CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
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Communication invigorates all forms of human efforts to enlighten and encourage, inspire and organise, build poise, restore confidence, change behaviour, and so on. Communication is one of the most essential two way process of life. A baby cries when it is hungry, thus communicating its need. The mother hears the cry and she assures that baby is fed properly, thereby fulfilling baby’s need. As we know from the Social Responsibility Theory and the Communist Media Theory, the media have the role and responsibility to the society. For the empowerment of women, exposure to mass media channels of communication contributes as a major factor. Women get considerable information on issues related to their empowerment if they are more open to the elements of mass media channels like newspaper, magazines, radio or television. Communication processes and media together can bring socio-economic development in a developing country like ours.

Media is a powerful agent of socialisation. It invariably exhibits societal conventions. Media as a stimulant satisfies the information needed by the people to widen their horizon and this information must be dispersed undiluted. In the existing world, the social, political and cultural course of the society is highly influenced by the information and communication. It just takes merely seconds for new ideas to reach any corner of the globe.

Media in true sense should be an exact reflection of the entire nation. It should participate as an important character in our present-day society. Media elucidates the common structure of the country and also tries to manipulate by shaping its pattern. In a democratic state, media helps in both political and economic development. It also brings to notice the public opinion of the countrymen.
As one of the mass communication media, the contemporary newspaper has three fundamental functions and some secondary ones. The basic one are: (1) to inform its readers objectively about what is happening in their community, country, and world; (2) to comment editorially on the news in order to bring these developments into focus; (3) to provide the means whereby persons with goods and services to sell can advertise their wares. The newspapers' less vital roles are: (1) to campaign for desirable civic projects and to eliminate undesirable conditions; (2) to give the readers a portion of entertainment through such devices as comic strips, columnists and special features; (3) to serve the reader as a friendly counselor, information bureau, and champion of his rights.

Magazine disseminates a specialised kind of information. They contain articles to varied readers. Magazines may be published weekly, fortnightly or monthly. It has very high quality representation of content and pictures. The content may be a factual reporting to a personal interview. Journal literally means record of daily events. It contains scholarly articles. Periodicals are the publications other than daily.

1.1 Statement of the Problem:

The eventful first decade of the new millennium witnessed very active and multifaceted efforts in various national and international forces towards a human face of development based on the principles of equity, equality, sustainability and empowerment with special focus on women. The issue of empowerment and engendering the development moved centre stage with the global paradigm shift from a growth oriented to a human development approach.

Indian women over the decade have proved that given the opportunities and access to strategic resources, they can excel in every possible field. They
have demonstrated their potentiality in almost every field, be it in politics or social services, administration or diplomacy, science or technology, fine arts and sports, medical or engineering, entrepreneurship or management and even in unconventional fields like police and military. But the fact remains that the benefits of development could be enjoyed by only a small portion of total Indian female population. Empowerment of women remained limited to certain groups, sections and regions and a large majority of one women deprived of it.

The concept of empowerment incorporates a thought of empowering people either in the form of individual or group who has been facing the challenges of social and economic deprivation. In the words, the term ‘empowerment’ creates a sort of entrepreneurship of encouragement among the poor sections of the society who is physically and mentally willing to do certain activities in promotion of their lives but hierarchy, which is inbuilt in social system, prevents them to do so due to their poor socio-economic background. Empowerment generates power among poor sections of the society. In the perspective of social sciences the ‘empowerment’ could be defined as a process of making people self-sufficient in all sphere of life such as social, religious, cultural, political and economic for betterment of their lives. This is applicable for those who are lagging behind in above mentioned spheres. In Gandhi’s view, ‘empowerment is a power, which enables people to act outside of their house with immense pride’.

Empowerment of women is an active process enabling women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life. Gandhiji gave great importance to women’s education and empowerment. He stressed that equal opportunity should be given to both men and women for acquiring knowledge and skills. He also felt that education should be related to self-employment to achieve betterment of rural life. He also emphasized that many of India’s programs are not succeeded due to lack of low involvement women in the
development process. He advocated that women should be empowered by liberation from mental slavery and economic upliftment.

The word ‘empowerment’ emerged from Spanish word ‘empoderaminto’ – those who were financing in women’s projects adopted the term demanding empowerment as a part of project. In the words of Janic E. Olawaye (1996), ‘Empowerment is a concept that has become popular in recent times to describe an enabling process for socially marginalized persons and groups to gain advantage and opportunity otherwise non-available to them.’

A carefully planned mass media strategy is of critical importance for women’s empowerment and related issues. Media is a provider of information on (i) protective services-legislation, rules and protective services-legislation, rules and procedures which confer rights on women and safeguard them from violence, (ii) social services-education, health, nutrition, child feeding practices, family planning and information support services for women, (iii) economic services information relating to small industry, khadi and village industry, agriculture, dairy and allied activities including availability of credit, marketing opportunities etc., (iv) regulatory service-relating to work place and other matters which can save women workers of the unorganized sector. In sort media can support and empower women in all sphere of their lives be it domestic/private affairs, work place or society at large.

