CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
You cannot be passive about citizenship or about journalism. A good newspaper will reward you only as far as you are devoted to reading it critically.¹

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Mass media, are a major social force in our world today as many of the fundamental principles and procedures for social activity are influenced by media. We believe that modern mass media are not passive channels and media persons too are actors in situations of social crises/conflict. By imposing meanings, news, according to Gaye Tuchman,² perpetually defines and redefines, constitutes and reconstitutes social phenomena. So, starting with the premise that news imparts to occurrences their public character, i.e., transforming mere happenings into publicly discussable events, this study intends to discuss news as a social institution.

News affects people, particularly in the urban sector of society. Information pervades daily life usually through a newspaper, Television, or conservations in buses, trains or sites of public gathering. It is true that more people in India today are exposed to more ideas than at any time in history. This volume of ideas, and the reactions they produce, are the most important aspects of change in modern India. If I had to answer in a single sentence, the question, "What's happening to India?", I would say that it is talking to itself as never before and forming a new ‘itself’ in the process.³

An interesting aspect is that the news conscious, news-addicted society is often critical of those who work in the news media. "People curse the messengers, even as they hungrily consume the message."  

The newspaper's universal character and appeal make it a continuing fact of life in the era of the information superhighway.

While some might suggest that the newspaper is a dinosaur in the Information Age, the last remnant of an old technology, such assumptions could not be more wrong. The newspaper is the most important organising force for news and information in the world today. More than any other medium, the newspaper offers an inventory of information - a menu, if you will - that includes a broad array of news, hard and soft, of the community, the nation and the world: It is multifaceted in its content, ranging from the most serious assessment of public affairs, such as politics and economics, to the most playful feature about an ordinary person doing something extraordinary.

The broad public nature of news is indicated by the way the word News is derived. The four letters of the word are the initials of the four directions of the world. News is constituted of reports from all quarters, from all sides, from all directions.

The two major proponents of sociology of news were both former or practising journalists and drawing on their own professional experience, answer the question of the nature of news. Walter Lippman (1822) focused on the process of news gathering which according to him was a search for the

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5 Krimsky and Hamilton, 1996, op.cit., p.xv  
"objective clear signal which signify any event" is why, "news is not a mirror of social condition, but the report of an aspect that has obtruded itself."

Which is why newspapers seek out places like police stations, law courts, hospitals, legislature etc., where events are likely to be first signalled. News has even been compared to another form of knowledge, history, which is also a record of events and placed on a continuum that ranges from "acquaintance with" to "knowledge about". Dennis Maquail has tried to elicit some of the major points of comparison of news with history in that; news is timely, unsystematic, perishable, unusual or unexpected, involves judgements by readers or audience, is mainly for audientation and attention seeking (so not a substitute for knowledge) and news is predictable. This paradoxical point has been explained by Park as follows:

If it is the unexpected that happens it is not the wholly unexpected which gets into the news. The events that have made news in the past, as in the present, are actually the expected things... it is on the whole the accidents and incidents that the public is prepared for... the things that one fears and that one hopes for that makes news.7

We may surmise that the depth and importance of communications media is evident when it is realized that contemporary mass society in its present form is inconceivable without the printing press. Political events, forms of community, economic systems, all are coordinated with communication media if the windmill is associated with feudalism and the steam engine, capitalism.

Similarly, electronic communications may also be associated with the mode of information. The extent to which communication is restricted by time and space governs, with striking force, the shape society may take, according to Mark Poster.  

Nicholas Luhmann, a German social philosopher influenced by Talcott Parsons, defines the media as regulating mechanisms within detached market-like institutions;

media... solve the problem of... contingency through transmission of reduced complexity. They employ their selection pattern as a motive to accept the reduction, so that people join with others in a narrow world of common understandings complimentary expectations, and determinable issues. Media are not only words, symbols, or codes; they are meaningful constellations of combined selectivity which can be signified by words, symbolised and codified legally. Methodologically prominent examples are money and power, and we would like to add truth, love and perhaps art.  

