CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Media coverage of women’s issues has been an important subject of study throughout the world and has been a source of contention and debate by the media researchers. According to various social scientists and media fraternity it is assessed that the status of development reporting in Indian press is not very promising and women’s issues which fall under the purview of development is covered less. The English newspapers usually caters to the educated and the enlightened section of the society who has the potential to highlight the problems related to women and facilitate the articulation of different perspectives and help the government to provide necessary redressal.

Media is considered to be the mirror of society and has immense power to influence the masses. Media reports reflect the happenings of the society but unfortunately media is waver from its actual role of disseminating factual information instead presenting biased information which obstructs the development of the society. The women’s issues get a low priority in media. Our society is plagued with burning women’s issues like female feticide, sexual harassment, discrimination in work places, women empowerment, maternal health, unemployment and illiteracy among women. Women are rarely given professional coverage in fields like economic, social, political and business. The most disquieting trend in media is that women are either poorly or negatively covered. The under representation of women in media has profound consequences on image and status of women in the society. There have been extensive studies related to underrepresentation of women in media in the West but paramount of gender based studies in print media is relatively less in India. Media needs to be sensitized in addressing the women’s issues and adopt strategies to focus on the positive portrayal of women’s issues.

The purpose of the present study “Binary Dissection Of Women’s Issues As Projected By Print Media: A Study Of Three English Daily Newspapers Of Assam” therefore is to analyze and study the nature of coverage of women’s issues in
English newspapers of Assam in terms of frequency, placement, source, tone, nature of news reports and the type of coverage. The researcher is of the opinion that the analysis of the women's issues in the newspapers will present the clear picture of the actual situation of under representation of women's issues in the newspapers.

It provides an in-depth analysis of the level of coverage and helps to understand the trend in media's coverage. It provides a new horizon in understanding how the women's issues are portrayed at the national, regional and local press in India. Hence, the study is a reflection to the ground reporting realities of Indian English dailies and its role in sensitizing the society on the pattern and the context of coverage of women's issues by the press.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Diversity and plurality marks the basis of a contemporary heterogeneous society and in which media culture is a primary source of knowledge and information about the world thereby shaping the attitude and behavior towards the socializing process (Berger, 1995). Research shows that media has the potential to influence, shape, change and reinforce public attitudes and values. It influences public opinion through their ideological representation of social reality compared against the real world (Harris 2004 and Fulton 2005). It plays a vital role in setting opinions on vital issues in a democratic system and is reflective of heterodox thought process which Noble laureate Amartya Sen refers as the ‘argumentative tradition’ of the clamorous nation.

Media acts as a mediator and facilitator between citizens and the policy makers. It involves various activities like, 'reporting developments likely to impinge on the welfare of citizens; identifying key issues of the day and setting the political agenda; acting as spokesperson of various perspectives and interest groups; facilitating a dialogue between rulers and the public and across a diverse range of views' (Gurevith and Blumer, 1994). Introspection made by Mc Quail suggest that the media are a 'power resource' which exerts its influence in the society; it is the 'location' where public affairs are rendered; a 'source' that generate different definitions of social reality, culture and values; a source that states the 'public meaning system' which conveys the public definition of 'normality' and 'deviance' in society (Mc Quail, 1994).
Media sets agenda for the policy makers and the public but the issues missing, remains ignorant and non-inclusive in the media list. The role of media in the representing women’s issues centers around media agenda that dwells on what kind of ideas and ideologies adopted by media for covering issues. Harris, mentions that media presents encapsulated information to the public on the different social group and it portrays gender as omnipresent in media categories (Harris, 2004). Media’s portrayal of women and the gender stereotyping has been the subject of study for gender and media activist throughout the world. Gender and media bears strong dependency, since the process of representation is central to the media itself. Media practitioners from their experience present their own perception on male and female – “about gender roles and behavior; about how women and men act and think; and also our belief about people’s physical appearance, even their body shapes” (Seidman, 2004).

In India, media played an important role during the struggle for freedom. The press not only played a significant role in creating a feeling of national integration and solidarity among the people but also contributed to the social change and development. The press gave voice to the aspirations, demands and problems and held strong affinity with the readers. The importance of media, print media in particular, has been enhanced by the role of press in India’s struggle for freedom. After independence the main challenges before the press was the political and developmental news and sensitize the readers about the various social and developmental issues. In a democracy, media plays a significant role in bringing about social change, as media is considered an integral part of democracy. For the proper functioning of democracy, free media is essential for representing public interest. The liberty of press and democracy goes hand-in-hand (Keane, 1991).

1.2.1 WOMEN AND MEDIA

The women and media has been the subject of study for researchers all over the world. When we talk of women and media the first question that strikes us is why women is the subject of media and why not men? Why media and gender becomes the issues of discussion? The media’s portrayal of women and gender inequality has been a matter of concern among media analyst and researchers across the globe. Over the years, the media industry has developed extensive communication infrastructure.
Media in its various forms, the print, electronic or new media has a constant presence in our everyday life. It plays a vital role in setting opinions, influences our behavior, attitudes, social interactions through the presentation of image. The mass media have played a decisive role in perpetuating gender stereotypes through the media messages and images across the globe. In the past few years the form and content of mass media have changes with new dimensions but even the modern mass media plays a significant role in the production and transmission of patriarchal culture. There exists a deep rooted complex relationship between media and the patriarchal structure of the society.

The women’s movement of the 60s and the 70s in the West had its impact in India also. The main-stream press then known as the ‘Nationalist Press’ in British India which was covering the Colonial rule did not lack behind covering the various women’s movement. The movement in the West questioned dominance of patriarchy and advocated for equality. The mass media influences the cultural domain by constructing social messages and people draw conclusion from the constructed reality. The exposure to mass media was considered as an important tool of modernity.

Earlier communication research argued on the representation of men and women in media. The media represents a constructed reality of media’s selective interpretation of social reality and such messages shape our perception of reality. The influence of the patriarchy in the media structures and media organization frames the image of women as subordinate to male. Various studies carried on mass media and gender produces a complex understanding of the relationship of culture dimension of power and equality and the feminist perspectives of media, culture and society (Gallagher, 1992). With the incorporation of ‘women’s genre’ in the various forms of media, women became durable commodity for the consumers of mass entertainment. Media organizations set agenda for public opinion and views that tend to reinforce the patriarchal dominion. Instead of neutral reporting the news reports showed women as trivialized, polarized, caricaturized, mischaracterized, depicted them in poor light and were represented as stereotypes. This kind of media coverage’s effected women’s development process and questioned the dignity of women in a patriarchal society.
The kind of relationship shared between media and reality is dialectic in nature. Culture is a dynamic form of social system, subjecting to the ever evolving process that constantly changes to accommodate the emergent alternatives and oppositional meanings, values and practices (Williams, 1977). Both the electronic and print mass media advocated the construction of new meaning and images and allocated space for it. As a matter of fact the progressive discourse is often co-opted in mass media and is re-constructed which again reflects the hegemony of dominant social group and gender relation. The various women's group, women's organization and media professionals poses a challenge in the light of the larger context of patriarchy and capitalism for subordinating women in mass media. The feminist activists and the media analyst critically analyzed the negative and the stereotype representation of women in media.

