MEDIA AND STEREOTYPES ON ETHNICITY: A STUDY OF FRAMING CHAKMA MIGRATION IN TRIPURA

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Abstract

This paper has attempted to analysethe media coverage on migration of Chakma refugees from Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in Bangladesh to Tripura with special reference to two leading newspapers of Tripura. It is an effort to understand how media positions itself in the context of conflict induced displacement and migration, gross denial of human rights, ethnic crises and other such issues in the context of Responsibility to Protect (R2P). This study has deployed both content analysis of newspaper reports on Chakma migration and interviews from a group of respondents selected through non-probability purposive sampling comprising of journalists and studentsrepresenting the civil society for triangulation. The content analysis of newspaper reports pertains to the phase of Chakma migration from CHT in Tripura in June 2014, published in 2 major newspapers of the state. The paper attempted to draw conclusions from framing and priming effects of the local media and related polarization of population on ethnic grounds as an impact of mediatized communication of ethnicity and stereotypes generated in media coverage. The study also tried to raise arguments on presence or absence of media trial on responsibilities of the State in offering asylum and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and thus denialof the human rights aspect to conflict reporting. The study used a critical reading of the 2005 UN doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), Draft National Rehabilitation Policy, 2006 and the Communal Violence (Prevention) Bill, 2005 (amended in 2009, 2011) to argue the role of mass media in framing issues of asylum, national security, development and vice versa.

Keywords: Media, framing, priming, ethnicity, Chakma Migration,security, xenophobia, R2P

Introduction

This study is an effort to understand the apparently random implications of media coverage on conflict induced conflict situations to gauge the media response and impacts in mitigating or accentuating conflicts. We have attempted to look at the issue from a human rights perspective and attempted to explore the subtle framing of asylum seekersby mainstream media in the times of conflict. Mass media has often been found to play significant role in creating and vent sometimes escalating or furthering facilitating factors and triggering factors, e.g, by utilising 'oppositional metaphors' ('us' vs. 'them') linked to internal and external issues or 'threats' facing the 'security' of the nation or the concerned population segment, groups etc. (Jager& Link, 1993)

At the political dimension, media is found to play a pivotal role in democracies. The central point of argument for viability of mass media organizations in democratic societies is that it fosters and augments the 'public sphere'. (Habermas, 1984)As seen in studies of Edward Herman and Robert McChesney, concentration of corporate ownership, political interference into 'mainstream media', rising influence of market forces have significant role in determining information filters in the media industry and vice versa.

McChesney and Herman noted that though media globalization effects are still hard to sort out, are being dominated by commercialization and its impact on the public sphere.For smaller and less economically developed countries, there is a further scope of economies of scale and technical and promotional sophistication that greatly facilitates media and cultural penetration by the great three powers. (Herman &McChesney, 1998)

Herman and McChesney categorically stressed on the fact that there is a strong tendency in the globalizing process for advertisers' preferences for laissez-faire to prevail, giving zero weight to the positive externalities of public service programming, and at the same time giving full access to cheap and superficial audience-attracting programs including featuring overtsex and violence, all in close allegiance to the logic of market force-driven media.

In other words, the global media treats the audience as passive customers, who needed to be kept inert. And there in comes the question of largescale trampling,undermining, if not denial, of the very basic human rights.

India inherited a tradition of private commercial press and a government-owned broadcasting system from the regime of British colonial rulers. While the private press was intrinsically related to the struggle for Independence in pre-1947 era, its association with the philosophy of safeguarding and upholding the national collective (being Indian) soon dropped off. The Indian Press remained uncontrolled by the government and free from official censorship, save the 18-month emergency under the then Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi in mid-1970s.

When it comes to the public broadcaster, several commissions suggested that the Doordarshan should be made independent of direct control from the State. Leaders who campaigned before elections setting forth issues of freeing the Doordarshan, shied away from realizing the coveted goal after achieving victory, for example, VP Singh in the late 1980s.

The problem with this system was that the public broadcasting monopoly was over-bureaucratized and its performance became nothing more than a State propagandist.

With the influx of private television channels in India in the early 1990s, corporate interests gradually started to show up. Barely six years after the Gulf War, India was found to have around 40 cable and satellite channels operating including the BBC, MTV, CNN, Worldnet, Gulfnet and Prime (a Dallas-based sports network). The most important attention was, however, gained by Zee TV, (started in 1992 with a 49.9 percent ownership by Rupert Murdoch). Audience attracting programming for middle class Indians in a wide variety of languages started.

