Chapter II
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2.0 The literature on 'press', 'social issues' and 'developmental news coverage' in context of India as well as in connection with some other countries world over may now be reviewed.

Although India is a developing country, its newspapers act quite differently from their expected role. Overall, the studies analyzing newspaper content reveal that development news coverage is not significant compared to other third world countries such as Malaysia, Ghana and Indonesia where development news occupies nearly half of the total newshole. However, Jordan, the Phillipines and the Indian studies show that development news content is low and do not exceed one-tenth of the total newshole of a daily.

Quite interestingly, India’s regional dailies, which are far ahead of the English dailies in circulation, are no exception.

Vilanilam’s study (1975) of four Indian dailies revealed that the English dailies- The Times of India and The Hindu - gave 9.2% and 18.8% of space respectively for developmental news, whereas the two native language papers Aaj (Hindi) and Malayala Manorama (Malayalam) gave 19.5% and 10.3%. However this study concluded that all four newspapers devoted more space to government and political news than to developmental news.

Mohapatra (1984) in a comparative analysis of two newspapers, pointed out that the two newspapers- The Times of India and Samaj (Oriya) devoted 25% of editorial space to developmental news. But they were all about demands, complaints and opinions. Space devoted to serious issues of the country like family planning and literacy was insignificant.
Haque (1986) in his study of developmental news versus human interest stories in seven dailies in India found that developmental news accounted for 10.5% of the news space across the dailies with a range of 4.9% to 18.3% and with a consensus ranking of 5 among the 10 subject categories of news.

Vergehese, B.G. (1969), the then editor of The Hindustan Times, New Delhi conducted an experiment in 1969 where he asked a team of reporters to write periodically about Chattera, a small village in Haryana about its people, their problems and the process of development taking place in that Indian village (Yadav, 1991).

Aggarwal (1978) reported: ‘Our Village, Chattera... is a bold attempt to give rural orientation to the predominantly urban based and elite oriented newspapers in the country. It is the form of journalism that can prove of immense help in bridging the rural-urban communication gap in the Third World’.

In another experiment, a researcher started a rural newspaper, Gram-Avani in 1993 in Deulpadi, a village in Ganjam district (Orissa) to give information to the rural people. The fortnightly newspaper reaching eight villages of the panchayat continued for 16 months. A major objective of the experiment was to provide development information to the people. The contents of the newspaper included agriculture, health, forestry and animal husbandry. The newspaper brought awareness among the villagers exposed to the newspaper (Jena, 1995).

Reporting on rural development does not receive much importance in the press although 70% of the population in India lives in rural areas. Rural stories rarely get front page coverage unless they were disastrous events such as starvation deaths, flood, famine or a policy pronouncement (Gupta, 1994).
Though the regional papers outnumber the English dailies, the coverage of development related issues has not received much attention in these papers. This apart, the regional papers also dedicated much space to local issues unlike the English dailies as evident in the following studies.

A study by Ahmed (1986) showed that the regional press devoted more than half of the space to regional news. This study based on the four Malayalam newspapers in Kerala revealed that regional press devoted a large proportion of the space to political news rather than news on development of the state.

Vilanilam’s analysis (1993) of ten dailies (8 Malayalam and 2 English), during the period between June 1987 and May 1988 found that science and technology news including development news occupied less than 5% of the newshole. Preetha and Karippai’s (1996) study of farm news in two Malayalam dailies in Kerala found that hardly 1.33% of the newshole dealt with farm news.

Srivastava’s study (1996) of coverage of environmental news in four dailies (2 English – *The Times of India* and *The Hindustan Times* and 2 Hindi dailies- *Dainik Jagran* and *Navbharat Times*) in 1995 found that only 0.7% of the total print area occupied environmental issues. No editorial appeared on the subject in the entirety of March 1995.

Bhatnagar (1996) who analysed the development news content of four Telkegu dailies in 1991 revealed that among the four dailies, *Andhra Prabha* devoted more space to development news than the other dailies. However, regional news occupied more space than national and international news in all these sample dailies.

