CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 MEDIA THE FOURTH PILLAR OF THE SOCIETY

The contribution of media to human development is significant and ever increasing. Umpteen researches have confirmed that the reach and influence of the multifaceted tool called media transcend the differences created by political boundaries, color, language, and so on. The media is capable of changing the nature and all aspects of the human life. It is almost impossible to find a person not influenced by the media. The media is the key to societal development. It is perfect to hold that on the whole presently the media shape and influence all decisions taken throughout the world.

The term Fourth Estate was coined by Lord Macaulay in 1828. He referred to the gallery of the House of Commons occupied by the reporters as ‘the fourth estate of the realm.’ (Abeynayake 2001) In the present day context the four estates of the State are Executive, Judiciary, Legislature and the Press. Justice KJ Reddy said at the inaugural function of the India First Foundation:

The, fundamental objective of journalism is to serve the people with news, views, comments and information on matters of public interest, in a fair, accurate, unbiased, sober and decent manner. Over the years, the press has become so powerful that, it has soon acquired unique status of ‘Fourth Estate’. It is supposed to play a key role and a crucial role of a watchdog, to see that the other three institutions ‘Legislature, Executive, Judiciary’ function fairly within the
constitutional framework and serve the people for whose welfare they were created. (Oza, 2004)

In course of time the media is referred to as the ‘fourth pillar of democracy.’

Obviously, the fourth pillar of the State has gained more respect than the other three viz. the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary, which are viewed by the people more sceptically; whereas the people turn to the media for getting informed and educated and as such rely more on them than they do on the other three pillars. So, each message conveyed by the media penetrates deeply in the minds of the people and creates definite reaction from them. Any study of the media is essentially a study of the images created by the media among the people and the inevitable changes for which they pave the way.

Just as the media have contributed to the scientific and technological developments and the national progress, they have taken part in the individual development and societal rise or fall as well. This has become a topic attracting the attention of the scholars the world over. Positive or negative contribution by the media is noticeable in every walk of life, including scientific progress or setback, development or damage of the natural resources, cultural rise or fall, improvement or decline of moral values, increase or decrease of religious or other group clashes. In the great laboratory of human society, the inputs of the media leading to marked psychological changes and the resultant problems surely deserve critical analysis.

The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behavior that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the
larger society. In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest, to fulfill this role requires systematic propaganda. (Herman & Chomsky, 1988)

Similarly, mass media has been identified as the social system ideally suited to unify the public.

Sociologist Charles Wright directly applied functionalism to mass communication in his 1959 book Mass Communication: A Sociological Perspective. He wrote that media theorists “noted three activities of communication specialists: (1) surveillance of the environment, (2) correlation of the parts of society in responding to the environment, and (3) transmission of the social heritage from one generation to the next.” Wright added a fourth, entertainment. These became known as the “classic four functions of the media. (Encyclopedia.jrank n.d.)

Going much beyond their normal functions of information, education, creating awareness, social relations, cultural exchange etc., media concentrate on developing ideas, imposing opinions and so on. The media that served as a powerful weapon for attaining the independence for India is criticized today that they function only with the objective of making money. It has become essential to study how the media handle the subjects of social peace, social unity etc. which are the prerequisites for nation-building and economic development.

After the Second World War till now the world has witnessed hundreds of fights and armed conflicts. Millions of people have lost their lives. Wars and civil conflicts are taking a massive toll on children. The numbers are devastating.

Approximately two million children have been killed during the last decade, and between four million and five million disabled. Twelve million more have been uprooted from their homes, and countless others face
the heightened risk of disease and malnutrition and of separation from their families. (UNICEF 1996)

The conflicts of all varieties, viz. wars between nations, wars involving several nations, internal uprisings, religious wars, clashes on the lines of color, race, etc. have steadily increased day by day. In such a volatile situation, it has become the duty of the media to promote unity and peace among the people. The role of the media in dealing with such clashes and conflicts has acquired special significance.

