Chapter I
Introduction

'Communication' together with its twin 'information' is perhaps one of the most hyped words in contemporary culture. It encompasses a multitude of experiences, actions and events, as well as a whole variety of happenings and meanings, and technologies too. The human effort from time immemorial is to discover nature, essence and dynamics of communication. To learn what communication is and how it works, there has been increasing interest in the study and practice of communication. Derived from the Latin verb *communicare*, communication means to make common to share, to impart and to transmit. To be precise, communication is the art of transmitting information, ideas and attitudes from one person to another. Through communication people control one another’s behaviour and unite themselves into groups. Therefore, communication is a means for breaking down the barriers in the way of human interaction and, as such, these are the means of actual mutual understanding.¹

Emerging as a source of information, the media have come to play an effective role not only in informing the people but also in influencing their thinking and shaping their attitudes. Every communication order is conditioned or influenced by the political

system and cultural milieu and the ends and purposes for which it is to be used. This all pervasive impact of media imposes a tremendous responsibility on everyone working for the newspaper, television or radio, including those in the management and allied departments. With the advent of the 21st century, media has assumed a status, which it had never enjoyed before. Starting as an institutionalized approach to generate awareness and inform the masses, media has become an instrumentality to govern human lives. Rather than a form of cultural expression, it has become a culture in itself. It has now become a way of life itself with the changing circumstances. Mass Media have evolved out of the basic techniques, skills and practices of producing, first newspapers and then radio and TV programmes. It is a discipline which has come out of the womb of industry unlike other academic disciplines which can trace their origin to their academic prophets, thinkers and scholars. Its terminology has not come from classical texts but from the common usage.²

The term media is widely used as a short-hand for “mass media”. Although commonly misused as a singular term, “media is the plural of medium”, and thus refers to the multiplicity of publications, broadcast outlets aiming at transmitting messages to large number of people. Conceptually, the mass media are technological agencies and corporate organisations engaged in the creation, selection, processing and distribution of messages that are produced at speeds and in quantities possible only with mass-production methods. Mass media, therefore, are the broadest common currencies of public interaction in

a society. As a logical connotation, the mass media deal with the day to day problems and effect the destiny of human in general and a nation in particular.

Media play a leading role in shaping, guiding and reflecting the public opinion. It even accentuates the process of establishing democratic mindset among the people. Use of media in a democratic polity creates critical awareness among the people. The media may not be able to perform such functions unless access to it is ensured to a large section of people living in a country. Access to media means access to facts and documents which help one to acquire information and knowledge. In comparison to individuals, media have more access to the domain of information due to their wide reach and institutional character. Media access in the realm of political sphere is essential because it often stands to protect and preserve democratic institutions.  

While 19th century has been regarded by historians as the age of remarkable political, economic and social transformation, the 20th century may appropriately be called the age of the development of mass media. The development of communication and the constant emergence of public relations as social techniques have been the unique phenomena of the century. For transmitting knowledge, disseminating facts and directing various emotional appeals to influence public opinion, the mass media have played a vital role. But the genesis of media development is not merely a record for technical advancement and of increasing scale of operation. It is a social

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innovation as much as a technological invention marked by major social changes. The history of the press, as the first medium, illustrates the point very well. Its development is linked to the emergence of the power of the bourgeoisie. It became an essential instrument in subsequent economic and political struggle, a necessary condition for economic liberalism, constitutional democracy and bureaucratic centralism. Its development, thus, reflects political and economic forces on the one hand and major social and cultural changes on the other. It provides a unique opportunity to play a vital role in educating the public and raising the level of political discourse in a country. Both are essential for a healthy political process and sound policy making.\(^4\)

In today's world, media occupy an important place. It contributes towards the emergence of a mass society and mass culture. Mass society is characterized by greater reliance on the mass media for information and news about the environment in which the people live. As generally interpreted the mass media are the press, cinema, radio and television. But books, magazines, pamphlets, posters etc. also need to be included in it. They are so termed because their reach extends to vast heterogeneous masses of the population living in a wide and extensive area of a country. The means they employ to communicate messages to the masses are technological. Their communications are thus interposed and mediated. Though mass media facilitate and relate communication technologies, their reach continues to be limited especially in rural areas, among women and

urban slum dwellers. This is mainly due to low literacy, poor purchasing power, vulnerable means of transportation for timely delivery of newspapers and lack of relevant information from the standpoint of the rural people who constitute the majority of the population in case of a country like India. Actually there is a perceptible association between backwardness and unprivileged condition and deprivation of communication resources. The traditional and folk media in contrast have a wide audience because they are media close to the hearts and minds of the people and help to facilitate identification and participation. Yet, it is undeniable that various media of mass communication such as press, radio and television have their respective roles to bring about betterment for the welfare of the people. Each medium is different from others and each has a specific role to perform in this process. No one can replace another in the process and they can be complementary to each other.\(^5\)

