

Political Crisis and Media's Role towards Conflict Resolution: A Study in Indian Context

Arjun Das
University of North Bengal
West Bengal, India

tutu4arjun@yahoo.com

Abstract:

With the rapid advancement of Science and Technology in the 21st century the role of media is omnipresent for all positive and negative changes in the society no matter of geographical location but it depends how media functions in its duties and responsibilities in such situation. Media as a whole has its potentiality either to affect any social development or to get affected by the factors of the social change. For all types of public opinion which impact mass media in any crisis situation with regard to media coverage or crisis one has to reflect, how mass media can influence the public opinion on the other hand. With this conceptual framework in mind this paper explores the synergies and tension arising out of political crisis and how media can function as a peace building mechanism for conflict resolution. This paper is an attempt to look at the methods as to how media can be used by practitioners in each field during each of the three stages of political crisis or conflict: A) before political crisis breaks out, B) during political crisis and arising conflict due to and its C) aftermath role as a long term measures. Using content analysis of newspaper articles and reports this study tries to address the issues as stated. To put forward the basic argument of this paper two case studies has been taken into consideration one is "Assam Movement" and another is "Sikh Movement" that took place in two different states in India i.e. in Assam and Punjab in the contemporary period during 1980s and 1990s for which the country witnessed some deep rooted political crisis particularly in those two states and to the nation in general.

Key Words: omnipresent, public opinion, conflict resolution, content analysis, civil society

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Case Selection:

Two cases namely the State of Assam and Punjab are selected as the empirical examples to address my argument for several reasons. On the one hand are the differences between the regions themselves. Punjab is economically prosperous while Assam is one of the most industrially and economically underdeveloped state of the Indian union. However, both regions experienced violent assertions of identity thereby created deep rooted political crisis which became most intense under Indira Gandhi's (the then Prime Minister who was assassinated by her two Sikh body guards) congress regime. The relative underdevelopment of the region of Assam and the economic dominance of the alleged outsiders played a part in Assamese unrest. However, it fails to explain why ethnic cleavages take one particular form rather than any other and how cleavages come to in the first place. Also, this assumption fails to explain secessionism in the context of Punjab which was, at the time that conflict became most intense, one of the most economically prosperous of the Indian Union. Moreover, conflict in Punjab gave way to full blown secessionist demands while demands in the state of Assam did not. Both movements sprang out of an evolving discourse of a distinct identity that was both constructed and transformed at different points in the political history of the post-colonial nation state. Both movements are historically grounded in a persistent struggle between the post-colonial state and the rights of the periphery both on the level of discourse and on the level of action. Further, though both Assam and Punjab experienced ethno-national assertions, the case of Punjab was transformed into demands for full blown secession, while the Assamese demands remained limited to those for a specific kind of autonomy within India's federal structure. Considering all these aspect the two cases have been selected.

The Case of Assam and the Assam Movement:

In order to put forward our argument out of the two case studies we will have to go through the voracity of the political crisis that emerged in those two different states. In the first instance it is to be stated that during 1979-1985 the state of Assam witnessed a kind of student movement (which was popularly known as Assam Movement) wherein the support was extended by various socio-political and literary organizations to the cause of the movement that was lead

by the All Assam Student Union. The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) along with the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP.. a socio-political and literary organization) launched a mass movement in 1979 for the detection of illegal migrants , their deletion from the voter's list (to disfranchise) and their deportation to Bangladesh from the state of Assam (as the large scale migration took place from the neighbouring country mainly from Bangladesh) and the movement continued till signing the historic Assam Accord on 15th August,1985 in a tripartite talk among representatives of the Central Government, State Government (Assam state) and AASU as well as AAGSP. In 1985, the student leaders called off the Assam Movement and signed the Assam Accord within among others, provided for the detection and deportation of the illegal Bangladeshi immigrant by a freshly modified law, the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act, 1985 and also agreed to fence off the entire border between Bangladesh and Assam. The Assam Movement was a watershed in Assam's post-independent history as it radically changed the direction of subsequent political developments in the state. A democratic mass movement in its appearance, its covert agenda of extremism made violence an intrinsic part of political movements in Assam ever since. During Assam Movement the regional press started a vigorous propaganda against the dangers posed by the outsiders and decried for the identity crisis. As a matter of fact the uneven economic development in Assam failed to meet the rising aspirations of the Asamiyas (original and actual inhabitants in Assam) and this frustration was expressed in a movement to exclude non -Asamiya (immigrants from other state and other nation)competitors from a share of the cake under the banner of 'culture-in-crisis'. The issue gradually divided the people of Assam and the Asamiya press did not allow for open or democratic discussions which only deepened the xenophobic fears in the state.

