Chapter I

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1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Credibility is the oxygen of journalism and professional integrity the cornerstone of a journalist’s credibility. But in the present day context this ‘professional integrity’ and ‘credibility’ in journalism are up for grabs to the highest bidder. Often media are accused of violating professional norms and hence call for certain explanations. The credibility and the status of media dwindled to such a low that petty traders now openly talk of how journalists can be bought. Journalists like politicians and bureaucrats, unfortunately have become a privileged class and are readily accepting patronage from the government, corporate houses, placing serious constraints on their independent functioning. The content is now dictated by partisan motives. Editorial spaces are being bought. There are numerous instances where a journalist has to tone down a news report either on the diktat of superiors or to satisfy his personal greed and gains. This phenomenon has not only raised a serious question on the professional role performance of journalists across board, the decline in values has posed a grave threat to the freedom of the media. Against this state of affairs nationwide, surely the situation could not be better in the districts and much less at the sub-divisional headquarters, small towns and rural level.

The researcher in order to address some of the core issues tried to find out the actual position of life and status of a journalist in Assam. The study addresses the concern of both journalists as well as focus on the ethical issues in the profession. Through this study, the researcher tried to ascertain the problems and prospects of journalistic practices especially at the regional and local levels. Since accountability is the duty of the journalist, the study
is intended to throw light on whether journalists in Assam are discharging
their duty effectively? If not where are the lacunae? How do they see
themselves? Do they believe they try to report things fairly? Do they believe
there is a free press in Assam? What impact does low pay and hazardous
working environment have on their social life?

Therefore, the present study “Social Background and Professional Role
Performance of the Journalists in Assam” aims at analyzing the relevance
of journalists’ perceptions of their own background as a potential stimulus
for their handling of their everyday work situation and for their coining of
professional standards. The paper first discusses the existing historical
perspectives and comparative empirical evidences on role performance of
Assam journalists and their applicability to the present times and later
examines the social background and working condition of Journalists in
Assam.

1.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature on “journalism” in context of industrialized as well as in
connection with developing societies may now be reviewed.

1.2.1 REVIEW OF SOME STUDIES AND LITERATURE FROM THE
WORLD

Journalism has been around “since people recognized a need to share
information about themselves with others” (Zelizer, 2004). However, the
study of journalism is a more recent phenomenon. There are several reasons
why the study of journalism is a worthwhile endeavor for scholars. First,
news shapes the way we see the world, ourselves and each other. It is the
stories of journalists that construct and maintain our shared realities (Carey,
1989).

In some ways journalism studies can be seen as both a newcomer and an old
hand on the stage of scholarly research. Most observers have argued that
scholarly work in the field began in the early 20th century alongside the
emergence of journalism as a profession and a social force. Most early
German theorists looked at journalism through a historical and normative lens, based on the view that journalism is a craft of more or less talented individuals.

The 1970s and 1980s witnessed a stronger influence of sociology and anthropology on journalism research, leading to what might be described as a sociological turn in the field. The focus shifted to a critical engagement with journalism's conventions and routines, professional and occupational ideologies and cultures, interpretive communities, and to concepts related to news texts, such as framing, storytelling and narrative, as well as to the growing importance of the popular in the news. The increasing attention paid to cultural issues went hand in hand with the adoption of qualitative methodologies, most notably ethnographic and discourse analytical strategies. Among the figures that have left a lasting imprint on journalism studies in this tradition are sociologists such as Gaye Tuchman, Herbert J. Gans, Philip Schlesinger, and Peter Golding, as well as cultural studies proponents such as James Carey, Stuart Hall, John Hartley, and Barbie Zelizer. This tradition of scholarship, often focused on work in and of national and elite news organizations, allowed for a greater understanding of news production processes through descriptive work, but also paved the way for a view of journalism's role in constructing and maintaining dominant ideologies (Wahl-Jorgensen & Franklin, 2008).

The 1990s have seen a global-comparative turn in journalism studies: While cross-cultural research was pioneered by Jack McLeod as early as in the 1960s, it has taken up until the past two decades before the comparative study of journalism could establish a tradition of its own. The global rise of international and comparative research has been accelerated by political changes and new communication technologies. Journalism researchers are finding more and more opportunities to meet with colleagues from afar, made possible by the end of the cold war and increasing globalization. New communication technologies have triggered the rise of institutionalized global networks of scientists, while it has become much easier to acquire funding for international studies. As journalism itself is an increasingly
global phenomenon, its study is becoming an international and collaborative
d Sundays. The onward march of globalization notwithstanding, journalism
studies today are still an extremely diverse scholarly occupation. This
diversity has been profoundly shaped by different national traditions,
resulting from the fact that the field has borrowed unevenly from the social
sciences and humanities (Zelizer, 2004).

1.2.1.1 Types of Enquiry

Within the academy, there have been five main types of inquiry into
journalism—sociology, history, language studies, political science, and
cultural analysis. Each frame offers a different way to address the question
of why journalism matters: sociology has addressed how journalism matters;
history how it used to matter; language studies through which verbal and
visual tools it matters; political science how it ought to matter; and cultural
analysis how it matters differently.

Sociology has offered the default setting for thinking about how journalism
works. Largely built upon a memorable body of work called the
Ethnographies of News or the Newsroom Studies of the Seventies (Fishman,
1980; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978), sociological inquiry by and large has
created a picture of journalism that focuses on people rather than documents,
on relationships, work routines, and other formulaic interactions across
members of the community who are involved in gathering and presenting
news. Sociology has established the idea that journalists function as
sociological beings, with norms, practices and routines (Tunstall, 1971;
Waisbord, 2002; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996), that they exist in organizational,
institutional and structural settings (Breed, 1955; Epstein, 1973; McManus,
1994), that they invoke something akin to ideology in their news work
(Gitlin, 1980; Glasgow University Media Group 1976), and that their
activities have effects (i.e., Lang & Lang, 1953).

History and the inquiry of news have evolved largely from the earliest
expansions of journalistic academic curricula. Central in establishing the
longevity of journalism and journalistic practice, the history of news has
used the past—its lessons, triumphs, and tragedies—as a way to understand
contemporary journalism. Within this frame, what has drawn academic attention has tended to be that which has persisted. However, the picture has been a narrowly drawn one.

The study of journalism’s language has assumed that journalists’ messages are neither transparent nor simplistic but the result of constructed activity on the part of speakers. There have been three kinds of language study—informal study, which uses language as a backdrop without examining extensively its features, such as content analysis and semiology; formal study, such as sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and critical linguistics; and the study of the pragmatics of language, as in the patterns of language used in the news that are shaped by narrative and storytelling conventions, rhetoric, and framing.

Political scientists have long held a normative interest in journalism, querying how journalism “ought” to operate under optimum conditions. Interested in examining journalism through a vested interest in the political world, an assumption of interdependency between politics and journalism motivates this inquiry. Thus, many scholars have clarified how journalism can better serve its publics. Political science inquiry has ranged from broad considerations of the media’s role in different types of political systems, such as the classic *Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956) to studies of political campaign behaviour, journalistic models and roles and the sourcing patterns of reporters and officials.

Finally, the cultural analysis of journalism has tended to see itself as the “bad boy” in the neighbourhood (Wahl-Jorgensen, K., & Hanitzsch, T. 2009). It has defined itself as querying the givens behind journalism’s own sense of self, seeking to examine what is important to journalists themselves and exploring the cultural symbol systems by which reporters make sense of their profession. In assuming a lack of unity within journalism—in news-gathering routines, norms, values, technologies, and assumptions about what is important, appropriate, and preferred—and in its research perspective, which uses various conceptual tools to explain journalism, much of this
inquiry has followed two strains, largely paralleling those evident in models of US and British cultural studies.

1.2.1.2 Review of Some Foreign Studies

Schudson (1978, p. 151), in Discovering the News, a social history of American newspapers identifies Walter Lippmann as “the most wise and forceful spokesman for the ideal of objectivity.” Journalists, according to Lippmann, should “develop a sense of evidence and forthrightly acknowledge the limits of available information; ... dissect slogans and abstractions, and refuse to withhold the news or put moral uplift or any cause ahead of veracity.” In short, Lippmann urged reporters to fuse their professionalism with claims to objectivity.

Obeng-Quaidoo (1988), in his study on “Socio-Economic Factors Affecting Journalistic Expression in Africa: The Case of Ghana” made an attempt to find out how socio-economic factors affect their performance. The subject of study was coverage of health-related issues in both broadcast and print media. It found that, in general, there was very poor coverage of health issues, qualitatively and quantitatively, compared to that given to, say, politics, agriculture, economics and sport. It concludes that, among the topmost impediments to proper and adequate coverage of health-related issues are lack of specialization and professionalism among Ghanaian journalists. But systemic factors such as the state of the economy, lack of financial resources and equipment also adversely affect journalistic performance. The study used qualitative and quantitative methods to content-analyse a sample of mass media, and solicit information (through focus group discussions — FGDs) from media personnel in Ghana.