Emerging as a branch of mass media, the print media or more precisely the press has come to acquire a unique status as sustainer of society, ideological state apparatus, and subtle manipulator of culture in an attempt to produce a consensus in the society which has been experiencing, of late, what is called the information explosion. The press, setting the agenda for debate and deliberation in the society independently of those who are elected to govern, has become an unelected power centre. In any geo-political set-up, the press plays an important role by disseminating information regarding public happenings. The spread of information among people leads to the

formation of public opinion, which is again mirrored in the press. The press serves as an exclusive media for projection of certain issues and movements. While the role of the press as the media for the generation of public opinion is a debatable issue, it is certain that the press acts as the forum for certain socio-political interests and groups among the educated classes. Thus the press and political system have a definite nexus. The functioning of the press in any geo-political unit can be properly assessed only when projected within the frame work of the political system. The press protects the public interest and checks any effort on the part of the authority to curb the freedom of speech and expression. It acts as a link between the rulers and the ruled and also develops political consciousness. Its editorials provide leadership to the nation and guidance to its people. To be precise, it is an instrument of change and strives hard to create a new and better world with new approaches and techniques. It liberates the people from the bondage of distance and isolation. By bringing what is distant and near, and making understandable what is difficult and strange, the media can help to make the transition from a traditional to a modern society. The press as a forum for public debate narrates what the people know, think, feel and talk about. It acts as a mirror reflecting the opinions, impressions and reactions of the people towards different issues. Further the press helps in enforcing social norms, forming tastes and it can broaden the ‘policy dialogue’ providing the two-way flow of information and opinion which is an essential requirement for strengthening democracy. The role and responsibility of the press in a democratic set-up is quite significant as it strives to safeguard the interest of the people against all obstacles and hindrances to growth and development. In a democracy, it is the greatest body of the people
who govern the country through their representatives elected on the basis of adult franchise. Thus the role of the press in a democracy is that of a watchdog for the interest of the people. As a source of information, education and entertainment, it ensures individual’s rights that one enjoys in a democratic polity, and this right can be protected when the press is objective, independent and impartial. A communicator, a social reformer, a political stabiliser, a crisis manager and instrument of economic growth as well as the guardian of democracy, the press, rightly described as the Fourth Estate, plays a very important role in the society.  

The origin and growth of the press over the years has a tremendous impact upon the process of communication. Nothing is or can be as significant as or more important than this since the whole civilization rests on it and may at any time collapse like a house of cards if the press gets a severe jolt. It would not be unpalatable to say that communication and development go together. Since the press plays a crucial role in making the people politically conscious, socially responsible, economically developed and culturally advanced, it should be committed independent, objective and neutral in its approach.

Perhaps, the history of the press began with China, because the art of printing from a single wooden block was known to the Chinese people right at the advent of the 6th century. Yet, it came to the limelight only in the middle of the 11th century with Pi Sheng’s

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invention of the movable type. It was Marco Polo who described the art of Chinese printing to the Europeans upon his return to Venice in 1295 A.D. Prior to mid 15th century most of the books and pamphlets available to Europeans were expensive and often erroneous, handwritten manuscripts. The first search in modern communication began about 1440 A.D. when Johannes Gutenberg, a craftsman and inventor in Mainz, Germany, developed movable type. Sometimes before 1455 A.D., Gutenberg printed his greatest work, the Gutenberg Bible, on a renovated wine press. The method of printing that Gutenberg devised, printing from movable type was used without any major change till the 20th century. It was followed by the entry of printing press in countries like Italy, France and England. In England the printing press was introduced by William Caxton in 1476 AD. The successful application of print technology to the reproduction of texts in place of handwriting was the first step in the emergence of a ‘media institution’, the print media. It gradually became a new craft and a significant branch of commerce.

