



# STATUS OF ADVOCACY JOURNALISM IN LOCAL NEWSPAPERS: THE INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

*Dr. Paratha Sarkar,*

*Associate Professor, Department of Mass Communication, Assam University, Silchar, India*

## ABSTRACT

*Today, the media has witness an important and challenging job for media organization is to create a balance between business considerations and social responsibilities. The primary duty of media is to serve its audiences by providing information on events and issues in fair, objective and impartial way. Viewed as the fourth pillar of the democracy people constantly look forward to the press for guiding the other three pillars: executive, legislative and judiciary of the democracy. Therefore, the media practitioners have an obligation to be truthful, comprehensive and unbiased in performing their informational, educational, and investigative and agenda building function.*

*The research paper focuses about the challenge faced by the newspaper in informing, educating and championing the rights of people especially for social and political issues through advocacy journalism. In this regard, a study was conducted among the local newspapers of Barak Valley of Assam in India. The data was collected by using content analysis and survey method to find out the level of coverage and reportage of advocacy journalism. The objectives of the paper was to examine the status of advocacy journalism in terms of changing the socio-political scenario in the society. Interestingly, the study reveals that the involvement of local newspaper in Barak Valley in terms of development issues are less. The respondent urged that the newspapers should take it as a part of their obligation to sensitize the society as well as to implement policies that could engender the expected change in society.*

*Keywords – Advocacy journalism, Local newspaper, socio-political*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

The primary objective of newspaper is to increase circulation and attract advertisers. News paper industries hardly consider the news worthiness of news Their only objective is to increase the number of readers by catering information to all sections of the people which in turn increasing the number of pages and news supplement. As such, a long term perspective towards social responsibility not necessarily conflict with an aggressive business perspective, of course, they complement each other.

The present study will be investigate to what extent the print media particularly the local newspaper serving or promoting social and political issues of public interest. This study provides an answer to this questions and the procedure adopted will be content analysis in addition to interview with reporters, editors, and proprietor and with distinguish personalities.

The investigator has selected this public to investigate whether the journalist maintain the ethics of journalism while reporting political and social events or do they incorporate their own perception or views while reporting a particular story which relates to the goodness of the society or the country as a whole.

Traditionally, advocacy and criticism are restricted to editorial and op-ed pages , a fire-wall exists between the editorial section and the newsroom. The Wall Street Journal, for example, has a policy of strict separation between the news desk and the editorial board, most major print and electronic news outlets do as well. In contrast, advocacy journalism takes a position on the issues of the day, and one is likely to observe subtle or obvious editorializing in reports. Print journalists, will indicate a discernible opinion regarding what is being reported.

A number of technology development and transfer pathways, and approaches have been adopted in Barak Valley over the years. The society in Barak Valley has indeed, evolved from an illiterate, pre-industrial setting, with small homogenous populations living in contiguous neighbourhoods, to an anonymous and dynamic mass society where direct communication is difficult because of a large scattered and heterogeneous population whose interpersonal relations are characteristically formal and secondary and under an organized industrial environment.

Newspaper publication started in Barak Valley in 1885 and today, there are quite a number of privately - owned newspapers in the region varying in frequency and time of publication as well as circulation rate, target audience and achievements. One of the primary functions of the newspaper is to objectively report news situation or events in all fields of human endeavor. Usually, management of the print media assesses the newsworthiness of events and based on the philosophy and interests of the organization, takes the decision on how best to present or showcase news events to achieve maximum effect. Newspaper messages are durable. Produced as tabloids or standard newspapers, their pages basically contain news items presented as editorials, features or advertorials.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- (i) To examine the role of advocacy journalism in changing the socio-political scenario in the society.
- (ii) To evaluate reader's acceptability in advocacy journalism as relate to social and political change.

### 3. RESEARCH QUESTION

To what extent the print media particularly the local newspaper, serving or promoting advocacy journalism on issues of public interest in Barak Valley?

Does the advocacy journalism in Barak Valley also solve the purpose of describing trends in communication, analyzing techniques for persuasion, and relating known attributes of the audience to messages produced for them?.

### 4 METHODOLOGY

A structured interview schedule was prepared for the journalists, editors, proprietors of particular news paper, distinguish personalities as well as reader's of different sections of society irrespective of their age, education, sex, economic condition on the basis of purposive sampling method.