Another interestingly relevant exposition by Poster is on Writing at the Border of Subject and Object. The author feels that compared to the pen, the typewriter or the printing press, the computer dematerialises. The written trace transforms a mental image into a graphic representation. Words become in a new way a defiant enemy of their author resisting his or her efforts to reshape or redistribute them.

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What elevates true journalism above the gutter press is its commitment to truth and values worth preserving - and a healthy respect for the people whom it criticises - once truth and ethics are thrown to the winds, what remains of journalism is the harlotry of the well-fed class.... Avarice, the desire to get rich overnight, prompts both the harlot and the journalist to throw off the garb of decency.

In a relatively small but extremely heterogenous society like ours, it becomes imperative to try and understand the messages being propounded by the prevalent means of communication. How the information dissemination-process takes on the dual function of not only imparting 'news' but also perpetuating stereotyped notions of gender, nationality or community. Another 'latent' (as Merton would put it) function being served by the same agencies could be seen as a mere transformation of a mission (as happened to be the case during the freedom movement) to an industry promoting 'the news at any cost'.

We are surrounded by facts. As social beings, we seek them, exchange them, check them and act upon them. We are all reporters and we handle large amounts of data in a systematic way. Yet we also rely on second hand messages about the world beyond our social experience. These messages do not come to us innocently. The facts they report are not merely random fragments which we capture and store. They come to us in patterns which are largely defined and packaged for us by the mass media.

The lofty ideas people have up pertaining to the Indian press may be hard to come by, in reality. A healthy Press ought to be a medium for dissemination of correct news on every topic of public interest,


without any suppression, distortion or slant, without exaggeration and without vulgar sensationalism in presentation, in which selection of news and featuring will be governed by considerations not merely of conveying information of importance but of news at once educative and conducive to promoting national solidarity and cohesion, acting with a sense of proportion, not transacting little events which have little social value, laying particular emphasis on those that possess such values.... A healthy Press implies that proprietors should not interfere with the freedom and independence of editors, and here I am thinking of the editor who is not also the proprietor and who would not mind the sacrifice of his private interests or political predilections to secure the public views.  

According to Armand Mattelart,

to be truthful and objective, forbidding himself any judgements except 'from outside': this is the line of conduct the journalist must observe. This is the code of ethics which determines the autonomous and extra-social character of the journalistic world, which, in its sceptical neutrality, resembles that of science. It is a micro universe, in which, it seems, the natural laws of ideology and value and value judgement do not operate.

Within it the professional ceases to be affected by the social conditioning. However, the same author contends that this sort of objectivity is very difficult to grasp because

1. What would be worthy of news, by the journalist, involves selection, on the basis of perception, from the external reality;

2. Interpretation of reality is bound to be influenced by the dominant system of values, which cannot but be ideological;

12 Mr. Rajagopala Ayyangar, a former judge of the Supreme Court who as Chairman of Press Council was giving the inaugural lecture for the All India Newspaper Editors Conference on What Ails the Indian Press? in 1970.

3. There are parallels drawn between the technique of objectivity and the technique of the alienation of the journalists labour.

The World Press Encyclopedia considers the press on four levels.14

i) On the economic level, as a business institution and a profit making activity as a consumer of goods and services, and, as an employer.

ii) On the political level, as the fourth estate, often in conflict, with the other three, often muzzled and unfree, but nonetheless helping to mould public opinion and bearing the public’s right to know.

iii) On the professional level, as an occupation with its own ethics and standards and in relation to other sectors of the mass media.

iv) On the philosophical level, as an intellectual activity, as a market place of ideas and opinions, dealing with the very raw materials of history.