In Assam the first phase of Assam Movement started with peaceful demonstrations and rallies, the inauguration of President's rule in December 1979 in the wake of the fall of the then ministry and the return to power of the Congress (I) in 1980 inaugurated a new phase in the state's politics. The confrontations between the movement and the government became more and more intense. The leaders of the movement called for a boycott of the parliamentary elections of 1979 unless the government agreed to remove the names of the foreigners from the electoral rolls. This was followed by an unprecedented mass popular upsurge in the form of sit-ins, strikes and symbolic disobedience of the law. The decision on the part of New Delhi to end President's rule in 1980 and form a state government indicated the center's decision to challenge the power of the movement and to back electoral institutions that reflected the demographic realities of the

state. Further, the subsequent government took action against ethnic Assamese officials who were sympathizers of the movement. These measure accentuated the crisis of legitimacy in the state, for the process was perceived as one of de-Assamization of the state bureaucracy, which in turn served to reinforce the fear of Assamese minoritization, and the loss of Assamese hegemony to immigrants. Between 1980 and 1982 there were twenty-three negotiating sessions between the leaders of the movement and the central congress government. However, despite the government's hegemonic actions, the movement, instead of declining in intensity only, became more militant, while the demands became more intense thereby political crisis at every sphere of life. The Assamese press that was sympathetic to the demands of the movement came under censorship and Indian Army was deployed to maintain law and order and several times Presidents Rule were also clamped. The capital city of the state was overrun with state police forces and paramilitary forces from the centre. The state witnessed large scale violence and lawlessness at several intervals during 1979-1985 and thereby political crisis due to.

The Case of Punjab and the Sikh Movement:

In 1980s incidents involving the movement for an independent Sikh homeland have received much media attention, especially since the attack on the Golden Temple by the Indian army in 1984. Much of the debate on the issue of Khalistan, the name of a proposed independent Sikh nation, has thus focused on events since the early 1980s. Sikh minority backed by the Akali Dal (Sikh political leadership in the form of the Akali Dal) make a series of demands to the Government of India in the name of the preservation of Sikh identity. What was called the "Punjab crisis" spawned much excellent reportage and several good books. What started as a political rivalry between the Congress and the Akalis soon degenerated into conflict between a section of the Hindus and a section of Sikhs. This led, on the one hand, to a series of communal killings; and, on the other, to an increasing alienation of Sikhs from the Government of India. Among the many low points of a dishonest decade three in particular must be mentioned: the storming of the Golden Temple by the Indian Army in June 1984; the murder of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her bodyguards on the last day of October 1984; and the revenge killings of innocent Sikhs which followed. The first and last of these events recruited many fresh recruits to the separatist cause. The latter part of the 1980s, therefore, saw a reign of terror in the Punjab countryside: jointly imposed by the Khalistanis (a separate nation as claimed by the Sikhs), who

intimidated and sometimes killed those who did not fall in line; and by the police, who in their search for the insurgents cared little for legal procedure or for the rights of ordinary citizens.