Other studies reveal that the coverage of developmental news differs from country to country. For example, Mustafa (1974) found that Malay language newspapers devoted half of their newshole to developmental news while the English language dailies devoted 32%. Emmanuel (1976) in his study of
Ghana press observed that developmental news content was greater in the wire services than in newspaper reports.

Sutapo (1983) examined six Indonesian national newspapers and concluded that Indonesian newspapers used more developmental than non-development news and that each newspaper in the study had a different view about which development issue was most deserving of attention.

Shah and Gayatri (1994) in their study of two Indonesian newspapers found that nearly 45% of the total newshole was devoted to developmental news.

In contrast, Barghouti’s study (1974) of Jordan media found that political news got more prominence than agricultural news.

Maslog’s study (1996) of the Philippines newspapers revealed that the newspapers gave more importance to politics and sports than developmental issues.

The second Press Commission (1982) reported all the newspapers in the country consistently allocated more space to politics and conflict news than to developmental news. The Commission observed that the English papers devoted nearly 50% of the space of front page and inside pages to news on politics and conflict. Developmental news occupied only 12.2% and 17.2% on the front page in comparison to 52.4% and 42.8% for politics and conflict.

Ranade’s study (1971) of editorials in six newspapers during 14 days revealed that out of 192 editorials, 35 (18%) (all papers put together) were on education, health/medicine, agriculture, science, social, cultural and sports while the rest were on political and economic issues.

Another study of editorials of three national dailies - The Hindu, The Times of India and The Hindustan Times by Srinivasan (1985) showed that 27.3%, 27.8% and 46.3% respectively were devoted to cover politics. The study also analysed the treatment given to the issues in the editorials on a three
point scale- favourable, unfavourable and neutral and noted that favourable editorials were more in all the three papers.

Readers express their opinions on development issues through letters to the editor column. Quite often, newspapers give attention to letters that contain references to political statements and conflict issues. In a study of letters to the editor, Deviprasad et.al. (1992) found that a majority of those letters dealt with civic amenities such as power, communications, public transport, etc.

Rukmini (1979) in her study of letters to the editor published in three Andhra Pradesh dailies observed that the two English dailies- Indian Express and The Hindu gave more emphasis to national issues than local and state issues while the regional English daily Deccan Chronicle focused on local and state issues compared to the national dailies.

Davis (1951) in his study on ‘Crime News in Colorado Newspapers’ found that the crime coverage in Colorado newspapers bore no relationship to changes in state crime rates.

Dube (1964) conducted a survey of the perception of emergency after the Chinese attack. He observed that 83.3% of the respondents were aware of the Chinese aggression. He also observed that the level of awareness was fairly high in the states far away from the area of conflict. The quick spread of news to the farthest areas only establishes that the proverbial isolation of the Indian villages is only a myth now. The information collected on the awareness of the international, national and state events revealed that the people were more aware of the state events than the international and national, regarding the level of awareness towards the different aspects of the rural development program in the villages.

Schramm (1964) noticed change in social, cultural, religious and personal attitudes which subsequently have helped change and shape a society completely differently. The Indian society has by and large reacted almost in
an identical manner. This has been amply established by some well-known studies conducted by Indian mass communication scholars such as Rao, Damle and several others. Rao emphasized that social responsibility is a concept that need to be practiced by all the media including the press. In a developing country like India, the mass media has important roles to play. That needs the media to be socially responsible. A socially responsible mass can serve the interest of the society at large.

Rau Chalapathi M. (1968) in his study of the Press has covered the various aspects of the Press its pattern, internal freedom, relationship with society, etc.,

Krishna Murthy Nadig (1966) in his work ‘Indian Journalism’ made sincere study of the growth, development and role of press in India since the early days of James Augustus Hicky.

Bhatnagar’s study (1966) of women’s issues in six English newspapers published in New Delhi in 1987 indicated that only 280 (1%) items in the sample reported about the problems and welfare activities about women. Important items like women’s education, right and wage rates of women workers did not receive adequate coverage in any newspaper under study.

