buses that marked the Wednesday's Bihar Bandh should make J.P. ponder over what his present movement is likely to lead to."

It concluded with :

" The people of Bihar must have also felt that living with J.P. and agitation has many disadvantages. It is, therefore, this time serious thought was given to coming to an understanding with give and take on both sides".

But later on the Assam Tribune changed its attitudes and admitted that J.P. was a force and his movement was a real challenge to Mrs. Gandhi's leadership. It did not subscribe to the views of the Congress leaders that J.P. movement was a threat to democracy. It said on November 20, 1974 :

" J.P. movement launched by Sri Narayan is a serious challenge to Mrs. Gandhi's leadership but to say that it is also a threat to democracy is hardly convincing".

Again on November 20 it said :

" Political movement launched by J.P. posed a serious threat to the Congress though the

latter is trying to meet the challenge through its counter - offensive. Undoubtedly it is a great problem that the Congress has seldom faced after independence.

So it appears that the Assam Tribune had frequently changed its attitude towards the J.P. movement and its editorials were marked by inconsistency.

However, it has been found that the newspapers in Assam accepted the fact that the J.P. movement in Bihar was really a movement to be reckoned with although they did not support the demand for the dissolution of the Bihar Assembly. They observed that the J.P. movement was a "challenge to the Congress party and the Government". But many of them did not subscribe to the views of the Congress leaders that the movement in Bihar was a "threat" to the democracy.

Some of the newspapers particularly small papers with poor circulation boldly termed the J.P. movement as a "People's movement". These papers were more critical of the Congress leaders than the big papers. They made no hesitation in making the Government and the Congress responsible for the rampant corruption in the country. What was more interesting was that few small papers welcomed the Bihar-type movement in Assam.

The Allahabad Judgement.

In the history of the Congress rule the Allahabad Judgement of June, 1975 was another landmark which paved the way for the rule of the Janata Government in the Centre and some States of India. It is important to study the reactions of the newspapers of Assam on the Judgement which had unseated Mrs. Indira Gandhi who had been the Prime Minister of India for more than a decade.

On June 13, 1975, the day after the Allahabad Judgement, the Dainik Assam, which expressed "surprise" at the judgement, came out with a novel advice to the Congress to dissipate the doubts that existed in the minds of people about the corrupt practice in elections which proved true in Mrs. Gandhi's case. The paper feared that the demand for the change in the election regulations would be intensified by the Opposition. However, the paper believed that the truth of the allegation would be known only after the verdict of the Supreme Court. The paper was not in favour of Mrs. Gandhi's resignation on the basis of the Allahabad Judgement.

On June 16, 1975, it said that the J.P. movement would not be able to provide a "third alternative to the people" as the opposition parties would never give up their separate identity. Referring to the Congress rally of June 20 in New Delhi in support of Mrs. Gandhi, the

Dainik Assam in its editorial on June 22 criticised the Congress leaders for their disrespects to the law and court. The paper was very critical of the Congress President, Deb Kanta Baruah for his statement "Indira is India" which made him, according to the paper, "a laughing stock" before the public.

For Nation Assamiya the Allahabad judgment was an opportunity to lash at Mrs. Indira Gandhi. According to the paper there were widespread corruption during Mrs. Gandhi's regime and Mrs. Gandhi herself gave indulgence to corruption in many ways. On June 13, 1975, in a two column editorial it said :

" During Mrs. Indira Gandhi's rule there have been wide-spread corruption in many fields and Mrs. Gandhi herself has given indulgence to corruption Although she has sometimes shown eagerness to remove corruption but in most cases she has remained indifferent".

It indirectly insisted on Mrs. Gandhi's resignation:

" Not to speak of the Opposition leader, even one of her own party's important leader and her Cabinet's ex-Minister Sri Mohan Dharja himself said that she should resign".

Again on June 15, 1975, Matan Assaniya in a two column editorial harped on Mrs. Gandhi's resignation. The paper said that it would be better if Mrs. Gandhi resigned forthwith.

Like Matan Assaniya, the Santanta also repeatedly demanded the resignation of Mrs. Gandhi after the Allahabad Judgment on its June 15 and 25 issues. This weekly said that it was wrong to presume that the congress party would cease to be a powerful political party if Mrs. Gandhi resigned.

Curiously enough, The Nilachal, another Weekly, avoided serious comment on the judgment. However, it observed that Justice Singh's verdict was not the final one and Mrs. Gandhi had the right to appeal to the Supreme Court.

The Mahajati expressed the same opinion. After demanding Mrs. Gandhi's resignation it said on June 20, 1975 that "no leader was above the people in any democratic country". 'Alak', another weekly, demanded the resignation of Mrs. Gandhi.

On the other hand, the observations of Asm Bank were to a great extent similar to those of Dainik Asm, Nilachal and Janashakti. On June 20, it asserted that there should not be any demand insisting on the resignation of Mrs. Gandhi since she had the right to appeal to the

Supreme Court.

The Assam Tribune at the outset did not address the Opposition parties' demand for resignation of Mrs. Gandhi following the Allahabad judgment. It said that Mrs. Gandhi could continue as Prime Minister till the final verdict of the Supreme Court where Mrs. Gandhi had filed an appeal. In support of its contention, it placed reliance on the views of the World Press. On June 20, 1975, it observed:

"It is incidentally relevant to find that the reaction of the World Press by and large has contrary to expectation been quite sympathetic to Shrimati Gandhi, in fact, the World Press has found no valid reason for Shrimati Gandhi to step down".

But the paper did not extend its support to the 'stage-managed' Congress rally in New Delhi in support of Mrs. Gandhi. "Friday's massive rally" it said on June 20, "was a sign of unprecedented nervousness on the part of the ruling Congress". It said further:

"It appears that attempts are now-a-days being made by not only immature and small parties but also by a party like Congress to settle certain issues on the street which is bound to strike a severe blow to proper functioning of democracy and Parliamentary system of Government".