Puddephatt (2006) observed:
Mass media often plays a key role in today’s conflict. Basically, their role can take two different and opposed forms. Either the media takes an active part in the conflict and has responsibility for increased violence, or stays independent and out of the conflict, thereby contributing to the resolution of conflict and alleviation of violence.

Today, the Development Journalism and the Peace Journalism are the much-talked about topics of discussion and research. Peace and Unity of the People happen to be the sine qua non for development; so Peace Journalism takes precedence over the Development Journalism.

Owing to serious conflicts in various parts of the world, now an extraordinary situation prevails in the world. In India, the conflicts of religion, caste and political shades, group clashes, and terrorist attacks need to be approached with increasing concern day by day. It is openly alleged, not without reason, that the media is engaged in the disservice of sowing the seeds of dissension in the minds of the people.

Das asserts that so far as India is concerned the media function only with the objective of deepening the conflicts. He has said:
When we look closely at the way the media functions today it becomes obvious that media are bedeviled by prejudices of one kind or the other. Media are often used in order to cultivate and nourish, sustain and spread prejudices. (Das 2009)

According to him, anywhere in the globe, there is every possibility of the media becoming subservient to vested interests and help perpetuate stereotypes and prejudices; it may also set agendas, criteria, and social norms; and also become guilty of branding certain areas as trouble-torn, conflict-zone and so on.

Chadha has said:

Coverage by both Indian and Pakistani media regarding Kashmir suggests that enemy images are embedded in the history and politics of the subcontinent and extends to economic and social interaction between the two countries. (Chadha, cited in Patel 2004)

In his view, the bitter memories of the unprecedented communal carnage at the birth of India and Pakistan in 1947 still shape the media coverage in these countries. India’s role in the emergence of Bangladesh as a nation also continues to be a relevant factor.

Sultan has pointed out:

Facts are hidden to give the desired picture of the conflict. Concepts such as national unity, national security, and threat of terrorism, freedom struggle, and human rights are used to validate the role of media in the dispute. (Sultan, cited in Patel 2004)

That is, from his point of view, any event is presented in different lights to suit their national interests. Similarly,
Editors from both India and Pakistan state that a suspicious and hostile media on both sides of the Indian-Pakistani border have hindered the peace process between the two enemy nations. (The Freedom Forum 1999)

Evaluation and research of the contributory functions of the media become necessary in the milieu depicted above. This also explains the necessity for undertaking a research about how the media, more specifically the newspapers getting published in Tamil Nadu, presented the conflict that arose between the lawyers and the police in the Tamil Nadu state of India. The police force is directly responsible to prevent and control any undue disturbance in the society; and the lawyers belong to a profession closely related to the delivery and administration of justice. The central purpose of this research is to study and analyze how studiously and responsibly the local media discharged their obligations with regard to this conflict between two limbs of law and order machinery in Tamil Nadu. Did what they published help bring the conflict to an end? Or, did they add fuel to the fire?

The newspapers have some prime duties to perform in the society: First is to provide news, which is unbiased and without any ulterior motive; second is to portray the ideas and opinions of the general public to the government, acting as the link between them. The media is supposed to treat life as a ‘serious matter.’ It should respect truth and believe in the moral governance of people. It should work for contributing to the welfare of the society.

In 1938 a former editor of The Times, Henry Wickham Steed stated that the ‘underlying principle that governs, or should govern, the Press is that the gathering and selling of news and views is essentially a public trust.’ He believed it was a form of trust akin to that of a doctor and patient but potentially more dangerous when dishonored. (Ellis 2005)
According to the old notion, the newspaper was a responsible advisor to the public. Its first duty was to provide the news, "uncolored by any motive." Its second duty was to present "a certain view of public policy" which it believed to be for the good of the state and community. It treated life as a "serious matter." It had an antiquated respect for truth and believed in the moral governance of things. It aimed at something and that something was guarded for the good of the society. This made Wickman Steed to say that "the printing and the selling of news is a social service." (Steed, cited in Radhakrishnan 2012)

Radhakrishnan vividly presents:

Over the last century, India has been rocked by communal, caste, linguistic or regional violence; of this, communal riots have assumed dangerous proportions from the beginning of eighties. … (Radhakrishnan 2012)

He has criticized that the media have not been dispassionate and objective in their presentation. He refers to the situation during 1991-92 and points out that the media were carried away by extraneous considerations and erred to the extent of glorifying militants and terrorists.