**THE STUDY AREA:** The study was conducted in Barak Valley of Assam. The Barak valley which derives its name from the river 'Barak' situated in the southern part of Assam consists of three districts; namely, Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi, covering an area of 6922 sq km .The valley is bounded by Bangladesh in the west, Meghalaya in the north, Manipur in the east, and Mizoram and Tripura in the south. Its current population is 24,91,546).The Barak Valley is now full-fledged region having all the avenues for further prosperity. Facilities for education from primary to university level are available here. Central University, National Institute of Technology, Medical College, Research Center, Agricultural Training Institute, etc serve the needs of this region in different spheres.

### 5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research paper signifies a comparatively new area of study under the communication and journalism. It also implies a shift in conceptual, theoretical and methodological contexts. Its aims to find out the status of Advocacy Journalism in the Local Newspapers of Barak Valley

### 6 FINDINGS:

#### 6.1 Mass media exposure of respondents

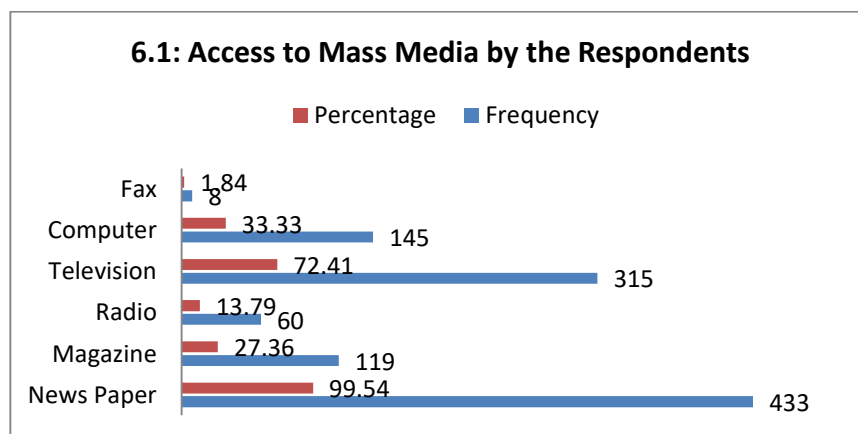


Table 6.1 figure shows that out of 435 respondents, 433 (99.54%) respondents' access newspapers, 119 (27.36%) respondents access magazine, 60 (13.79%) respondents access radio, 315 (72.41%) respondents access television, 145 (33.33%) respondents access computer, and only 8 (1.84%) access fax. Thus, many respondents have access to more than one form of mass media.

## 6.2 Habits of Local news paper reading

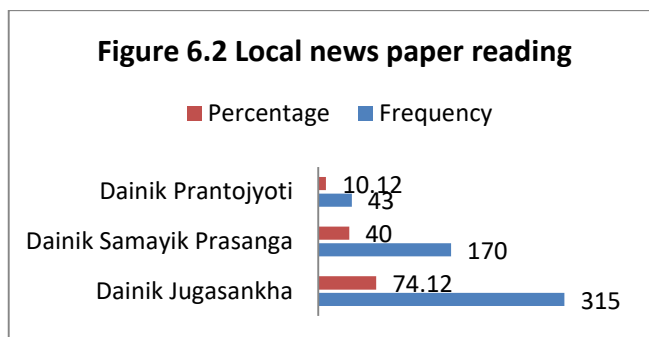


Figure 6.2 shows that out of 425 local news paper readers, 315 (74.12%) respondents read Dainik Jugasankha, 170 (40%) respondents read Dainik Samayik Prasanga, and only 43 (10.12%) respondents read Dainik Prantojyoti. Thus, many respondents read more than one local news paper.