The press played a dominant role in the Continent of Europe in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries in organising their national, social and cultural lives. The press stood to the expectation of the people in integrating themselves as nations and it in a way led to the emergence of the concept of nation state with new socio-cultural ideal by discarding old feudalistic pattern of social fabric existent in Europe for centuries. The French intellectuals, the harbingers and proclaimers of the new social order, found in the press a formidable weapon to

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expose the degrading moral values, cultural limitations and reactionary social order that marked the very basis of feudal regime in Europe. Disseminating scientific social thinking, the French stalwarts like Voltaire, Diderot, Holbach, Helvetius and others took resort to press and made scurrilous attack on the ruling feudal class, which kindled resentment among the people against religious dogmatism and social oppression prevalent in French society. They raised their dissentient voice against the prevalence of serfdom in the French society and provided moral guidance to the serfs to rise in revolt against feudalism and monarchical despotism. The French intelligentsia stood in support of the serfs and propagated equal rights of individuals in opposition to feudal privilege. It was the dream of the French intellectuals to establish a national state with democratic fervour where feudalism and absolutism would have no place. The result was the outbreak of the French Revolution which changed socio-economic fabric of France. Same was the role played by the press in other prominent European countries like England, Germany and Italy. The press in these countries influenced the enlightened groups and the intellectuals who, in turn, became successful in nurturing democratic thinking having a tremendous influence on the masses. Thus the press, right from its inception, had played a significant role in moulding European society and social system to a great extent and guided European states towards its journey from orthodox medievalism to modern intellectualism.  

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The printing press was a western import brought to India by the European Christian missionaries for publishing evangelical literature. The Portuguese Jesuits procured two printing presses and brought them to the subcontinent in 1550 A.D. From one of these presses, the first printed book in India was produced at Goa in 1557 A.D., 59 years after Vasco da Gama had landed at Calicut.\(^9\) Though the printing press in India emerged as a formidable weapon much against the wishes of the colonial rulers, yet it was a landmark in the history of the Subcontinent and became a real social force influencing the life of the people. William Bolts, a Dutchman and a merchant of the English East India Company was the first to attempt starting a newspaper in India. Bolts who had resigned in 1766 on being censored by the Company authorities for indulging in private trade, gave notice to the Calcutta Council of his intention of starting a paper to “communicate such intelligence to the community, as is of ... importance to every British subject...”\(^10\) But the Company did not approve of his intentions for obvious reasons. It was not until twelve years later that James Augustus Hicky commenced the publication of the first English newspaper, the *Bengal Gazette* also called the *Calcutta General Advertiser*. Bolts’ intention to start a paper alarmed official quarters and he was asked to leave Bengal and proceed to Madras and sail from there to Europe. With the appearance of *Bengal Gazette* or *Calcutta General Advertiser* by James Augustus Hicky, a ‘disgruntled’ employee of the East India Company on 29\(^{th}\) January, 1780, India

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entered into the arena of press activities. Hicky's *Bengal Gazette* was
in the words of its founder, "a weekly political and commercial paper
open to all parties but influenced by none." Hicky highlighted the
malpractices of the Company officials and stood for liberty of the
subject people. Reckless and indiscriminate criticism and personal
attacks soon landed Hicky in prison and caused the extinction of the
paper. With all limitations Hicky's paper contributed much to the
growth of journalism in Bengal. It was Hicky who first enunciated the
noble principle of liberty of press for which Indians had to struggle up
to the termination of the British rule in India. Editors like William
Duane of *The World* was deported to Europe in 1794 for publishing
inflammatory articles considered seditious by the Company's
government. Dr. McLean, editor of the *Bengal Harkaru* had to face
similar fate for his pungent criticism of the policies of the government.
From the beginning, the attitude of the Company's Government was
unfavorable and it tried to muzzle the press to protect its vested
interest.