Soloski (1989) in his observation on ‘News Reporting and Professionalism’ felt that when the important actors in journalism are journalists, their perceptions of their role in society are very important. If they perceive journalism as a profession for the public welfare, the profession sets two standards: 1) It sets standards and norms of behaviour; and 2) It determines the professional reward system.
Gibbons (1991) studies various forms of accountability to call for accounts from media. One such form of accountability is supervision to control the content. Apart from supervision, some institutional mechanisms can also be in operation. Press Councils seem to play a significant role. Also Pritchard (1991) observes that the press councils can provide the kind of justice most libel plaintiffs say they would like to have. Press Councils are quicker and cheaper than courts, and they accept complaints form a broader range of problems. Although press councils cannot impose fines or send people to prison, the survey suggests that what most complaints want is not a pound of flesh, but rather an impartial review of press performance. This argument was also supported in India by former Press Council of India Chairman, P.B. Sawant (2003), who argued that legal measures are counterproductive in dealing with complaints. Bertrand (2003) who studied immensely the role of press councils all over the world argues that press council requires penal powers.

Gaunt (1992) opens his book, *Making the Newsmakers*, with the words “Journalism training perpetuates or modifies professional practices and moulds the perceptions journalists have of the role and function of the media.” Journalism education, as discussed here, has the clear intent of modifying practice, enriching the quality of information produced and, with the help of this quality journalism, achieving improvement in the workings of civil society.

Pritchard (2000) defined press accountability (1991) and elaborated further by including the constituents in the process of accountability who can play a key role in making the media accountable. In making the press accountable, he termed the role of a journalist to be critical and crucial. In being accountable, the journalist can render an account to higher authorities.

Schudson (2001) in a later argument that amounts to an elaboration and generalization of his thesis in *Discovering the News*, has contended that the “objectivity norm” in American journalism ultimately provides some sort of benefit to the group that articulates it, either by stimulating social cohesion (in a Durkheimian sense) or social control (in a Weberian one). Ethics and
norms exist for ritualistic reasons, helping to provide internal solidarity and cohesion to a particular group; they can also represent a way of defining a group in relation to other groups. Schudson’s essay focuses on the social functions of the objectivity norm in American journalism, but it acknowledges that “a variety of moral norms could achieve the ends of providing public support and insulation from criticism” (p. 165). Journalists in Germany or China might work with norms other than objectivity, Schudson notes.

Kaplan (2002) has provided one of the most recent overviews of the social histories of the American press. Following and expanding on his lead, we can speak here of at least five orientations to this history. First, progressive historiography, which closely tracked the development of journalism’s own occupational ideology, has depicted journalism as moving inevitably toward social differentiation, occupational autonomy, and professional freedom. A third strand of scholarship points to economic developments that fuel commercialisation that saw the public as consumers rather than citizens. A fourth strand of research on the rise of journalistic objectivity in the United States begins with Schudson’s Discovering the News (1978), which, along with his later work (2001), moved away from seeing the emergence of objectivity as an “inevitable outcome” of wide-scale social processes and changes—whether social, economic or technological—and linked the emergence of journalistic professionalism to questions of group cohesion, professional power, social conflict, and the cultural resonance of claims to occupational authority.

Callahan (2003) calls for development of ethics universally as globalisation can speed up global ethics. The journalistic ethics can be uniform all over the world. But Plaisance (2000) doubts the concept of ethics. According to Plaisance, “professional codes of ethics have become popular among news organisation as demonstration of accountability. However, reliance of ethics generates significant suspicion that they often are used to put an ethics veneer over questionable behaviour”.

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Ramaprasad's extensive surveys of non-Western journalism do not even include adherence to "objectivity" as a major characteristic of news work in Egypt (Ramaprasad & Hamdy, 2006), Tanzania (Ramaprasad, 2001), or Nepal (Ramaprasad & Kelly, 2003), and the new notion of "contextual objectivity" has emerged to explain the editorial policies of non-Western cable news channels like Al-Jazeera (Berenger, 2005).

Donsbach and Patterson (2004) have argued that a commitment to objectivity still distinguishes American from European newsrooms. Their extensive survey of German, Italian, Swedish, British, and American journalists, both print and broadcast, find that US journalists almost uniformly report that their political views have no relationship to the views of their employers. Italian and German journalists at national newspapers say that their political views are close to their papers' editorial position.

Hallin and Mancini (2004) makes the strongest case for severing the link between objectivity and professional standing in the world of journalism. For them, professionalism is defined less in terms of educational barriers to entry, a lack of state regulation, or the ideal of "objectivity"; rather, it is viewed primarily in terms of "greater control over [one's] own work process".

Hollings et al (2007) - James Hollings, Geoff Lealand, Alan Samson and Elspeth Tilley in their "The big NZ journalism survey: Underpaid, under-trained, under-resourced, unsure about the future – but still idealistic" in their survey among New Zealand journalists (n=514) updates and extends previous surveys of New Zealand journalists, by measuring attitudes to resourcing, news coverage, ethics and standards, changing technology, ownership and other topics. While low pay and a lack of support and training, rather than staff numbers, were the standout concerns, respondents generally rated ethics and standards as important, and while they had concerns about sensationalism, they did not seek more regulation. They considered the media was generally performing its watchdog role well, but had concerns about the impact of decreasing resources (especially staff numbers, levels of experience, and time to develop in-depth investigations).
on that watchdog role, as well as the impact of changing technology, commercial and advertising pressures. They were evenly divided between antagonism and tolerance in their stances towards public relations. Respondents’ political views were generally neutral or slightly left. There were significant differences across gender, job status, employer and age in many of the results. Demographic data suggest the workforce is becoming more feminised, (as earlier surveys have suggested), with disproportionate numbers of younger women and older men, and an apparent pay disparity between males and females.

Chang, Li-jing Arthur. and Massey, Brian L, (2008) in their research “Factors Related to Journalist Job Satisfaction: Meta-Analysis and Path Model” studied twenty correlates of journalists’ job satisfaction uncovered in past research were input into a meta-analysis to assess their relationships with the satisfaction variable. A theoretical model including job satisfaction and its key correlates was also tested through a path analysis. The confirmed model showed that journalist’ perceptions of their impact on their communities and their feelings about pay are strong predictors of job satisfaction. It showed satisfaction as a significant predictor of intentions to quit jobs.

1.2.2 REVIEW OF SOME STUDIES AND LITERATURE FROM INDIA

In India during the last 30 years with the first Satellite Instructional Television Experiment, the media research has grown. Although applied research today is increasingly used by the market controlled media, basic research confined to academic institutions is steadily gaining momentum. The basic research however relies mostly on positivist perspective using the quantitative methods like surveys and content analysis (Murthy, 2008).

A significant number of studies have been made on press in India. Few types and categories of studies have emerged in the analysis, particularly focusing on journalism and journalists.
1.2.2.1 Review of books

In this category of studies that have emerged in the analysis was the observation and comments of various writers, professionals, authors, and academicians in depicting the growth, development, and performance of Indian Press. While some of the distinguished writers and authors criticized the role of media as contributing to negative trends in society, though the media is expected to play a constructive role, some others analyzed the role of media in society, offered suggestions to improve the functioning of press.

Krishnamurthy, Nadig. (1966) in his book “Indian Journalism” has made sincere study of growth, development and role of press in India since the early days of James Augustus Hicky.

Rau Chalapathi, M. (1968) in “Press in India” covered the various aspects of press- its pattern, internal freedom, relationship between the editor and proprietor, etc.

Mankekar, D.R. (1973) in his book “The Press under Pressure” has expressed his deep concern for the impatience and intolerance stowed by the Indian rulers towards the Press. He deplored that the Press has been under the control of authorities by backdoor means. He described the ordeals that the press faced during the National emergency in 1975.

Nayar (1977) vividly described how press in India was harassed and its freedom was muzzled during the National emergency.

Bhatt, C.S. (1977) in his book “Indian Press since 1955” provided a description of all the latest development that took place since 1955.

Parthasarathy, Rangaswamy. (1989) in “Journalism in India” did his best to write a historical and meaningful story of Indian Journalism from the days of Hicky to modern times.

Sharma, R.K. (1990) in his published book “Journalism as a Profession in India” quoted a study in which a large number of trained journalists were of the view that journalists sacrifice public interest if it clashes with their self-interest. Most of the journalists exploit their status for non-journalistic purposes. Further, the study found that 9.6 percent of journalists reported
that journalism is meant for public service. The study revealed that sensationalism had become a practice in journalism, and sometimes sensationalism was practiced in the name of investigative journalism. It helps the journalists and newspapers, while journalists achieve fame and personal gains in their career, newspaper achieve larger circulation. In contrast, an American study (Weaver and Wilhot, 1997) found that a majority of journalists now say that the editorial policies of their organizations are very important in how they rate their job.