Dasgupta (1976), in her study of women’s issues in four English dailies published in New Delhi in 1975, observed that women’s issues received no attention in the six subject categories social, economic, political, art and culture, biographical and other issues. However, the study did not elaborate the methodology adopted for the study.

Rogers (1976) suggested a new definition of development as a widely participatory process of social change in a society intended to bring about both social and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people through gaining control over their environment. The predominant role of communication has been: a) to transfer technological innovations from development agencies to
the clients and, b) to create an appetite for change through raising a climate for modernization among members of the public.

M. Chalapathi Rau (1980) has written, ‘the future of Indian Press means essentially the future of Indian language press. India will gradually have mammoth circulation in all the Indian languages. There is no doubt that with increase in literacy and in the purchasing power of the people living in slums, in the cities and in the rural areas, there will be significant increase in the circulation of regional language newspaper, not only in India but in Asia as a whole.’ (Rural Development and Media Strategies in Third revolution in Indian Perspective- Contemporary Issues and Themes in Communication Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi)

Parthasarathy Rangaswami (1989) in his study ‘Journalism in India’ did his best to write a historically meaningful story of Indian Journalism from the days of Hicky to modern times. Some other studies in related fields include that of Raghavan’s (1994), Bhatta’s (1997), Srivastava’s (1972), etc.

Aneesh Ankur (2008) a freelance journalist in a study of three newspapers each in English, Hindi and Urdu, carried out in Patna found that when it comes to giving space to news on social issues related to children and women Urdu newspapers are more generous in the coverage given to these issues than the newspapers in Hindi and English. Roznama Rashtriya Sahara, an Urdu daily leads all newspaper by giving 20% of its news space for coverage of issues related to the children and women. Hindi daily Hindustan was second in their coverage of issues covered. Another popular Urdu newspaper of Bihar Qaumi Tanzeem gives 9% of its space for women and children issues according to the analysis. Hindi dailies like Rashtriya Sahara has 13%, Dainik Jagaran 9%, Prabhat Khabar 8%, Aaj 8%, and Inext is at the lowest with its 6% of coverage to the children related issues. The coverage of English dailies like Times of India is 9% and that of Hindustan Times is 7%. Ankur tallied his numbers after monitoring various news papers for a month.
According to B.B. Mohanty (1984) the rural press can promote the traditional media in many ways. It can identify the various folk media and publicize their efforts and programmes through its pages. This is the advertising role of the press which is also the performance of the public relations role for the folk media. Secondly, the rural press can suggest development themes to the media at different times of the year and can even go to the extent of providing thematic details of various development topics. Thirdly, it can review the performance of the various traditional media and thus establish a dialogue between the media and the audience. Fourthly, it can publish the media contents, to the extent possible, say a folk song or a proverb, to enable the audience to read and remember the same. The rural press can actually make the traditional media more responsive and sensitive to development issues by establishing a cooperative linkage with the media and in doing so can itself become more knowledgeable about the media. (B.B. Mohanty, 1984)

Greenwald (1990) analyzed the coverage of women in the business section of two metropolitan newspapers. She found that women were the main subjects in only 5 of 180 stories.

According to Banerjee (1995), Gandhiji's dream of rebuilding Indian villages is still a far cry even after 50 years of independence. In the context of this dismal situation, the journalists have a great role to play to bring about a new climate. Journalism is a social trust. Journalists are social workers and they are the agents of social change. They should not only inform but also interpret and educate. They should give the message of hopes and aspirations to the teeming millions who live under the clouds of frustration in rural areas. Further they should guide the people to change the quality of life, through better agriculture and environment, better health and family welfare.

Banerji depicted that the journalists should be given incentives and encouragement by the government. There is also the need for providing
adequate protection to journalists in small towns to carry on their job with honesty and integrity.