The struggle against the Indian government has been portrayed as a religious conflict based on Hindu-Sikh religious differences, and a campaign without merit, propagated by Sikh leaders interested in creating a Sikh homeland. The Sikh Movement for independence from India is multidimensional, with religious, historic, political and economic grievances at the core of the struggle. Further, the issues inherent in these categories are deeply rooted in Sikh history in India and date much prior to the limited frame of reference which often begins in the early 1980s. While the relationship between Sikhs and Hindus became increasingly hostile and distant. Indira Gandhi, the erstwhile Prime Minister of India, sought to deal with the deteriorating political situation in Punjab, She developed ties with Sikh fundamentalists to weaken the movement. This move on the part of the central government was significant. As the political situation in Punjab deteriorated, the Union government declared a state of emergency in Punjab in October 1983 and imposed President's rule. Finally, on June 5, 1984 the Indian Army was ordered into the Golden Temple (Holy shrine of Sikh religious people) complex to flush out the terrorists. This siege on the holiest of Sikh shrines and the supreme symbol of Sikh identity was a watershed event in the history of the Sikh Movement, and had critical implications for centre-state relations so the state had to witness turmoil political tension as well as crisis. It was at this point that the cry for secession from India became magnified and gained wider Sikh support manifested in the demand for the sovereign Sikh state of Khalistan. Indira Gandhi's storming of the Golden Temple in 1984 (in the name of Operation Blue Star) not only symbolized the desecration of the holy shrine but also the once familiar loss of control over the religious institution of the Sikh. The storming of the Golden Temple in 1984 and the brutal massacre of the Sikh in Delhi in the aftermath of the assassination of Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards created tremendous outrage in the Sikh community. It also represented a turning point in the popular Sikh position towards the Indian State. It caused the moderate and extremist Sikhs to unite and created deep divisions between the Sikhs and other Indians. It is significant to note that militant secessionist discourse had until then, largely been opposed by popular sections of the Sikh community. However, in the aftermath of Gandhi's desecration, there was created a gulf between the Government and the militant and the popular discourse diminished. It thus marked the point at which the Sikhs were most alienated from the discourse of the pan-Indian nation-state. At later stage there was political accord between Akali leader and the then Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi in 1985 but could not

alleviate completely the spate of terrorism rampant in the Punjab. The terrorism was motivated by the demand for Khalistan. Even with an Akali victory in the September 1985 elections, they failed to translate a clear majority into the resolution of what had by then been termed “the Punjab Crisis”. By 1987, the Punjab problem or Punjab crisis had reverted back to the terror of 1984. Failure in the implementation of the political accord only led to renewed action on the part of the militants and the declaration of the formation of Khalistan by a faction of the All India Sikh Student Federation. The Sikh discourse thus became not only increasingly militant, but also increasingly accentuated a territorial component to its definition of identity. It is significant that the period during which militancy and the call for a Sikh homeland became most intense is also the period during which an increasingly Hindu revivalist discourse was being articulated at the centre. This made the Sikh demands a double edged sword- an articulation of a discourse on nationhood that was increasingly divergent from that of the pan-Indian one, and a nationalist imagining in which territoriality and temporality came to be the dominant theme as a result of nationalist mobilization.

An analysis of these two cases:

The basic aim to select these two case analysis is not to find the pros and cons of the movement but to touch upon the periphery because the broad objective is to put some light to give an idea that the two movements in two different Indian states was created a kind of havoc in the civil society since the crisis due to the movements affected all walks of life. No doubt in such turmoil political situation opinion were greatly divided either to support the movement or to oppose the movement and in this aspect media played a vital role especially because the role of the media as we know is to disseminate information. After going through the two cases in general parlance it seems that the two states has to pass through various political tension and crisis. As such to proceed further in our discussion we should concentrate more on to find out the role of the media in the crisis situation in context of the two cases as cited above.

