CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The news media are our central repositories and disseminators of knowledge and as such, exert a considerable influence over our perceptions of groups and lifestyles of which we have little first hand experience. They have the power to create issues and define the boundaries of debates. The news can organise opinions and develop world views by providing structures of understandings into which isolated and unarticulated attitudes and beliefs may be fitted.

How press reporting of criminality, violence or disorderly behaviour might affect the wider population has been a long-standing matter of debate and research and official concern about these matters has also existed for a long time. There are well established discourses upon the social deviance, law and order, and threats to conventional morality which repeatedly come on the political agenda of social crisis.

Communication is the art of transmitting information, ideas and attitudes from one person to another. Man’s fundamental need beyond the physical requirements of food and shelter, is the need to communicate with his fellow human beings. The urge for communication is a primal one and in our contemporary civilisation, a necessity for survival.
Contemporary society is far too complex to function only through direct communication between one individual and another. Technological advancement has made it possible for easy flow of communication among masses. Mass communication is delivering information, ideas and attitudes to a sizable and diversified audience through use of the media developed for that purpose.

Most of what is known is actually second-hand knowledge, information and insight that are obtained from others. Further, how one comes to know anything is grasped in terms of symbols, and the meaning content of symbols is, in large part, determined by the form in which they are socially shared. Because of technological innovations, such as the invention of newspapers, television and computers, these symbiotic forms are being fundamentally altered. It is for this reason that McLuhan (1962) argued that the medium is the message; what’s important is not, for instance, what people watch on television but rather that they watch it.

Communication determinists argue that culture and institutions are only subsystems of communication technology. Innis (1951), for instance, observed how all mediums of communication are biased in terms of their control of time or space.

The successful mass communicator is one who finds the right method of expression to establish empathy with the largest number of individuals in the audience. Successful mass communication is person-to-person contact, repeated
thousands of times simultaneously. Mass communication work demands broad knowledge, sound judgement, quick decisions, and the realisation that the words they write or speak may influence the lives of many millions of people (Burgoon et al., 1989).

**MASS MEDIA**

Technological advancements and invasion of satellite television have brought global developments and news events to our drawing rooms. Programmes beamed by television and radio are viewed and heard by people throughout the globe. Newspapers and magazines have an equally important global audience. These powerful communication tools alter the goals of society, as they play a pivotal role among the minds of opinion leaders. Films, the most popular among mass media has a universal language as good films can be dubbed and screened throughout the globe. Thus, mass media through words and pictures effectively transmit information and ideas among the audience including readers.

Mass media illuminates the social fabric of the nation. They are essential to the continued development of the economic fabric in a modern industrial state. And they continue to fulfill their historic role in protecting and improving the political fabric of a democracy. Among the many opportunities enjoyed by the
communicator, none is more important than the opportunity to mould public opinion.

The reader turns to his newspaper for news, opinion, entertainment, and the advertising it publishes. News magazines give the reader background information, entertainment, opinion and advertising; books offer a longer range and more detailed examination of subjects, as well as entertainment; pamphlets, direct mail pieces, and billboards bring the views of commercial and civic organizations. Films may inform and persuade as well as entertain. Television and radio offer entertainment, news, opinion, advertising messages and can bring coverage of public events into the listener's home (Kumar, 1998).

The rapid growth of communication during the last decade has forced newspapers to change their style and orientation for presenting news. While earlier newspapers played both the role of information and coverage, now it confronts a reader who invariably is already aware of the news being published. Thus, newspaper takes measures to provide additional information for the reader apart from the main news (Weaver, 2000).

Newspapers were stimulated by the appearance of new competitors: radio, television and the news magazine. Radio and television challenged the newspaper both in providing spot news coverage and in news analysis. The news magazines
competed with the newspapers by giving the reader background information and point-of-view interpretation. Together, the print and electronic media offered a ‘persistent reader listener viewer’ a sizable amount of information about the swirl of events, which virtually engulfed even the most conscientious citizen (Kraus and Perloff, 1985).

**Importance of mass media**

It is true that in a country like India with varying shades of opinion, geophysical conditions, style of life and so on, it is difficult for the people to identify themselves with the process of change. The media plays a two way role on the one hand of keeping the people informed of the state’s policies, development programmes and actions on the ground and on the other, of getting the feed back to the planners, decision makers and administrators on the reactions and responses of the people. The media is thus a social and administrative mirror in which the state and the people find their reflections.

The media is also an instrument of exchange of message between different sections of the people or society, between the rural and the urban sectors, between industrial and the agricultural sector, between the majority of the population and the minority sections, between scientists and scientific workers and the like (McQuail, 1985).
Throughout the mass media of communication, the challenge of social responsibility is felt by those at work. Frequently their judgement is tested under pressure in matters of taste, social restraint, and fairness, with few absolute rules to guide them. The jobs they perform make possible the general diffusion of knowledge about life in today’s world and, more than that, influence many aspects of our social, political and economic patterns. By the way they select and present information, they help in sometimes small, sometimes unintentional, ways to shape our society (Roberts et al., 1981).

The mass media plays key roles in the business life of the country, at both the national and local levels of production and sales, by providing channels for advertising messages. They bring people, from industrial leaders to labourers, the necessary information upon which their business and personal decisions are based. They help the public to crystallize its attitudes on matters of national economic policy. They serve as sounding boards of public opinion for business, labour, agriculture and other segments of society. Mass media as a transmitter of political opinions in a democracy and in promoting the country’s economic growth are equally vital in reporting the swiftly changing social customs and opinions (Fyock, 1968).

Newspapers are far more cautious in their use of increasingly uninhibited visual and spoken material than magazines, books, motion pictures and the stage.
Virtually no aspect of our habits, desires and relationships escapes examination in the media. The news media are the recorders of day by day history on a broader scale than ever before (Tuchmen and Gay, 1978).

The real task of the press is building up public opinion. It comes through the educational process and one’s own personal experience but the bulk of it comes through the news that one gathers from the mass media.

Society’s five requirements of the mass media are (1) a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day’s events in a context which gives them meaning; (2) a forum for the exchange or comment and criticism; (3) the projection of a representative picture of the constituent groups in the society; (4) the presentation and clarification of the goals and values of the society; and (5) full access to the day’s intelligence (Emery et al., 1971).

The agencies of mass communication are viewed as “an educational instrument, perhaps the most powerful there is”. The images created by the mass media can be helpful or detrimental in the making of public decisions and in the maintenance of social goals and values. The obligation to inform by the mass media extends beyond mere relating of current news, or mere entertainment in the cases of magazines, books, films, radio and television. Entertainment can also be
informative in nature, but that type of approach does not meet the full obligation of
the mass media to reflect educational leadership (Rivers et al., 1980).

**JOURNALISM**

The words ‘journal’, ‘journalism’ have their origin in a French derivation from the Latin term ‘diurnalis’ which means daily.

“Journalism is a report of things as they appear at the moment of writing not a definitive study of a situation” (Klein, 1980). “Journalism is a contemporary report of the changing scene, intended to inform readers of what is happening around them” (Schudson, 1978). In the ultimate analysis, what journalism is dependent on one’s news values.

“Journalism is the systematic and reliable dissemination of public information, public opinion and public entertainment by modern mass media of communication” (Wolsely, 1969). Journalistic writing is a contemporary report of the changing scene, intended to inform readers of what is happening around them. The impact of journalism can and often does influence the nature of events being reported, because it brings public opinion into focus and sometimes creates it (Gonzalez et al., 1999).
Modern journalism is a result of the Industrial Revolution; it is also an active component in the process of modernization. Gerbner’s (1972) observation that media “are the cultural arms of the industrial order from which they spring” remains a succinct and powerful assessment. In a society where media are the manufacturing plants of cultural goods, the idea of work remains central to an understanding of the commitment of journalists (Lull, 1995).

Aim of journalism rests on two assumptions, first, that the public has a general right to know, and second, is to serve that right. The general principles governing the journalism are: (1) the “purpose of distributing news and enlightened opinion is to serve the general welfare. Journalists who use their professional status as representatives of the public for selfish or other unworthy motives violate high trust”. (2) carries with it the responsibility to discuss, question, and challenge actions and utterances of the government, public and private institutions. (3) journalists will “seek news that serves the public interest, despite the obstacles. They will make constant efforts to ensure that the right of the public is always protected. (4) Journalists will “perform with intelligence, objectivity, accuracy and fairness” (Merrill, 1991).
PRESS

A fundamental institution of a society, the press in a democratic policy plays a very vital role in creating, shaping and reflecting the public opinion. Intimately concerned with the functioning of the State and the policy it follows, its contributions to socio-economic and political development are quite significant. Influencing almost every aspect of life, and discharging five basic responsibilities i.e., to survive to provide information, to offer guidance or interpretation of the news, to entertain and to serve the public, the press is rightly described as the fourth estate and occupies a commanding position as a medium of mass communication (Patterson and Eugene, 1983).

It was the press, which played a key role during the struggle for independence in the newly emerged independent countries including India by making the people politically conscious. The term ‘press’ refers to the establishment which undertakes to purvey news and opinion to the general public through regular periodical outpourings of the printing press.

At present the press as an enterprise unfolds through thousands of daily publications and tens of thousands of weekly publications. Published in hundreds of languages, their circulation varies in number i.e., from millions of copies per day to a few score copies per week or month. They are controlled and regulated by persons
belonging to different social, economic, political and cultural ideals and ideologies. They also reflect great differences in the aspirations and interests of the public to which they are addressed. The press is shaped by different governmental regulations (Edwin and Emery, 1972).

The press makes a significant contribution to the development to political awareness. It promotes public cooperation and helps the people in understanding local, national and international issues and problems. It acts as a link between the ruled and the rulers. By doing this it becomes an integral part of the system of modern government and an essential “public service” (Francois, 1986).

The press is no substitute for institutions. It is like the beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of darkness into vision. It is possible and necessary for journalists to bring home to people the uncertain character of the truth on which their opinions are founded, and by criticism and agitation to prod social science into making more usable formulations of social facts, and to prod statesmen into establishing more visible institutions. The press, in other words, can fight for the extension of reportable truth (Hanno and Bannie, 1995).
NEWSPAPER

By definition, legally a "newspaper" means any paper, magazine or periodical containing public news, intelligence or reports of events, or observations thereon, printed for sale and published periodically or in parts or numbers, at intervals not exceeding thirty-one days between the publication of any two such papers, or parts or numbers, and any paper, magazine or periodical printed in order to be dispersed and made public, weekly or more often, or at intervals not exceeding thirty-one days, that contains advertisements, exclusively or principally.

Newspapers can be traced to the age of the ancient Babylonians who etched their cuneiform on clay tablets or the stone columns on which ancient Egyptians affixed their hieroglyphics.

Technological advancements have made present day newspapers a readers delight. Probably, the uniqueness of a newspaper is that it could be the only product which is sold for much less than the production cost. Though a normal newspaper with about 15 pages will have a production cost of about Rs.5, they are sold at only half the price. The newspaper adjusts the cost through the revenue got from advertisement. Now there are several free local newspapers catering to particular areas or communities.
Throughout the history of newspaper, editors and reporters have used the news columns themselves for their entertainment value, either through selection of story material or through use of writing skills.

The newspaper today, as yesterday, also has a budget of non news entertainment material: comic strips, puzzles, humorous columns, cartoon panels, short stories, advice to the lovelorn, "how-to-do-it" articles in the family and women's sections, travel articles, fashion and cooking hints, and other reports which do not strictly fall inside the ambit of news.

The newspaper probe deeper look into the crannies and crevices of the event, critically examine its surroundings and its participants. The local newspaper's greatest advantage is its more detailed presentation of hometown news, which many readers consider the most important ingredient (Dyar and Ralph, 1942).

**Power of Press**

The printed word has a lasting power far beyond that of the spoken word or the visual image. Readers can refer to it again and again. Stories printed in today's columns may be filed and saved by readers for many years. It can be readily examined decades later. This fact increases the reporter's feeling that he is writing history and contributes to the newspaper's position as a stabilizing, continuing institution in the community (Tyler and Rasinski, 1983).
The press, occupying a key role in the battle for basic freedoms, is a particular target. To the closed mind, the press always has been a dangerous weapon to be kept as far as possible under the control of adherents of the status quo; to the inquiring mind, it has been a means of arousing interest and emotion among the public in order to effect change.