The UNESCO conducted workshop (1975) stated that - "Recognized the tendency of the media to project stereotyped image of women, reinforcing traditional concepts of the roles of women, prejudicial to aspirations for improved status, rights and participation in society". The projection of the images of women by the media is one of the blockades in removing to the discrimination against women in society and one of the main factors in developing the sexiest attitudes towards the female.

In another UNESCO symposium (1975) stated to the participants at the symposium to "denounce the existing sexiest images of women in the mass media, and appeal to women all over the world to carefully examine and analyze these images and to realize that they are literally living in the world of manmade images which do not resemble real women, or deal fairly with the realities of the women's experience".

Studies show that the blatant portrayal of sexism in the media shows more subtle distortions of women which are basically outcome of biasness and media construction of images. Larry Gross states that - representation is the "mediated reality" of our mass culture. By examining the images of women and the types of messages transmitted by the various media it would be worthwhile to analyze the specificity of media in reinforcing the existing gender ideology.

The print media plays a vital role in shaping public opinion in a democracy. The women's movement of the 1970s drew the researcher's attention to the representation
of women and women’s issues in the news media. With the growth of contemporary women’s movement in India, there was sporadic growth of women’s group who helped to give women’s issues more prominence in media. The accepted norm in media is that events rather than processes makes news. The relationship between press and women’s movement in India was not very smooth but still as compared to the West, the women’s groups of our country have greater access to media.

Media, regarded as the mirror of society reflects the happenings of the society. The news reportage is institutional methods of making information reach the audience or readers; it is gathered by media professionals. The news reflects the form of society, indeed referred as a “mirror of reality” (Tauchman, 1978). The news media renders information to the audience or readers who have no empirical reference of the event, no concept, ideas shaped or attitude formed and even in case of definite attitudes event is constituted within the existing paradigm. The media “suddenly and dramatically” deliver such information (Young, 1981). The events presented in news media as Sherizen (1978) elaborates about the crime reportage as “crime is an event with periodicity. . . . (it involves) the predictability of crime as a repeating event but with changes in participants and locations. . . . the same old story is created but with a newness everyday”. Studies shows that women are underrepresented and even when they appear in news they are shown as victims or passive reactors of the events in the news media (Bailey, 1994 and Ross, 1994). According to Joseph and Sharma, the importance of women’s issues in the news media is, “Women’s issues are usually not the stuff of which headlines made. Nor are gender related concerns considered good copy. When such questions draw the attention of the media, they are often sensationalized, trivialized or otherwise distorted. In a nutshell, their coverage can be summed up as a series of hits and misses” (Joseph and Sharma, 1994).

The relationship between gender and media bear strong dependency as the representation is central to the media itself. Studies show that there exists certain biasness in the context of gender representation in the news media. Consequently, this leads to under coverage of gender issues and stereotyping is essentially an organizational practice. The question arises, is it a deliberate attempt by the organization to ignore or be indifferent to the major social problems related to women. The coverage of special concern to women’s issues gives more weightage in
the traditional concept of ‘news’. The dominant elite sections of the society influence media organizations and the policy makers and this in turn gives more coverage to the male centric news. Tuchman defines such under representation or absence of women from the news as “symbolic annihilation” – together constitutes a combination ‘condemnation, trivialization and erasure.’

Press in India, do not completely ignore the women’s issues but such coverage is unable to explore the roots of problems instead it is presented in a relatively arbitrary and rather superficial form. Though women are comparatively less represented yet women’s group in India could project the problems fairly effectively through the press. The other aspect of press or news media is reflective of the kind of women’s issues that attracts the media attention. Studies show that the presentation of crime against women in news media led to multi-dimensional misrepresentation. The current media trend shows that there is increase or over representation of crime in the news media (Marsh, 1991).

The issues that centers around the practical realities like the developmental issues, health, societal status of women in society, family problems, prejudices against women in work places or gender biases gets less coverage whereas the other events and issues that constitute news worthiness for coverage of women’s issues encapsulate politics, crime and entertainment. The Indian press is basically known for its large coverage of political news, gossip and sensationalism (Goswami, 1994; Nandy, 1994a, 1994b; Karlekar 1994). A newspaper review revealed that issues of special concern that attract media’s attention are rape, dowry, atrocities and violence against women but it is not always the reflection of the real world. The representation of the gender related issues must not be superficially presented and must encourage the means for understanding the facts and realities of crime or other event or happening of the society. Research suggests that women constitute more than half of the world’s population. But do we see them or hear their voices frequently in the news media? News acts as a mirror of the world, but the question arises are we presented the clear unambiguous reality or the distorted reality? It distorts reality, flattening the importance of certain groups, while pushing others to the margin (Gallagher 2005).

The relationship between media and women is based on certain structure where woman is used as an ‘object’. The post liberalization made media market-oriented and
the media-market has expanded opportunities for women but the problem rises in the representation of women. The media, an important form of discourse, that structurally frames, shapes and reflect public’s opinion on various societal issues. “The media are important social institutions and are crucial presenters of culture, politics, and social life, shaping as well as reflecting how these are formed and expressed. Media ‘discourse’ is important both for what it reveals about a society and for what it contribute to the character of the society (Bell, 1995). Journalist need to understand the limitation of the media output and must play the role in the constructing the reality by informing, educating and entertaining and transmitting culture. Though the journalists operate under professional and institutional constraints yet they can exercise their choice on the selection of angles or frames or images of story which have an influence on the coverage and portrayal of women in media. Since, they have a role in shaping public opinion , Sheikh (1999) asserts, “Journalists have a special responsibility in shaping the image of women in media due to their role as conveyers of message that contribute to shape people’s opinions and feelings”. The study is narrowed to news media and the women’s issues print media. The study is designed to explore the pattern and frequency of the coverage’s of women’s issues and evaluates the representation of women in print media. The main focus of the study is to analyze the nature and kind of women’s issues given due importance in the print media.

1.2.2 REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN MEDIA THROUGH FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

The women’s movement in the West played a significant role in shaping the ground for the feminist in communication research. The feminist cultural politics focused on the media content and the construction of gender in media. In the developing countries the communication research on women started since 1980’s. The United Nations International Decade for Women (1975-85) initiated the communication research to study the negative portrayal of women in mass media. A very less study is carried on the women’s issues in the developing country where women have remained fragmentary and descriptive. Hence, research on women in the third world countries depends on the feminist paradigm. The three strands of feminist research on media are the content, the images and the representation on women. (Gallagher, 1992) documented the invisibility of women in media and the effect of the negative
portrayal in the society. Such juxtaposition of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ image of men and women posed problem in the interpretation media content by the audience thereby limiting this approach. To understand the representation of women in media the feminist critics carried out research to understand the depth underlying the construction or distortion of reality. The approach was criticized as it neglected the dialectical relation between media, and culture which culminated in the construction of ‘women’ in media. The challenge before the feminist in the Third World in context of new communication is evolve conceptual framework adopted by the mass media in changing the political-economic forces keeping in mind the feminist agenda of the Third world women in given cultural system.