Influx of the commercial enterprises threw a utopia of higher democratization of information and freedom from state censorship. However, the utopia became clear after the private television channels were found playing decisive roles in forming public opinion, and thus framing, altering political-business lobbies.

Newspapers were nowhere late to join the fray of working with corporate lobbies, rather becoming neo-corporates themselves. Corporations started emerging as newspapers branched out more editions in a single language and multi-lingual editions from different locations. Foreign ownership started flowing in and recent move of the Government of India seeking to allow 100 percent FDI in news media only opened debates for the gates of hell. India already has got 26 percent FDI in news media and 100 percent FDI in non-news media like

publications.Disturbing trends like emergence of Private Treaty in the newspaper industry under the BCCL were exposed after the first global meltdown of the current millennium.

All these factors indicate towards a single fact that presence of more media, whether state controlled or independent of state, couldn't justify the priorities of a true 'public sphere', although scholars argue that Habermas's idea of public space can be best achieved by a pluralist media.Habermas had said that almost in every society, there would be a public space in the realm of people's communication, which would also provide the ordinary citizens a scope of participation in public communication shaping the 'public life'. (Habermas, 1991)

Commercial control has become stronger in prioritizing media content.However, there are deterrents to confuse the conscious citizen. Capitalist media experts like Ben Compaigne would have you believe that more media and higher corporatization of mass media organizations are desirable since 'they increase competition among the media organizations and offer higher choice to the audience'. (Compaigne, 2005)

While the Propaganda Model in corporate media mainly referred tothe ownership and editorial controlin a global context (Chomsky & Herman, 1988), the same priority filters or control mechanisms arguably be unequivocally similar in context of smaller and local media organizations. Cross-ownership of media organizations as printers, publishers and media organizations cut down on the cost of production of smaller media organizations (from the experience of Northeast India) which means that local mass media organizations could exist without having infrastructure of their own. This proposition is being backed up by a systematic study of media coverage of two major newspapers of Tripura, one of the few NE states with heavy media footprint.

This study argues that Ben Bagdikian's idea of the private information conglomerate that holds the potential to create 'national agendas' can be argued to be similar with the same first filter of ownership operational in setting significant agendas in the local contexts.

Of course, the set priorities can be further studied through a significantly more dissected view of the ownership patterns of the analyzed local newspapers from different other perspectives, identity among the most crucial ones.

Experiences from Nagaland, Manipur etc. have shown us that while large media organizations work for safeguarding, promoting the ideal state apparatus, local media organizations are often found to work on propaganda for the interest of rebellious ethnic interests created as a fallout of the policy explosion in the initial years of the Indian State that reduced the State from a collective to fragments of conflicting interests.

We try to look at the issue through the Tripura experience of local mass media addressing ethnic conflicts.The internalization of priorities by set journalists and agenda set by the concerned media organizations combine to go beyond the apparent prescriptions of the propaganda model.Tripura's local media experience raises certain significant questions as a third variable of ethnic bias makes inroad to the case scenario.

An important precondition of conflict resolution is the free flow of information. In the absence of information, resolution may appear either distant or half-hearted. More often than not, a communication gap, lack of information, misinformation about the origin of the conflict and the demands or the manner in which the cases have been presented have adverse effects on public understanding affecting the outcome. (Kabi, 2012)

This study analyses local mass media organizations' behaviour in covering conflict with special reference to migration of Chakma refugees from the CHT in Bangladesh to Tripura in June, 2014 and argues that while it is propaganda and a choice to allow or not allow large mass media organizations to engage or support in conflict situations, the local media organizations here had choosen to act under influence of a number of factors, which may include ethnic identity of the owner, density of ethnic identities among the employees, overt and covert support to ethnic sentiments etc., which in turn, lead to largescale denial of human rights.

The potential danger of words has been recognized in international criminal law, as is evidenced by the criminalization of 'incitement to genocide' in the International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948, henceforth stated as the Genocide Convention. (Genocide Convention report, 2010)

The pressing question in this context, hence, is if we are at all equipped or motivated towards detecting the occurrences of ethnic marginalization, incitement to ethnic/communal violence(with the help of monitoring and content analyses of mass media content e.g. in the

pilotproject executed for monitoring pre-election media discourse before the 2013 Kenyan elections). These were historically known to set the ideological grounds for incidents tantamount to genocide or other forms of more virulent ethnic cleansing.