The press is not an instrument of government not a spokesman for an elite ruling class. Newspapers help to determine public policy by operating as a “free market place”. It is essential that minorities as well as majorities, the weak as well as the strong, have free access to public expression in the press of a libertarian society.

In the battle against authoritarianism, the press gradually became an ally of thinkers and writers who struggled for religious, political and intellectual freedom and of the rising commercially based middle class which demanded economic freedom and of the rising commercially based middle class which demanded economic freedom and political power in its contest with feudalism (Grober, 1990).

In a democracy the press is the “market place” of political thought. The policies and aims of government are made known through the channels of the press and are examined exhaustively by opposition political figures, and by commentators, editors, and the public at large. Stories from the newspapers and
newscasts are used as the basis for discussions in classroom and clubs. When a high
government official wants to test the public reaction to a policy idea, he often sends
up a “trial balloon” in the form of a guarded newspaper interview suggesting the
possible advantages of such a step, or he has a friendly columnist discuss the
advisability of the move. Other editors and commentators pick up the proposal and
examine it in print or on the air (Chaffee, 1981).

Role of Press

The most important functions of the Indian Press today is to expose the
wrongs committed with seeming impunity in various power centres: in the ruling
party, in the administration, in the big business centres, in opposition parties in the
name of democracy in the universities and trade unions and so on.

The newspaper’s less vital roles are: (1) to campaign for desirable civic
projects and to help 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 (Heath, 1984).

A daily newspaper must please widely divergent tastes in order to have a
strong circulation. Should its approach become completely political and
sociological, readers would lose interest. Many newspapers are quicker to print
stories about neighbourhood, automobile accidents, crimes, emotional crises, and about popular personalities than stories about a tax debate. Readers look to a newspaper for entertainment and for the small change of everyday life, as well as for intellectual uplift. For those who make a newspaper, the challenge is to give readers a balanced menu of the news they need and the news they enjoy. The two are not always identical.

The right of a newspaper to attract and hold readers is restricted by nothing but considerations of public welfare. A journalist who uses his power for any selfish or otherwise unworthy purpose is faithless to a high trust. The big media may also have long-term, cumulative effects on voting decision (Edwin and Diamond, 1978).

The relationship between the police and the press is complex and exists on many different levels of interaction. At one basic level a sort of contest exists between the police and the press. As the press in doing their job, attempts to find out from the police what the circumstances lead to crimes.

For the last 10 or 15 years, relations between law enforcement and the press have undergone a drastic, often traumatic change. Once founded on mutual trust and common objectives, these relations have foundered on the shoals of mutual suspicion and downright hostility and the socio-political upheavals (Basu, 1980).
By frequently providing editorial support for the court decisions, the press is the focal point for police frustrations and resentment. To many police, the mortal sin is for anyone to question or criticize the police.

The press wanted answers; the police wanted support. The two were seldom compatible. The police, accustomed to dealing primarily with criminals who no one listened to or sympathized with, interpreted this seemingly sudden change in press attitudes as tacit approval of its conspiratorial alliance with the demonstrators.

Proximity and familiarity can sometimes conquer prejudice and it is hoped that by exposing the press and law enforcement officers to each other in academic and informal settings, rather than crisis situations, they can begin to understand each other's problems and to avoid foolish and self defeating misunderstandings (Kluegel and Smith, 1988).

Newspapers publish stories reporting the viewpoints of political opponents and the actions taken in public meetings concerning government policy; on their editorial pages they express their own reactions to developments and make suggestions; frequently newspapers publish the interpretative comments of well known columnists (Homet, 1982).
The news media also have the vital role of "watchdog" over the government, searching out instances of malfunctioning and corruption. Without the searching eyes and probing questions of reporters, the public would have far less control over the affairs of city, state, and national governments than it does.

**NEWS REPORTING**

News reporting forms the focal point of a news organisation. Reporters are the visible arms of the newspaper organisation. They act as the ambassador for the newspaper. While some reporters prefer to key in their reports from the action spot using their laptop most scribes prefer to rush back to office and file their reports provided there is time.

Apart from foreign correspondents and district correspondents, a typical newsroom in any major city would comprise of a team of reporters working under a chief. Each reporter will specialise in a particular area preferably of his choice or a portfolio given to him by the chief.

