CHAPTER-II

INFORMATION AND MEDIA
2.0 Introduction

Since the present work deals with the study on ‘information disseminated by the local dailies’ (as mentioned in Chapter-1), some basic concepts/facets related to ‘information and media’ are required to be defined for linking the work with the central ideas. Undoubtedly, these concepts/facets with its definitions will be the foundation of the work.

2.1 Concepts/Facets of the work

2.1.1 Information

Information is a slippery concept, loaded with connotation and implications and that it has a variety of meaning. Many definitions have been attempted, but not even a single agreeable definition comprehending all its aspects has been arrived so far.¹ In fact, “information is complexion contents having more than one attributes ...........”²
The term ‘information’ is derived from Latin verb ‘Infomare’, which connotes meaning, to give, shape or form to the mind. The dictionary meaning of the term is “the knowledge communicated or received concerning a particular fact or circumstance.” Information may also be termed as knowledge, as knowledge is what we know or the portion of information, which is in our knowledge. In other words, information, is a fact told, heard or discovered about factual practices. It is a piece of knowledge for making its use.

The term ‘information’ has been defined differently by different persons. Eliahu Hoffman opines “Information is an aggregate (collection or accumulation) of statements, or facts or figures which are conceptually (by way of reasoning, logic, ideas or any other mental ‘mode of operation’ interrelated (connected).” According to J. Becker it is considered as “facts about any subject” whereas, in N. Belkhi’s view it is that “which is capable of transforming structure”. George Miller expresses: “Information is something we need when we face a choice. Whatever it’s content, the amount of information required depends on the complexity of the choice. If, we face a wide range of equally likely alternatives, if anything can happen, we need more information than if we face a simple choice between alternatives.”

In fact, the term has been widely accepted as cognitive state of awareness (as being informed) given representation in physical form. This physical representation facilitates the process of knowing. Information can be found in a range of forms, from the written words (books, periodicals, newspapers and other forms) to audio visual (T.V, Radio, Movies, etc) to purely oral communication (such as consultation, sessions, seminars, workshops, symposia, etc).
2.1.1.1 Relationship between Data, Information, Knowledge and Wisdom

The term data, information, knowledge and wisdom are used interchangeably to avoid tedious repetition. It is important to recognise at the very least the differences in usage models. Data are the raw material of knowledge creation. We can retain the information in our memory or record it on a piece of paper. This physical representation of data is information. Information, which is the result of a meaningful response to a stimulus, when correlated, synthesised and stratified during the course of time, becomes knowledge. Knowledge applied and tested over a long period of time by a continuous stream of minds resulting in its acceptance as truth, becomes wisdom. The transformation from data to information, to knowledge can be represented hierarchically. Each transformation represents a step upward in human cognition functioning. The relations between data, information, knowledge and wisdom may be viewed as a part of a continuum in terms of decision making process as under:

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Wisdom
   ↑
Knowledge
   ↑
Information
   ↑
Data
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2.1.1.2 Role of Information in Society

Information is considered to be the fundamental resource for social development and for the progress of human ties. The modern society is information-based society. The practical exercise of information is the key to avoid uncertainty and to eliminate the degree and number of problems. Information is an ingenious source of scientific and economic progress. In fact, it
is needed in all aspects of society and in all disciplines whether it is social, political, economic, educational, cultural etc.

With the advancement in research and social requirements, the information in an organised manner, with proper dissemination has become the need of today.\textsuperscript{13} So, an 'Information Policy' is a must to formulate basic directions, to establish and maintain a consistent framework to meet the developmental, educational and cultural needs, to adapt to the increasing uncertainty accelerated by change and complexity and to promote better use of available resources. 'National Information Policy' means 'a set of decisions taken by a government, applying laws and regulations, to orient harmonious development of the information dissemination services, to satisfy the information needs of the country. It is because of the ever-increasing demand for information from all walks of life that the importance of a policy is felt.\textsuperscript{14} In the fast developing world, information is treated as "POWER" and plays a vital role in all kinds of human activity and is an important factor for the overall progress and development of society.\textsuperscript{15}