The opposition parties made the question of resignation of Mrs. Gandhi not only an All India issue but also an important international news. The situation was such that the newspapers dared not to go against the public opinion. It appears that the Assam Tribune was gradually changing its earlier stand on the issue of resignation of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. On June 26, Tribune raised the question of resignation of Mrs. Gandhi. It hammered:

" But the questions are : Will it help the Congress and Prime Minister to refurbish their position under the cloud caused by the Allahabad judgment and the vacation Judge's refusal to grant an absolute stay ? Will the rallies and statements in support of the Prime Minister as stage-managed by the Congress silence the people not to question the propriety of Shrimati Gandhi's refusal to step down from the post of Prime Minister till the final judgment is made by the Supreme Court ? . . . there is also the question of morality which cannot be divorced from the reality of the situation".

So the study reveals that the newspapers in Assam were divided on the question of resignation of Mrs. Gandhi in the beginning. The big newspapers or papers with a good circulation did not support the Opposition parties' demand for resignation of Mrs. Gandhi. But subsequently due to the increasing popularity of the demand the big papers had also fallen in line with the small papers running with a poor circulation. These small

papers not only demanded the resignation of Mrs. Gandhi but they found in the Allahabad Judgment an opportunity to hit the Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi and harped on the common complaint - corruption among the ministers which was prevailing at that time. It has been found that these papers were very eager to play the role of the Opposition only to boost up their circulation. Their news headlines and editorial comments reflected the voice of the opposition. They did not hesitate to use superlative degrees of adjectives. They often made pungent remarks against the ruling party.

Lok Sabha Elections of 1977

The Lok Sabha elections of 1977 immediately after the lifting of the Press Censorship was a watershed which marked the end of 30 years Congress rule and the beginning of Janata Party rule in India. For the first time in the history of Independent India the political ideas were polarized, the Congress and its allies seeking a fresh mandate and the newly formed Janata Party and its allies fighting to end Mrs. Gandhi's family rule and the Emergency.

The Janata Party campaign stressed and high-lighted the Emergency excesses and high handedness ,

the Prime Minister's move towards a autocratic rule, rise of her son as extra-constitutional centre of power and forced sterilization. In fact, the entire election campaign was centred around the slogan "dictatorship - versus - democracy".

In contrast, the Congress party campaign focussed on the idea of National Unity, and stability which was safe only with the ruling party, for the country would prosper only under Congress rule and Mrs. Gandhi was a symbol of strong progressive forces.

In the light of the massive Janta victory it is necessary to study how effective was the newspapers' role. What was the impact of their reporting on the electorates ? Could the newspapers foresee any change? Was the Press hostile to the Congress ? How did the Press see the emergence of Janata Party in Indian Political arena ?

In Assam all the newspapers - big or small hailed the Government's decision to hold Lok Sabha election on March, 1977. While appreciating this decision, some newspapers "advised" the Congress Government to revoke the declaration of emergency so that the elections to the Lok Sabha could be held in free and fair atmosphere. On January 28, 1977 the Assam Tribune wrote :

" But there is a psychological aspect of the matter. Since the emergency has not been fully withdrawn and only all laws relating to it have been liberalised, it is just natural for the Opposition parties to suffer from certain inhibition affecting the freedom that is necessary in the election campaign. Therefore, Government would be well advised to consider if the Emergency can be revoked".

The 'Assam Express' another English daily of Assam, on the other hand, asserted that the restrictions would have been lifted long ago had there been normal situation in India. On January 20, 1977 it said:

" As a matter of fact, all these restrictions would have been lifted long ago had there been a normal situation existed in the country in pre-emergency days. It is probably meaningless to remind our people the situation which necessitated the declaration of emergency."

The paper further advised the people to vote for the best persons in whose hand the future of the nation would be safe. On January 25, 1977, the 'Assam Express' after appreciating Mrs. Gandhi for her "New Economic Programmes", desired that Mrs. Gandhi should lead the nation for "another decade." It said :

"To-day the New Economic Programmes of India has been hailed both inside and outside the country. If this most esteemed leader of us leads the Nation at least for another decade India will undoubtedly be one of the top most countries of the World".

The absence of a viable opposition party in the Indian Parliamentary democracy was well realized by the newspapers. But the possibility of such a party by merging all opposition parties was bleak, according to the Asian Tribune, since the opposition parties had some "deep-seated qualitative deficiencies". On January 21, 1977, 'The Asian Tribune' in its editorial said :

" A viable opposition with well-defined aims and co-herent programmes capable of providing a Government alternative to that of a party in power is a *sin-qua non* for the success of democracy, that political life in this country is poorer for the absence of such an opposition is all too evident..... Such a unity is not yet in evidence. Besides, none of parties has a truly national character. Each is dependent for its existence on some limited pockets of support mostly urban based. Until these deep seated qualitative deficiencies are removed a merger by itself will not constitute to the emergence of a really strong and viable opposition that the country sorely needs".

The 'ASSAM EXPRESS' on the other hand, held the Opposition parties responsible for creating unnecessary 'disturbance' in the country. On February 18, 1977 it wrote :

"Most of the Opposition parties only had a pastime of criticising the doings of the Government, when they could have given some constructive advice to add some more steps for successful implementation of various plans and programmes. What is irony of fate it is that while the Government is engaged in a programme of peace, a climate conducive to disturbance is being created by certain people and there are mounting tensions these days in the vortex of India's politics".

The paper also cautioned the people to keep a watch over opposition parties who according to the paper did never contribute anything to the development of the country. Again on February 25, 1977 the Assam Express said that it was the Opposition parties who encouraged the students to refrain from the examination. According to the paper a 'big conspiracy' had been working to create "chaos and disorder" and "confusion and anarchy" in the country.

Interestingly, the editorial of the ASSAM EXPRESS clearly reflected the voices of the leaders of the Congress party. It seems that the paper had no hesitation

in carrying the voices of the Congress through its news and views columns day after day during the election period.