Typically, there would be political correspondents covering the various political parties. The other areas being covered on a daily basis are corporation, high court, crime and the airport.
Reporters covering certain “beats” acquire an understanding of the sources of news and those who would be receptive to that news. Gans (1979) notes, the only characteristics of the audience that the journalists do keep in mind is its receptivity of the news. Further, Gans confirms the transactional relationship between journalists and their audiences.

Reporters and correspondents exchange analysis of events, issues and personalities in the news, and discuss the public and elite's reactions to their stories. In short, most seasoned reporters are uniquely qualified for their news-gathering missions and many of them are keen, constant observers of the public mood. Journalists rely on dependable sources. One of the trade secrets of any journalist is the contact with people who confide what is happening in their realms of work and interest, whether in politics, business, or society. As such, sources are as necessary as notebooks (Merton, 1987).

These crimes, legal and corporation reporters play a pivotal role in the functioning of a newspaper. They have to file reports on a daily basis. Without their reports the newspaper is never complete.

While all the beats have its own charm, even crime reporting has its own value. The role of the crime reporter is interesting and apart from collecting news, his task will include covering the local metropolitan courts and also the hospitals.
ETHICS IN NEWS REPORTING

Journalistic codes usually take into account the following concepts.

a. Safeguarding freedom of information
b. Freedom of access to information sources
c. Objectivity, accuracy, truthfulness or the non misrepresentation of facts.
d. Responsibility to the public and its rights and interests and in relation to nation the state and the maintenance of peace.
e. The obligation to refrain from calumny, unfounded accusations, slander, violations of privacy.
f. Integrity and independence
g. The right of reply and of correction
h. Respect of professional confidentiality
i. Consideration for the cultural, social or ethnic codes of individual countries (Media – Problem and Prospects, 1983)

CRIME REPORTING

Crime and violence has been a significant component of news coverage since earliest newspapers (Tyler, 1980). This coverage is primarily framed either on law enforcement or criminal justice point of view (Stevens, 1998). Beyond these basic frames however modern analysis of crime and violence news reveal significant
violations of principles of quality coverage. Even more disturbing, there is growing evidence that the problems of news coverage of crime and violence do significant damage to news consumers, who rely on this information for their perceptions and responses to the role of crime in their communities. Many researchers argue that news about crime and violence is degraded.

Crime reporters face a piquant task. Crime reports which interest one reader may not necessarily interest another reader. Stevens (1998) on reporting crime news has suggested that incidents should not be represented as isolated or random. Violent events have casual patterns and only when those causes are discussed can people understand the pattern that is the true face of violence.

On the impact of crime news on readers, Stevens (1998) adds that violence has consequences, both for the families and the perpetrators of crime. She suggests that crime news should regularly provide: (1) information about the status of different types of violence in community; (2) information about the economic and psychological consequences about different types of violence; (3) information that puts violent incidents into context about what is usual and can be prevented, and what is unusual and cannot be prevented; (4) information about methods being developed to prevent violence and how successful they are; (5) information about whether people's communities are implementing these approaches.
On the impact of newspaper stories on fear of crime (Heath, 1984) provides some background. According to Heath, stories covering sensational crimes and/or lacking information about precipitating events will increase reader's fear of crime. Her findings also show that while factors such as randomness and sensationalism will increase fear if related to local crime, they will decrease fear if the crime occurs at a distance. Crime reports have a direct impact on the reader. They absorb the reader's interest as the reports invariably deal with social issues.

"A crime story" can be seen in its treatment by media characteristically associated with sensationalism. A crime story must be justified by more than circulation figures and reader titillation – just as the coverage itself must be judged qualitatively and not only quantitatively. In this instances, a qualitative analysis clearly shows that haste, competition, carelessness, sensationalism and the quest for "new angles every day" often lead the press into publishing stories of dubious credibility and on occasion stories of demonstrable inaccuracy (Lewis et al., 1979).