2.1.1.3 Right to Information

Citizens have 'a range of rights', although 'the range changes from society to society'. They have 'basic human rights to be treated as human being with intrinsic worth.' They have 'civil rights' like freedom of speech, assembly, religion and the right to justice.' They have 'political rights' \textit{i.e.} the right to vote. Citizens also enjoy social rights' \textit{i.e.} the right to minimum standard of life.' But 'poorly informed people are often denied their rights because they lack the power to exercise them.' Therefore, it is necessary for every citizen to have the 'Right to Information.' With this right, citizens will be strong enough to enjoy all the rights properly. This idea formulates the concept of 'freedom of information.' 'Freedom of information legislation gives citizens the rights of access to information about
what is happening in government so that they can make better judgements about those who govern them.’ Not only to government information alone, the legislation ‘should include access to all the information that people need to exercise their rights as citizens’ irrespective of ‘their language skills, level of literacy, ability to pay and other factors.’

2.1.1.4 The “Right to Information” Bill

The Press Council of India has drawn up a draft bill on the ‘Right to Information’ in 1996. And the bill has been sent to the Union Govt. for consideration. The draft bill ensure that:

- every citizen shall have a right to information from a public authority;
- every public authority shall be under a duty to maintain all its records properly and make it available to any person seeking information;
- nothing shall preclude the right of any person to obtain such information as would affect his life or liberty; and
- information, disclosure, of which can affect the sovereignty and integrity of the country, can be withheld by the authority concerned.

However, the bill remained unimplemented for many years due to the reluctance of the bureaucrats. Later, the Lower House of the Parliament (Lok Sabha) passed the long denied bill on Dec.3rd 2002. All the members of the parliament have supported the bill. In a democratic country like India, such a bill is much since the ‘right to know information’ is the fundamental right of every citizen. On Dec.16th 2002, the Rajya Sabha (Upper House of the Parliament) has approved the bill.
2.1.1.5 Information-Communication

Information is often considered to be synonymous with communication. When one person is communicating with another, the person initiating the exchange of data is moving or transferring his/her understanding of the data to the other person (i.e. the receiver). When the data are received the person becomes informed. Being informed, therefore, is the result of communication. On the other hand, communication is not going to occur unless someone is acquiring and consuming some information about oneself or his/her environment. Thus it can be concluded that information and communication are interrelated to each other.

As such, communication becomes an important part in the present day information society. With the advancement of Science & Technology, communication of information is gaining its importance. However, information communicated at a particular time, also has its value, which if not received in time may be useless or cause some mis-hap. Therefore, there should be free flow of information and any barriers in its free flow should be removed for better information-communication.

2.1.1.6 Information-highway

The ultimate objective of the ‘information-communication system’ of any country is to establish a system “to deliver to all citizens the information they need when they want it and where they want it at an affordable price.” Basically, the ‘information-highway’ may be defined as ‘the convergence of computer and communication technologies.’ Academics tend to think of it and the Internet as synonymous. Some use the term as the ‘transformative process.’ However, the ‘information-highway’ may be looked as “a massive infrastructure, constituting a seamless and transparent network of networks capable of transmitting a full range of interactive, audio, video and data services.” For example, the National
Informatics Centre (NIC) in India has become the ‘National Information Infrastructure’ (NII) and connected all capitals and important cities/towns of the country.

2.1.2 Communication Media / Various Mass Media

Communication medium is a channel through which the messages of information are transferred to the receiver. A medium could be a spoken word or printed word or it could be in the form of electronic message. It includes everything that reaches the audience. According to Dr. Marshall Mc Luhan, media are “the medium which is the message. The medium, by which a piece of information or knowledge is communicated to us, has a profound influence on us.” The medium is of greater importance, because the same piece of information when conveyed on a printed page or over the telephone, by radio, slides or television will appear different and have entirely a different effect on us. The effectiveness of a piece of information depends upon the medium through which it is imparted. Communication media can be broadly classified into print media and electronic media.