Raghavan. (1994) in his study “Press in India” provided the comprehensive description of Indian Press since the time of Hicky’s Gazette.

Pandey, G.P. (1999), in his book “Press and Social Change” based on an empirical study observed the role of press as an agent of social transformation. He also emphasized on how press has played a significant role in transforming the socio-cultural lives of the people in the society at large.


Vilanilam, J.V. (2005) in his book “Mass Communication in India” observed that the economic factors of high cost of production, publication and distribution and the social factors of illiteracy, poverty, ignorance, lack of transportation and communication facilities, especially in the rural areas, act as a barriers against access to the media for millions of Indians.

Media Trust, Assam (2007) a registered charitable Trust formed and managed exclusively by journalists of Assam in “150 years of Journalism in Assam”- a collection of articles on the history of journalism in Assam by
several scholars, edited by Gobinda Prasad Sarma mirrored a comprehensive historical account of the beginning, growth and development of journalism in Assam. From Orunodoi onwards in the newspapers and literary periodicals in Assam, distinguished writers have analyzed and interpreted journalism from political, social, philosophical and theoretical perspectives. Several writers have also expressed their views on Assamese journalism in the past and present and firm opinions on the duties of a journalist at present. Discussions on newspapers in Hindi, Bengali, and Bodo language published from Assam have also been initiated. The book is an English version of *Asamar Batorikakat-Alochanir Dersha Bashariya Itihas* (150 years of History of the Newspapers and Magazines of Assam).

The review of literature on the press in India, seems to have been enriched by the professionals with their vast experiences in the field of journalism. Several authors and veteran journalists of the country tried to express their personal feelings, impressions, attitudes and values from the historical perspectives and documentary perspectives. They have remained one-sided by ignoring the reality of the problems faced and actual stock-taking of the ground situations. Hence, inadequacy cannot be ruled out in their Literature. The existing Literature of books therefore suffers from multiple deficiencies.

### 1.2.2.2 The Journalistic profession- A glance on some studies and available literature

A glance on the literature on journalism as a profession suggests much of it as journalistic. Most work seems to have been done on journalists as professionals than on the organizational aspects of the journalistic profession. Also, the literature on professional journalists in India is, by and large, empirical while that on the organizational aspects is mostly journalistic.

A significant empirical study devoted directly to the professional status of journalism is worthy of attention.

K.E Eapen (1969) using the perspective of sociology of profession focused on the socio-economic attributes and professional orientation of working
journalists in Bihar and Kerela. Analyzing the socio-economic origins of journalists, Eapen noted the importance of urban upbringing, higher education and the father's occupation. Further, he found the Indian journalists more professionally oriented than the Milwaukee Journal and Sentinel staff, and within India, Kerela journalists more than their counterparts in Bihar. Looking into the factors affecting the professional orientation Eapen identified job titles, age and attitudinal modernity as the most salient ones. Accordingly, editor scored higher than the reporters; the older group higher than the younger; and, the more modern higher than the less modern. Regarding the effects of professional orientation, Eapen's data indicate that the more professionally-oriented journalists tended to support education for journalism, expressed ethical preferences and performed professional activities more than the not so professional-oriented. Above all, he reports that the journalists perceived their profession as having high rank in intellectual attainment but low in income.

Assessing the professional standing of Journalism in India in terms of four major attributes of professionalism- autonomy, commitment, expertise and responsibility- Eapen concludes that they are being met at different levels, all of them at the idea level, while some of the at the functional level. In effect, journalism, according to him, is well on the way to professionalization (Sharma, 1985).

D.V.R. Murthy (2004), after about three decades of Eapen’s study, made an attempt to ascertain the perception of journalists on the concept of accountability of newspapers carried out a survey involving full-time journalists in seven-broadsheet newspapers (viz., The Hindu, The New Indian Express, Deccan Chronicle, Eenadu, Andhra Bhoomi, Andhra Jyoti, and Vaartha) in the city of Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. The study involving a total of 70 journalists figured in the universe. The study revealed that majority of the journalists expressed job satisfaction because of the nature of work and reported that ethics must be self-imposed. It also revealed that high salary would make the journalist satisfied with the nature of job and the study suggested implementations of wage board
recommendations. Majority of the respondents also reported that the Press Council of India is not effective in implementing ethics.

On the professional journalists, it is possible to distinguish two sets of works: journalistic surveys and systematic studies appeared in Vidura, Communicator, and other media journals and leading newspapers.

Thakur, (1971), in a series of surveys which appeared on the academic background of journalists in several issues of Vidura (1970-72) reported that more than half the journalists in each State were graduates, including about one-third of postgraduates in most States. The number of trained professionals among the journalists in all States except Andhra Pradesh was, however, negligible. It was different with Chandigarh, where most of the journalists were graduates, a vast majority of them being postgraduates and one-fourth having degree or diploma in journalism.

Krishnamoorthy (1988) in his Journalistic Article- “News values freedom, and accountability clarified that ‘news values must relate to the ongoing context in a country. He also observed that “a re-examination of news values and concepts in Indian print is essential to ensure that like every other public activity, journalism too has a public service objective on the basis of which alone newspapers can claim and exercise freedom of the press”

Mehta (1997) carried out a Content Analysis Study of Coverage by Local newspapers at Hissar in Haryana. Mehta also studied the problems faced by the Local newspapers and found that many units closed down in absence of government Support.

Mehta (1998), later in his study on local newspapers in Hisar, Haryana, suggested that “the government must extend help to these papers in the form of loan facilities, in newsprint allocation, concession in machinery/equipment purchase, concessional news agency rates, telecommunication facilities, etc.”

Choudhury (1998) in a study on Northeast Press observed that “NE media as a whole and the daily press in particular, with roots in the soil and the heart of the people have a role to play in catalyzing development, integration
and restoring culture”. Taking instance in the light of development of newspapers, Choudhury also quoted a study in Silchar which stated—“in official documents there are 35 newspapers published from here. But in reality most of the newspapers do not come out regularly. They only maintain the file copy to get government advertisements. Even the newspapers which are published regularly have little influence over the masses.”. Choudhury also suggested integrated sharing of resources among the northeast dailies in terms of “news sharing”, “printing”; “Northeast news networking with select regional dailies with other parts of the country”, common advertisement, transportation, communication sharing”, “campus recruitment from journalism institutes”, etc. According to Choudhury—“no two dailies in different languages from different centres have the same readership”.

Rajkhowa (1998), a veteran journalist of Assam, in a journalistic article on changing face of Journalism in Northeast elaborated the working condition of journalists in the perspective of “Yellow Journalism”, “Principles Lost”. According to Rajkhowa, “no other state in India has so many dailies and no other metropolis can match Guwahati. Circulation figures are inflated to get better and higher rates for advertisements”. Most of them claim their circulations to be 30,000 although many of these papers are never seen on the stands. Even the names of some of them have not been heard of.” Adding further Rakjkhowa on the practice of yellow journalism said: “There has been fast deterioration of standards. Since newspapers have increased manifold and they need ‘journalists’ of all categories and cheaply too anybody and everybody is welcome. There is no norm, no training, no supervision. Whatever is produced is published”. Rakhowa regrets journalists who work in small towns and blocks. “Mofussil journalists go a step further. They are prepared to serve without remuneration. Only an accreditation letter is enough. Stories are highly slanted and there is nobody to check in the editorial board”.

Sawant (2003), former Chairman, Press Council of India and retired Supreme Court Judge observed that “the ethics are essentially the self-
restraints to be practiced by the media persons voluntarily to preserve and promote the trust and credibility of the people”.

Rai (2004), at a nationwide project on the *Status of Women Journalists in the Print Media* initiated by the National Commission for Women examined the problems and issues confronting women working in the media and the extent of direct and indirect discrimination in the workplace. As part of a broader study on working women in India, it was executed by the Press Institute of India (PII), through empirical data collected from almost all the States and Union Territories of the country. The research was coordinated by Pamela Bhagat with the support of media representatives from various regions - Linda Chhakchhuak from Shillong, Rajashri Dasgupta from Kolkata, Sushmita Malaviya from Bhopal, R. Akhileshwari from Hyderabad and Surekha Sule from Mumbai – who together formed a National Study Group. The National Study Group assisted with the design and implementation of the 20-page questionnaire. Usha Rai, Deputy Director, Press Institute of India, guided and steered the group.

A total of 410 women working in the print media responded. Although there are no definite figures on the number of questionnaires distributed, estimates put the sample size at approximately 3500. One of the most disappointing aspects of the study was total non-cooperation in filling in the questionnaire, especially by journalists from the English language national media.