This study tries to analyze the media trial, if any, of the lack of responsibility of the Indian State on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and argues if the media itself should be put under the ambit of legal obligation to refrain from any form of ethnic/communal marginalization. This argument is strictly in distinction from advocating prescription-grade suggestions as stated in the Press Council of India (PCI) guidelines or the Times of India Code of Ethics, which obviously, isnot taken much seriously.The study in this context analyzes media reports carried on Chakma migration from Bangladesh in 2014 in two major newspapers of Tripura and tries to analyze the perception generated which largely caused denial of assimilation by the local populace as well as the administration.

India earlier used a similar concept like the R2P, way before the current avatar of R2P doctrine was accepted by the United Nations in 2005. The Government of India intervened to assist in the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. The country also intervened in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka with the Jaffna Food Drop.In the first week of June 1987, Tamil militants were cornered in Jaffna and Sri Lanka's Jayawardane government stopped essential supplies from reaching ordinary citizens. India sent unarmed bombers to airdrop relief supplies to starving civilians in the north.

These interventions clearly violated the sovereignty of the countries concerned. When the Indian army marched into East Pakistan (later Bangladesh) in 1971, it took on the Pakistani army. The food drop in Jaffna was not only a humanitarian act, but also a show of force to the Sri Lankan president. Despite the justification of a duty to protect people in neighbouring countries, Indian decision makers considered these interventions as primarily in the national interest. The humanitarian action in each case was in keeping with India's own strategic interests.

Scholars have often argued that the Indian government's anxiety about supporting R2P in its current forms stems from this experience, coupled with a historical anti-colonial mindset. And there are counter arguments of impeding with State sovereignty flagged by Responsibility While Protecting (RWP) champions as well.

The media interface with the State's apparent reluctance has been the prime driving force behind this study. Thus study has tried to find out the extent and reasons of the media incitement to violence or its apparent disconnect with the question of State's response to Responsibility to Protect (R2P).

Chakmas of CHT and Tripura

In 1964, around 30,000 indigenous Chakmas displaced by the Kaptai Hydro-Electric dam in CHT of then East Pakistan migrated to India. Few of them were granted settlement in the then North Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA), present Arunachal Pradesh, after consultation with the local tribal chiefs.

Following assassination of President Zia-urRehman on 30 May, 1981 and death of *Shanti Bahini* leader Manabendra Narayan Larma in 1983, Chakmas started to migrate across Indo-Bangla international border into the bordering states of India as refugees again. About 40,000 Chakmas had entered Mizoram in 1983 and in April-May 1986 about 50,000(in total) Chakma refugees entered the Indian state of Tripura.By May 24, 1989, total number of Chakama refugees in India who migrated from across the border reached 54,000. There were also several phases of migration from CHT till 2014 as well. With inter-ethnic conflict and trauma plaguing most Chakma habitations in the CHT, they have historically shown closeness to Chakmas in Northeast India. In the latest major incident of migration from the CHT, Chakmas fled CHT and sought asylum in Tripura in August 2013. The last group of Chakma refugees entered Tripura through Gandacherra sub-division in Dhalai district in June 2014. Initially devoid of the eyes of the administration and the government, they first came to light when a local cable TV channel journalist ran a newsstoryon unidentified people living in several villages alongside the Indo-Bangla international border at Gandacherra.

The administration soon stepped in: the media was debarred from interacting with them. The refugees, who were declined of any refugee rights, were huddled inside a senior basic school in Gandacherra sub-division and were pushed back after five days.

The act was a direct violation of the 1984 Torture Convention that India was herself a signatory of beside violating the universally accepted (though India didn't formally sign it) spirit of the 1951 refugee convention.

Understanding Propaganda and conflict

The Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model (1988) explains how dissent from the mainstream is given little, or zero coverage, while governments and big business gain easy access to the public in order to convey their state-corporate messages. Certain messages assume narcotizing dysfunctional characters by blind repetition like 'free trade is beneficial, 'globalisation is unstoppable' and 'our policies are tackling poverty' etc**.** (Chomsky & Herman, 1988)

'Violent Conflict and Roles of the Media', a report published under the Department for Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, said that mediated mobilization could directly lead to violence, just as well as mobilization leads to peaceful development and/or resolution.