2.1.2.1 Print Media

The printed word, as a carrier of knowledge, information came into existence when Johannes Gutenburg invented printing by movable types around 1455. The newspaper in the print began to emerge. Eventually, with the growth of education, industrialisation, commercial and the all round development, print media spread its tentacles. Print media include newspapers, magazines, periodicals, books, conference proceedings, pamphlets etc. They provide a wide coverage of information to the people at large.
Newspapers are the cheapest and most efficient mass communication media. They provide information not only on social, political, economic & educational uses but also form a popular source of reading for entertainment. Magazines, like newspapers are also another kinds of medium, which are issued on regular basis- weekly, fortnightly, monthly etc. They have dual functions i.e. provision of information and entertainment. Periodicals are specialised journals not meant for mass circulation, as is the case with newspapers and magazines. They deal with specialised subjects and are the primary sources of information usually devoted to reporting of original research. Books share with other print media the functions of informing, persuading and entertaining. Apart from these, there are varieties of other print media, which provide useful information to the society.\(^2^6\)

2.1.2.2 Electronic Media

The invention of telegraph and telephone in the 19\(^{th}\) century made the start of a major surge in communication, the rise of electronic media.\(^2^7\) Electronic media may be person-to-person communication such as telephone, telegraph, facsimile etc and broadcasting media like radio and television which provides with news and entertainment to the general public.

Telephone is one of the largest established methods of electronic information transfer. This allows a number of different signals to pass through the same links at the same time. Broadcasting includes mass communication devices like radio and television, in which messages are sent out regularly by professional communicators through electronic media to a large and diverse audience. The use of satellite communication system is one of the changing trends in the field of broadcasting media. Whereas, electronic mail is the transmission of message or
documents in an electronic form. It is primarily an alternative to the conventional postal mail service.

In fact, the new technologies of communications are extensions of the traditional media. Most of these technologies are the convergence of advances in telecommunications and computer systems.²⁸

2.1.2.3 Impact of Mass Media

Questions of mass media impact usually bring about a heated debate. The answers are still not agreed to universally, even with increased scientific analysis. However, two social scientists, Bernard Berelson and Morris Janowitz, once summarised knowledge about the effects of mass media in their book “Reader in Public Opinion and Communication”: “The effects of communication are many and diverse. They may be short range or long run. They may be manifest or latent. They may be strong or weak. They may derive from any number of aspects of the communication content. They may be considered as psychological or political or economic or sociological. They may operate upon opinions, values, information levels, skills, taste, or overt behaviour.” In other words, it would be impossible to make any sweeping generalisations about the impact of the mass media, even though we know they have impact. And social scientists in the 1980s have not moved much further beyond Berelson and Janowitz’s statement. The effects of the mass media have to be measured and predicted on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration all the variables in each situation. While discussing on the issue, Heibert and Reuss have put forward a number of ‘questions’ and then, tried to find ‘answers’: “what are the effects of the mass media on our society? To what extent are we moulded and shaped by the media? Are we informed? Or are we manipulated? Are we in control? Or are we merely dancing at the end of strings
pulled by mass communicators? What can we believe? What is true and what is not? Education must provide a way of answering these questions. We have to be educated about mass media if we want to steer a clear course between illusions on one side and disillusionment on the other.30

2.1.2.4 Government Policy on Media

The formulation of a ‘National Media Policy’, in India has been a constant preoccupation with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, media academics, professionals and non-governmental organisations.30 However, the policy is greatly facilitated by the deliberations, reports and recommendations of several committees and working groups constituted by the Govt. of India to study in-depth various issues impinging upon communication, development regulatory measures etc.31 The main objectives32 of ‘National Media Policy’ are as follows:

i] National Media Policy should help media fulfil the objectives of providing access to information to the largest number of people, preserve their credibility and work as two-way channel.

ii] To inform masses about the developments taking place in national and international spheres affecting their daily life.

iii] These policies also help, inspire, motivate and enthuse the people to support and co-operate in nation-building, economic progress, social development, imbibe national cultural values and education.

iv] The most crucial objective, however, is to bring about over all wider acceptance of programmes for national development keeping the fast changing global communication scenario.