Men and women in decision making position in family, community, work places and society at large can be gender sensitized through media intervention. The change of mindset, attitude and values for dual position of women in family, women’s right, constitution and legislation directions can be packaged in interesting views friendly programs for assimilation and absorption in social psyche; male concern on women’s issues; men sharing domestic responsibility and decision making power; importance of women health, education, skill building/employability for family and society;
superstition myth and facts on various issues and many such important issues need to be taken up both electronic and print media, film and alternative media.

1.2 Conceptual Framework of the Study:

The print media of Assam has a strong presence in both rural and urban areas. Majority of the households or families have the minimum exposure to print media directly or even in an indirect way. The print media, we have seen, devotes many columns to attract readership from different sections of the society. We have seen regular columns on topics like recipe, beauty tips, and home decoration etc. for women. But present discourse that bears vital significance is if there is a clear pattern of publishing news, articles, features etc. on more serious matters that needs to be addressed concerning the fair sex. One can assert conclusively that from gender viewpoint the fabric of society in Assam is much more improve than some of the other state in India. Burning issues related to women like dowry and female infanticide are not there in address for. It leaves the task of media much easier. Print Media in a propagatory role can address to education, reservation of seats for women in jobs, local governments, SHGs, NGsOs etc. for economic welfare of women.

1.3 Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of the study are –

1. To examine the status of print media in Assam.
2. To examine the acceptability of print media in the study area.
3. To examine the role of print media for women empowerment.
4. To identify the reasons for poor progress of women empowerment in Assam.
1.4 Methodology:

The study is empirical by nature. Both primary and secondary data have been used in the study.

a) Primary data:

The primary data had been collected from the sample units by using structured schedules and questionnaires.

The study area for the research work is the Guwahati City. As many as 300 sample units have been selected for our study using appropriate statistical methods. The sample units consist of women, journalists, intellectuals, social workers and editors of newspapers and magazines. This stratification of sample has been made on the basis of social status and economic activities of women.

The survey is based on the awareness of the women’s empowerment and the role of media for empowering women, government’s initiatives. The researcher has also collected data from different media houses.

b) Secondary data:

The secondary sources include-

The coverage of news, published articles/features etc. related to women for the years (2012 and 2013) in The Assam Tribune (the English daily), the Asomiya Pratidin, Dainik Asom and Amar Asom (the Assamese dailies), and their space analysis comprise the major portion of the study.

The study has explored and analysed the content through random sampling. Under this sampling, every item of the universe has an equal chance of inclusion in the sample in the sample; randomly a starting date is chosen and then every nth day a sample is selected. It is based on the concept
of equi-probable outcomes. Selecting sample every six day results in covering each day of the week therefore reflects a variation in the context across different days of the month.

In this case a random date is selected in January (that is 1st) and then every sixth issue (i.e. 7th, 13th, 19th, 25th) of four newspapers is analysed over a period of two years. A total of 496(62x2 from each newspaper) newspapers are selected, which also includes women’s day (March-8) and Mother’s Day (May-8).

The published articles/features related to women for two years (2012 and 2013) in Nandini and Priyo Sakhi (Assamese women monthly magazine) and their content analysis.

And the other sources are the past and present investigation and relevance official reports and statistics and records of relevant institutions, library, internet etc. A large amount of information on most aspect comes from the statistical data reports, white papers and govt. reports.

Similarly, personal documents like diaries, letters, autobiography and essays provide researcher details of which are not achieved by other standardized methods of social surveys. The information obtain by these source is the most dependable as there are less chance of bias. But the difficulty is getting an access to these sources.

1.5 Research Questions:

The following research questions are formulated in the study.

1. Do the print media provide adequate space covering women issues?
2. What is the role of print media in disseminating information about government agenda on women empowerment?

3. Do the women have required access to print media messages aimed at them?

1.6 Significance of the study:

The plight of women in society reflects the progress of the society. To improve the lot of women, government efforts are not adequate. A complementary effort from all spheres of society is needed. Media is supposed to play a vital role regarding women issues, discuss them and create awareness to propagate change in existing outlook. So it is a worthwhile exercise to assess the role of media which has performed in other spheres if it has performed its share of the responsibility related to women empowerment.

1.7 Theoretical Framework:

The Agenda Setting theory of the communication or media studies has served as the theoretical framework on which the research is based. Many studies have indicated the validity of this theory and they have shown that the mass people pay more importance to the issues which have more coverage by the media. Their (mass people) viewpoints are dependent on the level of coverage given to them by the media. The analysis of this theory is instrumental in understanding the widespread role of media as well as the likely consequence(s) of their ability to promote the women empowerment agenda.
1.8 Chapterization:

The thesis has been organised in six chapters. Chapter one includes the introduction of the study, the statement of the problem, methodology of the study and its significance. Moreover the conceptual framework of the study, the objectives, research questions and the significance of the study has also been highlighted in the introductory chapter.

The second chapter is concerned with review of past literature in regard to the media and women empowerment.

The third chapter demonstrates the growth and development and present status of Assamese print media. A brief review of the study area i.e. Guwahati city had also been added in this chapter. The concept and dimension of women empowerment has been discussed in the fourth chapter.

Chapter five includes the content analysis of the newspapers and magazines and a detailed analysis based on the primary data has also been made in this chapter.

The last chapter summerises the major findings and it also adds a concluding remarks

Bibliography is given at the end.
References:

Aggarwal, Vir Bala and Gupta, V.S (2002); “Hand Book of Journalism and Mass Communication”, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi

