CHAPTER II
MEDIA COVERAGE OF MINORITY RELATED CONFLICTS

2.1 Media coverage of minority related conflicts in the global media

As defined earlier, minorities were considered as inferior group of individuals who were separated based on caste, creed, age, sex and an endless number of differences. Survival of the aforementioned communities is always at the disposal of dominant groups of the society. It is through the media that people get to know about the status, functioning and the problems of minorities. The way they are being portrayed reflects the way they are being handled in the society. However, generally media look down the minorities in a peculiar way and their portrayal hail them inferior.

International Encyclopedia of Communications (1989) has clearly admitted that the coverage of the minorities in the mainstream media on a global context has always been biased, inadequate, stereotyped and unfair. News about the issues of minority rarely appears in the media, and very less importance is being given to the coverage. They tend to degrade, detain and stereotype the actuality. They always aim to sensitize some issues related to the minorities and provide a negative image on the minority groups, putting the harmony at risk.

Based on the argument-developed antecedent, acts of either rebellion or protest by national minorities ought to cause Government media retailers to extend the quantity of information they manufacture focusing upon ethnic considerations. By having the media emphasize, the Government provision of advantages to those collectivises, the intention was to delegitimize these movements within the eyes of the bulk (Hoddie, 2006).
An increase in official media attention to minority groups during periods of sensitive interethnic disharmony serves as an indication that the Government favours the approach of increasing targeted propaganda of conflict episodes. Conversely, a feeble Government media attention on minorities during periods of rebellion and protest would suggest that the state views its best strategy as isolating and ignoring minority interests until the confrontation has passed. It may also turn both international and domestic attention away from what the Government considers a disquieting source of vulnerability (Hoddie, 2006).

Wolfsfeld, Avraham and Aburaiya, (2000) in their study on the news coverage of minorities of the Arab Citizens of Isreal pointed out that there were two demonstrative changes that have influenced on the extremely negative portrayal of the Isreal minorities. The first was rooted in political changes during the election in 1992 and the second variation was linked directly to the editorial policies of an elitist newspaper that set up alternative structures and routines for ongoing coverage of the Arab minority. This was evident when two newspapers 'Ha'aretz' and 'Yediot Aharonot' were compared with their structures and routines. As noted, Ha'aretz was the more serious of the two newspapers that made greater effort to deal with social and political issues that were often ignored by the more sensationalist Yediot Aharonot. Readers of Ha'aretz expect in-depth look at politics and may have more interest in minority affair. The newspaper remains, however an ethnocentric medium that looks at Arab citizens as a threat to the Jewish majority. Unfortunately, the press itself served as one of the primary agents preventing such changes by constantly denigrating the minority population.
A study by Tereskinas, (2003) showed how ethnic and sexual minorities are portrayed by the mass media in Lithuania, argues that the mass media helps to shape attitudes about ethnic and sexual minorities by articulating, developing and disseminating ideas of ethnicity and sexuality. Media can also promote misunderstanding and antagonism through the repetitive stereotypical representations that exposed that sexual minorities are given limited credibility, related to crimes and seen as comedians. Hence, the media image tends to define these groups within the narrow confines of stereotypical representations. The mass media in Lithuania describe ethnicity as problematic rather than as a positive quality of multicultural society.

Henry (2010) analyzed a contested relationship between the media and Canadian multicultural minorities, specifically looking at how race, ethnicity and religion are interpreted by the mainstream media. He then translated into common discourse, to be studied by the consumers. They state, "Media messages, images and symbols are ‘refracted through a prism of white’ and minority women and men living in Canada are defined by what they are not in relation to mainstream society". The messages put forth by the media about minority groups living in Canada set them up against what is 'Canadian' and ignore who they are as people. They also suggest that the basis for a media-minority relationship can be interpreted as 'forms of systematic propaganda' as the media hold a great deal of power in defining what is acceptable and desirable in society. They select race-related newsworthy stories and then frame them in stereotypical fashions in order to help audiences relate to and understand what was being discussed.
Even in Britain, there always exists a false view of Islam. In his study of the representation of South Asian Muslims in the Britain press states that “Muslims are categorically regarded as threats to society, as ‘Fundamentalists’, as aliens, rarely, if at all, highlighting real and distinct patterns of racial and ethnic disadvantage. The press seeks to portray incidences of ‘Black crime’ and ‘Islamic political militancy’ rather than the economic, social, and educational deprivation experienced by the vast majority of British South Asian Muslims” (Abbas, 2001).

Klein and Naccarato (2003) examined how local television news has been shown to misrepresent minorities. Minorities are portrayed more frequently as criminals than Whites, and minority misrepresentation has been shown to be out of proportion to crime statistics. Several possible explanations are given for this phenomenon. Evidence exists that audiences are aware of misrepresentation and that news directors are aware that their newscasts scare the audiences they serve. Research suggests that local television news stations can improve ratings by reducing crime coverage and by changing the nature of coverage.

It is also notable that those domestic and International factors that reduced the overall level of media coverage of minorities are negatively associated with media reports emphasizing the provision of particular benefits to these collectivise. Both the cultural revolution and higher levels of international hostilities have the influence on limiting the Government’s discussion of the provision of both economic and cultural rewards to members of minority groups (Hoddie, 2006).

Naficy and Hamid (1999) observed that media play a part that is both significant and signifying when it comes to creating, maintaining and even dissolving ethnic, national and post-national identities.
Lubbers, Scheepers and Wester (1998) confirm the moderate relationship between real-world developments and media coverage in relation to ethnic minorities in the news. Ethnic minorities are associated with the trend in residence permits only and unrelated to asylum applications. It was evident that when the number of residence permits went up, news coverage of ethnic minorities increased as well. In a similar vein, Brosius and Esser (1996) found that news coverage of migration issues to a certain degree followed coverage of violent attacks against foreigners in Germany. He also provided information about the issues related to ethnic minorities this is indeed true. Results of his studies revealed that both concerning economic issues and ethnic minorities might be explained by the fact that negativism can be regarded as an important news value (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). This becomes apparent in the fact that in times of recession news reporting about the economy increases while news regarding ethnic minorities is usually negative.

The recognition of the insistence of racism and of disproportionate social exclusion for ethnic minorities has led to academic, political and policy debates concerning the longer term of philosophical kingdom. The Parekh report (2000) that followed the general public debates round the Stephen Lawrence racial murder has highlighted the requirement and created direct policy proposals planning to tackle very different dimensions of racism, discrimination and exclusion.

Most recent technique of recording minorities created sensitive problems with identity and new generations’ identification. It still teams individuals in giant biology-based classes that undermine distinction and sophisticated identifications – as an example being ‘White’ what is more, a member of a minority. Teams just like
the Cypriots and also the Italians typically establish as ‘White’ (Fortier, Anne-Marie, 1999). However, such identification makes them ‘invisible’ within the Census. Similarly, vital ethnic teams (e.g. the Arabs) area unit left between the White, the Black and also the others. Non-recognition and non-visibility in official statistics is twofold in it.

Consequences increase the sense of symbolic exclusion and it decreases social and cultural service provision towards invisible groups. The Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities in 1996 revealed that ethnic minorities increasingly define themselves as British (Parekh, 1997), while at the same time they continue to identify with a specific minority ethnicity. This complexity seems to increasingly reflect cultures and identities in the multiethnic European societies. Understanding this complexity is the only way to deal with issues of identity, identification and exclusion.

Media ‘images can connect local experiences with each other and hence provide powerful sources of hermeneutic interpretation to make sense of what would otherwise be disparate and apparently unconnected events and phenomena’ (Urry & John, 2000). Diasporic media can help the development of imagined presences, of communities of sentiment and interpretation’ (Gilroy, Paul, 1995).