Forms of dissemination of knowledge and information took
an entirely new dimension with the introduction of art of printing in
Bengal in the modern period. Once a Danish settlement, Serampore, a
Sub-divisional town near Calcutta commands a unique place in the
history of printing and the press in India. Though the primary aim of
the Baptists was to preach the gospel of Christianity, a propitious
corollary of their missionary activities was the cultivation of Bengali

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12 *Hicky's Bengal Gazette*, No. XVIII, April, 1780.
language and the growth of vernacular journalism. The Baptist Mission press established at Serampore by William Carey, William Ward and Joshua Marshman played a pioneering role in the realm of vernacular journalism. The Mission press published the first Bengali monthly *Dig Darshan*, in April 1818, and it was followed by the weekly *Samachar Darpan*, which was published on 23rd May, the same year. Following the publication of the two missionary papers, *Dig Darshan* and *Samachar Darpan*, there was a rapid growth of vernacular newspapers in Bengal.

However, the history of Bengali journalism begins with a controversy. Some writers give the honour of being the first Bengali newsweekly to the *Bengal Gazeti* of Gangakishore Bhattacharya, while others give the credit to the *Samachar Darpan* edited by J.C. Marshman. Rev. James Long wrote in 1850 that “the first Bengali Newspaper...was the *Darpan* of Serampore.” But a few years later, in 1855, he changed his view. Possibly he was influenced by Isvarchandra Gupta’s article on the history of Bengali press published in the *Sangbad Prabhakar* on April 12, 1852. In this article, Gupta gave the credit to the *Bengal Gazeti* as first Bengali news weekly. Again the *Bengal Gazeti* was not included in the list of newspapers published in the *Sangbad Purnachandrodyo* in 1851. So, there was a controversy centering round the first Bengali newspaper. Whatever may be the outcome of the controversy; this much seems to be certain that press activities were centered on Calcutta and its surrounding areas. The port city of Calcutta acted as a path finder in this direction.

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13 B.N. Banerjee, op.cit., p.739.
15 B.N. Banerjee, op.cit., p.739.
16 *Sangbad Purnachandrodyo*, Calcutta, April 14, 1851.
The other colonial port cities like Bombay and Madras also entered into the fray following the footsteps of Calcutta. The all-round awakening that was taking place in Bengal in the early 19th century was complementary to the emergence of the press in Bengal.

When there was a rapid growth of vernacular press in Bengal, Surma-Barak Valley, once a part of the then Bengal could not lag behind. With the publication of Srihatta Prakash, in 1875, one year after the amalgamation of the twin districts of Sylhet and Cachar with Assam proper, Surma-Barak Valley embarked on the path of press activities which remained unabated till Sylhet was transferred to East Pakistan in 1947. The standard of journalism that was set by Srihatta Prakash became a source of inspiration to other news organs published from the valley. To be precise, during the period under review, the twin districts of Sylhet and Cachar witnessed the emergence of a number of weeklies which made the history of journalism in the valley a comprehensive one. Jatindramohan Bhattacharjee in his book Srihattabashi Sampadito abong Srihatta O Cachar Haite Prakashita Sangbadparta listed some 225 newspapers and 180 journalists who were associated with press activities. Muhammad Nurul Haque listed some 40 newspapers that were being edited and published by 50 Muslim journalists in his book Sangbadpatrasebay Sylheter Musalman. Kumudranjan Bhattacharjee’s book Sahitye O Sangbadikatay Srihattter Abadan also provides information regarding the publication of newspapers and steady growth of journalism in the valley. The growth and genesis of the press was not confined to Sylhet town but it penetrated deep into the valley and far flung areas of the twin districts of Sylhet and Cachar.
came within its sphere of influence. Nikunjabehari Goswami thus wrote that the number of newspapers and journalists that sprung up from the valley could demand comparison to that of no other part except Dacca and Calcutta.¹⁹

Though the press and the modern kind of journalism emerged as a sequel to the spread of western education and ideas under the British rule in India, the Indian journalism manifested through national press differed from journalism in the western countries. The political scenario in India was different from that of the western world. Journalism in the west was nurtured in a condition which was different from India. The rulers and the ruled in the western countries belonged to the same stock and there was always more or less a national consensus over the major issues that concerned the general well-being of the people as a whole. But this was not so in case of India. The interests of the rulers and the ruled widely differed in India. The interest of the rulers in India was not to maximise the well-being of the people but to maximise profit and that too at the cost of the subjugation of the people. People, on their part, were induced by patriotic fervour and they wanted to get rid of the colonial rule. It was political and patriotic end that was the driving force behind the birth of newspapers in India. The native press in India, right from its inception, championed the cause of the Indian people and it ran counter to the interests of the imperial rulers which further widened the gulf between the Indian press and the alien ruling class. Moreover, newspapers were not in those days business enterprises, nor were the editors and