Radhakrishnan has further substantiated by giving specific examples that the modern media usually forgets some of its basic social responsibilities.

Media has a more important, powerful and undeniable role to play in safeguarding the communal harmony. In the last century, India has witnessed a number of communal, caste, class and social conflicts, which have brought disharmony into the society at various levels.
The Wardha commission has expressed a strong desire that both print and electronic media should exercise restraint and avoid screaming headlines.

In this regard, the memorandum said in view of the Government’s commitment to uphold the freedom of the press, it would not be appropriate to prescribe any code of conduct on reporting by the media, as it would be construed an interference in their working. It, however, said that the views of the commission were being brought to the notice of the Press Council of India. (Wardha Commission, cited in Radhakrishnan 2012)

Media is the fourth pillar of the society but sometimes tries to outsmart the other three pillars like judiciary, executive, and legislature. This creates an imbalance in the system and ultimately fails in doing its role. (Radhakrishnan 2012)

It is desirable that neither the profit-making nor gaining in readership surveys should be the sole aim of any newspaper. Media should not swerve from their righteous path due to fear or favor; they should never fail to give the truth; they should respect the freedom of expression for themselves and for others. Freedom of expression is one of the fundamental rights. But this is like one side of the coin; the other side of the coin is the corresponding responsibility. The right of freedom of expression should be enjoyed without forgetting the duty of promoting the communal harmony and national integrity. The newspapers should strive for strengthening the social cohesion. They should fearlessly fight the disruptive forces trying to divide the people in the name of religion, caste, language and so on. There is of course perceptible improvement in the attitude of the newspapers with regard to communal harmony but there is always scope for betterment in these matters.
1.2 ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MEDIA

As attributed to Malcolm X:

The media is the most powerful entity on the earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that’s power. Because they control the minds of the masses. … Events do not travel but Reports do. And through this they are able to influence the minds of the masses. (Benson 2005)

With the advancement in technologies, increase in the reach and access of those technologies, the need, participation and role of media have widened their boundaries. As an enjoyer of a lot of rights, media have also got a lot of responsibilities in the society. Commanding as it does, remarkable power in molding public opinion, the media can today make or mar the social unity. The power to make the country a heaven or convert it into a hell rests with the newspapers. It depends on whose hands such a significant power stays. If used by righteous and patriotic persons the country can march towards prosperity with pride; if it is usurped by the corrupt and power-hungry persons the downfall for the people cannot be very far. This is more so for a country like India because of its democratic form of government and variegated backgrounds of religion and culture.

1.3 MEDIA AND THE SOCIETY

The media has a critical role in a democracy, helping the public to understand political and social issues. The normative view of the media argues that the conduct of the media has to take into account public interests. The main public interest criteria that the media need to consider include freedom of publication, plurality in media ownership, diversity in information, support for the democratic political system, support for public
order and security of the state, quality of information and culture disseminated to the public, and respect for human rights. (McQuail 2010)

Media do not function in vacuum. It is integral with the society. So it should think of its rights and responsibilities in a holistic manner. Apart from the society, it has no possibility of existence. It has a duty to keep the people well-informed and protect the society from unhealthy changes resulting from misinformation. The media should take conscious steps to develop commitment to social welfare and nation-building.

