

**THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN ETHNIC CONFLICIT TRANSFORMATION:
A CASE STUDY OF KOKRAJHAR**

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In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

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September 2016

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled “**The Role of Media in Ethnic Conflict Transformation: A Case Study of Kokrajhar**” submitted to Sikkim University in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**, is my original work. This thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**The Role of Media in Ethnic Conflict Transformation: A Case Study of Kokrajhar**” submitted to the **SIKKIM UNIVERSITY** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** in Social Sciences embodies the results of *bona fide* research work carried out by **Mr. Benoy Joseph** under my guidance and supervision. No part of the thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma, associate-ship, fellowship.

All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been duly acknowledged by him.

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THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN ETHNIC CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION: A CASE STUDY OF KOKRAJHAR

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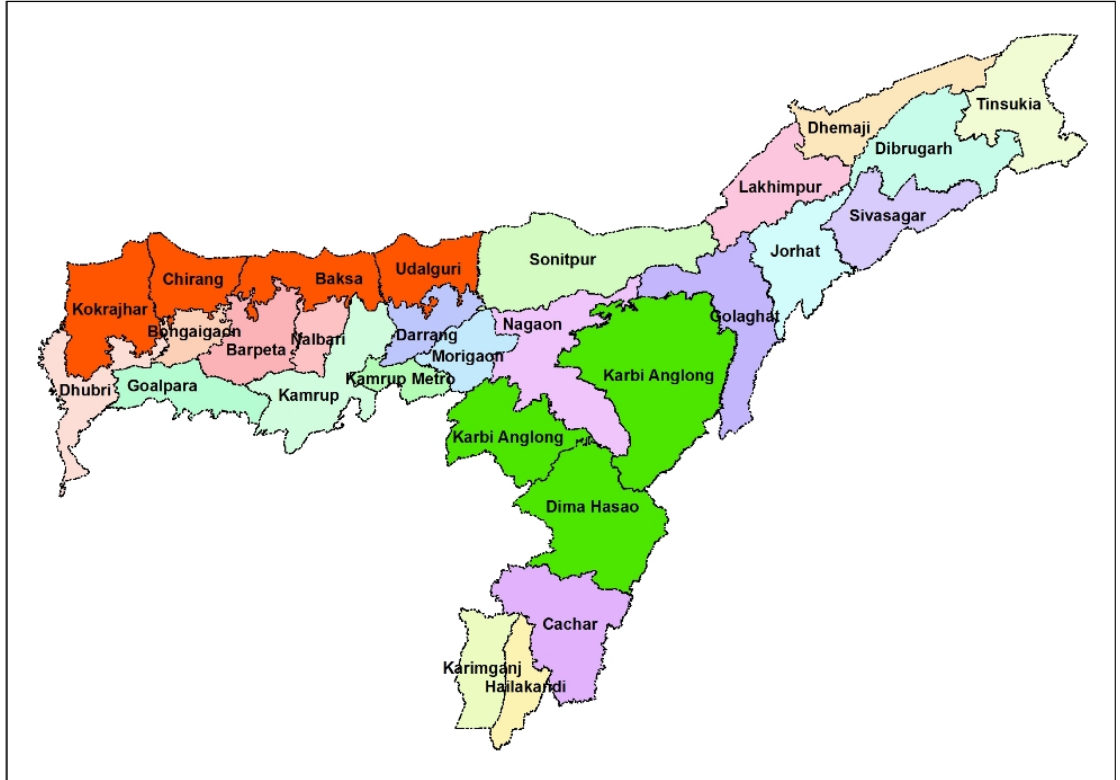
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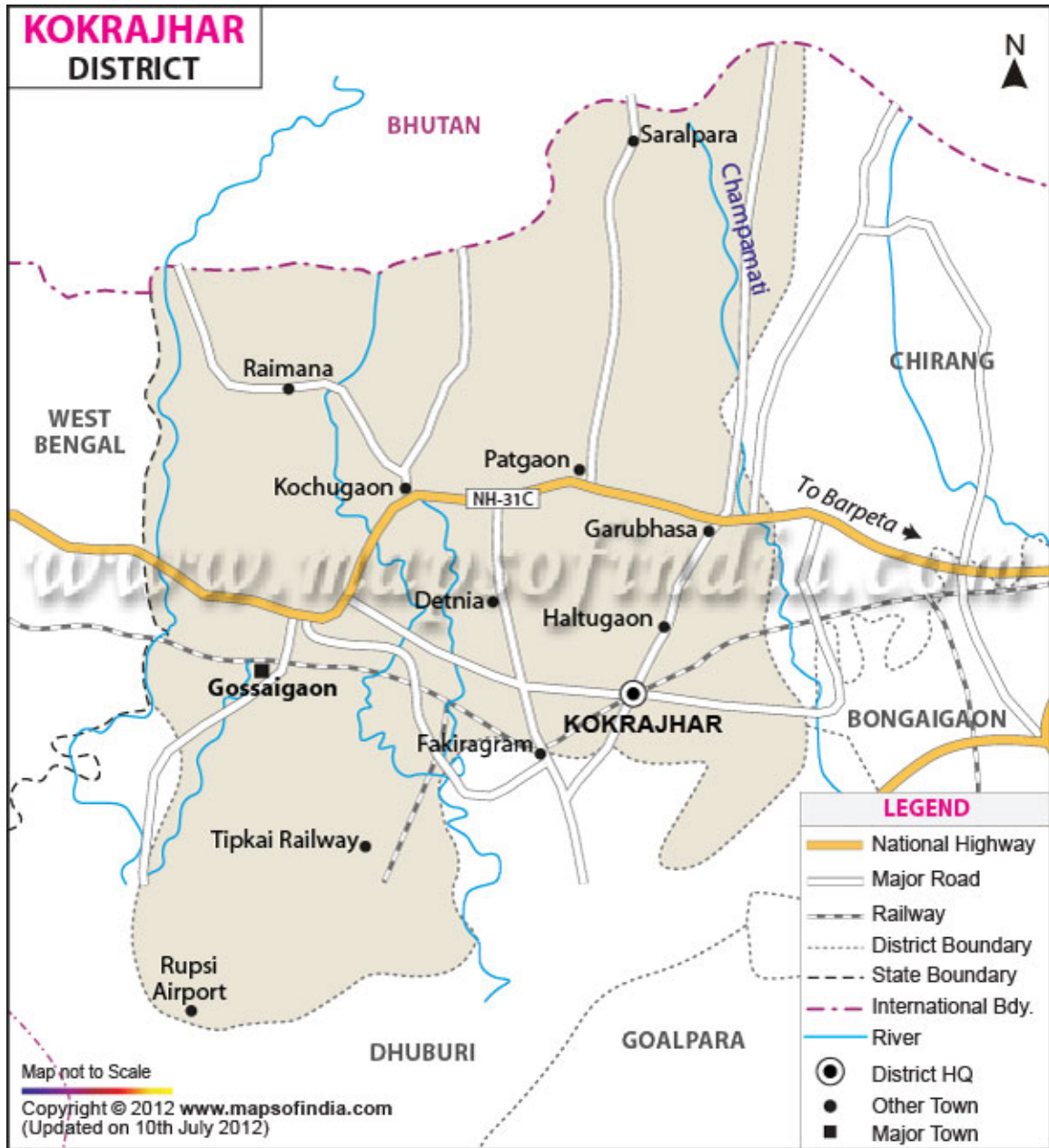
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Map of Assam



Source: <http://assam.gov.in/districts>. Official website of Government of Assam

Map of Kokrajhar



Source: www.mapsofindia.com

ABBREVIATIONS

AASU	:	All Assam Students' Union
AATS	:	All Assam Tribal Sangha
ABSU	:	All Bodo Students' Union
AD	:	Anno Domini (After Christ)
AFSPA	:	Armed Forces Special Power Act
AGP	:	Asom (Assam) Gana Parishad
AICC	:	All India Congress Committee
AIDS	:	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AKRSU	:	All Koch Rajbongshis Students Union
APHLC	:	All Party Hill Leaders' Conference
ATTF	:	All Tripura Tiger Force
BAC	:	Bodoland Autonomous Council
BBC	:	British Broadcasting Company
BC	:	Before Christ
BJP	:	Bharatiya Janata Party
BLT	:	Bodoland Liberation Tigers
BLTF	:	Bodo Liberation Tiger Force
BPAC	:	Bodo Peoples' Action Committee
BPF	:	Bodo People's Front
BPPF	:	Bodo People's Progressive Front
BSF	:	Bodo Security Force
BSS	:	Bodo Sahitya Sabha
BTAD	:	Bodoland Territorial Area districts
BTC	:	Bodoland Territorial Council
CT	:	Conflict Transformation
CBI	:	Central bureau of Investigation

CNN	:	Cable News Network
CRPF	:	Central Reserve Police Force
ECT	:	Ethnic Conflict Transformation
GNLA	:	Garo National Liberation Army
GoI	:	Government of India
HNLC	:	Hynniewtrep National Liberation Army
IDP	:	Internally Displace Persons
ISI	:	Inter-Services Intelligence
J&K	:	Jammu & Kashmir
KCP	:	Kangleipak Communist Party
KLO	:	Kamatapur Liberation Organisation
KYKL	:	Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup
MHA	:	Ministry of Home Affairs
MLA	:	Member of Legislative Assembly
MPLF	:	Manipur People's Liberation Front
NA	:	Not Available
NBDC	:	National Bomb Data Centre
NC	:	North Cachar
NCRB	:	National Crime Record Bureau
NDFB	:	National Democratic Front of Bodoland
NEI	:	North East India
NGO	:	Non Governmental Organization
NLFT	:	National Liberation Front of Tripura
NSCN(IM)	:	National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah)
NSCN(K)	:	National Socialist Council of Nagaland(Khaplang)
PCC	:	Pradesh Congress Committee
PLA	:	People's Liberation Army
POK	:	Pakistan Occupied Kashmir
PREPAK	:	People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak

PTCA	:	Plain Tribal Council of Assam
RAM	:	Random Access Memory
RPF	:	Revolutionary People's Front
RPF	:	Rwandan Patriotic Front
RTL	:	Radio Television Libre des Milles
SMS	:	Short Message Service
TV	:	Television
UG	:	Under Ground
ULFA	:	United Liberation Front of Assam
UN	:	United Nations
UNLF	:	United National Liberation Front
USA	:	United States of America
UTNLF	:	United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front
WWW	:	World Wide Web

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The world today witnesses the growing influence of media penetrating the various aspects of society. They have become an indispensable part of human interaction and development. At the same time it is also observed that the contemporary society experiences a number of ethnic violence across the globe. The power and the influence that the media have in today's society can be utilised in a conflict situation, either positively or negatively, so as to incite violence or promote peace. Hence, there is a need to examine whether there is any linkage between media reporting and ethnic violence. The study will focus on the roles the media can play in an ethnic conflict transformation: both in promoting peace and inciting violence. Therefore, the problem under investigation is to analyse the role of media in an ethnic conflict situation and what constructive role they can play in an Ethnic Conflict Transformation. Assam's experience of ethnic violence and conflict transformation will be examined through Kochugaon block in Kokrajhar district.

Societies undergo some sort of conflict during its transformation, qualitatively and quantitatively. As per conflict transformation theory, we are not suppressing the conflict in order to find a temporary solution, but are analysing and addressing the root causes of conflicts, thereby finding a lasting solution to the problem. It is this approach that distinguishes conflict transformation from conflict management and conflict resolution. In all these instances, media can play a pivotal role. People generally depend on media to get information, especially in conflict situations, where areas become restricted. So, it is through media that people come to know of the current status of the conflict and reconciliation. Their reports have the capacity to influence the attitude and perception of the audience and this can affect their behaviour towards the conflict. Therefore, it is imperative that media persons need to be highly sensitive in dealing with conflicts especially when based on ethnic lines, to keep the situation in control. In fact, they can act as a channel of peace and reconciliation in the conflict transformation process.

Most events around the world have been influenced by the media directly or indirectly. As a result, people are influenced by what is being projected by the media, especially in a conflict situation. The world witnesses a growing number of ethnic violence, due to reasons like - search for identity, power, and unequal distribution of resources. It could be estimated that more people have lost lives in ethnic conflicts than in the two world wars combined. These deadly conflicts have diverse histories and how the world views them depends on how the media project them. As a result, the role of media in a conflict is very vital and obvious. Their responsibility, especially in ethnic violence is very crucial, given its nature and gravity. At the same time, it is also important to analyse that while reporting conflicts, do media persons facilitate peacebuilding? The role of media in Kokrajhar – the epicenter for ethnic violence in the Northeast – will be analysed here.

Rationale and Scope of the Study

Ethnic conflicts have been a perennial problem in Northeast India since independence. There have been efforts to end ethnic conflicts by ways of conflict management and resolution, but a lasting solution to the problem is farfetched. Under such circumstances, the method of conflict transformation in resolving ethnic conflicts by addressing the root causes would be of great significance. Media can play a pivotal role in transforming ethnic conflicts. Media's role is evident before, during, and after an ethnic conflict. Media's role in conflict management, resolution, and prevention are vividly evident, however it still needs to be examined in conflict transformation - the latest innovative offshoot in peace and conflict studies. The study will also try to examine the nexus and linkages between the growing influence of media and the increasing number of ethnic violence in the contemporary society. In doing so, the study will highlight what role media play in ethnic violence and what normative role, media can constructively play in conflict transformation. So the present study will examine different ways and means by which media can play roles constructively in ethnic conflict transformation, thereby providing lasting solutions to the perennial problem.

Ethnic conflicts do exist in almost every heterogeneous society. In this scenario, what role media can play in an ethnic conflict transformation is of great significance. The study of available literature shows that a number of researches have been done on the causes and effects of ethnic violence, the role of media in ethnic conflicts, conflict resolution, conflict management, conflict prevention and conflict reporting. But, no similar effort has been made to analyse the role of media in ethnic conflict transformation. At the same time, there have been no studies on the role of media in Kokrajhar ethnic violence. The present study will look into this area to fill the gap and contribute to the existing branch of knowledge in media and conflict transformation.

The study and its findings will not only have an application value to transform ethnic conflicts in Northeast India but would also explore what constructive role media could play for a harmonious coexistence in a multi-ethnic society. The findings will provide a window to the levels of awareness among the stakeholders and general public on media reporting and motivate the media persons to play a constructive role in society. The findings may encourage further research in other parts of India, taking different case studies analysing different forms of media. With his experience from the research, the researcher himself hopes to be an agent in ethnic conflict transformation theoretically and practically.

Ethnic Conflict

In the matter of human existence, ethnicity has always been among the greatest factors: for it disseminates values from one group to another (Ahluwalia, 2000). A community's right to uphold its uniqueness and the journey of its return, to its roots in terms of life and culture is, how ethnicity is described today (Singh, 1992; Jha, 1992; Oommen, (1997). Held together by common factors, like race and culture, an Ethnic group, according to Morrix, (1986) is a singular section of the population, for its culture stands out from that of the mass. Yinger, (1997) in fact, states that identity in terms of ethnicity is what people carry from birth to death. When a sense of deprivation arises in a particular group with a separate sense of identity, Ethnic conflicts arise (Bercovitch, 2009; Szykiewicz, 1998; Huffman, 2009).

A disagreement of various issues – political, economic, social, cultural or territorial – between two or more ethnic communities, according to Brown, 1997, is considered an ethnic conflict. There is more than one catalyst that brings about violent conflicts, especially in social groups. By exploiting the concept of identity – hatred, violence, even genocide - has been incited, among the unaware mostly: turning old friends, neighbours and relatives into arch enemies (Bradley, 2008).

Therefore, clash of identity and interests, or a struggle for land, education, use of language, political representation, freedom of religion, preservation of ethnic identity and to autonomy or self-determination is what an ethnic conflict is involves (Dena, 2008; Das, 2005). Disparity, whether economic or political, are likely reasons for ethnic conflicts (Ahmad, 2005). The chances of ethnic conflicts are higher in a society that is heterogeneous, in regard to language, religion, race, culture and class. In contrary though, a particular reason for a conflict, according to Paul Brass, cannot be exactly ruled out (Brass, 2003).

Ethnicity is a one of greatest contributing factors, to a conflict. Whether in a developed or a developing nation, ethnic conflicts have sometimes turned severely violent, sometimes resulting in wars, even. Some of the examples are conflicts in Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bhutan, Bosnia, Burma, Burundi, Estonia, Ethiopia, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Liberia, Mali, Northern Ireland, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Romania, Rwanda, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan and Turkey. While few of these conflicts get worldwide attention because of media coverage, others don't. There have been times when international communities have intervened enabling the crisis to de-escalate (Brown, 1997).

One such example is India's Northeast. It has been one of the major conflict areas since independence. Socially, culturally, politically, economically, emotionally and even spiritually, the region has suffered the adverse effects of its resultant violence and perpetual ethnic conflicts. Started as the Nagas' demand for the greater Nagaland, now

the violence and conflicts have escalated into a battle, between insurgents and the state and between communities (Hussain, 2005). Peace is the way to achieve tribal unity – is a realisation that came to the Nagas, only around 50 years later (Mukhim, 2010). Nagaland, in fact, is where insurgency first began in India, in 1952 (Sahni, 2010). There are varied reasons of conflict in Northeast India. Among them, one is the insufficiency of collective land available to its indigenous people – a major reason of violence against those considered ‘outsiders’ (Council, 2011). The huge inflow, of a migration population, from various neighbouring states was seen as a threat to the distinct identity of its indigenous people, leading to the revolt (Bhaumik, 2010).

In NEI, ethnic identity has helped the communities to unite and bargain for their rights. At the same time, it has also led to conflicts and destruction. No doubt, we see the NE, in terms of its identity struggles, but not all these struggles are for preserving culture and tradition: in fact it is also about accommodating themselves in modernity. To achieve this, they use the issue of tribal roots, to fight against the authority. Though most of the conflicts have occurred in the name of kinship, culture, and tradition, the actual motivating factors are material concerns like land, political power, employment etc. Identities cannot be naturally born but are socially constructed. Ethnic identity politics in the region is perceived from economic interests, ideological hegemony and political expectations of the emerging middle class elites. Again quoting scholars like Partha Chatterjee, Srikanth and Ngaihte, (2011) make the classification of people, on the basis of cultural and racial differences, that contributed to the growth of ethnic identities.

Assam is one of the largest multi-ethnic states in the Northeast with sixty eight languages and dialects. Groups in Assam demand for autonomous statehood or want sovereignty (Dutta, 2005). In the past, Assam witnessed a series of immigration both from within and outside India. This would mean that the Assamese faced the threat of becoming minority in their own homeland, urging them to safeguard their interest and preserve their socio-cultural identity (Das, 1987). Assam is in tension and turmoil. On the one hand, United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) militants have been demanding Assam's sovereignty and on the other hand, autonomous demands are made by different ethnic groups such as Bodos, Karbis, Dimasas, Koch-Rajbanshis, Rabha-Hajongs, Tiwas,

and Mishings, creating perennial tensions between the diverse tribes and linguistic communities that share this common territory (Barpujari, 1984; Park, 2009). Many tribals in Assam are not happy with the Assamese identity mainly because the Assamese want to make Assamese language, the lingua franca of the state (Bhagabati, 1992).

Today the demand for a Bodo homeland, as a separate state within the Indian Union, is the most serious political crisis in Assam. The Bodos, belonging to Mangoloid stock, are one of the earliest settlers in Assam who migrated from China, Tibet, Mongolia and Siberia (Bhattacharjee, 1996). They are one of the most important tribes of Northeast India, particularly of Assam and are considered to be early settlers of Assam. It is also said that they were the ruling race since times immemorial in the northeast, with powerful kingdoms (Sonowal, 2013). The idea of having a separate Bodoland led some extremists to try and achieve a form of ethnic cleansing, targeting the immigrant communities settled historically in the Bodo areas (Baruah, 1999). The Bodo insurgency started with the formation of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) on 3 October 1986 in Assam. Later the 1990ies witnessed violence due to the formation of another group called the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) in 1996 (Rahman, 2011).

Kokrajhar district is the epicenter of violence in Assam in view of the demand for Bodoland. Bodo resurgence had its origin in Kokrajhar with the formation of Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 1952 (Barpujari, 1998). Kokrajhar was one of the five towns targeted by a series of bomb blasts on October 29, 2008 in which more than 80 got killed (Park, 2009). After signing the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) accord on 20th February 1993, Bodos tried to establish power over Bodo areas, chasing out non-Bodos from BAC areas. The killing of large numbers of Santhals and Bengalis by militant Bodo organisations created ethnic tension and enmity towards the Bodos by the non-Bodos (Biswas, 2008). The inter-group violence was high in 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2004, and 2008 (Dhar, 1998; Saikia, 2011). The year 2012 witnessed the violence between Bodos Vs immigrant Muslims and in 2014 between Bodos Vs Santhals.

Conflict Transformation (CT)

Conflict transformation plays a major role in ethnic conflicts in finding a lasting solution to the problem. Conflict Transformation has existed throughout human history. Though, as a field of study it emerged only recently, by the beginning of 1990ies. The field incorporates some of the core ideas of the contemporary conflict resolution approach and at the same time, goes one step further, focusing on large scale destructive conflicts and how they change so that they are conducted constructively. The past decade of peace and conflict research frequently uses the term transformation that views conflict as a dynamic source of positive change and promises to take peace and conflict research on a new high in this century (Ryan, 2009).

According to John Paul Lederach, the proponent of this theory, "CT is to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships". In an ethnic conflict situation, conflict transformation can alter the conflict in its totality and restore lasting peace by addressing personal, relational, structural and cultural dimensions. At a personal level, we try to improve the wellbeing of people by providing awareness programmes, counselling, and ensuring human security. At a relational level, we improve the interpersonal relationship by improving communication, conducting common programmes, and celebrations. At a structural level, we address the root causes of the conflict and ensure basic facilities, socio-economic equality, and participation in the decision-making body. And at the cultural level, we address the factors that contribute to conflicts, like search for identity, traditional values, and thereby respecting the culture and tradition of others as well (Lederach, 2003).

CT as described by Lederach does not suggest that we simply eliminate or control conflict, but rather recognise and work with its dialectical nature. By this, he means that social conflict is naturally created by humans who are involved in relationships, yet once it occurs, it transforms those events, people and relationships that created the initial conflict (Consortium, 1995). A transformational approach recognises that conflict is

natural within human relationships. Moreover conflict brings with it the potential for constructive change (James, 2004).

In relation to the transformation of violence and the promotion of just peace, people involved in CT should be in constant touch with local people in conflict areas, to respond to their immediate needs. At the same time, they should also engage in dialogue and discussions which might solve their problems and satisfy human security, which is very much applicable in an ethnic conflict situation (Mahanta, 2010). Therefore, conflict transformation is concerned with finding ways to motivate unwilling parties to make peace. That is what distinguishes conflict transformation from conflict resolution, that aims merely in eliminating the conflict (Brunk, 2012).

CT looks beyond the aims of both conflict management and resolution perspectives. CT parties in a conflict consciously work towards transforming the relationships, interests, discourses, and ideologies (Joseph, 2013). CT has three functions: peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding (Schweitzer, 2012). Transformative peacebuilding is a broad term for approaches that focus less on physical reconstruction but more on the social relationships that exist within conflict-prone societies. It is an attempt to alter conflicts so as to facilitate lasting peace (Mahanta, 2008). If the term 'resolution' implies the process of finding a solution to some problem, transformation implies bringing about a few major changes in some aspects of the conflict or the socio-political system in which it is embedded. Transformation has deliberately included the aftermath of the conflict in its focus like traumas, fears, hurts, hatreds, that might remain to poison the future events (Mitchell, 2002).

Role of Media in Ethnic Conflict Transformation (ECT)

Media have become an important tool in addressing the core issues in society. It is all the more relevant in transforming a conflict situation. Communication has become an integral part of conflict. In fact, both verbal and non-verbal message is the most important part of dispute (Kovach, 2000). People read media texts along ethnically-influenced ways and at the same time, these readings construct ethnic identities (Harindranath, 2009).

Freedom of the press is the mother of all freedoms – precisely why it can be used to create a better world or even bring about universal catastrophe (Malhan, 1985). Over the years, media have achieved tremendous power. It won't be unfair to say that media has become more powerful than the three organs of the state. It has the power to evaluate and criticise the executive, legislative and judiciary, and have the last word (Sawant, 1998).

Mass media play an important role in today's conflict, where media can take two different and opposed forms. Either they take an active part in the conflict and be responsible for increased violence, or they stay out of the conflict, thereby contributing to the resolution of conflict and alleviation of violence (Puddephatt, 2006). Media have a responsibility of presenting minorities as real members of a wider society (Howitt, 1982). All mass media content could be viewed from the perspective of what is revealed about ethnicity (Riggins, 1992). Media can add colour by reporting or ignoring conflicts. By being selective, it often misinforms and acts as propaganda-building medium. Coverage by some newspapers during Punjab violence (1978-95) labeled Sikhs as a violent community. Violence sells and media get more attention during conflict situations. At the same time, media had major contribution in building peace during 2002-2003 between India and Pakistan (Vilani, 2005; Burton, 2009).

The news media have enormous potential for doing good or harm, before, during and after a conflict. They can be used to incite hatred, but they can also provide news and information, that a democratic government needs in order to work effectively. The same medium that is being used to escalate conflicts can also be used for more constructive and peaceful purposes (James, 2004). Journalists working in conflict-hit areas should adopt values that would deescalate conflict and maximise the potential for reconciliation (Wolfsfield, 2004). The media may influence the process of de-escalating a conflict, by providing non-partisan news and reports that present news from more than one angle (Brice, 2004). Media persons provide news to political and economic elite, according to their interests and to the general public, something unusual and sensational (Meyer, 1988). The media do not represent reality, mainly because they are no longer in a position to do so. Therefore they are forced to construct reality either to satisfy their audience or for their existence (Langer, 1999). Weber (2002) is also of the opinion that we seldom

see news as they occur, but we are shown media's construction of the events. Therefore media are powerful agents that influence our everyday life.

Media organisations are becoming so powerful and influential today that they are in a position to have command over conflicts, able to shape and refine opinions and even governments. The media are like a double-edged sword. They can either act like a weapon to incite violence by means of propagating messages of intolerance or disinformation. Or they can be used for conflict resolution providing information that is reliable, respects human rights, and represents diverse aspects (Powers, 2008). Media can promote non-violent responses to acts of violence. There are instances wherein media were instrumental in building peace after the conflict. Media can be used to play a vital role in CT and peacebuilding (Mitchell, 2012). If media have played an important role in escalating violence, they also have the power and responsibility to end violence and build peace. During the 1994 Rwanda conflict, the local radio RTLM was used to incite violence but after the conflict the same medium was used by some peacemakers to build peace and reconciliation (Schirch, 2007).

There are three factors that influence the framing of news: one is journalist-centered influences, second is the organisational influence and the third is external sources. What people think about an issue, is influenced by the accessibility of frames. The more the accessibility, the greater will be the influence. Most research examining individual level outcomes of framing have assumed a direct link between media frames and individual level outcomes (Dietram, 1999). In the round table conference on conflict, media and human rights in South Asia, the members felt that media focus on the immediate events and outcomes. They concluded that human rights concerns are sidelined by other concerns like – a) the competition for breaking news b) stereotyping and negative-labeling of population c) formulating news on ideological biases d) paying little attention to marginalised group and e) attempting to stand out amongst competitors. Many times they move from reporting events to interpreting events. Media can claim credibility if only they are able to gather news independently (ICHRP, 2011).

The significance of newspapers in a developing country goes beyond just reporting the current affairs (Ghosh, 2000). However, compared to the other regions of India, the Northeast's press lacks the same freedom, due to insurgencies and other innumerable unions. This can contribute to the one-sided media coverage where the minority ethnic group will be at the receiving end (Park, 2009). Harris (2004) in her article about media's role in reporting conflicts states that the prime news value of the media is negative events. Violence or conflicts are highly projected and sensitised. Hence 'bad news is good news and usually good news is no news' for media persons.

In his analysis on the role of media in conflict-resolution, taking the case study of Katunayake incident, Hettiarachchi (2013) points out that newspapers have inbuilt agendas and they are biased while reporting facts. The study also revealed that it was the management of the media that decided what, when, where and how to report. In his study on the political crisis and media's role towards conflict resolution, Das, (2009) took the case study of Assam movement and Sikh movement in Punjab, and observed that in Assam movement, media played a very critical role even before the movement, by way of propaganda campaign about the issue of illegal migrants. It was observed that media failed to play its role and there was bias while reporting the cause of minorities. In the case of Sikh movement, the regional media was not supportive of the movement mainly because the media was controlled by the government. Therefore, he suggests that media should report as objectively as possible.

The study of available literature shows that a number of researches have been done on the causes and effects of ethnic violence, the role of media in ethnic conflicts, conflict resolution, conflict management, conflict prevention and conflict reporting. But no similar effort has been made to analyse the role of media in Ethnic Conflict Transformation (ECT). At the same time there have been no studies done on the role of media in Kokrajhar ethnic violence. The present study will look into this area to fill the gap and contribute to the existing branch of knowledge in media and Conflict Transformation.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Specifically, this study has examined, among other things:

- * To identify the root causes of ethnic violence.
- * To elucidate the role of media in Ethnic Conflict Transformation.
- * To assess the imperativeness of Ethnic Conflict Transformation approach in Northeast India.
- * To investigate the consequences of media reporting in Ethnic Conflict Transformation.
- * To analyse the role of media in reporting Kokrajhar violence.
- * To critically examine media's role in Ethnic Conflict Transformation of Kokrajhar.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study began with certain important research questions as follows:

- * What are the root causes of ethnic violence from Conflict Transformation perspective?
- * What role do media play in Ethnic Conflict Transformation?
- * What are the imperatives of Ethnic Conflict Transformation approach in Northeast India?
- * How did media report Kokrajhar Ethnic Violence in the past?
- * What role can media constructively play in the Ethnic Conflict Transformation of Kokrajhar?

HYPOTHESIS

The study began with a tentative postulated assumption as;

Media are yet to play a constructive role in Ethnic Conflict Transformation of Kokrajhar violence.

METHODOLOGY

This study is basically qualitative in nature, although quantitative techniques are employed to substantiate the qualitative method. The study makes use of both secondary and primary sources. Secondary data was collected from books, articles, and journals. Primary data was collected from official records, questionnaires and unstructured interviews. A pilot survey was conducted to understand the area and its people. Questionnaire was prepared for distribution among people from various walks of life, consisting of civilians, academicians, local leaders/NGOs, businessmen and journalists of various age groups, sex, and ethnicity.

Kokrajhar district of Assam is the epicenter of ethnic violence in the Northeast. Kochugaon village is one of the worst affected areas of ethnic conflicts in Kokrajhar. Therefore, Kochugaon has been selected for examining media influence on ethnic violence and its role in conflict transformation. According to 2011 census, Kokrajhar has a population of 8,87,142 and Kochugaon has a population of 5000. Disproportionate stratified sampling was employed in choosing 250 people, so that the questionnaires could be distributed among a diverse sample of respondents, from various walks of life. Questionnaires were distributed according to the size of the population. Maximum sample was chosen from the civilians, since they are the majority in the population: minimum sample size was chosen from the journalist, the smallest population. Unstructured interviews were also conducted among 40 respondents from various categories to substantiate the questionnaire filled up by the respondents.

The questionnaire was framed in a way that 10 questions were common for all categories of population and five questions were exclusive to each category of people, based on their professions. Out of 10 questions five were rating scale questions with '1' as the most preferred and '5' as the least. This was asked not to limit the respondents' choice, as there could be possibilities of more than one response in the basic questions. The remaining questions were framed in a Likert scale where the respondents were asked to choose any one of the given response options, according to their preference. Questionnaire was prepared both in English and in vernacular language for the civilians,

local leaders/NGOs and businessmen. Questionnaire for the Academicians and Journalists were prepared only in English. Print, electronic and social media were taken into consideration while framing questionnaire.

Out of 350 copies of questionnaire that were distributed, a total of 265 filled copies were collected. After verification and sorting out, a few of the incomplete and inaccurate questionnaires were removed and only 250 were shortlisted for coding and tabulation as desired before the survey. Microsoft Excel was used to code and tabulate the data. Different tables and charts were used to highlight the respondents' opinions regarding various aspects of media reporting and its effects on their behaviour using both Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word. After coding and tabulation of data, analyses and interpretations were made based on analytical verification objectively to know what role media played in the ECT of Kokrajhar.

Limitations of the study

1. Multi-ethnic and linguistic character of the field of the study.
2. Deficiency in local languages and the unfamiliar locality of the researcher.
3. Fear and suspicion coupled with illiteracy of the respondents.

Organisation of the Study

Chapter I. Introduction

The introductory chapter highlights the Issue under Examination, Rationale and Scope of the Study, Conceptual Framework of the Research, Research Objectives, Research Questions, Hypothesis, Research Methodology and Limitations of the research.

Chapter II. Ethnic Violence: A Conflict Transformation Perspective

The second chapter delves into conflict from a transformative perspective. It traces out the sources and causes of conflicts based on the theories of conflict. It also explores the source of ethnic identity formation and ethnic conflicts based on the theories

of ethnicity. This chapter elaborates the theory of Conflict Transformation and its application in an Ethnic Conflict Situation.

Chapter III. Media in Ethnic Conflict Transformation

This third chapter assesses the origin and growth of media from a historical perspective. This chapter examines the linkage between growing influence of media and increasing number of ethnic violence in the post-cold-war era. This chapter also elaborates the role of media in contemporary society from a transformative outlook taking into consideration the theories of media. It explores the power of media in reporting conflicts and brings out their transformative role in Ethnic Conflict Transformation.

Chapter IV. Ethnic Conflict Transformation in Northeast India

The fourth chapter delineates the history of Northeast India from a conflict perspective. It examines the various root causes and the evolution of ethnic conflicts in the region. It analyses the relevance and scope of Conflict Transformation in the Northeast. This chapter also illustrates the necessity of media as an indispensable agent of Ethnic Conflict Transformation to achieve sustainable positive peace in the region.

Chapter V. Media in Ethnic Conflict Transformation of Kokrajhar

In this fifth chapter the reasons for choosing Kokrajhar as the area of study and a historical overview of ethnic conflicts in Kokrajhar are discussed. The data collected through questionnaire is coded, interpreted and analysed to find what role media played in the Kokrajhar Ethnic Violence and what constructive role media could have played in the Ethnic Conflict Transformation of Kokrajhar.

Chapter VI. Conclusion

The concluding chapter summarises the study and briefly draw concluding observations.

Chapter II

Ethnic Violence: A Conflict Transformation (CT) Perspective

2. Introduction

Ethnic violence is very vivid and rampant in contemporary society. The major causes of ethnic conflicts are socio-economic and political exclusion, prejudice, exploitation, deprivation, unfulfilled needs, incompatibility of interests and values, identity crisis, and constructed enemy image of the other group. So, the question is, can we transform protracted ethnic conflicts having diverse root causes? Hence, the objective of this chapter is to analyse whether ethnic violence can be resolved from a CT perspective. The main focus is on how ethnic conflicts can be constructively transformed to achieve sustainable, positive peace. So, in the first part of this chapter, conflict will be analysed from a transformation perspective and various theories of conflict will be explained to show its sources. The second part of this chapter will examine the concept of ethnicity, major ethnic conflicts in the post-cold war era and how ethnic identity is formed based on the theories of ethnicity. In the third part of this chapter, the theory of conflict transformation and how it differs from conflict resolution will be explored. The last part of this chapter will elaborate on the possibility of transforming ethnic conflicts by: a) addressing the root causes and b) building relationships among the conflicting parties - so as to establish sustainable positive peace by eliminating direct, structural and cultural violence.

2.1. Conflict: A Transformation Approach

Conflict has been an integral part of human culture. The evolution of various civilisations saw a number of conflicts in its transformation. We witness intra-personal, inter-personal, intra-group and inter-group conflicts in our everyday lives. Every individual and every group wants to prove a point to others, that they exist with dignity and a certain identity. People are more prone to disagree than to agree on issues related to various aspects of life. It is this disagreement and difference of opinion that made the society make necessary changes, for its growth and development. In one way conflict is a struggle to overcome the difficulties faced by individuals and groups. Hence, from a

conflict transformation perspective, conflict is not to be condemned because it is a means for constructive change. Schilling, (2012: 98) defines conflict as a struggle, fight, serious disagreement or controversy involving two or more parties.

Lynch, (2002:29) argues that conflict is a process through which two or more parties try to attain incompatible goals while trying to undermine and ignore the goal-seeking potential of the other(s). He further states that conflicts escalate because of various factors like scarcity of resources (poverty, unemployment, housing, water etc.), poor communication between parties, incorrect perceptions of each other, lack of trust, unresolved grievances from the past, uneven distribution of power, and parties not valuing the relationship between them.

Verma, (1998) makes a comparison between traditional, contemporary and interactionist views on conflict. According to the traditional view, conflict is bad and is caused by troublemakers. Therefore, it should be avoided or suppressed. The contemporary view suggests that conflict is inevitable between humans, hence it is not always considered bad. Interactionist view goes one step further and says that conflict is necessary to increase creativity and performance. They encourage conflict for a better future. Thus a transition is seen from traditional to behavioural to the interactionist views on conflict. CT theorists follow this concept and believe that conflict can be healthy, if managed properly.

James, (2004); Deutsch, (2004:26); HEKS, (2012:9) and Kabi, (2012) referring to the transformational approach say that conflict is natural within human relationships and that it brings with it the potential for constructive change. The problem is not the conflict itself, but the way we deal with it. Violence is one way of dealing with conflict, but it is not an integral part of it. Vayrynen, (1991: 4) taking inspiration from Galtung, opines that conflicts are continually transformed even if it has not made any visible progress. Therefore, many intractable conflicts of interests or values may find their solution, only through the process of transformation.

Many people use the words 'conflict' and 'violence' interchangeably. But there is a distinction between the two. Conflict is something natural for human survival. Everybody experiences conflicts, and every single day people may come across different types of conflicts, of varying levels of intensity, regardless of caste, race, gender, nationality, age, culture, ideology or religion. Conflict is part and parcel of one's life. Violence, on the other hand, happens when a conflict has been aggravated, mismanaged or neglected (Cacayan, 1998). In the words of Galtung, (2000a:16) "it is the failure to transform conflicts that lead to violence".

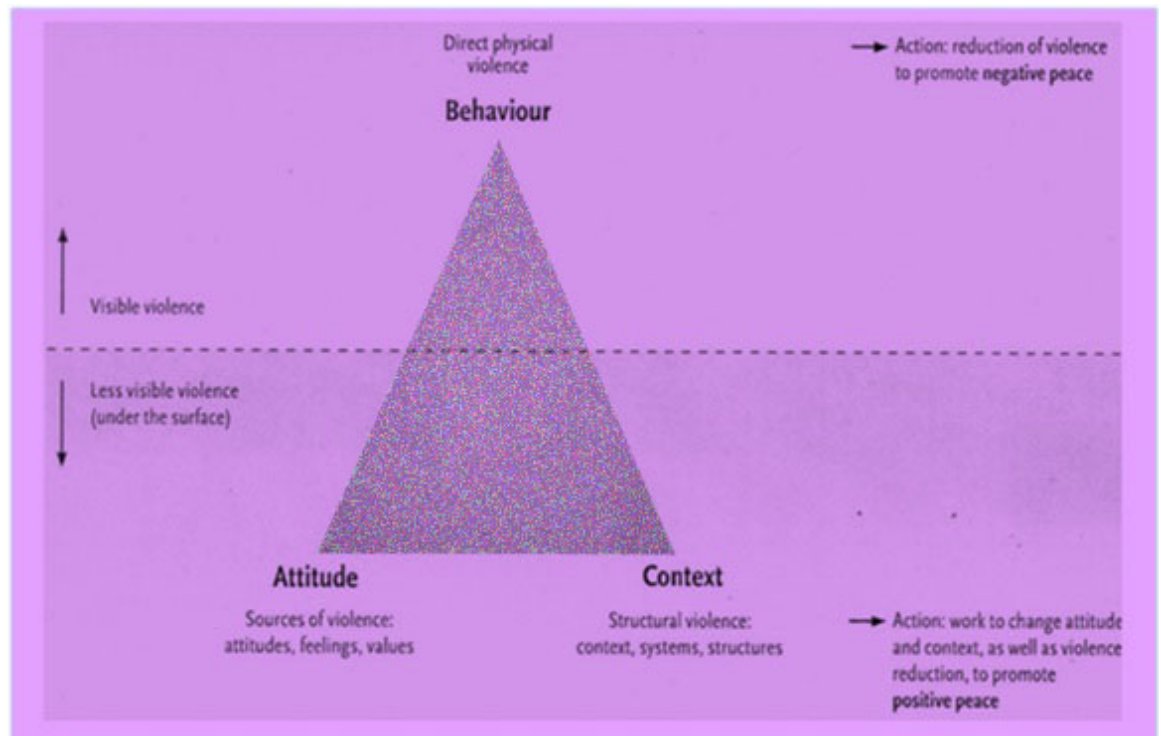
The danger is not in the conflict itself, in its escalation to dangerous and violent situations (Hamelink, 2011). What is to be condemned is violence, not conflict. It is always easy to transform conflict but not violence. Since violence is the failure of a society to transform the conflict constructively, it is a collective responsibility to ensure that those conflicts, do not lead to violence. Most of the ethnic violence that have occurred in history, is the result of a poorly transformed conflict in its initial stages. It is as if people wait till a conflicts turn to violence, to give enough attention to the problem. As a result, people use violent means to bring the attention of the authorities, to their problem. Conflict is only a symptom and not a sickness, and if not diagnosed on time and properly treated, it might turn into a dreaded disease.

Galtung, (2000a: 2) identifies three types of violence in the society. They are: 1) Direct violence which is visible, destructive with a will to harm people physically (eg. beating, killing). 2) Structural violence which is invisible, not willing to harm but destructive. Structural violence is something that is already in the system and being continued (eg. Slavery, material inequality). 3) Cultural violence is also invisible, but has intentions to harm and destruct. Cultural violence involves the images and stories which justify or glorify violence (eg. hate speech, persecution). Galtung, (2007) believes that direct violence is the late warning of cultural and structural violence. And cultural and structural violence are the early warning of direct violence.

The conflict triangle developed by Galtung can help us understand better how conflicts emerge and how they can be positively transformed. In fact, conflict triangle

was first presented by Chris Mitchell in 1981 and later developed by Galtung. According to Galtung, conflict is the outcome of attitudes, behaviours and contradictions ($\text{Conflict} = \text{Attitudes} + \text{Behaviours} + \text{Contradictions}$). It clearly shows that there is a linkage between these three elements, in relation to conflict. Referring to Galtung's triangle Dijk, (2009) mentions three main dimensions of conflict transformation which are inter-related. (i) the perceptions and attitudes of the people, (ii) the context in which people live, and (iii) the behaviour of the people. Perceptions and attitudes influence the behaviour of the people. The context in which people live influences their perceptions and attitudes and behaviour. And finally the behaviour of a person depends on one's attitudes and surroundings. The coherence between these three elements imply that conflict transformation needs to address them simultaneously.

Figure 2.1
Conflict Triangle



Source: Adaptation of Galtung's triangle (Fisher et al., 2000:10; as cited in Dijk, 2009:12)

The conflict triangle shows that there is a correlation between attitude and cultural violence, contradictions (context) and structural violence, and behaviours and direct violence. So it is important that we channelise our perceptions and attitudes in order to have a positive behavioural outcome. Conflict transformation aims to transform negative destructive conflict into positive constructive conflict and deals with contextual, behavioural and attitudinal areas of conflict. It involves a change of relationships that promote violent behaviour. It is the process by which conflicts are transformed into peaceful experiences (Schilling, 2012: 248). All these three types of violence are prevalent in our societies, which are destructive and condemnable. The visible and invisible forms of violence that exist in our society and culture disturb the peaceful co-existence of humankind. Even in the invisible forms of violence, the victims feel exploited that leads to frustration. The need of the hour is to transform these conflicts constructively so that they do not lead to violence.

2.1.1. Theories of conflict

There are a number of theories explaining the nature and origin of conflicts in society. Many of the intellectuals who have contributed in theorising the origin of conflict like Karl Marx (1818-1883), Max Weber (1864-1920), Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1929), Georg Simmel (1858-1918), and Emile Durkheim consider conflict as an inevitable element in any society, basically because man is never a satisfied being (Coser, 2004). Conflict occurs in any society when the existing system is unable to satisfy the needs of individuals and groups, leading to a desire for change. The reason for the origin of conflict varies from society to society and issue to issue. It would be unfair to determine the nature and sources of conflict based on just one theory, as every theory has its limitations and credibility. Hence, a combination of theories can explain the sources of conflict. Although there are a number of theories, this study takes up only six theories that are more pertinent to ethnic conflicts.