journalists professionals. Publishing newspapers was generally considered a national or public service. They were often financed as objects of philanthropy. To be a journalist was often to be a political worker and an agitator at considerable self sacrifice. Majority of them entered into the profession without any illusions of financial gains. They entered into the field because they were attracted to it and had to render service to the country. It was not very expensive to start a newspaper, though the editor had to earn his livelihood through a supplementary source. Therefore the press in India was looked upon not as a business proposition as in the west but as a mission dedicated to the cause of freedom.

The tidal wave of economic, political, humanitarian and religious movements had an impending influence on Britain during the closing years of the 18th century and it challenged the theory of conservatism and imperialism being patronised by conservative and imperialist government. While the political thinkers and philosophers like Jeremy Bentham and Thomas Paine preached new political ideas and advocated sweeping political and social changes, the humanitarians demanded better way of life for the colonised people. The English press took up the cause and started publishing articles in its favour which evoked strong public opinion in England. It, in a way, influenced its functioning in India, a British dependence in its infancy. The early press personalities, mostly Englishmen, drew their inspiration from the power of the press in England. Branded as
“interlopers and trespassers” by East India Company, they had no allegiance to company’s regime.  

Generally speaking, nationalism in India was a product of Western impact which also gave birth to early nationalist press in India. Study of European history and literature made the educated Indians familiar with the prevailing spirit of democracy, nationalism and liberalism in Europe. Towards the end of the 18th century, the ideas of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Hume and others began to reach Indian shores. These had a profound impression on the inquisitive and responsive Bengalee middle-class mind. Bengal was moved far more powerfully than the other Indian provinces by the new idea of freedom and equality of the 18th century European illumination, which the British brought with them. This had its direct impact on the destiny of the press at its formative stage. The rapid growth of press accelerated the growth of peoples’ consciousness. From the early 19th century, the number of newspapers and journals published in India began to increase rapidly. Most of the Indian leaders were directly or indirectly connected with press. In many cases they were the editors and in some cases they were the proprietor-editors. In the first session of Indian National Congress held at Bombay, a large number of “journalist politicians” were invited to participate in it. Thus Indian nationalism and Indian journalism had a close linkage and it was almost inseparable during the period of colonial regime.

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To be precise, nationalism is a political creed that underlines the cohesion of modern society and legitimates peoples' claims to authority. Nationalism highlights the supreme loyalty of overwhelming majority of the people to the nation-state, either existing or desired. The nation-state is regarded not only as the ideal, natural or normal form of political organisation but also as the indispensable framework for all social, cultural and economic activities. Nationalism has different connotations – one to the free people and other to the subject people. In India, nationalism emerged as a reaction to exploitation, imperialism and colonialism. With the passing of India to Britain, new classes emerged in India and the interest of these new classes was in confrontation with British imperialism. Political nationalism in India was the outcome of this conflict and gave birth to various political movements in the country. The political movements embodied the striving of the Indian people and its various sections to secure political power which they could use to serve their respective social, economic and other interests.  

To have a clear idea about the nature of national awakening in India, one must reflect on the socio-political movement that preceded the political awakening. These movements were largely responsible for the growth of press in India. In fact, the development of the press had been closely associated with the emergence of socio-political awareness. The press has often led the nation to reach its socio-political goals and at the same time, national aspirations have exerted tremendous influence on its policies. Thus both have helped and strengthened each other. Significantly, in India, as elsewhere, the

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leaders of these movements founded newspapers for the sole purpose of propagating their views to the masses and, therefore, had no commercial interest in them. Their main objective was to communicate ideas that would lead to the emergence of a national consciousness. As such, the progress of journalism in India during the colonial period was accelerated by the socio-political movements that swept the country.  