The ideology and election manifeste of political parties and their likely impact on the voters had also come in for criticism in the editorials of the newspapers. Some papers scrupulously refrained from passing any serious comments lest they might earn displeasure from the political parties. A few came forward to support the election manifeste of political parties. On February 10, 1977, the Assam Express referring to the Congress manifeste said :

" It once again brings high hope in the minds of the people to look forward to a bright future. . . . In spite of the best efforts of the ruling party the country is still not free from the exploiters and middlemen."

According to the Assam Tribune , the electorates would be influenced by the 'personalities' involved in the poll rather than by the ideology or by any slogan like "dictatorship- versus- democracy". On February 19, the paper observed :

" . . . The electorate being composed of diverse castes having different regional and other interests would be greatly, if not wholly influenced by personalities involved in the poll rather than by other factors".

The Dainik Ason apprehended some 'clashes' during the elections. On February 19 and 23, 1977, the paper repeatedly urged upon the political parties to avoid "clashes" during the election period. It scrupulously refrained from passing any other serious comments on the elections. The Dainik Janabhusi made similar comments. The weeklies - Ganatantra and Maha Jati on the other hand came forward to support the popular "Janata wave" against the ruling Congress party. They made no secret of their desire to extend a whole-hearted support to the Janata party. The Alok - a R.S.S. sponsored weekly, had a good time to avenge its old scores.

Generally, the newspapers - big or small - were in favour of a congenial atmosphere where a free and fair elections could be held. A few papers went to the extent of 'advising' the Government to withdraw the emergency rule so that the Opposition parties and Press could do their job freely and fearlessly during the elections.

Some papers on the other hand, high-lighted the so-called "gains of emergency" during the elections. Some scrupulously refrained from passing any serious comments

on the controversial issues. Their comments were of routine type, drab and had a tendency to escape from the main and vital questions. They did not like to earn displeasure particularly from the ruling party or Government.

What was most discreditable on the part of the newspapers was that they could not properly assess the people's upsurge that led the Janata party to victory. Their news columns and editorials could not visualize the emergence of a new power. Their reportings were monotonous and unbalanced. They gave more prominence and frequency to the news or statements of the Government or ruling party.

The victory of the Janata Party clearly indicates that the Press had no impact on the people who were disgusted with the 30 years Congress Rule as well as with the emergency excesses. It seems that Press was a mere silent spectator. Interestingly, as soon as the election results were out there was a mad rush among the newspapers to warm their hands in the rising sun of power. It appears that the style and the content of a newspaper have a relation with the political system of a country. It varies alternatively with the change of Ministry or Government.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION,
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The role of newspapers can be stated in brief: Newspaper are a channel of communication between politicians and the public. Democracy requires that the public should have the information about political ideas and events necessary for rational judgments about politicians and in particular about the Government. Because newspapers are the supreme arbiter to decide what to print and omit and they are in a position of political power. Further, newspapers being a 'neutral' channel can press upon their readers their own views instead of leaving them to work out conclusions for themselves. They can also influence politicians both by force of argument and more importantly by virtue of the influence politicians believe them to have over the views of the public.

This power enables newspapers to hold the Government responsible to the public by reporting, interpreting and criticising its actions. In view of this power of interpreting the policies of the Government, the newspapers must be independent of the Government.

They must also be fair and impartial in their reportings. Yet their power could be in a different way abused if newspapers suppressed and distorted facts. They would then be preventing the public from obtaining an accurate idea of Government actions and of political views and events in society at large. The power of the Press, therefore, has itself to be held responsible. Since the Press must not be controlled by the Government the ideal form of control is competition. So if there are papers reporting and commenting on the news from many points of view, the consequences of bias in any one are minimised. In brief, the basic assumptions are : that the Press has power, and that the more newspapers there are, the less likely will their power go against the interest of people, nation and democracy. The Press has many characteristic features : integrity, fairness, accuracy and objectivity, and self-criticism which should be devoted to the discussion of the shortcomings of the Press and providing a means through which the public can express its views through a system of accountability to show their responsiveness to readers' criticism.

F I N D I N G S.

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Now it is time to set against these arguments the various conclusions about the real role of the Press

that follow from the study of the factors determining it. During this long period 1954-78, it has been found that the Press in Assam has a chequered history with many ups and downs. The study reveals the following facts.

The growth and development of Press depends largely on the socio-economic factors like industrialization, urbanization, economic condition and literacy of a country. But this scientific assumption does not hold good in the case of the development of the Press in Assam. It has been found that although there had been considerable growth in the socio-economic field during the last 25 years yet the development of the newspapers- Assamese and English is far below the expectation. It appears that there is a large reading public which could be reached if newspapers and periodicals of popular appeal could be made more readily available to the people.

Lack of well qualified and trained journalists, and inadequate news coverage through correspondents are some of the causes responsible for the low standard of Assamese journalism. It has also been found that the big newspapers place heavy reliance on the news agency service rather than the staff reporters. As a result identical news with no change in the content and style is found in different newspapers. This makes the paper

dull and monotonous. The lack of competition among the newspapers for styles and contents is the major defect of the newspapers - both Assamese and English. The sheer parrot like repetition without variation in the content and style of the newspapers is bound to irritate the readers.

Turning to the editorials, it has been observed that most of the editorials are ambiguous, dull and boring. They are written in a style marked by verbosity and vagaries of views. They often do not put forward any concrete suggestion remedy for the solution of the problem. Their criticisms are stereotype, formal, vague and of the fixed pattern.

The ownership structure of the newspapers - English and Assamese - is purely based on the private proprietorship. Only a few houses control the important dailies and weeklies of Assam. Such concentration of newspapers in the hands of few monopoly houses tends to jeopardise the freedom of the Press in Assam.