The last level distinguishes the press from other businesses and purely economic activities. It is the source of its strength, because the press has to strive at all times to maintain the vigorous standards of objectivity and honesty that an intellectual enterprise demands. It also helps to make the press the terror of errant governments, forcing them to move against the news media more cautiously than they do in the case of other sectors of national life. Parallels can be drawn between the world of journalists and the world of intellectuals, at many levels. However, one basic professional character prevails through the spirit of unfettered enquiry. We do however contend that the ideas expressed in particular newspapers are bound to relate to their basic economic interests. But ownership potentially involves more specific forms of economic control. It allows

owners privileged access to public discourse. Such access means opportunities for, political or commercial exploitation.\textsuperscript{15}

We accept that journalists are part of their social value systems, besides being thorough bred professionals. These values and opinions may become a part of their vocation of writing. The news carries the stories and images of our day. News is determined by values, and the kind of language in which that news is presented reflects and expresses those values. In fact, news is one of the ways modern people go about building their worlds.

By maintaining an artificial distinction between public and private, the news media mask the actual organisation of significant services. They also allow 'private institutions' not to make news, much as in earlier days when members of the upper class sought to keep their names out of the papers except for announcements of birth, marriage and death. The power to keep an occurrence out of the news is power over the news.\textsuperscript{16}

THE PROBLEM

The main impetus to study the sociology of news, for us, has been by the increasing realisation of its potential as a powerful instrument of information. Intentionally, or otherwise, news seems to be a manufactured product. What we saw or read about Punjab during the Operation Blue Star in 1984, was nothing in comparison to the reality (as conveyed by relatives and friends, who survived or witnessed the events). In fact, the depiction of

\textsuperscript{15} Andrew Hart, op.cit., p.72.

\textsuperscript{16} Tuchman, Gaye, op.cit., p.164.
success of the army/government operations completely overshadowed the trauma and agony of innocent people who were liquidated along with the culprits just because they 'happened to be where the action was'. Similarly, there was hardly any coverage of the large scale terrorism that the state and its law-enforcing agencies almost endorsed while its "super cop(s)" were flushing out the 'real' terrorists. Similarly, the states in the North East have more often than not, been depicted as strife torn and problem ridden.

Conflict may involve the defence of what one already has or the acquisition of what one does not have. As conflicts affect the lives of people in varying degrees, they become major datelines for news media. Parties or nations in conflict may try to use media for their own ends which in turn may feel threatened or pressurised in conflict situations. However, it is not as though the media or press do not inflame conflict situations. This does happen we contend when press and other form of media overlook the rights or needs of some social categories like religious communities, women and age groups. Wilfully or otherwise, some newspapers may foster discriminatory attitudes. Socialised to their professional attitudes and norms, news makers cover, select and disseminate stories about items identified as interesting or important. Even those who are in control of news producing systems happen to have vested interests, which may be miles away from being socially constructive. More often than not, the sources of news are also either top level functionaries or elites within the social, cultural, political or economic spheres of society.
News, in our opinion, is presented with a certain bias towards the upper echelons of society. Where there is mention of the lower or anyway alienated lot like minorities, poor etc. it is invariably in situations of conflict, violence etc.

The manner in which the media, even the press, which one would presume, is unfettered by government control, so freer, can project mediated representations has been of concern to us. For instance, there is the possibility that the mass media, of India and Pakistan, are biased in their orientations towards each other. We feel the need to understand the role of media, specially newspapers, in acting as bridges of gaps of communication, between the two nations whose relations since the last half a century have been perpetually on the razor's edge.