One constant challenge facing editors of the print media is to cover controversial news vigorously without violating the laws of libel. These laws designed to protect the individual from unfair and damaging attacks in print, create well defined limits as to what a publication can print without risking legal action and possibly a heavy fine (Skogan, 1981).
The newspapers grew more cautious about what they printed concerning a crime and the suspects in it, before the matter reached trial. Also, the police became reluctant to disclose the facts of a crime to reporters—the kind of acts they had usually given freely in the past. Responsible editors admitted that there has been excesses; their primary concern was that restrictions on crime reporting, in the interest of a fair trial did not become a wedge toward restriction of press freedom in other fields (Lavrakas et al., 1983).

The press must be early enough and well enough, in informing the public about the causes of serious social disturbances. The nation’s press sensationalise and often overemphasize trivial happenings in their treatment of the news. Informs the public about suspected criminal activities and the processes of law without violating the right of the individual to a fair trial. The press is fair in its treatment of candidates for political office and protected by recent court rulings, in its criticism of office holders themselves (Dubow and Podolefsky, 1982).

Reviewing research on newspaper coverage of crime, Joseph R. Dominick found that "a typical metropolitan paper probably devotes around 5-10% of its available space to crime news. Further, the type of crime most likely reported is individual crime accompanied by violence, as individual crimes are bound to grab the attention of the reader."
From the perspective of news managers, more information unfolds in a case of brutality than in one where the victim dies. This fact in itself sustains coverage (Cannon and Lou, 1977).

Apart from individual crimes, news on terrorism requires extreme precaution. The terrorist groups thrive on coverage of their terror activities. Terrorists are primarily interested in attracting media attention as a way to publicise their grievances and generate pressures to accede to their demands. Accordingly there has been much concern that media coverage of terrorism may become an incentive for terrorists to commit violent acts. Media executives have been uncertain about proper coverage of terrorism, and governments have weighted the possibility of legislating curbs on terrorism stories (Cohen, 1975).

Crime is defined as an act or omission, which is prohibited by criminal law. Each state sets out a limited series of acts (crimes) which are prohibited and punishes the commission of theses acts by a fine, imprisonment or some other form of punishment.

Activities which are prohibited for the protection of society as a whole, or a section of society also defined as crime.

Organised crime

The Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Street Act of 1968, defines, organised crime as, “the unlawful activities of members of a highly organised, disciplined
association engaged in supplying illegal goods and services, including but not limited to gambling, prostitution, loan sharking, narcotics, labour racketeering and other unlawful activities of such associations”.

Abadinsky (1991) sees organised crime has continued to change and emerging criminal groups are becoming an even more serious threat than in the past. Organised criminal gangs, which are involved in contact killing, assaults, maiming and disfiguring are very violent and vigorous. Barnes and Teeters (1991) point out that organised gang criminals are violent vigorous, they live violently and expect violence. Tough, hardened criminals compose these gangs and they do not hesitate to use violence in order to accomplish their purpose. They are mobile and equipped with latest deadly weapons, well disciplined, efficient and dangerous. Only if they possess such activities, they survive in this competitive world. Morris (1983) describe that potential of organised crime could be identified from their violent activities especially in setting the disputes. Organised crime groups use criminal and violent force like shootings, beatings and threats of violence to settle the disputes, which are brought to their notice.

Caldwell (1977) said organised crime and vice crime are especially unique, complex and it poses a great challenge to the police in enforcement. Prostitution, selling of illicit liquor and drug are considered as vice crime in -different countries. Many scholars also classify these vice crimes under organised crime or syndicate
crime, as these enterprises are well structured, organised and adopt planned way of operation.

CLASSIFICATION OF CRIME

General Crime

The most common crimes are chain snatching, pocket picking and bag lifting. Criminals involved in snatching offences generally strike in lonely and residential areas where the victims are usually alone. Women fall easy prey to these gangs. Women in India have the habit of decorating themselves with lot of jewellery. These gangs are very active also during temple festivals where they snatch gold chains of victims.

Another common crime is pocket picking. They operate during the peak hours and target bus and train commuters and crowded shopping places. House breaking, is also a common offence. Burglars strike in houses when inmates are away or during the night hours when the inmates are fast asleep. Bag lifting gangs thrive in crowded areas. They take away the bag by diverting the attention of the potential victim.

Information collected from police officers shows that burglars operate mostly in the early hours when residents are fast asleep. There are gangs, which specialize in stealing electrical and electronic goods like the television, tape
recorders, CID and VCD players, computers and its peripherals. These gangs will have links with certain dealers to dispose the stolen articles.