More and more, minority media are flexible as they mix technologies broadcast and publish material from different places around the globe and experiment with their own identity as media and as representative cultural institutions of specific communities. Diasporic media can be local, national and global. They can use conventional, old technologies, new technologies, or a combination of the two. They can be produced in the country of origin or in the
country of settlement; they can address a specific ethnic group or a collection of ethnic groups. Minority press, for example is not bounded by the strict regulations that bind broadcasting. Yet, minority press, like all ethnic media, suffer from their financial limitations, the almost non-existence of financial support by the state like in other European countries (e.g. the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden) and the increased pressure by the mainstream, highly commercial and expensive media that marginalize minority media in competitive terms and in distribution. The British broadcasting terrain reflects very vividly the limitations for minority media. It is strictly regulated and very competitive, making it very hard for minority media first, to claim a space among the mainstream and commercial ones, and secondly, to manage to survive. At the same time, and with a few exceptions (e.g. BBC Asian Network or programmes such as *Goodness Gracious Me*), mainstream media’s content does not address particularly minority audiences and it is almost never in minority languages. Furthermore, and like in many other European countries (d’Haenens, Leen, Johannes, Beentjes and Susan Bink, 2000), minorities do not identify with the mainstream media and they do not see themselves represented in them (Gillespie, Marie, 1995). Also, minorities partly depend on short-living media that are published and broadcast for only short periods of time.

Media that operate on a neighbourhood level stay small scale in their ambitions, in their potentials for production and profit. Flexibility within the output of minority media, within the relation of their output and within the use of recent technologies, is directly associated with the survival of minority media. At a similar time, the pliability and the viability of media relate to the expectations of the audiences and also the accumulated hybridism and variety that characterize quality.
Some media primarily address the migrant generation, whereas most media appear to do to deal with the maximum amount the older generations in addition to younger. This attempt has to be done with their struggle to survive in the long run. Media’s reflexivity is discovered in their own hybridity – a hybridity that is homologous to their audiences. In this direction, minority media become progressively bilingual, like their audience. Community newspapers usually have vicinity within the original ethnic language, in additional to English. Within the English pages, replicate news and opinions with the interests of the younger generations. Most minorities still address ethnic media to check themselves and their cultures pictured and to scan and listen to their own language. Extremist and segregationary media specifically, primarily address members of minorities World Health Organization feel that though media and culture exclude them and have not any understanding or relevance their quality and identity. The multiplicity of media consumption and their involvement in various media cultures reflects the increasing fragmentation of audiences. The multiplicity of cultural engagement within minorities and within the broader society is increasing. The most devoted minority media audiences can even be devoted fans of mainstream media (Georgiou, 2002).

2.2 Media coverage of minority related conflicts in the Indian media

The role of media is perpetual in this information age. It is the decision maker, vehicle of opinion formation and plays a vital role in the projection of images in the society. People rely and believe whatever is being presented or portrayed in media. Especially, newspaper is the main element of decision-making and image framing in the Indian scenario. But more often, Indian newspapers do not do their job ethically. They fail in their duty by always being in the side of majority
and discriminating the minorities alienating them from within. There are very exceptional cases where minorities have been portrayed in a decent and unbiased way. Instead, all the times media have tried to demean and deconstruct the real values and images of the minorities. However, we do not have many studies on the portrayal of minority in the case of India, the articles and news stories appearing in the Indian print media is of more substantiation to the attitude of media towards minorities. Irrespective of caste, community and religious disparities, minorities are always treated as minorities and inferior to majority. No newspaper in India has dedicated any special reporter to look after the coverage of minorities.

Kuhlin (2012) in her study Violence against Christians in India, has conferred that it has become evident that the most common stories published on the subject concern Christians or Christian organizations reacting with protests and condemnations against violent attacks and as well as an ignorant state. Consequently, Christians immensely influence the construction of violence and harassment against Christians in the articles. They commonly use a discourse influenced by Indian secularism, were the Christian community is regarded as an Indian minority, which the state has responsibilities towards. The picture that emerges from this discourse is accordingly a country were the public authority is ignoring a relative widespread persecution against a minority which it has promised to protect and care for. However as this discourse is nearly entirely used by Christians and Christian organizations, it appears that they are quite lonely in their struggle.

Media has not left any minority community in India. Generally, the word minority here in India has been associated with Muslims, which shows the level of
suppression of Muslims in the name of minority. However, portrayal of another notable minority of India, Sikhs, who were more pathetic. Especially the portrayal of the Sikhs in the 1984 incidents and later clearly identified biased approach of the media against the community. Media coverage shows a clear abrupt congress supportive coverage of the riots, leaving the Sikh community in a wretched stage.

