Chapter I

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

The language press in India truly reflects the diversity and plurality of rich linguistic and cultural heritage of the country. Small newspapers coming out from the district centres and having grass-root contacts, mostly in Hindi and other Indian languages, constitute an important segment of the Indian Press. Several Indian language newspapers rendered valuable service in shaping different aspects of economic development, social awareness and cultural rejuvenation. These papers give voice to the aspirations and demands, difficulties and problems of their readers and have been able to establish strong affinity with them.

The importance of media, particularly the print media has been enhanced by the role of press in India’s struggle for independence where the language press had to face more years of persistent struggle before it was recognized as a significant segment of the Indian press along with English or national dailies. The language press not only contributed significantly to the social change and development but also played a major role in creating a feeling of national integration and solidarity among the people during the freedom struggle. After independence, the main challenge before the language press was to sensitise the readers towards developmental issues affecting the Indian masses, the vast majority of which was inhabiting in the rural areas. Till today, the press is playing significant role in bringing about changes in society.

Apart from the official languages in the Indian Constitution, in the modern mass media, as well as traditional communication, the use of variety of languages is an advantage, bringing a large segment of comprehension with
other linguistic groups. Interestingly, the report of International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, *Many Voices One World*, lists 16 languages which are spoken by more than 50 million people; out of which there are five languages in which newspapers are published in India. These languages are Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, Telugu and Tamil (Aggarwal & Gupta, 2001).

A unique feature of the language press is the vibrant practice of bringing special numbers and literary supplements on a regular basis. These special issues are brought out in large numbers and contain short stories, poems, creative writings, and novels in full or serialised. Thus these newspapers contribute extensively to the higher literary and cultural aesthetics of the people.

However, the concern for the language newspapers today is somewhat inextricably interwoven in their struggle for existence. The focus has now been shifted towards sensationalism and yellow journalism practice. Development or literacy related news is far from their agenda. The main objective for these papers is to increase sales. The basic canons of journalism practice like truthfulness, responsibility, objectivity, and fair play has taken its back seat and in lieu the contents are dictated by partisan motives like violence, theft, political instability, scams, and other related issues.

The media, an important form of discourse, both reflect and help shape the public’s opinion on various societal issues. "The media are important social institutions and are crucial presenters of culture, politics, and social life, shaping as well as reflecting how these are formed and expressed. Media ‘discourse’ is important both for what it reveals about a society and for what it contribute to the character of the society (Bell, 1995). As language press is a promising medium for disseminating information and knowledge about nutrition, health and hygiene, improved farm practices, family planning measures and many other vital issues, the present study assumes wider importance in the present context."
1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Media coverage of social issues have been a source of contention and debate since the earliest days of Indian press and still continues to be a major issue in Indian society, as seen by the attention given to various social issues in major newspapers across the country.

The purpose of the present study "Language Press and Social Issues: A Study of Bengali Newspapers in Cachar District of Assam" therefore is to analyze the nature and extent of coverage of socially relevant issues in major language newspapers of Cachar district of Assam, exploring how these issues are portrayed and how they both reflect and shape views of societal diversity and issues. Hence the study is a reflection to the ground reporting realities of Indian language dailies in sensitizing the local populace towards developmental issues affecting Indian masses, the vast majority of which is inhabiting in the rural areas.

1.3 LANGUAGE PRESS IN INDIA

The Press in India, from the time of Hicky to the present day has been playing a vital role in shaping the attitudes and behavioural patterns of the people. Indian Journalism has contributed immensely for national independence, democratic evolution, national integration and progress. It continues to play a major role in public opinion formation in spite of its limited reach both in terms of geographical area and population when compared to electronic media. The printed words, however, still has tremendous credibility and impact (Guru, 1995). Our planners have laid emphasis on participatory development. As A.S. Ramaswamy writes, "Development cannot be imposed from above. It has to be generated from within. The participatory process implies partnership in development by two parties, namely, the people themselves and the government organisations or non-government organisations. The participatory process refers to a host of development functions like collection of data, processing and analyzing, determination of needs and their planning programmes, and budgeting, raising of resources, implementation and monitoring and impact evaluation.
all done in a manner." Thus, development has to be engineered by mass media organisations including that of journalism since the people are deliberately kept in a state of powerlessness by the powers-that-be. Journalism could become a platform for debates, discussions, public opinion formation and enlightened participation of people in the process of nation building. Wilbur Schramm observes, "A rural newspaper, especially a small language newspaper published from district town is one of the great movers of national development."