Vehicle lifting gangs are also active in city. A very common crime is stealing parked vehicles from shopping malls or outside houses. A common ploy adopted by these criminals to dispose these stolen vehicles is to sell them in other States after forging the documents.

Sensational crimes

Sensational crimes are those which deal with cases which create a major impact among the minds of the readers. Some sensational crimes which created a major impact among readers was the coverage given by the media to ‘The kidnapping of actor Rajkumar by forest brigand Veerappan’ and the gruesome murder of a college student, Navarasu, as a fall out of a ragging incident are considered as sensational crimes.

These reports occupy large amounts of space in newspapers. Other sensational crimes include the theft of antiques, arts and crafts. These have a high value if they reach foreign shores. Cases involving murders for gain, kidnapping and murder for ransom are cases which come under this category.
Newspapers give high priority for cases involving these crimes. Reporters or teams of reporters are entrusted with the task of covering these stories.

**Extremist and terrorist crimes**

These are crimes involving fundamentalist, extremist and terrorist groups. There have been instances of extremist outfits targeting banks. Police have also been involved in shooting incidents killing suspected terrorists. Usually, extremist and terrorist crime stories overlap with sensational stories. Reports about forest brigand Veerappan’s gang and his exploits in the jungle and related reports fall in this category.

Reporters visit the spot and do extensive coverage for sensational crimes. These stories will include interviews with affected persons or victims. The reporters will package it in an interesting fashion for maximum readership. If possible they would attempt exclusive interviews with the victim or the accused for additional mileage.

Thorton (1964) divides terrorism into two broad groups: Enforcement terror and Agitational terror. The first is used by those in power to sustain and uphold their authority and the second is the terror used by those wishing to usurp that authority.
Wilkinson (1978) has evolved a three fold typology, Repressive terrorism, revolutionary terrorism and sub-revolutionary terrorism. Indeed all these diverse forms of terrorism are highly complex and call for differential strategies for analysis and containment.

There has been a recent spurt in fundamentalist activities during the recent past. There were serial bomb blast incidents in Coimbatore and also other violent incidents of crime because of religious fanaticism. These are also reported widely in newspapers.

Though a recent phenomenon, these reports have been getting a lot of prominence among crime reporters.

Crime against women

Women are usually soft targets for criminal gangs. Though the most common crime are snatching of chains from women mostly by motorcycle borne gangs there have also more serious crimes of physical assault on women.

There have been several cases of young housewives dying due to burns. It is a common crime where the victims claim of dying due to stove burst. Invariably, these cases are clear cases of murder where the victims are set ablaze by the husband or his relatives after a family problem.
However, fearing police harassment and to avoid problems family members even from the victim’s side do not prefer to lodge complaints. Even the victims do not give correct information to the police, thus helping the culprit to escape from the clutches of law. Victims who expect to die do not give complaints fearing harassment to their children after their death.

Dowry harassment cases are also common crimes. Eve-teasing is another harassment which young girls are subjected to. Reporters covering these issues exercise enormous restraint and invariably do not print the victim’s name.

Juvenile crime

The reporters have to adopt ethics while reporting on crimes involving juvenile offenders. Usually these offenders are part of a bigger gang. These criminal gangs are well organised like any other criminal gang. The structure and the administration remain as any other theft gang. Here also the leader only assigns the job to his members puts the right person in the right job. These gangs also follow steps of surveillance, planning, organizing and then execution to make good profit.

Juvenile offenders usually commit crimes like bag lifting or help bigger criminals by gaining entry into buildings and opening the main door to allow them to enter and commit bigger crimes.
Railway Theft

Theft in running trains is practiced by few gangs. The gang members travel as genuine person along with other passengers. They dress up very nicely pretending to come from very high society with posh background. They are extroverts and very good in making friends, they easily adapt to any situation and nature of co-passengers in their coach. They first get acquaint with the co-passengers and make them feel confident by giving playing, sharing jokes, discussing on interested topics of the co-passenger.