1.4 CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE TERM CONFLICT

Across the world researchers have defined the term Conflict in different ways. Conflict is a form of competitive behavior between people or groups. It occurs when two or more people compete over perceived or actual incompatible goals or limited resources (Boulding 1962, cited in Henderson 2004). Conflict has its own characteristics and classifications. A social conflict exists when two or more persons or groups manifest the belief that they have incompatible objectives (Kreisberg 1988 cited in Henderson 2004).

Further Henderson (2004) articulates that conflict relationship is one in which the parties have incompatible preferences; a co-operative relationship is one in which the parties can obtain highly preferred outcomes if they work together (e.g. marriage, employer-employee relationships). Most relationships involve a mixture of conflict and co-operation.

Conflict is an outgrowth of the diversity that characterizes our thoughts, our attitudes, our beliefs, our perceptions, and our social systems and structures. It is as much a part of our existence as is evolution (Weeks 1994 cited in Henderson 2004). While individual people continue to relate to
each other, but in pursuit of differing goals, there will always be conflicts of one kind or another (ibid).

‘Conflict is a situation in which interdependent people express (manifest or latent) differences in satisfying their individual needs and interests, and they experience interference from each other in accomplishing these goals’ (Donohue & Kolt 1992).

A latest definition of Conflict by Ramsbotham et.al, (2005) defines Conflict is the pursuit of incompatible goals by different groups’. Translated it into a social arena, Conflict is ‘...a social relationship within which action...is oriented intentionally to carrying out the actor’s own will against the resistance of the other party or parties’ (Weber 1947). ‘Conflict is social interaction in which the actors oppose one another in some manner’ (Olsen 1978). Further translating how social and cultural conflicts merge, Olsen (1978) lists (under the category of ‘Disjunction between culture and social order’) are (1) ‘incongruence’s between basic values and norms and rules,’ (2) ‘inconsistencies among norms and rules,’ and (3) ‘discrepancies between cultural ideals and actual social practices.’ These categories hint at a distinction between ‘social’ conflicts and ‘cultural’ conflicts.

Analysts like Sadowski (1998) argues that cultural conflicts are found in almost every society, whether it experiences high levels of economic freedom or not. There is evidence to support this view. For example, Malaysia had much in common with Sri Lanka in terms of economy, society, and culture, including ethnic composition and inequalities between ethnic groups (Bruton 1992). Unlike Sri Lanka, however, whose economy stagnated with economic liberalization, Malaysian prosperity expanded the economic pie through its participation in the global economy, and providing abundant resources were to Chinese and Malay alike. Our culture, particularly our media culture, is long on descriptions of the meta-conflicts that relate to the roots of the conflict like a metastasis to the primary tumor. There is a focus on negative attitudes = hatred, and on negative behavior = violence, and much less focus on the contradiction roots (Galtung, Johan 2004).

But this social harmony may be difficult to sustain, as the costs of participation in the global economy sometimes outweigh the benefits. By 2002, because of extreme fluctuations in global agricultural markets, Punjab experienced both chronic economic crisis, and the renewed escalation of social unrest.

Racial violence in urban America and Europe; widespread ethnic rivalry and religious intolerance in parts of Africa, Asia and the Middle East; and widespread prejudice and discrimination against national minorities, are all part of the global landscape of daily news reporting. The outbreak of conflict in the Balkans (1992), genocide in Rwanda (1994), and the simmering conflicts based on religious rivalry and ethnic differences in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, India, Indonesia, and the Middle East, are recent examples. The Danish cartoon controversy also demonstrates that the media can even cause a violent conflict (Bent Norby Bonde, 2007; Shawn Powers, 2008).
Likewise, the press coverage during the recent Ayodhya verdict necessitated that the cities all over India had to be put on high alert for fear of a fall out between religious communities in case of undesired outcomes. The Indian media however added fuel to the fire by continuously telecasting visuals of the Babri Masjid Riots in order to keep their viewers ‘informed.’ Again, lacking here was sensitivity towards the issue and the event only served to highlight how the media could actually fuel further hostilities between the parties through their reportage (Reddy 2002).