Since the press was a powerful weapon in the emergence of nationalism and of the nationalist movement, it had to face the vengeance of the British government. The colonial rulers, by imposing various restrictions and limitations tried its best to muzzle the nationalist attitude of the Indian press. The colonial government was reluctant to fulfill the hopes and aspirations of the Indian people and showed its hostile attitude to the demands of the Indian nationalists which was nurtured by the Indian owned press. Indian nationalists realised the potentiality of the press as a carrier of the seeds of nationalism and in generating the spirit of national consciousness. They extended their helping hands to the Indian press and led a crusade against the British government to foil all its attempts to curtail the freedom of the press. Thus, the history of the struggle for the freedom of the press in India had been an integral part of the history of the nationalist struggle. The freedom of the press was one of the basic democratic liberties which Indian nationalists, cherished and fought for. The Indian nationalists, right from the beginning, defended the freedom of the press whenever the alien government had attacked it or tried to curtail it. To be precise, there was an inseparable linkage

between Indian press and nationalism which ran counter to colonial absolutism.

The growth of nationalism and that of press were complementary forces – each influencing the other in its path of progress. Inevitably the national movement for freedom owed much to the national press. Gradually, a symbiotic relationship had developed between the two. In other words, the press through its propagation of specific ideas and notions gave colour, contour and content to nationalism which was somewhat insipid at the formative stage. With the formation of Indian National Congress in 1885, the activities of the Indian press got a momentum and both of them cooperated with each other in their struggle against a common foe – the colonial rule in India. But what was the case with regard to Surma-Barak Valley? The present study is an attempt to find an answer to this question.

Survey of the related studies:

The present study is a pioneering one in the sense that there is no known study on the relationship between print media and political movements in Surma Barak Valley. Hence the literature on it is very scanty. However, the Political History of Assam\(^\text{24}\) (three volumes) covered the political history of the valley from 1826-1947. Same is the case with Amalendu Guha’s Planter-Raj to Swaraj Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947.\(^\text{25}\) Guha provides us a


glimpse of political development and electoral politics that had taken place during the colonial period.

Besides, there are some other works that cover the history and politics of Surma-Barak Valley in a detailed manner. But these works are personal memoirs and compilation of records. These are mostly descriptive and not analytical in nature. Personal memoirs and compilation of records do not undertake the task of analyzing the developments they discuss or mention. Still these are of immense benefit on the ground that they provide us with primary data and information of diverse varieties. These, in a way, help to develop our reasoning and provide us with a platform from where we can make an investigation of the problem by framing questions and at times seeking answers to the questions posed. Thus a review of the literature related to this study cover those published works that are taken into account for collection of data necessary for the study.

One of the earliest attempts to highlight the socio-political developments in the Surma-Barak Valley is Jayanta Bhusan Bhattacharjee’s article titled, “Reaction of the people of Surma Valley to transfer of the Valley to Assam”\textsuperscript{26}. The article dealt in details the political developments which compelled Sylhet to join Assam much against the wishes of the people living in the valley and also how this amalgamation fermented regional consciousness in the valley throughout the colonial period. It is, indeed, this regional leaning which became a dominant factor behind the emergence of anti-

\textsuperscript{26} J.B.Bhattacharjee, “Reaction of the people of Surma Valley to transfer of the Valley to Assam”, Proceedings of the North East India History Association, 10\textsuperscript{th} session, Shillong, 1989.
colonial struggle that swept the entire valley during the days of freedom movement. *Cachar under British Rule in North East India* is another work by the same author. Highlighting the socio-political and cultural life of Surma-Barak Valley during the colonial period, the work provides us with a comprehensive history of Cachar.

Autobiographical works like Brajendra Narayan Chowdhury’s *Smriti O Pratiti*, Nirod Kumar Gupta’s *Swadhinata Sangramer Smriti*, Suresh Chandra Biswas’s *Bhulibe ki Pranantye* deserve special mention. *Swadhinata Sangramer Smriti* by Nirod Kumar Gupta is a work which depicts the political developments that had taken place during the colonial period in Surma-Barak Valley. The way, the author covered mass political upsurge like *Swadeshi* movement, Non-Cooperation movement, Civil Disobedience movement, Quit India Movement in the valley and its repercussion on the masses is a rare exception. A touching event like Sylhet referendum is also covered in the work. In the work, the author tried to justify the freedom movement in this remote part of the country on the path showed by Indian National Congress. However, no attempt has been made by the author to make it an analytical one taking into account various political developments during different phases of anti-colonial movement. The other two books also acted on the same line. The accounts are subjective and no effort was made to analyse the reasons behind different variations of public attitude during different phases of freedom struggle.