2.1.1.1. Human Needs Theory

The Human Needs Theory was developed in the 1970ies and 1980ies as a generic or holistic theory of human behaviour. It is based on the hypothesis that humans have

basic needs that have to be met in order to maintain stable societies (Cunningham, 1998:17 as cited in Kabi, 2012:14). The human needs could include physiological, sociological, psychological, political, economic and spiritual (religious) needs. When any of these needs are not fulfilled, people become restless and begin to react and retaliate. In fact, most of the theories of conflict emerge due to the non-fulfillment of the needs of the people. "The more one has, the more one wants, since satisfactions received only stimulate instead of filling needs" (Durkheim, 1951: 248). Karl Marx is of the opinion that man is perpetually a dissatisfied animal. When his primary needs are met he moves on to his secondary needs (Coser, 2004: 43).

According to Abraham Maslow, human needs are unlimited. When one need is being fulfilled, another need arises and takes its place. He formulated the famous 'hierarchy of needs' in his book, 'motivation and personality'. According to this theory, the first need that one looks to fulfill is physiological need (food), then the need for security (protection), need for belongingness (love), the need for esteem (self respect, appreciation and achievement) and finally self-actualisation (at peace with oneself or spiritual attainment). However, it does not mean that when a higher need is achieved, the lower needs are forgotten. What it really means is that, when a higher need is achieved, the lower need becomes less important (Maslow, 1970). Human needs theorists argue that the need for identity, recognition and security are non-negotiable. People are willing to risk their lives and the life of others in order to achieve their desired goals (Rubenstein, 2003:64).

Dixit, (2004) and Jeong, (2008) opine that the denial of identity, security and recognition are fundamental in most of the protracted conflicts. In most situations, the issues such as non-availability of resources and non-fulfillment of basic human needs are the causes of conflicts. Johan Galtung in his description of conflict transformation by peaceful means, affirms that basic human needs like survival, well being, identity and freedom are non-negotiable (Galtung, 2000a: 6). Therefore, according to this theory when needs are not fulfilled, people feel a sense of frustration that then leads them to strive for their goals, even by use of violent means.

2.1.1.2. Structural Theory

This theory argues that conflict occurs in the society due to the structure of the society itself. Societies are structured in such a way that one group always dominates or exploits another. Hence, the exploited fight against their exploiters for justice. The theory has its origin in Karl Marx, who said that there are basically two groups of people in any society: the ruling class and working class. The ruling class always tries to take advantage of the working class resulting in resistance from the working class, which turns into conflict, and sometimes even violence. This is further substantiated by Max Weber arguing that every society is divided into groupings with destructive lifestyles and views of the world, just as it is divided into distinctive classes (Coser, 2004: 229).

This theory considers social problems like economic and political exclusion, injustice, poverty, inequality, and exploitation as the sources of conflict (VES, 2016: 3). In any heterogeneous society, there are the majority and minority, the powerful and the powerless, the insider and the outsider, the ruling class and the ruled. Society is structured in a way where one group always dominates the other - politically, socially, culturally, and economically. This leads to confrontation between these opposite groups who are dissatisfied and feel exploited. Hence, this theory argues that the structure of the society itself is the source of conflict but fails to explain who are responsible for such disparities in society.

2.1.1.3. Elite Theory

At the core of the Elite Theories of conflict, is the assumption that ethnic war is functional. Ethnic violence does not result from irrational and spontaneous eruptions of mass anger or frustration, but is deliberately orchestrated and planned by elites and organisations to increase group cohesion and build a loyal support base. In this, violence is strategically instigated to create or affirm boundaries between groups of people. The old leaders are afraid of losing power and the new ones are trying to create their own means to attain power by instigating the members of the group. They construct an image of excessive threat to the group from outside and project themselves as the saviours. The

common assumption of the theory is that people normally consent to the orders of the elites (Demmers, 2000:28-29).

Elites create antagonistic identities to build support, which might favour more violence (Fearon and Laitin, 2000:853). People who do not support the group or the mobilisation are labeled as traitors (Gangnon, 1997:138). As a result people are forced into joining the group mobilisation for their own survival. Most of the times, innocent people are victimised and are made to pay the price of elite aspirations. The elite instill in their followers the strategy of 'offense is the best defense' and cause harm to their 'opponents' who are foreseen as a hindrance to their growth and prosperity.

2.1.1.4. Frustration-Aggression Theory

As per Frustration-Aggression theory, all aggression whether inter-personal or inter-group, has its root causes in the frustration of one or more actors' achievement. When people perceive that they are being prevented from achieving a goal, their frustration is likely to turn into aggression. This is to say that conflict can be traced to the non-fulfillment of personal or group objectives and frustration as a result of such non-fulfillment (Cunningham, 1998:6-7 as cited in Kabi, 2012: 12). This theory was developed by John Dollard and his research associates in 1939 and was modified by scholars like Leonard Berkowitz (1962) and Aubrey Yates (1962). According to them, conflict is the outcome of the frustration of not having one's desires fulfilled. The anger and frustration are often directed towards the people who are responsible for preventing one from achieving those goals (VES, 2016: 3-4).

Disproportionate allocation of benefits combined with poor economic performance generates further anger and emotional frustration. An excessive level of frustration is developed when an individual or group is prevented from achieving their goal. This blocked energy seeks some sort of release. Which is why, aggressive action is used as a means of release. When people cannot express anger towards the main reason of frustration, they attack a substitute object or person (Jeong, 2000:67-70). In short, conflict is likely to occur when people feel frustrated and when their desired goals are not met (Rubenstein, 2003:64).

2.1.1.5. Psycho-Cultural Theory

According to this theory, one group becomes the enemy of another group in an unconscious psychological process. The other group is depicted as the reason for all the bad things happening to one's own group. What is constructed at a tender age with regard to self-image and a sense of others contribute in dehumanising the enemy in the long run. It is commonly assumed that in-group solidarity and out-group antagonism are generated based on the fear created by psychic mechanisms (Jeong, 2000:68). Georg Simmel is of the opinion that an entirely harmonious group is practically not possible to exist. Those who are connected in intimate relations are likely to harbour, for one another not only positive but also negative sentiments (Coser, 2004: 184). Garg, (2007) assess that belonging to one group often gives rise to fraternal feelings and sentiments. The fear of being assimilated with the dominant culture and the apprehension of being exploited make the minorities fight for their common goal of preserving their identity.

This theory was developed in the late 1980ies by a group of psychiatrists and international relations practitioners, as a model to explain the complexity of group behaviour, particularly with regard to antagonistic group relationships. The basic hypothesis of this theory is that humans have a deep rooted psychological need to dichotomise, and to establish enemies and allies. This is an unconscious need which feeds conscious relationships, especially in group lives. This is important with regard to the formation of ethnic identities and behaviour (cunningham, 1998:7 as cited in Kabi, 2012: 13). Even though there are different identities, the one that is based on ethnicity stands out. Some people form an attitude towards others based on their culture at an early age and consider the other group as the cause of their misfortune and downfall (VES, 2016).

As per this theory, identity is the most sought-after human need and when denied, results in violent conflict. Psycho-Cultural Conflict Theorists like Ross (1997) and Horowitz (1998) consider that conflict that is caused due to identity are dangerous and very difficult to resolve. This is because the issue of ethnic identity is uncompromising and its denial questions the very existence of the group (PHP, 2015).

2.1.1.6. Social Learning and Social Identity Theory

Social Learning and Social Identity Theory was developed by psychologist Henri Tajfel. It is based on the hypothesis that aggression is not innate or instinctual but actually learned through the process of socialisation. Interaction in society helps to focus and trigger stored aggression onto enemies. The social learning theory has tried to understand individuals in the environment in relation to group aggression. This theory underlines the fact that individuals are different in groups and it is this difference that produces recognisable forms of group action (Cunningham, 1998 :7; as cited in Kabi, 2012:13).

People identify themselves with groups as a way to feel good about themselves. Group violence is possible if the members of the group feel that they can only achieve this possibility by degrading an out-group. At the core of social identity theory, is the idea that individuals seek to reduce uncertainty and achieve a secure and positive sense of self, through their participation in groups. This human tendency results in the formation of in-groups and out-groups (Demmers, 2012: 39-41). People form a strong affinity with their in-groups and hatred towards out-groups. This happens even without the knowledge of people irrespective of their age, gender, ethnicity, religion and profession. It is because it is something that has been learned over a period of time through group interaction and learning.

Identity plays an important role in social conflict, as it is fundamental to how individuals and groups see and understand themselves in conflict. Identities assert and identify who is 'us' and who is 'them', mobilising individuals and groups, and providing legitimacy and justification for individual and group aspirations. Identities are themselves created and transformed in the processes of social change (Huffman, 2009). A sense of identity can make an important contribution to the strength and the warmth of our relations with others, such as neighbours, members of the same community, fellow citizens, or followers of the same religion. Our focus on particular identities can enrich our bonds and make us do many things for each other and can even take us beyond our self-centered lives (Sen, 2006). Identity based on ethnicity is one of the strongest bonds of union and non-negotiable in any region and cultures.

2.2. Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict

Ethnicity is a term generally difficult to define as it denotes so many unifying factors of a group. However, generally, ethnicity is considered to be a group of people having similar socio-cultural and linguistic background with a common origin and identity. At the same time, it is not restricted to any one or two socio-cultural elements that are in common. It is the combination of so many factors that unite people. In many parts of the world, ethnicity is the defining and motivating factor behind the political, economic and social way of life.

Ethnicity is a term used by the people to identify themselves with a specific group. It may be defined as an organising mode of principle by a group of people in order to differentiate themselves from other groups, in terms of race, kinship, language, customary mode of livelihood, culture and religion (Morris, 1968; Jha, 1992; Singh, 1992; Palanithurai, 1993:4; Oommen, 1997; Priyadarshini, 2006:102; Rizvi, 2006:17; Pyal, 2006; Borgohain, and Sinha, 2014:13). "Etymologically, the term traces its origin from the word "ethnic", which refers to a community of physical and mental traits posed by members of a group as a product of their common hereditary and cultural traditions" (Zehol, 2008: 57-58). The concept of ethnicity refers to the way in which social, cultural, linguistic and heredity form a social network of relationship. It shows that there is a very significant idea of shared meaning that refers to the concept of 'our people' and 'our origins' or it can also mean 'those people' with 'their origin' and ancestry with social hierarchy (Fenton, 1999, 2003; Bijukumar, 2013; Jackson et.al, 2013:127). In ethnicity, people are unified and are differentiated.

The important element in ethnicity is nothing but its group identity. This makes the members feel unique, distinct and different. In one's ethnic group, one finds identity, security and a sense of belongingness. Rex, (1986:81) is of the opinion that "any individual looks to his kin and to neighbours as first resource for cooperative action". The formation of ethnic identities may lead to ethnic struggles of safeguarding their interests and privileges. It is this sense of identity and belongingness that keeps an ethnic group together under any adverse circumstances. Huffman, (2009) argues that identity plays an important role in social conflict, as it is fundamental to how individuals and groups see

and understand themselves in conflict. Identities assert and identify who is 'us' and who is 'them', mobilising individuals and groups, and providing legitimacy and justification for individual and group aspirations.

Most of the conflicts especially in underdeveloped and developing countries have occurred on the basis of ethnicity. In ethnic conflict, people polarise on the basis of their ethnic identity. They either look for establishing themselves as superior to other group(s) or when their existence is threatened they retaliate to establish themselves. Bercovitch,(2009:2-3); Collins, (2010); and Basumatary, (2012a) consider an ethnic conflict as a conflict that involves two or more groups that perceive themselves as different and are seen by others as different. Ethnic conflict arises when a group with a separate sense of identity feels that their governing structure is incapable of addressing their basic needs. When such needs are denied, deprived or are not met, grievances are formed, and demands that the situation be redressed become more and more evident. Forced deprivation and the desire to remove it are characteristics of the development and the formation of ethnic conflict.

In a society where there are different ethnic groups, there is all the possibility of conflicts over resources, identity, patronage and policies. Yinger, (1997: 346); Rashid, (2005:107); Chandra, (2006); Dena, 2008: 114; Zehol, (2008: 64) consider that in a multi-ethnic society conflicts can arise out of sheer emotional reactions on the part of both majority and minority communities. The fear of losing the rights or privileges and unequal distribution of power and resources can create a so called 'psychological stress' among the various ethnic groups, living in the same locality, when each would try to safeguard one's interests. If those rights are not materialised and are seen to be beyond reach, conflict takes place between groups.

Ethnic conflicts can be expressed in many forms, ranging from peaceful expression of grievances to violent physical force. Some of the examples could be institutional political action, secessionist movements, to violent confrontations which may take the form of riots, massacres, genocide, uprisings, rebellion, revolution, terrorism, civil war, wars of national liberation and inter-state warfare (Jemma, 2006).

History shows that when a conflict occurs based on ethnicity, it lasts longer and is more intensive because of the bond and sensitivity of groups, formed on ethnic lines.

Ethnic conflicts tend to escalate on the one hand when the minority groups feel that they are deprived of their political, economic, socio-cultural and even intellectual rights. If the minorities get support from other external sources, it can also lead to insurgency and terrorism which would in turn intensify the conflict. On the other hand, when the majority groups feel that additional privileges are provided by the state to the minorities, they tend to raise their voice. People do understand that unity and collective effort is required to achieve the common mission of the group. Hence, ethnic movements should be considered as a result of danger to ethnic identity and existence of the group.

It is believed that members of the same group tend to work together to achieve collective ends not because of their discriminatory preferences but because of their affinity. It is mainly because they speak the same language, live in a common territory, have access to the same types of information, and share social networks. In situations where the resources are scarce, they may even choose to work together against other groups, putting aside their personal problems with members of the same group. Thus, political unity and polarisation form along ethnic lines, not because people care more for their own, but just because collaborating with their ethnic group makes it easier to achieve common ends (Habyarimana et al., 2008).

Schmidt and Schroder, (2001) are of the opinion that violence has become a political mode of communication to create an impression of a group's demands on the higher authority and for ethnic cleansing. Violence can be interpreted as a strategy for bargaining power. It is a strategy to win over the scarce resources and a means to prevent situations critical for the survival of a given population. Reuben, (2009: 63) in his analysis on the 'impact of news coverage on conflict' mentions that "in conflict situations, ethnocentrism contributes to destructive escalation by delegitimising the values, beliefs, opinions, and actions of the out-group, thus polarising the parties and paving the way for the use of more extreme tactics and conflict-related behaviors". Wolff, (2006:206)

strongly believes that the near future is unlikely to see an end to ethnic conflicts. The root causes of ethnic conflicts cannot be washed away overnight. Even when there are determined efforts to address the conflicts at local, national, or regional levels, these efforts will have to be sustained for years to come and are certain to suffer setbacks.

2.2.2. Theories of Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflicts

The major theories of ethnicity and ethnic conflict are derived from the study of ethnic identity and ethnic relations. It is important to understand how ethnicity is formed and how ethnic conflicts originate, in order to transform the issues related to ethnic conflicts. There are three traditional schools of thoughts that explain the origin of ethnic identity. However, a sound theoretical basis for defining ethnicity cannot be achieved, depending on just one school of thought.

2.2.2.1. Primordialism

Primordialists consider ethnic group as a natural community. According to them, ethnicity is fixed and people have no choice in ethnicity or identity. Since ethnicity is seen as a communal bond given by nature, it is unchangeable and social interaction has nothing to do with ethnic identity (Fearon and Laitin, 2000: 848; Demmers, 2012:24). In primordial theories, a group is turned into a natural community by common bonds of blood, kinship, language and customs. Therefore, ethnicity is predetermined and given at the time of birth. Common history, traditions, language, beliefs and values are objective cultural criteria that distinguish one group from another (Jeong, 2000:71).

The Primordialist framework is viewed from at least two perspectives. The socio-biological perspective developed by Pierre Van den Berge considers kinship as the determining factor for ethnicity. According to this view, ethnicity originates from a membership in a nuclear family and then the extended family, leading to ethnic group. The idea is that ethnicity is rooted in ancestral bonds and will never perish because kinship always exists. The second view is based on cultural perspective. As per this view, a common culture such as language or religion, is the determining factor for the origin of ethnicity, even in the absence of common ancestors (Yang, 2000: 42-43).

The Primordialist approach to ethnic conflict rests on this premise: since groups are essentially different, these differences will, perhaps not always, but time and again provoke inter-ethnic clashes and violence (Demmers, 2000:25). So, in Primordialism, ethnic conflicts erupt out of fear, hatred, and anxiety and not because of political and economic circumstances (Williams, 2015:147). The membership in a group is hereditary and is passed on to generations and thus, is permanent. Hence, the membership is not by choice, but by birth and destiny. It is similar to the caste system in Indian society. Whether you like it or not, you have to enjoy the privileges of the group and also bear the sufferings. But Primordialists fail to explain why ethnic identity change and how some people acquire more than one identity through social interaction.

2.2.2.2. Constructivism

According to constructivists, ethnic identity is socially-constructed, flexible and can be achieved through immigration, colonisation, conquest and hence, by way of socio, economic and political processes (Karna, 2008:21). Therefore, ethnic or group identities are not permanent and they can change over a period of time. According to Demmers, (2000: 26) and Mach, (2007) ethnic group or ethnic identity is an imagery construction by oneself in the process of interaction with others. It is hence situational and dynamic depending on one's cultural environment and group relations. Spencer, (2014) argues that the way in which an individual constructs his/her shared identity will determine how s/he relates to this group image.

William Yancey et. al (1976); Werner Sollars (1989); and Joane Nagel (1994, 1996) and Yang, (2000: 44-45) argue that ethnicity emerges as a response to structural changes in society. As per this view, due to industrialisation and immigration, people from different areas come to live in a particular locality and may foster similar lifestyles and work relationship. This may later lead to the formation of ethnic identity of that particular group. The argument is that ethnic identity is sprouted in tradition which is created and sustained by people. It is also constructed and even reconstructed by external forces. Hence, socio-economic and political processes have got greater role to play in the formation of ethnic identity. Demmers, (2012:28-29) citing Constructivist Elite Theorists

argue that ethnic violence is a political strategy to create, increase or maintain political support and power. Essentially ethnic violence is a political strategy.

2.2.2.3. Instrumentalism

Instrumentalist account came to the forefront in 1960ies in the United States as a result of the community leaders (white) who made use of the cultural groups to mobilise people for power and resources. Instrumentalist views understand both ethnicity and ethnic violence as functional: a political strategy and a tool to acquire power. There is an agreement that violence is seen as deliberate, orchestrated in order to achieve a desired goal. As per them, ethnic war continues as long as the main actors strive to reach their objectives, and indeed, as long as war is functional. Instrumentalist approach aim to explore the determinants of what ethnic violence is really about (Demmers, 2000: 35).

Ethnic identification is for the purpose of achieving a goal. Therefore the group ceases to exist, once their purpose is fulfilled. Ethnic conflict is the result of the actor's rational activity of widespread interest such as prosperity, power and security. They will engage in conflict, if only it is profitable, otherwise they prefer to go for co-operation. So the ethnic group is formed for the advantage of the group itself. Johnson, (2003: 273-74) believes that identity is self-defined and not attributed to someone by another person, organisation, or society. Identity is situational and moves from the local to the transnational. Individuals have a core identity, but one's ethnic identity shifts depending on the environment and the relationships with others in a particular context.

Ethnic groups are interest groups because ethnic identity is formed in order to gain resources. Since interests are the sole determinant of ethnic identity, ethnic affiliation is situational and may shift at any point of time. People also may not have an attachment towards their ethnic group as, in the case of Primordialism. People form ethnic groups as long as ethnicity provides significant returns to them. It is utilitarian in nature. One becomes part of an ethnic group as long as it is useful to him/her or to his/her family. In simple terms, people choose one ethnicity over another or avoid association with an ethnic group because of its utility or cost of such affiliation. In short, people

favour an ethnic group if it is beneficial and they avoid an ethnic group if it brings disadvantages (Yang, 2000: 46-47).

According to Instrumentalists' view, an ethnic group is created on a temporary basis for a particular purpose. Most of the common people in the group may not be aware of the group goal and its strategies. They become part of the group in order to have an identity and achieve their desired goal. The elites in the society manipulate the sentiments of the people to take advantage of their petty interests. But this theory fails to explain why ethnic identity based on blood relationship is stronger, and why always people do not have the freedom to choose their own ethnicity.

2.2.2. Ethnic Conflicts in the Post-Cold War Era

Humanity witnessed a number of conflicts over a period of time around the globe. However, history shows that there has been a shift in the pre and post cold war era, as far as conflicts are concerned. Until the end of the cold war, most of the major conflicts were fought between states. But after the cold war, most of the conflicts occurred between ethnic groups within the states. This is mainly because the groups feel that they are able to safeguard their identity and aspirations based on ethnicity. Mahanta, (2008: 97) and Bercovitch, (2009) opine that ethnicity and identity conflicts will be the dominant form of violence in the coming years as well. Most of the ethnic groups have a myth of origin, a history, a permanent enemy, and stories of traumas.

Thirty-five of the thirty-seven major armed conflicts in the world in 1991 were internal, or what would be called ethnic conflicts (Mukhim, 2007). Collective mechanisms either do not exist or are just in their infancy, in the various regions of Asia, where tensions between various ethnic communities and the states in which they live, continue to suffocate all major states. China, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, India, Thailand, Afghanistan, and Iraq are all flashpoints of current conflicts and have the potential for serious local and regional escalation. The negative peace that has prevailed in most of Europe's ethnic conflict regions stands in sharp contrast to the situation in Africa where inter-ethnic violence has continued to trouble and devastate the lives of millions of Africans (Wolff, 2006). However, it is to be mentioned that it is not only the

third world countries that experienced ethnic conflicts but developed countries like United States, United Kingdom and some of the European countries also have experienced ethnic conflicts, though less intense than those in Asia and Africa. An evaluation of some of the dreaded ethnic violence that have taken place in different parts of the world would give us a bird's eye view of the intensity and repercussions of ethnic violence.

Kenya experienced electoral violence based on ethnicity since 1991. The period between 1991 to 1994 witnessed the killing of more than 1,500 people and the displacement of nearly 3,00,000 people. The worst of its kind was seen in the December 2007 post-election period between ethnic Kikuyus, Luos and Kalenjins. The violence resulted in the killing of 1,333 people and more than 6,00,000 people became homeless. The violence in 2012 caused the death of 480 people. According to the official estimate, at least 4,433 people lost their lives and 18 lakh became homeless, during the period from 1991 to 2012 (Halakhe, 2013). In Nigeria, ethnic clashes were mainly fought over socio-economic and political resources. The major inter-ethnic violence since the late 1980ies include the Tiv-Jukun, Urhobo-Ijaw-Itsekiri and the Hausa/Fulani-Igbo. The years 1999-2000 witnessed Hausa/Fulani-Yoruba clashes (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005).

Sri Lanka experienced ethnic violence between Sinhalese and Tamils. The Sinhalese make up for a whopping 74% of the entire population, while the Tamils make up for only 14%. During the British regime, the minority Tamils, enjoyed high positions as they were well-versed in English. In the post-independence period, the majority Sinhalese took control of the social, political and economic administration. They considered Tamils as outsiders as they were brought by the British, for work and feared that they would snatch away their land. Tamils felt that they were marginalised and discriminated. Conflict began and took a violent turn when the Sinhalese wanted to make Sinhala and Buddhism as the state's official language and religion respectively. The conflict resulted in the rise of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE). The bloody violence killed more than 80,000 people and lakhs lost their homes (Benedikter, 2009; Rawat, 2012; Mushtaq, 2012).

In the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the conflict between three main ethnic groups - the Serbs, Croats, and Muslims - resulted in genocide, committed by the Serbs against the Muslims. As a result of the conflict 2,00,000 Muslims had been systematically slaughtered. More than 20,000 went missing and feared killed, while 20,00,000 become refugees. In the same way, in the Kurdish-Turkish ethnic conflict, so much of human rights violations had taken place. Kurdish citizens of Turkey constitute a large ethnic and linguistic group. They have been subjected to discrimination, oppression and denial of their ethnic identity by the state administration. When the Kurdish workers' party began an armed struggle against the Turkish army, the Turkish authorities treated this as a security problem and labeled Kurdish rebels as terrorists. Since 1984 more than 40,000 people got killed and a large number of people got displaced (Arcan, 2013).

One of the most dreaded ethnic conflicts the world has ever witnessed, was in Rwanda in 1994. There existed ethnic tensions from the beginning between the majority Hutus and the minority Tutsis. Tutsis controlled power for centuries, until 1962 when the majority Hutus rebelled and took over the Tutsis regime. In 1990, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a rebel group consisting of Tutsis attempted to defeat the Hutu-led government. This aggravated the ethnic tensions in that country. The violence reached its peak on April 6, 1994 when the rebels shot down the jet carrying the president of Rwanda. In response, with the prompting of state-controlled and independent Rwandan media, Hutus attacked the Tutsis and around 8,00,000 people lost their lives, lakhs of people got injured and many were displaced (Mitchell, 2012).

Kyrgyzstan experienced ethnic conflict between the majority Kyrgyz and the minority Uzbeks. Kyrgyz constitute nearly 71% and Uzbeks constitute nearly 14% of the total population of the country. With the independence of the country, the majority Kyrgyz came to dominate the politics and the public administration. Uzbeks were not satisfied as they were forced out of public life and the professions. However, on 10 June 2010, Uzbek men rampaged the city centre for nearly six hours. The rumors spread through the mobile phones, that Uzbek men raped and killed Kyrgyz women. The next day's morning saw a large number of Kyrgyz men gathering and unleashing violence on

Uzbeks. In that incident more than 420 people lost their lives, 1,11,000 fled to Uzbekistan and further 3,00,000 fled their homes (Asia Report, 2012).

On April 21 2014, BBC carried a graphic, detailed news story of the horrific atrocities in South Sudan. BBC quoting the UN said that hundreds of people were killed because of their ethnicity after South Sudan rebels seized the oil hub of Bentiu. The conflict was basically between the Nuer and Dinka communities. The Nuer community was seen as supporters of rebel leader Riek Machar. President Salva Kiir was a member of the country's largest group, the Dinka. Although both men had prominent supporters from various communities, there were numerous reports of rebels killing, ethnic Dinkas and the army targeting Nuers since the conflict broke out in December 2013. Since then, more than ten lakh people fled their homes in what was already among the world's poorest nations. The violence is marked by numerous human rights abuses and the worst 'Piles of bodies' on the street (BBC News, 2014).

An analysis of the above mentioned ethnic violence in different parts of the world would show that most of these conflicts arose in reaction to political injustice that paved way for social and economic inequality, resulting in violent retaliation. Today, we cannot expect a nation purely based on ethnic unity and homogeneity. Hence, we need to foresee inter-ethnic conflicts within the states that might lead to violence. As a result, the near future is unlikely to see the end of conflicts based on ethnicity. So the issue that we need to look into is how to resolve, transform and channelise these conflicts for a better civilisation. Positive peace which is free from direct, structural and cultural violence is the ultimate goal of humanity today. The concept of CT can lead us into that realisation of sustainable peace.

2.3. Conflict Transformation: A New Paradigm in Peacebuilding

The emergence of the concept of CT has made a drastic change in the field of peacebuilding. CT identifies and addresses the root causes of the conflicts non-violently and creatively by building relationships that engage all the parties involved, in order to find lasting solution to the problem. It is indeed a long journey together with the actors in the conflict to accept and accommodate each other for a peaceful co-existence. Together

with the structural changes, CT envisages a spiritual healing, which is unique in the process of peacebuilding. In the words of Lederach, (2003) the journey toward conflict transformation involves the removal of something that is not desired (violent conflict) and achieving something that is desired (peace).

The term 'transformation' has witnessed a significant growth in its use in peace and conflict research in the past decade (Ryan, 2009: 303). It is a fact that the dynamics that transform the dispute has all the possibility to escalate, unless it is prevented at the right time by intervention or reconciliation (Boehlke, 2009: 16). Botes, (2003b: 287) argues that conflict can be transformed only by giving importance to a set of personal, relational and structural transformations.

CT as described by its proponents does not suggest that we simply eliminate or control conflict, but rather recognise and work with its dialectical nature. By this, they mean that social conflict is naturally created by people who are involved in relationships with one another, yet once it occurs it transforms those events, people and relationships that created the initial conflict (Consortium, 1995). The greatest contribution of this school is its shift from international to local actors. Therefore, civil society and the ordinary people become the main actors in CT (Paffenholz, 2009). HEKS, (2012: 7) finds that in CT process, peace is built into the culture and structure of society itself. It involves all actors concerned and the decisions remain with themselves. Hence, CT has to be understood as an internal non-violent process, which encourages participation, mutual respect, security, understanding and equal rights.

CT as a reality has been existing throughout human history, but as a field of study and practice, it emerged only in the beginning of 1990ies. This field of study integrates some of the basic ideas of contemporary conflict resolution approaches. However, it concentrates on long term and destructive conflicts and how they change, so that they are transformed constructively, to a great extent (Kriesberg, 2011:50). In order to transcend the limitations of the earlier methods in peacebuilding, a dynamic peace concept called CT is introduced (Galtung, 1996). It has emerged as a concept and a process that encompasses various aspects of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, supporting local

capacities for peace and transformational development. CT arose as an alternative to the existing strategies of conflict resolution (Essays, 2014).

2.3.1. Conflict Transformation: From Theoretical Perspective

Berghof Glossary on Conflict Transformation on '*Facilitation, Mediation, and Negotiation*' finds that transformation models are built on the assumption that a conflict develops from its latent phase towards a manifest phase. This is because conflict is not static and parties evolved in the conflict become mature in due course of time. It is a developmental process whereby the parties would be willing to engage in negotiations (BGCT, 2012). According to Berghof foundation for peace support there are five core elements for systemic conflict transformation. They are: 1. Conflict analysis and conflict monitoring. 2. Proper planning for interventions. 3. Involving key stakeholders. 4. Mobilising agents for peaceful change. 5. Using creativity to find out sustainable solutions (BFPS, 2006:31).

John Paul Lederach, one of the main proponents of this theory defines CT as an approach "to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict, as life giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships" (Lederach, 2003: 14). Lederach has taken inspiration from Johan Galtung, who proposed the idea of attaining peace when creative CT takes place non-violently. In fact, Galtung mentions in his book '*peace by peaceful means*' that he had drawn inspiration from M.K. Gandhi who advocated non-violent resistance as a means to attain peace. As for Galtung, peace is a revolutionary idea but attaining peace by peaceful means would suggest that this revolution is non-violent. Transformations happen not by chance but by willingness and perseverance. According to him, peace is not just the absence of direct violence, but also the removal of structural and cultural violence.

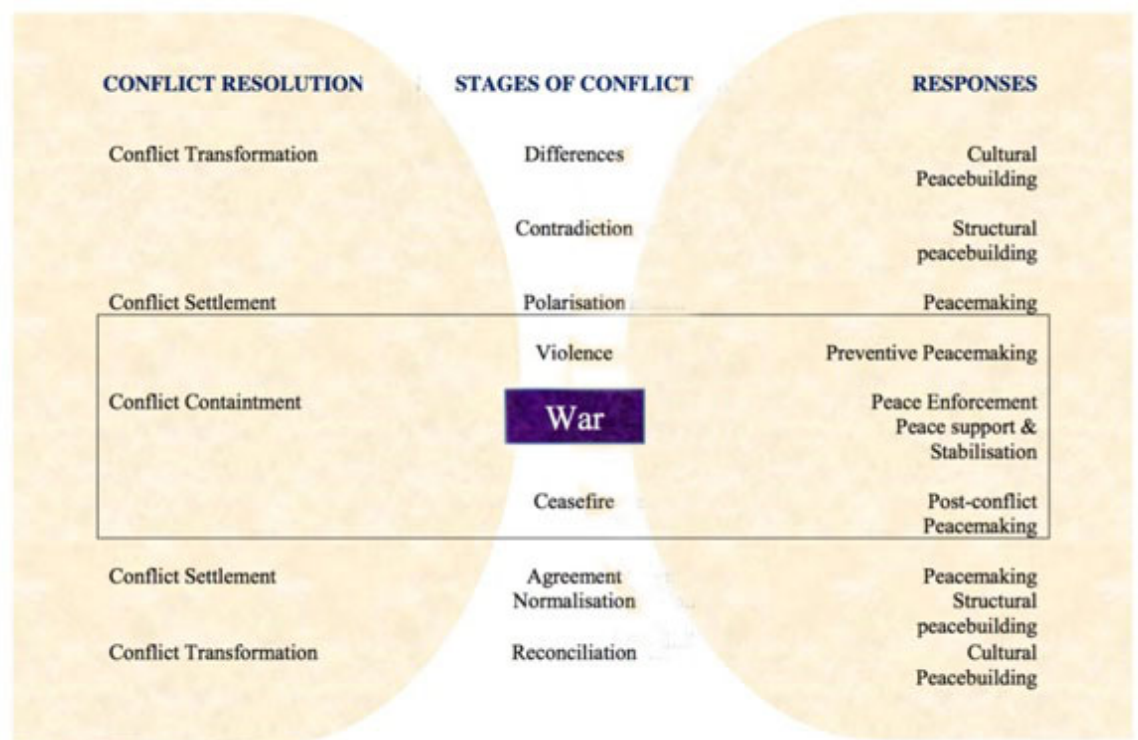
According to Galtung, (2000a:5) to transform a conflict means to transcend the goals of the parties in conflict and achieve a higher goal that would benefit both the parties in the long run. Galtung, (2007) further proposes a 'transcend approach' in order to materialise peace by peaceful CT. In this approach Galtung provides five

characteristics. 1) This approach focuses on peace and not just on security. 2) CT in itself has to be peaceful so as to not repeat violence in future. 3) In CT we need transcendence in order to go beyond the goals of the parties, so that they can live and develop together. 4) The transcend approach starts negotiation and dialogue, with one party at a time and then bring them together for negotiation with a facilitator. 5) This approach is holistic in nature. Galtung, (2011:17) points out that in the process of CT approach "peace must be built, webs of togetherness must be woven, humanizing where there has been dehumanization, and depolarizing where there has been polarization".

In order to better describe the process of CT, Thomas Boehlke explains the 'hourglass model' of conflict resolution, developed by Ramsbotham and Woodhouse. The hourglass represents both narrowing and widening of space towards escalation and de-escalation of violence. The idea is to create an ambience whereby amicable settlement is done through dialogue and negotiations.

Figure 2.2

The Hourglass Model of Conflict Resolution



Source: Boehlke, 2009:17

Conflicts are obviously present in human societies, but they can be and are dwelt in many different ways. They often are conducted constructively to some degree at particular stages of their course. There is every reason to believe that particular policies adopted by various persons and groups involved in a specific conflict have helped in dealing with it, in a more constructive manner and transform it (Kriesberg, 2011: 67-68).

CT is not just a set of specific techniques. It is a way of looking and seeing, and it provides a set of lenses through which we understand the social conflict. Galtung explains a lens as a transformational tool, drawing parallels with his spectacles. Lenses draw our attention to certain areas of conflict that takes our attention to a specific issue. Though a pair of spectacles is made up of only one frame, it comprises of three lens types which are progressive in nature, each for a different purpose - to see close, medium and distant objects. Therefore, even if each lens has one specific function, only a combination all the three lenses can serve its whole purpose, as an eye-glass to help see the entire picture. In the same way, we need specific lenses that can facilitate in understanding a conflict as a whole, to address specific issues. First, we need a lens that can see the immediate situation. Secondly, we need a lens to analyse immediate problems that cause the context of the conflict and thirdly, we need a lens that helps us unify these framework to create a platform to address the content, context and the structure of the relationship that can facilitate positive responses and solutions. That is to say, all things are connected and are in relationship (Lederach and Maiese, 2009).

Conflict transformation (CT) theorists argue that, contemporary conflicts require more than the reframing of positions and the identification of win-win outcomes. The very structure of parties and relationships may be confined in a pattern of conflictual relationships that extends beyond the particular site of conflict. CT is therefore, a process of engaging with and transforming the relationships, interests, discourses, and if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict. Constructive conflict is seen as a boon, a vital agent or a catalyst for change (Miall, 2004: 4).

Schilling, (2012) argues that in order to attain sustainable peace, it is not enough to concentrate on immediate events and outcomes, but on identifying and strengthening the circumstances leading to the conflict. According to him, we need to focus on three

dimensions of conflictual areas: relational, structural and personal. The relational dimension focuses on reconciliation, forgiveness, trust-building and future vision. The main attention should be to remove the negative effects of violence by transforming damaged relationships. The structural dimension focuses on the social, economic, political and cultural conditions that cause violent conflicts. Therefore, parties should initiate social structural change. The individual dimension should facilitate the healing process at the personal level by removing fear, anxiety, trauma and anger.

Azar, (1990) mentions that protracted social conflicts are long term unresolved conflicts which are a challenge to the society. These conflicts arise out of the deprivation of basic human needs like security, identity, power and socio-economic accessibilities. However, if suppression is used as a means to counter these conflicts, in turn, it will lead to further denial of basic needs resulting in an escalation of conflict. On the other hand, if conflict is resolved in a democratic manner, constructive change can take place, which actually is the basis for the theory of CT. Augsburger, (1992) finds that a group that upholds values will be conflict sensitive and peace loving. According to him, every society has got its own methods of resolving conflicts in turn with their value systems and traditions. As for him, CT is a means to empower the parties to get back to their relationships. Sharp, (1973) opines that non-violent resistance is one of the means to achieve CT.

2.3.2. Conflict Transformation Transcends Conflict Management and Resolution

CT moves beyond the objectives of both conflict management as well as conflict resolution techniques. The difference between conflict resolution and CT is one of attitude and goals. Conflict Resolution merely seeks to resolve conflict or in other words, to end the discomfort by any means (Skinner, 2010). While CT focuses its attention on making use of the resources for peacebuilding in the local context, rather than highlighting the role of external or international mediators (Parlevliet, 2010).

Conflict management is the combination of both conflict settlement and conflict containment. Conflict settlement means agreement between parties to settle an armed

conflict. Conflict containment includes peacekeeping with an intention to not escalate the conflict but terminate it at the earliest opportunity. Conflict resolution emphasises the intervention of a mediator or a skilled third party (Kabi, 2012: 25-26). The approach of conflict management is to end the conflict through different diplomatic channels (Paffenholz, 2009). It is primarily aimed to control violent movements in order to minimise the negative impacts of violence (Jeong, 2008:40). Dugan, (2003) argues that conflict resolution practitioners are more concerned about how to bring together the conflicting parties to the negotiating table, and what can be done once the negotiation begins.

CT goes beyond conflict resolution by providing a deeper and more permanent level of change. Conflict resolution theory and practice deal more with the dynamics of the conflict itself, than with that of the system, as in CT. Transforming deep rooted conflicts is only partly about resolving the issues of the conflict, the central issue is systemic change or transformation. Systems cannot be resolved but can be transformed. Transformationalists see this concept as an improvement over conflict resolution because conflict resolution supposedly "resolves" the conflict but leaves the underlying causes of the conflict untouched. CT is always related to social and systemic change. In short, CT is a process of moving away from conflict systems to peace systems (Botes, 2003a: 5-6); (Botes, 2003b:275-76).

Conflict management and conflict resolution aim at preventing violence and thereby de-escalating conflict. Both approaches concentrate on finding non-violent solutions to immediate conflict, striving to find answers, to end what is causing unpleasant outcomes. This would mean finding solutions, without necessarily addressing the underlying causes (Schilling, 2012: 250). Transformation aims for deep and profound changes in conflict situations, that go beyond the limitations of traditional approaches. CT moves beyond the immediate issues and looks at the broader environment. From the point of view of conflict transformation, lasting peacemaking in divided and war-traumatised societies require a broad range of measures. On the one hand, it has to eliminate the socio-economic inequalities and on the other, it has to build up political and

social capacities that will enable those involved in conflict to cope up with the situation (Ropers, 2013).

The major distinction between conflict resolution and CT is based on the assumption that even if the opposing sides reach a peace agreement, it remains only at the top level. It has to be reached and implemented at the grass-root level in order to have its total effect. Therefore, the distinction between conflict resolution and transformation (reconciliation) is that during reconciliation the parties attempt to move from negative peace to positive peace or from conflict resolution to CT (Gilboa, 2009: 95). At this juncture, it is important to make the distinction between peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Peace activities include peacemaking that refers to the negotiation process, peacekeeping refers to the third party intervention to reduce direct violence and peacebuilding focuses on building broken relationships in the post-conflict reconstruction process (Bitterman, 2007).

Table 2.1

Comparison between Resolution and Transformation

	Conflict Resolution Perspective	Conflict Transformation Perspective
The key question	How do we end something not desired	How to end something destructive and build something desired?
The focus	It is content-centered	It is relationship-centered
The purpose	To achieve an agreement and solution to the presenting problem creating the crisis	To promote constructive change processes inclusive of but not limited to immediate solutions.
The development of the process	It is embedded and built around the immediacy of the relationship where the presenting problems appear.	It is concerned with responding to symptoms and engaging the systems within which relationships are embedded.
Time frame	The horizon is short-term relief to pain, anxiety and difficulties	The horizon is mid-to-long-range and is intentionally crisis-responsive rather than crisis-driven.
View of conflict	It envisions the need to de-escalate conflict processes	It envisions conflict as an ecology that is relationally dynamic with ebb (conflict de-escalation to pursue constructive change) and flow (conflict escalation to pursue constructive change)

Source: Lederach, 2003: 33

2.3.3. Challenges before Conflict Transformation

To achieve positive transformation in a conflict situation is not an easy task. It is a challenge before every stakeholder involved directly or indirectly in the conflict and its transformation. First and foremost, people should accept the fact that there is a conflict that needs to be transformed. It is not easy to transform a conflict that has been existing for years, within a short span of time. It requires patience, perseverance, understanding and addressing the root causes, involving the public and moreover a social and political will. Any resistance from any corner can hamper the process of constructive CT. The mediators also need to be neutral and should look for common good. Bringing together the conflicting parties with conflicts of interest is another hurdle the peace builders face during the process of CT. Inexperienced mediators and negotiators can backfire the outcome of the negotiation and reconciliation.

Kriesberg, (2011:61-63) speaks of three challenges before constructive CT. (1) inappropriate ways in which the ideas are employed, (2) underutilisation of ideas and practices, and (3) error in the approach. The CT field has always tried to include theory and practice, but the relations between the two need to be closer. Very often the analysts project destructive conflicts paying little attention to how they are transformed and the role played by the particular persons and groups involved in those transformations. In his earlier writing Kriesberg, (2009: 8) opines that transformation of destructive conflicts requires the coming together of many actors and circumstances. Berghof Foundation for Peace Support (BFPS, 2006: 11) points out that in addition to mere dialogue and addressal of the root cause in CT, it is necessary to build confidence and encourage structural change, as well. Linking these various elements is a challenge in the conflict transformation process.

CT does not place the highest priority on eliminating the expression of disagreement. Instead, CT seeks to transform our experience of conflict from within. Furthermore, a transformative mediator has: 1) to help parties use the discomfort of their conflict 2) to ask questions designed to explore the root causes of that discomfort 3) to seek to empower the parties to the conflict to respond to the conflict with a higher degree

of understanding - which are all herculean tasks (Skinner, 2010). Bridging the gap between the peace movement strategies and foreign policy regulations is a major challenge facing peace-builders working for sustainable peace. Moreover, making structural changes in the society requires co-operation from every corner, which takes time, energy and sacrifices.