The study reveals that women in the regional, vernacular press are lagging far behind their colleagues in the English language press. There is a vast difference in the wages earned by those in English national newspapers and those in the regional media. It was shocking to find that in the regional press in several parts of the country, men and women are hired like contract labour on daily wages. At the end of a month they are paid on a voucher system, an amount that varies from Rs 1500 to Rs 3000. They are extremely insecure, living from month to month and when the establishment decides it does not need so many hands, it is invariably the women that are the first to be axed. The majority of women surveyed were on contracts for two or three
years and at the end of the period there was no guarantee that the contract would be renewed.

Chhakchhuak (2004), carried out a research study on women journalists in Northeast entitled – “Poorly paid, insecure in North East”, as a part of a nationwide survey on Status of Women Journalists in India, produced by the Press Institute of India, under the aegis of the National Commission for Women. The study found no upward mobility among women journalists both in terms of promotion and pay scales and special facilities for women journalists in terms of maternity leave, etc are mostly non-existent.

The survey showed that journalism was a low option as a long-term career. The pay packet is extraordinarily small and there was no upward mobility both in terms of promotion and pay scales. As for special facilities for women journalists in terms of maternity leave etc, they are non-existent in most cases. Journalists are underpaid and most of the time has to work on undignified terms and conditions. They can be fired at the whim and fancy of the proprietor. In some of the “better” newspaper houses journalists work on a one year contract basis, “temporarily permanent”, and while in most other cases they are not even issued proper appointment letters outlining their job, pay scale etc.

Of the 35 questionnaires handed out, which was about the total number of women working in the print media in the North East - 22 women responded. There were six respondents from the regional press and 16 from the English media. The age group of the 22 women who responded was between 20 to 40. Only three were above 40. The major area of concern that emerged out of the survey was job security, low pay and lack of prospects. Only 35 per cent worked as permanent full time employees. The rest worked as permanent part timers or on contract basis. None of the respondents were in senior positions, the highest being a senior reporter and sub editor. 72 per cent of them got salaries ranging between Rs.1500-Rs.5000. Of this 7 percent received salaries below Rs.1500. 40 per cent said that they had never been promoted, while 31 per cent said that they had been promoted once. There was no mechanism for addressing grievances or making appeals
and even where there was such a mechanism it was inadequate. Only 27 per cent were members of some superannuation scheme.

Murthy and Anita (2007) in a specific study, tried to find out the job satisfaction levels of media women in Andhra Pradesh. The study came to the conclusion that advancing age is negatively correlated with job satisfaction and job satisfaction is declining with the advancement of age and also service.

Thakuria (2009), freelance journalist and President of the Guwahati Press Club in his analytical article “Media Persons in Northeast India: Living on the Edge” depicted the plight of journalists in Assam and Northeast India. According to Thakuria, media persons in Assam and Northeast India have to perform their deities under tremendous work load but with low return in terms of salary and other legitimate facilities. The trouble torn region despite witnessing a media boom in the last decade, the media persons including the journalists continued to be the victim of exploitation by their respective employers. Many times, the low patronage from the management put the journalists in most vulnerable situation. The journalists are subjected to numerous threats from insurgents, surrendered militants and even the anti-insurgent security personnel time to time. The statistics reveal that the trouble torn region, surrounded by Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, Burma and Bangladesh has lost over 20 dedicated editor-journalists in last two decades. And surprisingly, according to him not a single perpetuator had been punished till date.

Thakuria also pointed out that the majority of journalists working in Assam are denied their due economic benefits recommended by the statutory wage boards constituted by the government and even the relevant labour laws. As most of them work without proper appointment letters, they enjoy little job security. Similarly the insurance coverage for the media persons continued to be awful. Understanding the importance of such support for the media persons, the Guwahati Press Club in a significant initiative appealed the media group owners of the State to provide health and life insurance coverage to their employees. In a formal letter, signed by its secretary and
disbursed on January 9, 2009 the press club argued that not more than 10% journalists and media persons in Assam are being entitled for the benefit of health and life insurance coverage such a benefit. The letter also informed that if for any reason, the managements were not ready to take the initiative immediately, and they might join supporting such an attempt to be taken by the press club in the coming days.

Media activist Nava Thakuria through his article also highlighted the concern raised by several speakers at a meeting held in Guwahati Press Club organized by the representative of National Federation of Newspaper Employees, demanded a basic minimum salary and other economic facilities for the working journalists of Assam. Several Speakers including Hiten Mahanta, Ranen Kumar Goswami, Mukul Kalita, Naresh Kalita, Pankaj Dutta, Sabita Lahkar (all are Guwahati-based senior journalists) expressed anger at the disappointing condition of the media persons of Assam, where most of them were compelled to work without the relevant facilities, recommended by various provisions including the Indian Labour Act.

“This is very unfortunate that media persons in Assam have to work with a salary starting with even Rs. 2000 with absolutely no job security. Many times, the journalists (including the editors) are used by the proprietors of media groups for their business (other than media) interest. So in such a chaotic situation, we can hardly expect a fair journalism in the State,” commented DN Singh, an Assam based senior journalist. "You can find more than 70 % newspaper employees in Assam, who are deprived of basic minimum facilities such as appointment letter, leave, provident fund, ESI etc," says Rupam Baruah, the president of Journalists' Forum, Assam. He also added, "They are emotionally exploited by the management and subjected to no job security. There is no other way than fighting for our dues as recommended by the statutory wage board."

Rehman (2010), an Assam based senior journalist while presenting an overview of demands and woes of journalist as appeared in “THE HOOT”, depicted the plight of journalists in trouble-torn Assam. Teresa Rehman quoted Keshab Kalita, President, Assam Union of Working Journalists, who
expressed serious concern over the plight of correspondents in the moffusil towns and villages. "These correspondents get paid even lesser than the ones with job cards under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). Most often they don't get paid. Some media houses give a fixed monthly payment which ranges from Rs 200 to Rs 1000. And they are paid Re 1 to Rs 2 per column/cm. But they do get the press card which is often misused." Kalita feels that these circumstances literally force a correspondent to corrupt practices. "They are literally being used as guinea pigs by the media houses. We want to bring the mofussil journalists under the ambit of the wage board," he says. These organizations also feel that the increasing tendency to hire all employees under the contract system have absolved them of all their rights and benefits.

Do high qualifications contribute to the professional competence of journalists? Opinions vary about it. S.K. Rau (1970), contends that high qualifications do not always contribute to an intelligent interpretation of news or to a critical assessment of events. By contrast, N. Chakraborty (1970) maintains that journalists educated in colleges and universities have better grip over the craft than those who are not. About the effect of training in journalism, however, none of the contributors made any observation.

Wider in their scope and coverage, there also are a few other studies of Press corps (Shridharani and Jain, 1952; Parikh, 1965), but these have little material on the professional status of journalists.

The literature on the organizational aspects is even more limited both in its coverage and nature. It is only journalistic training that has received serious attention, leaving other aspects to the mercy of causal observation and passing references. Among others, B.S. Thakur (1971, 1977, 1979) has provided a thorough review of the structure, procedure, programme and perspective of journalistic training in India. He finds it deficient in most respects, particularly so in faculty standards, primarily because many "discredited and discarded journalists" have sought rehabilitation in the departments of journalism. For this and other reasons, B.S. Thakur
maintains that "journalism does not have more than mere traces of what makes a profession" (Thakur, 1977).

Other organizational aspects have not received even a little attention - the relations between journalist and his employer, the press and the powers that be, the role of vested interests, limits on work autonomy, and the decision-making process and so on. Neither are there any studies on reasons as to why and what factors compel journalists to take up unethical practices. Why journalists till date are not recognized their worth in terms of attractive salary structure? Who is responsible for the degrading value of journalists? Any number of aspects of the problem such as changing socio-economic composition of journalists, their joining motives, professional socialization, career patterns, working conditions, peer relations, ethical sensibilities, and most important of all, their unprofessional practices, awaits serious investigation.

All in all, the study of journalism as a profession has completely escaped the attention of sociologists, communication academics and professionals and almost all literature has been produced by the journalists themselves as some of it is no doubt about as scientific as it could be. Nevertheless, the limitation of the existing literature on journalists as professionals leaves much less scope to explore the complexities in a variety of settings, more specifically in a conflict zone like Assam.

From the review of available literatures from India and the World, it can be construed that, journalistic objectivity and performance operates as both an occupational norm and as object of struggle within the larger struggle over professional jurisdiction. "Expert" professionals—in this case, journalists—seek, via occupational struggle, to monopolize a form of journalistic expertise, which itself is discursively constructed out of various journalistic practices and narratives, including the claim to professional objectivity. And yet, this very notion of journalistic expertise makes journalism an unusually fascinating case within the sociological analysis of the professions.

If professional struggles are, in part, struggles over a definition of and jurisdiction over particular forms of expertise, what, exactly, is the nature of
this struggle? Although attempt has been made to study the phenomenon, the context was not taken into account. The Indian study conducted by D.V.R. Murthy conducted in the city of Visakhapatnam included seven broadsheet newspaper journalists. It is pertinent to note in the confession of researcher himself, where he said that the perception of sample of small and medium newspaper journalists cannot be ascertained. The study sample included the top leading newspapers in the State of Andhra Pradesh, while ignoring the small and medium size newspapers where credibility and accountability of journalists are often put in question.