While usual journalistic practice is an understanding that information is being exchanged for publicity, in the case of the diplomatic correspondents it appears that often information is being traded for information. The prestigious foreign affairs correspondents are obviously important cogs in the wheels of diplomacy. The correspondents are made use of not only as source of information, but also under some circumstances, to carry on communication with another country. 17

The complexity of the situation, we feel, arises when the decision making processes within the two countries may be influenced by the information provided by newspapers. The fact that a number of our parliamentarians are increasingly taking the help of newspaper reports to

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reiterate their arguments, during ongoing parliamentary debates, is an indication of the ‘appeal’ of the media especially newspapers, amongst the powerful elite of the country. One may then further assume that governments are interested in persuasive communication within the frame of foreign-policy goals, and that journalists, too, are made use of, to alter the image of country or its policy.\(^{18}\)

Eventually, we wish to hypothesise that journalists and their construction of reality becomes very much a part of the political process of a country and its relations with others too. This co-governance of sorts has been explained by Patricia Karl who writes that the media are increasingly a part of the process (if not the entire process) in the communication between governments and publics about international politics.\(^{19}\)

Another notable point is the possibility of considerable damage done to countries in potentially conflicting positions, in our case, India and Pakistan were ‘the society’s elite to base their view of the environment primarily on the picture conveyed by the mass media.’\(^{20}\)

These mediated or constructed representations of conflict may further reinforce the stereotypes we hold towards each other, whether they be as a fanatic Muslim, a Pakistani-so-a-spy or an extremist Sikh. The suspicion is a consequence, we feel, of our media and its overenthusiastic journalists. Even

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18 Ibid, p.236.


20 Kunczik, op.cit., p.237.
within the country, we have seen the significance attached to the mediator’s role of the journalist in case of a crisis situation involving a smuggler bandit who had eluded the authorities of two state governments for many years, simultaneously carrying on his business of smuggling sandalwood. The fact that things did come round to some negotiation, even if they were questionable, speaks volumes for the reach or extent of contacts of journalists.

The fact that beauty can actually be projected only within the framework of a Miss Universe, Miss World is yet another media construction. Though the electronic media is obsessed in projecting such glamorous symbols as role-models for youngsters, the print media has found it an equally lucrative proposition to give it front page coverage.

By their coronations as Miss Universe and Miss World, and the subsequent profusion of media publicity which followed, Sushmita and Aishwarya, became for a time at least, and among a limited clientele, symbols of euphoric national pride. The media reacted as if this were a momentous event in Indian history, providing front page feature news coverage and numerous T.V. interviews.21

Both were received/given receptions by the President and Prime Minister at par with those accorded to heads of foreign countries, almost. Courtesy the media, we would not be surprised if many daughters born in Indian households would have been christened with name-sakes of the ‘awe-inspiring’ icons of Indian beauty (read culture - because that is how the newspapers portrayed them!). This crisis of culture or identity that the media, even newspapers participate in,

21 Corinne, Scott, 1995, Voices, vol.4, no.3.
in fact initiate, is another area of interest for us. How this ‘rootlessness’ of sorts is serving the interests of an inherently consumer culture. The role of the press, or media in general in projecting a convoluted rather than a realistic sense of beauty, to the point of propagating them as cultural ambassadors of the entire nation, is symptomatic of being part of a crisis situation, for us.

Some of the other questions of concern to us, involve the reportage of environmental issues like Bhopal Gas Tragedy, Plague epidemic etc. besides other crises like communal issues and how newspapers perhaps participate in biased image-making. We do contend that the factors leading to distorted reporting or ‘departures from objectivity could be the particular reporter’s commitments to the commercial interests of his employers, his desire to what the appetite of the mob for scandal is, his indifference to his social obligations, the correspondence of his political partisanship with that of his employer’s or simply directives from his employer.\textsuperscript{22} We do not however subscribe to his writing off the Indian Press as a ‘mirror of distortion’ but do certainly wish to probe whether:

- The press, interprets events on the basis of its occupational values?
- News is manufactured keeping in mind the vested interests of those who own news producing systems?
- The way issues are presented, is the result of the kind of access allowed to news sources?

\textsuperscript{22} Bannerjee, S., op.cit., p.74.
Newspapers are as effective means of communication as the electronic media?