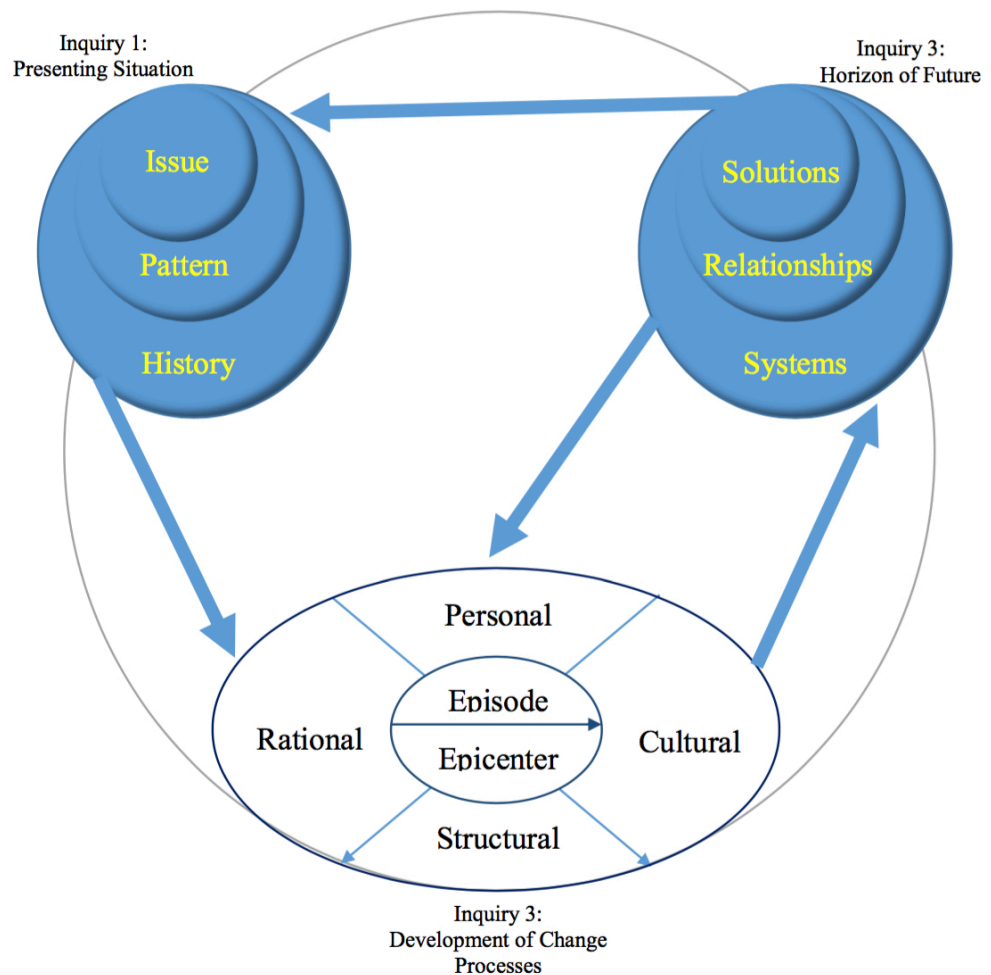
Adam Curle in his book *Making Peace* speaks of the progression model of conflict. According to him conflict is always dynamic that drifts from an unpeaceful situation to peaceful state. He mentions four stages in the progress model. In the first stage, people are unaware of the discrepancies and injustices done to them, but slowly in due course of time, people become aware through education. Once people become aware of the injustices done to them, they retaliate and enter the second stage called confrontation. Then when they realise that their demands cannot be met through conflicting means, they are willing to enter into dialogue and the third stage, called negotiation. What is important in this stage is to make the conflicting parties understand and accept the others' needs, as well. This is indeed a challenge before the conflict transformers to prevent negotiations leading to open confrontation and violence. If they succeed in this stage they enter into the final stage of sustainable peace (Curle, 1971).

2.4. Ethnic Conflict Transformation (ECT): An Inroad into Social Relationship

ECT is a new approach in the field of peace and conflict studies. Although there have been a number of ethnic conflicts around the globe in the post cold war era, not much efforts have been made to transform these conflicts to find sustainable peace. Many of the ethnic conflicts were suppressed either by military power or managed through international intervention. But a permanent solution to ethnic conflicts could not be found. History shows that neither conflict management nor conflict resolution, could find lasting solution to ethnic conflicts. It is precisely because of this reason that ethnic violence frequently occurred even after applying the techniques of conflict management and resolution. Unlike other conflicts, parties in ethnic conflicts take longer time to reconcile because of the intensity and sensitivity of a conflict, attached to ethnic violence.

In an ethnic conflict situation, CT can alter the conflict in its totality and restore lasting peace by addressing personal, relational, structural and cultural dimensions. At personal level, we try to improve the wellbeing of persons by providing awareness programmes, counseling, and ensuring human security. At relational level we improve the interpersonal relationship by improving communication, conducting common programmes and celebrations. At structural level we address the root causes of the conflict and ensure basic facilities, socio-economic equality, and participation in the decision-making body. And at cultural level, we address the factors that contribute to conflict like search for identity and traditional values (Lederach, 2003).

Figure 2.3
The big picture of conflict transformation



Source: Lederach and Maiese, 2009: 8

The first enquiry reminds us that the immediate issues are rooted in a context - in patterns of relationships and structures, all with a history. The potential for constructive change lies in our ability to recognise, understand and redress what had happened in the past. Positive change envisages a willingness to create new ways of interacting to build relationships and structures that look toward the future. The second enquiry enables us to think and dream about the horizon of the future. A horizon can be seen but not touched. The future though not in our control, is still something that we can visualise. The third enquiry indicates the design and support of change processes. This overall sphere requires that we think about response to conflict, as the development of processes of change that are interconnected in needs, relationships affecting all four levels like personal, relational, structural and cultural. Such a framework envisions and takes up the challenge of ending something that is not desired and achieving something desired (Lederach and Maiese, 2009: 8).

Apart from these four dimensions, there are also certain practical elements that could be followed by peace-builders and parties in conflict, in order to transform ethnic violence. As there is no written script for transforming an ethnic conflict, peace practitioners should be creative and make use of every opportunity that comes in their way, to patch up the lost relationship by reconciliation. The peacebuilders can take initiative in identifying the root causes, by interacting with conflicting parties and providing suggestions to people concerned to address them judiciously. Since there is no win-win situation in ethnic conflicts, parties should be made to compromise on certain issues and work for common interests, through dialogue and negotiations. Parties also should be encouraged to use non-violent resistance such as peace rallies, pen down strikes and processions to make known their grievances, instead of using violent means. Each member of the ethnic group should be made to feel that they are important and their dignity be upheld. Hence, the outcome of each of these decisions taken should not be confined to the negotiation table, but should reach each member of the group, so as to facilitate better relationship at the grass-root level.

Applying the theory of CT in an ethnic conflict situation requires proper accompaniment and support. Since conflict based on ethnicity is highly inflammable, it

needs to be addressed and transformed engaging all the actors in conflict. It is almost impossible that people affected by ethnic conflict come together and find lasting solution by themselves. Therefore, experts in this field, like peacebuilders, academicians, media persons, and other civil society should come forward to motivate and educate people on the need to transform the conflict, so as to live amicably. They should also build pressure on the government and other political parties to concentrate on developmental activities and be sensitive towards ethnic issues and problems. Once people are able to overcome the peripheral issues and address the root causes, lasting peace can be achieved.

2.4.1. Non-Violent Transformation of Ethnic Conflicts

Long term CT can be achieved through the means of non-violent resistance. CT cannot be possible without changing the social structures. Under such circumstances, empowerment or giving more power to the powerless has to be endorsed. In short, non-violent resistance is more applicable and suitable to situations of structural violence that can resist oppression, domination or any other form of injustice (Dudouet, 2013). A clear example can be traced from Thailand, where there was a fight between the Malay Muslims and the Thai authorities. In 2007 there would have been bloodshed when Malay Muslims led by student organisations took a demonstration to fight against injustice. However, the demonstration was a non-violent act and the response non-violent as well from the part of the state authorities. This helped in reducing tension, for it was carried out without the use of violent measures (Sombatpoonsiri, 2013).

However, the most suitable example of non-violent movement is seen in the life of M.K. Gandhi, who spearheaded the freedom movement in India and fought against cultural violence (apartheid) in South Africa. Gandhi's Non-Violent Resistance had great impact in the contemporary conflict resolution approaches. The founding fathers of the theory of CT took inspiration from Gandhi while developing the theory of conflict transformation (Presbey, 2013). In her inaugural address on the 'relevance of Gandhian Philosophy in the 21st century' at Capetown in South Africa, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, the then chairperson of UPA, hails Mr. Gandhi as an inventor of a unique protest to bring about social and political transformation. His nonviolent resistance, *Satyagraha*, is considered to be one of the best means to resolve conflicts, by contemporary thinkers and conflict

resolvers. Mrs. Gandhi emphasised that history shows that violence only begets violence. Therefore, she exhorted the audience to take inspiration from *Mahatma* Gandhi to find lasting solution to the contemporary conflicts and issues (Gandhi, 2007).

Galtung, (2000b: 3; 2007: 25) points out that parties in CT with their own conflicts of interests have to be transformed into a peaceful formation nonviolently, empathically and creatively. Untransformed conflicts can lead to a spiral of violence sooner or later. Kriesberg, (2009:6) also mentions that in constructive CT, as the conflicts escalate, some non-violent methods may be adopted to de-escalate the conflict such as - efforts by leaders of both parties trying to understand each other, avoid dehumanising the members of other group, and recognise the differences in the opposed group. Apart from this, both parties also may invite different mediators to suggest ways and means to de-escalate the tension, which helps in transforming the conflict

Harris, (1999: 681 & 87) opines that in order to eliminate the threats of war, violence, and environmental destruction, a new way of thinking will be required. This can transform the human animal using violence as a means to get things done, to a compassionate and cooperative being who manages conflicts without resorting to violence. Nonviolence does not seek to defeat the opponents but win their friendship. It is not humiliation or submission but a victory for both sides.

2.4.2. Resolving Issues and Transforming Conflicts

The best we can do in a conflict is to collaborate with it, in order to bring the best out of it. To do that, we must look beyond superficial issues, which are usually defined in specific terms like time, money or property and dig for the underlying interests. When constructive conflicts take place, the outcome is positive and benefits are shared by both the parties (Kriesberg, 2009:4). In the opinion of Gadlin, (2011) we need to understand ethnic conflict as a social dispute composed by two or more disputants. Similarly, the qualities of the disputants themselves are constituted by their conflictual relationship. Conflicts over race or ethnicity do not derive merely from the differences among groups but equally and importantly from what they share.

Each specific conflict may have originated from a singular or multiple specific materials, ideological and strategic factors. Therefore, analysing and addressing the causes of conflicts are important in understanding and resolving conflicts. This helps in outlining the specific conflict with its issues and separates it from subjective and disproportionate responses from parties to that conflict. This helps in setting the process of conflict resolution in motion (Singh, 2010a:12). Kohlrieser, (2007) suggests six essential skills for transforming conflicts effectively. 1. Create a bond with the other party. 2. Take initiative for a dialogue and negotiation. 3. Choose the right time and circumstance for talk. 4. Understand the causes of conflict. 5. Empathise with the feelings and views of others. 6. Build a positive relationship. Lederach, (2001: 22) also invites people concerned to concentrate on relationship, trust building, restoration of community, and use of people in the network. It focuses on being with people, as a means of building relationship than using techniques to resolve problems.

Dixit, (2004) referring to Lederach stresses on the need to transform the disputing parties by empowering them to understand their own situation, needs and encouraging them to recognise the situation and needs of their own opponents. Kabi, (2012:27) suggests that when left alone, conflict can have destructive consequences. Therefore, it has to be modified or transformed so that self-images, relationships, and social structures improve as a result of conflict instead of being harmed by it. Hence, effective conflict transformation can work to improve mutual understanding.

CT makes an attempt to prevent pre-war violent conflict and attempts to build enduring peace post-war (Ramsbotham, 2010). "To suppress fighting is to tackle a phenomenon but not the actual roots of the conflict" (Boehlke, 2009: 17). It is an optimistic, radical, and egalitarian idea that views conflict as a dynamic source of positive change, and promises to take peace and conflict research into a new high in the coming years (Ryan, 2009). Berghof foundation for peace support in its report suggests that it is of utmost importance to satisfy the basic human needs and to establish minimum social and economic justice to establish conflict transformation. However, this process should be as non-violent as possible. The aim of systemic conflict transformation is to

contribute in reducing violence by making use of the internal resources. It facilitates necessary social and political change towards a peaceful and just society.

Conflict behaviours are not static but dynamic. Interaction patterns alter and even the most protracted and intractable conflicts can be proceeded towards a resolution (Mitchell, 2011). From the analysis of various theories of conflict and peace and resolution methods, it can be traced out that conflict of any kind has its own root causes that need to be addressed in order to resolve the problem. It is also to be noted that in order to resolve conflict, both the parties must realise and acknowledge the fact that there can be no win-win or lose-lose situation; both should be willing to win some and lose some (Kabi, 2012).

CT deals not only with negotiations, political solutions and material reconstruction, but also with reconciliation and mental and spiritual healing. Traditional approaches of conflict resolution have a lot to offer, in this regard. They not only deal with material issues, reason and talk, but also with the spiritual sanctity, feelings and non-verbal communication. As these methods are more familiar and likely to be positively received by the people, they are more conducive to peace promotion, stability and cooperation enduring, within the society. Traditional approaches are holistic, comprising also social, economic, cultural and religious dimensions (Essays, 2014). Transformation processes should aim at removing the sense of helplessness about the conflict among participants, particularly those at the local and grass-root levels (Mitchell, 2011). Peace is a continuous process that requires active and continual personal and collective transformation to attain psychological and political development (Webel, 2007: 8).

2.4.3. Positive Peace, the Ultimate Goal of Conflict Transformation

The sole aim of CT is to find sustainable positive peace in a conflict-ridden situation. The advocates of this theory believe that lasting peace derived by addressing the root causes of the conflict only can build a bright future free from such conflicts in the future. According to Joseph, (2013) CT is a process in which the conflicting parties consciously work towards a systematic change in the structural dimensions of a conflict with – a) short-term objective of prevention of renewed violence and b) long term

objective of sustainable positive peace. It is a process of engaging with and transforming the relationships, interests, discourses and, if necessary the very system of society that supports the continuation of conflict.

Mitchell, (2011) finds that a transition towards conflict mitigation and transformation was very much prevalent during the last decade of the 20th and the first part of the 21st century. In Colombia, for example, many of the local peacemaking communities, attempting to become neutral in the struggle between guerrillas, paramilitaries and state security forces, adopted policies resembling Galtungian's ideas of positive peace. Kriesberg, (2009: 8) opines that the activities of some organisations can help in attaining positive peace by reducing poverty, improving the status of women, and improving the conditions of cultural minorities.

Using a social constructivist framework, citing the Rwandan genocide and the civil war in Sierra Leone, Wolfenden, (2011) argues that today's ethnic conflicts originate from unjust political systems in which ethnic identity becomes a marker of difference and division that provides privileges to some over others. Though the international community intervenes after violence erupts on many occasions, it is important that peacemakers must act before aggression takes its ground. It is advisable to follow peaceful methods so as to attain positive peace by renouncing our misguided, pessimistic ideologies and forego military power. Before we think of ending the violence, we must understand how it arises and its root causes. The Rwandan and Sierra Leonean conflicts are very good examples of how violence can arise from particular social conditions, specifically in reaction to political injustice. Instead of teaching young children to hate, we must help them to socialise, so that they learn cooperation, adjustment and peacefulness.

Societies may experience negative peace but often struggle to maintain positive peace in its existence. Kriesberg, (2011:52) defines 'negative peace' as peaceful relations characterised by only the absence of direct violence, while 'positive peace' refers to relatively harmonious relations as well. Negative peace may include oppressive relations in a society where some people suffer structural violence more than the others, where

their poverty and death rates are higher than those of many others within that society. Societies and relationships exhibit positive peace when they do not experience structural and cultural violence. Paffenholz, (2009) mentions that peacebuilding is nothing but the process of achieving positive peace.

Violence and conflict are seen as multi-dimensional within CT. Therefore, to build peace, the solutions also must be multi-dimensional. Since violence is interconnected with structures and cultures, interventions should also address direct, cultural and structural violence. Though it is a long process, once it is achieved people can enjoy their human rights (OXFAM, 2014). Ramsbotham, (2010) is also of the view that the primary task of CT is to overcome structural and cultural violence and to lift conflict parties out of the shell of antagonism into broader relationships and visions that can accommodate paradox, inclusiveness and diversity. Clements, (2001) considers that in relation to the transformation of violence and the promotion of just peace, it can bridge the gap with local people in conflict zones and respond to the immediate suffering. At the same time it can also organise discussions and dialogues with those in conflict about ways in which they might resolve their differences, solve their problems and satisfy their human needs and work for human security, thereby achieving positive peace.

Summary

Societies have undergone changes over a period of time in its existence. Conflicts have played a major role in making changes to the existing systems, for a better living. Therefore, conflict in itself is not bad, provided it can help us make necessary changes that are required for the growth and development of the society. Conflict transformation theorists go against the view of traditionalists who believe that conflict is bad and have adopted the views of interactionists who say that conflict can be healthy, if managed creatively. Hence, from a transformation perspective, conflict is something that is not to be condemned and should be treated as a means for constructive change. Great thinkers like Georg Simmel, Charles Horton Cooley and Johan Galtung consider conflict as normal occurrences and that, it should be made use of to achieve positive goals. So, the problem is the mismanagement of conflict that can lead to violence, which is destructive.

There are different types of violence seen in today's society. There is violence that is visible and invisible. Among them three types need special mention. They are direct, structural and cultural. Direct violence is very explicit and inflicts physical pain and injury to persons. Legal actions are taken against the ones who inflict it. Cultural and structural violence need not be explicit but are part of the system like discrimination, poverty, and injustice. Legal actions may not be taken against the one who is responsible, since this has already become part of the system. Today people are under the clutches of cultural and structural violence on the basis of gender, caste, tribe, religion and even employment. According to experts, people today suffer more from cultural and structural violence than direct violence. These kinds of violence are seen in families, institutions and in society.

If conflict is part of our culture and social interaction, it is imperative that we understand the sources of conflict. There are various theories that speak of the sources of conflict and violence. According to human needs theory, when people's needs are not met, they begin to retaliate. Structural theorists argue that the very structure of the society is the cause of conflict because in a society there is the exploiter and the exploited. As per elite theory, conflict is purposefully orchestrated by the elites in order to gain public support for their motives. Frustration-aggression theory believes that conflict is the outcome of deprivation of people's rights and the non-fulfillment of their desires. Psycho-cultural theorists deem conflict as the result of the psychological process wherein one group considers the other group as a hindrance to their prosperity. Social learning and identity theory consider conflict as the outcome of affinity to in-group and an antagonism to out-group. What is pertinent in each of these theories is that conflict is inherent in human behaviour and in the social system. However, none of the theories by itself is sum up the origin of conflict, but a combination of theories could satisfactorily analyse the sources of conflict, in a given situation.

Like individual differences, group difference is just as natural a phenomenon caused by differences in ideologies, value systems, cultures, customs and desires. When any of these factors are challenged by another group, the members feel threatened. Then

they organise movements to uphold what they consider as right and go forth to get their demands fulfilled. Like members of a family working together towards common objectives, the members of a group also unite to fight for their common cause. Ethnic movements take different forms and styles depending on the need of the time and circumstances. It begins with meetings, processions, strikes and then leads to extortions, kidnapping, killings and even ethnic cleansing. When people feel that peaceful movements do not get enough attention, they turn to violent means to achieve their goals.

One of the major sources of conflict seen in today's world is on the basis of ethnicity. As far as an ethnic conflict is concerned, it begins with a sense of feeling deprived of what is due to them. They consider the other group as the cause of their deprivation and begin to retaliate. Ethnicity, be it naturally-formed or socially-constructed, is a source of identity for an individual and therefore one shows allegiance to it. It is a boon to the society because it unites people and gives them identity. At the same time, it is also a curse to the society, because it creates division among people, for it acts as a reason for conflict. Most of the times, conflict occurs due to identity crisis and fight for scarce resources. Once people are satisfied with their basic needs, they will be content and will always look towards fulfilling a higher need.

It is also important to see how ethnic identity is formed and how it is related to ethnic conflicts. Some theorists consider ethnic identity as inherited, some consider it as constructed and still others consider it as functional. According to Primordialist school of account, identity is hereditary and is passed on from generation to generation. As per them, a group is turned into a natural community by common bonds of blood, kinship, customs etc. Constructivists argue that identity is socially constructed and is dynamic. A third school of thought called instrumentalist argue that identity is temporary and is formed in order to achieve a particular goal. Once the goal is achieved, that group ceases to exist. Ethnic identity whether inherited or constructed has a strong unifying factor that enables the people to come together for a common cause. It is precisely because of this that the conflicts based on ethnicity lasts longer than other conflicts.

There have been a number of ethnic violence around the globe in the post-cold war era. Although no part of the world is free from ethnic conflicts, it is more frequently seen in underdeveloped and developing countries, due to their social, cultural and economic factors. Asian and African countries hold the record for the highest number of ethnic violence in the last two and a half decades. Some of the major ethnic violence that shook the world are the violence between ethnic Kikuyus, Luos and Kalenjiins in Kenya, the Tiv-Jukun, Hausa/Fulani-Igbo, and the Hausa/Fulani-Yoruba clash in Nigeria, Sinhalese-Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Serbs, Croats and Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kurdish-Turkish in Turkey, Hutus-Tutsis in Rwanda, Kurgyz-Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan, and Nuer-Dinka conflict in South Sudan. Today war between nations is a distant chance, although we cannot completely rule out the possibilities. But ethnic conflict is very much possible because of the growing ethnic consciousness and social, economic and political inequality experienced by various ethnic groups. Therefore, the need of the hour is to transform these conflicts for a better tomorrow.

It is here that the concept of Conflict Transformation (CT) has to play its role. CT as a concept, has emerged only in recent years, although it existed since the beginning of human history. The theory was developed by John Paul Lederach in the 1990ies. He had drawn inspiration from Johan Galtung who introduced Conflict Triangle. In fact, CT is the revised and modified concept of conflict resolution. What prevailed in the past were conflict containment, settlement, management and resolution. But Galtung, Lederach and their associates took one step ahead and introduced the concept of CT so as to find lasting solution to the problems. A conflict cannot achieve a lasting solution, unless we trace out the reasons for those conflicts and find solutions for the same. Therefore, we are not interested in short term solutions of containing or managing the conflict but in solutions that would last, once and for all. Hence, the focus is on the structural, behavioral and attitudinal areas of conflict.

In CT we are not condemning the conflict but transforming it by addressing the root causes, for a constructive change. In CT our focus is on the positive side of a conflict wherein it is seen as an opportunity for constructive change instead. The process of CT

requires building relationships at the grass-root level to sustain peace in the long run. The important aspect of CT is that there are no predetermined solutions. But people who are engaging in transforming the conflict help the parties in the conflict to adapt to the existing situation by recognising their various interests and coming to a solution by their own free will. We try to transcend the goals of the parties in conflict in order to achieve a higher goal that would benefit both the parties in the long run.

Today in many parts of the world, people experience negative peace and hence live under the clutches of structural and cultural violence. For a harmonious co-existence, the society has to experience positive peace which is the ultimate goal of CT. It helps us to focus our attention on immediate specific issues to past underlying causes to future constructive transformation. The concern is not just to find an answer to the immediate cause but a lasting solution by addressing the root causes. The principles of CT highlight that it is a long term, gradual process that requires constant accompaniment and facilitation. Though CT sees conflict as a productive force for change, it always uses non-violent means to achieve its goal. In a conflictual situation the relationship between the parties gets broken. Therefore, the only way to overcome the conflict is to build relationship by interaction and dialogue.

CT goes beyond conflict management and conflict resolution in its approach. In conflict management we try to end the conflict with the help of external agencies. This includes conflict containment and conflict settlement. In conflict settlement, we seek the help of a third party as a mediator to resolve the conflict without the use of force. In both these approaches we look at the immediate causes and find immediate solution to the conflict. But conflict can arise at any time since the root causes are not addressed. So, in CT we aim at transforming the parties by making structural changes so as to achieve sustainable peace. CT deals not only with physical, economical, cultural and psychological well-being of a person but also with their spiritual nourishment. In order to achieve this, entire group needs to participate in the reconciliation process and should be willing to cope up with the changing scenario.

Transforming ethnic conflicts and thereby attaining sustainable positive peace is an uphill task before the peacebuilders. Our experience with most of the ethnic conflicts around the globe proved that neither conflict management nor conflict resolution was successful in providing a lasting solution to ethnic conflicts. Under such circumstances, the theory of CT emerges as a great relief to peacebuilders to achieve long-term positive result, in an ethnic conflict situation. This can be achieved by addressing personal, relational, structural and cultural dimensions of an individual's and group's behaviour. At a personal level, we improve the well-being of people by ensuring human security. At a relational level we foster interpersonal relationship with better communication and participation in common programmes. At a structural level, we ensure justice and equality and at a cultural level we respect others' identity, practices and culture without compromising on one's own tradition and culture.

Since there is no written script ready for transforming an ethnic conflict, peace practitioners should be creative and make use of every opportunity that comes in their way, to patch up the lost relationship by reconciliation. People belonging to different ethnic groups should be encouraged to share their culture, value systems, arts, music, sports and literature for the common good. Since polarisation is much easier on ethnic lines, only common interests and concerns such as national security, human security and infrastructure development can make people of different ethnicity come together on a common forum. This can facilitate in building better collaboration and appreciation among various ethnic groups. Each member of the ethnic group should be made to feel that they are important and their identity is respected. Moreover, the decisions taken at the top level should not be confined to the negotiation table but should reach the grass-root level, in order to facilitate peaceful coexistence. So, ethnic conflict transformation is very much on the cards, provided people from different walks of life are willing to work together for the common cause. What is important is to achieve positive peace where justice and equality prevail.

Chapter III

Media in Ethnic Conflict Transformation

Introduction

Media have become an indispensable part of everyday life of the society. They influence its political, social, cultural, economic and intellectual life. This influence, in a conflict situation, can be converted into either a positive or negative power that incites violence or promotes peace. History has indelible etchings on stones that prove there is often more negative role than the positive in the part that media has played in violent conflicts, across the globe. So, the objective of this chapter is to understand and analyse the various roles played by media in the social fabric and how they can become a catalyst in ethnic conflict transformation. The first part deals with the concept of media, the types of media and the power of media reporting. The second part deals with media's role in society, from a transformation perspective taking into consideration the theories of media. The third part analyses how media influence violent conflicts. And the last part deals with the transformative role of media in ethnic conflict situations.

3.1. Concept of Media

With its origin in the singular word of the Latin term 'medium', media means carrier or mode. Information and messages are transferred from the sender to the receiver through a certain channel, known as media. In the form of a spoken, written or printed word or any sign medium is what conveys a meaning. These could be coded in the form of electronic message. Besides this scientific understanding of the concept of media, there is a current common parlance of it, as a process or instrument designed to reach a large number of consumers as audience, readers or viewers. In the common parlance, 'media' and 'mass media' are used almost interchangeably. The term 'media' was first used with the advent of newspapers and magazines. Eventually, broadened to comprise the inventions of electronic media like radio, television and internet (Pushparaj, 2014).

Kumar, (2008: 41); Rajan, (2011: 3) defines mass media as tools that disseminate information and entertainment simultaneously to a vast number of heterogeneous and

anonymous audiences. The internet-based interactive 'new media' including social media are new items added to the concept. Habib, (2014: 15) acknowledges that the development of new media has made tremendous growth and evolution in the media world. A number of internet-based newspapers, journals and periodicals have already made their presence felt. The web newspapers are becoming increasingly popular. And the net editions of almost all the major newspapers are as popular as their print editions. Mass media have helped in creating social awareness and have also provided people with an easy way of living life. In this paper, the term media refers to mass media unless otherwise specified.

Evolved from as early as 3300 B.C. the early use of Mass Media was when the Egyptians perfected the hieroglyphics. This writing system, then based on symbols later was devised as alphabets and consonants by the Semites in the later part of 1500 B.C. It was around 800 B.C. that the vowels were introduced into the alphabet by the Greeks. By the end of 1900, print media could be found in the form of books, pamphlets, magazines and newspapers. Later, wireless communication of telegraph and telephone shortened the distance. Print media began to lose popularity with the emergence of radio and television. In the second half of the last century, the age of internet dawned. With internet, the world got globally connected. The introduction of smart phones has made a major change in the lives of people (Bhattacharya, 2012).

3.1.1. Types of media

In the process of human evolution, or even before humans appeared on earth, meaning was at the centre of all communication. The sender or the conceptualiser needed channels to communicate and thus media were born as early as meaning in the evolutionary process of the universe. For a deer, the sound of an approaching tiger is a medium that communicates danger. For the early humans, the rudimentary drawing on stones and sands communicated more complex meanings. From these rudimentary communication modes, we have reached a highly interactive internet and wireless communication stage between large numbers of people simultaneously. For the sake of convenience we categorise them into three: Print, Electronic and Social/New Media.

Radio, television, film, and internet are premium communication platforms today, taking over print media in the last few decades. However, print media has not vanished out of relevance altogether (Wadia, 1999). With the advent of internet in the 1990ies, the speed and intensity of communication have increased (Quiggin, 2013). Media of mass communication today include traditional printed newspapers, magazines and journals, as well as the twentieth century's core electronic resources: radio, television and the internet (Chalk, 2007:375).

3.1.1.1. Print Media

The first printing technology appeared in Mainz, Germany; books were mass produced for the first time when Johannes Gutenberg created a usable printing system that comprised a simple set of metal characters. Steadily, things paced up in 1798, when in France a machine that could handle a continuous roll of paper was developed. Steam power was added in 1811 in Germany, and an American invented a rotary press in 1846. The growth in education accelerated print technology. With the advent of the electronic media and the internet, it might seem that books would have faded from the scene. But books are still relevant as it can be used for efficient storage, quick retrieval and individual consumption (Lee, 2009).

The first printed newspaper appeared in Beijing, China in the 8th century A.D. In India, the first newspaper, Hicky's Bengal Gazette appeared in English, edited and published by James Augustus Hicky, an ex-employee of the East India Company on 29 January 1780 (Vilani, 2005). Innovative styles of reporting, writing and editing coupled with the ever-advancing realm of printing, composing layout and visual display have taken print media to newer heights. It is a well-known fact that the press carries out a smooth performance if operated in an open and competitive market without foul-play in the process of collecting, selecting and presenting news objectively and truthfully (Malhan, 1985). As the subscription base of the newspapers increased, so did the scheming power of opinion-building. What began as a medium to impart factual and objective information became the means to misinform, control and manipulate news to shape and mould views (Sawant, 1998:153-54).

3.1.1.2. Electronic Media

The invention of electronic media was a turning point in the history of communication process. Lee, (2009:1) points out that the electronic media developed more quickly than the print media. Radio emerged as a mass medium in the 1920s, thanks to the growing popularity of mass entertainment and technological advances stemming from the development of the telegraph, telephone and the wireless. Radios, which were less expensive than telephones and widely available by the 1920ies, had the ability of allowing large number of people to listen to the same event at the same time. A worldwide race to add pictures to the sound succeeded with the creation of television, considered to be one of the most important inventions of the twentieth century. A prosperous USA after the World War II got seduced by television and popularised the medium and revolutionised the process of news-creation and delivery. Simultaneously, films were emerging as an entertainment mass media. However, with the availability of cheap television sets that allowed viewers to be entertained with sound and moving pictures at their own homes, radio, cinema, and live theatre; all would decline in popularity (Lule, 2014:2).

3.1.1.3. Social Media/ New Media

With the emergence of internet and mobile technology, a new way of news-dissemination started taking shape. The media based on internet and mobile platforms came to be called 'the New Media'. While many printing houses stopped the print version and migrated to the internet platform altogether, some others retained both versions of their magazines or newspapers. Of the new media, social media is a game changer. Today there are a number of social media sites in the form of blogs, social networks, micro blogs, forums, wikis, photos, audio and video sharing. Hjarvard, (2013) opines that due to the advancement in technology, it is not only the journalists who become the news distributors. Anyone can publish news and opinions on the internet and on the social networking media.

Social media use web and mobile technologies to make communication as an interactive dialogue (Mathur, 2012). It "allows users with little technical knowledge to

create and share content" (Dar, 2011:130). Social media are a group of web-based applications that enable people to create and exchange information, pictures, videos and social booking (PAB, 2011:3).

We have to admit that internet revolutionised the way we store and retrieve information. In the 1960ies, the concept of a useful portable computer was a dream because huge investment required running a basic operating system. The inventions of Random Access Memory (RAM) chips and microprocessors in the 1970ies were important steps leading to the way to the internet age (Lule, 2014:3). According to Forsberg, (2006:1) social media is a social instrument of communication.

Changing priorities and principles are a common phenomenon. Therefore, a new conflict is seen among the media world on whether to give priority to journalism as a service and a profession or as a profit-making industry (Ray, 2008:4). The concept for new media technology standards, certain commonalities exist between all types of modern media. Geographical distance is compromised because technology can be utilised in nearly every market around the world. Communication's standard and pace increases with the ability of new media arena's use the internet (Gangwar, 2012: 153). Social networking has become part of human communication and culture today. Social media gives an opportunity to communicate and share information between individuals and groups. It can help generate the information and insights from participants who are not accessible (Agarwal, 2012). Social networks satisfy the need for exploring, interaction and socialisation (Khrti, 2012: 165).

Social media is one area of communication that allows one to share views and opinions. A major point of difference between social media and conventional media is that, the former allows instant responses, which is critical in moments of conflict. However, uncontrolled and irresponsible usage of this media is a great danger to the society (Baruah and Upadhaya, 2014:149-150).

A number of social and political movements of students, protests, and *dharnas* are made successful due to the influence of social media: this proves its immense power (Mishra, 2012). Today, even many traditional newspaper organisations gather

information from social media even before their reporters reach the spot. In some cases the social media provide more informative and reliable news, as it is reported by the locals who have better knowledge about the situation than the reporters who are normally outsiders (Dasgupta, 2013: 64). Saxena, (2012: 203) argues that "what distinguishes new media from traditional media is not the digitising of media content into bits but the dynamic life of the 'new media' content and its interactive relationship with the media consumer in real time".

3.1. 2. Media Power in Reporting

Having discussed different forms of media, it is proper to evaluate how media assume and wield power in the society. The power of media is such that nothing is unnoticed and uncovered in their reporting. The more active the media become,, the more power it acquires in its existence. As Thukral has rightly pointed out, mass media dominates the public sphere. They are forums where information and issues are presented for debate in order to build public opinion (Thukral, 2009:35). In a democracy, public opinion formation is critical in making and breaking governments and can influence the policy decisions drastically. This large consumer base coupled with the right to freedom of press – the mother of all freedoms - makes media a very powerful entity in a country. It can make and unmake individuals and institutions. It can also build and break societies (Sawant, 1998).

Reljic, (2010) acknowledges that in accordance with the liberal theory of power division in the state, mass media are assigned to act as the 'fourth power' in a society. They are expected to monitor on behalf of public interest - the legislative, executive and judiciary - and to raise alarm if they go against the norms of the constitution. It won't be unfair to say that media have become more powerful than the three organs of the state. It has the power to challenge and comment upon the deeds and misdeeds of the executive, the legislature and the judiciary, and has in a way 'the last word'.

Media would love to use this power during conflict situations so that what happens in war is presented in ways that are easily acceptable to the wider public (Webster, 2003). Before further elaborating the power of media, discussing Luis

Althusser and Chomsky is inevitable. Every person in media or otherwise has an unconscious standpoint, a perspective or an ideology of the country, of the society or group one belongs. Like Louis Althusser says in his famous work *Ideological State Apparatus*, that ideology is inescapable (Althusser, 1969). Chomsky, (2007) would further crystallise the same argument stating that media serves the interests of the state and corporate power thus limiting the debate and discussions in tune with the government policy. To extend this theory in terms of a media worker - any time a journalist attempts to challenge the hegemony of the ruling class in the media, the authority of 'professionalism' and 'objectivity' comes into play. If you tell the story from the point of view of the ruling class, you are 'objective', but if you take another view, you are 'subjective' and an 'activist' (Khan, 2012). Hence, the journalists are prone to construct reality in tune with ideology of the ruling class.

A couple of examples of media from Israel and Northern Ireland could be cited to prove the hegemony of the Government ideology over the media. The Israeli press seemed particularly eager to develop a unified interpretation of violence and murder in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Anyone who followed the news that November in 1995, would conclude that 'incitement' was the major cause for the Rabin assassination, or that the Palestinians were completely to blame for the failure at Camp David and for the outbreak of the second intifada. In Northern Ireland those opposed to the 'Good Friday' accords also felt that they were continually shortchanged in the media, and there is all the reason to believe that they were right. But, in closer scrutiny, the strategy of the establishment in manufacturing news gets revealed. The Nazis made use of the media for their propaganda against non-Germanic peoples even outside Germany (Meyer, 1988: 97-98). After one or two decades of independence for which mass media played a key role, many third world country leaders realised that the same media has the potential to divide a nation as efficiently as they can unite.

As Wolfsfield puts it, any change in the political situation leads to changes in media performance, which in turn make further changes in the political environment. The news media defines the political atmosphere surrounding the process, influence political actors' strategy and behavior, and raise and lower the public standing and legitimacy of

the various stakeholders. In fact every political movement, be it for war or peace include a media strategy (Wolfsfield, 2004). Kuusik, (2010: 3) states that media are used for propaganda purposes and instead of revealing truths, try to cover things up which further curtail people's freedom and right to information. Interestingly, besides Government, there are other interested groups that are eager to exercise hegemony and give ideological instrumentality to media.

Since no media can escape an ideological unconscious, it is important to reformulate, or create and educate media personnel into the ideology of conflict transformation as the stand point of the media while reporting war and conflict situations. Habermas, (2001:78) argues that only organised group of individuals could participate effectively in the process of public communication. Being an organised group of individuals, if media adopts a conflict transformation ideology, it will have the power to constructively create a world where justice and peace prevail.

3.1.3. Changing nature of Media Reporting

Over the last 20 years media have made great changes. Accessibility of media is one of the revolutions of our times. Availability of news on computers and mobiles empowers people with updates on-the-go. Press and electronic media are also easily accessible due to their association with the internet that helps people to connect anywhere in the world at any time (Kant, 2012: 7). The role of any media - new or old - is to effectively deliver information. It means providing the right information to the right people at the right time. New communication opportunities can keep individuals to be more informative and sensible for their own rights and duties as well. The new communication technology can create a media-literate public (Sarma, 2014).

Great changes are seen in the media world where the introduction of new means of communication rules the world. The television, internet and the latest development of blogging are making a huge impact even in remote areas around the globe. This new development has entirely changed the media culture especially the functioning of newspaper industry in its reporting and administration.

The number of newspapers and television channels are increasing at a rapid pace with a commercial motive. Starr, (2004: 25) opines that "as printing and bookselling developed, information itself increasingly became a commodity". Meyer, (1988: 18) also mentions that many newspapers and news channels collect and distribute news items in markets according to their utility and consumer tastes. The history of international news reporting shows that news has taken this present status mainly due to market forces in advanced capitalist industrial societies which have influenced the rest of the world. Political and economic elites are provided with news that affect their interests and the general public is provided with news that satisfies their desires.

Bias of different kinds creep into media reporting in our times. The media is tempted to avoid the poor, marginalised and the voiceless and give priority for the interests of the rich and the powerful. They are also prone to emphasise on negative news, which is sensational. Since news has only a fleeting value, every media person is looking for a new incident that can attract the audience. Hence newspapers, while providing information, are susceptible to bias in a number of ways. There is a tendency to give more importance for urban-centered issues and opinions. Bias can also be seen while reporting ethnic communities, racial groups and religions (Plathottam, 2013: xv).

Distortion of events is one of the practices of the media. Media, often, add colour to events or ignore some altogether. While reporting they become selective, and thereby often misinform and act as propaganda tools. Coverage by some newspapers on Sikhs during the years of Punjab violence (1978-95), fashioned a stereotype of Sikhs as a violent community. Bodos, Kashmiris, and Muslims were similarly depicted in India while Hindus and Christians in the same way in Pakistan. But it would be unreasonable to say that media build only negative stereotypes. Media have been a major force in drawing public opinion on different issues and thereby facilitating justice and peace. Both in India and Pakistan, during 2002 and 2003, there had been constant effort by the mainstream media to build a momentum for a dialogue on Kashmir and friendly relations between the two countries. In the same way, in India some leading newspapers tirelessly sought peace in Punjab during the period 1979 - 1993 (Thukral, 2009).

Disregard for minorities is another fault that media are accused of. Dafyllidou, (2002) feels that media are not standing for the cause of minorities who are marginalised and discriminated. He says that the moderate media fail to criticise the explicitly racist language often used by politicians and the media persons themselves. Any sympathetic reporting on minority issues and quest for action are narrated as a generous concession of the majority, rather than as a response to the rights of the minority.

Inordinate profit motive of the media has sacrificed moral standards and honesty of the media. Due to privatisation and globalisation, the media are driven by profit motive. On many occasions media do not have a say on various matters and are forced to act on behalf of market forces in view of more and more profit. As a result, they forget their primary duty as the fourth estate and guide of the nation to the path of welfare. It is indeed a fact that any organisation survives on profit and popularity. However, profit should not be media's only goal. A true journalist shall focus only on truth that can facilitate the growth, development and welfare of the society, transcending their petty interests and motives (Ray, 2008).

Irresponsible journalism is plaguing the media in the recent times. According to Murthy, (2010: 268) today press is becoming more vigorous and accessible to people but unfortunately it has become less responsible. Dutta and Mondol, (2012: 138) opine that "the world of news has changed to cope with the ever-changing technology in modern times. Established newspapers and magazines in print have embraced the world of blogs to be more acceptable among netizens". Since information is easily available with the help of various technologies, there is a tendency among the journalists to take a back seat and provide information without proper verification and objectivity.

Disproportionate advertisements and their revenue have reformatted media ethics of our days. Advertising, which is a source of revenue, has taken over the media industry and has devalued the function of journalism and its essential responsibilities (ICHRP, 2011: 11). Meyer, (1988: 18) and Ray, (2008) argue that in this modern technological era, media are becoming more and more market-oriented than social-oriented. Journalism has become more a business than the service and mission that it used to be in the past. For commercial gains, news content has become secondary to advertising and entertainment.

Though we cannot understate and underestimate the power of globalisation and its impact on media world, it has to be acknowledged that media have not resisted its negative impact on society but acted in tune with the existing system of profit-making and sensational reporting.

3.1.4. Construction of Reality and Framing of News

An enquiry into the forces that influence reporting or news production will shed light to where peace journalism can position itself and make a difference. In reporting, all media need to do is construct a reality. Converting a fiction into reality is possible and some journalists do it deliberately. Media presents events in two modes. They present 1) what is real-absolute reality and 2) something real-constructed reality. News or events as they occur are seldom broadcast. An accident cannot be broadcast as it occurs without prior warning. Later media reconstruct the events. The exaggerations and omissions in the reconstruction can influence the public perception of the event. There is much truth in what Weber said about media being powerful agents that can construct reality and influence our everyday life (Weber, 2002).

A method to look at how media frame news is to ascertain their philosophy of reporting, if they are representationists or constructivists. The debate between the two approaches goes back to the very beginning of Western culture. According to representationist concept, media portray reality and according to constructivist concepts, media construct reality. From a constructivist perspective, our minds have great power to structure the world by actively engaging in a process of 'construction'. Therefore, constructivism does not endorse hundred percent objectivity in media communication and does not believe that media acts as a mirror of the society (Murthy, 2010). In fact, these two approaches are strictly connected to the model of thought to describe reality itself: a realist model where the reality is something that exists and a constructivist model where the reality exists but only as a construct in the mind of a given 'agent' (Quaranta, 2010).

Within the realm of political communication, framing is operational on the basis of social constructivism. Media set frames which are interpreted by the recipients and forms public opinion. At the same time, people interpret media frames based on their

personal views and experience (Dietram, 1999). According to constructivist media model, audience, only partially, rely on the projected reality. The personal opinions are formed based on their personal experience, interaction with peers, and interpreted selections from the mass media (Neuman et al., 1992). The constructivist position cannot be supported in many instances. When alternative sources of information is unavailable, media become the sole source of information for the audience. In such cases it will be difficult for the audience to construct a reality different from what is projected on media. A constructivist approach is bound to produce irresponsible journalism. Ordinary people are often gullible to whatever media report, and believe it as the ultimate reality. In fact, media take advantage of this perception of the people and construct reality and frame news.

Manheim, (2008: 99-101) endorses this view and makes a distinction between traditional myth of journalism and the reality. It is a myth that news is a naturally occurring product and media organisations find and expose the truth. Considering journalists as independent professionals and news content as an outcome of objective observation, is part of this myth. But the reality is that news is purposefully formulated and shaped to take advantage of the situation. He further says that organisations are interested in maximising the profit and the journalists try to fill the space in a way that is pleasing to their audience. Hence, he concludes that the news content is a manipulated product. The ultimate goal of such reporting is not to find the truth or to resolve a conflict but to settle for convenient journalism.

Kaisii, (2014:149) writes from his experience in Manipur that the media in the state is one-sided and seldom cover both sides of the events. He says that the people and their concerns from the hills are not taken care of and what happens in the valley is the news of the state. As the media audience is not in a position to see by themselves the reality, the manipulated story is the news for them. As a result, the true story and the causes of the events are buried under the media coverage. Hence, constructed and manufactured news misleads the public and becomes public opinion.

Carah and Louw (2015: 27), investigating the impact of media representation on society discovered that representation shapes of how people think and act in the world.

Representations also have significant affective dimensions. They anticipate, construct and amplify how the audience feels about events. They reinforce or challenge the audience attitudes. They arouse our emotions like fear, passion, and anxieties. Representation is not simply a rational process of creating and circulating inert bits of information. The question is not always about whether or not representations are accurate, but how they subtly frame events in ways that position individuals in the social order.

Power and dominance are other variants that can influence the frame of reporting. The dominant and powerful classes use media either to enlighten or to confuse the targeted audiences. This could be best explained if the media is taken as a cultural construct (Thukral, 2009:62). Media for their survival and popularity try to please and satisfy the cultural expectations of their audience by using cognitive schemes and images. The understanding of mass media mostly depends on the cultural schemes reproduced by the media self (Langer, 1999). Media tend to subscribe to the views of the existing regime and become their ideologue. The argument has been discussed already in a preceding section.