Basis objectives:

- To find out the role of the media before political crisis breaks out
- To find out the role of media during political crisis
- To find out the role of the media at the aftermath of political crisis

Method:

This is a secondary analysis of qualitative data collected from various newspapers, magazines, and journals and with the help of conceptual content analysis method the present article is presented. In addition interview and discussion with various media persons and social scientists had been taken into consideration while preparing the article. In our first case we have taken 100 selected items comprising news items, articles, editorials and letter to the editors from the two highest circulated newspapers in the state of Assam during the Assam Movement in the state of Assam viz. The Assam Tribune (an English daily) and Dainik Asom (a vernacular newspaper). Further to study the second case i.e for Sikh Movement in the state of Punjab we selected altogether 100 items comprising various news items, articles, editorials and also few articles written to the Editor from “The Tribune” and “The Hindu” (both National English daily). We have also consulted other prominent regional media in the state. In addition we have gone through various articles and editorials got published in various magazines, journals and books. It is to be stated here that for our study, particularly, only the role of print media were taken into consideration for the content analysis purpose but at the same time the contribution of the print media and its role during these two movement in two different states in India were also kept in mind in general for obvious reason.

Role of media in Assam Movement and Sikh Movement:

Media by its nature plays an important role for any socio-political situation cutting across geographical boundary. In our first case it is observed that media played a very critical role even before the movement was gearing up and after the movement subsided at a point when a consensus was reached in a tripartite talk. It is alleged in most cases by the social scientist and intellectuals that over the issue of Assam Movement the regional media first started the propaganda campaign about the issue of illegal migrants. The regional press started a vigorous propaganda against the dangers posed by the outsiders or foreigners in Assam though the definition of the ‘outsiders’ remained foggy. The issue that was reflected repeatedly in the media divided the people of Assam and the regional press did not allow to generate open or democratic discussions which only deepened the xenophobic fears among the supporters of the movement and non supporters of the movement. Media itself failed to come to a consensus about the exact figure of the illegal migrants in the state. As such there was conflicting reports in the

media for which public opinion was virtually divided. An issue of majority and minority was surfaced so was the supporter of the movement by the majority people and the movement was also opposed vehemently by the minority fraction. But the regional media remained silent about the genuine cause of the minority group of people. A kind of social conflict was build up gradually during the movement and a kind of political crisis thereby as the citizenry was entirely suffered due to the movement. Media in this direction failed to play its role and there was biasness while reporting the minority cause. It seems during the movement that the media mainly the regional media acted as the mouthpiece of the movement leaders and the media scene was mainly dominated by the movement supporters. In this regard the people who opposed the illegal side of the movement relied much more on the reporting by the national media so far factual analysis is concerned. There is an existed tension among people so far our saying goes of good media having its basic objectives are concerned in the above context. Because media is capable of causing considerable damage and incite violence and influence the mind of the people to destabilize the society. Media refers here basically to several mediums or channels used in an organized fashion to communicate information to groups of people, as a service to the public and the three main tenants of journalism are accuracy, impartiality and responsibility in the public interest. In the light of the saying it is noticed that during the movement objective journalism was lacking and therefore, the state media as a whole could not show its color as neutral observer. It is to say so because we find lack of objective reporting so far human rights violation cases and other kind of human tragedy of the non supporter of the movement is taken into consideration. Of course we are not going here in detail about the human rights violation cases that was reported both by the regional press and national press as well as other print media in case of the act by the movement supporters and by the government agencies (like police, paramilitary and army forces) in the name of curbing the violence in the state. It is worth mentioning here is that thousands of people got killed and there was heavy loss of national property during the movement which caught headlines in the national and international media. That media fails drastically to discharge its ethical functioning bears in the fact that in the national interest many of the regional newspapers got censored during the period. This was due to lack of accuracy both in text and context, lack of truthfulness, lack of fairness in presenting all relevant facts in a balanced manner, lack of impartiality in reporting the news, inability to be free from obligation to any interest group, inability to refrain from any kind of stereotyping and above all to prove the media for its social responsiveness in referring to matters of violence etc.