The representation paradigm in the media is generally male centered because of the prevalent patriarchal system of society. Men tend to dominate the decision-making position, and hold the top position in almost all fields. The enduring misogynistic representation of women in media led the feminist leaders set up their own media house. The male hegemony in media and the lack of women media professionals led to the underrepresentation of women in all media outlets. The United Nations decade for women (1976-1985) worked for the increase in the global news infrastructure and inclusion of women news from the progressive women’s perspectives. But the question lies has such international forum brought about any radical change in the representation of women? The answer is no. This pinpoints that media follows the trend, which is male dominated. It fails to apprehend that media can enact on different viewpoints and ideas rendered by women to produce an enormous range of vision to bring the fundamental positive changes. But the fact lies that even the female journalists abide by the trend that men is apt in dealing issues like government, politics, policy making and many others. Women has achieved significant strides in the field of journalism yet the recognition was slow and has not sufficiently search out the terrain to prove the capacity of women in new roles. The press played a significant role in the women’s liberation movement through critical writing on the role of women in society and their contributions, the gender difference, the hierarchical frameworks of patriarchal society, positioning muscularity in the top order, polarization evoked the outbreak of equality and liberty. Media took up feminine agenda and constructed the image of women which was influenced by the
social and cultural consensus. It served as a platform to voice the need of women in
the changing global context of the fast growing commercialized media.

The chronicles of historical evidences shows that the development of feminism started
as 'movements' considered as historical process encompassing multifaceted ideas
and thoughts, common issues and particularly the fight for women's right. It may be
mentioned that Mary Wollstonecraft's (1792) a pioneering feminist writer advocated
for higher education for women, economic independency for women and also
attacked the patriarchy supremacy in the society. These movements were structurally
divided into three parts. The early feminist movement was concerned with the equal
status of women in the society and the right to suffrage and used the slogan 'The
Personal is Political'. The different feminist activity focused on the complete
emancipation of women both in public and private life. The androcentric and
patriarchal hegemony prevalent in the society was easily elucidated. "The Feminine
Mystique" by Betty Friedan (1963) marked the awakening of the awareness of
pervasive societal system which depicted women as pitied object of decoration and
ornamentation in the media. The legacy of feminist movement that started during the
colonial period continued and demanded the attention of media to carry their ideas
and views on women's issues all over the world and focused on enacting various
reforms to bring the equality of status and protection of rights. The feminist leaders
and activist advocated the incorporation of women's issues related to gender
discrimination, work place discrimination and the right to vote (Bradley, 2005). From
the sociological point of view the feminist perspectives were categorized into four
stages, first it points the underlying absence of women in the cognitive structure of the
discipline. Second focuses on the gender inequalities prevalent in the society. The
third stage is seen as one moving towards the conceptualization of gender as a social
structure while the fourth stage is seen as one of realization of the intrinsic linkages
between gender and other matrices of structural inequalities (Rege 2003).

The National Organization for Women (NOW) the largest feminist organization in the
United States demands equal status of women in all phases of society and
encompassing all spheres life and employment. The feminist agenda drew the
attention of the media in the "Fourth World Conference on Women" held in Beijing in
1995. The conference promoted the importance of equality between both gender and
how this equality can be promoted by media. The “Beijing Platform for Action” routed a plan and formulated strategies to use the mass media to propagate the empowerment and development of women across the world. The negative portrayal of women was criticized by various organizations since it degraded the image of women. The various women’s organization began to raise their concern against such negative portrayal like the commodification and objectification of women in media. The Beijing conference provided greater impetus to the women’s movement for the positive portrayal of women. Positive image of women in media can be brought about either by increasing the women ratio in media organizations or depicting them in the light of empowerment and outreach the public through the mainstream and the alternative media. The multidimensional and the holistic feminist framework helps to raise the voice of the marginalized women, strengthen to fight their cause against gender bias, address gender based violence and spread the seeds equality right from the grassroots level to the highest strata of society. The Isis, an international feminist school carried out research project called “People’s Communication for Development” in South Asian countries including India. The result showed that the women’s group in different section of the society responded to media. The convergence of different media like traditional and new media and communication technologies through a programmatic approach helped in developing and sharing information in gender, media and communication. The participation and position of women in media to large extend influences the impact of development process by making their views heard and the accurately representing the complexities of their lives. These images of women are deeply rooted in traditional social practices and interpretation that help the media in constructing female images. Women’s representation has moved beyond female images of the family and home to personal care, as dictated by the market agenda in predominant patriarchy.

With increased voices and protests from active women’s groups, some of media’s negative portrayal and representation of women have become quite subtle in the last few years. However, it is still rare that the media presents women as contributors to the development process or as professionals in their own field. The lack of a true gender-sensitive appreciation and analysis of women’s issues in media has allowed exploitative and derogatory images of women in media.
The economic liberalization made a shift in the portrayal of women from the stereotypical form to new genre career women in the Indian popular media and caters the distinct target audiences on market needs. Economic liberalization empowered the women with financial independence and dependency on the male members has considerably lessened (Chaudhari, 2000). There is a change in the media scenario in the post modern society; media highlighted the popular post feminism concept stating the paradox that women are dissatisfied even after complete emancipation. The media framed feminist rhetoric and ideology stating the vices of feminism which advocates the destruction of womanhood. The 'post feminist' constructs women by media as superwomen who desires to conquer the world which is not the real life depiction. Women wants to be identified as independent individuals even in the patriarchal society and media plays an important role in the building of such image (Faludi, 1991).

1.2.4 THE INDIAN PRINT MEDIA SCENARIO

Print media a traditional media played a significant role in the development of communication and also plays a major role in shaping the attitudes and behavioral patterns of the people. In India, the Print media strength have largely been shaped by its historical experience its contribution during the freedom struggle, democratic evolution as well as movements for social emancipation, reform and amelioration. It influences the public opinion and attitude formation in spite of its limited reach both in terms of geographical area and population. The printed words, however, still has tremendous credibility and impact (Guru, 1995). As Ramaswamy writes, "Development cannot be imposed from above. It has to be generated from within. The participatory process implies partnership in development by two parties, namely, the people themselves and the government organizations or non-government organizations. The participatory process refers to a host of development functions like collection of data, processing and analyzing, determination of needs and their planning programmes, and budgeting, raising of resources, implementation and monitoring and impact evaluation all done in a manner". Journalism could become a platform for debates, discussions, public opinion formation and enlightened participation of people in the process of nation building. The media reflects the
heterodox thought process and this is defined by Noble Laureate Amartya Sen as “argumentative tradition” of a clamorous nation like India.

The history of India press records from 1780 when James August Hicky published the first newspaper the Bengal Gazette which marked the advent of journalism in India and catered primarily to the colonial elite. With the three newspapers by Raja Rammohan Roy marked the true beginning of the Indian journalism. The British government functionary imposed restrictions to the publications, Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore penned an appeal for the freedom of press. They opined freedom of press was necessary to ventilate the grievances. The freedom of press was entrusted post independence as an essential part of the freedom of expression guaranteed by Article 19 of the constitution.

Today, the Indian press hold a strong ground is widely recognized as the most pluralistic, and the most assertive and independent press of a developing nation. In 1997, Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI) published data that there were 41705 publications among which the number of newspapers was 4719. In 2006, it has increased upto 45600 publications, among which 5600 are newspapers. At present, there are 398 major newspapers in India, with an overall circulation of 30,772,000 copies. India has the world’s largest newspaper market after China according to the World Association of Newspapers (WAN). Due to low literacy rate there is limited reach of the newspapers and are basically urban educated readership profiles. The scenario of the world press presents a gloomy picture but in India the scenario has changed with the rapid expansion and diversification of Indian press due to increase in literacy rates. The literacy rates especially the Hindi speaking aspirational class have increased the rapidly and led to the country’s sustained economic growth over the last one decade. If one were to look at the top 10 newspapers of the country, Hindi newspapers clearly dominate. Hindi newspapers occupy the top four slots, according to the Indian Newspapers Society, five are from regional languages, while there is only one English newspaper in the list.