Dietram, (1999) proposes that there are two types of frames that determine the formation of public opinion: media frames and individual frames (audience frames). In media frame, a story is organised in order to give meaning to an event. In individual frame, people are driven by the ideas which are already stored in their mind set. There is a significant relationship between the media frames and audience frames. Media frame is considered independent and individual frame is considered dependent variable. There are three factors influencing the framing of news. One is journalist-centered influences, second is the organisational influence and the third is external sources. What people think about an issue is influenced by the accessibility of frames.

3.2. Media's Role in Society: A Transformative Perspective

In the modern world media have become one of the basic necessities of life. There won't be any one who does not have any accessibility towards at least any one form of media. It is true that media play an outstanding role in strengthening the society. Its duty is to inform, educate and entertain the people. It keeps us in touch with the current

situations around the world. The media have strong social and cultural impact upon society. Because of its inherent ability to reach large number of public, it is widely used to convey message that builds public opinions and concerns. They cover all aspects of our interest like weather, politics, war, health, finance, science, fashion, music and more. People can listen, watch and read whenever and wherever they want. Media is the overseer of the political system. If it plays its role honestly, it will be a great force in building the nation. It plays a great role in bringing common men close to their leaders. Hence people can better understand their rights and make better decisions. Since the power of media is so extensive and huge, it can be used to educate people with very little cost (Pushparaj, 2014).

The media have a major role in improving the quality of governments and functioning of the society. Mass media act as mediators in relation of the people with their governments and the societies in which they live. It provides a forum for debates, the questions concerning citizenship, democracy, and political processes, development, identity, society and culture. It helps in shaping meaning, forms public opinion, demands transparency and accountability from the government and public persons. Media act as the source of information, education, entertainment and development (Nag, 2012; Rabindranath, 2012; Rahgav, 2012; Lule, 2014). According to Samaddar, (2004) power always follows responsibility. Therefore, media persons are expected to use their power with responsibility for social transformation.

Peimani (2010:25-26; Hodkinson, 2011:4), speak of five major roles and a couple of additional roles played by media in a democratic society. They are: 1) Provide Information. 2) Act as society's conscience. 3) Act as society's check and balance system. 4) Stakeholder of freedom of information. 5) Custodian of democracy. Apart from this, during conflict media could become part of the solution. They can contribute better to the transformation of conflict by supporting de-escalation process. Saxena, (2012) goes one step further and states that media is part of our socialisation process. Without media the people in the societies will be isolated not only from the rest of the world, but from government, law makers, and neighbouring towns and cities. Media are powerful socialising agents. Media play an important role in making us learn about our world and

how to interact with one another. They mediate our relationship with social institutions. Media are part of our routine relations with family and friends.

There is an inter-relationship between media and society and society and media. On the one hand, media have the power to influence the people and affect the future of the society. On the other hand, media report mainly depends on the taste of the people (Hodkinson, 2011:4-6). But today the media need to be professional in their approach. They have the responsibility to focus on social issues even if they are not so profitable. Government also should not unnecessarily interfere in the affairs of the media. An independent media is a must for its free functioning (Kant, 2012: 12). At the same time, media should not misuse the freedom that they enjoy to manipulate the events for their advantage. A responsible media is a must in a democratic society's growth and development. In a conflict situation, media should act as neutral agents to disseminate information and as mediators between the conflicting parties. Journalists also should be trained to analyse and report conflicts based on media ethics and peace journalism. In short, media must always look for the common good of the society rather than individual, organisational, ethnic, religious or political benefit.

3.2.1. Theories of Media

If the current approaches of media are faulty in dealing with conflict times, looking towards alternative approaches is inevitable. Habermas is one of the philosophers of modern times who has dealt in detail on the significance of communication. Habermas, (1984: 86) argues that actors in society come to a common forum and consensus especially in conflicting situation by using reason, with the help of the communication. In his 'theory of communicative action', he focuses on communicative mind, communication and rationality as well as the communicative society. Unlike Marx who believes in the revolutionary transformation of a class society into a classless society, Habermas believes in a gradual and lasting society. He believes in mutual negotiation and communication processes for a peaceful society. As for him in the conditions of free communication, problems of conflict can be transformed. Hence, social conflicts can be solved by rational discourse by people (Mitrovic, 1999; Bolton, 2005).

There are a large number of theories of media that explain the nature and functions of media in the society. In general, mass communication can be categorised into four groups. They are: 1) Post-positivism which is based on empirical observation guided by scientific method, but recognising the complexity of human behavior, 2) Hermeneutic theory that interprets the media text to the audience, 3) critical theory that seeks to make emancipation and change in a dominant social order and 4) normative theory that explains how a media system should operate in order to realise a set of ideal social values (Sani, 2012). Each of these theories is sub-divided into a number of theories that specifically highlight the role of media in the society. However, this study takes into consideration only the theories of media that are relevant in forming the society from a transformation perspective.

3.2.1.1. Social Responsibility Theory

Social responsibility theory is one of the four theories of press written by three American authors Wilbur Schramm, Siebert and Theodore Paterson and has been part of normative media theory. Nerone, (2002:184-85) describes social responsibility theory as a radical reconstruction of the relationship between individuals and communities, with great emphasis on the community. It is the triumph of the community over the individual. It was developed just after Rosevelt's death, when influential publishers were unpopular with the public. However, from media perspective, Mcquail, (2010: 171) believes that the theory of social responsibility involved a view of media ownership as a form of public trust rather than a private enterprise. The power that is provided to the minority (media) should be carried with it a responsibility to exercise it with great caution and respect for others. Therefore, media should be truthful, accurate, fair, follow code of ethics and relevant.

In their book *Four Theories of Press*, Wilbur Schramm, Siebert and Theodore Paterson criticised 'the Free Press Theory' and advocated the need for its replacement by the Social Responsibility Theory. This theory can be said to have been initiated in the United States by the Commission of The Freedom of Press, 1949. The commission found that the free market approach to press freedom had only increased the power of a single class and has not served the interests of the less well-off classes. Thus the theory

advocated some obligation on the part of the media to society (Suresh, 2003:1). Media have a mediating role of public opinion and the real life world. The power of mass media helps the civil society bring about changes in the values and systems of the society (Habermas, 2010).

Media have a greater responsibility in making a society vibrant and dynamic. Therefore, a healthy democracy requires a healthy media system, as it is said 'a free press is essential for a free society'. Hence, information is the lifeline of a society (McChesney, 1999). However, media should not publish undesirable and doubtful viewpoints even if they are highly sensational and interesting. But if media persons feel that the government or some agencies are trying to hide some information from the public, they have the responsibility to seek that information and make it known to the public (Oates, 2008). Eisendorf, (1998) also opines that media have the responsibility to uphold the principles of independence, impartiality, truth and accuracy with the aim to inform and empower the people to form their own judgments.

If the press wishes to be socially responsible, it should have a thorough knowledge about social and political issues, awareness about developmental projects and gender issues. The press must also pay greater attention to minorities, ethnic groups, rural realities, and ensure adequate balance between news, opinions and advertisements. Social responsibility is a process which can be achieved only gradually through careful monitoring and judicious process. Only a press that is socially committed and responsible can become a critical voice in a democracy (Plathottam, 2013: xiv). In a democracy, media ought to uphold the constitutional values and take forward the aspirations of the people to new heights. Being neutral agencies, they are expected to be the custodian of the constitution and actively take part in the social well-being of the citizens.

The duty of journalists is to be as objective as possible. Only then, will they be able to carry out their responsibility as professionals. It is when the truth is impartially revealed and explained, the parties in the conflicts can sit down and solve their differences (Lintner, 2014). In a society where minorities are present, the media have a responsibility to present them as real members of society capable of a wide variety of roles within that society. Minority groups gain little from being ignored and perhaps

sympathetic treatment might enhance the self-esteem of minority group members and can contribute for the betterment of the society (Howitt, 1982).

3.2.1.2. Media Dependency Theory

This theory was developed by Ball-Rokeach and DeFluer who advocated that audience depend on media information to meet needs and reach their goals. Apart from this, social institutions and media systems interact with audiences to create needs, interests, and motives in the person. The degree of dependence is influenced by the number and centrality of information functions and social stability (Suresh, 2003:4). People have no choice but to depend on media to understand what is happening around the globe (Hallgren, 2012: 3). In the modern technological world people are involved in commercial activities, so much that they lose personal relationship with one another. This builds a major form of media-dependency, from where one gathers information of the situations around them. If this dependency is misused by the media, it can have negative repercussions especially in a conflict situation. But this dependency of the public can, on the contrary, also be made use of constructively to facilitate the well-being of the individuals and the groups. Media are not expected to deceive the audience who trust and depend on them for information, education, entertainment and analyses of various activities.

Mass media have an important role to play in the modern democratic society, as the main channel of communication. The people depend on news media as the main source of information on the basis of which, they form opinions and make decisions. Media is considered to be the most powerful tool of communication. It helps in promoting the right things at the right time. It exposes to the mass audience the current situations and verdicts. Even though many a times media is linked with the sensationalisation of irrelevant news, it also informs and creates awareness about the realities to the public.

The media, be it print, electronic or social take control of the information that we read, see or hear. The media thus control our access to news, information and entertainment. Communication in all forms has an important role in holding the society

together. The desire and the need to belong to a society, to understand a society, and to keep up with it, has increased our dependency on the media (Kabi, 2012). People have a natural inclination to know what is happening around them and they trust in what media report on any issues surrounding them. Following media ethnics, the journalists are expected to transform the society in its totality keeping aside the petty local, regional, ethnic, linguistic or religious interests and at the same time being sensitive to all these issues.

3.2.1.3. Agenda Setting Theory

According to this theory, there is a co-relation between media reporting and people's choice of news items. It is the media that dictate terms for the public, setting what to choose and what to avoid. Hence, according to this theory, media will decide what people should consider as important issues. According to McCombs and Shaw, (1972: 5) the proponents of this theory, one of the most important effects of mass communication is that, it has the ability to mentally order and organise our world for us. The mass media may not be in a position to tell us what to think, but they are very much successful in telling us what to think about. Shabir et al., (2013: 480) opine that watching, reading and interacting with a nation's mass media can help us understand how the people think and behave in that nation.

The common assumption of agenda-setting is the ability of the media, to influence the visibility of events in the public mind. Therefore, the concept of agenda setting in our society is for the press to selectively choose, what we see or hear in the media. It gives media the power to establish what news we see or hear and which part of the news is important to see or hear (Spring, 2002). This theory is especially linked to dependency theory, so much so, that it makes people follow what media want them to follow. This is also linked to the framing of news and constructing reality by media. This theory can be made use of positively for the realisation of a peaceful society, by media. Hence for example, if media set an agenda of promoting peace in a conflict situation, by way of highlighting the need for dialogue and reconciliation, people's orientation and interest will also naturally move towards peace-building.

Noam Chomsky, in his book *Manufactured Consent*, has argued that corporate ownership results in the interests of the ruling class being represented in mass media. His theory assumes that the mere capitalist ownership of mass media determine the content of the media (As cited in Khan, 2012). This could be considered as one of the negative impacts of Agenda-Setting theory of media. Although media are blamed for setting agenda in favour of the elites or the ruling class to propagate their ideologies, this power can be constructively used by media to initiate peace-oriented activities. The advantage is that what media highlights is to be considered, by the public, an important issue in the society. In short, in the words of Bratic and Schirch, (2007:8) "the media shape what we see and hear about conflict. The perspectives of those who run the media shape stories that are covered". Therefore, media have to make use this opportunity to facilitate what promote peace and prosperity in the society.

3.2.1.4. Development Theory

The underlying fact behind the genesis of this theory was that there can be no development without communication. Under the four classical theories, capitalism was legitimised, but under the Development communication theory, the media undertook the role of carrying out positive developmental programmes, accepting restrictions and instructions from the State. The media subordinated themselves to political, economic, social and cultural needs (Suresh, 2003:2). A drastic change in the society is possible, if only there is development at various spheres of life. One of the objectives of media is to make sure that the developmental projects are on the right track and are fully utilised in the proper channel. Media also can take up the responsibility of ensuring developmental activities by imparting knowledge, awareness programmes, investigative journalism and anything that facilitates human development.

Kumar, (2008) holds the view that apart from resolving issues, communication helps in focusing on the developmental activities, to uplift the poor and the oppressed. Kant, (2012:7) is also of the opinion that media play an important role in the social development by its continuous positive processes. It is a mirror of our society and it is also instrumental in the progress of the society. A society's cultural, social, political,

economic and traditional image depends on how media presents it to the world outside. Apart from this, Deepak, (2015) argues that media contributes significantly in human development, as it prioritises communication systems and processes which empower people to initiate a dialogue and speak on issues important to their own lives and well-being. It enables people to develop more positive behaviours and practices for a better quality of life. It is a social process that promotes dialogue between communities and decision-makers at local, national and regional levels. Its goal is to promote, develop and implement policies and programmes that enhance the quality of life for all.

Development Communication is an educational and social process. It aims at developing social consciousness, personal responsibility towards one's fellowmen, one's community and country. Development Communication implies respect for the fellow human being, his intelligence and his right to self-determination. The role of mass communication is to help, and not take over or substitute for, his thinking. It serves him with facts for a sound judgment and inspiration to carry out his resolve. The term "Social Communication", therefore, suggests the primacy of human values and human dignity over mere technique, better than "mass communication" (Ong, 1976).

3.3. Media Influence on Conflict situations

In the recent past, the world has witnessed tremendous growth in the news media's role in reporting conflicts, caused by political turmoil, ethnic or religious conflict or by armed aggression. Therefore, media's role in reporting conflict has received a good deal of public attention (Habib, 2014:10). Arcan, (2013) argues that media have an important role to play before, during and after a conflict process. However, most of the studies focused on media's negative effects, while its potential for peacebuilding remained unnoticed and unexplored. As media single-handedly cannot start a war, it cannot single-handedly end conflict either. Media can employ both peace-oriented and war-oriented discourse by framing the issues, by using peace/conflict based journalism or war/violence based journalism.

Since conflict has become an integral part of the news, media scholars agree that news is normally presented within some kind of conflict framework. It has become a

commodity for which all forms of media compete. Hence conflict news is a source of such rivalry; it is not only dramatised or exaggerated, but often abused for commercial purposes (Geelen, 2002). In the present scenario there is no clear example to cite, whether the media did play an active role in conflict prevention and assisted in the process of conflict transformation. On the other hand, there are so many examples where media played a negative role in the recent major conflicts in the different parts of the world. In the Bosnian war of 1992-95 and Tajikistan civil war of 1992-97, media sided with the policies of the government. In the Northern Ireland conflict, journalists belonging to both parties supported their own groups (Peimani, 2010:28-29). The most drastic and well-known examples of hate speech communicated through the media was experienced in Rwanda, Yugoslavia and Bosnia (Eisendorf, 1998; Hieber, 2001: 2; Chalk, 2007:376; Arcan, 2013: 338).

It can be suggested that media is both a friend and a foe, to a peace process. Media can foster human security, and there is evidence that media can reinforce motives for fuelling wars. It can be an instrument for peace and conflict management, which promotes messages and strategies that can lead to peaceful agreements and tolerant behaviour in a given society. Media can also be a weapon of violence that propagates biased information and manipulates societies or groups in conflict with divisive ideologies and harmful actions (Forsberg, 2006:1).

Mohamed, (2012) projects both the positive and negative side of the media reporting in conflict. He cites the example of the role that Cable Network News (CNN) played in the withdrawal of American troops from Somalia in the 1990s by showing graphic pictures of the 3 bodies of American soldiers being dragged along the street. In Sudan, media played a great role in the 1990ies in mobilising the public and contributing to war and conflict: this was especially carried out by a Television weekly programme 'Fee Sahat Alfedat', that encouraged fighting as holy, branding it as Jihad to attract support. The first step taken by the government, right after the peace agreement was to stop the programme and produce new media programmes that would facilitate peacebuilding.

Some of the ethnic conflicts are based on flimsy, unreliable and misleading messages communicated that travel faster than the wind. If mass media and oral communication are used in a distorted manner it can spread mass violence (Chandra, 2006). McQuail, (1979: 15) argues that "the term 'amplification', 'sensitization' and 'polarization' have been used to describe the tendency of the media to exaggerate the incidence of a phenomenon, to increase the likelihood of it being noticed and to mobilise society against a supposed threat". Burton, (2009) is of the opinion that most of the times, it is a few sections of the media that are significantly responsible for arousing public anxiety and making uncritical assertions about violence. There is evidence that media make people believe that there is more violence occurring in society, than there actually is. This kind of reporting violent crimes with exaggeration may lead to fear psychoses among the people. One needs to recognise the fact that public concern is itself to some extent a consequence of media influence. Similarly, it is the media that dominantly report this public concern, once it is aroused. Violence sells; and nothing sells news in particular so much as bad news. Therefore, 'bad news' is 'good news' for media.

History has shown that the media can incite people towards violence based on ethnicity. Hitler used the media to create an entire worldview of hatred towards Jews, homosexuals, and other minority groups. Broadcasters in the Balkans polarised local communities to the point where violence became an acceptable tool for addressing grievances (Bratic, 2006). The mass slaughter in Bosnia was also a clear example of the influence of media on ethnic violence. In the same way in the Kurdish-Turkish conflict, the Turkish authorities with the help of the media treated the conflict as security problem and labeled the Kurdish as terrorists. Turkish media employed hate speech against the Kurds and mostly became the victims of media propaganda (Arcan, 2013: 341).

According to the survey conducted by Maureen Syallow 'on the 2007-2008 post-election violence in Kenya', majority of the participants agreed that the media, especially the FM radio stations played a big role in instigating ethnic hatred and animosity that caused open post-election violence. During the conflict, electronic media stations, especially FM radios broadcasting in ethnic languages advised their tribes people to support sides taken by politicians from their ethnic communities (Syallow, 2014).

Halakhe (2013) also opines that hate speech played a major factor in inciting violence in the post December 2007 election in Kenya. Apart from print and electronic media, SMS also played a crucial role instigating people to fight against the opposing ethnic group that ended up in the loss of so many lives.

Ethnic media and racial media outlets, including ethnic newspapers, radio stations and television programmes, typically target specific ethnic and racial groups instead of the general population. They try to defend their cause and demonise the 'enemy' such as immigrant audience groups (Mathur, 2012: 38). Radio, in combination with television, was manipulated to provoke ethnic and nationalist sentiments in order to win support of certain parties, particularly in Serbia and Croatia (Hieber, 2001).

Media in conflict-ridden societies try to create and facilitate arguments for conflict, such as oppositional metaphors of 'us versus them' linked to internal or external issues (Howard, 2003: 4). The coverage of the undeclared Kargil war in 1999 by various private news channels turned the war into a media event. The aggressive tone of the coverage whipped up nationalist pride and glossed over the loss of lives, the hardship of the local people, the loss of employment of the local people and issues of internal displacement (Mulay, 2007: 181).

Joseph, (2014) argues that media frame the news in such a way that they make the people believe that war is the only solution. Hence, they demonise the enemy and legitimise the war. It was very evident in United States intervention in Vietnam, Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Gulf wars, etc. by CNN. BBC also broadcasted news in favour of Britain in the war against Argentina in 1982. So according to her, news does not happen but is constructed in tune with a country's social, political, and economic interests.

The use of journalism in reducing conflict situation is a recent development emerged in the 1980ies. This idea got intensified with the fall of the Berlin wall, and when media was blamed for speaking out for genocide in Rwanda. This created an urgent need to develop a free but responsible media. In order to work independently, media should be free from external influences, they should report objectively, follow journalism

ethnics and values. If this is followed then media can play a great role in reducing conflicts (Habib, 2014:11).

3.3.1. Media Violence and Aggressive Behaviour

The impact of media on human behaviour is undoubtedly proven over a period of time. People believe what they read, hear and see in print and electronic media, as true. Anderson and Gentile, (2008); Sgarzi, (2003: 70) argue that there is a relationship between media violence and aggressive behaviour in people. Most of the studies show that exposure to media violence increases the likelihood of violent behaviour among the humans irrespective of sex, caste, religion, and nationality. He summarises many of the major reviews that were done on media violence and violent behaviour and concludes that brief exposure to media violence leads to aggression in the immediate situation, and continuous exposure to media violence contributes in the long term situation. This can lead a person to believe that violence is a means to solve the problems. Although the effect of media violence is seen in the behaviour of all age groups, it is all the more evident in children and youth. Continuous depiction of violent behaviour in the media might encourage the viewers that they may be acceptable.

According to the cultivation theory (Garbner, 1967), a long persistent exposure to media is capable of cultivating certain beliefs about the world. This theory is based on the assumption that mass media have subtle effects on audience who unknowingly, absorb the dominant symbols, image, and messages of media. He also suggests that the powerful effects of media act as moulders of society (as cited in Kabi, 2012: 33).

The report of media violence commission on aggressive behaviour argues that exposure to media violence ups the risk towards increased aggression among people, both in the short and in the long run. Media projection has an impact on people's feelings, thinking and action in real life. Many object to this reality mainly because people expect immediate impact of media violence on people's behaviour which may not happen. The simple logic is that when a person continues to read or watch materials that are related to education and service, one feels like helping or educating others. In the same way, when a person continues to watch the content of violence, one feels like behaving accordingly at least to a certain extent. The projection of violence in the media as rewarding, may

create the notion that violence is justifiable and socially acceptable. Moreover, children always have a tendency to imitate. Hence they are also prone to imitate what they have seen or read in the media, be it good or bad (ISRA, 2012).

There is a widespread belief among the public that media representations of violence and crime feed into the actual perpetration of violence and crime in society. In 2003, an ICM poll asked a cross-section of the British public 'Do you believe that on-screen violence in the form of films, television and computer games encourages violence in society or not? The survey revealed that nearly three-quarters of respondents (73%) believed that on-screen violence did indeed encourage off-screen violence. The belief was even stronger among the older respondents (that is, those over 45 years of age). Similar results were also reported in a study in the United States (Cumberbach, 2010:355) (as cited in Horner, 2015: 85).

Gurr, 1968: (247-248) argues that aggressive behaviour is seen among people who are the product of maladaptive socialisation process and the circumstances. The assumption is that aggressive behaviour is learned. Huesmann and Taylor, (2006) argue that exposure to violence in media has substantial risk factor in the aggressive behaviour of a person. Dutta, (2007) making a study on the impact of television on its viewers, argues that television is a powerful electronic medium. It can serve as dissemination information, imparting education and provide entertainment to the public. At the same time, it can have also negative impacts like learning aggressive behaviour and taking revenge as an accepted social norm.

3.4. Transformative Role of Media in Ethnic Conflicts

Ethnicity is one of the major sources of conflict in the contemporary period. There have been a number of efforts from various corners to resolve those issues, that cause ethnic conflicts and facilitate peacebuilding. Among them, the role that media can play in transforming ethnic conflicts stand out, yet to be fully explored. Media have the ability to identify, analyse and transform those issues by helping to address the root causes to build positive relationships. It is precisely because of this O'Sullivan, (2001:54) and Baruah and Upadhaya, (2014:149) consider that mass media have tremendous influence in shaping public opinion and projecting the views of public to authorities. The media's portrayal of ethnic conflicts as well as the steps for resolution, has immense consequences for conditioning public attitudes and influencing policy resolutions.

With the increasing number of ethnic conflicts, media can play a responsible role to create an environment for the conflict resolution and transformation. Responsible

media should inspire all to make opinions and decisions on development and human rights in a society. Thus, a responsible media can serve to disseminate information about peace and war. They can influence peace issues, and behaviour of the common people with the ongoing conflict (Dutta, 2012: 104). Hamelink, (2011)) observes that for the mass media to play a facilitating role in preventing conflict escalation, their primary focus should be on developing a societal environment within which they can employ de-escalatory modes of communication.

It is the duty of the media practitioners to cover the conflict, taking into consideration the common good by questioning inaccurate statements and avoiding provocative language. This helps to de-escalate the ethnic conflicts that are basically based on identity crisis, deprivation and exploitation which are highly sensitive in nature (Habib, 2014:11). While reporting ethnic conflicts, journalists should not side with the conflicting party that they associate themselves with. With their investigative journalism, they can warn the society of a possible outbreak of the conflict and exhort people concerned, to take necessary steps to prevent it. However, it is very important that media persons do not report without verifying facts from the field of conflict. They must also make sure that they do not place blame on a particular community as the cause of the conflict.

Hieber, (2001: 11) considers that the key to a successful media intervention includes a thorough understanding of the complexities of the situation. There may be immediate factors that trigger a conflict but there are deeper causes such as territorial demands, socio-economic inequality, and economic war-profiteering. By tackling some of the intractable issues which divide communities within a state, media may potentially help play a role in defusing some of the underlying tension. Adding to this, Bratic, (2006) believes that media have the power to influence the people's behaviour, attitudes, opinions and beliefs. In order to be productive, media need to assist institutions and stakeholders in their effort of peacebuilding.

Media have a major role to play in containing the spread of conflict by disseminating information to the public with the widest coverage. It is evident that media whether print or audio-visual can help mitigate conflict. The biggest challenge for media

is to ensure balanced reporting, carefully to preventing escalation of conflict. It remains to be seen how it could be maintained, given the fact that conflict sells better than cooperation. Tensions frequently escalate in situations where information is scarce. Therefore, providing a variety of information that contains a range of facts, views and opinions can mitigate the conflict (Pegu, 2014). Apart from this, when media in conflict situations focus on a parties' standpoint, they must corroborate with enough reasons why that position was taken in the first place. Also, instead of focusing on 'what should've been done', they should shift focus to 'what should be done in the future' to resolve the problem. They should also focus not only on a relationship gone sour, but on how to restore and even build a better relationship in the future (Richards and King, 2000).

In an ethnic conflict situation, if the underlying cause is discrimination due to political and economic inequality, media should be pro-active in their reporting and make it known to the authorities concerned. Instead of each group using violent means to achieve their goals, media should take initiative in getting things done for the voiceless in the society. They should also speak to both group leaders and exhort them to engage in dialogue and keep themselves away from harmful activities. It is also important to give them an opportunity to express their grievances on a common forum to release the tension, as well as to let them know that their voice and opinions matter. Media can make sure that adequate distribution of power and resources are achieved by both the majorities and the minorities. During a conflict and post-conflict scenario, media ought to become active in the de-escalation of conflict with their reporting and engage in reconstruction and reconciliation process.

What people expect from media during an ethnic conflict is the right information regarding the development of conflict and peace initiatives. The reaction of the people towards the conflict and peace process depends on how media project it to the public. If media highlight the act of violence and the damages, the people's attention will be directed towards violence-oriented activities. If media highlight on peace initiatives, people's attitude and behaviour will be in tune with peace-oriented activities. Misinformation and wrong information can lead to suspicion, frustration and anxiety.

Hence, it is imperative that media enable the people to remove their apprehensions and anxieties in order to facilitate peacebuilding.

3.4.1. Media as the Channel of Peace & Reconciliation

The social responsibility that lies on media today is not just confined to the traditional idea of transmitting news and entertainment. It has tremendous power in going beyond these basic responsibilities and reaching out to society in achieving positive peace, which shall be one of the main goals of media. Media are often blamed for becoming active in a conflict situation for their commercial gains. But media are powerful entity that can be made use of, for constructive purposes especially in resolving and transforming dreaded ethnic conflicts so as to find lasting peace in a conflict-ridden society. Although there are many NGOs that are working towards the same goal, media are in an advantageous position to achieve this goal, because they have the power to influence the attitude and behaviour of the people and are able to reach out to a large number of audience at the same time.

History also shows that media did play an important role in bringing normalcy and peace in the society. Bratic, (2006: 2) mentions that 'Good Friday' of 1998 will remain a special day in the histories of Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. On that day, one of the longest conflicts in modern history came to an end as representatives of the conflicting parties agreed to a political settlement known as the 'Good Friday Agreement'. The media campaign in support of the Good Friday agreement received support from both sides. During 1994 conflict in Rwanda, although Hutus committed large scale atrocities against the Tutsis community due to the influence of local media, after the violence, the same medium was used for peace and reconciliation. In 1995, Studio Ijambo was established in Burundi to produce a variety of messages that could facilitate peace development.

Media function as a channel of peace that clarifies all the misunderstanding and misperceptions. It frames and analyses the conflict, identifies the interests, defuses mistrust, provides opportunities for emotional outlets. The media thus becomes a facilitator of positive social change rather than a professional reporter (Howard, 2002a: 4). The information and education role that the media play provide it with a major

opportunity to help resolve conflicts, especially when the ethics of the profession are strictly adhered to (Otufodunrin, 2013). Hassan, (2006: 4) proposes that the journalists who are actively and constructively engaged in the reporting and making of peace, is to give sufficient air time and print space to matters related to peace that would facilitate peacebuilding.

Media persons should always keep in mind their role and responsibility while reporting conflicts. Since media is generally understood to be a powerful agent in conflict situations, every reporting that they make has got its repercussions. There may be conflicting parties trying to influence the media persons, there could be the government trying to curtail the freedom of the media and there is a large audience totally dependent on media to get information. Hence, in a conflict situation media persons should be diligent and use their discretion to report the right things at the right time to deescalate conflict.

Schilling, (2012) deems that communication, peace and conflict are interconnected in terms of resolving and transforming conflict. Communication is a tool that creates a bond between individuals, groups and nations. It is an important key to the transformation of conflict and peacebuilding. Hay, (2002) opines that media can transform into an instrument of peace by (a) creating an environment where true information and various opinion are provided, (b) training journalists who are work in conflict hit areas and towards conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and (c) providing support and technical equipments. Hattotuwa, (2002: 4) points out that media is a pivotal catalyst in the success of the peace process, mainly because people depend on the media for information on the peace process.

Media are expected to play a constructive role in preventing and transforming conflict. It can create a forum where conflicting viewpoints can be discussed and solutions derived, by seeking public opinion. Under such circumstances, media act as an agent of peace to address the core issues that affect the conflict to de-escalate (Peimani, 2010:27). According to Dutta (2012); and Hattotuwa, (2002: 1-2) the news covered by media can have four inputs on any peace process: (i) they help in defining the political atmosphere in which the peace process takes place. (ii) they can have an active influence

on the strategy and behaviour of the stakeholders to the conflict. (iii) they can have an important influence on the nature of discussion about a peace process and (iv) their reports build an environment necessary to hold conflict resolution process in a conscious manner. Therefore, he argues that media have an important role in maintaining adequate environment for peace process of any ongoing conflict.

Journalists working in conflict-ridden areas could adopt values that would minimise the risk of escalating conflict and maximise the potential for reconciliation. Given the fact that almost all news is dedicated to conflict, it is not unreasonable to argue that a small section be devoted to peace (Wolfsfield, 2004: 227-28). Journalism both in peace and in conflict situations must manifest its core values and uphold its principles. If these values are practiced in its true sense, then this profession can be more people-oriented, humane, constructive, and peace-oriented (Boemcken, 2008:21; Habib, 2014:16). Media persons also think of conducting inter-cultural exchange programs in order to minimise the gap between different ethnic groups and foster unity in diversity.

3.4.2. Media: The Best Mediator and Confidence Builder

There are no issues in the world that cannot be resolved through dialogue. Dialogue leads to negotiations, settlement, resolution and transformation of differences and disputes. One of the essential elements in dialogue is mediation by a third party. Media being an independent agency have got a greater role to play in taking initiative to bring the conflicting parties to the negotiation table to sort out the issues and build relationship. What is important in the negotiation process, is focus on what shall be done to resolve issues, rather than which party was at fault. Manoff, (2002: 39) acknowledges that media can greatly facilitate the process of dialogues and negotiations by making known the negotiating positions of their customers. Toit, (2010) asserts that the understanding that conflicts can be approached cooperatively and can provide audiences with a richer and more comprehensive idea, of the range of possibility for conflict transformation.

Coverage of ethnic conflicts can lead to constructive outcomes, when it facilitates greater communication between the parties to use problem-solving tactics in the resolution of the dispute by providing more information and different perspectives. A

sense of hope that a conflict can be resolved can facilitate in solving the issue (Reuben, 2009:77; Pegu, 2014: 91). Media provide a platform for dialogue among conflicting parties and a critical source for information about possible means for reconciliation and potential threats thereby serve as a bridge across ethnic divides (Boemcken, 2008:21; Arsenault et al., 2011: 5).

In the peace process, the role of media can be regarded as one of the fundamental pillars in order to bring consensus among the conflicting parties. During ongoing violent conflicts, though the role of media is circumscribed, they can provide necessary channels for dialogue in crisis situation. They can also mobilise and provide essential social services and humanitarian support to conflict ridden people (Dutta, 2012: 112). Howard, (2009:12) opines that in conflict and post-conflict environments, a reliable and responsible news media is a critical part of preventing and resolving violent conflict. Journalists can strengthen their reporting to avoid stereotypes and narrow perspectives, on the causes and process of conflict. The media can contribute to a wider dialogue among conflicting parties through wider reporting. They can explore and provide information about opportunities for resolution and peacebuilding.

Howard, (2001; 2002b) opines that since media can influence large amount of people over large areas, they should make use of this opportunity to build peace in the society. He argues that if media are involved in all kinds of activities, why not engage in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. According to him if the media persons practice the norms of good journalism, they automatically become part of conflict resolution team. They can facilitate peacebuilding by acting as a channel between parties, identifying the hidden causes and interests, providing forum for emotional outlet, focusing on consensus building and making everyone accountable for their behaviour. Apart from this, media initiatives must work in collaboration with other actors who are also working towards peacebuilding.

Media can act as mediators in sending messages back and forth between the conflicting parties. Conflicting parties also may use media as their messengers or negotiators. News media also may invite parties from opposing groups for panel discussions in order to express their diverse opinions and demands. They have the power

to create bridges among opposing ethnic groups and build confidence to open negotiations. Media events may promote and mobilise support for agreements and resolutions thereby reducing polarisation between ethnic groups (Bratic and Schirch, 2007:10).

Media need to focus on the ‘conflict and challenges’ to address them to play an assertive peacemaking role. Perhaps the primary step is to act as the bridge between the ethnic groups who have totally different perspectives and goals (Changkija, 2014: 53). Media should look at conflicts from a third party assumption to analyse it objectively and report it from peace journalism perspective. To a great extent, the course of the conflict determines how media projects it to the world outside and what initiative they take in transforming it. Even a minute possibility of reconciliation should be highlighted, for it gives hope to the people that peace is on the card and can be achieved.

3.4.3. Peace Journalism: A Road towards Transforming Ethnic Conflict

The concept of Peace Journalism was introduced by Johan Galtung, a Norwegian sociologist by the 1970ies. Peace Journalism is also referred to as conflict solution journalism, conflict sensitive journalism, and constructive conflict coverage. Peace Journalism can be identified as a special mode of socially responsible journalism that facilitates peace. It aims to correct what went wrong with war journalism. It encourages the conflicting communities and groups to consider and value non-violent responses over conflict. As part of peace building, it aims to address structural and cultural causes of violence: as they impact the lives of common people in a conflict arena. It aims to frame conflicts, as consisting of many parties and pursuing many goals rather than a simple goal. An explicit aim of Peace Journalism is to promote peace initiatives from whatever quarter and to allow the viewers and readers to distinguish between the projected positions and real goals (Baruah and Upadhaya, 2014).

Peace Journalism is grounded in developmental journalism that gives prominence to the idea of civic participation, the understanding of social justice as a moral imperative, with the view of the value and sacredness of an individual. In short, a peace journalist focuses attention on stories that highlight peace initiatives - brings down ethnic

and religious differences, prevents conflict escalation, focuses on the development of society, and promotes conflict resolution, reconstruction, and reconciliation, by giving equal voice to all parties. A peace journalist, in fact tries to bring forward the possible root causes and probable solutions, before the conflict parties (Fong, 2009). Peace Journalism makes use of conflict analysis and transformation, for unbiased and accurate reporting (McGoldrick and Lynch, 2000). In order to transform the ethnic conflicts, Gavilan (2011) proposes that the journalists must analyse the conflict from various perspectives: such as party's objectives and the root causes that led to the conflict. The reporting should present an orientation to conflict-solution giving importance to proposals, negotiations, agreements, etc.

Journalism is not all about reporting facts. It is about what to report, when to report and how to report holding high standard of ethics and principles, especially in ethnic-conflict-reporting. It is the responsibility of the media to know what to select as information, and how to present it to the public, considering the repercussions that it might have on the audience (Bassil, 2014). Biazoto, (2011: 16) argues that "given its value as a CT tool, there is no reason why journalists committed to a positive social impact should shy away from that challenge". Galtung, (2000a: 4) considers media as partners in conflict transformation process. In his opinion we need journalists who are able to report the invisible effects of violence, such as the underlying conflict formation and the root causes.

Otufodunrin, (2013) suggests that wherever possible, the media in accordance with its agenda-setting role should help in preventing conflicts. The media persons should foresee conflict situations and caution the people concerned, regarding its gravity. Media should stick to the truth while reporting all sides of conflict, instead of publishing falsehood and propaganda from interested parties. It is advised not to publish, when they are in doubt of the source and credibility, of the information. Peace initiatives should be highlighted and encouraged and conflicts have to be resolved and transformed while making use of every possible means, at the disposal of the media. Biazoto, (2011) derives a simple logic: if 'bad journalism' is able to incite violence, it is possible for 'good

journalism' to promote peace. Johan Galtung presents a table that makes the distinction between 'peace journalism' and 'war journalism'.

Table 3.1
Peace Journalism Vs War Journalism

Peace/Conflict Journalism	War/Violence Journalism.
Peace Oriented	War Oriented
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. explore conflict formation 2. open space, open time 3. making conflict transparent 4. giving voice to all parties 5. focus on conflict creatively 6. humanization of all sides 7. Proactive. 8. focus on the invisible effects of violence 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. focus on conflict. 2. closed space, closed time 3. making war secret 4. Propaganda. 'us' and 'them' 5. focus on who prevails in war 6. dehumanization of 'them' 7. Reactive. 8. focus on visible effect of violence
Truth Oriented	Propaganda Oriented
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expose untruth on all sides 2. uncover all cover-ups 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. expose 'their' untruths 2. help 'our' cover-ups/lies
People oriented	Elite oriented
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus on violence by all sides and on suffering all over; also on women, aged, children 2. give name to all evil-doer 3. focus on people peace-makers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus on 'their' violence and on 'our' suffering 2. give name of their evil-doer 3. focus on elite peace-makers
Solution Oriented	Victory Oriented
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. peace = non-violence + creativity 2. highlight peace initiatives 3. focus on the peaceful society 4. aftermath: reconstruction, reconciliation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. peace = victory + cease-fire 2. conceal peace-initiative 3. focus on treaty, institution 4. leaving for another war

Source: Galtung, 2005:2-3.

There are four main criteria in making the distinction between these two styles of journalism. While 'peace journalism' is peace, truth, people and solution oriented, 'war journalism' is war, propaganda, elite and victory oriented. This could actually summarise what peace journalism is all about and how important it is to follow peace journalism in an ethnic conflict situation to transform the conflict (Galtung, 2005: 2-3). Journalists both in peace and violence period are expected to follow peace journalism, so as to create and promote positive peace.

In his key note address, David Astley, the secretary general of the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union in Kuala Lumpur, made an important distinction between 'war journalism' and 'peace journalism'. In his opinion 'war journalism' uses only few sources and confines itself to simply reporting the facts on what is going on at a very particular moment in time. But 'peace journalism' takes into account the wider context of a conflict by considering the root causes of violence. In short, its function is not simply to inform but to educate the people (Boemcken, 2008: 20). Communication is one of the means to educate the people with the art of living together and co-operating with one another. Therefore, media persons should make use of this means to educate the people and transform ethnic conflicts, so as to have peaceful co-existence.

Summary

We live in an era of information technology. The information is disseminated through different media that are available in the society. Thus media play an important role in understanding the world and evaluating its events. There has been an evolution in the media world from books, newspapers, telegraph, telephone, radio, television, and internet to smartphones. It is very evident that the invention of television, internet have changed the face of the world and the lifestyle of the people. Media can generally be categorised into print, electronic and social media. Each of these media has its functions and relevance. Though print media has lost its popularity with the advent of electronic media, it is still relevant and is used as a source of record, discussion and analysis. With the emergence of internet, people are able to receive information in a short span of time with minimum expense and immediate response ability. This has provided an opportunity for the people to express their opinions and foster social relationships.

In the contemporary society, media have acquired tremendous power that influences the socio, cultural, religious, political and economic fabric of everyday life. Media have become one of the essential amenities of life. They function as custodians of the constitution of a nation. It has the duty to inform, entertain and educate the people on matters related to their lives. Journalists are expected to serve the society by providing right information at the right time. They have the right to criticise the institutions that go against the norms and values of the society. They are also obliged to work towards the growth and development of the society. However, the elites and the market forces often dictate terms, for the media practitioners, to act in their favour. The competition among the media persons makes journalism lean towards profit-making and sensationalising. Media stands accused of neglect of the poor and the voiceless, and loss of credibility and objectivity in reporting.

It is possible that media can construct reality and make people believe what they report. It is also seen that media highlight irrelevant events as important and vice versa. Thus media can mislead people and deviate from important issues and concerns. Sometimes media try to please the aspirations of the audience whom they address. Therefore, they frame images of reality to form public opinion and support. The elite manipulate the media in order to target a particular community or a group. Media also try to satisfy the cultural expectations of their audience. It is generally believed that media concentrate on immediate events than long-term human rights concerns. People also tune their mindset in accordance with what media highlight in their reporting. Framing of news is all the more evident in a conflict situation. Ethnic media is vulnerable to the extent that they favour the group that they represent. The journalists who frame conflict, mislead people on core issues leading to conflict, and deny the possibilities for the resolution and transformation of the conflict.

The role of media is very vital in a conflict situation. Under such circumstances, media can either incite violence or promote peace with their reporting. Media reporting has great impact on public attitudes and the resolution of the conflict. As a third party, media can act as mediators between the conflicting parties, take initiative for dialogue process and provide suggestions to patch up the lost relationships. They can also

pressurise the government to look into the genuine demands of the groups in crisis. Media have the ability to facilitate conflict resolution or even worsen matters through conflict escalation. Since media have great power, each party in conflict tries to win the favour of media to project their views to the public in order to obtain their support. State and non-state actors may influence or even threaten the media persons to prevent objective reporting.

Most of the researches on media's role in conflict show that media played a negative role in the major conflicts around the world. Media seem to be either siding with the government or with the groups in conflict. It was very evident that some of the newspapers and radio channels openly endorsed the viewpoint of their community. Very seldom were the actual reasons of the violence analysed and reported. The incidents that took place in Rwanda, Bosnia, Tajikistan, Israel, Palestine, Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland are examples that show how media could influence conflicts negatively. There were also occasions wherein media played constructive roles in conflict transformation. After the ethnic violence in Rwanda, the same medium that was used to instigate people to fight was used for peacebuilding. According to many, 'Good Friday' agreement would not have been possible without the aid of the media in Northern Ireland. Studio Ijambo was established in Burundi to promote peacebuilding.

Media play an important role in a democratic society. Media help people to come to know what is happening around them. It is all the more apparent during conflict situations where people totally depend on mass media to know the development of escalation and de-escalation of violence. Journalists should work for the common good, and as much as possible avoid inflammatory statements and sensational reporting. In order to work towards the peace process in a conflict situation, the media have to concentrate on de-escalatory means of communication. Media have the responsibility to remove mistrust among the parties in conflict and instill trust and confidence in them. There should be also co-ordination among various media persons to work together for the common good. This would make the media stand united for justice and truth and thereby facilitate constructive conflict transformation. Media in general, and local media in particular have the great responsibility to mitigate the conflict.

Some of the theories of media from a transformative perspective: they indicate that media are powerful agents that can influence the course of the conflict constructively, for a positive change. The social responsibility theory emphasises the need for responsible journalism with fair and objective reporting, that will create an ambience for social justice and peace. As per dependency theory, people depend on media for information and the media persons could make use of this opportunity to disseminate information that can facilitate peace and unity. The agenda-setting theory holds the view that people's choice of issues depend on how media projects them and what it makes them think about. If the journalists can highlight news items that are relevant to peacebuilding, people would consider achieving peace, as the main issue of concern and might concentrate on the same. In development theory, media give importance for the overall developmental activities that includes structural and cultural changes in the society. Therefore, these theories suggest that if media persons impart social values and are responsible in their reporting, they could make necessary changes required for the transformation of the society.

Ethnic conflict transformation is a concept that has emerged in the recent past which has not been fully explored and utilised, especially by the media practitioners. This is one of the areas wherein media can contribute substantially towards the peacebuilding process in a multi-ethnic society. If media can incite people to engage in violence, they also have the ability and moral obligation to engage people in conflict resolution and transformation. What is required from the journalists is a willingness to work towards the transformation of ethnic divides. They should transcend their ethnic attachment and commercial gains and report as objectively as possible, keeping in mind the common good of the society. They shouldn't hurt the sentiments of the groups in conflict by labeling them as uncultured, barbarians, anti-nationals or as terrorists. They are expected to address the core issues that escalated the violence in order to de-escalate the same. Their report should build an ambience for conflict transformation process and act as a channel of peace and reconciliation.