1.5 MEDIA AND CONFLICT

If Journalism as a profession should keep pace with modern developments, inter alia, it has to widen and deepen the branch of conflict coverage. There are, of course, optimistic thinkers who would leave the subject of conflict management to social and political evolution. They would like to believe that as the human development takes place the occurrences of conflict would peter out more as a corollary. But down-to-earth thinkers do insist upon well-planned out strategies for conflict prevention. They would not like to take the extinction of the deviant forces with vested interests in creation and sustenance of conflicts in the society for granted.

As stated by IDSA research fellow Rai:

In this information age, the media’s role in conflict situations has come to acquire added significance. Now the wars and political conflicts will be preceded by "info attacks": disinformation, psychological warfare and propaganda campaigns. Adversaries will attempt to win without firing bullets and rockets. It has already happened. The CNN won the war for the US-led multinational forces in the Gulf well before the Iraqi Republican Guards were destroyed. The Iraqis and others were led to believe that the Patriot missiles had cent per cent kill accuracy, but it turned out to be a myth only after the war. (Rai 2000)
Rai further suggested:

In actual or potential conflict situations the role of the media is crucial. It should in no account itself contribute directly or indirectly to the creation of conflicts or situations which breed conflicts. It has to avoid oral or written words, projections of scenes and depictions of pictures, which may inflame passions of the people, create hatred among different sections of the populace, or lead to violence. All audio-visuals, news and views disseminated by it, and the manner and method of their dissemination, must conform to the most elementary precautions taken for civilized living. In the area of conflict resolution, the media can really play a major role in enlightening the public opinion and in helping people take cognizance of the need for peace for their overall welfare. (Rai 2000)

1.6 INTERGROUP CONFLICTS IN INDIA

The conflict between police and lawyers and its coverage in media is not new. There have been many incidents of such nature. James Watson, a solicitor from Middleborough, was arrested in June 2009 after his client was acquitted of conspiracy to kidnap. Police suspected he was part of a conspiracy to make witnesses change their story. He was held in a cell for almost 30 hours and questioned on suspicion of perverting the course of justice before being released on bail. His wife, Rita, and their two sons were held in a room of their house for more than seven hours. The house and his office were searched, and documents – including sensitive papers protected by legal privilege – were taken and held by police. After a two-year investigation, no charges were made against Watson. Cleveland police agreed to the settlement after an investigation by the Independent Police Complaints Commission, which was highly critical of the force. (Urquhart 2013)

Moreover, India has witnessed some riots that shook the ordinary life of the common man.
An intriguing question is whether the communal and other riots occurring so frequently in countries like India, which is a democracy and which can be proud of a rich culture and heritage, are spontaneous or instigated. The scheming politicians engaged in cut-throat competitions to acquire power and retain it are the number one suspect. The foreign enemies working directly and indirectly to spoil peace and development in the country could also be behind such conflicts.

Post-independence periods saw many riots that included Ramnad riots in 1957, Moradabad riots in 1980, Anti Sikh riots in 1984, Bombay riots in 1992, Gujarat riots in 2001, Muzaffarnagar riots in 2013. India also witnessed many major and minor armed communal and group conflicts. There are limited studies carried out on the role of media in covering communal riots in India.

Communal conflicts within and outside nations ranging from wars, have resulted in genocide, famine, destruction of infrastructure, enforced displacement of populations and regional destabilization; clashes have taken place between violent groups such as drug traffickers, paramilitary organizations and mercenaries, political actors and non-governmental organizations. Media has increasingly focused its attention on them. Most of the knowledge that has emerged about these conflicts, their victims and their characteristics is obtained through the media.