The decade of 1990s is known as the transformational for the Indian media because of the economic liberalization. With economic liberalization India become one of the fastest growing media markets in the world. Apart from print media the electronic media radio, television channels and internet has captured the market attention. It saw
the convergence of technologies, the advent of satellite television, and the improvement in communication technology. The reach of satellite television exceeded the reach of print media. The new media has grabbed the attention of the growing urban middle class who are eager to know and for a part of the global information highway. Slowly, the use of internet in the media industry is spreading across the country on the backdrop of high speed communication lines. Newspapers houses are also going online with newspapers websites and the e-newspapers exploiting the new age information trend.

The phenomenal growth of the electronic media posed challenge to the print media but it bounced back to show a gross growth rate of 13 percent. Some of the factors that have contributed in the steady growth of newspapers in India may be discussed as under:

With the steady rise in the literacy rates in all the states of our country, more and more people are plunging into the world of reading and writing. They start to learn to read newspapers and periodicals. Robin Jeffrey who made elaborate studies about the newspaper revolution in India says that the states which has highest rate of literacy showed highest growth in newspaper circulation.

Moreover, with the expansion of Indian middle class, there is an increase in the circulation of newspapers. With increase in economic and educational progress, the household opt for newspapers as it is consider as a status symbol to subscribe to a newspaper. Nearly, 350 million people in India can read and write but do not buy any newspaper. This creates a vacuum, since there is a vast segment which is untapped as far as newspaper circulation is considered. As a result the newspaper market is trying to target this section so as to increase more readerships. By creating awareness and importance of education has increased the number of educated women and in turn leads to education of children. And such development contributes to the growth of readership even in small cities and towns.

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

But in the real sense, no English newspaper in India shows national character as it is understood to exist in the western and communist countries. The English press had faster growth compared to the language press during pre-independence period. After independence the situation changed as the language press found a better environment for its growth in professionalism and leadership. The only drawback or shortcoming in the case of the language press in India was that, barring a few, most of the language newspapers lack sound financial background and good marketing strategy (Patnaik and Bedi, 1997).

Today, due to the changing and advanced technology adopted by the printing and communication media, there emerged a new trend in the print media communication. Both the developed and the underdeveloped countries have adopted the various modern and sophisticated technologies because of the stiff competition from electronic media. Today, the sudden media explosion also increased its own set of problems. Many new media schools have come up providing the industry with reporters, editors and other content. The new age print media led to an exponential demand for quality content ushering in the largest number of news agencies in the world. There are many national and international wire services. Besides Press Trust of India (PTI) and United News of India (UNI), there emerged the private news agencies players like the Indo-Asian News Service (IANS) and Asian News Service (ANI). The circulation trends in the print media in newspapers and magazines throw light to the changing scenario both in developed and underdeveloped countries and opens new area research like the impact of electronic media on the print media.

1.2.5 PRINT MEDIA IN ASSAM

Print media scenario in Assam like the other parts of India has undergone tremendous change in the past few years. The recent causes of immediate changes are the
digitization of the newspapers and their online versions. The multi edition English newspapers brought a change in the current trend of newspapers. Assam houses the publication ground for many English newspapers along with the local newspapers in different languages. Current English dailies are the Assam Tribune, The Sentinel, The North-East Times, The North-East Daily, The Eastern Chronicle etc. published in multiple editions. National newspapers like the Telegraph, The Hindustan Times and The Times of India made their entry to the Northeast market with the launch of its Guwahati editions. The Hindustan Times, however in the subsequent year ceased their publication. The present status of newspapers in Assam is that it publishes more than thirty newspapers, in English, Assamese and other languages. The city of Guwahati alone witnesses the publication of more than 20 morning dailies; half of those are in the Assamese language. Most of the dailies are published from more than one centre, whereas three Assamese daily newspapers claim to enjoy around 1, 00,000 circulation. The prominent Assamese dailies are, Asomiya Pratidin, Dainik Janambhumi, Amar Asom, Dainik Agradoot, Asomiya Khabar, Dainik Batori, Dainik Janasadharan, Dainik Asom, Edinor Sangbad, Aji - have multiple editions to reach more readers in remote areas of Assam.

Like the history of press in India, the history of press in Assam forms an interesting study. The first printing press in Assam was brought by an American Baptist Missionary, in 1836, in Sibsagar. He used the press to publish a brochure to inform and the spread the merits of Christianity and glorifying the biblical stories (Murthy 1966). It was published with an intention to propagate Christian religion. The first Assamese periodical ‘Arunodoi’ was published in the year 1846. The editors were Dr. Nathan Brown, A.H Denforth, William Ward and Oliver Thomas Cutter. In fact it gave the shape to the Assamese literature. The Journal, “Arunaday” (1846-82) was the first magazine of Assam regularly published for 36 years. Nadig Krishnamuthy, historian of journalism has made the comment that “besides news items.....[it] contained pictures produced with wood-cut blocks. [It] was published for over 36 years. Learned articles from many eminent writers such as A.R.D. Phookan, Hem Chandra Barua and G. Barua....adorned this journal.’’ (Krishnamurthy 1966).

Until 1979, newspapers and magazines in Assam were largely focused on social themes, with the editor and the reporter treating journalism as an instrument of social
change. The student agitation of the 1980s changed the face of journalism. Print journalism became more aggressive and focused on investigative reportage. Amidst all the turmoil and social chaos, the local media flourished. But the geographical location of the state proved to be the disadvantageous point for which media development could not scale the to the expected height for years. With the entry of the electronic media there was a drastic change in the media scenario. It bridged the gap and reached different places without difficulty. The satellite television news channels in Assam are - NE TV, News Live, DY 365, News Time, Frontier TV and the Prime News offers 24X7 services. Both the print and visual media have contributed to the socio economic development by creating job avenues through direct and indirect employment.

The difficulty faced by the newspaper industry of Assam is the transportation and connectivity with the different districts by the roadways. Special attention here is drawn to the road communication with Silchar, in South Assam, one of the major commercial city which is approximately 400kms from Guwahati and covers more twelve hours road journey. As a result the papers published from Guwahati reach the next day. The local Bengali publications are Dainik Jugashankha, Dainik Prantojyoti, Samayik Prasangha, Janakantha and Eastern Chronicle is the English newspaper published from the house of Jugashankha.