In order to be actively involved in an ethnic conflict transformation, media need to be free from all external influences and report as objectively as possible following

media ethics. Media could be the best mediators in an ethnic conflict situation, as they ought to be neutral to the conflicting parties. Media persons need to understand local situation, the issues leading to the conflict and the changing nature of the conflict. Wrong notions need to be removed from the minds of the people by covering and reporting news that facilitate hope, trust and peacebuilding. They need to report facts that would create an environment of strengthening the unity and integrity of the society.

Peace journalism advocated by Johan Galtung would be of great help in facilitating peace in an ethnic conflict situation. In peace journalism, the primary goal is to achieve peace at any cost. It is grounded in individual and collective well being of the people, engaged in the conflict. The aim is the development of the society by fostering social justice, moral standard and patching up broken relationships between the conflicting parties. The first step could be to build confidence among the parties, and showcase a picture that peace is very much possible. Then, they should try to reduce the gap between the conflicting parties through dialogue process. Media ought to project that violence is no solution to the problem and that, in violence there is only a lose-lose situation. Media can project the advantages of attaining peace and the disadvantages if violence is continued and clarify the misunderstandings and misperceptions. They can provide a forum for emotional outlet and facilitate psychological strength and serenity. When war journalism focuses on who wins and loses in battle, peace journalism focuses on the structural and cultural causes of violence as part of facilitating peace. True journalism can help the society achieve positive peace, upholding the socio-cultural values irrespective of people's ethnic, linguistic or religious background.

Chapter IV

Ethnic Conflict Transformation in Northeast India

Introduction

Northeast India has experienced a series of ethnic conflicts due to its multi-cultural diversities. In fact, it was as early as in the colonial period when the people of Northeast began to be aware of their ethnic identities, and demand for their rights. This awareness of the ethnic identity became even more pronounced when the region became part of the Indian Union in 1947. What began as ethnic conflicts resulted in insurgency and militancy and began to hamper the peace and prosperity of the region. There have been a number of efforts to de-escalate these conflicts on many occasions by government and non-government organisations. None of these efforts could find a lasting solution, to this challenging problem. However, media as a powerful entity in the society could engage in overcoming these issues, applying a CT approach. Hence, the objective of this chapter is to analyse the root causes of ethnic conflicts in the Northeast and what constructive role can media play in its transformation.

4.1. The History of the Northeast: From a Conflict Perspective

Northeast India (NEI) consists of eight states with people of varied cultures, traditions, rituals, languages, and habits. They belong to more than 300 tribes and sub-tribes. The state of Arunachal Pradesh alone has 111 tribes. The region is precariously situated as it shares almost 98% of its boundary with neighboring countries and only 2% with Indian Union. It shows that they have more accessibility to international borders, restricted though. The region shares its boundary with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, China and Nepal. The people of NEI are of Mongoloid origin, believed to have come from central and south-east Asia. With just a few exceptions, most of them live in the hills. Centuries ago there was more peaceful co-existence between these tribes, although inter-tribal conflict was not unknown.

During the British Raj in India, people from other parts of the country were encouraged to migrate to NEI for their advantage. Some of them came as tea garden workers, some as officers to support the British administrative system, some as farmers

while others for business purposes. The large influx of immigrants from across the borders and from neighbouring states made changes, in the demography of the region. The natives who were unskilled and uneducated were sidelined: even exploited by the 'outsiders'. The tribals lost their land and became dependent on the immigrants, in matters of trade and commerce. When India became independent, immigration continued and the tribals became victims of discrimination and exploitation. The 'mainland' India considered Northeast as an appendix, due to its geographical and demographic situation. The central government did not take much initiative in resolving the myriads of problems faced by the region mainly as they were 'politically weak': although the situation has been changing ever since China claimed part of Arunachal Pradesh.

According to Rizvi, (2006) most of the tribes living on international border shared more ethnic and cultural affinities with the people living across the frontiers, than with India. Any development across the borders influenced the situation in NEI and could lead to tribal movement and create tension in the region. Goswami, (2014); Borgohain and Singha, (2014) are of the opinion that the diverse customs, cultures and practices make this region vulnerable to conflicts. Over the years, the region has experienced various kinds of conflicts and movements, ranging from mass civil-disobedience against Indian state, ethnic and communal riots to armed militancy, to secede from India and even genocide. According to Sahni, (2001:4) conflicts in Northeast are of three categories: Tribal group Vs the state, Tribal Vs Tribal, and Tribal Vs non-tribal.

A close analysis of the history of Northeast, might throw up a large variety of conflict dynamics in this region, ranging from sovereignty and autonomy, to terrorism and ethnic conflicts. No other region in India or, even the world must have seen the existence of such numerous ethnic-based insurgent groups, such as in NEI. Violent and diverse demands by various ethnic groups for sovereignty or for new states have been occurring over the past five decades (Mentschel, 2008). Das, (2014) assesses that any attempt on the state's part to touch the cultural realm was resisted by the people who find it hard to consider themselves to be part of India's mainstream'. Bhattacharjee, (1996: 7) considers that leaving Assam and Tripura, the rest of the northeastern states are dominated by tribal people. All these tribes have maintained their distinct identity and to

continue to do so. They have even fought against other communities that were considered as threats.

During the early post-colonial period, traditional self-sufficient economy of the minority ethnic communities was replaced by money economy that made way for competition, social stratification, social mobilisation, and changes in the traditional power relations between tribal and non-tribal groups (Saikia, 2011). In comparison with the other regions, the Northeast lagged behind in education, health, technology, transport and communication. Frustrations arose from within, when the region couldn't match up with the development pace of the other parts of the country. Plus, having to face innumerable everyday local hazards built up a sense of dissatisfaction among its people, which then forced them to turn to violence in the name of 'survival'.

Today's conflict in NEI is associated with ethnic conflicts that have resulted in insurgency and militancy. The situation now, is such that each ethnic group makes a demand, and when it is not materialised, they form an insurgent group to 'fight for their rights'. One of the reasons for the rise of militancy and insurgency is that only when violence takes place, authorities take notice of their grievances. This situation has made the region vulnerable to conflicts, leading to extortion, kidnapping, killing and even genocide. Often, innocent civilians become victims of conflicts who are harassed by both the state and non-state actors. The government does not seem to take initiatives to resolve the problems amicably. Instead, what it tries to do is suppress the conflicts by military force. The best example for military high handedness is the introduction of Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) that gives additional power to the armed forces, in order to control any violent situation. This has paved way for a lot of human rights violations, especially in the state of Manipur.

Although, the armed groups have not achieved any political advantage, they have certainly gained economic benefit, through illegal activities. Moreover, they also have sympathisers from over-ground organisations, businessmen and even politicians and bureaucrats. However, the widespread conflicts make the region underdeveloped and totally chaotic (Sahni, 2001). The Annual Report 2013-2014 by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, reports that the States of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and

Meghalaya continue to account for the bulk of insurgency-related incidents of violence, in the northeastern region. Tripura, Mizoram and Sikkim remained peaceful. In Arunachal Pradesh, barring a few incidents, there was a general atmosphere of peace (MHA, 2014). Naga insurgency started in the 1950ies and is known as the mother of all insurgencies and considered to be one of the oldest unresolved armed conflicts, not only in India but all over the world (Prakash, (2011).

The sheer number of armed rebel groups in the region is astounding. Manipur tops the list with forty such organisations, six of which are banned, and in addition there are nine active and twenty-five inactive rebel groups. Assam is next on the list with thirty-four rebel groups: two of which are banned, with six active and twenty-six inactive armed groups. Meghalaya has four armed rebel groups, of which three are active and one inactive. Mizoram has two rebel organisations and both are listed as active. Nagaland has two active and two inactive groups of rebels. Tripura has two rebel groups that are banned, in addition to one active and twenty-two inactive groups. Only Arunachal, according to this count, has no armed rebel organisation (Mahanta, 2013).

Even before the country gained independence, there were conflicts amongst the tribals themselves, and between the tribals and non-tribals. There were also tribes like the Nagas who fought against the British. To counter this, the British used the divide and rule policy and made the Kukis fight against the Nagas. The situation aggravated when the British brought in, migrant workers and others for their work and administration. This caused an existential threat to the indigenous population and they began to express their discomfort and grievances. When India became independent, the region did not want to associate with the Indian Union as they had nothing in common with the mainland India, be it language, religion, customs or habits. The unwilling merger into the Indian union resulted in the insurgency movements soon after independence, beginning with Nagas' demand for greater Nagaland. This was followed by demands by other tribal groups for their independence. In order to have dominance in a particular territory, each tribe wanted to get rid of the other groups, staying in the locality. This escalated into an ethnic tension in the region leading to violence and genocide.

4.1.1. Ethnic Group Formation

People tend to form groups and associations in order to fulfill their aspirations and demands. The convivial tendency of the humans naturally unites and organises them together to attain a common goals. NEI being the paradise of tribal population, has seen the establishment of various affinity groups on ethnic lines to safeguard their own identities and aspirations. Demand for autonomy or a separate statehood has become one of the major aspirations of each ethnic group in the region. This has resulted in ethnic group formation, and conflicts between state and ethnic groups, and among themselves.

Ethnocentrism is the main cause for ethnic group formation in the region. People have a tendency to see their group as superior, and do not want to associate with the other. This would result in identity formation, unique to each ethnic group. People would love to preserve their cultural identity at any cost because it distinguishes them from other ethnic groups. Pyal, (2006:213) deems that identity reflects both likeness and exclusivity. This unique identity not only distinguishes a group from another but also contributes to the sameness and oneness of its members for identification. This identity plays a major role in ethnic formation to achieve a particular goal for their ethnic group. .

Eventually, each ethnic group began to see the other group, living the same territory as a hindrance to their aspirations and prosperity. Immigration to the region fostered antagonistic natives against 'outsiders'. Ethnic group formation could be considered as one of the major causes for conflicts in the region.

Today groups based on ethnic lines are seen in the political, social, cultural, educational and intellectual spheres. The formation of groups favours the grouped over the ungrouped. Brass (1991:247) identifies three processes for ethnic identity formation and conflicts. 1. Intra-group fight for control over material resources. 2. Inter-group fight for rights, privileges and resources. 3. Conflict between the state and the dominant group on the one hand, and the group that inhabits its territory on the other hand.

Ethnic group formation in the Northeast is based on certain social problems, historic-cultural legacies and political aspirations. By way of organising themselves into an ethnic body, groups hope to stabilise their identity. This in turn results in the demand

for a separate administrative unit comprising of areas where a particular ethno-cultural group has majority. The ethnic group formation of this sort has already taken a serious turn in some of the states, giving rise to several insurgent groups. Conflicts arise among these ethnic groups due to aspirations for regional supremacy and deprivation of economic and educational opportunities. (Sarma and Sharma, 2012: 184). Mahanta, (2007) also considers that in NEI, there have been tendencies to demand for separate homeland in exclusive ethnic terms. This has resulted in conflict between the state and community on the one hand, and conflict between community-community on the other hand. The struggle for 'greater Nagaland' paved way for the reaction of other ethnic groups in Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh resulting in a number of ethnic movements.

4.1.2. Ethnic Movements in the Northeast

The first armed ethnic movement for independence, from independent India, was launched by the Nagas in 1956 under the leadership of NNC. Manipur also suffered armed violence with the formation of UNLF on 24 November 1964. Another significant Manipuri separatist armed group known as the RPF and its armed wing, PLA have been engaging in armed struggle since 1976. Most feared among them is KYKL, which has taken up social afflictions, such as fighting corruption, drug trafficking and substandard education practices. Another group, PREPAK was established in the 1970ies with the objective of fighting for Manipur's independence from India. Assam, the most dominant state in the NEI in terms of demography and resources, has also been plagued by insurgent violence, since 1979 with the formation of ULFA. It is important to note that most of these insurgent groups receive help from our neighbouring countries like China, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar (Goswami, 2010).

The dissident movements of the post-independence period are in a way the continuation of the maladies of the pre-independence period. Though Nagaland was declared the sixteenth state of the Indian Union, some organisations in Nagaland were not happy with it. Even today, they still fight for the sovereignty of Nagaland. The state of Manipur also experienced political movements for autonomy, and statehood was given in 1972, yet the trouble continues. In Tripura, the tension in between the tribals and non-

tribals arose when the tribals felt that they were being exploited by the non-tribals. Mizoram went through a long spell of political movement for autonomy. Though Mizoram received statehood in February 1987, it still has problems with its ethnic minorities. In Assam, both the plain and the hill tribes did not identify themselves with the movement, led by the Assamese speaking community. This resulted in separatist movements of their own like the Bodo insurgency and political movements in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hill's districts (Mazumdar and Kalita, 2012). But the government either uses delay tactics in the name of dialogue and negotiation or uses extreme methods like military power to suppress these movements. Seldom are the issues and causes of these problems, analysed and addressed.

Rizvi, (2006: 22) states that "the dominant form of tribal movement in North-East India is political with varied goals ranging from waging struggle within the constitutional framework to demanding full autonomy through armed insurgency". It is a common practice that when a demand of an ethnic community is not fulfilled by the government, they make movements demanding a separate state for their own ethnic community. The communities that are demanding separate statehood include Khasis, Bodos, Garos, and Kharbis (Deka and Bhattacharya, 2012).

The Assam Movement was led by students unions whose main strategy was to refrain from elections. This strategy became the model for other ethnic movements that cropped up throughout Assam in the post 1985 period. Among these, the most significant and enduring was the Bodoland movement, which indeed finds many parallels with the Assam Movement in its strategies of collective mobilisation and political bargaining (Sharma, 2006). One of the major reasons for Assam Movement was the issue of language. The two successive language movements in the state witnessed violent conflicts between ethnic Assamese and Hindu Bengalis (Borah, 2012). According to Baruah, (1986) a political turmoil demanding deportation of illegal immigrants, occurred in Assam in 1979. A number of talks between the government of India and the movement leaders could not bring about a lasting solution. As a result, political instability, civil disobedience and ethnic violence emerged in this period.

The Assam crisis reached its peak when ULFA extremists emerged as a natural ally to AASU led anti-foreigner movement since 1979. The Assamese-Bengali antipathies, which constituted essentially a middle class phenomenon, eventually turned into a mass movement directed against all non- Assamese in general. ULFA ideologues refused to merge Assamese with the rest of India (Choudhury, 2006). Barpujari, (1998: 90) expresses his concern that "Assam is in ferment and turmoil. While ULFA militants had been demanding *swadhin* Asom, autonomous demands of different ethnic groups like: Bodos, Karbis, Dimasas, Koch-rajbongshis, Rabha-Hajongs, Tiwas, Misings, had caused serious concern to the authorities at Dispur and New Delhi". The tension all the more got aggravated when British tried to impose Bengali as the medium of instruction in the schools of Assam. This made the Assamese feel that they would be a minority and Bengalis would be the majority in Assam (Baruah, 2012a).

"Many tribals in Assam are today on the verge of rejecting composite Assamese identity, the core element of which has been the Assamese language" (Bhagabati, 1992: 157). The Bodos, a branch of the great Mongoloid stock, are one of the earliest settlers in Assam, who migrated from China, Tibet, Mongolia and Serbia (Bhattacharjee, 1996: 22). Their demand for a Bodo homeland, constituted as a distinct state within the Indian Union, is the most serious source of political violence in Assam (Baruah, 1999: 174). Along with them, the movements of the Bodo, Karbi, Tiwa, Mishing, Deori and Sonowal Kacharis came to the forefront and adversely affected peace, growth and development of the state (Sarma and Sharma, 2012).

The success of the movement by one group normally encourages another with similar demands. Thus, when Bodos achieved autonomy, other major groups in the state like Karbis and Koch-Rajbongshis came forward with the demand for autonomy. (Goswami, 2014) argues that taking inspiration from other communities, the Koch-Rajbongshis of Assam raised their linguistic demands for the creation of a new state. Meanwhile, Kamatapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), a militant organisation, of the Koch-Rajbongshis was formed in 1995. It has been demanding the formation of a sovereign state of Kamatapur, independent of the Indian Union. However, political attention and mobilisation have not reached the same pitch, as that of the Bodos.

The Bodoland movement began in the 1960ies and reached its culmination in the 1980ies with the demand of Roman script. Thereafter, the Bodos demanded a separate state bifurcating Assam (Gupta and Sarma, 2012). The Bodo struggle for autonomy was the result of a mass mobilisation emerged out of a 'we feeling'. Like some other communities in the NEI, they too wanted to assert their identity and control the political and economic power of their locality. Hence, they demanded an administrative arrangement, wherein they could participate in the decision making process (Kalita, 2012).

Among all the ethnic movements of Assam, the most virulent one, is the case of the Bodos. Bodos are the largest tribal group followed by Mishing and Karbis in Assam. Though the Bodos in general demand for a separate state, different Bodo groups and organisations have different goals. Some groups demand a separate Bodoland state, while the hardcore extremists demand secession from Indian Union (Das, 2010). Thus the region has been witnessing a number of ethnic movements, in order to achieve their goals. The movement has often led to violence with the endorsement of the insurgent groups on ethnic lines, resulting in a number of ethnic conflicts in the region.

4.1.3. Ethnic Conflicts in Northeast India

Although the entire region has experienced ethnic conflicts at one time or another, it has been intense in few of the states. The three states that are known for their conflicts based on ethnicity in the region are Nagaland, Manipur and Assam. What began in Nagaland, spread to Manipur and then to Assam. The states of Meghalaya, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura also experienced ethnic conflicts at different periods of time. Nagas' desire for a greater Nagaland can be considered as the beginning of ethnic conflicts in the region. Nagas are also spread out in adjoining states that do not want any compromise on their territorial area. Due to this, the conflict extended to Manipur that has a large number of Nagas, in the 1990ies.

Borah, (2012) writes that there were clashes between Meiteis and Muslims in 1993 and Kukis and Paitei in 1997-98. Nagaland also experienced similar ethnic conflicts between Chakhesangs and Tangkhuls in Phek district during 1995-1996. Apart from this,

there have been a large number of violent conflicts in these two states between Naga-Kuki, Kuki-Paitei, Naga-Meitei, and Meitei-Muslims for a long time. The economic blockade of the highway to Manipur by the All Naga students' Association was of great concern, causing tension in both states of Manipur and Nagaland.

Tripura experienced excessive immigration of Bengalis from the, then East Pakistan (present Bangladesh) that caused a large demographic change in the state. The indigenous people felt as if their existence was threatened, when the land was given to Bengalis for cultivation. This made them retaliate and fight against the 'outsiders' resulting in the loss of life and property. Mizoram experienced ethnic conflicts between the Mizos and the Reangs. There have also been conflicts between the locals and the outsiders, especially the Chakmas. Arunachal Pradesh experienced conflicts between the natives and the Chakmas. Apart from these, there are other occasional clashes between different ethnic groups for political and economic gain.

Meghalaya is a state with three major tribes: the Khasis, the Garos and the Jaintias. The indigenous people, especially the Khasis, who inhabit the Shillong area felt threatened by the arrival of migrant Bengalis, Marwaris and the Nepalese. According to Nag, (2005) the conflict began in Meghalaya, when the natives retaliated against the government of Assam that decided to nominate non-tribals to the district councils of both Khasi and Jaintia hills. The 1979 violence saw the killing of 34 non-tribals, mainly Bengalis, in which thousands fled their homes. In 1987 violence broke out and this time the Nepalese were the victims. Again in 1992, the Marwari business community was targeted. Out of 30 people who lost their lives, 27 were non-tribals. Apart from these there is tension between Khasi-Garo and Khasi-Jaintia for affirming their identity and gaining socio-political and economic advantage.

Assam has been witnessing ethnic conflicts since 1979 with the anti-immigrant movement. The failure in the talk between the government of India and the movement leaders resulted in political instability, civil disobedience and ethnic violence. The worst of this kind was experienced in 1984 elections, in which more than 3000 people got killed (Baruah, 1986). In 1989, violence peaked between the Assamese and the immigrants over who should, and should not be registered for the elections so much so, that no elections at

all, could be held in the state (Austin and Gupta, 1994). 1993, 1996, 1998 and 2014 witnessed conflicts between Bodos and Santhals. Many got displaced and there was loss of life and property. The state also had to witness conflict between Karbis and Kukis in 2003 and between Karbis and Dimasas in 2005. The year 2008 and 2012 saw deadly conflict between the Bodos and Bengali Muslims in which both sides incurred loss of lives and property.

4.1.3.1. Causes of Ethnic Conflicts in NEI

There are a number of causes for ethnic conflicts in Northeast. The region being a multi-ethnic society is vulnerable to conflicts of various sorts. No single malady is adequate to explain the causes of ethnic conflicts. The reasons vary from exploitation of the minorities, fear of majorities becoming minorities, unequal distribution of resources, economic inequalities, lack of opportunities in the decision-making process, illegal immigration leading to the loss of land and other privileges of the indigenous people, desire to have autonomy or even sovereignty within the Indian Union and even fear of losing one's ethnic identity. Once a conflict occurs, the enemy image is formed, which is always retained mentally while dealing with the members of other groups as well. This creates suspicion and misunderstanding, further worsening the relationship and unity among various ethnic groups.

There are also occasions, wherein the elites in the group manipulate the members to fight against other groups for their political and economic advantage. Every ethnic group also tries to form a political party, based on their ethnicity. This makes the political arena corrupt and biased. The political parties who are in power try to dole out favours for their group members. This creates dissatisfaction and frustration among the members of other groups. Adding fuel to this crisis, is the problem of unemployment and underdevelopment. The unemployed youth engage in anti-social activities to make easy money and indulge in extortion and militancy. Thus a number of factors have contributed to the disturbance and ethnic conflicts in the region. Some of the major causes of conflicts in the NEI have been elaborated.

4.1.3.1.1. Identity Crisis

One of the major causes of ethnic conflicts is the fear of losing the identity of one's ethnicity. This could happen to both the majority and the minority communities. For chances are, that a large number of immigrants might create a sort of fear psychosis among the majority: that they might become minority in their own place. When the strong and powerful minorities occupy important positions in the political and economic spheres, a sort of identity crisis may occur, for the majority. This could also happen to minority communities, wherein the distribution of power and resources are uneven, and when their traditions and practices are not respected. This sort of crisis may lead to suspicion among one another, further leading to dispute and violence. Hence, each group wants to highlight their own identity by way of preserving their native language, land, natural resources and socio-political power. Every group wants to prove that they live with dignity and identity. In order to preserve their unique identity, they are willing to fight against even their friends and neighbors, belonging to other ethnic groups.

One of the major reasons for identity crisis in the region is that, people are either conscious of their unique identity, or that they are afraid of losing their distinct identity. Buzarbaruah, (2012) observes that many of these ethnic groups feel that their interests and identity are being threatened by others and that they are suppressed by the ruling class, who belong to the ethnic majority. As a result, a demand for more autonomy and in many cases even attempts to separate from the nation itself is resorted to. Singh, (1992) argues that tribal ethnicity awareness is evident and dynamic in the Northeast, with each ethnic community asserting and trying to preserve ones' identity.

The movements of various communities to assert and protect their 'ethnic' identity are the most significant issues of the contemporary socio-political conflicts in India's northeast. Many smaller groups drawing inspiration from major ethnic groups are also now beginning to assert their identities. Some are even busy inventing separate identities (Prakash, 2011). Rizvi, (2006: 26) finds that most of the communities in the region were not conscious of their ethnic identities in the pre-colonial period and their ethnic world view was confined to their families, clans and villages. It was during the colonial period

that the tribals became conscious of their unique ethnic identity and tried to preserve it together with improving their social, economic and political status.

Immigration is one of the main reasons for identity crisis among the indigenous people of the Northeast (Hussain, 2004:314). Mostly these immigrants are from neighboring countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Burma, Bhutan and Afghanistan. The immigrants, for their survival, occupy and buy land from the natives for cultivation and business purposes, by paying attractive amount of money. In the long run, many natives become landless and dispute arises between the 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. This can also lead to a cultural disintegration and loss of identity for the indigenous people. Since land is very precious to the tribals, as it galvanizes their identity, once the 'outsiders' occupy the land, their very existence is at stake. Bhaumik, (2009:62) considers land alienation, as one of the major reasons for ethnic tension in the region.

According to Bhan, (1999) the natives feel threatened by the very presence of the 'outsiders'. Unchecked and large scale illegal immigration from over the years in the northeast, particularly in Assam, changed the demographic, linguistic and socio-cultural composition of the region. It is a common fact that "demographic change anywhere in the world is resented by an indigenous community, they perceive the settlers as a threat" (Bhaumik, 2010: 124). Every individual or group has some sort of affinity towards their place of origin. People do not want to compromise on the land they are attached to, and do not allow others to encroach it. Losing land would mean to lose one's heritage and identity - that no one likes to compromise.

4.1.3.1.2. Social Exclusion

Most of the grievances of the people emerge due to a sense being deprived from what is rightfully theirs. This situation intensifies when the deprived see others benefit from the privileges that are denied to them. This deprivation leads to frustration and retaliation. In an organisational set-up, deprivation mainly happens on the basis of the distribution of power and resources. In a multi-ethnic society, each ethnic group expects that they have adequate share of the resources of the state and have a voice in the decision-making process. When one group finds unequal distribution of property, wealth

or facilities, in comparison with that of other groups, they feel deprived, sidelined and denied. The best way to get their grievances redressed is to stand united and fight for their 'common cause'. In order to actualise their goals, they even resort to violent means such as extortion, kidnapping, killing and even genocide.

Routray, (2008) argues that movements for identity is a struggle for due recognition, in the socio-political set up. The writer argues that in the deprivation theory, social movements take place among the people who feel deprived of some goods and services and they are most likely to organise a social movement to improve their conditions. Meyer, (1998) mentions that the third world politics is mainly played on ethnic lines, wherein various demands are proposed to the government through sub-national groups. Since national resources are limited, this is often a zero-sum game. Therefore, conflict escalates between these sub-national ethnic parties which are in competition for the available scarce resources. As each ethnic party demands more of the limited resources, there is all the possibility for inter group political conflicts. Fenton, (2003:183) argues that "ethnicity is tied into the politics of distribution by the fact that access to resources follows ethnic lines".

Bijukumar, (2013) speaks of social exclusion as one of the major reasons for ethnic conflicts in the northeast. Social exclusion results in the denial of access to opportunities, resources, power and social identities based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, language, caste or region. Basically in the northeast, different groups belonging to different tribes feel that they do not have equal opportunity with the dominant tribe that is in power. Most of the ethnic assertions are meant to protect the identity, language and culture of a particular group. He further mentions that in the process of nation-building, some communities were not given enough importance due to their low numerical strength or lack of political power. When the state is busy building national identity, smaller communities feel that they lose their identity and thus go against the national interests.

Socio-economic marginalisation was indeed an important factor that particularly contributed to the resentment of tribal ethnic minorities (Saikia, 2011: 51).Buzarbaruah, (2012: 28) believes that the Northeastern people feel neglected, by the 'mainstream' and

the government: this is one of the causes of ethnic tensions in the region. Kothari, (1989: 22) argues that when people proclaim equality as a social ideal and inequality as the result of development and modernisation, each individual and group considers its loss as someone else's gain. They also interpret that the others gain freebies from the government as a result of their unity and organisation, for getting things done.

4.1.3.1.3. Political Conspiracies & Motives

The attempt of the elites in a society to manipulate innocent people, in the name of ethnicity, to grab power is often seen in the society. They promise to emancipate the people from their miseries, if they are voted to political power. But once they are voted to power, they forget the people who stood by them and fought for them. According to Buzarbaruah, (2012: 29) in most cases, ethnic conflicts arise due to political motives and administrative convenience. Some groups form parties based on ethnicity, to achieve their political interests. They try to persuade and incite ethnic groups into conflicts, to achieve their common goal. It is seen that many political parties give greater importance on ethnic loyalties, to achieve power and prepare a stage for ethnic conflict.

Once an ethnic community gets recognised as a unique group, it begins to bargain for a political recognition even to the extent of seeking sovereignty (Isajiw, 2000). "Identity politics that polarise people and groups are creating fault lines between 'us' and 'them'" (Mahanta, 2007: 128). (Boehlke, (2009) considers that insurgent groups bloomed out of ethnic conflicts strive to achieve state-related power. Demmers, (2012:29) quoting constructivist elite theories of conflict, argues that ethnic violence is a political strategy to attain political support. Kuusik, (2010:2) feels that denying people the possibility of political participation and curtailing the freedom to express themselves, are significant causes for conflict.

Acquisition of political power and recognition of traditional institutions, through struggles of one ethnic group can excite stronger sentiments and emotions, among other groups which might lead to conflicts and violence (Garg, 2007). For example, Sonowal, (2013) opines that the Bodo elites feel that, in order to liberate the Bodos from the backwardness and enable them to lead a respectful life in the composite Assamese

society, they must have political power. For this the Bodos must be united and organised on the basis of their distinct cultural traits, which would help them not only in maintaining a distinct identity but also in bargaining for power sharing with the ruling majority. Later on, this identity assertion and political aspiration get transformed into a movement. "Smaller communities cannot influence the political verdict and are pushed to the edge of the economic and political system. Then they start demanding for separate states and autonomy" (Deka and Bhattacharya, 2012: 96). Chatterjee, (2004) argues that once a group attains political power; they twist the rules of the land in their favour.

4.1.3.1.4. Underdevelopment & Unemployment

Ethnic conflicts are more frequent in underdeveloped and developing countries, in comparison to developed countries. Hence, perhaps underdevelopment could be one of the major reasons for ethnic conflicts around the globe. It is true in the case of NEI as well. If we look at the present economic status of NEI, it is evident that though the region has great natural resources, it is economically backward due to its mismanagement and underutilisation. Many people still live below poverty line and under inhuman living conditions. The wealth is amassed by a few elites like: politicians, bureaucrats and the businessmen who manipulate government projects and other developmental funds for their wellbeing. It hampers the development of the locality in various fields: be it education, health, transport or communication. The poor who have no accessibility to possible routes of success will always remain poor.

When people lack enough facilities for an education, it results in illiteracy and unemployment. Unemployment leads to poverty and poverty leads to resentment. People who mostly engage in insurgent and militant activities are unemployed or underemployed youth. Once people have decent means of livelihood, they will be content and will engage themselves in constructive activities instead. A lot of youth in the region are unemployed because they are not well-educated. Also, there are not enough employment opportunities available for them in the locality. There is also a dearth of vocational training courses available in the region, which makes the situation worse. What's more, many people from the region are uncomfortable to leave the region for a job, because of the unfavorable response they receive in the 'mainland'.

There is no doubt that the region has the potential and resources to become an economic powerhouse of the country. What is lacking though, is the political will that concentrates on capacity-building and problem solving. It is a tragedy that we remain poor amidst plenty because of our ignorance and isolation (Singh, 2010b:27). What is required is the proper utilisation of these favorable conditions and resources for the common good. It requires co-ordination from both central and state governments, and the co-operation of the local people. Once the people are employed and the area is developed, anti-social elements will be on the decrease.

4.2. Relevance of Ethnic Conflict Transformation in the Northeast

Conflicts of various natures have been part of NEI for a long time. The people of the region live under fear, tension and confusion. They do not experience complete freedom of movement and expression, due to the perennial conflicting nature of the region. They become victims at the hands of the insurgents and the security forces. On the one hand, they want to safeguard their distinct ethnic identity and support the people who fight for their cause, and on the other hand, they want to live a peaceful life. Hence many people are already fed up with the armed insurgencies and militant activities. So the need of the hour is to transform these conflicts to ensure peaceful coexistence of the various ethnic communities. This can facilitate better relationship between the ethnic groups and other developmental activities.

The ethnic conflicts in Northeast have had adverse consequences. They have negatively affected the region economically, socially, politically, emotionally, culturally and even intellectually. Though it has united the people to fight for their rights, it has really hampered the growth and development of the region. The frequent occurrence of ethnic conflicts hinders not only the economic development, but also the socio-cultural advancement. The rest of the world sees the region as troublesome and aggressive. Since the 'success' of violence depends on the depth and width of harm done to the 'enemy', the poor civilians sustain maximum damage. Thousands of people from different communities have lost their lives and their dear and near ones. Many were grievously injured and bedridden for years. Apart from these, people have lost their houses,

cultivation and other assets. This situation cannot be allowed to continue for if it does, it would hamper the peace and prosperity, not only of the region but of the entire country.

Examples from the Northeast show that state-centric approach to peace-building, has failed to produce desired result. The state is interested only in mitigating or controlling a conflict with immediate effect (Biswas, 2010:42). Once it is controlled and managed, the state forces withdraw from the scene and conflicts takes place again, at the next opportune time. But peacebuilding in its real sense denotes conflict transformation, wherein lasting peace is achieved with the consent of the parties. Mahanta, (2010:164) argues that since conflict normally transforms perceptions by accentuating the differences between individuals and groups, effective CT can improve mutual understanding. Even when people's interests, values, and needs are different and even non-reconcilable, progress can be made if each group gains better understanding of the other.

4.2.1. Northeast: A Safe Haven for Insurgency and Militancy

Northeast is considered to be 'the conflict zone' of India, especially in terms of ethnic conflicts, insurgencies and militancy. In fact, all these three elements are interrelated and are destructive. Over the years, the region has experienced a number of conflicts, based on ethnicity. A lot of people have lost their lives, many have become homeless, and above all fear and anxiety continue to haunt the region. The 'mainland India' and even the central government consider the region as troublesome and underdeveloped. Many people from other regions are not willing to come and work in this area and the corporate industry is unwilling to invest, considering the conflicting nature of the region.

NEI is considered to be South Asia's hottest trouble spots, not only because the region has more than 50 armed insurgent organisations operating and fighting the Indian State, but also because of their trans-border linkages. Most of the insurgent groups from the Northeastern states have links with neighbouring countries. In 1985 itself, ULFA opened shop in Bangladesh, setting up safe houses bordering Meghalaya. In 1990, ULFA had its Pakistani contacts in place. Though NSCN (IM) is in peace talks with the Government of India, it maintains strong linkages with groups in Thailand, Cambodia

and Bangladesh. Arunachal Pradesh provides a transit route from Myanmar for ULFA, NSCN (K), UNLF and PLA. Its neighbouring districts with Nagaland provide hiding places for NSCN and ULFA. Mizoram is a safe passage from Bangladesh to the NSCN (IM) for bringing weapons purchased from South-East Asia. Meghalaya provides a transit route from Bangladesh for NSCN (IM), which has base in Garo Hills (Nishant and Pawar, 2011).

Major insurgency groups active in the northeastern states are listed below:

Assam

1. United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)
2. National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB)

Manipur

1. People's Liberation Army (PLA)
2. United National Liberation Front (UNLF)
3. People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK)
4. Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP)
5. KangleiYaol Kanba Lup (KYKL)
6. Manipur People's Liberation Front (MPLF)
7. Revolutionary People's Front (RPF)
8. Coordination Committee Cor-com

Meghalaya

1. Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC)
2. Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA)

Tripura

1. All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF)
2. National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT)

Nagaland

1. The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) [NSCN(IM)]
2. The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang) [NSCN (K)]

Source: Annual report 2013-2014, MHA, GOI.

Due to ethnic conflicts, insurgency, militancy and cross-border terrorism, the peaceful ambience is lost in the region. The governments, both at the state and the center use methods of suppression to control the immediate violence. Once the military moves out of the locality the 'rebels' unite and attack public agencies and even civilians. Hence, a lasting solution is required to find sustainable peace in the region. The method of conflict transformation is of great significance in this regard.

4.2.2. Human Rights Violations

Ethnic conflict in the region has resulted in a lot of human rights violations. People are often denied their right to life, property, livelihood, education, employment, communication etc. The public are troubled by both state and non-state actors. On the one hand, they are harassed by the non-state actors who seek shelter and food from the civilians, and compel the youth to join the group to fight for their 'common goal'. On the other hand, the security personnel in the name of combing operation and questioning the whereabouts of their villagers or family members, harass and torture innocent people. Apart from this, their friends and neighbours from other communities suffer extortion and sometimes, even ethnic cleansing. Some militant groups do not even spare the people who took shelter in relief camps. A lot of human rights violations have taken place in the region, over the last few decades.

4.2.2.1. Loss of Lives and Property

The immediate outcome of any direct violence is the loss of lives, injury and loss of property. The victims are often those who have no direct or indirect link with the violence. This has also resulted in extreme poverty, fear and anxiety, and broken relationships of locals and those belonging to other communities. In short, it is the poor, the weak and the marginalised who become the victims of ethnic conflicts, in terms. There is no win-win situation in a conflict. In fact both parties lose either in terms of life or property. Conflicts in the northeast cite that every ethnic group that has been involved in a conflict has become a victim of violence. From the oldest instance of violence in the Naga-Kuki conflict, to the recent Kokrajhar violence, experience shows that the outcome of conflicts is nothing, but loss of life and wealth.

In an ethnic conflict situation, human security is at its worst. The state is unable to protect lives and property entirely. Since conflict often takes place between neighbors from different ethnic groups and does not just erupt on a street, the security personnel are unable to foresee the timing, duration and intensity of the violence. There are occasions wherein even the security personnel become victims of ethnic violence. Rastogi, (1986) says that due to violence in the northeast thousands of people have lost their lives and many have been severely injured. The government also has experienced heavy loss on damaged and destroyed public property, expenditure on armed personnel and administrative staff from other states.

4.2.2.2. Internal Displacement

One of the aftermaths of ethnic conflict is internal displacement, mainly of minorities. This is a usual occurrence whenever a conflict takes place on ethnic lines. According to Dutta et al., (2012) conflicts of this nature, have resulted in internal displacement of many members of one ethnic group which happens to be a minority, in a specific geographical or political territory. The implications of internal displacement include loss of land, loss of life-sustaining resources including social networks, and access to common property resources. The plight of the displaced is very miserable and often hopeless, as they are left with no other option but to seek help from the very authority responsible for their displacement. In terms of an internally-displaced population, Assam is the worst-affected state in the northeast. The problem of internal displacement has assumed alarming proportion in Assam, over the last few years.

According to Phukan, (2013) a large number of people were displaced all over Assam, during the 1960ies, 70ies and 80ies. The conflicts between the Bodos and the Bengali Muslims and between the Bodos and the Santhals in the 1990ies resulted in the displacement of thousands of people. The 2008 and 2012 conflicts between the Bodos and the Muslims, and the 2014 conflict between the Bodos and the Santhals also witnessed a large number of people, being displaced. The two hill districts of Assam: North Cachar and Karbi Anglong, also experienced ethnic conflicts between Karbi-Kuki, Karbi-Dimasa, Dimasa-Hmar and Dimasa-Zeme which caused the displacement of thousands.

The conflicts that the Northeast has experienced for two decades have caused hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDP). The Anti-Foreigner Movement in Assam, 1979-1985 displaced 137,000 persons. The Bodo conflict with the Muslims, Bengali Hindus and Santhals, caused 350,000 IDPs, 190,000 of them Santhal. The tribal-Bengali conflict in Shillong in Meghalaya in the 1980s caused 25,000-35,000 IDPs. Some 1,400 Bengalis and 280 tribals were killed and 190,000 persons were displaced in the 1980s in Tripura. The Kuki-Paitei and Naga-Kuki conflicts in Manipur resulted in the burning of 10,000 houses, death of 2,000 persons and displacement of more than 50,000 (Fernandes, 2008:80).

The Karbi-Dimasa ethnic conflicts saw the displacement of more than forty four thousand people, who were deprived of essential food, water, housing, clothes and sanitation. Indeed, displacement is a highly disruptive and painful experience (Borah, 2012). Displacement of the Reangs from Mizoram and the Chakmas from Arunachal Pradesh shows that these two normally peaceful states also experienced ethnic conflicts and displacement. Therefore, almost all the Northeastern states experienced internal displacement as an aftermath of ethnic conflicts. However, the intensity and frequency are higher in Assam than any other state of the region.

4.2.3. Internal & External Security Concerns

Ethnic conflicts and its repercussions in NEI have adversely affected the internal and external security of the nation. Ethnic conflicts have created insurgency, militancy and terrorism in the region disturbing the peace and tranquility of the nation. Insurgents have their roots in ethnicity and 'fight for the cause' of their ethnic group. Insurgency is considered today as one of the means to fulfill a group's socio-cultural, political and economic demands. The insurgents are often sheltered in neighbouring countries, which is a thorn in the flesh for the Indian state. Many of the insurgent groups have asylums across the borders in Bangladesh, Myanmar and Bhutan: as they are very convenient for them geographically and are weak in counter insurgency operations. The report suggesting that the insurgents receive help from China as well, is a matter of great concern for the government of India. Baruah, (2005) opines that insurgency is one of the major problems in the Northeast, is therefore considered as a special fraction of the Indian Union.

The very fact that India shares its border with many nations, makes its task of internal and external security, more difficult. India shares ethnic, religious and cultural

affinities with its neighbours and in times of conflict, certain portion of tension overflows inward in the form of state-sponsored terrorism. Since these states can unleash terrorist activities in different capacities, they may use their own directly recruited and controlled terror squads, or may choose to work through proxies and client movements across the border. The terrorist menace from across the border is supported financially and materially by the government and institutions of neighbouring countries (Rawat, 2011).

Cross-border terrorism has been a major worry for the Indian leaders over the years because of the difficult terrains of the Indian borders and also the lack of proper border policies with neighbouring countries (Lama, 2010). India has sent a list of 200 northeast Indian rebel camp locations in Bangladesh, to Bangladeshi authorities (Hussain, 2010). In 1956, Angami Zapu Phizo, who started the first tribal insurgency in the country, went into exile in Britain, via the then East Pakistan, from where he led the Naga bush-war against New Delhi, until his death in April 1990. Phizo's successors in the Naga movement, and many other militant groups have long operated from bases outside India (Rai, 2009).

In the changing security scenario, it is becoming increasingly difficult to separate internal and external threats. Both of these pose challenges before India to maintain stability and security conditions in the country. No nation can be secure unless its internal security is also ensured. A nation in chaos cannot be safe from external threats. Internal strife and disorder can damage national interests, endanger the lives of citizens, lead to breakdown of law and order, make enforcement of laws difficult and the country more vulnerable to external threats. In such a state, society cannot progress smoothly nor can citizens feel secure (Yadav, 2014). NEI is a breeding ground for such extremists and militants. According to 2013 National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) reports, Assam reported the highest crime rate (54.2 percent), followed by Manipur (44.6 percent), while the total IPC crimes in the country was 11.5 percent only (Gaffar, 2013).

The use of neighbouring countries' territory by insurgents operating in India's northeast indeed is a serious security concern for the region and the nation (Sahni, 2001:

3). The peculiar situation in the northeastern states needs serious attention. Public debates and discussions must attempt to find a healthy solution to the problem. It also poses a serious threat to the internal security of the nation as hostile neighbouring countries are always looking for an opportunity to de-stabilise India. Since NEI is vulnerable to both internal and external security problems, related to separatism and militancy, it needs more care and attention (Deka and Bhattacharya, 2012: 92). Unless the nation safeguards its citizens from various kinds of threats arising from within, it cannot contain the threats perpetuated by external forces. Both internal and external security is inter-connected. Threat to it hinders the progress of the country. Therefore, NEI needs special attention in matters related to peacebuilding. Hence, CT approach is inevitable as far as peace is concerned in NEI.

4.2.4. Tribal Unity: A Pre-requisite for Peace in the Region

Peace is not something that can be achieved overnight. To achieve it in a heterogeneous society requires time, patience, commitment, perseverance and willingness from the part of the conflicting parties and the authorities concerned. NEI being a multi-ethnic society requires cooperation and collaboration from every corner, to achieve the lost state of peace. A society that is divided amongst itself will not be able to prosper. The situation in Northeast is such that different tribal groups; be it on the hills or in the plains fight for their demands and grievances. This has caused great turmoil, disturbing the peace in the region. Therefore, unity among various ethnic groups is a requirement to foster cordial relationship between various tribes and between the states for a harmonious existence.

The continued actions of insurgency and counter insurgency of the state and non-state armed groups, combined with the frequent strikes, *bandhs* and disruptions of normal life in the northeast is retarding the needed all round development. While government is spending huge amount on security and deployment of armies in the region, there are many developmental policies that go unimplemented and grappled with rampant corruptions, there is increasing poverty and social crime. There is a need to create good and congenial environment, in which individuals will grow up better citizens and thereby make better society (Debbarma, 2010: 154).

The development of the region has been hampered due to the perennial conflicts experienced in the region. Continuous tension and conflicts over the years have disabled

the government from implementing developmental projects. The entire focus of the state is to establish and maintain law and order. As a result, the region lags behind in terms of development. No multi-national companies or even local businessmen are willing to invest in the region as they are not confident in 'reaping a good harvest'. It is a fact that Northeast is blessed with a lot of natural resources like coal, bamboo, uranium, sand, stones, water and many more. However, the states are not in a position to tap these resources to the maximum due to the disturbance, existing in the region.