Multi-ethnicity, multi-culture and multi-language are the hallmarks of India. Infact the country is any linguist's delight. The constitution has recognized 18 major languages but there are 1652 languages spoken as mother tongues by the people of India. While North India is considered Hindi heartland, labeled after the dominant language, South India has four important Dravidian languages, namely, Kannada, Telegu, Tamil and Malayalam. East India has Oriya, Bengali and Assamese while the Western states have Marathi, Gujarathi, Rajasthani and Punjabi. (Nagaraj and Guru, 1997).

The Press in India is said to be of two different kinds, the English Press and the language press. The English press is identified with the elite and educated readers whose intellectual interest is supposed to cover a wide canvas. The language press is identified on regional or local basis having readers who are both literate and semi-literate. Obviously it appeals to a particular language audience. English press is mainly confined in urban areas and cities. In small towns it might reach the growth centers along with major roadsides. The language press is accessible only to a small majority of population based on common linguistic and cultural background of a particular region. The language press in India is regional in character. No language press claims its national character in the sense as some English newspapers claim.

But in the real sense, no English newspaper in India shows national character as it is understood to exist in the western and communist countries. The English press had faster growth compared to the language press during pre-independence period. After independence the situation changed as the language press found a better environment for its growth in professionalism
and leadership. The only drawback or shortcoming in the case of the language press in India was that, barring a few, most of the language newspapers lack sound financial background and good marketing strategy (Patnaik and Bedi, 1997).

1.4 GROWTH OF NEWSPAPERS IN INDIA
At the time when India became independent, the country had only 3533 publications. Among them 330 were daily newspapers and 3203 were periodicals. After 50 years, there has been a 12 fold increase in the number of publications. In 1997, according to the data published by the Registrar of News Papers of India, there were 41705 publications among which the number of newspapers was 4719. In 2006, this has gone up to 45600 publications, in which 5600 are newspapers. At present, India has 398 major newspapers with an overall circulation of 30,772,000 copies. India has the world’s largest newspaper market after China. While newspapers are struggling in Europe and USA, in India and China there is a boom. It is interesting to note that the world’s three top countries in newspaper circulation are China with 98.70 million copies, India with 88.90 million copies and Japan with 69.10 million. Growth of newspapers is calculated in two ways, one is by circulation and the other is by readership. One copy of a newspaper may be read by several people. If a family subscribes to a newspaper it is likely to be read by four of six members. So if a newspaper has a circulation of one lakh, its readership may be four or five lakhs. A close study of newspaper readership in India shows that there are more readers for language newspapers. This is mainly because English newspapers are confined to cities and towns whereas language newspapers are widely circulated in the rural areas.

India is one of the fastest growing media markets in the world. It is not only newspapers but other media forms which are also growing at a fast pace like radio, television channels and internet.

Some of the factors that have contributed in the steady growth of newspapers in India may be discussed as under:
There is a steady rise in the literacy rates in all the states of our country. More and more people are being initiated into the world of reading and writing. They gradually learn to read newspapers and periodicals. Robin Jeffrey who made elaborate studies about the newspaper revolution in India says that the fastest growth rates in newspaper circulation were in states which showed the strongest growth rates of literacy.

Moreover, as the Indian middle class expands, it leads to an increase in the circulation of newspapers. When a household makes economic and educational progress, they consider it as a status symbol to subscribe to a newspaper. India still has an estimated 350 million people who can read and write but do not buy any newspaper. So there is a vast segment that is still untapped as far as newspaper circulation is considered. More and more newspapers are trying to woo this section. It is often said that if you educate a woman you are educating the next generation. In India women are getting more and more educated and this in turn leads to education of children. Awareness also increases along with this. It contributes a lot to the growth of readership.