The burning problem in the media context today is the insensitivity of media coverage of the sensitive women’s issues. How credible and factual is the presentation of news is? The recent incident of the molestation of a girl in the heart of the city (covered in the analysis chapter) throws light on the unethical reportage by media practitioners. The most astonishing part incident was that the entire episode was shot by a cameraperson of Assam’s News Live channel and the incident was telecast within half an hour as the so called ‘breaking news’. Sheikh (1999) asserts, “Journalists have a special responsibility in shaping the image of women in media due to their role as conveyers of message that contribute to shape people’s opinions and feelings”. Unethical journalism throws a negative light on various issues of society. Newspaper influences the opinion and can also create pressure group to resolve problems. The present study explores the nature and sensitivity of coverage of women’s issues in three English newspapers of Assam.
1.2.6 PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN PRINT MEDIA IN INDIA

In developing countries the reach of print media is much less but the importance of the print media is felt in influencing public opinion. The news/issues covered by the print media is constructed and based on agenda setting. Gallagher (1980) pointed out that women and women's issues are comparatively less covered in the newspapers. The general pattern of print media coverage is stereotypical but with increasing feminist critique and feminist professional in print media, the situation has changed. Since 1980' the various women's movements has given a way to the coverage of the women's issues in newspapers and periodicals. The scenario has changed today as women became more visible in the in the mainstream print media. The feminist pressure inculcated on media led to gradual increase in the space devoted to women/women's issues and declines the anti-women coverage. But the newspapers are considerably ambiguous in representation of women/women's issues.

The media's portrayal of women and the gender inequality has been a matter of concern among researchers across the globe. The common ground on which gender and media is bridged is, gender representation a central part in media. It connotes 'the preferred' meaning to the issues either gender based, racial or ethnical (Bamburac, Jusic, Isononic, 2006). Representations are directly associated with collective meanings, power relations, status hierarchies, resistance, alliance or conflicts that may exist in the public sphere. Thus, it is a common belief among scholars that representations of gender relations actually reflect the social, cultural, political and economic values of the society that produces them (Dines and Humez 1994; Gauntlett 2000). Research suggests that women constitute more than half of the world's population. But do we see them or hear their voices frequently in the news media? News acts as a mirror of the world, but the question arises that whether we are presented with the clear unambiguous reality or the distorted reality? It distorts reality, flattening the importance of certain groups, while pushing others to the margin (Gallaghar 2005).

This lack of representation of women has profound consequences on the image of women in society and pinpoints the perpetuation of the patriarchal hegemony that engraved the potential of female sensibility and insight in the decision-making process. Joseph and Sharma (1991) mentions that, 'when there is less or no vested
interest of the media organization there may be some slippage in the coverage by the mass media. The tactical dealing of mass media is reflected in the conformity with elite priorities. Oppression against women is viewed as common social phenomenon and not treated as merit coverage.' Issues regarding violence, atrocities, aggression against women are sensationalized instead of protesting. Another aspect of the study is the representation of women in the print media which states, 'Press in India does not entirely ignore women's events or processes concerning the less powerful, including women, such coverage tends, by and large, to be fairly superficial.' The study further mentions that, 'the gender perspective have not yet been properly integrated into the process of newsgathering. Thus even when an incident touched the lives of women, their views are rarely sought; even when an issue concerns them directly, their voices are barely heard.'

The Marxist principle developed by Karl Marx generally identifies how the powerful elite section of society exploits the powerless. These powerlessness leads to alienation. The capitalist society claimed to shape the society and individual from within. The Marxist thinkers believed that oppression of the working class was due to the corporate owned media. They construct the media message and delivered with one goal in mind: the capitalist hegemony. Hegemony is defined as the influence, power or domination of one social group over another. Gramsci’s notion of hegemony was based on Marx’s idea of false consciousness. Gramsci (1971) introduced the theory of ‘hegemony’ and Bocock (1986) states that it is ‘the naturalness of a way of thinking about social, economic, political and ethical issues’. It refers to the state in which the individual becomes unaware of the domination force which include traditions, institutions, family, education, socialization, etc., which forms the basic ground for hegemony. William (1977) opines his views stating that hegemony is a lived system of meaning and value developed and the perception of reality for people in the society because they cannot think or accept anything beyond that reality that centers on their lives. Hegemony has strong social and cultural impact on the society and it entangles the aspect of domination and subordination in it. As, our society is plagued with the male hegemony, Gramsci says that audiences can be exploited by these social system. Factors like the economic factor, political factor and the societal factor which has deep rooted evidences of prejudices against women. Media which is recognized as the backbone of democracy works in the pluralistic society. The media
industry produces media products which is influenced by people directly or indirectly involved in it. It also shapes and re-shapes the contents according to their observation, analysis, education, perception and opinions. The social background of the media professionals interlocking the social, political, economic and cultural forces, the diversity of society in terms of class, caste, creed, gender, race, and ethnicity has imperative influence in their professional output. Recent surveys show that the present day system of mass communication expresses, to a considerable extent, gender representations of the sovereign patriarchal ideology (Burnsdon 2000; Haskell 1987; Shaltuc 1997). Even in the contemporary post modern societies the dominance gender inequality is still prevalent. R.W Connell refers this type of social phenomenon as ‘gender regimes’ which is the admixture of practices, ideological practices and material within a social pretext. From the feminist perspective the interwoven social and cultural phenomenon is defined as the process that generates the meaningful forms that transcends the natural existence of meaningful purposes. And it is this culture that influences the thinking and practices by the people. The concepts of social ideologies are derived from culture prevalent in the society. Culture is associated with religion, belief, art, family and personal life. In course of time culture has been referred as the ‘superstructure’ by the Marxist that is ‘a realm of mere ideas, beliefs, art, custom, determined by the basic material history’ (Williams, 1977). The basis of the social structures was fragmented by men into types of society, civil, political, family, beliefs, ideas that led to theoretical constructions of the existing situation. As men produced the material condition for existence so did the women. But the women were made dependent on men and a gendered division of labour was constructed between men and women. The existing culture of our country, the traditional practices and customs which forms the internal patriarchal force and state, the external patriarchal forces are considered as key determinant that reflect the subordinate status of women in society. Such social system effect the gender relation by and large in different levels rendering them as natural phenomenon. However, the core of hegemonic forces and the discriminating practices against women hamper their development and indicate the natural subordination of women is the root cause of patriarchal system of society.

The various media organization with its social roots did not lag behind in the under representation of women in media. Friedman (1963) stated that the biological
difference forms the ground for the portrayal of women in media. Our believe, attitudes and standards are deeply influence by the gender related media images. The portrayal of women in mainstream media like cinema, entertainment television, advertisements, online networking, even in video games, pornography presents women in its sexiest form. Women referred as ‘she’ is projected as someone who is ready to reshape her body and erotically cloth to satisfy ‘him’. Women’s body becomes the source of entertainment and pleasure by portraying in sexualized and erotic form. In the present context of the study, the researcher would confine the portrayal of women print media (newspapers). Studies shows that women are underrepresented and even when they appear in news they are shown as victims or passive reactors of the events in the news media (Bailey, 1994 and Ross, 1994). The importance of women’s issues in the news media according to Joseph and Sharma, women’s issues are usually not the stuff of which headlines made. Nor are gender related concerns considered good copy. When such questions draw the attention of the media, they are often sensationalized, trivialized or otherwise distorted. In a nutshell, their coverage can be summed up as a series of hits and misses” (Joseph and Sharma, 1994).

Media through its lenses presents the picture of society in the form of news and issues. The news reportage is institutional methods of making information reach the audience or readers; it is gathered by media professionals. The news reflects the form of society, indeed referred as a “mirror of reality” (Tauchman, 1978). The news media renders information to the audience or readers who have no empirical reference of the event, no concept, ideas shaped or attitude formed and even in case of definite attitudes event is constituted within the existing paradigm. The media “suddenly and dramatically” deliver such information (Young, 1981). The events presented in news media as Sherizen (1978) elaborates about the crime reportage as “crime is an event with periodicity. . . . (it involves) the predictability of crime as a repeating event but with changes in participants and locations. . . . the same old story is created but with a newness everyday”.