Since its inception the Press in Assam has struck its roots in the aggressive linguistic nationalism. The Assam Press devoted its most chapter to the cause of the Assamese language. It set out its journey to create a language, a culture and a people. It has grown along

with the development of Assamese literature and culture. The declaration of Assamese as the only state language of Assam had given a tremendous impetus to the growth of the Assamese newspapers.

The evidence of the content analysis confirms that both English and Assamese newspapers are mostly urban oriented. They have completely neglected the rural people who constitutes 80% of the total population. In the absence of the rural Press, the newspapers in Assam could devote a few columns to rural upliftment.

The newspapers of Assam have been found more critical of the Central Government rather than their own State Government. The Assamese newspapers in comparison to the English papers take more interest in and give more space and coverage to the state politics of Assam. This makes the Assamese newspapers more popular among the Assamese readers than the English papers.

Both the English and Assamese language Press never tried to offer a picture of the total society to its readers. It expressed its concern exclusively for representing the interests of the Assamese speaking people. The English language Press instead of giving recognition to all groups of people in the society, presented a sectarian view before its readers. The interests of non-Assamese people, who have been in Assam for generations, had been completely ignored by both the English

and Assamese language newspapers. As a result these papers could not attract the non-Assamese readers in Assam. The newspapers published outside the State of Assam- places like Calcutta and Delhi - have been more popular with the non-Assamese readers. Even a section of Assamese elite subscribes to the Calcutta and Delhi newspapers as these papers carry varied news and views catering to the needs of all section of the people.

The accessibility of the English Press to all racial and language group both plains and hills, who have a special admiration for the English language in this North-East Region, helps the English newspapers to have a strong foothold in a wide field. Since the English language is acceptable to all people of this region, it could play a vital role in bringing about a peaceful and integrated society in this turbulent part of North-East India which has been witnessing since independence many linguistic and chauvinistic communal strifes and unpleasant border disputes. But regrettably, the English Press completely failed to come upto the expectations of the people. It failed to bring about a cosmopolitan outlook among the various peoples living in this troubled area.

What is most distressing is that both the English and Assamese language newspapers could not keep pace with

the rate of literacy. They miserably failed even in maintaining their percentage of readers. There is no gradual upward trend in percentage of readers. The Assamese language Press depends completely on the Assamese speaking readers although it can to some extent penetrate into other language speaking people like Bengali since there is a little difference between the Assamese and the Bengali language. The English language Press on the other hand hardly took any step to attract the readers from all racial and language groups.

Accountability is one of the touchstones to determine the quality of the Press. Indeed this is a new concept of the world Press. The most common form of accountability consists of regular examination of errors and publication of corrections. Generally, corrections are printed under the heading "Beg your pardon" or "we were wrong". But this system has never bothered either the Assamese or English newspapers. There is nothing like this barring the 'Letters to editor' column in the newspapers of Assam. If a newspaper prints correction in this way, there would be fewer allegations of carelessness, undue influence, bias and suppression. Apart from this the idea of accountability will help improve the relation between the newspaper and its readers, makes the newspaper more credible and a genuine medium of two-way communication.

There is a tendency to use news for sensation.

Both Assamese and English newspapers fall short of the standard of accuracy. Their news reporting is so imaginative that one will wonder whether they are newspapers at all. Misleading headlines, distorted quotations, biased paraphrases, omission of portions of speeches and emphasis on other portions by heavy type, all seem to be the outcome of a policy of views instead of news. They are to be blamed for disseminating rumours and inflating an insignificant event by catchy headline and lengthy story. They frequently present details of events that never took place and prostitute the language of eulogium to persons and things unworthy of public favour. The use of indecent language is not uncommon in the Assamese newspapers.

It is true that a newspaper is entitled to support or oppose a particular policy but common honesty demands that it should keep its opinion from colouring its facts. "State the truth, and let your comment be as severe as you like, but do not forget that a large section of the public begins to distrust the Press as soon as it suspects that the truth is being concealed or news deliberately misreported."¹

1. Mansfield, F.J , The Complete Journalist, P.350, 1948

Power often lies in smallness. The small papers have a very distinct and important role to play because ultimately in a democracy it is the individual that counts and the small community that matters. To speak in global or national terms of news, of events, and of views that affect millions of people does not adequately do justice to the needs and requirements of small groups of people who have their own local aspirations, local problems, local grievances. They must have some means through which ventilate them. If a community is to grow, the people must know one another and a community paper, a small local paper whether in a village, a small town, or in a district or block catering to particular group or community fulfils a very distinct need.

In view of these roles of a community paper, the small newspapers in Assam present a unsatisfactory picture. Their size and number, and growth and roles are far below the expectation. Most of the small papers have grown out of the job- printing press. Obviously, these are more business - oriented rather than news-biased Press. They are more or less one man affair, that is the same man is the editor and proprietor and manager of the entire show. The editors have neither any journalistic background nor any definite mission to serve the society. To them the profession of journalism is a glamour and a means to earn easy advertisement revenue from their State Government and local authorities.

A country or community gets the Press it deserves. The reading public in Assam is unconcerned about the nature of its Press. The Assamese readers take no action to extract greater responsibility and responsiveness from the newspapers they read. Hence they cannot expect that there will be better newspapers and journalists. The Assamese readers have neither a good purchasing habit nor a reading habit. Naturally, the Assamese newspapers have failed to change the attitudes of the people.

There is no initiative or planning by the newspaper enterprises or journalists for better newspapers. A good paper should have - a training scheme for journalists, better documentation and reference centres, consumer reporting, community welfare scheme like setting up of a separate telephone line in the editorial department for direct calls from the readers, and symposium on community welfare projects. Such welfare scheme will help the newspapers to have a close link with the people of the community they serve. The ultimate value of a newspaper to a community will be judged not only by what it publishes but equally by what it promotes and does outside its office building.