v] The Sub-Committee of the Consultative Committee of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in its report stated the objective of National Media Policy should be to help a citizen of the country to realise his or her potential best.
2.1.3 Daily Newspaper

According to Registrar of Newspapers in India (RNI), “a daily newspaper is a printed or cyclostyled sheet which contains news or comments on public events.” A small newspaper is one that has circulation between 1-25,000 copies per publishing day. And a large newspaper is one that has circulation anything above 75,000 copies per publishing day. India already boasts of one of the largest newspaper industries in the world. As disclosed in the ‘Press in India 2002’ based on an official report, submitted to the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, the number of registered newspapers & periodicals in India rose from 49,145 in 2000 to 51,960 in 2001 recording a growth of 5.73 percent.

The NEWS (North, East, West, South) and the information in a newspaper for local, regional, national and world news are classified through various columns like editorials, special articles, readers-column, letters, correspondence, commercial news, abundance of advertisements etc. so that one can have easy access to all aspects of current news. Newspaper is supposed to provide reliable news and give correct details about every new item with respect to five elements of who, what, when, where, and how. It is readily available whenever one has leisure time. In fact, the newspaper publishes the news which cannot come in television or radio. News in detail can be known only through the daily newspaper.

2.1.3.1 Roles of ‘Dailies’ in Society

Print media, which include newspapers, magazines, books and other printed matter, have served the literate society for long. Their growth, however, was slow in the beginning but as the demand for education and information increased, they evolved quickly and flourished greatly. However, among the various form of print media, the press (i.e newspapers) is the only medium that
caters to the need of every stratum of society by ventilating and moulding public opinion, tapping popular remedies to the ills of evil system.\textsuperscript{38}

The press/newspapers has become an integral part in our day today life and performs a very important role as a means of mass communication media in the modern society. It is widely acknowledged as a watchdog in a democratic society. Therefore, for a successful democratic society, the press plays a crucial role in keeping the masses informed about policies, programmes and actions of the Govt. whether right or wrong. Moreover, press is a vehicle through which the governed express their grievances, problems and seek redressal of these. In short, it is a medium for communication between the Govt. and the governed. Without an active press, democracy will be rendered meaningless. It is precisely because of this fact, the press is regarded as the fourth pillar of democracy.\textsuperscript{39} In developing country like ours, the press/newspapers plays a special role as social monitors, constructive critics, stimulators of debates on public issues and social vitalisers.\textsuperscript{40}

2.1.4 Role of Local Print Media

The local print media plays a very crucial role in all the development activities of a community/society. They provide information and knowledge not only on local happenings, but also on health, culture education, sports, family planning measures and other development plans and to those sections of the society where the information is needed most. Through the local print media, “the local people have a better awareness of their needs and references and fuller information on the conditions and possibilities of their areas.” In case, the local communities are given more intimate knowledge of latest development in all the related fields, the purpose and objectives of the local development will be an easy process to achieve.\textsuperscript{41} As such the local print media would select, evaluate and
synthesis information in well-defined special fields and present it in a form best suited to the needs of the local people.

2.1.4.1 Role of Local Daily Newspaper

The local daily newspaper, as a medium of communication, is a link between the policy makers, bureaucrats and the people at local level. It is increasingly recognised as an important and viable means for the promotion of social awareness and development of local people. And, also, it is treated as a vehicle for reinforcing the literacy habit.\textsuperscript{42}