The relationship between gender and media bear strong dependency as the representation is central to the media itself. Studies show that there exists certain biasness in the context of gender representation in the news media. Consequently,
there is under coverage of gender issues and stereotyping is essentially an organizational practice. The question arises, is it a deliberate attempt by the organization to ignore or be indifferent to the major social problems related to women. The coverage of special concern to women’s issues is not given more weightage in the traditional concept of ‘news’. The dominant sections of the society influence the media and thereby gain more weightage and coverage. Tauchman defines the under representation or absence of women from the news as “symbolic annihilation” – together constitutes a combination ‘condemnation, trivialization and erasure.’

Press in India, do not completely ignore the women’s issues but such coverage is unable to explore the roots of problems instead it is presented in a relatively arbitrary and rather superficial form. Though women are comparatively less represented yet women’s group in India could project the problems fairly effectively through the press. The other aspect of press or news media is reflective of the kind of women’s issues that attracts the media attention. Studies show that the presentation of crime against women in news media led to multi-dimensional misrepresentation. The current media trend shows that there is increase or over representation of crime in the news media (Marsh, 1991). The process of news representation of stories that are constructed by journalists passes through a complex selection procedure and agenda - setting processes is influenced by ownership, advertising revenue, audience preferences, access to content providers and the mainstream culture of what is called ‘male journalism’ (McCombs 1994).

The present study will help to get a better insight of the present day representation of women in media.

1.3 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The present study on the nature and extent of the coverage of women’s issues by the English press of Assam is unique in its kind. The researcher empirically analyses the data to find whether the women’s issues are given due justice in the selected newspapers. What type of issues is given more coverage and which issues are given less coverage. How much space is rendered to the women’s issues and what is the
frequency of coverage of the stories in the selected newspaper. Thus, the research findings are expected to provide an assessment of the nature, type, placement, source and extent of coverage of women's issues by the English newspapers.

The rationale behind the selection of the three newspapers namely, The Times of India, The Telegraph and Eastern Chronicle, all Guwahati publication, was that, they represent the three section of reader. One national, one regional and one local English newspaper were selected keeping in mind the urban educated class who form the readership of the English press. The opinion and views presented in the newspapers may help the policy makers to work upon various women's issues.

1.4.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

General objectives:

The general objective of the study is to measure the nature of coverage of women's issues in the three English newspapers under study.

Specific Objectives - The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- To study the extent of space and frequency of coverage of women's issues by the three leading English newspapers of Assam.
- To find out the nature and pattern of the coverage of women's issues in the newspapers under discussion.
- To find out form of presentation of the women's issues portrayed in women's issues in the three newspapers
- To find the types of coverage
- To study the placement of the news coverage
- To find the source of information
- To find out the comparative analysis of the coverage of women's issues in the three newspapers.

1.4.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Since the study is exploratory by nature, the researcher has formulated the following research questions:
1. What is the space devoted to the coverage of women’s issues in the three sample dailies?

2. What is the frequency of coverage of women’s issues in the selected newspapers?

3. What kind of emphasis is given by these dailies in terms of nurture and pattern of women’s issues?

4. What is the context of the types of coverage of the women’s issues in the three sample dailies?

5. What is the placement of the women’s news/issues in the newspaper?

6. What are the different sources of the news stories covered in the newspaper?

7. What is the level of comparative importance accorded to issues identified by the selected newspapers?

The study is designed for exploratory research to understand the nature of women’s issues covered by the English newspapers. So no hypothesis is formulated here. The findings of this study are supposed to generate new problems and hypotheses for studies that might be conducted on related fields later.

1.5 WOMEN’S ISSUES CATEGORICALLY DEFINED

Media is a platform where various interests can be brought together in a democratic society. It is an embodiment of democratic values offering a “liberal, constitutional public sphere permitting a rational, well-informed conversation between equals capable of resolving their differences by non-coercive means” (Schlesinger and Tumber, 1995). Earlier liberal thinkers emphasised the role of press as the watchdog who monitors the activities of the government. They opined that “the right to a free press was a political trump held by individuals against government’ and perceived it ‘as a check upon the conduct of the ruling few’ (Keane, 1991). The role of media as presented by the early liberal thought was defined as watchdog but gradually the expectation from the media widened in course of time with the development of mass society. Mc Quail (1994) stated the proposition adopted by the Hutchins Commission of US (1947), “to provide full truthful, compressive and intelligent
account; to serve as a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism and be common carriers of the public expression; to give a representative picture of constituent groups in society and goals and values of society”.

Today, media acts as an indispensable part of society which imparts information on public issues and by means of which citizens convey their opinion to policy makers and play a crucial role in giving voice to people. Media sets agenda for the selection of the issues which indicates that ‘issues on the agenda of the media have fair chances of getting on to the agenda of both the public and the policy makers whereas issues missing on the media agenda remain in visible and non-existent’ (Protes and Mc Combs, 1991). Media plays crucial role in conveying the message as the meaning is constructed and shapes public consciousness.

Within media’s coveted umbrella of presenting information the question arises of media’s role in presenting the issues of women’s concern. Does media allow women the women’s voice to be communicated and heard? What kind of women’s issues given justice by the media? Research indicated that there is no single or coherent framework which can justify the marginalisation of women news/issues in the media coverage. The feminist have developed the gender based ideologies and structures or criticised the existing media theories from the feminist perspectives but outcome is not very encouraging. This section provides the insight to the kind of coverage of women’s issues in the news media.

1.5.1 Women Empowerment

Women empowerment refers to the social, political and economic upliftment of the women. Empowerment is a multidimensional social process by which one achieves a certain position in different fields. It helps to foster or gain control of power in the society. It is a process and the outcome of a process, by which women challenges gender based discrimination against women in different structures of the society. It is liberating women from the restrictive clutches and attains equality of status in society. All the stories associated with the achievement of women, both national and international are coded under this category.
1.5.2 Women as victims

Women as victims of violence/crime in the form of domestic or sexual violence or abuse were categorised under this head. Many women have experienced abuse in multiple forms like, rapes within family committed by husbands/partners/boyfriends or former husbands/partners/boyfriends and rape or gang rape committed by strangers all are under crime/violence against women. Sexual exploitation of women in workplace, schools, streets, public transport and social situation, flashing obscene pictures or messages, threatening calls, online harassment and prostitution (or forced prostitution) are the various form of crime the women are subjected to. Trafficking of women is the transportation and exploitation of women and children intended for prostitution, dowry/dowry death; kidnapping/abduction; police atrocities; Infanticide/feticide, stalking, acid attack, forced disrobing, etc.

1.5.3 Women as perpetrators

According to the criminological records there is an increase in the rate of crime done by women. Issues covering stories where crime is done by women against another women such as trafficking and prostitution; and involvement of women in killing or any other form of crime are coded. Mostly they commit crime involving men for its execution.

1.5.4 Women in Politics

Role of women as politicians, contribution to society as politician, elections, representation of the member of the parliament and women’s equality and active participation in the decision making. Many women have entered the political field and the percentage of women in the various levels of political activities has shown a remarkable increase. In the recent years there have been explicit moves to augment the percentage of women in the top level political participation.