A journey to some of the Northeastern states would give the impression that people live in fear, anxiety, frustration, envy and anger. An uncertainty is visible with frequent unexpected strikes and *bandhs*. Innumerable groups and associations call *bandh* at their beck and call especially in states like Assam and Manipur. If an organisation calls for a *bandh* on a certain day, one can expect another *bandh* called by a different group. Often these organisations are formed on ethnic lines. *Bandh* also takes violent turns causing injury to people and destroying property. Business communities, farmers, offices, and educational institutions are affected due to the '*bandh* culture' in the region. This has also adversely affected the tourist prospects of the region. Hence, unity of the society is a must for peace and development in Northeast.

4.3. Scope of Conflict Transformation: The Role of Media

The role of media in CT has been a point of discussion in the academic and research circles. Media, being a powerful entity, have the potential to broker the lost unity between the parties in conflict. Rehman, (2014:44) believes that journalists reporting from a conflict zone have the advantage of seeing both sides of the coin. And as a journalist, one has to be objective and see the other side of the story and report it authentically. The reporting shall not be confined to the government press releases on the number of militants killed and the number of arms and ammunition recovered. She feels that journalists can actually act as a bridge and go to the roots of the complex issues that lead young teens to take up arms.

In a conflict situation, transformation of structure, actor, issue and person is a crucial factor in transforming the conflict. Structural transformation makes changes in the

power structure. Actor transformation takes place when there is change in leadership. Issue transformation makes changes in issues and personal transformation changes perspectives and desire for reconciliation (Mahanta, 2010: 166). Media can play a major role in making structural and cultural changes that that are required for CT. Media practitioners are able to influence the people by organising awareness programs, conducting interviews to know the opinions of different people, organising inter-cultural festivals and bringing out the injustices done to any particular community, in the public domain.

4.3.1. Mass Media in NEI

For any institution to carry out its vision and mission, it requires willingness from the part of its members, to work towards its goals, proper infrastructural facilities and conducive ambience to execute its plans. Media being an independent institution is also no exception to this general norm. But in Northeast, media lack proper infrastructural facilities and a peaceful ambience to carry out their roles. There were instances wherein media persons were threatened, harassed and even killed for either reporting or for not reporting. Under such circumstances, many organisations do not risk the setting up of print or electronic media in the region. This makes the industry weak, putting it in the hands of a few individuals, who may not be able to provide security and facilities for their staff. Print media are more prominent in Northeast than electronic media, although the trend has been changing in the recent past.

The available history of modern media in NEI reveals that Missionary initiatives and colonial commercial interests facilitated the growth of print media in the region. Among the northeastern states, Assam stands at the top of the list. *Orunodoi* published in 1846 by the American Baptist Missionaries is considered to be the earliest newspaper in Assam. In Tripura, *Samachar Darpan* established in 1818 was published from Kolkata in undivided Bengal. Two literary newspapers *Dhumketu* and *Bangabhasha* were published from Tripura in 1903. Media in Meghalaya started with *Lielieh*, a daily newspaper. However, the first ever secular newspaper by the name, *U Khasi Mynta* was published in 1896. Print Media in Mizoram had its origin in the 1890ies. In Manipur, print media started relatively later, with *Meitei Chanu* in 1920. The first newspaper that can be traced

back to Nagaland was in Angami language, *Ketho Mu Keviin* in 1957. In Arunachal Pradesh, print media began in 1987 with the *Echo of Arunachal* (Charvak, 2015). But today there are a number of newspapers being circulated in the Northeast in vernacular languages, English and Hindi although the circulation statistics is not very encouraging. The number of electronic media is also on the increase.

Table 4.1

Major newspapers published from different states of NEI

S.I. Nos	Name of the News Papers	State
1	Arunachal Times	Arunachal Pradesh
2	Arunachal Front	Arunachal Pradesh
3	Sentinel	Assam
4	Asamiya Pratidin	Assam
5	Assam Tribune	Assam
6	DainikAsam	Assam
7	Sangai Express	Manipur
8	The Shillong Times	Meghalaya
9	Highlander	Mizoram
10	Vanglaini	Mizoram
11	Izol Post	Mizoram
12	Zozam Times	Mizoram
13	Nagaland Post	Nagaland
14	Sikkim Express	Sikkim
15	Sikkim Now	Sikkim
16	Prajashakti (Nepali)	Sikkim
17	Sikkim Reporter (Nepali)	Sikkim
18	DainikSambad	Tripura
19	DainikGanadoot	Tripura
20	Daily Desher Katha	Tripura
21	SyandanPatrika	Tripura

Source: GoI, Ministry of DoNER, News papers from Northeast India.

The above table clearly shows that the media industry has not risen to national standards in the Northeast. Many print media are still owned and edited by individuals. This limits their scope for larger outlook of issues and concerns. Although there are a few local newspapers, the region lacks a common newspaper that can highlight common concerns and issues of the people. This encourages the central government to ignore the demands and concerns faced by various communities in the region. When violence takes place, it is often treated as a law and order problem rather than analysing and addressing the root causes of the problem. It is also observed that the circulation of print media is disproportionately low in comparison to the literacy rate of the region, which is above the national average (Kaissi, 2008: 18).

In 2004, when Manorama Devi, a suspected messenger of a militant organisation was gang-raped by security personnel, a group of middle aged women protested in the streets fully naked with a banner 'please rape us'. This did not get enough coverage in the national and international news agencies. In the case of Manipur, many media agencies did not focus on the importance of the state's past history and its indigenous demographic profile. In Assam, both print and electronic media gave extensive live coverage to all conflicts that created a sense of trauma among the people. On October 30, 2008, all the local satellite channels of Assam broadcasted live footage of serial blasts with even photographs of the dead bodies of the victims. However, the number of casualties and the injured were not uniform across the media. The coverage in the national media during the ULFA attacks of Hindi-speaking people in November 2003 reported it as clashes between Assamese and 'Bihari' people. As a consequence of this media coverage, violence spread out to other regions (Bordoloi, 2014).

The period between 1955 to 1960 media freedom was blocked in the Naga Hills. Although people knew that violence was going on, many did not know the ground situation, or even who was fighting whom, and the causes of the violence. The national and even the regional media sidelined the issues of the people of Northeast. As a result, the voices from the region are seldom brought to light and heard at the top level. Hence, for example when Manipur was cut off from the rest of the country in 2010 due to an economic blockade, national media gave its attention only after 68 days (Sen, 2011). The

state of Manipur also had to face such situations wherein "print media had to stop publication of newspapers altogether on three different occasions in 2007 because of the *diktats* of militant groups. Newspapers of Manipur have also felt obliged to carry blank editorial columns in the face of 'impossible' *diktats* from the government" (Purkayastha, 2014: 41).

It's an irrefutable fact that journalists working in this violence-scarred region, especially in Manipur and Nagaland, are constantly flirting with danger. In a state like Manipur, where over 20 different underground outfits operate, editors have been killed by unidentified gunmen and journalists stopped from doing their jobs by militant outfits that have gone to the extent of closing down newspaper offices. Media persons often have to face the wrath of both the underground outfits and government agencies, including the security forces (Rehman, 2014: 44).

Journalists are constantly under pressure to report in favour of militant groups or suppress information regarding the rival groups. It is a common phenomenon in Northeast that the militant organisations demand media persons to publish press releases that they send. Adding fuel to this, the government also imposes restrictions on local media from reporting the activities of the insurgents. It has also been observed that the militant organisations impose 'bans' on media to deny its audience news and information. In February 2008, *Asamiya Pratidin*, an Assamese daily was banned by a political party in all areas within the jurisdiction of the BTC (Park, 2009: 7-9). Adding agony to this, some of the journalists in the region had to give up their lives just because they carried out their profession with a sense of mission.

Konsam Rishikanta, a junior sub-editor of daily newspaper, *Imphal Free Press* published from Imphal, was found shot dead in the city on November 17, 2008. Parag Kumar Das, executive editor of *Asomiya Pratidin*, an Assamese daily was shot dead in May 1996, in Guwahati. On November 22, 2008, Jagajit Saikia, another correspondent for the Assamese daily *Amar Asom*, was shot dead in Kokrajhar outside his office. Anil Mozumdar, the Executive Editor of the Assamese daily *Aaji*, was shot dead on March 24, 2009 in Guwahati. Badosa Narzary, owner of the local channel *BL TV* was murdered in April 2008 in Kokrajhar. Indra Mohan Hakasam, a reporter for the *Amar Asom* newspaper, has been missing from his village since 2001. Prahlad Goala, a correspondent for the daily *Asomiya Khabar*, was killed in January 2006, shortly after he published a number of articles linking local forest officials to the illicit trade in timber products (Park,

2009: 1-6). It has been estimated that since 1991, the state of Assam alone witnessed the killing of 26 journalists. "In July 2012 Tongam Rina, an associate editor with *The Arunachal Times* was shot at as she was entering her office in Itanagar" (Purkayastha, 2014: 41).

At this juncture, it is important to observe that the indefinite fasting of Irom Sharmila of Manipur which lasted for 16 years to repeal AFPSA. This had very little media coverage in comparison to the fasting initiated by Anna Hazare by the national news agencies. However, when Sharmila ended her fasting on August 9, 2016 and decided to fight in the election, a few of the national channels interviewed her and gave her a reasonable amount of coverage. According to Purkayastha, (2014: 39) local channels should be given the credit for bringing to the world, the news of struggle put forward by Sharmila for the cause of the people of Manipur against the human rights violations.

4.3.2. Growing Recognition of Media in Peacebuilding

The importance of media in peacebuilding is on the rise with the passing of time. Unlike in the past, today, there is better respect and acceptance of journalists in the northeast. Although there are occasions wherein the journalists become victims of violence at the hands of the state and non-state actors, there are youngsters who are willing to take up this profession. Journalists from the northeast like Patricia Mukhim, Pradip Phanjoubam, and Tongam Rina who are reporting fearlessly are a boost to the budding journalists. Many educational institutions have begun Mass Communication as one of the emerging departments in northeastern universities and colleges. Today more than just reporting news and views, the journalists are willing to involve themselves in emancipating the world from fear and violence.

The local media are growing in their popularity. The number of newspapers and television channels has increased substantially over the last fifteen years. In fact, the local media are in a better position to address the issues related to violence, as they have first hand information on the conflicts in the area and can interact with the locals in a conducive manner. Offices of newspapers, television channels and other periodicals can

be seen in almost all the towns of the northeast. They are able to bring to the notice of the world what is actually happening in the region and the initiatives taken for peacebuilding.

Another important aspect, in the growing recognition of media in peacebuilding, is due to the communication explosion in the modern era. The advent of the internet made communication much easier and cheap. Journalists are able to access and disseminate information from anywhere in the world. They are also able to communicate the progress of peace and reconciliation, at a faster pace. Unlike in the past, the state actors are collaborating with the media to get information, as media have more accessibility than the security forces in the interior areas. Kashyap, (2014: 51) views that the changing scenario shows that army is reaching out to local media and having one-to-one interaction. Moreover, media have access to military camps and the interaction fosters better collaboration.

4.3.3. Media as Civil Society

In order to resolve and transform any conflict, it is important to involve various agencies who are able to mobilise the population. It is unfair to blame the government alone for the failure of resolving and transforming a conflict. Civil society has a greater role to play in maintaining peace and security in the society. Mukhim, (2010: 110) considers civil society as a participatory socialisation platform and thereby as 'schools of democracy'. Such societies make people learn how to execute their democratic rights, even on a basic level. People also develop the capacities of being citizens, participating in public life, developing trust, confidence, tolerance and acceptance. This sort of participation helps in the de-centralisation of power and the creation of solidarity among citizens that prevent possible attacks on citizens' freedom. Hussain, (2005) believes that since civil society is weak in the Northeast, media should take up the responsibility as civil society, in resolving the conflict.

Civil society can play a major role in building peace in a conflict-ridden area. They will be in a better position to study the root causes of the issues and make it known to the policy makers and other stakeholders. They can also propose suggestions and possible solutions to the administration. In fact, they themselves can take initiative in

educational and humanitarian activities, as well as health care. However, they should start their work at the grass root level to understand the culture, faith, value systems, traditions and even superstitions that have an impact on their way of life. They can motivate and take appropriate steps to educate people because it is through education and knowledge that one can enhance the quality of living and be aware of one's own rights and duties. This can also improve their economic status by utilising the various resources that are available in and around them (Devi, 2012). Sen et al., (2012: 181) argue that

Ethnic conflict is not fundamentally a problem of law and order but one of existential alienations. Therefore, it cannot be suppressed by military operations and granting of limited local autonomy and economic packages. Instead of trying to resolve ethnic insurgencies by military means, more emphasis should be laid on political dialogues on a sustained basis by the government with the insurgent groups. In such negotiations the civil societies of both from North-East and other regions of India should be involved for evolving constitutional and administrative measures for decentralisation of state power and empowerment of people at the grass root level.

The primary goal of any civil society is to ensure human security to its members. There are a number of civil societies in the Northeast especially in view of facilitating peace in the region. Among the various civil societies that are prevalent today, media are the most powerful of all. They have the power to safeguard the rights of the individual and make people carry out their responsibilities as well. They can point out the atrocities of the government and the conflicting groups and also provide suggestions to rectify mistakes. By following the concept of peace journalism, they will be able to highlight peace-oriented activities to their audience. They are able to interact with conflicting parties and with the authorities alike. They can identify the causes leading to the conflict and help people to address it judiciously.

It would be unreasonable to think that the conflicting parties themselves will find an amicable solution. There should be an individual or a group who have the credibility and ability to make the conflicting parties or groups to sort out the differences. The role of civil society is very vital in this regard. As far as Northeast is concerned, the major trouble caused by ethnic conflict is insurgency and militancy. To bring both the sides (government and insurgents) to the negotiating table itself is an uphill task and can be considered as the first step towards the peacebuilding process. Media being an

independent agency who know the ground realities of the conflict will be in a better position to mediate under these circumstances. Khan, (2014: 111-12) deems that

To address the issues, a process of dialogue between different stakeholders either through the intervention of the state or the civil society is urgently called for. In this direction media can play a key role through encouraging members of various communities to integrate into their society and take an active part in its social, cultural, economic and political affairs.

It is not that media being a civil society becomes active only when violence occurs. What is required from them is to see to it that violence does not take place in the first place. They have the obligation to educate the people about the art of living together and inculcate a sense of appreciating the good in someone else's culture. Panyang (2012) suggests that civil societies such as media can organise literary and cultural programmes among the different communities to develop their indigenous language and culture. Illiteracy and conflict among the adult population can be removed, by organising adult literacy programmes, to understand the nature and reasons of the conflict. Such societies also can establish different types of employment-generating group. These will engage the new generation in productive activities, and help solve the problems related to unemployment and poverty.

Media as a civil society organisation can serve as a sentinel: holding leaders and officials accountable for their actions and words. Its presence is essential to the functioning of other civil society actors, who are working for the cause of peace and reconciliation. Even in unfavorable environments, media can still foster stability by providing essential information about humanitarian initiatives and peace progress (Howard, 2002a: 4; Bratic, 2008). The civil society has done wonderfully well in the northeast to reduce violence and foster peace in the region. There are nearly 700 civil societies working in the region, that in one way or other contribute towards peacebuilding process. Among these civil societies, media stand out.

4.3.4. Media: An Indispensible Component of Conflict Transformation

No conflict in the world can find a lasting solution by force or avoidance. The only way to achieve it is through dialogue and reconciliation. Media, being a powerful source in the process of mediation, have an added advantage in transforming the conflict,

if compared to government organisations and other non-governmental organisations. Being neutral to conflicting parties, they can act as doctors who console and heal. In a multicultural society, it is important that the media act as a channel of communication and as mediator to facilitate inter-ethnic unity. Habib, (2014:11) suggests that there is no denying the fact that media can be an 'instrument' of conflict resolution and transformation, if the information provided by them is reliable, respects human rights, and represents diverse views. True journalism supports activities that rebuilds a peaceful society and attempts to reduce conflict as well as prevents conflicts from escalating to violence. Therefore, true journalism can help a society live peacefully, and uphold the democratic values.

Media can perform a number of roles in a conflicting situation to facilitate peacebuilding. Since each conflict is unique and dynamic, we need to address each conflict independently. Conflict between the state and non-state actors should be addressed differently, from the conflict between ethnic groups. Media are in a better position to play a variety of roles that would facilitate peacebuilding. An indifferent and insensitive media before, during and after the conflict contribute to the escalation of violence. That is to say if one does not become part of the solution, one becomes part of the problem. The responsibility that lies on media suggests that unless they actively report for the sake of peacebuilding and highlight peace efforts, the conflict situation will have negative repercussions.

There are 21 major roles media can play in conflict situations that can transform the conflict.

1. Build confidence among conflicting parties
2. Build consensus
3. Allow face saving
4. Facilitate communication between warring parties
5. Provide an outlet for emotional expression
6. Analyse the conflict dispassionately and in detail
7. Educate the people on the process of conflict resolution

8. Propose options and solutions to the conflict
9. Influence the balance of power in a conflict
10. Promote dialogue between parties
11. Humanise the enemy
12. Address majority/minority issue
13. Strengthen understanding of others' needs
14. Provide and promote global vision
15. Advocate tolerance
16. Encourage flexibility
17. Reduce prejudice
18. Promote dignity
19. Relate with the other in a non-judgmental way
20. Encourage sensitivity
21. Get acquainted with the life of other members

Source: Manoff, (1998, 2000).

If media are able to project these ideal goals in their reporting and in their out-reach programmes, peace is not far from the region. Media should make sure that what they project reach the grass root level. The headlines should highlight peace-oriented activities and adequate space and time should be given for them. Without the effort of media, there will be a gap between the leaders and the public. Media ought to relay the decisions taken at the negotiating table to the ordinary people. The reconciliation at the bottom level is possible only with the extra effort from media persons. The role of journalists is inevitable for a constructive conflict transformation. Dutta, (2012: 104) opines that media have an immense role in forming conducive environment for peace process of any ongoing conflict. With the increasing number of crime, terrorism and ethnic violence, which is a matter of concern for every peace loving society, the role of media cannot be ignored. They should play a responsible mediator's role to create an environment for conflict resolution and transformation.

One of the prime means to transform a conflict is to address the root causes of the conflicts by building relationships. In order to find out the grievances of the parties involved in the conflict, it is imperative that parties engage in dialogue with one another, to make necessary negotiations for an amicable solution. In a conflict situation, people often forget the issues leading to the conflict but concentrate on what happened during the conflict such as loss of life, property etc. Changkija, (2014:56-57) believes that media should find ways and means to help the people focus on the various issues that led to the conflict in the first place. Following which, they must try to find their own answers and solutions for the same. They can act as a bridge that helps people find a common platform to address conflicting issues.

It has been argued that one of the greatest shortcomings of a conflict resolution process, is that it fails to address the bitterness and hurt feelings of the past, and carries it forward (Mahanta, 2010: 162). In a conflict situation what lacks most between the conflicting parties is mutual trust and confidence. Each party looks at each other with suspicion and considers the other as 'the enemy'. Confidence building is one of the most important aspects in dialogue and mediation. Media are in a position to build confidence among the parties: to let them know that peace is possible and that they are willing to help the parties come to a consensus. They are able to remove the anxieties and apprehensions of the parties and provide hope with examples of similar situations in the past that were resolved.

Even other NGOs depend on media to highlight their views on conflict and resolution. It is through media that they mainly communicate their strategy to the parties in conflict and to the authorities. It is also through media that they challenge human rights violations inflicted on civilians. Howard (2002:4) considers that news media remains in the forefront of peacebuilding, because it has the capacity to safeguard the democratic values and governance. By providing accurate and balanced reporting, they are able to present a variety of views, sufficient for the people to choose from. Media are able to warn the people and the administration of the possible out-break of a conflict, so that preventive measures are taken.

The fact that people depend on media for information, proves that this dependency is all the more relevant in a conflict situation, when people are generally afraid of moving out of their homes. They mainly depend on electronic and social media to know and understand, what is happening around them. Their perception, attitude and even behaviour towards people belonging to other groups depend greatly on how media project the conflict to them. It is generally believed that media have a role to play in any conflict; either they facilitate in promoting peace or they contribute in inciting violence. If media project peace and reconciliation in their reporting, it can indeed facilitate in constructive conflict transformation.

Objective reporting is not the only responsibility of the journalists. They have the social responsibility to work towards the growth and development of the society. They have the responsibility to see to it that the society moves at the right direction. In a conflict situation, apart from bringing out the truth, they have to take initiative in bridging the gap between the conflicting parties. A lasting solution to the problem can be found only mutually and amicably. Media can help one party change its attitudes towards another party. They can foster respect between cultures and traditions. They can also educate the people about human values and can prevent human rights violations. Thus media become an indispensable agent of constructive conflict transformation.

Summary

Northeast India is the homeland of a number of ethnic groups. There are eight states in the region with people belonging to various cultures, traditions, habits, languages and social systems. Majority of the people are of Mongoloid origin from South East Asia. The region shares nearly 98% of its boundary with neighbouring countries and only 2% with the Indian Union. Even before India gained independence, people from this region were conscious of their distinct ethnic identity which only got magnified in the post-independence period. Regionalism has crept into the region and national integration is a challenge. The strategic location of the region, sharing its boundaries with many neighbouring countries, makes it easy for the extremists to operate from these countries and get aid from them. This varied geographical, cultural and linguistic nature of the region makes it vulnerable to ethnic conflicts.

NEI region is considered to be the conflict zone of India, as far as ethnicity is concerned. There are communities and groups fighting against one another and the government in order to have their demands materialised. People from the region blame the governments for their failure to resolve the issues that have been haunting the region for decades. The government's slow statics can only aggravate the situation in the region, which in fact disturbs the internal security of the nation. There is a feeling among the different ethnic groups in the region, that they are marginalised and not taken care of by the central government. There is also the sense of being looked down on, by the 'mainland' Indians. There is also a feeling among various ethnic groups that the state governments ruled by the majority group, exploit the minority groups. This has made the people more ethnic-conscious and united, them to fight for their demands.

There have been a number of ethnic movements in the Northeast for a variety of issues. Though ethnic movements were seen even before the independence of the country, its occurrence became more pronounced and frequent after the independence. One of the main reasons is that the ethnic groups became aware of their distinct identity, which they want to preserve at any cost. One can say that most of the movements had its origin from ethnic-consciousness and the desire for self-determination. Although the movements began non-violently, when the demands were not met, they turned out to be aggressive. Today the situation has reached a position, where if a particular demand of an ethnic community is not granted by the government, they feel that it is a denial of their ethnic aspirations. This in turn, begins to mount pressure for a separate administrative set up or statehood. It is also seen among various ethnic groups that the successful movement of one ethnic group encourages another to follow the same path, to get things done for them.

An ethnic movement often ends up in ethnic conflict in the region. There have been a number of ethnic conflicts over the years, in different parts of the region. The worst affected states are Nagaland, Manipur and Assam, although Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh have also experienced conflicts over ethnicity. Only the newly added state of Sikkim is free from ethnic conflict. The demand for a separate state for Nagas was considered to be the beginning of ethnic conflicts and insurgency in the

region. A section of Nagas do not want to consider themselves, a part of the Indian Union. They feel that they were betrayed by both - the British and Indian government - at the time of India's independence. Though they are given separate statehood, some groups in Nagaland still fight for sovereignty.

Once Nagas got a separate state, other ethnic communities in the region also began to demand for autonomy and statehood. The state of Manipur followed the path of Nagaland and got statehood in 1972. Still conflicts continue between different tribes and with the government. This was followed by troubles in Assam whereby different tribes began fighting against each other for dominance and power. Insurgency and terrorism have been a part of the states of Nagaland, Manipur and Assam, over a period of time. Some of the major ethnic clashes the region experienced are Naga-Kuki, Kuki-Paite, Khasi-Pnar, Khasi-Garo, Arunachalee-Chakma, Tripuris-Bengalis, Bodo-Adivasis, Bodo-Bengali Muslims, Karbi-Dimasa, and Mizo-Reang. In the present scenario only Sikkim, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh are freed from ethnic conflicts.

Assam, being one of the largest multi-ethnic states in the region, has been witnessing a number of ethnic conflicts. The conflict began when the British tried to impose Bengali as the medium of instruction, in the schools of Assam. This created a feeling among the Assamese that their identity would be lost and that they should be united to preserve it. Apart from this, a large number of immigrants also made the Assamese to feel that they would become minority in their own homeland. Hence, they began a movement against practically all non-Assamese communities. Once Assamese language got recognised and their leaders gained political power, other communities in the state began movements to fight for their rights. Other tribal communities like Bodos, Karbis, and Koch-Rajbongshis then began to fight for separate statehood. Among them, demand for a separate statehood by the Bodos witnessed a number of violent conflicts in the Bodo-dominated areas of the state.

There are different causes for ethnic conflicts in the Northeast. Each ethnic movement has its own causes ranging from ethnic consciousness to autonomy to self-determination. However, the major reason may be identity crisis resulting from political, social and economic exclusion. Identity crisis can be experienced by both majority and

minority ethnic groups. It can happen to majority group when they feel that they are going to be minority in their homeland. It can happen to minority when they feel that their rights are suppressed by the dominant group. Hence, discrimination and exploitation unite people in their fight for equality. A large influx of immigrants to the region made the indigenous people feel insecure in their own land and began to consider others as 'enemies'. Though ethnic conflicts are fought in the name of culture and tradition, the motivating factors are material well-being. Poor economic status arising out of scarcity of land and other natural resources play a major role in the fight for a separate administrative unit. Adding fuel to these causes are the ethnic leaders who polarise the people to safeguard their ethnicity for their political gains.

Ethnic conflicts have adversely affected peace and development of the region. The various conflicts over the years saw the loss of life and property. Many even got seriously injured. Many lost their homes and internal displacement became a usual phenomena. Many people got displaced to relief camps and other safer places: from which, they are not willing to go back to their homes for fear that violence might take place in the future as well. There is no trust between communities and people and they look at each other with suspicion. Due to violence people were unable to go to work in their own fields and outside, for innumerable days. As a result poverty and unemployment struck the locality, although they were fighting against it. This has also resulted in insurgency and cross-border terrorism with the support from neighbouring countries. This has resulted in internal security problems disturbing the peace in the region. However, the civilians are at the receiving end of both the state and non-state actors.

Due to the continuous conflicts in the region, developmental activities are hampered. The government does not have enough time to concentrate on developmental works but are busy in tackling the conflict. People from the rest of the country are not enthusiastic to work in this region because of its ethnic volatility. This has also affected the tourist prospects of the region. Although blessed with plenty, the region's natural resources is underutilised and large scale companies are not willing to invest in the

region, due to the disturbance. So, tribal unity is a must for the development of the region physically, socially, culturally and intellectually.

Conflicts of this nature in no way facilitate the aspirations of the people and the nation. Hence it has to be resolved and transformed for a better tomorrow. Various governments at the centre and the states have failed to find a lasting solution to the ethnic conflicts. What the governments are interested in is conflict management wherein the conflict is controlled for a short period of time by military force. But when the force is moved out of the area, the conflict recurs. CT approach becomes relevant when these methods have failed to reach an amicable solution to such conflicts. CT approach addresses the root causes of the problem, engaging all the parties involved in the conflict by building relationships. So CT is the right method to apply in Northeast to find a lasting solution to the conflicts. There is no problem in the world that cannot be solved through dialogue and negotiations. People want to be heard, their grievances attended to and their aspirations at least partially fulfilled. This is possible only through building trust and relationships by multilateral agreement. Competent agencies that can take the initiative in mediation and patching up the broken relationship among the conflicting parties are inevitable. Media being a powerful agency have a greater responsibility to assume this role.

Today unlike in the past, there is a growing recognition of media in the Northeast. Although the journalists working in the region are harassed by both the state and non-state actors, there are many youngsters who are willing to take up this profession as their mission. The presence of some dedicated and courageous journalists in the region are a real source of inspiration for the budding journalists of the region. The introduction of mass communication in universities and colleges in the region as one of the major subjects in their curriculum is an encouraging signal for the future of responsible journalism. The fast growing technological advancement makes media communication faster and easy. So, being a leading civil society organisation, media should mobilise the people to facilitate peace. They can motivate people and educate them on the importance of peace for the overall development of the region.

Media are an indispensable part of CT approach in Northeast. They are in a better position to mediate between the parties in conflict, as they have accessibility with all the conflicting parties and the administration. They are able to analyse the root causes of the problem and make it known to the people concerned, for judicious redressal. Since people depend on media for information, media perspective of an event is the whole truth for them. So, objective and reliable reporting is necessary to create an ambience for peacebuilding. Even NGOs depend on media to disseminate the initiatives they have taken in peacebuilding. They also seek the help of media to communicate with the conflicting parties, when physical accessibility is not possible. Investigative journalism makes media practitioners go deep into the issues and find out the actual causes and the measures to be taken to transform it. If media project peace-oriented information, the public also will change their perception and behaviour towards peace process. They have a responsibility to provide hope and build confidence among the people, that peace is very much possible.

In a conflict situation, communication between the warring parties becomes non-existent. Media should be able to act as a channel of communication between the warring parties. They are able to provide an opportunity for the conflicting parties an emotional outlet, so that tension and grievances are subsided. Media also should be able to carry the decisions taken at the top level to every individual at the grass root. Thus media can play a constructive role in Conflict Transformation and are an indispensable part of it.

Chapter V

Media in Ethnic Conflict Transformation of Kokrajhar

Introduction

The experience over a period of time has undoubtedly proved that media can play a significant role in a conflict scenario. However, the extent and nature of media influence in an ethnic conflict is yet to be ascertained. Here, Kokrajhar is taken as a typical example, to study the nature of media's role in a conflict zone. Kokrajhar, under the Bodo Territorial Administrative Districts, is one of the worst conflict-affected districts of Assam. Over the years, the district has featured in the headlines of many of India's leading print, electronic and social media, but for all the wrong reasons. The district experienced ethnic conflicts from time to time, between the Bodos and Santhals, and between the Bodos and the Bengali Muslims. Major ethnic conflicts took place in Kokrajhar in 1993, 94, 96, 98, 2008, and 2012. The questions that need exploration are 1) how did media report the Kokrajhar ethnic violence? and 2) what constructive role did they play in the transformation of the ethnic conflict? The objective of this chapter is to analyse the role that media-reporting played in Kokrajhar violence and to examine media's role in the transformation of ethnic conflicts. In the first part of this chapter, the reasons for choosing Kokrajhar as the area of study, is explained. In the second part, a pilot study has been done to understand the role of media in the ethnic conflicts of Kokrajhar, in the past. In the third part, data that is collected from the field through questionnaire is interpreted and analysed in the light of the conflict transformation theory to ascertain, whether media played a transformative role in the Kokrajhar violence.

5.1. Kokrajhar: The Conflict Zone of Assam

Kokrajhar is considered to be 'the conflict zone' of Assam, particularly of Bodoland. Kokrajhar is the headquarter and heart of Bodoland Territorial Autonomous Districts (BTAD). History shows that most of the agitations or movements related to Bodoland, began in this district and then later spread out to other Bodo-dominated areas. Baruah, (1999: 193) assesses that amongst the most notable features of the campaign for Bodoland, general strikes is the most common in the district. Kokrajhar is situated on Assam's border with West Bengal and Bhutan. Being strategically located, and falling on

the route that connects northeast with the rest of India, the strikes at Kokrajhar often disrupts the road and rail links. *The Assam Tribune*, (24 Jul, 2012) reports that in, 2012, Kokrajhar District Administration imposed shoot-at-sight order during the indefinite curfew, which was extended to bring down the violent situation under control. Fresh incidents of violence were reported from certain areas of Kokrajhar district like Fakiragram, Serfanguri, Narabari, Gossaigaon, Dotma, Mokrapara, and Tulsibil in the same year.

Inter-group violence was considerably high in the years 1994, 1996 and 1998. The later years witnessed even worse episodes of violence between the Bodos and Santhals in the western part of Assam; mostly in Udalguri, Darrang and Kokrajhar districts (Saikia, 2011: 74). In early May 1996, ethnic clashes between the Bodos and the Santhals in Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon districts caused the loss of 150 lives, innumerable villages due to fire and arson, rendering two lakh people homeless (The sentinel, 22 May 1996).

The Bodo-Santhal conflicts of 1996 and 1998 in Kokrajhar district had heavy casualties. The two conflicts had led to deaths of over a hundred, injured many and displaced 4,17,027 persons (official record 3,60,794) (Musahary, 2012: 561). Basumatary (2012c) writes about the reason and the intensity of 2012 violence between the indigenous Bodos and the immigrant Muslims. On July 6th, 2012 when two Muslim minority youth were killed, the blame was put on the Bodos. The Muslims retaliated by killing four Bodo youth just six kms away from Kokrajhar town. When this news spread out, the situation went out of control and violence broke out in and around Kokrajhar, killing many and displacing lakhs.

The leading newspaper of the state, *The Guardian*, (July 24, 2012) mentioned that violence sparked when unidentified men killed four youth in Kokrajhar. In retaliation, armed Bodos attacked Muslims, suspecting them to be behind the killings. There was tension and the mob torched houses, just a few hundred meters away, from the police station. Referring to the police sources, the newspaper carried reports that around 40,000 villagers had fled to more than 60 government relief camps. Police sources said that 21 bodies were found in the jungle, by the road, or by the riverside. Some of the corpses

appeared to have been hacked with a machete. However, these were only the immediate reasons that had led to the violence and not the main, underlying causes.

It is to be observed that none of the media nor the administration brought out the perennial unrest, experienced in the Bodo dominated areas for more than a couple of decades. People of the locality have a story to tell about their glorious past and how they have been ill-treated by both centre and state governments, over a period of time. An analysis of their origin and the various conflicts experienced in and around Kokrajhar will enable us to understand the reasons behind this unrest and what could be done to transform these conflicts, with the help of media reporting.

5.1.1. Historical Overview of the Bodos

Anthropologists and social scientists clearly state that Bodo is a generic name, which includes various branches of the Tibeto-Burman speaking Indo-Mongoloid people believed to have migrated from China, Tibet, Mongolia, and Serbia. They were one of the dominant social groups and had ruled in NEI with powerful kingdoms. They are recognised by the constitution of India, as a Scheduled Tribe of Assam. They reside mainly along the northern bank of Brahmaputra, but their highest concentration is seen in the Kokrajhar district of Assam. Today 'Bodo' means the plain tribes of the Brahmaputra valley known earlier as 'the BodoKachar' (Bhattacharjee, 1996; Devi, 2006:217; Mukherjee, 2006; Choudhury, 2007:1; Sonowal, 2013; Wary and Daimary, 2015: 25). However, according to All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) the term 'Bodo' includes all those who speak or once have spoken languages belonging to the Bodo group (Baruah, 1999: 177).

Bodos might have been a seafaring ancient community. Mosahary, (1984: 50) opines that "the Bodos consider themselves to be a sea race, meaning 'dwellers on the sea coast'. This is not improbable. N.N. Vasu states that the Kiratas inhabited the eastern sea coast. The Bodos are the descendants of Kiratas". Banerjee and Roy, (2010: 13) write that the Bodos who are today, mainly concentrated in Kokrajhar, the northern belt of undivided Kamrup and Darrang districts are believed to have constituted the bulk of the population of Assam valley, Northern and Eastern Bengal and surrounding Hill areas.

Eventually, Bodo-Kacharis established the ancient states like Pragjyotish and Kamarupa. Till the arrival of the Ahoms in 1228, some of the powerful royal dynasties of ancient Assam belonged to the Bodo-Kachari rulers. Due to wars with the Ahoms, the Bodo-Kacharis lost the territories that they controlled in the 16th century. Thereafter, the Ahoms continued to dictate the political as well as other socio-economic matters of these areas, until the British took over the Ahom territories in 1828 (Saikia, 2011:54-55; Sarma et al., 2012: 131). The Bodos might have settled in Assam region before the arrival of the Aryans, near streams and rivers for cultivation and movement. There is a scholarly consensus that it was the Bodos who first named these streams and rivers in their own language (Roy, 1995). For example, "the names of many important towns and rivers in the present-day Assam, such as Dispur, Tezpur, Mangoldoi, Digboi, Dibrugarh, Haflong, Dibongetc are Bodo names" (Bhan, 1999: 57-58). Baruah, (1999:173) makes an interesting assessment that although, they have been considering themselves to be part of the indigenous population of Assam, now they want to withdraw from the Assamese sub-national formation and demand territorial separation.

5.1.2. Origin and Growth of Bodo Movement

During the British occupation of Assam, the enlightened Bodos organised meetings and activities, for the development of Bodo languages and literature. After India became independent in 1947, Bodos, the largest tribal community of the Northeast, became disappointed as they did not get due importance, in the formation of the geopolitical structure of the country. They felt that, with the passage of time, their existence as a separate community would be threatened. Therefore, the Bodos once again got united and launched movements to realise their social and political goals. They started a language movement against the Assam official language in 1961, which sought to make Assamese, the sole medium of instruction in Assam. They feared that if Assamese was made the official language of the state, Bodo language would lose its importance and eventually could even disappear. After the formation of Plain Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) in 1967, Bodos commenced a political movement demanding a separate state (Banerjee and Roy, 2010).

Some scholars note that, the Bodo Movement began as a language movement in the 1960ies and reached its peak in the 1980ies, with the demand of Roman Script. Afterwards, they began to demand the bifurcation of Assam (Saikia, 2011; Gupta and Sharma, 2012; Sarma and Sharma, 2012: 185). However, according to Barpujari, (1998:95) the Bodo Movement had its origin in the formation of Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) at Kokrajhar in November 1952. To protect the right and interest of the community, All Bodo Students Union was organised in 1967, and this was followed by the establishment of Plain Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA), a political unit, with Kokrajhar as its headquarters. Nath and Taku, (2012: 156) describe the Bodo Movement as the longest social movement, in the state of Assam.

The All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) taking inspiration from Assam movement, decided to fight for a separate state for the Bodos. Bodoland Movement officially began in 1987 under the leadership of Upendra Nath Brahma. The movement picked up momentum during Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) government. Though the movement failed to attain statehood, it was successful in attaining autonomy under the Sixth Schedule in 2003 (Basumatary, 2012b). The Plain Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) submitted a memorandum to the then President of India, Zakir Hussain on 20th May 1967, demanding autonomous status for the Bodos. Losing all confidence in PTCA leaders, the ABSU delegation met the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, on 10th July 1985 and submitted a memorandum requesting for a separate state for the Bodos. All Bodo organisations came with full support to the ABSU demand for a separate state for Bodos (Hazarika, 2014).

Sonowal, (2013:15) opines that the Bodo elites felt that the Bodos needed to have political power in order to uplift their people from the backwardness and enable them to lead a respectful life in the large Assamese society. Kalita, (2012: 141) argues that the growth and development of political consciousness among the Bodos, is the result of a long-drawn process of identity formation, that had its origin in the colonial period and gradually got intensified in the post-colonial period.

Some of the causes of Bodo Movement are: (i) Huge influx of immigrants into the tribal land, (ii) non-implementation of the Assam Land Regulation (Amendment) Act,

1947, and (iii) non-implementation of the constitutional provisions under Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India (Devi, 2006:220-21; Sarmah and Baruah, 2012). Therefore, the Bodos felt that they had no other options, but to take up agitation as a route, which turned out to be a great mass movement.

The most intense period of the Bodoland movement lasted for six years, from 3rd March 1987 to 20th February 1993. During this period, ABSU carried out numerous activities. It published books and submitted memoranda. The movement was most intense in Kokrajhar. Many top leaders of the movement were from this district (Sen, 2004: 76-77). During the first AGP government, attempts to evict illegal settlers from protected forests, led to the eviction of some Bodos, providing a significant spark to the Bodo Movement. Indeed, to some extent, the movement for a Bodo homeland was an outgrowth of the Assam movement (Baruah, 1999: 175).

The Chief Minister of Assam gave a proposal of creating a Bodoland Autonomous Council (BTC) with jurisdiction to extend to those villages, which have more than 50% Bodo population (Dhar, 1998: 40). BTAD is the outcome of the Bodo Accord, 2003. It exercises its powers under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. It has jurisdiction over the four administrative districts - Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri. The BTAD has a lot of executive and legislative powers, although law and order remain with the state government (Medhi, 2012: 14). However, the National Democratic Front of Bodoland, led by Ranjan Daimari, was not satisfied with the autonomous status and still fought for the statehood of Bodoland, although some of them did come forward for talks with the government (Sarma et al., 2012: 135). BTAD still continues to experience conflicts arising out of both intra-factionalism and inter-community disagreements (Sen et al., 2012).

5.1.3. Violent Mobilisation for a Separate State

In a democratic society, when people feel that they are deprived, discriminated and isolated, they begin to fight for their rights through peaceful means like submitting a memorandum or through dialogue, rallies and processions. When these peaceful means do not produce any result, people begin to take up violent means like kidnapping, killing

and even massacres to get the attention of the administration and the media. There have been a number of incidents of violence in Bodoland in order to achieve such goals.

The Bodo insurgency started with the formation of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) on 3 October 1986. The 1990ies saw a lot of violence in the Bodo heartland of Assam, as another group called the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) was formed on 18 June 1996 (Rahman, 2011). Since ABSU launched its movement on 2nd March 1987, it went through various phases of agitation and has been able to mobilise people's support mainly in the Bodo-dominated areas. Some Bodo dominated areas like Kokrajhar, Barpeta, Nalbari and Udalguri became the centres of Bodo movements and militant activities (Basumatary, 2012: 57). A similar opinion is expressed by Kundu, (2010) that since the launch of the movement on March 2 1987, the Bodos led by ABSU and other associate Bodo organisations, held demonstrations, protests, strikes and road blockades as a mark of protest, against the policies of Assam government as well as for the cause of Bodoland.

The Bodos did not want to separate themselves from India, but sought a separate state by the name, 'Bodo Land' (Priyadarshini, 2006). However, when they understood that it was not going to materialise, they changed their tactics and asked for autonomy, within the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which was easy to be granted by the government.

The Bodoland agitation though non-violent in the beginning, could not remain that way in the long run. It emerged as an ethnic conflict, resulting in a political movement characterised by brutal violence in 1989. Violence ranged from massacres to stray incidents of killing and injuring, loot, plunder and destruction of private and public property. Many lives were lost and children were orphaned. Economic development, trade, and industry suffered great losses (Bhan, 1999:61). Incidents of kidnapping, killing, explosions and destruction of life and public properties, became part of the intensified movement. The period also saw episodes of violence against non-Bodo communities including the Santhals, Nepalis, and immigrant Muslims. The killings and counter killings between the Bodos and the non-Bodos, affected many villages and displaced thousands from their homes. The government tried to suppress the agitation by

promulgating a series of anti-terrorist legislations like the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (prevention) Act, in 1987. While responding to the state repression, the agitators reacted violently by blowing up bridges, disrupting road and railway services, and closing all the ways, to stop police from entering the Bodo villages (Saikia, 2011:68-69).

Goyary, (2015) narrates the atrocities, and their effects in the Bodo-dominated areas, over the years. The violence that occurred in 1993, between Bodos and Bengali-speaking Muslims in Bongaigaon district, resulted in the death of 50 people. 1996 and 1998 saw brutality between Bodos and Santhals in Kokrajhar district, that led to the massacre of 300 Santhals. In 2008, conflict occurred between the Bodos and Bengali-speaking Muslims, that led to the killing of over 100 people from both the communities, in Udalguri and Darang districts. In 2012, violence took place between Bodos and Bengali-speaking Muslims in Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Chirang, and Dhubri districts. The incident led to the killing of 109 people of which 78 were Bengali-speaking Muslims, 20 were Bodos and the remaining were from other communities. More than 500 villages were set ablaze and nearly 4,85,921 people took shelter in 259 relief camps.

A 72-hour Assam *bandh* was called by ABSU, from 27th April 1998 marked by violence in Bodo-dominated areas. The Assam Director General of Police said that 'there were 28 bombs blasts in Kokrajhar and Udalguri Sub-division during the *bandh* (Hazarika, 2014: 129). Mrinal, (2012) writes in 'Sunday Guardian' that as violence spread to five districts of Lower Assam, nearly 24,000 train passengers were attacked between New Jalpaiguri and Bongaigaon. The Northeast remained cut off for three days, since mobs from both sides went after the trains.

"Decreasing political opportunity and existing mobilisation mechanisms, violent repertoires and effective framing of the opposition are the few factors that have transformed the essentially socio-political identity movements, to violent campaigns or insurgency movements" (The Assam Tribune, 04 Mar 2008).

In order to achieve the goal of a Bodo homeland, some extremists attempted to achieve a form of ethnic-cleansing, especially targeting settlements of 'immigrant

communities' in Bodo areas. After the failure to define the territorial jurisdiction of the BAC, groups such as Muslims of Bengali descent, Hindu Bengalis, and Santhal immigrants, many of them settled in the area for generations, became targets of violence (Baruah, 1999: 194-95). Saikia, (2011: 73) affirms that militant groups like NDFB and BLT used violence as a means to achieve their goal. However, they had fundamental differences with regard to their goals: while BLT demanded Bodoland within the Indian state, NDFB demanded for a separate state outside the Indian Union.