In other words, the local dailies provide the information on local events easily and quickly at any time to the locality/community. National and international newspapers are not as vocal about and focal to localities’ sensibilities as their local counterparts are. One author from Manipur\textsuperscript{43} has explained the role of local dailies in some poetic fashion: “Burning issues of a particular region can only kindle the special interest of the immediately concerned. A scandalised scoop rocking relationships in a city does not create the same sensation elsewhere. A calamity of tragic magnitude occurring in alien land loses its shocking edge when it reaches one’s hometown. In fact, the people see their joys, sorrows and dreams adequately reflected in the local newspapers. Their crusade against atrocities and excesses on innocents, fearless exposure of injustice in public life and timely echoing of popular sentiments earn of themselves endearing soft spots in the hearts of the readers.” That’s why, the local newspaper, with its simple language and contents are closest to the interest of its readers. They also reinforce the reading habits of the people. Since reading is basic to the understanding of the working of a host of social, economic and political, ‘the local newspapers/dailies by cultivating and reinforcing the reading habit, performs an important role in enhancing social and political awareness.’ Incidentally, it may be recalled here
that during British period, James Long in his report (1859) made the categorical assertion that if the local newspapers had been carefully studied during 1856, ‘the Sepoy Mutiny’ of 1857 could have been anticipated and prevented.\textsuperscript{44}

2.1.5 **Preservation and Dissemination of Local Newspapers**

Preservation of knowledge contained in various forms of reading materials like newspapers, journals, reports, manuscripts, pamphlets and books need to be cared, maintained properly in order to fulfil the desire of knowledge of mankind for the coming generation.\textsuperscript{45}

The local newspapers, a medium for disseminating information should be preserved since they have some specialities in content which are absent in other forms of print media which constitute the cultural heritage of the society. Proper weightage should be given to the protection and maintenance of such medium, which are essential reference tools for the people of the local community.

It may be noted that every literate person/researcher should recognise the fact that the preservation of that portion of a nation’s heritage conveyed through the newspapers has a great need. There is no doubt that there is inadequacy of past efforts in the preservation of newspapers. It is high time now to intensify the present and future efforts. There is also a need for international co-operation and development of worldwide newspaper preservation policy.\textsuperscript{46} The ‘IFLA International Symposium’, 1987, has already focussed this issue. The IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations) also adopts the ‘preservation and conservation’ of print media at its core programme. The UNESCO, too, has launched ‘Memory of the World Programmes’ to protect reading materials.\textsuperscript{47}
2.1.5.1 Role of Library in Preservation and Dissemination of Newspapers

The libraries at the grassroots level are used as the medium of communication. The development activities of the society are accelerated by the exchange of information through wide network of libraries. Development of any state is intertwined with development of libraries and ‘system for exchange and delivery of knowledge and information.’ “It has been a long time since a library was merely a collection of books. For centuries libraries were essentially archives for the storage and preservation of recorded thought.” From early twentieth century, libraries have been emerged as ‘distinct form’ with an emphasis upon information dissemination-retrieval-use activities. The impact of current ‘information revolution’ and ‘information-technologies’ have changed a library totally in a new shape, as one of the important media for communication of knowledge. Using modern ‘IT’s, the libraries of today have changed the pattern/methods of collection-storage-dissemination-retrieval of knowledge/information. So long librarians had been merely custodians of written/print materials and passive towards the services of the readers. But, now, the professionals have become very active in providing services with proper use of modern ITs.

Thus, the role and function of a library become relevant in providing appropriate element of information and within a given period of time to the rightful user. As such library should collect and preserve not only books but also other print materials like newspapers (local, national & international) which provide up to date and timely information to the users. In fact, an efficient and well-organised library is an absolute necessity for the appropriate use of newspaper. Lack of an organised library service could lead to poor service to the users of newspapers and consequently newspaper-use would be poor. The ‘library is the memory of the newspaper and, consequently, the memory of the community the newspaper serves.’

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2.2 Observation

As pointed out at the beginning, some of closely related concepts/facets are explained above. The demonstrations made, as expected, have consolidated almost all the important ‘basic ideas’ on which the current study will be carried on in the next few chapters. However, before picking up the issues of local-dailies in a particular state (i.e. Manipur), it is necessary to have a clear knowledge about the printing-culture of the country (i.e. India). The next immediate chapter (chapter III) is required to deal the same.

References


6) Khan, M.T.M. Op cit. 6.


26) *Communication Process and Media.* IGNOU reading material (M Lib). 17.


30) Gupta, V.S. *Op cit.* 49.

31) *Ibid,* 54


37) *Introduction to Journalism and Mass Communication.* IGNOU reading material. 16.


42) Gupta, V.S. Op cit. 103.