These criminals offer to the co-passengers biscuits, drinks or any other eatables, which are mixed with sedatives that, causes them to become unconscious. In a few moments the victims become unconscious and at that time the criminals remove the passengers' belongings and other valuables and alight at the next station. When the victims return to their consciousness, they come to realize their plight.

Extortion

As we know from the definition of extortion from our Indian Penal Code 1860, any use of violence at the time of commission of theft may be considered as extortion. Extortion is intentionally putting a person in fear or to others there by dishonestly induces that person to deliver property of any kind. Some of the theft gangs practice extortion whenever and wherever they were forced too. For example
when the victim is aware of the crime he is forced to give his belongings under force and intimidation.

Robbery and Dacoity

As we know that aggravated form of theft is robbery and aggravated form of robbery is dacoity, their characteristics and modus operandi used by these gangs are also quite similar to that of theft gangs with an additional use of force and increase in quantum of men. These gangs also conduct surveillance for selection of target; here also operations are well planned, organised and executed. At the time of operation of robbery and dacoity all members are well equipped with deadly weapons and tools required for the operation. These weapons are often used to threaten the victim intentionally to take away the property and it is also used to respond to the resistance given by the victim as a reflex action.

Thee criminals never hesitate to use violence if confronted by the victim or their kin. Criminals usually carry knives, unlicensed pistols, sickles, axe, iron rods, wooden logs and country made bombs.

Multiple crimes

Some of these theft, robbery or dacoity gangs commit multiple crimes whenever they find good opportunity. For example, they lift vehicles like two
wheelers or cars for fast mobility at the time of the operation or to reach the place of operation. They take advantage of passing opportunities like street robbery, robbery at petrol bunks, house breaking or burglary at shops, extorting property from lonely travellers in late hours either before or after their operation is commenced. All these might occur in the same area or in different localities or while they pursue to their target or while returning to their headquarters or some other preplanned congregational place of the gang after the operations on the same day.

The records in the police station reveal that multiple crimes are charged against some of these gangs on a particular day or night for commission of vehicle lifting, snatching, extortion and house breaking, besides their preset target. This charge equally binds on each and every member who participated or involved either directly or indirectly in the operation, as it is in the case of single crime committed by the gang.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The present era is described as an Information-Explosion era by researchers of mass media. Several researches have been conducted in the field of mass media in the developed countries. There is a need for research of mass media in the Indian context. Very few studies have been conducted by Indian researchers in this area when compared to their counterparts in the West. Invariably, most research
dominates in the area of television and cinema. Research in newspaper is not as charming for many researchers who prefer to study the more modern tools of communication like satellite television, internet and modern cinema. Any number of studies is readily available in these areas.

Research in newspaper is a fascinating experience. Newspapers are constant companions for many and inspite of the massive stride in the field of communication, it continues to lure the reader, either at home or while traveling. For many a day is not complete without reading their favorite newspaper. Even after the advent of the internet, the pleasure of holding and reading a printed version has no substitute.

Among the news items published, those dealing with crime and violence and of course cinema grab the attention of the reader instantly. Crime reporting is one of the major areas covered by the newspaper. Different types of crimes, which occur in the society, are featured in these newspapers.

Society is passing through a rapid transformation. The reasons for crime and agitation are numerous and it is increasing. This is a disturbing trend.

Newspapers, in recent years, have generally drifted away from general issues to crime and violence, analyses of major social problems, and investigations of governmental and corporate wrongdoing. Therefore, it is now common to find
crime stories splashed with big headlines even on the front page of major newspapers. Thus, the need to study the coverage of crime reporting in major newspapers is bound to throw up exciting findings. Hence, the need was felt to analyse the content of crime coverage in the newspapers.

The research focus is the result of widespread belief among members of the public and its significant influence among public behaviour, the general quality of life in local communities and the quality of life in the nation as whole. In this connection, the study attempted to study the response of the readers of the four newspapers in reacting to crime and examining the cognitive distinctions underlying these separate responses.

Reporters are the main content providers of news for the newspaper apart from the news agency. Among the reporters, the crime reporters are those who provide the newsroom with spot stories and interesting incidences of violence, which get prominence in the newspaper. Thus, it was but natural to elicit the views of the crime reporters through focus group discussion as part of the research.

Therefore, the present study aimed to find the importance of crime news among the newspapers and its impact on the readers.