ABSTRACT

The term community journalism is tentatively a new term in the field of journalism. Emerging democracy in various countries across the world and issue of development adopted by the governments and also by the world organizations, including United Nations, inspired a new kind of journalism concentrating in a particular community or society or a geographical place is the community journalism. UNESCO has discussed these issues of development and introduced NWICO movement to uplift the underdeveloped communities by giving sufficient and useful information through media. Here is the importance of community journalism, a new type of journalism which concentrates on the issues of a particular community or society. Community journalism has the vehicle with specific role to play for its goal is community media. Along with the various places in the world, Assam is also practicing community journalism through community media. Mostly the district level newspapers in particular and the language newspapers in general are practicing the community journalism in Assam.

There are three terms that are used, often interchangeably, to represent this new concept of journalism public journalism, civic journalism, and community journalism. All three terms have, as a common basis, the idea of the journalist as a member of the community gathering new stories for the civic good, for the public good and of course for the community.

A journalist’s focus is on the community and how as a journalist, reporter, broadcaster, one can best serve the people. This is best done when the journalist is
a member of the community by being one of the citizens, not as an elite member of the media or society.

These three terms represent the same idea—that is collaboration between the citizens of the community and the media should all work together to solve problems or come up with ideas that might be solutions to problems, faced by the community and have a focus on self-improvement.

Community journalism is not a movement among scholars. It is not a movement among lecturers at polytechnics and universities, it is not teaching new journalists or new students how to serve people better. In fact, community journalism is a movement of practicing journalists to do their job better and to make the impact of the media more meaningful. Civic journalism has its roots, its growth, in a non-American movement. Today, it is still not solely American. It is spreading to the all over the world.

The most essential characteristics of a community are a group of people. This is the fundamental and most essential element of a community. Also the group of people should have a definite locality. In case of Assamese community, majority of the Assamese peoples are residing in Assam and sharing the common place and language, so they are Assamese.

Though community is primarily a fact of bonding on the major basis of language or dialect but there are other factors also which make a bonding community. Specially in the country like India, where various cast, class, geography, religion, profession are there, the definition of community even more complex. In some
cases, the profession or the campus makes a community, just like the Oil fields employees colony or tea industry employees comprises a community in Assam. Tea community though has a campus as physical boundary, but as a emotional bonding even ex-tea labourers or employees are also included in the tea community.

In Assam, major communities are based on the linguistic characteristics followed by the geographical locations. There are also dialects which also makes a sub community within the larger Assamese community such as Kamrupia, Goalparia etc which otherwise a geographical location. Here mutual intelligibility is of one sided many a case. For example, the Goalparia or Kamrupi dialect is not cent percent mutually intelligible to the standard dialect speakers of the same Assamese linguistic community.

NWICO, the New World Information and Communications Order, the movement by UNESCO in the 1970's, can be seen as a foundation, a basis, for the current trend, the current emphasis, among journalists known as civic, public, or community journalism. As we have already mentioned that the goals of developmental communication fit nicely into the movement of community journalism or civic journalism.

In Assam, the concept of community journalism was started with the local newspapers published from various places in the early 20th century. These newspapers have a very strong voice in the local place or in the community. For example- Mahajati in Tezpur is serving for more than 40 years to the peoples of Sonitpur district. Kalongpar in Nawgaon, Amar Nalbari in Nalbari, Mangal Barta
in Darrang, Gana Sabuk in Dhubri are some of the very strong media in their respective area or community. Besides these, there are some papers in Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Sibasar, Morigaon, Karbi Anglong, Kachar, Kokrajhar, Goalpara and Kamrup.

The major objectives of this study are i) to study the role and impact of the community journalism in Assam; ii) to study the scope of the community journalism in the developmental issues in Assam; iii) to critically evaluate the role and impact of the community journalism in Assam vis-à-vis rest of the world; iv) to study the new media as a possible mass media of community journalism in Assam.

The study—„Community Journalism in Assam; A Study of its role and impact on society” (With special ref. to Assamese language newspaper) has been planned as an empirical research study. There are three specified segments that are role and impact on society of community journalism. The hypothesis framed for testing are:

a) The role of community journalism has been of a successful medium of information education and entertainment.

b) The community journalism has been a contributory mode for anticipated positive change in society.

c) The scope of community journalism and newspapers as a viable medium of change or development is established and felt by the masses.

d) Community journalism is viable tool of socio-economic change of the community.
The Methodology for the study is basically consists of content analysis and interview of selected people. The area of the study is Brahmaputra valley districts of Assam. And the population for this study are Community media in Assam specially dailies and weeklies of Assamese language. For this particular study we have taken samples of around 50 respondent each from four administrative comissionerate divisions of Assam selected from journalists, media managers, readers and hawkers. Also content analysis for some selective newspapers on the scale developed by the researcher. Tools have been used as content analysis, Questioner, Schedules, Interview method.

As we have seen from the discussion that many of the newspapers including the Daily newspapers in Assamese language are having the characteristics of community newspaper doing the community journalism. Also it is found that Assamese language newspapers whether it is daily or weekly, readers feels that these newspapers are fulfilling the needs of the Assamese community regarding discriminating the information important for the community along with the guidance and analytical news or information carrying in it. Many of newspapers are giving importance to the community news in their newspapers by publishing it in the first page. There are some dedicated pages for the community news also in the newspapers, specially the daily newspapers in Assamese. So, it can be said that Assamese newspapers are playing the role of community newspapers and they are doing community journalism through these. Also there is impact on the society or community of these newspapers. As long as this characteristic is there to the Assamese newspapers, they are competing with the other commercial newspapers or the big metro dailies in Assam.