Hence inadequacy in the study cannot be ruled out. Moreover, the study cannot hold relevance in a militancy infested state like Assam or other parts of Northeast, where a journalist has to work under tremendous stress and risk to life.

Therefore, the present study titled “Social Background and Professional Role Performance of the Journalists in Assam” is of paramount importance.

1.2.3 THE CONCEPT OF PROFESSIONALISM

The growth of professions is an indicator of social development as it reflects the degree of social stratification and specialization in a society. In the process of industrialization of western societies there emerged various professions in the field such as law, medicine, technology, communication, banking and trading, etc. The sociologists paid special attention to the study of professions from the very beginning and that has given rise to a special branch called sociology of professions. Their main issues have been centered around the problem of distinguishing a profession from a non-profession and of discerning processes of professionalization in a society. There from emerged the attributional and processual approaches for the study of professions. In the developing societies like India the growth of profession is a result of the spread of modern western education rather than the product of industrialization (Singh 2003).
Therefore, the present study “Social background and Professional Role Performance of the Journalists in Assam” analyses the dynamics of the profession of journalism in Assam by also examining the process of mobility in professions in a society.

1.2.3.1 JOURNALISTS

Journalists are individuals who engage in a broad range of activities associated with news making, including, in Stuart Adam’s (1993) view, “reporting, criticism, editorializing and the conferral of judgement on the shape of things.” Journalism’s importance has been undeniable, and while it has been the target of ongoing discourse both in support and critique of its performance, no existing conversation about it has suggested its irrelevance. Rather, contemporary conditions have insisted on journalism’s centrality and the crucial role it can play in helping people make sense both of their daily lives and of the ways in which they connect to the larger body politic.

However, not all of journalism’s potential has borne out in practice. Contemporary journalists have been under siege from numerous quarters. They live in an economic environment in which falling revenues, fragmentation, branding and bottom-line pressures keep forcing the news to act as a shaky for-profit enterprise across an increased number of outlets. These outlets have not necessarily produced a broader scope of coverage, and many journalists have taken to multi-tasking the same story in ways that previous generations would not recognize.

Politically, journalists have come under attack from both the left and right, which have argued for different definitions of so-called journalistic performance alongside a political environment that has undercut the journalist’s capacity to function in old ways. While the competing and contradictory expectations from left and right have paralyzed aspects of journalism’s performance in more stable political systems, the demise of the nation-state in many areas of the world has raised additional questions regarding journalism’s optimum operation. All of this has produced an untenable situation for journalists, who have been caught in various kinds of
questionable embraces with government, local interests and the military and who, in the United States, have gravitated toward coverage that plays to "safe" political spaces, producing news that is characterized by heightened localism, personalization and oversimplification (State of the News Media, 2007). Journalists have learned to follow various models of practice, not always thoughtfully and none of which have been fully suited to the complexities of today's global political environments.

Lastly, moral scandals involving journalists have abounded. Often, the press is known for distorting the reality keeping in view the priorities. All of this suggests that journalists have not been as effective as they might have been in communicating to the world journalism's centrality and importance. Questions persist about changing definitions of who is a journalist? Questions also underlie the issue of fundamental question of what journalism is for has no clear answer. Is its function to only provide information or to more aggressively meld community and public citizenship? Journalism's different functioning in different parts of the world—as in the distinctions separating the developmental journalism prevalent in parts of Asia from the partisan models popular in Southern Europe—has made the question more difficult to answer.

1.2.3.2 JOURNALISM – TRADE OR PROFESSION?

The key question in journalism education to this day is whether journalism should be regarded as a trade or a profession. The main distinction between the two is the implicit standing afforded to journalists and the educational background expected from them. A trade is defined as the habitual practice of an occupation. Regarding journalism as a trade would require only vocational teaching needed "to perpetuate practice" (Gaunt, 1992), and on-the-job training without prior study would suffice.

If journalism demands to be a profession, then it would need at least a defined educational pathway to underpin this claim. However, as indicated above, journalists come to their jobs from a great variety of educational backgrounds, and most of them receive in-house training by the media organization they join. This has led to the debate about journalism education
having been “framed as scholars versus practitioners” and has caused mistrust between academy and industry that shows few signs of easing. According to Deuze (2006), “journalism education [...] must negotiate rather essentialist self-perceptions of both industry and academy.” Deuze also correctly points out that this dichotomy between theory and practice “adds a level of complexity to our understanding of journalism (and its education).”

This dichotomy is also perceived as one of the key questions in journalism education in tertiary institutions, with discussion centering on the weighting of subjects either towards the scholarly or the practical. Yet this debate masks another, wider issue. When looking at the theoretical subjects that are part of journalism studies, the entrenched ideological positions of journalism education become apparent. To most in the Western world, journalism—and hence journalism education—is inextricably linked to the political form of democracy. The importance of this link is one of the as yet rarely debated key questions of journalism education. So far journalism education has been seen as the exclusive domain of democracies, but geopolitical changes and transitions in media systems will force journalism scholars and educators alike to address this hallowed view.

In Asia and to be more specific in India, it is contended that newspaper journalism is a profession with its own techniques, traditions and sense of fellowship. Rau (1968) contends that journalism is a profession with its own sense of fellowship as a profession. The main idea behind acknowledging journalism as a profession is the pursuance of a task of high social responsibility. The newspaper press is not just any other business. This is well perceived by Azmi (1977) who contends that journalism is a profession as it has a body of knowledge imparted in training institutions affiliated to universities and exercises self-regulation to some extent. Karnani (1977) submits that there is no doubt about its status. But whether it even become a profession in the real sense of Law and Medicine, as journalists are employees and cannot be regarded as independent practitioners. Eapen (1969) had perceived that journalism was on the way to professionalism due to education in journalism which started much earlier in 1938, organization
of occupational associations at the national level (the first being IFWJ in 1950), the formation of the Press Council of India for self regulation in 1966.

Journalism as a craft, a profession and even a trade or business, is over two centuries old. There are a number of competing visions at the core of journalism's self definition. Is it a craft, a profession, a set of practices, a collective of individuals, an industry, an institution, a business or a mindset? In that it is probably a bit of all of these things, there is a need to better figure out how they work off of and sometimes against each other. This is critical, for even basic questions about journalistic tools have really never been addressed and journalism's tools have not been equally valued. It was made possible by the coming together of a number of technologies as well as several social, political and economic developments. As a profession, it is markedly different from other established professions like law, medicine, engineering, management or teaching. While the established professions require some specialized educational qualification and training to be recruited to them, Journalism does not make any such requirement essential. There is no bar to anyone entering the profession, no matter what one's educational qualification is. Besides, there is a distinction of journalistic profession from other profession with the vital aspects like freedom of speech and expression whereas the legal and medical practitioners have no such constitutional right and also its industrial aspect. Porter(1968) argues that by the conventional definition of the word 'profession', the occupation of journalists is not a profession at all, as there is no formal training required either to secure a job or to fit it well.

From the very beginning, Journalism like its other intra-disciplinary professions such as Advertising, Public Relations, Film, Television, Theatre, and Publishing has been, and still remains, an 'open profession' Kumar (2005). Further, Journalism has no distinct body of knowledge that defines the profession and marks its relationship with its clients (readers, advertisers, advertising agencies, public relations, etc) and other professions.
There is no system of licensing or certification of journalists. Any official body of the profession does not police their activities.

But today the scenario of journalism has changed and many veterans in the field consider Journalism as a profession. Deka (2006) observed that "journalism today has become a professional service. Earlier journalism was recognized as a means of livelihood to a limited extent. But today, it is recognized as one of the foremost respectable means of livelihood. It is strange to hear but it is true in today's world, there are a few journalists who earn more than one lakh dollars a year like Asrot Raakhwald of Washington, USA. The strange thing is that Raakhwald neither writes news nor appear in television screens. Every week he writes only one short news commentary and that is published in 300 newspapers of the world at the same time. From his writings Raakhwald earns 15 lakh dollars yearly. Besides, he earns another 15 lakh dollar from various speeches and royalties. That means, Raakhwald's annual income is 30 lakh dollars. A few other such wealthy journalists are Jack Anderson, James Reston, Gay Telasi and Arthur Milan of USA, Harold Robinson of England, B.G Verghese, Kuldip Nayar, Pran Chopra, Inder Malhotra, Khuswant Singh, M.J Akbar of India, etc. Of course only few journalists of the world attain such fortune in life. But still there are many who cannot manage two square meals a day even today. In spite of this job satisfaction is the greatest reward of a journalist. One who can submerge himself in Journalism attains job satisfaction. One who can tell by the smell that which is news and which not is the competent journalist."