Coming to self-analysis, the newspapers of Assam are completely different from those of the rest of India. It is the peculiar characteristic of the Assamese journalism

that it never talks of its own failings or of the community or of people it serves. The habit of self-criticism is conspicuously absent in both the English and Assamese newspapers. This queer phenomenon of the newspapers of Assam is really very surprising. What is more disquieting is that newspapers have the habit of hiding or suppressing the real truth if it is unpalatable to the readers. In this respect they are too touchy and sensitive.

The popular concept that a newspaper can create or change the attitudes of its readers has some relevance here in this study. The newspapers- whether Assamese or English have some impact upon their readers only when they deal with the issue like language or events about which people have preconceived notion or preference. The already existing opinions, more particularly people's predispositions influence their behaviour or attitude vis-a-vis the Press. So the newspapers have a limited influence on their readers.

On the question of newspapers' coverage to the opposition parties' views, the evidence shows that they had deliberately ignored statements of the Opposition parties during the period of elections and in normal times. There was not even any special column devoted to views of the Opposition during the elections as was generally

done by the newspapers published from the big cities of India. Their news coverage weigh heavily in favour of the party in power. Interestingly, after the 1977 General elections results which led to the change of Ministry in the Centre, there was a mad rush among the newspapers to warm their hands in the rising sun of power. It appears that the style and content of a newspaper have a relation with the political system of a country. It varies alternatively with the change of Ministry or Government.

But the newspapers are ignorant of the fact that the variety of views and news is the spice of life of the newspapers- whether dailies or weeklies. Publication of different shades of opinion not only makes the newspapers readable, interesting and presentable, but also improves the credibility of the newspapers.

The Press in Assam has been living on the fat of the political and economic aspirations of the Assamese middle class. The cause of this Assamese middle class, who aspired to have a share in the political and trade market of the country, had always been upheld by both the Assamese and English newspapers of Assam. While doing so the newspapers had a tendency of nailing the blame on others for the failures and shortcomings of the Assamese community. They ignited communal hatred between different groups of people. The non-Assamese, who have been in Assam

for generations, were made scapegoats holding them responsible for political and economic crisis.

The newspapers, which have a vital role to play in the political and economic tension, grossly abused the right of speech and expression given to them under Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution. This freedom of expression is neither a licence nor a sacrosanct or an absolute right, but the right to expression is subject to certain limitations imposed by the same Article 19(2) of the Indian Constitution, on the ground of decency or morality, security of the State, public order, contempt of court, defamation, incitement to an offence and friendly relations with foreign States. It has been found that the newspapers frequently made these constitutional restrictions on the Press freedom inoperative by creating a 'popular' mass hysteria in the State when the entire legal machinery was bogged down.

Such usurpation of constitutional provisions, which has been incorporated with a view to strike a balance between the individual liberty or freedom of the Press and social interest, does not favour the concept that the Press is the safeguard against the arbitrary action of the authority in power. The Press can well play its political game within the bounds of the constitutional limitations. It can easily serve the

interest of its readers without flouting the rule of law.

The freedom of the Press is a bipolar concept involving both freedom and responsibility. There cannot be any right without duty. A free Press which is concomitant of democracy cannot shirk its responsibilities. What is most needed is a responsible Press.

During the period of 30 years since independence, the newspaper of Assam had witnessed and covered many events of national importance such as, six general elections, two Pak attacks, one Chinese aggression, creation of new States, change of Ministry and various social and economic changes. So the journalists had got the chance to play their part in great national events and come to the mainstream of the Indian Press. Besides, the prolonged domination of the Congress as a single dominant party in the State and the lack of effective opposition should have helped the Assam Press to play the vital role of the opposition from outside the Legislature but it chose to play rather a timid, uneven and dangerously biased role. The newspapers could have provided a platform for a wide variety of opposing political ideas.

Still the North-East India has a tremendous future for the growth of journalism. The frontiers of this region are full of immense international possibilities. Its varied people with their novelty of life, various customs and traditions, and political ambitions may provide a most interesting human dossier for news which may catch the headline of any all India newspapers. The political map of this region has already undergone vast changes. The newspapers have also to play a significant role in social and economic progress of Assam. Because information is now occupying a greater role as a productive force in society and this evidently holds good in Capitalist as well as Socialist system. It is a well established fact that improved communication facilities resulting in increased flow of information accelerate economic and social development.

It has to be admitted with honest admission that the journalists of this region have yet to acquire a position of honour and social status. Most of them are indifferent to their rights and responsibilities. Are they happy with the coverage, its fairness, its accuracy? How much is the content of the daily newspaper relevant to the real problems and interests? How great is the dependence on agency material? How does the Press help maintain communal harmony in

society ? All these are legitimate questions and the problem is that the passive readers take whatever the newspapers care to dish out and they hardly ever protest.

SUGGESTIONS.

A great burden always rests on the journalists and their organizations. If fact, obligations of the journalists are more onerous than those of the community as the Press wields tremendous influence on the people. To gather, present and interpret the news by whatever medium - Press - film - radio or T.V. demands not only high technical skill but also the ability to understand and make understandable to others the swiftly changing and complex panorama of modern times. The situation not only presents a challenge to those engaged in the profession, it carries wider social implications which affect everyone. If, as is generally conceded, an informed public opinion is one of the best guarantee for a healthy national and international climate and since the basis of public opinion is the information carried by the newspapers, then it follows that the validity of opinions held by the public will largely depend on the knowledge, understanding, responsibility of those who provide the information. The informed opinions of the people are

based upon the accuracy and completeness with which the facts and events are made known to them. Considering all these facts the following suggestions may be made :

The key to improving the quality of information lies in more through education and training of the journalists in all media. The training should be of a two-fold nature-technical, covering the techniques of the profession, and general education to give the journalists as much knowledge as possible concerning the subjects with which they deal. The needs of the modern world require that such education and training keep pace as far as possible with the development of new means of communication. The training will help reduce the half-truths and partial reporting. Bernard Rubin said :

" It is felt that biased and distorted reports on public affairs would be less numerous if standards of professional work were raised and were applied on an industry-wide basis".²

2. Rubin, Bernard, Politics and Democracy, P4. 1977

Unlike medicine, the law and similar well-regulated callings, journalism is unfenced. There is no gate of entry guarded by examiners, nor are any specific certificates of general education demanded. While admitting that the journalism can not be compared with professional callings like medicines and law, the beginner should come equipped with a minimum level of general education and training.