Also, the technological development has added to the growth of newspapers in India in the recent years. In earlier days, starting a newspaper publication or establishment of a new edition was a costly affair. As technology has improved, it became easier for newspapers to start new editions. This has led to an expansion of newspapers even into small cities and towns.

1.5 GROWTH OF LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS IN INDIA

A silent revolution has been taking place in the Indian press- a revolution during the course of which the two-century old dominance of the English press has been overcome by the Indian language press in terms of both the numbers of newspapers and their combined circulation. At the time of Independence, there were about 3000 newspapers and periodicals, which included 300 major English and language dailies. Just after fifteen years of independence, a remarkable change was noticed. The Hindi language press overtook English press and left it behind in terms of circulation also. In 1989 the numbers of Hindi newspapers was nearly double to that of English
newspapers- an indicator of steady progress and prospect of language press. In 1960 there were about 392 language dailies with a combined circulation 36 lakhs, the corresponding number rose to 704 and combined circulation 68 lakhs in 1971, when the number of daily newspapers rose to 704. In 1971 all the top four dailies were language dailies. The circulation of language dailies nearly doubled between 1960 and 1971.

The reasons for the growth of newspapers in India that we have studied so far are equally applicable for the growth of language newspapers. But there are some other factors that helped the rise of the latter. During the early days, the language press was looked down upon as ‘vernacular dailies’ by the English press but with the rise and emergence of language media as a major force this impression has changed.

Indian economy is basically a rural economy. More than 60 per cent of our population lives in the rural areas. According to a survey by National Sample Survey Organization, more than 16 crore households live in the rural areas.

A paradigm shift has been visible in the rural population over the past 50 or 60 years. Indian farmers, who were classified as born in debt, live in debt and die in debt, have become one of the most influential consumer groups in society now. Their income levels have increased and along with that, tastes and preferences have also shown changes. This advancement of the rural mass has resulted in the growth of language newspapers.

A marked change in the coverage of local news by newspapers is another reason for the growth of language newspapers. Earlier national and international news dominated the Indian press. But the experiment by some newspapers, especially in the southern states, of covering local news with prominence gave a big boost to their circulation. Newspapers from other parts soon copied this. Newspapers started covering issues that were concerned with the ordinary people. The rural people found that there is a medium to express their grievances and aspirations.

Starting of multiple editions was another factor that resulted in the growth of the language press. Earlier newspapers were confined to state capital cities only. But as more and more potential readers emerged from other areas,
newspaper owners started editions from even district centres. Thus multiple editions of newspapers were brought out. The boom in advertising also helped in the growth of the language press. The rural mass turned out to be the biggest market for any product. For attracting them, advertisers were forced to give advertisements in local papers. This in turn resulted in an increase of revenue for the language press.

1.6 JOURNALISM FOR DEVELOPMENT
Development journalism has been defined by different experts in different ways. Vilanilam (1975) defined it as ‘journalism that deals with the process of development in developing nations’. The same view was further elaborated by Aggarwal (1978a), according to whom developmental journalism basically reports the development process rather than events. The emphasis in development journalism, is, therefore not on what happens at a particular moment or on a given day but on what is happening over time. Development journalism covers the entire gamut of socio-economic and cultural developmental journalism and does not differ drastically from regular news coverage.

However, western scholars like Stevenson (1994:144), Hachten (1996:30-35) and Righter (1979) viewed developmental journalism as advocacy journalism or propaganda journalism by the government because journalists mostly depended on government handouts.

Aggarwal (1978b) criticizing the western view, argued that developmental journalism is not synonymous with officially prepared news. According to him, developmental journalism in the developing countries makes the highly urbanized and elitist media relevant to their predominantly rural societies.

1.7 DEVELOPMENTAL JOURNALISM: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE
Developmental journalism was practiced in India even before the term came into existence. One example is Mahatma Gandhi’s writings in his journals, Young India and Harijan. Gandhi educated the masses on topics that he considered of vital interest to the progress of the nation. He profusely wrote on contemporary topics such as Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of
untouchability, promotion of khadi and other village industries and the popularization of spinning wheel as a means of supplementing the income of the semi-starving and half-employed village peasants in India. (Murthy, 1966).