A different picture is seen while analyzing the role of media insofar as our second case i.e. Sikh Movement in Punjab is concerned. The media here did not have the pioneer role to launch the cause of the movement as had been seen in the case of the Assam Movement. In fact regional media was not supportive here in Punjab crisis. On the other hand right from the beginning of the movement in Punjab government controlled media had close watch and there was heavy censorship. Indeed for as long as India has been a nation, the powerful electronic media has served as the mouthpiece of the government so was the role of the electronic media in Punjab too. The Government control on media was so heavy during the movement that the foreign reporters trying to grab the sensational tragedies of 1984 especially on the attack of Golden Temple by the government forces were not allowed and the Indian government acted as the most visible gatekeeper, making it impossible to approve journalist visas for foreign correspondents. Historical Sikh events have thus suffered from not only biased media coverage, but selective coverage which projects a one sided perspective. The “media blackout” of Operation Blue Star , is a prime example of this type of media offense. Operation Blue Star was the government ordered storming of the Golden Temple at Amritsar. The Temple was serving as an armed encampment and refuge for Bhindranwale, the leader of a Sikh political faction. Using ground forces and tanks, the Indian government invaded the temple: killing dozens of Sikhs and destroying the sacred gurdwara with bullet holes and fire. Represented the holiest shrine and Temple in the Sikh religion, this event sits deep in the hearts and memories of Sikhs.

The day before the actual invasion, the government ordered all press out of state and restricted press coverage in Punjab. The press was allowed back a week later and then only on guided tours. The aftermath was later described by the press, as involving a small gang of criminals disliked by the majority of Sikhs and Indians. Making light of the militants depicted them as petty political agitators, rather than leaders of a movement for a greater Punjabi autonomy. A discrepancy between the press release images and the actual severity of the violence used by the Indian government in the operation, created a layer of deceit when informing the public. This usage of selective information in the Indian media only contributed to the ambiguous image of the Sikhs to the misinformed world. During the Sikh Movement the Government of India passed the National Security Act, 1980; The Punjab Disturbed Areas Ordinance, 1983; The Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1983 and the Terrorists Affected Areas (Special Courts Act), 1984. These acts gave sweeping powers to the police and army to curtail even the right to life. By and large during the Punjab crisis the approach of the media has also been partisan to take into

account all aspects of the multidimensional problem historical, socio-economic, political and ideological. The media have focused only on the law and order aspect ignoring a careful examination of all the issue and processes that had compounded the problem. Thus, during 1984, Indian leaders were free to broadcast made-up stories through the govt. controlled Radio and TV. Consequently, all foreign news organizations were left with no choice but to take the twisted news of local govt. controlled media and broadcast over their networks abroad. It was much later that the foreign newspapers knew only the partial truth about 'India's Unknown Holocaust. It is alleged that one of late Gandhi's (late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi) first acts in pursuit of the upcoming attack on the golden temple was to seek active support of both print and the electronic media as the media mainly national by contrast did not report terrorism being perpetrated by the police or the army during the Punjab crisis. It seems that as of the early 1980s, the vernacular press in the Punjab was active from both sides in fomenting the religious divide between Hindus and Sikhs. Thus we get a clear difference on the role of media in Assam Movement and Sikh Movement. It is evident from the media source that in case of Punjab the role of the media was not in line with the thought of the supporter of the Sikh Movement. In fact above saying focus that there was uneasy Sikhs-media ties in those days of the movement. The relationship between the media and the Sikhs has never been a very happy one. The Sikhs' portrayal by the media not only produced ambiguous stereotypes, but in turn it also sparked an emerging movement from the Sikhs to challenge their social reputation and to build more unity among the followers of the religion by using the media themselves. The historical Sikh events of the 1980s and the early 1990s have suffered from not only biased media coverage, but selective coverage which projects a one sided perspective. The 'media blackout' of operation Blue Star (attack of the Golden Temple to flush out militants or the hard core supporter of the Sikh movement), is a prime example of the type of media offense or media biasness.