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Chanchal Sharma's work, *Surma Upatyakar Shramik O Krishak Andoloner Itihas* is a class of its own. Though he was actively involved in the organizational activities of the Congress, Sharma was a staunch follower of revolutionary ideas and then leaned towards communist ideology. Thus the account of Chanchal Sharma had sharp differences with that of Nirod Kumar Gupta. He made a gallant attempt in highlighting the growth of revolutionary politics in the valley which at the end was influenced by communist ideology. Not being an analyst, he put much emphasis on the prototype political developments and made no attempt to analyse the causal connection that had tremendous influence on the course and development of political activities that engulfed the entire valley during the days of freedom struggle.

Works on history of the press in national perspective are found in plenty. A few of them are *A History of the Press in India* by S. Natarajan, *History of Indian Journalism* by J. Natarajan, *Journalism in India: From The Earliest Times To the Present Day* by Ramaswami Parthasarathi, *Indian Journalism* by Nadig Krishnamurthi. These works attempt to provide information and insight into a chronological study of journalism, its influence on the development of language and in awakening the masses for freedom

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35 N. Krishnamurthy, *Indian Journalism*, University of Mysore, Mysore, 1966.
struggle. But no attempt has been made to relate them to the political forces in operation or to the subsequent political developments.

The works related to the press in Surma-Barak Valley are very scanty. The earliest attempt in this direction was made by Jatindramohan Bhattacharjee. Bhattacharjee in his book, *Srihattabasi Sampadita Abong Srihatta O Cachar Hoite Prakashita Sangbadpatra*\(^36\) provides a list of newspapers, periodicals and magazines published from the valley from time to time. It gives us valuable information as to the chronological development of the press in the valley and the persons connected to these publications as editors and publishers. Similarly, Kumudranjan Bhattacharjee’s *Sahtye O Sangbadikatay Srihatta Abadan*\(^37\) provides valuable information of newspapers and journalists of the valley. Mention should also be made of *Sylheter Shatabarsher Sangbadikata*\(^38\) by Mohiuddin Shiru and *Jugaveri: Ekti Prachin Bangla Sangbadpatra*\(^39\) by Giyasuddin Awal. In these works, the authors dealt with the growth and development of newspapers in this part of the country. But there is no known work on the mutual relationship between press and political movements in this valley.

It is, thus, clear that no attempt has yet been made to understand the interaction and interrelation between the print media and political movements in Surma-Barak Valley. Thus we have to proceed through

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38 M. Shiru, *op. cit.*
an untrodden path and at the same time we have to initiate the process from the very beginning by making a thorough investigation of the growth and genesis of the press and political movements in the valley. That will make the work meaningful and worth taking.

Objective of the Study:
In view of the limitations of the existing studies on the subject, the present study aims at understanding the i) origin and growth of the Print-media in Surma-Barak Valley; and ii) the interrelation and interaction between the Print-media and the Political movements in Surma-Barak Valley.

Hypothesis:
The study is conducted with the hypothesis that i) the origin of the Print-media in Surma-Barak Valley coincides the emergence of nationalism in this region; and ii) the Print-media in Surma-Barak Valley had been a part of the political scenario of the valley and had always represented the cause of freedom movement going on in the country.

Methodology and Data Collection:
The nature of the study makes it obvious that the method of historical analysis needs to be employed to test the hypothesis proposed. The information required for the study is collected from the old files of newspapers and periodicals, books, gazette, memoranda and other archival records. Information relating to print-media is obtained from Jatindramohan Sangrahashala at National Council of Education, Jadavpur. Old files of papers and periodicals published from Surma-
Barak Valley have been preserved at this centre. Besides, information relating to the study is also collected from Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, newspaper section of National Library located at Kolkata, National Archives, New Delhi and Assam State Archives, Guwahati. Persons having knowledge on the subject are also interviewed.

**Organisation:**

The study is organised into the following chapters:

**Chapter I:**
Introduction

**Chapter II:**
Press and the Development of National Consciousness

**Chapter III:**
Politics of Agitation and the Press

**Chapter IV:**
Press and Popular Resistance (1920-1930)

**Chapter V:**
Press and Popular Resistance (1930-1939)

**Chapter VI:**
Freedom with Partition and the Press

**Chapter VII:**
Summary and Conclusion