1.2.3.3 WORKING JOURNALIST ACT

Any consideration for the methodology of professional journalism research in India is inextricably linked to the regulations as prescribed in "The Working Journalists and Other Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1955". The Act regulates certain conditions of working journalists and other persons employed in newspaper establishments.
The First Press Commission in its report in 1954 found that the emoluments received by journalists were on the whole unsatisfactory. It could not undertake a detailed investigation for fixing scales of pay for different categories of employees. But it recognised the necessity of fixing a minimum wage for the journalist employees and made recommendations relating to the minimum wages to be paid to them.

In 1955, the Working Journalists and Other Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act was enacted and the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 was made applicable to working journalists also (Aggarwal & Gupta, 2001).

**SALIENT FEATURES OF WORKING JOURNALIST ACT**

- This act may be called Working Journalists & other Newspaper Employees (Conditions of service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1955. It extends to the whole of India, except the state of Jammu & Kashmir.

- The provisions applicable to workmen under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 shall apply to working journalists.

- Definitions: “Newspaper” means any printed periodical work containing public news or comments on public news and includes such other class of printed periodical work as many, from time to time, be notified in this behalf by central Government in the official Gazette.

  "Newspaper Employees” means any working Journalists and includes any other person employed to do any work in or in relation to any newspaper establishment.

  "Newspaper Establishment” means an establishment under the control of any person or body of persons, whether incorporated or not for any production or publication of one or more newspaper or for conducting any news agency or syndicate.

  "Working Journalists” means a person whose principal avocation is that of a journalist and (who is employed as such, either whole-time or part -
time in, or in relation to, one or more newspaper establishment), and includes an editor, a leader writer, news-editor, sub-editor, feature-writer, copy-tester, reporter, correspondent, cartoonist, news-photographer and proof-reader, but does not include any such person who-

a) Is employed mainly in a managerial or administrative capacity or
b) Being employed in a supervisory capacity performs, either by the nature of duties attached to his office of by reasons of the power vested in him, and function mainly of a managerial nature.

• The working journalists, who have been in continuous service for at least three years in a newspaper establishment, are entitled for gratuity equivalent to fifteen days average pay for every completed year of service or any part thereof in excess of six months on termination, retirement, resignation or death as per Section 3.

• No working journalist shall be required to work for more than one hundred and forty-four hours during any period of four consecutive weeks, exclusive of time for meals. Every working journalist shall be allowed during any period of seven consecutive days rest for a period of not less than 24 hours inclusive of the period between 10 pm and 6pm. "week" means a period of 7 days beginning at midnight on Saturday.

• The number of hours which shall constitute a normal working day for working journalists exclusive of time for meals shall exceed six hours per day in case of a day shift and five and half hours per day in case of night shift and no working journalist shall ordinarily be required or allowed to work for longer than the number of hours constituting a normal working day.

• When a working journalist works for more than six hours on any day in the case of day shift, and more than five and half hours in case of night shift, he shall in respect of that overtime work, be compensated in the form of hours of rest equal in number to the hours for which he has worked overtime.
• Every working journalists shall be entitled to Earned leave on full wages for not less than one-eleventh of the period spent on duty, provided that he shall cease to earn such leave when the earned leave due amounts to ninety days.

• A working journalists shall be entitled to leave on medical certificate on one-half of wages for not less than one-eighteenth of the period of service.

• A female working journalist who has put in not less than one year's service in the newspaper establishment in which she is for the time being employed shall be granted maternity leave on full wages on production of a medical certificate from an authorized medical practitioner for a period which may extend for three months from the date of its commencement or six weeks from the confinement whichever is earlier. a) Leave of any other may be granted in continuation of maternity leave.

b) Maternity leave shall also be granted in case of miscarriage, including abortion, subject to the condition that the leave does not exceeds six weeks.

• Quarantine leave on full wage shall be granted by newspaper establishment on the certificate of authorized medical practitioner for a period not exceeding 21 days or in exceptional circumstances, 30 days.

• A working journalist who has no leave to his credit may be granted, at the discretion of newspaper establishment extraordinary leave. Study leave may be granted in same pattern.

• A working journalist shall be eligible for casual leave at the discretion of newspaper establishment for 15 days in a calendar year.

• Sec 25-f of the aforesaid act, in its application to working journalist, shall be construed as in CI. (a) thereof, for the period of notice referred to therein in relation to the retrenchment of a workman, the following periods in relation to the retrenchment of a working journalist has been substituted, namely –

a) six months, in case of an editor,
b) three months, in case of any other working Journalists.

- For the purpose of fixing or revising rates of wages in respect of working journalists the Central Government shall as and when necessary constitute a wage board which shall consist of:
  a) Three persons representing employers in relation to newspaper establishments
  b) Three persons representing working journalists
  c) Four independent persons, one of whom shall be a person who is or has been a judge of High court or Supreme court and who shall be appointed by the Government as the Chairman.

- After the receipt of the recommendations of the wage board the Central Government without affecting the important alteration in the character of the recommendation can modify it.

- The Central Government can fix interim rates of wages in consultation with the Wage Board under Section 13-A.

- Provisions of 'Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946' and 'The Employees Provident Funds Act, 1952' shall apply to every newspaper establishment employing twenty or more person.

- If any employer contravenes any of the provision of the Act, he/she shall be punishable with fine which may extend to two hundred rupees. If the offence is committed for second time, the fine may extend to five hundred rupees.

**IUU'S DEMANDS TO AMEND THE WORKING JOURNALIST ACT**

The Indian Journalists Union representing over 15000 journalists in India has the following demands pertaining to Working Journalists Act \(^1\).

- An amendment to make the non-implementation of wage awards a cognizable offence to ensure that no newspaper management gets away into not to implementing it.

- Amendment to increase the age of superannuation from 58 to 60 years.
To amend the provisions of gratuity in working journalists act to provide for grant of gratuity after 5 year service.

To make it mandatory for the employers to issue appointment letters to all mofussial and part-time correspondents, by whatever name called, according to a fixed forma as suggested by BACHAWAT WAGE BOARD.

DEMANDS OF JOURNALISTS' UNION OF ASSAM

Ensure implementation of Manisana Singh Wage Board award in all the newspaper houses of the state. Immediate step should be taken to revive the wage board monitoring committee for the benefit of the journalists and the non-journalist newspaper employees. The state government should take a policy decision stopping issuance of advertisements, cancellation of trade licenses and recommending cancellation of registration in the RNI to the central government of the defaulting newspaper houses. The state government should recommend amendment of the working journalists' act suitably to the central government so that the defaulting newspaper houses compel to implement the wage board award.

Ensure right to trade union activities in all the newspaper houses of the state.

Each and every newspaper management should comply with the provision of Provident Fund, Gratuity, ESI, Pension, Medical and Earn Leave etc. regulations. Special stress should also be laid on creating separate Gratuity Fund by the newspaper houses. Punitive measures should be taken against defaulting management in this regard.

Government should declare a well-defined policy on extending facilities to the journalists as desired by the Press Council of India. Accreditation Board should be kept active and accreditation should be reviewed regularly. Accredited and government recognized journalists should be provided with all the facilities like the other states such as :-
➢ Accommodation facilities in Government guesthouses, circuit houses, bungalows etc. on priority basis at a rate fixed for the government officers.

➢ Telephone, Fax and E-mail facilities at least at district and subdivisional head quarters.

➢ Telephone, Fax and E-mail facilities at all the Press clubs and journalists' union offices in the state.

➢ A well equipped Press Lounge at Janata Bhawan, DIPR office, State and Assembly Secretariat offices.

➢ Allowing accredited and government recognized journalists to carry camera, tape recorder, cell phone, laptop computer or any other gadget necessary in discharging their duties to Ministers Offices and residences, MLA hostels and any other such places.

• Maximum care should be taken to ensure security of the journalists so that they do not become victims of any physical attack. Care should also be taken so the journalists are not harassed by the administration.

• The government and the media management should provide free insurance coverage to their employee journalists working in conflict areas.

• Safety code should be derived from international News safety Institute and some safety training should be given to the media persons by the media management and the government before sending them to cover war, insurgency, mafia activities and other dangerous assignments.

• A full fledged autonomous Press Academy should be set up in the state by the state government in line with Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka etc. so that future journalists could be groomed properly.

• We also urge the government to allot us a plot of land for the state headquarter of Journalists Union of Assam in the heart of the Guwahati city.