5.2. Media Reporting in Kokrajhar Violence

Kokrajhar district of Assam hit the headlines of print, electronic and social media repeatedly. It is difficult to say whether there were any national media in India, that did not mention 'Kokrajhar' in their reporting. In fact, media had a 'good harvest' of news during those days of violence so that they did not need to 'hunt for news'.

In order to understand the various aspects of media-reporting on ethnic conflicts, a pilot study was conducted based on the newspapers that reported the 2012 ethnic conflicts. An analysis was made, based on whether the news stories were positive, negative or neutral (other). Positive news items included those reports pertaining to; life-saving, rescue acts, relief and rehabilitation, communal harmony, social awareness, peace efforts, acts of justice etc. Negative news items included ethnic riots, physical assault, killing, injuring, kidnapping, strikes, conspiracy and other sensational news. The news stories that could neither be included in positive nor in negative were considered to be neutral or other (Plathottam, 2013). The news items of three of the major English newspapers of the state viz; *The Assam Tribune*, *The Telegraph*, and *The Seven Sisters Post* were used for the analyses.

5.2.1. Positive News: (Peace-oriented)

In spite of the sensational value of negative news, media reported positive news, as well. Reporting a) the initiatives taken by conflicting parties, government, and NGOs for dialogue b) the real issues and causes of violence and c) the relief and reconstruction activities, were done responsibly at times. Though each bulletin carried lesser number of positive news stories in comparison to negative news, still, the positive news stories

cannot be dismissed. Some of these news items did have any impact on the constructive conflict transformation of Kokrajhar violence.

5.2.1.1. Concerns, Issues, and Negotiations

The BTC leadership led by its chief, Hagrama Mohilary, left for New Delhi to meet the Home Minister and Home Secretary, to discuss the situation in BTAD areas. Meanwhile, the central leadership also sent delegates to visit the areas, affected by violence to assess the situation (*The Telegraph*, 27 July 2012). The visit by the BTC leadership and the AICC officials had a great impact on the speeding up of the enquiry, on the communal riot and the relief and rehabilitation activities. One of the news items in *Seven Sisters Post*, (7 Aug 2012) reported that the central government favoured the CBI enquiry into the unrest in the BTAD, in order to find out the real perpetrators behind the communal clashes. At the same time, the Chief Minister asked the officials to ensure that the relief camps were decongested and to open new camps, to avoid any outbreak of diseases.

The Assam Tribune, (19 Aug 2012) published an article on the 'causes and implications of BTAD violence' by Dr. Pahi Saikia. The article elaborated on the proximate and underlying factors, responsible for the conflict in BTAD. Dr. Saikia argues that a systematic analysis shows that a combination of proximate and underlying factors were responsible for the recent violence in the BTAD areas. According to him, intense competition for scarce renewable resources, particularly land, coupled with fear and insecurity were the root causes of the problem. *The Telegraph*, (August 31, 2012) reported that BTC had several rounds of meetings with the Deputy Commissioners, people from various departments, state representatives, and NGOs. Evidence does not lead to prove that media projected news items with dialogue and solutions-aimed negotiations.

5.2.1.2. Reconciliation and Reconstruction

The media attempted to build the confidence of those affected by the ethnic violence: they projected the leaders visiting the camps and reported peace rallies, organised by different groups. Different organisations made an appeal to the people

concerned, to maintain peace in the locality, for the larger interests of the state and country (*The Assam Tribune*, 25 July 2012). The same newspaper reported that curfew was relaxed in Kokrajhar and normalcy was slowly returning too, which gave a sigh of relief to the violence-affected people of the district. Meanwhile in a press meet, BTC Deputy Chief, exhorted leaders of all political parties to make a united effort, to bring normalcy and peace in the area. The Chief Minister, Mr. Tarun Gogoi also assured the affected people, that their land rights would be ensured at any cost. He also reiterated that the violence was not communal (*The Assam Tribune*, 28 July 2012).

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) team visited several violence-hit areas of Kokrajhar - to take stock of the situation and to probe into the violent incidents in the BTAD areas (*The Assam Tribune*, 11 Aug 2012). *The Telegraph*, (17 Aug 2012) reported that a CBI team has started the probe into the BTAD riots. Again *The Telegraph*, (August 31, 2012) reported that the peoples' representatives had visited the relief camps and asked the public to return to their homes. The administration assured the safety of the people. The preference for rehabilitation would be given to the people who possess land *patta*. The power minister along with BTC chief visited Gossaigaon sub-division where the people were desperately waiting for the combined effort of the local and state administration, to boost their confidence. On security, Kokrajhar Deputy Commissioner was quoted saying that altogether 81 pickets had been installed in the affected areas, and 46 relief camps sheltered nearly 44,000 displaced persons, from the district.

The Telegraph, (12 Sept 2012) carried images and reports of the then Congress General Secretary, visiting the relief camps and trying to build people's confidence. He said that they were trying to rehabilitate the people as early as possible. Even after repeated assurance and encouragement by the leaders to return to their homes, many were not willing to go back on two grounds. First, they were afraid of suffering another attack. Second, they had nothing to return to: they had lost their homes, property and means of livelihood. Under such circumstances, when the violence had totally stopped, the government took the initiative of building confidence among people. *The Assam Tribune*, (17 Jan 2013) reported that a peace rally had been organised by the BTC where the Chief Minister of Assam was the chief guest. In his address, he expressed his hope that peace

had returned to the area on seeing the large gathering of people, belonging to different communities. He also announced some schemes for those orphaned and widowed by the violence.

5.2.2. Negative News: (Sensational and Provocative Reporting)

One of the major accusations against the media is that they are highly sensational and are always looking for 'breaking news'. While making a pilot study based on the newspaper contents, it was found that most of the news items sensationalised the reports and thus became negative news. The major reason behind yellow journalism, is that the viewers and readers, always look for what is sensational. Today media also have become a highly competitive industry, where the medium that doesn't enter the rat race, doesn't survive. Hence, media persons always look for something interesting, creative and sensational. By sensationalising, many news items become provocative, especially to the victims of the ethnic violence. The negative news items are analysed under two categories: acts of violence and conspiracies involved.

5.2.2.1. The Acts of Violence

Headlines of any medium during a turmoil is marked by acts of violence, such as the number of people killed, houses burned, vehicles torched, even supported with images. These types of news items and images project an area as a violent zone and instigates the people, belonging to the same community, in other parts of the state or even country to retaliate in their locality. Thus, the possibility to spread violence to other parts of the region is created. *The Assam Tribune* (22 July 2012) reported that tension prevailed in Kokrajhar, following group violence resulting in the killing of at least 9 people. Indefinite curfew was imposed in the area. The headline read as '9 killed, curfew clamped in Kokrajhar'.

Again the same newspaper projected 'Shoot at site order in Kokrajhar'. It reported;

The Kokrajhar district administration imposed shoot-at-sight order during the indefinite curfew that has been extended from 5 pm today to bring the volatile situation under control as the violence tended to go out of control due to repeated incidents of attacks and counter attacks, informed SN Singh, IGP, BTAD. Fresh incidents of violence were reported from certain areas of

Kokrajhar district namely Fakiragram, Serfanguri, Narabari, Gossaigaon, Dotma, Mokrapara, Tulsibil etc. Since last night as agitated mobs burnt down houses, forcing thousands of people to flee their homes and take shelter in relief camps (*The Assam Tribune*, 24 July 2012: 1).

The very next day another leading newspaper of the region posted 'Kokrajhar burns, 4 dead in police firing'. The paper also projected the attack on 'Rajdhani Express' and army's help sought to tackle the situation (*Seven Sisters Post*, 25 July 2012). Again a news item on *Seven Sisters Post* (26 July 2012) projected the chronicle of deaths foretold. This created a sort of fear psychoses among the people. The news also reported that several villages were burnt in Kokrajhar. Even the people in the relief camps were filled with fear of the unknown. One report (*The Telegraph*, 27 July 2012) mentions that 'leaders scurry as BTAD burns anew'. Due to the fresh killings of five people, the situation had all the more aggravated and the leaders feared that it could go out of control.

In order to highlight the intensity of the violence, the newspapers also elaborated the act of violence and the casualties occurred. The *Seven Sisters Post* on consecutive days highlighted that the area was tense, and violence was on. Fresh incidents of violence occurred in the Bodo heartland, where two among the six bodies recovered, were suspected to have been killed overnight. The bodies were recovered from the border of Kokrajhar and Chirang districts (*Seven Sisters Post*, August 05, 2012). *Seven Sisters Post*, (August 06, 2012) reported that violence had reoccurred and the area was tense. Again the same newspaper carried the headline 'Mumbai burns over BTAD riot'. The news said that MMSes and CDs depicting atrocities on minorities were being circulated to provoke them to retaliate (*Seven Sister Post*, 12 Aug 2012).

The Telegraph, (17 Aug 2012) wrote that 'violence spreads outside Bodo Belt' creating panic among the tribals living outside Bodoland. The arrest of BPF MLA created tension in Kokrajhar, as the party supporters blocked road and rail services, demanding the release of their leader. He was arrested for his alleged involvement in the riot, which was denied by the party. The party leaders said that the arrest could only aggravate the situation (*The Telegraph*, 24 Aug 2012). *The Telegraph*, (25 Aug 2012) mentioned that curfews and indefinite strikes affected normal life in the area and CBI was planning to

take over the case, registered against BPF legislator Pradip Brahma. 'Violence hits Kokrajhar' was the title given by *The Telegraph*, (28 Aug 2012). The news elaborated the killing of three persons in Kokrajhar district. It also mentioned that 30 houses were torched by the miscreants.

5.2.2.2. The Blame Game and Conspiracies Involved

Newspapers also highlighted the actors involved and the conspiracies by different groups and communities. Though they did not explicitly mention the name of the actors in violence, it was evident from their reporting. *The Assam Tribune* reported that BTC chief claimed there was a political conspiracy to unsettle the bond between the two communities (July 22, 2012). Some of the tribal groups in Assam suspected that there was a conspiracy behind the recent violence in BTC. One of the tribal groups: The All Assam Tribal Sangha (AATS) alleged that there was a political conspiracy to destabilise the state. They said that, since law and order were with the State Government, they should have taken adequate steps to prevent the situation, turning to be violent especially in sensitive areas like BTC (*The Telegraph*, July 25, 2012).

BTC Chief, Hagrama Mohilary said that Muslims from across the border were creating trouble in the area, and demanded the sealing of Indo-Bangladesh border. He also suspected the involvement of foreign elements, instigating the violence (*Seven Sister Post*, 25 July 2012). However, the State Government denied the statement made by the BTC chief, stating that there was no clear evidence that there had been any infiltration from Bangladesh in Kokrajhar. The PCC spokesperson said that such irresponsible statement could fuel tension in the region (*The Telegraph*, 26 Jul 2012).

In the same way, All Koch Rajbongshis Students Union (AKRSU) also alleged that it was a political conspiracy to say that KLO was involved in the first killing in BTAD, to instigate communal clashes between Koch-Rajbongshis and Muslims in BTAD areas (*The Assam Tribune*, 10 Aug 2012). Two minority organisations accused AASU and BJP for making irresponsible comments on the reasons behind the riots in BTAD. ASSU and BJP had earlier said that Bangladeshi illegal immigrants were the cause of the problem (*The Telegraph*, 27 Aug 2012).

5.2.3. Neutral News: (Neither Violence-oriented nor Peace-oriented)

Media also reported news items that were neither violence-oriented nor peace-oriented. Though these news items were not relevant as far as violence was concerned, they had their effects on the mindset of the people. It was indeed better than projecting sensational news that had negative impact on the recipients. A news item in *Telegraph* (July 26, 2012) mentioned that the Chief Minister and the Chief of BTC had different views, on the source of trouble in BTAD areas. When BTC Chief said that illegal immigration from Bangladesh was the root cause of the present trouble in the area, the Chief Minister said that he did not believe what the BTC Chief had said.

Though there were no fresh incidents of violence in BTAD areas, the large number of people seeking shelter in relief camps was a major concern for the administration, due to the lack of facilities in those camps. The members of the National Human Rights Commission also visited various relief camps in BTAD and took stock of the prevailing conditions (*The Assam Tribune*, 9 Aug 2012). Another news item in *Assam Tribune*, (August 22, 2012) said that violence in the BTAD areas might delay the commissioning of the 250-MW Bongaigaon Terminal Power Station in another six months to 12 months. Violence had put pressure on the labourers to leave for their respective homes or to the relief camps.

5. 3. Media's Role in ECT of Kokrajhar

Media reporting does affect an individual's attitude and behaviour towards the process and progress of the conflict. Kokrajhar ethnic violence reporting was no exception to this phenomenon. Media were active and their reporting had its effects during the course of the conflict. So the data that is collected from the field through questionnaire is interpreted and analysed in order to understand the role that media played in the ethnic conflict transformation of Kokrajhar.

Table 5.1
Profile of Respondents

Category	Gender						Age						Name of the Tribe									
	M		F		Total		18-30		31-50		51+		Bodos		Santhals		Rabhas		Others		N. A	
Profession	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Civilians	70	57	53	43	123	49	52	21	51	21	20	8	37	15	38	15	15	6	12	5	21	8
Academicians	29	60	19	40	48	19	12	5	29	11	7	3	26	11	4	2	3	1	12	5	3	1
NGOs	16	46	19	54	35	14	4	1	14	5	17	7	11	4	12	5	3	1	5	2	4	2
Businessmen	13	54	11	46	24	10	7	3	12	5	5	2	8	3	0	0	1	1	8	3	7	3
Journalists	20	0	0	0	20	08	6	2	12	5	2	1	8	3	0	0	0	0	8	3	4	2
Total	148	59	102	41	250	100	81	32	118	47	51	21	90	36	54	22	22	9	45	18	39	16

Source: Field Work

The profile of the questionnaire consisted of four parts; viz; profession, gender, tribe, and age. Since name and religion were given optional fields, most of the respondents preferred not to answer them. Some of the respondents preferred not to mention their tribe as well. Questionnaires were distributed among five categories of people from different walks of life including civilians, academicians, local leaders/NGOs, businessmen and journalists. Three divisions were made to distinguish the age group of the population; 18-30, 31-50 and 51 and above. A total of 250 questionnaires got filled up from these categories of people. The majority of the respondents were civilians, as they constitute the major portion of the population. The total number of civilians is 123, followed by academicians 48, local leaders/NGOs 35, businessmen 24 and journalists 20. 10 questions were common for all and five questions were asked to each category of profession separately. Apart from the questionnaires, interviews were conducted to further understand what role media had played in the ethnic conflict transformation.

Out of 250 respondents, 148 were males and 102 females. Among them 81 belonged to the age group of 18-30, 118 belong to the group of 31-50 and 51 belonged to the group above 51. The tribes were categorised as Santhals, Bodos, Rabhas, others and Not Available (NA). Bodos numbered 90, Santhals 54, Rabhas 22, others 45 and not

available 39. Others included Muslims, Koch-Rajbongshis, Nepalis, Bengalis, and Others. Some of the people who did not want to reveal their tribal identity were categorised as Not Available (NA).

Out of 123 civilians, 70 were male and 53 females. There were 52 civilians belonging to the age group of 52. 51 belong to the age group of 31-50 and 20 belong to the group of 51 and above. Among the civilians, there were 37 Bodos. Out of them, there were 21 men and 16 women. Out of 38 Santhals from the category of civilians, 25 were men and 13 women. Among the 15 civilian Rabhas, seven were men and eight were women. There were 12 persons belonging to other tribes and cultures. Out of them, 9 were men and 3 women. There were 21 persons who did not want to reveal their identity due to various reasons. Among them, eight were men and 13 women.

Out of the 48 academicians, 29 were men and 19 women. Many of them were university and college teachers. Some of them were school principals and administrators. Most of them (29) belonged to the age group of 31 - 50. 12 people belonged to the age group of 18-30 and seven were above the age of 51. Most of the academicians were Bodos (26) among whom 12 were men and 14 women. Among the Santhals, only 4 (three men and one woman) persons responded and among the Rabhas only three persons responded and all of them were women. There were 12 persons from other communities and out of which 10 were men and 2, women. There were 3 academicians who did not want to reveal their identity out of which 2 were men and 1, a woman. All three of them belonged to the age group of 31- 50.

Among the 35 local leaders including NGOs, 16 were men and 19 women. Four of them were of the age group 18-30, 14 were between 31-50 and 17 were above 51 years old. There were 11 Bodos of which 7 were men and 4 women. There were 12 Santhals of which 5 were men and 7 women. There were three Rabhas; all of them women. Five people belonged to other groups of which 4 were men and 1, a woman. There were also four people who did not mention their tribe; all of them were women.

There were 24 business people of whom 13 were men and 11, women. Seven belonged to the age group of 18-30, 12 between the age of 31-50 and five were above the

age group of 51. There were 8 businessmen from Bodo community, 8 belonging to other communities and 7, from the Not Available group, out of which 2 were men and 5 women.

Among the 20 journalists who responded, all of them were men. 80% of them worked for print media and the rest for electronic media. Six of them belonged to the age group of 18-30, 12 of them belonged to the group of 31-50 and two of them were above 51 years old. There were eight Bodos, and eight belonged to other communities, and four among them were under the category of Not Available.

Many of them were very apprehensive about the research and did not cooperate in the beginning. But when approached through references, most of them cooperated. The questionnaires for civilians, local leaders/NGOs, and businessmen were translated into Assamese. Few were hesitant to take a photograph; few did not want to mention their names, religion, and tribe. And nobody allowed me to record the conversation that I had with them. What was strikingly evident was the fear factor, among the people. People believed that there could be violence in the future, once the military moved out of the area. There was no mutual trust between the different communities. People looked at each other with suspicion.

Though the questionnaire was mainly based on the 2012 ethnic conflict, many shared what they remembered from the ethnic conflicts of 1993, '94, '98, 2006, and '08 as well. However, what they remembered clearly for bringing the worst effects was the ethnic conflict of 2006 between the Bodos and the Santhals. Though many said that they were proud of their tribe and locality, few shared their disappointment about being born in such a conflict-ridden region. Few said that they couldn't even dress in their traditional wear, for the fear of revealing their ethnicity. They brought into light their doubts about development, saying that progress can never truly come to the locality, because of the high chances of recurring conflicts: this doesn't invite, investors and new opportunities. They are saddened about the 'troubled area' image that has been created about their land in the outside world.. Many of them felt that media also played a major role in showcasing the area as conflict-ridden, and its people as violent. However, they feel that if media wants, they can change the perception of the people in future.

Table 5.2
Use of Media during Peace Time

Category	1st choice		2nd choice		3rd choice		4th choice		5th choice	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Newspaper	72	29	80	32	40	16	10	4	0	0
Radio	26	10	20	8	55	22	42	17	4	2
Television	138	55	71	28	20	8	4	2	0	0
Internet	12	5	19	8	46	18	42	17	0	0
Others	2	1	0	0	1	0	2	1	5	2
Total	250	100	190	76	162	64	100	41	9	4

Source: Field Work

The majority of the respondents opted for Television, followed by newspapers, radio, and the internet, as their preferred medium, in order of significance. Only very few people depended on other sources like magazines and leaflets to get information. Out of 250 respondents, 138 persons (55%) opted television as their first and 71 persons (28%) as their second source of information. Being a rural area, the newspaper still has relevance - 72 persons (29%) chose it as their first source of information and 80 persons (32%) as their second source of information. Only a few respondents depended on the internet for information. Among them, many were staying outside their locality either for education or for employment. The first preference for all categories of people was television. The second preference for all categories of people was newspapers except, for the journalists whose preference was the internet. Radio was the third preferred choice for all categories, except for journalists who preferred newspapers.

The electronic media are more influential than the print media, due to three reasons: a) Time factor allows people quick access to up-to-date information b) Printed materials are lengthy and requires time and higher attention span c) Moving images are more attractive, as well as easily accessible. However, there is a danger in depending on electronic media. As they provide information at a faster pace, they may not give priority to the personal, relational, structural and cultural transformation of people and institutions. Television may analyse the situation from an immediate context rather than

enquire into the underlying issues. It is evident that everyone irrespective of tribe, gender, age, and profession has accessibility to media. It shows that media are active and relevant in the lives of the people. In fact, it is during peacetime that media are in a better position to carry out their social responsibility of educating and focusing its attention on structural and cultural changes. During peace time, media also could concentrate on developmental activities, that would facilitate overcoming some of the core issues leading to the conflict. This would help in satisfying the basic needs of the people and overcoming their grievances.

Table 5.3
Use of Media during Violence

Category	1st choice		2nd choice		3rd choice		4th choice		5th choice	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Newspaper	40	16	79	32	52	21	11	40	1	0
Radio	21	9	39	16	46	18	40	16	2	1
Television	179	72	43	17	10	4	3	1	0	0
Internet	7	3	23	9	45	18	37	15	0	0
Others	3	1	0	0	7	3	11	40	4	2
Total	250	100	184	74	160	64	102	40	7	3

Source: Field Work

During the conflict, a large number of people (72%) preferred television as their first choice of information followed by newspapers and radio. This just shows the influence that electronic media have on people. Though just 16% have opted newspapers as their first choice, many said that they had long discussions at home and in the marketplace, based on newspaper reporting as it elaborated the events and incidents. It shows that print media still have relevance in rural areas. Most of them said that during violence, newspapers were not available, due to strike or curfew. Hence, they depended on electronic media like television. People who responded with internet as their first, second and third choices were youth, academicians, and the journalists.

Both during peace time and violence, people depend on Television (TV) to get information as it can provide news with immediate effect. However, more people prefer TV during violence than in time of peace. Since many of these news items in the TV during violence, are in the form of 'Breaking News' and are sensational in nature, they are reported without much editing, analyses, and ground verification. Therefore, all the information provided by electronic media is not necessarily authentic, nor does it cover all the angles of a news story. This can also have a negative impact on people's attitude and behaviour on the course of violence. Once the violence de-escalates, media practitioners feel that their 'mission is accomplished'. But they have a lot more to do, to know what happens to the victims, and what should be done to restore the lost relationship. Their role in reconstruction and reconciliation can facilitate in building trust and confidence, among the conflicting parties.

Table 5.4
Means of Communication during Violence

Category	1st choice		2nd choice		3rd choice		4th choice		5th choice	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Phone calls	205	82	20	8	15	6	0	0	0	0
SMS	17	7	99	40	40	16	3	1	0	0
S. network	10	4	31	12	52	21	16	6	3	1
Leaflets	10	4	19	8	36	14	55	22	8	3
Others	8	3	5	2	1	0	3	1	4	2
Total	250	100	174	70	144	57	77	30	15	6

Source: Field Work

Most of the respondents used the mobile phones (82%) to communicate with one another in days of violence. Their second choice was SMS. Some of them used social networks to communicate to their friends and relatives, outside the locality. While interviewing, some of the senior citizens trace their memory back to the major ethnic conflict between Bodos and Santhals, in 1996. They remember that they had mainly used leaflets to communicate. They were mainly exchanged during market days and often

through the school-going children. Some of them said that they used drum beats to communicate with their community members. One of them said that when he heard the drum beating alarming danger, he ran to his village to rescue his assets and family members. However, referring to 2008, 2012 and 2014 ethnic violence, most of them said that mobile phones were used to communicate with one another.

Communication is a source of conflict, as well as reconciliation and peace. It is communication - be it verbal or non-verbal - that causes differences or unity. People use different means of communication to exchange their views, to provide information and pass on messages. However, during violent situations, people choose the best means of communication that is faster and effective. Mobile phones, being faster in communication, are used by people to communicate present happenings and inform about impending dangers. Although this can help in a way, it can also create panic in the area, as it can quickly spread rumors about violence causing repercussions in the area.

Table 5.5
Impact of Violence

Category	1st choice		2nd choice		3rd choice		4th choice		5th choice	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Loss of life	59	24	18	7	29	12	19	8	5	2
L. of property	53	21	60	24	26	10	20	8	1	0
Fear & anxiety	116	46	49	20	38	15	19	8	0	0
L. of unity	20	8	39	16	49	20	56	22	1	0
Others	2	1	1	0	4	2	1	0	9	4
Total	250	100	167	67	146	59	115	46	16	6

Source: Field Work

Although there is a difference of opinion regarding the impact of violence on the lives of people, many of the respondents (46%) feel that fear and anxiety is the main outcome of violence. These are the people who thankfully have not lost their dear ones and property in the violence. This is followed by loss of life (24%) and loss of property (21%). These are the respondents who have lost their dear ones in the clashes and remember how their houses and cultivations were destroyed, by the opposing community members. A few of them (8%) mention that loss of unity as the main impact of violence.

The effect of violence is obviously destructive and negative. It can only lead to devastation, mistrust, and anxiety. There is uncertainty regarding what is going to happen and freedom of movement is restricted. There is harassment from both the state and non-state actors. Since violence occurs again and again in the locality, an enemy image is already constructed and people look at each other with suspicion. There is a strong 'in group' feeling and 'out group' antagonism. There seem to be no consolation from any corner including the media, that peace is possible. The elites in the society do not give enough attention to the sufferings of the civilians. Only when the situation goes out of control, media, administration, and the government take note of the situation.

Table 5.6
Media Projection during Violence

Category	1st choice		2nd choice		3rd choice		4th choice		5th choice	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Act of violence	134	54	44	18	21	8	3	1	0	0
Actors	30	12	79	32	44	18	24	10	1	0
Causes	77	31	43	17	71	28	23	9	0	0
Reconciliation	8	3	16	6	36	14	93	37	4	2
Others	1	0	1	0	2	1	1	0	6	2
Total	250	100	183	73	174	69	144	57	11	4

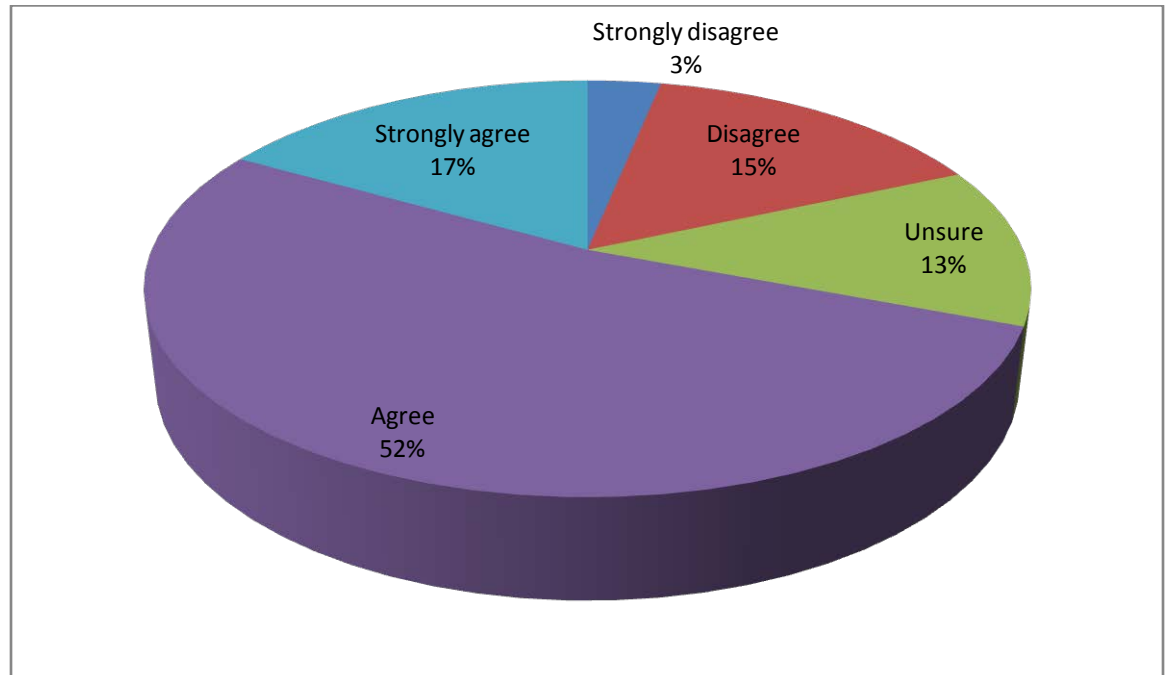
Source: Field Work

This question is asked to get to know the highlight of media during violence in their reporting. The majority of the respondents (54%) opine that media highlight acts of violence in their reporting. Media have projected houses being burnt, cultivations destroyed, dead bodies of victims etc. An interview with a local leader revealed that images of one house being burnt was shot from three different angles and projected as if three houses were being burnt. Many others also had similar incidents to narrate. However, 31% opine that media highlighted the causes of violence in their reporting. While interviewing the people, they said that local newspapers and channels highlighted immigration, as the cause of violence. They also blame a particular community for the cause of violence. There are also people who said that media highlighted actors in

violence (12%). Some say that media mention the number of militants in each community and spread fear psychoses among the people. Only marginal respondents mention that media gave importance to the need for reconciliation. Not surprisingly, many of the journalists support this view.

Media are busy, innovative, creative, investigative and sought-after during violent situations. It can be said that they are at their best and worst during conflict periods. They can be at their best by actively involving themselves in peace-oriented activities such as initiating dialogue, negotiations, relief works, bringing out the root causes, and above all highlighting the need for CT. They can be at their worst when they highlight violent activities and 'catch fish in the troubled waters'. The competition among the media persons makes things worse as far as reporting is concerned. Every media management expects their reporters, to be the first to report the outbreak of violence and its causalities. Therefore, violence is 'celebrated like a festival' for the media persons. Media ethics and the Peace journalism are seldom taken into consideration under such circumstances. Hence, the analyses clearly indicate that media gave more importance to the negative and the sensational, thereby giving less importance for peace-building activities.

Figure 5.1
Media Power in Reconciliation



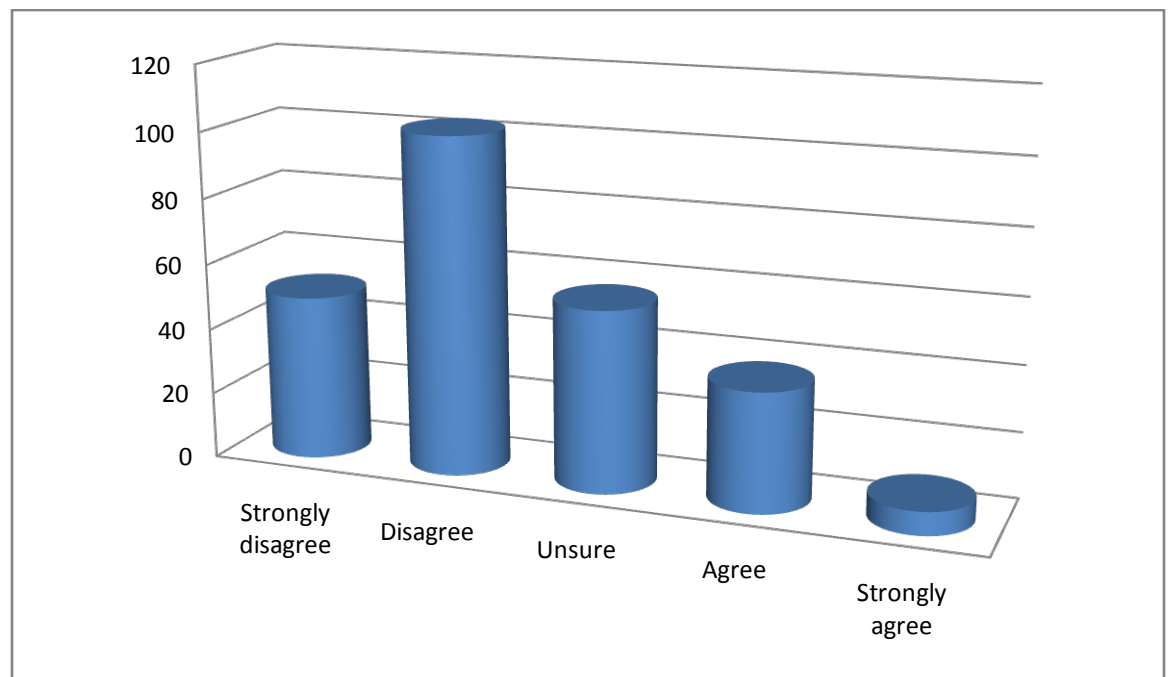
Source: Field Work

As many as 52% respondents, irrespective of their profession, tribe, sex, and age consider that media have the ability to patch up broken relationships between communities and individuals. It is also to be noted that 17% strongly agree with this view as well. Many suggest that media can promote peace, provided they are impartial, service-minded and visit the area of conflict and interact with locals. It is evident from the empirical verification that people do believe that media have the power of patching up broken relationship between communities, during and after a conflict. However, 15% disagree with this view mainly because of their experience of a hostile media, which are not interested in fostering a relationship.

The power of media in patching up broken relationship is beyond doubt. They are in a better position to act as mediators and facilitators, in conflict situations to restore the lost unity. Media can educate people about violence, not being a solution, adding that there are no winners but only losers in violence. They should encourage parties to make some compromise to achieve their desired goal. They can educate the people that violence hampers the structural and cultural fabric of the society. It is also imperative that

they provide an opportunity for an emotional outlet, to the conflicting parties to ease their grievances and tension. They can also foster national, religious and inter-community celebrations in collaboration with members of various groups at the local level. But how well do they do justice to this huge responsibility that they shoulder as agents of CT, is yet to be answered.

Figure 5.2
Objective Reporting

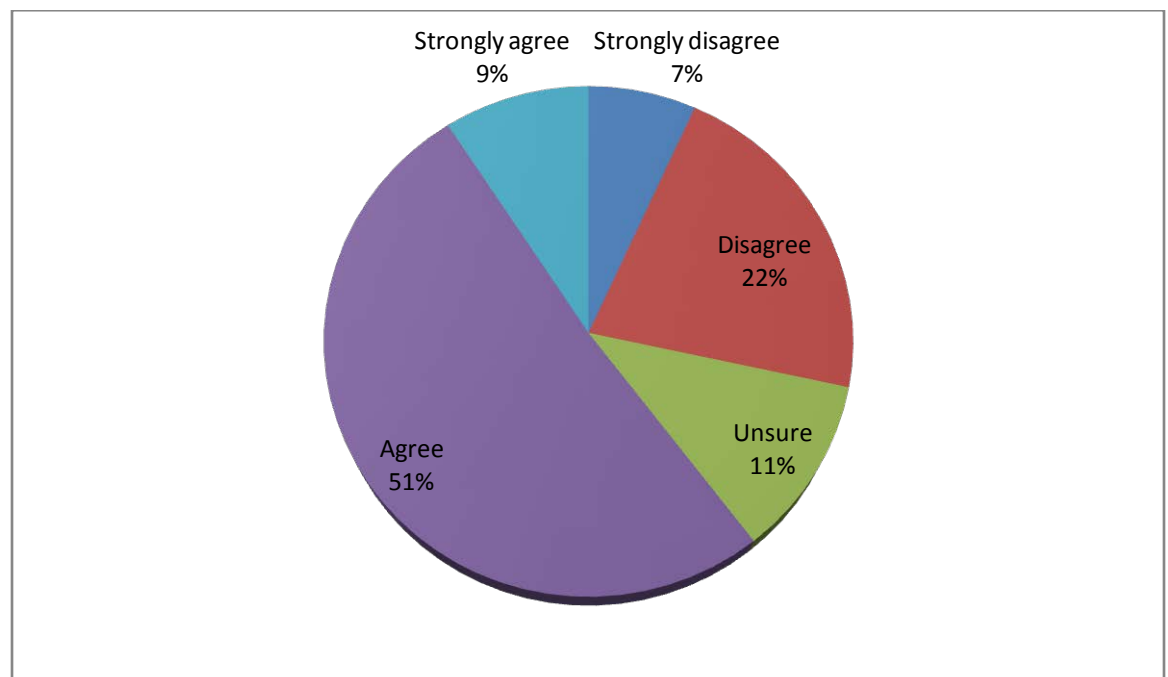


Source: Field Work

Most of the respondents either disagree (41%) or strongly disagree (20%) that media cover the entire incidence of violence, taking into consideration the various causes related to violence. However, 22% are unsure of how media reported the violence. Many of them said that media were 'over active' during conflicts. They tried to bring the best out of it for their own advantage. Media are also blamed for not reporting from ground zero, but only from the newsroom. There is a consensus among respondents that media are not interested in understanding the reasons for violence, but interested in issues that are important for them.

Any protracted violence has three causes to narrate. There is an underlying cause, a proximate cause, and an immediate cause. When violence breaks out, media very seldom look at the underlying causes that lead to the violence. Only the immediate cause is seen as the reason for violence and never is the root cause identified and addressed. This has resulted in diverting the focus of the public from the core issues that are leading to the conflict. Unless the people concerned come to know the real issues leading to violence, it won't be easy to resolve the crisis. This might result in recurrence of violence, even after the de-escalation. Media persons also have their limitations, as they are also vulnerable during conflicts and are influenced, even pressurised by the state and non-state actors. It is here that media should apply their social responsibility and media ethics, keeping aside their commercial interests and ethnic affiliation.

Figure 5.3
Media as the Source of Information



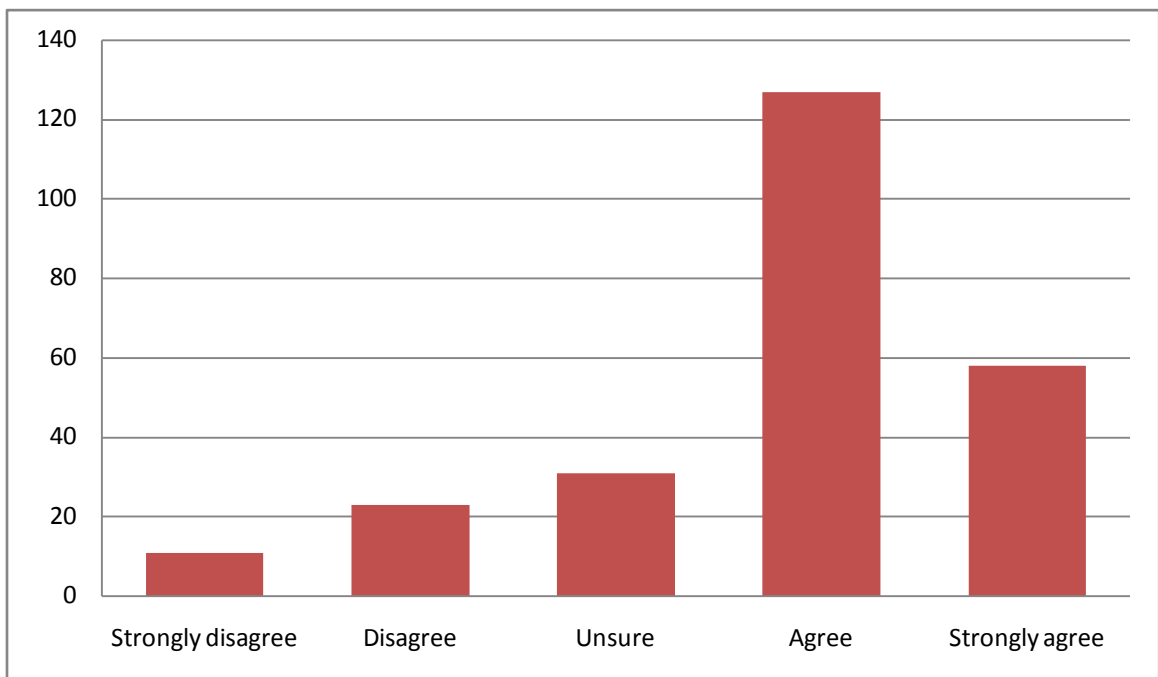
Source: Field Work

More than half of the respondents (51% agree and 9% strongly agree) agree that the information they received on violence were mainly based on media reports. It shows how powerful and influential are media in the lives of the people. The 22% who disagreed and 7% who strongly disagreed are people who actually did not have much

accessibility to media during conflicts. They are the ones who also communicated through leaflets and local meetings during the violence. Journalists also mentioned that they received information from the primary sources.

Media have the power to form public opinion and influence the perception of the people on violence, as they reach a large number of people in a short span of time. Many people do not have first-hand experience of violence, but mainly react from what they read, hear and see from the media. While interacting with some of the respondents, they said that when they saw the dead bodies of their relatives in other villages through media which made them furious and anxious. Even people’s discussions on violence was also based on media reports. Media should make use of this dependency of people to create an agenda, that can make people think about matters related to peacebuilding. They can also instill in people, trust and confidence that peace initiatives are in full swing.

Figure 5.4
Focus on the Immediate Event



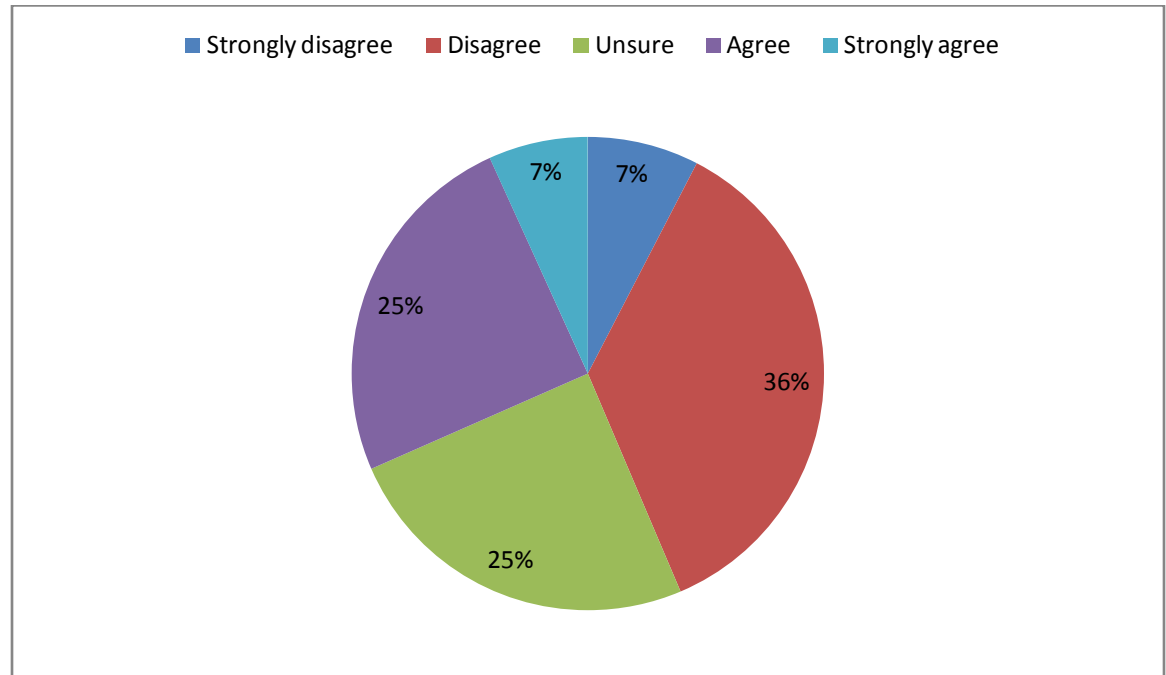
Source: Field Work

The majority of the population (51% agree and 23% strongly agree) agree that media gave importance to immediate events and outcomes, rather than long-term resolutions. Media are interested in giving sensational news, which are attractive to their

audience. One of the reasons why sensational news is given prominence to, by media persons is because 'sensational' and 'Breaking News' are sought-after by their audience. Some of the civilians told that journalists were interested in only knowing of the causalities and our reactions. One of them said, 'they are interested to see our tears because they ask questions that hurt our feelings and emotions'. Media lose interest when the violence subsides. They are not interested in knowing what happens to the victims of violence in the post-conflict scenario.

The tragedy today is that many media practitioners see journalism like any other job, and not like a mission to accomplish. Few see it as a hub of power and a means of profit-making. The competition among media fraternity makes things worse, forcing reporters to gather the appealing, attractive, anxiety-creating and curiosity-building, as news, in order to win the attention of their audience. There is no better topic than violence, to quench the media's thirst for the sensational. Long term resolutions of conflict should be one of the prime concerns of media persons reporting a conflict. Media also fail to project the lack of developmental activities in the locality. Media cannot be said to be sufficiently interested in human rights concerns and long-term resolutions. They are but interested in the short term benefits for their industry.

Figure 5.5
Dialogue Initiative



Source: Field Work

There is no clear consensus regarding the initiative taken by media, on dialogue process. However, 36% disagree and 25% agree that the media are instrumental in taking initiative for dialogue process. It is to be noted that 25% neither agree nor disagree. Among the respondents who agree, more than half are journalists, followed by academicians. An academician says that 'media have called the leaders of different communities for panel discussions and dialogue'. A few of the journalists mentioned that, since the intensity of violence was shown on media, the authorities concerned were forced to take stern actions like deployment of army, providing relief camps and dialogue process.

Dialogue is one of the best means of resolving an issue, involving two or more parties. It is unreasonable to expect two opposing parties with conflicting interests to come to the negotiation table, by their own will. It requires the initiative and encouragement from a third neutral party. Media being an independent agency have the moral authority to convene such initiatives, to help the parties to sort out the differences. Since conflicting parties do not compromise on position, they should be encouraged to

make compromises, on their needs and interests. They can also provide suggestions to the parties and the authorities concerned to move in line with the peace process. Although media played a reasonably commendable part in initiating a dialogue, it was not enough to sort out the differences between the parties.