According to Jyothi Panwani in *Reporting Communal Conflict*, the telecast of the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6 by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) inspired the violence after demolition. Naming the communities involved in the riots for more than one day by the BBC substantially triggered the conflict. (Punwani 2009)
Arjun Das in his study on the role of media in Assam and Sikh Movement riots in 1979-85 and 1984 respectively concluded that media created stereotypes and prejudices about the conflict and also became guilty of branding certain areas as ‘trouble-torn’ and ‘conflict-zone’. Lack of fair and objective reporting, lack of accuracy in the content played a negative role in covering the riots. (Das 2009)

Tridivesh Singh Maini in his study on The Indian Media Coverage of Riots: A Comparison of 1984 and 2002 concluded that news breaking in real time and right before the eyes of the viewers has an instant and direct impact. The study gave positive opinion on the impact of media during communal riots that the then Vajpayee government passed a bill to allow foreign direct investment in the print media as a result of the bold coverage of Gujarat riots. (Maini 2010)

An article by Radhakrishnan B (2012) on Media - the fourth pillar of the society, states that newspapers have used words which were very mischievous and capable of causing hatred between communities while they reported on riots in Ayodhya.

Aishvarya Singh in an article on Media gets great power along with great responsibility states that a large section of the print and electronic media has, instead of alleviating communal unrest, often played an ignoble role of inciting communal passions leading to large scale rioting, arson and pillage in the State concerned. (Singh 2012)

The studies reviewed in this section reveal that media’s role in covering communal clashes had often an arguably a negative slant. Mistakes in language used in the reporting, angles covered, highlighting petty remarks by the clash groups etc., have triggered the intensity of the clash. Specific observations of the media’s communal portrayal give more understanding as
to how media respond to communal problems. Many studies reveal that local media’s support to resolve international conflicts is a pre-requisite to tackle the conflicts. Moreover, empowered local media can surely help reinstate peace in the conflicting society.

India had many armed conflicts with the external countries. First Indo-Pak war (1947), Operation Polo (1948), Invasion of Goa (1961), Sino-Indian war (1962), Second Indo-Pak war (1965), Third Indo-Pak war (1971), Siachin war, (1984) and Kargil war (1999) are some of the major armed conflicts in India. But numerous religious conflicts, caste conflicts, cultural conflicts, group riots, internal insurgencies and language conflicts have stormed the Indian society. It is believed that Indian media has not paid enough attention to resolve the conflicting issues of the multi-cultural, ethnic society. Local clashes between various groups, security forces vs. public, police forces vs. other law enforcing agencies have not at all received proper attention of the media researchers. If the media researchers carry out academic research in depth on the role of media in handling the local conflicts, we may assess the relationship between the media content and the conflicts.

1.7 MEDIA AND PEACE-BUILDING

Media can play a role in all stages of conflict, from pre-violence to post-conflict reconstruction. While there is a significant amount of academic research investigating the relationship between media and conflict, there is little exploring the relationship between media and peacebuilding. (Bratic 2006; Wolfsfeld et al 2008) Media development practitioners in particular assume that interventions in the local media sphere can support peacebuilding, although little academic evidence supports this. (IMS 2006) Media are assumed to influence peace processes: media are the main conduit of public information on peace and conflict processes. (Wolfsfeld et al 2008)
Wolfsfeld identified five key differences between peace operations principles and media principles (the guiding doctrines of both). It is important that this list is informational in nature and depicts only one representation of key differences. (Wolfsfeld 2001, cited in Aho 2004) They are:

1. Inherent tension
2. Peace requires patience while media requires urgency.
3. Peace develops with a calm environment while media prefer threats/violence.
4. Peace-building is complex and news media deal with simplicity.
5. Progress towards peace requires minimal understanding of the other side – news media routinely reinforce hostility towards the other side.