The English language newspapers have an edge over the Indian language papers, in terms of influence, accessibility to those in power - so influence the decision makers, too?

Stereotypes about religious groups, beauty, environmental/health issues are the handiwork of the press as much as those who are directly involved in the same?

There could be any checks on the Press?

There is a need for a theoretical understanding of the news behind newspapers. Indeed, this is what our study aims to analyse.

METHODOLOGY

We have based our study on works related to similar issues about which we have elaborated towards the end of this chapter. We have also sought direct contact with journalists, by administering a questionnaire each, to 175 journalists from various newspaper organisations in Delhi. 164, out of these 175, chose to respond to our queries which was more like an interview schedule, as each respondent was contacted personally by the researcher and asked to fill up the questionnaire besides answering some of our queries, through informal interviews based on the same.
The sample of 175 journalists, was selected keeping in mind the availability of time and other resources. On the basis of purposive sampling, we selected our respondents from different newspapers, keeping in mind various languages, the gender and age representation factors. Needless to add that purposive or quota sampling’s main requirement

"is not that the various population strata be sampled in their correct proportions, but rather that there be enough cases from each stratum to make possible an estimate of the population stratum, and that we know (or can estimate with reasonable accuracy) the proportion that each stratum constitutes in the total population."

This we concede may not be a very satisfactory procedure for high precision but our attempt at administering the questionnaire-cum-interviews has not meant to be ‘representative’ for the entire journalist community. It has been more of an experiential exercise in gauging the various parameters significant for making news, by journalists and their organisations. This experience of interacting with ‘newsmakers’ the method of observation was also utilised helped to get an insight into the motivations/aspirations, perceived objectives, values, reportage and biographical accounts of journalists. These parameters are taken up at the end of each chapter, to elucidate the related theoretical discussions. A pre-test of our questionnaire was done on 30 journalists and after a few modifications we conducted the ‘field work’.

Whoever said 'real' field work generally entails going to alien 'other', not-so-advanced cultures, would not know what travails even familiar, very broad minded and accessible groups of people, professionals, can make one go through. From being openly ignored upon arrival, in a newsroom (despite knowledge that the researcher has come to conduct the interview/questionnaire), to being brushed off as a "survey wali" akin to those marketing consumer durables, one had to face the ignominy of what being a 'patient' researcher is. Other queries apart, one had to virtually face a post mortem of one's work by some enterprising journalists who took it upon themselves to remind the researcher in no uncertain terms that studying about them or their organisation, was not going to be easy. The invisible barricade that is woven by the journalists around their professional world for the outsider, can be quite a drive up the wall. A young reporter who works in an English daily even brushed aside the competitive, do-gooder image of the Press. He said "Don't build any halo around the press - they're no messiah of change". The "I'm busy" air, surprisingly, came from the unlikeliest of quarters. The younger generation, of journalists were the hardest to access. The experienced correspondents, senior editors, bureau chiefs etc. were the most forthcoming in terms of availability and time spent. So much for debunking my own stereotypes, as to how the contrary would have been true!

This 'field work' was undertaken during the summer and monsoon of 1995 and took six months to complete. This included at least 2-4 visits to
many of our respondents, who chose to be as elusive as can be, under some pretext or the other. The selected newspaper organisations were those of English dailies (like Times of India, Hindustan Times, Indian Express, National Herald, Asian Age etc.), Hindi dailies (Navbharat Times, Jansatta, Nai Duniya and others) and other languages too (Quami Awaz, Sandesh, Kerala Kaumudi, Mathrubhumi, Pragativedi etc.). Some of course, were very considerate and helped in fact, by prodding on their colleagues to cooperate. The responses were coded, tabulated and analysed with the help of a computer which generated quite a few interesting data, on the basis of cross tabulation with the help of the SPSS package. Our study has used multiple methods like questionnaire, interviews besides using other sources of data like reports of the Press Council, Press Commission, etc.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Among the few relevant studies, the work of N.Bhaskara Rao\(^\text{24}\) focuses on Indo-Pak conflict. Looking at the 1965 war between India and Pakistan, from a mass communication perspective, Rao examined the role of press and found that the frequency of the editorials from the *Times of India* and the *Pakistan Times* increased considerably as tensions mounted and relations became strained between the two countries. This finding led him to support the thinking of James W.Markhan, who observed that as the volume of direct