The Universities and other educational institutions can play a vital role in providing facilities for education and training in Journalism. Both the educational institutions and newspaper organizations should co-operate in providing training facilities to the beginners and also those who are already in the line. Both the Organizations jointly may take up such projects intending to give practical training to the journalists.

The attempt to suppress or twist news by the journalists will amount to a great abuse of freedom enjoyed by the Press itself. With a view to increasing the selling value, newspapers sometimes publish a most ordinary news item in a most sensational or distorted manner. The menace of such false and inaccurate news can be best dealt with by making laws which will require the newspaper to give equal space and prominence to a

correct news and different and opposing views.

It has been found that newspapers devote maximum space to the advertisement. While admitting that the advertisement is the life blood of the newspapers, the ratio of news - advertisement space in the newspapers should be brought down to 50 : 50 if not 60 : 40

More newspapers mean more opinions. This is one of the characteristics of the democratic country. To encourage the growth of different shades of opinion, the advertising authorities particularly the Government which is the biggest advertiser should liberally patronize the small newspapers which suffer from circulation as well as financial difficulties. That apart, these small newspapers will serve people as an opposition to the monopoly press.

Newspapers have special responsibilities in the areas of socio-economic conflicts. Newspapers when they deal with sensitive and volatile subjects like race, religion, language ,etc. , have a very delicate responsibility. The reporting on these subjects is a difficult and delicate problem for the journalists because the very mention of these words in certain contexts and situations, may generate emotional heat among the public. The headlines, the length of the

report, the position of the paper - all these determine the importance of a news item. The amount of emotional heat generated depends upon the prominence and frequency of the news given in the paper. So the journalists must be restrained while reporting on race, chauvinistic feature news and brawl between two different communities. Some pressures like the withdrawal of advertisement may be exerted on the newspapers fostering such communal feelings among different communities.

The newspapers have been giving wide coverage to political news rather than developmental news or matters crucial to economic and social development. It is a deplorable fact that the newspapers have failed in acting as catalysts to social and economic betterment efforts. Even today newspapers allot a minor space for constructive contents and have a tendency to ignore the important development activities and progress which had been made in India. It pays more attention to political bickerings, scandals, linguistic strifes and inter-state feuds.

There should be more space for publication of interviews, letters and more commissioning of articles of dissent.

What should be the relationship between the newspapers and national security ? What principles can there be about the handling of information relating to national security ? The relationship is really very sensitive. Freedom of expression and full freedom to keep readers informed in matters like the country's defence is absent in almost every country in the world. But in developing countries like India, where the electorates are comparatively dumb, it is a common feature that secrecy in defence information is extended to absurd limits, with the result that the people are left free to entertain all kinds of notions and succumb to all types of rumours about the capability of the nation to preserve its security. In view of this it should not be unreasonable to say that a method may be devised by which defence information is periodically and correctly passed on to the people through the newspapers or other media in a form that will not only conform to the principles governing the newspapers' basic objective and the limits of safety of the country. Such an arrangement can be worked out through special co-ordination committees comprising representatives of the newspapers or mass media and the authority, which will set up a sort of screening process for all informative materials

As regards internal security to preserve national integrity, a code of conduct is essential. This should be observed voluntarily by the newspapermen. A body like Press Council could most effectively prevent newspapers from moving dangerously away from the prescribed norms. A vigilant and intelligent reader is an additional safeguard in putting a persistently erring medium in its proper place.

Newspapers are still suffering from a hangover of the colonial and imperialist eras. They are more the papers of agitation than the people's newspapers. Even now the newspapers cling to an editorial conception of "news" which is too official and obsessed by the activities of Government. No newspaper will have, or hold a grip on its public unless it is a people's paper, a platform and forum for free discussion of the affairs of the community for which it is published. To survive a newspaper has to serve in a unique way. The newspaper is a guardian of the people's fundamental right to free expression of opinion.

The Press is a natural vehicle for the expression of the needs of the society and it

detects the breakdown in the social system. It provides a feedback system from the governed to the governing, from one state to the other, from the province to the centre, from the consumers to the manufacturers. Press is the mirror of times and through it the Government as well as people can see their mistake. It is the spokesman of the People, it plays the role of the Opposition both inside and outside the Parliament, educates people and improves talent and character of the individual.

A free and open Press is characterized by criticism and counter criticism, clash of ideas, facts, and opinions. It is a process which seeks to ferret out truth. A critical public opinion through the mass media is the best safeguard against the arbitrary action of the authority in power.

APPENDICES
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The information is based on the Report of Historical Research in Assam, 1907, by E.A. Gait, History of Assamese Literature by Dr. Birinchi Kumar Barua, Annual Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India, 1961 - Press in India Parts I and II, 1965-1978, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Press Information Barua, Gauhati, Directorate of Publicity, Government of Assam.

APPENDIX 'A'

Chronology of Assamese newspapers and Journals.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Name of the Paper	Date of appearance	Name of editor.	Periodicity.	Place of Publication.
Arundel	Est. 1848 - 1882	Editor Rev. Thomas Cutter.	The first Assamese monthly.	Sibsagar.
Assam Bilasini	Est 1871 -1888		Monthly	Published from Dharmaprakash Press, Auniati Satra, Sibsagar.
Assam Nihir.	1878		First weekly newspapers in Assam. It was at first written in Bengali, but subsequently in Bengali and English.	
Assam Darpan.	Est. 1874-1875		Monthly	Published from Calcutta.