Further, taking the case of Muslims they are left the worst and highly condemned minority of India. Media never seem to have supported the case of 1996 Muslims in their stories. Analysing the Media representation of the Gujarat riots and Kargil war. Chattarji (2004), points out the reluctance of the media to analyze minority communalism and its ideology, politics, mechanics, and psychology. In this respect, the ‘secular’ media is instinctively reactive and tends to minimize the role of violence perpetrated by the ‘other’, i.e. Muslims. At face value, this argument seems to be at one with the votaries of the BJP who claim that Godhra outraged no one. However, it seems that the best strategy to cast off the taint of ‘pseudo-secularism’ (whatever that might be) would be to offer analyses of both majority and minority communalism. He substantiates with a lot of articles that appeared in various newspapers in the time, which the researcher have taken for the better understanding of the portrayal of minorities.

Gupta and Sharma (1996) in their study *Communal construction media reality vs real reality* confines that generally newspapers give varied news on the same conflicts and especially with communal conflicts. They comment, "In so many ways, then, has the mainstream press in India legitimised the forces of communalism. There is a clear nexus between the two. The tendency to play up tendentious, partisan and provocative statements and to treat accusations as facts
appears to be evolving into a normal pattern. The print media manages to manufacture a communal consensus in which the latitude of opinions and attitudes is quite strictly constrained”. Thus, this clearly shows the apartheid nature of media reporting.

In his article in the *Outlook* dated April 1st, 2002, Bhushan, Ranjit keeps a question over the functioning of media in reporting minorities *'Has this kid-glove treatment of minority communalism resulted in giving secularism a bad name?'* This clearly stated the status of the media in dealing with the minorities.

Further, coverage of Gujarat riots by the Star News was largely daring, intuitive with a political touch. A series of stories by Shikha Trivedi went beyond the news, portraying the trauma and alienation of the Muslim communities and individuals who returned to their villages on problems and in the ways in which tribal communities have been designated into the Hindutva fold (Chattarji, 2004).

Mahajan (1997) in his article in *The Indian Express* stated that the definition of minorities itself needs to be changed and to be defined precisely to be applied in a national manner. He states that a specified community is considered as minority in one state but not in the other, and this leaves the status of community in a dilemma and increases the confusion.

Varadarajan (2010) in his article poses a question ‘Despite overwhelming evidence that Muslims are the main victims of communal violence, why is it that the standard riot narrative as propounded by the bulk of the print media continues to revolve around the alleged aggressiveness of the Muslims?’ and presenting his views on the same he suggests four reasons. ‘The first is the average newspaper’s over–reliance on the police for news and information, given the communal bias of
the police force. Given this bias, it is dangerous for a newspaper to rely on police handouts for information on riots, or on the sequence of events, when these kinds of incidents happen. Since, in the bulk of riots, the majority of people killed in police firing tend to be Muslim civilians, the police narrative often tends to be aimed at sanitizing the role of the police and painting a portrait of Muslims as aggressors in order to justify whatever the police does. The second reason is because of the high financial and logistical costs of gathering news. Hence, in a situation of a communal riot where, more often than not, it is the local bigwig who is involved in the machinations behind the local riot, local stringers and local underpaid staffers perhaps do not find it easy to send across the real story, either because of flattering by these forces or because of threats, or even compliance. The third reason is the prevalence of biases and unprofessionalism within the news desks of newspapers. This results in the biasness of the reporter presenting his works in his own opinion and ideology. Finally, there is the pressure of space and deadlines. In other words, the technique and the technology of news dissemination can lead to communal stereotyping.

Contradicting to his views, Mitra (2010) in his article reverted that “One is patronizing, the other antagonistic. The patronizing stand recognizes that a wrong has been done to the Muslims, and one has to go out of the way to support them and advise them what they should and should not do. This stand is growing even among a section of the Hindu intelligentsia and the media. There is another well-known antagonistic strand mainly propounded by Vinod Mehta that Muslims are prisoner of these images. This strand does not reach out for any kind of dialogue or understanding and has certain stereotyped images of which everybody has become a
prisoner”. Further he added, “It has, in fact, been responsible and responsive – its extent is another issue. Instead of tarring the entire media with the same brush, one needs to differentiate and expand the space where there is a greater concern and sensitivity, rather than saying that the whole media is the same. The Muslim intelligentsia should not shut themselves out from the English media, rather they have to enhance their space within it”.