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communication between the parties fell, the countries involved increasingly used their respective mass media systems through which to pour out their feeling of frustration and hostility. It is suggested in the book that by a systematic analysis of mass media of the countries engaged in inter-state conflicts, one might be able to assess the degree of trust that these countries display towards each other and some of the consequences that operate under tension-trust or crises-non-crisis situations. The assumption the book makes is that these countries are likely to exhibit trust for each other at the declining rate just before a crises touching lowest point during a crises period and again changing after the crises has subsided. "The major elements in this conflict are the images that India and Pakistan have created of themselves on the eve of the partition" (p.73) Bhaskara Rao also contends that conflict is a breakdown in a communication and the chances of conflict increase proportionality as communication declines. This area has been explored throughout questionnaire and otherwise, where we do get an indication of the sensation prone news by journalists, when it comes to the Indo-Pak issue. We have tried to gauge the possibility of stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes or actions being a consequence of the biased reportage across the border.

Burton25 explains how media organisations put their messages together, why they do this in the way they do, and what bearing their output may have

on us. He also takes up analysis of power and influence, construction of meaning and theories about mass media in relation to society.

Goldstein, a veteran reporter himself, examines the way the press gathers the news. He gives an insider's account of how journalists shape the news, and he shows us that we have good reason to be suspicious of much of the news we get. In their relentless search for the story, journalists sometimes overlook basic human values and often take questionable shortcuts in collecting information. He also shows how few of the ethical constraints on reporters apply to media owners, whose chief concern appears to be gathering not news, but profits.

The idea of an information rich environment hides more than it reveals. The reading of newspaper has become a ceremonial, ritualistic, or, near compulsive act for many people. The news has become a crucial source of beliefs and values with which people try to make sense of their lives and the world around them. Golding and Elliot attempt to examine this much taken for granted product, and to question its nature and source.

For Altschull, the notion that news has a kind of independent character or that stories tells themselves is simply wrong, just as it is incorrect to think that reporters and editors somehow stand apart from the political,

27 Golding and Elliot, Making the News, Longman.
economic, social, and cultural system that has shaped them. To imagine that journalists are a breed apart, somehow able to be objective about the world around them in ways that others cannot, is to believe in a logical absurdity. He suggests that the content of the news reflects the ideology of those who finance the press and argues that this relationship will continue, no matter what form or forms the news media takes. De Fleur\textsuperscript{29} deals with communication revolution, society and the mass press, socio-cultural influences on the development of motion pictures, social context of broadcast media and mass media as social systems. Rubin\textsuperscript{30} explores the ways in which the media handle political events and processes. He believes that the educational power of the media has frequently been less obvious than the tendency to disseminate superficial or misleading information.

For Dennis Howitt\textsuperscript{31} the distrust of the news media can be traced to a number of untruths that are promulgated by them. In the absence of trustworthy mass media, as often happens in crises situations, rumour is rife. The public have heightened the need for information which can be served by interpersonal meanings, should the need arise. The mass media can define reality for their audiences. Crises situations increase the need for news during most serious disturbances. News media are bombarded with calls from anxious

\begin{itemize}
\item Dennis Howitt, 1982, \textit{The Mass Media and Social Problems}, Pergamone Press.
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citizens wanting information clarification, verification of what they have heard. So important is the flow of news through established channels that its continued absence can help precipitate a crises. Mass communication often annoys and angers those whose position in society is sensitive. This is seen with tragic consequences at the time of riots, war-prone situations, or assassinations.

