Chapter VII

CONCLUSION

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7.1 Conclusion

The professional role performance of journalists is to be the watchdog of the society. For an effective performance, a set of definitive parameters functions as a guidepost, needed for a high quality journalism. Journalism, as a socially responsible profession, has come of age. However, journalists, in Assam appear to reflect the same status that prevails in other parts of rural India. The working conditions and the remuneration they receive do not commensurate with the heavy load of duty they are purported to complete under the pressure of deadlines and editorial demands. The impact of corporatization and new technology has reduced their power for collective bargaining. In fact, the unions of journalists have become rudderless. The spurt in militancy in this border state has created a pernicious atmosphere where grass root level journalists are exposed to the danger of physical elimination. The cream of intelligent youth move towards greener pastures like medicine, engineering and business management as the professional perks are immensely attractive in those areas compared to journalism. While social commitment is an ideological fervor, a decent financial return for the work done is equally essential. Sound management principles will go a long way in ensuring a tolerable living condition for the working journalists.

7.2 Recommendations

It is easy to espouse the cause of morality and ethicality, but the market driven economy suggests otherwise, i.e., focus on high revenues. Caught between social obligations and corporate interests, the journalists in Assam have been drifting aimlessly. The state government can initiate suitable measures that would enable journalists to effectively acquire professionalism. These can be:

1. Financial aid to meet the medical expenses of ailing journalists.
2. A pension scheme for journalists who have served the state for more than 25 years in various professional capacities.

3. Start a media academy. The suggested media academy should recognize the services of journalists and honour them with awards every year.

4. The academy should conduct regular workshops for enhancement of professional capacities and expose them to newer techniques and standards.

5. Sponsoring a few fellowships for journalists in Assam for higher studies abroad.

6. Regular professional exchanges with journalists of other states.

7. Sponsoring scholarships for journalists in Assam who want to pursue a degree or a diploma in journalism through correspondence. The financial support would encourage journalists take up journalism studies and hone themselves to better professionals.

8. Financial support to institutions of media education to improve their infrastructure.

9. Publications of books and journals to enhance the knowledge level of language journalists in particular.

10. Pressurize media houses to implement the recommendations of the wage board regularly.

11. If possible, constitute an ethics commission for media to monitor their societal obligations.

12. The Assam Government must develop, immediately, legal protection for workers under its territories in line with Working Journalists Act and a framework of standards of the ILO and should provide special safeguards for media workers in precarious situations.

13. The government of Assam can facilitate journalists in getting loans to buy vital consumer durables like digital camera and laptop which are of paramount importance to quality journalism. This support will not only reduce dependence of the journalists on DTP operators or cyber cafes, they can file copy right sitting at their homes.
14. The recent announcement of the government of Assam to pay three percent subsidy if journalists obtain housing loan from any financial institution is a welcome gesture. But the government has failed to delve deep into whether journalists get loans easily or how many journalists of Assam can derive the benefit out of such waivers. If the survey results are an indicator, only 4.5 percent of the respondents have got housing loans. Hence, the study strongly recommends that the government can facilitate in helping journalists in getting loans from the financial institutions. It can stand as a guarantor in a similar fashion like Prime Minister's Rozgar Yozna (PMRY) where unemployed youth are given loans to become entrepreneurs.

15. The government of Assam has recently (Feb-Mar 2011) distributed laptop computer to accredited journalists who have completed 10 years in the profession in Assam. Undoubtedly a welcome gesture bestowed by the government, but by classifying the distribution of laptop to accredited journalists only, the government has left out a huge chunk of journalists who are in dire need of a laptop. As of date almost cent percent of the accredited journalists recognised by Directorate of Information and Public Relations are based at Guwahati- the state capital of Assam and the condition of services is quite better than that of its counterparts serving in districts and sub-divisional towns. Thus, the researcher recommends that the government should extend the schemes to journalists serving in the districts. In order to determine the genuineness of the journalist that it had actually served for more than 10 years, opinions of press club and journalists union can be sought to finalise the exhaustive list of beneficiaries.

16. In order to facilitate local or rural/ grass root newspapers, the Assam government should set up printing press in all district headquarters and offer subsidized printing rates. The initiative would not just usher objective and sensible journalism practice, more individuals especially experienced journalists can take up entrepreneurship in newspaper business. In doing so, the government can use the District Industries Centre (DIC) premises of each districts for setting up printers.
17. Media employers should cease and desist compelling working journalists and associated media workers to work in poor and unsafe working conditions.

18. Media employers must present unambiguous employment agreements to working journalists and must stop employing journalists for name sake purposes and must stop employment on an on-call and stringer basis which will translate to fulltime employment.

19. Journalists must not accept oral contracts, working for their names and entering into employment contracts without specific conditions of work, remuneration, hours of work and duties. Women journalists should be bold to report to the union cases of sexual harassment and physical attacks.

Many of the measures suggested have already been implemented by many states in the country. Perhaps Assam can draw a leaf or two from them.

The Mac Bride Commission on new international information and communication order emphasized the importance of research in mass communication. In India, this is one of the most neglected sectors as investment in this field is dismally negligible. More than the state government, the large media houses should consider the issue seriously. A professional organization of journalists and media educators along with the leaders of civil society can bridge the gap between practice and social expectations in the state.

The growth of professions is an indicator of social development as it reflects the degree of social stratification and specialization in a society. In developing societies like India the growth of a profession is the result of modern western education rather than the product of industrialization. It is hoped that the data reported here will give journalists and the wider public a window to look the profession which has the freedom to comment on all facets of human life, but often reflects much less upon its own values and practices.