The Media Conflict Theory discusses on Ancient Hatreds, Identity Politics and the social psychological theory. The social psychological theory discusses about social identity and intergroup conflicts.

Ghosts of Rwanda, a news documentary by Frontline, showed use of the Hutu Radio (Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines) in spreading hate speeches against Tutsis, majority tribal community of Rwanda. The Hutu-Tutsi conflict of 1994 is reported to have killed 800,000 men, women and children.

'Violent Conflict and Roles of the Media', the report from Uppsala University, says that the international media mostly show interest in a conflict only after the critical preventive moment has passed.

'Media and Ethnic Minorities' by Valerie Alia and Simone Bull (Alia & Bull, 2005) says that the word 'Indian' is a term mostly used to market souvenirs, cigars, cigarettes, gasoline, cars, recreational vehicles, golf courses, movies and books. (Keeshig-Tobias 1990: 67)

'Uncertainty, Threat, and the Role of the Media in Promoting the Dehumanization of Immigrants and Refugees', (Victoria M. Esses) said that the media may have got opportunities to take advantage of uncertainty and unease involving immigration policies and treatment of refugees in certain nations.

Local media organisations are often bound by local economic and political requirements. Alternative print media existed during the Rwandan genocide but number of independent newspapers at the time of the genocide was between 30 and 60 (Alexis and Mpambara, 2003; Higiro, 2007).

'Media and Forced Migration: A Case-Study of Media Response to Reang Displacement in Tripura' (10th Orientation Course, MCRG, 2012) said that ethnic bias played a very integral part in the local media. Community-based class sentiments get involved into coverage and relief camps in areas with tribal majority often get scanty coverage, the study said.

'Media and Ethnic Minorities' by Valerie Alia and Simone Bull (Alia & Bull, 2005) refers to the 'outsider' media representations of ethnic minorities and says that the intention is normally to support preconceived paternalistic notions of a 'primitive' or 'savage' creed.

'Information flows during wartime are drawn from a poisoned well of misinformation, though which potential migrants must sort in order to update their beliefs about their potential for victimization'. (Delehanty, October 07, 2013)

The media alters the existing communication environment and are thus inherently involved in the conflict (Sandra D. Melone, GeorgisTerzis, OzselBeleli, March 2002).

"The media can: cause intended change; cause unintended change; cause minor change [form or intensity]; facilitate change [intended or not]; reinforce what exists [no change]; prevent change. Any of these changes may occur at the level of the individual, society institution or culture". (McQuail, 2014)

The media's ability to reach large numbers of people and participate in the opinion building process brings with it considerable power to shape the course of crises and conflicts (George Terzis, VrijeUniversiteitBrussel, MyriaVassiliadou, Intercollege, Nicosia).

Van Dijk says that one of the main findings of more than a decade of research in discourse and racism was that the 'elites' play a special role in the reproduction of racism. He argues that negative medial portrayals are result of explicit discursive practices of the media elites, usually in collusion with the political, corporate and social elites. (Dijk)

'Media and Ethnopolitical Conflict' by GeorgiosTerzis, Media Programmes Director, European Centre For Common Ground (ECCG),Brussels, said that media play a central role in the negotiation of the structural factors, as well as triggering factors that lead up to a violent conflict. (Terzis). We may also note that "(I)n their coverage of international and national events, the media continually produce and reinforce certain socially shared ethnic prejudices". (Carrier, 1997; Rivenburgh, 1995; Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1985).

John Drussel says that 'given the ability to disperse information efficiently to a mass audience, potential for rewards in social networking are unrestricted'. (Drussel, 2012)

WallesKotra, Managing Editor of France O, insisted, "Till now, the media in France has been internally racist. The white newsrooms have practised implicit racism over the years. They have closed their eyes to the minorities and that is not going to change in a hurry". (Chakrabarti)

With specific reference to the Chakma related issues, we see that the Chakmas in Arunachal Pradesh allege that the media of the state are completely biased towards the local communities or indigenous tribes of the state. Their claim is that every report in the newspaper goes against them even if the truth is otherwise. (Sengupta).