## 6.3: Priority of Social and Political News

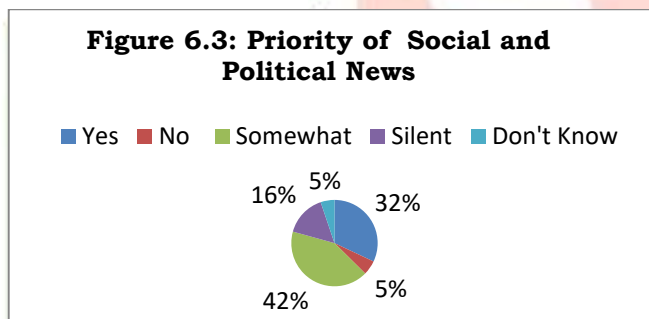


Figure 6.3 shows that out of 425 local news paper readers, 136 (32%) respondents said yes that local dailies of Barak Valley give importance to social & political news, only 23 (5.41%) respondents clearly said no local dailies of Barak Valley don't give importance to social & political news, 178 (41.88%) respondents said that local dailies of Barak Valley give somewhat importance to social & political news, 66 (15.53%) respondents were silent, and 22 (5.18%) respondent responded don't know as they seemed confused. Thus, majority of the respondents said that local dailies of Barak Valley give importance to social & political news.

## 6.4 Social & Political issues serve the public interest

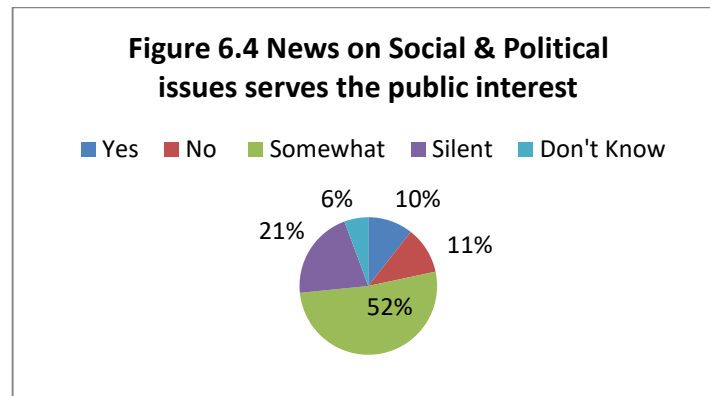


Figure 6.4 shows that out of 425 local news paper readers, 45 (10.59%) respondents said yes that social & political news of Barak Valley serves the public interest, 47 (11.06%) respondents clearly said no that social & political news of Barak Valley don't serves the public interest, 220 (51.76%) respondents said that social & political news of Barak Valley somewhat serves the public interest, 89 (20.94%) respondents were silent, and rest 24 (5.65%) respondent responded don't know as they seemed confused.

## Figure 6.5: social & political news bringing up change in society

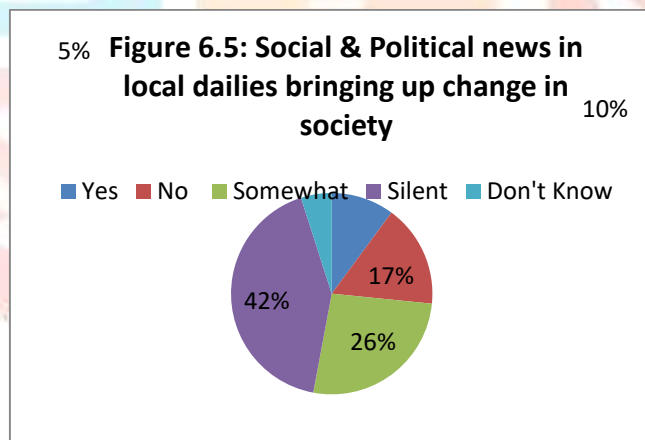


Figure 6.5 shows that out of 425 local news paper readers, 43 (10.12%) respondents said yes that social & political news of Barak Valley in local dailies is bringing up change in the society, 70 (16.47%) respondents clearly said no that social & political news of Barak Valley in local dailies is not bringing up any change in the society, 112 (26.35%) respondents said that social & political news of Barak Valley in local dailies is bringing up somewhat change in the society, 179 (42.12%) respondents were silent, and rest 21 (4.94%) respondent responded don't know as they seemed confused.