Regarding the inherent tension that exists between peace operations and the media, a look at objectivity and intention would assist in analyzing this dynamic. Martin Bell, a correspondent for BBC, was particularly bothered about the ‘ethnic cleansing’ in Rwanda in 1994-95. He reasoned that the West “stood idly by because the media reported the slaughter with all the objectivity of reporting on a football match.” (Ayers and Bell cited in Aho 2004)

Many conflict resolution scholars and researchers proclaimed against Bell’s view of the media’s role … (Botes 1996 cited in Aho 2004)

Citing the views of scholars like William A Gamson and Stuart, Ryan, Ahmed Buric to his support, Michael C. Aho points out that News media operate within a set of cultural and professionally congruent bases that help “define the construction of news.” (Aho 2004)
He adds: That being said, there is also a key difference between governments and media:

Governmental bodies and agencies operate in an apolitical culture of secrecy, withholding almost all information of vital interest to the public. (Buric, cited in Aho 2004)

There may be differences between the structures and functions of media and peace operation. But the media effect is not affected in any way by such differences. Aho points out that the recognition of local assets is an element common for peace operations and media. (Aho 2004)

As noted by Andrade:

…carefully observing local attitudes could help determine what is needed and what changes may be required…it is (also) important to find suitable local partners who can be engaged through shared objectives. (Andrade, cited in Aho 2004)

Clearly, peace operations embody the same principles noted here. One of the significant limits to media is the lack of neutrality that is inherent. Melone, Terzis and Beleli (2002) argue that professional objectivity must not override the obligation of a reporter to realize that he or she can drastically affect perceptions by the audience to a given situation. Further, they argue that, “Simply by being there and reporting on a conflict, the media alter the communication environment and are thus inherently involved in the conflict and non-neutral.” Another key aspect of the media that is similar to that of peace operations is that “media are sensitive towards the task of promoting tolerant and diverse viewpoints (and) can be both informative as well as entertaining and have a large potential audience.” (Botes 1996) While peace operations do not entertain, those responsible for such operations do take into account the diverse viewpoints present in such a situation. (Aho 2004, P. 21)
On the basis of a detailed study on ‘Using the Media for Conflict Transformation’ Sandra D. Melone, Georgios Terzis, and Ozsel Beleli have said:

However, while media can, and often do contribute to the escalation of tensions and conflicts, this does not mean that they cannot play a positive role as well. On the contrary, based on the experience of Common Ground, we argue for a more ethical use of the media in order to counterbalance the negative effects and/or reverse the damage that has already been done. (Melone, Terzis & Beleli 2002, p.1)

1.8 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

India is the world’s largest democracy and a place of political freedom where all citizens have the right to free speech. India’s democracy and freedom of press have their own illustrious characteristics. The PUCL bulletin (1982) explicitly articulates:

Freedom of expression has always been emphasized as an essential basis for the democratic functioning of a society. The reasons for this are: the right of an individual to self-fulfillment, which right requires the communication of thought; the importance of constantly attempting to attain the truth, an attempt which is frustrated if information is suppressed or comment blocked; the inherent democratic right to participate in decision-making, which obviously implies the freedom to obtain, communicate and discuss information.

India has multicultural, multi-religious, multi-linguistic and multi-ethnic ambience. In this scenario the role of media is more crucial in constructing the meaning of society. There is an association between the development of mass media and social change, although the degree and direction of this association is still under discussion upon even after years of study into media influence. Among other influences, media is shaping,
altering and reshaping the opinion of the people. Amongst them transformation of conflict messages has its deep implications in the society. India has witnessed many kinds of conflicts.

Literature on conflict and peace-building reveals a dismal focus on the role of the media in peace processes. Existing theories only tend to portray the media as essential in reporting and generating discourses on conflicts (Conflict, communal harmony, conflict resolution, conflict management and peace journalism are some of the major thrust areas in the field of Media studies.) The researchers have very keen to study the relationship between media contents and public perceptions regarding conflict and peace. Across the world media researchers have to be encouraged to study the constructive role of the media in the society. Hitherto, the role of the media in the conflict, and their ability to mediate peace has not been sufficiently tackled. The role of media in the countries like India has its own positive and negative aspects.