Table 5.7
Civilians' Response

Questions	S. disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		S. agree		Total	
	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%
Highlighted Concerns	28	23	46	37	08	6	28	23	13	11	123	100
Root Causes	37	30	39	32	15	12	20	16	12	10	123	100
Dialogue Process	19	15	53	43	17	14	22	18	12	10	123	100
Blame Game	10	8	31	25	29	24	38	31	15	12	123	100
Reconciliation	29	24	50	41	13	10	23	19	8	6	123	100

Source: Field Work

As many as 23% strongly disagree and 37% disagree that media have highlighted their sufferings and concerns in their reporting. At the same time, a substantial number of them agree (23% agree and 11% strongly agree) that media highlighted their sufferings in their reporting. It is mainly because media had extensively given coverage to their causalities and tragedies, in their reporting. Most of them disagreed (30% strongly disagree and 32% disagree) that media ever tried to bring out the root causes of the conflict. Media are not interested in analyses of issues leading to the violence, but only in disseminating information on an immediate basis. Many of them disagreed (43% disagree and 15% strongly disagree) that they were sufficiently informed of the progress of dialogue and reconciliation, through media.

As many as 31% agree and 25% disagree that media projected a particular community as the cause of the conflict. However, 24% are unsure of the situation. Hence, we can say that there is no consensus regarding media's projection on blaming a particular community. However, while interacting with people, some of the members of a particular community expressed that the state media projected their community, as

militants. Many of the respondents disagree (24% strongly disagree and 41% disagree) that in the post-conflict period media concentrated on peacebuilding.

While interacting with people from different communities, they were surprised to see that the national media reported the incidents, as if they were covering 'war between Israel and Palestine'. Media failed to empathise with the sufferings of people. This reveals the attitude of mainland media towards Northeast. The real causes of the conflicts were unidentified, and media showed interest in commercial benefits and popularity. People were left in the dark regarding the progress of dialogue and peace process. So much so, that they could make only speculate the course of violence. Ethnic media often sided with their own community and blamed the government and other communities for the outbreak of violence. So, ethnic media create a strong 'in group' and 'out group' feeling among the people. Subjectivity and prejudice crept in the media world, so much so that they altogether forgot about peace journalism and media ethics. It is also to be mentioned that media were active during the course of the conflict, but failed to carry forward their mission in the post CT. As per Civilians' Response, media have not yet succeeded in their responsibility in facilitating peace processes.

Table 5.8
Academicians' Response

Questions	S. disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		S. agree		Total	
	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%
Contradictions in Reporting	0	0	4	8	8	17	23	48	13	27	48	100
Can make Structural Changes	1	2	2	4	2	4	35	73	8	17	48	100
Focus on Negative News	0	0	5	10	6	13	27	56	10	21	48	100
Sensational Reporting	1	2	3	6	5	10	30	63	9	19	48	100
Authenticity in Reporting	14	29	17	36	14	29	3	6	0	0	48	100

Source: Field Work

Academicians are of the opinion that (48% agree and 27% strongly agree) different media gave divergent information, and made contradictory statements on the same issue. Many of them said that media institutions were competing with each other, giving exaggerated causalities of the incidents, leading people to believe that they had the

latest account. At the same time, they felt that (73% agree and 17% strongly agree) media can play a major role in making structural changes like ensuring economic equality, basic facilities, participation in decision-making body and thereby address the root causes of conflict.

As much as 56% agree and 21% strongly agree that media focused more on negative news than the positive. Responding to a general question 'what media highlight in their reporting', majority of said that media highlight the act of violence. It is because negative news can generate more attention and curiosity among the audience. Adding to this, people respond that (63% agree and 19% strongly agree) media are highly sensational in their reporting. The headlines like 'Kokrajhar burning', 'More villages gutted down', 'city tensed', 'more dead bodies found', 'people are not willing to return', 'situation out of control' etc really created panic among the people. Apart from this 36% agree and 29% strongly disagree that the information media give are authentic.

One of the respondents says that 'what is shown on the TV is terrifying'. Another one says, 'what is shown on the TV and is entirely different from reality'. Media make a lot of guess work during conflicts. They have even placed blame and named culprits before the investigation began. One of the leaders says that a TV channel reported 'a few houses in Kochugaon are set on fire', but nothing at all had happened when people hurried to the spot. One of the lady Associate Professors mentions that how the T.V shows her village and what actually is, are entirely different. Media also report without visiting the area of conflict and factual verification. Some of them feel that media act on political pressure and change the statements every now and then.

One of the University Assistant Professors says that 'if only we read at least three newspapers and watch three T.V channels, we get some idea about the incident'. One school principal is of the opinion that 'media are not reporting facts but exaggerated lies'. It shows that some people doubt the objectivity and authenticity of media reporting. One of them says that when the media persons came to interview him, he is specified to speak only of the atrocities, done by the opposing community. It indicates that some media have predetermined agendas and what they need is 'bad news' which is 'good news' for them. Even if people doubt the authenticity of media reporting, they depend on media to get

information, therefore, media have the moral obligation to provide genuine and factual information, following the concept of peace journalism. Hence, it is clear from the response of the academicians, that although media have the ability to make significant changes, they are far from achieving that goal. They exaggerate events to make news appealing and sensational.

Table 5.9
NGOs/Local Leaders' Response

Questions	S. Disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		S. agree		Total	
	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%
Information Provider during Violence	0	0	0	0	3	9	25	71	7	20	35	100
Initiative taken for Peace Process	3	8	20	57	10	29	2	6	0	0	35	100
Less Coverage on Peacebuilding	0	0	0	0	2	6	25	71	8	23	35	100
Power to Build Confidence	0	0	1	3	2	6	27	77	5	14	35	100
Helped Authorities in Peacebuilding	3	9	16	46	12	34	4	11	0	0	35	100

Source: Field Work

Most of the respondents agree (71% agree and 20% strongly agree) that media are powerful agents in providing information during the violence. During violence, since the movement of people is restricted, face-to-face communication is not easy. Hence, the dependency of people on media becomes inevitable. As many as 57% disagree and 8% strongly disagree, that media have tried to ensure peace in the region by taking initiative for relief work, mediation and dialogue. Moreover, 71% agree and 23% strongly agree that there is less coverage of dialogue-process and peacebuilding, and more of the atrocities done, and blame game, by the opposing parties. It confirms that media give more importance to negative news, which is sensational in nature.

However, as many as 77% agree and 14% strongly agree that media have the power to build confidence and facilitate inter-community unity. Hence, the power of media in playing a positive role, in transforming conflict is unquestionable. However, 46% disagree and 9% strongly disagree that media's analysis of the ground realities has enabled the leaders and the administration to facilitate peacebuilding. Only 11% agree that media have done a commendable job in this regard. Therefore, the coverage lacks

intensity on the process of peacebuilding and is inadequate in helping the authorities in transforming the conflict constructively.

What is most important in a conflict situation is to restore the lost relationship of individuals and groups. More than any other NGOs and official agencies, media are in a better position to do so, as they are neutral and are able to reach out to a large audience, in a short span of time. They can also facilitate inter-community unity by visiting the relief camps of both communities and explain to them that violence affects both opposing communities equally. A local leader mentions that neighbouring families belonging to different communities, helping each other to reconstruct houses was mentioned in one of the local newspapers. This news, in turn encouraged him as well, to reach out to his neighbouring families and villages, belonging to other communities. However, these were rare occasions wherein media did exceptionally well in carrying out their mission with devotion and dedication. Often, they are victims of commercial interests, subjectivity and pressure from various corners. In order to transcend these vulnerabilities, there should be some mechanisms that can place the media persons above the material interests and ethnic attachments.

Table 5.10
Businessmen's Response

Questions	S. Disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		S. agree		Total	
	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%
Source of Present Calmness	1	4	15	63	5	21	2	8	1	4	24	100
Highlights Concerns	1	4	17	71	2	9	2	8	2	8	24	100
Better Resolution	0	0	0	0	3	12	18	75	3	13	24	100
Customer Relationship	0	0	3	12	11	46	9	38	1	4	24	100
Bringing back Normalcy	0	0	17	71	5	21	0	0	2	8	24	100

Source: Field Work

The majority of the respondents from business community disagree (63%) that the present calmness is due to the influence of media. Many of them were of the opinion that media were interested in highlighting the closed shops or burning shops. They also disagreed (71%) that the media highlighted the loss and concerns of their community in

their reporting. Even when a similar question was asked to the civilians, they also mentioned that media did not highlight their sufferings in their reports. Sufferings of the people were not the main concern of the media. However, as many as 75% agreed and 13% strongly agreed that if media could be more sensitive in their reporting, they were in a better position to resolve the conflict. When the same question was asked to the journalists, they also expressed a similar view.

There is no clear consensus regarding the respondents' opinion, on whether the media reporting have negatively affected their relationship with their customers. While 38% agree with this view, 46% were unsure whether the media reporting really affected their relationship with their customers. People who were unsure and who disagreed with this view have nothing to do with the violence. They mainly belong to neutral communities. The people who agree with this view belong to one of the parties in conflict. A majority of the businessmen disagreed (71%) with the view that media played a major role in bringing back normalcy in the locality. Since media were highly sensational and failed to appeal to people and administration, for peace effectively, their role in bringing normalcy in the locality was very minimal.

In any major conflict, the business community was one of the worst affected groups in the locality. Either they were forced to close down the business establishments or they were targeted to inflict maximum damage so that the 'violence became successful' as far as trouble makers were concerned. Media were able to bring out reasons for the people's frustrations and encouraged the authorities to fulfill the genuine demands of the people. While many of the businessmen revealed that media never approached them, others blamed the media persons for not visiting the site of conflict, yet reporting as if, from the area of conflict. So, media could not carry out their social responsibility as expected of them, in bringing back normalcy in the Kokrajhar violence. Instead of carrying news like 'more violence is expected in next few days' to create panic, media should have taken an angle, like 'though the situation remains tense it is under control and could return to normalcy soon'. This would have built confidence among the people and remove fear psychoses to a great extent.

Table 5.11
Journalists' Response

Questions	S. disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		S. agree		Total	
	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%
Secondary Sources	1	5	12	60	0	0	7	35	0	0	20	100
Considered Various Factors	0	0	4	20	6	30	9	45	1	5	20	100
Do not Enjoy Complete Freedom	0	0	3	15	8	40	6	30	3	15	20	100
Highlights Sensational News	2	10	5	25	1	5	11	55	1	5	20	100
Better Resolution	0	0	2	10	4	20	10	50	4	20	20	100

Source: Field Work

As many as 60% of the respondents disagreed with a comment, that their reporting was mainly based on secondary sources. They claimed that their reporting was based on primary data. However 35% admitted that they received information from secondary sources. Many of them work for state and national media. 45% of the journalists agreed that they had taken into consideration various factors involved in the conflict while reporting violence. They also said that they had highlighted the root causes of violence and even warned the people concerned that if not taken care of, it would have disastrous consequences. However, the people who disagreed opined that it was impossible to take into consideration various factors, involved in the conflict which seemed a genuine response.

There was no proper consensus on whether the media persons enjoyed complete freedom while reporting violence. As many as 30% agreed and 15% strongly agreed that they had freedom in reporting. However, 40% were not sure whether they enjoyed complete freedom while reporting violence. Probably they did not want to enter into any controversy. Some of them said that they were given clear instructions from the management on what to report and what not to report. It is interesting to note that the journalists agreed (55% agree and 20% strongly agree) that they have given more importance to sensational news, in their reporting. Many of them were of the opinion that 'violence itself is sensational in nature'. One of them asks, 'when violence is going on, how can we report that situation is under control or everything is normal'. At the same

time, many of them were also of the opinion (50% agree and 20% strongly agree) that if they were to report the violence from a different perspective, they would have facilitated in resolving the conflict in a better manner. This nuance was mentioned by journalists irrespective of their tribe and media category.

Although it is almost impossible to avoid sensationalism while covering violence, media persons are obliged to show as much objectivity as possible, by depending on primary sources. Some of them were of the opinion that the media persons were able to reach certain places, where even the security forces were unable. Two of them, said that it was they who brought to light, what had happened in the interior villages, to the world outside. However, it is evident that these types of occasional reporting are not good enough to make necessary changes in the conflict transformation constructively. It is also unfair to blame the journalists for all the bad happenings in the locality and the media world. They are also vulnerable and are under constant surveillance and threat. One of them says that 'what I report from the field and what comes out from the newsroom are entirely different'. Another journalist said that he was warned by some from his own community of dire consequences, if not reported 'properly'. However, as acknowledged by the journalists that if they could report from different angles and perspectives, they could positively influence the course of the conflict. It indicates that media were less effective in implementing peace journalism, in their reporting and could not make use of every effort in transforming conflict positively.

Summary

Among the various ethnic movements in the Northeast, particularly of Assam, the demand for 'Bodoland' by the Bodos created havoc and turmoil in the Bodo-dominated areas. Although various organisations among the Bodos stand for the cause of Bodo community, there are differences of opinion in their demands, and the way it is to be accomplished. When many of the socio-cultural organisations demand for a separate state within the Indian Union, other organisations demand sovereignty for Bodoland. There have been a number of agitations, strikes, rallies, and violence, especially in Kokrajhar, the heart of Bodoland agitation. Since Kokrajhar, in a way falls in the gateway to Northeast India, it has a strategic importance, as far as rail and road connectivity is

concerned. Any trouble in this part of the region, would adversely affect the lives of the people in Northeast. As a result this strategic position of the location is being used by the Bodos to awaken the State and Central Governments.

Since the Bodo accord, there have been a number of conflicts and violence in the Bodo- dominated areas to press their demands. Often, non-Bodos were the victims of this violence, as they constitute minorities in the region. Bodos blame the minorities, for the cause of the conflicts, and also as an obstacle to getting their demands met. This, because a large number of non-Bodos in the region, make it difficult for them to attain statehood, as they require a minimum percentage of Bodo population in the region. Therefore, they try to prevent immigration and expel the immigrants at any cost. To themselves, they are the indigenous people of the area and any non-Bodo is an immigrant, who is to be treated like a foreigner. Hence there occurred a number of conflicts between Bodos and Santhals, and between Bodos and Bengali Muslims. However, the victims of violence were both Bodos and non-Bodos.

The fight for a separate statehood by different tribes and castes in different parts of India encouraged Bodos to continue to fight for a separate state. Through media, they were constantly aware of what was happening in other parts of the country. The power of media in transmitting knowledge and information, to the public is unquestionable. They have the ability to make the powerful weak and the weak powerful. Their reporting can break and mend relationships, all the same. In the second and third part of this chapter, I tried to analyse what role was played by the media, in the ethnic conflict transformation of Kokrajhar. It was carried out to understand whether the media tried to promote peace or incite violence with their reporting. In the second part of this chapter a qualitative analysis of three leading newspapers of the state was done, to see the performance of the media during violence. The analysis showed that media highlighted more the act of violence than the act of reconciliation.

The respondents irrespective of their profession, gender, tribe and age responded that media are a great powerhouse. They have the power to influence the emotions and mindset of the people irrespective of age, religion, ethnicity, gender and qualification. Most of the respondents gave a positive nod, to the influence of media in their everyday

lives. Most of the people had access to at least any one channel or form of media. Though all three categories of media; print, electronic and social were in use, electronic media was the most influential of all, since it could transmit information faster, than the print media. Being a rural area, social media had only minimum influence on the majority of the people. It was mainly used by youth, academicians and journalists.

Since the area is dominated by the Bodos, majority of the respondents were Bodos followed by Santhals. Among different categories of people, civilians numbered the maximum sample size as they constituted the largest population there. Though males outnumbered females, there is a certain significant proportion in its percentage. As per the age of the respondents, the age bracket of 31-50 numbered the most. Respondents admitted that during conflicts, media become active and involved. They have the ability to influence either in promoting peace or inciting violence. They could be the best mediators between the conflicting communities and between the communities and the government. People come to know the intensity of a conflict and the progress of negotiation and reconciliation, through media reporting. As in the case of content analysis, the data collected through questionnaires also show that media highlighted the acts of violence more than that of reconciliation.

However, majority of the respondents were of the opinion, that media have the ability to patch up broken relationships between conflicting parties. But they say that media have not covered the incidents of violence exhaustively, considering the various issues related to the violence. At the same time, people agree that their information on violence was mainly based on media reports. It was agreed upon by a majority of the respondents, that media focused on the immediate events and outcomes than long term resolutions and human rights concerns. Moreover, people disagree that media were instrumental in taking initiative for dialogue process. Hence the responses for these five questions suggest that though media have the power to build peace, they are yet to play a constructive role in the ethnic conflict transformation of Kokrajhar.

From the specific questions that the civilians were asked, many answered that media did not highlight their sufferings and concerns in their reporting. They were also unanimous in saying that media failed to bring out the root causes of the conflict. They

also said that they were not sufficiently informed by the media regarding the progress of dialogue and reconciliation. However, there is no consensus, whether media projected a particular community as the cause of the conflict or not. But, the Bodos blame the Assamese media for projecting them as the cause of the conflict and Non-Bodos blame the Bodo media for projecting other communities as the cause of the conflict. They were of the similar opinion that media did not concentrate on reconciliation in the post-conflict period.

The academicians were of the view that media gave divergent information and contradictory statements on the same issue. As a result, it was difficult to depend on any particular medium for information. At the same time, they believe that media can play a major role in making structural changes like ensuring economic equality, providing basic facilities, participation in the decision-making body and thereby addressing the root causes of conflicts. They also agree that media in general, focused on negative news such as comparing the atrocities of each party and loss of lives and property. While they should have focused more on positive news, such as the number of times the leaders came together for dialogue, examples of communities supporting each other, government's initiative for dialogue etc. However, everybody agrees that media were highly sensational in their reporting. And they did not believe that all information provided by media were correct.

The local leaders/ NGOs agreed that media were powerful agents in providing information during violence. However, they did not believe that media tried to ensure peace in the region by taking initiative for relief works, mediation, dialogue, peace education, structural changes and cultural heritage. They also agreed that there was less coverage of dialogue and peacebuilding, when compared to the reports on atrocities and blame game, by the opposing parties in the conflict. They agreed that media have the power to build confidence and facilitate inter-community unity. But the respondents did not believe that media analyses enabled the leaders and administration to transform the conflict constructively.

The business community does not think that the present calmness in the locality is due to the influence of media. They also do not think that media highlighted their loss

and suffering in their reporting. Most of them agreed that if media were to be more sensitive and objective in their reporting, they would have been in a better position to resolve the conflict. They do not think that media reporting on violence negatively, affected their relationship with their customers. This is mainly because most of the businessmen were Bengalis and Nepalese who were not involved in the conflict. But they do not believe that media played a major role in bringing back normalcy in the locality.

Journalists admitted that it was very difficult to collect primary data during violent situations in spite of making every effort to visit the field of conflict. Hence, they had to depend on secondary data as well in 'good faith'. They were divided in their opinion regarding the initiative taken for peacebuilding process and the freedom they enjoy while reporting ethnic conflicts. Most of them agreed that they gave importance for sensational news. However, they were unanimous in their opinion that if they were to report from a different perspective, they would have been better able to facilitate peace.

An analysis is made to understand why media couldn't do justice to their duty of social responsibility. The elites and the market forces often dictate terms for the media persons to act in their favour. The competition among the media houses in the industry, makes profit-making integral to the job. Hence, they chase the sensational, to be popular with the audience. Every media management expects their reporters to be the first to report, the outbreak of violence and its casualties. Media ethics and the peace journalism are seldom considered under such circumstances. The national and international media were insensitive and ethnic media were selective and lacked credibility in their reporting.

Media become very active during violence and once the violence de-escalates, they disappear from the scene with a feeling that their 'mission is accomplished'. But they have a lot more to find out, like a) what happens to the victims after the violence and b) how can a lost relationship be restored. In fact, it is during peace time that media are in a better position to carry out their social responsibility of personal, relational, structural and cultural transformation of individuals and institutions. This can prevent situations leading to violence and facilitate positive peace, wherein people experience the absence of direct, structural and cultural violence.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The central objective of the study has been to examine the nature and scope of ethnic conflict transformation and what role media can play constructively by examining the experience of continuing cycle of violence in Kokrajhar. We began the study with a review of the dominant discourses on the sources and causes of conflict and ethnic identity formation from a conflict transformation perspective. Then the transformative role of media has been analysed by delving into various theories of media to understand how media can influence the political, social, cultural and economic milieu of the society. Hence, Northeast India, a region perennially ridden with ethnic conflicts has been mapped to understand the root causes and evolution of ethnic conflicts in the region in the wake of growing recognition of media as an indispensable agent of ethnic conflict transformation. The study examined Kokrajhar ethnic violence by conducting a filed study to understand what role media could play in ethnic conflict transformation by drawing the insights from civilians, academicians, NGOs, businessmen and the journalists.

Our analyses of the literature on the sources of conflict and violence reveal that ethnic conflict emerge due to deprivation of needs, exploitation, manipulation of the elites, non-fulfillment of rights, hindrances to prosperity, affinity to one's own group etc. Human Needs Theory argues that when people's needs are not met, they begin to retaliate. Structural Theorists consider the very structure of the society as the cause of conflict, because in a society there are the exploiters and the exploited. As per Elite Theory, conflict is purposefully orchestrated by the elites, in order to gain public support for their motives. According to Frustration-Aggression Theory, conflict is the outcome of deprivation of people's rights and the non-fulfillment of their desires. Psycho-Cultural Theorists believe conflict is the result of a psychological process, wherein one group considers the other group as a hindrance to prosperity. Social Learning and Identity Theory deem conflict as the outcome of affinity to in-group and an antagonism to out-group. What is evident in each of these theories is that conflict is inherent in human behaviour, and it gets intensified through social interaction.

Ethnicity is one of the significant loci of conflicts. While the cause of ethnicity garners immediate sympathy and bonds, people readily create a common identity: this can create conflicts with other identity groups. Ethnic conflicts arise often out of an imagined sense of deprivation of benefits, which other groups enjoy. Scarce resources and underdevelopment have been indicated as root causes for ethnic conflicts, at various parts of the world. The fulfillment of basic needs can reduce occurrences of such conflicts, as human nature is such that it looks towards the satisfaction of higher needs. Ethnic identity is often created along the lines of minority vs. majority, immigrants vs. natives, in which one of the groups perceive an existential threat to one's ethnic group. Ethnicity is a highly inflammable issue. Vested interest groups or individuals often use it to garner support and manipulate the allegiance of members, for their personal benefits. Ethnic movements take different forms and styles, according to the need of the time and circumstances. When people feel that peaceful movements do not get enough attention, they turn to violent means to achieve their goals.

There is a relation between ethnic identity and ethnic conflicts. Some theorists argue that ethnic identity is inherited, some consider it as constructed and still others consider it as functional. Primordialist school of account considers identity as hereditary and that it is passed on from generation-to-generation. According to them, a group is turned into a natural community by common bonds of blood, kinship, customs etc. Constructivists consider that identity is socially constructed and is dynamic. A third school of thought called Instrumentalists deem that identity is temporary and is formed in order to achieve a particular goal. Once the goal is achieved that group ceases to exist. Ethnic identity whether inherited or constructed has a strong unifying factor that urges people to come together for a common cause. This makes the conflicts based on ethnicity lasts longer than other conflicts.

Some of the major ethnic violence that shook the world are the violence between ethnic Kikuyus, Luos and Kalenjiins in Kenya, the Tiv-Jukun, Hausa/Fulani-Igbo, and the Hausa/Fulani-Yoruba clash in Nigeria, Sinhalese-Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Serbs, Croats and Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kurdish-Turkish in Turkey, Hutus-Tutsis in

Rwanda, Kurgyz-Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan, and Nuer-Dinka conflict in South Sudan. Today war between nations is a distant chance, although we cannot completely rule out the possibilities. However, the probability of an ethnic conflict is high because of the growing ethnic consciousness and social, economic and political inequality experienced by various ethnic groups. Therefore, the need of the hour is to transform these conflicts for a harmonious living.

Conflict transformation (CT) is an innovative strategy in peace and conflict studies, developed by John Paul Lederach in the 1990s although its processes and procedures were used unscientifically, from the beginning of human history. Former strategies focused on conflict management and settlement, to contain violence by addressing the immediate causes of violence. In the earlier approaches, the underlying causes of violence are not addressed and a resurgence of violence might occur. CT approach emerged as an answer to these shortcomings of the former approaches. Lederach had drawn inspiration from Johan Galtung who introduced conflict triangle. CT is the revised and modified concept of conflict resolution. CT approach includes finding lasting solutions to conflicts. Its focus is in the structural, behavioral and attitudinal areas of conflict.

CT approach endeavours to transform the conflict, into a constructive change, by addressing the root causes of the conflict. It focuses on building relationships at the grass root level to sustain peace, once and for all. In CT, the facilitators help the parties in the conflict to gradually adapt to the existing situation, by recognising their various interests and come to a lasting solution on their own free will. CT aims at creating positive peace by addressing personal, structural, relational and cultural dimensions of the issues, related to the conflict through dialogue and nonviolent means.

Achieving sustainable peace is the objective of CT approach by transforming the parties through structural changes in the society. It deals not only with the physical, economical, cultural and psychological well-being of people but also, with their spiritual nourishment. The entire group's participation and willingness to cope with the changed

scenario of the society are required in the transformation process. Peace builders, academicians, media persons, and NGOs need to be engaged in the process to ease out the initial reluctance of the parties, to come around the negotiation table. Lobbying with the government and political parties to concentrate on developmental activities to cater to the basic needs of the people is part of the strategy.

In a brief analyses, chapter II tries to explain that every society experiences conflicts in its evolution. Conflict can be made constructive, if managed properly. It is the failure to transform conflict that leads to violence. The theories of conflict explain that conflict emerges in a society, when the existing system is unable to satisfy the needs of the people. This leads to frustration and polarisation in order to achieve goal in an unconscious manner, and through the process of socialisation. It is all the more evident when violence takes place in a multi-ethnic society. There are three views on the formation of ethnic identity: hereditary, socially-constructed and functional. It has been observed that when violence occurs based on ethnicity, it lasts longer and is intense because such is the bond and sensitivity attached to groups, formed on ethnic lines. Under such circumstances, the method of Conflict Transformation is imperative in finding a lasting solution to the problem, by removing the structural and cultural violence, as it analyses and addresses the root causes of the problem non-violently and creatively, involving all the parties in the conflict. The ultimate goal of Conflict Transformation is to achieve positive sustainable peace.

The role of media is very vital in conflict situations. During a conflict, the media can be a) indifferent b) incite violence or c) promote peace with their reporting. Constructive reporting catalyse a dialogue process and provide suggestions, to patch up the lost relationships as a third party. Media is capable of pressurising governments, to look into the genuine demands of the groups in crisis. The pitfalls that seduce the media in conflict situations are: constructing biased realities, highlighting irrelevant events as important and vice versa, deviating public debate from important issues and concerns, pleasing the aspirations of the audience or a social or cultural segment, playing into the

hands of the elite and powerful, and exaggerating events to create panic response from the public. Impartial reporting in such situations becomes challenging and even risky.

History has proven that media played destructive roles in many of the dreaded ethnic conflicts, around the globe. Exaggeration of violence and one-sided reporting have created panic, suspicion and retaliation in the ethnic conflicts in Rwanda, Bosnia, Kenya, Tajikistan, Israel, Palestine, Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland. However, there have also been occasions wherein media did play a constructive role in the ethnic conflict transformation. After the ethnic violence in Rwanda, the same media that was used to instigate people to fight was used for peacebuilding. Probably, 'Good Friday' agreement would not have been possible without the aid of media in Northern Ireland.

Responsible use of media is a sine qua non in conflict transformation process. Different theories on media suggest directives to moderate their behaviour in conflict situations. Social Responsibility Theory emphasises the need to report fairly, objectively and be responsible. Dependency Theory argues that people depend on media for information and the media persons could make use this opportunity to disseminate information that can facilitate peace and unity. The Agenda Setting Theory insists that people's choice of issues depend on how media project the issues and highlight news items that are relevant to peacebuilding. In Development Theory, media give importance for the overall developmental activities that include structural and cultural changes that can facilitate transformation of the society.

Ethnic Conflict Transformation Approach views media as an agent that can facilitate peacebuilding process in a multi-ethnic society. What is required is, the willingness of journalists to work, towards the transformation of ethnic divides. They should transcend their ethnic attachment and commercial gains with objective reporting, keeping in mind the common good of the society. They are expected to address the core issues that escalate violence. Wrong notions have to be removed from the minds of the people, by covering and reporting news that facilitate hope, trust and peacebuilding, and thereby need to create an environment that strengthens the unity and integrity of the society. In Peace Journalism, proposed by Galtung, the primary goal is to achieve peace.

In brief, chapter III reveals that media could play its transformative power in conflict situation. People depend on media to get information during conflict situations and the information that they provide can influence the attitude and behaviour of the people, towards the conflict and towards the opposing parties. History shows that media played a negative role in the major ethnic conflicts around the world, although their role in peacebuilding cannot be totally ruled out. Therefore, responsible media is an indispensable component in the process of constructive conflict transformation. In an ethnic conflict, media could bring changes in society by transforming causes of conflict at the personal, relational, structural and cultural levels. Peace journalism advocated by Johan Galtung is initiated to facilitate peace and pave the way for constructive Conflict Transformation.

Chapter IV examines the experience of Northeast region that is considered to be 'the conflict zone' of ethnic violence. It also analyses the necessity of media as an indispensable agent of ethnic conflict transformation in the region. Communities and groups fighting against one another or the Governments have been regular phenomena in the region. The Governments are often blamed for their failure to resolve an issue. What's more, it is also sometimes held responsible for aggravating issues that have been haunting the region for decades. Though ethnic movements in the region occurred even before the independence of the country, its occurrence has become more frequent in the post-independence era. Ethnic consciousness and collective desire for self-determination are underlying reasons for these movements. Many non-violent movements eventually turn violent when their demands are not met. Today the situation has reached a position, where if a particular demand of an ethnic community is not granted by the government; they see it as a denial of their ethnic aspirations and demand for a separate administrative set up or statehood. It is also seen among various ethnic groups that the success of one movement of an ethnic group encourages others to follow the same path to get things done for them.

There are different causes for ethnic conflicts in the Northeast. Each ethnic movement has its own causes ranging from ethnic consciousness to autonomy to self-determination. However, the major reason may be identity crisis resulting from political,

social and economic exclusion. Hence, discrimination and exploitation unite people to fight for equality. A large influx of immigrants to the region made the indigenous people feel insecure in their own land. This insecurity led them to consider the others as 'enemies'. Poor economic status arising out of lack of governance, non-productive use of land and other natural resources play a major role in the fight for a separate administrative unit. Adding fuel to these causes are the ethnic leaders who polarise the people, to safeguard their ethnicity for their political gains.

Ethnic conflict in the Northeast has disrupted normal conditions of life. Though it united people to fight for their rights, it also hampered the growth and development of the region. The rest of the world sees the region as troublesome and aggressive. Loss of lives and property and post-violence trauma, and displacement of communities are fallouts of these conflicts. Northeast has witnessed the transformation of a democratic protest turned into armed insurgencies and cross border terrorism. This has also negatively affected the prospects of tourism and corporate investments, in the region. The abundant natural resources of the region are therefore, underutilised. Conflicts of these sorts in no way facilitate the aspirations of the people and the nation. Hence it has to be resolved and transformed for a better tomorrow. Media being powerful agencies have greater responsibility in this regard. Some universities and colleges in the region have begun to offer mass communication as one of the major subjects in their curriculum.

In brief, chapter IV provides an overview of ethnic conflicts and its diverse causes in the Northeast. It also analyses the role of media in transforming ethnic conflicts in the region. It was found that given the faith that public have in the media coupled with easy accessibility to the various mediums of information, makes neutral media an indispensable part of conflict transformation, in the Northeast. Today, unlike in the past there is a growing recognition of media's influence in the Northeast. Although harassment of journalists in the region by State and non-State actors are not rare, dedicated and courageous journalists have inspired budding journalists. They are able to analyse the root causes of the problem and make it known to the people concerned, to address it for the common good. Media are expected to project peace-oriented information, in order to change the attitude and behaviour of the public towards

peacebuilding. They are to instill hope and build confidence among the conflicting parties, that peace is very much possible.

The chapter V presents field survey, interpretation and analyses made on the Kokrajhar ethnic violence to examine what role media could play in ethnic violence. Media could play their role in the constructive transformation of continuing cycle of ethnic violence in Kokrajhar. The local media, state media, regional and national media covered the incident according to their interest and convenience. A study on the three leading newspapers of the state shows that media highlight the act of violence more than the act of reconciliation.

Irrespective of people's profession, gender, tribe and age, public opinions were formed by the information that the media gave. However, the educated audience was suspicious of depending on any one particular media for information during violence. Most people had access to at least one of the media. Though print and social were in use, electronic media were more influential as they spread the information faster than print media. Social media played an insignificant role, since its reach out was limited to the youth, academicians and journalists.

Media reported partially and failed to bring out root causes of the ethnic violence. While focusing on the immediate events and outcomes, media often ignored or lacked the will to engage in long-term resolutions and human rights violations emerged out of ethnic violence. However, the survey proved that media have the capacity to play a transforming role in the ethnic violence and patch up broken relationships, between the conflicting parties. They have the power to build confidence and facilitate intercommunity unity in the post-conflict reconciliation process. If media were to be more sensitive and objective in their reporting, they would have been in a better position to control the violence.

The civilian's responses converged to point out that media did not highlight their sufferings and concerns in their reporting. However, community newspapers gave biased reports based on the communities they owed allegiance to. Divergent information and contradictory statements on the same issue reported by media showed inaccuracies and carelessness by the media persons. Media stand accused of reporting mostly negative

news such as comparing the atrocities done by each party, focusing more on the loss of death and property, than on positive news such as the number of times the leaders came together for dialogue, examples of communities supporting each other, government's initiative for dialogue etc. However, most of them agree that media were highly sensational in their reporting.

NGOs reported that media were not keen in taking initiatives in the peacebuilding processes. Their analysis of ground realities and root causes did not help in the resolution of the conflicts at all. Sadly, media could not fulfill its role to bring normalcy in the conflict zones. But they are of the opinion that media do have the ability to build confidence and promote inter-ethnic unity and fraternity.

Business fraternity also reported that media reports are far the reality. They are of the opinion that present 'peaceful ambience' in the area is fragile and has little do with media reporting. At the same time, they do not think that media reporting affected adversely their relationship with their customers, as the business community was neutral towards the conflict.

A self-appraisal of the journalists revealed the vacuum of first-hand data in their articles and narratives. The need for sensationalising news and the lack of total freedom in objective reporting led to non-constructive media production. Sensitisation of the media personnel is required to usher in peace in conflict zones, the media personnel admitted. In a democratic country unlike other totalitarian regimes, media enjoys comparative freedom to make independent narratives of incidents: they do not have to adhere to the official versions of the ruling authority.

A comprehensive analysis of the problem under examination allows us to draw certain significant observations. The analyses of the causes of ethnic violence reveal that socio, political and economic exclusion, prejudice, exploitation, deprivation, identity crisis, constructed enemy image of the other and unfulfilled needs are some of the major root causes of ethnic violence across the globe. Conflict emerges in a society, when the existing system is unable to satisfy the needs of the people as well as when the very structure of the society is conflict prone that promote inequality in terms of distribution of

resources and power. In order to transform the structure of the society, a conflict transformation approach focuses on personal, relational, structural, cultural aspects that can foster sustainable peace. The traditional methods of conflict resolution and management are inadequate to address the root causes that are ingrained in the social structures of the society. Hence, a conflict transformation approach needs to be instilled at various institutional levels to achieve positive peace.

The study suggests that media are powerful agents of Conflict Transformation. Media can initiate peacebuilding programs and confidence building measures during the peace time to uproot the social structures that are becoming the sources of conflict. At the same time, media can play a constructive de-escalatory means of communication, during violence. They are in a better position to mediate and bridge between conflicting parties by bringing forth the real sources of conflict through their comprehensive analyses and reporting. Hence, media are an indispensable part of conflict transformation process. In an ethnic conflict transformation media can address the core issues that lead to the violence and create an ambience for peace. As an agent of conflict transformation, media can highlight the various sources of conflict to get the attention of authorities concerned. Since public opinion is formed by the information that media provides, they have the power to influence the attitude and behaviour of the people. Media can make use of this opportunity to set an agenda that can promote development and peace in the locality. Investigative peace journalism has the ability to eliminate structural and cultural violence by fostering inter-community unity for bringing lasting peace in the society.

An analysis on the importance of ethnic conflict transformation in Northeast India reveals that the region is flooded with a number of ethnic violence due to its multi-cultural diversities. People of the region experience discrimination, exploitation and insecurity in their own land. Many of the ethnic communities of the region consider that their misfortunes are caused by other communities and it is their responsibilities to safeguard their culture, tradition, and interests. This hampers the growth and development of the region. As a result, fear and anxiety, Loss of lives and property, internal displacement, perennial human rights violations etc are normal phenomenon in the region. In order to achieve conflict transformation in the region, a comprehensive

peacebuilding methods and strategy need to be initiated for a peaceful society in the region. The authorities seldom look into the root causes of the problem and address it judiciously. However, in an ECT, we are able to identify the immediate, distant and root causes of the conflicts and address them non-violently involving all the parties in the conflict, so as to find a lasting solution to the problem. This can facilitate in transforming the conflicts once and for all which is a pre-requisite for peace and development in the region.

The analyses of the media's role in Kokrajhar ethnic violence enable us to suggest that media are a great powerhouse in patching up broken relationships among the conflicting parties. But, this power as agents of reconciliation is yet to be fully accomplished. Many a times media failed to cover the entire incidents of violence thereby diverting from the core issues that lead to the conflict. Most of the times media gave more importance for negative and sensational news that are destructive in nature. The media focus on immediate destruction and ignored the human rights concerns and long term resolutions. So, the real sources and causes are not addressed by the media and they wait for the violence to erupt to report. In the immediate aftermath of the violence although some of the media initiate dialogue process it was insufficient to achieve lasting peace.

Civilians are of the opinion that media are very much active during the course of the violence. However, they are not interested to bring out the root causes of the violence to facilitate reconciliation and inter-community unity in the post-conflict period. It is also evident from the response of the academicians that although media have the ability to make structural changes, they lack objective reporting. Media are compelled to make 'appealing' and sensational news for their commercial interests. The NGOs also consider that media are powerful agents in conflict transformation through their objective reporting to build inter community unity in multi-cultural and ethnic prone society. But the media news lack peace-building initiative and conflict transformation efforts in transforming the conflict constructively.

The business community does not believe that the media play a greater role in bringing back normalcy in the locality. Whereas, they were of the opinion that media's objective

reporting could have de-escalated the violence. The journalists admit the difficulty of reporting during the violence taking into account various factors of conflict transformation. They also accept that if sensational news was not given importance they would have been in a better position to facilitate conflict transforming processes.

In the final analyses of the study, it is observed that media sensationalise violence and downplay reconciliation during ethnic violence. Though media could have played a constructive role in brokering peace, the study reveals that media often fail to exercise their power as an agent of ethnic conflict transformation. The experience of Kokrajhar ethnic violence reveals that media focused more on acts of violence than as an agent of conflict transformation. It is observed that the media ethics and investigative peace journalism were seldom exercised while reporting violence. Hence, media are yet to play a constructive role in the ethnic conflict transformation of Kokrajhar.

In order to facilitate constructive conflict transformation, it is imperative to carry out their responsibility, without fear and prejudice. It is important to bring to light and address structural and cultural violence, to establish positive peace in the society. There should be collaboration between different media practitioners, in order to coordinate and authenticate the information. Media ought to provide adequate space and time for peace-oriented activities, and be active not only during the course of the violence, but also need to be involved before and after violence. In fact, it is during peace time that media are in a better position to carry out their responsibility to bring changes at personal, relational, structural and cultural levels to achieve conflict transformation. Media being an agent of conflict transformation need to take peace initiatives through dialogue and negotiations. It is also important that the state and other agencies ensure and encourage media to exercise their fundamental role as agent of conflict transformation. In short, media can play a constructive role in achieving peace in ethnic conflict transformation. Since the study examined the role of media in general, a further research on how various types of media such as print, electronic, social etc can exercise their respective roles to achieve conflict transformation can be initiated.

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APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a Ph.D research scholar of Sikkim Central University doing a research on "the role of media in ethnic conflict transformation of Kokrajhar". The objective of this research is to examine the role media can play in ethnic conflict transformation of Kokrajhar violence. Kindly span your memory to 2012 ethnic conflicts to provide feedback on what role the media played during the violence. The data that is collected will be used only for research purpose and I assure you that all personal information provided will be kept confidential.

Thank You



Benoy Joseph

Profile

* Name: (Optional)

* Religion: (Optional)

* Tribe:

* Gender: a) Male b) Female c) Transgender

* Age: a) 18-30 b) 31-50 c) 51 and above

A) In a scale of 1 to 5, please rate the following questions according to your preferred choices where '1' as the most preferred and '5' as your least preferred.

1) Name the media from which you generally get information?

.....News paper

.....Radio

.....Television

.....Internet

.....Others (specify:.....).

2) Specify the type of media from which you got the information during violence?

.....News paper Radio Television
.....Internet Others (specify:).

3) How did you communicate with one another in those days of violence?

.....Phone calls SMS Social networks (Facebook, Twitter etc)
.....leaflet Others (specify:).

4) How did the violence affect you the most?

..... Loss of dear and near ones Loss of property fear & anxiety
..... Broken relationship Others (specify:.....).

5) What did the media highlight the most in their reporting?

..... The act of violence Actors in violence Causes of
violence Need for reconciliation Others (specify:.....).

B) Carefully read the following statements and tick () the most appropriate response.

6) Would you agree that media have the ability to patch up the broken relationships between conflicting communities during and after the conflict?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

7) Do you agree that the media covered the entire incidents of violence taking into consideration the various issues related to the violence?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

8) Were your information on the violence mainly based on the media reports?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

9) Do you think that media focused more on the immediate events and outcomes than the human rights concerns and long term resolutions?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

10) Would you say that media was instrumental in taking initiative for the dialogue process?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

Specific Questionnaire for the Civilians

1) Do you think that media highlighted your sufferings and concerns in their reporting?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

2) Would you agree that media tried to bring out the root causes of the conflict?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

3) Do you think that you were sufficiently informed of the progress of dialogue and reconciliation through the media?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

4) Are you of the opinion that the media projected a particular community as the cause of the conflict?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

5) Do you think that in the post-conflict period, media concentrated on reconciliation?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

Specific Questionnaire for the Academicians

1) Did you find different media giving divergent information and making contradictory statements on the same issue?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

2) Do you think that media can play a major role in making structural changes; like ensuring economic equality, basic facilities, participation in the decision making body and thereby address the root causes of conflict?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

3) Do you think that media in general focused more on negative news such as comparing the atrocities done by each party and loss of death and property than the positive news such as the number of times the leaders came together for dialogue, examples of communities supporting each other, government's initiative to tackle the conflict etc?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

4) Do you think that media were highly sensational in their reporting?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

5) Do you think that all the information that the media reported were correct?

- a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

Specific Questionnaire for the NGOs/Local leaders

1) Would you agree that media were powerful agents in providing information during the violence?

- a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

2) Do you think that media tried to ensure peace in the region by taking initiative for relief works, mediation, dialogue, peace education, structural changes and preserving cultural heritage?

- a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

3) Do you agree that there was less coverage in the media regarding the process of dialogue and peace building as compared to the atrocities done and the blame game by the opposing parties in the conflict?

- a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

4) Do you think that the media have the power to build confidence and facilitate inter-community unity?

- a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

5) Would you say that media's analysis of the ground realities and the root causes enabled the leaders and the administration to transform the conflict constructively?

- a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

Specific Questionnaire for the Businessmen

1) Do you think that the present calmness that you experience in the locality is due to the influence of media?

- a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

2) Do you agree that the media highlighted the loss and concern of the business community in their reporting?

- a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

3) Do you think if media were to be more sensitive and objective in their reporting, they would have been in a better position to control the violence?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

4) Would you agree that the media reporting on violence negatively affected your relationship with your customers?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

5) Do you agree that media played a major role in bringing back normalcy in the locality?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

Specific Questionnaire for the Journalists

1) Would you agree that your reporting was mainly based on secondary sources than the primary sources?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

2) Do you think that while reporting violence you have taken into consideration the various factors involved in the conflict; like the immediate and root causes, it's short, medium and long term impacts, the sensitivity of the locality and the need for peace building?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

3) Do you think that media persons do not enjoy complete freedom while reporting violence?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

4) Do you agree that you had given more importance for sensational news in your reporting?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

5) Would you agree that if you were to report the violence from a different perspective, you would have facilitated in resolving the conflict in a better manner?

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) unsure d) Agree e) Strongly agree