In the Punjab crisis during the movement the discrepancy between the media-generated images and the actual severity of the violence used by the Indian government in the operation as cited above created a layer of deceit when informing the public. This usage of selective information in the Indian media only contributed to the ambiguous image of the Sikhs to the misinformed world. During the 1970s and 1980s the bias of a number of newspaper owners, editors and journalists also contributed to Sikh disenchantment. With attitudes in Northern and Central India hardening along communal lines because of manipulation by government, the situation was further aggravated by national newspaper whose reporting on the Sikhs made no

distinction between a regional political party, a handful of militants, and the entire Sikh community. Even senior editors and columnists considered all Sikhs accountable for the actions of these three. During those critical years of political crisis in Punjab, The Times of India (an English national daily) and The Hindustan Times (an English national daily) did more to incite hostility between Hindus and Sikhs than perhaps any other English-language newspaper. According to the editor of The Times of India, for example, ‘a myth has been built, and it is currently sought to be reinforced, about the heroic role of the Akalis in the independence struggle..the Akalis let us face it, were not an independent Sikh component of the larger freedom movement....they were the products of a British inspired movement amongst the Sikhs which emphasized their separateness from the Hindus. This emphasis was not accidental. It was part of the well established “divide and rule policy”’.

The Tribune is the major daily English-language newspaper in Punjab. Founded by a Sikh The Tribune in Punjab to some extent during the Sikh Movement, consistently played a very negative role as far as representing the Sikh case is concerned. From 1988 to 1995, the Tribune regularly reported alleged encounters, deaths from crossfire, “inter-gang” violence, accidents, lethal attacks. the media may have been averse to reporting acts of state violence as enforced disappearances or extrajudicial killings fearing that they would be subjected to intimidation and violence by security officers people with little access to the media and mass communications are less likely to contact the NHRC, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or the media; Tribune’s greater ability to cover incidents in the major urban hub of Amritsar relative to other areas of the state. However, the nature of the Tribune reporting was certainly closer to a passive surveillance system which relied heavily on information updates from the security forces in contrast to the proactive community based collection of information for reporting in other regional vernacular language newspapers.

Political crisis and Media:

Media plays a very crucial role in democracy and India being the largest democratic country in the world, to record success and failure for maintaining democratic fabric mass media has to do a lot. As a matter of fact success of democracy in any country depends how the media can play roles in that democratic set up. The debate in political science is loaded with skepticism and avoidance. The debate is how a crisis is possible? The spectrum of political crisis arising out

from time to time in a mature democratic country and immature democratic countries varies and so is the role of media in resolving the crisis in such political situation towards conflict resolution for maintaining the healthy democratic spirit.

Political instability due to conflict over any issue warns the media how to diagnosis the disease and find out the acceptable path of treatment. If media fails its ethical duties and responsibilities in generating positive public opinion in this respect then it is inevitable that the political crisis will deepen. In this context it is better to understand in brief what the political crisis is .As per general empirical conception of political crisis there are two strong conceptions of political crisis. In the theological view, political crisis indicates a collapse of civilization and a denial of divine revelation and human nature. These threats can only be blocked and overcome by a sustained effort of revolution and purification. In the medical view, political crisis indicates a disease of the political body that threatens to halt the political system. The threat can only be remedied by appropriate diagnosis and acceptance of treatment. The theological view is dominant in radical approaches to liberal democracy, such as historical materialism and classical rationalism. It tends to overrate the political crisis and see every incident of democratic ineffectiveness as a sign of total instability. The medical view is dominant in public administration literature on governance and sensationalist journalism. It tends to underrate the political crisis and see the practice of government as a normal process of making and managing crises in a wide sense. The importance of available information for people's perceptions of the management of a crisis points towards the crucial role of the news media. *During political crisis* the public depends almost totally on the media for news and for vital messages from public and private authorities. In such situations, a complex interaction between the supply of information and the demand for information occurs. If the event constitutes or is perceived as a major crisis, then there is an almost insatiable demand for almost any information related to the event. The media both responds to and fuels these demands by interrupting their regular programming, rushing to the scene and reporting as extensively as possible, with the result that almost everything that is or can be covered in relation to the crisis becomes newsworthy.