"The current philosophy of the counter-insurgency policy of the Government of India for instance is built on a single, widely circulated idea: 'The Mother of all Insurgencies'...... it was phrase coined by some journalists struck by a flash of bright idea to colour up the copy of the day. The image, however, has struck a chord in popular imagination and has been somewhat immortalized". (Phanjoubam)

"Many 'filters' are at work in this process. American media analyst Noam Chomsky discussed about a set of filters to describe media behaviour to conflict situations. Such filters can become extremely important in the case of displacement-related news". (From the Field to the Newsroom)."Take the political and media discourse on what has come to be termed the 'Bangladeshi problem'. Here the genuine person/environmental refugee has become synonymous with the *jehadi* terrorist. The distortion that now characterize this discourse, the general conflating of terms like refugees/migrant workers/displaced people/infiltrators, has had two unfortunate consequences". (Philipose)

Ammu Joseph says on media portrayals of victims of the 2005 tsunami in Indian shores that The New Indian Express marginalized Dalits, Muslims and other disadvantaged communities. (Joseph)

Dr. AnasuaBasu Ray Chaudhury argues in 'Vernacular Press and the Nellie Massacre' that vernacular newspapers of Assam overtly tried to differentiate and stereotype populations based on caste and class backgrounds. (Chaudhury). BhupenSarmah and RatnaBharali said in 'Media Audit on Forced Migration' with special reference to Assam that the local media had been reluctant to provide any analysis of the ethnic conflicts considering the historical factors responsible for their frequent occurrence in the state. (BhupenSarmah).

SubirBhaumik notes in 'Integration, Multiculturalism and Glolocalization', "It is not unusual for the German media, driven by market logic, to pander to stereotypes, either because the media decision-makers and journalists feel strongly about the undermining of German language and culture or because they want to keep their core audiences happy by supporting - rather than challenging - their racial/cultural stereotypes. (Bhaumik).

Sanjay Barbora said in 'Media and Minorities in the United Kingdom' that beside growth and visibility of minorities in the British media since sitcoms of 1970s, sectoral interests were promoted to a large extent. (Barbora).

Rita Manchanda says in 'Media, Terrorism and Suspect Communities' that eight major Indian English language dailies and several leading regional language newspapers carried practically identical shots of three suspected youths accused of being implicated in the 2008 Delhi blasts.

Kemal Kurspahic drew upon his experience in the Balkans to emphasis that the media can just as easily have a deleterious effect and cause an escalation of violence and hate speech. The media's actions in the Balkans are a prime example of how the media can be a source of antagonism and an instigator of conflict rather than a source for peace.

Julia Hoffman and AmakaOkanysay that in events of ethnic conflicts and genocide, the media have to be considered an amplifying forcer in some incidences of mass violence. They say that the media has been identified as an active player within the 'eight stages of genocide' famously identified by Gregory Stanton, in particular, the 'dehumanization stage'. (Hoffman &Okany, 2012)

Key Concepts

Few important theories related to conflict resolution and the roles of media were referred for the theoretical framework of the study. They include Track Two Diplomacy, Agenda Setting Theory, Frustration-Aggression Theory, Social Learning and Social identity theory, Enemy System Theory, Human Needs Theory & the Herman-Chomsky Propaganda Model.

Objectives

This study seeks to figure out the patterns of reaction of Tripura's local media organizations to issues relating to ethnic conflict, if any. This study is an effort to understand the pattern of reaction in the light of the Propaganda Model (Chomsky & Herman, 1988) with special focus on coverage of two selected local morning dailies on Chakma migration from the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh into Tripura in June 2014.

Specific Objectives

➢ To analyze news content in selected sample of local mass media on Chakma migration.
➢ To collect and analyze readers' perception through a structured audience perception survey.
➢ To find out the nature of revenue earned by a selected sample of local media firmsby analyzing their published advertisements
➢ To find out the source of information of the news generated in the selected sample on Chakma migration.
➢ To assess the readers' perception about local mass media organizations' behavioural conformity to justify 'public sphere' against the logic of elitist propaganda offered by the Propaganda Model.
➢ To assess role of the analyzed media organizations in questioning the State's liability to uphold human rights by honouring the 2005 Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine of the UN.