Prior to independence, newspapers influenced and moulded the opinion of the people on social issues such as sati, child marriage, bride burning and so on. Journalism in those days functioned as a mission to awaken the masses socially and politically. (Murthy, 1966; Yadav, 1985; Parthasarathy, 1991).

The second press commission of India (1982) in its survey of the state of the press in the country observed that “the extent of development reporting in regional newspapers had improved considerably in some widely read dailies in Bengali, Kannada, Malayalam and English. These newspapers have reported regularly on development-related topics and major socio-economic issues such as the conditions of tea-gardens, labour problems of drought and irrigation, ‘dowry-death’ and the general ill-treatment of women, the plight of under-trial prisoners and the living conditions of urban slum dwellers, etc.”

However, developmental journalism has not gained much currency among Indian newspapers. Obviously, the Indian press is known for its wide coverage of political news, gossip and sensationalism (Goswami, 1994; Nandy, 1994a, 1994b; Karlekar 1994). Hence vital issues such as primary education, population control, the state of urban decay, power crises, etc., get a backseat (Rai, 1992; Singh, 1994; Shourie, 1995).

Despite these developments, the Second Press Commission (1987:30) again observed that “the reporting of non-official initiatives in rural development, educational reforms, leprosy eradication and so on is less extensive than the in-depth reporting of the implementation of official development programmes. It is unfortunate that our newspapers become aware of such non-official activities only after they have been honoured by Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation or Magsaysay award.”
1.8 PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENTAL JOURNALISM IN INDIAN NEWSPAPERS

The causes of backwardness in development reporting in Indian newspapers, according to Bhattacharjea (1994) are:

- Inadequate information and poor understanding of the subject of development among practicing journalists.
- Absence of training in marshalling and presentation of facts in an attractive format.
- Poor interest shown by newspapers in development coverage
- Lack of funds and support from the newspaper establishments.

Another important reason for the Indian newspapers for not taking up developmental journalism seriously is the entry of businessmen into the profession and the commercialization of the press. Newspapers came to be increasingly owned and managed by top businessmen in the country (Rao, 1982; Yadav, 1985; Vilanilam, 1989: 65; Joglekar, 1990; Nayar, 1994). The advent of new technology helped the launching of new dailies all over the country. The publication of multiple editions from many places went up as technology facilitated this venture (Chaturvedi, 1992; Saddhar, 1992). The Press Council of India annual report 1991-1992 observed that, “this factor (new technology) operating in tandem with other forces, is leading to increased concentration of the newspapers in the hands of some big business house or trading interests. As a result, the newspaper business in India is fast becoming a money game.”

1.9 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The present study of the nature and extent of the coverage of social issues by the language press in Cachar district of Assam is the first of its kind. Thus, the research findings are expected to provide an assessment of the nature and extent of social issues covered by the Bengali newspapers of this region.
The rationale behind selection of the two newspapers namely, *Dainik Jugashankha* and *Samayik Prasanga* was that they are the two highest circulated Bengali language newspapers of Cachar district of Barak Valley, which is a Bengali dominating area and concerned about the social issues.

1.10 **LOCALE OF THE STUDY**

The research setting of the study is the Cachar district of **Assam**, in the **northeastern** part of India.