In the light of the above in our case analysis we find that media as a whole discharged its duties during the political crisis in its own fashion in those two different fields and failed to play its duties maintaining uniform standard of media ethics. That is why people had to speculate over the functioning of the media since it provided the ground to divide public opinion rather helping

to formulate agenda to create healthy democratic fabric in the country. In so far as our context and cases are concerned we see that there was a crisis of democracy when and because members of a polity, both elite and mass segments were confused and polarized as to their valuation of the political community vis- a vis the norms and principles of the political regime. There was a crisis in Indian democracy especially in those two states when and because members of a polity are dissatisfied with most leaders and most sectors of law, public and private and more specially over the role of media and its functioning.

Theoretically, a crisis in democracy, do not have to bring about a crisis of democracy. Furthermore, sub-optimal but satisfactory performance of leaders and policymakers allows the possibility of a crisis of democracy. The political crisis in a democratic country has a number of features. First, the political establishment feels insecure as to the bases of its authority and vital interests. Insecurity leads to intransigence (uncompromising), paralysis, or capitulation. Second, political opposition rises and claims a democracy deficit. This is a gulf between ideal and practice, society and state, reality and public rhetoric, in short between the establishment and the people. Without such opposition, the crisis is short lived due to harmonized activity that controls and overcomes it. Third, neither the form of politics nor its substance satisfies the agents involved. These agents then turn to the public sphere to mobilize certain coalitions into making claims about change in the status quo and communicating their concerns. There is no crisis without and openly expressed sense of malaise within and across establishment and opposition. Fourth , the risk of disorder in non-political spheres. If such situation arises we then term it political crisis instead saying 'political problem', 'political tension' and 'political conflicts'. And we see most of the characteristics as stated above while analyzing out cases. A deep rooted sense of political crisis within the state as well as within the central government did surface while dealing with the cases was noticed in the context of our subject matter.

Under the situation of political crisis that we have tried to define in consideration of the two case studies that we have tried to understand we see that in such circumstances in the First Phase, media as a watch dog serves or should serve primarily as a source of information about the impending crisis in the early stage rather than guidance and consolation in the crisis. The magnitude of the crisis and the uncertainty during the early stages of a crisis limited media in using government officials as source and the influence of government officials are not found to be not as strong as these are expected in a crisis situation involving national interest. And thus the

stage of a crisis is an important factor in determining coverage frames and media functions. It is therefore, interesting to note that media when functions crisis situation of unprecedented magnitude the stages of crisis affects coverage frames to cope up the situation so far reaction of the society is concerned as well as the affect of the society to the media. Here in lies the credit of functioning of media in such circumstances.

Under the circumstances stated above if we consider the socio-political movements that took place in two different Indian states we can say therefore, that at the first phase the media as a whole do have the following functions during a political crisis—in time warning of impending dangers and how to avert it if the situation so arises , flow of accurate information without any political bias, guidance for future preparedness , educate public in right direction for safeguarding national interest. In the Second Phase, media coverage of events should focus on making sense out of the situation. Doing so media should suggest the ways for long term measures and perspective. In the Third Phase media should check and counter check for media bias by national/local/international media house. While reporting it should be ensured that no political mileage is taken at the cost of the nation. The priority remains for media men so as to provide accurate guidance and one should not (media men) forget that media have a multiplicity of functions, depending on the needs of the audience.

In our study it seems that when the social order was seriously disrupted in those movement people usually desired more information than the media can provide. It is so because during any political crisis the people become almost totally dependent on the media for news that may be vital for survival and for important messages from public and private authorities. They look to the media for information, explanation and interpretations. In such situation media men should remember the facts that providing factual information to the public is the fundamental tasks of media in a crisis and that kind of media literacy should also be cultivated in the mind of the public well before any crisis situation starts. And media itself can provide more insight on how media perform in a crisis situation.