1.5.5 Social Issues on women

The various issues related to discrimination of women in the patriarchal structure of society in which the women is considered inferior, roots the major factor of
discrimination. Women in India fight for their right to equality and development in the field of education, employment, health and productive resources.

1.5.6 Legal Issues on women

Legal issues are the issues concerning legal action in support of women or against them. It also mentions about the legal proceedings, the judicial hearings, the judgments, the legal trail and various legal stories where either women is the victim or the perpetrators of the crime. The government should be responsive to gender sensitive women’s issues especially in cases on domestic violence and personal assault. The enactment of new laws towards women and review of the existing laws to ensure punishment meted out to the culprits according the severity of the offence. There has to be sound government policy to encourage changes in personal laws such as those related to marriage, divorce, maintenance and guardianship including community and religious leaders so as to eliminate discrimination against women. The most important aspect of the discrimination is the evolution of property rights in a patriarchal system that led to the subordinate status of women. The crime issues are sub-divided under the following heads for better understanding of the subject:

1.5.2.1 Rape

According to the report of National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), rape is the fastest growing crime against women. In India in every 60 minutes, two women are raped. Of the targeted victims one-quarter were minors and 75 percent of culprits were known to victims and 10 percent were relatives. Due to the social stigma associated with the crime most of the cases go unreported.

1.5.2.2 Molestation

Molestation is another form of crime against women where women are sexually humiliated privately or publicly. It can be touching private parts, rape, exposure of genitals, any sexually inviting acts. Reports show that women and children are at the risk of molestation either by the family members, known persons or unknown persons or any unwanted sexual acts short of rape.
1.5.2.3 Suicide

There is an increase rate of suicide among the women who either succumb to social cause or crime or economic cause. Suicide is committed out of despair due to mental trauma or depression. Economic factors, social factors or troubles with relationships, sexual harassment or abuse are factors which tend the individual to commit suicide.

1.5.2.4 Dowry/ Dowry death

Dowry/dowry deaths is the outcome of discrimination and injustice towards women in India. The Government of India adopted the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 marks the first attempt by the Government to recognize dowry as a social evil and to curb its practice and made dowry a punishable offence. All the section of the society accept dowry in different forms.

1.5.2.5 Domestic Violence

In the patriarchal form of society the women is considered as subordinate to men. They are object to gratify the needs of the family and husband. Women are tortured physically or mentally either by her own family member or by her in-laws. Domestic violence is also known as domestic abuse, battering, family violence, spousal abuse. Domestic violence include the physical aggression or abuse towards the women, economic deprivation, domineering. It also includes criminal coercion, kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment, stalking, trespassing or harassing.

1.5.2.6 Prostitution/Trafficking

Prostitution/ Trafficking is considered one of the major social problem against women, where women are forced into prostitution either by family members or known persons or are trapped by miscreants. It is the act of engaging sexually with someone on payment. The legal status of prostitution varies from country to country.

1.5.2.7 Murder/Acid attack

Mostly women are exploited and abused physically and murdered. They are either victim of rape or assault. Another crime that shatters the women’s life is acid attack. Mostly he attackers target the face of the victim. Acid attack is a form of violent
assault by throwing acid usually targeting the face damaging the skin tissue and dissolving the bones leading to long term consequences leading to blindness, permanent scarring face and body with far reaching social, psychological and economic effect.

1.5.2.8 Infanticide/Feticide

The patriarchal form of society where a female infant is unwelcome leads to infanticide/feticide. As the male child forwards the generation so there is no case of infanticide/feticide against them. It is considered illegal in India but it is permissible to perform infanticide/feticide in case of emergency to save the mother’s life.

1.5.2.9 Kidnapping

Reports of girls missing are considered a major problem as the missing girls are either deported for domestic help or forced into prostitution. It is the criminal offence of taking away or transportation of a person against the person’s will. It is usually done for an unlawful purpose asking ransom or for the purpose of committing crime.

1.5.2.10 Police atrocities

Victims who report to police against crime rendered to them are also subjected to ill treatment and harassment by the policemen which becomes the second assault to them. Women are vulnerable and fall victim to atrocities and criminal activities against even under the police custody.

1.5.7 Health Issues

Various health related articles, interview of doctors on women’s health, mother and child care, government policies on health developments, suggestions, recommendations and queries on contraceptives, in both the broadsheet and the supplement. The government policy adopted for the women’s health development and enabled women to access the various schemes. It is the priority of the government to render women access to comprehensive, affordable and quality health care. A holistic package of women’s health includes both nutrition and health services with special attention to the needs of women and the girl at all stages of the life cycle.
1.5.8 Sports Issues

Achievements in the fields of sports, performance in various games played by women and participation of women in sports activities are covered. Any hard news, soft news, features, articles, news briefs covering women in sports, opinion stories on different players were coded.

1.5.9 Entertainment Issues

Stories and issues on fashion, lifestyle, modelling, gossips, films, articles or feature on actresses, achievements, interviews, award ceremony, personal care, public and private life of celebrities, relationships. Entertainment issues both national and international were incorporated.

1.5.10 International Issues

All news political, social, economic, empowerment, bureaucratic, business, trade, victims of crime, perpetrators, culture, legal, health, relationship, sports concerning women.

5.11 Editorial

All the editorials published on various issues were discussed in detail to understand the seriousness rendered by the newspapers on the topic. The editorial board writes a column expressing the newspapers opinion on the topic.

1.5.12 Others

The news/issues on women which did fit the above categories but were on women were coded under the other category.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

1.6.1 Binary Dissection

The term binary dissection is explained in two parlances:
(i) Binary means two and it measures an item that has only two categories. The social scientist often engage in binary thinking in categorizing a social phenomena (Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft). Binary in the present study encapsulates the two threads of analysis the qualitative and the quantitative. It is the two-way treatment rendered to the study of women's issues. The women's issues selected are empirically analyzed to get an indepth understanding of the subject with the treatment and tone rendered to it.

The heart of this study is to understand the coverage of women's issues through the binary opposition or differences. Binary opposition is the world of 'opposites' formed in the mind to understand the two contradictory aspects. The central idea of binary opposition is to understand the world of reality. In the light of media, what is shown may not coincide with our level of ideas however natural it might seem to be. All we try to know here is the idea of depiction of reality is its natural form and the ideas of representation of reality. Applying the structuralists perceptions in understanding the media content we may assume that images depicted by the media is called the 'signifier' and the impression of the image in our mind is called the 'signified'. What might seem real and what we perceive it is nothing but the representation of reality. Binary opposition is concerned with the way the meaning is interpreted.

(ii) Dissection is the action of cutting apart or separate. According to the oxford dictionary dissection can be explained in two wings – in science dissection is separation of tissues and in arts dissection is to analyze a text or idea in minute detail that is dissection of an issue. Dissecting the issues helps to get better insight of the implication of the study. All the items coded are dissected to study the nature, form of presentation, types of coverage, placement and source to get a better and comprehensive picture of the coverage of women's issues.

The researcher has used the terminology binary dissection in the title of the study because it employed content analysis as the research tool. The two categories of analysis is the quantitative and qualitative methods of content analysis which supports
the term binary and analyzing the issues covered by the newspapers by dissecting the minute details of the variables employed in the study supports the term dissection.