The statement of this study, therefore, *Role of Popular newspapers of Tamil Nadu in dealing communal harmony during conflict situations – A detailed study of police-lawyer conflict in Madras high court* is concerned with the interaction of the media and the conflicting parties. This will include comprehensive and in-depth look into the role of the media in communication and information gathering and dissemination as well as its role in conflict escalation, mitigation, management, prevention and resolution. In addition, this research shall also elucidate the views of the experts to understand the exhaustive nature of the conflict coverage of the media. The Police-Lawyer conflict is one of the ideal research problems to the study the role of media in the construction of conflict in its stories. The research illustrates the two-fold role of the media as a constructive and destructive mediator, and provides a link between construction of conflict and peace building. The thesis
exhaustively studies the role of the media during conflict situation with respect to preservation of communal harmony in the society.

1.9 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to examine the role of media in the conflict prevention and conflict resolution. There is no doubt that the subject which researcher has taken for the study is very wide; so the study area was confined to newspapers. The study includes an analysis of newspaper contents and comparative analysis of contents, styles of presentation, and the characteristics of the newspapers. However, the specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- To study the positioning of the police-lawyer conflict news in the leading newspapers of Tamil Nadu.
- To evaluate the authenticity and credibility of the news stories on the conflict published by the leading newspapers.
- To present an analysis of significant relationship, if any, among the conflict portrayals of the newspapers.
- To investigate conflicting frames, if any, constructed in the contents of the news stories.
- To study the projections and opinions supplemented in the headlines of the news stories.
- To study the role of photographs in the portrayal of conflict stories.
- To place suggestions for improving the quality of conflict reporting by the media in order to improve communal harmony.
1.10 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Have the media performed responsible role in the portrayal of conflicting situation to their audience?
- Have the media professional had professional capacity to handle the conflict situation?
- Do the media houses practice their code of conduct in true letter and spirit?
- Is there a need to modify these codes and guidelines to face the conflict circumstances better?
- Is the print media sensible enough to disseminate the conflict situation to the audience?
- Do the media frames, angles and texts help maintain peace components or do they escalate them?
- Should the media play gate-keeping role during the conflict?
- Do the media use the situation for their commercial notions?
- Do the media contents sensitize the issue or sensationalize the issue?
- Do the media perform sensible role in reporting the conflict?
- Do the media act conflict-friendly during peace-building initiatives?
- Do the newspapers aggravate the conflict between the two parties?
1.11 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Media have often been very keen to sustain the conflict and enthusiastically dramatize them to the readers. It is often contended that the readers expect more and more dramatic contents. Hence the study of the role of media and conflict is essential to understand the contemporary trend in journalism. In view of the extensive nature of the area and in order to ensure in-depth analysis of the conflict, the researcher limited the scope of the research to the Police–Lawyer conflict in the premises of the Madras High Court. All the newspapers published from Chennai, Tamil Nadu were grouped into three categories and analyzed. The entire news cycle was extensively covered for this study. In order to ensure the depth of the study the researcher purposefully focuses his research on newspapers alone.

1.12 RATIONAL BEHIND THE SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH TOPIC

Mass media command an enormous influence over the public. From advertising to News broadcasts to nightly sitcoms, people are continuously bombarded with opinions and information (Cohen, Gunther, Tailor & Tsfati 2010). It is difficult to fully comprehend the impact of the media on our daily lives. The constructed texts of the media may expand as several sub-texts and meanings in the minds of the readers.

The researcher intended to study the nature and intensity of the coverage of media on the conflict stories. In order to have in-depth understanding on the subject the researcher focused his attention on the Role of Popular newspapers of Tamil Nadu in dealing communal harmony during conflict situations – A detailed study of police-lawyer conflict in Madras high court. This conflict could be described as idiosyncratic in many ways. Normally the conflicts take place between two parties and the law enforcing
agencies would work for conflict resolution or conflict prevention. But unfortunately two major law-enforcing agencies were actively engaged in this conflict. The researcher was, therefore, rather intrigued about the role of media in handling such a rare conflict.