1.10.1 **THE NORTH EAST INDIA**

The Northeast- exotic, colorful, mysterious are some of the adjectives that constitute the Northeastern corner of India. Except for vague impressions of a tribal populace that has a rich variety of colorful practices and lifestyles, separatist tendencies that are stoked by militant outfits and the occasional ethnic clashes, not many in the rest of the country know much about the northeast. The region covering a vast area of 2,63,000 square kilometers is a home to 40 million people spread over eight States- Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Mizoram, and Sikkim. The fact that not many in the country know about the northeastern states is the direct result of governmental insensitivity, administrative bungling or insensitivity of the mainstream India. It is often argued that due to insensitiveness of media in giving adequate coverage to the Northeast, the Government of India left the area unattended and neglected the region for decades. This total negligence of the Government of India towards the Northeastern region was responsible in giving birth to several underground outfits and with their demands ranging from secession to autonomy and right to self determination. Some organizations like Mizo National Front, which fought for a separate independent nation became over ground and joined the national mainstream. Over the past five decades, virtually every state in India's northeast has witnessed the emergence of powerful militia to contest the Indian state's narrative of socio-economic progress and integrating the margins into the "national mainstream." The influx of Bangladeshi migrants into India and to be more specific into the northeastern States including Assam have long
been a contentious and controversial issue hitting the headlines every now and then. The issue of ineffective border management and slow pace of detection and deportation of illegal migrants still continues to be an issue unresolved. There has also been a tendency to ignore emerging movements unless it turns volatile. Whether it is the six years long foreigners’ movement in Assam or the eight year long fasting of Manipur’s Iron Lady, Irom Sharmila for the repeal of AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Powers Act, of 1958, which gives security forces the authority to use lethal force and legal immunity from independent investigation. These issues are still alive in the hearts and minds of people of the region. Poor governance and lack of accountability is another area which is of immense concern for the northeastern states. Lack of accountability in fast-tracking the completion of national projects like Lumding-Silchar gauge conversion, Gas Cracker Project, Bogibeel rail-cum-road bridge, etc clearly portrays lack of accountability- whither media or government? (Paul, 2011)

The heart the fact lies that each state of the Northeast has a different set of location-specific concerns, grievances which often get blurred in the scheme of things of media, policy framers and government leaders who are supposed to address these issues.

1.10.2 ASSAM

The word ‘Assam’ as interpreted by some scholars is derived from the Sanskrit word Asoma meaning peerless or unparalleled. But the widely accepted opinion of the academic circles today is that the term has come from the original name of the Ahoms, who ruled the land for about six hundred years prior to its annexation by the British.

Assam is the sentinel of north-east India and gateway to the Northeastern states. The state is close to India’s international borders with Bangladesh and Bhutan and cultures, peoples and climate with South-East Asia, important elements in India’s “Look East” Policy. Also located south of the eastern Himalayas, Assam comprises the Brahmaputra and the Barak river valleys and the Karbi Anglong and the North Cachar Hills.
1.10.3 DISTRICTS OF ASSAM

Assam is divided into 27 districts. With an area of 78,438 square kilometres, Assam currently is almost equivalent to the size of Ireland or Austria.

Of these 27 districts, the Cachar District has been considered as the locale of the study.

1.10.4 POPULATION OF ASSAM

Surrounded by Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh on the north, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh on the east and Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram on the south, Assam is the largest among all the eight Northeastern states with a population(according to 2001 Census) of 26.66 million (2,66,55,528) with 4.91 million households. Higher population concentration was recorded in the districts of Kamrup, Nagaon, Sonitpur, Barpeta, Dhubri, Darang and Cachar. The Technical Group on Population Projection constituted by the National Commission on Population (India) in 2006 has estimated Assam's population at 28.67 million in 2006 and has estimated it to be 30.57 million by 2011, 34.18 million by 2021 and 35.60 million by 2026.

In 2001, the census recorded literacy in Assam at 63.30 percent with male literacy at 71.30 and female at 54.60 percents. Urbanization rate was recorded at 12.90 percent. Growth of population in Assam has experienced a very high trajectory since the mid-decades of the 20th century. Population grew steadily from 3.29 million in 1901 to 6.70 million in 1941, while during the later decades it has increased unprecedentedly to 14.63 million in 1971 and 22.41 million in 1991 to reach the present level. Particularly, the growth in the western and southern districts of Assam was of extreme high
in nature. This is mostly attributable to the rapid infiltration of population from the then East Bengal (East Pakistan) or Bangladesh.

1.10.5 LANGUAGE

Assamese and Bodo are the major indigenous and official languages of the state while Bengali holds official status in particular districts in the Barak Valley. There is one more Dialect known as Goalpariya which is widely spoken by the inhabitants of Assam, North East and adjoining parts of Assam, Goalpariya language is also known in different names such as Goalpariya in Goalpara, Rajbongshi/Kamatapuri language. (Source: India, 2010)

1.10.6 MEDIA SCENARIO IN ASSAM

Assam is one of the important states of the country and the gateway to northeastern India. The presence of diverse cultures, communities, religions and races in the state make it a vibrant place. The ever-growing political activities, the sporting actions and the regular social happenings keep the state in news. With a large population and varied activities in the state, there is a need for a media to put those in the news. Along with the electronic media, the newspapers of Assam are doing wonderful jobs to serve the people with major and minor news. Some of the popular newspapers in Assam are: - Asomiya Pratidin, The Sentinel, Assam Chronicle, the Assam Tribune, Dainik Agradoot, The Northeast Tribune, Dainik Jugashankha, etc.