Research Methodology

The study has conducted qualitative content analysis of newspaper content and quantitative analysis of placement, frequency and space covered by news coverage on Chakma migration from the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh to Tripura in a selected sample of two

morning dailies of Tripura in June 2014. It has also qualitative analysis of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and the Communal Violence (Prevention) Bill,2005.The study has conducted a quantitative analysis of advertisements published in the month of June.

This study also conducts quantitative analysis of the choice of information source in reporting conflict by analyzing origin of information to justify reports on Chakma migration from CHT in Bangladesh.

This study further conducted a structured survey among a stratified group of respondents of journalists and students from Tripura. It uses the cumulative knowledge bank to generate findings on Tripura's local media experiment on reporting migration of Chakma refugees from Bangladesh.

Research Sites and Sample Population

This study focuses on local mass media organizations of Tripura. It uses secondary data from newspaper reports of Chakma migration from CHT in Bangladesh published in Tripura Times, leading English morning daily of the state.

The study deployed content analysis on reports published in the selected sample of newspapers on Chakma refugee influx from Bangladesh to Tripura from June 01 to June 30, 2014. The study also analyses origin of information of the news and advertisements published in the two newspapers in a similar timeframe. It further analyzes ownership pattern of the selected newspapers.

Thus the first three filters of Propaganda Model (Chomsky & Herman, 1988) are being tested in the context of Tripura's local media experience. The sample was chosen through non-probability purposive sampling.

The group of ten selected respondents was chosen by a random survey among two stratified respondents groups - journalists and students from Tripura for assessing their perception on the newspaper coverage of Chakma migration from Bangladesh.

Sample Profile

DainikSambad:-*DainikSambad* is the largest circulated Bengali daily from Tripura and one of the largest circulated dailies published in the language from the entire NE region.It started publication from 2ndNovember 1969, initially under the name *Dainik Jana Abhijan*. The founder editor and owner of this newspaper was Bhupendra Chandra DattaBhowmik. It is now managed by the Bhupendra Chandra DattaBhowmik Trust and has emerged as an effective spokesman of the entire North Eastern region.

Tripura Times:- The first English newspaper of Tripura was published under the name 'Spark' in 1958 by its late founder editor and veteran lawyer Apanshu Mohan Lodh. 'Spark' was renamed as 'Tripura Times' in 1961. It is being currently owned, published and edited by ArindamLodh and has the largest footprint in English journalism in Tripura.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Tripura Times covered the Chamka refugee issue for 16.67 percent of the total coverage timeframe in a month. It dedicated 7.19 percent of the total news-space in the time when it covered the said reports. The newspaper didn't continue follow-up stories to find out the status of the repatriated refugees after they were sent back home.

This studyhas found that local mass media organizations accentuate the State propaganda of national security issue for denying refugee rights, as the doctrine of non-refoulement wasn't mentioned for a single instance. The gross human rights violation by denying drinking water, food and medicine to the refugees was not reported - tactically silenced and replaced by the government version which proves that the local media organizations chose to side with the State.

Non-refoulement is a principle of international law, which forbids the rendering of a true persecution victim (or anybody forced to flee his or her country of origin out of any violent conflict or troublesome measures adopted by the concerned State) to his or her persecutor. The persecutor in mind is usually a state actor in these cases. It is a principle of both the customary and trucial law of nations.The principle of refoulement was officially enshrined in Article 33 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and is also contained in

the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees and Article 3 of the 1984 Convention Against Torture.

The newspaper reports used expressions like 'tension', 'Bangladeshi', 'porous border' etc. to create an invisible facilitating factor for the readers that would help in inhibiting assimilation and integration of the refugee population among the local residents. The reports created oppositional metaphors by deploying phrases like 'thwart attempts of further influx' to describe the preparedness of BSF on the Indo-Bangla border in the wake of the influx of Chakma refugees.

The news report that appeared on June 4, the second day that the newspaper carried report on Chakma migration from CHT, quoted the District Magistrate and suggested 'repatriation' as the logical solution of solving the situation but denies to suggest the other three major durable solutions for refugee protection suggested by the UNHCR. The standpoint of the newspaper appeared more like a hired propagandist for the government rather than offering unbiased critique of the incident and the reaction of state government to it.

The reports used expressions like 'their own homeland' instead of saying Bangladesh, which creates a psychological distancing of the Chakma asylum seekers' among readers. Repeated use of the phrase creates a strong and binding stereotype of illegal immigrants who would be rather seen as threat instead of terming the immigrants as asylum seekers, which they really were.