<u>Name of the Paper</u>	<u>Date of appearance</u>	<u>Name of editor</u>	<u>Periodicity</u>	<u>Place of Publication.</u>
Goalpara Hitasadhana	Est 1876		It was a weekly paper in Bengali	Goalpara
Chandrodaya	1876	Dihingiya Goswami	Weekly	Chidananda Press, Gauhati.
Assam Dipika	1876-77		Monthly	Dharmaprakash Press.
Assam News	1881-85	Manik Chandra Barua	Anglo-Assamese Weekly.	Gauhati.
Assam Bandhu	1885	Gunaviram Barua	Monthly	Calcutta.
Maui	1886	Hara Narayan		Calcutta.
Assam Tara	1888-90	Sridhar Barua		Majuli.
Lara Bandhu	1888	Karunaviram Barua		Calcutta.
Jonaki	1889	Chandra Kumar Agarwala	Monthly	Calcutta.
Bijuli	1890	Krishna Prasad Duara	Monthly	Dibrugarh.
Assam	1894	Manik Chandra Barua	Assamese Weekly	Gauhati.
Assam Banti	1900	Mathura Mohan Barua		Tezpur.
Bijuli	1902	Lakshinath Sarma		Shillong
Dipti	1905	Published by Christian Baptist		Dibrugarh.
Alochoni	1906-7	Dr. Lakshmi Prasad Chaliha & Jurganath Chang-Kakoty.		Dibrugarh.

<u>Name of the Paper</u>	<u>Date of appearance</u>	<u>Name of editor</u>	<u>Periodicity</u>	<u>Place of Publication.</u>
Usha	1907	Pudmanath Gohain Barua.		
Biswa Bharat	1909	Kaliram Burman		Gauhati.
Banhi(flute)	1909-29	Lakshinath Borbarua		Calcutta.
Assam Sandheb	1910-16	Taranath Chakraborty		Tezpur.
Assam Bilashini	1914	Krishna Kanta Bhattacharjee	Weekly.	
Akon	1916	Children's Magazine editor Bom Chandra Goswami		
Islami Akbar	1918	Parsi Priya		
Assomiya	1918	Moheswar Barua- ah, founded by Chandra Kumar Agarwala	Weekly	Gauhati
Assam Krishak	1920	Narayan Cha- ndra Barua		
Prabhati	1920	Organ of Kachari Yubak Sangha		
Argha	1921	Sinhadutta Adhikari		
Moina	1921	Raghunath Choudhury.		
Chetana	1924	Chandranath Sharma & Ambicagiri Roy Choudhury.		
Sadhana	1924	Muhammad Saleh		
Santa Pradip	1924	Tirthanath Goswami		Jorhat.
Arya Darpan	1924	Nigannath Goswami		Jorhat
Pracharak	1924	Muhammad Suloiman Khan		

<u>Name of the Paper</u>	<u>Date of appearance</u>	<u>Name of editor</u>	<u>Periodicity</u>	<u>Place of Publication.</u>
Jagaran	1924-26	Topesh Chandra Bagchi		Dibrugarh.
Arun	1925	Mahadev Sharma	Children's Magazine	Calcutta.
Assam Hitaisi	1925	Kabala Kanta Bhattacharyya		
Gaolia	1926	Dimbeswar Bora		
Jayanti	1926	Raghunath Choudhury		
Suprabhat	1927	Krishna Kanta Bhattacharyya.		
Rajj	1927	Kirtinath Bordoloi		Jorhat.
Assam Sahitya Sabha Patrika	1927	Sarat Chandra Goswami		
Ghor-Janti	1928	Kanaklota Chaliha	a woman's Journal	
Khetiook	1928	Narayan Chandra Baruah.		Jorhat.
Lagariya	1928	Toseswar Dhakial	Fortnightly	Dibrugarh.
Satyabadi	1928		Monthly	Dibrugarh.
Bibar	1929		An organ of Kachari Community	Dhubri
Dainik Batari	1929-37	Milmoni Phukan		
Awahon	1929-10	Dr. Dinesh Sharma		Calcutta for about 10 years.
Amar Desh	1931	Tulsinara-yan Sharma		Jorhat.
Bordoi-chila	1931	Siva Prasad Barooah		
Assam Sevak	1932	Devendra Nath Sharma		Gauhati.

<u>Name of the Paper</u>	<u>Date of appearance</u>	<u>Name of editor</u>	<u>Periodicity</u>	<u>Place of publication</u>
Jahnabi	1934	Janardan Acharyya	Anglo-Hindi-Assamese	Varanasi.
Na-jon	1934	Nilmani Phukan		
Batori	1935	Nilmani Phukan	First as weekly and afterwards as daily	Jorhat.
Asom	1935	Kirtinath Bordoloi		
Swaraj	1935	Kirtinath Bardoloi.		
Suravi	1936-52	Raghunath Choudhury		
Nagarer Katha	1936	Mafassal Hussain	An Assamese daily	Jorhat
Pakhila	1936	Harendra Nath Sharma	Children's magazine	Calcutta.
Prativa	1937	Gangaram Choudhury	Weekly	Gauhati
Khadem	1937			Gauhati
Janasikhya	1938	Nirmaleswar Sharma		Gauhati
Abhijan	1941	Dharani Das	Monthly	Gauhati.
Janambhumi	1947	T.C.Sharma	Weekly	Jorhat
Randhenu	1948	B.M.Barua	Monthly	Gauhati.
Akhanda Bharat	1948	Keshab Kanta Baruah.	Weekly	Gauhati.
Ranghor	1948	Dr.Birinchi Kumar Barua	A children's Magazine	Gauhati.
Kamrup	1948-50	Pratap Chandra Talukdar	Weekly	Gauhati.
Mutan Assamiya	1949	Devakanta Barua, ex-Congress President	Assamese daily	Gauhati.
Gathan	1950	Sukadeva Goswami		Nowgong
Rajj	1950	Beliram Das		Gauhati