1.2.3.4 WAGE BOARD

Since 1955, the Government of India has constituted 5 Wage Boards at regular intervals for the working journalist non-journalist newspaper employees.
The following table gives the details of the constitution of Wage Boards along other relevant information (See Wage Board).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.NO</th>
<th>Name of the Wage Board</th>
<th>Date of appointment of the Wage Board</th>
<th>Date on which final report was submitted to the Government</th>
<th>Date of acceptance of the recommendations by the Government</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Wage Board for Working Journalist</td>
<td>02-05-1956</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>10-05-1957</td>
<td>DIVITA WAGE BOARD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Wage Board for Non-journalist Newspaper Employees</td>
<td>25-02-1964</td>
<td>17-07-1967</td>
<td>18-11-1967</td>
<td>Was converted into One-Man Tribunal on 9th February 1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Wage Boards for Working Journalists and Non-journalist Newspaper Employees</td>
<td>24-05-2007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NARAYANA KURUP WAGE BOARDS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


There has been series of development as regards to wage board and its implementation is concerned.

• The newspaper employee's unions have been demanding constitution of fresh Wage Boards as more than 10 years have been elapsed after the constitution of last Wage Board and they felt the last Wage Boards had not taken into consideration the boom in the newspaper sector on account of globalization and liberalization.

• Although the Working Journalists and other Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions act, 1955 does not say anything about the periodicity of constitution of Wage Boards, it was felt that the time was ripe for constitution of fresh Wage Boards as more than 10 years have elapsed since the last Wage Board were constituted.

• The Government of India, after taking into consideration the requests of the interested groups and all concerned stakeholders, approved the proposal for constitution of two Wage Boards, one for Working journalists and other for non-journalist newspaper employees, Under Sections 9 and 13C respectively of the working Journalists and other Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions act, 1995.

• Thus two Wage Boards were constituted vide Notifications No. V-24040/3/2004-WB dated 24th May 2007 under the Chairmanship of Justice K. Narayana Kurup, formerly Judge, High Court of Kerala and Acting chief Justice, High Court of Madras. Shri K.M. Sahni, former Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment has been appointed as full-time Member-Secretary of both the Wage Boards. Consequent upon resignation of Justice K. Narayana Kurup, the Government of India has appointed Justice G.R. Majithia as Chairman of Wage boards vide Notification nos S.O. 580(E) and S.O. 581 (E) dated 28th February 2009.

• Both the Wage Boards begin functioning with effect from 1st November, 2007.
UPDATES ON WAGE BOARD FUNCTIONING

Update: July 22, 2008: Justice K. Narayana Kurup submitted an interim report of the two wage boards- recommending an interim relief of 30 per cent of the basic salary for newspaper employees with effect from January 8, 2008, to the Minister of State for Labour and Employment Oscar Fernandez on July 22. This decision was arrived at through voting. Trade unions of newspaper employees said that the proposed interim relief was inadequate in view of the increasing inflation rates and demanded that the recommendation should be revised.

Update: July 22, 2008: Mr. Fernandez said that the Government would take a decision on interim relief within a week. The report was to be considered by the Union Cabinet. (Justice Kurup has submitted his resignation to the Cabinet Secretary.)

Update: October 8, 2008: The Union Cabinet approved notification of the interim enhancement of the wages at 30 per cent of basic wage for the working journalists and other newspaper employees with retrospective effect from January 2008 and was later notified.


Update: June, 2010: Term of wage boards extended up to December 31, 2010.

Update: December 31, 2010: Wage Boards submitted their recommendations. The Boards recommended a 35 per cent variable pay for journalists and non-journalists working in four top categories of newspapers and 20 per cent for others with effect from July 1, 2010. They also proposed an increase in the retirement age by five years to 65 years. Besides, they suggested 100 per cent neutralisation of increase in the cost of living index in dearness allowance. The allowance is recommended to be revised twice a year as against current practice of varying rates of neutralisation for different categories of establishments. 
and quarterly revision. The new basic pay is arrived at by merging the existing basic pay, dearness allowance and 30 per cent interim relief granted earlier. In sum, the basic salary of a journalist/other employee would move up by 2.5-2.85 times if the recommendation gets acceptance. However, the representatives of the employers (newspaper managements) have refused to sign the final report.

Update: January, 20, 2011: The Indian Newspaper Society (INS) expressed dismay at the recommendations. Said it would drive several newspapers out of business, if accepted by the government. It urged the government to reject the report. On the other side, The Confederation of Newspaper and News Agency Employees' Organisations, an apex body of five large federations of newspaper industries/news agencies' employees criticised some managements for practicing "anti-worker" policies and warned of a nationwide agitation if they opposed the recommendations (1).

Update: February, 10, 2011: Despite the stiff opposition from some newspaper managements to the recommendations of the Wage Boards for journalists and other employees of newspapers and news agencies, the Union Labour and Employment Ministry has prepared a Cabinet note, which will soon be circulated to other Ministries.

"We have prepared a Cabinet note, and soon it will be circulated to Ministries such as Finance, Information and Broadcasting, Law and Company Affairs ... for their comments and suggestions, if any. After their views are received, the note will be relooked and presented before the Cabinet for its approval," Union Labour Minister Mallikarjun Kharge told The Hindu (3).

Unfortunately even after the recommendation of successive Wage Boards since 1957, low-pay packets and poor-service conditions continue to exist in Indian media organizations and Assam being no exception to that.

The researcher with over a decade old experience of professional journalism in Assam often confronted with accusations that the "soul has gone out of
journalism". The notion that "journalists" are sold out to "political class", and are minting money in the name of public service, media in general have earned an extremely bad name in the society and there is an urgent need to address the issues.

The social background of a journalist is closely related to his value orientation, role perception and role performance. It involves an analysis of his place of origin, family type, caste, type of schooling, educational background, parental educational background (three generations), intergenerational and intragenerational occupational mobility; choice of profession of journalism, employment status, job satisfaction, appreciation and evaluation; training and skill development; press freedom and social responsibility; ethics and values, etc. The study thus warranted an inquiry into the reasons for journalis’s preference to choose journalism as a profession.

There has been acute dearth of research in this context and hence the study undertaken on “Social Background and Professional Role Performance of the Journalists in Assam” holds paramount importance.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- To examine the social background of the journalists in Assam.
- To understand the professional role performance of the journalists in Assam.
- To understand the relationship between social background and professional role performance of the journalists.

1.4 HYPOTHESIS
To fulfill the objectives, following Research Hypothesis is formulated:

"The social background of a journalist is closely related to his role performance."

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1.5 METHODOLOGY

Keeping in view the objectives of the study, the researcher first carried out an in-depth analysis of journalism of Assam in its historical and cultural context. The researcher also took note of systematic and truly longitudinal observational studies offered by veteran journalists that carefully tracked changes in Assam journalism over time. Exploration of this subject is significant in this area, as no such study has been carried out in Assam.

As required by its nature, objectives, and design, the research design for attaining the objectives was a survey using the questionnaire method. The researcher adopted purposive sampling method to collect data pertaining to the study. Since the study focuses on journalists in Assam, the researcher first prepared a list of the universe of all working journalists in Assam from different organization like Guwahati Press Club, Journalists Association of Assam, All Assam Press Correspondent's Union, Electronic Media Forum Assam, Assam Sangbadik Karma Parishad, Journalists' Forum, Assam, Journalists' Federation of Assam and DIPR (Directorate of Information and Public Relations). Many working journalists who are not accredited under DIPR are either members of the districts press Clubs/ journalists associations/ or has continued to serve the profession with the identity card issued by their respective organization. In fact, there was a problem in finding out the actual universe of the journalists in Assam. After a threadbare discussion with several journalists association, the researcher estimated presence of around 2500 journalists in Assam which includes part time, stringers, retainers, and electronic media journalists. Therefore, in order to ensure a moderate representation of the universe where each and every item has an equal chance of inclusion in the sample the researcher used “Journalist Directory 2008-09”, where a district-wise list of names of journalists was readily available. The Journalists directory of Assam, edited by Dipen Bayan and Parthajit Saikia, was found to be the only comprehensive directory published in Assam till date. It has turned out to an indispensable guide for the researcher.

Thus the study considered journalists from regional print and electronic
media (Reporter, Staff Reporter, Correspondent, Senior Correspondent, Stringer, etc working for daily newspapers/TV news channels) who have more than three years of work experience for inclusion in the universe. With the adoption of the inclusion criteria, a random list of 405 respondents was prepared for administering the questionnaire. Altogether 15 journalists representing each of the 27 districts of Assam figured as the representative of the universe.

1.5.1 RESEARCH SETTING

The research setting of the study is the State of Assam, in the northeastern part of India, in which the universes of the study are the journalists among the regional print and electronic media of 27 districts of Assam. The districts are:


The national print media, the national electronic media and journalists working under government media like Doordarshan and Prasar Bharati have been excluded from the purview of the study due to their better service conditions. The study has also excluded journalists of regional media holding editorial positions like Chief Reporter, Assignment head, Deputy Editor, Associate Editor, etc and also other supporting in-house staff of the media organization.