Poornananda (1997) emphasized that the newspapers report events without probing sources and this has been confirmed by the rulings of the Press Council of India. The Annual Report for the year 1991-1992 says that of the 13 complaints the Council received against the press for communal and anti-religious writings, 11 were upheld, 1 was settled upon and 1 was rejected. The Council has often appealed to the Press to exercise due care and caution while reporting matters where sentiments of communities and castes are involved so as not to give rise to communal passions. What is forgotten is that whoever enjoys freedom has certain obligations to society.

Hollifield (1997) compared coverage of the proposal for a National Information Infrastructure by the communication industry trade press, the general trade press, and newspapers. She found that the trade press was less likely to cover the social implications of policy proposals.

The purpose of the study by Behnoosh Payvar (2004) was to examine the coverage of gender, environment and development (GED) issues in the Indian English-language newspapers. A main hypothesis is that the high rate of gender discrimination in India contributes to a gender bias in the coverage of GED stories. The newsworthiness of GED has been examined by use of a frequency analysis. Some key concepts in the study of gender and media, namely gender typifications and gender stereotypes were used to examine the contents of articles and news stories. The results of the frequency analysis were discussed in relation to evaluations and assessments made by newspapers' editorial staff, gender scholars, international and Indian NGOs, and Indian government representatives. The possible selection biases were also discussed. Material for the study was collected through interviews and observations at the sorting desk of the Indian Express during a two month's field study in India. The results show that the press does not reflect the actual needs of people in India and is influenced by certain biases in the coverage of GED issues. NGOs, gender scholars and
press watch organizations believe that the press performance regarding the coverage of GED is weak.

The comparative study done by Uppal Charu (2009) is based on the assumption that there is a marked difference between the environmental activism developed (US/Canada as representative) and the developing world (India as representative). Social injustice is more of concern in environmental activism in the developing world. This study examines four years of news coverage in both countries to determine if those concerns are still reflected in the news coverage of environmental issues. This paper uses contextual analysis to analyze coverage of hydroelectric projects in two Indian newspapers (*The Times of India* and *The Hindu*) and two U.S. newspapers (*The New York Times* and *The Buffalo News*) in the environmental cultural context of their respective countries. Environmental activism was measured by examining the ‘power of news stories to invite public participation’. Using Barton’s classification of news formats, presence of ‘disjunctive’ news format was considered an indication of newspapers’ emphasis on citizen involvement. The study demonstrates that there is a marked difference in the way environmental activism, as it relates to the hydroelectric projects is covered in the United States and in India. Some of the key findings of the study are: 1) environmental activism appeared more potent in the Indian newspapers than their U.S. counterparts, 2) Disjunctive news formats, which create a sense of discontent and therefore potentially invite public participation were much more prevalent in the Indian newspapers. 3) The coverage of hydroelectric controversy in the US newspapers was much more complacent and seemed to discourage public participation.

The increased attention to women and to women’s issues in the media in the last decade has not been free of blatant sexism and/or subtle distortions, partly as a consequence of overt biases and partly due to the very structure of the media. This article by Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma looks at the coverage of all issues concerning women in the English language press between 1979 and 1988 focusing on five landmark issues— dowry deaths,
rape, sex determination tests and sati. (*Between the lines: Women’s Issues in English language newspapers- Ammu Joseph, Kalpana Sharma*)

A study by Porismita Borah employs three methods to understand media content. First, the study examines the 'peak periods' to ascertain the pattern of coverage. Second, with a sample of 4058 articles the study examines the prominent frames used by newspapers. Third, with the help of interviews of journalists from the same newspapers, the study examines the factors that influence the way these frames are created in the first place. Results show that, in general, the driving force of this coverage is marketability of the stories. This is implied by the overall coverage as well as the responses of journalists. (*Examining media content: A case study of newspaper coverage of dowry in India, 1999-2006.*)

A study of review of literature shows that the present study on the nature and extent of coverage of social issues by the language press has so far escaped the attention of researchers and is therefore unique in its own respect.

Since there has been acute dearth of research in this context, hence the research- "*Language Press and Social Issues: A Study of Bengali Newspapers in Cachar District of Assam*" holds paramount importance.