1.6.2 Women's News/Issues

'Feminism' is a complex phenomenon and hence there are no universally accepted or concrete or definite or integrated definitions available on it. Different scholars have defined women issues in different ways. According to the Graber (1978) women's issues were categorized into different heads such as family welfare, health, education, rape and child abuse as these issues were directly related to the welfare of the women. Bailey (1994) in her study on women issues included three items – news dealing with birth control, abortion, pregnancy and sexuality in general; news with women as victims of crime such as sexual harassment, rape, molestation, domestic violence; as victims apart from the 'body politics' news, relative coverage of sexism; in comparison to male in politics, health care, education, human interest; and finally – women as worker, as business owners, women organization involved in protesting criminal activity, etc. Allen (1993) referred women's news/ issues as issues that encapsulate the women's angle or their opinion and views. In reference to these perspectives, the researcher has incorporated certain criteria for the present study:

(i) To code the items/story with women's perspective in any activity and area with parameters such as social, political, economic, legal, crime, etc. Whichever item was presented as an 'issues' regarding the women was coded to examine the nature of coverage rendered to such issues.

(ii) To code any story/items that appeared in the entertainment section and only the supplement papers were included.

(iii) Any story/items with women related issues or women's movement or feminism that were discussed or commented in the editorial and the opinion were coded.

(iv) The stories/items that bear only the photo and caption were not included, or any road accidents, burglary incidents, etc. were excluded. But if it carried a gender angle it was selected.
1.5.3 Print Media

Print media is a medium distinguished from the electronic, broadcast and new media. A medium which disseminates information to the masses in printed form. Print media forms the mainstream newspapers, magazines, newsletters and other printed publication that communicates and sell advertising space to earn revenue. In India the English newspapers holds a significant status and plays the dynamic role of agenda setter among the educated and enlightened elite political arena (Joseph and Sharma, 1994). Among the publication of this form of media, the newspapers have highest circulation. In this study the researcher have selected three mainstream English newspapers—one national, one regional and one local.

1.5.4 Content Analysis

Content analysis is a methodology that is most widely used as research tool in media research. The researchers examine the artifacts of social communication and understand social reality in a subjective and scientific way. Berelson (1952) says content analysis is “a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communications”. According to Holsti (1968) content analysis is, “any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of message”. It helps in making valid, replicable and objective inferences about the matter under study on the basis of explicit rules. The researcher has employed this technique in the study because frequencies or facts can be used as indicator of phenomenon (Krippendorff, 1980). According to Abrahson (1983) “Content analysis can be fruitfully employed to examine virtually any type of communications”. Therefore, it may focus on any of the two aspects of content analysis—qualitative or quantitative analysis. Quantitative content analysis is used widely in communication research as a method employed to count manifest of the textual elements. It is basically deductive in nature. Qualitative content analysis is developed to explore the meaning and examining the underlying messages of the topics and themes as well the inferences drawn from the data and is mainly inductive in nature.

The content analysis is the research methodology adopted in this study to analyze the gathered data. The analytical strategy adopted in the present study is as under:
The collected data are coded and analytically developed.

Coded data are categorically placed under different level of classification.

The coded items are analyzed to study the nature of women’s issues in the newspapers.

This study encompasses both the realms of analysis – quantitative and qualitative content analysis.

1.5.5 Column Centimeter

It is the unit of measurement of space covered in the newspaper. Each unit is one column wide and one centimeter high. This unit is used to give space to the advertisements in newspapers to generate revenue. In the present study all the data are measured in column centimeter as it is the easiest identifiable unit in measuring the newspaper content in terms of space.

1.5.6 Editorial

Editorial content of the newspapers is the statement or opinion by the editor of the newspapers in which his/her expresses views certain issues. The weightage of the paper is measured by the editorial contents.

1.5.7 Feature stories

Feature story is a special human interest stories or article that has personal slants and written in individual style. The main are which it engulfs are people, place, events, and dwells in detail featuring concepts and ideas on specific topics. Feature do not have any specific page in the newspaper instead features are found in every section of the paper, from news to business to sports.

1.5.8 Hard news

Hard news is the kind of fast-paced news that is presented in an objective and dispassionate manner and usually appears on the front page of newspapers. Stories that are under the coveted head of hard news covers topics like war, economic, politics, crime, and international news and answers the five Ws .What defines hard
news is not always the subject it deals instead it is the framing of the story that’s heavily reported on a certain subject which might be soft in nature, but considered hard because of its projection and approach.

1.5.9 Soft news

Soft news is different from hard news in its tone and encompasses topics like arts, entertainment and lifestyle and do not answer the five Ws. Moreover it does not deal with the formal and serious topic and events. It presents a human interest angle to any news story and involving the reporter’s subjectivity into the matter.

1.5.10 Letters to the editor

Letter to the editor are the letters on relevant issues of concern from the readers intended for publication. It is sent by the public to the editor of the concerned newspaper.

1.5.11 Column and Article

Column is an individual piece of writing, expressing opinion of the writer on any issue or theme. It is a recurring piece or article in the newspapers for publication. Person who writes column are known as columnist. An article is a special piece of writing on a particular topic written by an expert on the particular topic or issues.

1.5.12 Newshole

The amount of space rendered to news content in a newspaper. In this study the news hole is measured by computing the area of printed space in each newspaper and then subtracting from it the area devoted to advertisements, jokes, comics, cartoons, crosswords puzzles, index to contents, masthead, weather charts, transportation timings, film charts and public notices (Vilanilam, 2009).

1.5.13 Print Space and non-news space

Print space is the total space available for printing in a newspaper. Non-news space is the space devoted to advertisements, jokes, comics, cartoons, crosswords puzzles,
index to contents, masthead, weather charts, transportation timings, film charts and public notices.

1.5.14 Press

Reporters, editors, feature writers, columnist and reviewers are identified as journalists which also include the press associations. All of them fall under the umbrella of ‘press’ which is connoted as print media. ‘Press’ today, not only encompasses the print media journalists but journalists from all media (Vilanilam, 2005). In this study the ‘press’ is referred to newspapers only.

1.6.15 News Items

A news item covered by the newspaper is any item on a timely event with a current dateline, an account of that event reported by the paper’s own correspondent or reporters or items from the wire services. These include human interest stories. (Parthasarathy, 1998)

1.6 ORGANIZATION OF THE CHAPTERS OF THE THESIS

The study will consist of the following seven chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter deals with the statement of the problem, background of the study, rationale of the study, the objectives and research questions and operational definitions

Chapter 2: Review of literature

This chapter deals with the theoretical framework of the study, background of the study, and review of related literature, overall limitations and conclusion.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The chapter will contain the research method, the period of study, the sample, the unit of analysis, population, sampling technique, research tool, i.e. content analysis and period of study.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

Content analysis of the data was carried by employing the quantitative content analysis and quantitative content analysis.

Chapter 5: Summary of findings

This chapter summarizes the findings of the research study. After the analysis the findings of the study are presented elaborately in this chapter.

Chapter 7: Summary and Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the findings of the research study and draws conclusion by generalizing the research findings. Suggestion given by the researcher for further improvement of the situation under this area of study is included in this chapter.

Bibliography & Annexure