## 6.6: Local Governance News brings Positive Change

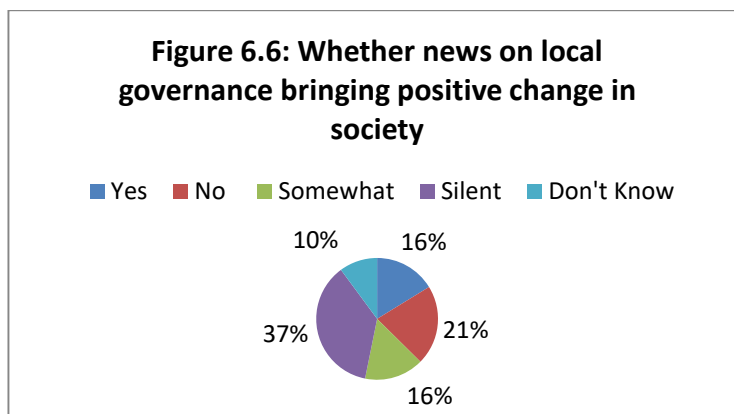
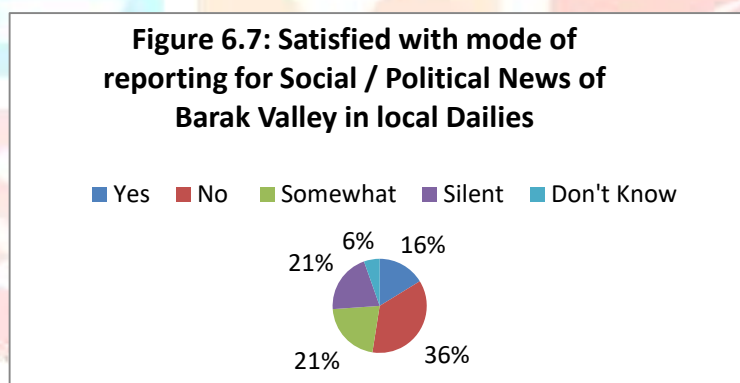


Figure 6.6 shows that out of 425 local news paper readers, 69 (16.24%) respondents said yes that news on local governance is bringing positive change in society, 90 (21.18%) respondents clearly said no that news on local governance is not bringing positive change in society, 67 (15.76%) respondents said that news on local governance is bringing somewhat positive change in society, 156 (36.71%) respondents were silent, and rest 43 (10.12%) respondent responded don't know as they seemed confused.

## 6.7: Presentation of Social and Political News



The figure 6.7 shows that out of 425 local news paper readers, 69 (16.24%) respondents said yes that they are satisfied with mode of reporting for social & political news of Barak Valley in local dailies, 154 (36.24%) respondents clearly said no that they are not satisfied with mode of reporting for social & political news of Barak Valley in local dailies, 91 (21.41%) respondents said that they are somewhat satisfied with mode of reporting for social & political news of Barak Valley in local dailies, 88 (20.71%) respondents were silent, and rest 23 (5.41%) respondent responded don't know as they seemed confused.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The research revealed that the majority of the people of Barak Valley are unaware about the advocacy journalism and its impacts on social and political events of Barak Valley. Only 9.8% of the respondents says that the news paper of Barak valley maintain the advocacy journalism while covering news on corruption. Only 10.35% of the respondents are satisfied with the coverage of social and political news by the three local dailies and only 10.12% respondents said that social and political news in local dailies bringing up positive changes in

society. Moreover, while researcher analyzed the contents of selected news topic found the same results. Thus from the above study it is can be concluded that advocacy technique of journalism in presenting developmental news is not in the priority list of newspaper.

The study also reveals that the involvement of local newspaper in Barak Valley in terms of development issues are less. The respondent urged that the newspapers should take it as a part of their obligation to sensitize the society as well as to implement policies that could engender the expected change in society.

Bias news is pertinent in the valley and it confused readers .So, the Journalist should stop to report in a somewhat robotic fashion. They should provide the public with accurate information for the purpose of galvanizing readers to take action on issues of human development. Media fellowship can be an incentive to encourage journalists to do in-depth features on particular issues.

There is an urgent need of Multimedia kits to develop the present status of advocacy journalism in the valley. Relationship building is the key to the success of any media advocacy effort. The Communication gap between newspapers with non-profit organisation is in the higher side. This effects both the newspaper in terms of advocacy and developments works in terms of NGO. The local newspaper should work together with NGOs and other Non-Profit organization to achieve the goal for the larger interest of the society .

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