The state of Assam can be classified into two natural regions-the Brahmaputra valley and the Barak valley. These two valleys have been named after the two main rivers of the state-the Brahmaputra and the Barak, respectively.

1.10.7 BARAK VALLEY

Barak Valley which consists of three districts namely Cachar, Karimganj, and Hailakandi is situated in the southern part of Assam. The main city of the valley is Silchar. The place is named after the river Barak. Karimganj, the district headquarters of Karimganj district, is the second largest town in
valley. It is considered as the cultural center of Barak valley. The official language of Barak valley is Bengali. However, majority of people speak a dialect, which is known as Sylheti Bengali. The major tourist attractions in Barak Valley are remains of the Kachari kingdom at Khaspur, Kachakanti Mandir at Udharbond, Sidheswar Shiva Temple, Narsing Akhra, Bhairab Bari, Bharambaba Temple at Silkuri and the numerous tea estates in the valley.

1.10.8 CACHAR DISTRICT

Cachar district of Assam covers an area of 3,786 sq km. It is bounded by Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and Bangladesh. Cachar serves as a gateway to the north-eastern states of Mizoram, Manipur and Tripura. The Barak, Chiri, Jatinga, Sonai, Dhaleshwari and Katakhal are the major rivers. Cachar has a population of 1.2 million. Silchar is the headquarters. The major agricultural products are rice, sugarcane, jute, pineapple, chillies and mustard. The climate is tropical with hot summer and heavy precipitation. Sidheswar Shiva Temple, Narsing Akhra, Bhairab Bari, Khaspur and Bharambaba Temple are the major tourist attractions.

Cachar district is located on the bank of river Barak (South of Assam). It is bounded by North Cachar Hills and state of Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, sister districts Hailakandi and Karimganj, and neighboring country of Bangladesh. It is the oldest district of Assam. Cachar is the gateway to Mizoram and Manipur but communication to Cachar is not easy. The main river of the district is Barak. The total population as per 2001 Census is 14,42,141. The district’s literacy rate is 68.42%. It has two sub-divisions-Silchar and Lakhipur. Silchar is the center point of the district. The Cachar district has 8 police station, 15 development blocks, 5 revenue circles, 163 gaon panchayats.

The language spoken in this part of the world is Bengali, especially Sylheti that is spoken by the people of Sylhet, now in Bangladesh. Other languages spoken in the region are Hindi, Manipuri, Dimasa, and Khasi, etc.
Some Bengali newspapers are published from this place. These are *Dainik Jugasankha*, *Samayik Prasanga*, *Dainik Sonar Cachar*, *Dainik Janakantha*, *Dainik Prantojyoti*, etc.

### 1.10.9 PROFILE OF THE NEWSPAPERS

The profile of two language dailies of Cachar district- *Dainik Jugasankha* and *Samayik Prasanga*- that have been used in this study are as follows:

- **DAINIK JUGASANKHA**

*Dainik Jugasankha*, established in 20\(^{th}\) December 1950 at Silchar is one of the leading Bengali daily of Assam. The founder proprietor and editor of the paper was Baidyanath Nath, who began the publication as a weekly paper with a circulation of 700 copies. In 1979, *Jugasanka* was shifted to Guwahati and in 1985 it came back to Silchar. After Baidyanath Nath, his son Bijoy Krishna Nath took over the management of the paper.

*Dainik Jugasankha* is Assam’s most popular and one of highest circulated regional newspaper in North East India. At present *Dainik Jugasankha* has three editions- Silchar, Guwahati, and Dibrugarh (RNI report).

The newspaper has been on a constant growth as more and more readers accept it as their daily news resource. *Dainik Jugasankha* has become the people’s newspaper primarily because it is printed in regional language. Aggressive yet fair reporting practices and a host of special pullouts on various topics generate great interest among readers of *Dainik Jugasankha*.