According to Dennis Mcquail, society produced the demands for information and entertainment to which the media respond, the reservoir of money and time needed for the growth of media industries, the inventions on which they are based, socio-cultural climate in which they are free to operate. Mass communications in turn stimulates change, accelerates the demand for its own services, contributes to the climate of cultural and political freedom in which media can themselves better operate and defuses new ideals and innovations.

Morrison and Tumber question the role of information in liberal democracies during war time. They analyse the content of news during the Falklands Conflict and also present results of a national survey of public opinion about the news that people saw and their attitudes towards the media. Their account given equal weightage to the recognition of the journalist as a person and to news gathering as a product of occupational practices.

33 Morrison and Tumber, 1988, Journalists at War.
Dexter and White\textsuperscript{34} have discussed the latent function of the media besides other dimensions. By expressing, dramatising and repeating cultural patterns both the traditional and newly emerging, the media reinforce tradition and at the same time explain the new roles. Members of the society thus remain integrated within the socio-cultural structure. As a form of adult socialisation, the media are seen as guarantors that a body of common ultimate values remains visible as a continuing source of consensus, despite the inroads of change. To stimulate action, they feel, mass media exhortations need to be coupled with the organisation of face to face leadership as changes in values and attitudes are far more important to modernization than are mere changes in actions. Richter Rosemary\textsuperscript{35} has written about an evolving international situation in which the growth of what might be called the political consciousness of the Third World for all the event diversity of the countries which belong to it, has as a common factor a rejection of the ideals of individual opportunity and freedom of choice. The symbiosis between public and the press is shaped in the market place, say the authors where the press, guardian of peoples rights, competes through its credibility (and its ability to entertain) for the publics confidence (and purchasing power) and also through its sensitivity to public place; 'what' and 'how much' are both regularity factors - the basic premises that news is a national resource and must serve the


developmental process through the mobilisation of public option. There is no such thing as a neutral fact. The least fragment of information conveyed, is an international event - all news is from one to the other.

The author also contends that the Third World Politicians who talk seriously about "decolonising" information are also convinced that the news which reaches them from the West imposes values and creates demands which damage their societies - whether it is a number of cars per Scandinavian Household published in a country where even a bicycle is a luxury or a blow-by-blow account of a celebrity divorce circulating in a strict Islamic society. Because news is a merchandise rather than a service, stories are selected for their impact, exoticism and ability to entertain.36

Gaye Tuchman37 demonstrates how the news frame including its identification of ‘facts’ is embedded in certain social institutions and in so doing, it explodes the myth of journalistic objectivity applying the philosophy of social science to news and comparing news to other modes of knowing. She also finds that news is ideological - a method of obscuring truth. News presents to a society a mirror of its concerns and interests. Comparing news with knowledge, Tuchman feels that news imposes a frame for defining and constructing social reality but as ideology, news blocks enquiry by preventing

36 Which is why Michael Jackson's skin 'surgery' or latest hairdo or some auction of an icon of an actress become front page news items, rather than some 'hard' news about the country’s political, social or economic state of affairs.

an analytic understanding through which social actors can work to understand their own fate. Ultimately news as ideology prevents the realisation of the Enlightenment model of free speech and public governance by preventing the ascertainment of truths about contemporary society, by limiting access to ideas.

There are a couple of works by 'insiders' who have written about the Press in relation to its inner working. Many have written about the latent reality of newspapers. Some books have dealt with the legal aspects related to the Press. Prominent amongst these are Padhy (1994) and Mankekar (1978).39

Very few books deal with specific issues pertaining to the press women's issues for instance have hardly been taken up. Rama Jha's Women and the Indian Print Media, does try to fill the gap on that account through. Another useful book on this topic is 'Whose News?' in The Media and Women's Issues edited by Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma.41 Taking up different women's issues, the authors have tried to depict the portrayal of the same by newspapers.