The 'official' stands on figure of 'refugees' varied every day. It abruptly varied from 200 families to 90 families, which then went to be further reduced to 84.

Content analysis from *DainikSambad*, leading vernacular daily of Tripura, went a step further and termed the asylum-seekers 'infiltrators', found 'genocide' as reason of migration and thrice mentioned that 400 'infiltrators' managed to gain access to 'Indian soil' out of which 83 could be detected. The newspaper carried only two news reports in an entire month on the Chakma migration from CHT, with less than 3 percent news coverage in average.

News reports analyzed in this study were found to inform that the refugee families took shelter at a senior basic school at Tuichakma ADC village which was the version given by the District Magistrate (DM) but denied to voice the version of 'refugees' themselves who were

huddled inside the school with absolutely no sanitation facility, facilities of food or safe drinking water, medical care for the ill or so.

The report brands the ongoing talks between Bangladesh and India to repatriate the Chakma refugees as 'deadlock'. The expression as stated by the surveyed respondents, to have perceived as offering negative idea about the refugees and the readers' mind is influenced to distance itself from the refugees on the pretext of border and nationality.

The report quotes BSF officials, officials from the BGB and unnamed sources but denies referring to any of the refugees in Tripura or their families in Bangladesh. The entire victim population is dehumanized, denied attention and silenced.

In the final report published on June 07, 2014, the newspaper used expression like 'impasse over' to describe that the repatriation of Chakma 'refugees' was finally being held. It uses the expression 'asylum-seekers' for the first time in the entire coverage of Chakma refugee influx in Tripura. The statement, however, comes after thrice of terming the refugee as 'Bangladeshi migrants' (which was stated by the respondents to have created confusion with illegal immigrants since Tripura and Assam were historically worst sufferers of illegal immigration from Bangladesh). A statement from a BSF official said how the border guards resisted one more refugee influx in 2012. The report uses the expression 'thwarted' to describe the act in a tacit use of syntax which was later stated to have been perceived as an oppositional factor between readers 'of India' and 'refugees from Bangladesh'.

Absolutely no report published during the entire period analyzed had any keywords relating to 'protection', 'responsibility to protect', 'rights', 'human rights' etc.

The study found that sourcing of information for news coverage on Chakma migration to Tripura from Bangladesh was entirely based on state agenda through statements or interviews with government officials, ministers etc. There was absolutely no voice allowed to non-state actors in the reports like victims of onslaught in the CHT, which later propelled the migration, or local residents of the area where the Chakma refugees had sought asylum in Tripura.

During the advertisement survey, the study found that nearly 44 percent (43.84 percent) of all advertisements published in Tripura Times in the month of June 2014, were generated from the state and central government. All private commercial, classified and other forms of

advertisements added up to 56.16 percent of the total advertisement space in the newspaper in a similar timeframe.

In the advertisement survey in *DainikSambad*, 50.97 % of all advertisements published were generated by the state and central governments. 49.03% private advertisements were published in a similar timeframe.

In the perception survey, 100 percent of the respondents confirmed the first two filters of the Propaganda Model and said that ownership and dependence for revenue limited the coverage of Chakma refugees' influx from CHT to Tripura were instrumental in shaping response of local media organizations. 100 percent of the respondents said that they felt the coverage would have been more empathetic had the ownership been in the hands of people from Chakma community. 90 percent of the respondents felt that media coverage of the Chakma refugees from CHT to Tripura was not scarce owing to over emphasis on national security issue. 70 percent of them same respondents said the lack of coverage was due to ethnic bias of the media owners.

100 percent of the respondents said that local media (here Tripura Times) organizations were bound by local commitments and said that ownership pattern of the concerned media organization had direct influence on the pattern of coverage of Chakma migration.

CONCLUSION

This study safely concludes that policy of Tripura Times and *DainikSambad* (arguably leading local media organizations of Tripura) in covering Chakma migration from Bangladesh in 2014 reflected a direct influence on a set of local coverage features existing in the local media organizations.

The terminological double standard as seen through content analysis of news copies carried on Chakma migration from CHT was found to have been maintained reliably throughout the mainstream media organizations of Tripura.