Analysis and Interpretation:

In our study it indicates that in a political crisis zone audience is left with the option of either accepting the lie as truth or suspend judgment and strives to look for other perspectives. It

is not easy considering the fact that they do not often have the adequate tools to check the veracity of news and information concerning people and places which are far away from them. Even if such tools did exist, they are not fool proof due to many subjective factors under which media might undertake to do the verification. Generally audience tends to trust the media, and therefore, media must ensure that the trust the audience place on it is not belied. That brings us to the question of the issue of prejudice or bias in media. When we look closely at the way the media functions today it becomes obvious that media are bedeviled by prejudices of one kind or the other. Media are often used in order to cultivate and nourish, sustain and spread prejudices. Media can easily become a handmaid. Besides helping to perpetuate stereotypes and prejudices, media can set agendas, criterion, and social norms and also become guilty of branding certain areas as trouble torn, conflict zone etc. It can be in any country in the globe no matter of South Asia, South Africa, Asia or America.

Conclusion:

Today's media constitute a major coverage of crime, conflicts and controversies and the way these are presented call for utmost caution and objectivity. How does a media person weigh conflicting ideologies in the context of communal riots, protest rallies, ethnic clashes, violence is interesting to speculate. It is on occasions of social turmoil and conflict that the society at large looks to the media for direction and light. The spotlights are turned on the media, and people expect them to be a saner voice, to inform accurately and truthfully, to clarify and interpret, to show the way. The task of the media professionals are no doubt today enhanced by new technologies, but the speed with which information is gathered, presented and transmitted to the audience, make the task of being objective, accurate and responsible extremely challenging. Off course the media coverage of some of the recent socio-political development in some countries including India raise worrying questions so far objectivity and responsibility of the media is concerned. There is a strong ethics of objectivity in journalism. But what does this mean? Editors may be objective in the sense that they don't want to publish a "slanted" story. They are very subjective, however, in which stories get assigned, which stories get written by the best reporters, which stories get edited down, and which stories get printed on the front page. It is therefore, difficult to understand what journalists mean by objectivity. Media must tell what's going on as completely, accurately, honestly, and dispassionately as possible. And that is objective reporting. News is a competitive business and today with several channels airing round the clock news headlines, the press has a tough task on hand to be 'first and fast' with the latest news.

Competition leads to some abuses too- hasty reporting, exaggeration or sheer sensationalism. Media often compete with one another. There are numerous examples every day in the press. The hallmark of any media should be objectivity. But objectivity is something that needs to be constantly tested and proved. The good newspaper, the good news broadcaster must walk a tightrope between two great gulfs-on one side the false objectivity that takes everything at face value and lets the public be imposed on by the charlatan with the most brazen front; on the other, the interpretive reporting which fails to draw the line between objective and subjective, between a reasonably well-established fact and what the reporter or editor wishes were the fact. To say that is easy; to do it is hard. The journalist's mission becomes that of telling us what's going on in as completely, accurately, honestly, and dispassionately as possible. And that is objective reporting. And that kind of reporting and presentation through media is a must especially in a state of political crisis.

On the other hand it seems that many journalists prefer the criterion of balance, which is the recognition that there is more than one side to any story, and journalists should attempt to present all sides. This has been the criterion of journalists who realize it is impossible to be completely objective. In order to be fair, they attempt to achieve balance in their stories. This means including the viewpoint of more than one side in the story, and with some stories there are many sides.

Having the discussion as above, in our context, we can safely conclude that if journalists are unable to provide us with balance, then we must construct it for ourselves if we are to be media literate. This means we must seek out information from all sides of an issue whether it is political crisis, ethnic conflict, communal riots or so on in any nation across the globe. When media remains impartial to deal with any political crisis it should also remain as watchdog so that the government can not hold control of the media and if it lose its control for vested interest it is the people who will act as watch dog over the functioning of media because mass people do have their capacity to have mass impact on media. In such situation it is certain that media will lose its credibility in the eyes of the mass people.

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