*Dainik Jugasankha* is a 12-page newspaper upholding the reader’s urge among the Bengali diaspora residing across the nooks and corners of Assam. Being the leading and most most-circulated Bengali daily of this region, the newspaper has been successful in providing a platform for matrimonial match through its special segment called ‘Prajapati Bibhag’.

The content of the newspaper is a perfect blend of both hard, soft and feature based news stories. On an average day the front page is a mix of...
local, regional, national and international news items. Classifieds being the backbone of a newspaper, the second page consists of classified advertisements and other government advertisements. Small snippets however chip in between the advertisements to fill in the vacant space. Page 3 covers major local, national and international news, while page 4 is the edit page. Other news from the Cachar district and Barak Valley features in the 5th and 6th page respectively. The 7th and 8th page on an average day is dedicated to national and international news stories. Again the 9th page covers news from the two other districts of Barak valley- Hailakandi and Karimganj. The 11th and 12th page carries sports news on an average day.

The newspaper also churns out special issues based on selected themes on the 10th page every day. The Sunday’s paper has a two-page spread out based on literary and creative writings named ‘Rabibarer Baithak’, which contains poetry, short stories, travelogues, etc. Similarly on Monday a special page is dedicated to sports-loving Bengali population which is aptly called as “Khelar Bhubon”. This sports page is a special page in addition to the normal sports page that it churns out every day. On Tuesday, the 10th page is dedicated to art and culture under the name ‘Shilpa Sanskriti’. Again on Wednesday, a page is dedicated exclusively to women named ‘Ananya’- that features specialized articles on beauty, recipes, etc. Dainik Jugasankha also offers a special page on health that comes out every Thursday. The health page is called ‘Sasthya Bigyan’. In order to cater to the entertainment needs of its target readers, the paper comes out with a full blown space dedicated to film and entertainment on Friday known as ‘Celluloid’. During the weekend the paper has special page devoted to children termed as ‘Sabujer Mela’.

_Dainik Jugasanka_, is among the few newspapers in Assam which had celebrated golden jubilee. With the changing times the paper has made rapid progress in terms of technological advancements. At _Jugasankha_, printing till 1995 was done in flat bed machine. In 1995 offset machine was introduced and in 2004 colour printing was introduced. Diversification being a strategic move, the Sankha Group of publications launched _Eastern_
 Chronicle, an English daily in 2009 under the editorship of Phatik Chandra Bora.

Some eminent journalists who have served Dainik Jugasankha since its inception are Atin Das, Swadesh Chakraborty, Amal Gupta, Tamojit Bhattacharjee, Sankar Dey, Arijit Aditya, Partha Bhattacharjee, Aminul Haque Mazumder, Debasish Purakayastha, Taj Uddin Tapadar, Nurul Huda Laskar, Bireswar Das, Nakul Mandal and many others.

During the period of study, Santanu Ghosh was the Editor of Dainik Jugasankha. Mr Ghosh retired on 31\textsuperscript{st} January, 2012 paving the way for Arijit Aditya as the Editor of the paper. It is pertinent to note that the paper has changed its appearance in terms of make-up and placement of news stories from 1\textsuperscript{st} of February, 2012. Nilotpal Choudhury, an eminent personality of this region is currently the Executive Director.

Dainik Jugasankha also has its presence on the internet and could be viewed at www.dainikjugasankha.net.

- **SAMAYIK PRASANGA**

Samayik Prasanga made its appearance as a Bengali fortnightly from Silchar on April 15, 1978. In the year 1981, the paper became a weekly and in the year 1991, the newspaper was converted to a bi-weekly. It was on 11\textsuperscript{th} of May 2003, Samayik Prasanga hit the stands as a daily newspaper. Taimur Raja Choudhury has been holding the forte as the proprietor cum editor of Samayik Prasanga since its inception and his wife Jyotsna Hussain Choudhury is the Managing Director.