This study finds that the mediated opinion on Chakma migration from CHT had a visible disconnect to the cause of granting asylum to the refugees. This was also seen in absolute absence of public opinion on the issue on popular social media platforms.

In the context of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), this study finds that the media coverage analyzed does fall under the category of ethnic generalization and dehumanization, which were argued by communication scholars to be prime causes behind building the ideology of ethnic conflict.

Especially, given the context of ethnic cleansing against the Chakmas, Mog and other ethnic communities living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh which earlier used to be a part of the Hill Tipperah during feudal regime of Tripura's Manikya kings, the media coverage of Chakma asylum seekers from CHT definitely signified inclination of the concerned media organizations to stay aloof from 'the matters of Bangladesh'.

The study has also contextualized the findings against the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) judgment where it made an important clarification that cultural and linguistic backgrounds of a speech is relevant for determining whether or not it constitutes 'direct' incitement to genocide, ethnic cleansing and other ethnic crimes.

While comparing media coverage of Tripura on asylum seekers of Bangladesh might apparently seem far-fetched, this paper has found this very labeling of people, in other dehumanization, significant factor of ethnic polarization and denial of human rights, in this case to Chakma refugees from CHT, in the local media coverage.

The ICTR categorically stated that a specific call to commit genocide or stay away from it may be made in words, including coded speech, slangs and so forth, while they may also be vague or indirect in their meaning to 'others' by branding them by a certain background, be it nationality, culture or language.

Referring to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the ICTR judgments, this study finds that Tripura Times and *DainikSambad* had contributed to ethnic generalization, which provoked sentiment against members of the asylum seeking ethnicity, which is more likely to lead to violence. This can be directly related to the ICTR judgment on the *Akayesu*, a media organization found guilty of inciting ethnic violence in the famous 'Media Case'. (ICTR, 1996, May 30)

This study has also found the media parlance is hardly careful about the total absence of responsibility of the Indian State to protect such asylum seekers.

Government of India's long history of accepting refugees and asylum seekers ranging from Swat valley refugees to Chin Burmese refugees to the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees and of course the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War refugees shows India's legacy of acceptance and assimilation to asylum seekers.However, the recent trends do exhibit some disturbing questions. The attitude of the Indian State in granting citizenship to refugees from Pakistan and Bangladesh, due to contested reasons, is very much different from those hailing from other nations.

This study concludes that the media coverage of Tripura Times and *DainikSambad* on Chakma migration from Bangladesh largely resulted in forming ethnic stereotypes that hold high potential in determining the public-Chakma refugee relationship.The study also suggests that absolute dependence of the newspaper on state sponsored advertisements may have resulted in its dependence and reliance on the state for information and advocacy over the Chakma migration from Bangladesh as suggested by the government and its affiliates.

This study proves that the denial of human rights to Chakma asylum seekers from Bangladesh was deliberately silenced in the coverage of the issue. This study finds that the absolute absence of media criticism of State's failure to uphold the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) was a direct act of upholding the Ideal State Apparatus (ISA) in cases of reporting ethnic conflict as seen in the case national large media organizations.

This study finds that ethnic divide in media ownership is seen as a key cause of bias for selective choice and rejection in coverage of three cases in local newspapers of Tripura. The study concludes that the readers' perception is justified through content analysis of the newspaper contents carried on the same.

In the local context of Tripura, Tripura Times and Chakma migration from CHT, this study has found that ethnic identity of newspaper owners may also have a role to play in ethnic conflict situations for agreement or disagreement on issues of silencing or propagating minority voices which can be compared in further studies. This additional factor of identity can be seen as a determinant cause in a direct act of displacing the political sphere by a depoliticized consumer culture.

This study confirms all three filters of the Propaganda Model that were found applicable in local media organizations of Northeast India. It left out the filters of 'flak' and 'anti-

communism' for lack of grounds. At the same time, the results of this studytell us to think if we should extend the structural definitions of ownership from size and corporate entities to identity of the owner/owners when it comes to local media organizations.

At the end, this study agrees with the recommendations made by Julia Hoffman over media role onR2P and suggests that media labeling and branding of ethnicity and community might be seen beyond *ex post facto*. Hence, this study recommends bringingnew mechanisms for all recognized media organizations of India e.g. under a legal statutory mandate for avoiding any form of ethnic or communal favours at par with the Responsibility to Protect (R2P).

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