1.5.2 STUDY SAMPLE

Of the 405 journalists figured in the sample from 27 administrative districts of Assam, the researcher approached the respondents with a request to fill the questionnaire. However, in North Cachar hills district, the entire universe comprised of nine (09) respondents. Hence, the researcher finally arrived at a total sample size of 399 respondents.
1.5.3 SAMPLING

In view of the objectives of the study, the researcher adopted purposive sampling method to collect data pertaining to the study. A random sample of 15 journalists was drawn from 27 districts of Assam. The study also followed a holistic approach in North Cachar Hills district where the entire universe was selected due to the presence of limited number of journalists.

1.5.4 INSTRUMENT

The data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire consisting of open and closed ended questions. The closed ended ones have simple yes/no, agree/disagree, etc type of questions. In the open ended ones, the respondents have the opportunity to express their own views regarding some queries. The questionnaire was divided into two parts, each comprising of several sections. Part I consisted of questions related to identification and demographic data of the respondents such as age, sex, caste, religion, mother tongue and so on. Part II comprised of different sections to ascertain the professional role performance of journalists in Assam like choice of profession of journalism, employment status, job satisfaction and job expectations, job appreciation and evaluation of work, press freedom and social responsibility, press ownership and editorial freedom, on journalist’s ideology, trends in journalism, ethics and values, training and skill development, some alternative considerations for journalistic practice and survival and state of Assam journalism. The data pertaining to the study were collected between June 2010 and January 2011.

1.5.5 PRE TEST

The closed-ended structured questionnaire thus prepared was pre-tested before the study began. The questionnaire was given to 15 journalist-respondents based out at Silchar, in the Cachar district of Assam. Based on their responses, a few questions like monthly earning of the respondent from journalistic profession, respondents status on governmental accreditation facilities, loan/facilities from government, and others were incorporated in the questionnaire. Few changes like misprinting; repetition of serial
numbers, etc was noticed during the pre-test and has been rectified accordingly.

1.5.6 TECHNIQUES OF DATA COLLECTION

From the very beginning the researcher was aware of the fact that there could be certain problems in contacting a journalist and convince him for providing information. This became apparent during the pre-test study as each journalist was reluctant to fill the questionnaire at one sitting due to its detail structure. When questionnaires were supplied for filling the same as per their convenience, it had taken more time. There were instances where some respondents misplaced the questionnaire and the researcher had to provide again fresh questionnaire.

In the first phase, ‘questionnaires’ (as enclosed on Appendix-II) were dispatched to respondents directly on their mailing address by post. But, due to postal delay and some other unavoidable reason, very few received the questionnaire. As the questionnaire was set in English, it was also difficult for some to grasp the subject matter and answer accordingly. Altogether, 16 journalists majority of them from barak valley districts responded to the questionnaire supplied to them.

As the study area is quite vast, the researcher in the second phase of data collection, prepared an “offline questionnaire” (as enclosed on Appendix-IIA) in order to reach out to the respondents. The ‘offline questionnaire’, is a replica of the ‘printed questionnaire’ where a respondent has to simply download the attachment (questionnaire), fill in the required field, save and send back the same attachment to the researcher’s email. The entire questionnaire can be filled without any alteration to the format and structure and is unique of its own. Exclusively designed by the researcher himself, the questionnaire was prepared taking help of MS-Word tools which is compatible to “MS Word 97-2003 document”. The special characteristic of the online questionnaire lies on the fact that a large universe can be covered with minimum cost and effort.

The researcher on the basis of information and phone number available in
the Journalist directory reached out to the study sample for their email ids. However, the problems encountered were again with the non-availability of email ids and access to the internet in some rural areas. Besides, some of the respondents faced problems in understanding the English questionnaire, and for some following instructions of the online questionnaire like ‘downloading the attachment’, ‘filling the required fields by double clicking on the check box’ was something very new to them. Moreover, as the media in Assam is dominated by Assamese newspapers, understanding the English scripts was very difficult for the respondents. On each such occasion, the researcher guided the respondents over phone. Despite all efforts and sending at least three reminders over the phone and mail, the online response rate was very much unsatisfactory. Only 28 respondents (journalists) in total send their responses through internet.

The researcher also uploaded the offline questionnaire in social networking sites like face book, northeast journos’ group in getting response from the respondents who fits in the criteria set for the sample. However, only one respondent of kamrup district responded from such initiative. Finding no other alternative, the researcher adopted ‘telephonic interview’ (as enclosed on Appendix IIB) in the third phase of data collection. This interview technique was immensely beneficial as the remaining 354 respondents could be successfully reached over the phone. On the basis of directory listings, each respondent was contacted for an appointment to spare few minutes for the survey. The questionnaire was redesigned in the form of interview schedule (enclosed in Annexure) and special codes were marked for each response. The telephonic survey was carried out by the researcher himself along with a group of post graduation students of the department of mass communication, Assam University, Silchar. All the group members engaged for gathering the data has been explained on the main objectives and purpose of the study and was specially trained for the purpose. Requisite tips on how to conduct an interview like taking a prior appointment, understanding the work load, etc of the journalists was also briefed to those research assistants. The technique of data collection through
telephonic interview helped the researcher invariably. With over a decade experience as a practicing journalist in northeast, the researcher was well acquainted with a number of journalists who had been his friends, colleagues, and staff. Through these ties of social network and fluency in Assamese language, the researcher could explain to the questions and queries rose by the respondents. This helped the researcher in getting quick and favorable response.

1.5.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The data was analyzed using SPSS tool- a comprehensive and flexible statistical analysis and data management solution. The cross-tabulation data pertaining to the study was first analyzed with the help of SPSS software and later on organized accordingly using the MS Excel tool. All the figures which include the pie and bar diagram was made in MS Excel.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study assumes vital importance not only from academic point of view but also safeguarding media from further erosion. The concept of credibility, accountability and performance is increasingly found in the discussions at various forums about public institutions like the judiciary, the executive, and the legislature. Since checks and balances control the judiciary, the legislature, and the executive, the fourth estate i.e. the press has no such mechanism to control it, except in certain circumstances where the law can be invoked against the media. Contrary to these institutions media have the duty to represent the case of public to the other three institutions for public good that duty gives power to the media to be used for any purpose.

Hence the study while recording the level of influence of social factors on professional practices suggested the government and industry frame appropriate system for optimum utilization of their human resources. Thus, the study would help in the promotion of further research and offer a value
addition to the field of knowledge as well as provide a proper framework for evaluating journalistic issues in any given universe.

1.7 UNIQUENESS OF THE STUDY

The uniqueness of the study lies in its inter-disciplinary approach. In the process, the study is of equal importance for mass communication academics, media industry, media management, social work, and other allied social science disciplines.

1.8 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

The definitions of the terms used for the study are as follows:

The term ‘Journalist’ refers to a person who practices journalism. “Reporters” are one type of journalist who creates reports for broadcast or publication in mass media (print and electronic media). Synonymous terms such as “media persons”, “correspondents”, “senior correspondents”, “staff reporter”, “senior reporter”, “video journalists”, “stringers”, “contributors”, and “retainers” are also used to describe the profession.

The Term ‘Social Background’ refers to value orientation, role perception and role performance. Some key elements of socio-economic background includes- age-group, length of service, place of origin, family-type, caste, type of schooling, educational background, parental educational background (three generations), intergenerational and intragenerational occupational mobility, etc.

Professional role performance refers to choice of profession of journalism, employment status, job satisfaction, appreciation and evaluation; training and skill development; press freedom and social responsibility; ethics and values, etc.

Newspaper, means any printed (including cyclostyled) periodical work containing public news or comments on public news. According to the Indian Post Office Act: “every publication consisting wholly or in great part of political or other news or of articles relating thereto or to other current topics, with or without advertisements, shall be deemed as newspaper
subject to the following conditions, namely, (a) that it is published in
numbers as intervals of not more than 31 days, (b) that it has a bonafide list
of subscribers. According to UNESCO, Newspapers are broadly divided
into two categories, namely, “General Interest Newspaper” and
“Periodicals”. The “General Interest Newspaper” is defined as any
publication put on sale to the general public, which serves as a initial source
or written news of current events in the field of public affairs, politics,
government, etc. “Periodical” other than a general interest newspaper as a
publication which appears under the same title at regular intervals but more
than once a year and whose contents vary from information of a general
nature of trades, technical and professional subjects.

Regional print media are the broadsheet daily newspapers which are
published from Assam and have a region/ nationwide readership.

Regional electronic media are the satellite news channels with transmission
centre’s in Assam and have a region/ nationwide audience.

Circulation (RNI) means average number of copies sold and distributed per
publishing day.

Big newspaper (RNI) means a newspaper with a circulation of more than
75,000 copies per publishing day.

Medium newspaper (RNI) means a newspaper with a circulation between
25,001 and 75,000 copies per publishing day.

Small newspaper (RNI) means a newspaper with a circulation up to 25,000
copies per publishing day.

Claimed circulation (RNI) means circulation figure claimed by a publisher
in his annual statement filed under the Press and Registration of Books Act,
1867.

Accepted circulation (RNI) means circulation accepted by the Press
Registrar of RNI.