Samayik Prasanga is a 12- page newspaper published from Silchar. The paper features special page on different themes during the week. On Sunday, the 10\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th} page is dedicated to literary and creative works under the name— ‘Rabibarer Prasanga’. On Monday the 10\textsuperscript{th} page is specially dedicated to sports and named as ‘Krira Prasanga’. For youth, the paper comes out with a special page on Tuesday (10\textsuperscript{th} page) terming it as ‘Youth Adda’. Likewise a full blown page on film and entertainment named
'Binodon Prasanga' comes out every Wednesday. Thursday newspaper of the publication features 'Sasthya Bigyan Prasanga' on the 10th page. A page on art and culture named 'Sanskriti Prasanga' is put on the 10th page every Friday. Similarly, a page dedicated to children— 'Prabhati Prasanga' comes out every Saturday in the 10th page.

Samayik Prasanga over the last three decades has produced several successful journalists including Bikash Chakraborty, Uttam Kumar Saha, Biswajit Dutta, Manjur Ahmed Barbhuiya, Ratan Pariyal and many others. Unlike Dainik Jugasanthka which has multi-editions spread across the state of Assam, Samayik Prasanga is confined to the limits of Barak Valley focusing on local issues and themes. The paper has made giant strides in the recent times through adoption of state of art technology. The newspaper is now available online through its e-paper and can be accessed at www.samayikprasanga.com.

1.11 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Content Analysis: Krippendorf (2004) defines content analysis as “Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use. Techniques are expected to be reliable. More specifically, research techniques should result in findings that are replicable. That is, researchers working at different points in time and perhaps under different circumstances should get the same result when applying the same technique to the same data. Replicability is the most important form of reliability. Berelson (1952) says content analysis is ‘a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communications’.

Content analysis is a method of communication analysis, as well as a method of observation (Kerlinger, 1973). It is a versatile research technique in mass communication as well as in social science research, where data obtained from archival records and documents can be analyzed systematically and scientifically to draw valid conclusions.
Chadwick et al. (1984) say that content analysis is “systematically coding messages of information into categories, thus allowing for quantitative analysis”.

Dremers and Nichols (1987) say content analysis is one of the three major methods of precision journalism, the other two being survey research and field experiment. Content Analysis typically uses documents or records as the subjects whereas survey research uses people as subjects.

Content Analysis thus provides a precise means for describing the contents of any sort of communications—whether they involve newspapers, radio programmes, films, everyday conversations, verbalized free associations or anything else.

- **Language Press:** By language newspapers, we mean newspapers published in different languages spoken in the country. They are also called regional newspapers. In India, language papers are published in more than 100 languages. But the main papers are published in 16 principal languages. Language papers vary from English papers in their style, presentation and approach.

Newspapers in India can broadly be classified into two groups - English newspapers and language newspapers. As the name indicates, English newspapers are published in English language. They are mainly published from big cities and towns, whereas language newspapers are published in different Indian languages. Unlike the English papers, these are available even in the interior villages of the country. Thus they have a major role in formulating public opinion across our country.

Language newspapers here stand for the two Bengali dailies of Cachar district- *Dainik Jugasankha* and *Samayik Prasanga*- that have been used in this study.

- **Social Issues:** Social Issues may be defined as those issues which are related to important social processes. Moreover, social issues are matters which directly or indirectly affect many or all members of a society.

- **News Items:** A news item is any item on a timely event with a current dateline, an account of that event reported by the paper’s own correspondent
or reporters or items from the wire services. These include human interest stories. (Parthasarathy, 1984: 107-108).

- **Editorial:** An editorial is an opinion piece that projects the viewpoint of the newspaper on a particular policy, programme or event. It gives a digest of facts, evaluates them and arrives at a logical conclusion step by step. (Mehta, 1979:133)

- **Letter to the editor:** A letter to the editor is an opinion piece written by a reader on an issue or an event. It is an indicator of public opinion when compared and contrasted with a variety of measures such as a news item or a feature. (Grey and Brown, 1970: 450-456).

- **Post editorial:** It is an Opinion Piece which may or may not reflect the editorial policy of the newspaper and can be an invited or Syndicated Article. It actually reflects the newspaper’s commitment to plurality of opinion.

- **Newshole:** A Newshole is a Journalism term that stands for the amount of space available daily for news in a newspaper (Dominick, 1990). The space reserved for newshole is usually the remaining space after paid advertisements are filled.