<u>Name of the Paper</u>	<u>Date of appearance</u>	<u>Name of editor</u>	<u>Periodicity</u>	<u>Place of publication</u>
Asoma	1953	Published by the Congress party		Gauhati.
Jugarpatan	1954	Hemchandra Kenwar		Dibrugarh.
Deepak	1954	G.K.Talukdar	Monthly a children's Magazine	Gauhati.
Samaj	1956	Ramchandra Das	Monthly	Gauhati.
Puberun	1957	Durgaswar Sarma	bi-yearly	Gauhati.
Sonar Asom	1958	Assamese & English	Fortnightly	
Gati	1959	Dr.Shupen Hazarika	Cultural Magazine	Calcutta.
Awahan	1959	Dr.Dinanath sarma	Monthly	Gauhati.
Gandiv	1960	Daiba Chandra Talukdar	Weekly	Gauhati.
Alok	1960	Radhika Mohan Goswami	Weekly a R.S.S. Organ	Gauhati.
Fragjyoti	1961	Jogendra nath Saikia		Gauhati.
Manidsep	1961	Mahendra Bora		Gauhati.
Jombai	1961	Nava Kanta Borooah,	Monthly	Gauhati.
Ganata- sara	1962	Purna Chandra Sarmah	Weekly	Nowgong.
Juga Dharma	1962	Rabin Kakoty	Weekly	Gauhati.
Navadhara	1963	Sreeman Prafulla Goswami.	Weekly. published on behalf of Assam Pradesh Congress Committee	Gauhati.

<u>Name of the Paper</u>	<u>Date of appearance</u>	<u>Name of editor</u>	<u>Periodicity</u>	<u>Place of publication</u>
Asom Batori	1963	Chandra Prasad Saikia	bi-weekly	Gauhati.
Navajug	1963	Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya	Weekly	Gauhati. 7
Khadi Gramadyog	1963		Monthly	Gauhati. -
Mahajati	1964	Purna Narayan Sinha		Tezpur.
Asom Bani	1965	Satish Chandra Kakoti	Weekly	Gauhati.
Kamrupa	1965		bi-lingual Assamese & Nepali Fortnightly.	Gauhati.
Dainik Asom	1965	Kirtinath Hazarika	Assamese Daily	Gauhati.
Saraighat	1967		Monthly	Gauhati.
Roopam	1967		Monthly	Gauhati.
Sangvadik	1967	Bi-lingual Assamese & English	Fortnightly.	
Nilachal	1968	Homen Bar-gochain	Weekly	Gauhati.
Asom Raj	1968	Deven Sarma	Weekly	Gauhati.
Janamat	1968	A communist party journal Suren Bhattacharya	Weekly	Gauhati.
Pakheki Sangbad	1968		Fortnightly	Titabor.
Assamiya	1968		Monthly	Gauhati.
Prahari	1968		Monthly	Gauhati.
Ballyajyoti	1969		Monthly	Gauhati.
Swakshar	1969		Monthly	Gauhati.

<u>Name of the Paper</u>	<u>Date of appearance</u>	<u>Name of editor</u>	<u>Periodicity</u>	<u>Place of publication.</u>
Naxa	1970		Monthly	Gauhati
Amar Batori	1970		Fortnightly	Golaghat.
Agradoot	1971		Fortnightly	Mangaldoi.
Nabadiganta	1971	Animesh Barman	Weekly	Dhubri.
Aluran	1972		Fortnightly	Dibrugarh.
Ajanta	1972		Monthly	Gauhati.
Malakhimi	1973		Fortnightly	Lakhimpur.
Dainik Samabdhumi	1973		Daily	Jorhat.

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Appendix - 'B'.

Chronology of English Newspapers and Journals published in Assam.

<u>Name of the paper</u>	<u>Date of appearance</u>	<u>Name of editor</u>	<u>Periodicity</u>	<u>Place of publication.</u>
The Times of Assam	1895	Radhanath Chakraborty.	English Weekly	Dibrugarh.
The Eastern Herald	1902	Bansabadi Mitra.	Weekly English	Dibrugarh.
Citizen	1902	Bansabadi Mitra	English Weekly	Dibrugarh.
Advocate of Assam	1905	Mathura Mohan Barua	Weekly	Gauhati.
Assam Chronicle	1905	Krishna Chandra Barua		
Assam Herald	1912	Krishna Chandra Barua		Nowgong.
✓ Assam Tribune	1939	Lakshminath Phukan	Weekly	Dibrugarh.
✓ Assam Tribune	1946	Lakshminath Phukan	Daily	Gauhati.
Assam Information	1950	Published by Information and Public Relation Dept.		Gauhati.
Batori	1954	Oil India		Digboi.
Indian Reformer.		R. Dewan	English Weekly	Gauhati.
Tribal Mirror	1965	M	Monthly	Silchar.
Tele-voice	1965	Published by All India Telegraph Engineering Employees Union		Gauhati.
Spit fire	1970			Gauhati.
Weekly Express	1970	Jiba Kanta Gogoi		Gauhati
Assam Express	1971	Siba Kanta Gogoi		Gauhati.
The Assam Observer	1973	H. Ray	Bi-monthly	Sapatgram.

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The Dainik Asom ,	<p>Assamese daily, Gauhati:</p> <p>January-February,</p> <p style="padding-left: 100px;">April, 1967</p> <p>January-February, 1968</p> <p>October-December, 1974</p> <p>June-July, 1975</p> <p>January-December, 1977</p>
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January - February, **1968**
November- December, **1974**
June - July **1975**
January - March , **1977**
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January- February, **1967**
January- February, **1968**
November-December, **1974**
June - July, **1975**
January- March, **1977**
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November- December, **1974**
June - July, **1975**
January - March , **1977**
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January-December , **1967,1968**
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 December, 1963
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 February , 1968
 December , 1974
 June - July, 1975
 January - March, 1977
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