40 Rama Jha, Women and the Indian Print Media.

The Language of News Media by Allan Bell\textsuperscript{42} explores the influential language of the media and asks what the patterns of media discourse tell us about wider linguistic issues. His discussion on the production of News Language makes it directly relevant for understanding our own construction of reality thesis.

Indian publications by and large have concentrated on discussing the history of the Press, tracing its background from the freedom struggle to the present times. Important amongst such publications are:\textsuperscript{43} S.Natarajan, 1962, \textit{A History of the Press in India}, G.N.S.Raghavan, 1994, \textit{The Press in India - A New History} and Bhattacharya and Chakravorty,\textsuperscript{44} 1989, \textit{News Behind Newspapers} also surveyed the Indian Press from the time it was a mission to the time it became an industry.

We have also collected data from the Press Commission Reports and Press Council publications, besides the many journals, related to the area of our research.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{42} Allan Bell, \textit{The Language of News Media}.


\textsuperscript{44} Bhattacharya and Chakravorty, 1989, \textit{News Behind Newspapers}.

\textsuperscript{45} Kindly refer to bibliography for journals consulted.
CHAPTERISATION

Contending that the role of the Press in the process of the social construction of reality holds a significant place in communication research, our chapterisation includes first, a theoretical analysis of the major sociological concepts and perspectives of significance, to our work. In chapter two we have tried to analyse the concept of 'ideology' to enable us to use it in the most restricted sense, in the domain of ideas. Ideas if distorted can lead to the biased reportage, similar to what we see in our daily newspapers. In chapter three, we have tried to go into the historical development of these ideas. That is, what is the history, the present reality, and experience of those working within the organisation of newspapers? How journalists perceive their news organisations vis-a-vis their objectives, before/after independence and now, in the nineties, also figures here, on the basis of our fieldwork. Chapter four deals with the Journalist or 'Newsmaker'\(^{46}\) as an actor in the organisation. What are the ethics they have to adhere to? What hierarchy do they become a part of? What are their aspirations or motivations, for staying on in the field. The biographical account of our own sample of journalists also figures here.

Chapter Five, "Constructing Reality," is an attempt at understanding the media's contribution in portraying occurrences. Giving examples from other

\(^{46}\) 'Newsmakers', we are aware can be used in two senses. One, for sources or persons who are "in the news" for instance politicians, bureaucrats, socialites, criminals etc. The other interpretation for 'newsmakers' is for those who 'make the news' when they gather, select and process information. We are using this term, in the latter sense. Also refer Gaunt, Philip, 1992, *Making the Newsmakers*, Greenwood Press, London.
studies and taking up specific issues depicting newspapers' selective pattern, we have tried to discern the possibilities of subjectivity, preference and thereby selectivity in newsmaking.

Chapter six is a further elaboration of the possibility of values or ideology determining news reportage. Here we have taken up specific case studies like the Indo-Pak conflict, Ayodhya dispute, Punjab crisis, Shah Bano case, Bhopal Gas Tragedy etc. to elucidate our earlier propositions about news being made in a certain manner. We do not fully agree with Broder\(^47\) according to whom,

> The newspaper that drops on your doorstep is a partial, hasty, incomplete inevitably somewhat flawed and inaccurate rendering of some of the things we have heard about in the past 24 hours, distorted, despite our best efforts to eliminate gross bias, by the very process of compression that makes it possible for you to lift it from the doorstep and read it in about an hour. If we labelled the product accurately, then we could immediately add: But its the best we could do under the circumstances, and we will be back tomorrow with a corrected and updated version.\(^48\)

We do however wish to probe the extent to which newspapers present occurrences in a manner that needs looking between the lines. This is one of the main driving forces for our study.

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47 Broder, David, 1973, Pulitzer Prize, (the most prestigious award in journalism) winner.

48 Part of speech delivered to 1979 Pulitzer Prize winners at Washington by David S. Broder.